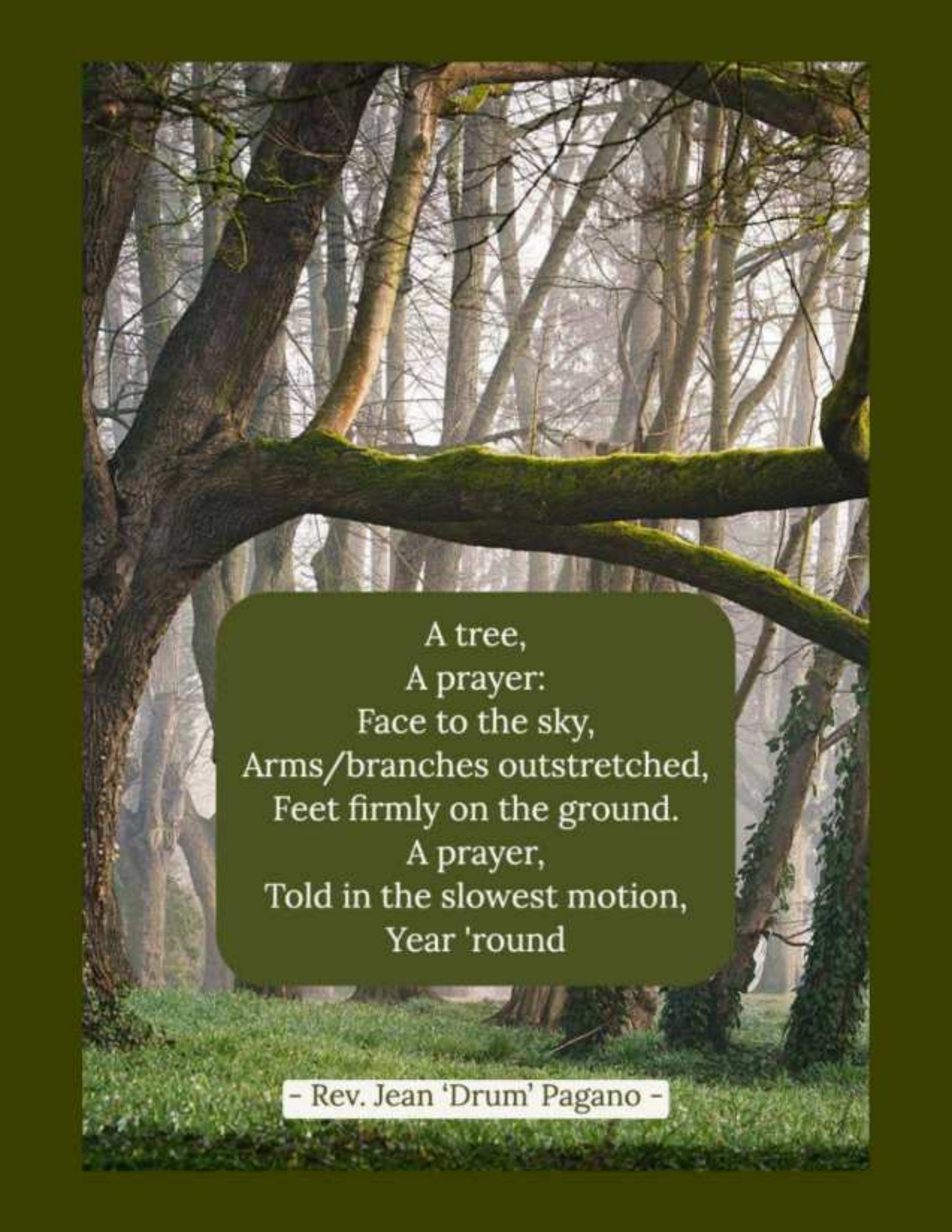


OAK LEAVES

The Quarterly Journal of Ár nDraíocht Féin Spring 2021 ~ Issue No. 92





A tree,
A prayer:
Face to the sky,
Arms/branches outstretched,
Feet firmly on the ground.
A prayer,
Told in the slowest motion,
Year 'round

- Rev. Jean 'Drum' Pagano -



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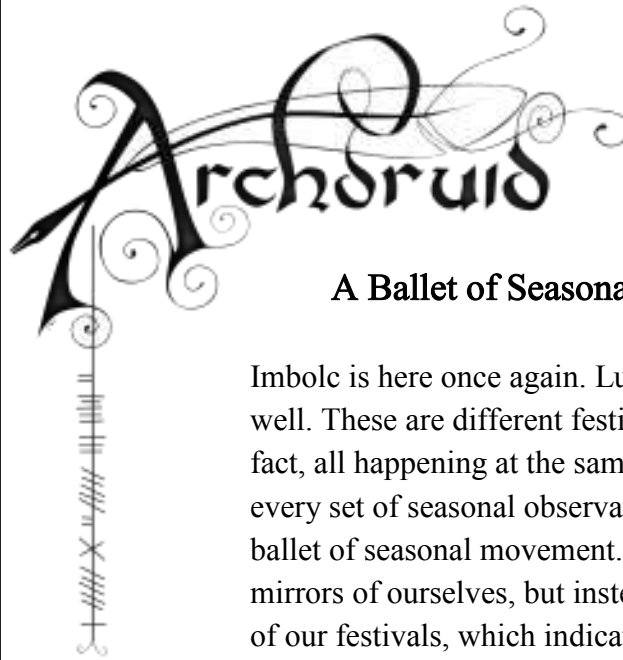
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A Ballet of Seasonal Movement

Imbolc is here once again. Lughnasadh is here as well. These are different festivals, opposites in fact, all happening at the same time. These and every set of seasonal observances fall into this ballet of seasonal movement. These are not mirrors of ourselves, but instead are complements of our festivals, which indicate that the totality of the two festivals makes for a whole observance.

In this instance, it is the quickening and the harvest. In one place, the rivers slowly start to trickle beneath the ice; in another, the rivers run with less water because of the searing sun. Opposites unite currently to create a whole. This totality is not found in one place but across the collection of places that make up the halves of our world.

Imbolc and Lughnasadh are fire festivals, nestled cross-quarter between Solstice and Equinox. Some with call out to Brigid currently, when the fires of the forge herald the coming of new life and the first noticeable lengthening light of the new year. Others recall the funereal games that Lugh held for Taltiu, his foster mother, marking the day. Imbolc celebrates the coming of new life, newly stirring deep within. Lughnasadh recalls the passing of a Goddess who was integral to the coming of agriculture, and the harvest that comes after the clearing of fields for growth and subsequent harvest. Life and death, all celebrated at the same time. The ballet of seasonal movement celebrates life and death, two opposite festivals, all happening at once. By celebrating new life, we anticipate the harvest. By celebrating the harvest,



we recall the new life that once was and that which will be again.

COVID-19 is still with us, violating the rules of hospitality by overstaying its welcome and by being a guest that brings little but despair and takes so much at the same time. We look forward to the time when this affliction has moved past us, and we can build a new normal from the challenges that we have faced. We can never go back; we can only go forward.

For those of us who have maintained a practice through these troubled times, we hold this bit of normalcy as the fire that burns within, and look forward to lighting the fires on the hills to announce the coming of the High Day. From the solitude of isolation, we gather virtually, with Zoom and Skype and their like as welcome guests into our homes during this time. These virtual hosts come for a brief time to enrich our lives, and then leave us richer by their offerings.

In the many discussions that I have heard around ADF, I do believe that virtual services will remain, after COVID, after social distancing, after

isolation. For those with limited mobility, there is no need to leave one's home. For those with social anxieties or concerns, there is no need to go to a different place. For those who are unable to travel for whatever reason, there is no need to travel further than a laptop, desktop, or cell phone. We will enrich our ritual experiences by making virtual and in person happen at the same time, in a different kind of ballet of seasonal observances.

We are looking to bringing *Oak Leaves*, this great magazine, to more readers in the coming months. We hope to make *Oak Leaves* available to a broader audience of not only members, but non-members alike. *Oak Leaves* is too good not to share. We will maintain our print format along with an electronic format so that we can appeal to those who like either format or both.

Blessings of the season to you!

Rev. Jean (Drum) Pagano
Archdruid, ADF

Spring Issue of Oak Leaves

By Oak Leaves Editor-in-Chief Rev. G. R. Grove

As we begin this new calendar year, we hope for improvements over the last one. In this virtual world of Zoom, Oak Leaves is still one solid physical thing. In this issue we have the usual column from our Archdruid, Rev. Jean “Drum” Pagano. This time, he talks about the dance of the seasons. We also have thoughts from our Vice Archdruid, ADF Senior Priest Amber Doty, on ways to celebrate the Northern Hemisphere

and Rev. Diane Cacciato, who also shared her Ordination ritual from last year — our second Zoom ordination! Rev. Ian Corrigan also gives us an Imbolc devotional.

I used some of my own travel experiences and research to describe a famous Irish cave known as “Oweynagat” — the “Cave of the Cats”. I plan to follow up on this theme in a future issue.



spring. Thomas Brown discusses spiritual practices for Neopagans, and where ADF fits in that continuum, while Rev. Diane Cacciato speaks of folk music and another sort of dance.

Looking to the Mediterranean, Rev. Kirk Thomas shares another abundantly illustrated article from his physical travels, this time as a Wandering Druid in Cyprus, followed by a brief piece by Rev. Christopher Temple on the role of the seer in Ancient Greece.

Our poets this time include Rev. Amber Ferreebe, Rev. Ian Corrigan, Rev. Jean “Drum” Pagano,

Finally, Aimee Brannon reviews the book “Trees in the Religions of Medieval England”.

As always, I thank all our contributors and encourage others to submit articles and poetry for future issues. Despite the “Rev. heavy” nature of this issue, I assure you that clergy credentials are not required of contributors! Send your submissions to oak-leaves@adf.org before March 15th 2021, and you, too, may find your work in print.

Blessings to all,
Rev. G. R. Grove

Wandering the Wheel

By Rev. Amber Doty

Welcome to the first Oak Leaves of 2021! Spring brings with it hope for new growth and an abundance of potential. In my part of the world, this is the time of year when the leaves are starting to sprout on the trees, and grass turns from brown to green. The world begins to once again feel warm and fresh with the first glimpses of colorful flowers and creatures returning from hibernation. The equinox approaches and then the light will overtake the darkness once more, and this year I am very, very ready for the return of the light.

The past year was challenging for so many of us, and I know for me it was detrimental to my own motivation. I found myself having to look for new ways to connect to the Kindred and the natural world around me. In Neopagan traditions, most spring festivals focused on ideas of fertility and the ever-increasing presence of life in the natural world. I imagine this year may look a bit different, but there are still a lot of ways that we can celebrate the coming spring, even during times of social distancing.

Below are just a few examples:

- Take a nature walk. You can wander in your neighborhood or a local park, anywhere you feel like you can connect to nature. Try to look for

new life beginning all around you.

- Plant something. Even if you don't have space for a large garden, planting small flower seeds for inside your home can be a wonderful way to feel connected to nature.
- Cook a meal, even if it's just for yourself, using foods that are in season in your region.
- Try some spring crafts. Paint a flower, decorate an egg, allow yourself to get creative and bring some color into your décor.
- Enjoy some quality time at a bonfire. Whether you can build your own or visit a local place that allows them, sitting by a fire is a wonderful way to celebrate the warmth of the returning sun.
- Wake up at dawn to welcome the sun into your day and thank it for the many gifts it brings with it.
- Start something new. If you've really wanted to learn how to do something new or have a hobby you keep telling yourself you want to try, now is the time of new beginnings, so why not give it a chance.

