

# OAKLEAVES

The Quarterly Journal of Ár nDraíocht Féin

Spring 2010 ~ Issue No. 48





**Sonoran Sunrise Grove, ADF**  
Presents our 7th Annual



# **Desert Magic Festival**

## **May 6-9, 2010**

**Presenters include: Diana Paxson, Ian Corrigan, Sue Parker, Skip Ellison, Kirk Thomas, Kenn Day, Patricia Lafayllve, Elisheva, and more to be announced!**

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## Table of Contents

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### Features

Nemetons of ADF .....	3
Principles of the Avestan (Indo-Iranian) Hearth Culture in ADF .....	20
<b>Brigid's Three Flames</b> .....	32
Macrocosm in the Microcosm .....	34

### Columns

From the Archdruid .....	2
Video Review— <i>The Secrets of the Druids</i> .....	14
Personal Story— <i>Beltaine with the Bees</i> .....	17
Members Advocate Speaks— <i>ADF Is Made of People!</i> .....	26
Book Review— <i>The Fire on Our Hearth</i> .....	29
Personal Story— <i>Druid Rehab: How I Went To The Birds</i> .....	30
<b>Children's Page</b> — <i>The Prayer of the Iris</i> .....	37

### Departments

Crossword Puzzle .....	38
Key to Fall Puzzle .....	39
News and Announcements .....	40
ADF Directory .....	41
Contributors .....	42
Submission Guidelines .....	43
ADF Membership Form .....	44

### Bardic

Invocation: <i>Nuada Airgetlám</i> .....	16
Prayer: <i>A Druid's Hearth Prayer</i> .....	19
Song: <i>Sacred Center</i> .....	25
Poetry: <i>A Seed</i> .....	25
Poetry: <i>At This Significant Moment</i> .....	28
Poetry: <i>An Appointment with Ostara</i> .....	36



As this spring season rolls around, we turn our thoughts **once again to travel, and meeting friends we've only talked to over the winter.** As we have grown, so have the number of festivals that are available for our members. We are up to 15 festivals now that are either put on by ADF Groves and Proto-groves, or are heavily attended by ADF members and where ADF takes an active part in providing programming. Attending a festival near you, even if it's an eight- or ten-hour drive away, is a great way to meet other ADF folks.

In October of 2009, we initiated the first two students through the Initiates' Program. They were Rev. Kirk Thomas, and Rev. Michael Dangler. My congratulations to both of them for the hard work that they have put into the program! We currently have 16 other students enrolled in the program, and expect to see more initiations happening in the near future.

When this issue of Oak Leaves comes out, the election will be in full swing, so I urge every member to vote wisely or give your proxy to a trusted fellow member. I thank everyone who has served with me on the Mother Grove for all their hard work and time in service to ADF. While many times it's a thankless job, it is something that is very important and without which, ADF couldn't survive. May the blessings of the Kindreds shine upon you all!

Bright Blessings,

*Rev. Skip Ellison*



## Oak Leaves

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Cover: *Dryad by Caroline Farrow*

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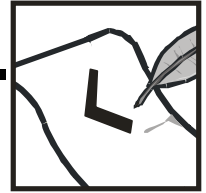
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# Article

## Nemetons of ADF

Edited by Steph Gooch



*One of the sources of pride and spiritual energy for a grove is a permanent Nemeton, or Druid temple. Not every grove has one, but this article is intended to provide a variety of examples to inspire more groves to build their own Nemetons [Editor's Note: there is some disagreement as to whether the plural of Nemeton should be Nemeta or Nemetons; for the purposes of this article, we use the Anglicized version]. First, you need a "permanent" piece of land on which to build. It can be land that the grove members purchase together: this route can be expensive or require a long-term financial commitment that not all groups will be comfortable making. Alternatively, the land could be on private property, requiring only the commitment of one member of ADF; in this case, it is important for the rest of the grove members to appreciate the generosity of that member (or family) and help with the construction and upkeep of the Nemeton area, so as to encourage use of it for years to come. So, without further ado, please enjoy the various descriptions and construction advice that follows:*

### CedarLight Grove, ADF

Baltimore, MD

by Crystal Groves

CedarLight Grove, ADF has the blessing (or curse?) of being the first and only "Grove" to own its own building and sanctuary. By own, of course, I mean the Grove is incorporated and owns the title to the land

as a group, not any one individual. And while we are very proud of our Sanctuary, it does not come without a heavy burden that sometimes overshadows the spirituality we are trying to accomplish.

We have all of the normal bills and upkeeps that any building has. We pay electricity, city taxes, building taxes, business insurance, phone bill, maintenance, etc. Just in 2009 we have spent around \$15,000 in required maintenance alone, which is actually high compared to our budgeted \$5,000 per year. The higher number for 2009 comes from a leaky porch roof, leaky chimney, and a weak floorboard in our main bathroom that couldn't wait to be fixed.

The reason I mention those expenses is to point out that clearly we cannot survive on member donations and dues alone. We are not the largest Grove in ADF, and certainly not the richest. To compensate for all of our expenses, our building also has two apartments upstairs that we rent out for additional income, which

opens up a whole new can of worms and responsibilities.

Now we are landlords and we have to deal with all of the responsibilities that come with being a landlord. We have to deal with tenants, leases, late fees, apartment depreciation, maintenance complaints, security, yearly building inspections, permits, evictions, and neighborhood relations. In 2008 we had to fight with the city of Baltimore to even keep our two apartments which spanned over several months and several thousands of dollars later, but we won.

Some of our other hassles include limited parking for our high rites, since our location is in downtown Baltimore and our driveway fits only two cars. The rest of our parking is street parking, and while most of the neighbors do not mind, occasionally we'll hear a complaint about the amount of cars along our street. However the location is ideal for tending to the surrounding areas neo-pagan populous, and is close



Pavillion at CedarLight Grove

Credit: Crystal Groves

to bus routes. If we were out in the country then perhaps our numbers would be even less because of accessibility issues.

Despite some of the negatives I mention above, there are many positives as well to owning your own sanctuary. A rooted place to hold any and all ceremonies and high rites, somewhere that people know where to go for every event. At the same time, you often feel tied down to the building instead of going off somewhere more secluded, because people are expecting there to be events in your building.

The ability to cultivate the building and the grounds is a very nice bonus. We have beautiful gardens on the outside and decorative altars to the kindred on the inside. We have bathrooms! Bathrooms are always a good thing to have instead of worrying about renting port-a-pots.

You do not have to worry about being discriminated against by park owners or locals passing by. Our Grove is private property, owned by us high and dry, and no one can take that away from us – especially now that our mortgage is paid in full thanks to a hefty donation in 2007 of \$50,000.

We have a room that acts as our library, with almost 1,000 books and periodicals that are all donated to the Grove and the entire collection is worth almost \$11,000. We have many of the books needed for the study programs, so we are able to provide those resources to our members. A note to others that may wish to start up a library – between 2003 when the library was originally built in an open space, and 2006 when we moved it into a room with a lock and key, we had approximately \$1,400 in books disappear. Putting the library in a room that could be locked when not in use was a very positive step for us, and helps us keep

track of our books along with using a program called “Readerware”.

We can also rent our space out for additional income. The original purpose of CedarLight “Center” was to provide a place for the community to use. Our founder, Will Pierson, was inspired by his patron (and CedarLight’s patron) Tailtue to “Build a Home for Her People”, so he purchased this place in 1996 under this Vision. We do not get as many renters as we would like, but occasionally Pagan groups will contact us in need for space for a workshop or handfasting or something. We have a short-term lease agreement ready and prepared for those events to protect ourselves and our assets.



CedarLight Grove Nemeton, Spring 2002



CedarLight Grove Nemeton, Mabon 2009

Short-term lease agreements are another very important topic I want to touch up on, should anyone who owns their own land decide they want to rent it out to other groups. Absolutely, *positively*, use leases or contracts when allowing other people to use your property. CedarLight Grove learned this lesson the hard way, when the Witan (Board of Directors) at the time thought because someone was “friends” with the Grove, that we could certainly trust them with an “oral” agreement. Remember as the old saying goes, “Contracts keep friends as friends, and business as business.”

Another thing to consider regarding a permanent Nemeton owned by the Grove, is whether you have enough volunteers to help do all of the things that need to be done, and whether there are other people who are capable of running it in the future. Who is going to be available on a Monday at 10am for a building inspection when most people have full-time jobs? Who is going to come address a tenant issue at 11pm at night on a Wednesday evening when most of the leadership live 40 minutes away? Burn-out is inevitable with such a



Credit: Crystal Groves

large responsibility and territorialism is unavoidable.

Some of our future improvements, and we have many, are lead removal in the apartments once they are empty again. New awnings above some of the doors where the rain is starting to rot the trim and floorboards. Eventually we'd like to be more handicapped accessible, as right now there is no way for a wheelchair to enter our building and we have had handicapped visitors in the past. We would like to have the electricity redone so we have a higher voltage into the building and can put in washer/dryer hook-ups for the tenants.



A long term goal would be to survive without tenants at all, so we can rent out the apartments as usable space for the community as well. But I have doubts we'll be able to reach that goal anytime soon given how our donations have gone in the past. We'd need to be able to supplement the regular income loss through our own member donations as well as requests by groups to rent space, and neither of those are stable at this time.

To give some insight on CedarLight Center and how it's grown over the last 13+ years, a few side-by-side comparisons of our outdoor sanctuary:

In 2004 one of our members had a very profitable year and wanted to make a donation to the Grove. They decided to build us a \$15,000 pavilion to use in our space, which we now call "Dun Elphame":

Indoors we have many different altars that span across several pantheons since our Grove consists of people from all different paths despite being a mainly Irish-Celtic

Grove. We tend to three main altars in our main community space for the Shining Ones, Nature Spirits, and Ancestors, though most of our High Rites are done outside. Our Ancestors altar was actually a project by a high school student who came to us a few years back requesting to do a community service project for us.

We also have a parsonage, which formerly was a one-room apartment with a kitchen and a bathroom that can be used for out-of-town guests. This space is also used for extra space during high rites, as well as an extra refrigerator for all of the food.

We average about 30 attendants per ritual, but have had upwards of 50. We have approximately 29 members to our Grove, not all of which are ADF members, but most are. It was **originally "founded" in 1989** during a Free Spirit Gathering by Will Pierson, and is ear-marked as having joined ADF in 1991 by ADF, making us the second oldest Grove in ADF.

As the current Senior Druid, I have to say that if I were to start over, I don't think I'd want to buy a building or land for my Grove. I don't see it as a negative thing, but I do feel that much of the focus is pointed towards the mundane responsibilities instead of the spiritual growth of the Grove. But regardless I'm proud of what CedarLight Grove has accomplished, and I will continue to work hard and keep it going in whatever direction it is heading.

(If you'd like to see more pictures of CedarLight Grove, visit our gallery:

<http://www.cedarlightgrove.org/gallery>

and use the login: adfmember/oakl3av3s)



CedarLight Grove Altars

Having been a member of ADF since 2003, Crystal Groves is currently the Senior Druid of CedarLight Grove, ADF, a passionate bard and naturalist, and currently working through the Clergy Training Program. She is valued by ADF International as an integral member of the web team.

## Grove of the Twilight Flame, ADF

Sault Ste Marie, MI

by Michele "Shell" Alexander

It all started with a little grove in search of its own space to worship. In the beginning everything had to be lugged out into a muddy, hard to get into spot in the woods. The place belonged to a friend's family. They were great people and we all love them, but we needed more. We needed a spot where we could have permanent altars and handicap access. That spot came from our current senior druid Jan and her husband Joe Sweet. Joe having made a promise to the "Powers That Be" he would do whatever they asked him to do if he had a successful hunting season, had no idea what deal he had made. A short while later he had a dream of a Giant Hammer in the ground on a special spot on his property. The deal was struck.

After some pre-planning and brain storming, Joe and our then Senior Druid Kalvin set out to clear a circle.

When I say clear a circle, I don't mean some light sweeping. With hand tools, chain saws, and a tractor they removed heavy brush and stumps. It was muddy and the mosquitoes loved them. At this point it didn't look like much. It was just a clearing in the woods approximately forty feet across.

Next Joe used his circa 1920's tractor to haul sand from a ridge on his property. He started leveling off the spot. He then took a stick and marked the center. From this stick he plotted out the circle using a nineteen foot length of string marking in the sand. Then he marked out the placement of the twelve posts (uprights) for our Henge.

This much work had taken him several months. Now he was presented with a problem, how do I move the stone we wanted for a main altar? The idea was to have a stone for all of us to set personal offerings on and have our hands free during service. It easily weighed 2,000 lbs! His old tractor wouldn't budge it. Fate intervened; the next door neighbor bought a new tractor. I can see the conversation going something like this: "That's some new tractor." "D'ya think that would move a thousand pounds?" "Two-ton ya say?"

**Three Rivers Festival Trois Fleuves**  
The ADF Canada East Regional Conference and Gathering  
A. D. F.  
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**GO TO**

- Raising of the Menhir (Standing Stone)
- ADF Regional Unity Ritual
- Regional ADF Meeting & Panel Discussion

**EVENTS**

- Guild and Crafts Fair
- Bardic Competition (original works only!)
- Lectures

**Party!**

- Friday Night Meet and Greet!
- Bonfires!
- drumming
- dancing
- revelry

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ADF Vice-Granddruid

Dr. Brendan Myers

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"I'd like to see that." This would be followed by a *\*ghosti* exchange of beers. He moved it for us at no charge (unless you count the beer).

For the upright poles Joe decided to use tamarack trees. They take a hundred years to rot in the ground and luckily he had some dead that needed to be cut down anyway! The neighbor helped out again by using his pulleys and tractor while felling the trees. The trees were then limbed and dragged with chains hitched to the tractors out to the circle. Joe's daughter, Juli, came over for a few days to help hoist and set the posts upright and level.

