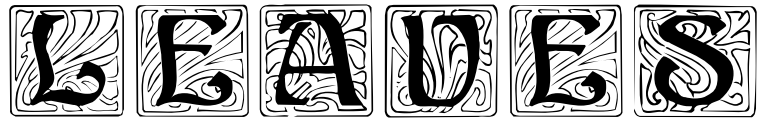


ORÆDÆS

The Quarterly Journal of Ár nDraíocht Féin

Autumn 2005 ~ Issue No. 30





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Autumn 2005 • Issue No. 30

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From the ArchDruid

The festival time of the year is well underway and it's my busy travel time. So far this year, I've been to the Trillium Festival in Virginia, the Desert Magic Festival in Arizona, The Well-spring Festival in New York and by the time this column comes out, will have attended the Sirius Rising and Starwood Festivals held in New York, the Kaleidoscope Festival held in Ontario, Canada and the Summerland's Festival held in Ohio. At all of the festivals, I will have presented workshops on ADF, talked with our members and taken part in ADF format rituals put on to show people what our religion is about.

At the Kaleidoscope Festival, I met with a group of ADF members to continue the discussion of creating ADF Canada. I feel that this will become a reality within the next few years. Our religion has now reached the next stage in its growth. We have more than 1,000 members and I feel that our membership numbers will be growing at a much faster rate.

We now have many of our training programs in place with members working through them. Our Clergy Training Program is active and I'm sure that it will be very popular. Much of the thanks for keeping the training programs moving forward, especially the Dedicant Program, have to go to our Preceptor, Jenni Hunt and her 'Preceptor Posse.' Without them, our programs wouldn't be working anywhere near as efficiently as they now do!

In the coming months, I look forward to another season of growth and plenty in our worship of the Old Ways. May the Kindreds bless you all!

Skip Ellison
Archdruid



OAK LEAVES

Autumn 2005 • Issue 30

Editor-in-Chief: Vedis Köerner
Editors: Michael J Dangler, Linda Costello
Art Director: Michael Luevane
News Director: Calliean
Sales Director: Selene Tawny

Contributors

Kirk Thomas, Jennifer L. Gadd, Michael J Dangler, Moonhawk, Chris.), Skip Ellison, Susan "Ratatask" Eaves, John McDaris, Steph Gooch, Francesca Hedrick, Raven and Carrion Mann, Anne Lenzi, Gretchen Persbacher, Brian Long, Edwin Chapman, Carey Oxler, Vedis Köerner

International Ad Department

Selene Tawny
2941 N Dunham Road
Amelia, OH 45102
selenetawny@adelphia.net

International Art Department

Michael Luevane
P.O. Box 112
Colfax, IL 61728
metrophage@gmail.com

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Subscription Service Department

ADF
P.O. Box 17874
Tucson, AZ 85731-7874
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Leadership Interview

How did you come to Paganism?

When I was 11 or so, I discovered ancient history. I just loved all the myths that went along with them and felt drawn to the Greek Gods. But Gods were just in stories and everyone knew that they weren't real, I thought.

Then when I was a teenager, I discovered witchcraft. Now, this was back in the late 1960's and there wasn't a lot of information out there. I had a book by Sybil Leek, I remember, and another one called, "Mastering Witchcraft" or some such. I really got into it, and even put a ritual into a home movie I made in High School with my friends. I didn't know anyone else who was interested, however, and so was an unwilling solitary. But as a budding gay man, I became more and more uncomfortable with the heterosexual focus I perceived in the religion - with the God and Goddess and the dipping of knives into chalices and all that. So I just sort of fell away from it. My spiritual nature starved for a long time.

A few years ago, however, a friend gave me a silly novel for my birthday called, "The Mists of Avalon", and it brought me up short. I suddenly remembered how I had felt all those years ago and how much I missed the Gods. I was filled with a certainty that I had to go back and rediscover those lost roots of mine, and so, it being the 21st century, I went searching on-line. I had assumed that I would end up in Wicca, since witchcraft was all I knew, but I kept running into the ADF web site. I'd then go on looking elsewhere, but always ended up coming back to ADF. Finally, after about two weeks of searching, I decided that ADF was where I wanted to be. The fact that there was a protogrove here in Tucson was a big plus!

Which pantheons do you work with?

My hearth culture is Welsh, and Rhiannon is one of my Patrons. But I am also drawn to the Gods of the Irish and Gaulish pantheons, as well as some of the Greek. Pan has been with me since I was a child, even if I didn't acknowledge Him for many years. My other Patron is the Gaulish God Cernunnos, and I have working relationships with Lleu Llaw Gyffes, the Morrigan, Brigit, Taranis and Manannan (or Manawydan - if they are not the same, they have to be twin brothers!).

How did you come to know these particular Gods?



Kirk Thomas

I have a fairly strong mystical streak in me. I participate in primal, primitive practices on occasion, and a few months after joining ADF, I had a vision during one of these activities. I was deep into a trance state when I suddenly heard birds flying and singing all around me. Birds? I had no idea what this was about. Then I realized that a lady with dark hair and fair skin was standing to my left. I had no idea who she could be. She seemed warm and loving and put Her hand on my shoulder. Then I became aware of a figure on my right. He was naked, and very, very male. I had no idea what was going on until I perceived the antlers on His head. And it was then that the skies opened. The room filled with entities. I know now that the lady was Rhiannon, and my Lord Cernunnos was on my right. Gods I now know to be Lleu Llaw Gyffes, Manannan mac Lir and Taranis also showed up. The Morrigan was some distance away, Her back to me.

The one message that I clearly remember from that dizzying moment was that I had to learn to touch the Gods in ways other than through my rare forays into primal, primitive practices. I had to learn to find them in meditation and prayer. And this I have now done.

How do you balance your religion with the rest of the pieces of your life?

I lived so many years without any religion whatsoever that I have really jumped into Neopagan Druidry with both feet. Rarely a moment goes by that I don't see the divinity of a tree or rock, or wonder at the presence of the Kindreds. Something I read on the ADF lists once really stays with me, that when we finally open our eyes, we can't help but see the magic and divinity of the world all around us.

Of course, I have a mundane life, too. Lots of stresses and strains occur that can really knock me off my center. My daily devotionals include a 20-minute meditation session where I look for the "silence," and this helps me get through the rest of the day. ADF Priesthood has become one of the dominant themes in my life, and is now far more important than I would have ever dreamed a few years ago. One of my volunteer activities is as a hospice volunteer. I only have one patient at the moment, and my job is to visit her once a week and do her shopping. It seems fairly easy, but I have to be emotionally available to her while watching her inexorable slide towards a messy death. I often become quite fond of my patients and their deaths can be very hard. But it's the heart and spirit that attracts me to the job.

How do you communicate with the Gods?

I try to remain as open to Them as I possibly can.

During my morning devotionals I make offerings to them before my meditation session. While I normally look for the "silence" while meditating, sometimes a message will just break through. Often it is something more along the lines of a question than anything else, like, "Who are you going to offer to at the Saturday morning ritual?" and then I'm suddenly filled with a certainty of what I need to do, and why.

When I have a big question that I want to ask, I do a divination in the Stone Circle. I normally use the Animal Oracle cards, which I quite like, but I do hope to get into reading the Ogham eventually. If the question is a really important one, I'll do a full ritual and do the divination in the Omen section, after lots of offerings.

But I don't just use the cards. I look for signs as well. The grandest sign I've been getting is a huge rainbow. They show up occasionally, and once I had two of them during a divination session in the circle!

But there is one other way that the Gods speak to me. Some-

times in public ritual I'll get up to make an offering to a God or Goddess intending to say something or other, but when I open my mouth, something entirely different comes out. When this happens I just try to let go and see what I say. I've gotten some surprising messages this way.

Sometimes the Gods can leave us confusing messages.

What are your suggestions for figuring things out?

First of all, I would counsel patience. This can be quite difficult, especially when the message seems to indicate that you should take action of some kind. It could be that you are not yet ready or that you have only received part of the message.

Messages I get are sometimes vague or not particularly urgent in feeling.

When this happens I acknowledge that a Power has something for me to do or know, and at my next ritual I will open myself up as much as I can and announce that I am willing to receive whatever message is meant for me. It can take quite a few rituals before things become clear. And sometimes they never do.

Another way I have used is to have seer friends do readings for me. Sometimes it can really help to hear the input of other people.

And sometimes I just have to accept that there was probably no message to begin with, and that I had just imagined the whole thing!

You are taking classes on the Welsh language. How important do you think language is to our practices?

I'm of two minds on this. I really enjoy being able to say a blessing in Welsh, or to use Welsh in other liturgical phrases in ritual. Also, in our Grove, we have a pan-Celtic focus, with High Day rituals using Welsh, Irish, Gaulish and Scottish hearth cultures and pantheons. So I'm able to say a few basics in all of them (So be it; Open or Close the Gates, etc.).

But when I do speak phrases in one of these languages, I immediately say it again in English. Most of our attendees don't speak any of these languages, and I don't want to alienate them by using too much of them. Thanking or addressing a God in a language spoken in ancient days could be seen as honoring the Deity. But the Welsh I am learning is modern. Does that count? A little Welsh or Irish is fun and adds flavor to a ritual, but too much could kill it. I believe that the Gods, Nature Spirits and Ancestors can understand our hearts as well as our words.



You seem to enjoy traveling. What is the best part of that?

Spending time with old friends and making new ones! People, I think, are the most interesting part of any trip. But in addition to that, I love to see the mountains, rivers, forests and ancient ruins of a place and connect with whatever land spirits there may be.

A couple of years ago I made a driving trip to Colorado and New Mexico in my role as SW Regional Druid. I visited people all over the two states. I saw beautiful mountains and vistas, but you know, when I think back it's the people I remember.

I also recently visited Wales to find as many of the sites mentioned in the Mabinogi that I could. And I found quite a few of them. But the warmest part for me was my stay in a Bed and Breakfast in Porthmadog and my talks with the owners over hot cups of tea. That was truly Wales.

When did you first discover ADF?

As I believe I mentioned earlier, I discovered ADF on-line while searching for a path for my newly rejuvenated Pagan soul. What really attracted me to ADF was the emphasis on scholarship. I had waded through so much crap on the Internet that it was quite refreshing to find a group of people who wanted to inform their spirituality with intelligent discussion based on proper research. And I was also pleased that ADF was willing to combine personal experience with scholarship so we could create a living, breathing religion rather than just try and resurrect the remains of an ancient one.

Do you recall your first ADF ritual?

By the Gods I do! The Protogrove here in Tucson was pretty new, and I was REALLY new. I hadn't yet had my encounter with the Gods. This was to be a Summer Solstice ritual in a park, and the liturgy we used was one from the old Peachtree Grove in Atlanta that our Senior Druid had found on-line.

Well, the summer monsoon came early that year. Just before the ritual, Taranis came to town in a big way, rending the sky with thunderbolts and drenching everything with a massive rain. Luckily, there was a ramada, or little park building, nearby, so the ritual ended up taking place in there, amidst the concrete picnic tables.

Even so, the entire ritual was punctuated with thunder and downpours, with little rivers of rainwater running by our feet. Our Senior Druid performed most of the rite but he let me have a small part. It was fun, but we were quite disorganized. We even had a few attendees that none of us had

met. They said they liked the ritual, but we never saw them again. Har!

What are some of your accomplishments with the Mother Grove as a Regional Druid?

I think the Mother Grove as a whole has been very amicable and productive these last two years. We've had some very difficult complaints to deal with which ended up benefiting ADF in unexpected ways.

But I think my main contribution has been to be an even-tempered voice on the MG, giving support where needed and holding firm when necessary.

My main accomplishment has been within the Southwest Region. I encouraged the formation of two Protogroves, one of which is now a Provisional Grove and both of them are growing.

What is it that you do in ADF?

I am the Vice ArchDruid, a Dedicator Priest, the Southwest Regional Druid, the Archivist for the Liturgists Guild and I'm the Arweinydd (assistant Chief) of Tylwyth Y Ddraig Goch, the Clan of the Red Dragon (the Welsh Kin, actually).

As Regional Druid, I sit on the Mother Grove and act as a sort of traveling clergy person for the people in the region. I'm also the Mentor for the Enchanted Desert Protogrove in Alamo-gordo, NM and recently performed a wedding there.

As Archivist of the Liturgists Guild, I am currently working on collecting a book of rituals actually performed in 2004 for each High Day.

As Arweinydd, I have recently managed to put up audio files on the Welsh Kin web pages of my Welsh cousin speaking the Welsh liturgical phrases! I was amazed to discover how clear his Welsh was, considering how appalling his English is. Well, Welsh is his first language.

You've made an effort to get to know the members of your region as a Regional Druid even though there is a large geographical distance between both Groves and solitary members. Why was this important to you?

Out here in the west, the large distances and empty spaces can lead to feelings of isolation. Even Groves can begin to feel like they're the only Druids around. I felt that it was important for someone to go out there and be the public face of ADF, one that could be seen and touched. While our electronic communications within ADF are fabulous, nothing can replace a human touch.

I also wanted to encourage the creation of new Groves. It's easier to feel validated in a group than by yourself. I think it can be really hard for some of our solitary members to feel a connection with ADF when the Internet is the only means of contact. Now, with all my visits, I still was only able to see people a few times, and some of them only once, which really isn't enough, but a little is better than nothing, I feel.

One day, when ADF is larger and more mature, I'd like to see the Regional Druids become traveling clergy, visiting solitaires on a regular basis, performing weddings, funerals, rites of passage and High Day rituals. They could be a spiritual support system for our people.

What sort of issues would you like to see ADF tackle/discuss in the next few years?

I think the issue of growth needs to be addressed. While ADF is growing, it's a painfully slow process. I look at the Christian churches out there, and even the smaller ones have their own buildings and paid clergy. The average congregation size seems to be about 150 to 300 people. Big churches have up to 1000 members. And that's the way it is in every town. Our average Grove size is around 15 members.

In a way, it's a chicken and egg scenario. Without the members, we can't raise enough money to buy our own buildings or pay our priests. But without the buildings and sense of permanence we have trouble attracting new people! I think we need to tackle the Pagan attitude that "religion should be free" and re-educate them in the realities of running a church. A tall order, I fear. But this is an issue we need to be considering.

Many people experience ADF mostly through the various mailing lists and Oak Leaves. Do you think that ADF's Internet presence gives a clear picture of what the ADF community is?

I really think it does. For many of our solitaires, the lists and Oak Leaves are the only ways they have to feel themselves a part of the ADF community. There are lots of areas of interest covered, from Dedicant Program studies to the Guilds and the Kins. In fact, I'd say that there is something for everyone out there!

But one problem is that the more vocal people can tend to dominate some lists. And novice members might feel intimidated by the knowledge of our more learned and articulate

members. But many people do stick their toes in the water, as it were, and people are genuinely friendly as a rule. The more aggressive list moderation we've adopted in the last couple of years has made a tremendous difference in the tone of the lists, making them feel safer for everyone as well as easier to use. I think October has done a tremendous job here.

What would you advise people to do in order to see the ADF community in action?

Go to ADF festivals! Not only are they great fun, but they are also an opportunity to meet other members and get to experience our Druidry firsthand. There are classes and

rituals and Bardic circles and lots of fellowship. For solitaires, the festivals can be an eye-opening discovery, where rituals can be experienced in large groups. Even Grove members can benefit from the exchange of ideas and styles present at a festival.

Your Grove has its own festival. What can a person expect at Desert Magic?

As I write this, we're still in the planning stages for the 2005 event in May, but we hope to have classes on chaos

magic, beginning practical magic and ritual omen taking, among others, and I'll be re-doing my class on sensory deprivation as a spiritual tool. We'll be having a main ritual, an opening ritual and Mike Dangler is going to present his Jimmy Buffet ritual as part of our Bardic night. We also have a couple of swimming pools and two hot tubs for relaxation! We also hope to offer a nature walk in the desert at the Saguaro National Monument next door.

You have a Stone Circle at your place. Tell us a little about it, and why you built it.

I suppose I've always wanted my own, private Stonehenge. When I was living in England a few years ago, the real Stonehenge was only an hour away by car. When I joined ADF I started the Dedicant Program right away, and found myself holding my personal rituals using a plastic folding table in the desert behind the house. One day I was talking with my partner, Steve, and joked about how nice it would be to have a real stone circle to work in. And he said, well, why not? I had never taken the idea seriously before, but with Steve's encouragement, we made it happen. It started out as my own private chapel, really, but the Grove needed someplace better than that ramada in the



park, so Steve and I agreed to let them use it. Now we have public ritual in there every Saturday morning as well as the High Days.

The inside dimension is 28 feet across, and there is bench seating all around the inside. Twelve large stones loom over the circle, and inside are a fire pit, a well, a main altar and a quickly growing Southern Live Oak tree. Outside the circle, a boundary ditch surrounds the walls, making it a true henge. There are also altars to Brigit, Lugh and Lleu Llaw Gyffes, the Nature Spirits, the Ancestors, Manannan, Cernunnos, Rhiannon, the Morrigan and one altar for all those Gods who don't have altars. You can see photos of it at www.ssg-adf.org/circle.htm.

Who do you admire in ADF and why?

Oh, I admire so many people! I admire Ian Corrigan for his ability to do research, pull together a lot of disparate elements and create a system that actually *works*. I admire our Archdruid Skip Ellison for his ability to preside over ADF, an unruly beast at best, with aplomb and grace. I admire Jenni Hunt for her incredible patience. I admire Meredith for her charm, sexiness and great sense of humor. I admire Todd Covert, Ceisiwr Serith and Jeremy for their incredible intellects and hard work. I admire Mike Dangler for his warm helpfulness, his incredibly bright mind and his cute butt. I admire my own local grove members for their enthusiasm and sense of fun. And I admire all our members who have had the courage to set themselves on the path of spiritual growth. Can you tell that I really like being in ADF?