If you have other ways you like to celebrate spring, I'd love to hear all about them. So feel free to drop me a message through email or social media. I hope you all have a wonderful Spring!



Spiritual Practices for All Neo Pagans

By Thomas Brown

Most discussions about Ár nDraíocht Féin (ADF) with others are explaining how ADF is a Neopagan organization and NOT a Druid Order. Yes, there are druids (little D), our path is technically defined as Druidism and Druidry (big D), and we have Initiates and a Priesthood. We also have an administrative hierarchy, but that entity is not empowered to pass along a spiritual current like an initiatory group such as the Golden Dawn or Ordo Templi Orientis. ADF also has various Bards, Brew Masters, Liturgists, Artisans, Naturalists, Warriors, and a vast assortment of Heathens and non-Christian folks. Some in ADF don't refer to themselves as Druids at all, but simply as modern Pagans. Of course, a Druid Order of a Neopagan Priestcraft was part of the original plan of the founding members. However, I don't think that's what defines ADF today. So, the following viewpoints are how I've learned to explain ADF to non-Druids, dare I say to some anti-druids as well, when sharing ADF's Fire with others.

It is worth mentioning that ADF does have an Initiatory current which is part of an ongoing, rigorous study program through the Council of Lore. However, most folks must realize that "... the degree [Initiate] will be given only as recognition of specific demonstrated levels of skill and practice" (Corrigan, 2009, Part 3). And we have Priests - as any religious organization should.

It should be noted that ADF is a Pan Indo-European organization with multiple religious practices, and therefore is not (really) a religious order of modern Druids. A common definition of a "Religious Order" is "... an organized community of people who live in some ways set apart from society in accordance with their specific religious devotion, usually characterized by the principle of the founder's religious practice" (Fielder, 2020).

I then explain my own definition of a Druid based on a modern context of my own experiences. I emphasize that it is MY definition. That definition involves demonstrable skills as a ritualist, prosocial interactions and interfaith work, and sharing modern Pagan history and Indo-European (IE) lore with others. These are my personal qualifiers for calling myself a Druid. It is something I encourage others to consider.

Anyone may call oneself a druid, but that doesn't mean one is competent to share the history or knows how to kindle a fire for oneself and others with any semblance to wit or skill. Simply put, I further define the modern Druid as one who has become disciplined in learning how to serve. Being a Druid is not a title as some may think it means. People make too much of titles.

That being said, I turn the discussion to hearth fires of rustic folks from the various IE cultures. Most of the ancient Pagans were not "trained" as Druids since that is unique to Celtic culture. Most people lived among the populace and eked out a living as farmers, artisans, warriors, sailors, and such who also happened to be family members with duties and obligations to tribe or clan (births, harvests, deaths, etc.). Yet those duties and obligations were understood across many IE cultures the same as in ADF today. One doesn't require a lot of formal training to kindle a hearth fire. Nor does one need claim to be a Druid to do so. ADF is a start.

Next, I explain that there were Druids among Celtic folks and there were most assuredly public rituals watched over by Druid Priests. These folks were likely serving a function similar to other ritual leaders among the various IE cultures as well. We know that the skill sets of the Druid caste included lots of social functions. Furthermore, it is joining in a shared worldview and worship practices with the rustics that is at hand - offerings with art, food and prayers were from the



folk. Although the Druid served the community, anyone would most likely make sacrifice and kindle a sacred fire. A practice the majority of ADF does today with much custom and diversity. It feels wrong to come to a fire empty handed, and not one of us really “needs” a skilled priest to make a sacrifice.

One minor sidebar - ADF's Initiates, Priesthood, and organizational leaders are a vital part in the scope of modern Paganism. I may have and share my opinions and call myself a Druid, but I do not speak for ADF or any other druid organization as a whole. That's where leaders, titles, elections, and service are affirmed by the folk. A responsibility managed by bylaws and not a spiritual current or hubris.

The last thing I explain to folks about ADF is the optional training and the emphasis on scholarship in Our Fellowship. Having worked through ADF's study programs to be ranked, and training from other modern Druid groups, I'm confident when I tell folks that being a Druid requires a lot of humility in what one learns. I may be a Druid, but being a Druid doesn't put one above being an everyday Pagan.

ADF is not (really) a Druid Order. Our Fellowship encompasses the diversity of people and cultures from across the IE world as artisans, producers, warriors, and, of course, priests. Let us revive the spiritual practices of our ancestors and let us do so without the misnomer of Druid. Being a Druid is another story.

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Thomas was inspired to write this after rereading an article on service to Solitary ADF members by Rev Michael Dangler. While preparing for a local discussion it occurred to Thomas that the work of ADF is not only Druidic, but Pagan. Thomas joined ADF in 2009 and is ranked a Master Bard in the BGSP.

Irish and Slavic-Baltic Folk Music

By Rev. Diane Cacciato

Anyone who has made a trip to Ireland will be aware of how much the Irish embrace their music, and it is no different in the Slavic and Baltic regions of Europe. The most important difference, however, is that the music we hear in Ireland today has very little connection with that of our ancient Irish ancestors while the Slavic/Baltic music has ties going back into antiquity.

So, what makes the difference between the ancient music of the two cultures? To understand this, we need to examine what defines folk music. According to Bruno Nettl, Professor Emeritus of Music and Anthropology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, folk music can be characterised as being traditional rural music that is passed down through smaller social groups through oral and aural transmission. It is often associated with some other group activity "... such as calendric or life-cycle rituals, work, games, enculturation, and folk religion..." (Nettl) meaning that folk music is more 'participatory than presentational'. Folk songs were generally known within each community; however, there were instrumentalists and singers who were specialists such as the travelling bards of Ireland or the Balkan and Finnish singers of epic narratives.

One of the important methods for preserving folk music is in its association with dance. The combination of kinesthetic activities with aural/oral connection makes it much simpler to remember the music and lyrics. One of the problems with ancient Irish folk music came from the two pronged, coordinated approach of the Catholic church and the English colonial power to remove Irish culture. Together, they made Irish dancing, and therefore, Irish folk music, difficult to practice. The church did not want the Irish to continue to worship their pagan gods, and the English did what they could to suppress Irish

culture. In fact, if we look at Irish folk dancing today, one of the most notable characteristics is the rigid arms. While there is currently no clear answer why this is the case, there are a number of theories:

The Church did not want people to use their arms in dance as it was seen as provocative or did not want people to dance at all. By keeping their arms still, the dancers would not be perceived as dancing if viewed through a window by a passing priest.

The English wished to suppress traditional Irish practices and so, as above, dancers kept their arms down so that they could dance without being seen.

Conversely, it has been suggested that Elizabeth I wished to have Irish dancers in her court, but the Irish did not wish to show respect, so they refused to raise their arms even though they were being forced to dance.

Irish folk dancing may still exist, but it does not exist in the way it did prior to Christianization or prior to the English colonial wave. It is not unreasonable to postulate that the loss of early Irish folk music could be partly because of the suppression of Irish dancing.

The Slavic and Baltic folk music, on the other hand, was not impacted in the same way. While the Church may have tried to suppress folk music, folk dance was something that continued unabated. In addition, the Catholic Church came in to the Slavic and Baltic lands in the 12th century CE to convert the people. While the conversion did happen, it wasn't completely as the Church wanted. The Slavs, in particular, continued a kind of dual faith called dvoeverie (Russian) in which they continued to practice their pagan faith alongside their Christian one. As a result, it is



possible to still see today the Khorovod or choral dance in festivals or in the Posidyelka or traditional social gatherings, particularly as soon as the long winters have passed and spring has arisen. The Slavs and the Baltic peoples were able to hold on to aspects of their culture such as folk music and dance in ways that were much more difficult in Ireland.

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Diane Cacciato joined ADF in 2017, and is the Grove Organizer for Garry Oak Protogrove. She is an author, poet, essayist, and retired teacher-librarian. She divides her time living between two islands worlds apart — Vancouver Island in Canada and Sicily.. She was ordained as an ADF Priest in October 2020.

A Wandering Druid in Cyprus

By Rev. Kirk Thomas

The Archaeology of Cyprus

Cyprus has been a crossroads for this part of the Mediterranean for millennia. There was a vibrant Neolithic culture here, which disappeared for a couple of hundred years (like on Malta) but was eventually replaced by a new culture in the Copper and Bronze Ages.

They had a strong trade with Bronze Age Ugarit and the rest of those 'empires', such as the Mycenaeans, Hittites, and Egyptians.

When that all collapsed it would appear that Cyprus hung on a bit and transitioned into the Iron Age (like everyone else around there) until they were conquered by the Phoenicians in the 9th century, followed by the Assyrians, and then the Persians.

During this time the great city states came into being, and these were ruled by local elites and kings under their conquerors. It was after Alexander the Great's death when Ptolemy took over Egypt and Cyprus that the local kings were

suppressed (either killed or driven to suicide, I read).

This period ended with the Roman conquest, and after the western Empire fell Cyprus was part of the Byzantine Empire until the Crusades. After the Knights of Malta and others like them Cyprus was conquered by the Ottomans, and after the First World War fell to the British.

Cyprus became independent after the Second World War, but in the 1970s the northern part of the island was conquered by the Turks to forestall a coup that would have made the island part of Greece. They're still divided to this day.

Kition - Temple of the Great Mother

Cyprus is well known as the birthplace of Aphrodite, Goddess of Love, according to Greek mythology. But Aphrodite was preceded by other great goddesses.



Temple of the Great Mother.

Around 1200 BCE, at the edge of the town of Kition, a sacred enclosure dedicated (we believe) to the Cypriot Great Mother was built. This is

rather amazing when you consider that the other great Bronze Age civilizations (like Mycenae, Ugarit, the Hittite Empire) were falling apart around that time.

This temple was a walled, open air space, sort of a garden. And there was an enclosed Holy of Holies at the rear of the space.



Holy of Holies.

Around the temple complex were also workshops for copper working. The metal was extremely important to their economy, so the elites of the temple certainly had their hands in, as it were.

When the Phoenicians took over the island in the 9th century BCE they rebuilt the temple, now dedicated to Astarte, their Goddess of Love, and added a row of wooden columns so that part of the space could be roofed. This burned down after fifty years or so, and they then put in two rows of columns so that there was an open aisle down the middle, leading to the Holy of Holies, with roofed aisles on either side.

Over a couple of centuries more temples were added on, but this one, called Temple 1 by the archaeologists, was always the largest. These temples were frequented by sailors, who left offerings of anchors and even some graffiti of ships scratched on the outside wall of Temple 1. Inside one of the other temples was a shrine that had carved bull's horns (similar to the ones in

Minoan Crete) in front of an altar.

When the Greeks took over the island, though, the temples were abandoned.

The Birthplace of Aphrodite

To the west of Kourion, near to the great Sanctuary of Aphrodite at Palaipaphos, is the bay of Petra tou Rhomiou where the Goddess Aphrodite rose from the sea.



Petra tou Rhomiou

The God Ouranos (the Heavens) mated with the Gaia, the Earth, and She bore His children, the Titans. One of these, Cronos (sometimes equated with Time), overthrew His Father by cutting off His genitals, and where they landed in the sea, the Goddess was born of the spreading foam.

At this place in the sea are great rocks, and when the storms rage the sea is turned to foam.

May She grant us love and beauty in our lives, and may we live up to Her promise. Esto!

