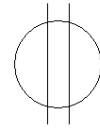


the druid chronicles



(evolved)
30th anniversary edition

d.a.l.

the
druid
chronicles
(evolved)

being
the collected writings
of the
reformed druid
movements
in north america

The Reformed Druids of North America
The New Reformed Druids of North America
The Schismatic Druids of North America
The Hasidic Druids of North America
Etc.

Edited by Isaac Bonewits D.A.L. and Robert Larson D.A.L.
Current Edition Edited by Stephen Crimmins D.A.L., D.D.T.



Monument Hill
Photo by Isaac Bonewits



The Altar Stone
Photo by Isaac Bonewits



The Hill of Three Oaks
Photo provided by Dr. John Messenger

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preface

to the Thirtieth Anniversary Edition

This edition of the *Druid Chronicles (Evolved) (DCE)* is the second edition created. There were plans to create a (simple) updated edition as early as 1977, but those plans were never carried through although the project eventually turned into the *Druid Chronicler* magazine. Some materials were created that may have been intended in the later edition, either in addition or as a replacement to earlier materials but, again, no update was ever made. Later printings followed, however, which were essentially photo copies of the original material with occasionally hand written changes. The purpose of this edition, however, is not to update the *Druid Chronicles (Evolved)*. If one is interested in that, it has been undertaken and completed twenty times over by Michael Scharding in his *A Reformed Druid Anthology* which appeared in 1996 and was further updated in 2003-2005. Almost all of the materials presented in this edition are available within *A Reformed Druid Anthology*, with the prime exception being the introductions to each part. The goal, rather, is to make available the original material in its original presentation, and so to offer modern Druids and other readers a look at both the state of Reformed Druidism in the 1970s, from the viewpoint that created this work, and to give an idea of Isaac Bonewits,' the original editor's, view of Druidism.

Isaac Bonewits joined the Reformed Druids in the late 1960s and quickly became enamored with the group, becoming the main impetus for the budding of groves in the 1970s. Then, in the 1980s, having decided that he couldn't in any way create a -DNA group that would fit his organizational requirements, he created Ar nDraiocht Fein: A Druid Fellowship which is today the largest Neopagan Druid organization in America. He has written a number of books; most notably is his first, *Real Magic*, an outgrowth of his Bachelors degree in "Magic and Thaumaturgy." He also acted for a time in the early seventies as editor of *Gnostica*, a magazine put out by Llewellyn publications, and would go on to found and edit the *Druid Chroniclers* which would later turn into the Pentalpha Journal. He later worked on magazines associated with Ar nDraiocht Fein. Though he edited the *DCE* with the help of Robert Larson and theoretically under the guidance of the Arch-Druids of RDNA and related Groves, the work was in large part Bonewits exploring and explaining his form of Druidism. It is noteworthy that the *DCE* appeared before many books about the Neopagan community existed and about three years before Margot Adler's *Drawing Down the Moon*.

In creating this edition I have intentionally not changed any of the original material except for a few extremely minor points of grammar and spelling. The layout was reworked, however I have done my best to maintain the original feel of the book. No graphics were added, some were taken out, and the borders are generally much simpler. My additions to the body of this work are limited entirely to footnotes which appear at the bottom of some pages and offer comments of primarily historical value about the creation of the original *DC(E)*. Some footnotes were in the original however these are all of a different style from the new footnotes and will, hopefully, be easy to differentiate from my footnotes.

The original introduction, *What and Why is Reformed Druidism in the 1970's* has the most comments of any section. It was Bonewits attempt to explain Reformed Druidism and its branches. Many of my comments are based on earlier pamphlets, one, in 1974, of the same name and one, in 1964, called *What is Reformed Druidism?* Additionally I am making use of one letter specifically offering corrections to the 1974 pamphlet from Richard Shelton and another letter by him giving corrections throughout the *DCE*. Comments based on the later letter will also be seen elsewhere.