ADF is young with a promising here and now and a very bright future. Where do you see ADF in 5 years? 20? 50?

I agree that ADF has a very bright future. Our clergy training program is almost done, guild training programs are coming on line and we have plans for a new initiate program. ADF has a lot to offer our members! Some of our groves are really growing fast, and I see more of them having their own buildings and land.

In 20 years, when we celebrate our 40th anniversary, ADF will have its own festival site and a permanent office with full time staff. The national meeting will become a huge festival attended by representatives from every grove. Groves will begin to support the organization in a significant way, and ADF will in turn provide the priestly and logistical support new groves need.

In 50 years, I see ADF helping groves buy land and buildings. By then we should be establishing our own retirement homes, hospitals and social services. And I see our fellowship growing and becoming a force in the religious life of the United States.

What do you see as your greatest accomplishment, thus far, as a member of ADF?

I'd probably say that my greatest accomplishment was to encourage and stand ready to lend a helping hand to our two new groves here in the Southwest. When I joined ADF, the Southwest had one provisional grove and one protogrove. Now we have two charter groves, a new provisional grove and a new protogrove. That's progress!

Important Announcement



ADF has it's FIRST Provisionally Charters Grove
OUTSIDE of the US!



Please give love and support to:

Red Maple Grove
in Ottawa, Ontario Canada, chartered November 4, 2004



Proof Positive that ADF is Strong and Growing!

The Great Tea Experiment of 2005

By Jennifer L. Gadd entirely.

Our family conducted the Great Tea Experiment of 2005 this past January, and the results were both informative and hilarious. We present this piece in the hopes that other ADF families and members will be encouraged to practice creativity in their leisure time together, devising activities that are educational, group-building, economical, and just plain ridiculous.

The Hypothesis:

First, some background. My husband David gave me some Scottish Breakfast tea for Yule. Most people are familiar with English and Irish Breakfast teas, but Scottish? Intriguing, no? Thus, our hypothesis: If tea companies produce and sell English, Irish, and Scottish Breakfast Teas, then we will be able to detect some difference amongst them. We resolve to determine what these differences are.

The Experiment:

We acquired English and Irish Breakfast teas to supplement the aforementioned Scottish Breakfast. A Welsh blend (Murrough's Paned Gymreig), while not specifically of the "breakfast" variety, was included to ensure fair representation of all countries that comprise the British Isles. There is, as far as we know, no Manx Breakfast Tea. We asked. Apparently, the varieties readily available are satisfactory to Gaels of Manx descent. We did not inquire about the possibility of a Norman Breakfast Tea because that would be silly now, wouldn't it?

The teas were prepared in identical cups in identical amounts for precisely the same amount of time (four minutes). We brought water to a furious boil before pouring it over the tea, which was in bags for tidiness' sake. Taylors of Harrogate produced all varieties, save the Welsh. We thank them for their cooperation in this endeavor, even if they had no idea whatsoever that they cooperated.

We numbered the four teas and then switched for each taster, so all taste-tests were blind. We took extreme care not to confuse the teas and numbers. David sampled the teas with nothing added, although technically, he prefers milk. What a sport! I sampled the teas with sugar. Our older daughter Rachel had her teas with both milk and sugar. We allowed tea biscuits to, erm, cleanse the palate between tastings. Our younger daughter Maggie served as official time-keeper and proctor to ensure the validity of the experiment. She enjoys her tea most when it is drunk by someone else

Results:

English Breakfast--David found it to have a sweet bouquet, very strong taste, but mild aftertaste. He felt it would be good with dessert. I was very surprised by this tea in that I hated it. "Ew," I said. Very weird herbal taste and painful afterbite. And I usually like English Breakfast, too. Rachel noticed the same odd taste.

Irish Breakfast--David thought this tea was almost as strong as the English, with a strong aftertaste. I found it to have a light, soft taste that was slightly naturally sweet. Rachel thought it was slightly bitter in taste and aftertaste.

Scottish Breakfast--David found it to have a fruity bouquet, smooth taste, and little or no aftertaste. He speculated that it might be nice before beddy-bye. I found it to be very mild, soft, and sweet. Rachel agreed that it had a mild flavor.

Welsh Blend--David noticed that there wasn't much very smelly about it and thought it tasted a bit flat. I found it very strange, in that any sugar added seemed to be absorbed into the tea without adding any noticeable sweet taste. It was strong and bitter, with a nasty aftertaste. Rachel also thought the taste was bitter and slightly smoky. She also didn't like the strange aftertaste.

Preferences, 1 being high, 4 being low:

David: 1. Scottish 2. Welsh 3. Irish 4. English
Jennifer: 1. Irish 2. Scottish 3. Welsh 4. English
Rachel: 1. Scottish 2. Irish 3. English 4. Welsh

Overall, it would appear that the milder Scottish and Irish teas are preferred by this family over the stronger English and Welsh. Recommendations: The stronger teas might be more enjoyable if brewed for less time.

Extended Research Update: The Welsh Blend is very tasty when brewed in a large cup for three minutes. Both Rachel and I can verify this. We weren't so lucky with the English Breakfast. We tried it prepared any number of ways, and the results were the same. To wit, this particular brand of English Breakfast tea is just crap.

The point of all this? There isn't one really, except to serve as an example of how a little ingenuity can provide a family or other intentional group with an enjoyable evening of fun and companionship, with the added bonus of an educational element for the children, all for the price of four boxes of tea we would have bought anyway. Be creative with your time together!

Norse Afterlife

By Susan “Ratatask” Eaves in Norse lore.

When most people think of the ancient Norse view of the afterlife, they think of Valhöll first. Often they think of Hel's realm as well. And a few will think of Freyja taking half the battle slain to her hall, Folkvangr. That is about all your average Joe Pagan knows of the Norse view of the afterlife. Many would be surprised to learn that the Norse afterlife is much more complicated and elaborate than they could imagine. Part of the reason for this is that the regions that fall under the term “Norse” covered a number of different tribes with beliefs that varied from tribe to tribe. It is also due in part to the way the Norse people conceptualized the soul. To explain that would take more room than I have here, so I will just say that in the Norse beliefs, the soul has many parts to it. This means that while part of the soul may die, another part may go on to live with Oðin in Valhöll, while yet another part may go on to be reborn in a descendent.

But that's not all of it. It is always best to start from the beginning. The beginning of most discussions of Norse lore is Snorri Sturlson, the Christian poet who wrote the Prose Edda. The conception that we are most familiar with of Valhöll, the warriors fighting all-day and feasting all night, is a vision of Valhöll that is given only by Snorri. Other sources simply say that Valhöll is a hall where warriors sit at peace together and dwell with Oðin. These warriors are always called the Einherjar and they are sometimes said to have the power to choose whom among the slain will go with them to Valhöll. It is also only in the Prose Edda that the Valkyries are represented as serving maids to the Einherjar. Elsewhere Valkyries appear in many different guises, though they almost always have a connection with death. In some cases, the Valkyries appear as noble ladies in full armor, following the will of Oðin by giving victory in battle to whomever he wills. At other times they appear as fierce and crude women who exult in blood and carnage, waving bloodstained clothes over those about to fight. Yet other stories show them as supernatural protectors of the men they favor, sometimes following them into death and rebirth, and sometimes allowing themselves to be born into a woman to become the wife of their charge. In all guises, the Valkyries have some connection with Oðin and they are always supernatural women. They are sometimes akin to elemental spirits or some type of lesser deities. But whatever they are, it is clear that they are key figures of death

Part of the discrepancies among the Valkyries may come from discrepancies with the lore of Oðin. Earlier lore depicts Oðin as a dark god of the dead to whom slain were offered, while later lore depicts him as the ruler of Asgard who lives among the gods. In this light, it is clear that the blood-thirsty view of the Valkyries go along with the death god Oðin, while the handmaiden view goes along well with the King of the Gods.

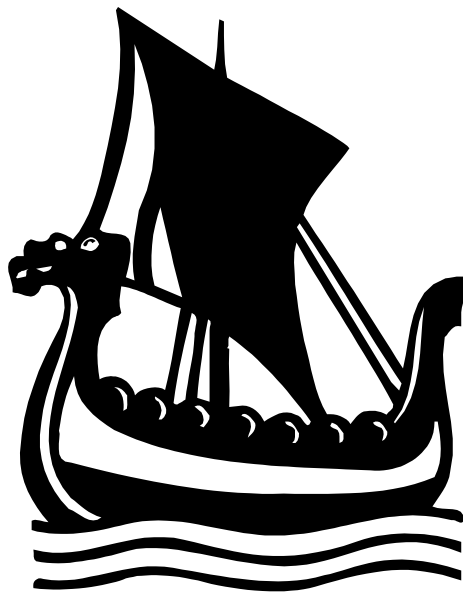
The next most common version of Norse afterlife is Hel's Realm. Hel is said to be the monstrous daughter of Loki

who is thrown into the land of the dead to rule over it. There does not seem to be a set rule as to who goes to Hel's realm. Snorri tells us that only those who dies of old age or sickness goes to Hel, but then says that Balder, who died from a weapon, is in Hel's realm. Either way, Hel's realm is most often depicted as a quiet place to rest after the labors of life. It is possible that the word ‘Hel’ means death or dying, and earlier poets may have used the term “going to Hel” as a poetic way to say that someone is dying. This terminology may have been so widespread that eventually the lore of a goddess named Hel grew up around it. Interestingly, the concept of her dwelling in the ground, with quiet rest and feasting is actually quite similar to the concepts of the burial mound and

of the ancestral mountains that will be discussed later in this article.

In the Gylfaginning, Snorri says, “Wicked men go to Hel and on to Niflhel.” Very little is mentioned about Niflhel. It appears to be located beneath Hel's realm (sometimes called Niflheim) and is where people who committed great evils go to be punished. It is the closest thing in Norse lore to the Christian version of Hell.

Many of the other gods are said to take the dead into their halls. Snorri says that Freyja “allots seats in Folkvangr, to whom she will, and she has half the slain that fall each day while half belong to Oðin.” There are strong connections between Freyja and the Valkyries, but the nature of this connection is never made clear. Gefion is said by Snorri to be attended by women who die. Ran, the wife of Aegir, is said



to receive drowned men into her hall. Holda is said to have unborn babies in her care. Óðin, in disguise, taunts Thor by saying that Óðin has the jarls, while Thor has the thralls (serf or slave). The common interpretation of this is that Thor takes peasants or commoners (possibly whoever no one else will take) into his hall, Thrudheim.

However, the options don't end there, as there are many stories of life continuing on in the earth. These stories take two forms: the dead live on inside a mountain, which is not necessarily where they were buried; or the dead live on in the grave-mound. In both of these cases, however, the mountain or mound is seen as a house or hall of the dead.

The stories of the dead living inside a mountain come mostly from Iceland. There are descriptions of a great hall inside a mountain near the family home where the fallen of the clan gathers and feasts. This may have begun with Thorolf, a follower of Thor who, upon immigrating to Iceland, saw a mountain near his land and stated that his family would go there when they died. When his son drowned after Thorolf himself had died, a shepherd was said to have seen the mountain open up and the son welcomed in. This belief also seems to have some connection to Thor, as many who were said to do this were known to be followers of Thor.

The stories of life continuing within the grave are much more varied. There are stories of warriors who fight eternal battles inside a grave mound, of animated dead within the mound (called draugrs) who guard their possessions jealously and wreak havoc on those nearby, and of those who live peacefully within the grave mound. In the latter cases, good men are seen resting at peace in their graves, retaining some interest in the affairs of the living. Some ask that their graves be positioned so they can look out over their lands or talk to their friends in nearby grave mounds. There are also references to offerings being made to grave mounds in hopes that those dwelling in the grave mound would bring fertility and fruitfulness to the land. Offerings often included food, drink and wealth, quite often in the form of silver. These offerings appear to be one of the oldest traditions in the north. There are even stories of Freyr being in one of those burial mounds and being given offerings for his gifts of fertility. This indicates some sort of connection between Freyr and those who live on in their burial mounds. Related to this concept is the practice of mound sitting, the act of sitting on a person's burial mound to commune with the dead, which is referred to frequently.

Another type of life after death is shown in the Disir, ancestral mothers who watch over their descendents and guide them in life. The Disir are often seen in the lore as supernatural guardians who attach themselves to certain warriors who they protect in battle. In this light they are somewhat similar to the Valkyries. However, the Disir generally cannot

follow their hero into the afterlife as the Valkyries do. There are cases where the Disir come to claim their kin upon death, but they usually foretell the death just before it happens, rather than appearing after death. At times, when they come to claim their kin, they appear aggressive, and "foe-like". This role of the Disir is akin to the wail of the Bean-Sidhe in Celtic lore.

As mentioned previously, the Disir are often depicted as warding their kin in battles, sometimes actually taking part in the battle by sending arrows flying out of their fingertips, unfastening bonds on their warriors, and paralyzing the enemy. There is evidence that people made offerings to statues of their clan-goddesses before battles. The Disir were also shown to be very much related to birthing and to fruitfulness, and were called upon for help in conceiving. They appeared to newborn children to give them their fate, and to pass on the luck of the clan at birth. In this capacity, the Disir are closely related to the Norns, to the Latin Fates, and to fairy godmothers. The Disir were also sometimes called upon for advice. In at least one case a Disir is called from her grave to come and give her stepson advice and aid. Disir were often honored and invoked as protectors of the family line.

Along with the Disir, there are a variety of related beings in Norse lore that have the name Alfar. The light Alfar are akin to the Gods, and particularly closely connected to Freyr. Very little is known about them. Land-spirits are sometimes given the name Alfar as well, though the name is not used for them often. The Swart Alfs are more frequently called Dwarves, who are closely associated with death. It is possible that the Swart Alfs are dead men as some have names such as Dáinn, which means "Dead One" and Nár, which means corpse. The Dark Alfar are almost always depicted as the male ancestors of a clan. They are called mound-elves and are most likely the dead dwelling in the burial mound that were mentioned previously. The Dark Alfar and Swart Alfar seem to be quite similar, and always seem to be male. The connection between the Alfar and Freyr reflects back to Freyr's connection to the mound-dead mentioned above, and further supports the theory that the Alfar are one and the same as the mound-dead. The main difference between the Alfar and the Disir is that the Alfar are more connected to the land, while the Disir are more connected to their descendents. The fact that one group is male and the other is female is quite possibly a distinction that occurred because of the roles of men and women in society. Men primarily looked after the land, while women primarily looked after the family, so it makes sense that their ancestral roles would follow this structure. However, these roles sometimes blurred in daily life, and most often blurred at times in how the Disir and the Alfar were viewed as well.

House-ghosts are a common type of Alfar. The belief in them is wide-spread in the Germanic world and has lasted to the present day. They seem to be a type of mound-dead who dwell in mounds, although not necessarily the mounds in

which they were buried. They are strongly associated with places of living or of business. They are depicted as protectors of the farm, business or home, and often bring or take away prosperity and luck, depending on how they are treated. There are some house-ghosts though who are not very helpful and are rather unpleasant troublemakers. These are sometimes said to be babies who have been abandoned to die, who then stay and torment a family through generations.

There are references to reincarnation in the lore as well. The most clear reference to this is the story of King Olaf the Holy, who is said by some to be the reincarnation of Olaf Geirstaðaálfr. There actually are strong indications that Óðin has something to do with this reincarnation. The reincarnation required someone to go into Olaf Geirstaðaálfr's tomb, cut off his corpse's head, and steal some important items from him. The items are then given to a particular woman who is pregnant. She is told that the child should be named Olaf if he is a boy. This occurs and Olaf the Holy is born. Throughout his life, there are references to Olaf being the reincarnation of Olaf Geirstaðaálfr, including a very strong denial of this by Olaf himself after he becomes Christian. That Olaf Geirstaðaálfr's corpse has to be mutilated before the person can be reincarnated seems to be significant. The mutilation of a body allowing the person to move on happens frequently in stories of draugr as well, especially the cranky ones. When a draugr is making trouble, often the only way to stop it is to cut off its head or to burn the body.

The most important theme presented in the story of Olaf is that of the baby being named after the man who is reincarnated. Other indications of reincarnation in the lore are not quite as clear as the story of Olaf, however the importance of the name seems to occur quite often. There are cases of men having marks on them where their father or grandfather of the same name were wounded. There are also stories of dying men asking to have a baby named after them. From the stories, it seems as though the point of this is so that they will be reborn. The belief in reincarnation also seems to be connected to the burial mound, as in the story of a young nameless boy receiving a name at last while sitting on a howe. A Valkyrie named Svava gives him the name Helgi. Helgi and Svava may have been lovers in a past life, and are brought together again as Helgi and Kara. Svava is an example of a Valkyrie who follows a man in life, death, and again in rebirth.

Like the Disir who are guardian spirits that protect and aid their descendants in life when necessary, and the Valkyries who are protective spirits who follow their charge in life and may appear to a warrior to take him to Valhöll after he dies, the Hamingja are usually attached to a person throughout their life. A person's Hamingja appears as a single woman who is the embodiment of the luck of the person. When a person dies, his or her Hamingja moves on to another person within the family. As the embodiment of luck, the Hamingja is intertwined with the soul and the fortunes, or misfortunes, of a person in such a way that it actually is a part of the person's soul. The better a per-

son lives his life, the better his or her Hamingja is. By passing on the Hamingja, a person is able to pass on a part of who he or she is. So, in a sense, passing on the Hamingja is a type of rebirth.