Several grove members donated cinder blocks to make a circle around the Nemeton two blocks high for seating. Most of them came from a neighbor of JD and Cindy (grove members). He was tearing down a building and he let them have the blocks for nothing.

Next came the portals. The Well is lined with two thirty-gallon barrels with the bottoms removed. During a drought a few years back, several frogs could not escape after they jumped in seeking water. Joe was able to save a few by fishing them out. We keep a lid over the Well when not in use so small critters cannot fall in now. It was a sad reminder that planning for the safety of your Nemeton is not just for humans. Take into account the impact on the nature spirits too.

The original Tree was a white oak but it didn't survive being transplanted to the grove. The tree we have now has been raised from an acorn and we have great hopes for its future!

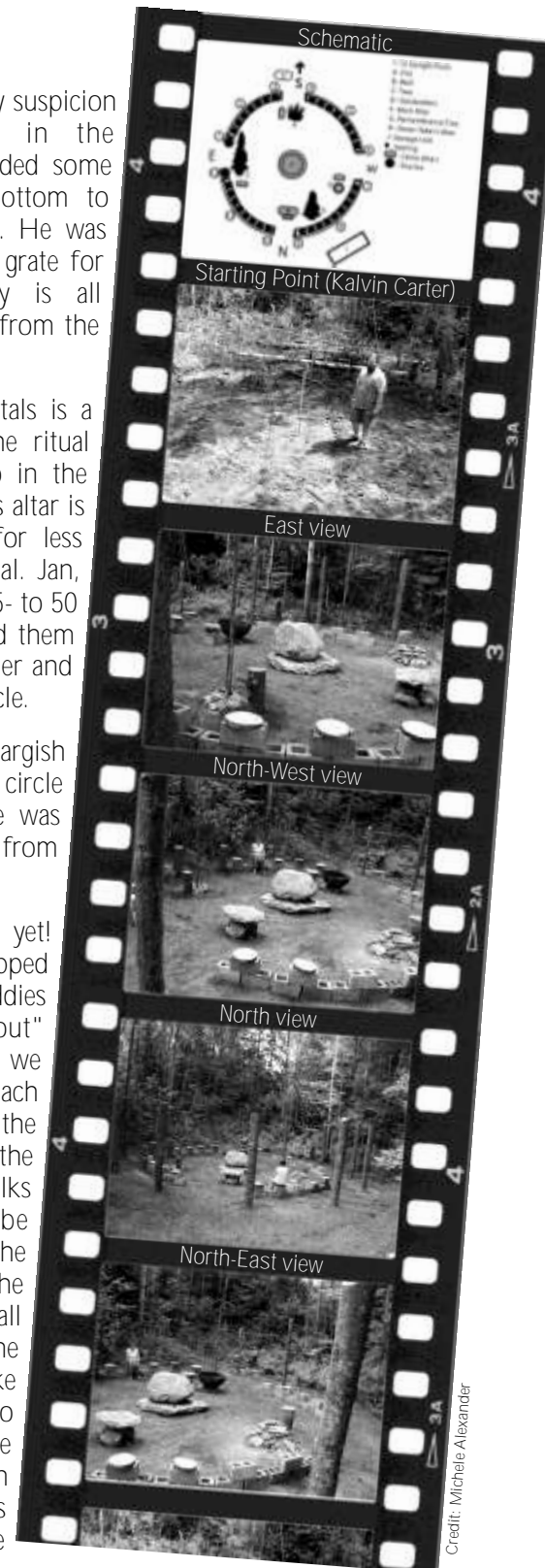
The Fire pit was a lucky find. It is the end cut off of a 500-gallon propane tank. One of Joe's cousins makes them into fire pits. He saw it at a family reunion and with some finagling to get it transported 300 miles north, we had our

fire portal. I have a sneaky suspicion alcohol was involved in the negotiation again. Joe added some drainage holes to the bottom to allow rain water run out. He was also able to find a metal grate for the top. This assembly is all balanced on three stones from the property.

Next to each of the portals is a small altar for setting the ritual offerings on that will go in the portal during the rite. This altar is very handy and makes for less confusion during the ritual. Jan, Joe, and I dug the small 25- to 50 -pound stones out, loaded them by hand to his four-wheeler and positioned them in the circle.

The Outdwellers have a largish stone located outside the circle to the south. This stone was also dragged to the spot from elsewhere on the property.

Ah, but we're not done yet! Yes, we could have stopped here and had what the kiddies call, "one pimped out" Nemeton. Being Norse, we added a short pole on each side off the opening on the east; one for fire and the other for ice. A person walks between these to be asperged upon entry to the grove. We also gave the omen-taker her own small altar and a smooth stone kneeler on which to take the omen. No one has to worry about losing a rune stone in the well, fire, or in the grass. As the grove's seer, I can only say I love



Credit: Michele Alexander

it. We then added an onsite storage unit. It stands on four poles and has double doors that drop down and latch in place so its water tight and keeps out the little critters. It is approximately four foot by four foot by six foot.

Joe, being the sentimental sort, added a remembrance tree. It is a post with "limbs" that allow a person to tie mementos to it. The grove tradition is to tell a story **about the departed person so they won't be forgotten** and then they tie the memento to the tree.

A grove member donated some grass seed. We mixed it in with our Nerthus/Earth Mother offering and spread the seed each time we made offering at ritual. Along with this, Joe also added some chives for color. Joe also ran electricity to the site and added a yard light for night ritual. He also put in a donation box made out of PVC pipe. Everything we do is by donation as our grove takes no dues.

All this is beautiful, but if you cannot get to it, what does it matter? We had this problem for several of our grove members. We have seniors with mobility issues. Joe and I spent an afternoon making a dirt ramp that gradually slopes down to the Nemeton. It should be twelve-foot length for each foot of height. Joe added a wooden hand rail and pine trees along the slope. Jan has added rose bushes, while I gave sage. The other side of the path has been filling in with mountain ash trees. They make a beautiful canopy over the trail. Wild flowers have moved in. You can hear the sounds of the wild things instead of traffic and noise. It has begun to blend in and have a natural feel over the last four years.

*Michele "Shell" Alexander has been with Grove of the Twilight Flame since 2004 and joined ADF in 2005. She has held the position of grove scribe and offers her services as an artist (costuming, sewn badges, flags, boats for Midsummer sacrifices, photographs, etc.) and omen taker.*

## Three Cranes Grove, ADF

Columbus, OH  
by Shawneen

Three Cranes Grove, ADF Nemeton was developed in partnership with the Unitarian Universalist Congregation East (UUCE). It is located on a beautifully landscaped and wooded parcel of land which borders on the Creek Blacklick in Reynoldsburg, Ohio. The Nemeton currently consists of a fire circle, altar, sacred well, shrine to the Earth Mother and a processional way leading from a mature Pin Oak through some hand carved boundary stones. We have celebrated over a years worth of sixth night druid moons as well as interfaith celebrations with the

UUCE. Grove members participate in property stewardship on a routine basis as a part of our ongoing partnership with the congregation of the UUCE. Mature rowan, oak, cherry and ash surround the Nemeton clearing along with hemlock, white pine and spruce.

*An ADF member since 2006, Shawneen is Three Cranes Grove's Naturalist and former Grove Scribe. He leads a monthly workshop/class on nature lore called "A Walk in the*

*Woods with Shawneen" at the local main library.*

## Our Whole Protogrove, ADF

Samsonville, NY

by Bryan Perrin

Nemeton as sacred grove

A temple without a roof

All weather worship

Out of doors

An outer expression of inner understandings

A Nemeton or sacred grove embodies an inbetween-ness that is not often found is a place of worship. It lacks a roof found over a temple; the roof carries with it the basic notion of shelter and protection from the elements.

The Nemeton, its contents and worshipers, are exposed to weather and is a purposely designated space that lacks the basics of domesticity.

It has wall and an entrance but no door or gate.

It is a place that is no longer wild, yet not tamed for human comfort.

A paradox of notions of inside and outside, it is never entirely closed or open. It is separated from its surroundings and clearly treated as a special space for sacred activity.

Its basic function is a receptacle for sacrifice and a seat or home of a spirit or spirits being worshipped. It does not appear to be treated as communal or common land, the property of tribe, clan or living noble; but a place belonging to or dedicated to Gods & Goddesses, Spirits of the Place or the mighty Dead.

It is a container or vessel of the sacrifice. I like to think that it is grown as much as it is built.

*Bryan Perrin has been a member of ADF since 1989 and was made fully Ordained Druid Clergy of Ár nDraiocht Féin in 2002. Having founded the*

*former Green Man Grove, after moving states he is beginning again with Our Whole Protogrove. He has served ADF International as Chronicler and Chief Artificer and was involved in the establishment of the National Nemeton at Brushwood.*

## Muin Mound Grove, ADF

East Syracuse, NY

by Rev. Skip Ellison

We started work on our current Nemeton in 1998. Before that we had a large structure in an open field made out of large poles in a “sort of” Iron Age roundhouse shape. Living in a wet climate, the poles didn’t last too long buried in the ground and as it became unsafe, we took it down.

The area in the woods where the Nemeton is currently located seemed the best choice for us.



Looking down from the bridge, as shown in the picture below, the three trees with rocks near their base form our **Kindreds’ triangle**.

The tree to the left and closest to the bridge is our **Ancestor’s tree and the location of our well bowl**. The tree to the right closest to the bridge is our Nature Spirits Tree, and the tree furthest away from the bridge is our Shining Ones Tree. It has an eight spoke wheel on it, symbolizing their powers.

The center of the triangle is raised and filled in with gravel and is the location of our fire. The small tree located right near the Ancestor’s Tree is our **Bile** and over the years, has had several small shoots start up from the ground near it. We like to think that it is showing the groves that have formed in nearby cites from our members.

The hardest part of creating the Nemeton was putting in the bridge. The first few years we were using it, we put wooden pallets down over the small creek that forms from snow melt. But there were a few times that the water was deep enough that we couldn’t hold our services in the Nemeton. Since the bridge has been in, we have always been able to cross into the Nemeton. The bridge is listing to one side

now, and this coming summer we have to raise that side up and fill the posts holes with more cement to straighten it out again.



Putting in the Nemeton was a very worthwhile endeavor, and brought the grove closer together through the “work parties” that were organized to create it. Usually each year, people bring more things to leave in the Nemeton on a permanent basis, and we have been planting flowers and shrubs around it. In the long run, I do not think it will ever be “finished” but it will continue to get more beautiful. We use it between Beltain and

Samhain each year. We have used it year round in the past, but it has become too hard to get to in the winter months because of the snow.

*A member of ADF since 1990, Rev. Skip Ellison is fulfilling his third and last term of office as Archdruid of ADF. His various activities in ADF have included serving as Senior Druid of Muin Mound for ten years; serving on the Mother Grove as Registrar, Scribe, and Vice-Archdruid; and serving also as the first Chief of the Magician's Guild. He has also worked on the revisions to ADF's Study Program.*

## Stone Creed Grove, ADF

Cleveland, OH

Formerly an organic potato garden, the owners of Tredara (a private residence) decided to convert this tree-enclosed field into a permanent Nemeton, used by Stone Creed Grove, ADF. There have been several incarnations of Hallows: the Bile (*photo 1*) is formed from straight tree trunks fallen in the surrounding woods, planted firmly in a mound of dirt surrounded by rounded paving borders and replaced as older ones rotted away; the Well shaft has been re-dug as it fills up with offerings and supported with bricks, currently covered with stone

decorated in knotwork; and the Fire pit was originally ringed on the grass, and then mounded and bricked, and finally cemented together.

In the North, the former Earth Mother votive pillar (*photo 2*) from the National Nemeton at Brushwood is now planted, with periodic cleaning and restoration of the tooled copper. A small hearth in front of the pillar provides space for offerings and has flowers planted in the dirt around her. In the south, a small brick altar amongst the brush serves as the Outdweller area.

To the West is the entry gate (*photo 3*), built of pressure-treated four-by-four posts topped with a lintel of the same material. The uprights are decorated in 27 stacked knotwork segments on each side, painted from the bottom with alternating blue, green and yellow (symbolizing sea, land and sky). The lintel is painted green for the background and there are future plans for symbols to be painted in yellow and blue. A carved wooden Gate Guardian was ritually interred in the soil beneath the gate to “chase away all ills” of the congregants passing through the gate. Flanking outside the gate are two clumps of hazelnut



trees that often provide nut offerings at High Days from Summer Solstice through Fall Equinox. In the field leading up to the Nemeton are trees from Beltaine rituals, still with clooties tied to them.

Processions into the Nemeton traverse a path over a wooden bridge, through the woods alongside a stream, and past a grove-created Earth Mother shrine and meditation spot. At the exposed root-mound of a tree, a lean-to

shelter was built to cover various votive art pieces (a well, tealight holders, shiny stones, goddess figures, etc.). A wicker wall sets off a flat space in front of the shrine and a flat stone set into white gravel provides meditative seating.

In the field from which this path leads, there's an old barn that has been converted into a comfortable potluck and social space. Electricity has been run out to this barn to provide lighting and plugs for appliances. With a rented porta-potty, this space is great for summer camping events.

## Brushwood (Wellspring Site)

*Sherman, NY*

The second year of Wellspring (1992), a National Nemeton was constructed based on a model proposed by Bryan Perrin, who offered an historical basis for mounding dirt over piled brush. The Fire pit was created from a metal truck wheel with the Bile (Tree) planted in the center and clad with copper for fire resistance (this lasted a few years before succumbing to burning), with the idea of placing the Hallows together in the center. However, the Well was divided into three pits around the edge (a major trip-hazard as it turned out) for Kindred offerings. Three paths spiraled into the mound with the idea of forming a triskele, but the paths proved difficult to navigate in the dark. The Bile was carved by Bryan into a tri-cephalous (three-headed) form.