The Sanctuary of Aphrodite at Palaipaphos

Palaipaphos was the only city in the southwest of Cyprus for a very long time. Founded in the Bronze Age, it remained the local capital until the early Hellenistic era when the king moved the capital to Nea Paphos (New Paphos) on the sea.

But the great Sanctuary of Aphrodite was not affected by this move. Indeed, this sanctuary is probably one of the most important places involved in the development and worship of the Goddess.

From the ancient Cypriot Great Mother to the Phoenician Astarte to the Greek Aphrodite, a wonderful and terrible Goddess was worshipped here from Petra tou Rhomiou in pre-history right up to the end of the ancient world.

There isn't a lot left standing on the ground today. Originally, in the Late Bronze Age (about the time of the Trojan War) great cyclopean walls were built around an open space which had a low building in it. These walls, if not built by Mycenaeans, were certainly influenced by them.

In the center of this sacred place stood a large



Cyclopean Walls



Great Stone

stone, about 4 feet tall. This stone was seen as the Goddess. Such a thing is not unheard of. A very early Archaic depiction of the Goddess Hera in Greece was simply a plank of wood. A statue was not needed in the early days - rather something that resonated with the people would do as well. The great stone may have connected the place with the Earth.

Later, in Roman times, the place was rebuilt with two parallel feasting halls constructed (one larger than the other) and some buildings in between, perhaps priest quarters.

Some interesting finds were made by the archaeologists, including a mini-temple in terracotta and a magnificent sarcophagus depicting the story of Odysseus and the Cyclops Polyphemus.

The Sanctuary of Apollo Hylates

This incredible precinct lies outside of the ancient

town of Kourion in the south of the island. The appellation of the God, Hylates, means "God of the Woodland". Currently there is a scrub forest surrounding the Sanctuary, and in ancient times it was also a preserve for deer. The worship of the God here began as early as the 8th century BCE and continued until the 4th century CE when it was destroyed in the massive earthquake in 365 CE.



Temple of Apollo

There are two entrances to the Sanctuary, one on the east, called the Kourion Gate (nearest the town), and one on the west, called the Paphos Gate, which leads to the road to the town of Paphos.

Entering through the Kourion Gate, immediately on the left is the Palestra, or gymnasium, where athletes would work out and have competitions.

Inside the Palestra is a huge stone carved cauldron which held water for the use of the athletes.



The Palestra

the Votive Pit, covering the time period of the 5th century BCE to the Roman period.

Heading towards the north, on the right side, are the priest quarters leading up to the beginning of the Sacred Way, which leads to the Temple of Apollo. On the left side there is what is called the Circular Monument, which may be extremely old, and which was actually a

Nearby, on the side of the Palestra, was a building that housed the more expensive votive offerings (like those made of precious metal), presumably protected by a gate which allowed the items to be viewed from outside.

Across the road from the Palestra were the baths, which were there for the use, presumably, of the athletes, though others such as priests may have used them as well.

Continuing into the Sanctuary, on the left side, are a series of five dormitories in what is called the South Building. These long rooms could accommodate a large number of people for overnight sleeping. Across from the South Building, by the Paphos Gate, is a place that looks like a staircase to nowhere, but is really the place where pilgrims would place their votive offerings for Apollo. It must have been quite a site when full.

And when it did get full, the priests would gather them up and deposit them in a big pit. Archaeologists found all kinds of statuettes and pottery in

Sacred Grove for the God. The soil is very thin here, and so great holes were hollowed out of the



The Treasury.



Sacred Grove.

offering fire, and the altar was really just the huge pile of ash.

Continuing on, we come to the Temple itself. Originally it was a large, single-room structure in Classical or early Hellenistic style, but it was rebuilt in Roman times to have a pronaos (porch) and inner naos (or room, sometimes referred to as the cella). It stands on

rock to hold enough soil for the root systems of the myrtle and laurel trees which were planted here. It was surrounded with a pebbled walkway and dance floor for processions and dancing for the God.

a raised platform and is reached by stairs from the road below.

This Sanctuary truly moved me. I could almost hear the crowds, smell the smoke of the sacrifice,

Continuing up the Sacred Way, on the right hand side, is the Archaic era altar. This doesn't look like much now, and appears only as a low pile of stones. But when this was excavated the archaeologists found a huge pile of ash mixed with animal bones and votive offerings, primarily terracotta figurines and pottery. The altar actually consisted of an ash pile which got bigger and bigger with each



Archaic Altar.



The Temple

and hear the chanting of the priests. I went into the naos at the back of the temple and made a short invocation to Apollo, offering Him a silver bead. A breeze came up at that point, and I like to think that the God heard me.

Tombs of the Kings – Paphos

Outside of Paphos are tombs of wealthy people from the Hellenistic period (so, no kings). But these tombs were probably for entire families, not just one individual, and were used over centuries.

There are also some more primitive tombs carved out of the rock, probably by people with less wealth. Indeed, there are a few different styles of tomb - some with atriums, as in a house, and some without. And all the big ones had wells, or cisterns for gathering rain. Perhaps the water was used by people during funerals.

They are quite amazing, having been carved out of the rock, as opposed as having been built



Paphos Tomb #1



Phaphos Tomb #2

above ground. And some are far fancier than others.

Enkomi - a Bronze Age City

In the east end of Cyprus, near the sea, are the ruins of Enkomi, a Bronze Age town that demonstrates just how much commerce there was before the collapse of the empires of the time. Cyprus was known for its copper, and copper is something they exported a lot of. Indeed, a boat was recently excavated off the coast of Cyprus, about a mile offshore, that was filled with copper ingots.

In the center of the town were three temples, built with ashlar limestone blocks (as opposed to rubble walls). In one of them was found a bronze statue of the Horned God, the largest bronze statue from the Bronze Age found on Cyprus. It stands about two feet high.

In another temple, next to the one of the Horned God, was found another bronze statue, only slightly smaller, of the Ingot

God, or a God of Copper. He is standing on a copper ingot. There was a statue of an Ingot Goddess also found nearby, with her standing on the copper ingot while holding her breasts.



Temple of Horned God



Horned God Statue.

These deities show us that cattle were important, as well as copper. It's all about fertility and abundance, everything needed to keep the culture alive.

By the end of the Bronze Age their inland harbor silted up, and the town was abandoned. The populace moved on to found nearby Salamis, on the coast with a good harbor. During the subsequent Archaic period Salamis became the most powerful of the 10 city kingdoms until it was eclipsed in Ptolemaic times by the city of Paphos, on the other side of the island.

Salamis, Cyprus - successor to Enkomi

Now we go on to the Turkish part of Cyprus, up north. Salamis lies on the east coast very near to Enkomi, and archaeologists believe that it was founded after Enkomi was hit by an earthquake in 1075 BCE. The inland harbor of Enkomi was also silting up, and Salamis had a good harbor right on the sea.

By the end of the 8th c. BCE Salamis was an extremely wealthy trading city and was even minting its own coins by the 5th c. BCE. It thrived under the Persians, but when Alexander the Great died in 323 BCE his general Ptolemy, who had taken control of Egypt, also took Cyprus, and he eliminated the kingships of the various city states, including Salamis, and made Kourion, on the other side of the island, into the capital. Salamis continued to be a major, if somewhat diminished, hub while Kourion grew in prosperity.

The earthquakes of 332 CE and 342 CE devastated the city, but it was rebuilt by the Roman Emperor, Constantius II, who renamed the town Constantia. However, the harbor was silting up badly and around 648 CE the last residents moved out to another town nearby. Famagusta, just a few miles to the south of Salamis, then became the premier city of the area and a capital of the island in Medieval times.



Ingot God Statue.



Salamis Palestra.

This site is HUGE, but mostly unexcavated. What I've shown here covers a tiny part of the site, and we didn't have enough time to visit the rest of it. So, I obviously have to return!

Rev. Kirk Thomas is an Archdruid Emeritus of ADF.



Salamis Theatre.



View from Theatre.

The Seer in Ancient Greece

By Rev. Christopher Temple

When someone says the word *oracle*, many individual's thoughts travel to the Greek isles and the ancient mythology. Within the Greek culture the seers were the oracles, although the word oracle is not in fact Greek. The word oracle originates with the Roman term *oraculum*. The Greek term was *chresterion* or *manteion*. This referred to a place that travelers would come to for divine counsel. The concept of a specified location set aside for counsel comes from Egypt and/or Asia Minor (Burkert 114). Although the modern individual may be familiar with the Oracle at Delphi, the oldest oracles are found at Dodona in Epirus near the Pindus Mountains. Odysseus was believed to have traveled to Dodona in order to better understand his destiny (ibid.).

Oracles were found in sanctuaries that were dedicated to certain gods. In the case of Dodona, the temple was dedicated to Zeus. Pytho, the sanctuary at Delphi was dedicated to the god Apollo. Other oracles could be found throughout the Grecian regions and outlying areas, such as Klaros near Colophon and Didyma at Miletos dedicated to Apollo (ibid 115).

While there are unlikely extant records of the specific names of the various oracles, they were often women which were given the position for life. Regardless of their age, they were dressed as young girls. They were seated over chasms from which fumes emanated. The fumes helped the ladies to enter into a meditative trance. The popular theory of volcanic fumes being the culprit has since been disproved geologically. Often-times, they would have no idea what happened during their session, but the priests of the sanctuary would "translate" the messages into prose writings or Greek pentameter to be analyzed later (ibid. 116).

Often the oracles and/or priests could be bribed into coming up with the translations that corresponded with desired results. Obviously, political machinations moved throughout the oracular sanctuaries. Very few political moves were made without consulting the oracles, and it was considered unwise to move against those consultations. When the oracles failed to foresee the Greek victory over the Persians, the reputation of the priests was broken, especially when surrender was considered inevitable (ibid.).

The concept of the oracle divining in a meditative trance-like state is very much akin to the trance states that I use on a regular basis for private readings and the occasional High Day celebration. While this is not considered a closed system of divination, I personally find that the Kindred are often encouraged to speak freely and without filter when allowed. Just as the oracles were introduced to their trance state through ritual and mental cues such as incense and chanting, I use particular incense and recordings of Tibetan Singing Bowls or drumming. Although, I rarely use oracular trance without the benefit of someone close to me watching over me and interpreting some of the more... vague statements.

Work Cited

Burkert, Walter. *Greek Religion*. Malden. Blackwell, 1987.

Rev. Chris Temple is the Senior Druid and Chief Seer of Whispering Lake Grove. With a background in Divination starting as a young teenager, he enjoys reading for friends and family as well as volunteering in the Prison Ministry.





Devotional to the Stations of the Sun

By Rev. Amber Ferrebee

Upon rising, face East saying:

Hail unto thee who art Eos in thy rising, even unto thee who art Eos in thy beauty,
Hail to thee who travels across the sky in your chariot at the Uprising of the Sun.
Hermes stands by your side at the reins: A guide for your journey through the heavens.
Hail unto thee from the Abodes of Night!

At Noon, face the Sun's current location saying:

Hail unto Thee who art Helios in thy triumphing, even unto thee who art Helios in thy strength,
Hail to thee who travels across the sky in your chariot at the
Mid-course of the Sun.
Hermes stands by your side at the reins: A guide for your journey through the heavens.
Hail unto Thee from the Abodes of Morning!

At sunset, face West saying:

Hail unto thee who art Astreaus in thy setting, even unto Thee who art Astreaus in thy joy,
Hail to thee who travels across the sky in your chariot at the Down-going of the Sun.
Hermes stands by your side at the reins: A guide for your journey through the heavens.
Hail unto Thee from the Abodes of Day!