As should be clear by now, this is a hard topic to summarize. There are so many different beliefs in the afterlife that are all tied up in the same belief system that it is hard to know what to make of it. One could go to Thor or Óðin, Freyja or Hel, or to any number of other gods. One could live in the burial mound or in their ancestral mountain. One could go on to become a Disir or an Alfar, or possibly be reincarnated. It is possible to link certain types of afterlives to certain gods, such as saying that if you go to Thor, you go to your ancestral mountain, which could be a representation of Thrudhiem; or if you go to Freyr, you live within your burial mound, or become one of the Alfar (although this could be seen as going to Hel as well); if you go to Óðin, you become one of the Einherjar in Valhöll; and if you go to Freyja, you become a Disir.

Then there are types of deaths. Sacrifices and great warriors go to Óðin, except in the cases of warriors like Baldur and Sigurdr, both of whom were killed by weapons and wind up in Hel's realm, and Sinfjötli, who dies of poison and goes to Valhöll. People who die of sickness go to Hel, except for the son of Egill Skalla-Grimsson who dies from fever and goes to Valhöll. People who drown go to Ran, except for the other son of Egill who went to Valhöll after drowning, and the previously mentioned son of Thorolf who went into his ancestral mountain. Or the type of burial – people who are cremated go to Óðin, except for Baldur. Well, I think the point is made. There are no set rules for the Norse beliefs in the afterlife.

All these various options do not have to be contradictory however. Many people who follow the Norse path believe that those among the fallen who have gone to the hall of one of the gods, usually the god with whom they were closest, may be able to move about freely. They are not stuck in the god's hall. They could live in the hall, and then go visit their descendants when they are needed, and maybe stop by to visit their clan partying in their own hall. Personally, I like to imagine a grand hall with all my friends and family sitting around drinking, feasting, and telling stories, and Thor popping in from time to time to have a drink with us.

References:

Snorri Sturluson Edda, Translated by Anthony Faulkes (Orion House and Tuttle Publishing, Vermont, 1987)
Road to Hel by H.R. Ellis
“Our Troth, Chapter XXVI: Soul, Death, and Rebirth”:
<http://www.thetroth.org/resources/ourtroth/soul.html>

Ancestors

I had three services for my dad when he died.

By John McDaris

The morning this past March when he passed, I was singing for a funeral at the Episcopal church where my partner, Jacob, is the music director. I literally got the call moments before the service began. He had slipped away painlessly and completely by surprise early that morning. All that was left was to turn off the machines and let his body stop. So after some private tears and a hug from Jacob I made my way through the service for this woman I knew and liked as best I could. Only, she had to share my thoughts and her funeral with another loss. (Knowing her, she probably didn't mind.)

I flew from Minnesota to North Carolina that weekend for the memorial service. Dad was a big man. Both in physical size and in his effect on people. So the little country Presbyterian church was bulging at the seams on Sunday morning. Around 450 people showed up to a church that holds 150 in the main sanctuary where the ushers are equipped with shoe horns. Chairs and tables were set up everywhere else in the church to accommodate them all. Dad's memorial was being done as a part of the regular worship service so when the time came, I got up and spoke for the family, as I was the only one in a condition to do so.

The last time my dad was gravely ill and we all thought he was going to pass, he told me (and I'm paraphrasing) that he knew that I was the stronger of his two sons. Not physically, as my older brother will always be a more massive person than me. But he said that I was emotionally stronger and that my challenging path as a gay man had probably given me the core of strength he saw. He told me he knew I would have to support the rest of the family with my strength when his time came. This was the only time he had ever said anything of the sort to me and it took my breath away for a moment. He pulled through that time but what he had said showed me that he saw and thought about things much more deeply than I had ever given him credit for.

So as I prepared what I would say at his funeral, I remembered this and tried to put into words the cycle of birth, life, death, rebirth that I feel all the way to the center of my bones. (You can read the full text of my eulogy for dad at http://www.geocities.com/john_mcdaris/eulogy.html.) My

purpose was to help soothe the wrenching pain of losing someone as pivotal to the community as my dad was in his unprepossessing way. Move them beyond that knife edge of grief to the dull ache of remembrance. Before retiring, dad had worked for 25 years as a paramedic and emergency medical responder. He spent his life pulling people out of the wreckage and trying to save them. This was the only time I have really felt I came close to achieving what he did every day.



About a month after the funeral, Jacob and I flew back together to fulfill earlier plans to go visit the family in the spring. Dad's body

had been cremated and was awaiting its dispersal. Only one thing is less common than getting cremated in the south (from my experience) and that's having your ashes spread on the land instead of interred or buried. Dad had wanted to return to the land that he had grown up in and had worked for many years as a part-time farmer and cow rancher. So on a Sunday evening in April, with the full moon ready to rise from behind the mountain tops, I stood alone on a hill between my parents' house and my grandmother's holding a vial of ashes. As I stood there, I took in the mountains and valleys and coves and streams that made up the place where he had lived most of his life. It seemed so out of step with what I had thought his beliefs to be for him to want his ashes spread here. I told him that I honored his decision for whatever reasons it was made. I honored him in my own way drawing inspiration from the Old Ways that predate what I understand his path to have been. I kept the piece of him that is in me and released the rest to continue the journey. And I asked the help of the spirits of the land we both love to guide him over the river to the shores of the Otherworld to rest and restore in preparation for the next turn of the wheel.

He may not be physically in this world anymore, but he is now even closer to me than a phone-call-away. He's as close as my every thought and memory of him.

An Ancestor is Made. Indeed! An Ancestor is Made.

Loss and a Loved One

By Rev. Kirk Thomas

When we look at the Celtic tales, we see great heroes going off to their deaths, dying in battle or by other means, often due to violations of their *gessa*, like CúChulainn and Conaire.¹ Some die of broken hearts, such as Branwen, when she reflects on all the death and destruction that has occurred in the fighting over her.² Death is viewed as a violent thing, presaged by omens, even when a person dies quietly. The banalities of our modern attitudes towards death (“Oh, he’s better off now,” or “She had such a good life”) didn’t matter to the ancients. They gave death the dignity and potency that it deserves.³

But only rarely do we read of how their loved ones fared. We know that thrice fifty queens, who loved CúChulainn, gave “a scream of wailing and lamentation” and smote “their hands” as they knew they would never see him again.⁴ But no one mourned for Branwen, at least in the tale.

I remember when my father died, years ago. I was only 24, and his dying was a long a painful experience. I remember the horror I felt as he slowly wasted away, until he was little more than a living skeleton. I felt separated from him, as though a wall existed between us. I didn’t know how to talk to him or be with him. At one point, my mother told him that one of their friends wanted to come and see him. His response was, “Cripes, I don’t want her coming over here and blubbering all over me!” I was so afraid that I’d do something wrong, that my grief and fear, too, would be unwelcome. Living through that whole experience was like walking on eggs.

Since that time, I’ve found peace with my father, and he is one of my most revered Ancestors – the first to come to me in fact, before I re-found Paganism. And in that time I’ve learned a lot and supported other loved ones through that greatest of transitions.

One of the givens in my life is that seminal work by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*. It’s been talked of and bandied about over the years so much that it has practically become a *cliché*. But I think it would be a mistake to dismiss it out of hand. In the book, she tells of the five stages of dying, as she puts it. These stages, Denial and Isolation, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance⁵, were used to describe the experience of the dying person. People going through these stages could go through them in any order, and even come back and revisit stages multiple times.

But we mustn’t forget that the care-givers, the loved ones of the dying person also go through these stages, and can return and

re-visit any of them at any time. The process isn’t neat and tidy.

It is my belief that we all go through grief processes every day. Any loss, however small, causes grief to occur. Some people bottle it up until they explode in anger or frustration, while others are able to get through it easily.

In ADF’s Dedicant Program, we have a section about disciplining the mind. One of the meditations recommended is that of finding the “silence.” This centering exercise teaches the mind to become quiet and instead of living in the past (guilt), or in the future (fear), we can live in the present moment, experiencing everything that comes, avoiding nothing. The message of this meditation is simply, “now.”

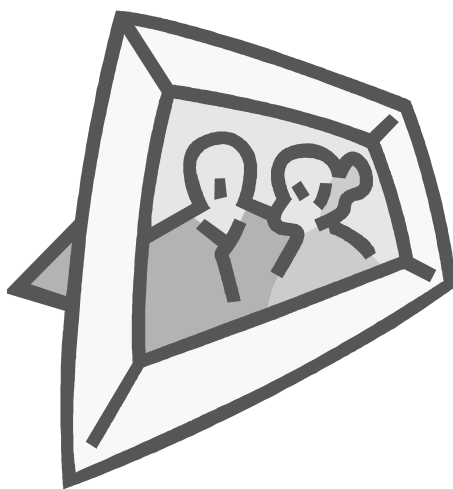
A couple of months ago I got a call from my favorite aunt informing me that she had been diagnosed with lung cancer. She had been a heavy smoker and drinker for much of her life. I was stricken. But we agreed that she’d come down to visit in a couple of weeks, so while I began grieving, I knew that we’d have good times again soon.

However, a week later I got another call from one of her friends that my aunt was in the hospital and might not live out the night! I immediately got on a plane and got there around 11 pm, to find her in very bad shape, indeed.

She lived for another two weeks. During that time, because I’m fairly strong and in reasonably good shape, I became her primary caregiver, getting her up off the floor when she fell and, when she became bedridden shortly thereafter, getting her in and out of bed, taking her to the bathroom and then just getting her on and off the porta-pot by her bed, cleaning her up whenever necessary.

And I grieved. Oh, yes, I grieved. The overwhelming pain I felt about losing her was the hardest part. But whenever

I was with her, my meditative practice came to my aid, for I was totally in the present with her, laughing and joking and telling stories. I wasn’t denying my grief, but my joy at being with my aunt was so great that I didn’t notice the grief until I was out of the room, or in bed at night, when I



allowed myself to think about the future and remember the past. We actually had a great time. And we had real quality time.

I can only describe my time with my aunt as magical, in all senses of the word. The Kindreds were there with me the whole time, and I regularly made offerings to them. Finding the "silence" is part of our magical practice in ADF. How wonderful it is that magical practice can involve so much more of our lives than only the time we spend in ritual.

Endnotes:

1. Alwyn Rees and Brinley Rees, *Celtic Heritage* (New York, Thames and Hudson, 1961), pp. 326-333.
2. Patrick K. Ford, Translator, *The Mabinogi* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA., University of California Press, Ltd., 1977), p. 70.
3. Rees and Rees, *Celtic Heritage*, p. 341.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 326.
5. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York, Scribner, 1969), p. 9.

Ancestors Before Me

For many Pagans, "ancestors" are a fuzzy look into the past, a harkening back to a time when great deeds were done and sagas written. For me, the ancestors are a bit more recent. When I think of the ancestors, I think of my grandfathers, all three of them.

I think of my father's father. He parlayed his camera skills into an indentured service position for my grandmother and her unborn child, so that my father would not be born in a Nazi controlled camp. From what I understand he was a hard man, prone to both rage and long bouts of depression. I never knew him, but I know he took incredible risks to protect the people around him. He taught me that you do not have to be perfect to do good.

I think of my father's step-father. He was a huge man who sold life insurance up and down the coast, selling dreams and hopes at the kitchen table. In the war, he was a guerilla fighter for the Czech people and watched his friends shot in the woods. When I was growing up, one of his best friends was a former SS soldier. They would sit around the table laughing and saying in thick Eastern European accents "You know, in the war, I would have shot you!" He taught me that today's enemy may well be tomorrow's best friend.

By Anni Lenzi

I think of my mother's father. He was a brilliant man whose true vocation was drinking. When I was about 8, my father took me aside and told me "Grandpa Santa's nose isn't just red because it's cold outside" and told me everything of my mother's childhood. I hated him for a long time, unable to forgive him for what he had done. I was there just before he died, a frail old man hooked up to machines straining to breathe in intensive care. I walked up to his bed with blackness in my heart, still condemning him. I leaned over his bedrail, unsure if he even remembered me. He looked up at me, and mouthed something that I couldn't hear. I didn't need to. In my mind, I heard an old man weeping. I put my hand on his forehead and whispered "It's all right. All is forgiven. It's all right." A tear rolled down his cheek and he stopped trying to speak. He taught me that forgiveness can heal two souls.

So when I speak of Ancestors, I am not speaking of a racial memory or a long forgotten name. They are my flesh and my family. So I raise my voice to honor you, Herman, Miroslav, Bud, you who have come before me, for you have taught me well.

Eldr ok Iss : Kin of Fire and Ice

The Kin of Fire and Ice is a Kin for ADF members interested and/or practicing the Germanic & Northern Traditions.

Our mailing list is ADF-Norse, and you can sign up for it on the member subscription page.

We are currently collecting information to assist ADF members interested in the study of the Germanic & Norse Gods and Goddesses.

Kin Chief: Flip Rutledge flip@chainolakescamp.com **Vice Chieftan:** Jeff Cummings njpagan@yahoo.com

Learning From the Past

“Who is one person, alive or dead, that you’d like to meet and why?” It is a fairly common question when playing a “getting to know you” game. This time, however, there’s a bit of a twist – I’m going to introduce you to someone I’d like *you* to meet... my grandmother.

Of all of my family, I believe that my grandmother had the most influence on me, and I hold her in my heart and mind as the epitome of a good person. I strive to be like her, and I know I still have a lot of work to do. As I am working my way through my Dedicator program, I hold my grandmother as a shining example of many of the virtues I myself would like to make a part of my personality – piety, wisdom, perseverance, hospitality, courage.

My grandmother, Sybil, was born in a small town in Wales, and she had a difficult life. I firmly believe that some difficulty is required to build character, but some people get more than their fair share. However, it was how my grandmother dealt with these difficulties that makes her such a role model.

When my Uncle Paul died in a plane crash, Grandma was understandably devastated. She had always been religious, so she turned to the Church for comfort. When she found the door to her own Presbyterian Church locked, it was just another blow. The Catholic Church was open though, and within she found the comfort she needed. This was what precipitated her conversion, but it was more of a “coming home” for her, it seemed. Catholicism suited my Grandma, and she was devout until the day she died. After my grandfather died of cancer, she again turned to the church for comfort, and when she herself passed away, it was without fear – she was going to see her hus-

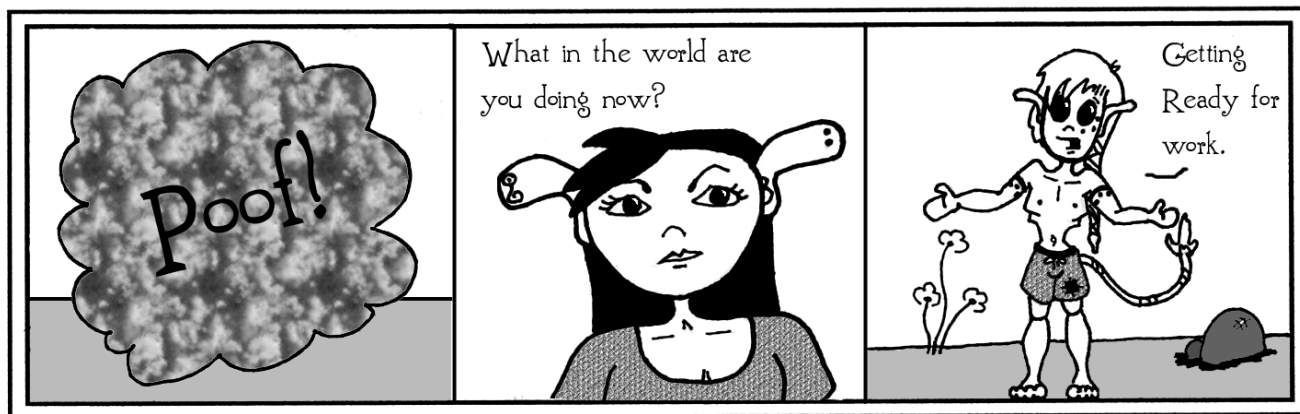
By Moonhawk

band and son again. One thing that always struck me was that even though she was such a devout Catholic, she was incredibly tolerant of other faiths, including Paganism. This is how piety should be, in my eyes: you practice your own faith to the best of your ability and take comfort in it, but realize that there is no one true way and that you can learn a lot from other faiths if your mind is open.

When I was young, my grandmother had a series of aneurysms that left her partially paralysed and unable to speak. I will always remember her struggles to relearn such “basic” skills – how to speak, how to write, how to walk. It was truly inspiring. She knew exactly what she wanted to do and say, but was totally unable to make her body respond the way it had before. It took years of perseverance to finally remaster these skills (to the best of her new ability level), but she never gave up. It must also have taken great courage to take on such an enormous task, but she did it without complaint.

Our ancestors have so much to teach us, regardless of if they are our cultural heroic ancestors or our parents or grandparents, cousins or siblings. We all need to pay attention to what we can learn from these wonderful people, and we should never be afraid to turn to them for guidance and advice. We call our ancestors the Honoured Dead, and they deserve to be remembered and honoured each and every day of our lives.

Landwight Leif by Heather ‘Vedis’ Koerner



Irish Funeral Service

This service can be done either in the workings section of a full ADF ritual or may be done as a stand-alone liturgy. In case there are no Hallows present, all offerings may be reserved for disposal at a later date.

The Funeral Goods given the deceased should be either buried with the casket or urn, or may be poured on the ground or into a shaft. Again, these offerings may be reserved for disposal at a later date.

The Welcome

The Priest rings a bell, three times three.

Priest says:

Children of the Earth, we are here to celebrate the life of name. While this is a time of grief, it is also a time of joy!