The *Chronicles of Foundation* received a number of comments regarding the changes which Bonewits made to the text. The *Chronicles* was the first major publication of the Reform and the earliest publication still read regularly. In creating the edition for the *DCE* Bonewits and others felt that it needed to be updated in order to fit with feminist thought which had not been around at the original publication and to change a set of verses that had been 'outdated' by a decision of the Council of Dalon ap Landu. The *Apocrypha* selections can be divided in two: the early works by Carleton Druids, all completed by 1966 and four selections by Berkeley Druids writing between 1974 and 1976. Two were written by Bonewits and a third, the *Book of Changes* was created by him with the intention to reflect as much as possible the opinions of the Provisional Council of Arch Druids.

For most of the rest of the sections my comments are extremely limited, though in some cases I have made notes comparing the liturgy to earlier versions. The fifth part contains the works of the Hassidic Druids of North America, now defunct. It is interesting to note that they had come into existence within a year prior to the publications of these works. They reflect in many ways a strong Neopagan element and they are very revealing about their practitioners, if one looks closely enough. In a way they do not fit in with the rest of the book as well as other materials do, but they are a very interesting addition.

Again, the goal in this edition has been to offer the view of Druidism that the original *DCE* presented. Read it with that in mind.

-Stephen Crimmins
Northfield, Minnesota
2005

thoughts from three decades later

A New Introduction By Isaac Bonewits

“It was the best of times; it was the worst of times...”—no, wait, that’s been used before. How about, “It was the year of living Druidically...”? Or “It was thirty years ago today, Brother Larson taught the band to play...”?

Due to medical difficulties, I am unable to recall much of my own life, though I can recall a great deal about the Indo-European peoples some two thousand years ago (stored in a different part of my brain, I assume). Here are the fragments I recall of the creation of *The Druid Chronicles (Evolved)*:

It was in 1976 c.e. (14 y.r.) that I noticed the sad shape my copy of *The Druid Chronicles (Reformed)* was in. Already a copy of a copy of a copy, the text was becoming too faint to read, especially during nighttime rituals. I decided to make a whole new set of masters from which clear future copies could be generated. About this time, I began a job that involved typesetting a magazine, thus giving me access to equipment that would allow the creation of new originals that could withstand a dozen generations of copying.

Then I decided to expand the project to include all the materials I could find from both the RDNA and the various offshoots I had conspired to create over the preceding few years, as well as all of the Apocrypha (letters between the clergy) I had in hand from the other members of the Council of Dalon ap Landu. I thought it should be of use to scholars of religion and future historians, so I added many explanatory footnotes to the text. I thought it would be useful to have copies of the rituals used by the original RDNA as well as its then-existing offshoots, as well as introductory materials on Neopaganism. So the project “just grew.”

I wanted the resulting work to be a kind of “Druid Handbook,” which would allow anyone using it to begin their own steps along a Reformed Druidic path. So I spent many hours writing new materials and editing old ones, typesetting each page by hand (there were no text scanners available in those days), developing the prints, cutting and pasting the blocks of text and illustrations onto cardboard sheets, then finally printing the results with Br. Robert Larson on an offset press. Then we collated everything and mailed out copies to every member of the Council we could find, as well as sending two bound copies to the library at Carleton, which subsequently led to both the beginning of the Druid Archives at Carleton and the revival of the RDNA there in later years.

I was missing a lot of the non-Pagan materials and some of the Apocrypha, however, so I have been gratified to see Br. Scharding and Stephen Crimmins take upon themselves and execute well the task of completing what I had begun so many years ago, in the course of creating the *Reformed Druid Anthologies* and now this new edition of *TDCE*. I am honored that words I wrote as a “young pup” will be carried on into the future.

As I page through my copy of *TDCE*, I see earlier versions of materials that eventually became founding principles for *Ar nDraíocht Féin*: A Druid Fellowship and first drafts of ideas that found their way into subsequent editions of my book *Real Magic*, as well as into *Authentic Thaumaturgy*, *Witchcraft: A Concise Guide*, and *Rites of Worship*, not to mention my forthcoming *Essential Guides* on Wicca, Druidism, and Neopaganism. Producing *TDCE* crystallized many concepts in my thinking about magic, ritual, religion, and philosophy. The fact that many of these concepts seemed to me to be implicit in the original RDNA materials led to my insistence for many years that Reformed Druidism was a Neopagan religion. I now understand that it started out Mesopagan (mixed Pagan and non-Pagan) and still is for many members, including some of the surviving founders. Nonetheless, because I brought so many Neopagans into it and its subsequent Branches of the Reform (including, to stretch the point, ADF and Keltria), now most Neopagans who know about it assume that Reformed Druidism is all Neopagan. Browsing through these pages (and those of *ARDA*) will help, I hope, to delineate the distinctions. If nothing else, future historians of new religious movements will be able to trace the evolution of one type of Paganism from its Meso- to its Neopagan incarnation.