Before retiring or at midnight say:

Hail unto thee who art Nyx in thy darkness, even unto thee who art Nyx in thy mystery,
Hail to Thee who travels unseen across the sky in your chariot at the Midnight Hour of the Sun.
Hermes stands by your side at the reins: A guide for your journey through the heavens.
Hail unto Thee from the Abodes of Evening!

***Inspired by and patterned after *Liber Resh*

The Dance of the Stag

By Rev. Diane Cacciato

O Antlered one! Green Lord of the Forest!
You sit at the trunk of the sacred oak.
You give care to all the plants and trees.
O, stag in rut, I come to thank you.
Man of the mighty oaks
God in the golden woods
You bring life to the early morn and the dawning
spring.
Mighty horned one,
Hunter of the backwoods,
Shaking your horns,
You lead us in your dance.
O, Cernunnos!
Nothing I can offer will be sufficient,
But I'm willing to give you what I can.
I ask for your blessings as I offer you what I
have.



Companionship

By Rev. Diane Cacciato

Rhiannon, Horse Goddess,
Wise wife of Pwyll
And long-suffering mother of Pryderi.
I call out to you and ask for your Companionship.
Walk with me into the forest
Into the darkness
And help me cast light
On that which is unseen.
O, Rhiannon! I return your protection
With the sweet scent of lavender.
Along with the perfume of my gratitude.

Prayer for Someone Looking for a New Home

By Rev. Diane Cacciato

Cailleach
O, Divine Hag
My Winter Queen
Step back behind your veil,
My time in this home is done.
Release me from this place
So that I might start afresh.
I light this silver candle to you in thanks.

Brighid,
O Daughter of the Dagda,
Queen of the Spring.
Step out into the light
And show me where I will dwell.
Open the door and let me in.
Bring peace and happiness
And friends and family
Across my threshold.
I light this golden candle to you in thanks.

Faery Queen and Lover Divine

By Rev. Diane Cacciato

Hail to Thee, Lady of the Hill,
Hail to Thee, Daughter of the Sea,
Hail to Thee, O Queen of Radiant Glory,
Hail to Thee, O Queen of the Fae.
Beautiful Áine,
Faery Queen and Lover Divine,
Your love unending,
Your gifts immeasurable,
Your passion fierce.
I honour Thee for all this and more.
Sun Queen & Bright One,
Immortal Light & Sacred Goddess,
I honour Thee in the Elder Ways.
O, Áine of the summer's warmth,
O, Áine of the brightest cloak,
Be with me and grant Thy aid and blessings and
joy.
O, Áine of the surest step and best heart,
Lady of Light, I praise and reverence Thee.



For Protection Against Disease

By Rev. Ian Corrigan

By the Might of Brigid, daughter of Danu
By the Mercy of Brigid,
Flame of the Hearth
By the Flow of Brigid, Water from the Well

Spirit of the Hammer, Warm the Forge
Spirit of the Quaich, Bear the Draft
Spirit of the Harp, Sing Beauty
So ring, Oh Hammer,
In the Cauldron of Warming

Let my furnace burn warm,
My power be strong, to keep me from all ill.
Be full to spilling, Oh Cup,
Into my Cauldron of Movement
Let your healing flow through every course,
To keep me from all ill

Sing like the Birds of Dawn, O Harp,
With words of comfort
Echoing in my Cauldron of Wisdom

Mighty Goddess, make strong flesh and bone
Loving Goddess, make clean blood and wind
Wisest Goddess, make clear mind and will

In my heart and at my hearth
For my kin and for my folk
That we may all be well.



A Call for Healing

By Rev. Jean "Drum" Pagano

To those in need,
We hold our hands
Like an open cup,
To bring blessings to you.

May the Waters
Of the Ancestors
Rise to cleanse
And surround you.

May the Winds
Of the Middle Realm
Chase all illness
Away from you.

May the Fires
Of the Shining Ones
Burn any infirmity
Away from you.

May the Earth Mother
Give you the strength
Of tenacity
As your body heals.

May Inspiration
Power you forward
In these challenging times
As your body heals.

May the blessings
From my hands
Be yours
Today and always.

May it be so!

Ordination of Diane Cacciato
During the Samhain Ritual, November 1st 2020,
of the Vancouver Island Druids
and The Garry Oak Protogrove, ADF

By Rev. Diane Cacciato

Rev. Jean "Drum" Pagano (Archdruid): Remarks

Nick brings forward the stole. Diane places her hands on the stole, saying:

Before all of you, with my Grove, my family, my friends, the folk of ADF, the Archdruid and the Kindred as my witnesses, I give my oath.

I pledge to love the land, serve the folk, and honour the Gods.

To this I dedicate my hands, my heart, and my head.

I further dedicate myself to continue my endeavors in the programs of study of *Ár nDraíocht Féin*

The folk, both pagan and otherwise, live in my heart and soul,

The land, here and in Sicily, lives in my heart and soul

The Kindred, Gods, Ancestors, and Nature Spirits, live in my heart and soul.

I promise to give my love and uphold you to the very best of my abilities.

Because community building and education are at the heart of my service,

I promise to serve the folk to the very best of my abilities,

And to act as a bridge to help my community find their own way to the Kindred.

Because the Kindred are at the heart of my faith, I promise to honour Cerridwen, Rhiannon, Artio, Gwydion, and Brighid.

I promise to honour Áine, Án Morrigan, Cernunos, and the Cailleach.

I promise to honour all the Gods and Goddesses

and ask for their wisdom and guidance.

I promise to honour the Ancestors and ask for their wisdom and guidance.

I promise to honour the Nature Spirits and ask for their wisdom and guidance.

I give this oath with my whole heart,
With all that I am, and all that I may become.
May the Kindred keep and protect me in my oath.

Drum: Do the folk accept Diane's oath?

All: We do!

Drum: Do you pledge your support for her in this work?

All: We do!

Drum: Do you pledge to tell the truth to her, even if it may be uncomfortable, that she may continue to grow in her role?

All: We do!

Drum: Then I present to you, Reverend Diane Gallagher Cacciato.

Drum: Remarks

Diane makes her sacrifice.

I sacrifice to the Kindred this peat,
Used by my Celtic Ancestors to stay warm and ward away the dark,

Made from the Plant Spirits of the Celtic lands
And acquired at Dunrobin Castle,

The seat of the Sutherland Clan on the lands
From which many of my Celtic Ancestors came
And whose tartan and symbols I wear now.

I make this sacrifice to the Kindred that guide me every day

To Cerridwen, Rhiannon, Artio, Gwydion, and Brigid

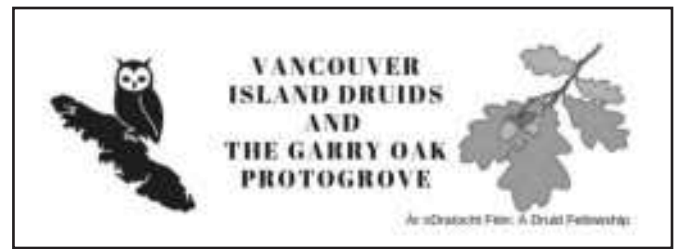
To Án Morrigan, Áine, Cernunnos, and the
Cailleach.
To my father and to Bernadette,
And to the walnut and Garry Oak trees that stand
guard over my home
I make this sacrifice.

Drum draws a second Omen.

Drum: Remarks

Diane:

Today I gird myself with triple power—
Invocation of the Gods;
Attunement with the Spirits;
Reverence to the Ancestors.
Today I gird myself with the Power of the Magic
Cauldron,
With the power of the Spear and Sword,
and the Stone of Sovereignty.
With the whole company of the Mother's Kin.
Today I gird myself with the Power of the Noble
Ones
Obedience of Spirits, service of the Sidhe
With the loving blessing of the Dead.
Wisdom of the wise, courage of the strong,
innocence of the young
And the deeds of heroes.
Today I gird myself with the Power of Heaven
Light of the Sun, brilliance of the Moon, speed of
Lightning;
Swiftness of Wind, depths of the Sea, firmness of
Earth
Hardness of Rock
And the Power Under the Earth
Today I gird myself
With the Goddess' Power to direct me
With the Gods' Wisdom to bear me up
With the Child's Love to content me
Their eyes to look after me, their ears to hear
from me,
Their voice to clarify for me, their hand to guard
me,
Their paths open before me, their shield to ward
me,
From the snares of spirits, from the weakness of
will,
From habit and unmindfulness, from all who wish
me ill



Far or near.

I summon these Powers to be upon me and in me,
to make me equal to any challenge:

To come between me and any power that threat-
ens my body or spirit:

That I may have the wisdom of the wise, the love
of the loving, the power of the powerful;

That I may be known in the Inner Realms and
acknowledged with honor.

Know me. O Mighty Ones, for my name is Diane
Gallagher Cacciato.

Magic within me, magic on my right hand, magic
behind me;

Magic on my left hand, magic before me, magic
above me, magic beneath me.

In the eye of all beholders, in the ear of all who
hear

In the heart of all beings

My magic is established.

Today I gird myself with the three-fold power

Honor to the Gods! Honor to the Fair Folk!

Honor to the Dead!

And honor to the Wisdom of Magicians

That dwells in me forever

So be it!

*Nick carries stole to the Zoom screen and each
person holds their hands out to it saying:*

I armour you with (*whatever attribute you wish to
give to Diane, i.e., Wisdom, Courage, etc.*)

Drum: Remarks.

*As Drum speaks, Nick puts the stole over Diane's
shoulders.*

Diane: Remarks – Gratitude and Thanks.

*Comment: this was the second remote Zoom ordina-
tion held in 2020 due to the Covid Pandemic.*



Photo 1. The entrance to Oweynagat, taken from approximately ten feet away. Note the hawthorn tree above the entrance. The small access road crosses from left to right just above the top of the picture. (Photo taken by the author in 2009.)

inscription read as QREGAS MU but untranslatable. The presence of a number of large earth-fast stones and lintel-like slabs in the field south of the road suggested to Waddell et al that this souterrain passage may have continued for some distance to the southeast.

The left-hand souterrain passage, which is about 1.1 m (3.6 ft) wide and between 70 cm (2.3 ft) and 1.2 m (3.9 ft) high, joins a narrow natural fissure in the limestone bedrock (see figure 2) and continues to the northwest, descending fairly steeply to join the long narrow natural cave. This passage is largely of artificial construction for about the first 10 m (33 ft), before joining the cave, which continues for a further 37 m (120 ft). In this initial section, the natural fissure in which it was constructed appears to have been widened in places, and drystone walling, built on a footing of natural rock on either side, supports large slabs which span the roof. This partly artificial section of passage increases in height and widens considerably before joining the natural cave. At that point, the roofed ceiling descends abruptly,

coinciding with a drop in floor level. A level area of bedrock on either side of a narrow passage, 40 cm (1.3 ft) wide, leads by a series of five rough flagstone steps to the natural unmodified cave below.

The natural cave then widens to a chamber 2.85 m (9.35 ft) in maximum width at its lowest level, which is only 8 m (25 ft) below present ground level. Its walls incline from the cave floor to a narrow roof, spanned by naturally deposited rocks and boulders, about 5 m (15 ft) above. The floor of the cave is boulder-strewn and muddy. From this point the cave floor rises and narrows again, to terminate relatively close to ground level, about 50 m (160 ft) from the present souterrain entrance. The results of the electrical survey work performed by Waddell et al suggests that the fissure continues as a clay-filled cavity in the limestone bedrock, the length of which has not been determined. They consider it likely that Oweynagat and other natural fissures observed in



Photo 2. A closer view of the entrance to Oweynagat from about five feet away. (Photo taken by the author in 2009.)

the vicinity developed by solution in static or slow-moving water along simple joints in the limestone bedrock (Waddell, Fenwick, and Barton 2009, 81-82, 86; Waddell 2014, 62).