The Precedent

Priest says:

In days of old, Classical writers wrote about the Celts.

Diodorus Siculus wrote, "For they do not fear death, but subscribe to the doctrine ... that the human spirit is immortal and will enter a new body after a fixed number of years."

Pomponius Mela also wrote, "Thus they burn or bury articles useful in life with the dead. For this reason, in past times, they would defer business and payment of debts to the next life."

Uniting the Three Worlds

Priest says:

Children of the Earth, let us call the powers of Earth and Sky that they may join within us here.

PRAYER:

O waters of the earth, deep and dark,
Arise, primeval powers, fill us now
With all your wondrous possibilities,
That through the Earth our Mother
We may ground and join as one.

By Rev. Kirk Thomas

O fires of the sky, O blinding light!
Descend and crystallize within us all
That spark of order on which life depends,
That through the Sky our Father
We may shine and share as one.

You powers dark and light, you liquid fire,
Conjoin and blend this mixture volatile
That powers great will join within our selves,
Connecting all the Worlds so
That the circle is complete.

Dissolving the Barriers

All present say:

O Donn, son of Mil!
Manannán, son of Lir!
O Lords of the isles where the newly dead go,
We pray to You now – hear our call!

Your magics are great, Your powers intense,
We ask that you join Yours with ours.
Let the barriers standing 'tween this world and Yours
Dissolve in our hearts – hear our call!

With love and with joy, we humbly pray
For our dear friend to join us here now.
As our newest Ancestor to cross the divide
We welcome you home – hear our call!

Remembrance and Offerings

Priest says:

Newest Ancestor, name, we welcome you here!
And though we will miss you here in the Midworld,
We take comfort in knowing that you are quite near,
Just beyond the veil of the Worlds.

When the Veils are thin and the Gates open wide,
We will welcome you here once again!
Just as one day we hope that you'll welcome us, too.

Priest says:

Children of the Earth, this is also the time of the living!



We now call on those who have cared for _____ *name* _____
and who miss

_____ *name* _____,

To come forward and speak, sharing a memory of happy times.

And in days of old, offerings were made to the newly dead
To accompany them on their way.

We invite you to bring up your Grave Goods, that you
May make offering to our new Ancestor.

The People come up one at a time, and leave an offering
(such as silver or beer or other food) on the altar for later
burial or disposal, or put it in the shaft or the Well or pour it
on the ground.

*After an offering is made, the person may speak for a time about the
deceased. When each person is finished speaking, the Priest will say:*

Bíodh sé amhlaidh! (BEE-uh SHAY Ow-LEE) So be it!

Intercession

When everyone who wishes to speak has spoken of the
Dead, the Priest says:

Donn, son of Mil, keeper of *Tech Duinn*, Assembly Hall of
the Dead,
We make offering to You!

The Priest offers silver and whiskey.

We ask that you welcome _____ *name* _____ into Your
Hall,
And prepare him/her for the further journey.
Offerings are made for the Sacred Well of *Tech Duinn*! Needle's
Eye is crossed!
Eagle's Nest is mounted! Grant that _____ *name* _____ may
reach Your holy Hall.

Mighty Donn, accept our offering!

All say:
Mighty Donn, accept our offering!

The Priest says:
Manannán mac Lir! Rider of the waves and Lord of *Emain
Ablach*,
We make offering to You!

The Priest offers silver and whiskey.

We ask that You meet _____ *name* _____ at the Assembly and
carry *him/her*

Across the Western Seas, that *he/she* may be reborn in *Tir na
nOg*!

Offerings are made where the sea meets the land! The sacred
cloak is shaken! The golden Cup of Truth is whole again!
Grant that _____ *name* _____ may reach the sacred isles.

Great Manannán, accept our offering!

All say:
Great Manannán, accept our offering!

The Closing

Priest says:
Children of the Earth, now is the time to let go.

O Great Manannán and Mighty Donn, we thank you for your
aid.

Departed Friend, our love and thanks go with you on your
way.

And Mother Earth, we sing to you of thanks and loving
praise.

Now look we deep within our hearts
And closing Gates discern.
We know that death is but a door
And loved-ones will return!

The Priest rings a bell three times three.

Priest says:
Walk with wisdom, Children of the Earth, this rite has ended.

Song:

We're Ancestors Now

From out of Her bosom we come to this life,
In joy and in sorrow we live all our days.
The Good Earth sustains us, in union or strife,
For She is the Mother, we sing to Her praise!

And when the day comes that we leave this green earth
To take that great journey beyond the endless seas,
Our bodies return to this womb of our birth,
And we are reborn in a land of great ease.

Our lives you may celebrate, so do not despair!
For death in this world is a birth in the new,
No sorrows or troubles shall weigh upon us there,
We're Ancestors now and we'll watch over you!

(Sheet music can be found with poetry on page 32)



We are our Deeds

Whispering Lake Protogrove Blessing Rite and Raven Mann's Dedicant Oath

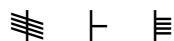
By Raven & Carrion Mann

When I began thinking about making my dedicant oath I had first thought about making my oath with only myself and Carrion present, but the more I thought about it the more I began to think that I would like to make it with the members of the grove present. I did not want to make my oath during a public high day. We, however, had decided sometime ago to hold a monthly Blessing Rite and any member who wished to make their dedicant oath during this rite would be given the opportunity to do so. I felt like I was ready to make my oath and since this was our first Blessing Rite I began to think that I should consider taking my oath during this rite. I also felt that this was a good opportunity to make my oath because the rite had been written by Carrion and myself.

As a way to prepare for my oath, I offered in sacrifice at Samhain my first Pentacle and Athame. I offered them to a small lake that lies close to where I live. I had not used them for several years, but they remained cherished possessions and reminders of my first steps on the Pagan path. I had been feeling for sometime that it was time to let them go, however, I had not realized what an emotional experience it was going to be to sacrifice them. The sacrifice was symbolic of leaving one path behind while moving onto another.

I also purchased a ring that I would wear as an outward symbol of my dedication to the Druid path. I chose it because I felt the symbols were representative of the Kindred. It has two Irish lions facing one another, connected by knot work. To me the lions symbolized the Mighty Ones because the lion was a symbol for some of my ancestors of blood, as well as heroes that I look to for examples of right living. The lions also symbolized the Noble Spirits because a great cat will fiercely defend its pride and territory. The knot work to me symbolized the Shining Ones because, as knot work, they have no beginning or ending.

I took an omen the morning before the rite to help me prepare for the upcoming rite, as well as for making my Dedicant Oath. I drew three Ogham and received:



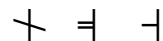
I found this omen of little comfort. I felt uncomfortable when I saw the blackthorn in the spread with its associations with strife and the forcing of one down a harsh and unavoidable path. Additionally, it speaks of fate and those things

outside our control. The birch has been a common Ogham of late in both personal and Grove omens. The aspect that stood out to me was not only new beginnings, but also the clearing of old growth, so new growth can take place. The willow speaks of balance and the finding of balance.

I did not like the way this omen was looking, so I discussed it with my wife and after the discussion, a few things became clear to me. At first I was interpreting this omen as a sign not to make my oath, but the more I thought about it, the more I realized that was not the situation. I felt as though the plans I had made for making my oath had been ruined because several members of the Grove would not be able to be present. I had really wanted to make my oath with all of them there, but that was not going to be possible. Blackthorn was speaking not so much of strife as it was telling me sometimes situations do not always turn out as we wish. It also was telling me that not everything is within my control. The message of the birch was one of cleansing and if I did go through with my plans, I felt as though it would be a cleansing experience. I try to seek balance in all that I do, so I felt the willow was telling me that I would be entering into a time of balance and fertility.

An additional message I received was that I need to examine my motivation for doing my oath now. I thought long and hard about this because of some of the disruptions that have been happening lately within the grove. I wanted to make sure I was not doing this just to prove a point, but as I prayed and meditated I came to the realization that I was ready to make this oath and was not doing it to make a point. In fact I had been planning on making my oath during this blessing rite, since it was first planned in early October.

I wanted to take an omen to see how my oath had been received, but did not want to disrupt the flow of the rite, so I waited until the rite was over. I drew three Ogham and received:



I was very pleased with this omen and was very pleased to see each of these Oghams in the spread: Muin with its connection to prophecy and allowing instinct to show one what should be done; Duir with its connection to being strong and secure in one's pursuits and Huathe with its connection with bringing protection from the magical realms. I read this as a positive omen.

I was able to see that not only was my oath accepted positively, but there was also a clear message from the Kindred, as well. The Mighty Ones were telling me to open myself to my instincts and to open all my senses for inner development. The Noble Ones were telling me that I have the strength to overcome and survive and so should feel strong in my pursuit of Druidry and following the ways of old. The Shining Ones were granting me protection and also telling me that I need to have a cleansing period to concentrate on mental pursuits.

There were only four members of the grove present at the Blessing Rite, so I was a little disappointed. This was a rite we had never done before so there was the usual hesitation during some of the parts. I also wish we would have had all present taking more active roles. It seemed a little silly to have two people officiating with only four people present. Our omen during the rite was accepted, but with caution. We have had some conflicts for some time and it was evident during the set up of the rite that there was some tension between members. After the rite we spent almost an hour talking and were able to work through many of these issues and were able to be honest with one another. I am sure if the caution had not been present in the omen we would not have discussed the issues as honestly as we did. I left the rite feeling tired, but satisfied that we had made the first steps at healing the grove. By time we all left that evening the tension that had been present during the set up was gone.

The Ritual

An offering of apple butter is laid beyond the perimeter of the ritual space prior to the Rite for the Outdwellers.

An offering of milk and honey is made at several points around the perimeter of our Nemeton to the spirits of the land.

Nine times the drum beats, saying:

Earth Mother and Sky Father, hear your children's call.
We gather our kith, kin and clan before our hearth.
To give honor and sacrifice to the Kindred;
That we may receive their blessings as in the ways of old.

An offering of bread and honey is made.

Earth Mother and Sky Father, accept our sacrifice!

Outdwellers

Dark Dwellers beyond the fire's light.
Bringers of primal chaos; those who will never know peace.
Take what has been laid beyond the fire's light
And trouble us not this night!

Spirits of this Land

Spirits of this land,
Those who whisper and watch
Our grove has erected our Nemeton before you.
Once more we assemble upon this ground, ask for the use of
this place and invite you to share in our worship.

Spirits of this land, accept our offering!

Grove Attunement

We now gather as one folk to receive the blessings of the
Kindred and to walk in the ways of old.

Closing your eyes, take a few deep cleansing breaths. Breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth. Laying aside the worries, troubles and woes of the mundane world.

As we breathe:
Feel the water that supports and surrounds us.
See the land that extends about us.
Know that the sky stretches above us.
Envision within your heart and mind a living flame.

As we assemble as one folk to worship with a common purpose:

May our worship be true.
May our actions be just.
May our love be pure.

We gather this night at the crossroads, between the Earth and Sky
We enjoy the company of good friends and family beside the hearth's fire
We Welcome the Kindred among us and keep the ways of old

The fire is blessed, saying:

Sacred flame, joining together hearts and minds,
Transcending the realm of light and shadow.
Forging and purifying mind and body
Sacred fire burn within us,
As you become the way to the Shining Ones.

The censer is kindled from the fire, the top of the bile is lit at this time and incense added to the censor. An offering of clarified butter is made.

The water is blessed, saying:

Sacred well of ancient wisdom.

Waters reaching deep within the Earth
Healing and cleansing heart and soul
Sacred waters flow within us,
As you become the way to the Mighty Ones.

The aspersing bowl is filled from the well and an offering of silver is made.

The Bile is blessed, saying:

Mighty oak of the ancient grove;
Roots burying deep within the Underworld.
Branches reaching into the heavens.
Pillar joining Earth and Sky; road to all realms;
Sacred tree, spanning the three worlds
Let all who walk this way walk in your wisdom.

The Bile is censed and asperged

The Nemeton is censed and asperged as the following words are said.

With the powers to create and destroy.
And the strength to cleanse and purify.
Through the union of fire and water,
Our Nemeton is made whole and holy!

Participants will be censed and asperged at this time.

As the world of the living and that of the spirit become one,
May these words be heard at the crossroads.
May they echo between this world and the next.
May our words bid welcome to the Kindred.
And stand as a warning to all those who lurk beyond the
fire's light!
Let us now begin our worship together between Earth and
Sky from this holy ground!

Offering of Irish Whiskey is made to the Manannan
MacLir, saying

Manannan, son of Lir; companion of Mankind.
Warder of the Ways, Guardian of the thresholds.
Weave now your mists, Grey One
Make open the way from this world to the next.

A Druid traces the triskel over the fire and well.

Warder of the Ways, merge your magick with mine.
Let the fire open as a gate so that we may follow the way to
the Shining Ones.
Let the well open as a gate so that we may follow the way to
the Mighty Ones.
Let the tree, pathway between Earth and Sky, be open to us.

Manannan Mac Lir let the gates be opened!

All: Let the gates be open!

Kindred Sumbel:

A horn will be passed among the gathering of the folk three
times, once for each of the kindreds, participants are invited to
give honor to each of the kindreds.
The horn is lifted, saying:

Grandfathers & Grandmothers of old,
You who have paved our way within this world.
Those whose blood flows through our veins.
Ancient ones and most recent dead;
Friends, family and loved ones,
All those who have passed from this world.
Know you continue to live in our hearts and memories
As we await your rebirth and ask for your guidance.
Mighty Ones, we invite you to gather and rejoice at our
hearth.

As you receive the horn, feel free to give honor and praise to
the Mighty Ones, Ancestors of blood and those of heart, and
the Heroes that inspire and guide us. After you have spoken
drink deep in honor of the mighty ones.

***Once all have offered their honor and praise to the
Mighty Ones an offering is prepared for them and the
following is spoken:***

Mighty Ones of blood, heart and soul,
We honor your presence;
Offering our praise in love and respect.
Walk among us and be in our hearts this eve.

The offering of porter is made to the Mighty Ones

Mighty Ones, accept our sacrifice as a token of our kinship!

All: Mighty Ones, accept our sacrifice!

The horn is lifted, saying:

Noble Spirits of this middle realm,
Those of known and unknown form,
Intently you watch from a distance,
Silently waiting in the shadows

Guardians and Protectors of this land
Guides, teachers and friends of humankind.
Kin of the world about us
We welcome you to our hearth.

As you receive the horn you may feel free to give honor to
your animal or plant allies. You may also wish to give honor
to your companions among the sidhe. After you have spo-

ken, drink deep in honor of the Noble Spirits

Once all have offered their honor to the Noble Spirits an offering is prepared for them and the following is spoken:

Noble Spirits of Land, Sea and Sky
We honor your presence
Offering to you our love and respect
Walk among us and be in our hearts this eve

The offering of corn meal is made to the Noble Spirits.

Noble Spirits, accept our sacrifice as a token of our kinship!

All: Noble Spirits, accept our sacrifice!

The horn is lifted, saying

Shining Ones, whose might and bounty know no bounds.
Gods of our people and our people's people,
Watchers over your children and their children's children,
Gods of Life, Gods of Death, Gods of Rebirth,
Gods of Land, Sea and Sky,
Gods that are well known and those who we have yet to meet.
We bid you welcome to our hearth's fire.

As you receive the horn you may feel free to give honor to the Shining Ones. You may also wish to give honor to your matron and patron deities. After you have spoken, drink deep in honor of the Shining Ones.

Once all have offered their honor to the Shining Ones an offering is prepared for them and the following is spoken:

Gods of our people and our people's people,
We honor your presence
Offering to you our love and respect
Walk among us and be in our hearts this eve

The offering of fruit is made to the Shining Ones

Shining Ones accept our sacrifice as a token of our kinship!

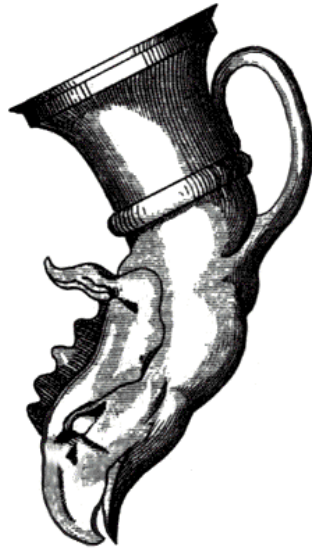
All: Shining Ones, accept our sacrifice!

After all the kindreds have been offered to, the grove vision is reestablished and the presence of the host of spirits is acknowledged.

The waters support and surround us.

The land extends about us.
The sky stretches above us.
And at the center burns a living flame.
Let us pray with a good fire.

The Kindred now walk among us.



May all the Kindred bless us.
May our worship be true.
May our actions be just.
May our love be pure.
Blessings, honor and worship to the holy ones.

Sacrifice and Omen

Through Manannan MacLir, Great Warder of the Ways,
We have opened the Gates this night.
Through our praise, love and sacrifice;
We have honored the mighty Kindred as they walk among us.
Through communication with the Otherworld;
We receive guidance, inspiration and insight;
As we prepare to make our final sacrifice!

A final sacrifice is prepared.

Kindred of land, sea and sky we call to you!
Hear us this night for we are in need of your guidance and wisdom.

Tonight we call out from the crossroads to all who aid us!

The final sacrifice is made.

Mighty Kindred, accept our sacrifice!

All: Kindred, accept our sacrifice!

It is with love, honor and respect that we have offered hospitality to the Kindred this night.
We have called through the Gates and deep within the Otherworld our invitation to gather in their honor.
We have sung their praise; made our sacrifice.

It is our hope that our words and sacrifice have conveyed our love.

