

Green Book Of Meditations Volume Seven Seasonal Selections

Introduction 2003

The motivation for this Green Book was that Part 3 had the seasonal liturgies, Part 4 had the numerical calendar of the seasons, but the reflections on the seasons had no such collection. Perhaps no aspect of Druidism is more widespread than the observation of the passing seasons, and the lessons they bring. However, not everyone writes about them, so this Green Book is really only the thoughts of a small handful of members.

Most of these selections were culled from the various NRDNA magazines of Part 11 of ARDA (published as a separate volume) and put together into three main sections, each sub-arranged by seasonal holiday, and then further sub-arranged by chronological order. Many of these materials may very well be copy-right protected by the original authors.

Section One: Essays of the Season are mostly drawn from the introductory essays found at the front of the various magazines announcing the holiday and giving some notes of past customs associated with the holiday, often a reconstructionist style that draws primarily on Celtic or European sources. Many times a subject is addressed again and again, and developed over the years. Emmon Bodfish, the editor of Live Oak Grove's "A Druid Missal-Any" from 1982 to 1991, wrote many of these selections, as did his protégé, Stacey Weinberger, in the later run of that magazine from 2000 to 2003.

Section Two: The Heathen on the Heath was penned by Les Craig-Harger, a hermetic member of Live Oak Grove, who moved to Humboldt and lived in a rural stretch of land with her two children. She had been a previous Matriarch of the Bardic Order of Oberon in the NRDNA. A free-lance writer, she writes from a very personal angle with an immediate first-hand observation of the seasons.

Section Three: Non-liturgical Festive Activities was pulled from Part 3 of ARDA and reprinted with this collection. This series was mostly written by Alex Stuart for the recent incarnation of "A Druid Missal-Any," providing enjoyable activities outside of the ritual format that often so dominates the celebration of the holidays.

I hope that you will read through these selections when you feel those holidays approaching but don't feel a "connection" or firm style to begin the necessary preparations. Hopefully you'll find some inspiration, but take these selections as but a few ideas, yea, a few ideas among many possibilities.

Yours in the Mother,
Mike Scharding
Four Seasons Hotel Lobby (Waiting for a bus.)
Georgetown, Washington DC
April 7th, 2003 c.e.

Printing History
1st Edition 2003 c.e. (ARDA 2)

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Section One: Essays of the Seasons

Samhain

Samhain Notes

The Druid Chronicles (Evolved) 1976
 By Isaac Bonewits and Robert Larson

Samhain begins the season of *Geimredh* (gee-ru,) in Modern Irish *an Geimhreadh* (uN gee-ru); which is Winter, running from roughly the beginning of November till the end of January.

Samhain (Sô-un,) known in Modern Irish as *Lá-Samhna* (Laa Sôu-Nu,) in Welsh as *Nos Galen-gaeof* (that is, the night of the Winter Calends,) in Manx as *Laa Houney* (Hollantide Day,) *Sauin* or *Souney*; is, of course, the eve of "All Saint's Day," All Hallow's Evening or Halloween. Among other things, it is the beginning of the Winter Half of the Year (the seasons of *Geimredh* and *Earrach*) and is known as "the Day Between Years." The day before *Samhain* is the last day of the old year and the day after *Samhain* is the first day of the new year (though for clarity's sake, most Druids assign each *Samhain* to the year following it. Being a day "between years," it is considered a very magical night, when the dead walk among the living and the veils between past, present, and future may be lifted in prophecy and divination.

Samhain basically means "summer's end" and many important mythological events occurred on that day. It was on a *Samhain* that the Nemedians captured the terrible Tower of Glass built by the evil Fomorians; that the Tuatha De Danann later defeated the Fomors once and for all; that Pwyll won his wife Rhiannon from Gwawl; and that many other events of a dramatic or prophetic nature occurred (see *Later Chronicles*, Chapter 5, Verses 11-14.) Many of these events had to do with the temporary victory of the forces of the darkness over those of light, signaling the beginning of the cold and dark half of the year.

Samhain Essay: The Tuatha

A Druid Missal-Any, Samhain 1982
 By Emmon Bodfish

Samhain, the day between the years. The Druid year starts with Samhain, in the autumn just as the Celtic day starts with sundown, proceeds through night, dawning into the day. The Classic writers of antiquity held that it was a Druid teaching that cold and dark and the difficult precede warmth and light and the beneficent.

In pre-Christian times, Samhain was the occasion of great gathering in Ireland and Gaul, and probably in Scotland and Britain, though there, no records survived. Druids Bards and Ovates (Ollafhs) and the political leaders from all parts of Ireland assembled at Tara. In Gaul similar gatherings were held, and received and sent emissaries to and from Scotland and England. Better accounts survive from Tara than from any of the other Celtic areas. The Tuatha from the four provinces of Ireland assembled at Tara Hall well before Samhain. There

after ritual purifications, which may have included the offering of sacrifices, part of the harvest, and leaping through the bonfires, the nobles and Druids retired indoors. They remained “under roof” all Samhain Day, the belief being that on this day the forces of Propriety and order were gathered inside, and the forces of Chaos were afoot outside. Inside the palace at Tara, took up their traditional stations around the High King: Those of Ulster, representing the warrior caste, to his North; Those of Munster, representing the prophetic/aesthetic pole to his right; Those of Connaught, representing the Druid, or clerical caste at his back; and facing his Lennster, representing the Tuatha, husbandman/producers. In this order the great counsel of the year was held.

Though called the Day of the Dead, Samhain was considered a good or lucky day. In contrast, Beltaine was considered a difficult, or tricky day as the day beginning the Season of Life. On Samhain, the two worlds of the living and of the Tuatha De Danann draw close and may merge, making this the time to contact the Other World, and ascertain the disposition of the Gods and ancestors on the plans for the coming year of the settling of old quarrels. Ancestors, in particular, could send fertility, or disease, to their descendents and their favor was sought for the ensuing winter. This tradition was especially strong in Alba (Scotland, approximately) where Samhain was the occasion to seek instructions from the ancestors and bring oneself into harmony with them. If the required funeral ceremonies had been performed, and the yearly offerings made, and all was right between the living and the dead, then there was no need to fear ghosts. But if all was not well between the living and their clan forbearers, if their will was flouted or the rites neglected, the dead could make their will known on this night when the line between the two worlds dissolved and spirits could come over and walk in ours.

To the Tuatha, husbandmen of the land, Samhain marked the absolute end of the harvest. It was forbidden to glean or gather any more wild fruit after Samhain night. This assured that all would be gathered in and stored before the storms began, and may also have prevented overpicking, especially of wild fruit, by declaring that anything which remained in the fields or woods after this date to belong to the wild birds.

Samhain Essay: Talking to Ancestors

A Druid Missal-Any, Samhain 1983

By Emmon Bodfish

Samhain, in the Celtic traditions, begins the new year. It is “the time between the Worlds,” the time that the dead may manifest again in our world or send us messages from theirs. In Eire it was the feast of Dagda. In a tradition that may be older than the Indo-European, spirits of departed ancestors are said to be able to send either prosperity or disease, fertility of crops or plague. If you have fulfilled all your ritual and practical obligations to your ancestors, and have not committed any defamations against their names, you have nothing to fear from ghosts on Samhain Eve.

If not, there are various ways of getting back on good terms with the spirits of dead ancestors. One is to create an image, a mask, a statue, a name plaque, or a painting (on rock) of the ancestor. This gives the spirit a “body” or locus in our world to replace the one that has died. The implication seems to be that with this image-body she/he continues to live, to be remembered, and to be able to transact any unfinished business in this dimension which may be troubling her/him. G. Rachel Levy, the anthropologist, feels that this image making is very

old, and may account for certain types of rock paintings or prehistoric peoples. She quotes an Eskimo artist, relative to his rock paintings: (This way) “we give them new bodies to replaces their bodies that we had to take away.” (for burial.) This solidifying or fixing of a spirit into an image is probably pre-Indo-European, though elements of it are carried through in the Celtic culture. It was practiced until fifty years ago by some Siberian cultures* which some anthropologists feel are descendents of the pre-Indo-European peoples of North Europe/Asia. It is also very recent. It is still considered filial and decent, in some circles, to erect headstones and memorials over and for dead family members, though why is not now so clearly specified.

Another method of appeasing the ancestors is to name a child after the deceased, so that the ancestor’s spirit can be reborn within the clan. This, also, is still in practice, and children are named after deceased or aging relatives to assure prosperity, or at least inclusion in the will.

In the Celtic epics, there are numerous Bardic passages imploring that the names of ancestors not be forgotten. In later times, appeals to Deities of the dead, or of the other world, seem to have replacing offerings to the dead themselves. But at the most flourishing times, at the high points of Druid power, all the Celtic cultures buried their dead with rich grave goods, ready for another life that would be a close reflection of this one. Social status would be preserved; chief would remain chiefs, warriors, warriors, etc. Valour would be rewarded in men, fidelity, skill and courage in both sexes.

In the Scottish tradition, a Western Isle, Tir nan Og, is the location of this paradise, and Manannan McLer comes with his white barge to ferry souls across “to the isle where they would be.” Caesar, in the last century B.C., states that Druids of his acquaintance believed that souls do not suffer death, but after death pass from the (world) to the other.” (ab aliis...transire ad alios.) And Lucan, in rhetorical address to the Druids, said

“But you assure us, no ghosts seek the silent Kingdom of Erebus, no the pallid depths of Hades’ realm, but with new body the spirit reigns in another world—if we understand your hymns, death’s halfway through a long life.”

Unfortunately the hymns have not come down to us.

To the Classic writers, descendents of Mediterranean cultures, death was a state of suspended animation, or minimal animation, where shades drifted and muttered aimlessly in a twilight world ruled by an unfeeling, motionless god, Pluto/Hades.** In the Druid afterlife, people and gods mingled in a sunny world similar to this one, but “outside of time.” This was so different from the Greco-Roman concepts of death that it seemed to the Classic writers to require both emphasis and explanation.

They had, from their own Pythagoras, a doctrine of another kind of re-incarnation, and, in an attempt to explain the unknown in terms of the slightly more familiar, they asserted that the Druids had studied or borrowed from Pythagoras. This myth continued until the 18th Century, when it was reversed and asserted that Pythagoras had plagiarized from the Druids. There is no good evidence that Druidism ever heard of Pythagoras. It antedates him by at least a millennium, probably more. Its doctrine of re-incarnation in a material but timeless body in an Outer World, bears little resemblance to Pythagoras’ idea, as recorded by Salmoxis, of the immortality of the soul based on the indestructibility of concept and number. By equating the Druid belief with Pythagoras’ school, it could be integrated into the world of Classical thought and made

acceptable to the Roman mind, and at the same time enhance the reputation of the Greeks as “The Founders of Philosophy,” a favorite Roman idea.

Sucellos, Esus, and in some of his aspects, Cerunnos, are often listed as Celtic gods of the afterlife or Underworld, but as much as my research has been able to determine, there is no one god of the dead, comparable to Classic Pluto or Hades. The Druid afterlife is more an Other World than an Under World, in which gods and people mingle in a timeless dimension. All the gods, and one’s own merits and clan connections seem, in Ossian’s poems, to determine one’s place at the perpetual feast in the Isle of the Ever Young.

It was a later development, and among the Germans, not the Celts, that associated divine energy with the souls of the dead. It was here that the original root of our present word, “God,” Ghav, Ghuto, arose and designated “the evoked” and was associated with the souls of the dead.*** Why the Christian missionaries used this word to translate the concept of their Deity, Jehovah/Yewah, is not known. Perhaps Dis Pater, also a heavenly father, and the other likely candidate, Taranis, were too clearly individualized, and specifically pagan presences. Ghav/Ghut was shadowy and vague. Perhaps they followed Paul’s example when he described his God to the Greeks as that “god-they-knew-not” but to whom they had built, nonetheless, an altar on Mar’s Hill. However that may be, by the laws of magical evocation, when you evoke “God,” you are naming/calling an ancient deity of the dead. This could explain the dour atmosphere at many Protestant services. You might experiment with using “Deus” or “Dea” and see if the mood changes; or, if you want the deity of the Bible, why not evoke Him by name, Jehovah or Yehowah. Avoid embarrassing mistakes.

*Waldeman Jochelson’s Expedition, 1900.

***“Being dead is a waste of time.” c.f. your average classical culture.

***Alternative interpretation: Ghav/Ghuto, “the evoked” one, referred to a “divine energy” associated “with the souls of the dead.” The trouble with the history of ideas is that historians all have a different idea of what happened in history.

Michaelmas

A Druid Missal-Any Samhain 1982

By Emmon Bodfish

The following ceremony was associated with this time of year, and enacted annually at least through the 1820s, though in Christian times it was incorporated into Michael-mass festivities. In the Northern Celtic areas, Michael takes over many of the characteristics of the Celtic deity, Manannan Mc Ller, and even of Llyr, the sea god, and ruler of the Land of the Dead, celebrated on this Day of the Dead, Samhain.

‘Na Gellaidh

Thug mo leannan dhomh sgian bheag
A ghearradh am meangan goid,
A ghearradh am bog ’s an cruaidh,
Saoghal buan dh’an laimh a thug.

Gheall mo leannan dhomh-sa stiom
Gheall, agus braiste ’s cir,
‘S gheall mise coinneamh ris
Am bun a phris mu’n eireadh grian.

Gheall mo leannan dhomh-sa sgathan
Anns am faicinn m’aille fein,
Gheall, agus breid is fainne,
Agus clarsach bhinn nan teud.

Gheall e sid dhomh ’s buaile bha,
Agus falaire nan steud,
Agus birlinn bheannach bhan,
Readhadh slan thar chuan nam beud.

The Promises

My lover gave to me a knife
That would cut the sapling withe,
That would cut the soft and hard,
Long live the hand that gave.

My lover promised me a snood,
Ay, and a brooch and comb,
And I promised, by the wood,
To meet him at rise of sun.

My lover promised me a mirror
That my beauty I might see,
Yes, and a coif and ring,
And a dulcet harp of chords.

He vowed me those and a fold of kine,
And a palfrey of the steeds,
And a barge, pinnacled white,
That would safely cross the perilous seas.

The song and the dance, the mirth and the merriment, are continued all night, many curious scenes being acted, and many curious dances performed, some of them in character. These scenes and dances are indicative of far-away times, perhaps of far-away climes. They are evidently symbolic. One dance is called “Cailleach an Dudain,” carlin of the mill-dust. This is a curious character-dance. The writer got it performed for him several times.

Welsh Folk Customs for Pagans at Nos Galan Gaeaf (Eve of Samhain)

A Druid Missal-Any, Yule 1984
By Tom Cross

1. Before the Eve of Samhain, gather pieces of bread, cakes or pancakes. This is to be called in Welsh *hen solod* or *hel bwyd cennad y meirw*, or collecting food for the dead and the food is soul cakes. This food is to be given to those who have passed on.

In Celtic folk belief, Samhain or Calan Gaeaf is the time when the dead are close to this world and it was believed that on the eve of Samhain, when the Otherworld was closer, the dead came back to earth. This is the time when we can look back at those who have died and reflect on the ones that we miss and remember them and honour them. One of the ways we can do this, is by the archaic rite of feeding the dead which was practiced by the ancient Indo-European ancestors and still practiced in other cultures today.

2. At the Samhain bonfire, or *coelcerth*, as it is called in Welsh, which is lit at night on the eve of Samhain, the soul cakes which have been gathered may at this time be eaten by those celebrating and a portion of each piece is to be thrown into the fire as an offering not only to the deities but also for the dead.

3. When the food has been placed in the fire, a eulogy for the dead may be recited and other charms or prayers uttered in commemoration of those who have died. Also, the gods and the spirits of the dead may be asked for help in the coming season or for the year. As an example thanks may be given to one's parents or relatives who have died. They will be listening!

4. The fire should then be circumambulated three times each time ending on the west side. Some ecstatic Celtic music could be played. This should end this ceremony and each person should be ready to go home. Staying behind could be for those looking for the dead, or as in Welsh folk belief, the tailless black sow or Ladi Wen (white Lady) who haunts the eve of Samhain. It is speculated that the Ladi Wen represents the old year.

A rhyme from Caernarvaonshire for Nos Galan Gaeaf:

Gwen y gwnei a dy holl deulu,
Hyn a gei di genni leni.

(Pronounced: Gwen uh gwnaye ah duh hollh dye-lee
Huhn ah gaye dee ggennee lenee)

Mayest thou bless thy whole family,
This is what I give thee this year.

It is danced by a man and a woman. The man has a rod in his right hand, variously called "slachdan druidheachd," druidic wand, "slachdan geasachd," magic wand. The man and the woman gesticulate and attitudinize before one another, dancing round and round, in and out, crossing and recrossing, changing and exchanging places. The man flourishes the wand over his own head and over the head of the woman, whom he touches with the wand, and who falls down, as if dead, at his feet. He bemoans his dead "carlin," dancing and gesticulating round her body. He then lifts up her left hand, and looking into the palm, breathes upon it, and touches it with the wand. Immediately the limp hand becomes alive and moves from side to side and up and down. The man rejoices, and dances round the figure on the floor. And having done the same to the right hand, and to the left hand right foot in succession, they are also become alive and move. But although the limbs are living, the body is still inert. The man kneels over the woman and breathes into her mouth and touches her heart with the wand. The woman comes to life and springs up, confronting the man. Then the two dance vigorously and joyously as in the first part. The tune varies with the varying phases of the dance. It is played by a piper or a fiddler, so sung as a 'port-a'bial,' mouth tune, by a looker-on, or by the performers themselves. The air is quaint and irregular, and the words are curious and archaic.

Samhain Essay: The End of Summer

A Druid Missal-Any, Samhain 1984
By Emmon Bodfish

Samhain, Celtic New Year, the day between the Worlds. The Druid year starts with Samhain, in the fall of the year, just as the Druid reckoning of days begins each day at night fall. This marks the end of the harvest season. Any fruit not gathered in by Samhain Eve must be left in the fields to feed the birds and wild animals, or the Sidhe, as one would have it. According to Françoise Le Roux, whose article, "Studies on the Celtic Feast Days" has been translated out of the French by one of our subscribers, Jeanne Elizabeth, Samhain may be derived from Sam Fuin, Weakening or End of Summer. Other competing derivations from Sam Rad or Samhna are by no means disproven. Samh-rad, summer or Samhrach, quiet.

Like New Year's Celebrations everywhere, Samhain festivities fall into two sequential phases; one that signifies a return to Chaos, e.g. disposal of old goods, expelling of evil, reversal of usual habits of behavior, parties, suspension of taboos, and the return of the dead, all on Samhain night; and a second which signifies re-birth of the Cosmos and creation anew, e.g. lighting of new fires, beginning of a new season, inauguration of new ceremonies, reaffirmation of the existing order and installation of new leaders. This will be enacted at the Dawn Service Samhain morning, in the Reformed Druid tradition. The newly elected Arch Druid, Preceptor, and Server enact the first service of the new year; the Third Order Druids change their ceremonial ribbons to new, white ones, and winter begins.

Samhain Essay: Samhain Customs

A Druid Missal-Any, Samhain 1985

By Emmon Bodfish

Samhain, the break between the years, is one of the four major High Days of the Druid calendar. Throughout the Celtic lands, Samhain was the Great Gathering. Wars ceased, and representative Druids, Bards, Ovates, Kings, and Equites met at sacred sites, on the Plain of Murtheme or with Conobar at Emain Macha in Ireland, or at Carnac in France. Similar convocations almost certainly met in Britain and Scotland, and perhaps in the Shetlands and the Orkneys as well.

The word Samhain may be derived, according to Francois LeRoux, from "sam fuim" meaning "weakening or end of summer," though competing derivations from "sam rad" and "La samhna," "rest" and "reunion" must also be considered. The LeRoux derivation concurs with the traditional date near the first of November, reflecting the Celtic division of the year into two long seasons, Summer and Winter, analogized to day and night. And as the Celtic calendar reckoned the night before the day, with each date beginning at sunset, the new-year began with Samhain, or sundown Samhain eve. It marked the end of the harvest. Anything still ungathered in the fields was left to the wild birds and the Pucas, Wood Sprites.

The rites and rituals have been lost, and we must piece together fragments from oral traditions, from 10th, 11th, and 12th century manuscripts of Irish law and commentaries, old customs and descriptions found in the Cuchulain and Find(h) epics. We gave a rendering of one such description of a Samhain ceremony from the old Irish in last Samhain's Missal-Any.

One of our subscribers, Jeanne Elizabeth, has translated some of LeRoux's work on the social and historical significance of the holiday, from her articles in the French journal "Ogam." As far as I can find, these essays have not been available in English.

Samhain, LeRoux emphasizes, was first of all a universal observance, required, on pain of exile, of every member of the community. It was called the holiday of obligation.

"Samhain is first of all a holiday of obligation, an approximate expression when it is applied to an ancient holiday, but practical, in order to express the restrained tone and universality. Such a holiday, was celebrated with dignity: An assembly was held by the Ulates each year, that is to say, three days before Samhain and three days after, and the High Day of Samhain itself. It was the time when the Ulates were in the plain of Murtheme, and they held the assembly of Samhain each year. There was nothing in the worlds that was not done by them at this time to enhance the games, gatherings, reunions, pomp and magnificence, with costly goods and banquets, and it is from there that came the (custom of) the three days of Samhain in all Ireland.

'Conchobar himself served them at the holiday of Samhain, because of the reunion of a great crowd. It was necessary to nourish the great multitude, as all those of the Ulates who did not come to Emain on the night of Samhain and the three days after Samhain, lost their reason, and their sepulchral mounds were prepared, each one's tomb and his headstone set the following morning. There were great provisions at Conchobar's the three days before and three days after Samhain that marked the feast at his palace.'

So runs the stanza from the Birth of Conchobar. At these gatherings, kings were chosen or reaffirmed. Debts and quarrels were settled and laws for the coming year enacted. It was a sacred and magical time, and the corridor to the Other World, to the Ancestors and the Gods, was open, and communications, and even goods and people, or at least their souls, could pass between our world and the Other. The Sidhe Mounds were said to open, and horses or children who had been lost, spirited off by the Sidhe, or other denizens of the Other World, could return or be brought back. But likewise the Deities and ancestors could exact reprisal for offenses against them, or demand changes and send signs confirming or denying victory or prosperity. Kings who had broken their "Guise," ritual taboos, or warriors who had made unjust war, were in particular danger of being struck dead or carried off at this time.

A typical Samhain tale is found in the Echtra Nerai epic:

On the eve of Samhain Ailill and Medhbh, king and queen of Connacht, offer the prize of his choice to whomsoever succeeds in putting a withe around the foot of either of two captives who had been hanged the previous day. Nera alone accepts the challenge. He goes to the gallows but he only succeeds in fixing the withe after the corpse has instructed him. The corpse then complains of thirst and Nera carries him on his back to a dwelling in which he finds water. Having replaced him on the gallows, he returns to the royal court of Cruachain only to find it in flames and the severed heads of its people near by. As the attacking warriors move off, Nera follows them into the Cave of Cruachain, a famous gateway to the otherworld. Once inside the *sidh* he is discovered but is permitted to remain. He takes a wife from among the women of the *sidh* and from her he learns that his vision of the destruction of the court of Cruachain was but a premonition: it will come true next Samhain, however, unless the *sidhe* is ravaged before then. He sets out to bring warning to his own people, carrying with him fruits of summer—wild garlic and primrose and golden fern—to prove whence he had come, and he finds his friends still seated around the cauldron as he had left them, though much had befallen him in the meantime. When Samhain returns, the Connacht warriors invade and plunder the *sidh* and carry off the three great treasures of Ireland. But Nera remains behind with his family in the *sidh* and there he will stay until Doomsday.

Nera remains behind as exchange for the treasures, or as reprisal for the plundering. This illuminates one side and meaning of Celtic sacrifice, and may also echo the ancient ideas of the death of divine victims, priests married to Goddesses, or who assumed a God's identity. The Nerthus traditions of Germanic society are a close parallel. The priest who tended Nerthus' wagon during its annual summer journey through the countryside was sent to join Her at the end of the ritual pilgrimage. The bodies of some of these male attendants, found with Her wagons in Danish bogs show, according to Prof. P.V. Glob, slight muscular development and hands that had never done rough work. These were not slaves. Neither were

they prisoners of war, i.e. warriors, nor criminals, the two most common groups used for sacrificial purposes.

Nera could be a memory of a cultural parallel. He (1.) accepts a magical or magic-laden challenge, more the stuff of a Druid, 1st function/caste, than a warrior; (2.) he sees a vision and prophesizes; (3.) he is married to a supernal being; (4.) he leaves the mortal world, forever, to join her and serve as recompense for the treasures gained by mortals, his kinsmen.

In modern N.R.D.N.A. celebrations of the holiday, vigils are in order, and vision-quests prayers for guidance in major life-changes are in order. It is a time to tie up loose ends and settle debts, to, as Jim Duran said, "get straight with your ancestors," deceased relatives and departed friends. If you are keeping an all night vigil, leaving out a plate of food or a remembrance for the spirits or departed friends is one way.

Samhain Essay: The Other World

A Druid Missal-Any, Samhain 1986
By Emmon Bodfish

Samhain, Celtic New Years, the Day-between the Worlds...The Druidic year starts on Samhain, in the fall of the year, just as the Druidic day begins with the going down of the Sun. Samhain marks the end of the harvest which began at Lughnasadh. All fruit not gathered in by Samhain Eve must be left in the fields to feed the birds, the wild animals, and the Sidhi. The Pukas, mischievous spirits, will come for it, to steal its nourishing essence and leave the husk, or to despoil it, if it is not to their liking. Their mythic descendents swarm out in the form of myriad "Trick-or-Treaters."

Like New Years' celebration all over the world, Samhain festivities fall into two sequential phases: one that signifies the return to Chaos, and involves the disposal of old goods, potlatches, parties, suspension of taboos, return of the dead, and the mixing of the two Worlds, in Past and Future; and a second whose theme is the rebirth of Order and Cosmos, of creating anew, of preparations, and of the rites of Samhain Morning. (As we are not an official, organized Grove, here in Orinda, but a gathering of Solitary Third Order Druids, First Orders, and friends, the election that would ordinarily be held for officers in an R.D.N.A. Grove will not need to be held. Isn't it a relief!?)

The beliefs involving the return of the dead on Samhain Night are based on the Pan-European traditions of Samhain as the time when the Other World is closest to this one, and when, therefore, doors, passages, may open between the two. In Celtic myths these gateways were usually located at the Sidhi Mounds, the megalithic tombs of the Celts' Pre-Indo-European predecessors. But ways were also said to exist through sacred lakes and springs, and through caves in the crags. These doorways admitted passage in both directions. On special days, mortal heroes or heroines crossed to the Other World on quests, adventures or to obtain prophetic knowledge. Throughout Eurasia, the dead, who exist beyond time, are believed to know the future as well as everything that has happened in the past. Dead ancestors could help a favored descendent with this knowledge, or send health and prosperity, but first the petitioner must be in perfect estate, having broken no Geas, nor taboo, nor have incurred the censor of any Deity or Sidhi. In addition, the seeker must be in the good graces of the ancestor whose help is needed. Health or disease were from the ancestors in the Celtic Cosmos; to live well one had to be on good terms with the dead and with one's past. The past becomes present again on Samhain, between the years. All oblations and funeral rites due the ancestors must have been

offered, and all debts of this World paid, if the traveler is to step lightly between the Worlds. If all was not in perfect order, the quester might become trapped or the ancestors could send disease and misfortune when the passage opened. Or the wronged dead could pass into this World, and walk in the time between the years, seeking revenge.

The concept of going to the Other World for help from disease or to secure prophetic knowledge is found in several different European Samhain traditions, as well as among the Celts, is probably cognate with, descended from the Other World journeys of the Paleolithic Eurasian shamans. Similar, but more complex and complete traditions and epics have been preserved among the Siberian shamanic religions. There, going to the Other World(s) and returning to one's mortal body are usually the privilege of the clergy, i.e. initiate shamans. But in Europe, on Samhain, the Other World is very close, in Celtic verse, just a mist apart. On this night, there is no treacherous journey through intermediate kingdoms or being states. Tonight a mortal, albeit a hero or a heroine, could make the leap.

R.D.N.A members hold all night vigils, beginning with a bonfire at dusk when the first of the two Samhain services is held. All opened bottles of spirits must be finished by dawn, and there will be, then, no more fermented spirits in the Grove chalice until Beltaine. Plates of food and offerings should be set out, just beyond the firelight, for the souls of friends who have died in the past year. They may be invited to join the festivities.

At dawn the second Samhain service is held. All remaining liquor is sacrificed in the fire, and the Third Order Druids exchange their red ribbons and ornaments for the white of the Season of Sleep. There is pure water in the Chalice. The new year has begun.

In preparation, all debts should be paid, or arrangements for them brought into harmony. All rites due to the dead, and the past, should have been performed, and all obligations to the living brought current. Then enter the Time-Between-the-Worlds "without burden, without geas, without malice." Pleasant journeys!

Samhain Essay: Celtic Feast Days

A Druid Missal-Any, Samhain 1987
By Emmon Bodfish

Samhain, Celtic New Year, the day between the Worlds. The Druid year starts with Samhain in the fall of the year, just as the Druid reckoning of days begins each day at the fall of night. This high day marks the end of the harvest season. Any fruit not gathered in by Samhain Eve must be left in the fields to feed the birds and the wild animals, or the Sidhe, as one would have it. According to Françoise Le Roux, whose article, "Studies on the Celtic Feast Days" has been translated from the French by one of our subscribers, Jeanne Elizabeth, Samhain may be derived from Sam Fuin, meaning weakening or end of summer. Other competing derivations from Sam Rad or Samhra are by no means disproven, such as Samh-rad, summer, or Samhrach, quiet, still.

Like New Years, Samhain's celebrations everywhere, Samhain's festivities fall into two sequential phases: one that signifies a return to Chaos, to wit: the disposal of old goods, expelling of evil, reversal of usual habits of behavior, parties, suspension of taboos, and the return of the dead to this world of the living, all of which occur on Samhain night; and a second phase which signifies rebirth of the Cosmos and creation anew, to wit: the lighting of new fires, the beginning of a new season,

inauguration of new ceremonies, re-affirmation of the existing order, and installation of new leaders. This phase is enacted Samhain morning, and is symbolized in the RDNA tradition in the Samhain Dawn service, Service The newly elected Archdruid, in Preceptor, and Server enact the first service of the new year; All Third order Druids change their ceremonial ribbons to new white ones, and winter begins.

Samhain Essay: Gatherings

A Druid Missal-Any, Samhain 1988
By Emmon Bodfish

Samhain, a major High Day in the Druid calendar, is the day between the years. The Druid year starts with Samhain in the autumn just as the Celtic day begins at sundown, The Classic writers of antiquity held that it was a Druid teaching that cold and darkness and difficulty precede warmth and light and benefit.

In old Druid times, Samhain was the occasion of great gatherings in Ireland and Gaul, and probably in Scotland and Britain as well, though there no records of them survived.

The Druids, Bards, and Ovates (Ollafhs) and the political leaders from all parts of Ireland assembled at Tara. In Gaul similar gatherings were held, which sent and received emissaries to and from Scotland and Alba (England.) Representatives of the Tuatha, the husbandmen, from the four provinces of Ireland assembled at Tara Hall well before Samhain. There, after ritual purifications, such as running or leaping the bonfires, and the offering of sacrifices, the chieftains and Druids retired indoors, into the Great Hall. They remained "under roof" all Samhain. Day, the belief being that on this day the forces of Propriety and Order were gathered indoors, and the forces of Chaos were afoot outside. Inside participants took up their traditional stations around the High King: Those of Ulster, representing the warrior caste, to his left; those of Munster, representing Bards, Prophets, and artists to his right; those of Connaught, representing the Druidic (clerical) caste at his back; and facing him, Lennster, representing the Tuatha, "the people," crafts and husbandmen. In this order the Great Counsel of the year was held.*

Reflections are held in R.D.N.A. Groves, and a night vigil is held mark the new year. In the morning, the Third Order Druids exchange their red ceremonial ribbons for white, and offer a second sacrifice to the Dawn.

*For the High King, it was "face the people day." No wonder the holiday became associated with dread. From Professor James Duran's seminar, "The Druids," Berkeley, 1985.

Samhain Essay: Paying Respects

A Druid Missal-Any, Samhain 1989
By Emmon Bodfish

Samhain, Celtic New Year, the Day Between the Worlds, the Druid year starts on Samhain, The sun is half way between Autumn Equinox and Winter Solstice. Samhain marks the end of the harvest season. All fruit and grain not gathered in by Samhain Eve must be left in the fields to feed the birds and wild animals, the flocks of Cernunnos, and its vegetable life essence, its "spirit" becomes the property of "The Little People," the Sidhi, and feeds them. (Is our word, "fairy," derived from "fear an sidhi," meaning in proto-Gaelic "a person of the Sidhi," one of the little people?) Sidhi is

pronounced in Gaelic as English "shee,." A Banshee, the spirit that gives prophecies and mourns for the dead, means literally "a woman of the Sidhi." Another folk tradition, probably from old Druid times, holds that "Pukas," mischievous spirits, will come out on Samhain night and steal the nourishing essence of any food crops left in the fields, or, if it is not to their liking, will despoil it. Their mythic descendents swarm out in the form of hordes of trick-or-treaters and disguised, costumed revelers.

This is the night when the Other World, the world of the dead, the future souls, and of the ancestors, comes the closest to our world and "dimension hopping" is the easiest. It is time to honor dead ancestors, and remember old friends. This was "the day of the dead" long before the Christian era. The dead were thought by the ancient Celts to have a wider and truer perspective on things than we mortals do, and to be able to advise their descendents and friends, They know all history, are aware of all forces and causes, and can intuit the future better than we. Pay your respects at graves or memorials, ask questions of departed friends, ancestors, or mentors. Leave out food offerings for them at your Samhain Eve celebrations and vigils. Get out old photographs. Review the past, this pre-Samhain week, and pay old debts, spiritual or emotional. Find lost belongings, make amends. Then celebrate.

Samhain Essay: Vigiling

A Druid Missal-Any, Samhain 1990
By Emmon Bodfish

Samhain, Druid New Year's, occurs when the Sun is half way between Fall Equinox and Winter Solstice. The Druid year begins in the autumn, just as the Druid day begins at twilight with the going down of the Sun and runs until the next evening. Julius Caesar called this the "custom of reckoning by nights rather than by days," or dawns, and considered it a strange custom, one that set the Druids apart from any of the other peoples he encountered in the Ancient World. Samhain marks the end of the harvest season. Any food not gathered in by Samhain Eve was left in the fields to feed the birds and wild animals, or the Sidhe, the spirit-folk.

Like New Year's Celebrations everywhere, Samhain festivities fall into two sequential phases the first signifying a return to chaos, e.g. the disposal of old goods, expelling of evil, repayment of debts, completion of contracts, endings, then parties, dancing, fire-leaping and the suspension of taboos; on Samhain night, the first half of "the Day-Between-the-Worlds," this World and the Other are very close. Spirits of the dead may return, and messages can pass very easily from our world to the Other world and back. Spells are more easily broken and banished at this time Cernunnos rules, and His followers, the Suibhnes, forest hermits and prophecizers, the mystical branch of the Druid caste, try their skills at (shaman-like) journeying to the Other World or other parts of this one.

With Samhain dawn, the second phase of the New Year's celebration begins: the establishing of the new order. New, "clean" fire is kindled by friction, traditional summer trappings are exchanged for traditional winter trappings. The traditional Samhain ceremonies and rituals are enacted. Winter begins.

The R.D.N.A. Samhain celebration reflects these two phases. It begins on Samhain Eve with a sunset service with the summer season chants and ritual. Then an all-night vigil is held and the altar fire is kept burning. Members bring food and jollity, and all already-opened bottles of liquor and wine belonging to members must be finished or sacrificed before dawn. No alcohol is found in the chalice or consumed in the Grove during the winter half of the year, the Season of Sleep.

At dawn the fire is built up again and a second Service performed at which all the Third Order Druids who are present exchange their red ribbons of the Season of Life for white ones of Sleep. There is pure water in the chalice, and the words and chants of the winter half of the year are spoken. Grove elections are held and the new order invested. Rest and peace are invoked and all the members go home to sleep.

Samhain Explanation

An interview with Andrea Davis
Alumni and Druid of Carleton College
October 20, 1996

Davis: [Samhain] is a time of death and of the cycle. It's the Druid new year but it's the time of...if you follow the Wiccan tradition like the dying of the god. And so I always see it as a time of things are dying, and you have to acknowledge that things are dying, but in that death you also have to see hope. There are a number of songs about this time. Some of the songs we've sung are:

“Hoof and horn, hoof and horn, all that dies shall be reborn.

Vine and grain, vine and grain, all that falls shall rise again.”

There's also:

“We are the flow and we are the ebb,

We are the weavers, we are the web.

We are the flow and we are the ebb,

We are the weavers, we are the web...”

That's just a connection to the cycle of life song whereas the other one is more specifically a Samhain song.

I also see it in the traditional sense that this is the time when the dead are walking the earth, that the worlds are closest, and that this is the time you say good-bye to the people who've died that year. You can feel free to say things, and ask questions and question my concepts as well, that's fine. Its just times like, from traditions like the Mexican tradition of El Dia de los Muertos. That really used to be a holiday about going to the graveyards and cleaning off the ancestors graves and making sure they had flowers and basically a big party that they held in the graveyard. I think American culture has moved away from. It's a natural process with death, we're all so afraid of it - we avoid it so much.

In a ritual- for myself I always use it as a time to say “Okay,” and I take and light a candle in the evening and I'll sit there and I'll talk to the people who have died last year and tell them what I remember about them and things that I wanted to tell them but maybe didn't. I think it really helps with the letting go, with the accepting of the transition, and I think it also helps to have a designated date that this is when you do this.

I see it also as a time of shucking down, preparing for winter. I see the equinox more as a joyful harvest time and Samhain as “Yes it is starting to get cold, winter really is going to happen soon!” You have to prepare yourself and so you clean out all your baggage and lighten yourself up in preparing for winter where you really not going to have as much energy. You try to let go of things, letting go of your dead. If there were things about yourself that you were trying to let go it

really helps to mention them in the ritual circle. I find that things, that New Years resolutions made in a ritual circle tend to be more likely to happen, they tend to have more strength or resolve if you tell this group of people in this context. It works better, and I don't know if that's psychological or if that's magical but it works.

There are many ways you can do this: you can burn things, that's always fun to do. You have a bonfire and tell people to bring things that represent what they want to get rid of or what they want to say good-bye to. If they have poems that they want to send the dead; you know in China the tradition was that any wishes or hopes that you wanted to send to the dead you wrote on a piece of paper, and then it was burned with them and that way traveled with them. Many people believe that by burning things you can get them to the spirits, so that's one way to release that energy. Another way that I learned when I was touring with the Environmental Theater Group Action Project Council of All Beings was: you take a stone, kind of at the beginning of the ritual, you do some other things at the beginning of the ritual, talking about traditions and fall, a little singing, a little chanting, and you let people just hold their rock for a while, or two rocks, or whatever, and think about what they have lost and what they are in mourning for. Towards the end everybody takes their rock and puts it in a cairn and tell what it's for, you either explain the story behind it or just say “Okay, this is for my grandmother who died this year.” Some people did this a couple of years ago here and for this one guy it was just like we were doing this total group therapy session for him; all this stuff just came pouring out, he had so much stuff that he was putting into this rock. But then you take the rock and you put it away from you in the cairn, and in the end you just have kind of a grieving session or all kind of howl with a sad feeling, and then, having let go of all that you kind of have a joyful dance afterwards. You've let go of these things. You know that there's been a transition and that life is going on and you're very happy about that. That's a good one.

Interviewer: Some native American peoples use a similar sort of ritual, and add to it that whatever you put into the rock stays there. They believe that someone else picking up the rock can be affected by whatever grief or pain is put therein.

Davis: I believe that, which is why I clean the rocks afterwards. When you soak them in salt water that tends to draw out excess energies, then you can scatter the salt water. If it is grieving or sadness that kind of energy can fade away from the rock into wherever you put it if you leave it for a while. If it is something like murderous wrath now, you can't get that out of a rock! There's just no cleaning it. With most of the rocks I've used people were putting some sadness into it.

(Editor's note: In the time since beginning this the tape has vanished. There was more there, but Andrea's thoughts on Samhain proved influential ones during the 96-99 period. Be careful charging rocks like that. They sometimes get kind of active.)

Samhain Essay: Summer's End

A Druid Missal-Any Samhain 2000

By Stacey Weinberger

The season of Samhain is upon us. Summer has finally come to an end in Northern California with the warm days of an Indian summer swept away by some of the windiest nights in 50 years. Cold, rainy weather has returned, heavy sweaters are pulled out of storage, the heat is turned on. Time for hot tea, mulled cider and wine!

Samhain, summer's end. Traditionally whatever is left over from the harvest is left in the field for the birds, and mice, and other wildlife, and the Sidhe--the spirit folk, to glean for preparation of the coming winter. Samhain signals the beginning of the Celtic New Year. It is the end of the Summer half of the year and the beginning of the Winter half. This is the time when the veil between the worlds is the thinnest and when the ancestors, departed family and friends are said to return to visit the land of the living once again. The dead are honored and feasted on this night. Food is set out for them and they are remembered in word, song, and deed. Astronomical Samhain occurs when the Sun is half way between the Fall Equinox and the Winter Solstice and is on November 6 this year. As the "night precedes the day," Baccharis Grove will be celebrating Samhain on Sunday, Nov. 5 at sundown, which will be at 5:06 p.m.

After a nine year hiatus, the Missal-Any has found a new home. Though it had been in the back of our minds to resume publication without any particular start date, this Samhain seemed to be fitting. Our Grove celebrates its one year anniversary and is going strong. Interest in the RDNA and what we do seem to be on the rise. It is our sincere wish that we are able to continue the tradition started by our noble founder, presenting information, resources, history, and not a little bit of humor. So it is to him, Emmon Bodfish, that we dedicate this first issue.

Samhain Essay: A Thin Time

A Druid Missal-Any Samhain 2001

By Stacey Weinberger

Samhain, Samhuinn in Scots Gaelic, Sauin in Manx, from *sam fuinn* "Summer's end," marks the Celtic New Year, the day when the veil between the Worlds is the thinnest. Fires were lit on sacred hills this night. It was customary to extinguish the household fires, symbolizing the end of Summer, and then relight them from the ceremonial fire marking the beginning of the new season, Winter, the Season of Sleep. For the first time Baccharis Grove will be enacting this tradition during the service when the Third Order Druids exchange their ceremonial red ribbon for white. After the New Year's revelry and merrymaking rejoicing in the bountiful harvest of the previous year, we prepare ourselves for this long period of darkness as our thoughts turn to contemplation, reflection, and renewal.

A Few (?) Thoughts About

Samhain and Sacrifice

A Druid Missal-Any, Samhain 2001

By Mortus, the Morose Druid

(Please refer to the NRDNA's 1979 article:
<http://www.geocities.com/druidarchives/pent3-2part2.html>
titled "Now, About Those Human Sacrifices...." about Celtic Gaul.)

We all know that there are only three certain things in life; Death, taxes and idiots. As much as we dislike them, often all three arrive together. But with this essay, please tolerate the first and third.

Well, it is Samhain, so it's time to bring up that perennial subject; death. (Fun activities at the end.) Yes, death, a subject rarely brought up willingly in our modern cult of youth and life. It is a huge far-reaching subject, on which I'd like to endlessly ramble for a six pages. It is a huge topic that we all are deeply concerned about. Life is, of course, not separate from death, it only looks that way because, "Death stares old men in the face, and lurks behind the back of youth." Perhaps one of the reasons we are so shocked in our society by sudden violent death, is that we persist in that infantile belief of immortality, bolstered by medical and social advances that virtually promise us a death by old age. Death always comes out of season to us, it seems. Yet, throughout history, death was a daily possibility and old age a rare achievement; therefore worthy of respect. (Possibly, a reason why current seniors are not respected is that there are too many of them?) Talk to an insurance salesman if you really want the morbid statistics of modern dangers. Our fear of death, combined with our materialistic fear of economic loss has made the whole concept of "sacrifice" particularly unpleasant to many today.

The very word "Sacrifice" tends to ring warning alarms to pagans, who must constantly prepare arguments and defenses against ill-informed persecution; "Oh, we only use vegetables or Sacagawea Dollars," or such. But while this word is bandied about in this preparation of America for a "new" war, let's pause to reflect on it's meanings. Here's a popular view of sacrifice from the O.E.D. (abridged edition);

"sacrifice: n. 1.a. The act of offering something to a deity in propitiation or homage, especially the ritual slaughter of an animal or a person. b. A victim offered in this way. 2.a. Forfeiture of something highly valued for the sake of one considered to have a greater value or claim. b. Something so forfeited. 3.a. Relinquishment of something at less than its presumed value. b. Something so relinquished. c. A loss so sustained. 4. Baseball A sacrifice hit or bunt. [Middle English, from Old French, from Latin sacrificium: sacer, sacred; see SACRED + facere, to make.]

To "sacrifice" is to "make sacred," which means:

"sacred: adj. 1. Dedicated to or set apart for the worship of a deity. 2. Worthy of religious veneration. 3. Made or declared holy: sacred bread and wine. 4. Dedicated or devoted exclusively to a single use, purpose, or person: sacred to the memory

of her sister; a private office sacred to the President. 5. Worthy of respect; venerable. 6. Of or relating to religious objects, rites, or practices.