Publishing the first edition of *TDCE* in 1976 had a small but noticeable impact on the evolution of what became the American Neopagan movement. Here was a new religion worshipping the Old Gods and Goddesses, that wasn’t Wicca! That alone encouraged people wanting to start revivals and reconstructions of other systems of Paleopaganism. Now Druids of various sorts have become some 10% or so of the quarter-million-plus English-speaking Neopagan movement, not just in the USA, Canada, and Britain, but around the world. I’ve heard Druids from other countries recite “ancient Pagan poetry” and perform “ancient Druid rituals” that were clearly variants of items I wrote or edited for *TDCE*! Apparently the copies of copies of copies got around quite a bit...

So find a comfortable chair, sit back, and enjoy browsing the New and Improved 30th Anniversary Edition of *The Druid Chronicles (Evolved)*. It should keep you busy reading, thinking, and chuckling for quite some time.

introductory essay

The Making of the *Druid Chronicles (Evolved)* and the Remaking of (Reformed) Druidism

“It will be evident that Isaac and I disagree rather strongly on many matters. Yet—and this is my point—we both call ourselves Reformed Druids. Let the Reform remain such that this is possible.”¹ Richard Shelton wrote these words early into the period of Reformed Druid history known as the ‘Isaac Affair.’ They should be noted carefully; the creation of the *Druid Chronicles (Evolved) DCE* caused considerable contention because, in some part, Shelton and Isaac Bonewits held very different viewpoints within the Reform. Both wanted to make sure that their form of Druidism was heard and, as the editor, Bonewits was able to show his part much more clearly. In the following I will explain some of the points of contention and their importance based primarily on a series of letters between Bonewits and Shelton written between 1974 and 1976.

‘Neopagan Goobledegook’:

In 1974 Bonewits sent out a letter to the Council of Dalon Ap Landu suggesting that it consider itself “an Eclectic Reconstructionist Neo-Pagan Priestcraft.”² As he has later revealed he had been unintentionally led to believe by the evidence presented by Robert Larson that the Reformed Druids were essentially Neopagan.³ The term Neopagan was only a recent invention and many groups, upon learning about it, decided that they fit within the definition. Hence it was not odd for Bonewits to thus categorize the RDNA and expect that other members would accept the term.⁴ However, a flurry of replies, many strongly opposed to the definition, came in answer from many active and inactive Druids.

The *DCE* was a continuance of this introduction of Neopaganism into parts of the RDNA; it went farther in representing the Neopagan side of the RDNA than to explaining the whole of Reformed Druidism. Bonewits probably saw this as the most important goal for the book due to worries about the state of the world and a belief that Neopaganism would be at least a part of the answer.⁵ This one point managed to find its way into the background of most of the other points of contention.

The Other Book:

While Shelton was offering corrections and making sure that *The Druid Chronicles (Evolved)* would accurately portray Reformed Druidism as a whole, not just the Neopagan portion, he was also planning a counter publication, one which he did not finish. In the Introduction to the Apocrypha, Bonewits mentions that there were other Apocrypha being prepared for publication. Specifically he was referring to an Apocrypha which Shelton was preparing. As Shelton told the Frangquists, “I have the option of sending the ones Isaac doesn’t have to him for inclusion in his Apocrypha, or of publishing a Carleton Apocrypha myself. I would prefer the latter.”⁶ Additionally he was preparing the *Green Book of Meditations* for publication. It is clear that Isaac would have liked to include that in the *DCE* as well. Shelton was able to keep that away mostly by citing problems that he was having in obtaining permission from the copyright holders. However, as he told Don Morrison, Arch-Druid of Carleton College, “I have been using that as an excuse not to send a copy to Isaac until after it’s too late to include in his thing.”⁷ He did, however, give Morrison a copy with the instruction to “let [Bonewits] have no inkling that you have a copy.”⁸