Let us now close our eyes, opening our hearts and minds to the Kindred pouring out our love as we prepare to receive their blessings upon us.

Participants meditate on the kindred, sending their energies through the gates.

The Omen is taken. One Ogham stick is drawn for each of the three Kindred. The seer then interprets the omen, leading the company to contemplate the things they would ask of the powers, especially as suggested by the omen.

The Kindred have spoken. What use have you in your lives for their knowledge and wisdom.

From the Noble Spirits _____.
From the Mighty Ones _____.
From the Shining Ones _____.

The Blessing

Two cups will be filled and sat in the midst of the hallows. The following words will be spoken over the cups.

As in the ways of old we have given our gifts freely and as in the ways of old a gift is given unto us in return.

We will drink deep of the Cauldron of Rebirth. May the blessings of health, wealth and wisdom be ours.

We gather with you between Earth and Sky. We are proud to call ourselves your people.

We have brought our offerings. We have made sacrifice.

Most mighty Kindred, your blessings upon us!

All: Mighty Kindred, your blessings upon us!

The cups are lifted before the participants.

Behold the Waters of Life!

All: Behold the Waters of Life!

Now Good folk, drink deep; the blessings of the Mighty Kindred.

Drinking horns and/ or cups are passed and all participants share the waters.

A meditation is led to attune all to the blessing

As we drink of the blessing cup,
We open ourselves to the joy and wonder of the Kindred.
We drink deep of the well of wisdom.
In our hearts and minds burns the flame of inspiration.

Kindred of Land, Sea and Sky lead us in the ways of old.
Be welcome and walk among us.
Guide us as we walk the path of the Elders.
Awaken your magic deep within our souls.

We are the children of the old ways.
We are all your children!

May your magic flow through our very being,
through our hearts;
through our minds;
through our souls.

Let us all find ourselves one with the Kindred.

For all who have brought objects for blessing we now invite you to bring them forth and lay them among the hallows. You are invited to make a statement of need or intention as you lay them before the Kindred of Land, Sea and Sky.

Raven Mann's Dedicant Oath is made:

Long have I journeyed and long have I wondered, but this night I celebrate my homecoming. This night I celebrate and reaffirm the path I follow. This night I dedicate myself to following the ways of old and Druidry.

Upon my hands I wear many rings, but until this night one and only one is never removed. This ring symbolizes the joining of two into one, the love shared between two who became one, but mostly it symbolizes my oath, my bond, my devotion and my love for Carrion from this world to the next. This night a second ring will join the first in never being removed from my hand. This ring will serve as an outward reminder to all who see and know of my devotion and dedication to the ways of old.

This ring was not chosen lightly, but rather with care and love. For within the symbols the kindred are represented. The Shining Ones are the knot work because as knot work they have no beginning nor ending. The Mighty Ones are symbolized by one lion for lions were the symbol of my ancestors of blood, as well as mighty heroes who have walked this way in times past. The Noble Ones are symbolized by the other lion for the great cat will fiercely guard and protect its territory. This ring will serve as an outward reminder to all who see and know of my devotion and dedication to the Kindreds.

To all gathered this night I swear this oath. I dedicate myself to the ways of old and Druidry. I offer my honor and sacrifice to the Kindred of Land, Sea and Sky. I give my honor and sacrifice to those who walk beside me as Matron, Patron, and Guide. May this ring never leave my hand until I breathe my last. May this ring then pass from my children and their children's children. May there be pride when they speak of their Druid ancestor and how he kept his oath. May ones not yet born keep it safe until I once more place it upon my finger.

I will keep the faith until they sky falls upon me and crushes me, until the earth opens and swallows me, until the sea arises and overwhelms me.

Now let us lift our voices in song so that we may raise power as one people:

(repeat chant 3 times)

*Gods and Dead and Mighty Sidbe
Powers of Earth and Sky and Sea
By Fire and Well, by Sacred Tree
Offerings we make to Ye*

Let us now give thanks to the Kindred for their blessings. Let us keep their blessings within our hearts, minds and souls so that our worship may always be true; our actions always just and our love forever pure.

Thanksgiving and Closing

Shining Ones, Gods of Life, Death and Rebirth, all those of Land, Sea and Sky may there be peace between us until we meet once again by the hearth's fire. Shining Ones, we thank you for the blessings we have received this day.

All: Shining Ones, we thank you!

Noble Spirits that are this land, dwellers of land, sea and sky, may there be peace between us until we meet once again by the hearth's fire. Noble Spirits of this land we thank you for knowledge and companionship.

All: Noble Spirits, we thank you!

Grandmothers and Grandfathers, ancient ones and dearest friends, may there be peace between us until we meet once again by the hearth's fire. Mighty Ones, we thank you for your guidance and wisdom.

All: Mighty Ones, we thank you!

Manannan Son of Lir, Mist Weaver, may there be peace between us until we meet once again by the hearth's fire. Manannan Mac Lir we thank you for warding the ways between the worlds this day.

All: Manannan MacLir, we thank you!

Earth Mother and Sky Father, Mother and Father of all that was, all that is, and all that will be, may there be peace between us until we meet once again by the hearth's fire. Earth Mother and Sky Father we thank you for attending to us this day.

All: Earth Mother and Sky Father we thank you!

Now that our work has finished; we now end what we began. The Gates are now ready to be closed.

Manannan, Son of Lir, Warder of the Ways, Opener, Closer and Guardian. We ask now that you close the gates that we have opened this night.

Let the way to the Shining Ones once again be fire, the way to the Mighty Ones once again be water and the way between the worlds once again be wood.

By the strength and wisdom of the Mighty Ones, Noble Spirits and Shining Ones; the way to the Kindred is once again warded.

We now return all that has gone unused to the Earth and the Sky. May they continue to support, surround and sustain us.

All offerings that remain are burnt in the fire or scattered upon the Earth.

All: We will keep the faith until the sky falls upon us and crushes us; until the earth opens and swallows us; until the seas arises and overwhelm us!

Special Thanks To:

All who attended, participated and shared in this blessing rite.

Stone Creed Grove, ADF

For providing the inspiration for the blessing rite format and for the use

Apple Valley (Epladalr) Heathen Gathering

Eplagarthr Kindred, along with the Grove of the Seven Hills, will be hosting Apple Valley (Epladalr) Heathen Gathering at The Log Cabin Campground October 21-23, 2005.

For more information, contact Ratatask at scrane14@yahoo.com

It will be a Norse oriented gathering featuring Norse Vendors, a Sumble, a Main Blot, and various Norse Workshops. This will be held at the same campground as Trillium, so come and join the fun!

For more information on the Campground visit www.thelogcabincampground.com



A Wandering Druid: Tales from the Road

The Nine Ladies

By Francesca Hedrick



Once upon a time there was a fiddler who played up on the moors, filling the still night air with music for miles around. The local ladies not wanting to miss any opportunity to enjoy the wondrous sound would gather round to dance. Seeing that this was the Sabbath this conduct was quite intolerable and to put an end to such behavior from happening again an example was made of the revelers as they were turned to stone.

On Stanton Moor in Derbyshire, England is a stone circle known as Nine Ladies. It sits in an opening beyond a stand of trees and surrounded by the greens and purple of heather. Nine stones are sitting upright in a circle formation, with a reclining tenth stone recently revealed by ages of drought and wind. The 'fiddler' or King Stone sits a few yards away from the main group. The stones are of the local millstone grit and are barely three feet in height with the center mound worn away with time. These are not large stones or resemble Stonehenge in any design, but it is a powerful and locally respected spot all the same.

I stood on the fringe as the other sightseers walked the area and thought of how the ancestors would have walked this

area. As everyone moved on, I slowly walked the inside of the stones, momentarily stopping to lightly touch each one. In my head I sang "We approach the sacred grove with heart and mind and flesh and bone...We have come home." To this strange and enchanting place I felt like I had - come home.

Walking to the center I listened to the quiet peace. Gone is the raised cairn now but a depression in the earth. I slowly breathed, imagining the old ones, the first ones who first walked here. In my thoughts I called to them. Stooping down I poured water I brought from home into the center and whispered, "I offer this water from my home, from one who walks a druid path, to mix with the waters of those druids who once walked here." Standing quietly I could picture others standing around in this circle. I breathed slow and deep hoping to hear the 'first one' I once previously called to in another rite. Yet all I heard was the sounds of birds in distant trees, people talking, noisy campers and the whisperings of the wind. As I stood there taking in all that surrounded me, I slowly had a feeling of sadness creeping over me. Strange that such a peaceful place would generate this type of feeling, yet the more I stood there the greater it became. Finally I walked out from the circle of stones and stopped a few feet away to talk to some friends.

As we talked, I tried to discern where this sadness was coming from. Was it from the work of nearby quarries? Was it the campers encroaching on the area? Was it me missing those who did not make this trip? Was something amiss at home? I mentioned the sadness but the others did not feel it. Instead the two convinced me to join them, entered the stone circle, joined hands and thought of a wish we would like. Shades of 'Charmed'! The longer I stood there I could not concentrate for the sadness was coming over me like a heavy blanket. At last I could take no more. The sadness was so overwhelming that I could not breathe. I broke our little circle and walked a few feet away but the sadness followed me. By then I was crying and struggling to catch my breath. Everyone had gathered at the tree closest to the stone circle, so I walked further beyond them to another large tree in the wood line. Sobbing I stumbled up to the tree and put my hands on its trunk, my back to the direction of the circle. Now I do not like bees as they always manage to sting me and as I stood there I became aware of the hum of bees all around me. I could not see them or whether I had disturbed them and did not really care. It was all I could do to calm myself, to ground all this sadness

and just breathe. Several minutes went by before I was no longer crying and able to breathe somewhat normally again. Looking around I never did see the bees although their hum never ceased. Our group slowly walked beyond the circle, the king stone and out to the open moor. I walked a distance away avoiding the circle edges and past the king stone. I turned to look back at the circle as others drifted into it and wondered what brought on my distressed feelings?

The next evening I finally related my uneasy feelings to one of our local guides. His quiet and measured reply was one of dancing words and phrases. It is said, that long ago the Romans had a way of controlling the non complying populace by means of setting 'examples'. If an area did not submit, they would kill the local leaders, their families and in some cases whole villages. With this in mind, if the Druids of this area were to make a 'last stand', Nine Ladies may be the place that they stood last. Bards have a story for everything, whether they are true is a matter of contemplation.



Artisan's Guild



The ADF Artisans Guild exists to create artworks and other artifacts for use by ADF, and to promote training and education in the arts and crafts for members and friends of ADF, as well as the larger community. The Artisan's Guild has completed their section of the Study Program. They also have a large book list, a listing of ADF artisan's and their goods and services, as well as a yearly Arts competition at Wellspring!

For more information, you can subscribe to the group's e-mail list 'ADF-Arts' using the subscription page , or you can contact the Guild Scribe directly at:

2paws@telus.net

Come and Join the Artists in the ADF Artisan's Guild!





Arís Mundi

Representing ADF in Public

By Michael J Dangler

People are judged, it is said, by the company they keep. Over the years, we have all noticed that no matter who we are as individuals, our deeds, our words, and our interactions all reflect on the company we keep as well. Because of this, it is vitally important that all our members, no matter where they fall in the scheme of the organization, reflect upon their own actions. What's more, those of us who are leaders, however unfair this may sound, must be even more self-critical than the general membership, for we truly represent ADF, both in the leadership we can offer, and also in the quality of our religious practice.

There are five places or things that the majority of people will learn about ADF from: ADF's written literature, workshops given by our members, rituals put on by our Groves, personal interactions with members and leaders in real life, and virtual interactions on the internet.

Literature:

ADF seeks to provide Grove Organizers and Senior Druids with example pamphlets, fliers, and handouts for use at rituals and around town. Extra copies of Oak Leaves, the Membership Guide, and some of the writings created by members of Our Fellowship are highly effective. Here, Groves and Protogroves should consider a website (several places can host for free) to direct people to. The Web has become so ingrained in modern Paganism that it seems that one must first have a website, and then they may have legitimacy.

On all your literature, make sure that you have your Grove's (or Protogrove's) name and address, as well as an email address and web address, stamped or written. Distributing information without a method of contact attached won't get you very far at all. Also, don't be afraid to ask your Grove or those attending ritual if they will chip in a few dollars to help off-set printing costs.

Keep in mind that nothing needs to be expensive, just informative and engaging. Simply changing the colour or weight of the paper for your pamphlets might have the exact effect you want.

Workshops:

If you can, find somewhere to give presentations about Druidry. Often, it's best to start out by talking about ancient

Druidism and how modern groups work to keep up the worship of the Gods and the Kindred. Several groups have done these workshops, and asking if anyone has something you can use is always a good place to start.

You can also give a class on the differences between Druidism and Wicca, or walk people through a basic Druid liturgy. If you do the former, work hard to not be condescending about Wicca, or making the discussion an "Us/Them" issue. If you do the latter, describe why we do what we do, and give the importance of things, such as the Return and the Omen.

Perhaps you can follow these classes up with a discussion of how one becomes a Druid, discussing the ADF Dedicant Program and the Study Programs. Finally, you might do a lecture on forming a Druid Grove, and give information directly from the Grove Organizer's Handbook.

It is fairly clear, we hope, that if you give these workshops, by the time you come to the fifth one, you might already have a clear core group of people who are interested in helping you form a Protogrove. You will have managed to integrate the students into the thought-process and shown them the surface of what ADF is all about, and if you have managed this, you will know that a Protogrove is ready to form.

Groves that have become very large and feel that branching out into a new Protogrove (or several Protogroves) might also find it useful to train a few people from a similar geographical area with this set of workshops, making sure that they are prepared for the journey.

Rituals:

At festivals, the main way people hear about ADF is by attending a rite. Offering to do the opening, closing, or even the main rite at a festival or gathering can cause an influx of new Druids to any struggling Grove. The key is that the rite be well done, and that the rite be rehearsed enough that problems and errors are kept to a minimum.

If you have a small Grove or Protogrove and still wish to take on this responsibility, see if there are other ADF members who will be attending. Ask them if they will take parts, for it is likely that they will have a good grasp of the liturgy (or, at the very least, will have seen it performed before). If you cannot find ADF members, and need to pull ritual leaders (such as bards, sacrificers, dancers, drummers, or chanters), you will need to be able to explain the liturgy in a man-

ner that they can understand. This may require an extensive briefing for your ritual participants.

At the pre-ritual briefing (and you should have one for the benefit of those who have never attended an ADF rite before), explain the steps in the rite, go over the chants, and talk about how to do the processional. It is usually best not to compare ADF liturgy to other forms of liturgy, especially if you are not well versed in the other forms. After one festival, I received a complaint that in the process of explaining how the rite would be done, the ritual officiant doing the briefing had made blanket statements about how Wiccans did ritual during the briefing, meaning to explain how ADF ritual was done in comparison. The officiant never considered the fact that he might be coming off as disrespectful to Wiccans in his briefing, and conveyed his regrets that it had come out that way.

If you can memorize your liturgy (or extemporize it well), you will appear more together and impressive than a group who reads everything from paper. You don't need to have everything memorized before you do your first public ritual, but it is best if you work hard at memorizing the lines as soon as possible.

Finally, though certainly not the least important thing, your rituals should start on time. The vast majority of Pagans are not happy with Pagan Standard Time (i.e. starting at least 15 minutes late for everything), and starting on time can win you more members than any amount of talking and hand-shaking you can do.

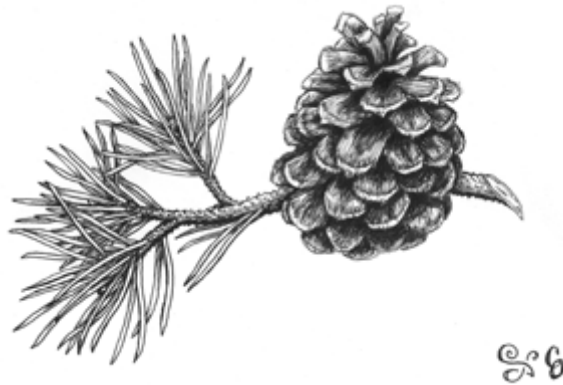
Personal Behavior (Offline):

It is an unfortunate thing that people judge others, but it is a fact. Most often, we form an opinion about a person very quickly, and that opinion can come from many things: how a person looks, how a person dresses, or even how a person greets another. These impressions are transferred from the person to the company she keeps: in this case, onto ADF. While we cannot offer suggestions about how to dress or tell you to change the colour of your eyes, we can encourage one thing that we hope still speaks louder than all those things: right action.

It doesn't matter if you joined yesterday or if you have been a member of the organization for over 20 years. If your affiliation with ADF is known, people will associate your behavior and your actions with the rest of ADF's membership. Those of us who are leaders in Our Fellowship must be more care-

ful, though, for an organization's true worth is always measured by its leaders.

To this end, we encourage the leaders in ADF to constantly review their actions, to become self-critical of what they do. A good template for this can be found in the Nine Virtues found in the Dedicator Program: Wisdom, Piety, Vision, Courage, Integrity, Perseverance, Fertility, Moderation, and Fertility.



Simply applying your understanding of these Virtues to your situation could make all the difference in how a person views you, your Grove, and ADF as a whole. Much of the time, Pagans are not so interested in which code you follow, but more that you stick to that code through thick and thin. Here are a few simple ways to apply some of the virtues:

Moderation: Probably the quickest and easiest way to make a poor spectacle of yourself (and ADF by extension) is to drink too much. ADF representatives (and as we have seen, that includes nearly every ADF member, but especially the leaders) should avoid drinking to severe intoxication. In fact, if you plan on drinking a lot in one night, you might consider removing your ADF t-shirt before heading to the fire, though this doesn't do you any good if everyone already knows that you're an ADF representative. Of course, we aren't telling you not to drink or otherwise indulge and it rarely happens that anyone becomes too intoxicated, but simply to do so responsibly. As a representative of ADF, your Grove, and yourself, it is best that you be in complete control of your faculties at all times.