Many cultures make daily offerings, to “respect,” “feed,” or “bribe” the spirits by setting aside something they want to “pay back” the gods for the kindness of giving it to the devotee in the first place. Taxes operate on a similar level, by our repaying society for the conditions that gave us a good business environment. The ancient Celts, to take but one collection of cultures, would sometimes bury sacrifices of food, animals, disliked neighbours, in special pits; perhaps as a fertility-death cyclical bargaining (I give you one skinny deer in the fall, you give me six months’ interest...say, three fat deer in the spring?) The Celts were also quite fond of throwing treasures and leaden body-shaped-parts into hot springs, pools, rivers, wells, fountains, oceans or anything wet. The Romans drained them and took the loot; initiating perhaps the first recycling campaign? Hopefully, the gods will further bless us and the government will further improve our economic security and quality of life; a cycle of thanking. Uh-huh, that’s the theory. And what is the greatest of material losses, but the death of our physical body? What do we get in return?

As a falling tree produces an arboreal opening for a new sapling to grow towards the sun; so does death provide new space for youth to grow. What we call ourselves now, is not the same self we will become in five minutes. You can’t step in the same river twice. Even physically, parts of us come and go, with every breath and excretion. I was told that our complete skeleton is reformed on a cellular and molecular level within every seven years, and few cells in your body were atomically or biologically present 10 years ago. Life is a process not a stationary condition. (Decomposition and reclamation are processes too.) We merely do not notice the death that is around us, when the forces of growth are more apparent or ascendant. Yet we fear the loss of something we’ve lost many times before. We want *quid pro quo*; “if I die and give up this body, I WANT eternal life, or...I’ll be really miffed about it!” The truth of the matter is that we probably didn’t choose to be in this world and we likely won’t be able to choose when and how we’ll go. They also say, you can get by in this world with only half of what you’re born with, if used rightly. That’s all a hard pill to swallow and many religions and industries are built upon this grievous issue. I guess, it’s what you do in between that makes all the difference, and be glad that we are such a potentially long-lived species among animals.

Some of us have gone beyond a greedy desire for maximum duration of life to assist others (but not me, yet.) We all revere our parents, teachers and heroes for the hardships and injuries they have sustained on our behalf. Why do good people suffer? That’s a \$60 billion dollar question. I’m not going to go into a good and evil debate, because I’m not convinced they actually exist beyond the level of concepts. Some say that death and suffering inspire us to use our time wisely, and they are inherent to the biological reality of life on Earth. Around Sept 25th, the Rev. Jesse Jackson said the 9-11 disaster has had some positive impact;

“Suffering breeds character, and character breeds faith, and in the end faith will prevail. This suffering has allowed, in the darkest hour, the light to shine most clearly.”

Some of the reasons for tragic death are probably poor preparation, unforeseen consequences, and just plain bad luck. Such comfort takes a longtime, if ever, to reassure the victims. Starvation and wasting away are not inherently noble in themselves. Mother Theresa once said, “I pray much better when well-fed and dressed comfortably.” Another troubling issue, is that the people most directly responsible for the tragedy died in hopes of receiving divine reward for what is mostly a political statement in a “David and Goliath” act, where we were the loser. While suicide for reasons of depression or cowardice are often not esteemed, but doing fool-hardy acts for a cause or to save a group are oft considered heroic; even if the same result is dead people. I guess for many moderns, it’s not a question of “if” they die, but how they live and die. I believe, however, that you shouldn’t make that choice to die for others without their permission. All too often, violent acts are result of cheating and are used in place of long-term remedies, ostensibly due to time constraints; thereby dampening rather than solving a problem.

Now, as you all know in the *Druid Chronicles* “The Early Chronicles,” it was determined in April 1963, that the RDNA would not choose animal or human sacrifices (lawyers and politicians were included in 1965,) irregardless of their purported effectiveness. Most, if not all, Druid, Wiccan and Neo-Pagan organizations since then have followed a similar tradition to ours. There is, of course, the agonizing issue of whether fungi are to be treated as plants or animals, as they have characteristics of both! There are strangely no records on how to choose a sacrifice, but there is some guidance on how to do think about a sacrifice:

“For one man, the sacrifice of life is the offering up of himself to a god or gods. To another, it is an offering up of his mind to a search for truth.”—Book of Faith, v.9

“If one but says “Dalon ap Landu” with the knowledge of the power of it, truly the whole Universe will be forever consecrated.”—Thomas the Fool, 1970

Many peoples believe, that spirits with feelings inhabit all objects and creatures, not just “Homo Sapiens Sacrificius.” I, personally, try to take only willing sacrifices by divining the feelings of the plants or objects, which might take a long time. And as always, thanks and apologies before and after are to be recommended. I’m moving towards vegetarianism, but still occasionally eat reptiles, fish and bugs. I try to reduce the frequency of consumption and have rarely done the butchering (cowardice on my part, not unlike many Hindus) but I try to be respectful. After all, according to “Babe” they say, “What you eat, walks and talks tomorrow” and “You are what you eat, from your head down to your feet.” What goes in, will come out. My wife says that means I’ll become a vegetable as I grow older.

In my experience, a sacrifice is rejected when there is a hastily chosen unwilling plant, a poorly directed purpose, misguided intentions of participants, or the gods are in a plain weird mood; and killing for no purpose is not commendable. From my observation, the most common sacrifices in the RDNA have been; leaves, branches, berries, tufts of grass, acorns (plantable afterwards,) flowers, home-grown vegetables, ect. The divination of the winds will decide whether the sacrifice is acceptable, and we must patiently await and abide by their decision, not ours. I sometimes cheat though, by only holding services on windy days in areas with many birds...(By the way, bringing hand-held fans is strictly prohibited! An area, largely unexplored, is how to have an RDNA service or activity without intentionally harming anything, (if such is

possible, counting the squashed grass under our dancing feet, airborne microbes, ect. See Jainism.) Would it be too much to bring the ceremony to the uncut offering, which would then live a life of service?

It would be well for the squeamish Neo-Pagans to remember that animals are still routinely raised and killed for religious feasts throughout the world. Examples could include Thanksgiving Turkeys, Christmas Goose/Ham, Easter Lambs, July 4th BBQ, Sajigor goat sacrifice in Kalasha India, Kosher meat preparation, the ever-popular Uidhyah goat sacrifice for Eid holiday in Islam, the reverent buffalo slaughters among Native American plains tribes to teach their children, pig feasts in Borneo, Santeria rites, etc. Christianity prizes the voluntary human sacrifices of its founder and martyrs. Historically, the pre-diasporic Judaic kingdoms had their own fair share of temple sacrifices (and possibly may have again if a few hardcore Orthodox Jews can ever remove the "Dome of the Rock" mosque from the site of the Solomon's Temple.) For those tribal hunters who are still in an ever-present-holy-moment-union with the Earth, any act of hunting is a religiously imbued activity. Ancient tribes are especially afraid that angering an animal's spirit, would reduce the hunt next year. All this goes on, yet journalists would be delighted to uncover a report on a dog killed by some pathetic Satanists. And yet in America, home of the top animal protein consumers, husbandry and abattoirs are conveniently efficient and simply barbaric; if not unhealthily operated as a whole, tastefully out of sight. No one prays during their deaths.

But why do people kill things in a religious service, if most religions are life-affirming, in theory at least? A possible theoretical liturgical reason, offered by the venerable Isaac Bonewits (2nd Epistle, Chapter 7,) is that a living (plant, fungal, bacterial or animal) creature allegedly releases energy on its death, (and some while it's alive, too,) which might amplify the resonance of a magic raising activity. (I wonder if a flashlight, a plutonium cell, dancing, sex, or campfire could substitute the necessary energy in place of living sacrifices?) Perhaps it is so.

I also disagree with the above definition's hint that only "victims" are sacrificed. While all religions have offered material sacrifice in some format, most ancient cultures freely accepted the necessity or advantage of sacrifice of living creatures, some even considering it such an honor as to volunteer themselves. In some cases, the volunteer would be instructed with lengthy messages to convey to the deities involved, kind of like a court witnesses being briefed by lawyers to present their villages case. However, I suspect that the vast bulk were less than thrilled with their candidacy, often being the criminals, disliked trouble-makers, or prisoners of war of a society. Civilization helped make it possible, as self-sustaining small villages needed as many people alive as possible, due the death rate; but cities often have less-than-necessary inhabitants to be mistreated or sent to war.

With rare exceptions, death is irreversible and final; so unsanctioned killings have been punished more severely than non-fatal injuries by legal codes of most states. It's not my purpose to wade deeply into the debate the pros and cons of capital punishment (see China, Florida, and Texas,) but it's interesting that priests are still an integral part of the execution process, although few would label these priests as "blood thirsty;" rather, they're merely there to comfort the victim and restrain the vengeful passions of bystanders, and perhaps to mitigate the executioners' guilt for breaking one of their 10 commandments. To their credit, that great Fertility Cult, (known as the Catholic Church) now tries to sacralize life; and prevent such state-sponsored murders, albeit sometimes to excess. The Druids, themselves, were often also present at matters of life and death, like councils of war, exiling (which

equaled death) or executions. Depending on the individual, perhaps they enjoyed or dislike the responsibility involved. One could also make the case that vendettas and war are a "viral" form of human sacrifice that is out of control and self-feeding (like an inferno,) soon bereft of whatever religious impulses that may have motivated or restrained the initiators. Once life is stripped of its holy aspect, fearful things become conceivable.

I can think of three attitudes towards death. 1. If you feel that death is an end to all existence, it is a dirty distasteful thing to be feared and avoided at all costs and deeply mourned. 2. If you feel that death is a one way journey to a (hopefully) pleasant place, then death should be an acceptable; if not desired. Of course, "A man's dying is more the survivors' affair than his own," so you shouldn't recklessly hasten your death, widows really hate being told "He's in a happier place." 3. If you feel that death is a two-way or cyclical journey, then the above applies, plus any apprehension or anticipation of having to start all over again from scratch; either in re-birth or re-incarnation. Perhaps it is so.

The ancient Celts and Europeans, on first glance do not seem inordinately afraid of death; in fact, many literary heroes hardly even notice their death until long after the fact. After all, "A brave man dies but once—a coward many times." In the case of the Celts, there are references to ancient Celts loaning money and expecting repayment in the next life. People would keep the heads of enemies or friends, occasionally talking and giving them a feast. But, how the average Joe McBlow felt is less certain. Perhaps, it's along the lines of "It's a good day to die...tomorrow" or "Who wants to live forever? Okay, but who ELSE?" or "I am not afraid to die, I just don't be around when it happens."

In Celtic myth, there are tales of Avalon (island of apples,) Tir nan Og (land of youth,) Islands out West over/under the Ocean (America?), Hybrasil, Annwyn (in the Tales of Pryderi,) and the Faery underworlds of mounds and tombs. (See the Voyage of Mael Dun for another interesting journey by boat.) A general sense of connection is thought to exist in the same place, like parallel universes, that are crossed-over sometimes (especially on holidays like Beltane and particularly Samhain.) Ghosts, spirits, saints, monsters, faeries are rampant in their mythology that continues to this day.

So, finally, as you know, the greatest traditional remnant concerning death is the great fire-festival of Samhain (or the triple holiday of Halloween, All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day.) You've read already read oodles about Samhain on the internet, you know its roots and know all that stuff about it being a Celtic new-year (a new calendar year in the NRDNA.) I'm a "do-er" not a "liturgist," festivals for me are about doing interesting related projects.

Samhain Essay: Prophesizing

A Druid Missal-Any, Samhain 2002

By Stacey Weinberger

Samhain, the beginning of the Season of Sleep in the Druid calendar, marks the end of the Celtic year and the beginning of the new, a time the veil between the worlds is the thinnest, when the door to the Otherworld opens and spirits walk the earth, and when communication with the dead is possible. This is the most important High Day in the Celtic calendar.

Samhain is a time associated with prophesizing and foretelling of the future. It was commonly believed that children born on Samhain were gifted with Second Sight or the ability to foresee events and objects. This was time when divination rites were practiced and there are many tales and traditions surrounding them.

In the Book of the Dean of Lismore, a mortal man, Fingein mac Luchta is visited by a ban-sidhe every Samhain who would tell him of all the marvels in all the royal strongholds of Ireland. She tells him of three chief artefacts of Ireland that were found and revealed this night, the headpiece of Briun mac Smethra, a helmet that had been hidden in the well of Sidh Cruachan from the Morrighu; the fidhchell board of Crimtham nia Nar left in an adventure and was hidden in the rath of Uisneach; and the minn (diadem) of Loeguire mac Luchta Limfinn that had been hidden since the birth of Conchobar until this Samhain night. The ban-sidh also relates to Fingein other events that come to pass in the next twelve months

In modern times divination rites were still practiced in the Celtic countries at Samhain. Grain, vegetables, and fruit were used indicating the close association of Samhain with the Harvest. These were the foods that would sustain tribes through the winter. Apples and hazel nuts that played an especially important part to the early Celts: they were foods of the Otherworld, were notably used. Hazel nuts were known as a source and symbol of wisdom, and were eaten before divination. The apple symbolized life and immortality, was the talisman that admitted one to the Otherworld, and gave one the power to tell the future.

In the Border ballad Thomas the Rhymer, the 13th century poet and seer, meets the Queen of the Faeries at his favorite Eildon Tree, and after entering her mystic hill, they journey through rivers to the Land of the Faerie, where they find a garden. The queen gives him an apple from one of the trees for his wages saying, "It will gi'e thee the tongue than ne'er can Ice," and thenceforth Thomas can only speak the truth. After having been instructed by the faerie queen in prophecy or "second sight," Thomas is then able to enter Avalon as an initiate where he dwells for seven years.

There are two main apple rites that survive, one involves ordeal by water and the other ordeal by fire. The act of going through water to obtain apples could be the remnants of the Druidic rite symbolizing the passing through water to Emain Ablach or Apple-Isle. Apple-Isle is where Manannan Mac Lir prepared the Otherworld feast for the eternal enjoyment of those who have passed on.

The Ordeal by Water survives in Scotland in such Samhain traditions as "Dookin' for Aipples." A large wooden tub is filled with water and set in the middle of the floor into which apples are placed. The master of ceremonies has a porridge stick or some other equivalent of the Druidic wand, and with this he keeps the apples in motion. Each participant get three tries, and if unsuccessful, must wait until the others

have had their turn. If a participant captures an apple, it is either eaten or kept for use in another of the divination rites.

The modern form of the Ordeal by Fire is known as "The Aipple and the Can'le." A small rod of wood is taken and suspended horizontally from the ceiling by a cord. After it is fairly balanced, a lit candle is set on one end and an apple at the other. The rod is then set whirling around. Each of the company takes turns leaping up trying to bite the apple without singing his or her hair. Touching either the rod or apple with the hands is not permitted.

The divinations practiced at Samhain were chiefly used to discover who would marry, who one's partner was going to be, and who was going to die over the course of the next year. Eating the Apple at the Glass is an example of such a divination. At the hour of midnight the person goes into a room with a mirror. The room is lit with but one candle. The apple is cut into nine pieces. The person stands with his or her back to the mirror, eats the eight pieces, and throws the ninth piece over the left shoulder. Turning towards the mirror, he or she will see the future partner.

Paring the Apple is another Samhain divination rite performed at the stroke of twelve. The person pares the apple carefully so that the skin comes off in one unbroken ribbon. As the clock strikes twelve the person swings the paring around his or her head three times with out breaking it, and tossing it over the left shoulder. The shape that the paring assumes is the initial of the querant's future spouse. If the paring breaks matrimony will not happen in the coming year. If any of the readers wants to try either of these divination methods we would be curious to know how they work.

Winter Solstice / Yule

Winter Solstice Notes

The Druid Chronicles (Evolved) 1976
By Isaac Bonewits and Robert Larson

The Winter Solstice is a Minor High Day, usually occurring around December 21st or so of the civil calendar. Also known as Yule and Midwinter, this is a day sacred to Sun Gods, Thunder Gods, and Fire Gods. Large fires were built up outdoors and a Yule Log lit indoors, in order to rekindle the dying Sun and help it to return brightly to the Northern skies. Burnt logs and ashes from Midwinter fires were kept as a talisman against lightning and house fires. It was also a custom in many parts of Paleopagan Europe to decorate *live* evergreen trees in honor of the Gods (cutting down a tree to bring indoors is a blasphemous desecration of the original concept.) This is considered, along with Midsummer, the best day of the year to cut mistletoe.

Among some Paleopagans, a date on or near this (such as December 25th) was celebrated as the Birthday of the Sun God, frequently from the womb of a virgin or unmarried girl (who was sometimes also the Mother Goddess.)

Yule Essay: What is Yule?

A Druid Missal-Any, December 1982
Volume 6 Number 4-5
By Emmon Bodfish

Yule, a minor Celtic High Day, the Midwinter Solstice's sun shines into the mouths of cairn graves and the openings of hill tombs. The day was of obvious importance to these megalith builders, and associated with the dead and with regeneration. This is the bottom of the year, and the coldest months are still to follow. Bonfires are lit on hills to call back the Sun, and kept burning all night to celebrate its return. This Celtic tradition may be a cognate of the Norse Yule Log tradition, which is still carried on in the Nordic countries. This use of fire to recall the Sun's fire, (the name for the Sun in Gaidhlig is thought to be derived from the phrase "of the nature of fire," greine, and is of the feminine gender) is an instance of one of the most ancient religious ideas, that of reciprocity.

This concept goes back to the beginnings of religion in the Old Stone Age, as well may the fire lighting ceremonies. As C. Rachel explains, these rites were

"the culmination of the Stone Age religion of reciprocity, in which, by ritual attunement to the rhythm of seasonal change, man shared with Divinity the responsibility for its maintenance, so that the ceremonies first introduced to guide the birth and death of the hunter's quarry, were replaced in natural succession by those considered necessary to assist the new year to be born, the very sun to return, (and) the harvest to be cut down."

This correspondence

"was also understood conversely, so that early written documents record (Le Titre d'Horus d'or, by A. Mort, translator, Rev. Arch. xxiv) that the rising of the Young Year God from his winter sleep in the subterranean chambers held hope for the resurrection/reincarnation of man. Such a belief would seem to have been naturally transmitted from the ideas concerning the case as mother of rebirth, now reinforced by the lesson of the seeds, through Neolithic ceremonies in which the sense of mutual causality was so compelling. It is demonstrated in the monuments of the dead."

Yule Essay: Where Is Your Sun?

A Druid Missal-Any, Yule 1983
By Emmon Bodfish

Yule, Solstice, Greinstad, Sunstop; the Sun, which has been setting each day at a new, more southerly point on the horizon stops its progression. We have reached the "bottom of the year," as the Gaels call it. Midwinter's night was considered a productive night to vigil, and a Yule fire was built, in some traditions around a single log big enough to burn all night. Its flames would welcome the returning Sun at dawn. The sunrise was hailed with shouting, drums, and thanks for the returning of the light.

This is one of the four Solar Holidays of the Druid year. This year it will culminate at 9:30 p.m. December 21st, Pacific Standard Time, and an hour later for each time zone east of the Pacific one; i.e. 5:30 a.m. Universal and Greenwich Time. At this moment the Northern Hemisphere of the Earth will be tipped at its maximum angle away from the sun. Since this is one of the few years in which this event occurs at a convenient hour when most of us are awake, we might try synchronizing our watches all across the country and let out at this moment the shout "Seall" (Pronounced sha-oul) to call back the descending Sun. After all who wants to end up freezing in the dark?

Or go out on Midwinter eve and note the point on the horizon where the sun sets; this is its most Southerly extreme. Do the same for the following dawn, Solstice morning, and from the angle between these two points you can calculate your latitude. (Write in for the formula.) By sightings like this, on these Special Days, the Ancients calculated latitude, the curvature of the Earth, and kept the calendar aligned with the Heavens.

Yule Essay: Holly and Mistletoe and Sickles

A Druid Missal-Any, Yule 1984
By Emmon Bodfish

Yule, Winter Solstice is one of the four minor Druid High Days. It is associated with the Holly and the Mistletoe. All mistletoe symbolism and use we see around during this time of the year is a carry-over from pagan, most likely Druidic, customs of ancient Europe.

Pliny the Elder, in his *Natural History*, gives us the best description we have of a Paleo-Pagan Druid ceremony, that of the cutting of the mistletoe. According to Stuart Piggot, the time for this ceremony was determined by observing the growth of the mistletoe on an oak tree. "The time of the rite was the sixth day of a new moon, and preparations were made for a feast and a sacrifice of two white bulls. A Druid in a white robe climbed the tree and cut with a golden sickle the branch of a mistletoe, which was caught as it fell on a white cloak. The bulls were then sacrificed and all present ate of them."

The gold sickle is inexplicable, as real gold will not hold an edge tough enough to cut through the woody stem of the mistletoe. Gilded, or simply polished, bronze, is more likely. Elsewhere Pliny writes of the ritual necessity of gathering the mistletoe left-handed, after first fasting, and of the Celts plucking Selago without using an iron knife, barefoot and with the right hand through the left sleeve of a white tunic, but these are private rites, not public ceremonies. We realize that two white bulls are difficult to come by in most parts of the country now, and hard to keep until Yule. (My lease says "No pets.") But a feast among friends and some holly sprigs and mistletoe hung about is definitely in order. The feast at Live Oak Grove will be on the evening of the twenty-first, after Yule service. Watch this space for pictures.

Yule Essay: Bards, Oghma and Ogham

A Druid Missal-Any, Yule 1985
By Emmon Bodfish

Yule begins Winter, Geimredh, season of the Bard. The File and Bards, like the troubadours who followed them, practiced their art "from Samain until summer" as in the old poem of Forgoll, the Bard, who tells King Mongan a story each night from his wise repertory. And, as Keatings explains, commenting on the Old Irish, the winter practices of the File, lodging from house to house in exchange for their songs and stories, had become such a great burden for Ireland, that a king had the idea of banishing them:

"It is by Aodh son of Ainmire that a great assembly of Drom Ceat was convened where there was a gathering of the nobles and ecclesiastics of Ireland. Aodh had three reasons to convene this assembly, the first of them being to banish the File and bards because they constituted a heavy burden and were hard to govern."

At this time, Keatings adds, almost a third of the well-born men in Ireland belonged in some way to the Bardic class

"And from Samhain to Beltaine, they lodged at the homes of the nobles of Ireland."

The project failed because Conchobar, to show his Druid orthodoxy and generosity, gathers up the File and Bards and maintains them for seven years, and also sends Cuchulainn to meet them. (It is not, in the light of this, accidental that we have more verse remaining about Conchobar than about any other Pre-Christian Irish king.)

The tradition continued after the Christianization. A folklorist whom the Rees quote recalled that

"Just until recently, the Irish story tellers, heritors of the Bards, also did not exercise their art during the summer. In order to feel at ease, it had to be winter and night had to have fallen."

The Patron god of Bards and story tellers is Ogmios, Champion of Strength and Eloquence. Lucian, writing in the second century, equates him with Roman Hercules, but notes these differences. First, Ogmios is portrayed as an old man, white haired, but still powerful. The Gauls, he learned through his native acquaintance, associate eloquence with the old champion, and not with Hermes, whom they see as too young and callow. On one of the temples or art works then extant, Ogmios, he says, is pictured leading a joyful band of men, attached to him by thin chains which link their ears to the tip of his tongue, a striking visual portrait of persuasive ability. The Irish god Oghma or Oghma, is clearly the same divine persona, though Prof. MacCana feels that the name may be a borrowing instead of a genuine cognate. But the figure appears, often qualified by the title "Grainainech" of-the-Sun-like-Countenance, and the Honey-Mouthed, both in Ireland and Wales as on the Continent. He is also known as "trenfher," champion, or literally the "heavy man." In insular traditions he is not only the patron of eloquent speech, but the inventor of writing, in the old Irish system of Ogham letters. This is a system of varying lengths placed above and below a central line. It is of uncertain origin, but clearly designed for carving on stone, or at the end of square pillars.

[Graphic of Ogham pillar]

It continued in use into the Early Middle Ages. MacCana believes it probably evolved out of an earlier set of magical symbols, perhaps some of the same ones that gave rise to the Norse Runes.

[Graphic of Branch runes]

As Ogham came into use after the Celts were exposed to the Latin alphabet, MacCana contends it may have evolved thus: "seeing the utility of the Sound=Letter system of Latin script, the Gauls may have let the magic symbol whose name contained the sound stand for that sound in all words." Other scholars, such as Prof. Rhys, and Charles Squire, believe Ogham was the indigenous script of Ireland. They stress that it more closely resembles a binary or trinary code, akin to the bars and lines of the I Ching, than the picture writing of sound diagrams from which Mediterranean and hence all Western systems of letters evolved. Most Ogham inscriptions are found in Ireland and Scotland, where the Romans never came. (Druidism is full of these riddles.)

Being in this way the God of Writing, it may not be an accident that Oghma is one of the very few Celtic gods for whom we have written records of his worship, i.e. prayers. Two “defixiones,” inscribed tablets, were found in France on which Ogmios is beseeched to avenge the author and wreck a curse on certain individuals. In Irish sources, he is also the Champion in this sense of judge and avenger, and to him binding oaths are made. He is invoked as “the god who binds” the binding power of words and oaths, the spell-binding power of eloquence, so graphically portrayed by the thin golden chains by which he leads his listeners, in the scene described by Lucian. This ability to persuade, convince, and enchant with words was highly regarded in Celtic society, and a part of the training of Bard, Filidh, and Druid alike. LeRoux speculates that the “magic of Ogam” that Cuchulainn used in the *Tain Bo Cuailnge* to stop, single handed, the advance of the Connaught army, was not supernatural magic, but persuasion, or eloquent diplomacy and playing for time.

Thus Oghma is the one to invoke in negotiations, when eloquent speech and persuasive ability are needed.

Yule Essay: Mistletoe

A Druid Missal-Any, Yule 1986
By Emmon Bodfish

Yule, Winter Solstice is one of the four minor Druid High Days. It is associated with the Holly and the Mistletoe, prosperity and purification. The hanging of Mistletoe over doorways harks back to its protective function, as the All-Heal. Spirits that bring disease will not pass under it. All Mistletoe use and customs are carry overs from Pagan, most notably Druidic traditions.

Though kissing under the Mistletoe can't be traced back further than the 17th century, it is probably much older. It reflects the herb's Paleo-Druidic attributes of protection, fertility, and prosperity.

Pliny the Elder, in his *Natural History*, gives us the best description of a Paleopagan Druid Ceremony, that of cutting the Mistletoe. According to Stuart Piggot, the ceremonial mistletoe must be cut from an oak tree. The time of the ritual was set by the Moon as in Pliny's description.

“The time of the rite was the sixth day of the new moon, after preparations had been made for a feast and a sacrifice of two white bulls. A Druid in a white robe climbed the tree and cut with a golden sickle the branch of mistletoe, which was caught as it fell on a white cloak. The bulls were then sacrificed and all present ate of them.”

The golden sickle is a puzzle, as pure gold will not hold an edge sharp and tough enough to cut through the woody stem of the mistletoe. Gilded, or simply polished bronze, are more likely materials. Though Pliny was allowed to witness the ritual, he probably could not approach the Druid or examine the sickle.

Nor would he have been able to talk to a Gaulish Druid without an interpreter. Their ceremony was recorded in Roman Gaul. Gold may have been a description of color, or a quoting of hearsay. Elsewhere in his book Pliny writes of the ritual necessity of gathering the mistletoe left handed, after fasting, and of the Celts plucking Selago without using an iron knife, barefoot and with the right hand through the left sleeve of a white tunic, but these were private rites, not public ceremonies. There is no mention in them of the presence of a Druid.

Yule Essay: Motherhood

A Druid Missal-Any, Yule 1987
By Emmon Bodfish

Yule, Winter Solstice, was a minor High Day in the old Druid calendar, The festival's association with a Mother and newborn Son is very old through-out the Eurasian cultural area. It predates Indo-European occupation of Europe, and probably included the Proto-Indo Europeans in their steppes homeland. A Goddess and a Young Year God were worshiped in Balkan Europe before 3500 B.C. and in Summeria and the Caucasus even earlier. In Rome, (much later) it was the Festival of the Three Mothers, probably cognates of the extremely popular Triple mothers cult of the Celts. Mass produced, molded pipe clay votive figures of the three are found throughout Britain and Gaul.*

As deVries's, Grenier's, Green's, Szabo's and Ross's work has shown, the mother-goddess cult, so popular in Gaul and Britain during the Pre-conquest period and extending into Romano-Celtic times, has its origin in Proto-Indo-European culture, and shares features with similar cults in some of the other Indo-European peoples. The parallel has been drawn many times with Tacitus' description of the Teutonic Earth-goddess Nerthus who rode in procession through cities. This imagery recalls and is corroborated by Strettweg's processional wagon with its female figure and also, later Romano Celtic Mother figures portrayed in chariots. Another parallel is suggested in Irish literary tradition in descriptions of Connaught's Queen Medb being driven in her chariot around her camp before battle. Medb is a problematic figure, somewhere between a goddess and a heroic archetype. But it must be remembered that the “Tain Bo Chuailgne” was not written down in pagan times.

*Proving that mass-produced little religious goodies are not a modern tackiness.

Yule Essay: Alignments and New Years

A Druid Missal-Any, Yule 1988
By Emmon Bodfish

Yule, a Minor High Day in the Druid calendar, marks the Winter Solstice. This was a more important day it appears from the archeological evidence in the preceding Megalith Culture. Not only is the rising point of the sun marked in the stones of Stonehenge, but many of the Megalithic tombs are so constructed that only on Midwinter's Day does the sun shine into the interior, usually through a round window cut in the portal stone, or along the funnel-shaped corridor of stone pillars leading up to it. The link between death, the Sun, Midwinter and an afterlife or a re-birth is a very old one, predating the Druids and even the arrival of the Indo-Europeans in Europe. In the cultures of Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean, about whom we have more information than has survived about either the Megalith culture or the Druids, the celebration of the Solstice is linked with the birth of the new, young Year-God, Corn-God or Vegetation-God. (Yes, the Christians co-opted this motif. According to the tax roles the historical Jesus was probably born around May.)

As we know that the Druid year began on Samhain, we know that they did not consider this the birth of the new season,

as did many other Neolithic culture. But the traditions of Bardic revels and of feasting on the wild boar, the vigil of the Yule log, and the decorating of Yule trees very probably do come from the Druid past. So also may be the tradition of going from house to house, singing a ritual song particular to the holiday, i.e. caroling. But in Druid times this would have been something like the “Hogamany Carols” and the related rituals of circling or dancing around the house, beating on drums and bull hides. This tradition was preserved in the remote Highlands until the nineteenth century. The ritual use of the bull hide, also used with other Druid rites, links it to Druidic, especially the Druidic Filidh tradition, and not to the preceding Megalithic or pre-Indo-European ones.

Here is one such carol. Try marching around your house and singing it this Solstice, with or without bull hide.

(Sun-wise, of course!)

CAIRIOLL CALLAIG

Nis tha mis air tighinn dh’ ur duthaich
A dh’ urachadh dhuibh na Callaig;
Cha leig ml leas a dhol ga innse,
Bha i ann ri linn ar seanar.

Dirim ris an ardorus,
Teurnam ris an starsach,
Mo dhuan a ghabhail doigheil,
Modhail, moineil, maineil.

Caisean Callaig ‘na mo phoca,
Is mor an ceo thig as an ealachd.

Gheibh fear an taighe ‘na dhorn e,
Cuiridh e shron anns an teahlach;
Theid e deiseil air na paisdean,
Seachd ar air bean an taighe.

Bean an taighe is i is fhiach e,
Lamh a riarach orinn na Callaig,
Sochair bheag a bhlath an t-samhraidh,
Tha mi ‘n geall air leis an arain.

HOGMANAY CAROL

I am now come to your country,
To renew to you the Hogmanay,
I need not tell you of it,
It was in the time of our forefathers.

I ascend by the door lintel,
I descend by the doorstep,
I will sing my song becomingly,
Mannerly, slowly, mindfully.

The Hogmanay skin is in my pocket,
Great will be the smoke from it presently.

The house-man will get it in his hand,
He will place its nose in the fire;
He will go sunwards round the babes,
And for seven verities round the housewife.

The housewife it is she who deserves it,
The hand to dispense to us the Hogmanay
A small gift of the bloom of summer,
Much I wish it with the bread.

Yule Essay: Mistletoe and Sickles

A Druid Missal-Any, Yule 1989

By Emmon Bodfish

Yule, Winter Solstice, mistletoe and white bulls, this is one of the four minor Druid High Days on the Coligny Calendar. Pliny the Elder, in his *Natural History*, gives us our first look at the use of mistletoe at this season of the year. “The time of the rite was the sixth day of the new moon, and preparations were made for a feast and the sacrifice of two white bulls. A Druid in a white robe climbed the tree and cut the branch of mistletoe with a golden sickle, the herb being caught as it fell on a white cloak spread below. The bulls were then sacrificed, and all present ate of them.” The gold of the sickle has been prolifically debated by scholars ever since. (The Gods find harmless for idle hands?) Real gold is too soft to hold a cutting edge and slice through the tough, woody stem of the mistletoe. Polished bronze is a more likely candidate, but the bronze may also have been gilded. Elsewhere Pliny writes of the necessity of gathering the mistletoe left-handed after first fasting (and purifying oneself.) He also writes of the Celts plucking Selago without use of iron knives or tools, barefoot and with the right hand through the left sleeve of a white tunic, but these were private rites, not public ceremonies, The golden nature of the sickle may simply have referred to the taboo on the use of iron implements in gathering the sacred plant.

Whatever the metal was then R.D.N.A. Druids now use bronze sickles, cast for us years ago by a member who at that time had access to metal casting equipment as well as the necessary skill. Does anyone out there know how to cast bronze? Have the set up? For, alas, we have no more sickles for new Third Order (Ordained) Druids.

This feast should be celebrated with feasting among friends and relatives, all night bonfires to welcome back the Sun, and much singing and merriment, The exact time of the turning of the Sun God will be, according to my almanac, 1:15 P.M. on December 21, 1989. That’s a Thursday, a work day for most of us. If you can’t do anything else to celebrate it, surreptitiously light a match. Or, rank and job security permitting, you could jump up and shout “Saoul” (shaou-el,) that ought to wake the office up.

Yule Essay: Yule and Mistletoe

A Druid Missal-Any, Yule 2000

By Stacey Weinberger

Yule, Winter Solstice, is one of the four minor Druid High Days. More so than any other of the High Days, Yule seems to be especially associated with plants and trees. In the dark days of Winter it is the evergreen that reminds us of the “continual flow and renewal of life.”

The Mistletoe is one of the few plants that naturally bears fruit this time of year. It is commonly found on such trees as the apple, ash, walnut, and hawthorn, and much less often on the oak. Though it manufactures its own food through photosynthesis, it depends on its host tree for water and nutrients.

The Mistletoe was held sacred by the Druids. In Wales, it is still called *druidh his*, “Druid’s Weed.” The Roman author Pliny the Elder gives an account of the mistletoe gathering ceremony in his *Natural History*:

“The Druids held nothing more sacred than the mistletoe and the tree that bears it, always supposing that tree to be the oak. But they chose groves formed of oaks for the sake of the tree alone, and they never perform any of their rites except in the presence of a branch of it, in fact they think that everything that grows on it has been sent from heaven and is a proof that the tree was chosen by the god himself. The mistletoe, however, is found but rarely upon the oak; and when found, is gathered with due religious ceremony, if possible on the sixth day of the moon. They chose this day because the moon, though not yet in the middle of her course, has already considerable influence. They call the mistletoe by a name meaning, in their own language, the all-healing. Having made preparation for sacrifice and a banquet beneath the trees, they bring thither two white bulls, whose horns are bound then for the first time. Clad in a white robe, the priest ascends the tree and cuts the mistletoe with a golden sickle, and it is received by others in a white cloak. Then they kill the victims (i.e. the cattle,) praying that God will render this gift of his propitious to those to whom he has granted it. They believe that the mistletoe, taken in drink, imparts fecundity to barren animals, and that it is an antidote to all poisons.”

Pliny doesn't explain why the Druids held the mistletoe so highly other than the reference to it being all-healing. It is extremely poisonous. I overheard this past week while waiting for the train home that some florists, when it is sold yearly at Christmastime, have removed the berries because there have been cases of children picking them off the branches, eating them, and dying. (And where were the parents in this?) Mistletoe has been used (the leaves, not the berries) however, though greatly diluted, in modern times to much success in treating serious illnesses. A specially prepared homeopathic tincture is used in the treatment of cancer and herbalists use mistletoe to strengthen the heart and reduce blood pressure. So the Ancients did have it right after all, it just took us moderns a little while to uncover it, and as with any medicinal, probably used it with great wisdom, caution, and efficacy.

Poems of the Season

A Druid Missal-Any, Yule 2000
From Our Server, Susan Press

Solstice

Winter has come, The song has been sung, The days have been white and cold.

The dark has been deep, The earth was asleep, Dreaming a dream of old.

Now hear Her blood drum, For the time has come, For the days to grow long and warm.

For the dark becomes light, And the earth will take flight, Greeting the Sun's return.

Nights of Winter

In deep of winter, In the middle of the night, Jack Frost paints your windows with nary a light.

Look thru his icy artwork, Know each to be unique, You'll see a starlit world revealed, A world that some would seek.

A world that is within, without, A fragile world of wonder and glitter A world that from his paintbrush flows, In the deep, dark nights of winter.

Walk Amongst the Trees

Murmuring softly, Father Winter walks amongst the trees, gently easing them into sweet white slumber. He stops to rest with those who keep vigil during the long winter, the Holly, the Mistletoe, and the Evergreen.

They are old, old friends and pass the long white winter sharing tales and talking of things they have seen and heard throughout their long lives.

Go walk amongst the trees. Be quiet and still, listen for their voices and then for their wisdom. Share with them your dreams, your wonders and your woes, for they will become the substance of tales told in the future...the knowledge and wisdom of the trees.

Yule Essay: Tree Lore

Druid Missal-Any, Yule 2001

By Stacey Weinberger

Yule, Winter Solstice, the Shortest Day of the Year, is one of the minor High Days of the Druid calendar. Though there is an association with trees at each of the High Days, none of them so strongly evokes the image of the tree than Yule with the tradition of Christmas or Yule tree, a latter-day symbol of pagan tree-worship. The Yule tree as we know it is a German custom brought to England in 1840 by Prince Albert, prince consort of Queen Victoria. Perhaps a parallel to the May-pole in the Summer half of the year (see A Druid-Missal-Any Beltaine 2001,) which also was a tree cut down for a particular celebration and placed as the center of ritual, the Yule tree harkens back to an older tradition and can perhaps be traced back to the ancient Druids and other pre-Christian Indo-European practices.

In southern Europe there was the midwinter custom pertaining to the celebration of the god Phrygian god Attis that is very reminiscent of cutting down the Yule tree and decorating its branches. Certain priests of the Attis called dendrophori, meaning "tree-bearers," annually selected a pine tree (*pinus silva*) from the sacred grove to carry the effigy of the god into His Roman temple. The dendrophori were charged with the duty of setting up and decorating the tree upon which the god was presented for sacrifice. The pine tree stood for a promise of eternal life because being an evergreen it kept its vital appearance even in winter. The boughs did not wither and die, and signified the continuing presence of life.

In Celtic culture there is also archeological evidence of ritual involving trees. At two large sacred circular enclosures, the Goloring near Koblenz and the Goldberg in Southern Germany, that date from the sixth century B.C., a huge central post was erected, possibly imitative of a living tree. Similar pre-Roman ritual activity can be observed at the La Tene site of Bliesebruck where over one hundred sacred pits filled with votive objects had been planted with tree trunks or living trees. In the Rhineland, one of the four regions of the Celtic World, the great sanctuary at Pesch contained many temples and ancillary buildings grouped around a sacred tree.

There are legendary tales of royal halls with a living tree in the center of the building, and trees may have been used this way, as in the Old Manor House at Knaresborough in North Yorkshire and the hall of Huntingfield in Suffolk. Positioning the tree in the center of a building as a source of good luck and protection for gods and men is confirmed by the custom in Germany, continuing as late as the 19th century, of having a guardian or lucky tree beside a house. Does bringing the tree inside symbolize bringing the luck inside? Symbolic offerings were made to the tree, and ale poured over its roots at festivals, as in the case of a huge birch tree that stood on a mound beside a farm house in western Norway until it fell in 1874. Adam of Bremen, wrote of a huge tree that stood beside a temple in Uppsala, the holy center in Sweden, that remained green summer and winter (signaling perhaps an evergreen,) but no one knew what kind of tree it was. The existence of sacred trees in Germany in the pre-Christian era is borne out by reference to their destruction by early Christian missionaries such as St. Boniface.

Memories of sacred trees at holy places can consistently be found in Irish literature, where a number of sacred trees are mentioned. The sacred tree, in Old Irish *bile*, was apparently a usual feature of the site where the inauguration of the kings of each tribe or confederation took place, the sacred center of the tribal territory.

Sacred trees are found mentioned in pagan texts of early Ireland, most notably in the Rennes Dindshenchas ("History of Places.") Holy trees were particularly associated with sacral kingship and the inauguration rites surrounding the election of a new king. Five special trees are mentioned in the Dindshenchas marking the sacred ritual and assembly centers of Ireland: "The Tree of Ross and the Tree of Mugna and the Ancient Tree of Datha and the branching Tree of Uisnech and the Ancient Tree of Tortu."* Three of these trees are recorded as ash trees, while the Tree of Ross was a yew (an evergreen,) and the Tree of Mugna was an oak, although it was not an ordinary one as it bore three crops of different fruits each year: "apples, goodly, marvelous, and nuts round, blood-red, and acorns, brown and ridgy" (together which symbolize the fruits of the Otherworld.) It too appears to be an evergreen: "Its leaves were upon it always," as with the tree at Uppsala described by Adam of Bremen.

A characteristic of the Otherworld tree in Irish tradition is that it bears blossoms and fruit of gold and silver, which the more modern Christmas tree is reminiscent of.

This Winter Solstice when you go out to purchase your Yule tree, preferably a live one, keep in mind that you are maintaining the pagan tradition of honoring the tree and making it the focus of the modern day tribal assembly of home. During this time when all seems dead and asleep the pine or fir Yule tree remains green, symbolizing the promise of life that is to return.

*"The Prose Tales in the Rennes Dindshenchas," ed. W. Stokes, *Rev Celt* 15 (1894) and 16 (1895)

Christmas Plants and Picking the Yule Log

A Druid Missal-Any, Yule 2001
By Mairi Ceolbhinn, D.C. Grove

Druids love and respect their plants and truly wish them to return to full vitality in the spring. Without plants, how'd we do our sacrifices? What we'd eat? What'd we wear? It's nice to know that in the depths of winter, when the days are shortest, that some plants are doing rather well. We wish to celebrate this with Christmas trees and such and bring their blessings into our homes. See also the site:

<http://www.circlesanctuary.org/pholidays/SolsticePlanningGuide.html>

Mistletoe, as we all know, was considered sacred, by our ancient Siblings and has remained such throughout the years. Its Gaelic name still means "all healing," although I'm not sure how to use it safely, since it is rather poisonous. Perhaps, it is by its poison, that it fends off winter's blight, and manages to bloom around the solstice? Its persistent fertility is therefore an established trait that gives us that great custom of "kissing under the sprig of mistletoe" which would happen in a night of partying and debauchery. That age-old theme of commemorating the death of the "old Sun" and birth of the "new Sun" is now popularly incorporated into the images of "Old Man Time and Baby New Year" doing a tag-team on January 1st every year.

Holly berries, like Mistletoe, bloom amidst the snow as if to defy winter and encourage the return to life. Its green boughs were of course common decorations on buildings, holy places and public buildings during the winter festival, and this tradition has fortunately continued to this very day. Even the Japanese, Mike Scharding says, have a "kadomatsu" placed in front of the door at New Year's Eve.

Yule Log Tradition

Not to be morbid, but a sacrifice is necessary to rekindle the life of the dying sun (no, I'm not pro-Aztec, which sounds like a marketable drug,) and it seems the Yule Log has filled that role for several centuries. "Yule" comes from "hweol," meaning "wheel," which is a frequent European symbol for the Sun. So you're basically giving the Sun a well-needed torching to warm it up.

According to various sources, it is widely agreed that the hearth of the Celtic House was the home of a protective spirit, and (for practical and symbolic reasons) the fire was rarely allowed to die out except once or twice a year during the big fire holidays. Special prayers were and are still spoken before leaving the banked fire of turf for the night in rural areas. Much magic also went on around the fire during cooking, story telling, and entertaining of guests. The hearth was basically the pre-modern "Home Entertainment Center." If you've ever noticed, televisions also send comforting relaxing flickers of light into a darkened room while you stare blankly?

Now, back in those days, people had access to common forests surrounding their village. The choice of the wood varied greatly among locales, but one good size tree would provide several logs for a neighborhood. But under no circumstances, should you steal one from a neighbor's private land (and no buying one at a parking lot, good religion is do-it-yourself.) I've not heard of any special methods of cutting a tree down, but a short ceremony, and posting a few days advance notice

for malevolent or uninterested spirits to depart, would certainly be in order. (No, that Golden Sickle is no more effective than a haddock, get a good steel axe.) Angry spirits will make the tree conk you on the head; so be forewarned.