Oweynagat – the archeological cave.

As a natural topographical feature, Oweynagat predates all the monuments at Rathcroghan, and may have been one of the most sacred elements in the Iron Age landscape, possibly having achieved the status of a sacred place in earlier prehistory. Early Medieval literary sources stress the sacred importance of the area as a place apart from the profane world, but it is the Cave of Crúachain that figures most prominently in the texts. Aside from its location, two significant archaeological features of the cave stand out: the ogham stones in its souterrain, mentioned above, and the possible surface enclosure which may have surrounded it at one time.

The ogham stones. Souterrains have, in the main,

managed to remain free from allegations of a “ritual dimension” in Ireland. Oweynagat is one of two exceptions, the other being located on one of the islands in Lough Derg. There is no denying that this hybrid souterrain / natural cave is a rather enigmatic creation, the “cave” being regarded in the literature as a Gate to Hell or to the Otherworld. There are other known hybrid souterrain / natural caves, but none has acquired such a mythology. The occurrence of the two ogham stones in the drystone section of the Oweynagat complex is of particular interest. One of the two stones reads VRAICCI MAQI MEDVVI – “(the stone) of Fráech, son of Medb”. According to Medieval mythology, the warrior Fráech was the son-in-law of Queen Medb and the hero of the narrative *Táin Bó Fraíche*, which describes his wooing of Medb’s daughter Fin-nabhair. There have been, however, some suggestions that the Medb referred to in the ogham inscription is an unknown male personage. The inscription on the second stone is undecipherable, but a possible reconstruction is (MA) Q REGAS MU (COI). Dowd (2015) considers that the

possible reference to the goddess Medb in one of the stones is highly significant, not only because she was the mythological queen of Rathcroghan, but also because of her link to the cave in one narrative story. Reference to the warrior Fráech is similarly important, as Carnfree (“the cairn of Fráech”, shown on figure 1) derives its name from him. The builders of the entrance to Oweynagat were probably aware of the significance of the names on the stones. The presence of the ogam inscriptions (which are rare in Connacht) is noteworthy, and the attachment of a man-made souterrain to a natural cave is also unusual in this part of Ireland. The souterrain at Oweynagat has been dated to a general Early Medieval timespan (400-1100 CE), and the use of the 5th century CE ogam stones (which may have been taken from somewhere else) as roofing slabs was probably not a casual decision. Their purpose may have been to serve as talismans with a protective function, for which they may have been deliberately sought out. In particular, the lintel bearing the “Fráech” inscription (photo 3) may have been deliberately placed at a junction of two branches of the souterrain, presumably to mark a key point in the structure.

The surface enclosure. The 1864 woodcut of the cave by Samuel Ferguson showed the presence of a small circular embanked enclosure surrounding the entrance to Oweynagat (see figure 2.). This consisted of a bank 2 m (6 ft) wide around an area 17m (56 ft) in diameter that was slightly raised in the center. No indication of this enclosure now survives, and it was not traced by geophysical investigation. However, intense activities involving fire were identified in its interior. The enclosure has been interpreted on more than one occasion as an Early Medieval ringfort or settlement, but this is unconvincing, partly because the enclosure is half the size of the average ringfort, but also because there is no indication of an external ditch, typical in ringforts, in the 19th century drawing, and one was not picked up by geophysics. Early historical habitation sites at Rathcroghan deliberately avoided the Iron Age funerary and ritual sites which surround the cave, and the documentary sources repeatedly depict it as a fearful supernatu-

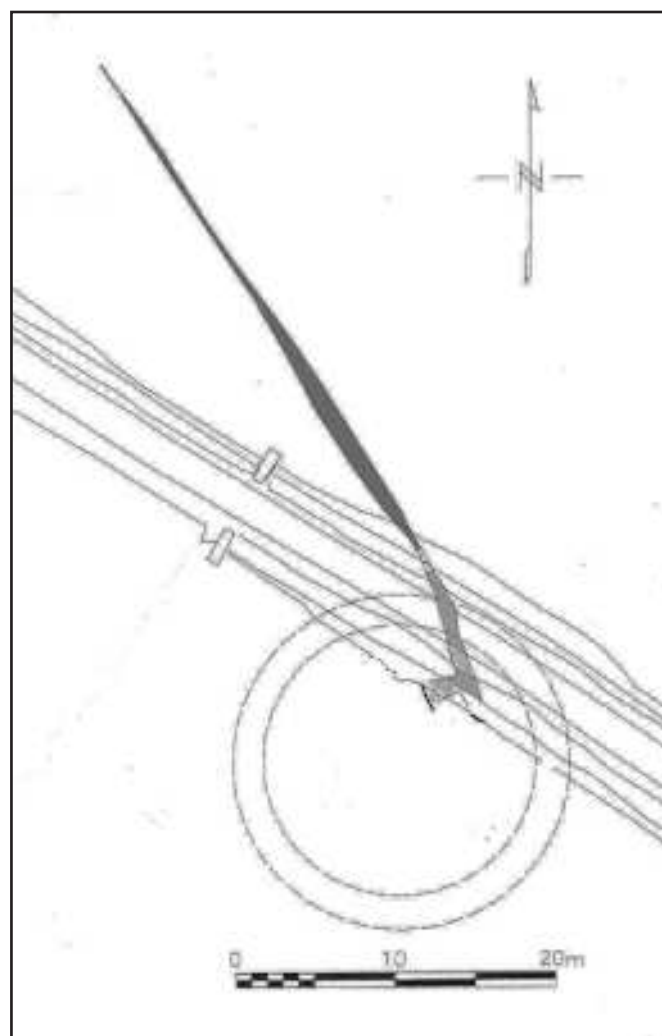


Figure 2. Map of the cave (dark gray) and souterrain (lighter gray), showing the road which crosses it on the surface and the possible location of the enclosing bank noted by Ferguson in 1864. After Waddell et al 2009, p. 87.

ral place. It is difficult to envisage that a secular settlement would have been constructed around the entrance to such a highly charged location. On the whole, there is some consensus that the enclosure surrounding the Cave of Crúachain was ritual in nature, but there is less certainty regarding the date of its construction and use. Waddell et al (2009) believe that the enclosure dates from the construction of the Early Medieval souterrain, and suggest that the mythology pertaining to the Cave derives from oracular and prophetic practices or warrior initiation rituals and rites of passage which may have taken place there. Dowd (2015) thinks it is more probable that the enclosure is late prehistoric in date, predating the souterrain by many centuries. If the enclosure



Photo 3. The “Froach” ogham stone , viewed from under the first lintel of the entrance souterrain. The dry stone walling on the north side of the main passage is visible beyond it. Note the water dripping from the roof. (Photo taken by the author in October 2009.)

was prehistoric, then the original natural entrance to the Cave of Crúachain would have been located immediately inside the northwestern bank. In this case, she considers it possible that the enclosure served to *contain* the cave, to control or emphasize what was perceived to be an extremely potent and dangerous place in the landscape, and to restrain the supernatural forces within it, marking the boundary between this world and the Otherworld. No excavations have taken place inside the natural portion of the cave or in the area surrounding it which might determine whether it was actively used during the Iron Age. It is unlikely, however, that the souterrain fulfilled any of the practical functions usually attributed to souterrains (such as storage areas or refuges) because of the scarcity of any sign of secular activities in the immediate environs, and the special nature of the ogham stones, or that such a potent and feared place would have been adapted for domestic usage. The elaborate

structural enhancement of the Cave of Crúachain in the Early Medieval period may be a reflection of the regard in which it was held and its perceived association with the Otherworld into historic times. (Dowd 2015, 171-173, 198-199; Waddell 2010, 14, 62; Clinton 2001, 60, 72-73).

Oweynagat – the mythological cave.

If Oweynagat’s physical structure is relatively straightforward, and its archaeological features only somewhat ambiguous, its mythical dimensions are huge. The number of references to its supernatural features in the early literature are extensive, winning it its title of *dorus iffírn na Hérend* – “Ireland’s gate to Hell”, as one ninth century writer put it in the tale *Cath Maige Mucrama* (“The Battle of Mag Mucrama”):

“Now Mag Mucríma [was so called from] magic pigs that had come out of the cave of Crúachain. That is Ireland’s gate to Hell. Out of it too came the swarm of three-headed creatures that laid Ireland

waste until Amairgene father of Conall Cernach... destroyed it... Out of it also had come the saffron-coloured(?) bird-flock and they withered up everything in Ireland that their breath touched until the Ulaid killed them with their slings... Out of it then had come these pigs. Whatever [land] they traversed no corn or grass or leaf grew on it until the end of seven years. Wherever they were being counted they would not stay there... if the attempt to count them succeeded the counts did not agree... it was impossible to count them. Nor were they able to slay them... Medb of Crúachu and Ailill went... to reckon them... One of the pigs jumped across the chariot... [and] Medb [seized] the pig's shank so the its skin split on its forehead and it left the skin in her hand along with the shank and it is not known where they went from that time onward... (Waddell 2014, 58-59, quoting M. O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama* 1975, p. 48)”.

In the complex and surreal story known as *Echra Nerai* (“the Adventure of Nera”) the cave’s frightening aspects are also well described. One year when Ailill and Medb were celebrating Samhain, the warrior Nera goes outside in order to have dealings with a hanged man in order to win a prize. On returning to the fort, he finds that the otherworldly people of the *síd* have burned the court and left a heap of heads. Nera follows them into the Cave of Crúachain and finds a home and a wife there. His wife eventually explains to him that the destruction he witnessed was a vision, and that Crúachain will really be destroyed the following Samhain unless its inhabitants are warned. She tells him to bring the fruits of summer to the winter world outside in order to convince them that he has been in the *síd*. He takes with him wild garlic, primroses, and buttercups, and succeeds in preventing the slaughter, but at the end of the tale “Nera was left in the *síd* with his people, and has not come out yet, and he will not come out until the end of the world” (Koch and Carey, 118, 122).

The cave is mentioned in *Fled Bricreen*

(“Bricriu’s Feast”) as the source of the three magical cats which give it its modern name:

“One night as their portion was assigned to them, three cats from the Cave of Cruachan were let loose to attack them, i.e., three beasts of magic. Conall and Lóegaire made for the rafters, having left their food with the beasts. In that way they slept until the next day. Cú Chulainn did not flee from his place from the beast which attacked him. But when it stretched its neck out for eating, Cú Chulainn gave a blow with a sword on the beast’s head, but [the blade] glided off as it were striking stone. Then the cat set itself down. In the circumstances Cú Chulainn neither ate nor slept. As soon as it was early morning the cats were gone.” (Koch and Carey, 1994, 82)

Ogam inscriptions in souterrains, where translatable, generally seem to provide no further clues as to the role of these stones – with the possible exception of that dedication to *Fraích* in Oweyn-gat. If this is indeed an allusion to the hero of the eighth-century *Táin Bó Fraích* (“The Cattle Raid of Fráech”), then we have a reference here to the foremost legendary warrior of Connacht. In *Táin Bó Fraích*, the wounded hero is carried into the cave by “three times fifty women” to come out “quite healed without defect or blemish” the following day.