Courage and Integrity: To tie directly back into moderation, you should have the courage to approach any ADF leader you see who has had too much to drink and politely inform them that they have had enough. Before doing this, the individual should take an honest look at themselves, and have the integrity to admit whether she has also had too much or not. Also, all ADF events should be "drug-free," and you should have the integrity to stick to that label, and have the courage to enforce the policy. To call an event "drug-free" and not follow your own rules will turn off more than a few participants.

Hospitality: We have already begun to move down this path with integrity, but hospitality is another easy virtue to apply to your personal behavior. It is a fine thing to offer food and drink to friends or strangers who happen to come to your camp at a festival, or to offer a potluck dinner after your rites,

but remember to have options available to those who do choose not to partake of drink or certain foods for whatever reasons, and always have options for vegetarians and vegans, who make up a large part of Our Fellowship. If someone politely refuses a drink, don't ask if they are sure about their choice; offer them an alternative. Let Pagans who state that they are in recovery know that ADF is very supportive of their attempts. Another aspect of hospitality ties into how you run your rites: you should start them on time, all the time. Offering a potluck dinner following your rites is also a good way to build a good reputation for your Grove and ADF.

Piety: Keep the High Days. Each Grove is required to hold eight open to the public High Days per year. Show the Pagans in your area that your Grove lives up to the expectations they have for a functioning church in their area. Make a big deal about them, perhaps even giving presentations on them at a local Pagan shop, or holding a mini-festival in a city park. All this will show that you do indeed practice what you preach, and that will go a long way toward making you, your Grove, and ADF look good in the long run.

Fertility: Every day, we have the opportunity to explore those things that bring us pleasure, and this is not a bad thing. Love, lust, and creativity are all important things to us, and ADF does not discourage these emotions or feelings. Still, we must constantly remind ourselves that our advances are not always welcome or comfortable, and that when we represent ADF to the outside world, we can be seen as "power figures" (and, unfortunately, as "power objects"). You are free, of course, to indulge in your own romantic goals, but remember that ADF is not a dating service, nor is any position in ADF something you should use as a power over someone. We need to avoid any hint of abusive or exploitative behavior toward the subjects of our attentions or those observing our actions. If false accusations arise, remember that your best (and perhaps only) defense will be your previous responsible, respectful actions.

The other Virtues will also come into play, as well, but the above examples can show ways to apply them.

Keep in mind that you have the responsibility to provide safe and inclusive rites. If there is a person attending your rites who is behaving in a rude, abusive, or exploitative manner, you do have the right (and responsibility) to exclude them from your public worship. This does not contradict ADF's policy of inclusiveness, since you are acting to protect your Grove and ensure that your congregation has a "safe space" to worship in. The individual can always apply to the Members' Advocate if she is a member and thinks this decision was unfounded, but the Mother Grove will back you up if you can show sufficient cause.

Personal Behavior (Online):

Modern Pagans use the Internet as a primary form of communication. The lifeblood of ADF is in the electronic forums and email lists, as well as on personal sites and public journal sites. This has caused us to re-think the way these media have impacted the perception of ADF.

Sometimes we need a place to vent our frustration, or to just talk honestly about what's going on in ADF. When we're mad, fed up, or simply frustrated with what is being done (or what is not being done) somewhere in ADF, we might take it out on an open journal or on our personal website. Something that we need to remember, especially as leaders of ADF, is that such things are not private. They do not get lost in the void that is cyberspace. Non-ADF members read these things, and if you only write about how angry you are with Our Fellowship, it will eventually lead to people shying away from ADF. Remember to write about the good things, as well.

Personal correspondence and venting in journals are, of course, private things. ADF doesn't have a say in what you put in them, and it never will. The most important thing to remember here, though, is that we need to stop and consider if what we're writing reflects what a leader in Our Fellowship should be writing. This goes for all levels of leadership.

The best thing to do is to remember that the Nine Virtues are not a mask that you put on. They should show in everything you do, even online. If you read through an email, and you see that you are not displaying a Virtue well, then it might be prudent to re-word it. If you have just finished a journal entry and find that it lacks piety, perhaps you should consider adding some in. Eventually, it will become second-nature, and you will not need to revise and add.

Also remember that some of our email lists, such as ADF-Druidry and the regional lists are open to the public. Your correspondence on these lists as an ADF member reflects directly back onto ADF, so on these you should be extra-mindful of the content. ADF-Druidry is where a good number of new members start out, and we should be showing them the best of Our Fellowship. We don't have to smooth over the "bad" parts, but we need to spend less time on them.

Additionally, remember that one of the primary ways ADF will grow is through email lists, both local and national. If your Grove does not have an email list, at least for announcements, get one now. Both Yahoo! and MSN offer free hosting for email lists, and they work very well. Again, on these lists, try to remember that when you talk about ADF, try to do so in a generally positive way. Talking excessively about the shortcomings or the pitfalls that we sometimes experience will not bring in members as quickly as you may hope. You should also get on as many local email lists as you can in

order to announce rituals and get-togethers.

Online communication is always a difficult thing. Jokes, and especially sarcasm, are very difficult to read in text form, lacking the facial expression or tonal qualities to convey the correct emotion. This can cause many problems. In order to avoid problems in the first place, read every email from different angles. Consider each angle carefully, and then read it in the most positive way you can. If something looks like it might be a joke, treat it as one. If something can be either a sarcastic compliment or a derogatory statement, read it with sarcasm and take the compliment. If you read the positive into it, your own correspondence will be more positive and will reflect better on you, and thus on ADF.

Usually, it is best to simply ignore jokes and sarcasm when working over email. Think about it this way: if you received your missive, and you knew nothing about why it was being written, how would you read your words? It adds time, but if you aren't sure about how something will be received, delete it. It will save you (and ADF) much trouble down the road.

Finally, we can modify the old saying, "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all." Perhaps the best way to put it is: "If the only things you can say will reflect poorly on you, don't say it." Again, what reflects poorly on the individual will reflect poorly on the organization.

Dealing with Criticism of ADF:

Remember when we mentioned that people judge not only an individual by his company, but also the company by the individual? Well, you will constantly meet people who have, in their pasts, had contact with an individual ADF member who turned them off to the whole organization. Perhaps it was an entire Grove that dissolved before you even came onto the scene. Worse yet, they may be former members who were unable to get what they needed out of the organization. No matter what their gripe, they will be hard to convince that ADF has changed and grown from when they last

knew us, or that they met a single "bad apple." Sometimes it might not even be worth the time (but it never hurts to try, of course).

Often, if ADF is accused of not being perfect, or not living up to our ideals, the best strategy is to agree whole-heartedly. We're a young organization, relying on a select group of dedicated volunteers, some of whom didn't manage to fulfill their intentions as well as they wished. Recently, though, we have had some major changes for the positive: we have Study Programs in place, with more on the way; there are Groves that are multiplying all over the world; and we are gaining many more new volunteers who are just as excited (if not more so) than the "old hands" and various projects are coming to fruition. You might even invite them to a rite or two to see how



things are going on the local level, and then give them some good dirt about what's happening nationally.

Some people see a new ADF Grove or Protogrove as a serious threat to their own political power in the area. When Pagans decide that their place in the community is threatened, no matter how false the threat may be, they become very difficult to deal with. Their arguments are generally impervious to logic and truth, and they will criticize you to no end. The best thing to do is

to make it clear that you are not out to "steal" members, emphasize that you'd like to grow and learn from each other while networking and helping to share the ecumenical duties required of Pagan groups, and just try to be diplomatic.

If a person (or set of persons) tries to take you on over an email list, the best thing to do is to ignore them. Don't sink to their level and fling insults back. Such fights will get you nowhere. Allow them to hang themselves by their own rope, and if you must reply, do so cheerfully and without malice. If nothing else, that will give you the satisfaction of making them look like the fool they are.

Finally, remember: you can't please everyone. Simply do your best to please the highest number of people possible, and be responsible in your representation of ADF.



Poetry

The Ballad of Nellie and the Fiddler (A Eulogy for Grandma)

By Brian Long
In memory of Nellie May Gray Brinkley, at her death

Nellie was born into a fairy tale life,
'Cause everything changed with daddy's new wife.
The Cinderella story was played out again,
Starting the day her stepmother moved in.

Her stepmother's kids had always come first.
They got the best; the others got the worst.
After six years of school they pulled her out
To work in the fields, day in and day out.

Beaten and blamed for whatever went wrong,
She found her only solace in the words of a song.
Behind the barn she'd sing to her audience of cows,
She'd tell them her dreams of the opera house.

She snuck into town one Saturday night,
With her sister, Geneva. They were drawn to the light,
That poured from the window of the big dancehall.
They couldn't resist the fiddler's call.

He played it so sweetly, and with such animation,
They were mesmerized by its incantation.
For a long, long time the spell wasn't broken,
And then it was by the next words spoken.

"Geneva," she said, "do you see that man?
The one standing there with the fiddle in his hand?
I'm gonna marry that man... someday... somehow;
But to stay out of trouble we've gotta get home now."

At fifteen years old she ran away from home.
If 'home' was that, she'd be better off to roam
Out into the world to take a chance
On finding some joy, some love and romance.

She'd heard of a widower who worked out of town
Who needed a nanny, so she came around.
She was hired by his brother, moved into his home.
She loved his children like they were her own.

She stayed several months, never seeing his face,
While she cared for his children, and kept up his place.
And every day Johnnie said, "Nellie, I know

You're gonna like my daddy, when he gets home."

One day little Johnnie came running up the drive.
He'd seen his daddy who was soon to arrive.
And what do you know, the little boy was right
Up walked the fiddler from that Saturday night

John Wesley Brinkley and Nellie May Gray
Were married soon after that fateful day.
He made some changes that pleased his new wife.
He gave up gambling and drinking, and the dancehall life.

He gave up the fiddle for the rest of his time,
He said he couldn't fiddle and still walk the line.
His love was sincere, his gifts freely given.
He worked hard at his job for a living.

He was no prince charming, with great wealth and lands,
But she was safe in the strength of his gentle hands.
Their love was strong and in the course of time
They raised up children, a total of nine.

She gave all her best to all of the kids.
Not one rule for hers and another for his.
His kids called her Nellie, but loved her as mother
And all of the kids were just sister and brother.

He left her too soon, after just fifty years,
A lifetime of living, of laughter and tears.
As we buried my grandpa I'm sure that I heard
My grandma utter these simple words.

"Geneva," she said, "do you see that man?
The one lying there with the ring on his hand?
I'll see him again...someday...somehow.
But how can I go on to live my life now?"

Now, twenty years later comes the end of my tale.
With a body that's weak and a mind that's frail,
After a lifetime of living and memories to spare,
She bows her head and whispers this prayer.

Across two thousand miles, I hear her last breath,
As the darkness comes, and she gives in to death.
"Brian," she said, "do you see that man?
The one standing there with the fiddle in his hand?"

"I'm gonna be with that man...today...right now
And Grandpa will fiddle while I sing to the cows.
I expect Grandma's happier than she's lately been,
Held safely in the arms of her husband and friend.

I received news this morning that my Grandmother has just passed away. It was her time, and this news is not entirely sad--I rejoice that she has been freed of her pain and is now in whatever afterlife she has chosen for herself.

I had been writing a funeral song, and this news has inspired me to finish it. I have no gift for music, so I only have lyrics, but I would like to offer them. My grandmother's journey to the otherworld has been my inspiration in this.

-Gretchen Persbacker

We'll sing beside your pyre
We'll dance upon your grave
Tell Stories of your honor
Your virtues we'll proclaim

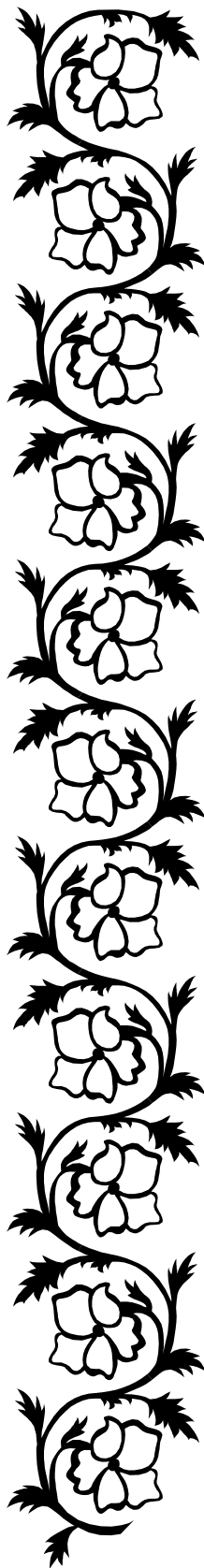
We'll cherish all you've taught us
And Pass your wisdom on
Alive we'll keep your memory
In thought, and deed, and song

It's true that we are grieving
But smiling through our tears
Remembering all the joyous times
We've Shared throughout the years

And though we all shall miss you
Safe Journey is our prayer
To that which lies beyond this life
And joy may you find there

The history that binds us
The love that holds us close
These things are eternal
And are that which matter most

While no life lasts forever
And all pass to their rest
You will never be forgotten
By we who love you best



Trick or Treat

(for Lilith B.-- who likes this sort of thing...)

By Edwin Chapman, Grove of the Other Gods,
ADF

Mother overturned some worms
and as a treat, She said,
on Samhain's Eve She'd give them
to the poor and underfed--
to the dreadfully costumed dead.

So when the clock to twelve had turned,
all at once they banged Her door!
And 'tho I'm sure She answered them,
and they were sure it was Her door,
they banged their own poor doors-- indoors.

Wooden doors that fasten firm,
or doors adorned, for what it's worth,
they're tall and narrow-- all of them--
and marked with name and date of birth,
and they open forth to none but Earth.

She parceled treats that writhed and wormed,
that turned and squirmed and oozed with goos;
they happily devoured them,
although they sometimes got confused--
to who chewed what and what chewed
whose....

For when our Mother turns Her worms
--those sweetmeats underneath our feet--
watch out when She distributes them:
Her treats are tricks and tricks are treats,
and the trick is what the treats shall eat!





Poetry Continued

We're Ancestors Now

Rev. Kirk Thomas

Voice

From out of ____ her bos- om ____ we come to this life, in joy and
in sor - row we live ____ all our days. O Good Earth, ____ sus-tain us,
in un - ion or in strife, For You are ____ the Mo-ther, we sing you our praise.



Dirge For The Tree Ring

Michael McKenny

With clouds for shrouds and bathed in streaming
tears,
Axe hewn and strewn upon the ground you lie,
Immortal portal, heart divine, I cry
For Thee. To see our Tree as slain with shears.

The soundless ground besides the weeping rain,
Air cold can't hold or freeze the pain.
No bird is heard, nor seen. Squirrels aren't home.
Heart riven, driven they but wail and roam.

Our core is corpses shattered on the earth.
O Ring, I sing your dirge, lamenting dearth.
I've brought the thought of what you used to be.
I've sought and caught a primal memory.

Inside abiding trees standing awesome,
A place embracing worlds, mortal, divine,
At night, a sight of light, a lunar line,
Now tasteless waste. We wonder what will come.



Festival Review

Magic in the Desert

By: Medb Aodhamair

Magic in the desert unfolded in the heart of the Sonoran desert this May. The Summerland's Stone Circle in Tucson, AZ is home to Sonoran Sunrise Grove's Desert Magic Festival (DMF). This year was even better than the last. We had a total of 33 in attendance this year, an increase from last year. Kirk and Steve are two very generous people and without their hospitality DMF would not be possible. So before I go any further I must thank them both for being such generous, gracious hosts. There were so many activities throughout this festival that I could not possibly put it into perspective for you in just a few short paragraphs. So, I think I must begin at the beginning of my DMF experience and work my way through the whole weekend.

The day began with the blaring sound of my alarm clock. With a sigh I turned over and shut it off. Then suddenly I was jolted awake with the memory of where I was going today. Desert Magic Festival (DMF) at Summerland's Stone Circle!

I have always enjoyed my excursions to Sonoran Sunrise Grove's High Day festivities, but all year I have looked forward to my second DMF.

Jon arrived on time to pick me and my gear up and we headed to Tucson. I could hardly contain my excitement. We have been planning the menu for DMF and had to arrive early to purchase groceries and begin prepping for the meals before everyone arrived.

We arrived and received our orders from the Chief (Kirk Thomas of course). Then set out to wrangle up grub for between 30 and 50 festival goers. We returned to the Grove just after 1 and got everything mise en place (a fancy French term that means to have all your ingredients prepared and ready to go before you start cooking). Then we joined our grovies (Jon's term) at the pool. The sun glistened off the warm waters and invited us to take a dip while in site of the awesome (and I really mean awesome, check out the pictures on their website) Nemeton.

At 4:30 pm we were already into some deep philosophical conversation about the virtues of wearing thongs or some-

thing when we were reminded that Gordon's Drumming Trance Journey workshop was starting. Realizing the time Jon and I sped to the kitchen to start dinner while some of the new attendees made the effort to go down to his workshop. I attended the workshop last year and had a very profound experience so I was disappointed at not being able to attend, however I can be a Stoic, though I am no Zeno, when need be so I concentrated on the work at hand.



It was during dinner preparation that Jon found out that he had to go home to deal with a family emergency. Kirk and I offered to help in any way we could and I was assigned a new role as head chef, Arrghh! Jon decided to stay until the morning as he's had a few beers and we laid out the plans for the rest of the weekend. Luckily Jon and I had been planning the menu for DMF since late January so I knew the plan pretty well.