Once cut down, a goodly size log was the festooned and regally dragged back to town through the streets. As the Log entered the house, some cultures would give it a hearty drink of oil, salt and mulled wine, with a song perhaps. In more recent times, it was burned on Christmas Eve (which is close enough to the Solstice,) with music, activities and frolicking. To kindle the fire, splinters from last year's logs (saved by the eldest daughter) were used to get the substrate of dry logs going, since those Yule Logs are hard to burn by themselves. Guests were encouraged to toss sprigs of holly on the fire to take away bad luck. The way it burned would prognosticate the future.

Splinters of the log and cinders were taken home to protect against fires, lightning and tax-collectors at their home. Now the Yule Log tradition, widespread since the 12th century, nearly died out with the change to pot-belly stoves and grills in the late 19th Century. The tradition still survives in sizeable pockets today in the country-side today. For fire sensitive areas, a smaller log-shaped cake now decorates the dining room table. I've tried this custom for a few years in my little BBQ next to my house (sneaking one from the Rock Creek National Park,) and saved some ashes, and no disasters have yet befallen my home (well, except the Pentagon in Virginian Commonwealth, but that's the workplace, perhaps the White House and the "Mystic District" of Washington, D.C. were spared because of their National Yule Log?).

For me a Christmas tree is just another elaboration on "bringing the greenery in," and it certainly is a younger tradition than the Yule Log, perhaps a merger of pagan Nordic tree worship and perhaps the 13th century morality plays' "Tree of Life" (from the Garden of Eden) which was often the only stage prop, and conveniently performed around the Solstice. Perhaps, the inability to have a Yule Log burning and urbanization led to the soaring popularity of the Christmas tree in the 19th century? So go get your plants!

Oimehc/Imbolc

Oimehc Notes

Druid Chronicles (Evolved) 1976
By Isaac Bonewits and Robert Larson

Oimehc begins the season of *Earrach* (u-RoCH,) now an *tEarrach* (uN tu-RoCH); which is Spring, running roughly from the beginning of February till the end of April. Together, these two seasons constitute "the Winter Half of the Year," otherwise known as "the Season of Sleep."

Oimehc (i-melc,) is known in Modern Irish as *Lá na Féile Bhríde* (Laa Nu fê-li bree-di,) in Manx as *Laa 'n Arragh* (Day of Spring,) and as Imbolc, Candlemas, and Lady Day in English. *Lá na Féile Bhríde* means the day of the festival of "Saint Bridget." Brighid, Bride, or Bridget is yet another Pagan deity turned by the Christians into a "saint," in order to co-opt Her worship. This goddess was a triple-aspected deity of Poetry/Divination (considered the same thing,) Healing and Smithcraft, whose followers kept an eternal flame burning in Her honor.

By analogy with the Gaelic names of the other High Days, we may assume that the holiday was originally called *Lá hOimehc* (Laa Hi-melc.) It is the festival of the lactation of the ewes. In Paleopagan days (and, indeed, until the recent past) the sheep was a very important animal, providing both food and clothing. The occasion of the birth of lambs (not to mention kids and calves) was a cause for rejoicing and a sign of life in the "dead" world of a Northern winter.

The name "Candlemas" is a Christian term for a holiday occurring February 1st or 2nd. This supposedly is in honor of a "Saint Blaise" and has no official connection with "Saint" Bridget and Her cult of fire, nor with the fact that this day was one of the four major fire festivals of Paleopagan cultures throughout Western and Northern Europe. Of course they don't mention a certain Slavic god named Vlais, who was the Patron of cattle, wealth and war, and who was worshipped with fire. *Lá hOimehc* begins the spring season of *Earrach*. It is also the day before St. Groundhog's Day.

More Oimehc Notes

Pentalpha Journal: Volume 2, Issue 3 Whole Number 8
Oimehc, 17 y.r. February 3/4, 1979 c.e.
By Isaac Bonewits

According to our calendar, *Oimehc* occurs at precisely 12:42 p.m. GMT on February 4th, 1979 c.e. This is, of course, at 7:42 a.m. EST, 8:42 a.m. CST, 9:42 a.m. MST and 10:42 a.m. PST. In most of the Reformed Druid movements, the High Day begins at sunset on February 3rd, and starts the spring season of *Earrach*.

Oimehc ("ee-melc") is known in Modern Irish as *La na Feile Bhríde* (Laa Nu fe-li bree-di,) in Manx as *Lao'n Arrali* (Day of Spring,) and as Imbolc, Candlemas and Lady Day in English. *La na Feile Bhríde* means the day of the festival of "Saint Bridget." Brighid, Bride or Bridget is yet another Pagan deity turned by the Christians into a "saint," in order to co-opt her worship. This goddess was a triple-aspected deity of Poetry, Divination (considered the same thing,) Healing and Smithcraft, whose followers kept an eternal flame burning in her honor.

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Oimehc Essay: Oimehc and Brigit

A Druid Missal-Any, *Oimehc* 1983
Volume 7, Number 1
By Emmon Bodfish

Oimehc is one of the major high days of the Druids. A pastoral people, this holiday marks the first births of lambs and the lactation of the ewes. It is the end of "black January" and we are past the bottom of the year. It is clear, now, that the light and fertility invoked at the Solstice is indeed returning. This festival is presided over by Bride, (Bridget) as Lugh presided over Lughnasadh at the opposite point of the year. Bride and Lugh are poles, complementary figures, who balance each other in the Celtic system of male/female checks and balances. Though a patrilinear society the Celtic was less male dominated than our own has been, and certainly less patriarchal than the Middle Eastern or Mediterranean societies of the time, or than the Christian society that replaced it.

Bride is the goddess of the hearth and of fire, the inspirer of craftsmen and poets. Her ensigns are the fire essence and the rays of the Sun.

Though a Celtic goddess, and associated with the fire sacrifice, a rite not used by pre-Celtic peoples, Bride, in England and Scotland, has absorbed many elements of the local, pre-Celtic Earth goddesses. This, her time of the year, is associated with the visiting of strings and the circumambulation of wells and sacred stones, with the thawing of the streams and the beginning of the year's fishing. The rites of wells and stones may be older fragments of Megalithic religious conceptions. Certainly the stone circles and cairns and the rite of circumambulation, predate the Celtic arrival. Some of the oldest stone circles and altars are found in Mesopotamia and South West Asia, so it is conceivable that the Celts may have brought some of the rounding rites with them from the Indo-European homeland, as well as by having been influenced by these Megalithic rituals, which reached their greatest heights in Western Gaul and Britain, of the pre-Celtic peoples that they encountered on the migrations westward.

John L. Smith, writing in 1780, in *Gaelic Antiquities*, has this to say of circumambulation rites still being practiced by local peasants and attributed to "the old Druids."...that at the thawing time, the supplicant should go, upon three occasions, to a certain well or spring, and there bath himself three times; or make three journeys to some ancient stone, and there pour the new water out upon it and go three times around it in the deiseal direction" (from East to West.) The classic writer, Pliny, ascribes a similar ritual to the Druid rites of healing. He records that the Druids prescribed this rightwise circumambulation of stones and triplicate bathing in the newly thawed water, as part

of their treatment for mental disorders or lingering internal complaints.

Bride's function as goddess of fire and the hearth are purely Celtic characteristics. The prominence of the Sun and of fire symbolism, and the fire sacrifice are uniquely Indo-European, as contrasted with the rites of earlier peoples. They mark a shift from the Neolithic and early Megalithic concern with earth's fertility and continuance, to the importance of the regularly recurring cycles of the Heavens, characteristic of the Indo-European religions. Extrapolating from those sacred stone and cairn beliefs that persisted into nearly modern times, it is found that when the divine spirit is felt to reside in the stone, or cairn, which is an embodiment of Earth and a concentration of it, the offering is poured over the sacred stone, or buried within the circle or cairn. Evidence of both these practices have been found connected with Stone Henge. However, fire sacrifice and solar symbolism is connected with a conception of a usually anthropomorphic deity living at a distance, in the sky, as with Taranis of the Celts, or in an Other World, as with Bride, Fire, then so much like the sun in warmth, is conceived as a connecting link to these deities, as the smoke and the offering rise and disappear. Though the Celts shared with the pre-Celtic peoples burial and other forms of sacrifice, they brought with them this idea of the fire sacrifice in which fire and smoke ascend and carry the offering and the prayers to the sky dwelling or distant deity. A tower or cloud of fire is sometimes used in Irish lore as a symbol for Bride. This association continued right down to her co-option by the Christian church, as "Saint" Bridget, when, according to the hegemony, a pillar of fire appeared over her head at this young girl's investiture into holy orders.

-EB

Oimele Essay: Brigid and Birch

A Druid Missal-Any, Oimele 1984

By Emmon Bodfish

Oimele, the festival of Bride, Bridgit, Bredes, the daughter of Dagda, and Celtic goddess of fire and the hearth. She is also patroness of poetry and inspiration, which the Gaels regarded as an immaterial, supersensual form of flame. Always one of the most prominent and popular deities, the early Christianizers of Ireland were unable to eradicate her name and worship, and instead adopted, (or co-opted) her into their own pantheon as St. Bridgit. According to Charles Squire, she is still the most popular of Irish saints, and is still easily

"recognized as the daughter of Dagda. Her Christian attributes, almost all connected with fire, attest her pagan origin. She was born at sunrise; a house in which she dwelt blazed into a flame which reached to heaven; a pillar of fire rose from her head when she took the veil; and her breath gave new life to the dead. As with the British goddess Sul, worshipped at Bath, who, the first century Latin writer Solinus tells us, 'ruled over the boiling spring and at her altar there flamed a perpetual fire which never whitened into ashes, but hardened into a stony mass,'* the sacred flame on Bridgit's altar at Kildare was never allowed to go out."

Bride comes, probably, from the Indo-European stem name Bhethe/a which is also the name for the Birch tree. This

tree, with its shining white bark, is still known in Gaelic tradition as "Bride's tree." Bhethe/a is cognate with the Roman Vesta, and also with the Hind Agni, a fire god whose attributes and rites are perfectly parallel to Bride's except for the name and sex change (c.f. Larry Press, A.D.)

"Saint" Bridgit's flame burned on her altar in Kildare from approximately the sixth century until the suppression of the monasteries by Henry VIII of England. "This sacred fire," quotes Charles Squire, "might not be breathed on by the impure human breath. For nineteen nights it was tended by her nuns but on the twentieth night it was left untouched, and kept itself alight miraculously." This echoes the old, pre-Roman, Celtic system of counting by twenties, rather than by tens. With so little of her character and ritual changed, the sixth century Irish gladly accepted the new saint in the stead of the old goddess. A careful examination of Irish hagiology would result in the discover of many other undeserved co-options/canonizations, in which Celtic deities and heroes became Christian worthies.

Bride was the protector of childbirth, the supreme form of creativity, and in the Christian stories and hymns, St. Bridget is portrayed as the "aide woman" or mid-wife of Virgin Mary, though no such figure is mentioned in any of the Nativity gospels. Celtic women prayed to Bride for a safe delivery, and visited her spring with gifts of thankfulness. Fire-springs-fertility is an old, perhaps even pre-Indo-European triad.

As fire is the winter's indoor sun, Bride's festival at Oimele lies opposite the Sun festival of Lughnasadh, Lugh and Bride being seen as balanced opposites in the Celtic pantheon. Balance, rather than hierarchy, is the pattern of the Celtic system of thought. Druidism is a kathenotheism, emphasizing the worship of deities in sequence, each pertaining to a certain season of the year, instead of arranging Them in a permanent hierarchy as in the Greek or Roman polytheisms.

According to Marvin Harris' Structural Materialism thesis, we worship, love and adore what we need,** based on the premise "god, what have you done for us, lately?" Here, at the coldest time of the year, we need a hearth goddess, a protective figure watching over the birth of the lambs, for which Oimele is named, and assuring the re-birth of Spring.

Structural Materialism and Religious Ritual

Child: "Mr. Druid, why are the sleeves of your robe so long and flowing that they cover your hands?"

Druid: "Join First Orders, child, and when you are standing out there in the cold, grey, dawn waiting to salute the Mid-Winter Sun, you'll find out."

*A small knowledge of chemistry would make this miracle easy to arrange.

**Learn more about Fire Worship; live through a winter without central heat.

Oimele Essay: Brigit

A Druid Missal-Any, Oimele 1985

By Emmon Bodfish

Oimele the festival of Bride, Bridget, Bredes, the daughter of Dagda, and Celtic goddess of fire and the hearth. She is also patroness of poetry and the source of creative inspiration, which the Gaels regard as a supersensual form of fire. Always one of the most popular deities, the fifth and sixth century Christianizers of Ireland were unable to eradicate her worship, and instead adopted or rather co-opted her into their own pantheon as St. Bridget. She was not, however, a Christian. Modern evidence suggests that she was of ancient Indo-European origin, cognate with Agni, god of fire in the Vedic tradition, and with hearth goddesses all over Europe. The masculinizing of goddesses was a frequent occurrence in the East and Middle East as nomadic pastoralists settled down and became agricultural and urbanized.

Bridget is also associated with the Sun, which in Celtic countries is feminine, "na Ghreine," and which is carried in a chariot and served by a young male deity, son of the Sky God, usually Lugh or an Apollo-like figure. This may be a similar pattern to the one for Danu, the Earth Goddess, whose statue was annually transported through the countryside in a ceremonial wagon attended by a young, possibly virgin male priest. Traces of this ritual come from all over pagan Europe, according to Prof. P.V. Glob, but the best descriptions come from Scandinavia, where the ceremony persisted into Medieval times.

On Oimele, statues of Bride were carried through the streets to her temple, where a perpetual flame burned on her altar. This continued in Ireland under Celtic Christianity, with only the name being changed to "Saint." There and in Scotland, the tradition is still repeated when the dawn shows pink colors, it is called Bride, the Sun-Maiden, hangs her cloak on the beams of the morning sun. In Bara and the isles, up until the last century, she was addressed at dawn as just that, the Sun-Maiden, and even the thin layer of Christianity, laid on in Ireland, was ignored here.

In the oldest Indo-European traditions, the Moon is masculine and may be associated with Cernunnos, the hunt and forest magic. (J. Duran, after Gimbutas, 1982) The feminine moon goddesses, usually connected with water symbolism, are thought to be of Pre-Indo-European origin.

Bride was one of the most popular deities, and most often worshipped and appealed to by the common people, judging from the statements of early Christianizers and from the large number of charms, spells, and songs to her that persisted into Medieval and some into modern times. An old fire charm for kindling a damp hearth, and in Scotland it's always damp, goes: "To Bride, Ruler of fire, give me/us this little bit of perfect fire, now." Highly effective, I use it daily.

Remember also that matches were invented by a Scotsman, a Gael. The word "match" comes (some think) from the Scot's Gaelic word "Maide" meaning "little stick." The fire sticks used to kindle fresh fire for the sacrifice are spoken of in the Vedic tradition as the Parents of Agni; Birch bark, in the primitive tinder-kit, was known as "Bridget's wood." The line from Bride, early Indo-European fire-goddess, through Agni, who is Bridget in her Asiatic male guise, leads, according to the entomological dictionary, to our word ignite and ignition, via Latin. So to keep all this relevant, when you put your foot down on the accelerator these cold mornings and turn the key, invoke Bride, Goddess of fire:

"Ah, Bhride, Banreigh na Teintean, thoir dhomh an beagan teintean lan."

Hymn to the Three Brighids

A Druid Missal-Any, Oimele 1985
Verse for Oimele by Thomas M. Cross
Alliterative Syllabic Verse in English

Brighid brought us the burning coals
Bright mistress of hearth warmth-ness
Blesses midwives and milk-cows
Bareness banished from us.

Blessed Brighid, Queen of Nature
Daughter of the Dagda comes.
On Oimele we salute thee
Feeding kindling in fire.

Three Brighids as the winter breathes
Three nights and three heroes born.
On the three hills high fires burn.
Shall we bring our new offering?

Brighid (pronounced Breed or Breej) for proper rhythm)

Notes on Oimele and Brigit

A Druid Missal-Any, Oimele 1985
By Thomas M. Cross

Oimele (sometimes spelled Imbolg) is known as the pagan Celtic festival from Irish lore is said to translate as "sheep's (ewe's) milk" and has many associations with the goddess Bright and later with St. Brighid--Christianized as a saint. According to Cormac's Glossary (circa 900,) the goddess Bright was daughter of the Dagda or as three daughters of the Dagda. She was an expert in poetry, learning, prophecy or divination, healing and craftsmanship. Then, according to the *Life of Brighid* (the saint,) she was born "neither within nor without a house, at sunrise; is fed milk by a cow who is white with red ears " (these colors suggest a likely supernatural origin,) "she hangs her wet cloak on the sun's rays and her house appears ablaze." According to Gerald of Wales (Giraldus Cambrensis) Brighid and her nuns guarded a perpetual sacred fire and Solinus, in the 3rd century A.D. mentioned that Minerva's sanctuary in Britain contained a perpetual fire. It seems most likely then, that Brighid the saint is a euhemerized goddess Bright. Therefore, Bright has many functional associations: lactation of sheep and cattle, arts and crafts, learning, healing, fire, the hearth and sun, also with rivers and motherhood, and also she is a triple goddess or triune of goddesses.

The British Minerva that Solinus wrote of, seems to be Briganti (or Brigantia) the tutelary goddess of the Brigantes who is cognate with Bright. There are many non-Celtic Indo-European cognates and parallels, such as *Berecythia*, *Brihati* of Thracian-Phrygians and Indians...the Indo-European root being "high" or "exalted" etc. Bright also has Celtic counterparts such as the Gallo-Brittonic *Matronae* or *Mates*, triple mother goddesses sometimes called *Sulevia* and known also in Gaul *Belisama* ("most brilliant") and Romanised as Minerva. As Brigantia, her name survives in Britain as names of two rivers, Braint (in Wales) and Brent (in England,) as *Mates* or *Matronae* the name survives as the river Marne in France.

In Christian legend, Brighid the saint appears as mid-wife to Mary thus reflecting her motherly functions and Lá Brighid (law breed) (St. Bridget's Day) seems to be a purificatory festival—in commemoration of the purification of Mary. Fire was a purificatory element to the ancient Celts as fire was used to purify cattle as in needfire and Bealtaine rituals. Brighid as fire and motherhood goddess was very suited then as a mid-wife to Mary in this purification. On Lá Brighid or St. Brighid's day, a doll made from a churndash as the image of Brighid called a *Brideog* was carried about from village to village and all women had to bow before it as it was paraded about. On this day, rushes were woven into crosses, called St. Brighid's cross, which bring good luck on harvests and yields. These crosses resemble the ancient triskalion and swastika more than the do Christian crosses. The triskelion in the three legged or armed type of pictograph that today is an emblem of the Isle of Man and Manannan Mac Lir. These symbols of the triskalion and swastika were ancient solar symbols and were used in Indo-European religion--although the swastika has come to be popularly associated with Nazis and the Third Reich of Hitler it was depicted by the ancient Germanic peoples and also by Greeks, Indians, and Celts. In ancient Germany there was, as described by Tacitus, a spring festival celebrated around a mother earth goddess called Nerthus, in which her image was paraded around in a wagon to communicate blessings for peace and a good year. This, of course, parallels Oimelc and similar customs around Brighid.

As Bright was a triple goddess, there were many other triple goddesses in Celtic as well as other Indo-European mythologies. Bright was mother of Brian, Iuchir and Iucharbha (also called Mac Cuill, Mac Cecht and Mac Greine; sons of the Hazel, Plough and Sun) who married another triune of goddesses; Banbha, Fodhla, and Eriu whose names are metaphoric for Ireland (Eriu is an older spelling of Eire.) Sometime Brian, Iuchir and Iucharbha (or Uar) were known as the three sons of Danu, perhaps making Danu and Bright either the same or confused. Danu also seems cognate with Danu, Mother of Urtra in the *Rig Veda*, Vrtra being the same as the Old Persian god Verethragna. Vrtra was a demonic god opposed to Indra to the Vedic Indians, but Verethragna was a hero god. At any rate, Danu seems to go back to an Indo-European root having to do with "dripping or flowing water" also the root of the name Danube and other central and eastern European river names. The Norns of Norse-Germanic myth, the Parcae of Roman Myth and Moirai of Greek myth are all triple in form and are what we call the Fates who control the destiny of mankind. The Morrigan* of Irish myth seems to correspond as triple in form also, as Badb, Macha and Nemain, however, they seem to be better paralleled in Germanic mythology as the Valkyries in function. Both are war goddesses who, as birds, pick up the slain in battle. Badb is the hooded crow who with her beak pecks at the corpses. Valkyries sometimes appear in bird form and they take slain warriors to Valhalla. In Greek myth, the three Moirai (Fates) were joined by other goddesses, such as, the three Graces and the nine Muses, also a multiple of three. However it was Pallas Athene or Athena who corresponds in function to Bright as well as Hestia and Artemis. If one could group Athena, Artemis and Hestia as a triune one would have a parallel to Bright.

Thus we have:

<u>Celtic</u>	<u>Greek</u>	<u>Norse</u>
Bright or	3 Nornir	3 Moirai
3 Brights	Urd Clotho	Verdandi and Skuld
3 Matrona	Lachesis	
The 3 Morrigan**	Atropos	13 Valkyries--
	3 Furies	
Banba, Fodhla,	3 Graces & 9 Muses	The Norn
Erin	3 goddesses of Ireland	

Germanic: Eos (Eastre) Goddess of Easter

Greek: Austron Goddess of Easter & dawn.

Vedic: Usha Goddess of Dawn

Welsh: Arianrhod?? Goddess of Dawn

*Welsh equivalent of an aspect of Morrigan in Aeron (from Brittanica Agrona) a goddess of battle and slaughter; Aerfen (Welsh) goddess of the "end of battle" (cf. Aeron and Aerfeu to Badb and Nemain.) Rhiannon may be compared to Macha. Note: The three daughters of Dôn (Danu) in Welsh myth: *Gwernen* (alder,) *Elan* (push, drive) *Maelan* (profit, material gain)--all are also names of rivers. In Welsh myth there is Modron mother of Mabon (Mabon Ap Modron) from Gallo-Britannic *Matronae*.

**Badd, Macha, and Nemain

Sources:

The Cult of Brighid, Chap. 4 of *Mother Goddesses*, article by Donal Ó Cathasaigh

Proinsias Mac Cana, *Celtic Mythology*, Hamlyn

Alwyn and Brinley Rees, *Celtic Heritage*, Thames and Hudson
Padraic O Farrell, *Superstitions of the Irish Country People*, Mercier

Tacitus, *Germania* (with *Agricola* etc.) Penguin. Trans. H. Mattingly

Oimelc Essay: Baby Naming

A Druid Missal-Any, Oimelc 1986

By Emmon Bodfish

Oimelc, Thaw, Lady Day, birth of the lambs and goats. This is the Festival of Bride Fire Goddess, Divine Midwife, Ruler of the hearth and the byre, and guardian of birth.

It was to Brid that the old Celts prayed and sacrificed when a child was being born. Then, after She was thanked for a live birth, the child was ushered into the Celtic community by the Druid naming ceremony. The parents in ancient Britain did not name the child, but rather the foremost Druid of the clan or fife offered a name, based on the circumstance at the birth. In the case of "great souls," heroes or heroines, a Druid connected with the future child's family might receive a vision, and prophesy a name and destiny for the child.

Françoise Le Roux in her study, *Les Druides*, describes three instances of Druid namings that have survived in the literary fragments of Pagan Celtic Culture. (So much of the rich Celtic Bardic work was lost in the Romanization and then more again in the Christianization of Europe and the Isles; we must piece together a heritage from what is left to us, mostly by the Irish Bardic Schools, and in the oral folk traditions. We have nothing comparable to the Bramanas of India, or even the Islandic/Nordic mythologies, though there is ample evidence

that such a body of knowledge and art existed in the Celtic World.) A re-naming could occur in adult life, in the case of equites, (warrior-caste) or Druids, on the basis of their deeds, particularly if the warrior left his household and became a member of a different clan.

Ms. LeRoux (Translated from the French by Jean Elizabeth)

“The Druids intervened at the beginning of life, just, as we have seen, they occupied themselves with death. In Ireland, they officiated by giving a name, based on a particular detail or noteworthy happening. It is this that Cuchulainn, formerly named Setanta, got his name from the Druid, Cathbad. Having killed the fighting dog of the blacksmith, Culann, he, himself, rendered such equitable judgment that King Conchobar and his Druid, Cathbad, were astonished at the little boy:

“What judgment will you render on this boy?” said Conchobar. ‘If a young dog of the same line exists in Ireland, I will bring him up just to the point where he is as capable as his father. Meanwhile, I will myself be the dog who will protect the clocks, the goods and the land of Culann.’ ‘You have rendered a good judgment, little boy.’ Said Conchobar. Cathbad declared, ‘In all truth, we could not have rendered a better one ourselves. Why don’t we name you Cu Chulainn, the dog of Culann?’ ... And from this moment onward he had this famous name, Cuchulainn, because he had killed the blacksmith, Culann’s, dog.” (Ogam, XI, 214-215)

King Conchobar’s naming is even more interesting:

“A child was born with a worm in each hand. He was taken, in the fetal position to the river that was named Conchobar; the river passed by him on his back. Cathbad took the child and gave him the name of the river, Conchobar, son of Fachtna; having taken the boy and put him on his lap, Cathbad gave thanks for him, and prophesized about him.” (Ogam, XII, 240)

A simple sign was enough. At the beginning of the *Longes mac n-Usnig*, the Exile of Usnech’s Sons, the Ulates were assembled for a great feast in the house of Fedlimid. They received the announcement that Fedlimid’s wife is with child. The Druid, Cathbad, then foretells that the baby will be a girl of extraordinary beauty and magnetism. She will have skin like snow, blond hair, magnificent blue eyes, ruddy cheeks, flawless teeth, and lips as red as coral. But, Cathbad adds, in order to get this treasure of a child, the Ulates will end up fighting each other.

“Cathbad then put a hand on the mother’s stomach and the unborn babe stirred under the touch of his hand. He said that in all truth the baby would be a girl, that Derdiu would be her name, and that she would be pure, surrounded by evil.” (“True, but surrounded by weakness.”)

She must have also had considerable Bardic talent, by the later accounts and the poems that are attributed to her. I include a translation of one that survives. It is from the Penguin Classic *A Celtic Miscellany* and her name is spelled Deirdre, in the Scottish fashion, translator unclear, the editor, perhaps, Ms. Betty Radice.

-E.B.

21. Deirdre Remembers a Scottish Glen

Glen of fruit and fish and pools, its peaked hill of loveliest wheat, it is distressful for me to think of it—glen of bees, of long-horned wild oxen.

Glen of cuckoos and thrushes and blackbirds, precious is its cover to every fox; glen of wild garlic and watercress, of woods, of shamrock and flowers, leafy and twisting crested.

Sweet are the cries of the brown-backed dappled deer under the oak-wood above the bare hill-tops, gentle hinds that are timid lying hidden in the great-treed glen.

Glen of the rowans with scarlet berries, with fruit fit for every flock of birds; a slumbrous paradise for the badgers in their quiet burrows with their young.

Glen of the blue-eyed vigorous hawks, glen abounding in every harvest, glen of the ridged and pointed peaks, glen of blackberries and sloes and apples.

Glen of the sleek brown round-faced otters that are pleasant and active in fishing; many are the white-winged stately swans, and salmon breeding along the rocky brink.

Glen of the tangled branching yews, dewy glen with level lawn of kine; chalk-white starry sunny glen, glen of graceful pearl-like high-bed women.

Oimeic Essay: Candlemas

A Druid Missal-Any, Oimeic 1987

By Emmon Bodfish

Oimeic, the festival of Bride, Bridgit, Bredes, the Sun-Maiden, Celtic Goddess of Light, Fire, and the Hearth. She is the patroness of craftsmen, especially those that use fire, smithies and workers in gold. Gold is her color, and she hangs her cloak on the beams of the morning Sun. She is also the patroness of poets, source of Bardic inspiration, which, to the Gaels was a supersensory form of fire descending upon the mind of the poet. The symbol of fire-in-the-water signified her divine inspiration, and her favored poets could see fire burning at the bottom of her sacred wells and springs.

The Festival of Lights, Candlemas, on the Continent, a celebration presided over by “Lucinda,” from the Latin “the light bringer,” is rooted in old Oimeic festivals. The Light is now returning; the days grow perceptibly longer, thaw begins in the more southerly parts of Europe and in Ireland, and the sheep and kine begin to give birth. In this association, and as

Goddess of the Hearth, Bride is also the Goddess of birth. (To co-opt her worship, which they couldn't eradicate, the Christians invented Bridget, who was mid-wife to Mary and Jesus. No such character is mentioned in the Bible.)

In the R.D.N.A. tradition, Oimelec is celebrated when the Sun is mid-way between Solstice and Equinox. There is the milk of a sheep or a goat in the chalice, and thanks are given that the coldest time of the year is past. The Earth Mother begins to stir in Her sleep, and dream of Spring.

Oimelec Essay: Bride

A Druid Missal-Any, Oimelec 1988
By Emmon Bodfish

Oimelec now is the time of Breedes, Bridget, Goddess of the hearth, Ruler of fire, Lucinda, Vesta, candle light parades, Lady Day, the Thaw. Bride was one of the most popular of the pan-Celtic Deities, and in Pagan times a perpetual fire burned on Her altar in Kildare. She was attended by a female priesthood. She is also the Dawn Maiden who hangs Her cloak on the rays of the morning sun. The sun is feminine in Gaelic, and in Scot's folk tradition.

34. To the Sun

Greeting to you, sun of the seasons, as you travel the skies on high, with your strong steps on the wing of the heights; you are the happy mother of the stars.

You sink down in the perilous ocean without harm and without hurt; you rise up on the quiet wave like a young queen in flower.

Scottish Gaelic; traditional folk prayer.

From now until Equinox we worship Bride and give thanks for fire. When you light your fire or candle during these days, try, this old Scot's verse, which is, I think, in a direct oral tradition from old Paganism.

"Unto Bride, Ruler of Fire,
Give us this little comfort now."

MAD SWEENEY'S NEWS

I have news for you; the stag bells, winter snows, summer has gone.

Wind high and cold, the sun low, short its course, the sea running high.

Deep red the bracken, its shape is lost; the wild goose raised its accustomed cry.

Cold has seized the birds' wings; season of ice, this is my news.

Irish; author unknown; ninth century
A CELTIC MISCELLANY

Oimelec Essay: Brigid's Monastery

A Druid Missal-Any, Oimelec 1989
By Emmon Bodfish

Oimelec, festival of Bride, Bridgit, Breedes, the daughter of Dagda, and Celtic goddess of fire and the hearth. She is patroness of Bards and craftsmen. She sends poetic inspiration which the Gaels regarded as an immaterial and suprasensual form of fire. Always one of the most prominent and popular deities, it is thought to be She who the Romans called the "Minerva of the Gauls." The early Christianizers of Ireland were unable to eradicate Her worship and instead adopted, or co-opted Her into their own pantheon as "Saint" Bridget. According to Charles Squire in *Celtic Myth and Legend*, She is still the most popular of all Irish saints with the country folk, and is still easily "recognized as the daughter of Dagda. Her Christian attributes, almost all connected with fire attest her pagan origin. She was born at sunrise; a house in which she dwelt blazed into a flame which reached to heaven; a pillar of fire rose from her head when she took the veil; and her breath gave new life to the dead." This last attribute of the "saint" may be one of the powers of the Goddess which is recorded nowhere else. Knowledge of it was lost when the Druidic teachings were destroyed by the Roman Church and its soldiers. It is preserved only in folk memory and here in the co-opters' own writings.

She may be related to the British Goddess Sul, worshipped at Bath, and of whom the first century Latin writer Solinus says "She ruled over the boiling spring and at her altar there blazed a perpetual fire which never whitened into ashes, but hardened into a stony mass."* A perpetual fire burned on the altar of the Druidic sanctuary of Bride at Kildare we learn from both Christian and Pre-Christian sources. Even after the sanctuary was stormed and taken over by Christians, the fire was kept burning, and some of the Goddess' traditions such as that having all and only women clerics in attendance, were continued until the thirteenth century. By then the Roman Church had enough power to impose its monopoly by force and the persecutions were beginning on the Continent. A British bishop declared the sacred fire "pagan" and ordered it extinguished in 1220 A.D.

*a small knowledge of chemistry would make this easy to arrange.

Oimelec Essay: Triumph of Light

A Druid Missal-Any, Oimelec 1990
By Emmon Bodfish

Oimelec is one of the major high days of the Druid calendar. For the Celts, a pastoral people, this holiday marks the birth of the first lambs and the lactation of the ewes. Sheep's milk was an important food in those times, as it was among many herding peoples into this century. The calves would not be born until late April or May.

Oimelec marks the end of "dark January," as it is called by the Gaels. The days are noticeably longer now, and we are past the nadir of the year. The light and life invoked on Yule Solstice are indeed returning.

This festival is presided over by Bride (Bridgit, Breedes) as Lugh presided over Lughnasadh at the opposite point on the Celtic Wheel of the Year. Bride and Lugh are poles, complementary figures, who balance each other across the calendar in another of the Druidic systems of checks and balances. The Druids found good in the balance between

opposite poles of a quality, light and dark, summer and winter, woman and man, producing and harvesting. Though a patrilineal society, the Celtic world was less male dominated than our own has been, and certainly less patriarchal than the Middle East or the Mediterranean societies of the time, or than the Christian society that replaced it.*

In this the Indo-European cultures and many of those of the Far East contrasted with the Mid-Eastern group of religions from which Christianity and its offshoots developed. There good was defined as the final and total victory of one pole of a quality over the other. Thus it's light triumphing over darkness, summer over winter, man against Nature. They have partly succeeded; in the middle of the Arabian desert, it is always sunny. Summer has triumphed. The deserts are spreading.

*See Professor Green on the status of Celtic women in *The Gods of Celts*, and Jean Markale's work *Women of the Celts*. Both can be gotten at remaindered price from Publishers' Central Bureau.

Oimele Essay: End of Publication

A Druid Missal-Any, Oimele 1991
By Emmon Bodfish

Oimele, the festival of Bridee, Celtic Goddess of fire, the hearth, poetry and inspiration, Patroness of birth, Dawn-maiden, daughter of the Dagda who hangs her cloak on the beams of the morning sun! Here we are in the time of new beginnings.

The Druid Missal-Any will be looking for a new home. The pollution, crowdedness and difficulties of the Bay Area have increased, along with our financial means, to the point where your editor deems an atmosphere of the mountains a benefit. As we will be putting time and energy into locating rural property and relocating, the Missal-Any hereby declares a hiatus in its nine years of continuous publication. Anyone who would like to serve as interim Assistant Editor-Collator and Errand-runner-in-Chief should write to us at the usual address:

P.O. Box 142, Orinda, California, 94563.

If you would like a refund, rather than waiting for publication to resume, write us. Back issues are still available.

Oimele Essay: Various Brigits

A Druid Missal-Any, Oimele, 2001
By Stacey Weinberger

Oimele, the end of Winter. It is the turning point in the Season of Sleep. Now is when the ewes come into milk and the first lambs are born. It is the beginning of new life. This can be seen even at the Orinda Grove site with the budding of new plant life.

Oimele is the festival of Bride, Brigid, Breedee, daughter of the Dagda, Sun-Maiden, Daughter of the Dawn, Celtic Goddess of fire and the hearth, and of birth. She is patroness of poets and bards, smiths and craftspeople. Bride has perhaps had the longest enduring cult of any Celtic goddess. This is evidenced by Her aspects being co-opted by the early Christianizers into the figure of St. Brigid of Kildare. Even as a saint, Her identity continued to be associated with fire. No doubt the "legend" of St. Brigid's monastery at Kildare (from cill dair meaning chapel of the oak—possibly a telling connection) of a group of pagan holy women originally tending the perpetual sacred fire of a pre-Christian sanctuary on the site suggests that it is based on historic precedence.

Her eternal flame continued to burn in Christian times at Her sanctuary at Kildare and was never allowed to go out—a tradition which sprung from its pagan Celtic roots. This sacred fire was tended for nineteen nights by nineteen nuns who each took a turn to feed the flame. On the twentieth night, St. Brigid Herself was said to take over. That night the nineteenth nun put the logs beside the fire and said: "Brigid, guard your fire. This is your night." In the morning, the wood was found burned and the fire miraculously stayed lit. The fire was not extinguished from the foundation of the monastery in the fifth century but once in the thirteenth century until the reign of Henry VIII.

Sister Mary Minehan, a Brigidine Sister (Sisters of St. Brigid)—a restoration of the Ancient Order founded in 1807 to revive again the spirit of St. Brigid—relit St. Brigid's flame on Oimele in 1993 at Solas Bhríde, a Christian Community Centre for Celtic Spirituality in Kildare. And so to this day Her sacred flame continues to burn.

"Unto Bride, Ruler of Fire,
Give us this little comfort now."

Oimele Essay: Brigit and the Flocks

A Druid Missal-Any, Oimele 2002
By Stacey Weinberger

Oimele, one of the major High Days in the Druid calendar, is the Festival of Bride, Brigit, Brid, Dawn Maiden, Patroness of Poets, Bards, and Smiths, Celtic Goddess of the hearth, healing, inspiration, childbirth, cattle, and crops. Oimele marks the end of the dark days of winter and the beginning of spring. Noticeable is the increasing length of the daylight hours.

Originally a pastoral festival, Oimele was associated with fertility. The Irish word for Oimele, Imbolc, is derived from the root word m(b)olg meaning lactation. Oimele stems from the Old Celtic Ouimelko "ewe's milk." This was the time of year in agricultural societies when the ewes were first coming into milk and the beginning of the lambing season. This was important as milk was the first fresh food since the end of the harvest at Samhain. Sheep and Cattle were valued possessions both in human and underworldly society, and this is especially true of herding societies, such as early Celtic societies. The classical writers such as Pliny and Strabo comment on the use of milk and milk-products in Gaul, Germania, and Britain, showing its importance in those cultures.

That Oimele is also known as Bride's Feast Day (La Fheill Brighde in Scotland) shows Bride's association with the fertility festival. Though little of the goddess Bride is known in detail, many of her associations were carried over into early Christian accounts of the saint. Anne Ross writes in her *Everyday Life of the Pagan Celts* that in the later Christian tradition, St. Bride's association with sheep and pastoral economy and fertility in general would seem to be carry-overs from her pagan predecessor's role. In the *Life of St. Brigid* there are also various pagan attributes. She was said to be fed from the milk of a white red-eared cow, which was her totem animal as a pagan goddess. In Irish mythology white animals with red ears were considered supernatural or otherworldly. She was protectress of the flocks and harm would come to any that harmed her cattle. She had the power to increase milk production. In artwork, she was often shown to be accompanied by a cow, which Miranda Green writes is a manifestation of her mother Bofhíonn, the White Cow who is the goddess of the sacred river Boyne. She is associated with the dandelion, thought it quite possibly could have been coltsfoot, a plant with similar attributes, which flowers closer

to Oimelc. It is said that the milky white juice in the stems fed the young lambs.

Bride's association with the flocks is still evident in modern times. In the *Carmina Gadelica*, a collection of hymns and incantations by Alexander Carmichael records a charm for stock as recited by Archibald Currie, shoemaker. Charms are a poetic form dating back to Indo-European times used for protection.

The charm placed of Brigit
About her neat, about her kine,
About her horses, about her goats,
About her sheep, about her lambs;

Each day and night,
In heat and in cold,
Each early and late,
Each darkness and light;

To keep them from marsh,
To keep them from rock,
To keep them from pit,
To keep them from bank;

To keep them from eye,
To keep them from omen,
To keep them from spell,
South and north;

To keep them from venom,
East and west,
To keep them from envy,
And from wiles of the wicked;

To keep them from hound,
And keep them from each other's horns,
From the birds of the high moors,
From the beasts of the hills;

To keep them from wolf,
From ravaging dog,
To keep them from fox,
From the swiftness of the Fiann.*

*Fiann were hired warriors.

Spring Equinox

Spring Equinox Notes

The Druid Chronicles (Evolved) 1976
By Isaac Bonewits and Robert Larson

The Spring Equinox, although sometimes known as the Festival of the Trees, is better known as the feast of (the Fertility Goddess) *Eostara*, or "Easter." It is a celebration of the returning of life to the Earth. Rabbits, eggs and children are sacred at this feast and Pagans in need of fertility talismans now color hollow eggs and pass them through the ceremonial fires (quickly) to take home and hang over their beds and in their barns. A fascinating source of almost forgotten Paleopagan symbols can be found by examining carefully the fantastically decorated eggs produced by folk artists from Europe (especially Eastern Europe and Russia,) Mexico and South America.

A Minor High Day, it usually takes place around March 21st or so. On the night before, some Hasidic Druids stayed up until dawn, reading meditations about trees, eating the fruits of various trees and singing hymns about trees. Among many Paleopagan cultures in Southern Europe, the Spring Equinox was the date of the New Year (instead of Samhain, as it is among the Celts) and indeed, many Druids refer to this holiday as "the New Year for Trees." Adding a bit to the confusion is the fact that some Neopagan groups call this holiday "Lady Day."

More Spring Equinox Notes

Pentalpha Journal, Volume 2, Issue 4 Whole Number 9
Spring Equinox March 20/21, 1979 c.e.
By Isaac Bonewits

The Spring Equinox, although sometimes known as the Festival of the Trees, is better known as the feast of *Eostara* (the Fertility Goddess,) or "Easter." It is a celebration of the returning of life to the Earth. Rabbits, eggs and children are sacred at this feast and Pagans in need of fertility talismans now color hollow eggs and pass them through the ceremonial fires (quickly) to take home and hang over their barns. A fascinating source of almost forgotten Paleopagan symbols can be found by examining carefully the fantastically decorated eggs produced by folk artists from Europe (especially Eastern Europe and Russia,) Mexico and South America.

A Minor High Day, the Equinox takes place at 9:15 p.m. PST on March 20th, therefore the Druid celebration takes place starting at sunset March 20th and continues until sunset March 21st. On the eve of the holiday (3/20,) some Hasidic Druids stay up until dawn, reading meditations about trees, eating the fruits of various trees and singing hymns about trees. Among many Paleopagan cultures in Southern Europe, the Spring Equinox was the date of the New Year (instead of Samhain, as it is among Celts) and indeed, many Druids refer to this holiday as "the New Year for Trees." Adding a bit to the confusion is the fact that some Neopagan groups call this holiday "Lady Day" (which we consider to be Oimelc.)

Spring Equinox Essay:

Festivals and Eggs

A Druid Missal-Any Spring Equinox 1983

Volume 7 Number 2

By Emmon Bodfish

Equinox, a Druid Minor High Day, the emphasis is Balance.” Some customs of this season, still held over from pre-Christian times, include colored and fancy eggs, and the “Easter Bunny” who brings them, though this was not the original sequence or association.

Nora Chadwick, a noted Celtic historian, describes the spring rite of the “coloring of the Cakes and Eggs,” noted by classic authors in their descriptions of Druid customs. Egg hunts, egg rolling games and rituals are still current in Ireland, Lithuania and Eastern Europe and may have a pre-Indo-European origin. Decorated eggs, and painted clay models of eggs are a frequent theme of Pre-Aryan, Balkan culture. They are part of the ensign of the Bird Goddess, whose worship seems to have been particular to spring, and to the time of the spring rains, to judge from holdovers into Greek times. Eggs are also part of the imagery of the supreme Goddess of the Old-European culture. In this connection, they represent the Cosmic Egg, laid by a swan or Nile goose, which was said to begin the world. Small painted clay eggs were included inside statues of this Great Goddess, as in Marija Gimbutas' drawing below.

“A Cosmic Egg may also be laid by a mythical water birds: this myth is almost universally known between Africa and the Arctic Zone; it is recorded in ancient civilizations and was known among hunting and fishing tribes. In an Ancient Egyptian myth, the Cosmic Egg was laid by a Nile Goose which was worshipped as the great chatterer, the creator of the world. According to the Orphic story, untreated Nyx (Night) existed first and was regarded as a crest black-winged bird hovering over a vast darkness. Though unmated, she laid an egg from which flew gold-winged Eros, while from the two parts of the shell Ouranos and Gaia (Heaven and Earth) were trotted. The beginning of the myth must lie in the Paleolithic era.”

The Egg, plus chatter, words, began the world.

The Bunny wasn't one at all, it was the Hare, not the rabbit, that was the sacred animal among the Celts and Germans. Julius Caesar, in his War Commentaries on Gaul, describes the Gauls as keeping “hares and certain other animals to amuse themselves, and which they do not eat.” (or hunt.) The hare was seen as a messenger animal, associated with prophecy and madness. The March Hare brought in the Spring and gave the seeds their fertility, or withheld it. To run afoul of him caused madness. By the Middle Ages, the madness element predominated, and he came to be regarded as a demonic species. Many pagan ensigns and symbols suffered like defamation; and prophecy has always been associated with madness in Indo-European traditions. And underlying the egg theme, the theme of the March Hare is solidly Indo-European; its sacred and tabooed nature extends to most of the eastern European languages and early cultures. If language is the oldest witness to history, as Lockwood asserts, then the Cult of the Hare must go back to at least 3,500 BC. and the second wave of Indo-European expansion before Celtic, Germanic and Italic

languages diverged. In these, the true word for hare, hara/haso, was tabooed, and euphemisms were commonly invented for it in everyday speech.