In the next incarnation of improvements the three paths were straightened for better navigation and Nisza built a two-foot high applewood wicker wall around the pits and mound that lasted several years

before drying out and disintegrating. The pits were combined into a single Well shaft.

Several years later, Kia took the ADF Engineering Corps of Volunteers up to expand the mound with a more permanent rock wall, removing the truck wheel but covering the rest of the previous mound with fresh dirt. The Well shaft was dug down

to a depth of three feet and corbelled with stone. The fire pit was built with stones taller than the current one, but with less burn space. An Earth Mother idol wooden pillar was decorated with tooled copper sheeting and set in place. A few years later, Scott carved the current Gatekeeper from driftwood to add to the idol pillars, followed by a more robust Earth

Mother pillar, as currently seen (the previous Earth Mother pillar was planted back at Tredara – Stone Creed Grove's Nemeton).

Other features at the National Nemeton include the now-cemented stone-faced altar, mounted on cinder blocks, and two votive posts for the Ancestors and Land Spirits. A long path lined with four-by-four posts joined with rope (and often lit with paper-bag luminaries) leads up to an Outdweller offering area before crossing a wooden bridge to the Nemeton. A shorter entrance off the dirt road supports setup/teardown and provides handicapped accessibility. In addition, various votive shrines have been added by inspired members of ADF: Brigid, Taranis, Epona and Sky Father, as well as sundry less-identifiable contributions.

☪

There are other Nemeton of ADF, including the famous Old Stone Circle at Sonoran Sunrise Grove



Credit: Skip Ellison



(viewable at [<http://www.ssg-adf.org/circle.htm>]) – this was an ambitious and costly project, well worth looking at online, if you have not been fortunate enough to visit. Don't be discouraged in your local efforts – start small enough to see results the first year and then make plans to improve as the years and ambitions increase.

*Steph Gooch started in ADF at Stone Creed Grove's Summer Solstice, 1998. She completed the Dedicant Program in 2005 and is a DP Mentor working on the General Study Program. She is the current Editor-in-Chief of OakLeaves.*



Credit (all photos): AJ Gooch





*Epona Shrine*



Credit (all photos): AJ Cooch



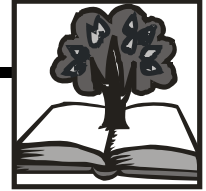
*Sky Father Shrine*



# Video Review

## The Secrets of the Druids

by Mary Jones



When alerted to this one-hour program on the National Geographic Channel, I was intrigued—what new facts could there be? Archaeology is an evolving field, certainly, and the "National Geographic" brand was a fairly reliable one, at least in my mind. Unfortunately, the style of the program was typical of cable "historical" "documentaries" usually seen on channels like NatGeo and the History Channel—poorly-directed, poorly-costumed pantomime reenactments, shot at less-dramatic-than-intended angles, while a narrator intones ominously about the events, intercut with talking head experts (such as the ubiquitous archaeologist Miranda Aldhouse-Green).

The tone of the documentary was sensationalist to the point of absurdity. It largely focused on the Roman invasion of Britain, and how the Druids represented a resistance force. Which is certainly fine as it goes, but for a show called *Secrets of the Druids*, it's an amazingly small window to explore the subject of Celtic religious practices. Moreover, the conclusions drawn in the program—that the Druids fought the Romans via human sacrifice as a magical defense, and this battle for Britain was a clash between the civilized Roman Empire and barbaric Celts—was of such heavy bias. And the "secrets of the druids"? Well, apparently the secret of the Druids is that they were barbarian cannibals who delighted in human sacrifice while resisting the Romans and their gift of civilization. This was one of the worst examples of making one civilization the Other, while assuming the viewers will associate themselves with the Same, i.e. the Romans. It is as far from a postcolonial examination as one can find without actually having being written by the ancient Romans themselves. The Celts are treated not as a true civilization, but as an evil to be conquered. This narrative, I should point out, is not the fault of those archaeologists interviewed, who often point out that if these are examples of human sacri-

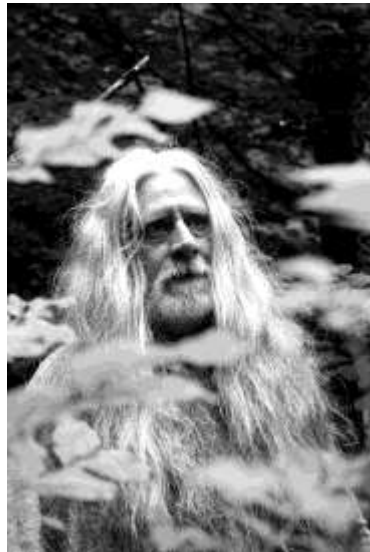
fice, they were made in a time of extreme stress, even cultural annihilation.

If I seem to repetitively use the word "barbarian", I'm unfortunately imitating the script of the show. At one particularly ridiculous moment, the Celts are referred to by archaeologist Mike Pitts as "pagan", while the Romans are... What? Not pagan? The use of the word "pagan" within this context is an incredibly fraught one, which I feel obliged to untangle. The word pagan in an ancient context certainly meant a rustic, one who lacked urban experiences—in the modern

American parlance, a hick. And certainly to the Romans the Celts of Britain would have seemed pagan. But in the modern Anglosphere, "pagan" often has a dual meaning—in the first instance, it means those who don't follow the Abrahamic religions, which would certainly describe both the Celts and the Romans, as they were polytheists; and the second, it has unsavory undertones of barbarism—there's that word again—and dark rites usually involving blood sacrifices to demonic forces. It's this second meaning in which the term is being used here, and it's a highly offensive one.

The program claims that "archaeology has provided few clues... until a recent discovery", i.e. the so-called "druid's grave" in Kent. A very valuable find, and indeed he seems to be a surgeon of some kind, and the presence of metal rods with no known purpose may reflect the belief that this was a divination tool. But instead of spending time on this fascinating discovery, they then jump from these rods to the famous description of Strabo (though they don't bother identifying it as such) that the Celts divined the future by stabbing their victims and studying the death-spasms.

Much of the program likes to focus on a "Celtic cult of death", with descriptions of Caesar's Wicker Man (which even the program has to admit there is no evidence for outside of the Roman imagination). They



Credit: National Geographic Channel

then describe the site of a battle at Ribemont-sur-Ancre as evidence of massive human sacrifice. Some bones are "completely jumbled up" in a pile of bodies and weapons. This isn't really a sign of human sacrifice, but the site of a battle, of victory. Outer bones may have been suspended on the wooden palisades—but this is no different than placing heads on London Bridge, is it? One skeleton was found set apart, not dismembered, but for his head cut off with a sword. The program suggests that this is an example of human sacrifice. But is this human sacrifice, or the execution of a losing chieftain? Is this significantly different from, say, the beheading of various modern kings of Europe who were on the losing side of a battle? Of Charles I or Louis XVI?

Their next example of massive human sacrifice was apparently found by a group of cavers in Alveston. Some 150 remains have been found, dating to roughly the time of the second Roman invasion in 43 CE, but they can't claim that it was definitely from one single event, only that the people who were found were local, and died violent deaths (broken skulls, for examples). The presence of dog bones in the cave leads Dr. Mark Horton of Bristol University to claim that this was a mass sacrifice to Nodens, for whom dogs are sacred, and whose cult site was nearby in Lydney. But there's no way to definitively prove this is a mass human sacrifice by Celts, or a slaughter of Celts by Romans, or by another tribe.

But then the most egregious argument is made about the site. A human bone, split down the middle, is found—and the obvious suggestion is that this is an example of cannibalism. One archaeologist says this is the only time she's seen such a split bone, which would argue that this is an extremely rare event of cannibalism, and the only example even from that cave (at least according to the documentary). It's a huge leap to then follow Pliny's claim that the Druids indulged in cannibalism, since it is admitted, even in this program, there is no other example of cannibalism that has been found. However, the program uses it to argue that the Druids practiced ritual cannibalism, as if it were an everyday occurrence and not an aberration.

They finally come to the Lindow Man. The Lindow Man, dating to the time of the Roman invasion, is a *very real* example of human sacrifice, having been hung, bludgeoned, and slashed across the throat, and apparently having consumed mistletoe. Aldhouse-

Green emphasize that this was a "last stand" of the northern Britons.

The subject of human sacrifice is a tricky one. The Celts certainly practiced it on some level, but then so did their neighbors, not the least being the Romans with their gladiator games and *Rex Nemorensis*, the famous sacred king-priest of Diana who kills his predecessor and plucks the golden bough. The Romans only officially outlawed the practice in 97 BCE. **I don't object to exploring how or why the Celts would practice human sacrifice—what I object to is the sensationalism, with Romans portrayed as enlightened liberators who have come to rid the world—or at least Britain—of murderous, barbarian cannibals, without admitting that the Romans could be equally cruel to anyone who opposed the Roman state. Just look at the practice of crucifixion.**

One of the most annoying errors of the program was to claim that the Druids were destroyed at the battle of Anglesey, as recounted by Tacitus, and thereafter ceased to exist, replaced by the Romans. This rather limited view completely disregards the very existence of Ireland, where the druid priesthood apparently survived as late as the seventh century—i.e., well into the Middle Ages. But even if we ignore an entire island of un-Romanized Celts, others have pointed out references to druids as late as the fourth century, such as the "druidess" in the *Historia Augusta*, and the poet Ausonius who claims that his friend, the rhetorician Attius Patera, was descended of druids. If the druids were the bloody, evil, barbarian cannibals that this program paints, would any Roman stand for being called a descendant?

Finally, Aldhouse-Green notes that the Romans were anti-druid largely because they were the focus of the resistance against Rome—so whether or not they were truly barbaric or not, whether they practiced human sacrifice or not (or in great numbers or not), their real offense to the Romans was the fact that they didn't want to be conquered by Rome.

An antidote to this program, if one can find it, is Terry Jones' series "Barbarians", a look at the enemies of Rome through more sympathetic eyes. The first episode deals with the Celts (of which the Welsh Pythonite emphasizes he is descended), and presents a society far more complex and advanced than what is presented by "Secrets of the Druids", where "the Triumph of Rome over barbarism" resulted in "a thousand year old culture washed away with the blood of

their people." That the culture was *not* really “washed away”, as Rome never conquered Ireland, or the northern part of Britain now known as Scotland. Those people were certainly Celts—but that isn’t very convenient for the narrative of this “documentary.”

Notes:

1. Alison Futrell's *Blood in the Arena* makes the argument “that the amphitheater was a politicized temple that housed the mythic reenactment of the cult of Roman statehood”, and indeed, there is no separation of church and state in ancient Rome.
2. Augustinus Hibernicus. "De Mirabilibus Sacrae Scripturae". *King of Mysteries: Early Irish Religious Writings* edited by John Carey. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000.



# Invocation

## Nuada Airgetlám

by Jamie Goodwin



*To be used at a Spring Equinox Ritual:*

Great and Mighty High King

Wise and noble God

Skillful acquirer of all that is needed

Nuada Airgetlám

Of the Silver Arm

Restored and glorious king

We throw off the long dark of depression and tyranny.

We rejoice at the balance restored in our growing Earth.

We exalt with joy at the sight of you retaking your throne.

Come to my fire High King

Be welcomed in this, my sacred grove

Partake of these gifts of love and honor

Nuada Airgetlám, accept my sacrifice!



# Personal Story

## Beltaine with the Bees

by Brighde Indigo



*[Author's note: In the early 1990's I worked as caretaker for a Unitarian-Universalist church. The position included a cottage on six beautiful acres of grounds surrounding the church. Early mornings and weekdays were particularly delicious, since church activities were rarely scheduled then. I often felt like the guardian spirit of the place and greatly enjoyed my solitary hours in deep communion with Ma Nature, who blessed me with many ecstatic moments. The following piece is from a journal reflection made shortly after the Spring Equinox in 1992. It was published in an edited version in The Witch Next Door, a newsletter produced by my friend, Kerdys, for the Sacramento Valley Pagan community.]*

Ah, Beltaine! This spring is so glorious. I don't believe the Lady and Her Consort have waited to consummate Their love! The whole exquisite Earth is pulsing with erotic energy, and every day some new growing thing bursts into radiant bloom. I am reminded daily of the lines from one of Rilke's elegies: "Oh, Earth!! I need no more of your Springtimes! One, just one, is already too rich for my blood!" Sweet desire truly weds wild delight in this season. The Earth vibrates and shimmers with Life.

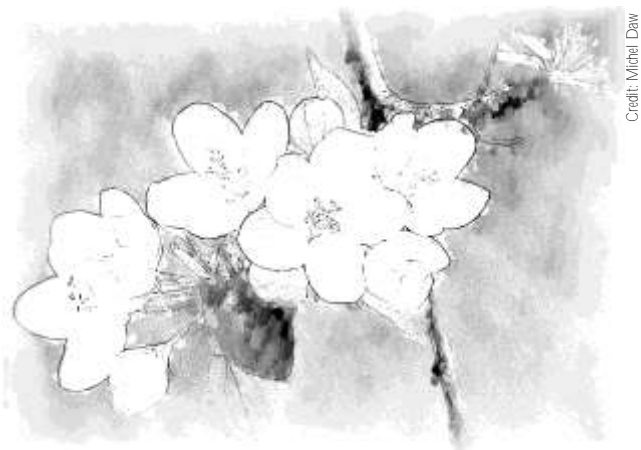
This afternoon I looked across the grounds to where The Graces—three crabapple trees—are in full flower. From the cottage doorstep they appeared to be quivering and dancing in a breeze, but the air was still. Curious, I wandered down the gravel path and across the footbridge. As I drew nearer, a faint sound drifted out from the trees, like barely heard white noise, the background music of the universe.