In the metrical *Dindshenchas*, the Morrígan, the ancient Goddess of Battle, emerges from the cave of Crúachain, “her fit abode”: The Goddess also figures in the prose *Dindshenchas*, where she carries off a bull and installs it and a cow in the cave. In *Acallam na Senórach*, the daughter of Bodb, son of the God Dagda, comes from the cave to talk with Caílte, who recognizes her as one of the *Tuatha Dé Danann*. Another person to come out of this populous cave is Olc Aí, who,

even though he is depicted in the *Dindshenchas* as the guardian of the beautiful Findchóem, is an otherworld figure whose name Olc has wolfish connotations. Three female werewolves or dogs emerged every year to kill sheep until they were slain by Cailte. In *Táin Bó Regamna*, Cú Chulainn confronts the Morrígan, who brings a cow out of the *síd* and transforms herself into a black bird. In various other tales, the cave is represented as the abode of several omnipotent women, including Mórrígan, Cruachú, Scothníam, and a woman of the *sídh*, who comes out of the cave every Samhain to steal away nine of the best animals out of every herd.

The warning given to the nearby royal settlement about its impending destruction in *Echtra Nerai* might mean that prophetic rites once took place in the cave, something well documented in the Greek and Roman world, where caves were often instrumental in producing altered states of consciousness. The tale of the triple-headed creature or creatures killed in single combat by Amairgene may imply that the cave was once the location of initiation practices. Such rites of passage could involve other forms of testing besides combat, such as deprivation and isolation. It seems likely that Oweynagat was a focus for cult practices in pre-Christian times, which might have included sensory deprivation and altered states of consciousness associated with divination, oracular activity and warrior initiation. The tales that hint at this sort of usage may be echoes of ancient prehistoric customs, but they could also be an indication that some or all of those customs were still practiced in early medieval time. It is not surprising that the Cave of Crúachain was regarded as one of the three darkest places in Ireland (Wardell et al, 2009, 30-31; Waddell 2014; 59 66-68; McCafferty 300; MacKillop; 113; 10; 169-170).

Oweynagat – the modern uses.

Like a number of other Irish caves, Oweynagat has been reinvented – some would say revived – in recent years as a place of New Age or Neopa-

gan spiritual activities. Ritual practices there are reported by Dowd to center on the concept that caves are locations of the feminine, either residences of female supernatural beings / energy / Goddesses, or symbolic of femaleness, fecundity, sexuality, the womb, or birth. The modern rituals at these and other caves are personal and private, but Oweynagat has been a focal point for Neopagan rituals since at least the 1990s, particularly at Samhain.

On my first visit in 2009, we spoke with an artist who lives near Oweynagat, saying we were looking for a cave. “Pagan, are you?” was his immediate response, adding that no one came there but Pagans and archeologists. In 2011 Dowd interviewed the same person, who provided her with valuable insights into how the cave is used and perceived at present. Several people have described the cave to him as being a “busy” place in terms of energies and spirits; others have sensed malevolency. Some considered it an empowering place, a place for conquering fears, somewhere to test or challenge oneself, a site of initiation, an in-between place, a residence of the goddess of death (the Morrígan), an entrance to the Otherworld, and a space to connect with one’s ancestors. From my own experiences, I can agree with many of these descriptions (Dowd 2015 19-20). In recent years, the Rathcroghan Visitor Centre in Tulsk has been running tours to the cave, although those are currently suspended due to the pandemic. I recommend contacting them if you are planning a visit (<https://www.rathcroghan.ie/>).

Imagining Oweynagat.

I visited Oweynagat in 2009 and 2011, although I only descended into the cave proper on my second visit. The following passage from one of my novels is based on my experiences then, and describes part of an imagined initiatory experience in the sixth century CE.

Even in the growing darkness, he could see that the descent was steep. Kneeling on the rocky edge, he began to lower himself backwards into the dark. The rocks were slick with mud, and he went

bent double, holding with his hands to the walls, his only light the faint twilight which came down from above; but presently the slope became less steep, and the cave roof higher, and he could stand erect. He knelt and found the lantern, together with its flint and steel, and lit it. By its light he walked forward, deeper into Oweynagat... Above him the walls rose up steeply into darkness, beyond the reach of his feeble light, and nowhere were they farther apart than twice the span of his arms. At first, he walked through pools of standing water where the brown mud sucked at his bare feet, and always the air around him was as cold as winter's breath. Slowly the walls came closer and closer together, so that at last it was hard to pass between them. Then, when he could go no farther, he stopped and blew out the lantern, and with difficulty placed it on the ground. In the icy darkness, held close in the arms of the earth, he stood still and listened, with ears and with mind, for what was to come. At first, he could hear only the sounds of his own breath, and his own heartbeat, loud in his ears. Then, as time passed, he heard faintly in the distance the sound of falling water—the tinkle of drops dripping into a pool, clear as single notes plucked on a harp in the icy darkness, like the Dagda's four-cornered music... Before he had extinguished his lantern, he had seen his breath steaming like clouds in the air before him. All the walls of the cave had been shining wet, shining like dark glass or golden-brown ice... How long was the lineage of those who had stood where he stood now, pressing their hands to the freezing rock, and listening like him for the approach of terror? For of course, though he could not go deeper into the cave himself, other things—frightening and dangerous things—could come out. They had done so in the past, leaving death and destruction in their wake, burning and slaying without regard for human kind, delighting in their savagery and in the bloodshed and

pain they inflicted. And he, one frail mortal man, stood in their way...
(Grove, p. 172-173).

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- Rev. G. R. Grove is a Senior Priest of ADF, a Master Bard, an Initiate, and Editor in Chief of Oak Leaves. Her books can be found on Amazon.com and Lulu.com.

An Imbolc Devotional

By Rev. Ian Corrigan

Imbolc is the feast of the Goddess Brigid, in her aspect as nurturing Mother and protector. It has special significance in the Scottish Highlands and is celebrated in Erin as the furthest beginning of Spring. In the cycles of the land Imbolc is the end of the coldest and darkest winter days. The meat and grain stored for the winter are nearly used up, but the land has not yet begun to yield the new year's herbs and roots. So the clans would offer to the Goddess to stave off hunger and illness until the warming of the earth. In Erin the climate often permits planting in February, and the ewes come into milk as they gestate the new herds. Thus the feast is called Imbolc, which means "in the belly". The earth is pregnant with the year's good, but has not given forth.

Imbolc is a feast of home and hearth. The other three Celtic holy days were observed with tribal gatherings, while Imbolc seems to have been a private matter. It was focused on the house, hearth and land, and on what might be called woman's ways.

The mythic elements of Imbolc center around the important Gaelic Goddess Brigid, or Bride. Recorded in Irish lore as a daughter of the Dagda, one of the Tuatha De Danann, she was the ruling Goddess of the north British Celtic tribe, the Brigantes. She is mentioned in Irish lore as a triple Goddess of poetry, healing and smithcraft, but in Scots lore she is clearly an Earth Mother, who rules the bounty of the land. She passed into Christian legend as Saint Brigid. In this form she is sometimes called the midwife of Christ, revealing her nurturing nature. In the folkways of this holy day, she is asked to grant fertility and growth to land, herd, and clan.

So we begin the work, saying:

**The Fire, the Well, the Sacred Tree,
Flow and flame and Grow in me.
In Land, Sea and Sky,
Below and on high
Let the Water be Blessed and the Fire be Hal-
lowed,**



Photographer unknown.

And Let my voice be heard by the Holy Ones!

**Now may the Powers of Underworld and Heaven
bring their cleansing blessing.**

*Anoint and cense the hands and any items proper
to the work, saying:*

**By the might of the Water and the light of the
Fire,
this (place/thing/work, etc) is made whole and
holy.**

*And/or, slightly more detailed, for cleansing a
room or object or person:*

**Fire and Water, Earth and Sky,
Rooted deep and crowned High,
Ill be gone and good draw nigh
Fire and Water, Earth and Sky.**

Hymn of Intention

O Brigid of the Mantles, you make my heart easy;
With a wondrous admiration I come to your
shrine.

My heart in exaltation, I call to you sweetly,
That your healing and blessing be on me and
mine.

The Fire of inspiration, that shines in the Poet
Burns too in the forge and the Healer's kind hand;
The wondrous transformation, of loving and
knowing,
The gift of the Goddess in Sea, Sky and Land.

The Flame in the homestead, the Cauldron a-boiling,
The Wise Chieftain smiling, The Queen on her throne—
In Winter's long keeping, it's kin that bring comfort,
For if we face hardship, may it not be alone.

The Winter is passing, though ice is still clinging
To bough and to hillside, but your hearth is warm;
With clan and with kindred we come to you singing,
Brigid of the Kindness, to keep us from harm.

The Fire Upon the Hearthstone lights the Flame
of the Altar
The pure light made brighter the Blessing to bring;
We come to the Altar, together in worship
Of Holy Ones all, for the Blessing of Spring.

Antiphon of the Vision

**Let the Inner Eye be open,
let the spirit eye be clear;
Wisdom speaks in spirit-vision,
let the truth be on me here.**

*Sitting in your meditation seat,
breathe and seek your peace in silence.
Let your bone uphold you,
Let your blood beat in you,
Let your breath flow through you
For a moment, in silence...
And let the Gate of the Season be open,
and let the threshold of Spring
flow into your mind...
Like the rising light
and warmth of a new fire.
Winter may be long,
and the hearth wants cleansing.
With water pure from spring's melt
the stains of good use
must be scrubbed away,
and the Good Hearth Fire laid anew.
Kindled from the old spark,
it is the very shining presence of the Goddess.
At such a Hearth the Kin are kept whole.
And to gaze into such a flame
is to recall another –*



*the forge-flame, blown hot by bellows,
which serves the artist's hand.
As meat becomes the feast,
so stone becomes iron,
and iron becomes tools,
by the Same Fire,
the shaping presence of the Goddess.
At such an Anvil are the kin made able.
And it is from the Hearth-Fire,
from the place of the Goddess,
that the spark is carried
to the Rites of the Gods.
Raised on the Altar,
fed with sweet oils and herbs,
the Fire of Sacrifice is the place of the poet;
where the old songs are sung, the old tales told,
by the light of the people's offerings,
the singing presence of the Priest of the Gods.
At such altars the Kin are blessed.
So contemplate the Fire –
of the Hearth, of the Smith, of the Poet,
for a time in attunement with the Season...*

Antiphon of the Vision

**Let the Inner Eye be open, let the spirit eye be clear.
Wisdom speaks in spirit-vision, let the truth be on me here.**



Prayer of the Vision

By the Blessed Fire, and the Purifying Water,
I pray for renewal and restoration.
To the Lady of Hearth-Fire,
and the Red God of the Fire of Sacrifice
I pray, and ask that you shine in my heart.
Wake skill in my spirit, and inspiration,
and the compassion of a Mother,
and so in my heart, likewise,
let there be peace, and rest,
and the blessing of purification,
in this Holy Season –
in wisdom, love, and strength,
so be it.

Offertory Invocation

The Imbolc Charm

In the Belly, Growing!
Hearth Keeping, Earth Stirring,
Light Rising, Bread Baking,
I keep the Feast of Imbolc!
Bride of the Hearth-Fire, you I call,
Lady of the Sacred Well,
Bannock Mother, Font of Sustenance
Take now this offering, here at my Fire.
Bride of the Skills, to you I call,
Queen of Poetry, Queen of Artifice,
Queen of Healing, Goddess of Inspirations,
Take now this offering here at my Fire.
Foster Mother, Cattle Mother,

Fire Mother, Well Mother,
Beneath your Mantle of Stars
I give you this sacrifice,
Mother of Blessing.
Milk of the Mother,
Come fill the Cauldron.
Let the Land grow soft with your warmth,
Let your milk come into the world,
Let me gain every good
in the growth of the season,
By the Blessing of the Lady of Fire and Water!
So, Brigid and all your Powers,
I give you welcome at my Fire.
Let your light be reflected in my spirit,
let your ale flow in my veins.
I raise this glass to you,
and drink to your divine power.
Let me know the health, wealth, and wisdom
of the Gods and Spirits
on this holy feast of Imbolc! So be it!