Our American Ground Hog Day, may be a dim and distant reflection of the March Hare theme, with its element of prophecy for an early or late spring. In the days of plowing and sowing magic, it was by the hare's behavior that people tried to foretell the spring weather and the prospects for the seeds about to be sown. By the shadows of posts and menhirs, not groundhogs, and by the points of the sun's risings, the priestly castes at the Great Henges determined the day of the Equinox and kept the calendar of sowing and reaping in line with the Heavens.

Spring Equinox Essay:

Plowing Charm and New Year

A Druid Missal-Any, Spring Equinox 1984

By Emmon Bodfish

Equinox, the beginning of spring, which is marked by the Sun's crossing of the Celestial Equator, the first point of Aries. For a diurnal cycle, the day and night are of equal length. The emphasis of the holiday is on renewal, active preparation for the summer to come. The stones of some of the Megaliths mark this sunrise, by this point the plowing and seeding must be done. In numerous cultures these were sacred activities, from the Charming of the Plow in pagan Germany, a celebration which the Anglo-Saxons brought with them to England, to the ritual plowing of the first furrow in a special sacred field by the reigning Chinese Emperor. Our word for acre, 43,560 sq. ft. of land, comes from the Gaelic word “acadh” meaning a field.

Erec, Erec, Erec,
Mother of Earth
Hail to thee, Earth,
Mother of Men

Be fruitful in
God's embrace
Filled with food
For the use of men.

This was written down in the Leechbook circa 950 AD in England. It is the ancient Indo-European Earth Mother and Sky Father, despite five hundred years of Christian influence.

In England, Spring Equinox was celebrated as Lady Day, now fixed at March 25, to make it a dependable legal holiday while the Equinox shifts yearly between the 20th and the 22nd. Before the adoption of the Gregorian calendar in England in 1752, this holiday was the beginning of the New Year, legal and fiscal. In the Gaelic world, the new season, Samhna, wouldn't begin until Bealtaine, but the New Year had commenced on Samhain on November 5th or 6th. Between Samhain and Bealtaine is the “Season of Sleep” and May Day begins the new “Season of Life.”

In modern Reform Druidism there is no whiskey, or intoxicant, in the chalice at services all through this Season of Sleep, only distilled water, the Waters-of-Sleep. Only water is poured out in the Offerings to the trees. It is the season of the Pine and the Birch. The latter, Bride's tree, begins her season at Equinox. It has been a time of rest and in-drawing, the re-couping of our energies. Now life starts to re-awaken and we begin preparations for the major celebration of the Druid year, Bealtaine, the full-blown Rose.

Spring Equinox Essay: Plowing and New Years

A Druid Missal-Any, Spring Equinox, 1985
By Emmon Bodfish

Equinox, the beginning of Spring, one the four Minor High Days in the Druid tradition. The Sun crosses the celestial equator, from Southern Declination to Northern, and the day and the night are of equal length. This is the time of renewal, the beginning of preparations for the summer to come. The holiday is older than Druidism; stones in the megaliths mark this sunrise. Plowing and planting begin. It is the season of egg gathering. The giving of painted eggs as gifts and offerings predates Christianity, or the introduction of chickens, originally a wild Indian pheasant, to European barnyards.

The Leechbook records this chant of English (Brythonic, really) farmers in the spring rites circa 950 A.D. The Christian church had not yet begun its campaign in earnest to expunge old pagan ways or else re-name and "Christianize" them as it would over the next five hundred years.

Erec! Erec! Erec!
Mother of Earth
Hail to thee, Earth!
Mother of mortals.

Be fruitful in
The God's embrace
Filled with food
For the use of man.

In England, prior to the adoption of the Gregorian calendar in 1752, Spring Equinox was the beginning of the new year. It is still celebrated there as "Lady Day." In the Gaelic world, the new season, Samhra, summer, won't begin until Bealtaine, but the new year began on Samhain in November.

The emphasis of this season is balance, as day and night now stand balanced. Time to make recompense for old mistakes and receive the reward of our winter's patience. The tree is the birch, Bride's tree, the tree of Spring and Dawn, at the East point of the circle.

Spring Equinox Essay: Sequanna and Rivers

A Druid Missal-Any, Spring Equinox 1986
By Emmon Bodfish

Spring Equinox, the Sun crosses the Equator and shines down over the Northern tropics. It is dawn at the North Pole. This is one of the four Minor Celtic High Days. The grain of the last sheaf, made in to the Corn-doll last autumn.(see Fall Equinox Missal-Any, '85.) has been taken down from its place of honor, torn apart and scattered over the field prior to plowing. This holiday is one of renewal: planting, cleaning, fasting and "taking the bathes," visiting holy wells and springs. In Southern Britain, if I recall an oral tradition correctly, it was associated with Sulis, Goddess of hot springs and the Rites at Bath, and perhaps in Gaul with Sequanna, Goddess of the source of the River Seine. Here, in the valley of Dijon,

numerous votive offerings to Her have been found, and traditions dramatically emphasizing Her powers to cure the sick were recorded by classic writers. (c.f. Barry Cunliffe, though he does not list his sources for this.) Twenty-two wooden plaques, carved in relief to represent internal organs, one, better preserved, showing anatomically accurate diction of trachea and lungs, have been recovered.

"The Celtic religious sense was strongly marked by the principle of reciprocity. To save a life, another would be sacrificed. Similarly," Cunliffe states, "if sacred waters were used by someone wanting a cure, a gift in exchange was expected of the user." Votive offerings found in this spring portray the hopes of the pilgrims who brought them, like the exquisite statue of the little blind girl from the shrine of Sequanna. Other carvings are of organs or limbs, perhaps to communicate with the Goddess or to focus the ritual's participants attention on the afflicted part. Wooden votives were carved from the heartwood of the Oak, and may depict the entire figure of the donor, sometimes holding the offering he has brought; a lamb, a jewel, a bar of silver. Most have very individual faces, as contrasted with the smooth, archetypical faces of Celtic God statues.

This is a time to get healthy; do a sauna or visit the Hot Springs, re-organize and get ready for Bealtaine.

Spring Equinox Essay: Epona and Horses

A Druid Missal-Any, Spring Equinox 1987
By Emmon Bodfish

Spring Equinox, balance, awakening, a time of planting, a time in keeping with the theme of Irish Macha, Patroness of farmers, the Horse-goddess, who could run with the speed of a horse or become one. On the Continent She was called Epona. She was Rhiannon in Wales. She is a shape-shifting Goddess who can appear in human form, or in the form of a mare, or of a woman mounted on horseback. She is responsible not only for the fertility of herds, but of the ground as well. She is described in Celtic myths as the mother of kings or as capable of bestowing sovereignty on the rightful king. She is represented by the white mare whom the Kings of Ireland espouse at their coronations. Prof. J. Duran speculates that Macha and the mare represents the agrarian classes, the "Tuath," the third of the three castes in ancient Celtic society. (The other two were the warriors and the Druids. "Caste" is a poor word since these categories were not rigid, and some movement between them was possible, but it is used in Indo-European studies for lack of a better term.)

Macha may have been the Patroness of the Tuath, as Bride was the Patroness of Bards, and as the Morgani were associated with the warrior caste. Llyr, or Manannan McLlyr, it is said, also has ancient equine themes running through His worship. There is a theory that He was a Horse-deity back on the steppes of the Indo-European homeland, and that only later, when the Celtic peoples reached the Atlantic coast and the Island, did He become a Sea-god. He is always portrayed in a chariot, or riding in a boat, or in a combination of both, as in His sea-shell boat drawn by porpoises. This considered, He may be more a charioteer or vehicular god than a Horse-deity.* Epona rides astride. Cernunos, the other shape-shifting, fertility-bestowing deity, never rides. He sits on the ground among the wild beasts, and is spoken of as running with the deer. These latter two figures hark back to the earliest Eur-Asian levels, very likely to the Paleolithic. Similar figures may

have been common to the Ice Age peoples of Eastern Europe and West Asia from whom the Proto-Indo-Europeans sprang. In that early time, in the art of the Magdalenian hunters, a similar theme can be seen.

The Paleolithic dancer wearing a horse-head mask is a woman. The men wear disguises of horned animals, bear, or mammoths. The connection between Macha, the female shape-shifter-shaman-magician, and the horse may be very old, paralleling the male enchanter of horned animals, from the time when the Horned Man and the Horse Woman danced in Paleolithic caves.

*Could He be persuaded to protect us nowadays in our cars?

Spring Equinox Essay:

Eggs and Rabbits

A Druid Missal-Any, Spring Equinox 1988
By Emmon Bodfish

Equinox, a Minor Druid High Day, the emphasis is on balance. Some customs of the season which are hold over from pre-Christian times include the colored and fanciful eggs and the "Easter Bunny" who brings them, though this was not the original sequence nor association.

Nora Chadwick, a noted historian, describes the spring rite of the "offering of the cakes and eggs," recorded by classic authors in their descriptions of Druidic customs. Egg hunt, egg rolling games and rituals are still current in Ireland, Lithuania and eastern Europe, and may have a Pre-Indo-European origin, decorated eggs and painted clay models of eggs are a frequent theme of Aryan Balkan culture. They are part of the ensign of the Bird Goddess, whose worship seems to have been particular to spring and to the time of the spring rains, to judge from holdovers into Classic Greek times. Eggs are also part of the imagery of the Supreme Goddess of Old-European culture. In this connection they represent the Cosmic Egg, laid by the swan or Nile Goose, which was said to have begun the world. Small painted clay eggs were included inside statues of this Great Goddess, as in Marija Gimbutas drawings reproduced here.

A Cosmic Egg may also be associated with the mythical water bird of Creation. This myth is almost universal between Africa and the Arctic; it was recorded in the scripts and hieroglyphs of the literate civilizations and sung in the oral traditions of hunting and fishing tribes.

In an ancient Egyptian myth, the Cosmic Egg was laid by the Nile Goose which was worshipped as the "Great Chatterer," the creator of the world and of language. According to the Orphic story, uncreated Nyx (night) existed first and was pictured as a great black-winged bird hovering over the vast darkness. Though unmated, she produced an egg out of which flew gold-winged Eros, while the two halves of the shell Ouranos and Gaia (Heaven and Earth) were created. The beginning of the myth must lie in the Paleolithic ear.¹ The Egg, plus chatter, that is words, began the world.

The Easter bunny wasn't at all. It was a hare. The hare, not the rabbit, was the sacred animal of the Celts and Germans. Julius Caesar, in his war commentaries on Gaul, describes the Gauls and keeping "hares and certain other animals to amuse themselves, and which they do not eat" (nor hunt.) But the motive was more likely propitiation and divination than "amusement." The hare was seen as a messenger animal

capable of travel between this and the Other World, and was associated with both prophecy and madness. The March Hare brought in the spring and gave the seeds their fertility, or withheld it. To run afoul of him caused madness. By the Middle Ages, the madness element predominated, and his came to be regarded as a demonic species. Many pagan ensigns and symbols suffered similar defamation and prophecy has always been associated with madness in Indo-European traditions. And, unlike the egg theme, the theme of the March Hare is solidly Indo-European. Its sacred and tabooed nature extends to most of the Western European languages groups and cultures. If language is the oldest witness to history, as Lockwood asserts,² then the Hare cult must go back to at least 3,500 B.C. and the second wave of the Indo European expansion before Celtic and Germanic and Italic diverged from one another. In these language groups the true word for hare, hara/haso, was tabooed and euphemisms were commonly invented for it in everyday speech.

Our American Ground Hog Day may be dim and assistant reflex of the March Hare theme with its element of prophecy of the early or a late spring. In the days of plowing and sowing magic, it was by the hare's behavior that people foretold the spring: weather and the prospects for the seeds about to be sown. By the shadows of posts and menhirs, not ground hogs, and by the points of the sun's risings, the priestly castes at the Great Henges determined the day of the Equinox kept the calendar of sowing and reaping in time with the Heavens.

(It bears saying again: The Druids did not build Stone Henge. Nor as far as we know did they make use of it as a calendar. This was the work and genius of the pre-Celtic peoples of the British Isles.)

¹Marija Gimbutas, *Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe*, U. of California Press, 1982.

²Lockwood, *Indo-European Philology*, Hutchins University Library Press, 1969.

Spring Equinox Essay: The Birch

A Druid Missal-Any, Spring Equinox 1989
By Stacey Weinberger

Equinox, one of the four minor High Days in the Druid tradition, signifying the beginning of spring, dawn and the time of renewal. Day and night are of equal length now, and although it is the High Day Oimelc that marks the first stirrings of life, it is at the equinox that this becomes apparent. The Orinda Grove site is blossoming in all its splendor. We have never seen it so green (and without the help of seeding or modern technology!) The hills are a carpet of green, the live oak seems to have recovered from the attack by the oak moths and the ground around the altar has sprouted grass, clover and wintercress, with its peppery tasting flowers and subtle leaves.

As the cycle of the year continues, we move to the next in the circle of the trees at the Grove, the Birch. Passed down through Celtic oral tradition, the Birch is known as 'Bride's Tree.'

According to Paul Friedrich, author of *Proto-Indo-European Trees*, (University of Chicago Press, 1970) the birch has been a female-virgin symbol for many of the speakers of the Indo-European languages for over five thousand years. This would fit with one of the aspects of Bride as a Triple Goddess figure.

The Proto-Indo-Europeans, including (the ancestors of) the Celts probably associated the birch with the spring,

comparing the brightness of the returning sun, the greening of the earth with something tangible, that represented the changing nature of the surroundings.

The birch's association with spring and the return of light is probably not coincidental. P.I.E. forms of the word (for birch) lead back to "bright, shining, to be white," and seem to be based on the physical appearance of the birch

(explanatory parentheses by E.B. editor)

Spring Equinox Essay: What is the Equinox?

A Druid Missal-Any, Spring Equinox 2001
By Stacey Weinberger

Equinox, three months past the Winter Solstice, Yule, marks the astronomical arrival of Spring. This is when the Sun crosses the celestial equator following the ecliptic moving northward. The celestial equator is the projection of the Earth's equator on the sky. It divides the sky into two equal hemispheres and is everywhere 90 degrees from the celestial poles. If you watched the Sun for the course of a year it would appear to circle the sky. This apparent path of the Sun is the ecliptic. Another way to define it is to say the ecliptic is the projection of the earth's orbit onto the sky.

Days and nights are now of equal length, and at the North Pole the sun rises above the horizon after a six month absence. The Sun rises exactly due East and sets exactly due West. The noon day Sun is shining directly upon the equator.

It is a time of balance. As the days start to warm, the nights remain still cold. While there are new buds of green foliage on the Sweet Gum trees outside my window, the thorny balls from the previous year still hang from their branches, stripped of their seeds by the local wild birds. But it is a time not just of balance in Nature but in our own selves. It is a time to look within and to reevaluate our lives, looking at where we've been this past year, and looking towards our own new growth with the coming of the new season. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that the East, the direction of the dawning Sun, also represents new beginnings.

Mad Sweeney News

Mountain stream, clear and limpid,
wandering down towards the valley,
whispering songs among the rushes—oh,
that I were as the stream!

Mountain heather all in flower—longing
fills me, at the sight, to stay upon the hills
in the wind and the heather.

Small birds of the high mountain that soar
up in the healthy wind, flitting from one
peak to the other—oh, that I were as the
bird!

Son of the mountain am I, far from home,
making my song; but my heart is in the
mountain, with the heather and the small
birds.

Welsh; John Ceiriog Hughes; 1833-87

Beltane

Beltane Notes

The Druid Chronicles (Evolved) 1976
By Isaac Bonewits and Robert Larson

Beltane begins the season of *Samradh* (Sâu-Ru,) now *an Samhradh* (un Sâu-Ru); which is Summer, running from roughly the beginning of May till the end of July.

Beltane (BauL-Ti-Ni, or BauL-Hi-Ni,) known in Modern Irish as *Lá Bealtaine* (Laa BauL-Hi-ni, or Laa Baul-Ti-ni,) in Welsh as *Galan-Mai* (Calends of May,) in Scottish Gaelic as *Bealtunn*, and in Manx as *Shenn da Boaddyn*, *Laa Boaldyn*, or *Laa 'nTourey* (Day of Summer); is, of course, the day we know in English as May Day. It is also called by a variety of other names, such as Roodmas, Summer Day, Walpurgistag, St. Pierre's Day, Red Square Day, etc. It is the beginning of the Summer Half of the Year (the seasons of *Samradh* and *Foghamhar*) and is a festival of unalloyed joy.

A very large number of important mythological events are connected with this day. It was on a Beltane that Partholan and his followers, the first inhabitants and partial creators of Ireland, landed on that isle. Three hundred years later, on the same day, they returned to the Other World. It was on a *Beltane* that the Tuatha De Danann and their people invaded Ireland. It was on a May Eve that Pryderi, the missing son of Rhiannon and Pwyll (Rulers of the Welsh Otherworld,) was lost by them and later (on another May Eve) was found by Teirnyon Twryf Vliant (and eventually restored to Them.) On every first day of May "till the day of doom," Gwyn-son-of-Nudd fights with Gwyrthur-son-of-Greidawl, for the hand of Lludd's (Lugh's) fair daughter, Creudylad. Most of these events, again, as all over Europe, have to do with stories of the forces of light defeating the forces of darkness. Why did you think the Marxists chose May Day as their international Holiday? And can you guess why Adam Weishaupt chose Walpurgistag as the day to announce the founding of the Bavarian Illuminati, and why the date at which the forces of evil later tried to Imannetize the Eschaton?

About Beltane

Pentalpha Vol. 3, No. 2 1980
By Isaac Bonewits

Beltane is one of the four Celtic Fire Festivals that mark the time between Solstices and Equinoxes and relate to the inner feminine, intuitive, yin side of our souls. Its symbol is a blossom. It is a day of blossoms and spring fever, of open hearts and merry trysts, of dance and raucous song, of mirth and mystery, of lechery and love.

Beltane, among the matriarchal, lunar festivals, stresses the importance of male-female interaction, mother nature's need for fertilization, the earth's need for female and male energy. As part of our celebration, we invite the coming of Pan and dance around a Maypole. We drink to Pan, the great god of nature, (so systematically belittled and bedeviled in recent centuries,) the scary instinctual goat-god in us, who plays such haunting, beautifully spiritual music on his pipes.

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same day, they returned to the Other World. It was on a Beltane that the Tuatha De Danann and their people invaded Ireland. It was on a May Eve that Pryderi, the missing son of Rhiannon and Pwyll (Rulers of the Welsh Otherworld,) was lost by them and later (on another May Eve) found by Teirnyon Twryf Vliant (and eventually restored to Them.) On every first day of May "till the day of doom," Gwyn Ap Nudd fights with Gwyrthur Ap Greidawl, for the hand of Lludd's (Lugh's) fair daughter, Creudylad. Most of these events, again, as all over Europe, have to do with stories of the forces of light defeating the forces of darkness. Why did you think the Marxists chose May Day as their international Holy Day? And can you guess why Adam Weishaupt chose Walpurgistag (another name for Beltane) as the day to announce the founding of the Bavarian Illuminati, and why that was the date at which the forces of evil later tried to Immanetize the Eschaton?

About Beltaine

A Druid Missal-Any Beltane 1982
By Emmon Bodfish

E. DWELLY has this to say about old Highland Beltaine, in Gaelic, Bealltuinn.

"On the first of May was held a great Druidical festival in favour of the god Belus. On this day, fires were kindled on the mountain tops for the purposes of sacrifice; and between these fires the cattle were driven to preserve them from contagion till next Mayday. On this day it was usual to extinguish all hearth fires, in order that they should be re-kindled from this purifying flame. In many parts of the Highlands, the young folks of the district used to meet on the moors on the first of May. They cut a table in the green sod, of a round figure, by cutting a trench in the ground of sufficient circumference to hold the whole company. They then kneaded a cake of oatmeal, kindled a fire and toasted the oatmeal cake in the embers. When a feast of eggs and custards had been eaten, they divided the cake into as many portions as there were persons in the company, as much alike as to size and shape as possible. They daubed one of the pieces with charcoal until it was black all over, and they then put all of them into a bonnet all together, and each person, blindfolded, drew out a portion. The bonnet holder was entitled to the last bit. Whoever drew the black bit was the devoted person who was to be sacrificed to Baal, whose favor they meant to implore in rendering the year productive. The devoted person was compelled to leap three times over the flames."

This folk ritual may preserve an echo of prehistoric festivals.

Grove News on Beltane

A Druid Missal-Any, Summer Solstice 1982
By Emmon Bodfish

BELTAINE CELEBRATION went well despite two principle people being handicapped with bad colds. Sue has some color pictures of the merriment, which I hope we can print in the next Missal-Any. The standard Beltaine Service, as given in the Chronicles, was performed, beginning at 1:00 p.m. For the first time in the Grove's history, we had our own altar on which we could build a fire. Though the altar is not in final form yet, the base served as a platform for a good blaze. Afterwards we had the Maypole Dance around our home-made 11 foot tall Maypole. Such thanks to Daniel and Leslie Craig-Hargar for helping splice two logs together, using only primitive hand tools, (i.e. the power saw gave out,) to create a 16 foot pole. All the May Dance participants brought their own ribbon, of whatever color, and we danced and wove them down the pole in the traditional Day dance, with the Bards singing and the Patriarch of Bards, Leslie playing guitar. It was a colorful, fast and flailing event, especially as many of us are not used to dancing in long robes, nor on the sides of halls. All the officers, and many of the members were in their full Druid robes, some barefoot, some in Engineer boots. After the Maypole was woven with the ribbons, we decided to leave it stand, at least until Solstice. Then we sat around, itched, Leslie sang requests from her lengthy Pagan repertory. Meanwhile most of us ate and enjoyed the return of the Season of the Waters of Life, in flavors wine, Irish Mist, and Whiskey. As this took effect, more people joined in the singing, shouting, and a few dancing through the underbrush,

Beltane Essay: Shafts and Gatherings

A Druid Missal-Any, Beltane 1983
By Emmon Bodfish

Beltaine, one of the greatest, and, now-a-days, best known, of the Old Celtic High Days, it marks the beginning of Samhradh, summer, and the "Season of Life." Historically, it signaled the moving of the herds out to summer pastures in the mountains. Great fires were build to welcome back the Sun, and the cattle were driven through the flames for purification before starting on their way to the high meadows. The Druid caste, priests and priestesses, presided over these rites at which all the clans gathered together at the ritual sites such as Tara and Carnutes for celebration, planning, and deliberation. Quarrels were settled and justice meted out. This was another Druid function, that of magistrate, with a specialized sub-group of the priestly class acting as judges. Sacrifices were offered to Belenos and on the Continent, to Gaulish and Galatian analogs of this Indo-European Sky God. Another opinion holds that this derivation of Beltaine from the name of a sun god, Beal, is problematical, and that Beltaine was, like Samhain, a festival of all the Gods and Goddesses.

For the New Reformed Druids of North America, it is the beginning of the Season of Life and the end of the Season of Sleep. The first spirits of the year will be added to the Chalice of Waters that is shared at each service, and the Third Order members will change their ceremonial ribbons, worn over the fronts of their robes, from white to red ribbons. The Earth Mother wakes from her winter sleep, and chants and praises are addressed to her.

Live Oak Grove plans to inaugurate the shaft grave, a Toll-Uaigh, we have dug this winter at Larry Press's

(Archdruid) instigation, with an offering of some of the new Waters of Life from the first chalice of the new season. Shaft graves were built in Ancient Gaul, and perhaps elsewhere in Druidic lands. Offerings presumably to the Earth Mother, were put into these deep shafts at different times over a long period. Some of the "Tolls" were twelve meters deep, and offerings might include a whole tree. We plan to offer a piece of the sacrifice at each service which will be put into the shaft after the rest of the sacrifice has been placed in the altar fire.

Beltane Essay: Indo-European Drink and Sacrifice

A Druid Missal-Any, Beltane 1984
By Emmon Bodfish

Beltaine, festival of the Sun, celebrates the long and eagerly awaited return of the Waters of Life to Grove chalices of the R.D.N.A. Use of the divine drink as sacrament, channel to the gods and restorer of mortal and Divinity alike, is an ancient Indo-European concept. It is found in a highly developed form in the Rig Veda, written down circa 1600 B.C. and the custom may go back two to three thousands years before to the Proto-Indo European homeland on the steppes of Asia. The Indo-European tribes early learned the use of fermentation processes both of milk products as yogurt, etc. known to many pastoral races, and, perhaps by extension, the fermentation of honey into Mead. Juices of other, psychotropic plants were preceded and added to this, by some of the later Indo-European tribes, notably the Vedic branch in the Ganges Valley where such herbs abound.

Fraser and others have collected and reconstructed Indo-European ideas surrounding the divine drink and its use, and the origin of sacrament from sacrifice. The early Indo-Europeans saw humanity as originally mortal, and the gods as immortal, and their myths tell how immortality was achieved by certain human beings, or in some branches of the Indo-European spectrum, made available to humanity in general. The Hebrew and Chinese mythologies took the reverse view: animals and humans were originally immortal as Adam and Eve in Eden, or the "First Man" before the dividing up of Chaos. Then, through some fall, death came into the world. In the theme, a hero or demi-god's discovery or theft of a divine potion makes him immortal and able to communicate with the divine powers. The potion is then lost, through trickery or deceit, but sometimes an Earthly version of the drink remains with a promise of future immortality. Consumption of a Sacred drink is used both in initiatory rites and as a group bonding ritual in religions from Ireland to India. The Eucharist may be the Christianization of this ritual; it does not spring from any Orthodox Hebrew rite. Dr. Duran characterizes Christianity as "a very much Indo-Europeanized, Semitic religion." Holy food is more characteristic of other cultures, Semitic, African or Amerindian, while the deified drink is Indo-European. The drink not only inspires, but is thought to be a god, a divine thing in itself, or to contain the essence of a divine being. This led Fraser and Rutherford to associate it with the deified sacrificial victim of other sacrificing religions, but Dumézil and other modern students of religion have repudiated this idea. It is an area where experts still disagree. However, its consumption is treated as an act of sacrifice; an offering up to the gods of the drink and of oneself or one's consciousness, (at least temporarily.) This maintains the human connection to the Divine, as well as maintaining the immortal vigor of the Deities thus worshipped. This is explicitly set out in the Rig Veda, and similar descriptions are preserved from the West:

The sacrifices to Euses, the Horse Sacrifice of the High Kings of Ireland, libation ceremonies in Greece, and in the Slavic areas, wine or mal rituals to Perun. Statues of Perun held a drinking horn into which a sacred liquor was poured during a spring rite, perhaps even Beltaine, and in which the priest caste then read hopes for the year's crops were read through the liquid's behavior. Perun is cognate with Taranis and Thor as the thunderbolt wielding god of the Oak.

[Picture of Perun]

Stone Idols from Satchany in the Upper Dniester basin.

Structural anthropologists connect the deified drink rite with the "dying-god" motif, which is not an exclusively Indo-European theme, but wide-spread in the Old World. This connection is exemplified in the song of "John Barleycorn," who dies with the harvest in order to feed the people, but rises again in the Spiritus of the ale, and in the sprouting grain of the spring. However, I think these two themes were only merged at a much later date, after the Indo-Europeans had scattered from their steppes homeland. There is no traced of the latter motif in the earliest Indo-European record, the Rig Veda, or in the reconstructed Proto-Indo-European vocabulary.

The young year god, Osiris, Dionysus resurrection theme seems to be part of the pre Indo-European strata of the Eastern Mediterranean. And in Europe, the dying Corn King tradition seems to be older than the Celtic Bardic records and has no official place in Druid doctrine. Though Dumézil also repudiated this "ambrosia cycle," he later, in 1939 re-affirmed the parallel between the Germanic and Indic accounts of obtaining the vessel, cauldron or chalice to hold the deified drink. This vessel grew in importance, and takes precedence in the later mythology of the Western Indo-Europeans over its contents. Anything drunk from the sacred bowl grants divine inspiration. The vessel and the ritual, and the readiness of the participant, (set and setting) become more important than the particular intoxicant. This is the stance taken by the RDNA and discussed in the Later Chronicles, making us a descendent of the Celtic and Western most wavelet of the great Indo-European expansion and evolution. Thus Beltaine, beginning the summer and the Druid Season of Life, sees the return of the Waters of Life to the chalices of RDNA Groves across the country, and to our subscribers if they are holding Proto Grove services, in such unlikely places as Melbourne and Hong Kong. * Since Samhain no liquor has been used, only the Waters of Sleep, pure distilled H₂O, in the sharing-cup. Concomitant with this holiday, the Third Order Druids, clergy rank, exchange their white ceremonial ribbons for red. At Live Oak Grove, a Maypole dance follows the Beltaine service, and a general partying and merry-making may continue till sundown.

*Write us for Proto-Grove instructions.

References:

The Rig Veda
Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology*
Gimbutas, *The Slavs*
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When men go to serve the gods, they go for the god that serves them.

Beltane Essay:

Maypole and Shamanism

A Druid Missal-Any, Beltaine 1985
By Emmon Bodfish

Beltaine, major Holiday of the Druid year, and beginning of the Season of Life, marks the point on the sun's ascent when it is half way between Equinox, level, and Solstice, culmination. Bonfires are lighted on hill tops and feast prepared. The Maypole dance, which crowns the festivities, is probably older than Druidism, or than the migration of the Indo-Europeans into Europe or India. There is speculation from both academic and traditional channels to the effect that the Maypole and the Sacrificial pole may have a common origin in the spring and autumn rituals of the early Neolithic pastoralists of the Eur-Asian Steppes. At this season these ancestors of the Siberian, Turkic, Tartar and Indo-European peoples, celebrated an animal sacrifice, in which the animal to be offered was tied to a richly decorated post, which was the center and focus of the ritual and dancing. Ribbons, streamers or threads of bright colors figure in the rites and records of the descendent cultures.

The Rig Veda describes the stake to which the horse sacrifice is tethered as "brightly beribboned" with colored banners streaming down it.

In the Siberian Shamanistic rituals, which preserve the earliest traditions, the reindeer or pony sacrifice is tied to a freshly cut young larch or birch tree. The tree is festooned with ribbons, streamers or colored threads. The colors are always those associated with the particular deity or deities being addressed. The Shaman of the Buryat and his assistants, nine youths and nine maidens, dance. The Shaman, in trance, conducts the spirit of the slain animal up, along the path of the streamers to the top of the tree, and on up to the heavenly abode of the waiting deity. In healing and initiation rites, ribbons are also used to indicate soul-paths.

In the volumes of data collected by Fraser, are descriptions of the traditional cutting of the maypole in Europe, in which the tallest young birch in the woods was selected, cut and set up in the village square. These traditions probably pre-date Christian or Roman contact, and seem to have been very little affected by them. Their similarity all across Europe and the Steppes of Asia would argue for a very archaic origin.

But the May dance also includes strong Pre-Indo-European elements: the circle dance, the gathering of buds and flowers, maybasket giving, and the Green Man symbolism and costumery. These may speak of an older, agrarian tradition, perhaps brought by the first farming peoples coming into Europe from the Near East and the Mediterranean and melding with the indigenous (from Ice Age?) peoples of Europe. The farther East one goes towards the Steppes of Asia, the fewer of these milder customs of the May one encounters in village life and folk tradition, until among the never Christianized tribes of Siberia, there is found the pure animal sacrifice, tethered to the be-ribboned Axis Mundi, the World-Tree.

Beltane Essay: Fire Making

A Druid Missal-Any, Beltane 1986
By Emmon Bodfish

Beltaine, May Day, festival of bonfires, greeting to Belenos, the returning Sun. It is the beginning of summer, Season of Life. In old "Celtidom" cattle were moved to the highland pastures; modern Third Order R.D.N.A. Druids exchange their white ceremonial ribbons for red ones.

In ancient Britain, Ireland and Gaul, according to the witness of the Classical writers and to numerous folk traditions, all fires were extinguished on Beltaine Eve, and a "new, clean fire" kindled by the Druids, "through means of friction, from logs of Oak." In Gàidhlig this process is called "tog an teine," lifting fire out of the wood.

Making fire by friction is a ceremonial skill that one or a few members of each Grove might want to try.

The bow and drill method is the easiest

GRAPHIC OF BOW DRILL

Make a fire-board of Oak, well seasoned, very dry. With a knife or a pointed stone, make a shallow hole, a cup, near the edge of the board. Whittle a "V" notch in from the edge of the board, with the "V's" point at the cup. Don't cut through into the cup/hole. Making the notch, which is undercut, wider on the bottom side of the board, helps. Place your tinder in the notch. (More about tinder later.) With the board on a firm, dry surface, hold it steady by kneeling on it, or holding it down with your foot as you drill. Put the drilling stick in the cup and hold down on it with the "fire hold" block. Then with the bow, spin it as fast as you can. Persistence and consistent speed pay off. Use a "fire-stick," i.e. a drill, of at least 3/8 inch diameter. Thinner sticks dissipate heat and cool off too quickly. And, as our Humboldt County "Third" says, it also helps to have someone else to push down on the top of the "fire-hold." "As we work a bow back and forth like that, our arms automatically tend to rise." If no one else is around, hold down on it with your chin. (Paleolithic fire-holds are the joy of Old World archeologists.)

The fire-stick can also be turned by hand. I have not done this and I don't know anyone who has been able to get this way to work. It may have to be a group endeavor, with a number of people spelling each other in relay. But, so I'm told; "Use a longer drill than you would with the bowed method and roll it between your palms. When your hands reach the bottom, quickly let go and return them to the top of the stick and keep it spinning." With either of these methods, it is easier and surer if you have a group of people. With the right choreography, this could be worked into the Beltaine Ceremonies as an effective part of co-operative ritual.

After a while, you will see smoke waver up from the cup-hole then hot black powder will well up and out into the notch; keep turning, faster. Press down harder. Press the tinder into the notch and against the red hot glowing firestick. If you turn the drill fast enough, sparks may jump out and catch the tinder. When you see a red, glowing area in the cup or on the notch, gently remove the fire-stick, and breath on the glow until it becomes a bright gleam. Then pick up the fireboard and tinder together and press the tinder around the incandescence. Carefully breath it into life. This part takes practice and finesse, minute attention, and great awareness of the right moment. In other words it is a meditation. Mastery over fire, like playing the violin, is not learned easily. In many pre-agricultural

societies it is considered one of the marks of the Shaman or Adept.

For tinder, I use the feather “wolf-lichen,” *Letharia vulpina*, that grows on Orinda coyote bushes, with lots of fine, dry splinters of resinous pine or juniper, and thinly shredded paper at the center of the bundle. Bradford, in his survival books, recommends lint, from your pocket, and very dry pine needles or shredded bark. (“finely shredded pieces of the “Wall Street Journal” soaked in lighter fluid is great.”—Good-Gulf the Wizard) When the tinder begins to flame, gently set it to the kindling under your previous readied altar fire. Continue breathing on it auspiciously, coaxing it into a blaze. From this “new clean fire” re-kindle all your fires. By now you know why pre-industrial people kept fire burning, and never let it go completely out.

AN ASIDE

“Match” is from “maide” meaning “little stick” in Gàidhlig. The match was invented by a Scotsman. Be grateful.

Beltane Essay: Maypole and Sacrifice

A Druid Missal-Any, Beltane 1987
By Emmon Bodfish

Beltaine, May Day, was always the most widely and universally celebrated of the Druidic and old Pagan High Days. It was also the least Christianized and distorted, even in the heyday of the church’s powers. In Ireland, Wales, and parts of Europe the Maypole was a freshly cut young larch with a crown of green living branches at its top. The use of a tree of the larch family, decorated with streamers suspended down from its top, and other features of the Maypole dance are thought to hark back to the early Proto-Indo-European deer and horse sacrifices, and the rituals around the sacrificial stake.

Rituals of this kind were preserved down to the present century in Siberia among the peoples of the northwestern quarter. These tribes once occupied a more southerly location, but have been driven steadily northward since medieval times. In the Neolithic, they are thought to have occupied the forest belt north of the Proto-Indo-European homeland around the Caspian and Aral Seas. Pursuing an essentially Mesolithic life of hunting and pastoralism, most of these forest peoples rejected Christianity and maintained their traditional religions down to modern times, and have, therefore, as Professor James Duran puts it, “been able to give us a window on the past.”

They have likewise preserved their traditions in the face of the Russian State, which tolerates them as a folk curiosity. First studied and recorded in this century, they have been a rich source of information about Meso and Neolithic European cultures. The Russian anthropologist Popinov, in his extensive studies of these peoples, gives transcriptions of many of the traditional ceremonies that they have preserved.

In the Siberian pony or reindeer sacrifices, the animal was tied to a freshly cut young larch or birch which had been decorated with ribbons, streamers, and colored threads. In this offering, the Buryat shaman was assisted by the unmarried young people of the tribe, nine youths and nine maidens, who danced around the larch and the slain animal. The shaman, in trance, conducted the animal’s soul up the path marked by the streamers to the top of the tree, and then upward to the waiting deity who received the sacrifice. (Ribbons were also used to mark out “soul paths” in healing and initiation rituals.)

In the East Indian Rig Veda, one of the oldest written Indo-European documents, there is a description of the stake to

which the horse sacrifice is tethered. The pole is “brightly beribboned” with “colored banners streaming down from it.”

The tradition of the Maypole may also draw from a second and even from a third source in the Eastern Mediterranean rites of spring, and in those of the Pre-Indo-European peoples of Europe. In the former, ribbon decorate effigies were carried on tall poles, and each pole-bearer was followed by a line of young girls dancing and singing. These rites were formalized and preserved in the Roman rites of Priapus and in the older, Pre-Indo-European strata behind the festivals of Dionysus in Greece. It seems that similar rituals were enacted in European villages as part or in addition to the dance of the Maypole.

The bare Maypole, in contrast to the May Larch Tree, seems to be a blending of these different lines. From the Mediterranean and the Pre-Indo-European sides it takes the bare form and Priapus’ crown of flowers, and, in some areas, preserved his phallic effigy. From the ancient Indo-European line come the pole’s central position within the circle of dancers, the long streamers, and the steps of the dance that weave them around the pole’s trunk.

The R.D.N.A. has always held a Maypole dance. It is the Big Party of the year, and was once dubbed by the media “Pagan Christmas.” We will be having a Maypole dance and celebration at the Orinda Grovesite, with food to follow. Isaac’s group will also be holding a May Celebration on the weekend.

Beltane Essay: Bonfires

A Druid Missal-Any, Beltane 1988
By Emmon Bodfish

Beltaine, the most festive and best-known holiday in the Druid Calendar. The theme of rebirth and renewal, and the beginning of a season of light and growth. It is the day of the Sun God, Belenus, and some authorities think that the name Beltaine or Cetshamain derives from Bel Teine, Bel’s fire. Others think this the worst sort of “folk etymology.”

(When I typed it* just now, the Goddess statue here on my desk fell over, so you can make what you want of that. She seems not to approve.) In Scot’s Gàidhlig there is a specific term, “tein’ eigin,” for fire by friction, fire created by rubbing one wood against another. The literal translation would be “raised fire,” and the method of lighting the great bonfires of the High Days, always with fire by friction, was called “raising fire of the wood.” Fire seems to have been thought of as inherent in certain woods, such as the oak, and was a matter of calling the spirit forth. Spending some time with bow and drill, learning how to this is a valid part of a Pagan education. It is a good skill has and a great fire meditation. It takes patience and stamina first, and concentration and the quickness, timing and delicacy to breath life into the glowing embers. (Write to us for the back issue covering the how-to techniques for this.)

On Beltaine the cattle were driven between two lines of fires to purify them before they were moved to the summer pastures in the hills. This may not have been entirely symbolic. Smoke and the scorching effect drop off exto-parasites and the ability of fire to sterilize surgical instruments used in treating wounds was known throughout much of the ancient world. Similar ceremonies continued to be used in times of plague or contagious diseases among cattle well into Christian times, and, in the Highlands, into the late 19th century. Dwelly, recorder of Highland customs and author of the large *Standard Gaelic-English Dictionary* “the Scottish Webster,” printed this description of the practice in 1901:

The tein³-éigin was considered an antidote against the plague and murrain and all infectious diseases among cattle. Dr. Martin says all the fires in the parish were extinguished and 81 married men, being deemed the proper number for effecting this purpose, took two planks of wood and nine of them were employed by turns, who by their repeated efforts, rubbed the planks against each other, till the heat thereof produced fire, and from this forced fire each family was supplied with a new fire. No sooner was the fire kindled than a pot filled with water was put thereon, which was afterwards sprinkled on people who had the plague, or on cattle that had the murrain, and this process was said to be followed invariably by success.

A term applied to fire produced by friction—in olden times a means employed to check evils arising from being bewitched. If a household suffered loss such as indicated being under evil influence, all areas in fires district between two running streams were extinguished on a set day. Then a spinning-wheel was put in motion, and kept going furiously until the spindle became heated. Tinder or tow was applied to the hot spindle, fire was thus procured and distributed to all households affected by evil influences. Within the memory of persons still living, fire was thus procured to check witchcraft in a township in Uist where some sickness, supposed to be evil eye, carried off some cows and sheep. It is odd that neither cow nor sheep (tied after, possibly the epidemic had exhausted itself.—DC.

Dwelly was trying to be a good “modern man” which in 1901 meant denying his Pagan heritage and the efficiency of these remedies. Beltaine, then, is a time to purge the cares and ills of winter, as well as to celebrate the return of light and life. Try passing things infected with bad memories through the smoke of the Beltaine fire, giving away things you no longer use, lightening your load, and putting your burdens aside for a dance.

*Teine, which I had misspelled.

Beltaine, May Day, begins the Season of life. Hurrah! It marks the end of the Season of Sleep, the rule of “The Leprous White Lady,” the “Old woman of the Mill Dust,” the Crone. In several Indo-European legends the wandering hero, in Greece Hercules and in the Celtic, Finn, arrives at the palace of the Gods and after passing numerous tests is enraged by their mocking attitude toward him. He challenges any one of them to a duel. The young and vigorous Deities of both genders disdain his challenge and will not fight with a mere mortal. Finally, however, the paternal figure of the pantheon says “Oh, but my aged mother will wrestle with you.”

The hero is insulted but he accepts. The Ancient of Days pins him. She laughs toothlessly in his face and lets him go. “Do not feel discouraged, hero” Says the pater-deitus, “that old Crone wrestles down every man who comes far enough to meet Her. Her name is Old Age.” Her name is not given, nor was the hero’s in the German version of this myth, which I heard, (it’s still a word-of-mouth culture,) from Dr. James Duran, Ph.D. If any out there know, please write us. In the Celtic world She was Cailleach, the Old Woman. She was credited, in Scottish myth to appear at sea, in the form of a sea horse or sea-hag, and lead enemy ships their doom, by challenging the captains to ride or catch her. She is a trickster figure, one who brings down the proud, and tricks the vain and the blasphemous. (As a death figure I wonder if She is cognate with Kali in India.) She is a Goddess of transition and transfiguration, not all like the “Underworld” or Death figures such as Nixus or the Eastern European “Mother of the Dead,” who greets the newly dead and nurse and instruct them in their new life in the Other World. She is the harbinger and transmogrifier, and She Herself can change from old to young and back again at will or with the seasons. Hers may be one of the stream of myth that fed the later Ban-shee tales and legends. All the seemingly contradictory characteristics of the Deity, enduring seasonal, warlike, alternately young and old, using allure and trickery symbolize Her station at the point of death and rebirth or rejuvenation. She is not a war Goddess per se, like Morrighu or Badh, inciting men to heroism, but a nature deity of the seasons and the elements, and the natural cycles of creation and decay, rest and strife. As Proinsias MacCana writes, more of Her traditions survived than those of the Goddess Morrighu, and being inexterminable, more were co-opted into Christian hegemony. Even the old bardic odes to Her were taken and rewritten to make Her a figure in the new foreign religion. In the eighth or ninth century one of the monastic collectors recorded and “Christianized” this old pagan “dan” written in Ireland. It is composed in that uniquely Pagan style in which the Deity speaks through the mouth of the bard and mourns with him the plight of Her people.

“The monkish chronicler, availing himself of the semantic ambiguity in the word “Cailleach,” invented the fiction that She had taken the nun’s veil, caille, in the end of Her days.”

He then went on from this to compose around this story of the “nun” of Berre. Cailleach Bherre, the Old Woman of Berre,“ was a popular epithet for Cailleach in that part of Ireland.” Unfortunately Professor MacCana does not give the Gaelic/Goidelic original of the poem in his edition of *Celtic Mythology*, but we can easily guess that the holy Roman changed in recording this lament of a “nun” who had once been

the advisor and consort of kings. The real subject of this work is the plight of Druidism and the Bardic Orders in decline, driven out to the heath and wild places among the poor and illiterate by the foreign religion of Rome. Many similar laments for the stability, culture and richness of the old courts of Chieftains, bards and Druids, echo down through the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries as the Dark Ages grew darker and Christianity spread.

Swift chariots
and horse that carried off the prize,
once I had plenty of them;
a blessing on the King who granted them.

My body seeks to make its way
to the house of judgment;
when the Son of God thinks it time
let him come to claim his loan.

My arms when they are seen
are bony and thin;
dear was the craft they practiced,
they would be around glorious kings...

I envy nothing that is old
except the Plain of Femhen;
though I have donned the thatch of age,
Femhen's crown is still yellow.