Closer and closer I was pulled, mesmerized by the movement, the song, the inexplicable surging dance, until finally I stood under the triad of flowering trees. Thousands of bee people were singing in the branches, busy with their sacred harvest, and the ground where I stood vibrated with their music. Caught in that spell of sound and sense, my body as throbbing and resonant with Life as in the sweetest orgasm, I felt myself released from time, and dissolved in Love's ecstatic fertile dance. Unable to resist, I also began to dance under that triune altar to Flora, with her acolytes, the bees.

Some of the bees alighted on my upraised arms, checking for nectar, perhaps. I prefer to think they

were anointing me with the Goddess' blessing of that moment, for they never stung me, and lingered briefly as if to join their dance with mine. And so we honored Her together. Hours later, now, as I write this, every cell of my body still hums with the rhythm of our dance. The feast of Beltaine is weeks away, and I look forward as always to a celebration with my human community. Yet, those timeless moments with the bees today were the essence of Beltaine for me. Goddess, hold it in my memory, and may Eros bless us sweet and wild forever.

*Brighde Indigo has been a member of ADF since 2007, and is an active member of Sierra Madrone Grove. Her interests include quilting and sewing in the Artisans guild.*



Crabapple blossoms—2010  
(digital watercolour)

Credit: Michel Daw



## *The Art of Robyn Bellospirito*

*artist, writer, storyteller*

[www.robynbellospirito.com](http://www.robynbellospirito.com)



*(Above: Lady Brigid, Left: Forest Queen, Right: Queen of Hearts)*



# A Druid's Hearth Prayer



by Christopher S. Yow

Welcome, Kindreds of the Blessed Realms,  
Noble Ones of Land, Sky, and Sea,  
I ask that you remember me,  
And gather round my kindled hearth.

In offering to the Holy Well,  
May its waters be replenished.  
May its magic meld with my own  
To open a door between the worlds.

In offering to the Holy Fire,  
May its power be renewed.  
May its magic meld with my own  
To open a door between the worlds.

In offering to the Holy Tree,  
May its majesty be upheld.  
May its magic meld with my own  
To be a bridgeway between the worlds.

Sacred Well and Fire and Tree,  
Now flow and flame and grow in me!  
Now the gates between are open  
As portals for my humble devotion.

Ancestors and beloved kin,  
Dwellers within the Hollow Hill,  
Accept this token of my love,  
And restore me to your memory.

Land Spirits and beloved kin,  
Dwellers upon the Middle World,  
Accept this token of my love,

And restore me to your memory.

Mighty Ones and beloved kin,  
Dwellers above the Starry Reach,  
Accept this token of my love,  
And restore me to your memory.

Kindreds of the Blessed Realms,  
Remember me as one of yours.  
As gift given calls for gift returned,  
I ask now for your wisdom and blessings.

May peace deepen always between us,  
Peace above me and peace below me,  
Peace to girdle, ward, and guide me,  
Peace in the Land, in the Sky, in the Sea.

Kindreds three, I bid farewell for now.  
Let the gates opened now be closed,  
And Tree and Fire and Well, restored,  
Now be left as they were before.

May the Earth continue to hold me up,  
And the Sea remain within its bounds.  
May the Sky revolve and shelter me,  
And peace and wisdom be our parting words.

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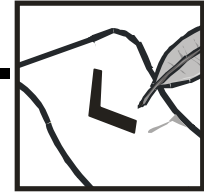
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SATURDAY: 10AM-8PM  
SUNDAY: NOON-6PM



# Article

## Principles of the Avestan (Indo-Iranian) Hearth Culture in ADF

by: Rev. Jessie "Medb" Olson



One of the hearth cultures with the least visibility in ADF is the culture of the Avestan (Indo-Iranian) people. Until recently I had little interest in this culture myself but through research into my family history I discovered that the "Lebanese" side of the family is actually Parsi, this explains why my grandfather was a political refugee (we'd always wondered what the circumstances were that led to his arrival in this country). This sparked my interest to begin researching the culture and how this religion would fit with ADF cosmology.

I use the term *Avestan* to describe the culture of these people and do not use *Indo-Iranian* because that term technically encompasses the Vedic people as well. Interchangeably, the phrase "ancient Iranian" may be used in this article.

The primary problem with researching this particular culture is not a lack of written records, the Avesta is a lengthy text which is widely available, but a lack of pre-Zoroastrian records. While many of the traditions and beliefs of the Zoroastrians may stem from earlier times, it is difficult to separate many of the Zoroastrian influences from the original beliefs.

The primary elements of Avestan hearth culture as it relates to ADF that I will cover in this article include order, chaos, the Outdwellers, the Kindred, the Three Realms, and the Three Worlds.

### The Importance of Order and Chaos

It is obvious from reading the Avesta, the primary religious text of the Zoroastrians, that Order and Chaos were issues of primary importance to the Avestan people. The ancient Iranians believed that the world acted according to a natural law or order, which they called *asha*. *Asha* also governed human behavior. The most valued of human virtues seem to have been "truth, honesty, loyalty and courage" and *asha* was also believed to have enforced the sacredness of a man's word.

### Outdwellers

*Daevas* are beings of chaos and disorder and fit the ADF concept of Outdwellers well. In the Gathas, the oldest texts of the Avesta, the *daevas* are identified as "false gods" that should be rejected. In the Younger Avesta, they are merely beings that promote disorder and chaos but are not specifically evil themselves. In later Persian folklore they are often interpreted as personifications of evil.



*Æjhi dahhaka*, a "dragon" or "serpent" in Indo-Iranian myth and folklore.

The word *Daeva* is a cognate for the Vedic *Deva*. In the Avesta, *daevas* are beings in opposition to the *Ahuras* (beings "worthy of worship" or deities). The word *Ahura* is a cognate for the Vedic *Asura* and *Æsir* of the Norse. It is interesting that, in the Vedas, the sacred texts of the Vedic peoples, it is the *Asuras* that have the negative traits associated with the *Daevas* in the Avesta. The negative disposition of the *Asura* in Hinduism appears to have progressed over time. The earliest texts in Vedism indicate that

the *Asuras* preside over society, while the *Devas* preside over the nature.

### The Kindred

#### *Nature Spirits*

It is clear that the pre-Zoroastrian, Indo-Iranians honored a number of elemental beings associated with nature. *Asman* was the spirit of the sky while *Zam* was the spirit of the earth. The sun, *Hvar*, and the moon, *Mah*, were also venerated. There were also two wind deities, *Vata*, the god that brings the rain-clouds and the god of the blowing winds, *Vanyu*. *Vanyu* was regarded by the Avestans as the breath of life itself. The god *Tishtrya*, the dog star, protected the clouds that brought rain. *Arədvī Sūrā Anāhitā* was the goddess of the water, and embodied the sacred river that poured from the great sea, called the *Vourukasha*.

## Ancestors

Among the ancestors are the honored dead, the heroes and the farohar. As with many Indo-European cultures the Avestan people honored their deceased family members. The festival *frawardīgān* is a sort of “All-Souls” day celebrated just before the end of the year and dedicated to honor the spirits of the dead and the *fravashis*.

*Fravashis* were a sort of guardian spirit of the living and the dead. Boyce suggests that the *fravashis* may be the remnants of an earlier hero-cult in the “Iranian Heroic Age” (c. 1500 BC onwards), when ancestor-worship was still common

In the modern Zoroastrian faith there are six feasts, called *gahambar's*, in a year. The sixth is called the *Hamaspahmaidyem Gahambar*. It is dedicated to honoring and treating the farohars and the souls of those who have died recently to rites of hospitality. This rite is similar to the tradition of Samhain and lasts three days while families of the departed prepare meals for the souls of the dead.

## Shining Ones Earth Mother

The best candidate for Earth Mother in Avestan cosmology is *Spenta Armaiti*. Her name essentially means “increasing or growing serenity”. The *Gathas*, the oldest texts in Avesta, are filled with references to Armaiti as an independent being, an abstract concept, an adjective to describe human virtue, and a personification of the earth itself.<sup>6</sup>

She is the daughter and consort of Ahura Mazda and associated with the earth. Because of this association she is viewed as the goddess of fertility and the dead.<sup>9</sup>

She is also often invoked when a new piece of land is dedicated or a building is consecrated. In modern Zoroastrian ritual she is symbolized by a white sheet that lies beneath all other sacred items and delineates the sacred space.

## Inspiration

*Arədvī Sūrā Anāhitā* is a popular supernatural being, or *yazatā*, and is one of the most ancient figures in pre-Zoroastrian cosmology. She is the guardian of the

waters and is associated with healing, fertility, and wisdom.

The connection between *Arədvī Sūrā Anāhitā* and wisdom is also apparent in the Aban Yasht, where she is the goddess to whom priests and students pray for insight and knowledge. The proto-Iranian equivalent *\*Harabvatī*, derives from Indo-Iranian *\*Sarasvatī* making *Arədvī Sūrā Anāhitā* and the Vedic *Saraswati* cognates.<sup>4</sup>

## Gatekeeper

Sraosha is the name for the divinity of obedience. He is one of three deities, along with Rashnu and Mithra, who judges souls at the Činvat bridge, the “bridge of judgment” but he is the only one that accompanies the soul on his journey across the bridge. This makes him the natural psychopomp for ADF ritual.

## Guardian

Rashnu Razishta makes an appropriate guardian for ADF rites, as he is the deity of truth and prevents the devas from destroying Creation. He is also one of the judges that pronounce the fate of men when they die.

## Other Prominent Deities

There were several other deities that were revered in the Avesta but two in particular stand out as having played particularly important parts in the religion of the Avestan people.

Mithra is one of the most well-known of the Iranian deities. The proto-Indo-Iranian root word *\*mitra* means “covenant, contract, oath, or treaty. He is commonly interpreted as a god of soldiers due to his associations with war in Roman times. However, in the Avesta he is THE god of judgment and is the god who watches the world from on high and, seeing everything, knows the truth.<sup>17</sup>

Hoama is the priest of the gods and is a cognate with the Vedic Soma. He is both a divine plant (soma) and god. The jaw, tongue, and left eye of every sacrificed animal are given to him. The significance of this is obvious as the eye, jaw, and tongue are organs of vision and speech, powers of the priestly class. Therefore failure to offer this sacrifice would be a slight to Hoama, all priests, and the sacrifice itself. In



Mithra Slaying the Primordial Bull

Credit: Louvre Museum, Paris, France

fact, the penalty for failing to offer this portion to Hoama is severe; “no priest, warrior, or herdsman will be born into your home but instead a line of sorcerers (followers of the daevas) will be born into your home.”

### The Three Hallows

#### *Fire*

There are several types of fire mentioned in the Gathas: “mental (Songs 4.3 and 12.6), the radiant light (4.19 and 16.9), the warmth (8.4), and full-of-energy (7:4). It is to help meditate in quest of righteousness (8.9) and to enlighten one's mind to find means to ward off danger (11.7).”

In the Avesta, “Atar meant both fire and the deity presiding over it.” In Zoroastrian cosmology, fire was created by Asha Vahishta (the best Asha) with the help of Atar (the fire elemental or deity). Therefore, Atar is the most important element of Asha (cosmic order).

Fire acted as the primary intermediary for the gods and was the primary mode for sacrifice which took “the form of libations, soma (Haoma), and in many cases animals.”

History books written by Muslim travelers talk of fire-altars that were lit without wood. It has been determined that many of these fire-temples were in oil-rich regions and were probably fed by natural gas. The Azar Goshnasb temple in Azerbaijan, Iran and the temple in Baku both had natural gas-fed fire altars. Recent excavations have revealed baked clay pipelines to the fire-altars.

#### *Well*

The importance of water in Avestan religion is also made apparent by numerous references to and prayers to the waters in the Avesta. The most sacred and important of rituals in the Avesta is the Hoama ritual. During the recital of the ritual a portion of the mixture of milk, ephedra, and spring water, called *parahôm*, is returned to the water while the priest invokes Arədvī Sūrā Anāhitā.

The water itself later became the elemental deity Apas and regular offerings (of plant or animal material) were made to her at the nearest pool or spring.

#### *Tree or Other Axis Mundi*

In Avestan cosmology there is a tree known as the Saena. It is the “Tree of All Seeds” and is the tree from which all plants on earth come. In the Bundahisn, the “book of creation”, it says, “he produced the Tree; first it grew up in the middle of this earth, several feet high, - without branches, without bark, without thorn, fresh and sweet; it had in its germ (seed) all kind of force of the trees; He produced the Water and Fire for the help of the Tree; ... it grew for ever with their strength (Bundahisn 1a.11).” Given this passage it would seem that the Tree of All Seeds is more like a pillar than a tree.

Despite the existence of the tree it seems that the first mountain created on earth, Harā Bərəzaitī or High Hara might be a more appropriate Axis Mundi. It is the center of the world in Avestan cosmology and even the sun, moon, and stars had their orbit around Hara. It has also been suggested that Harā Bərəzaitī might occupy the North Pole.

It is interesting to note that the tree sits in the center of the mountain in the cosmic ocean, from whence all the waters of the earth flow. The rivers of the earth are described as flowing from the ocean to the earth and back to the mountain again. There is not just a good case for the tree in mythology and cosmology but also in ritual. The Haoma ritual, one of the most important rituals of the Avesta, uses twigs from a pomegranate tree, which grows in the courtyard in the temple, and water from a spring that flows in the courtyard. When the ritual is completed the Haoma, mixed with spring water and goats milk, is returned to the spring.

In the Vendidad, an ecclesiastical rather than liturgical text within the Avesta, Harā Bərəzaitī is described as being on one end of the Činvat bridge. The bridge extends over the lands of the daēva and the unworthy will fall from the bridge into that land when they attempt to cross. It is interesting to note that this is very similar to the Bifrost Bridge of the Norse mythology.

### Cosmology

#### *Upperworld*

Ahura Mazda, who created Harā Bərəzaitī, built palaces on it for Mithra, Rashnu, Sraosha, Ardvī-sura Anahita, and Hoama. Humans were not able to live

on the mountain but many of the heroes were able to make sacrifices there.