*Offerings: oat-cakes and milk. Work the rite at
your own hearth or home.*

Antiphon of Blessing

**With open heart and centered mind
I seek the flow of blessing—
Shine from Above and Rise from the Deep!**

Litany of Blessing

Holy Ones, we remember you!



Response: Grant me the Blessing!

Fire of the Hearth and Fire of the Altar!

Response: Grant me the Blessing!

You to whom I make these offerings

Response: Grant me the Blessing!

That there be blessing in our spirits, bright and deep!

Response: Let the Blessing be in me!

Let there be blessing in our minds, calm and clear!

Response: Let the Blessing be in me!

Let there be blessing in our Flesh, whole and strong!

Response: Let the Blessing be in me!

That Wisdom guide me!

Response: That the Blessing be mine!

That Strength empower me!

Response: That the Blessing be mine!

That Love sustain me!

Response: That the Blessing be mine!

Antiphon of Blessing

With open heart and centered mind, I seek the flow of blessing—

Shine from Above and Rise from the Deep!

Antiphon of Contemplation

In soul-peace, I let light reflect, and shadow bide in the deep—

May my stillness reflect beauty, and abide in wisdom.

Now abide a while in silence, and let the whole Blessing of the coming Feast be upon you.

Antiphon of Contemplation

In soul-peace, I let light reflect, and shadow bide in the deep—

May my stillness reflect beauty, and abide in wisdom.

Final Prayer

Holy Ones, on the Threshold of Spring

I remember the hope of the Light.

May wisdom and skill grow in the world and in my life.

May kindness rule, and Blessing flow with the melting waters.

Let me and mine know peace and fullness in our home and in our heart.

In Wisdom, Love, and Power, so be it.

Rev. Ian Corrigan is a Senior Priest and Archdruid Emeritus of ADF.

Trees in the Religions of Early Medieval England

Reviewed by Aimee Brannon

Author: Michael D.J. Bintley
Publisher: The Boydell Press, Woodbridge
Language: English
ISBN: 978-1-78327-301-0
Paperback Edition 2018

Trees in the Religions of Early Medieval England ranges across the academic disciplines of archeology, literature, and religious studies, and explores building sites, burial mounds, place names, and Anglo-Saxon poems, homilies, and charters. The author is a Senior Lecturer in Medieval Literature at Canterbury Christ Church University, so the book is scholarly, yet well written and approachable for a non-specialist audience.

The book examines how trees and their derivatives, wooden pillars, rods, staffs, crosses, and posts, were used in an “inculturation” process to persuade Anglo-Saxon Heathens to become Christians, and once converted, to use trees and their derivatives to maintain ties to their Pagan Ancestors, as well as to connect them to the Christian cross and all of its associations. Pagan and Christian use of trees occurred throughout the Anglo-Saxon period in England, as evidenced by the long use in the Yeavinger building complex and ring ditch site in northeast England; finds from the Sutton Hoo ship burial mound; the Ruthwell and Bewcastle stone crosses, which still stand in England and bear vine images; and Anglo-Saxon original and translated literature.

Dr. Bintley lays the foundation for the theme of the book by examining evidence for pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon understanding of trees, which will probably be the most interesting aspect of the work to most Pagan readers. Trees acted as meeting places and boundary markers throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, and these trees were named, well known, and widely recognized. Given examples of iconic trees in Germanic pre-Christian religion include Irminsul, Yggdrasil, the Oak of Jupiter, and an impressive tree that reportedly stood close by the Pagan temple at Uppsala, Sweden.

Writing in an engaging style that keeps the reader with the book, Dr. Bintley provides evidence by examining numerous aspects of Anglo-Saxon culture, including a set of ten Byzantine silver bowls from the famous Sutton Hoo ship burial mound site in southern England. Each bowl features a rosette in the center, which is commonly interpreted as referring to vines and the Christian cross in the Byzantine culture of the time, and could have been seen in Anglo-Saxon England as representing a highly relatable tree/cross complex.

A thorough and surprisingly interesting discussion of illustrative Old English poems, in particular, *The Dream of the Rood* and *Judgment Day II*, demonstrates that the prominent place of trees and wood in Anglo-Saxon literature is rooted in Anglo-Saxon Paganism as much as, if not more than, in contemporaneous Christianity. Particularly, *The Dream of the Rood* features a sentient wooden cross describing its career as the rood Christ was crucified on. *Judgment Day II*, an Old English translation of a poem originally written in Latin, expands its opening scene from that of the original work to describe a person seated under the trees in a small wood, itself enclosed by a hedge, accentuating the role of the tree, woods, and hedge in much more detail than the original. This puts an ineffaceable Anglo-Saxon stamp on the poem. Dr. Bintley describes how Anglo-Saxons made impenetrable hedges by bending saplings sideways and weaving them between posts, eventually creating thick, tall protective barriers. These poems and other Anglo-Saxon literary works show how comparable and consistent the Anglo-Saxon reverence for trees was between the Pagan and Christian religious worlds, and gives interested Pagans valuable insight into the minds of the Ancestors.

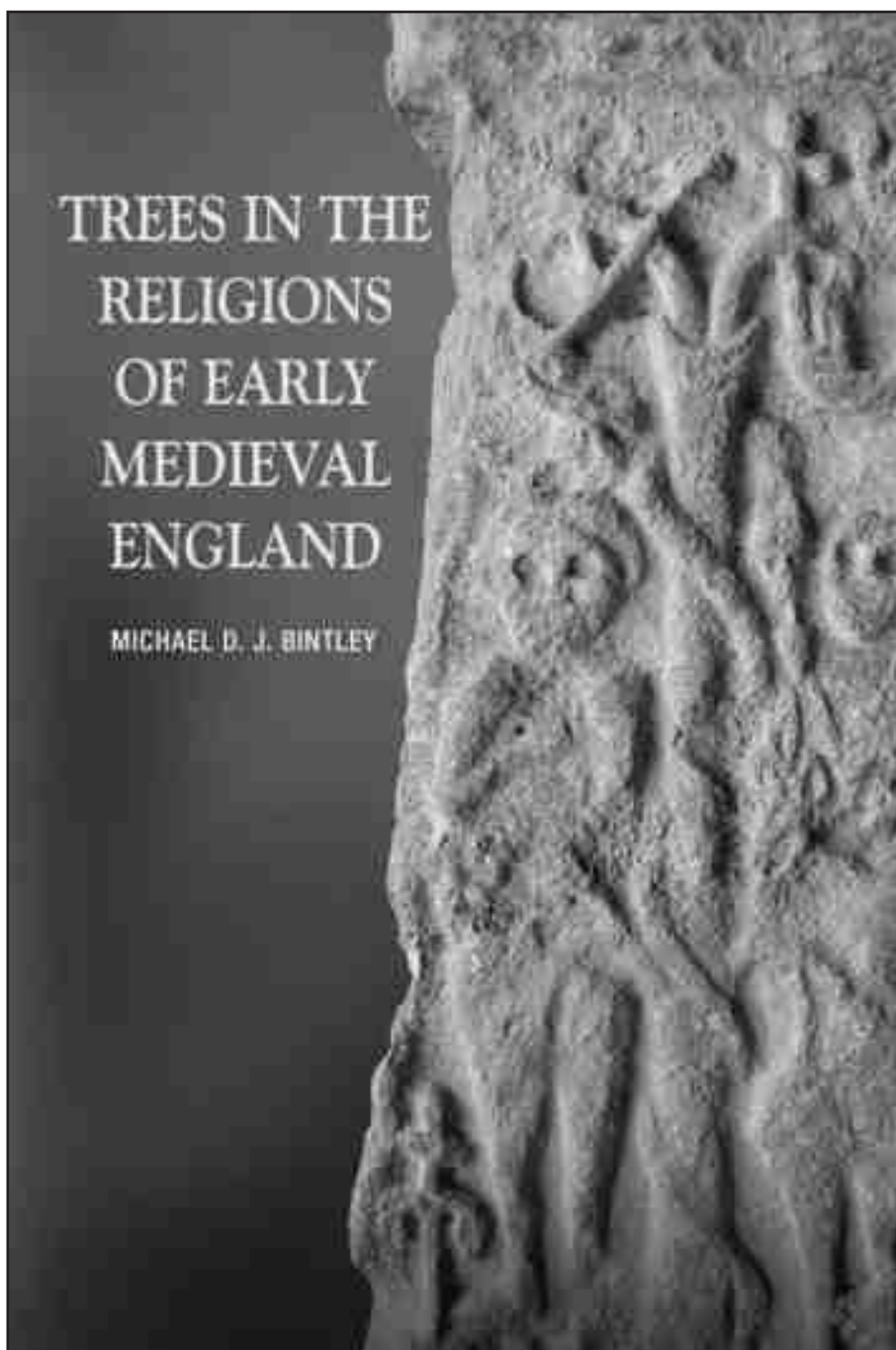
Dr. Bintley makes his topic come alive, almost literally, in the final chapter, *The Human Forest*. He sets the stage for further illustrating Anglo-Saxon thought regarding trees by briefly discussing the animist perspective of plant life presented in Matthew Hall’s *Plants as Persons: A Philosophical Botany*. Hall describes present day

Western anthropocentric and zoocentric attitudes towards Nature, and suggests that pre-Christian cultures that were converted late, including the Anglo-Saxons, had a contrasting outlook and recognized plants as kindred non-human persons.

To show the difference between present attitudes, based on Classical and Judeo-Christian ones, and those of early medieval Anglo-Saxons, especially the Heathens, Dr. Bintley engages in a survey of some of the innumerable descriptions in Old Norse literature of people as trees, and connects them with the same ideas in Anglo-Saxon writings to amplify these far less numerous ones. He notes that just as in modern English, the Old English word “lim” (modern English “limbs”) was used to describe parts of trees and of the human body. He discusses Germanic stories of the creation of humans by the Gods from pieces of wood and relates them specifically to Anglo-Saxon culture, driving the living importance of trees to Anglo-Saxons home.

A quibble I have with the book is that the author capitalizes the words “Christian” and “Christianity”, but doesn’t capitalize “heathen” or “paganism”. The book otherwise seems unusually matter of fact regarding Paganism, and because the author has published in *The Pomegranate*, an international peer-reviewed journal of Pagan Studies, I assume he is merely observing conventional or academic usage; however, the time has come for Paganism to stand on equal ground with Christianity in all contexts.

Trees in the Religions of Early Medieval England is a wide-ranging academic work, but is readable



by the non-specialist interested in Anglo-Saxon Paganism. It illuminates the sometimes-dim world of Anglo-Saxon Paganism through archeology, literature, landscapes, sculpture, place names, and judicious use of the comparative method. It’s a fascinating work that Anglo-Saxon Heathens and other interested Pagans should find informative and enjoyable.

Aimee Brannon joined ADF in 2016. She completed her DP in 2020. She is a member of Chokecherry Grove in Denver, CO..