The Stone of the Kings in Femhen,
Rónán's Fort in Brehon,
it is long since storms first reached them,
But their cheeks are not old and withered...

I have had my day with kings,
drinking mead and wine;
today I drink whey and water
among shrivelled old hags...

The flood-wave,
and the swift ebb;
what the flood brings you
the ebb carries from your hand...

Happy is the island of the great sea,
for the flood comes to it after the ebb;
as for me, I do not expect
flood after ebb to come to me.

Beltane Essay: Presiding over the Festival

A Druid Missal-Any, Beltane 1990
By Emmon Bodfish

Beltaine, one of the greatest, and, now-a-days, one of the best known of the old Celtic High Days. It marks the beginning of Samhradh, summer, the "Season of Life." In old Pagan times, it signaled the moving of the herds up to summer pasture in the mountains and the beginning of the new cycle. Great fires were built to welcome back the Sun, and the cattle were driven through the flames for purification before starting on their way to the high meadows. The Druid caste, priests, priestesses, ovates and bards, presided over these rites at which all the clans gathered together at such ritual sites as Tara, in Ireland, and Carnutes in France. Though a Good Day, Beltane was also considered a tricky one, and great care had to be taken that there were no errors or mishaps that day. The High King, in Ireland, remained indoors, surrounded by his advisors and magically guarded by his Druids. The dancing and festivities were carried out by the farming and craftsmen castes. Previous to Beltane Eve, all quarrels been settled, and justice meted out. This was another Druid function, that of magistrate, with a specialized sub-group of the caste acting as judges. A different sub-group of Druids presided over the sacrifices offered to Belenos, the Sun, and still another specialized group of the Druid caste, often women, Druidesses, actually offered the sacrifices, and dispatched the offered animals. The Ovate sub-group then read the will of the Deities by whether and how the sacrifices were accepted in the fires,

For the R.D.N.A. Druids today, Beltaine also marks the Season of Life. Though we have no White Bulls nor mares to offer, (animals sacrifice was forbidden by the Reform which made us R.D.N.A. in 1966 (sic)) there will be whiskey in the Chalice and tree food in the Tree Chalice, offerings of flowers, and the Third Order Druids will exchange their white ribbons of winter for red ones of the summer season. High Kings and politicians will be left indoors, and a merry time will be had by all.

Beltane Essay: Sacred Maypole Tree

A Druid Missal-Any, Beltane 2001
By Stacey Weinberger

Beltaine, May Day, the beginning of the Summer half of the year when Nature awakens once again. This is the most widely known of the pagan and Druidic High Days with the practices of paganism having evolved or been adopted into practices of folklore and custom. The marking of the return of life in the veneration of vegetation appear in the words of the old saying "April showers bring May flowers," May Day celebrations, and the dancing around the Maypole with colorful ribbon streamers. It is not surprising that Mircea Eliade's words "the cosmos is symbolized by a tree" and "fertility, wealth, luck, health" are all concentrated on herbs or trees.

Beltaine probably originated as a vegetation, agricultural, and fertility festival. Cattle were driven between two fires to insure their health and fertility before being sent out to green pastureland for summer, with Druids officiating at the ceremony. With the beginning of the summer half of the year the tree embodied the newly awakened spirit of vegetation. The belief was held that the tree-spirit would bless women with children, cause the herds to multiply, and make the crops grow.

Houses and farm buildings were bedecked with green boughs and flowery garlands. May flowers were crushed and the juice from them was used to wash the cows' udders.

Nothing symbolized the tree spirit more than the Maypole. Originally a sacred tree, the Maypole became the focal point of Beltaine festivities. A sacred ash tree stood at Uisnech, County Westmeath, an important Druidic center and assembly place where Beltaine was annually celebrated. The Cerne Abbas Giant cut into the hillside above the village in Dorset, possibly dating back to Romano-British times, obviously epitomizes fertility and vitality. For centuries, a fir Maypole was erected on May Eve on the hillside above the giant's head in readiness for the May Day festivities, which were again dedicated to the continuance of fertility. In villages, whole trees were felled and set up. Later the pole was permanently left up and then decorated each year for May Day. To this day, a few villages in England and local parks and Renaissance faires in the United States still retain the Maypole, which is often painted with red and white spiral stripes. These colors are often used in spring festivities, red signifying the color of life and generative energy, and white, a fresh, new beginning. Again we see the constant theme of renewal and rebirth as the world awakens from its long season of sleep.

Beltane Essay: Fire and Water

A Druid Missal-Any, Beltane 2002

By Stacey Weinberger

Beltaine, May Day, the first day of Summer and the beginning of the Season of Life. In the RDNA tradition the Waters-of-Life are returned to the Grove chalice and all Third Order Druids exchange their white ceremonial ribbons to red. At Baccharis Grove we add a natural fertilizer to the tree chalice as part of our offering to the Grove trees. Now is a good time for those who own bronze sickles to sharpen them for the coming season.

Beltaine is a pastoral festival. It is associated with fertility, the return and renewal of life to the face of the earth. It was also a period of purification for the animals of the as well as people. Fire and water seem to be the principle methods used for purification and to insure fertility of the coming year.

At sundown on Beltaine eve, the Druids kindled need fires or *teine eigin* from oak and other sacred wood. Household fires that were normally never allowed to go out were extinguished and relit from the need fire. At Uisnech, a ritual center in Ireland, this fire was kindled by the king's druid and the people would bring a brand with which to relight their hearths. The Lebor Gabala, the Book of Invasions, contains a story about the Druid Mide, for whom Meath is named, who was the first Druid to light a Beltaine fire at Uisnech for the clans of Nemed. This custom is also documented as being practiced in Scotland in the Highlands and Islands as late as the first quarter of the 20th century.

In ancient times, cattle signified the wealth of the Celtic tribes as well as their continuation and survival. Thus it was importance to insure their fertility and health. To this end, bonfires were lit on hills and mountaintops and the cattle that had been sheltered and stall-fed all winter were driven between the flames before being sent out to summer pasturelands. In his glossary, Cormac, the ninth century Irish writer, Beltaine comes from *Bel-tene*, a goodly fire. According to Cormac the Druids kindled two great bonfires between which cattle were driven. There is some thought that in earlier times that the cattle were sacrificed to the deities in exchange for protection against disease, fertility, a good growing season, and a good

harvest in the fall, and later evolved into symbolically passing the cattle between the fires.

Though people also passed between the Beltaine bonfires, their purification and fertility practices seem to be more centered around water than fire.

To the Druids, the most sacred of all water forms was dew (found at dawn, the liminal, "otherworldly" period between night and day,) especially the dew of Beltaine morning. The washing of the face in the dew of Beltaine morning and drinking from the well before sunrise was common practice. It was well known that holy wells were considered to bestow fertility upon women. The tradition of dew's potency has come down through the centuries and in Scotland and Ireland young women still rise before dawn on the first of May to wash their faces in the morning dew and let it dry in the air. The dew of Beltaine morning was often gathered and kept as a medicinal or beauty aid. It was said to bring a good complexion, cure sore eyes, prevent or cure headaches, skin ailments, and freckles.

Men who washed their hands in the May Dew were said to gain skill in opening lock and knots, in mending nets and untangling ropes. Women who did the same would be able to untangle threads. Walking barefoot in the dew cured soreness and insured healthy feet during the year.

Also common was the scattering of water to with which to bring fertility upon those whom it falls. On Beltaine in Padstow, Cornwall the dancing 'Obby 'Oss was known for bringing the promise of a husband or child to the young women it covered with its skirts. But in pastimes the prancing and twirling about also including water in this fertility ritual. The 'Oss would wade in Treater Pool near the town, "drink" from the water, and sprinkle those assembled for good luck. Early May festivities in Southern Ireland included a procession of Mummies, one of whom dressed as a clown, carried a long pole with shreds of cloth like a mop at the top. He would dip this into a pool of water or puddle and liberally sprinkle it on the crowds about him, another symbolic gesture of distributing the fertilizing properties of the water.

Summer Solstice

Summer Solstice Notes

The Druid Chronicles (Evolved) 1976
By Isaac Bonewits and Robert Larson

The Summer Solstice is a Minor High Day, usually occurring around June 21st or so. Also known as St. John's Day and Midsummer (and, confusingly enough, by at least one Neo-Pagan group, as Beltane!), it shares mythical elements with both *Beltane* and *Lughnasadh*. Like both, it is a feast celebrating the glory of summer and the peak of the Sun God's power. But in many systems of belief, it is the day of the biggest battle of the year between the Dark Sun God and the Light Sun God (or between the evil one and the good one,) Who are usually brothers or otherwise intimately related. Midsummer is a peak from which the Sun can only fall, for it is the day on which the hours of light slowly begin to shorten.

In those areas where it is safe to do so, Neopagans frequently will light cartwheels of kindling and roll them down from the tops of high hills, in order to symbolize the falling of the Sun God.

Summer Solstice Essay: Midsummer

Druid Chronicler, Midsummer 1980
By Isaac Bonewits

The Summer Solstice is a Minor High Day, usually occurring around June 21st or so. Also known as St. John's Day and Midsummer (and, confusingly enough, among some groups as Beltane!) it shares mythical elements with both *Beltane* and *Lughnasadh* (the midpoint between Summer Solstice and Fall Equinox.) Like both, it is a feast celebrating the glory of summer and the peak of the Sun God's power. But in many systems of belief, it is the day of the biggest battle of the year between the Dark Sun God, and the Light Sun God (or between the evil one and the good one,) who are usually brothers or otherwise intimately related. Midsummer is a peak from which the Sun can only fall, for it is the day on which the hours of light slowly begin to shorten.

Summer Solstice Essay:

Danu and Diana

A Druid Missal-Any, Summer Solstice 1983
By Emmon Bodfish

Midsummer Solstice, one of the four astronomical high-days of the Celtic year, is associated with the Druid goddess Danu, mother of the gods, the Tuatha de Danann. She is probably the same figure as the Irish goddess Anu and the Breton Ana. She may be cognate with the classic goddess Diana, not only on the grounds of word origins, but on the witness of Gallo-Roman writers who noted the similarities in character and type in the days when her worship was still current in Gaul. She is associated with fertility, particularly of women, and with the boar totem, as was Diana the huntress and the earlier Greek Artemis. The virgin aspect of this Moon and fertility goddess was emphasized in the lands bordering the

Mediterranean, and the mother aspect in Western and Northern Europe.

Her festival was on midsummer day, and traces of the old customs continue in Celtic lands. On the Isle of Man, it is customary to wear a spring of Mugwort, a plant also sacred to Roman Diana, and reputed, in England, to bring a young woman dreams of her future husband. That the Christian Church chose this day for one of its major saints, John the Baptist, may indicate that it was attempting to displace a major pagan festival and deity. Many of the customs carried on into modern times on "St. John's" day, seem singularly at odds with the stern, rather puritan character of the man who was beheaded for refusing to retract his condemnation of King Herod's incestuous behavior. These include dancing in the streets, all night bonfires, public song fests, and encouragement of amatory games among the young.*

*This sounds interesting, but Ward Rutherford, *The Druids*, does not elaborate.

Summer Solstice Essay:

Danu and Megaliths

A Druid Missal-Any, Summer Solstice 1984
By Emmon Bodfish

Midsummer Solstice, one of the four minor High-days of the Celtic year, is associated with Danu, Mother of the gods, the Tuatha de Danann. She is particularly associated with rivers, and rivers from the Don in Russia to the Don in Scotland are thought to be names for her. She is probably the same figure as the Irish goddess Anu and the Breton Ana. Roman Diana and Greek Artemis may be other cognates of the same Indo-European deity. This is based not only on the study of word origins, but on the witness of Gallo-Roman writers who noted the similarities in the character and in season of worship to those of Diana, during the time when the Celtic religions were still practiced in Gaul. Like classical Diana, her totem is the boar, and she is associated with fertility and marriage, and the luckiness of June marriages may be distant memory of her festivities. Mugwort is her flower, an herb also sacred to Roman Diana, and on Isle of Man it is customary to wear a spring of it to the Mid-Summer dance. In England, Mugwort placed under the pillow is said to bring a young woman dreams of her future husband. In Scotland, there are all night bonfires, song fests, and dances for the young unmarried people of the villages.

This is the morning on which the Sun used to rise over the heel stone at Stone Henge, beginning the new season of the Megalithic calendar. (It no longer rises at that point due to the precession of the Earth's axis.) The Druids did NOT build Stonehenge. It antedates their arrival in Britain by centuries. It was William Stuckeley, in 1717, who mis-located the Druids there. He did some of the best antiquarian field work of his day, but his theorizing later wildly outstripped his data. The mistake was an honest one, however, considering what was known in his day. He showed that the stones were not a memorial to King Arthur, nor a Roman temple. He was the first to accept them as definitely pre-Roman. The only knowledge of pre-Roman Britain he had came from Roman and Greek writers of the Classical period. They said that Britain was inhabited by Celts whose priests were the Druids. So, if the stones were pre-Roman, Stuckeley reasoned, they must have been built by Druids. He knew of no other candidates. The last two centuries of archeology have given us many, even too many, other possibilities. The current most favored candidates are the early

Neolithic framers of Natufian stock, long headed, slender, fine-boned people who inhabited the Salisbury area in 2900-2600 B.C., the best modern date for the first cycle of building at Stone Henge.

A larger boned, hardier people later took over the monument and set up the Blue Stones, but they, too, had disappeared before the arrival of the Halstatt Celts circa 480 B.C.

This is not to say that the Celts did not take cognizance of the huge monument. They worked other monuments of prehistoric peoples, such as the mounds, Sidh, of Ireland and the cairns of Scotland into their mythology and song. They may have done the same for Stone Henge, but the English traditions are almost all lost, while the Irish are among the best preserved.

“Behold the Sidh before your eye,
It is manifest to you that it is a king’s mansion,
Which was built by the firm Dagda
It was a wonder, a court, an admirable hill.”

It is likely that the religion of the Megalith Builders was more astronomical than that of the La Tene and later Druids. Two or more different groups contributed to the five or more cycles of construction and re-construction at Stone Henge. Though astronomically aligned, the stones are not accurate enough for an “observatory.” It may have served as a calendar rectifier, eclipse predictor, and a ritual site for the Megalithic religions. But what that religion was must remain a matter of conjecture. Clearly it had something to do with sunrise, mid-summer, moonrise, and lunar eclipses, but what it meant, and what they did here, is probably not recoverable short of the invention of a time machine.

Summer Solstice Essay: Stonehenge and Mugwort

A Druid Missal-Any, Midsummer 1985
By Emmon Bodfish

Midsummer, Solstice, Greine-Stat, Sun-stop, today the Sun reaches its most northerly declination, at 2:44 A.M. Pacific Standard Time. This is the festival of the Goddess Danu, mother of the gods and men. Bonfires are lit on hilltops and the night is danced away. Tossing grain or coins into the air this day is said to help one’s prosperity. This is the morning that the Sun would rise over the heel stone at Stone Henge, but for the fact that the Earth has processed far enough on its axis since 1500 B.C. to move the sunrise point out of line with the ancient markers. In the 18th and 19th centuries, English Druid groups held ceremonies there. But now the Henge is fenced off and protected, and accessible only with permission of the government. The huge numbers of tourists were eroding the soil around the monoliths and there was concern that the monument would be damaged. The smaller, less well-known stone circles, such as Callanish or the Maidens are still accessible to the public, as is Avesbury.

The Druids did NOT build Stone Henge. It antedates their arrival in Britain by many centuries. It was William Stuckeley, in 1717, who mis-located them there. He did some of the best antiquarian field work of his day, but his later theorizing wildly outstripped his data. The mistake was an honest one, however, considering what was known in his day. He showed that the stones were not a memorial to King Arthur,

nor a Roman temple, as had been previously supposed. He was the first to accept them as definitely pre-Roman. The only knowledge of pre-Roman Britain he had came from the Roman and Greek writers of the Classical period. They said that Britain was inhabited by Celts, whose priests were the Druids. So, if the stones were pre-Roman, Stuckeley reasoned, they must have been assembled by the Druids. He knew of no other candidates. We now feel that Stone Henge and the numerous other stone circles were set up by at least three different, pre-Celtic races, best described, I think, by Clannad’s phrase, “the race no one knows.” Clannad is an Irish music group who have produced several records, of which their latest, “Magical Ring” is, in our opinion, their best. (We highly recommend it.)

In many English, Irish and Welsh villages, bonfires are lit in the squares, or in Scotland, it is the day for a community picnic on the moors. Then, on mid-summer’s night, the shortest night in the year, which will be the twenty-third, (long, boring, astronomical explanation here omitted) single women would put a bouquet of Mugwort or St. John’s Wort under their pillow, to bring dreams of their future husbands. If you try this, let us know what happens. We need this research.

Summer Solstice Essay: Firbolgs and Tuatha De Danann

A Druid Missal-Any, Midsummer 1986
By Raphael McKeen and Stacey Weinberger

Midsummer, Summer Solstice, the Longest Day of the Year, is one of four Minor High Days of the Celtic Calendar. It is a feast celebrating the glory and the peak of the Sun God Belenos’ (meaning “the shining one”) power. On this day the altar fire should be especially large and a sacrifice of green branches and mistletoe be made. It was upon Midsummer Day that the people of the Goddess Danu, the Tuatha de Danann, took pre-Celtic Ireland from its earlier inhabitants, the Fir Bolgs.

It was upon the mystic first day of May that the Tuatha de Danann landed on the coast of Ireland in a dense fog without being opposed by the Fir Bolgs. The Tuatha de Danann then proceeded to “druidically” form showers and fog-sustaining showers over the country and caused the air to pour down fire and blood upon the Fir Bolgs. The Fir Bolgs had to shelter themselves for three days and three nights, after which time their own Druids put a stop to these enchantments by counter spells.

After a parley at the Plain of the Sea, the Fir Bolgs and the Tuatha de Danann agreed to exchange weapons, so that each side might be able to come to some opinion as to the opponent’s strength. The people of the Goddess Danu offered the Fir Bolgs peace, with a division of the country into two equal halves. The Fir Bolg King Eochaid would not have this. The Tuatha de Danann however, impressed by the Fir Bolgs’ weapons, decided to retreat farther west into Connaught to a plain then called Nia (now called Moytura,) where they drew up their boundary line at the extreme end. This was in front of the Pass of Balgaton, which offered a retreat in case of defeat. Nuada, King of the Tuatha de Danann, sent an ambassador offering the same terms as before. Again the Fir Bolgs declined, but agreed to a truce of one hundred and five days in order to become battle-ready.

It was on Midsummer day that the opposing armies at last met. The people of the Goddess Danu appeared “in a flaming line,” wielding their “red-bordered, speckled, and firm shields.” Opposite to them were aligned the Fir Bolgs,

“sparkling, brilliant, and flaming, with their swords, spears, blades, and trowel-spears.” A deadly hurley-match was begun in which thrice nine of the Tuatha de Danann met the same number of Fir Bolgs. The Fir Bolgs emerged the victors. This was followed with more parleys and battles, fought with equal numbers on each side. After four days and a terrible slaughter upon each side, the Fir Bolgs were reduced to three hundred men. Those remaining were offered a fifth part of Ireland—whichever province they might choose. They agreed to this and chose Connaught, ever afterwards their special home, and where, until the middle of the seventeenth century, men were still found tracing their descent from Sreng, a warrior of the Fir Bolgs.

So when you gaze into the Midsummer fire, think of the power and beauty of the Light and before the Sun begins to wane for another half year, remember the Fir Bolgs with their flaming swords standing up to defeat by the Tuatha de Danann.

(Primary Source: Charles Squire, *Celtic Myth and Legend*. Newcastle Publishing Co., 1975.)

Summer Solstice Essay:

Danu and Stonehenge

A Druid Missal-Any, Summer Solstice 1987
By Emmon Bodfish

Midsummer Solstice, one the four minor High Days of the Reformed Druid Calendar, is associated with the Celtic Goddess Danu, Mother of the Gods, the Tuatha de Danann. She is particularly associated with rivers, and rivers from the Don in Russia to the Don in Scotland are thought to be named for Her. She is probably the same figure as the Irish Goddess, Anu, and the Breton's Ana. Roman Diana and Greek Artemis may be other cognates of this Pan-Indo-European Deity. These theories are based on the study of word origins, and on the witness of Gallo-Roman writers of the period who noted the similarities in character, rituals, and Seasons of Worship of Danu and Diana. These primary historical sources, written when the Celtic religion was still practiced in Gaul, corroborate the evidence from linguistic studies. There is an opinion about that Danu was not an important Deity, or even that the Celts lacked a Mother-Goddess figure, but I can find no hard evidence in Philology, history, or Celtic Mythology for this point of view.

Like Roman Diana, Danu's totem is the boar, an animal also associated with a female agricultural deity in the Balkans. Danu, like Frigga of the Germans, presides over marriage and fertility, and the luckiness of June weddings may be a distant memory of her festivities. Mugwort is Her sacred flower, an herb also sacred to Roman Diana; the ripe ear of grain is Her token. (This fits T. Edwards' theory that the Christian Madonna was modeled after (to co-opt?) the various Mother-Grain Goddesses of pagan Europe.) On the Isle of Man it is customary to wear a sprig of mugwort to the Midsummer dance, and in England, placing mugwort under her pillow is said to bring a young woman dreams of her future husband.¹ In Scotland, there are all night bonfires, song fests, and dances for the young, unmarried people of the villages.

This is the morning on which the Sun used to rise over the heel stone at Stonehenge, thus beginning the new season in the Megalithic calendar. It no longer rises at that point owing to the procession of the Earth's axis, but celebrations are held there, anyway.

The Druid did NOT build Stonehenge. It antedates their arrival in Britain by centuries. It was William Stuckeley in 1717 who mislocated the Druids there. He did some of the best archeological field work of his day, but his theorizing later wildly outstripped his data. The mistake was an honest one, however, considering what was known in his time. He showed that the stones were not a memorial to King Arthur nor a Roman temple, the two then common theories. He was the first to establish the monument as definitely pre-Roman. The only knowledge of pre-Roman Britain he had came from Roman and Greek writers of the Classical Period. They said that Britain was inhabited by Celts whose priests were the Druids. So, if the stones were older than any Roman constructions, Stuckeley reasoned, they must have been put there by Druids. He knew of no other candidates. But in the last two centuries, archeology has provided us with many, even too many other possibilities. The currently favored candidates are the early Neolithic farmers of Natufian stock, a longheaded, slender, fine-boned people who inhabited the Salisbury area from 2900-2500 B.C. coinciding with the most accurate modern date for the first cycle of building at Stonehenge. A larger boned hardier people later took over the monument and set up the Blue Stones, but they too had disappeared before the arrival of the Celts around 480 B.C.

This is not to say that the Celts did not take cognizance of the huge stones. They worked monuments of other prehistoric peoples into their mythology and song. Numerous Bardic compositions refer to the Sidh Mounds of Ireland and the Carnes of Scotland as sacred places and the long abandoned abodes of the Gods. They may have done the same for Stonehenge, but the English traditions and Bardic works were almost all lost, while the Irish are among the best preserved of any oral lore.

“Behold the Sidhe before your eyes.

It is manifest to you that it is a king's mansion,

Which was built by the firm Dagda.

It is a wonder, a court, and admirable hill.”

“The Sidhe of Donegal” a seminar by Prof. Duran.

Two or more different groups of peoples, sharing the same or similar astronomically oriented beliefs, contributed to the five cycles of construction and reconstruction at Stonehenge. Theirs was a fairly sophisticated culture for the time. They knew that the Solstices, eclipses of the Moon, and the courses of the stars were regular predictable events. Their stone moving techniques were on a par with the times. Though not aligned accurately enough for an “observatory” in the modern sense, the stones can serve as a calendar rectifier, an eclipse predictor, and, of course, as a ritual site for religious ceremonies. But what those religions were must remain a matter of conjecture. Clearly they had something to do with sunrise, Midsummer Solstice, moonrise, and lunar eclipses, but what they meant, and what the people did there, is probably not recoverable. As Clannad sings “Forgotten is the race that no one knows.”²

¹A friend of mine tried the experiment of putting mugwort under her pillow, but reported she had no dreams at all. “I guess I'm just going to stay single.” She is till fancy-free three years later. If anyone wants to try this, you can get mugwort in most herb shops. Send in your results and we'll publish them for Lughnasadh.

²Clannad, a modern Irish Folk Group. "Ring of Stones," good album.

Summer Solstice Essay: Danu and Summer Fun

A Druid Missal-Any, Summer Solstice 1989
By Emmon Bodfish

Midsummer, the Summer Solstice, the longest day, the shortest night, this is one of the four astronomical High-Days of the Druid year. It is associated with Danu, Mother of the Celtic family of deities the Tuatha de Danann. She is cognate with the Irish Anu and Breton Ana. She may be cognate with classic Roman Diana, though Her character and role are more like those of Juno. Like Her, Danu is the patroness of marriage and sanctifier of the home, The particular luckiness of June weddings may be a folk memory of the time when this time of the year was sacred to the Goddess of marriage. She is associated with fertility of grain as well as of women, and She is linked to rivers and river valleys which bear Her name or cognates of it stretch all across Europe from the Danube to the Don and the De in Scotland. Rivers, valleys, grain, home, fertility and prosperity formed a thematic group in the Celtic mind. Her festival was on Midsummer day and all night bonfires, dances, and games of courtship and revel continued to be celebrated on the day and the preceding night well into this century. Again we see the Druid custom of counting the night which precedes the high-day as the one sacred to that day. There are many, many references to this night of revels in medieval and Renaissance folksong, as well as in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries.

The tension between the folk customs and the Christian church is succinctly in the traditional verse:

"Mierry do not tell the priest,
For I fear he would call it a sin,
But we have been in the woods this night,
A' conjuring the summer in."

This fragment of a ballad was quoted to us by a folksinger whom we talked with at the Live Oak Park Faire, who had collected it in England. In this case the folk tradition probably goes back to Druid times.

This would be a propitious night for a vigil, or just to try sleeping out of doors if possible. Following another folk tradition whose roots are probably Druidic, single women might try sleeping with a pillow stuffed with mugwort, an herb sacred to Roman Diana, and probably to Danu or Ana, under their heads. This will bring dreams of their future husbands, and was a practice carried on into this century in Celtic countries. The only similar divination practice I have ever heard of for young men involved looking quickly into a particular sacred well, in which he might catch a glimpse of his future mate. But this had nothing to do with Danu or Midsummers.

Summer Solstice Essay: Belenos

A Druid Missal-Any, Summer Solstice 2001
By Stacey Weinberger

Midsummer, Summer Solstice, the longest day of the year. On this day the Sun rises and sets at its most northerly points along the horizon and reaches its most highest point in the sky of the entire year at Solar Noon (1 p.m. daylight time.)

While there are several Celtic deities who are considered a Sun god or goddess, in the RDNA tradition it is Belenos who we honor and praise this Midsummer day.

Belenos, also know as Beli, Belin, or Belinus in Britain, is perhaps associated with the Phoenician word Ba'al, meaning master. The variant Belenos is found widely distributed in early inscriptions in Gaul and northern Italy. Beli Mawr (Great Beli) appears in The Mabinogion as a powerful king of Britain and ancestor-deity of the Welsh royal line, and may be identical in origin to Belenos Himself. The ancient name element "Bel-" (root,) is also found in the Latin bellus, meaning bright or brilliant, beautiful, and all the words subsequently derived from it; in the Goidelic "bile," meaning sacred tree, and other words of distant origin.

Bel was the young-god counterpart of the old-god Bran, as Jupiter was the counterpart of Saturn in the Roman pantheon or as Zeus was the to Cronos in the Greek pantheon. In general the first half of the year may well have been associated with Bran and the second half with Bel or Belenos.

Caesar's Gaulish Apollo is generally to be taken to be Belenos in His native guise. Apollo is actually a latecomer to the Greek pantheon, and one of a variety of theories about His origins is that He was adopted from the Celts. Both are known as gods of light and of the sun. Both are gods of sacred springs. In the Shetlands as well as in the Orkneys, the sick visited the wells which were circled sun-wise before drinking from them. This is another tribute to Belenos, who like Apollo, is also a healer-god. Water and solar symbolism are closely linked in healing cults.

Whereas dedications to the Celtic gods in the form of inscribed altars appear to chiefly recur within one area, a few individual dedications are distributed widely. Belenos was one deity to be honored in such a way. His dedications are relatively common and widespread in Celtic Europe, particularly in southern and central Gaul, North Italy, and Noricum in the eastern Alps. Ausonius, a Bordeaux poet writing in the later half of the fourth century A.D. mentions sanctuaries in Aquitaine and writes of Phoebicius, who had been a temple-priest there.

Belenos is commemorated in place names as well. In England examples include Billingshurst in Sussex and Billingsgate in London. In France a number of places bear His name. The high rocky islet off the coast of Normandy formerly called Tombelaine, which in the slightly altered form of Les Tombelaines is a reef off Jersey's north coast. Belenos also appears to be venerated in some parts as St. Bonnet.

It is thus not coincidence that in the liturgy for the Special Order of Worship for the Summer Solstice it is suggested that the altar fire be especially large. We welcome Belenos on this day of days asking Him to fill us with life, and warmth, and light our way as we honor Him with His element, and enjoy this glorious season before He begins to wend His way southward again.

Hail Belenos, God of the Sun!
Hail Belenos, Giver of Life!
Hail Belenos, Lord of Light!

Summer Solstice Essay:

Anu and Danu

A Druid Missal-Any, Summer Solstice 2002
By Stacey Weinberger

Midsummer, Summer Solstice, the longest day of the year, one of the minor High Day of the Reformed Druid calendar, is associated with the goddess Danu. There has been much discussion in the scholarly community on whether Danu and Anu are cognates of one another or separate goddesses entirely.

Anu and Danu were both fertility goddesses and Mother Goddesses in early Irish mythology. Anu is described in Cormac's Glossary (*Sanas Cormaic*, 10th century) as the mother of the Irish gods, and in the *Coir Anmann* (Fitness of Names) as the goddess of prosperity to whom the province of Munster owed its wealth and fertility. Danu is associated with the divine race of people, the Tuatha De Danann, the People of the Goddess Danu, who are recorded in the *Leabhar Gebhála* (Book of Invasions) having arrived in a cloud from the North, invading Ireland, and defeating the Fir Bolgs and later the Fomorians.

Anu is identified with the earth and fertility of Ireland. She gives her name to the two rounded hills in County Kerry, called *Dá Chich Anann* or the Paps of Anu. In Ireland today she is still talked about from Cork up into South County Tipperary and is considered the earth goddess of Ireland. A distinction is made between her and Danu. Anu is considered to be pre-Tuatha and possibly the Sheela na Gig.

Anu is also identified with Aine, another goddess associated the land. Her cult was localized to County Limerick, Munster, where she was still worshipped up until the 19th century. She was said to live in the hill Cnoc Aine. On St. John's Eve, Midsummer's Eve, the local people carried torches of hay and straw around the hill that were then taken to the fields to bless cattle (another instance of fire being used to insure the health and fertility of the flocks for the coming year.)

Danu, according to MacKillop, is the speculative name for the mother goddess of the Continental Celts, based on the evidence of place names, for example the Danube river (*die Donau*.) He writes that "a prosthetic D-changes Ana, Anu to Dana, Danu; some commentators advise that these forms are later scholarly inventions, while others point out that the name Dana has discrete associations and parallels." But if you look at the types of places Danu is associated with, a pattern begins to form. Derivations of her name being rivers show strong evidence that she is a river goddess, as opposed to Anu who is a land goddess. Rivers all over the Indo-Europeans lands were named for her: the Danube in Austria (the Greek author Herodotus commented on the Keltoi residing in the area of the Danube valley in the fifth century B.C.), the Don in southwest Russia (where an inscription referring to an attack on the kingdom of Bosporos and a scattering of La Tene objects across the southern steppes in indicates that some Celts might have reached,) Dneipr in the Ukraine (where the Celts settled around 300 BC,) Dniestr in Moldavia, and even the Don and Dee in Scotland are all cognates of her name.

Other linguistic evidence exists showing Danu's position as a Pan-Indo-European river Goddess. Her name is Sanskrit and in India's Rig-Veda signifies "stream" and "the waters of heaven."

Lughnasadh

Lughnasadh Notes

The Druid Chronicles (Evolved) 1976
By Isaac Bonewits and Robert Larson

Lughnasadh begins the season of *Foghamhar* (Fôr,) now *an Fomhar* (uN FôR); which is fall or autumn, running from roughly the beginning of August till the end of October. Together, these two seasons constitute "the Summer Half of the Year" or "the Season of Life."

Lughnasadh (Loo-Nu-Su) is known in Modern Irish as *Lá Lúnasa* (Laa Loo-Nu-Su,) in Welsh as *Gwyl Awst* (August Feast,) as *Lla Lluanyys* or *Laa 'n Ouyr* (Day of the Harvest Season) in Manx and as Lammass, Apple Day and Harvest Home in English. It is the anniversary of the funeral games given by Lugh, the God of All Crafts, in honor of his Father. Essentially a harvest festival, this signals the beginning of the harvest season and the ripening of the apples (as well as other fruits and vegetables.) Enormous quantities of applejack, hard cider, mead and other alcoholic beverages are consumed at this time (it's almost a duty!) by all enthusiastic Neopagans. Hasidic Druids may prefer to drink ten-day-old slivovitz (plum brandy) at this time, but it's their stomach lining!

This holiday is a day of mixed joy and woe (Irish wakes are an *old* tradition,) for it is by now obvious that the days are getting shorter. Stories of the battles between Lugh and Balor (the good Sun-Fire God and the bad one) are retold, as the autumn quarter of *Foghamhar* begins.

Lughnasadh Essay: Funeral Games

A Druid Missal-Any, Lughnasadh 1983
By Emmon Bodfish

Originally a celebration of the funeral games for Lugh, the Celtic deity of Light. By August 1 the sun is lower in the sky and days significantly shorter. By now even the non-astronomically oriented can feel the summer's decline. The sun, re-born on December 22, is ageing. The period of harvest, *Foghamhar*, is coming, and this High day marks the celebration of the First Fruits, and the first produce of the fields. In Celtic Countries, this middle of the summer festival is still marked in The Races in Ireland, Revels in Wales, and the Highland Cattle Show in Scotland. In a stock raising culture like the Iron Age Celts, this was the most likely time of market faires and Gatherings. The calves of the Spring were old enough to sell/trade; likewise the sheep would have been sheared and surplus wool of lambs could be bartered.

Lughnasadh Essay: Rosmearta

A Druid Missal-Any, Lughnasadh 1984

By Emmon Bodfish

Lughnasadh is known in Modern Irish as La Lunasa, in Welsh as Gwyl Awst, (August Feast,) as Lla Lluanys or Laa 'n Ouyr (day of the Harvest Season) in Manx and as Lammas, Apple Day, and Harvest Home in English. It is the anniversary of the funeral games given by Lugh, the God of all Crafts, in honor of his Father. Essentially a harvest festival, this signals the beginning of the harvest season and the ripening of the apples. This holiday is a day of mixed joy and woe (Irish wakes in the old tradition) for it is now obvious that the days are getting shorter. Stories of the battles between Lugh and Balor (the good Sun-Fire God and the bad one) are retold, as the autumn quarter of "Foghamhar begins."

--The Druid Chronicles

A much cited but little understood goddess of the Celtic pantheon is Rosmearta, consort of one of the Mercury-like gods, though which one is not certain. It was probably not Lugh himself, whose story and exploits are fairly well known, at least in Irish tradition. She may have been associated with the Gaulish or Welsh Lugh, according to a piece of information from one of our Grove members, but there is no reference for it in any pre-medieval source we can find. His Gaulish name, Lugus, was known to the Romans, but it is not mentioned in connection with Rosmearta. Lugh's wife is Eriu or Erin in the Irish literature. In any case, she seems to have functioned independently of her consort, judged by the number of references, shrines and place names that have survived. Her name is found in twenty-one different inscriptions, in Roman letters, on monuments in Gaul, dating from the first few centuries A.D. Caesar, Lucan, and later Latin chroniclers tell us that she was very popular, receiving much worship and tribute from the native Gauls.

One derivation of her name, (Branston, L.G. of E.) spring from the Celtic roots:

Ro=much, exceedingly

Smeart=smear, anoint

Branston cites the use of the term, smearta, in an early Cuchulain tale, in which the Irish hero smears with blood a false beard which he has made for himself from grasses. Besmearing his face, he effects a disguise. This fits with the Roman report of her popularity if she was "The much Anointed One." Celtic deity's statues and artifact were often anointed with precious oils, or with the blood of vanquished enemies when that deity was beseeched for favors or thanked for victories.

There is a sanctuary, on the Boyne in Ireland, called Rosmaree, which may be that of her Irish cognate. It is a high mound, of Bronze Age origin, and Medieval Legend tells of a speaking stone connected with it which gave answers to questions about all past deeds and events. It was appealed to in order to settle disputes or establish guilt, much to the despair of the Christian monks, who recorded the custom. Local folklore has it that even up to a century or so ago, no one passed by the stone, whose name is Druin Torerime, without dismounting and paying her homage. It was seen, apparently, as a female being.

This idea of giving answers and of knowing the past, of the actions of all mortals, adds credence to the second derivation of her name, Rosmearta, from the Indo-European root Smer, to think, to remember, to share or portion out.

Ro=much

Smer=remembering, allotting

Ta=from ti, tia, female, she

The All Remembering One

The Apportioner

Her other attributes, her associations with vegetation, grain and Earth-bounty, which she meets out are consistent with the allotting function. She shares this function with another set of supernatural beings whose names derive from the same I.E. root, Smer. These are the Early Greek Moira, and the Germanic Norns, especially the middle Norn, Verthandi. In Greek her title is Lachesis, from lot, distribution, share. A more distant connection can be made to the Italic Parcae, also originally goddesses of vegetation, fertility and birth. But these three powers act differently in the Northern countries than they did among the Indo-Europeans of the Mediterranean. The Norns, Wyrð, and their cognates have none of the feeling of foreknowledge and predestination about them that characterize the Classic Fates. For Homer, the Fates' decision was unavoidable, even if one had foreknowledge and will. The Norn do not control the future. They set out one's circumstances, one's lot, and then record human action as present evolves into past. They do not control our action, but only mark them down, layer by layer, weaving the present into the past.

All these deities have in common the ancient link to vegetation and to the allotment of each person's share in life, but in Celtic and Norse they are not concerned with the future, nor do they have the power and feeling of predestiny this implies. This concept, which in later Hellenic times attached itself to the Fates (and by way of Classic trained scholars to King Arthur's Merddyn,) entered Europe with Christianity, there to cause numerous philosophical problems which hardly ended with Calvin. The Indo-European apportioning goddesses give only talents and setting. Greatness, as the poems of Cuchulain and Beowulf, and the Ossianic Fennians make clear, depends on what each person does with their portion. Rosmearta seems to have been a goddess who was thanked for success, harvest and victory.

Rosmearta can be beseeched with incense and aromatic oils to give us the circumstances in which we can be successful. (Blood is not to the modern aesthetic, unless you're a hunter or a beef rancher.) Of course, we must know what these circumstances would be if we're to ask for them and to recognize them when they occur. She can be thanked on Lughnasadh, along with Lugh and Danu, the Earth Mother, for the harvest that now begins, for our share.

Lughnasadh Essay: Reaping and the Last Sheaf

A Druid Missal-Any, Lughnasadh 1985
By Emmon Bodfish

Lughnasadh, Feast of the First Fruits, begins the harvest season. Traditionally it marks the Funeral Games for Lugh, Celtic Sun-God, and by now it is clear that the summer is waning, and the Sun retreating southward. Our harvest this year at the Grove is hay, and apples, and the promise of Elderberries and Holly.

In line with the local fire prevention campaign, we were required to cut down the hay in the two and a half acre meadow at the bottom of the property. (This issue's trivia fact: the bent wooden handle of a scythe, the tall kind the Grim Reaper carries, is called a "snath." We had to order one through our local hardware store when the old one broke.) To speed things up, we also used a weed whip. While out there mowing, I thought: We should try enacting the old Celtic ceremony of the cutting of the last sheaf." Up until the introduction of mechanical reaping machines in the last century, it was the custom in all the Celtic countries, and many on the borders of the, to leave standing the last "stook" of hay or grain, and then all those that have worked at the reaping of the field take turns throwing their sickles at it. The one who knocks it down is declared the "King of the Harvest" and the shout goes up that he "has got the Old Woman," presumably the spirit of the grain/hay-field, which has been driven into the last sheaf as the reapers advanced across the field. In some areas it was called the "Maiden" or the "Corn-Baby." In each case though, the sheaf was dressed up in makeshift clothes like a woman or a child, and is carried to the Harvest man's home on the last wagon amidst raucous shouts and song, "like a wedding procession" according to a Welsh source. It was hung up over the hearth, or, in Ireland over the door, or in the barn. In some places it was saved until Yule, when it was fed to the cattle, to keep them healthy. In other places it was kept until the following spring and then scattered over the field before it was sown. (Wrapping the trunks of birch trees in burlap...dressing the Last Sheaf, trimming and decorating Yule trees, What is this Celtic desire to put clothes on plants?) On the Continent, in Gaulish lands, it is a woman who cuts and binds the last sheaf, after which she is called the "Oat-Bride" or "Hay-Bride" or whatever after the grain. She is escorted home amidst dancing and songs typical of weddings.

We left the last stook of hay standing in the field, and on Sunday, after the regular Druid ritual we went out in company and tied the tuft of hay into a sheaf with a rope of braided rush-grass. All the males took turns throwing the short sickle at it, and Larry A.D., knocked it down. He was declared King of the Harvest and the hay-sheaf was dressed up in a cap and apron which Willow-Oak had made. Larry carried it back on a pole.

As we have no cattle to whom to feed it on Yule, we will save it to scatter over the field.

[Picture of Larry with the hay-bride raised up on a pole.]

Lughnasadh Essay: Tales of Lugh

A Druid Missal-Any, Lughnasadh 1986
By Emmon Bodfish

Lughnasadh, festival of the funeral games of Lugh the Sun God, or, given by Lugh in honor of his father the Sun, depending on your tradition. It is the beginning of the Celtic harvest season, and is often called Festival of the First Fruits. Lugh, from the same root word as light and luminous, is one of the younger generations of gods in the Celtic pantheon. Like other Indo-European solar deities, his growth was rapid, being the size of a 10 year old when he was 5, and gaining full manly size and skill by age 10 or 12. He is the multi-competent god, not specializing in one function, but capable in all. Even as a child he was expert at any craft or skill from his first attempt at it. As a boy of 8, according to Welsh legend, while his goddess-mother was measuring his foot for a shoe, he picked up a bow and arrow and shot a wren in the leg. This, the story goes on to explain, was the favorite demonstration shot of Celtdom's best crack archers. His mother was delighted, and Lugh went on to become a parent's dream come true. He was good at everything, polite, chivalrous, and an example of filial devotion.

Later as a young man, when he applied for admittance to the company of the elder gods, he is quizzed by the gatekeeper as to what he can offer. "I am an excellent smith," he says. "We have Goibhne the smith," said the gatekeeper. "We have no need of that." And this continues to be the reply as he lists each one of his skills. The gods already have one of their number who is an expert in that domain. Finally, frustrated, the boy shouts, "But do you have anyone who can do them all?" The gatekeeper reflects that, no, they do not. And so Lugh is admitted.

Lugh is the patron of craftsmen, apprentices, and artists. In another tradition, he is also associated with money and the accumulation of wealth. This is his only functionalistic connection with a harvest festival. The Funeral Games of Lugh, whose title for this high day may also refer to the fact that by now the Sun is past his Zenith, and is declining again toward the South.

In the R.D.N.A. traditions, anyone who has a garden, grows anything, etc., should save their first picked produce of the summer season, and bring it or a portion of it to the Service, to be offered up in the altar fire, with hopes of prosperity in the years to come.

Lughnasadh Essay: Balor vs. Belenos

A Druid Missal-Any, Lughnasadh 1987
By Emmon Bodfish

Lughnasadh, festival of the funeral games of Lugh the Sun God, or, given by Lugh in honor of his father the Sun, depending on your tradition. It is the beginning of the Celtic harvest season, and is often called festival of the First Fruits. Lugh, from the same root word as light and luminous, is one of the younger generations of gods in the Celtic pantheon. The other Solar Deities, Belenos and Balor, the good and the bad aspects of the sun, respectively, are not only pictured as older, mature male figures, but are traceable to the Early Indo-European stratas, in the Eastern European homelands. But Lugh, as the young Shining One, didn't appear until the Celts had settled Gaul and melded with the Celto-Ligurians and the Pre-Indo-European "Atlantic Wall" cultures which they encountered there, circa 600 B.C. Urnfields replaced passage

Lughnasadh Essay: Lugh the Protester

A Druid Missal-Any, Lughnasadh 1989

By Emmon Bodfish

graves, and typical Celtic farming practices were begun. When the Celto-Ligurians had arrived, a thousand years earlier, there had been no sharp cultural discontinuity, as they blended with the Pre-Indo-Europeans, who continued to build their dolmens and passage graves. Pre-Indo-European traditions were therefore still strong when Celtic Lugh arose and began to replace Belenos as the popular Solar Figure. His ascendant, youthful, headlong character may have been influenced by the Young Year God image common in the Pre-Indo-European cultures of the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts. This archetype has been traced by G. Rachel Levy from the Balkans, to Minoan Greece, along the Mediterranean Coast to France and north to Normandy.