As mentioned previously, the celestial bodies were thought to revolve around Harā Bərəzaitī the “bright mountain around which the many (stars) revolve, where come neither night nor darkness, no cold wind and no hot wind, no deathful sickness, no uncleanness made by the daevas, and the clouds cannot reach up unto.”<sup>29</sup>

### *Midworld (Including the Three Realms)*

In the ancient Iranian religion the world is surrounded by a sphere of stone. In the bottom half there is water and the earth is a flat round disk of soil which floats upon the water. In the center of the earth stands the Harā Bərəzaitī (the Axis Mundi) around which the heavens revolve. The middle continent of Khvanuras (Ganiratha, Hvaniratha), “which equaled in size all the rest combined and surpassed them in prosperity and fortune,” was surrounded by six other lands. Each of these other lands was bordered and separated by great forests and mountain and a mountain range surrounds all the lands.

### *Underworld*

There was also a belief in a life after death. According to tradition the spirit lingered in the head of the deceased for three days before he went to the Činvat bridge where he would be judged and cross over to the subterranean kingdom of the dead. The kingdom of the dead is ruled by Yima, the “first king to rule on earth and the first man to die.” In this world the dead depend on their descendants on earth to satisfy their hunger and clothe them. The first born son is expected to make offerings to his parents for 30 years after their death.<sup>32</sup>

### *Conclusion*

While I do not anticipate this to be an exhaustive study of the Avestan religion as it relates to ADF cosmology, I do hope it will make a good starting point for any ADF member interested in following this hearth culture. I hope to see many more contributions on this topic in the near future and look

forward to learning even more from other interested followers of the Avestan hearth culture.

*Rev. Jessie “Medb” Olson has been a member of ADF since 2003. In that time, she has been a member of Sonoran Sunrise Grove and has served ADF as the Regalia Manager. She is the Northwest Regional Druid, Deputy Chief of the Council of Regional Druids, a Dedicator Priest, and a member of the Clergy Officer’s Council. She authored ADF’s Festival Organizer’s Handbook, is compiling a new Grove Organizer’s Handbook, and is developing a Druid Scouting program with Feather River Grove.*

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Anahita (Bronze, 500 BCE)

Credit: British Museum

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# Song

## Sacred Center (in two parts)

by Melissa "Missy" Burchfield



Voice 1

Well and fine and Sac - red Tree,

Voice 2

The land, be lo - w us, the sea, sur - ro - unds us, the

Flow and Burn and Litow in me!

sky, a - bove us at the cen - ter a - re we. (The)



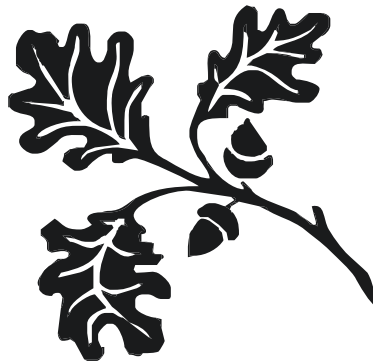
# Poetry

## A Seed

by Allen Grim



A seed  
 Unsown is just a seed  
 It bears no fruit  
 No action  
 No essence  
 It remains a container  
 A vessel  
 A thought  
 A seed  
 Unsown is just a seed



A seed  
 Sown is more than a seed  
 It bears fruit  
 It causes action  
 It is effect.  
 It sends forth  
 It nourishes  
**It's Prosperous.**  
 A Seed  
 Unsown is just a seed  
 A Seed

Sown  
 Is more than a seed



# Members Advocate Speaks

## ADF is Made of People!

by Arthur Shipkowski



In October, I was invited to be the guest at an ADF video chat. Despite technological quirks, I think it went quite well, with a lot of questions that really made me think. One question was to the effect of “What is one thing, as Members' Advocate, that you want to tell ADF members?” The answer is “ADF is made of people!”

ADF's primary interaction model, even for grove members, is online. Some Groves do have extensive in-person events—but that's interaction with that Grove rather than with ADF as a national organization. Given the costs involved, it's unlikely that ADF as a national organization is going to have extensive use of other modes of interaction. Festivals are highlighted as a way to “meet ADF”, but they are not frequent, and they require a certain regional saturation to happen.

I find that online discourse, unfortunately, tends to cause people to forget that ADF is made of people. My last column focused specifically on general communication with the people that are ADF. This column addresses a related tangent of ADF being made of people: getting things done in ADF.



Members occasionally need ADF, as an organization, to do something for them. These can be quick items like getting a question answered, to important things like sorting out an issue with membership renewal. Most of these requests come in via the ADF Office, either through the contact form at the website or the handy email address ([adf-office@adf.org](mailto:adf-office@adf.org)).

However, sometimes these things do not seem to be handled in a timely fashion. What do members do then? A number of them don't say anything, figuring it will happen as “Fast as a Speeding Oak Tree!” A number of them vent to others about it, sometimes because it doesn't seem like a big deal.

However, there is one appropriate action: send a reminder to the person involved, or, if that has already been attempted, *politely* try to move up the

chain to someone else. Why is this the best way? Firstly, it is possible that the breakdown may be elsewhere. Recently I resolved a situation where someone was supposedly not added to an email list. They were in fact on the list—they just weren't paying attention. Without checking on the situation, it might have been thought actions needed to be taken that weren't.

Of course, sometimes the item isn't done. ADF is made of people, and despite Druidic thoughts on memory, people and the devices they create to help remember things, people are fallible, even among volunteers and leaders. Sometimes we forget, or a task never gets on our task-list. Or something happens—we all have additional aspects of our lives (often those aspects are also people!) that influence our ability to get ADF things done. Worse yet, if we realize later that we've forgotten—we may be embarrassed at missing it, a very human experience.

I can speak on this, I feel, because I've been guilty of it. Early on in my time as MA, I handled a matter for a member whose ID number was in the low double-digits. I thought it was fully handled, until I went to prepare my report for the quarter, at which time I realized I'd never followed through on the final step! I quickly fixed the situation, but I was quite embarrassed to have missed something for that long, especially for a long-term member.

If I'd been reminded about it, I would have fixed it much faster. Of course, the key is writing a good reminder that will encourage the person to do the desired thing. If it's very late, they will be quite embarrassed and so allowing them to save face may help, especially on a first reminder. Encouragement is equally welcome if the problem is that (likely unbeknownst to you) they've had something happen that prevented them from getting to it (either directly, or by causing it to 'fall off the radar'). In that case they may feel a harsh reminder is intentionally belittling

whatever situation occluded their previous attempt to accomplish the given task. This is especially problematic when the unrelated situation involves people important to them.

Here's an example of a bad reminder message:

*From: A. Random ADFer*

*To: Arthur Shipkowski*

*Subject: Fix it!*

*Art,*

*I can't believe you haven't handled the change I asked to be made! It only takes a minute to do! Get it done now!*

*-Random*

What's wrong with this message? First, the tone is discouraging. The writer seems to feel I had nothing to do but that one change, and assumes it is the top priority. Second, it assumes I know what the change is. If the original message never got to me in this age of spam, I have no idea what change is required. Third, it's sent directly to me rather than via an official email address. While not all official email addresses go to multiple people or have flagging, a number do. As MA, I have set up my email client to flag all email sent to [adf-members-advocate@adf.org](mailto:adf-members-advocate@adf.org) in a special, high-priority way that helps it avoid getting lost among everything else.

Let's rewrite it for A:

*From: A. Random ADFer*

*To: [adf-members-advocate@adf.org](mailto:adf-members-advocate@adf.org)*

*Subject: Problem with my Address*

*Art,*

*I know we emailed about this before, but could you look into the address change I sent in with my compassionate membership? It didn't seem to go through, and my old roommates complained about my ADF mail coming to them.*

*My member ID is -1. In case the Internet ate it, my new address is:*

*A. ADFer*

*20 W. North Ave.*

*Cedar Rapids, IA 50210*

*-Random*

At this point, the email is where it needs to be, I should have all the information I need, even that from the original email, or I can reply if I have further questions.

In the end, getting things done in ADF is getting things done by people—wonderfully imperfect people. The next time something gets held up, use a gentle reminder to increase your chances of getting it done.

*Art Shipkowski is currently the outgoing ADF Members' Advocate (MA). Beyond the defined duties of this position (essentially, a voice on the Mother Grove more directly representing the members), he has actively sought out causes of member dissatisfaction and helped people get the most out of ADF.*

Arthur Shipkowski has served three consecutive terms as ADF Members Advocate with honor and diligence, and the staff and contributors of Oak Leaves wish to thank him for his years of selfless service.

May the Kindreds bless you, Art, as you have blessed us!



# Poetry

## At This Significant Moment (To These Five Things I Give Honor)

by *Brandon Newberg*



At this significant moment,  
When frost hardens the furrows,  
Granaries are all but empty,  
And sons and daughters tarry beyond the hill in arms,

At this significant moment,  
When the snowy field is surveyed by a new worker,  
An unprecedented hand grips the plow,  
And seeds of change shake in the basket,

At this significant moment,  
When weight shifts anxiously from foot to foot,  
Ruddy cheeks shiver,  
And lips blow on knuckles like dice for good luck,  
Let me in my way give honor to five things.

*First, to Justice:*

That wrongs past and wrongs current be set right,  
That all may share fairly and equally in the harvest,  
And that poor policies may be like nourishing soil for better ones,

*Second, to Prudence:*

That this new sower may judge wisely the stars for planting,  
That we may hold no unrealistic expectations,  
Nor make a savior of the man.

*Third, to Fortune:*

That the new crop may not bring mere change,  
But that it may be change for the better,  
And change for the best.

*Fourth, to War:*

That frenzied wrath may calm,  
That enemies may be reconciled,  
And that no death may be in vain.

*Fifth, to Peace:*

That whatever road be taken,  
Our sons and daughters may follow it home one day soon,  
And by the same road too may fare the safety of all the world's citizens.

At this significant moment,  
As the new worker opens the door of the shed,  
To these five things I give honor,  
And we shall have these, the right tools for the job.

At this significant moment,  
As the yoke is placed on the oxen,  
To these five things I give honor,  
And they will haul us through the difficult ground.

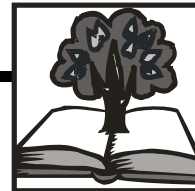
At this significant moment,  
As my brow raises to the horizon,  
To these five things I give honor,  
And my hands know their role in the season of planting.



# Book Review

## The Fire on Our Hearth

by Rev. Kirk Thomas



There have been a couple of books put out over the past few years by ADF groves that detail the lore, rites and bardic efforts of those groves. Muin Mound Grove's *The Wheel of the Year* has had wide circulation in ADF since it appeared in 2002 and has proven to be influential, especially in the spread of ADF chants throughout our church. *The Book of Sassafras*, sadly, has not yet been published outside of Pittsburgh.

And now Three Cranes Grove in Columbus, Ohio has published their own volume of Grove lore, ritual and song. Coming in at 132 pages, this book encompasses the work of grove members past and present, including that of Rev. Michael J Dangler, Rev. Jenni Hunt, Seamus, Anna Banana (seriously), Shawneen and others. The authors pay homage to those whose works have influenced them, particularly Ceisiwr Serith, but they speak (and sing) with their own voices, in their own space and time.

This book is a vast undertaking. It is divided up into seven sections (eight if you count their *Further Reading* section): *Prayers, Ritual Invocations, Rituals for Self Blessing and Devotion, Core Mythology, Additional Modules* (basically variations on the standard Two Powers meditation and Waters of Life sections of their rituals), *Full Rituals and Chants*. The chants are original. The book includes very simple rites and blessings suitable for solitaries up to major group rites with all the trimmings – so there is something for everyone. The Hearth Cultures represented in this book are primarily Gaulish Celtic and Norse, but the main interest is not so much in these as in the forms they have created to hold their inspiration. There is a wide variety in the rites and invocations, displaying the artistry of this talented grove.

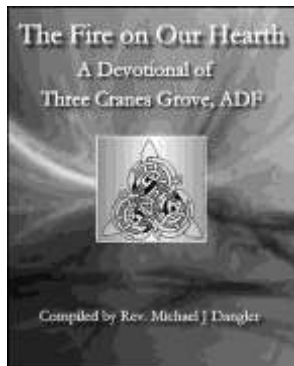
One item interested me in particular. I was surprised to see a rite actually in honor of the Outdwellers. The reasoning is that the Gods who came before our own had to be overthrown in order for humanity to thrive...

“But in many of the stories, these beings are not seen as intrinsically evil in any common Western/Judeo-

Christian sense of morality, in most respects they are seen as too vast, too wild for them to be able rulers over the world of human beings—in many cases they are seen embodied in the mountains, the hurricane, the tornado, the raging wildfire. None of which are evil *per se*, but are still harmful to and uncontrollable by human beings. In this way these primordial deities are seen as the enemies of the gods, who protect and foster humanity, not because they are innately immoral in any way in comparison to the gods or humanity.” (page 94)

The ritual still honors our Kindreds, but asks them not to interfere. As the founder of the Grove is also a Discordian, it should come as no surprise that they would have such a rite, but I have to admit that I found it fascinating and intend to give it a try myself sometime.

I heartily recommend this book to solitaries who are looking to enlarge their practice, and especially to new Groves and Protogroves who would like to have a comprehensive look at how others have established a wheel of the year and new rites and traditions in their personal and grove practices.



*The Fire on Our Hearth: A Three Cranes Devotional*  
Garanus Publications  
Compiled by Rev. Michael J Dangler



Available at <http://www.cafepress.com/3cgshop>



# Personal Story

## Druid Rehab: How I Went To The Birds

by Kolacetan (Hawkfriend in Lakota)



I am a volunteer for a raptor rehabilitation center. We rescue birds of prey (hawks, owls, eagles, falcons, vultures), provide medical care, and return them to their habitats. We also give education presentations with live birds. I have been a Druid for two years. The following is a brief record of my journey in these worlds.