After dinner we attended the opening ritual. I felt it was particularly powerful with so many well trained Druids attending. Our voices lifted in song and we shook the ground with our music. My grovies and I from the SSG border contingent (Sierra Vista) had the honor of invoking the ancestors, nature spirits, and shining ones. I found it interesting that we did not close the gates at the end of this ritual; that would be done at the closing ritual.

Then we departed for the hot tubs and pool. The night was warm, but the water was warmer. There was plenty of good drink and good companionship as we all unwound and got to know each other. By 1:30am we'd had enough revelries and the Sierra Vista group headed back to camp for bed.

Bright and early the next morning we got up and set out coffee and muffins for the dawn ritual. I joined the party and was surprised that most of the people participating were ones who had gone to bed as late as or later than I had! Perhaps they never went to bed at all?

I left the circle before the ceremony was done to help Jon get breakfast ready for our hungry Druids and lamented the loss of him again. Jon gave a few last minute instructions and he

was off leaving me holding the bag, and the knife, and the cutting board, and... you get the picture.

After breakfast we joined Jenni Hunt for a Roman ceremony using ADF liturgy. I found this very exciting, as I have never done a Roman ceremony before. The explanations of why she did things in her particular way were very helpful to put the whole ceremony into context and I really feel I learned some things in her presentation.

Next I attended a magical journaling workshop conducted by Mark Cantwell and Julian Greene, members of Sonoran Sunrise Grove. They were very informative and I was inspired to start writing in my journals again. Since then I have written five poems and several other miscellaneous entries. Thanks Julian and Mark!

After we had lunch I sat in on a few minutes of Ian's Beginning Practical Magic workshop but soon found that I was getting a major headache, probably from lack of sleep not from Ian's presentation. I went and took a nap in the hopes that I would soon feel better.

After a much needed rest I stumbled into Jenni and Michael's DP mentor roundtable. I learned a lot of good information about what our DP mentors are looking for. Being very close to completing my DP I paid special attention to what was being said. By the way, I just completed it, yipee!

After the roundtable, I attended most of Skip's lecture on harauspicy. I really enjoyed what I was able to watch of it, but it was time to prepare dinner and help set up Michael's Buffett ritual by the pool at the main house. I enlisted some help for kitchen duties, which was lucky since I am afraid of Kirk's grill. Following the barbeque Michael did his Buffett ritual, very cool but needed music and the sound of waves in the background. Erien and I got to help distribute the leis. I'm sure you can imagine the remarks that elicited from the group. We then adjourned to the pool and hot tubs once more, and there was much rejoicing, yeah!

Saturday morning I woke early after 2 hours of sleep and headed for the kitchen to begin making the frittatas for breakfast. While I was cooking I was treated to the site of Michael in naught but his bath towel! The early bird gets the worm after all.

Breakfast was followed by Michael's Chaos magic workshop, by the way I did almost all of the homework, and then took another break during the sensory deprivation lesson. I loved Kirk and Steve's presentation on this last year but felt a little too dehydrated to be wrapped naked in cellophane at the time.

After resting I got some more help to set up lunch then relaxed until Meredith's omen taking workshop. Sadly, I was unable to attend the whole thing as I had a lamb feast to prepare for that evening. I zipped up to the kitchen in the main house with my wonderful volunteer kitchen staff, thanks to every one of you who helped during DMF, and began to prep the lamb for the oven.

Now, it's been a long time since I have prepared lamb, and I certainly have not ever cooked six legs at the same time, but it turned out pretty well. We were late getting it out. Despite using the proper temperature for the weight, it just wasn't ready when it needed to be. Try as we might, the gods had different ideas. Kirk and I discussed it and it was decided to bump up the evening ritual and have the feast afterward. Personally I prefer it this way. Feasting is too social a thing for a 1 hour meal time.

Unfortunately I missed most of the unity rite but it was so worth it to see everyone enjoying the meal afterward. After the dinner I proceeded back out to the hot tubs and had some great conversation later down at the guest house. I, again, didn't go to bed until after 3.

On Sunday I woke to the sound of birds chirping and singing, damn birds. I got up and set out the breakfast again, then fetched my hiking gear. The hike was conducted by Gordon and was very informative. Three festival goers were nearly marooned on the top of a large megalith but they managed to find their way down and we returned home unscathed.

I managed to make it to the second part of the Gate Working workshop and took care of Toad's talisman that he had created the day before. He wasn't well and couldn't make it so I filled in. I also managed to make it to Gannd's mead making workshop, most of it anyway. I found it very interesting and informative but had to get lunch ready so I skipped out on the end.

Following lunch I went and relaxed by the pool. I missed Nan's heart energy workshop, but being recently single decided I was better off not discussing that particular subject. I made it to the closing ritual and we closed the gates. It was really tough to get them closed after being open for so long, especially with so few of us remaining. Many had left earlier in the day.

After ritual I said my farewells to my new friends and exchanged emails, phone numbers, and addresses. Toad and I packed up our camp site and headed home, basking in the glow of the Desert Magic.

Ancestral Wisdom: Infallible or Outdated?

By Steph Gooch

The Conservative says: “Listen to our wizened ancestors that developed these ways of living based on generations of experience rather than acting rashly out of youth and inexperience.”

The Liberal says: “But our ancestors were ignorant of these new discoveries and could not possibly know what we now know to give us proper advice—and besides, being conservative leads to inflexible stagnation, rather than creative growth.”

Which one is right? Both. And neither. Using the virtue of Moderation, a combination of these two viewpoints is healthier for long-term survival. Unchecked growth can lead to terrible consequences—take for example the Kudzu infestation that has been creeping northwards from the Southern US, choking millions of acres of trees. It was introduced from Japan in 1876 as an ornamental plant. Around the 1920’s it was discovered that grazing animals would eat it, and as a fast-growing plant it was considered a good foraging food. During the Great Depression, it was used to control soil erosion, with government farm subsidies to grow fields of it. However, at a growth rate of 60 ft per year (up to 1 ft per day in summer), the plant has become an environmental nightmare. After 18 years of research, one scientist recommends that herbicidal treatments continue for at least 4 years, and sometimes up to 10 years with even the most effective herbicides; some herbicides actually promote growth in the plant! What was once a “wise” idea (providing fast food for foragers and controlling soil erosion in the days of the Dust Bowl) has been re-evaluated as experience exposes the risks (massive deforestation).

The lesson to be learned from the Kudzu (as well as many other examples) is that Wisdom changes with experience. Not only should we listen to the generations of wisdom passed down by our ancestors, but realize that we need to re-evaluate that wisdom as we factor in our own experiences. We should realize that we are in the process of *becoming* Ancestors to our own

descendants, and therefore we have a responsibility to pass down our share of wisdom along with what useful bits have been preserved by our predecessors.

This raises a new point: how to preserve wisdom so that the youth will take it up and pass it along to their descendants? Those of us who are parents (or know some teenagers, or better yet *remember* their own youth) know all too well that in exercising their independence and creativity, children often discount the ways of their elders as being “too square” (here I’m dating myself, as that is the old-fashioned term!). They are naturally attracted to “the latest, greatest” thing, not necessarily looking at the long-term picture. But in order to pass the wisdom along, one must enlist their help in keeping the generational chain of knowledge intact.



Before we had written forms (and even afterwards), wisdom was passed down through oral traditions. Often wisdom was compressed into kernels of generic experience that could be applied to many different specific situations, all in memorable stories and poetic

formats (poetry is by nature mnemonic). Oral traditions can distort the “message” through the infamous ‘telephone’ effect and non-factual myths render less precise information than a scientifically based account. On the other hand, precise scientific tomes often gather dust on some obscure bookshelf, with intimidating or just plain bland contents. Like that dusty tome, knowledge that resides solely in the Sage’s head is completely useless unless he shares that knowledge.

Therefore, in the process of becoming the ancestors of our descendants, we need to find engaging ways to package wisdom palatably for the generations to come. Perhaps moderation is the key—between oral and written, fantastical and factual, generic and specific...



News and Announcements

Dedicant Program Completions

Mary Jones of Red Oak Grove, Completed April 5, 2005
Michael Clark of Grove of the Rising Phoenix, Completed April 5, 2005
Betula of Sierra Madrone Grove, Completed April 6, 2005
Ravenswood of Whispering Well Protogrove, Completed April 9, 2005
Cait Machnamh Cooney of Muin Mound Grove, Completed April 10, 2005
Mark Allen 'Eremon' Cantwell of Sonoran Sunrise Grove, Completed May 02, 2005
Leah Hamilton of Sonoran Sunrise Grove, Completed May 02, 2005
Dennis Ford of Sonoran Sunrise Grove, Completed May 02, 2005
Nora Ford of Sonoran Sunrise Grove, Completed May 02, 2005
Steph Gooch of Stone Creed Grove, Completed May 10, 2005
Jayme L. DeShon-Cherry of Raven Wood Grove, Completed June 19, 2005

New Protogroves

Silver Awen Protogrove, Louisville, Kentucky, March 17, 2005
Awen's Breath Protogrove, Fountain Valley, California, founded March 17, 2005
Long Leaf Pine Protogrove, Greensboro, North Carolina, founded May 20, 2005
Protogrove of the White Hart, Birmingham, Alabama, founded June 3, 2005

New Provisionally Chartered Groves

Red Maple Grove, Ottawa, ON Canada, chartered November 4, 2004

New Kin

Clann na nGael, the Gaelic Kin
Current officers are Warren Kleinman as Director/
Bantiarna, Calliean (Nicole Harlow) as scribe, and Corr Do'bhran (Pob bendith) as Associate Director/Taniste.

Grove News

Grove of the Rising Phoenix

Our grove continues to grow strong, and we have reached a new stage of unity and connectedness.

Our full moon drumming circles are thriving; our attendance is averaging 20 or more, with the promise of further growth. I am hoping that these events truly become a community service, a place where people can join together to celebrate the joy of the rhythm and cycles of life.

Our rituals, too, are usually attended regularly by over 30 people. It is humbling and inspiring to see so many people coming together to honor the kindred and the old ways.

Thanks to the creative use of transfer paper and T-shirts on sale at Walgreen's, we made up a batch of grove T-shirts with our logo on them.

In April, we attended Spring Fest, an event similar to Pagan Pride. We got a booth and a banner for this, which we will now have for future events. Several of us attended Desert Magic Festival in May, and that served to further unite us in shared experiences. Two of us even made it to Wellspring.

As a fundraising activity, we have started to sponsor daylong "spiritually oriented" workshops for the public. Last quarter, we presented a workshop on Chi Gung, and this quarter we presented a workshop on basic shamanism. The workshops are a lot of fun and give us a chance to share our knowledge.

Linda, Sr. Druid

Red Oak Grove

It's been a busy year for Red Oak Grove. We gained twelve new members since Calan Gaeaf, bringing us to a total of twenty-six—the largest we've ever seen at one time. We've even inducted our youngest member yet, ten-year-old Hawk, son of our own Bardd Dafydd. At Calan Gaeaf we inducted new officers, while Calan Mai saw us celebrating a handfasting for a frequent attendee of our rites.

With all these new members, we've been able to organize various public service projects:

- * collecting donations for the local SPCA
- * cleaning up Ridley Creek State Park, where we hold some of our rituals
- * planting trees in Brendan T. Byrne State Park

The final project is possibly our most significant; we've been able to plant an entire grove of red oaks in the clearing we use for our high day rituals. In twenty years, we hope to be surrounded by a nemeton of our own planning. Given our size and new activities, we've also restructured the running of the grove from a single Senior Druid to a triumverate: a Head Priest, Chieftain (who currently acts as Senior Druid and Pursewarden),

and Head Teacher (who also acts as Scribe). Bardd Dafydd still acts as our Head Priest, while Willow* is our new Chieftain, and Cigfran Brânwaedd our Head Teacher. Cigfran is currently developing a bi-weekly study group for working on the Dedicant Program.

Cigfran Brânwaedd
Scribe, Red Oak Grove

CedarLight Grove

Several members of CedarLight Grove recently took part in an Interfaith service to celebrate Gay Pride week here in Baltimore. Caryn, our clergy carried our banner during the procession. Another member Lady Katherina, SD Emeritus wrote and read a very moving address. I also spoke and wrote a prayer that was read. This is the second interfaith service in which CedarLight Grove has participated. The following is the prayer I wrote:

I pray to all Deities to grant our brothers and sisters respect. I ask the Gods and Goddesses of all those gathered to bless each person with joy and love. I ask that every person be granted the privilege of choice, to love whom they choose and to be able to make a life with their chosen one. I ask the Goddess to open the hearts and minds of all and let in the light of love and tolerance. I ask the Goddess to open the minds of all and plant the seeds of tolerance. I ask the Goddess to shine the warmth of her love on these seeds and encourage their growth. I ask the Goddess to teach all peoples to harvest the seeds and to consume them and allow tolerance to grow and blossom in each heart. I ask the Goddess to do this for all peoples in all communities around the world.

Deirdre
Child of Danu,
Senior Druid, CLG

Wild Onion Grove

Summer solstice was a glorious sunny day in the mid-seventies. Grove members gathered at the home of our senior druid for an 11am ritual. Unfortunately, we had a member who had just complete a week of final exams draw the omen and it was a reflection of his recent ordeal. We drew a card for guidance, invited all the spirits to spend the day with us and adjourned to the Scottish Games for a picnic and loads of fun watching big men in skirts throw 56lb hammers, cabers etc around, a sheep herding demonstration, dancers, and a whole passel of pipe bands in competition. After this kind of entertainment, the Gods smiled upon us once more. One of our newest members (who happens to be Polish) brought her favorite ethnic dessert - Polish apple pie! All you need is some apple juice (any vintage will do) and a bit of Zubrowka Bison Brand Vodka. The vodka is herbed with zubrowka, a grass favored by bison in Poland (who knew!). When mixed with apple juice it tastes like the most delicious apple pie in a glass. The Gods were most pleased.

Field Trip! A few of us may be found at Camp Clifton, Ohio for the Summerland Festival - those folks know how to throw a party.

Ordination and Celebration (September)

We're having a multi-grove celebration for the Autumnal Equinox and Archdruid Skip Ellison will be there. Our sister grove, Ravenwood is hosting, which means we all invade Pat and Lori Donlea and terrorize their neighbors. Pat will be ordained as Dedicant Clergy on September 25th. We are just thrilled for him.

Protogrove of the White Hart

We performed the Summer Solstice ritual for the local Unitarian Universalist Church, which included a spiral candlelit labyrinth and a drumming circle.

Lady DragonStar

Sassafras Grove

Our Spring Equinox rite honoring Nerthus was held at the Waldorf School. About 40 people attended. Our May Day picnic and rite, one of Pittsburgh's longest running pagan events drew over 100 people. Four couples ate their way through our traditional giant oatmeal cookie in search of the button that would give them the honor of being May King and Queen. The rite featured purification by fire, a sacred dance by three women, including our Queen, in honor of our primary deities Flora and Faunus, and of course, a Maypole dance. This year, we organized a group of singers and drummers to provide traditional music for the Maypole dance. On Midsummer's Eve, seven grove members and friends gathered for a semi-formal dinner in honor of the Fair Folk. Our public rite was held at dawn on an overlook on Mt. Washington where we could watch the sun rise over the city. We also held open Lore Meetings two weeks before each rite.

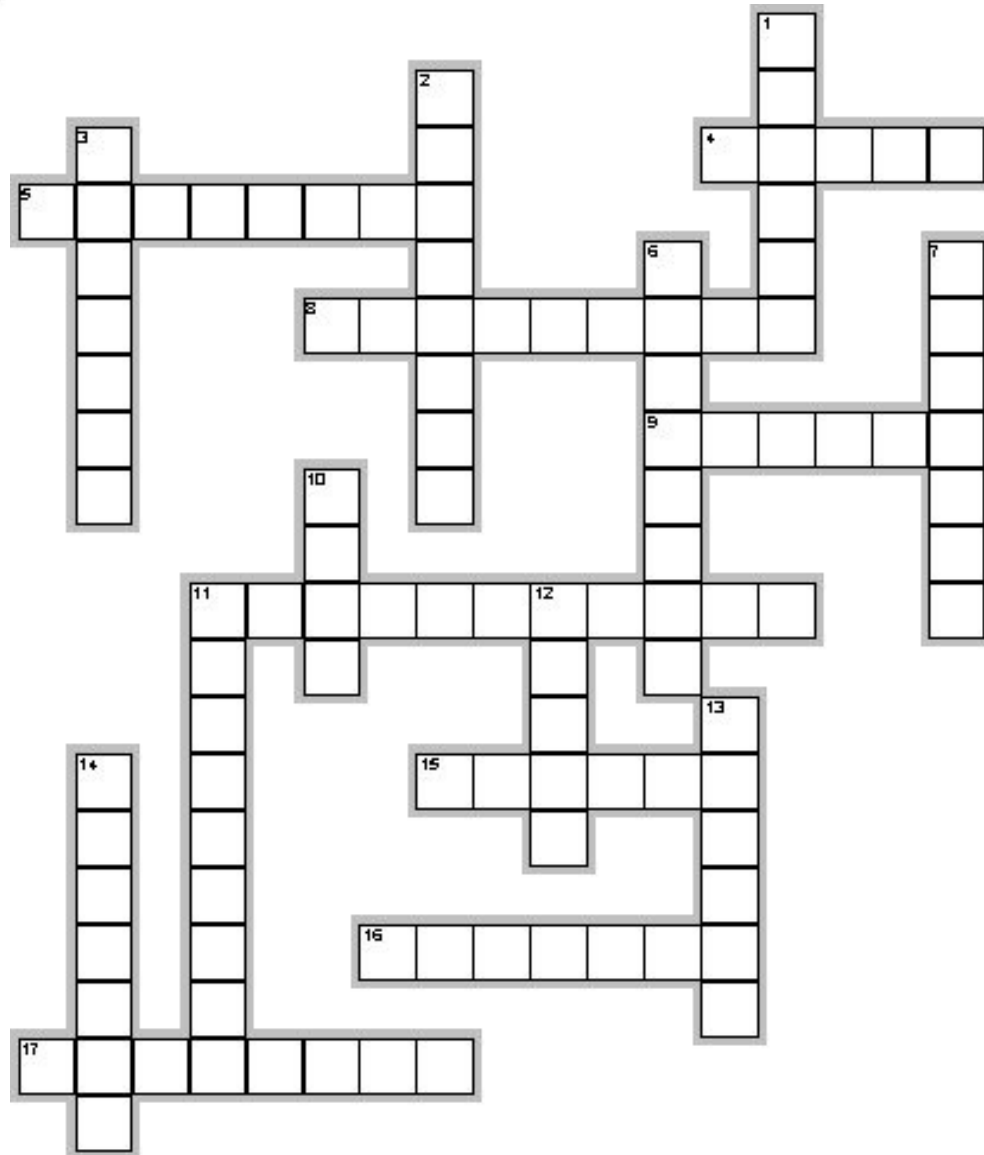
Second Friday activities continued at Moonstones. In March, Emerald facilitated our first Blessing rite based in Greek tradition. April's Bardic Circle focused on traditional May songs. In May we concluded our series of workshops on the Kindred with a discussion of Deities, facilitated by Diana. In June, we held our second blessing rite based in Norse tradition, facilitated by Maria.