Lugh's best Indo-European cognate is Apollo of the Greeks. The Greek religion was strongly influenced in other ways by the beliefs and Deities of the Pre-Indo-European people they conquered and absorbed. Odin, Lugh's Northern cognate, has a much less Solar character. He is more a Shaman, knowledge-bringer, and Divine Wayfarer, going among mortals in disguise. He is not a martial figure; He is not youthful. Lugh is the patron of the harvest, which in Celtic countries began at Lughnasadh. Apollo was worshipped in the Peloponnesus as a god of vegetation, giving Him another link with the "young Year God" of the Western Neolithic. From a magical lawgiver, healer, transformer archetype, which He shares with Odin and Varuna, He evolved, partly through absorption of the Young Year God, into the youthful solar Deity of the later Celtic myths.

In R.D.N.A. traditions, anyone who has a garden, grows anything, etc. should save their first picked produce of the summer season, and bring it or part of it to Lughnasadh Service, to be offered up in the altar fire, with hopes of prosperity in years to come.

Lughnasadh Essay: Summer Games

A Druid Missal-Any, Lughnasadh 1988

By Emmon Bodfish

Originally a celebration of the funeral games held by Lugh, Celtic god of light for his father the Sun, Lughnasadh marks the Sun's position half way between Solstice and Equinox. By now, usually August sixth or seventh, the day's length is noticeably shortened. The sun, re-born on December 22, is in decline, and the season of the harvest, Foghamhar, is coming. This High Day marked the beginning of the harvest in pre-industrial times, and in Druidic times was known as the Festival of the First Fruits. Cutting of the new grain could begin, and "hungry July" was over. In the Celtic countries, this middle-of-the-summer festival is still marked by The Races in Ireland, the Revels in Wales, and the highland Games in Scotland. In a livestock-raising culture like that of the Iron Age Celts, this was the most likely time of market faires and regional gatherings. The calves of the spring were old enough to sell or trade. Likewise the sheep would have been sheared and the lambs were old enough to bartered. This was a festival of the Tuatha, the largest class in the Celtic society, comprised of the farmers, craftsmen and merchants. The other two classes were the Warriors and the Clergy, which last included Bards, Ovates, Filidhs and Druids, their students and retainers.

In the Neo-Pagan R.D.N.A. tradition, anyone who has a garden or grows anything, should save the first picked produce of the summer season and bring it, or a portion of it to the Lughnasadh celebration to be offered along with the Grove Sacrifice and hopes and prayers of prosperity to come.

Lughnasadh is the celebration of the funeral games given by the God Lugh for his father, Cian, who was slain by the sons of Tuenn. Cian was a shape-shifter and magician, i.e. one of the Druid or clergy-caste. Rhys considers Him a minor solar deity, but in mythology He acts more the part of shaman and ambassador. The games show Lugh's filial piety, as Lugh represents all that the ancient Celts thought good in a young man. He is the multi-competent god, defender against oppression, patron and teacher of craftspeople and artisans, God of commerce and its wealth, protector of travelers, and Lord of the Harvest.

The figure of the young boy-God, son of one of the old Pantheon, who saves the people from an unjust ruler, in the myth of Lugh, King Breas the Fomor, is a very old and widespread theme in sacred literature. Many cultures have myths dating back probably to the Neolithic, of a young agricultural and solar deity born on the Winter Solstice, who defends the people, exemplifies morality, teaches the arts of civilization, and is associated with the harvest: Lugh, Balder, the Balkan New Year God, Prometheus, Zeus in His battle with the Titans, Mithra, and some aspects of the Moses and Jesus myths. (The early Judeo-Christian writers grafted these age-old aspects of the Young God into the founders of their faith, just as they did with numerous sayings, rituals and ideas borrowed from the older cultures surrounding them. These things were not new.)

Lugh in His defender role was also a tax protestor. When the Celts had fallen under the sway of Breas, a half-Fomor from "under the sea," Lugh, son of the old God, Cian, appeared. Breas, in one of his acts of mis-rule had levied an oppressive tax on the Tuatha de Danann by means of a deception. Breas is portrayed as a smart man (or demi-god) and clever with words. Then he first joined the de Danann pantheon, before the first battle of Moy Tura, he was the one chosen and sent out to parley with Streng of the FirBolgs. But later as king, he perverts his intelligence into trickery. Like Loci in the German myths, Breas has a legalistic, literalistic, conniving turn of mind. And like Loki, he is an outsider, possibly an adopted God from the pantheon of the Pre-Indo-European inhabitants of the region. He has ancestral ties to the long term enemies of the Pantheon he now serves, Breas represents the negative aspects of intelligence, as Lugh represents the positive ones. The Battles of the Gods, as one school of theology holds, are the battles of the archetypes and choices within the human conscience. "Mythology is not about how things are; it's about how they feel," Joan Carruth, circa 1983. Breas had the Tuatha de Danann agree to surrender to him the milk of every cow, in Ireland that was brown and hairless. They agreed. He then caused every cow in Ireland to be passed through a fire which made them all brown, scorched and hairless. A more moderate version of this fire ceremony was part of the annual Beltaine purification rites. This may have made his proposition seem at first hearing acceptable to the Tuatha. Then after perverting the sacred purification rite into a destructive one, he claimed the milk of every cow in Erin. Crops also failed to prosper under Breas' rule. The people were starving. Lugh came and won acceptance into the Pantheon with his multitude of skills, high character and regal bearing. He vanquished Breas, restored Erin to the Tuatha de Danann and their king, Nuada. Under Nuada's rule the land prospered and harvests were bountiful. This, in the Celtic theory of sovereignty, was the mark of a true and rightful king.

Celebrate Lughnasadh by offering up to Lugh the first fruits and produce of your gardens, any plants you've grown or windfall profits received. (no animals!) Dance, sing, be grateful for the harvest!

Lughnasadh Essay: Cycle of Lugh

A Druid Missal-Any, Lughnasadh 1990
By Emmon Bodfish

Lughnasadh, festival of the god Lugh. In one tradition these festivities marked the funeral games originally held by Lugh in honor of his murdered father Cian. In another tradition, in Ireland, they commemorate the death of Lugh's divine foster mother Tailtiu, who cleared the forest from the plains of Ireland to make them fit for agriculture and died of the effort. She is a goddess of agriculture and one of the Irish female origin-figures. Irish clans often traced their ancestry to a female divinity, a goddess of the land. Lugh is the son of Ethniu and Cian, and the grandson of Balor, the elder Sun God, whom he later vanquishes in battle, reminiscent of Zeus overthrowing Chronos.

Lugh is the youthful Celtic Deity of Light, eulogized as "The Shining One." Some see in him an evolved form of the Neolithic "Young Year God," representing the Sun, born on Winter Solstice, married at Summer Solstice, and triumphant at Lughnasadh when he brings the harvest. He is fated to die on Samhain at the end of the harvest season and to sleep until the returning of the Sun on Winter Solstice.

Lugh is the multi-competent god, patron of all crafts and of commerce, protector of travelers, poet, harper, physician, smithy, magician, and defender of the people against their oppressive Fomorian king. Some scholars think he is cognate with Grecian Apollo. He is master of the throwing spear and has the title "Lamhfada," long arm, far reaching; he owns the spear that cannot miss its mark but seeks out its enemy.

The Sun is now half way between Solstice and Fall Equinox, and already the days are perceptively shorter, though the strong heat is still to come. This festival marks the beginning of the harvest. The first fruits are of each farmstead were brought and offered in the sacrifice. Sheep had been sheared, and the surplus wool and lambs could be bartered.

In Reformed Druid tradition, any members who have a garden, a fruit tree, or a tree that gives mast or nuts, or wild land that gives any vegetable food, bring the first fruits picked this season to offer in the Lughnasadh bonfire. (No Animals! That was forbidden by The Reform in 1963 which gave us our origin, constitution, and laws.) Lugh's tree is the apple. I cannot find a scholarly reference on this, but so folklore and tradition have it. (If you know of one, send it in and get a free subscription if it checks out.) Celebrate with apples, apple pie, cider, apple jack, and the planting of apple trees. Lugh is the divine father of the Celtic champion, Cu Chulain. Reread some of these epics* aloud.

--Emmon Bodfish

*The Tain Translated from the Irish Epic Tain Bo Cuailnge, tr. Thomas Kinsella, Oxford University Press, 1983.

Lughnasadh Essay: Harvest Games

A Druid Missal-Any, Lughnasadh 2001
By Stacey Weinberger

Lughnasadh, funeral games of Lugh in honor of his foster mother, the beginning of the harvest, the Feast of the First Fruits. Technically still summer one can already feel the chill of the coming fall in the air here in Northern California. Though the sun is still setting late into the evening, the daylight hours begin to shorten and effort is begun in earnest to bring in the harvest while there is still light in the sky.

Lughnasadh was a festival that lasted a month long, beginning in mid-July and ending mid-August. It was a time of great feasting and games, as well as being a time of assemblies where political and legal matters were settled. Origins of the festival tell that it was established by Lugh to commemorate his foster-mother Tailtiu, the last queen of the Fir Bolg, who died at Teltown, (in County Meath) on August 1. After clearing the great forests of Ireland for cultivation she collapsed from exhaustion, and as she was dying asked Lugh to hold funeral games in her honor every August.

This year the wheat we left from the offering of the Bride-og beside the Grove altar at Oimeic sprouted. As part of our Lughnasadh service we will be re-enacting the Celtic ceremony of the Iolach Buana, the Reaping Salutation. As is tradition, we will be using a sickle, freshly polished and sharpened for the occasion.

The practice of the reaping salutation appears to be related to the "crying the neck" custom that was practiced on large farms in Devon. An old man, or someone else acquainted with the ceremonies, would go around to the sheaves as the laborers were reaping the last field of wheat, and pick out a little bundle of the best he could find. This bundle he would tie up very neatly and plat and arrange the straws very tastefully. This was called "the neck" of the wheat. After the field had been cut, the reapers, binders, and the women stood around in a circle. The person with "the neck" stood in the center of the circle, grasping it with both hands. He would first stoop and hold it near the ground, and all the men forming the ring would take off their hats, stooping and holding them to the ground in imitation of the person with "the neck." They then would all begin in a very prolonged and harmonious tone to cry "the neck!" at the same time slowly raising themselves upright, and elevating their arms and hats above their heads. The person with "the neck" did this also raising it on high. This was done three times.

The cries then changed to "Wee yen! Way yen!" which were sounded in the same harmonious manner three times. After this everyone burst out in joyous laughter with much capering about. One of the laborers would then grab "the neck" and run as fast as he could to the farmhouse, where the dairy maid or one of the other female domestics stood at the door with a pail of water ready to douse him, reminiscent of a rain charm. "The neck" was then hung in a place of prominence and honor within the farmhouse where it remained until the spring when it was mixed with the seed corn before it was sown or fed to the horses or cattle at the start of ploughing.

Beannachadh Buana, Reaping Blessing

A Druid Missal-Any, Lughnasadh 2001
From the Carmina Gadelica, collected by Alexander
Carmichael

The day the people began to reap the corn was a day of commotion and ceremonial in the townland. The whole family repaired to the field dressed in their best attire to hail the God of the harvest.

Laying his bonnet on the ground, the father of the family took up his sickle, and facing the sun, he cut a handful of corn. Putting the handful of corn three times sunwise round his head, the man raised the "Iolach Buana," reaping salutation. The whole family took up the strain and praised the God of the harvest (ed.: Michael, who Lugh became co-opted by in Christian times,) who gave them corn and bread, food and flocks, wool and clothing, health and strength, and peace and plenty.

When the reaping was finished the people had a trial called "cur nan corran," casting the sickles, and "deuchain chorran," trial of hooks. This consisted, among other things, of throwing the sickles high in the air, and observing how they came down, how each struck the earth, and how it lay on the ground. From these observations the people augured who was to remain single and who was to be married, who was to be sick and who was to die, before the next reaping came around.

God Bless Thou Thyself my reaping,
Each ridge, and plain, and field,
Each sickle curved, shapely, hard,
Each ear and handful in the sheaf,
Each ear and handful in the sheaf.

Bless each maiden and youth,
Each woman and tender youngling,
Safeguard them beneath Thy shield of strength,
And guard them in the house of the saints,
Guard them in the house of the saints.

Encompass each goat, sheep and lamb,
Each cow and horse, and store,
Surround Thou the flocks and herds,
And tend them to a kindly fold,
Tend them to a kindly fold.

For the sake of Michael head of hosts,
Of Mary fair-skinned branch of grace,
Of Bride smooth-white of ringleted locks,
Of Columba of the graves and tombs,
Columba of the graves and tombs.

Fall Equinox

Fall Equinox Notes

The Druid Chronicles (Evolved) 1976
By Isaac Bonewits and Robert Larson

The last big holiday of the year, the Fall Equinox (sometimes called Michaelmas and the Feast of the Hunters,) is a Minor High Day occurring somewhere around September 21st or so. This is a Thanksgiving feast and signals the beginning of the Hunting Season (for deer and other large game) in many parts of Europe and North America. Thus, it is dedicated to the Hunting and Fishing Gods and the Gods of Plenty, in thankfulness for benefits received and hoped for. Outdoor picnics in the woods are a popular Druid tradition in those areas where the weather is still good at this time of year. Hunting magic may be minimized by those Groves living in areas where game is a little dear.

Fall Equinox Essay: Cernunnos

A Druid Missal-Any, Fall Equinox 1982
By Emmon Bodfish

Equinox approaches the time sacred to Cernunnos, the Hunter God. The cult of the horned god/shaman, dressed in the horns and hide of a hoofed prey-animal, is one of the most ancient themes running through Indo-European religions. The cave paintings in France show such a figure and may date from Paleolithic times. (Figure 1) He is seen again on the Gundestrup Cauldron in near-historic times, here with the antlers of a Stag. It would be rash to think of all horned gods are called Cernunnos, as each tribe may have had their own name for him, but the theme of the shaman raised to a god and endowed with horns remains consistent. In southeastern Europe he is associated with the goat, and in parts of Britain with the bull, but always with a horned, food species. He may be the Being commemorated in the horn-dances carried out in a number of English villages up through the 19th century and now exclusive to Abbots Bromley. Originally he seems to have been a hunter's patron, and later associated with fertility of flocks and herds, and then with fertility in general. This was the tradition of Grecian Pan, and Robin Goodfellow, and later debased into Christian "devil" myths. The Gaelic word "faighe" for prophet, and also the name of one class of Druids, may be cognate of the Proto-Gaelic word for deer, "fiagh," especially in its genitive case, meaning "of a deer." In Gaelic cultures there is also an association with the Hazel tree, and again with the after-death world, which we will shortly be contacting in the upcoming festivals of Samhain. His following continued after Christianization, and is reflected in the Highland Calluinn ritual still in practice in the 19th century. The Protestant cleric who recorded it seems to have had no inkling of its meaning, but he asserts that the people of the West Highlands, in the 17th century, before the coming of the Presbyters, were "little more than pagans, having been neglected by the Roman Church."

The Horned-god had a second sacred time after Yule and before Oimelc, also indicative of the Cernunnos-Calluinn (Hazel) association. According to Dwelly, there is an old Gaelic myth that New Year's night is the night of the fecundation of the trees, when the winds blow from the west, and is called Calluinn night. On this night Boggles may walk.

Bogles are wood spirits, connected with Cernunnos in the following interesting manner. The word Bogle or the Scottish Bogle is a diminutive of the original word Bog, with cognates in the Slavic, "Bog" god, and in Proto-Celtic "Boc" god. The Welsh "boucca" evolved into Puck, the wood sprite, and the Highland Bogey, spirit inhabiting wild or lonely places. "Poccan" is a male goat, and "Puc" is the goat-god who presides over the Puck fair celebrations in Ireland.

Fall Equinox Essay: Archeo-Astronomy

A Druid Missal-Any, Fall Equinox 1983
By Emmon Bodfish

Fall Equinox, this is the season associated with Cernunnos, the horned god, patron of hunters, wild creatures, herders and flocks. Write Thomas Cross, of Post Oak Protogrove, Texas, the preferred spelling should be Cernunnos from the original inscription found in Gaul and dating from Roman times: _ERNUNNOS.

In its other aspect, the Fall Equinox is an astronomical holiday associated with marking the passage of time and the need to keep the calendar rectified. The Druids were astronomer-priests, as numerous classical authors attest. Watching the heavens, keeping the calendar and predicting lunar eclipses were among their skills and duties. But they were not the first people to be able to do this. They may have learned from the Megalithic cultures that predated them, either in the Indo-European homeland, or during the long trek across Europe before 1500 BC when they arrived in the British Isles. When they came to England, it was already inhabited by a thriving stone age culture which had built Stone Henge, by the use of which it could rectify its calendar and foretell eclipses of the Moon. Many archeologists now believe that the great monument is a perpetual calendar and sidereal computer. Its location and construction show a sophisticated knowledge of the heavens and the Earth. The Moon/eclipse system could have been worked out by careful record keeping over a long period of time, something ancient priesthoods were good at, but because of the geometry of the Earth/Moon/Sun system, it is possible to construct this type of stone marker system for both the Sun and Moon only at the exact latitude of Stonehenge. Calculation of this requires knowledge of mathematics and geometry. According to John Gribbin (*Timewarps*, Delacorte Press, 1979) "even 20 or 30 miles north or south, the doubly significant rectangular observing marker could not have been built."

The effort involved in the construction of this Megalith must have been great; by implication, the society that built it must have been both rich and stable, because in the first place, it could support a group of "wise ones" who were able to study the astronomical alignments over decades, and probably centuries, and to develop the mathematics necessary to plan the great observatory, and secondly it could take men out of active production for the long periods of time necessary to build the stone megalith, circles and ditch-works. Jim Duran, Ph.D. feels that the pre-Celtic people of Britain were organized in sets of matri-clans, based on fishing and hoe cultivation. Matri-clans foster a spirit of co-operative labor among men, as they are accustomed to working with other men from diverse family groups, wife's brothers, sisters' husbands, uncles, rather than feeling at ease only with his own family, his brothers, his father, as is usually the case in closed, patrilineal systems. The system of matri-clan organization is also a distinct advantage to a

society engaged in long distance trading and raiding, as Duran thinks the ancient Britains were. Sea raiding may have helped to enrich the economy and make huge projects like Stonehenge feasible. (See Emmon Bodfish's future monograph, "The Financing of Stonehenge.")

As asserted, when the men are going to be away for long periods going to be away for long periods of time, raiding, trading or engaged in public works projects, they prefer to leave the homesteads in the care of their sisters and their mother's people, who will guard their mutual inheritance, rather than in the keeping of the wives, as under patrilineage. The wives would be from a different, also raiding clan, and their loyalty would be divided.

Gribbin, reasoning from the workings of the marker stones at Stonehenge, deducts that basic megalithic calculations were in 3/1 and 7/1 ratios. These, especially three, were important number in Celtic ritual also. This may be the basis of our seven day week, an institution that pre-dates recorded history, in Northern Europe. Though the Druids did not build Stonehenge, they may have understood its workings, and certainly the working of the Solar calendar it marks. With it they could have calculated not only the Fall Equinox which is at 7:42 AM Pacific time this year, but also the fact that it is a Friday, though they would not have called it that. The names, as most people know, are Norse.

Fall Equinox Essay: Cernunnos

A Druid Missal-Any, Fall Equinox 1984
By Emmon Bodfish

Equinox approaches the time sacred to Cernunnos, the Hunter God. "Now is come September, the Hunter's Moon begun." ¹as Holly sings it, and now is the time of Cernunnos, the god of the hunt, the immortal shaman invoking and controlling the quarry. In Gaul, an altar was dedicated to him below what is now Paris. He is one of the prototypes of that inexhaustible figure, The Horned Man.

As Master of the Animals, he embodies their spirits and can parley with them, bringing game to the hunter, or protecting and sustaining cattle and flocks. As the Woods-god, he directs primary energy, the life forces, creative, magical, and procreative of animals and wilderness. As the Shaman-god his function is to be a connecting link between the human and non-human worlds, and to balance the two with their opposing tensions. From these two roles flow his later attributes, God of Wealth, magician, juggler, and Lord of the Dance.

He is appealed to to communicate to the spirit of the animals to let one of their number be taken for food, to make the cattle flourish, and to increase the herds. Most pagan cultures believe that it is not prudent or even possible to catch game or raise an animal for slaughter without its permission on the spiritual level. This is always a bargain, requiring the prey's cooperation. Ritual and honor must be paid to prey species, or to the Master of Cattle, in return.

Though Margaret Murray was ridiculed for suggesting it in the 30s, it has since become clear that we are dealing with a Paleolithic cult in the Horned God, yet one that has continued down to the present day. This shows a strong, basic archetypal appeal. Like all good archetypes, he has multiple and voluminous levels of meaning

In Celtic mythology, he forms a triad with Eusus and Sylvanus. As with other Celtic triple divinities, these may be different facets of the same being. He is close on the left side to Eusus, god of the underworld and riches, and on the right to Sylvanus, Wood spirit, god of vegetation, the Green Man. The

links with wealth and death on one hand and magic and fecundity on the other go all the way back to Cernunnos' stone age roots. Around the pictures of horned men on cave walls are other pictures, most of them of animals. All were animals which were important in the hunt, but which were dangerous to hunt. Species known to have been hunted, but which are not dangerous, are not represented. These animals, deer, bison, bulls, wolves, horses are ones that have to be reckoned with, and this was done magically. As the Finn-Ugric and Siberian hunters, heirs to Paleolithic Europe, explained it in the 19th century, there are three things the hunter wants to insure: that he kill the quarry and that it not kill him. That is that his spirit, mana or tapa, overcome the animal's spirit. And thirdly, he wants to insure that his hunting not cause the prey species to flee or to become depleted. He wishes to propitiate the spirits of the animals for the loss of some of their number, and to insure the fertility of the herd and secure its increase.

Among many Northern European peoples it was important to assure the animal killed of a way to be reborn, to come back and continue its life. Its bones were collected and treated with special funeral rites and magic to aid this return. Ideas presaging the concept of reincarnation are common to Eurasian hunter cultures and south to the Caucasus and the Indo-European homelands. Here, then are the Cernunnos' triad's attributes:

Success-Wealth Underworld-Death	Magic	Fertility Reincarnation
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with magic as the connecting link or directing force which humans and gods assert, influencing the course of events for their benefits.

Cernunnos is the Gaulish deity whom Caesar equated with Roman Mars. This was more than chance resemblance. There is some evidence of their common I.E. roots. Mars was not always a god of war. Originally he was a god of vegetation. Cato and Varro concur on this, telling us that it was to Mars that the farmers prayed for good crops and prosperity, and for protection of their cattle. He had an old title, from pre-Republican days, of Mars Silvanus, Mars of the Woods. The elements of War and martial spirit were later connected with him when Rome began its expansions and conquest. There is a myth recorded in Plutarch's "Parallela," in which Mars takes on a mortal woman as his lover. Her name is Silvia; she bears him a son whose soul is contained in a spear.

Mars	Mamurius Veturius	Mars Silvanus
War Plunderer	Fecundity Venus' Lover	God of the Wood Protector of Cattle

At the other end of the Indo-European spectrum, in Vedic India, is the figure of Rudra, who may be cognate with Mars. He is the patron of the Kesin, long haired, woods-dwelling ascetics. And there is reason to think that Sylvania, Silvanus, and Shiva are the same. The latter two share similar myths of travels in the Underworld. If we accept the Irish Wildman-of-the-Woods, Mad Suibhni (Swee' nee) as a late Christian euhemerization of Sylvania/Cernunnos, then the Celtic Horned-god(s) made similar journeys to the Underworld, under or inside Magic Mountains. All these tales include a visit to a female figure who lives inside the Mountain and who is the source of wealth or knowledge. In Siberia she is the Reindeer Mother. Among the early Greeks she is the Bear Mother. On Shiva's journey, she is Devi, Madam Bramha, conqueror of the Bull-Demon, bulls, cattle, and herds.

In the Caucasus she is Mother of the Dead, who suckles the soul of the newly dead, as the Reindeer Mother suckles each

would-be shaman who finds his way through the labyrinth to her cave. There is nothing like her in African, Chinese, or Australian myths, no source figure who is a Lady-inside-a-Mountain. She is an Eurasian figure, probably of Paleolithic origin. In her we may be seeing who "Venus of Willendorf" was.² Similar Magdalenian and Gravettian female figurines have been found far down in caves and caverns under mountains in France and Switzerland. These caves are often difficult and dangerous to climb down into, yet the walls are elaborately painted with figures of animals and outlined handprints of humans, or whole rooms painted red with ochre. Footprints in the hardened clay show that dances and ceremonies were held here around her figurines, or around clay models of gravid or copulating bison. Here someone painted on the wall the famous "dancing sorcerer" of the Ariège, the proto-type of the Horned Man.

Cernunnos, King of the Wood, Lord of the Animals, he can be appealed to for difficulties with pets or with wild animals. His color is brown, burn aromatic woods or pine pitch or incense. Brown is a very special color; it is not found in the spectrum. It is a mixture of red and green with yellow for warm brown, or blue for cool brown mixed in, in lesser quantities. But there is no brown light. The sensation, brown, is created within the human visual system. This is fitting for Cernunnos, the mind-traveler, the shaman. Francis of Assisi, preaching to the birds, living in the forest, and specifying humble brown robes of local material for his Order, was in the old I.E. tradition of the Holy-Man-in-the-Woods. These old currents of thought change direction and name, but do not die out as quickly and as easily as textbook history would portray.

Cernunnos can best be experienced out-of-doors in the woods or wild places. After 2:00 a.m., and the last lights are out and radios off, even fairly tame bits of the out-of-doors, backyards, and gardens return essentially to Nature. Smells and sounds change. Try sitting like Cernunnos in his Gunderstrup pose in this setting. If you cannot find a horned serpent, use some other symbol of the Mountain Mother,² and a torc, sign of the warrior and of his bond to his patron deity.

¹Holly Tannen, "Invocation." Kicking Mule Records, KM 236.

²James Duran, "The Horned God of Europe," Spring Seminar, 1984.

Fall Equinox Essay: Michaelmas

A Druid Missal-Any, Fall Equinox 1985
By Emmon Bodfish

Fall Equinox is associated in the Celtic parts of the British Isles with the gathering of root crops. Many of the old customs have continued, in the Highlands and the Islands, and are enacted now in the name of the Michael-mass festivals. Michael is the Christian personality most often substituted for Lugh, or even Llyr, by the Old Celtic Church when it first came to the Celtic countries in the 4th and 5th centuries. The flaming sword and warrior aspect of the Archangel may have suggested a similarity to Lugh-of-the-Long-Arm and his spear in his defender, protector role. Most particularly, the quality of "shiningness" links the two.

Alexander Carmichael, collecting oral folklore in the 1830s, notes that in the Highlands, St. Michael is spoke of as "an Brian Michael," that is, the Demi-god Michael. Christian saints, such as Columba or Andrew were called "Naomh" the usual translation of the Latin "sanctus." Brian Michael rides a winged horse, and is the patron of sailors and ships, the former province of Llyr. There is no basis for either magical horses or

control of the sea in the Biblical Archangel's exploits that I recall. The same powers and a fiery steed are attributed to him in Cornwall and Brittany, but never in Greek or Roman Christianity, i.e. south of the Alps.

Since some tiny carrots have sprung up in our lawn, we may do a version of the Highland Carrot ceremony come Fall Equinox. (The benefits of using kitchen compost for fertilizer.)

While one of our members went to the gathering at Harbin Hot Springs, the remaining Live Oak members celebrated Lughnasadh with a Bonnack Bake. Bonnacks, or in Scot's Gaelic "bonnachann," are small, unleavened cakes of sweet meal, often mentioned in old Celtic song and lore. The Romans on Hadrian's Wall describe Pictish raiders baking them over their campfires on the flats of their swords.

Bonnach Recipe

A Druid Missal-Any, Fall Equinox 1985
By Emmon Bodfish

[Several pictures of the procedure.]

Cut your grain with a bronze sickle when the heads are an even tan and dry. Thrash it over a clean white cloth and winnow it with your breath. Grind it until it is a fine meal. Mix it with whiskey and water and pat it into cakes. Cook slowly over a smooed fire, (on the flat of a sword) without turning them. (8-10 min.)

"Tha bonnach min milas aig Bride a'taobh d'an sliabh."

When it ripened, we cut the rye and wheat that had sprouted spontaneously in our Grove circle. We decided to make some ceremonial bonnacks out of it. We thrashed it by hand, rubbing the grain heads between our hands, letting the grain fall on a clean white cloth, as described for the old Highland rites. Stacey discovered the best method of winnowing. She put the rubbed gain, still in its husks, in a sloping sided bowl, and blew lightly down the near side of the bowl, puffing the fine chaff up the opposite side and out, all the while shaking the grain in the bowl to bring more chaff to the top.

We made a fire of the last of the wood that Joan Carruth, ex A.D. of Live Oak Grove, current A.D. of Birch Grove, had donated when she moved East a few years ago. The fire burned down to good glowing cooking coals while we took turns grinding the grain in a hand bill, a never-used-before pepper mill, actually. We baked the bonnachann on the lat of a sword, in the old Pictish (Cruithinig) tradition, Raphael lending his sword for the purpose. During the grinding we chanted the old Highland Quern Blessing, Larry reading the English and Emmon reading the Gaelic. Although we were prepared to bite into something "not so wonderful" and eat it anyway, the result were surprisingly good, especially with sweet butter. As Raphael said, "Boy, this is bread 'from scratch'."

Beannachadh Brathain

Oidhch Inid
Be feoil againn
'S bu choir 'uinn sin
Bu choir 'uinn shin

Leth-cheann circe,
'S da ghreim eorna,
'S bu leoir 'uinn sin
Bu leoir 'uinn sin.

Bi bin againn,
Bi beoir againn,
Bi fion againn,
Bi roic againn.
Meilc is marrum,
Mil is bainne,
Sile fallain,
Meall dheth sin,
Meall dheth sin.

Bi cruic againn,
Bi clar againn,
Bi dus againn,
Bi das againn;
Bi saltair ghrinn,
Nan teuda binn,
'S bi fairchil, righ'nn
Nan dan againn,
Nan dan againn.

Quern Blessing

On Ash Eve
We shall have flesh,
We should have that
We should have that.

The cheek of hen,
Two bits of barley,
That were enough
That were enough.

We shall have mead,
We shall have spruce,
We shall have wine,
We shall have feast.
We shall have sweetness
Honey and milk,
Wholesome ambrosia,
Abundance of that,
Abundance of that.

We shall have harp,
We shall have harp,
We shall have lute,
We shall have horn.
We shall have sweet psaltery
Of the melodious strings
And the regal lyre,
Of the songs we shall have,
Of the songs we shall have.

Fall Equinox Essay: More Michaelmas

A Druid Missal-Any, Fall Equinox 1986

By Emmon Bodfish

Fall Equinox is associated with the gathering of root crops in Scotland and England, and perhaps, before the potato, in Ireland as well. Many of the old customs are preserved in the Highlands, enacted now in the name of "Michaelmas" festivals. Michael was the Christian personality most often substituted for Lugh, or, in other contexts, for Llyr, by the Old Celtic Church. The flaming sword and warrior aspect of the Archangel may have suggested a similarity to Lugh-of-the-Long-Arm with his magical spear. It also carries on the Celtic God's protective image and his function as defender of the people, but most particularly it is the quality of "shining-ness" that links the two.

Alexander Carmichael, collecting oral folklore in the 1800s, notes that in the Highlands, St. Michael is spoken of as "an brian Michael." That is "The Demi-god Michael." Christian saints, such as Columba or Andrew, are called Santo, Saint, from the Latin. Archangel Gabriel is "aingéal" a Gàidhlig word deriving from the Latin, or "Naomh," Gàidhlig for holy, sacred. No one else is "brian," demi-god. The Highlanders' Michael is pictured riding a winged horse, and is the patron of sailors and ships. There is no basis in the Biblical angel's character for this; it is probably a co-option from Llyr, God of the Western Ocean and Master of Horses. The same characteristics, and the combination of associations with ships and with a fiery steed, are attributed to Manannan McLlyr, in Cornwall and Brittany.

The ceremony of the carrots, described by Carmichael, in connection with Fall Equinox and Llyr/Lugh's Time, is something that could be adapted to the present R.D.N.A. celebration. It follows:

On the 29th of September, a festival in honour of St. Michael is held throughout the Western Coasts and Isles. This is much the most imposing pageant and much the most popular of the Celtic year. Many causes conduce to this--causes which move the minds and the hearts of the people to their utmost tension. To the young the Day is a day of promise, to the old a day of fulfillment, to the aged a day of retrospect. It is a day when pagan cult and Christian doctrine meet and mingle like the lights and shadows on their own Highland hills.

The Even of St. Michael is the eve of bringing in the carrots, of baking the "struan," of killing the lamb, of stealing the horses. The Day of St. Michael is the Day of the early mass, the day of the sacrificial lamb, the day of the oblation 'struan,' the day of the distribution of the lamb, the day of the distribution of the 'struan,' the day of the pilgrimage to the burial-ground of their fathers, the day of the burial-ground service, the day of the burial-ground circuiting, the day of giving and receiving the carrots with their wishes and acknowledgements, and the day of the 'oda'--the athletics of men and the racing of horses. And the Night of Michael is the night of the dance and the song, of the merry-making of the love-making, and of the love-gifts.

Some days before the festival of St. Michael the women and girls go to the fields and plains of the townland to procure carrots. The afternoon of the

Sunday immediately proceeding St. Michael's Day is especially devoted to this purpose, and on this account is known as "Domhnach Curran"--Carrot Sunday. When the soil is soft and friable, the carrots can be pulled out of the ground without digging. When, however, the soil is hard, a space is dug to give the hand access to the root. This space is made in the form of an equal-sided triangle, technically called 'torcan,' diminutive of "torc," a cleft. The instrument used is a small mattock of three prongs, called 'tri-meurach,' three-fingered, 'sliopag,' 'sliobhag.' The three sided 'torcan' is meant to typify the three sided shield, and the three-fingered 'sliopag,' the trident of St. Michael, and possibly each to symbolize the Trinity. The many brightly-clad figures swing to and fro, in and out, like the figures in a kaleidoscope, are singularly pretty and picturesque. Each woman intones a rune to her own tune and time irrespective of those around her. The following fragment was intoned to me in a soft, subdued voice by a woman who had gathered carrots eighty years previously:

'Torcan, torrach, torrach, torrach,
Sonas curran corr orm,
Michael mil a bhi dha m'chonuil,
Bride gheal dha m'chonradh

Piseach linn gach piseach,
Piseach dha mo bhroinn,
Piseach linn gach piseach,
Piseach dha mo chloinn.'

Cleft fruitful, fruitful, fruitful,
Joy of carrots surpassing upon me,
Michael the brave endowing me,
Bride the fair be aiding me.

Progeny pre-eminent over every progeny,
Progeny on my womb,
Progeny pre-eminent over every progeny,
Progeny on my progeny.

Should a woman find a forked carrot, she breaks out into a more exultant strain that brings her neighbours round to see and to admire her luck.

'Fhorca shona, shona, shona,
Fhorca churran mor orm,
Conuil curran corr orm
Sonas curran mor dhomh.'

Fork joyful, joyful, joyful,
Fork of great carrot to me,
Endowment of carrot surpassing upon me,
Joy of great carrot to me.

There is much rivalry among the women who shall have most and best carrots. They carry the carrots in a bag slung from the waist, called 'crisolachan,' little girdle, from 'crios,' a girdle. When the 'earrasaid' was worn, the carrots were carried in its ample folds. The women wash the carrots and tie them up in small bunches, each of which contains a 'glac,' handful. The bunches are tied with three-ply thread, generally scarlet, and put in pits near the house and covered with sand till required.

Fall Equinox Essay: Sirona

A Druid Missal-Any Fall Equinox 1987
By Emmon Bodfish

Fall Equinox, a minor High Day in the Druid calendar. The days are getting short again and the harvest is in full swing. This is the time of Cernunnos, and the other Deities of night, of the Season of Sleep, and the Otherworld. The Celts, as far as we know, did not have a specific lunar deity. (I often get asked for the name of a Moon Goddess.) In researching this I have come across the interesting information on the origins of the Goddess Sirona. Her name comes from the same Indo-European root as "star," although She was later associated with the source of the river Seine, a spring where a shrine to Her was located.

As the Celts moved out of the Halstatt homeland in Austria and across Europe, they re-named rivers and springs for their Goddesses, perhaps merging them with local protective Earth Goddesses. A major shrine to Sirona, located at a spring in Hochscheid has been both traced in Roman reports and verified archeologically. This shrine was associated with healing, and Sirona is shown here on plaques and in votive statues along with a young male figure. This is probably Lugh, whom the Romans equated with Apollo after they took over the site in the second century AD. When Christians later took over the shrine, they dedicated it to a "Saint Sabine," another euhemerism of a Pagan Goddess into a Christian Pious. In late Celtic times the sanctuary was a Nemeton built around a spring whose waters were directed into a pool. In the pool have been found small votive statues of the Goddess and of the Divine Couple, presumably Sirona and Lugh, and also coins and precious offerings. It is described by the excavators as an unusually rich shrine for one so far in the country.

Sirona is portrayed here, as elsewhere, in statues and wall reliefs, holding a serpent, and a bowl of eggs, probably serpent's eggs. The motif of the Serpent's Egg appears in Irish literature and in folklore about the Druid in the British Isles. Possession of these magical eggs was said to bestow divine wisdom, eloquence, and protection against spells and disease. This last quality may be a dim echo of the healing powers of Sirona and of Her ancient association with night and dreams. People seeking cures for chronic illnesses often made pilgrimages in order to sleep within the sanctuary of a healing Deity in hope of receiving a Divine Dream in which the cause and cure of their illness would be made known to them by the Goddess of the shrine. Dio Cassius wrote of a pilgrimage made by the Emperor Caracalla to the shrines of the Celts as well as to Greek and Roman temples in search of a cure.

Farther west in Gaul, Sirona takes on a more diurnal and agrarian image, and is portrayed holding an ear of grain and a bowl. The concepts of healing and of regeneration were always closely associated in Celtic culture, according to Prof. Miranda Green, archeologist and British expert on the Celts. The ear of wheat symbolized the power of growth and rebirth, truth to its name "spica" from the root for hope. Green calls Sirona "polyandrous," but evidence simply shows Her working in conjunction with several different male Deities: Lugh, Bormo, Grannus, and several other as yet unidentified male figures. She is always associated with the serpent itself as an image of healing and wisdom in the Ancient World, and a symbol associated with the milky Way in several early astronomies.

Night, rest, and healing are the domain of Sirona. The nights will be getting longer now, taking precedence over the day. But as one devotee of Sirona, in spirit if not in name, put it, "I hold the darkness to be good no less than the light." Now begins the harvest of the benefits of the "good and covering

dark." Between now and Samhain, try to visit some place in the deep country where you can see the Milky Way and the dark sky the way the Druids of Sirona saw it before artificial lights and smog lowered our vision. Anywhere you are, though, a few of the bright stars and planets are always visible, even in the city. If you can't sleep go out and look at the stars.

A meditative experiment for the radical and the brave: From now 'til Samhain, avoid all night time electronic media. Know darkness and stars.

Fall Equinox Essay: Preparation for Winter

A Druid Missal-Any, Fall Equinox 1988
By Emmon Bodfish

Fall Equinox, a minor High Day in the Reform Druid calendar. The season of Foghar begins. The harvest advances in earnest. All produce of the fields and wild woods must be gathered in before Samhain Eve. Any fruit left in the fields after that night must be left, abandoned to the birds and the wild creatures, "to feed the flocks of Cernunnos." At Fall Equinox the work of harvesting is in full swing and we can appreciate a minor holiday from our work.

There is very little to gather here at the Orinda Grove Site. After the drought and the oak moth plague of this year and last, the oaks has not ripened any acorns to speak of, and the Blue Flag bulbs and wild onions are scarce. We'll leave what there are to the animals. The deer are hungry and the squirrels have grown bold. They come into the yard or sniff around the garage. However we have a bumper crop of fire wood with all the dead saplings and fallen oak limbs. Never cut a living tree for fuel. There is plenty of the dead stuff around.

From now until Winter Solstice is the time of Cernunnos, Master of the Animals, the woodland God, the antlered shaman. He is the teacher and "brother" of mystics, and of the solitary woods hermits of the Celtic pagan tradition. Professor James Duran believes He is a cognate to Hindu Shiva. He is the magician or shaman figure, cultivating his "yoke to God" in solitude. One theory of the torque symbolism in Celtic religion is that it represents a bond to the wearer's patron deity. There is archeological evidence, shrines in caves in Spain and France with continuous offerings left over the centuries, that His identity may go back to the antlered and costumed shamans of the Paleolithic. He is a patron of hunters, and is probably cognate with the Anglo-Saxon figure of Hern the Hunter.

The emphasis of this season is balance: old and new, gains and losses. Now we can take stock of the past, of the year's activities and harvest our gains or cut our losses. Harvest is a time of endings. We are busy storing, preserving and celebrating crops and insights. Balance it with rest, and talking over future plans, beside a hearth fire if possible.

Fall Equinox Essay: Cernunnos and Dance

A Druid Missal-Any, Fall Equinox 1989
By Emmon Bodfish

Equinox approaches! This is the time sacred to Cernunnos, the Hunter God. The cult of the horned god, the shaman-god dressed in the horns and hide of a hoofed prey-animal, is one of the most ancient themes running through Indo-European-Siberian group of cultures. Cave paintings in France and Spain dating from the Paleolithic show these figures, and he is seen again on the Gundestrup cauldron, crafted by the Eastern European Celts under Druid auspicious and direction, he wears the antlers of the stag. It would be rash to think of all the horned Eurasian gods as Cernunnos, each tribe probably had their own name for him, but the theme seems universal among those cultures which lived through the last Ice Age in Europe and Eurasia north of the Caucasus. In the Pre-Indo-European Balkans he is associated with the goat, in Siberia with the reindeer, in England with the Red Deer, and in the Mediterranean and Ireland with the bull, (Here is another element linking Erin to Spain and the Mediterranean world as opposed to the rest of the British Isles or Gaul.) Everywhere Cernunnos is associated with a horned and hoofed, food producing species. He may be the Being commemorated in the "horn-dances" carried out in a number of English villages up through the nineteenth century, and now exclusively in Abbots Bromley. Whether this is a local survival from Druidic or even Pre-Celtic times, or is a rite brought with them by the Anglo-Saxon invaders in the service of their cognate deity, Hern the Hunter, is not known.

Originally Cernunnos seems to have been a hunter's god, and later to have become associated with flocks and herds as "Master of the Animals." Still later he is appealed to for prosperity and fertility in general. This was the stage of the tradition seen in the Grecian Pan cult, and in that of European "Robin Goodfellow," later distorted and debased by Christian missionaries into their "devil" cults and images. There is no devil in the Celtic Pantheon. A cosmic "bad guy" is a theological invention of a set of Middle Eastern religions including Zoroastrianism, Persian, Sumerian and Semitic as well as Christianity. Devil inventing and worshipping as we see it now is a Christian spin-off, and usually a rebellion against that same faith. It has nothing to do with the older, indigenous religions and God-figures of Europe. Cernunnos was an extremely popular figure among the farming peoples of Celtic Europe, and the Romans, newly Christianized themselves, seeing that they could not co-opt his worship, or euphemize him into a "saint," as they did a number of the other Druidic deities, debased him into a demon, i.e. the god of a rival, competing theocracy. Margaret Murray first enunciated this theory in the 1920s. Her work then fell into disrepute in the '40s and '50s, but has since been revived and vindicated. Her book, *The God of the Witches*, Oxford University Press, 1970, is worth reading if you can find it. G. Rachel Levy also sheds some light on the Mediterranean versions of his worship. In her book *The Gate of Horn*, Farber and Farber, 1948. (This book is now published as *Religious Conceptions of the Stone Age and Their Influence Upon European Thought*, New York: Harper, 1963.)

The Gaelic word "Faighe" that come to be translated "prophet," originally meant "seer" and was the name of one class of Druids, solitary forest-dwelling mystics, who may have originally been connected with the worship of Cernunnos in his role as the shaman-god. "Fiagh," the Gaelic root word for

"deer," is suggestive in this regard. The old "seer" whom Finn encountered beside the sacred pool was probably one such. They are associated with the Hazel, as Cernunnos may have be as Bride is associated with the Birch and Lugh with the Apple tree.

The Horned-god had a second sacred time beginning around the Winter Solstice with the tradition of the Plying Shaman, Mystic and inter-world journeyer, he descends Into the Land of the Ancestors, (the sun, sinking to its nadir?) to bring back new souls, of game animals and kine and humans that new animals and Infants may be born and increase and prosperity be assured. This journey, "dedicated to the continual flow and renewal of life,*" was still being undertaken by Finn-Ugric and Siberian tribal shamans into this century. It is well documented and the beliefs behind it recorded by A. A. Popov, the Russian anthropologist in his numerous books and articles,

Cernunnos' rituals and, from the evidence of offerings left secretly at cave shrines, his worship, continued long after nominal Christianization of Europe. The Highland Calluinn (Hazel-tree) Ritual is an example of one such rite, still in practice in the nineteenth century. The Protestant cleric who recorded it seems to have had no inkling of its meaning, but he writes that the people of the west Highlands, in the middle of the seventeenth century, were "little more than heathens, having been neglected by the Roman Church." According to Dwelly, of *Dwelly's Gaelic-English Dictionary* fame, it is an old west Highland belief that old Calluinn night, when the winds blow from the West, is the night of the fecundation of the trees. The West is the direction of the Celtic Other World, and of the dead. One wonders if this post-Solstice celebration marks the successful return of the shaman, (as well as the sun) from the Land of the Dead with his sack of new souls and spiritual gifts from the ancestors

(See the Yule Druid Missal-Any for 1986 for the "Santa" Claus-Cernunnos-Flying shaman connection.)