*February 3, 2007—American Eagle Idol*

*Our show is at 2 pm. It is for a weekend-long program devoted to seeing eagles at a local reservoir. Our first show is about non-native birds to our area. We start with a Harris' Hawk. I take that bird out of the box and it's like a Paris runway, cameras flashing everywhere. When you're a birder, seeing birds of prey live is like seeing a supermodel. We are preaching to the crowd today, that's for sure.*

*Did I get into birds to do this? Be onstage showing birds and sometimes talking about them? No, I had no idea that is what I would be doing when I began volunteering in 1997.*

Birds of prey sought out my consciousness a few years before that. I began to notice the red-tailed hawks along the road and the turkey vultures in the sky. I didn't know why I was seeing them now, in my thirties. They had always been there. Where had I been?

Then around the end of 1996 I heard a public service announcement on public radio about a group that supported a raptor rehab facility. I thought it was so cool there was a group devoted to birds of prey. I wanted to be a part of that group instantly but thought I wouldn't have the time because of my marriage. A year later in December of 1997 after the breakup of my marriage I found my way to the group's first meeting.

I attended the group birding trips. I attended rescue training and my first bird rescue was a gull from a Wal-Mart parking lot. It was dead on arrival, but I was not deterred. I continued helping out, cleaning cages, rescuing birds, and learning how to rehabilitate them.

As my married life ended, my new life began, one of adventure and spiritual growth. My soul was beginning to take flight, on the wings of those birds. I had

confidence in handling them right from the start. It was very natural for me.

My first birding trip with this group was to the local reservoir. Now I have come full circle and am showing birds there.

*March 11, 2007—An interesting rescue in the country*

*Sunday morning I get a call from the center's President asking if I want to go with her on an owl rescue. She was told it's a big owl. I say yes and we head out. It is off of (and I mean OFF OF) the main road. It was one of those narrow, curvy, hilly roads they have in our area. We're glad it's daylight. It is a beautiful sunny, warm day, the first after a cold winter.*

*We find the location. They are waiting for us, a family of six. The father said he and his son found it while looking for wild turkeys (to observe, not to hunt). The father describes it as a barred owl. It's in a ravine across the road from their house. And by ravine, I mean ravine. When I see it I say, "You're going to want me to take this one."*

*The slope on this thing is nasty, and it's muddy, and the leaf litter is thick. Of course we are on the opposite side of the ravine from the owl. The bird (it is a Barred Owl) is on the ground at the end of a log that crosses the ravine. The log is about 6 inches in diameter. The father said he had walked across it. He said he would help steady me across it.*

*I think about this for about half a second. Pride has a hold of me for that long. Then I realize that 1) this is about the bird, not me showing off, and 2) I do have a chance of falling off the thing and doing myself damage. So I straddle the log and scoot across. It is only about 8 feet across the ravine.*

*I go to the other side and start talking to the bird. It's getting nervous while I'm still 10 feet away. It starts clapping its beak and trying to scramble away, but has trouble staying balanced. It's spreading out its wings and almost rolling further down the ravine. I tell the father to go down around behind it. He does that and it distracts the bird enough I can crawl close enough to get a fish net over it without any fuss. Then I reach under the net and get a hold of the feet with my gloved hand. As I pull it out from the net, the mother says, "How'd she do that?"*

*I toss the net back to the father to free a hand and head up the hill with the bird tucked under my arm. The whole thing takes less than ten minutes. Then we show the owl to the children. They are all very interested and nice and give us a nice donation. These are people who seem to truly love the land they live on and all who inhabit it. There are a lot of people like that around here.*



Birds do have personalities. It's very subtle; you have to get to know them a while to see it. It is very easy to see that there is spirit there. Have you ever had a Golden Eagle look you straight in the eye? That is looking into spirit. Seeing birds in the wild is always still a treat for me.

*Saturday, March 22, 2008—Two spiritualities merge*

*I am the Druid in Charge for the Equinox. I have adopted the Greek hearth culture and decide to honor Demeter and Persephone. I decide to use augury for the omen, and release a Barred Owl.*

*I make a final offering of whiskey to the fire. Then it is time to seek the omen. I am seeking a yes/no answer; have our offerings been accepted? A new person to our rituals volunteers to release it. She isn't scared of the bird, she just lets it go and it flies from her hands to the right about 20 feet up and 100 feet away. It turns around to face us, but won't let us near it. It flies across the road and then into the woods and disappears among the trees. I start talking about the Greeks saying flying to the right was a bad omen but to the Romans it was good and how it flew to the South, which means growth, when a fellow Druid says, "don't over think it." So I don't and realize it was a good omen because it had been a good release. How could releasing one of Artemis' children back to her not be good?*

Am I involved with the birds because I'm a Druid? Did I become a Druid because of my love for nature? That's a conundrum like the chicken and the egg. And what have I learned, what have I gained from these experiences? I get a sense of giving back. I am making a difference in a very intimate, individual way when I rescue a bird; feed the birds, and yes, when I clean their cages. The impact widens to a broader level when showing birds.

*Saturday, May 3, 2008—*

*I am at a bird show in a nature park instead of attending Beltaine. We have three shows today: a bird on a float in a parade, this nature park thing, and then a show at the state park. Without three of us it the logistics would never have come together.*

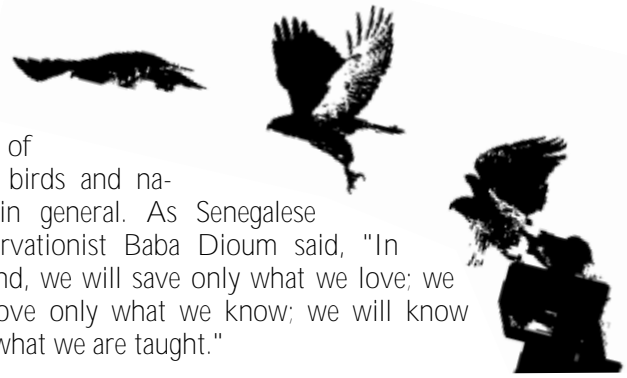
*They have a table set up for us under a tree. I bring out the first bird and two robins start making a ruckus. Then I get dive-bombed. The kestrel, the screech owl, even the peregrine, it doesn't matter, they go after it. They are flying close enough I can feel the wind from their wings. But when the eagle comes out they suddenly disappear.*

Every show is a little bit different. We do shows in a 150-mile radius and people from all over the state come to our state park. I believe we are educating everyone in some way. We try not to get too preachy during programs, but it can't be ignored when showing a peregrine or eagle that would not be here now without conservation efforts. I look for the awe in peoples' eyes. When that's there, I feel hope for the

f u -

ture of these birds and nature in general. As Senegalese conservationist Baba Dioum said, "In the end, we will save only what we love; we will love only what we know; we will know only what we are taught."

*Kolaceta (Hawkfriend) has been a member of ADF since 2006. She is currently Scribe for Black Bear Grove, a member of the Warrior's Guild and the Hellenic Kin, and working on her DP.*





# Article

## Brigid's Three Flames

by Ashley Price



Considering her popularity within modern Paganism, it is surprising how little was written about the goddess Brigid (as opposed to the saint) that survives to the modern day. I have long considered myself a devotee of Brigid, and the lack of a vibrant Brigidine mythos early disappointed me. Like many of her worshipers, I had a vague idea of Brigid as a triple goddess of fire, and with a possible connection to wells, lambs, and milk. Moreover, I was perennially confused by the apparent lack of connection between her fire associations: poetry, healing, and metalwork. Unfortunately, the extant material doesn't help too much with this. There is no narrative myth with Brigid as a central character; she passes in and out of the Cycle of Invasions with little discussion of her abilities or significance, though some later writings do shed some light on this. It took some further exploration into the symbolism of fire before I truly understood Brigid's role in a theological and societal context, which I hope to show here.

The texts reveal that Brigid's three patronages go back to ancient Ireland. The 9<sup>th</sup> century Glossary of Cormac says the following:

*Brigid: i.e. a female poet, daughter of the Dagda. This Brigid is a poetess or a woman of poetry, i.e. Brigid a goddess whom poets worshipped, for very great and very noble was her superintendance. Therefore they call her goddess of poets by this name. Whose sisters were Brigid, woman of healing, Brigid, woman of smith-work, i.e. goddess, from whom names with all Irishmen Brigid was called a goddess. Brigid then, i.e. breo-sagait, a fiery arrow.*

This is, to my knowledge, the earliest source that lists Brigid's three areas of purview. As you can see, the only obvious connection to fire is in Cormac's interpretation of her name.

However, this link with fire is apparent in other texts. For example, the Cethirslecht Athgbála refers to the physician's use of medicine as the "heating of brews," and the Cath Maige Turedad mentions that Nuadu's medicine was only applied after it had been blackened by fire. As for poetry, the 8<sup>th</sup> century Old Irish text, the Cauldron of Poesy, compares poetic ability as a cauldron within each person. An obvious link to the hearth fire, the text also refers to *tein fesa*, or "fire of

knowledge." It also mentions *imbis forosnai*, or "great knowledge that lights up," a rite that brings the practitioner the knowledge of poetry. Fire's connection to smithwork is obvious.

While all three arts can be construed to stemming from fire (I personally thought healing is a stretch), I never saw any further connection between them, at least until I delved further into the symbolism of the flame. Traditionally, fire has been used to symbolize creation and destruction, inspiration and purification, as well as a connection to the divine. If you look a bit below the surface, you can see this clearly with Brigid's three flames.

First we have the flame of inspiration, which in Brigid is manifested in poetry. We've already seen that poetic inspiration is compared to light or fire with *imbis forosnai*. With poetry, one creates a work of beauty from nothing, bringing into being something by plucking it out of the flame. This is also a flame of illumination, with poetry coming down from the Heavens to reveal something new. At least in the Celtic context, poetry is inextricably linked with history and mythology. It is the art that creates a community's identity. Poetry, or beautiful words in general, are the stuff of ritual and worship; the bard's religious significance is well known. So with this flame we have an act of creation coming down from on high, connecting the people to the Gods.

Next we have the flame of purification. At its most fundamental level, purification is an act of destruction; it burns away impurities. What else is healing but the removal of an unwanted influence, whether spiritual, mental, or physical? As a fever burns out disease, so the flame of purification burns out impurities and causes healing. We see this also in the Yogic concept of *tapas*, or a burning zeal that purifies the soul.

On a more literal level, healing involves the "heating of brews." Traditionally a healer, whether it's the mother in a household or an apothecary, would work over a hearth fire to create concoctions which serve to help others, and therefore the community. This work is central to the community, and centered on it



(as the current health care debate shows). In comparison to the work of the artist, it is highly earthbound.

**It is in the smith's fire that these two ideas converge.** The smith melts and reshapes metal, destroying its old form to create something new. It burns away the impurities and melds two (or more) metals into an alloy, purifying and creating a greater whole. In this way smith-work is the highest expression of the power of fire; creation through destruction, and destruction for creation.

As the flame of inspiration is heaven sent, the flame of purification earthbound, the flame of forging is distinctly in the middle, encompassing both. With the flame of forging a new unity emerges. Because of this Brigid is more than a simple fire goddess. She is the unity of creation and destruction, the spark that turns a group of people into a community, which allows them to remember their past and inspire them towards a greater future. As you can see, Brigid's three flames aren't the disparate realms I originally saw them as, but inextricably linked in the dual nature of the flame and at the center of every community. In this way Brigid herself is a representative of the cosmos, forging a link between the Heavens and the Earth, the spiritual and the physical. Not too bad for a Goddess with no extant narrative myth.

*Ashley Price has been a member of ADF since 2004. Having finished her DP in 2006, she is now working her way through the Generalist Study Program. She's the founding Grove Organizer of Apple Branch Protogrove and the Coordinator of Brigid's Hearth SIG. She is also an editor on the OakLeaves staff.*

#### Citations

1. Whitley Stokes. Three Irish Glosses. London: Williams and Norgate: 1862. pp. XXXIII-XXXIV.
2. Kim McCone, Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish

3. McCone, p. 168.

4. This is discussed in detail in BKS Iyengar's Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali.



## ADF Regalia.

Ar nDraíocht Féin's member store

- Books
- T-shirts & other apparel
- Jewelry
- Divination Sets
- OakLeaves
- Ritual Supplies
- Gifts
- Music

Visit us at: <http://regalia.adf.org/>  
Or email us at [adf-regalia@adf.org](mailto:adf-regalia@adf.org)



# Article

## Macrocosm in the Microcosm: A Metaphysical Look at the Hallows

by David Crawford



There are many within the Pagan community who understand the phrase ‘the macrocosm within the microcosm,’ but how many have taken the time to look at that phrase to truly see how its meaning might apply to ADF’s cosmology and a few of the possible variations of the Sacred Hallows? First we need to understand the definitions of the two concepts we are working with. The word macrocosm can be defined as ‘the great universe; the universe considered as a whole’ (Random House, Macrocosm). Microcosm can be defined as ‘human beings, humanity, society or the like, viewed as an epitome or miniature of the world or universe’ (Random House, Microcosm). With an understanding of the definitions for macrocosm and microcosm we can begin to take a look at how different variations on the Sacred Hallows are without as well as within us.

The first viewpoint I want to take a look at is one of the more commonly used variations of the Sacred Hallows: Fire, Well, and Tree.

Each of these Sacred Hallows contain associations that correspond with various aspects of the ADF cosmology. Cosmology is the central focal point of our Druid practice. The Well is associated with the Sea, all the waters within all the worlds, and the Underworld. The Tree is a symbol of the Land and all that lives within the Middleworld. The Fire is linked with the Sky, the divine, and the Upperworld (ADF 26). Through the combination of the Sacred Hallows, no matter the variation, forms the Sacred Center. And through the Sacred Center all energy flows. These associations become very important to understanding how we can see the macrocosm within the microcosm.