Word Search Puzzle: Norse Deities

By Rev. G. R. Grove

B	A	L	D	R	U	Y	N	G	V	I	G
R	A	O	N	I	F	O	R	S	E	T	I
A	S	K	A	D	I	V	A	E	N	Y	D
G	R	I	N	D	R	F	R	E	Y	R	U
I	L	I	O	V	O	R	I	O	E	N	N
S	O	L	R	O	D	I	N	R	T	A	N
E	N	M	O	V	O	G	V	O	H	F	A
O	A	R	M	A	K	G	J	E	O	R	E
S	H	E	I	M	D	A	L	L	R	E	U
T	O	N	M	R	A	F	E	S	N	Y	L
R	D	V	I	D	A	R	R	I	E	J	L
E	R	N	R	A	N	Y	N	F	V	A	R

BALDR
BRAGI
EOSTRE
FORSETI
FREYJA
FREYR
FRIGG
YNGVI

HEIMDALLR
HODR
ILMR
IDUNN
LOKI
MIMIR
ODIN
RAN

RINDR
SIF
SKADI
SOL
THOR
TYR
ULLR
VAR
VIDARR
VE

The Poets

Rev. Diane Cacciato joined ADF in 2017 and is the Grove Organizer for Garry Oak Protogrove. She is an author, poet, essayist, and retired teacher-librarian. She divides her time living between two islands worlds apart — Vancouver Island in Canada and Sicily.

Rev. Ian Corrigan is a Senior Priest and Archdruid Emeritus of ADF. He blogs at <https://intothemound.blogspot.com/>

Rev. Amber Ferrebee is an author, artist, and all-around “Nerd-Girl”. She is an ADF Initiate, an Ordained Priest of ADF, and the current Head of the Initiate's Council.

Rev. D. Rowen Grove joined ADF in the spring of 2010, and completed her Dedicant Path work two years later. She became an ADF Initiate in 2015 and was ordained an ADF Priest in 2016. She is currently Senior Druid of Chokecherry Grove, ADF, in Denver, Colorado.

Rev. Jean “Drum” Pagano has been a member of ADF since 1984 (he was ADF's eighth member). He is an ADF Senior Priest, an Initiate, and our current Archdruid. He enjoys working with his various altars, spending time in Nature, and studying and teaching the Ogham.

News and Announcements

Program & Path Completions: Dedicant Path

Claire Stevenson - 28 October, 2020.

Brian Larter - 8 November, 2020.

Mark Colbert - 3 January, 2021.

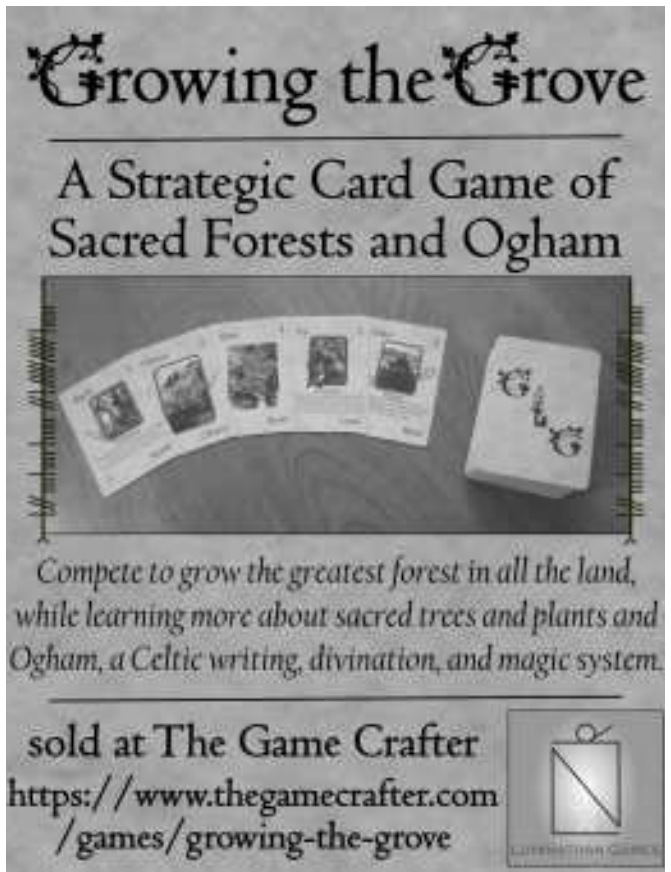
Elizabeth Walker - 8 January, 2021.

~Congratulations to all~

Upcoming Events

None scheduled at this time.

For more festival information see www.adf.org/events



Growing the Grove
A Strategic Card Game of Sacred Forests and Ogham

Compete to grow the greatest forest in all the land, while learning more about sacred trees and plants and Ogham, a Celtic writing, divination, and magic system.

sold at The Game Crafter
<https://www.thegamecrafter.com/games/growing-the-grove>

LUTHERIAN GAMES

Word Search Puzzle : Names from the Aeneid - Answers from Issue #91

A	N	D	R	O	M	A	C	H	E		H
U	P						A	J	A	X	E
T	A	L	A	U	S	S	S		P		C
O	L	A	E	N	E	A	S	T	A	J	A
M	L	A	V	I	N	I	A	I	R	U	T
E	A		M	A	R	S	N	B	I	P	E
D	S	D	I	O	M	E	D	E	S	I	
O	P	H	E	C	T	O	R	R	U	T	I
N	R						A	I	F	E	O
	I			C	Y	D	O	N	E	R	P
C	A	M	I	L	L	A		U	N		A
	M		T	U	R	N	U	S	S		S

AENEAS
 AJAX
 ANDROMACHE
 AUTOMEDON
 CAMILLA
 CASSANDRA
 CYDON

DIANA
 DIOMEDES
 HECATE
 HECTOR
 IOPAS
 JUPITER
 LAUSUS

LAVINIA
 MARS
 PALLAS
 PARIS
 PRIAM
 TIBERINUS
 TURNUS
 UFENS



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Clergy Council	Chair: Rev. Jean 'Drum' Pagano	adf-archdruid@adf.org
Council of Lore	Chair: Rev. Kirk Thomas	adf-preceptor@adf.org
Grove Coordinating Committee	Chair: Rev. Caryn Laney-MacLuan	adf-gcc-chair@adf.org
Grove Organizing Committee	Chair: Nancy McAndrew	adf-goc-chair@adf.org
Prisoner Relations Committee	Chair: Rev. Kirk Thomas	adf-prison-ministry@adf.org

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

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

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Ár nDraíocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship

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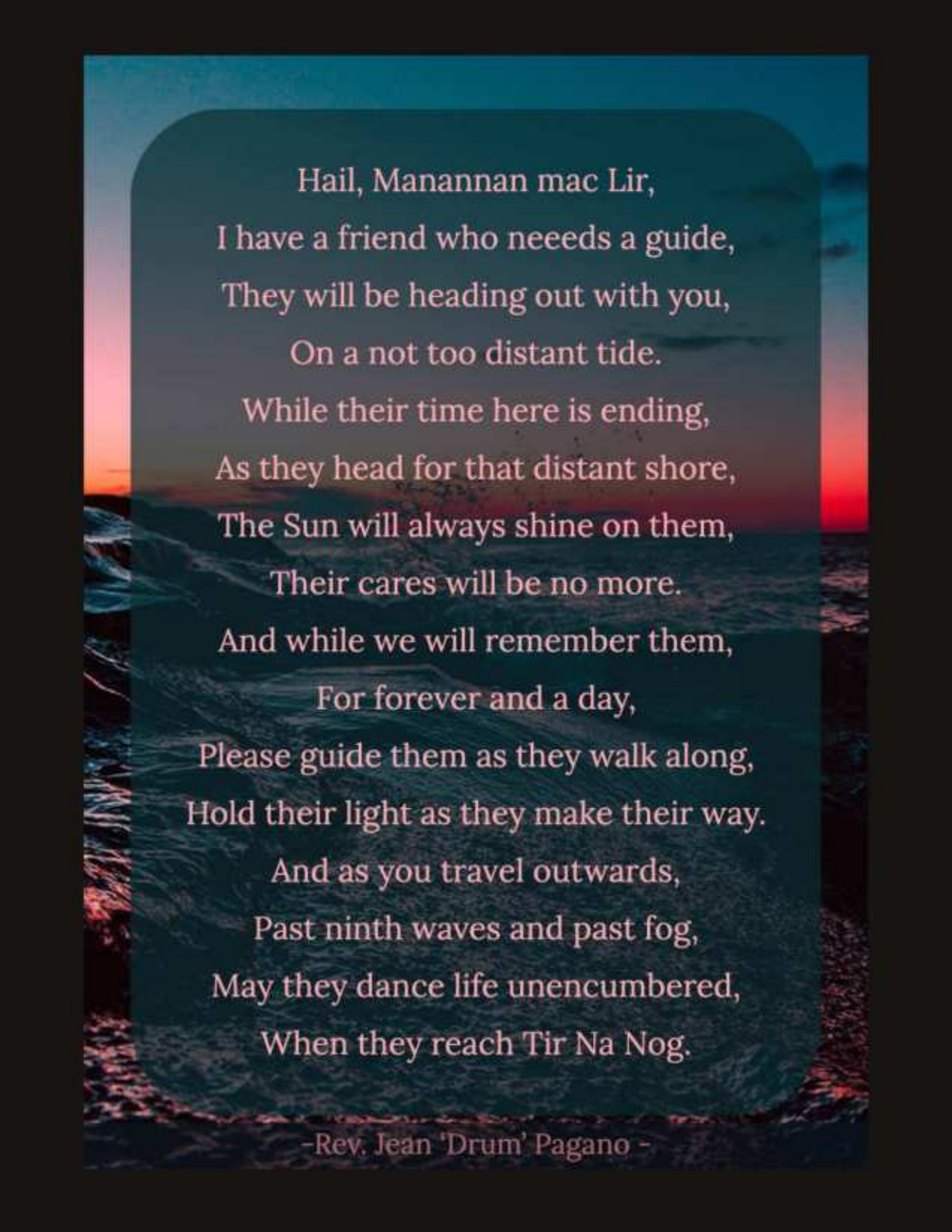
Submission Guidelines for Oak Leaves:

Oak Leaves welcomes submissions of articles, poetry, artwork, and anything else that might be of interest to our Druid readers. Submissions 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, but preference will be given to submissions from ADF members. Since excellent scholarship is one of ADF's goals, please document sources of ideas and materials that you used for your writings. 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. We reserve the right to reject submissions which do not meet our standards. When planning lengthy submissions, please inquire first at oak-leaves@adf.org.

Electronic submissions are preferred, sent as email attachments to the Oak Leaves submissions address: oak-leaves@adf.org. Written submissions should be sent in one of the following formats: MS Word (.doc/.docx), Rich Text Format (.rtf), or Text Format (.txt). Please include a brief ADF-related bio for all articles and essays. For more information on submissions, please see our web page at <https://www.adf.org/publications/periodicals/oak-leaves/submissions.html> or contact us at oak-leaves@adf.org.

Deadlines for submissions (two months before publication date):

Spring Issue : December 1st;
Summer Issue : March 1st;
Autumn Issue : June 1st;
Winter Issue : September 1st



Hail, Manannan mac Lir,
I have a friend who needs a guide,
They will be heading out with you,
On a not too distant tide.
While their time here is ending,
As they head for that distant shore,
The Sun will always shine on them,
Their cares will be no more.
And while we will remember them,
For forever and a day,
Please guide them as they walk along,
Hold their light as they make their way.
And as you travel outwards,
Past ninth waves and past fog,
May they dance life unencumbered,
When they reach Tir Na Nog.

-Rev. Jean 'Drum' Pagano -