*Quote from the R.D.N.A New and Full Moon Day Service

Section Two:

The Heathen on the Heath

a.k.a.

The Thoughts of Les Craig-Harger

The Heathen on the Heath: Dying

A Druid Missal-Any, Samhain 1986

It is the dawning of our year, and the time to mourn our dead.

I mourn two men of gentle courage, Earl McKeever and George Russ. I cannot keen, or recite their deeds in epic verse; I was not so trained, and neither am I that big a liar. I wept when weeping was fresh and unavoidable. Now is the time of remembrance, and I remember each of them.

Both lived with disability; both died at the hands of murderers. What this means to the year that has ended, or the year that is beginning, or any years before or after, is beyond me--for which I am glad.

As always, I turn to the garden, to the land.

Plants are dying now, sinking to the ground, beginning to decay before the green of life has entirely left them. New growth fastens on the decay and is made strong thereby. This is the way of compost, and of those of us who bear the stigma: Survivor. Ruthlessly the living soul battens on memory. The mourner weeps proudly, wearing the names of the dead as decorations of battle.

And the earth does not judge us, nor does she care. Salmon run, and spawn, and die, and all their history is carried out to sea, along with the hope of their race. Leaves fall, and become rich loam. Myth degenerates into bedtime stories—

--And children dream.

And what shall we do, when sweet-scented loves and bright, clean angers of youth begin to disintegrate into the nameless depths of a mind no longer young? Some of us become cynical, embracing disproof when proof proves impossible. Some of us set places for the dead at our tables, and turn down their beds, and berate the living world for slighting them; we too cling to dead dreams as if loud repetition of their content would bring back our innocence, and vindicate its misconceptions as higher truth. To some of us, the passage of time is a pattern, immune to any attempt of ours to contribute. To others, time has not passed at all.

"When I die," one friend told me, "the world ends."

But I choose to inhabit a world that will outlive me, if only for company, and the desire to belong. I may not leave a mark on the face of history; there may be no place for me in any structured scheme of things.

But there's always room on the compost heap.

The Heathen on the Heath: Death

A Druid Missal-Any, Samhain 1987

Samhain is change; Samhain is ever the same. Year after year we celebrate the Eternal Return, yet in many ways, every Samhain, we are made aware that you can never really go home.

Remember the dead, they whom--at least this time around--we will not see again. If ever we do meet again, it will be a different story, with everyone wearing different faces; the beloved ghosts who watch with us this night can only wait, and whimper, hoping that when Mannannen's cloak is finally drawn between us, it is wisdom and not wounds that each shall bring away from that parting. Some changes are irrevocable.

I talk to my death. I ask his advice, and he always gives it. It never differs from the last advice he gave me, but the sound of his voice awakens the mind to flooding moonlight, clearer than the cluttered light of day, and all the hairs on the back of my neck stand up, and petty things become very small indeed. For my death says, "Whatever it is that you will do, remember that I am coming for you; I know when that is, but you don't."

We live in a real world, and we know that because, one by one, we die. This Samhain, as we stand in the moon drenched grass, can we let wishful thinking drain from us, and be there for our Gods as they are? The wishful mind is a lover so busy planning the wedding, or choreographing the seduction, or mentally buying a house, that the fiery satin of the beloved's touch goes unnoticed. Imagination given to the present, and to the opening of the senses, is psychedelic; there is no book of instructions for the opening of an eye, and no script for a kiss. Name the names of your dead, and let yourself cry. Look at the living and see them. Don't miss anything, because the next Samhain, the next year, the next life, the next time you step on this same patch of ground, everything will be different.

The Heathen on the Heath:

Seasonal Festivities

A Druid Missal-Any, Yule 1986

The wind is rising; it yowls like a ghost, or like my boojum-hunting Siamese cat. Modern society, to placate centralized authority, has its Halloweens and Christmases mixed up; Yule's defiance of the dark has always had a shiver in it, for all the blazing fires and gift-giving.

In the hills, our potlatches begin early and end late, with gifts displaying little of meekness, or modern good taste. It is a show of individual power and communal solidarity, an upraised finger to the society that names us separate and subordinate, and a jeer at the darkness. Animals are given, and food, and parts for woodstoves, and tools, and weapons. The well-to-do clothe their friends in gaudy finery; the poor may literally give the shirts off their backs. ("I got good wear out of this, but it'd really look better on you...") Some of these folk are Christians, and others evade all Gods equally; we pagans, for the most part, go in secret. But the Mother is there. Who can forget Her ways, when She blows off chunks of the roof and pours the bounty of Her waters down the backs of our necks at 4 A.M.?

The Really Together Pagan Farmer could perhaps use the Season of Sleep to catch up on same (barring the occasional invasion by the elements!) For all Her vaunted somnolence in these short days, Mom would do a lot of my winter work for

me, had I only prepared. Clover scattered in the cornfield will both feed and weed it, while we who miss the boat get to experience winter's majesty firsthand, as we haul manure in the rain. And this is the litany of the Not So Together Pagan Farmer: "Next year, for sure, I'll remember!"

People of the towns and valleys charge about at breakneck speed, readying for their own midwinter festival. They beam in childlike glee at festoons of red and gold and green--anybody recognize those colors? Spend money like water, and then go home and feed their shrewd and skeptical children one version or another of the Santa Clause: there is or there ain't. The Heathen's child didn't wait for the huffing and puffing of grownup authority. "Santa's a spirit," he said. The Heathen's child happens to believe in spirits, being something of an imp himself. Will Santa come to him in visions? Guide him through the forest at night? Bestow amulets, misplace household objects, spook the cat? There have been a disproportionate number of small, impressively-antlered deer around here lately; perhaps I should have a talk with that kid.

Do people have a Yule instinct? With crèches and evergreens, candles in varying arrangements, and assorted bells and books, we all seem to gather in the dark, to give the Wheel of the Year a push out of midwinter's mud and snow. And thus we come to love a season of harsh truths. It is now that sickly animals will die, and terminally-ill people as well. It is now that the weather takes its toll, in sniffles and shivers, in stuck, crashed, or broken vehicles. And darkness settles in our thoughts and our hearts, depression and contention and unexplained tears: we *need* our festival now. The flame of Life's energy burns low, and it is our turn to fan the embers that once blazed so heartily, whether or not we noticed or cared.

So join now, my people, remembering who we are. Let not the traditions of others, whether openly sacred or merely The Way Things Are Done These Days, bind us in unawareness. Rather let us face our hardship and heartbreaks, wearying pasts and intimidating futures, and together make loud, rude noises at them. And so we shall be prepared for the Sun's return, and strengthened for the work that is to follow. Don't worry if it isn't easy, or if the holiday's merriment has a catch in it here and there. We have the freedom to debunk the *real* seasonal fraud, and admit: it *isn't* easy, or carefree, or exactly like being a kid again. Then, having admitted it, light the fire, pour the punch, and make the light welcome when it gets here.

It isn't easy. So why should Mom have to do it all alone?

The Heathen on the Heath:

Making A Tradition

A Druid Missal-Any, Yule 1987

Time was when I tried to tie every column in with the theme of the seasons. But I've ridden at least one revolution of the year-wheel with this column, and it has finally occurred to me that Mad Sweeney handles the seasonal aspects of the Missal-Any quite well, without the aid of my scholly sloppishness. So I think I'll stop the year and get off.

What, I haven't succeeded? Why, so I haven't. For I have here a subject of rant and rave quite appropriate for winter's dark insistence. You see, it occurs to me that winters--especially country winters--are a fine time to get down to the grunt work of our religion. We have sung and feasted and sacrificed, and yelled at one another and praised our ancestors. But what do we do next? What is a pagan, or more specifically a Reformed Druid, life, in gubby day-to-day detail?

I must first admit that hard, clearheaded scholarship is something that I perceive as a duty, badly neglected on my part. I am currently poking my nose into the study of history, in bits and snippets, including more of the world than the U.S., or Celtic Britain and Ireland. The future springs from the loam of the past; if one wants to add a few nutrients for its proper growth, it helps to know what was thrown on the compost heap to begin with, and also to be reasonably aware of the nature of composting.

But what do we want to do with that future? Could I say that most of us would like to bring with us some of the values that we find in the visions of our Celtic forebears--the stubborn individualism that has led English-speaking peoples (and those who still speak Gaelic) into political experimentation that has continued to this day? Do we want to continue the openhearted pride and hospitality of the Celt, and the bold curiosity that looks the very Gods squarely in the eye?

We can only start right now. And though we may debate the correctness of possibility of writing, or rather rewriting, our own religion, the need to rewrite our culture is hardly worth an argument. Culture gets rewritten, and one can either participate actively or be manipulated by those in power. We're living a script that was heavily re-written in the aftershock of two world wars: although the sanctity of the family per se is a very old concept, the sanctity of the *nuclear* family is no older than our own parents. Cut! We're gonna have to do that scene over again. The previous generation meant well. They probably hoped, by isolating the breeding unit, to achieve greater individual prestige, and in some cases, it worked.

No one could have explained to them, without first trying it, that isolating small groups of people with specialized roles under heavy economic pressure would provide all sorts of motivation for abuse. And the failure to deal with Grandma and Grandpa, though a grandiose glitch, is no bigger than some of the boners we'll pull, once we get the lead out and start doing things.

Who's that in the back row? You say "doing things" is a fine idea for flaky South Humboldt hippies, but what about you real folks with real jobs and real bosses and neighbors and such to deal with?

You win a few, you lose a few. Actually, country folks can be just as hardheaded in their expectations as city dwellers, and although rural neighbors are fewer, they have more influence on your day-to-day life. Which brings me to the next point: if we expect to have any influence on our surroundings, we must exercise it as neighbours do, a little at a time.

It would perhaps be more fun to establish, immediately, a clan-type family structure with a set of equal-opportunity social customs. This is always a favorite fantasy, probably because everybody wants to be The McGregor. But if you are the leader of your embryo clan, you have my heartfelt sympathy. Chances are that your contributions pass unremarked, except by loud complaints of stubbornness, meddling, egotism, and being late when you drive the neighbors' kids to school. The loudest grouching will come from your own immediate family, since time devoted to a larger group is time not lavished exclusively on them.

To be even responsible, much less acceptable or polite, we must start small. This means noticing small things.

To whom do we show respect, for what, and in what ways? What are our prejudices? (Careful, lying saps power.)

Is there any subject regarding which we would not want to pass our beliefs on to our children?

Are our religious ideals reflected in our etiquette? Do we give lip service to the Mother, but expect human mothers to

stay home until their figures look normal and their kids don't cry unexpectedly? Do we fear and ridicule old age?

Do we revere Nature, but describe biological processes in the language of disgust? (Footnote: this correspondent is aware of the glory-in-grossness rhetoric of Crowley, or the Hell's Angels. She is also aware that the excuses for such rhetoric only fool men. *Please* don't refer to a pregnant acquaintance as "spawning," at least in my hearing...probably also in hers. We *do* know what you mean, and we don't like it.) Or do we use euphemisms to shove conversation away from a subject, rather than handling it in a calm and neutral tone? If a child asked you to describe sex, what words would you use? My "well, they fit together" may have been less than articulate, but it at least allowed my daughter to laugh, especially when I explained that when she was old enough, her instincts would cause her to enjoy it. "I always knew grownups were weird!" said she.

Do we deplore patriarchalism in the home, autocracy in business, and arbitrariness in law, but allow them to function unmolested? Do we "mind our own business" about socially acceptable cruelties, but pretend to the "normality" of the busy bodies in power?

Do we vote? Do we volunteer in the service of our beliefs?

Do we have a relationship with our surroundings? With plants? With animals? How well do we know our climate, our soil, our geography?

See, This is the grunt work. This is the kind of thing a religion faces you with, once you've lasted through the honeymoon phase. And half the time, once you've decided what the Gods really want you to do, your first impulse will be to try to talk Them out of it. Like, there's a quintillion bazillion gophers in my garden, and You Guys don't want me to use any poisons? Not even one little pellet? And about that geas. Folks--You really mean to tell me that You expect people to have geasa in the Eighties? Next, You'll be asking us whether we believe in magic.

But if you readers are members of the NRDNA or related organizations at this point in their development, you're the diehards, the ones who have made it this far. You've lived through the political snits and social catastrophes that drove away the dilettantes and novelty-seekers. Your pagan eyes have seen births and marriages and divorces and deaths. You have, somewhere within you, a worldview not taught to you by either mainstream religious or secular authorities.

Now, obviously, there's no law that says you can't just bug out on the project at this point. Taking your feral spiritual priorities out for a spin can make you conspicuous, especially in the current sociopolitical climate of enlightened despair. Giving up always looks terribly sophisticated.

But you can't bug out on winter.

The Heathen on the Heath:

Balance and Planting

A Druid Missal-Any, Spring Equinox 1986
By Les Craig-Harger, Humboldt County, CA

On the farm, the day of equal-night may pass, as usual, unmarked by any observance, yet no less sacred; sacred is each moment to its own purpose. Remember the day of planting, and keep it holy, for few hours separate the rain and clumping mud from the onrushing summer. Too late, wherein seedlings rise just in time for the devouring heat of midsummer, and bolt before any but the birds and mealybugs have tasted them! Forget not the blessed days of foal-gentling, before the young horse can overcome its wobbliness and see what tottering and snail-paced wimps we two legs are! And are the fowls laying, and where--sacred to this purpose are a thousand times and place, including the tool shed, or your tennis drying on the front porch.

And so sometime after the blooming of the first roses, and the setting out of beans and tomatoes from the greenhouse, someone may notice that spring has, indeed, sprung, and too bad we didn't have time for a Maypole last week...

One may be thankful for the Equinox as it whizzes by, seeing that the daylight hours finally hold their own with the hours of tripping over the water-hose and falling in the compost pit. One may recognize the rich generosity of the Mother in the blackness of dirty fingernails, and the smell of last year's dead leaves calling out to this year's living plants. On the day of the Equinox. I may be on my hands and knees in the rain, planting with my fingers in a narrow raised bed, so that each row can be reached without putting my weight on the moist earth. I may be hunting ducks' eggs in the dew, with my son gathering feathers behind me. This year, I may be watching the cow calve, or frantically stringing fence against the incursions of milk stealing steers. But meditations may creep across the back of my mind, meditations of this day of balance, or precious and minutely-measured time--of economy, the ever shifting economy of life and of the earth, which makes hay, as the sun begins to shine, of all our smaller concerns.

In the city, our time is worth money. I could lay aside my shovel, take pen in hand, and prove to myself that in not renting a tractor to till my garden, I am earning perhaps eleven cents an hour. But what cosmic Boss offers me money for this time? And is not my time mine to keep or use, as well as sell? If I compare the time of buddy boots, dripping sweat, and peace with the time of driving cars and sitting at desks, I laugh. And if my time is not entirely my own, but also Hers, shall I offer Her days of my good, smelly, biodegradable toil, or hours and minutes of noise and spewing hydrocarbons? (Hours and minutes, which by Her own executive fiat, may not come until the time for planting is past, for it would take a worse farmer than I am to roll a thousand pounds of metal over the fragility of wet ground, when my own feet can tread their appointed walkways, and fingers and Garden-Weasel, while inefficient, will at least not undo the work of a year's composting.

And what do we plant? As we follow Mother around the garden, clumping like children in Her cast-off shoes, which game of creation shall we play? Each has its own rules; every garden must be a little ecosystem, hopefully favoring plants over pests, and competing successfully with a system of crabgrass, slugs, gooseberry runners, and aphids that already works perfectly well, thank you. The hardy radish will crowd out the weeds, but how many radishes will one family eat? Perhaps I can sell them turnips again this year, if I chop them

up finely in Chinese food, or dissolve them in lentil soup. Carrots love tomatoes, and vice versa, but neither of them loves my heavy acid loam; can I till in some sand, without merely creating a playground for the gophers? (My onions, potatoes, and garlic are planted--long before the Equinox--in old truck tires with wood or wire beneath them; for such gopher-ambrosia as these, I must create not only a separate ecosystem, but a separate little planet, inaccessible to nature's little restaurant critics.) The years teach me to recognize lost causes, too; Bak Choi will substitute for celery and cabbage both, and the mealybugs will at least share it with me. We ask for what we want, and do what we can to earn it, but the final choice is at the Mother's whim, varying from year to year. One year someone wished me either peas or peace, and got the accent wrong, for peas were upon me until long after summer should have withered them, whether I ever cultivated them properly or not. The next year, everyone ate a lot of borscht; the next, we learned a thousand and one ways to cook banana squash. I cannot bring myself to despair of eggplants, artichokes, or corn, but surely She laughs at my efforts, as each year's one-meal harvest is celebrated with a toast of "Better luck next time!"

So I'll raise a dented beer-can to this day of balance, before I've forgotten it (and drink the half that doesn't get poured in the slug-traps) and then go on to do as I've always done, celebrating not days, but seasons of labor and years of learning. Like most of Her mob of grubby kids, I love our Mother more than I bother to tell her; and perhaps as we lesser mothers of forgetful offspring do, She know this. Another year of Her rough patience with my efforts has begun...

The Heathen On the Heath:

The Balanced Epistle

A Druid Missal-Any, Spring Equinox 1987

Balance? Not to doubt You, oh my Mother, but I don't see it. As the hill greens around me, and the ducks begin to lay, work looms large; winter's anomie begins to thaw, and my own identity pokes its nose out of hiding--a belated groundhog in search of its shadow. Where is meaning, or mission, or will? There is a place for me in these hills, and right easily could I stagnate in it.

Seasons come to us, reminding us that we are neither omnipotent nor alone. But seasons have as many names as there are folk to speak them. I give rose-cuttings to a Wiccan neighbor "for Brigid," because if I said Oimeic she'd say "huh?" And local farmers have other names for it: lambing-time, and also a pain in the ass, with bummers to nurse and marauders to repel--coyote, cougar, dog-pack. And then one must ask, are the berry-bushes cut yet? Does the nursery have seed-potatoes? The time to remember the Equinox, and planting, is in February, before it is too late.

Much is said in these pages of tradition, and of scholarship, and of knowledge that must not be lost. Others, I among them, point in turn to the knowledge that sits directly in front of our noses, just waiting to be ignored. Neither the traditional scholar, nor I, can do anything as a purist but yell at the other; in the vibrating tension between us is most of reality.

So let me say now that I do not set out to abandon the mythic awareness of our forefolk, but only to live a life with leaves as well as roots. If we are not merely the inventors of myth, but co-participants with the gods, then we must recognize that myth springs both from humanity and from the soil itself. Gladly will I learn what my people once knew of their homeland. But if you ask *me* (or even if you don't; you

can always read something else!) I will tell you what I learn from my own homeland, for that may well be the only thing on Earth that I know and you don't.

Myth like the grubby liberty of the hills, and hill folk join gladly in the game, taking to themselves small notorieties as straight-men to Nature's comedies, or soldiers in mythic battles. There is a Trickster here, called The Buck You'd Better Not Shoot At: he's robbed a thousand gardens with impunity, and whosoever shoulders a gun against him is injured in the attempt. I've seen him myself; he's magnificent. There are good-lucks and bad-lucks, many of them founded in common sense: don't hunt between the houses could hardly be called baseless superstition, nor could the rough interpretations of Karma or hubris that passes for common knowledge. "Something will hear you!" we warn our braggarts, and they turn pale and shut up. And "God" help the one who drives heedlessly by a neighbor's stalled or swamped vehicle, for the local gods will not.

Where do these youthful, local traditions and the elder traditions of Celtic Druidism meet? I spent as many days as anyone else with neither any recognizable knowledge, nor any use for it; then a neighbor came to me. "You're the Druid around here," he said; "which trees should I be careful not to cut?"

I could have said that Druids don't deal with things like that, except that what little I know of tradition states that our forebears were priests and cognoscenti, *meant* to be consulted by their neighbors. I could have said that Neopagan Druidism was a religion--but since when does that make it irrelevant? So "the Druid around here" spent a long day in a neighbor's woodlot, trying to feel the life-forces of trees, inspecting roots for firmness and tops for fullness, and trying to remember snatches of an ecology course she took in 1970. Seat of the pants flying, indeed--but it might have been less confusing if I'd spent more time studying!

And there, perhaps, we have balance, if not stability. Just so is the spring a time of balance, though when it snows one day and cooks my greenhouse the next, it may be too pretty to appreciate it. The year is not an orderly, well-mannered procession; it goes by fits and starts. And learning, if it is to take us anywhere we haven't been before, must see-saw between study and appreciation, with each testing the other.

And when I am confused, I shall admit confusion--not by intoning that there are Things I Was Not Meant To Know, but by realizing that I can't see (or portray) the whole picture at once. I speak to you only as one person speaking, saying one thing at a time. We are not the people of the One God, the One Truth, or the One Way; we are like the forces of Nature that we worship -- a howling confabulation of extremes.

This is our balance (as when we chant to a March windstorm, "Balanced now are we!" and burst into giggles.) Let no voice among us be silenced; this is what we are, and how we grow.

The Heathen on the Heath:

Fertility

A Druid Missal-Any, Spring Equinox 1988

The hills truly do flow with the milk of the ewe, and the birth of lambs in the frost. Some of them die. Lambkind, however, continues in its sheer numbers, milling back and forth past the bones of the lost ones in the field.

For the animals, the promise of fertility is enough. Each mother beast has her own soft wondering here-baby sound, of desire fulfilled and her work cut out for her. Once I, too, made such sounds.

For the ewe, the task is over when she dies, or when death looms so close that the body will no longer answer any other call. For a woman, time passes a little differently. My tall son and daughter are a source of pleasure and pride, but other work calls to me now, more clearly than that one work of my body. I shrink from the promise of fertility with something akin to revulsion. Would I risk my life again, not in action but in helplessness, while others direct me and attend my most intimate needs? Would I hang my heart once again on a newborn's uncertain commitment to survival? For the door between world's swings both ways at birth, and an infant may exit as well as enter. And no parent desires to outlive his or her offspring. And would plain practicality relegate my ambitions to a back corner, while I spent five years or more in a routine of baby care that left no time for anything else but servitude?--For nothing gainful can be done with hours doled out in increments of twenty minutes or less.

Not if I can help it! But then, it didn't look that way to me when I was doing it. In calm, this appears as a function of the passage of time. Once a mother, I was a maiden no more. And someday, even the intransigent body will take its slow, awkward steps from mother to crone. So why (to more women than just me) should fertility, having outlived its personal usefulness, fester like a wound that will not heal?

Some of this can be ascribed directly to the arrogance and cruelty of the powerful. What major corporation would rent part of a woman, when it can more conveniently buy all of a man? The executive woman performs many hidden duties: not only to do her work, but to be the knife-thin, aseptically tailored embodiment of a life with no other purpose. This is called Equal Rights, for now we, too, can owe our souls to the company store. And so birthing becomes either an expensive luxury, or the task of the unambitious. And the earth does not groan, for there are too many humans already.

This is our problem. Over the generations, we have brought it on ourselves, and now we bear it alone. Alone as a race, and often alone as individuals: over such issues as crying babies, housework, and the division of money not equally earned, we squabble rancorously among ourselves.

Very much has already been said, some of it by me, about the need as either political or religious whatever-we-ares to respect the decision of a mother to be a mother. But what is a mother?

Motherhood is a role, a set of tasks. But Motherhood--the embodiment of the many-named Mother we worship--is a form of power. And like any form of power, it can be abused.

We moderns shrink from the corniness of the imitator Dei, not only because of its grandiose indignity, but also through fear of failure. Which one of us is ready to be *the* Lover, *the* Father, or to brave face-on the death and rebirth inherent in the growth and independence of a Child? And who among us can live in our birthing and caring as Earth lives,

both passive and productive? If I were Earth, could I whine and manipulate and demand that others care for me? Could I use the sacredness of my condition as an excuse for tyrannical Illogic, or blackmail loved ones with my supposed fragility?

Admittedly, if I were Earth, mainstream society still probably wouldn't like me very much. If I were Earth, I would sweat blood and wallow in pleasure, all in one day. I would stride through the entire firmament with Babies on Board and no bumper sticker. I would smell of milk burps and diaper enhancers and the passion of begetting, and care little what any child of mine thought of it. I would lie quiescent under the mud pies and scheming of my young, but do nothing to keep my tsunamis and tornados and earthquake, from dusting the impossibilities off them. And the lambs would drop in the silvered chill of the grass, but spring would come when it came, and no sooner. And by human standards, I'd laugh too much.

And if I were Earth, I still wouldn't know where the money was coming from, but I would continue to Create, and not sweat the details. Without humility, I would take the gifts of heat, of light, of His love, and make life of them, simply because that is what I do.

Obviously, the courage of Earth far surpasses my own. But in all phases of life, there are opportunities to try. When the Gods inspire, shall I say, "but the floor is still dirty!" or "the boss wouldn't like it!" and whimper proudly of what might have been? Beware the boredom of the Gods! Energy is given to us, to flow productively through us; its unfulfilled dispersal can be dangerous. Man, if you are not a father of children, what do you father? Ideas? Music? Shapes and colors, toys and shelters, parades of number and order, or conflicts and their resolution? Or do you open another beer and shrug, saying that the Father is not you? And woman, if you are done with birthing, or do not birth, what else comes out of you: teaching, or healing, or things made with the hands? Vision? Hospitality? Or purposeless busywork and endless complaint, excused by your own insignificance?

Brigit rules the season, and my woodstove. Sometimes She also decides to rule me. I can reach for guitar or typewriter, and let Her have her sport, or I can sit and fuss and hope She doesn't decide to burn the house down.

The Heathen on the Heath:

Growth and Life

A Druid Missal-Any, Beltane 1986

Beltaine, Belanos, love's return. The sacred shampoo commercial, Lord and Lady finally looking up, enraptured, to meet each other's arms. Fulfillment blossoms forth in a smugly profligate burst of life, without regards for our priorities; weeds, rabbits, gophers, and bugs share the celebration with humanity's pampered pets. Who invited the piratical jays, the defiantly rapacious boar? Never mind, you guys; I think She did. Anyway, they're not leaving, and where's the beer?

Beltaine, bright blossoms, how does your garden grow? With glistening backs and gaily discarded shirts, and a thousand things I don't remember planting, and none of it all in a row. My own strawberries could take lessons from the wild ones that have crept in through the fence, and the big, bold blooms of the flower garden struggle in vain to keep up with their more fragile sisters of meadow and creekbed. And our own turn to wildness as well, howling dog and disappearing tomcat in their turn, playing hard at the only game in town. The ducks are a scandal to the jaybirds, and the jaybirds are a

scandal to everybody, but scandalous thoughts come easily to mind at this time of year.

I have seen snow on this day--doubtless some manic prank for my especial benefit--but if I want to can tomatoes this year, I will Have Faith and set the starts out, now. Pleasure coaxes us to faith, to belief in the unknowable future; why else would I trust my corn to a wind called the Freight Train, because it comes every day at four o'clock? Of course, I stake everything, giving the neighbors something to laugh at when the entire assemblage arrives in their yard, green plastic ties gaily fluttering in the residual breeze. Still there are some covenants ineradicable and unbroken, and this day will see the Earth Mother's signature to Her indelible word: the sleek twin banner of the new-sprung squash plant, and the opulent green of the potato leaf. How richly She engraves the simple promise: you shall not starve.

The breeze is perfumed with paradox; roses and garlic, those old lovers of garden-book fame, confuse the nose together. The compost heats up evocatively, and the barnyard is definitely a barnyard, unless the wind is blowing through the lilac bush.

This, they tell us, is the Season of Life, as opposed to the Season of Sleep. This is because this is the Season of Damned Little Sleep, as the screech-owl's mad laughter proclaims its own inexplicable business to the world at large, and deer bound crashingly by the window, no fear of anything but boredom.

Life.

Life! LIFE! Wake up, oh Party Poopers, and celebrate Life! And restless at our Lady's command, we do. For is it not Her pleasure-principle that draws us to her purpose, starting with air but inevitably going on to the harder stuff, while She, our Connection, smiles and gently suggests? We lust and are fruitful, hunger and work, desire and create. And gently, irresistibly, she draws us on.

Beltane. Blessed be, my people. Look about us, and see the endless, pointless, perfect purpose of our existence.

The Heathen on the Heath: Praising the Gods of May

A Druid Missal-Any, Beltane 1987 (published Solstice 1987)

In any Neopagan Druid service, we pause self-consciously to remind ourselves that we are standing in one limited spot, using limited names to offer the limitless Gods a passel of praise and sacrifice that They don't actually need.

In Beltane's disorderly abundance this reminder becomes especially poignant. Where is need of any kind in all of this? Fullness approaches, and our need is for union, for celebration: to be drawn into the riotous family of nature. Beltane is a love story, and I shall go a-Maying.

Shall I call you Earth Mother? Talithu? Nerthus? Ina? In all languages You have a name. I have trusted the seed to its rebirth in the rich death-and-life cycle of the loam; the plant has risen. Someday I shall be part of this, in body as well as in spirit. Is composting and mulching and planting and watering praise? Is gratitude praise?

Shall I call you Danu, Wellspring, Mother of Gods and of Mysteries? Mysteries are not that-which-man-was-not-to-know, but that which lures the mind beyond its depth, lest it grow too stolid to swim. Is it praise to seek our origins, to stare into the past and future, to revel in identity? Is it praise to be ourselves?

I begged my vision through night's chill, and morning's first ray was a kiss. Belanos, Lovelight, Seed-father; what is my praise but desire? The praise of green grass means the same, but love does not judge.

An antlered Cernunnos, may we amuse You! Ever the joke is on us, Lord of Beasts and of deep woods, dark fear and bright mockery. By green bough and animal-cry I know I shall live and lust and die in good company, but praise? You've heard me say things less polite. My flower gardens belongs to Rhiannon, for what She has taught me. In birdsong and sweet scents nature may praise the wise Horsewoman, but I can only learn. Let there be forgetfulness of that cruelty too often called justice: honor is a fresh blooming wild flower, and valor a note of music. Is a life praise? I cannot know while I am living it.

Like children, we praise greedily, reaching up for notice and acceptance, as a baby demands a hug. Our Gods are Mothers, Fathers, Lovers, Teachers; our gratitude quivers with wants yet unspoken. Like children, we have little to offer but ourselves and our works, in the hopes that our arch-Parents will gather us to Them as sentimentally as we do our own children. (All the while trying Their patience by attempting to shove our siblings out of the way, and hog all the attention for ourselves!) Is sharing praise, or service, or respect for fellow-creatures?

Surely we do not worship because we think our guaranteed annual year depends on it. And if we worship for the sake of the Gods, what shall we say to the Gods we do not know? The people of Thor offered wary respect to the White Christ, until Christian priests rejected, on Christ's behalf, the brotherhood of Thor. Then might Thor's people denounce Christ as a Wimp; but never did they take the view that what they did not know did not exist. Defining "unproven" as "false," or "myth" as "fabrication," or "unknown" as "nonexistent" is a popular failing of the current scientific establishment; in seeking our own science, we must remember that the modern mind is trained to the square corners and shut doors of monotheism. Though pre-existing knowledge is there for us, we are denied the cheap tricks of Central Authority. Do we worship in ritual? And what is our ritual: the mutable traditions of a farmer in the garden? A window opening on the visions of our forbears? Or a door to shut between emotion and thought, magic and work, religion and real life? Lugh help us; it's not an easy path.

We seek the path of heroes, for the modesty of the monotheist is another cop-out we don't get. Saints are safe in Heaven, beyond the reach of our kind, but heroes are meant to be emulated--though they may shine brighter out of antiquity, all their awkward moments over and one with. We need only remember that some being or circumstance will eventually play Emer to our Cuchullain, and require us to place money where mouth is.

So be splendid in the splendor of May, fellow wedding-guests! If our praise is presumptuous and our dreaming extravagant, only look around: with gaudy flower fields, flooding light, and leaping beasts, we have a fine example.

Salacious Spring Meditation:

Make sure the rigor of your mind is not rigor mortis, but the other kind!

The Heathen on the Heath:

Life and Death

A Druid Missal-Any, Beltane 1988

My son's cat, Boadicia (a proper battle-queen, with knives on her chariot wheels) has just brought forth four mewling heirs to her warlike throne. They rest in a box that once held frying chickens, and think happy thoughts.

My son is the proud one: Bo is a little confused. Who will ye marry on Beltaine day? When the tomcat comes around, she wants to kill him. And I watch the little princes and princesses as anxiously as she does, remembering my own little wonders, which had to be rescued from my incompetent womb by men with blades, rubber gloves, and endless dials and gauges. The door into this world swings both ways...

Check on the kittens," Daniel says. "I'm not sure Bo won't take them out of the box and put 'em back in Olin's bed." I do not yet interrupt a system that a mother cat doubtless understands better than I do, however young and inexperienced she may be. So when my eyes finish opening, I use my spy-hole—a gap between the boards in the wall of my son's room, visible from the ladder to the loft.

My glasses are still in a kitchen drawer, but I can make out an indistinct Bo-and-kitties blob, and a smaller orange blob off to one side. Rattiness has already given way to the audacity of fur.

The fuzzy reddish blot does not move. I hear a small, grunting noise. Perhaps it has moved aside to answer a call of nature, and is awaiting the fullness of time. I am barely awake. I do not want to know more.

Coffee. The horse needs her hay. Dogs trip me; ducks laugh. I don't think about the perils of fertility. The hell I don't! I did not share Bo's touching faith in the universe: her first heat simply pre-dated my being able to afford to spay her. My male animals remain as they are, for the sake of the élan that their altered counterparts seem to lack. But I know what my female critters would be missing—urgency, pain, birth. And motherhood, the one solid joy among--all of them, presents an overpopulated world with another potentially homeless child. No, not homeless! If no one else takes the little ones, I do. A stray once offered me a real deal on puppies does anybody wants one?

I'm putting it off. Something has either gone wrong in that box, or it hasn't. I will either look, congratulate Bo again, and then relax and have breakfast, or I will spare Bo the pain of further association with the corpse of her child.

I will look, but not too closely. My glasses remain in the drawer.

The orange one is still there, still motionless. May it nurse at the undying teats of Earth, How big it is, handsome and furry. It sits in an attitude of guardianship, watching over Bo's unconcerned sleep...with *huge*...exactly round pale...plastic...eyes.

The devilishly grinning toy Garfield that Olin set in attendance on them is doing his job.

Once again I have been a human, empowered and therefore a klutz. That which has escaped my control is doing just fine, thank you, without respect for my megalomaniac and overprotected neuroses. Once again I have peered tremblingly into the face of the Mother, expecting to see death, and found instead the tentative whimsy of love. Sometimes worship is humility. Sometimes worship is as rich and private as a stolen kiss. And sometimes worship consists simply in letting go of

responsibilities that don't belong to you. My son already knew that. I have just been shown.

Even when life is fragile, it is not brittle: we invented brittleness. With what do we replace our innocence? What playful and unnecessary gift do we have for the May-bridal and summer-birth? For they will be celebrated in spite of us, even up to the day when life is no more. There is a time to do battle against the destructiveness of power, and a time to simply let go of power and join in the party.

For reasons beyond our ken, She did invite us.

The Heathen on the Heath:

Babbles on about Patronage

A Druid Missal-Any, Beltane 1989

I recently had a very dear brother tell me that my life in the woods had a romantic mystique of being more genuine than a pagan life in the town. May I say, hogwash? The only thing the Heath has managed to impress upon the Heathen and make it stick, so far, is how *un*-genuine a life she usually leads, next to her other brethren of water, beast, and tree. Oh, close-up adoration of the gods is a very moving experience. But there's more to a god or goddess than loving him or her, and it's all much too big for us, and I suspect that the energy of our natural comedy is a better feast for the immortals' table than any amount of praise and sacrifice.

One thing that I'm sure inspires a veritable salvo of godly giggling is how we deal with our patrons and teachers, both in the other world and in this one. Most of you probably know your patrons, and have at least some idea of who your totem beasts are. Some of you may know a departed or disincorporate spirit who teaches you, or uses you to speak to others. Some of this stuff is very recognizable; other times, you may shake your head, check whatever resources you use to identify the "real" archetypes, and decide that you're simply crazy.

Totemism, for instance. I'm not going to get into whether our forebears practiced any precise or organized form of totemism, although Cuchullain's relationship with the hound (killing one, then having to fulfill its function, and thereafter being forbidden to harm the hound or eat of its flesh) sounds a lot like totemism to me. But we Neopagans are balanced between two influences: What is born into us from our ancestors? And then, what do the gods and the beasts do to us in the here-and-now?

For instance, I sit at the feet of the entire canine tribe. Wolf, dog, coyote, fox--all bitches and vixens are my sisters. *Elder* sisters. A totem is a teacher, a giver of omens, a bridge between human anomie and the solidarity of nature. I don't know anyone else whose attachments are so general. I do not know that for me to ignore the call of any pack-running nightsinger means disaster. It puts me in quite a dilemma, because a country homestead, with its deliciously helpless ducks and chickens and its panicky newborn grazers, is an even worse place to interact with large number of canines than a house in town. So in a very undignified, non-ritual way, my totem is constantly teaching me the difference between genuine love and respect and the phony human construct of charity. *We* are not the gods. An ordinary housedog knows the gods better than I do.

It can be a pretty harrowing relationship. There's you, and there's your teaching-beast, and there's the rest of the world. Are you brother or sister to a beast that the neighbours regard as property, or a menace, or a running larder? I listen to

the song of the Grey Brethren on the ridges with an entirely different emotion than do the sheep-ranchers a little further down the valley, though we meet on the common ground of wishing dysentery and poison oak on the morons who dump unwanted dogs "out in the wilds" to seek out their niche as incompetent pack members and stock killers.

Sometimes an animal relative will come to you for its *death*. Fub that one, and you're in big trouble. I know.

Then there are the creatures other than your totem who show up here and there with messages or lessons, or just to make your day. There was the king stag of our hill, laughing at me. There was the squirrel crossing the road, to show me the consequences of letting faster drivers (or anything else which is simply more aggressive or socially acceptable than I am) push me around. There are the white cranes that feed in the pastures north of here, whose mere presence lights up my heart for no reason that I can name, and the river otters who join me for a dip: "Screw it; this is playtime!"

You can't put your life in a pattern, or make a pretty pattern with the wild things in all their rightful places: not and know anything about yourselves. Nonhuman logic is not going to make sense to you. A brave man can find himself chosen by a grazer; a timid woman might have a totem that hunts to survive. There is more to any animal or spirit than one human can know.

To the sparrow, the sparrow was himself; to the raven, he was dinner. Definitions can be a real bitch sometimes.

Plants will choose you, too. What kind of wood is your staff made of? I don't have one. I kept waiting for a branch of madrone to wave yoo-hoo at me. Meanwhile, the bay tree at the head of my garden, that I had talked to and cried on and rested under for the last dozen years, dropped a branch in this winter's snow. It's about ten feet long, and as thick as my leg and finally today it occurred to me that my staff is smack in the middle of it, waiting for me to get my lazy butt in gear and whittle it out. "Hey, is anybody awake here?"

I suspect that the gods sort of meet us in the middle, choosing us when we most need them. Perhaps we look harder for our gods, because religion makes such a blatant difference between us and the rest of the world, and the gods are such an obvious feature of it. We meet with blessings, opportunities, and quest. Eventually, we find the gods who are our patrons. When I was younger, I always thought that my patroness would be the goddess who ruled over my purpose in life, or my identity. Now I know better: my patroness is the goddess that don't cut me no slack.

Paganism is not a TV set, and the teachings of gods and beasts are not a spectator sport: our patrons and our totems will all want something from us. Our laughing disclaimer at the beginning of services may remind us to respect reason, but the praise and sacrifice that follows is just as necessary, to keep our end of the bargain up until we find something better to offer. Wherewith, I offer this praise:

Who loves you?
Whose laughter caresses your departing back?
Beneath whose cloak of midnight do your eyes adjust to the dark,
And whose hand sets the geas before you
Like a wall of stone?
To this, I give my heart.

The Heathen on the Heath:

The Gift of Horses

A Druid Missal-Any, Summer Solstice 1987

I invoke that portion of compost, which is the gift of horses.

Do you guys know how many times I've rewritten this #!%?! thing? I think we can settle down and admit that the Missal-Any has become a new format: Interactive Nonfiction. Is there some Hitchhiker's Guide to the minority-theological Galaxy? Or are we headed for the Snit at the End of the Universe? Stay tuned...

This is the season of battle; the Sun stands ringed by hero-light, facing the confrontation He cannot win. In the summer blaze of midsummer, YES!, we stand cocky and feisty at His side. The day is long and summer just begun--will it not last forever? By August, each warm hour is precious: our words and deeds will echo with the gentleness of farewell. The (Carleton) traditional services chant our glee at the conquest of day over night, but most of us have our moments of rooting for Pryderi. We are in our glory, our attitude of immortality unsmirched, yet we can still take comfort in saying "This, too, shall pass."

We (genetic and/or emotional) Celts are historically marked as argumentative cusses, as witness the forms of lampoon, rant, and challenge-in-verse. Boldness is our legacy, and defensiveness our last year's garbage.

What is the appropriate channeling of our quibblesome nature? I, for one, would not go back to my pacifist beginnings; I have little respect for the tameness of a toothless dog. My most honored comrades are dangerous folk, controlled by volition rather than weakness. When people are scarce enough to be a resource rather than a nuisance, the strong can stop apologizing. We don't sheathe our blades in the neighbor's house out of fear, but because we respect our neighbors.

Also, if we love, we are having too much fun to care overmuch what our beloveds can do to us...

As a religious minority, we are an automatic rural neighborhood. We have our local characters, but let the stranger say, "Do you know that nut-case?" We will quite likely say, "Oh, he/she's okay once you know him/her," and find that, against the perspective of the rest of the world, we mean it. I know, I know; you'll all howl that this kind of neighborhood loyalty is not something you reserve for Druids or extend to everyone who takes that name. That's true. My primary clan relationships are likely to differ from Tom's, or Albion's, or Mad Sweeney's, and a good number of the members of my clan or clans do not name Neopagan Druidism as their religious orientation. They are all, however, joined to me in avowed and reliable goodwill, and respectful of the orientations I profess. So okay, I am available to my own clansfolk before I would be available to Tom, or Albion, or any other Druids that I don't personally know. But I am available (willingly, and in good faith) to my Druish brethren and sistern before I am (willingly, and in good faith) available to the mainstream authorities. I assume that we squabble *en tutoyant*, and will still be there for each other if that is necessary. (And yes, you can call me on that. Box 215, Myers Flat, CA 95554.)

This doesn't mean you have to agree with me, or approve of me. Your minds, especially in devotion to the Gods, are your own.

Fear of names? Sometimes. What do I most fear to name: my Gods, or myself? My dealing with some Gods are embarrassingly private. And I myself possess a name that will

call me from sleep, or draw my energy to the user of it; I don't give that to just anybody. But Tom and Albion have boldly "named" themselves in these pages, to a degree that I have not. Ergo, the Summer Statement: Here am I, a woman 35 years old, attempting to farm a hillside steading in southern Humboldt while making a living as a freelance reporter and general odd-jobber (currently, selling cherry cider and produce to tourists.) The untidy generosity of my physique bears witness to my undisciplined nature, but I'm still pretty functional.

I write--basically, anything that anyone will print, and a lot of things they won't. Most dear to me of all our lore are the poetic, emotionally-charge stories of Erin. Like Albion, I was once a Quaker. My religious practice contains little of formal observance, but I operate under a number of what I see as my own geasa and obligations. (Laugh if you want; sometimes I do, too.) I use magic only as a last-ditch adjunct to doing my damndest on the physical plane, and only for certain purposes. I honor ethics and deplore morality. My greatest weakness is a reflexive snapping and snarling at what I see as elitism or authoritarianism. I once beaned a wife-beater with my purse, but I am not reliably or consciously brave. I'm a solitary 3rd, married, with a 7-year-old son who lives with me full-time and a 9-year-old daughter who visits.

Tom, Albion, I offer this: who among us has the *power* to be a threat to the others? (Hopefully none of us is such a slob as to throw energy around as we argue, instead of grounding it out!) Both "promoting darkness" and "Ku Klux Klan" show a fine sense of drama, but you know effing well that if the storm troopers showed up looking for any of us tomorrow, the rest would like like right valiant rugs to cover his/her ass. So *will* you guys kiss & make up, or at least wait for the bell?!

The Heathen on the Heath: Garden Wars

A Druid Missal-Any, Lughnasadh 1986

Okay, enough already! This is war. Sweat runs down too fast to blink away from my eyeballs, and my hands are too filthy to mop it away. How can so many slugs exist in the *world*, let alone in my garden? And where did that eighth duck go, and just what is it that got past my eight-foot fence, stacked tires and assorted whirligigs and wind chimes to eradicate half my potato plants? Hey, gang, there's a limit! Isn't there? At Beltaine you came to party. Now the sun is past the zenith, and you're still raiding the pantry. I've tried asking you to go home. No dice. And the dog has some inexplicable wound on his paw—boars? Bobcats?