The human body on average is made up of about 58% water (USGS). This amount of course varies from male to female and according to age. As the

Well is associated with the Sea and all waters of all the worlds on the macrocosmic level it is a simple step to see how the Well can be associated with the human body on a microcosmic level. Every cell within our bodies is partially made up of water. We consist of around 10 trillion cells (Wikipedia, Human). Equipped with this knowledge we can visualize ourselves having just about that many Wells within us that can be accessed. So when we are opening the

Well as a gate we’re not only opening a gate in the physical world to the Underworld but we’re also opening the Well as a gate within our bodies. The very water that makes the 58% composition of our bodies becomes linked with all the waters of all the worlds making us one.

The other 40 to 42% of the human body is composed of organic materials (Wikipedia, Body). These organic materials are a part of the Middleworld. They live, grow, and die as part of the cycles of life. As stated

before the human body is composed of around 10 trillion cells. These cells are largely made of organic material. This material links us with the natural world and the Nature Spirits. It is our anchor to the Middleworld. As beings of Middleworld we are intricately linked with the World-Tree. The World-Tree symbolizes not only the Nature Spirits and the Middleworld but also the pathway between the upper and lower worlds. When opening the Tree as a gateway we also call upon our physical organic form to become part of that gateway. With 10 trillion cells inside us, we have the potential of opening a vast World-Tree. Our bodies themselves become the pathway between the worlds.

Fire has been seen throughout the ages as a symbol of spirit and the divine. In this case fire can be seen as a representation of the life force that drives all living beings. Every cell has life. Through the collective



Credit: Public Domain

cohesion of these cells we are given a form that permits us to live. The fire that drives this life can be seen in the bio-electrical currents and energy fields that living organic materials produce. Another aspect of fire within the body is that of heat. The human body retains an average temperature of around 98.5 ° F or around 37 ° C (Bets Davis). A strict balance of heat must be maintained internally, too high or too low and damage can occur. This can be seen as keeping control of the internal life giving fire. We must also control our external fire that serves as a gateway. When we open the fire as a gate we are opening not only our spirit as the gate to the Upperworld but the very living essence of each cell **within us. We're opening ourselves as the gate to the divine.**

Another possible variation to look at when seeing the Macrocosm in the Microcosm is taking the view point of the Sacred Hallows or gates being the Three Realms: Sea, Land, and Sky.

The waters of the earth flow from springs and creeks which travel their way into ponds, lakes, and rivers. Some of these springs and creeks start out as glacial waters or subterranean sources. We consume water from these bodies to maintain life. Our bodies then process and use portions of the water consumed. What is not used is then removed from the body. The waters are then returned back to their flows which in many cases end up in the seas. If we call to the Sea as a Hallow and gateway we are calling to all the waters of all the worlds. This means not only the waters of the planet but also the waters within our bodies. Even the waters within our bodies at some point came from the cyclical water system of our planet. So to call on the Sea as a gate is to call upon the waters or smaller sea within us.

The realm of Land is not just composed of organic materials. Its composition is made up of various minerals, rocks, and elements. Many of these can be found within the composition of our bodies as well. Plants pull these elements from the soil. When animals eat the plants and other animals they then absorb the needed elements. We then consume both plants and animals which add to the existing amounts of minerals and elements within us. Through this process we become part of the land itself. If we are made up of some of the same materials both organic and non-organic, then calling upon the Land as a gateway is calling upon the very essence of ourselves.

Besides water the other requirement for most organic life is breathable air. Air is made up of many different gases. Some are harmful while others are beneficial. Most plants need carbon dioxide to perform their biological functions while most animal life needs oxygen. Organic life forms take in the needed gases to help fuel the conversion of their food sources so that they can live. The byproduct gases are then released back into the air. These gases, like the water so dearly needed for life, are present in every cell of organic materials. With that train of thought, calling on the realm of Sky as a gateway allows us to call upon another of the necessary components of life itself. It calls upon that which surrounds and permeates all living materials.

**Within ADF's cosmology we have the Three Worlds:** the Underworld, the Middleworld, and the Upperworld. The middle world in which we live contains the Three Realms: Sea, Land, and Sky. We have three commonly used Hallows: the Well, the Tree, and the Fire which we use to connect with the Three Worlds and the Three Realms. There are variations that can be used to open the gateways to the Three Worlds, but no matter how you choose to do so, you are opening the gates within yourself. And though this alone is a prime example of the macrocosm within the microcosm, the Sacred Hallows live within the human body bringing the macrocosm even closer to home within the microcosm. It allows us to see our connection with the Realms around us as well as with the Three Worlds and the Well, Tree, and Fire. The tools we use are merely a focal point for we are truly the Sacred Hallows; we are the macrocosm within the microcosm.

*David Crawford has been a member of ADF since 2006 and completed the Dedicant Path in 2007. He is currently working through the Clergy Training Program and serves as the Grove Organizer for Ozark Mountain Protogrove.*

## Works Cited

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## Poetry

### An Appointment with Ostara

*by Amber Skyspirit*



I arose as the moon drifted off to sleep,  
And off I went, a special date to keep,  
I walked along a path of crocuses and daffodils,  
Past cottages where fairies slept on window sills,  
Where robins hip hop among pearls of morning dew,  
And sprouts of young wild flowers come breaking through,  
Sunlight spills between spirited young trees,  
Laden with new shades of green in their leaves,  
I make way past wild bunnies as they feed,  
To a place where butterflies rise and fly free,  
A clearing, ancient circle of oaks and pine,  
Where warblers sing, sending up a sign,  
Caught between Moon set and complete sunlight,  
A balance of worlds cast in Springtime Delight,  
A presence I sense, Someone draws near,  
I ask, "Is that you, Goddess?" She replies,  
"Yes, I am here."



# Children's Page

The Prayer of the Iris  
by Carol Tyx



Like the iris  
in the side yard,  
I have stopped blooming.  
Dig me up, O Spirit,  
and split me; where I have grown  
calloused, break me open;  
then drive me deeper  
into darkness,

to pull my yearning  
to live fully  
into the light;  
then let me offer  
my purple and gold freely  
to all who pass by.

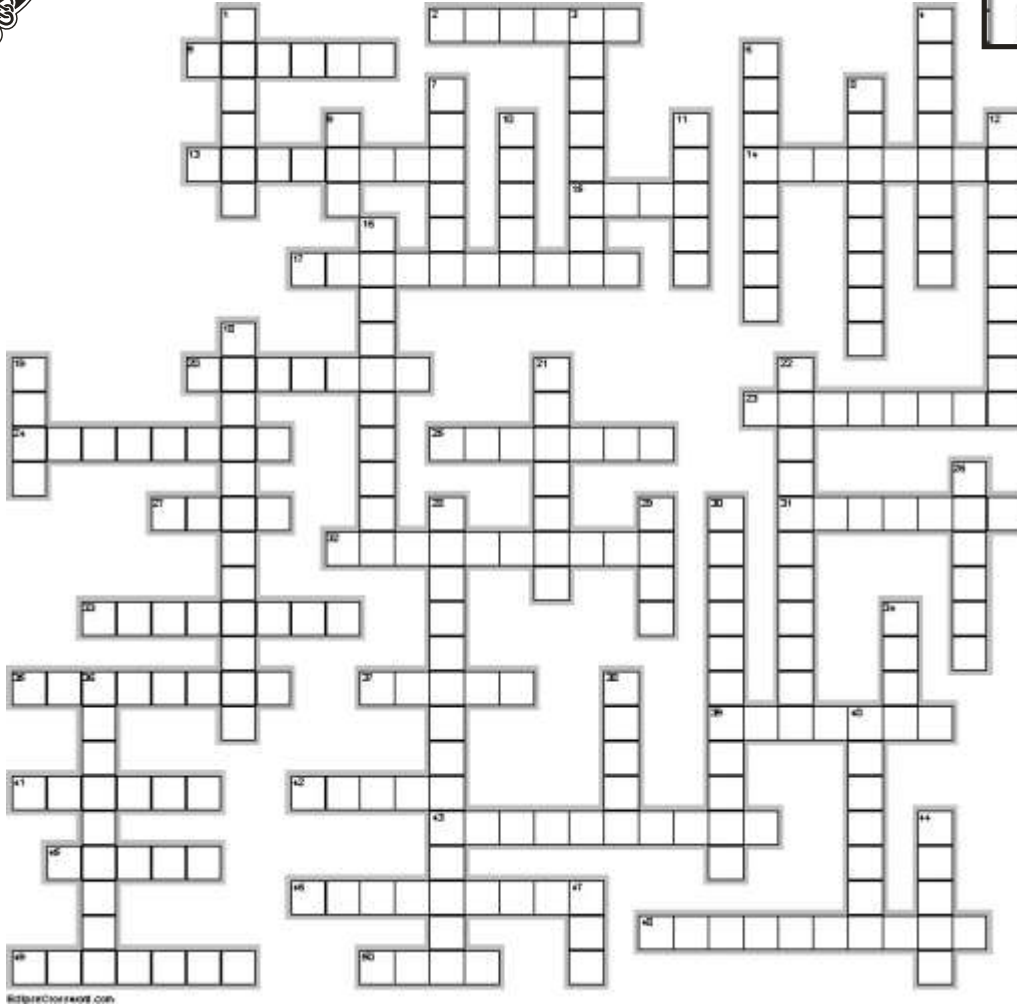
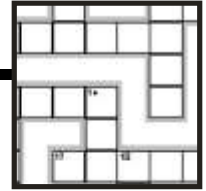
where I wait for you





# Crossword Puzzle

by Chris :)



## Across

2. Northern Pagan Trance work
5. Bird Divination aka
13. Norn - Present
14. Coriandrum sativum
15. Ansuz Rune is his
17. 5th major Arcana
20. Panax quinquefolium
23. Real Magic author- last
24. C- she dazzled Pwyll.
25. The Cycles of the Kings -author last
27. Aries Sister
31. C- He animates trees to fight as his army
32. Gk- This Nymph married Poseidon
33. January 21 to February 19
38. • **Oak Leaves** • **Spring** • Issue #48
35. Gk God of the sea
37. Triticum aestivum
39. **Dublin's country**
41. Hordeum vulgare
42. The Druids- Author -last
43. Hades river of fire
45. Joy Rune
46. Mentha spicata
48. Gk- Cast out of olympus, he landed on Lemnos
49. Manannans horse
50. Troglodytidae
1. Comparative Mythology author-last
3. Huath...aka
4. Pouring an offering is AKA...
6. He's credited with freeing Prometheus

# Down

---

- Wagon/journey Rune
- Dreams in Early European Literature- author- last
- Gk -Flute playing God
- Beithe is AKA
- Early Irish Myths and Sagas author- last
- C- they have a goats head & mans body
- Melissa officinalis
- Glycyrrhiza glabra -2wds
- A City in Northern England
- C- Saint Brigid of -
- Punica Granatum
- Oslo's country
- Capsella bursa pastoris- 2wds
- He burned Rome
- Salix Discolor- 2wds
- Persia's current name
- The Prose Edda credited author-last
- C- River of the white cow
- Gk- She killed Niobes' daughters
- Neladoir was an Irish\_\_\_\_\_ Diviner
- Teiwaz Rune

# Last Issue' s Puzzle Key

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## Across

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- OLIVE—Olea Europaea
- BOUGH—Frazier's Golden \_\_\_\_\_
- WORMWOOD—Artemisia absinthium
- ARIANRHOD—W- Mother of Dylan and LLEU
- AFALLON—Welsh name for Avalon
- STARHAWK—Spiral Dance author
- EPIC—Heroic poem AKA
- PERSEPHONE—Greek—She ate the pomegranate
- ALE—This drink of Goibniu gives immortality
- CERIDWEN—W- Her ugly son was Afagddu
- ARITHMANCY—Divination by numerology.
- SAP—Tree Blood
- LOT CUP—Perthro rune (2wds)
- GREEN—The World of the Druids- author last
- WEALTH—Fehu Rune
- URANUS—Husband of Gaia
- ROSS—The Life and Death of a Druid Prince Author -last
- MISTLETOE—Viscum album
- MACKILLOP—Dictionary of Celtic Mythology author – last
- ADDERSTONE—Formed from snake saliva
- SKULD—Youngest Norn
- BOAR—sus scrofa
- DIANCECHT—Dannann Healer
- HALL—Crystal Bible author-last
- GEMINI—May 22- June 21
- YGGDRASIL—Norse world tree
- SUNFLOWER—Helianthus annuus
- BOYNE—The salmon of knowledge was caught in this river
- VIRGO—August 22 to September 23
- FORTUNE—The Sea Priestess author -last
- EMPRESS—3rd major Arcana
- ZEUS—Heras husband
- PENNYROYAL—Mentha Pulegium
- HECATE—She whom Zeus honored above all...
- LETHE—River of forgetfulness
- MUGWORT—Artemisia vulgaris
- PENTACLES—Cups, Wands, Swords & ...
- LABRADOR TEA—Ledum groenlandicum
- SUN—19th major Arcana
- YMIR—N – First Giant
- KENAZ—Torch Rune
- EPONA—Gallic horse Goddess
- BIRCH—Beithe ogham
- AGNI—Vedic Fire God
- ADLER—Drawing down the moon author (last)

# Down

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- FLORA—Roman Goddess of flowers



# News and Announcements



## New Protogroves & Grove Approvals

- Cedar Song Protogrove, ADF  
Lansing, Michigan  
Provisionally Chartered September 9, 2009
- Feather River Protogrove, ADF  
Chico, California  
Provisionally Chartered September 9, 2009
- Beautiful Rivers protogrove, ADF  
Buffalo, NY  
Provisionally Chartered October 16, 2009
- Protogrove of the Elder Oaks, ADF  
Sanford, MI  
Founded October 19, 2009
- Thorn Haven Protogrove, ADF  
Inkerman, ON Canada  
Provisionally Chartered October 21, 2009
- Charter Oak Protogrove  
East Glastonbury, CT  
Founded November 9, 2009
- Nine Woods Protogrove, ADF  
Pensacola, Florida  
Founded November 18, 2009
- Silver Falls Protogrove, ADF  
Akron, OH  
Provisionally Chartered November 24, 2009
- Ozark Mountain Protogrove, ADF  
Bentonville, AR  
Provisionally Chartered November 30, 2009