Eleven members of Sassafras attended Wellspring this year where two of our grove members were elected to national offices. Diana was chosen as Heartland Regional Druid and Emerald as Member's Advocate. Congratulations! We also want congratulate grove members Eric and Deana who returned safely from China with their new daughter Mai Lucia on June 10. Welcome Mai!!!

Maria
Grove Steward, ivybrigid1@aol.com



Crossword Puzzle



Created with EdioseCrossword — www.ediosecrossword.com

Across

4. Greek Underworld
5. Norse: Hel's hall
8. AKA Funeral Prye
9. Norse: Walking Dead
11. "Pagan" otherworld
15. Roman: He died March 15, 44BC
16. Slavic: Household spirit
17. Land of the young

Down

1. Greek: The Ferryman
2. Greek underworld guard
3. Greek Paradise
6. IE: (2words) Oskorei, Herne etc.
7. AKA- Tumulus, Kurgans etc
10. Vedic God of death
11. Norse: Composed Prose Edda (last)
12. Roman: Deceased ancestors
13. Irish: Keening is attributed to her
14. Norse underworld



Little Acorns

A Special Visitor at Samhain

Lady DragonStar

It was a cool, blustery day and all the members of the grove were gathered, busily preparing for the Samhain ceremony and the Ancestors' Feast to follow. Mama Selu was rolling out the bread dough into the pan, while Daddy was outside setting up the altar. Gwalchmai was outside as well, setting up the candles for the labyrinth along with Taran. Mama was preparing the feast, with little Brigid on her hip in the baby sling, happily playing with her rattle. Collin and Aidan were enjoying the breeze coming through the window, as they finished setting up the decorations for the table, just as Morgan came out of the kitchen with the plates.

"Morgan," said Aidan shyly.

"Yes, dear?" asked Morgan as she placed the china plates carefully on the table, centering them on the place mats which the children had made from pressed Autumn leaves.

"Why do we always set an extra place at the Ancestors' Feast?"

"And why do we always put food on it?" added Collin.

"Well," said Morgan, "pull up a chair and I'll tell you."

They all took seats around the wood plank table and Morgan began to speak.

"Tonight is the time of the year when we honour our ancestors. On this night, the veil between our world and the world of the dead is the thinnest and our ancestors sometimes cross through the mists to visit with us. We set a place for the ancestors to show that they are welcome. They may not be able to eat the food the way we do, but they enjoy it none the less.

"Now," she said as she got up from the table, "we've got a lot to do to get ready, and soon it will be time for you to get dressed, so go wash up, please."

"Yes, ma'am," said the boys in unison.

Not long after the boys had finished their baths, Mama came in with their robes for the ceremony. The boys eagerly took the robes from their mother and put them on. They loved their robes that Mama had made to look just like hers and Daddy's. In fact, Collin would wear his every day if he got the chance; in fact he had tried to on more than one occasion.

"Mama," Aidan said as Mama helped him put his arms through his sleeves, "what happens when we die?"

Mama sat back on her heels as she fastened the clasp of Aidan's robe. "People have been wondering about that for as long as there have been people, and no one alive knows for sure. It's a mystery. There are many different beliefs about it though. Some people believe that once you've lived just one life on Earth, you die and depending on whether you were good or bad in that life, you go to a place of reward, or a place of punishment forever. Some people believe that once you die there's nothing else. Then there are people like your father and I who believe in reincarnation."

"What's reintarnation?" puzzled Collin.

"Reincarnation," said Mama, "is a big word that means to live again in a new body, to be reborn as a baby and live another life on Earth. I believe that when I die, I will cross over the Rainbow Bridge into what some people call the Summerlands. There are many different names for it. Some people call it Avalon, the Elysian Fields, or Tir na Nog. Some people believe that if you die a hero's death, you will go to the halls of Vallhalla. I believe that when I cross over the Rainbow Bridge, I will rest and prepare for my next life. Some things that I may do as I prepare might be that I would review my previous lives and see what lessons I have learned and see what I still need to work on. I also believe I will meet up with loved ones who have crossed over before me."

"You mean like Grandpa?" asked Aidan. "I never got to meet Grandpa," he said sadly.

"Yes, I believe that I will see him there," said Mama. I also believe that I will start preparing for my next life by seeing what challenges I need to work on, and maybe even pick my own parents for my next life."

"You mean we pick our own parents?" asked Collin. "I don't remember doing that!"

"Yes, I believe we do, and I'm glad you guys chose me," said Mama with a smile. "But no one knows for sure, and it may be different for different people. We don't remember what happens when we're in the Summerlands, but some people can remember little bits about past lives here on Earth."

"But," Collin asked, "how can our ancestors visit us if their rein –whatchamacallit?"

"Reincarnated?" Mama said. "For one thing, time doesn't work the same way in the land of the dead as it does here, just like time flows differently in the land of the Sidhe. Another thing is that our ancestors may only be able to visit us between lifetimes, while they're in the Summerlands."

"Oh," said Aidan.

"Like I said, nobody really knows for sure until we die," said Mama," and I hope that none of us crosses over for a long time," she said as she ruffled Aidan's hair. Now, let's go downstairs. It's time for ritual.

The boys finished getting dressed, and went downstairs where everyone was gathered to walk out to the Grove. All the adults carried candles as they walked through the woods, and Collin and Aidan could see their faery friends peeking out from the trees and bushes as they walked past. Every once in a while, one would fly out and tickle Brigid on the nose, so she giggled and wiggled in her sling.

Soon they were all gathered in the Grove, and the ritual began. After a few minutes, Collin noticed something. As he looked around, there were more people, a lot more people in the Grove than there had been when they walked in, and that wasn't all. Collin saw animals, too, and among them were some he recognized. Salem, his cat who'd died last year, was rubbing against someone's leg. There was a cat that looked like Mao, the grey tabby whose picture usually hung above Mama's desk, but tonight that picture sat on an altar along with pictures of others who had passed.

Collin looked over at Aidan, and was about to ask him if he saw them too, but he didn't have to. He could tell from the way Aidan's jaw was hanging open, he could see them too.

Just then, the boys looked up to see a familiar face in the crowd of newcomers. They knew him well from the pictures in the house. Grandpa was grinning proudly at the boys, and gave them a wink.

Crossword Puzzle Key for Last Issue.

Down

2. **ERIS**—Greek - Goddess of discord and strife, sister to Aries.
3. **POLEWIK**—Slavic - This field spirit with grass for hair leads folks astray.
5. **BIA**—Greek - She is the personification of destructive force.
8. **LEMURES**—Roman - Malignant spirits - ghosts.
9. **ALASTOR**—Greek - An avenging spirit or nemesis.
10. **JOTUN**—Norse- This race of giants, represents nature's force of Chaos.
11. **BUYASTA**—Persian - The Daeva and personification of laziness.
12. **FIRBOLG**—Celtic - Eochaid, Tailtiu, Gann, Slainge etc.
14. **HULDRU**—Norse - The sensitive folk of the mounds and forests - not slain by sunlight.
17. **FOMORIANS**—Celtic - According to the book of Dun Cow, they have the body of a man and the head of a goat.
19. **ERINNYES**—Greek&Roman - To avoid their revenge you called them the kindly ones.
21. **KERES**—Greek - They are sharp clawed creatures who dress in red and are often seen hovering around battle fields.
23. **AESMA**—Persian - This Daeva is the personification of violence.

Across

1. **FIDEAL**—Scottish -Water Demons who drowned their victims after luring them to the water.
4. **PHOBOS**—Greek - This god of fear was said to be in the center of Hercules shield.
6. **LARVAE**—Roman - Wicked spirits known for wandering among the living haunting and driving them to madness.
7. **ALFAR**—Norse - Unpredictable elves for good or ill.
13. **PUCK**—I.E - This mischievous spirit appears in A midsummer night's dream.
15. **APATE**—Greek - The Goddess of lies and deceit.
16. **BALOR**—Celtic - According to prophecy, this monster was to be killed by his grandson.
18. **TROLL**—Norse - A large cave dwelling malicious earth spirit/monster.
20. **DVOROVoi**—Slavic - A spiteful male yard spirit.
22. **AILLEN**—Celtic- Malevolent otherworld creature who came out of his cave at Samhain and burned the Royal house of Tara.
24. **EREBUS**—Greek - He is the personification of darkness.
25. **CHAOS**—Greek -The Theogony says: "In the beginning there was only _____."
26. **TITANS**—Greek - Cronos, Rhea, Oceanus, Themis etc.

ADF DIRECTORY

The Mother Grove

Archdruid
Skip Ellison
adf-archdruid@adf.org

Vice-Archdruid
Rev. Kirk Thomas
adf-vice-archdruid@adf.org

Preceptor
Jennifer Hunt
adf-preceptor@adf.org

Scribe
Anthony Thompson
adf-scribe@adf.org

Members Advocate
Emerald Moonfire
adf-members-advocate@adf.org



Chief of the Council of
Senior Druids
Flip Rutledge
adf-senior-druids-chief@adf.org

Non-Officer Director
Meredith
bitscenter@yahoo.com



Regional Druids

Upper Midwest Regional Druid
Jeremy Mallory
adf-upper-midwest-rd@adf.org

North East Regional Druid
Bardd Dafydd
adf-northeast-rd@adf.org

Heartland Regional Druid
Diana Paar
adf-heartland-rd@adf.org

North West Regional Druid
Anne Lenzi
adf-northwest-rd@adf.org

Central Regional Druid
Fionnghal Nic Phaidin
adf-central-rd@adf.org

Canada Regional Druid
Chris:)
adf-canada-rd@adf.org

South East Regional Druid
Reggie Bell
adf-southeast-rd@adf.org

South West Regional Druid
Callican
adf-southwest-rd@adf.org



Additional Leadership Positions

Administrator
Francesca Hedrick
adf-administrator@adf.org

Archdruid Emeritus
Isaac Bonewits
bonewits@warwick.net

Archdruid Emeritus
Ian Corrigan
tredara@ncweb.com

Archdruid Emeritus
John 'Fox' Adelman
foxadf@mindspring.com

Chronicler
Vedis Jansdottir
adf-chronicler@adf.org

Information Manager
Anthony Thompson
athomps@adf.org

Listmaster and Moderator
October
adf-listmaster@adf.org

Office Manager
adfoffice@direcway.com

Pursewarden
Linda Costello
LindaC5755@aol.com

Webmaster
Anthony Thompson
adf-webmaster@adf.org



Committees

Grove Coordinating Committee
Chair: Caryn MacLuan
E-Mail: carynmacluan@earthlink.net

Grove Organizing Committee
Chair: Vacant
Mailing list: adf-goc@lists.adf.org



Guilds

Artisans Guild
Mailing list: adf-arts@lists.adf.org
Web: <http://www.adf.org/members/guilds/artisans>

Bardic Guild
Mailing list: adf-bards@lists.adf.org
Web: <http://www.adf.org/members/guilds/bards>

Dance Guild
Mailing List: adf-dance@lists.adf.org
Dance Web: <http://www.adf.org/members/guilds/dance/>

Healers Guild
Mailing list: adf-healers@lists.adf.org
Web: <http://www.adf.org/members/guilds/healers>

Liturgists Guild
Mailing list: adf-liturgists@lists.adf.org
Web: <http://www.adf.org/members/guilds/liturgists>

Magicians Guild
Mailing list: adf-magicians@lists.adf.org
Web: <http://www.adf.org/members/guilds/magicians>

Naturalists Guild
Mailing list: adf-naturalists@lists.adf.org
Web: <http://www.adf.org/members/guilds/naturalists>

Scholars Guild
Mailing list: adf-scholars@lists.adf.org
Web: <http://www.adf.org/members/guilds/scholars>

Seers Guild
Mailing list: adf-seers@lists.adf.org
Web: <http://www.adf.org/members/guilds/seers>

Warriors Guild
Mailing list: adf-warriors@lists.adf.org
Web: <http://www.adf.org/members/guilds/warriors>



ADF DIRECTORY

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

American SIG

Mailing list: adf-americankin@yahoogroups.com

Brewers SIG

Mailing list: adf-brewers@lists.adf.org

Web: <http://www.adf.org/members/sigs/brewers/>

Children's Education and Parenting SIG

Mailing list: adf-parents@lists.adf.org

Web: <http://www.adf.org/members/sigs/childrens-educationand-parenting/>

Foireann Mhorrigan

Mailing list: adf-morrigan@lists.adf.org

Web: <http://www.adf.org/members/sigs/morrigan/>

Solitaires SIG

Mailing list: adf-solitaries@lists.adf.org

Web: <http://www.adf.org/groups/sigs/solitaries/>

The People of the Purple Feather

Mailing list: adf-lgbt@lists.adf.org

Web: <http://www.adf.org/members/sigs/purple-feather/>



Kins

Aus Dhwer: Eastern Gate Kin

Mailing list: adf-eastern@lists.adf.org

Web: <http://www.adf.org/members/kins/eastern-gate/>

Eldr ok Iss: Kin of Fire and Ice

Mailing list: adf-norse@lists.adf.org

Web: <http://www.adf.org/members/kins/fire-and-ice/>

Oi Asproi Koukouvayies: White Owls Kin

Mailing list: adf-hellenic@lists.adf.org

Web: <http://www.adf.org/members/kins/white-owls/>

Tylwyth Y Ddraig Goch: Clan of the Red Dragon

Mailing list: adf-welsh@lists.adf.org

Web: <http://www.adf.org/members/kins/red-dragon/>



Contributors

ARTICLES

Kirk Thomas, *Leadership Interview* pg 3
Irish Funeral Service, pg 16
Loss and a Loved One, pg 13
druidkirk@direcway.com

Michael J Dangler, *Representing ADF in Public*, pg 27
dangler.8@osu.edu

Chris:), 'Crossword Puzzle' pg 38
2paws@telus.net

Susan "Ratatask" Eaves, *Norse Afterlife*, pg 9
Scrane14@yahoo.com

Jennifer L. Gadd, *The Great Tea Experiment*, pg 8
fionnabhar@hotmail.com

Moonhawk, *Learning From the Past*, pg 26
lady_moonhawk@hotmail.com

John McDaris, *Ancestors*, pg 12
john_mcdaris@yahoo.com

Steph Gooch, *Ancestral Wisdom: Infallible or Outdated?*, pg 35
smgooch@hotmail.com

Francesca Hedrick, *The Nine Ladies*, pg 24
FAHEDRICK@salisbury.edu

Raven and Carrion Mann, *Whispering Lake Protogrove Blessing
Rite and Raven Mann's Dedicant Oath*, pg 18
RavenMann@aol.com

Anne Lenzi, *Ancestors Before Me*, pg 14
malacat@gmail.com

POEMS

Gretchen Persbacker, "Untitled Poem" pg 31
glaisney@excite.com

Brian Long, "The Ballad of Nellie and the Fiddler" pg 30
boru@cox.net

Edwin Chapman, "Trick or Treat" pg 31
eternalansw@earthlink.net

Michael McKenny "Dirge for the Tree Ring" pg 32
solarguard@yahoo.ca

ARTWORK

Carey Oxler, 'Large Pinecone' pg 28
gaia-kat@kc.rr.com

Vedis Köerner, 'Greenman' pg 29
'Kolfinna03c' cover
Vedis_jansdottir@mchsi.com

Submission Guidelines

Oak Leaves seeks to provide a forum of sharing, learning and community growth through the content within its pages. You can help by submitting your articles, essays, art work, poetry, recipes, travel stories, reviews, thoughts, rituals, and announcements. Oak Leaves welcomes submissions from both non-members and members of ADF. Submissions may be sent to: Oak Leaves Submission c/o ADF, P.O. Box 17874, Tucson, AZ 85731-7874 or as attachments to:

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Deadlines for submissions are: Spring: January 1st, Summer: April 1st, Autumn: July 1st, Winter: October 1st



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Notary Seal:

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