This is war. Somehow mine ancient enemy, the wild gooseberry, has started some fifth-column activity amid the tomatoes, and sent spies among my mealybug-ridden brassicae. No use griping to Mother: She and her Consort are making hay while the sun shines, and hardly interested in the squabbles of the children.

Whoever first characterized life in Nature as peaceful had a somewhat warped sense of humor.

The very plants do battle; this winter my pruning-saw must break up a slow-motion barroom brawl between an oak, a madrone, and a whitethorn, all of whom can survive quite nicely if they will simply settle for their own spaces and leave each other alone. Fat chance! All living things demand to not only live, but win, preferably at the expense of any and all possible competitors. That herd of wild pigs must not only have the next ridge, but also *my* ridge, to find true happiness.

And what members of any one species think of each other cannot be printed and sent through the U.S. mail.

Where does that leave your everlovin' Heathen? Confused, mostly. While I have no compunctions about claiming the fruits of my own labor, and whatever else I can pry loose (I'm not even a vegetarian) there are certain human-engendered refinements on the art of war that I will not use. Mom may not care whether my tomatoes or her gooseberries grow in the garden, but that's not sufficient reason to dump assorted petrochemicals in Her water-table--or feed to my down hill neighbors, if it comes to that. I'll go after rodents with cats, traps, and a .22, but I have no desire to bring down my allies the redtails with the "friendly fire" of B-gon or DeCon. Can this be said to make a difference, in view of how the rest of my species chooses to nuke their nuisances? And ought I to be messing around in here at all? This garden is an invasion in itself, exotic and pampered organisms installed in the devastation of turf that I chose to call French Intensive Double-Digging. That's not what was here to begin with.

Thing is, an attitude of nobles oblige requires a certain amount of backup. Kindness is for what we control, and as I gaze in utter dismay on the ruin of my efforts, and the impossibility of reverting to humanity's original mode of participation (hunting and gathering) without overstressing an already depleted wild economy, I realize that my control over this environment is minimal. And wasn't that what I wanted?

Admittedly the fight is rigged. Pit me, with a rifle, against a boar with tusks and I'll bet on me every time. I ought to know; I rigged it myself...I, and forebears who shared my motives, long ago. Like the boar, we also want it all. Unlike the boar, we may someday be unfortunate enough to get it all, thereby destroying it. Will we someday live on chemicals, or mutated yeast, because we have won all our wars and there are no other surviving species?

The squirming, biting, struggling child takes endless comfort in the unarguable restraint of Mother's arms. But as the child ceases to be a baby, a little caution creeps into its protest, unaware at first: we don't want to *hurt* Mommy, after all. And hopefully, by the time we are big and strong enough to do Her real damage, we will have thoroughly absorbed the lesson that She has feelings, too.

Except that people-en-masse are always a little dumber than people one at a time.

Where are you in the world? Where are your battles, what have you won...and at what cost? Come, swap war-stories with me, for even if you are busily making chemicals out of other chemicals, or laying concrete over ground, we are all the same in this. Nobody gave us the right to be who we are; we have made ourselves. Nobody owed us a place in the world; we have taken it. This is *our* nature, as surely a part of us as greenness is of grass, to be channeled but never truly changed.

Just remember that perhaps it is not worth postponing, indefinitely at finite cost to the rest of the world, one's own last battle. For *sus scrofa, homo sapiens*, or any living creature, anywhere, there is but one ending. Let the sun blaze on into the night, drink deep, and gird yourself with honor. It is a good day, at least, not to know what's going to happen. And no matter how many sandbags we make of our environment, to pile around our laughable foxholes in the scheme of things, it's out there, waiting for us, somewhere: the fight we can't win.

Nobody's getting out of here alive.

The Heathen on the Heath:

First Fruits

A Druid Missal-Any, Lughnasadh 1988
(published Fall Equinox 1988)

First fruits. They don't seem to come as easy as they used to. The ground, the gophers, the winds, and my own intrusive human garbage, all fight harder each year. Or is it just the time?

Lugh has lost his battle, and the ravens cross the sky in croaking crowds. The year has lost its innocence, There is a tear in our celebration. When the wedding is a memory, and the birth of the babe, and now the farm is fat with full barns and lowing cattle, the cycle must inevitably turn to its end. Do you look back on great deeds, instead of ahead to them? Has love progressed from dreams, to passion, to sticky fulfillment, and does it now draw near the anticipation of grief? Is the horse growing old in the sun? Does silver frost the muzzles of cat and hound?

This is not England. Here, the grass tells the story, browning in the violence of the Sun's passion for his ladylove. Summer *has* to end. Shall we burn-out and die in one long pig-out on the wealth of the warm and growing time? Already, it has been too much for the grasses. The blowing dust begs for rest, and the Lover whispers, "Weep not. Well could I have loved thee to death."

She will weep anyway. It must be hard to live forever, when love cannot.

The modern myth clings to the old days, even though history itself must follow suit. The mornings of August sear imagination with a sunburst of Hiroshima, and the dust forms mushroom clouds in the mind. Is this the August of our race? I'd sooner live, an attitude our religion does not forbid or decry. Nor does it guarantee I'll have my way... And the Last Rose of Summer is my protest song. No bunkers for me, nor did I flee the cities to outlive the victims of the mighty. Bury my heart at Ground Zero.

Centralized religion softens the analogy with faith and resignation. One woman swore the Rapture would come this fall, and when someone suggested she was dating it from the wrong event, and had still more than forty years to go, she was horribly disappointed; she had mundane bills coming due, no longer payable while watching the fires from the sheltering arms of Jesus. If the world is doomed to end, I still claim my right to go pissing and squealing. If I shall be reborn, and reborn yet again, each body still retains its animal heritage, to flee or fight death until it has honestly lost. Neither Celtic nor Teutonic peoples, whose traces figure most strongly in my own woodpile, were ever much for throwing a fight.

Seeds go in now for the winter garden, an option our Celtic forbears didn't have. Fertilizer goes in too. I compete and fuss over my soil's health, chanting the twin litanies of light waning too much, and water waxing too slowly. A high level of ritual impurity, that, when November's green tomatoes ought to be left in the fields for the Wee Folk.

Well, I'll leave 'em a dish of my pickalilli, instead. My clumsiness alone could support a faerie convention. Or perhaps they plant their own garden, late squash in the compost heap and spilt tomato seeds among the potatoes and lettuces. And having finally decided not to die, my garden will cause me to curse the name of zucchini, as it has in years past. Even the fairies don't want that; next year their discards will spring anew, in places where I never would have planted them.

I'll feed the little bastards generously, on zucchini burgers and zucchini bread and zucchini soufflé and quiche. Who needs ritual purity when you have runaway squashes?

The Lady mourns her passing Lord, but lady animals run him off, Papa Tomcat is not welcome, and my duchesses have appropriated the shed: Maternity Ward, Drakes Keep Out! Alas, alas John Barleycorn, He was a rascal anyway. So pass the keg again. Weeping and foolery are kin, tears for the rain and guffaws for thunder. This is important business! As you go about your day, 'earning and arguing and building the things of humanity, make sure you're laughing and crying enough to bring on the autumn storms and keep the Wheel rolling. There's precious few of us who know our duty, so raise the Waters while you've still got 'em, and toast us in devout rowdiness.

(Sniff!) I love you guys!

The Heathen On the Heath:

First Fruits and Hunting

A Druid Missal-Any, Fall Equinox 1986

First fruits, late as usual--arguments with the neighbors--yellow grass, grey dust, and scorching heat. Balanced now are we? In the hardware store where I earn some of my living, a motley assortment of law-abiding types are buying their hunting licenses, with tags permitting them to ritually assassinate one or two adult male deer this season. Certain local subsistence hunters regard both the season and its regulations as ridiculous. But I count the hopeful license buyers during one workday, and then count the deer on my way home. The number of deer becomes less impressive, beside the number of hunters.

And the subsistence hunters--does concern for the continued stability of the deer population arise automatically from need? I doubt it. And the numbers of the needy are also increasing...

But the hunt goes on. From my own experience, in pursuit of one wild pig (which died to provide food for two families with hungry children, one of them mine) it seems strange to call it a sport. The hunt is a relationship, ending with the death of the other party. The pig wanted to live, and my cohort and I wanted to eat it. These goals were mutually exclusive; no amount of mystical hocus-pocus could ever convince me that the pig was a willing participant.

There was one moment, crouched on the hillside, with the immensely vital, prehistoric-looking beast looking directly at me, when I felt that the hunt was at an end; I had met the wild. My challenge had been offered and met. The pig was ready to attack or flee, but did neither. Here was life; its ending was anti-climactic.

But sorrow was also the feeling of a split second. Our children were fed. And something within me was changed.

The Hunter roams the greenwood, dealing death at will. Yet He guards His beasts, wears their semblance, instills in them His lust and power. And the Maiden-as-Huntress, in any pantheon, is the friend of Her creatures, mourning their destruction at the hands of conquering humanity.

So it is with nature. Animals do not hate their prey. Cats pounce with glee, eyes wide and ears forward. The dog pursues the rabbit with his tail high; he is playing. They are part of the world, and filled with the sense of being alive.

Is this the longing in the eyes of those who approach my counter, saying "License and two tags, please," and paying the

\$41 that the government demands for their participation in the rite? The people whose actual means of making a living is many times removed from Earth's vitality will finally face the wild and have something personal to say to it. Balanced now are we?

With that same longing, I came to the Druids, and with that same longing, I came eventually to my untamed hill, to be one grubby, sweaty part of a world with more than people in it. Cars race over a concrete bridge; uncaring, the river flows beneath. Balanced now are we?

As day conquered night, and light conquers day, and our guaranteed annual year continues on its appointed course, I tell you; there is no need for faith.

Balanced now are we?

We may not be able to feel it, but it's there.

The Heathen on the Heath: Harvesting

A Druid Missal-Any, Fall Equinox 1987

Autumn is a promise, wind singing of the blessed rains to come. Autumn is my true love calling, soft as death. The door blows open; cats run in and out. The scent and horror of wildfire blows away, and we foolhardy ones replace it with the smoke of woodstoves against cold that we secretly cherish.

In these days I glare daggers at those who whine for more nice days. Have we cursed our land with the curse of drought, for the sake of our prim plastic notion of a nice day? Do we think of unblemished tomatoes, or mold-free buds, or whatever turns us over-proliferating hominids on, and not of the Mother? She knows her grief will soon be upon her; do we forbid her to weep and be comforted? I may throw a shoe at the Today Show one of these mornings—a strange offering to the gods!

I pick tomatoes now, between writing assignments. My boss is unlike me, but also a farmer. He tells me how he does it, but is also open-eared for what little I may know that he does not. That eternally confused expression belongs to both of us. We share a secret, called "Damned If I Know." We run to beat the deadline of rain, and altogether it's sort of festive.

Autumn howls laughter, weeps loving, just around the corner, and we beg for the turning of seasons, while cursing the passage of time. Neopagans differ from paleopagans, for we face threats that our forbears did not, and are lulled by our overcomplicated distancing devices. No neophyte bard or Druid could have been held in thrall by a vehicle unstartable, or a heating or cooling whoozits beyond normal comprehension. A wise one might instruct on in the mysteries, but no expert was needed to keep one functioning. Take time from the broken washing machine, Oh my People, and ponder the water we wash with. No one has yet died and left us in charge, and that water could somehow manage not to come. We differ as we must, but also in ways that we should not. And in some ways, all our pagan forbears knew the same thing. What's Gaelic for "Be attentive as you walk?"

The Heathen on the Heath: The End of Summer

A Druid Missal-Any, Fall Equinox 1988

In the time of balance, I think of hairpulls, and of the doubts as old as religion that we may either decry or embrace. Myself, I have learned to be fond of them; otherwise I suffer a lot.

Rationalism is a cold place. It also makes the sensations of one's isolated consciousness a little uncomfortable. Why should I be peering out these two wet windows, instead of someone else? And whatever I may think of it, does it matter very much?

I'm not really the believing kind. Yet I walk in a world of many gods and goddesses, all part of the divine universe, and all workers of great magicks. I speak, "Lord," "Lady," and solemnly declare that a living world hears me.

I also walk among others of my nonfaith who call upon methods of divination, by cards and stars and crystals. And I have various odd means of justifying my refusal to reject such things outright: archetypal imagery, channels of intuition. Phooey. I cast cards on a table and read the pictures in them as a way of grasping at straws in confusion. I count the images in star patterns and permutate and combine them in the sky of this or that moment in time, because the star-pictures are a handle on the mystery of personality, not because they name aught that I can truly know.

And I collect the lessons of each, ancient and well-laden with the thoughts and dreams of my forebears. Help me, Old Ones! What did you know that I don't?

When does this—or the channeling of my energy through arbitrary places in my body, or the repetition of mantra or Wiccan doggerel—pass over the line between seeking and superstition?

When I walk among the people, I remember a card sent by Mad Sweeney: "Nature is not dirty, but it provides the raw materials from which we manufacture dirt." And I tell myself that people are not foolish or shallow, but they have the materials in them from which foolery and crassness are made. So I am still responsible for the times when I get used or jerked around, but for individual errors in present judgment, rather than for outreach to strangers at all.

People need not be mine to be benevolent, nor need they have been of my time to be wise. Can we translate the speech of poets? And can our materialistically-trained minds then put to use what we hear? Or is it lost to us forever, our efforts warped to fallacy by the indoctrination of an utterly alien culture?

And can we give our Mother any protection but our own extinction? By loving Her, have we become the enemies of our own kind? Many of the so-called scientific community think so. Yet in rejecting all that they know, we continue in ignorance to wound that which we love.

We need more than balance: Synthesis. Turn in your compost, and think of that.

Section Three:

Non-Liturgical Festival Activities

All too often, festivals have over-emphasized the liturgy at the expense of the celebration. The following articles are mostly drawn from A Druid Missal-Any and should give you some ideas on how to draw the more activity-oriented members of your Grove into attending your rites, by appealing to their lower instincts to have a good time.

Uncommon Activities for Samhain

By Mortus

A Druid Missal-Any, Samhain 2001

1. Visit and tidy-up the graves of family, friends and respected people.
2. Séances are popular at this time of year, but book in advance!
3. Hold a “dumb feast” with no talking and plates for ancestors.
4. Contemplate your own funeral arrangements, especially if you want to fight “The Industry” and have a natural funeral free of chemical and air-tight sealed caskets.
5. Include the dead in your thoughts during the daily grind.
6. Begin a custom of thanking the things we kill and eat.
7. Visit an abattoir or kill your own dinner (fish is the least unpleasant,) which will open your eyes and heart to some cold facts.
8. Work on your will, living-will, powers-of-attorney, and insurances.
9. “Sacrifice” some fun, for retirement planning.
10. Discuss deeper issues of after-life with your children and spouse.
11. Research genealogy and visit elderly relatives (research for Eulogies.)
12. Get a health-check-up and other medical appointments. Quit smoking.
13. Rake leaves, plan a composting heap (done properly, they don’t stink)
14. Plant acorns, salt meat and jerky, pickle things.
15. Go hunting or fishing [or “camera-stalking” of prominent politicians...]
16. Volunteer to escort children for Halloween (you get candy, too!)
17. Adopt an overseas child or assist a charity.
18. At Carleton, we’d pour molten-lead or wax into cold water and divine things.
19. Protest the most recent prejudiced horror-flick of the season.
20. Lobby against the funeral industry.
21. Make a list of 100 things you’ve done, and 100 more you want to do.
22. Contemplate capital punishment, war, crime, sanitation and vegetarianism.
23. Bless your pets with smoke (yes, jumping through a fiery hoop is okay...)

24. Clean your home, extinguish your oven/furnace’s pilot-light and relight it.
25. Replace the batteries in your smoke detector, buy a fire extinguisher, etc.
26. Write long-winded, disconnected rambles and lists about Samhain and Sacrifice.

Various Winter Customs to Try Out

By Eric, ex-Akita Grove, now in NYC.

A Druid Missal-Any, Yule 2001

I enjoyed the Samhain activities, and spent four hours searching for good customs to complement the next issue. It’s a simple list of what I plan to do, because I’m not much of a writer.

- Nov 23 Divining the best presents after a hearty Thanksgiving meal by asking relatives and the Gods.
- Dec 1st Cleaning out the house thoroughly--Any remaining dust is “Not mine, please ignore it.”
- Dec 2nd Light “advent candles” or Yule Candles marking down the Solstice Sun’s arrival.
- Dec 15th Decorating the House--Holly, Mistletoe, tree setup, bunting, Yule-logs, front lawn décor. Mail out blessings (Christmas cards) to friends and curses to enemies.
- Dec 19th Donate 10% of December Paycheck to charities closest to my house. And carry small presents to distribute to beggars and muggers in NYC.
- Dec 20th Wassailing and Caroling. Nothing more than Trick or Treating for the winter, fun to do with the Christians.
- Dec 21st Vigiling in the Grove--Spend the longest night of the year in the grove with a fire, several blankets and some friends to encourage the sun to make a come back.
- Dec 21st Mari Lwyd in Wales (Lair Bhan in Ireland)--The Welsh visited houses with a draped horse skull, interrogated their neighbours with strange questions, and got free booze if the homeowner couldn’t come up with decent answers. I think Barney’s head on a stick would be fine and appreciated.
- Dec 22nd Namahage--In Akita, drunken barefoot men in demon masks, straw clothing, flaming torches (my that’s dangerous sounding) would burst into pre-decided homes “surprising” a family at dinner and terrorizing the bejesus out of small kids. The father would ransom their children’s lives with more booze, and the demons would bless the house to protect it from fires and further burglar intrusions. Very similar to German house visits by Father Christmas (Weihnachtsmann or Julknep) and his point man, the “Black Moor” (Knecht Ruprecht.) Don’t you pity my neighbours?
- Dec 23rd Celebrate the Emperor of Japan’s Birthday (he is the descendent of the Sun Goddess after all)
- Dec 24th. Presents and Party
- Dec 25th Hanging out sheaves of corn or bird seed AFTER Christmas for the all-winter birds.
- Dec 26th, Divination- by dropping a handful of pine-needles into a bowl and rohrsarching
- Dec 26th Boxing. Put away boxes and decorations. As for the Tree: Put the tree in a safe spot in the yard (needles still on) away from the house. Allow to

thoroughly dry and use it to light Beltane fire. WHOOSH! What a sight!

- Dec 27th Return presents and Buy discounted goods at stores for next year!. A gift of the Gods!
- Dec 30th New Year Resolutions--Adding thanks for last year's completed ones and a tweak from everyone in the room for not finishing the last ones.
- Dec 31st Fireworks, all-night parties are fine to continue.
- Jan 1st, Sleep to Noon. Pray to Braciaca for forgiveness and mercy.
- Jan 6th, "Epiphany." Credit card bills arrive. Holidays are officially over.

Yule Time Caroling

By Sine Ceolbhinn
A Druid Missal-Any, Yule 2001

Strangely enough, Christmas is one of the few times of the year that we feel like singing with our neighbours outside of a karaoke bar. Easter songs? A few. Groundhog Day songs? Not likely. We all want to sing, but trip over the uncomfortable lyrics, right? I decided to but together a little list of songs that a pagan could use in company with their monotheistic friends.

A few hours of scanning the internet has given me a collection of popular songs that didn't dwell on babies in food troughs, righteous crowns, deceased people with bird wings, and ecstatic shepherds hearing voices in the dark (won't even go there.) I prefer my own improbable stories (grin.) Just change "Christmas" to "Yule time" and most are okay. Santa Claus is rather unavoidable, but he's nearly pagan, and so I let him slide. Many of the songs on the list below have on-line free music-files and lyrics at:

<http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/~ai251/xcarol.html>

- Auld Lang Syne
- Christmas Song (Chestnuts roasting)
- Deck the Halls
- Do they know it's Christmastime at all?
- Frosty the Snowman
- Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer
- The Grinch's Theme Song
- Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas
- Here Comes Santa Claus
- Holly Jolly Christmas
- Home For The Holidays
- I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus
- Jingle Bells
- Jingle Bell Rock
- I'll Be Home For Christmas
- It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas
- It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year
- Jolly Old Saint Nicholas
- Let It Snow
- O Christmas Tree
- Rocking 'Round the Christmas Tree
- Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer
- Silver and Gold Silver Bells
- Sleigh Ride
- That Christmas Feeling
- Up on the Rooftop
- We Wish You a Merry Christmas
- White Christmas
- Winter Wonderland

Now, I was going to make a list of filkable songs, but surprise, somebody's gone ahead and re-done most of the Christmas songs in a Neo-Pagan flavor. Isn't it great that people do all the work for us? You could spent weeks studying the solstice. Enjoy!!

Winter Solstice Drama of Akita Grove

By Nozomi Kibou and Patrick Haneke
December 2001

Japan has a very old story recorded in the Kojiki Scrolls (700 AD) about the Sun-Goddess, Amaterasu which we will incorporate into the Grove's drama. Rituals can get dull after a while, so we're going to improvise. We got the idea from Merri's Beltane service Mummery Drama at Carleton that Mike told us in 1999. But first the basic story:

Part One, The Story:

AMATERASU (Japanese: "Great Divinity Illuminating Heaven,") the celestial sun Goddess from whom the Japanese imperial family claims descent, is the most important Shinto deity. She was born from the left eye of her father, Izanagi, as he was performing shugyo. Izanagi bestowed upon her a necklace of jewels and placed her in charge of Takamagahara ("High Celestial Plain,") the abode of all the kami. One of her brothers, the storm God Susanoo, was to be sent away to rule the sea plain. Together the sky and ocean would encircle and protect Japan. Before going, Susanoo went to take leave of his sister. As an act of good faith, they produced many children together, she by chewing and spitting out pieces of the sword he gave her, and he by doing the same with her jewels.

However, Susanoo soon began to behave very rudely--such as breaking down the divisions in the rice fields, defiled his sister's dwelling place, and finally threw a flayed horse into her weaving hall. Indignant, Amaterasu withdrew in protest into a cave, sealed the door with a rock, and darkness fell upon the world. Many demons appeared to plague the people with snow and lightning. Not only people, but the Gods were at a loss. Amaterasu's brother, the Moon, did his best to take over her job, but couldn't keep the plants from wilting nor could he stop the cold winds from chilling the livestock.

Because no one was able to open the door of the cave, many Takamaga-hara Gods were at a loss as to what to do and conferred on how to lure the sun Goddess out. The wise God Omoikane decided at the meeting that Amenouzume would perform an amusing dance to attract Amaterasu attention. They collected cocks, whose crowing precedes the dawn, and hung a mirror and jewels on a sacred sakaki tree in front of the cave.

The Goddess Amenouzume began a very suggestive dance on an upturned tub, partially disrobing herself, and bumping about comically, which so delighted the assembled Gods that they roared with laughter. Amaterasu became curious how the Gods could make merry while the world was plunged into darkness.

"Why you are laughing?" She asked through the rock door of refuge.

"The most beautiful Goddess has appeared. She is a most skillful dancer!" One of the Gods responded.

Hearing this, Amaterasu, who was a proud Goddess and said, "This is a performance I must, by all means, see." And opened the door just a crack. The God conversing with Amaterasu then took out a mirror and placed it in front of her.

Amaterasu saw her face in the mirror and exclaimed, "My! What a beautiful Goddess!"

Wondered by her own beauty, she open the door wider to see better. A strong God, named Amenotadikarao, didn't miss that chance. He grabbed the slit, and pulled it wide open. Still bedazzled by her reflection, she heard the cock's crow, and was thus drawn out from the cave. The Kami (Gods) then quickly threw a shimenawa, or sacred rope of rice straw, before the entrance of the cave (now in Kyushu Island) to prevent her return to hiding. No choice, the sun Goddess Amaterasu returned to the world. After that, Susanoo behaved better, well, most of the time.

Amaterasu's chief place of worship is the Grand Shrine of Ise, the foremost Shinto shrine in Japan. She is manifested there in a mirror that is one of the three Imperial Treasures of Japan (the other two being a jeweled necklace and a sword.) The genders of Amaterasu and her brother the moon God Tsukiyomi no Mikato are remarkable exceptions in worldwide mythology of the sun and the moon.

Amenouzume is happy and sexy dancing God whose dance make spectators dazzled or entertained or raises spirits. Much of her followers are strippers, comedians, sandwich men and such artists and entertainers. Her lesson is that even in the most dire times, there is a place and role for joy, hope, love and entertainment.

Solstice Drama Part Two:

Props and Staging

It will follow almost the same process and language (with improvisation) as the story.

Mayumi will play the role of Amaterasu, the Sun. Nozomi will play the role of Amenouzume, the Dancer. Pat will play the role of Susanoo and Amenotadikarao (bad boy and strong guy.) Little Naomi will be the impish winter sprite, armed with snowballs.

Other grove members and guests will play the audience of the Gods (about five people,) maybe even Father will attend.

We'll hold it near the Shrine in a small open area on the Emperor's birthday (Dec 23rd) which is appropriate and a holiday. We'll make a mini rice field, set aside a square area for the sun's house, some hand-made straw ropes, and a little dance stage, stage decorations, plus put together a horse puppet (later used for piñata,) collect some mirrors, kids jewelry, and some tiaras. Caves are hard to find in Akita, so we'll make a stout wicker hut (bigger than a sweat lodge) and roll a rock in front of it. We'll use tiki-torches for dramatic lighting in the evening and set up a portable searchlight in the cave, for her dramatic exit. Nozomi has begun practicing her dance, which is going to be quite the eye-opener for such a shy one! Perhaps Susanoo and Amaterasu will have more children?!

Some Optional Things for Oimele

By Alex Strongbow, ex-Carleton
A Druid Missal-Any, Oimele 2002

Well, here's my list of things to do for Oimele, Imbolg, Candlemas, Ostara, or whatever you wish to call it. It's a multi-faceted festival reflecting Bridget's diverse talents. If you were to combine them all you'd be "writing poems by candlelight about flaming metallic sheep." Sounds strange, but where do you think "steel wool" is from? Do not put it in the microwave, though, unless you want to see visions of Pikachu!

- Banana-Split candles (Cherry, banana, pineapple ring; possible imagery...)
- Make decorated candlestick holders.
- Try to Predict (e.g. candle divining) whether winter will end soon and what day the last snow will be gone in the grove or some other spot.
- Start planting seeds in little pots.
- Get a candle-making kit at an art store.
- Spring Cleaning Party
- Make homemade butter or ice-cream (try goat's milk)
- Fireworks (if legal, secretly if illegal...)
- Make a contest to find first flowers or awakened hibernators
- Decorate the house: Bridget's Straw Crosses, ironwork, stained glass, candelabras, lava lamps, anything that's bright,
- Melt lead and pour into molds to make items.
- Sharpen knife, repair or replace tool collection
- Rent "Lambchop's Funniest Songs"
- Write poems together (perhaps within five minutes on a theme)
- Rent "Babe" or "Ground Hog Day" with Bill Murray
- Rent "Bell, Book, Candle" with James Stewart or "Silence of the Lambs"...
- Rent "Wallace and Grommit" (Perhaps "A Close Shave" is the best episode)
- Decorate chair by fireplace.
- Burn the dried up Christmas tree (watch it go fuuumph!)
- Have a sheep day
- <http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Hills/9609/sheeptxt.html>
- Call up a farmer and have the kids come down for a sheep birthing.
- Do some knitting with wool.

Also see:

<http://pages.ivillage.com/paganparent/imbolic.html> packed with stuff
<http://www.web-holidays.com/candle/> fun
<http://www.circlesanctuary.org/pholidays/CandlemasCustomsLore.html> overview
<http://www.partytown.com/menus/imbolc.htm> for a meal
http://www.education-world.com/a_lesson/lesson048.shtml about Groundhog Day
<http://orderofthecauldron.homestead.com/candlemas.html> nice discussion on Candlemas
<http://www.ghostdragon.net/sabbats/imbolcactivities.html> more activities.
<http://members.tripod.com/acorns3/archives.html> pagan kids activities back issues (look also under Ostara)

Goat's Milk Ice Cream

A Druid Missal-Any, Oimele 2001
By Stacey Weinberger

Back by popular demand! This was a hit at last year's Oimele social. Now you too can make Goat's Milk Ice Cream as a fun and tasty way to celebrate the festival of the lactation of the ewe!

1/2 cup sugar
2 cups very hot goat's or sheep's milk
1/8 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
4 egg yolks, slightly beaten
1 pint heavy cream

Mix the sugar, salt, and egg yolks together in a heavy-bottomed pan. Slowly stir in the hot goat's or sheep's milk. Cook, continuing to stir, until slightly thickened; remove and cool. Add the cream and the vanilla extract. Chill. Freeze in a hand-cranked or electric ice cream freezer.

Things to Do for Spring Equinox

By Alex Strongbow
A Druid Missal-Any, Spring Equinox 2002

Well, that's a really hard question. We know that most sowing in the fields would be done by now and it was time to change to spring clothes and spend more time outdoors. When it comes down to, we're talking about eggs and sunlight, right?

1. Break down, and enjoy the Easter egg decoration party. Especially the Ukrainian style wax and decoration. If you're an overachiever, go into Faberge.
2. Have half an omelet, sunny side up, of course.
3. Hide treasures in the forest or park. Tall grasses equals stepped-on eggs.
4. Be early for April Fool's day.
5. Go out to the pub for Saint Patrick's day and live it up.
6. Spend the whole day with a watch and see if day REALLY equals night.
7. Set up and synchronize your solar-calendar (that rock-henge in your back yard. A great site, for setting up your stones in a parking lot or a field is www.efn.org/~jack_v/AstronomicalCalendar.html Strangely, the design looks like a basketball courts lines! Could there be a connection?!
8. Get your garden planted, if you haven't started. Try old-fashioned "heirloom seeds" at www.seedsavers.org or Seed Savers Exchange (SSE) at 3076 North Winn Road, Decorah Iowa 52101 at 319-382-5990.
9. Make waffles. Write "Clinton" with maple syrup. Hee. Hee. Enjoy taking half-way opinions on important subjects and carefully study both sides of issues.
10. Change your wardrobe to summer-style suits, sandals and wear a flower. I've been thinking. Many religions have strange headgear or hair-styles, and we haven't since that weird "bald-forehead" style in the 450s AD, so let's go out for straw hats?!

Ten Things to Do for Beltane

By Alex Strongbow
A Druid Missal-Any, Beltane 2002

1. Sex. Of course!
2. Wake up early, greet the sun, wash your face in the morning dew. Collect flowers and make garlands for those you care about.
3. An Oak King can be selected by various athletic competitions such as: races, wrestling, archery, stone tossing, sit-ups in one minute, fire kindling contest (first to boil cup of water,) greased pole climbing, rodeo riding, or a combination of foolish macho things.
4. A maypole dance for the women (men too if not enough people.) Last woman holding the ribbon will become the May Queen The May Queen and Oak King should symbolically (or actually) consummate their "marriage" in a symbolic gesture. <http://altreligion.about.com/library/howto/htmaypole.htm>
5. Picnic, leaving a symbolic offering of one piece of everything. Possibly foods are oatmeal, dairy, berries, greens, wine, barley, honey, eggs, sweets. <http://www.keirle.freeseerve.co.uk/page18.htm>
6. Drama or play of Persephone returning from the underworld or a story of a woman returning from the fairy lands. Divination is a possibility.
7. Enjoy the Waters of Life (i.e. whiskey.) If you're solitary, do some self-nurturing type of activity, like a walk in the woods of a state park and camp out or vigil.
8. Raise stones. Its always a good time to bring the community together to haul rocks around and make a memorial of some type to the event. I recommend using car hoods from a junk yard, long levers, and 15 ropes and a pulley.

Build a Bonfire.

This might be hard for those of you in fire-prone areas like California, but a cauldron fire might be possible, or just use a barbeque/hibachi for the job. Some of you are girl-scouts, but here's some advice for the rest of you.

Apparently, the traditional wood to burn is oak, ash, thorn, rowan, apple, birch, alder, maple, elm, gorse, holly, hawthorn, and others from a story about the Battle of the Trees. I'd add a piece from any other tree in your forest. Collecting the woods and maypole would be a nice combination activity, and give time for certain members to "dally."

Be sure to remove all the dry materials in the vicinity and dampen the area. Now you can just pile a lot of logs if you'd like, or you can stack them. A pyramid shape or steppe shape is considered ideal, as boxy shapes tend to fall to the side rather than collapse inward (1999 Texas A&M disaster, anyone?) I recommend that you don't get too close to the fire, just in case a log rolls out. Leave spaces between the logs to allow air to circulate. Old Christmas trees make great center pieces (whooom!.) Put the kindling and ever large pieces in the center.

There are many ways to make the initial flame. Magnifying glass, parabolic mirror, iron and flint, rubbing two sticks (use a bow to spin faster,) magma, lightning, natural forest fires, and matches. As always, the key is to start small with shaved wood, dried grass, lint, cotton (yes, toilet paper is good) and add that to small sticks than keep adding bigger stick

until the logs reach the magic temperature of 451F. If all else fails, CAREFULLY throw a cup of gasoline onto it.

Dance around it, watch it, talk to your friends. Throw negativity away into the fire. Or send up prayers with the fire. Young couples may wish to jump over the fire together after it burns down.

As always, stay with the fire until you are able to handle all the ashes with your bare hand. If you can, you take a candle home and relight your furnace, like the ancient Celts did.

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/6992/bonfires.html>

Or you can do something no one else has thought that you really like! See these sites for ideas:

http://altreligion.about.com/c/ht/00/07/How_Celebrate_Beltane_0962933966.htm Fun.

<http://www.circlesanctuary.org/pholidays/Beltane.html> Good customs.

<http://www.witchvox.com/holidays/beltaine/beltainehistory.html> A lot of info.

<http://paganwiccan.about.com/cs/beltanemaydayb/>
www.cyberwitch.com/wychwood/Temple/beltane.htm Good history

Summer Solstice Activities

By Alex Strongbow, ex-Carleton Grove
A Druid Missal-Any, Summer Solstice 2002

It is not a major holiday, but here are some activities to surround the holiday.

Short and simple, the list looks like this:

- Picnics, beach parties, and fireworks
- Bonfire (It's always a good time)
- Fire-Fly searching, bug collecting (and release?)
- College or family reunions
- Charging magical tools
- Hardest work on a long-term project or making a journey
- Eating a super-big sundae
- Hauling rocks and attuning your megalithic calendar
- Baseball, soccer, hurley, outdoor games.
- Searching for St. John's Wort
- Backyard volcano building (see familyeducation.com site)

Some Possible Lughnasadh Activities

By Alex Strongbow, a Druid Lost in the Woods
A Druid Missal-Any, Lughnasadh 2002

Basically, early August is a "hey, the farming is turning out alright!" agricultural festival and horse race time. Because it is a rather warm time of the year, and like other parts of the Northern Hemisphere, it is also a good time for big crowds of people to travel and have some constructive fun. Taitiu, Lugh's mom, is commemorated in funeral games that last a week or so. I've put together a list of some events that might be done throughout August.

- Food was scarce before the harvest, so you might consider fasting before the festival begins, eating only seasonal foods that you can research as being available before world-grocery began. Perhaps combined with a camping trip, to test your rigor.

- Brehon Wedding/Handfasting: A young couple will put their hand through a hole in a stone and pledge to officiant and public their intention to try living together for a year before deciding on a permanent marriage.
- Settling of Legal Disputes: Advice or mediation in long-term disputes could be sought from other members of the grove (perhaps on slips of paper pulled from an anonymous box.) Alliances with other organizations may be approved now.
- Horse racing: Well, few of us have horses, but a trip to a derby, dog track, or Nascar race would be appropriate, as would attending a summer track and field meet. Gambling is encouraged. If you do have a few horses (or can rent them,) it is traditional to race along a river or ford a river mid-race.
- Bonfire: Not associated with hearth-fires, but just for fun and illumination of nocturnal partying. Sacrifice bad habits and unwanted things from your life by throwing symbols of them into the fire, this is good anytime. Perhaps, a competition between teams to build the biggest/oddest Lammas tower?
- Prearrange to collect the last sheaf of wheat from a farmer and make it a Cailleach doll (old woman,) much like the Bride-og at Oimeic in February. It should be placed on the mantle over the winter and destroyed in the spring, perhaps ploughed into the ground.
- Celtic Olympics: Yes the games of Tailtean, were held until the time of the Norman invasions in the 12th century. Perhaps modeling them on a highland games, which are frequent this time of year, would be apt. Events could include:
 - Wrestling in either Greco-Roman fashion (pinning shoulders to the ground,) Sumo (no touching ground except feet or leaving circle,) or WWF smackdown rules.
 - Hurley, Cricket, Soccer, or Rugby matches.
 - Foot races, wheelbarrow races, bicycle, piggy-back, sack-races, obstacle courses
 - Hammer Toss, Shot put, heavy rock lifting or caber toss
 - Sword dancing, country dancing, interpretive dance etc.
 - Long jump, high jump, pole-vaulting with walking sticks
 - Boffer-sword/Quarter-staff bouts, preferably on a log over a river.
 - Massive tug-a-wars, wacky relays, tag, human pyramids, or egg-toss contests.
 - Archery, fire-arms, catapulting, slinging or spear toss contest
 - Have a "Rhibo," a welsh game where people line up facing each other, making a bed of arms and then fling them up in the air. It is advisable to catch them on the way down.
 - Mental contests for the less physically-gifted: Chess, poetry, story-telling, lying contests, geometry jousts and math matches (bring out old SAT prep sheets,) joke-telling, banjo-dueling, scavenging hunts.
- Large elaborate parades or activities to test the strength and endurance of young folk, usually

through a forest, to a special spring or well or curving up and around a hill.

- Make plans for the winterization preparations.
- Feasting!: Foodstuffs include Beef, broccoli, cherries, spinach, any type of early berry, corn, potatoes, homemade bread (particularly wheat, oat, and especially corn bread,) berry pies, barley cakes, nuts, apples, rice, roast lamb, acorns, crab apples, summer squash, turnips, oats, and all grains. Drinks: Elderberry Wine, Mead, Ale, Meadowsweet Tea, and Cider
- If you live near an abattoir, you could attempt a Tarbh Feis (cattle meditation) by wrapping yourself in a freshly killed bull's hide after eating 10 pounds of beef at a crossroads and sleeping overnight while Druids sing around you. You could then prophesy the 2002 elections by this method, perhaps, or the fertility of the harvest might be gauged from your dreams.
- Offer first-fruits from your garden and plant all the seed of fruits eaten at festival. Bake a loaf of bread in the guise of a man and tear him apart by wild-cats. Include bilberries or blueberries in your feast; these were a traditional fruit, whose abundance was seen as an indicator of the harvest to come. Make a cornwheel of ripe grains.
- Gather and make acorn bread.

Some Optional Activities for Fall Equinox

By Alex Strongbow, a Druid Lost in the Woods
A Druid Missal-Any, Fall Equinox 2002

Fall Equinox is the opposite twin of Spring Equinox, only that life is now giving fruit and dying at this point in the year's cycles, sometimes known as Michaelmas in the Catholic calendar; when contracts and rents were collected (as at Easter.) What harvesting began in Lughnasadh should be about finished by the Equinox. In times past, autumn was a dreaded season, as people scrambled to prepare food for the long, deadly winter. Only in recent centuries, with assured food supplies, have we begun to romanticize the season. For modern society it is a time for starting school and the end of summer vacations.

- It's possibly the last chance to have the types of fun summer outdoor group activities that characterize Beltane, Mid-summer and Lughnasadh. So it offers an opportunity to repeat previous ones, or try out one that you didn't have time for.
- A picnic is definitely in order or participation in final harvesting. Traditional choices would be grapes, acorns, wheat bread, goat, Indian corn, horn of plenty, cornbread, corn, root crops (i.e. onions, carrots, potatoes, etc.) pomegranates, nuts, goose, mutton, dried fruits, apples, beans, and squash.
- Prayers towards protection, balance, and success in life are auspicious.
- Building a doll of grains to be burnt in the spring or fed to animals.
- Sitting under trees with nets to catch falling nuts and leaves, perhaps saving a leaf from each year in a collection. The rest should be made into a leaf pile for the kids.

- The changing leaves can also be dipped in paraffin and put on wax paper. After the leaves dry, they may be placed around the house or in large jars with sigils of protection and/or abundance
- Take notes on which trees turn color first, which fall soonest, and into which colors.
- Follow the migration of birds.
- String nuts into a necklace.
- Plan a trip to see the fall colors in the mountains.
- Do the Halloween farm-visit early and beat the crowds.
- Make a grapevine wreath for the door.
- Deer season opens. Contemplate it and find some deer. Vegetarians can protest the sporting elements of it.
- A good time to give to local charities to feed the poor.
- When do certain animals begin to disappear?
- Bake bread from scratch (i.e. grind the grains into flour.)
- Note the date of the first frost and its effects on plant life.
- Put up storm windows, check insulation and pack away the air conditioner.
- Start notice the location and time of sunrise, noon and sunset and continue through winter.
- Plant acorns and other nuts and wait for spring growth.

Fertility Cycle of the Druid Year

By Nozomi Kibou
Archdruidess of Akita Grove
A Druid Missal-Any, Oimelc 2002

I apologize for the poor quality of this essay, but I hope you like it. You know, my father's grove is a fertility shrine (people, plants, animals too) so it is important subject for me. I have thought on Paganism and big four holidays and I think they are fertility holidays. Here are the reasons.

Beltane: It is warm. Young people date and have sex (Pat says "It's a festival of muddy knees and grass-stained dresses.") Planting season. Lughnasadh: We know if we have a baby. People marry. Family starts. Samhain: Baby gets big. Spirits move in baby. Baby kicks. Hard to work in fields, but okay, that work is done, we can relax, start new plans of life. Oimelc: Baby is born. Sheep are born. Not much food, which is hard for mothers. Use sheep milk for babies? By equinox, can work in fields again. Grow baby plants! Beltane: Ready again for more babies? Maybe wait one more year, no?

Sister Tegwedd says we don't need more babies now, "Zero Growth Population," so instead we are mind-creative. Yes, but there is no cycle for that. Most Japanese babies are also born in spring around Feb 1st. April's when school and government and business start a new year in Japan. Very convenient. Birth time of the year, April is. Old Europe started the New Year around Easter, but then changed to Roman Julian calendar. But now most people are not farmers in Wales or Ireland now, so the baby-schedule doesn't work well. Probably more babies in late summer with constant year-round food, long winters, and Fall school starts.

In modern Ireland there are good luck rules for the wedding, which was often before baby-making. A good wedding will help fertility. See <http://www.ireland->

information.com/irishweddingtraditions.htm for many fertility rites of “The Traditional Irish Wedding” by Brian Haggerty.

Old Ireland has no records of “before-birth” advice for women. There were warnings in 11th century that women should have purity of heart and mind and not “heat the womb” during sex; but church didn’t like recreational sex back then. Saints took over from Druids in blessing women with fertility, in many unusual ways, including potions. Some babies were born from swallowing live bugs, worms or fish, unusual water plants, sex with giant otters or bird-monsters or night-dreams. There was mystery in how it happened. The best modern advice for all (including men) is to exercise and eat only health food for six months before starting baby/getting married. No drugs, tobacco, alcohol, fatty foods, chocolates, coffee, allergenic foods, meat, gambling and horse racing, avoid rabbits, and corpses. Choose foods with special traits to direct babies personality. In Japan, we were special belly-belt to keep belly warm. Stay that way until milking is done. Of course this is not easy.

Once with baby, a blessing from priest and soon grandparents is good. Some make a special bow/knot for the house. When birth comes, untie it and open all windows, doors, cabinets, knots in house and clothes. The baby comes quicker this way. Sometimes a special bird or animal will visit the house during pregnancy, give it honor, and a name to baby. Going to a forge and pushing the bellows would help the birthing later and make a strong baby. But the most important thing is of course strong love from both parents, no fighting and excitement in the house, peace and tranquility. With this, baby will grow well. If the baby did not go well, abortion by potion and self-abuse was also known. There is evidence of infanticide, too. Unfortunately, modern Ireland has worst rate for “caesarian” births (near 25% for first time,) a weak midwife system, and no birth-centers as yet. Yet, this is because of the modern medical monopoly. In the past midwives were common. This describes a 19th century Co. Mayo birth:

"After she went into labour, the woman was transferred from her usual bed, which was in the kitchen by the fire, to the floor, which was covered with straw. She put on her husband’s jacket, an outsize flannel garment with sleeves, made of homespun wool, or bainin. As the great event drew near, the husband stood at his wife’s back, and placed his hands on her shoulders while she was in a kneeling position on the floor. With words of faith, hope, and encouragement, he supported her morally and physically in her trial, while the midwife got on with the great task of bringing a new human life into the world.”

Celtic sources have much more on the raising of children after birth than before birth. The most important fear was bansid (faery women) stealing the children and leaving a “changeling,” an old faery who never got bigger and shrank. Sometimes the mother would be took and go to fairy hill to raise fairy-babies. This may have been due to emotional stress and mother running away or hurting the child (like that Texas case) in tight society with small support for mother’s need. In famous case of Ard Macha, treating pregnant wife rude like the animal (making her race the horses) caused a weak-body curse on all men of North Ireland for many generations. The point is, let pregnant women do what they want!

So ends Volume Seven
of the Green Books