- Victoria Grammer  
Sassafras Grove, ADF  
Completed November 2009
- Lesley Gary  
Solitary  
Completed November 2009
- Euandros  
Solitary  
Completed December 2009

## Coming Events

- PantheaCon  
Feb 12 - 15, 2010 in San Jose, CA  
<[www.pantheacon.com](http://www.pantheacon.com)>
- Medieval Madness  
March 5-7, 2010 in Mesa, AZ  
<[www.risingphoenix-adf.org](http://www.risingphoenix-adf.org)>
- Trillium Spring Gathering  
Apr 15-18, 2010 in Cross Junction, VA  
<<http://trilliumgatheringadf.org>>
- Desert Magic  
May 7-9, 2010 in Tucson, AZ  
<[www.ssg-adf.org/desertmagic.htm](http://www.ssg-adf.org/desertmagic.htm)>

## Announcements

- Non-English Speakers SIG  
Approved October 29, 2009  
by the Council of Lore.
- Orders (subgroup category of ADF)  
Approved November, 2009  
by the Mother Grove

## Dedicant Path Completions

- Janet Kline  
Sassafras Grove, ADF  
Completed October 2009



- Wellspring 20: Grand Symbol/ADF Annual Meeting  
May 27-31 in Sherman, NY  
<[www.stonecreed.org/wellspring.htm](http://www.stonecreed.org/wellspring.htm)>

ADF Elections are coming up - **Don't forget to Vote!**



# ADF Directory



## The Mother Grove

Archdruid  
 Vice-Archdruid  
 Treasurer  
 Secretary  
 Members Advocate  
 Chief of the Council of Regional Druids  
 Chief of the Council of Senior Druids  
 Non-Officer Director  
 Non-Officer Director  
 Non-Officer Director

Skip Ellison  
 Rev Kirk Thomas  
 Kristine Marino  
 Rev. Robert Lewis  
 Arthur Shipkowski  
 Nancy McAndrew  
 Flip  
 Anthony Thompson  
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 Mariah Sheehy

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## Additional Leadership Positions

Administrator  
 Archdruid Emeritus  
 Archdruid Emeritus  
 Archdruid Emeritus  
 Chronicler  
 Information Manager  
 Listmaster and Moderator  
 Preceptor  
 Regalia Manager  
 Webmaster

Selene Tawny  
 Rev Isaac Bonewits  
 Ian Corrigan  
 Rev John "Fox" Adelman  
 Peg Glosser  
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## Committees

Clergy Council  
 Council of Lore  
 Grove Coordinating Committee  
 Grove Organizing Committee  
 Prisoner Relations Committee

Chair: Skip Ellison  
 Chair: Raven Mann  
 Chair: Rev Caryn MacLuan  
 Chair: Aigeann  
 Chair: Rev Barbara Wright

adf-archdruid@adf.org  
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 adf-prison-ministry@adf.org

For information on Regional Druids please see the full listing at:

<<http://www.adf.org/members/org/cord/>>

For more information on Groves, Guilds, Special Interest Groups (SIGs), and Kins, please see the full listing at:

<<http://www.adf.org/groups/groups-list.html>>



The full ADF Directory will return to *Oak Leaves* in a future issue. In the meantime please enjoy the extra pages of content...



# Contributors List

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## Art

Michel Daw  
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*Iris*  
AJ Gooch  
*Photos of Brushwood & Tredara Nemeton*

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Jamie “Dubhlainn” Goodwin  
*Invocation: Nuada Airgetlám*  
Melissa “Missy” Burchfield  
*Song: Sacred Center*  
Allen Grim  
*Poem: A Seed*  
Christopher S. Yow  
*A Druid’s Hearth Prayer*  
Brandon Newberg  
*Poem: At This Significant Moment (To These Five Things I Give Honor)*  
Amber Skyspirit  
*An Appointment with Ostara*  
Carol Tyx  
*The Prayer of the Iris*

## Reviews

Mary Jones  
*Video Review: The Secrets of the Druids*  
Rev. Kirk Thomas  
*Book Review: The Fire on Our Hearth*

## Crossword

Chris :)

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Steph Gooch  
*Nemeton of ADF, Stone Creed Grove, & Brushwood*

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*Cedar Light Grove, ADF - Baltimore, MD (& Photos)*  
Michele “Shell” Alexander  
*Grove of the Twilight Flame, ADF—Sault Ste Marie, MI (& Photos)*  
Shawneen  
*Three Cranes Grove ADF Columbus, OH (& Photos)*  
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*Beltaine with the Bees*  
Rev. Jessie “Medb” Olson  
*Principles of the Avestan (Indo-Iranian) Hearth Culture in ADF*  
Arthur Shipkowski  
*ADF Is Made of People*  
Kolacetan (Hawkfriend in Lakota)  
*Druid Rehab: How I Went To The Birds*  
Ashley Price  
*Brigid’s Three Flames*  
David Crawford  
*Macrocosm in the Microcosm: A Metaphysical Look at the Hallows*



## Current Schedule

WINTER EDITION - DECEMBER 12 2009  
SPRING EDITION - MARCH 21ST 2010  
SUMMER EDITION - JUNE 20TH 2010  
FALL EDITION - SEPT 19TH 2010  
WINTER EDITION - DECEMBER 12TH 2010



Visit us @ [adf.org/podcast](http://adf.org/podcast)  
Send submissions to [adfpodcast@gmail.com](mailto:adfpodcast@gmail.com)

# Submission Guidelines

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Oak Leaves welcomes submissions of artwork, articles, poetry, letters to the editor, and anything else that might be of interest to our readers. Submissions, and especially artwork, relating to the turning of the wheel of the year and the celebration of the High Days are particularly encouraged. Submissions from non-members will be accepted, however, if space is constrained, preference will be given to submissions from ADF members. Certain pieces may receive preference, depending on available space.

## References and Notations:

Since excellent scholarship is one of ADF's goals, please document sources of ideas and materials that you used for your writings. Detailed endnote references are preferred rather than simply providing a bibliography. Please follow the standards for references in the MLA Handbook or Style Manual. We will not accept submissions with footnotes, as they require considerable editing to convert to endnotes.

## Medium of Submission:

Electronic submissions are preferred, sent as email attachments to the Oak Leaves submissions address:

oak-leaves@adf.org

Please send one submission per attachment specifying the format, author's name, your email, membership status, and a short bio of your ADF experience. Be sure the title of the piece and your name are at the top of the page, and you have checked it over for spelling and grammatical errors.

We will also accept electronic submissions on CD, sent to:

OL Editor,  
P.O. Box 17874  
Tucson, AZ 85731-7874

Please do not upload the article directly to the wiki as this has caused some confusion. Written submissions should be sent in one of the following formats: Rich Text Format (RTF), PDF or MS Word. Submitted materials will not be returned to the sender, unless specifically requested.

## Art Submission Guidelines:

We now accept photos as well as drawings and computer generated pictures. Some of the color pictures will need to be modified to black and white but we will do that as necessary. We would like to have pictures submitted at 300 dpi, and in a useable format such as .jpg, .png, etc. Please send them to the Art Director at adf-ol-art@adf.org. We are not currently accepting hard copies of your art.

## Deadlines for submissions are:

Spring: December 1st,  
Summer: March 1st,  
Autumn: June 1st,  
Winter: September 1st



# Ár nDraiocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship



P.O. Box 17874, Tucson, AZ 85731-7874

## Membership and Subscription Form

One form per person please.

Beside your name, address, phone number, and e-mail address, please indicate whether the information is: Publishable (P), meaning it can be printed in ADF publications and we can give it out freely to people who wish to contact you; Sharable (S), meaning we can give it out to ADF members who request it; or Confidential (C), meaning that only the Mother Grove and ADF office staff will have access to it.

Legal Name: \_\_\_\_\_ P \_ S \_ C  
 Religious Name: \_\_\_\_\_ P \_ S \_ C  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_ P \_ S \_ C  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip/Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Country: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ (mm/dd/yy)  
 Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ P \_ S \_ C

The information on this form represents a:  
 New Membership  
 Renewal  
 Revival of Expired Membership.  
 Information Update (If name/address changed indicate previous)

If this is a new membership, where did you hear about us? \_\_\_\_\_  
 If this is a membership renewal please state your ADF membership number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 In which ADF Grove do you intend to participate in, if any? \_\_\_\_\_  
 I am 18 years of Age or Older: { } Yes { } No (If no, see waiver below.)

### ADF Membership Rates:

Regular Membership	_____ years @ \$25/year = \$ _____
Prisoner Membership	_____ years @ \$10/year = \$ _____
Subscription to Oak Leaves - Members	_____ years @ \$20/year = \$ _____
Subscription to Oak Leaves - Non-Members	_____ years @ \$25/year = \$ _____

Total Due \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail this form with your check or money order (made payable to "ADF" in U.S. dollars only.) Please allow 4-6 weeks for processing. There are special rates for Prisoners. Please contact us if you are a prisoner or are assisting one. This form may also be found online at: <http://www.adf.org/joining/join.html>.

### Under 18 Membership Waiver

If you are under the age of 18, you must have a parent or guardian sign this waiver to indicate her/his permission for you to join ADF, and that signature must be notarized.

To whom it may concern: (enter child's name here) \_\_\_\_\_ has my permission to become a member of ADF, and I am fully aware of the Neopagan nature of this organization.

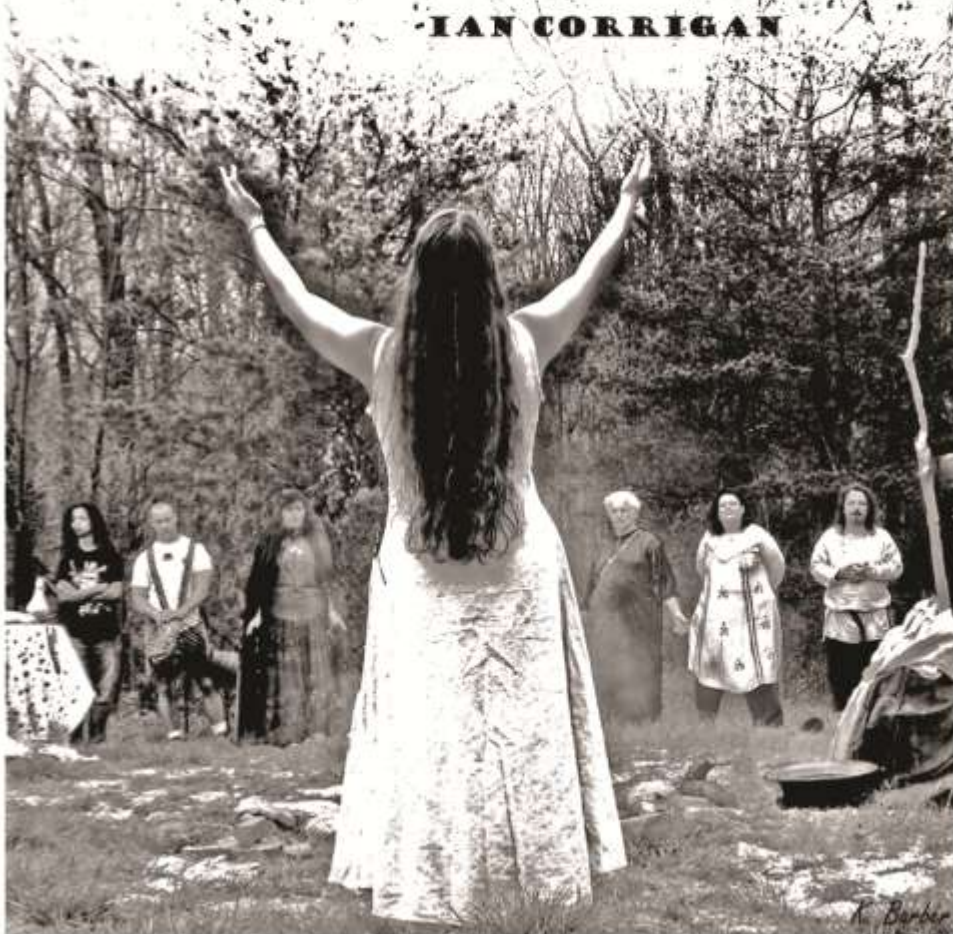
Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Notary Seal:

**"TRILLIUM  
IS ON THE SHORT LIST  
OF CLASSIC ADF FESTIVALS."**

**IAN CORRIGAN**



Come celebrate our 12<sup>th</sup> year with us and see why!!!

**Trillium: ADF Spring Gathering**

*April 15-18, 2010: Magic and Our Druidry*

At TLC Campground in the beautiful mountains of Virginia!

*Sponsored by Grove of the Seven Hills & ProtoGrove of the Shenandoah, ADF*

[www.TrilliumGathering.org](http://www.TrilliumGathering.org)

# Wellspring 20

## The Grand Symbol

May 27-31, 2010

Brushwood Folklore Center  
Sherman, NY

ADF National Meeting  
Induction of new Arch Druid  
ADF Grand Symbol

Saturday night band:  
**The Mickeys**

Classes starting Thursday a.m.  
Warrior Games  
Brewing & Artisans Competitions  
Guild & Kin Meetings  
Potluck Dinner  
Hospitality

PayPal pre-registration at the website:  
[www.stonewald.org/wellspring.htm](http://www.stonewald.org/wellspring.htm)

Camping: \$10/night/person  
Festival fee: \$30 (ADF members)/\$40 non-members\*  
\*we will honor memberships paid for at the event