He also hoped to create a new publication of the *Druid Chronicles (Reformed)*⁹ and a collection of liturgy based on the Black Book, a book which was normally in the possession of the Arch-Druid of Carleton and included copies of early liturgy. He did not manage to print either of the last two, though there have been a number of printings of the *Druid Chronicles (Reformed)* since then. The *Carleton Apocrypha* was only finally printed in 1993. However, the Drynemtum press is currently working on a publication of those four works in one volume, tentatively titled the *Carleton Druid Compendium*.

The question is, why did Shelton want his materials to be separate from the *DCE*? In part Shelton was imagining a work that would be useful to Druids at Carleton and those of the same mind as Carleton druids. The specific materials that Shelton wanted to include were items that he felt to be helpful when he was Arch-Druid of Carleton.¹⁰ The *Druid Chronicles (Reformed)* and some of the apocrypha were useful in spreading the words about druidism as well as being entertaining reading. The Green Book likewise was intended for the use of Arch-Druids and includes a ready set of meditations. The inclusion of liturgy was also useful at least as a starting point or easy back up for services. The use of printing these materials was especially clear since there were fears that the originals might be lost.¹¹

However, there were additional reasons. Specifically, in response to Isaac’s feeling that he was meeting undue resistance to the production of the *DCE* Shelton explained: “You realize by now that Schismatic Druidism is utterly foreign to many in the Reform, and some feel that you are doing the Reform a grave-disservice by publishing the *Chronicles* in the company of “all this Neopagan Gobbledegook.” There is fierce resentment in some quarters of the association between the terms “Druidism” and “Neopaganism” that your book will create in the mind of the public—an association that saddles us with religious baggage that is not ours.”¹² Printing the books

¹ Shelton to Council, August 14, 1974. “The Words of Green.” All letters noted with persons and dates are available in the Druid Section of the Carleton Archives. Many, including this one, are available in the *ARDA II*.

² Letter in *Book of Changes*, Bonewits to Council, July 18, 1974

³ C.f. *Sixth Epistle of Isaac* in *ARDA II*. Neopagan was a term that post dated the founding of Reformed Druidism in 1963.

⁴ In his “A General History of Reformed Druidism,” in *ARDA II*, 659 Scharding suggests that Bonewits was actively attempting to change the RDNA into a Neopagan organization which is, at best, misleading. He does go on, however, to suggest that Bonewits was using his letters to create for himself an understanding of what was going on in the RDNA.

⁵ C.F. Isaac Bonewits, telephone interview with Michael Scharding, April 1 1994, available in *ARDA II*.

⁶ “Post Carleton Perplexations,” Shelton to David and Deborah Frangquist, 5-8 May, 1976.

⁷ “Lessons for a New Arch-Druid,” Shelton to Morrison, 21 April, 1976.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ This is the original name of the work entitled in the collection *The Chronicles of Foundation*.

¹⁰ Cf. “Post Carleton Perplexations.”

¹¹ Shelton to Morrison, 10 April, 1976. In this letter he mentions the problems of committing the traditional books to the mail. Moreover, there is also the problem of recovering the printed copies of the *Chronicles* which had been lost in storage.

¹² The Epistle of Richard, Shelton to Bonewits, 26 May, 1976.

separately offered a chance to eliminate some of the baggage. Moreover, some of the letters in the Carleton Apocrypha offered a fierce contrast between Neopaganism and Carleton Druidism that might otherwise be drowned out. Of course a separate printing offered other advantages, especially giving editorial control to Shelton who was strongly opposed to changes made by Bonewits to the Chronicles and elsewhere that Shelton felt were unnecessary.

‘Sexism in Language’:

One of the most hotly contested points between Shelton and Bonewits was the creation of terms specific to women out of what Shelton argued were unisex terms and which Bonewits held to be male terms and hence in need of female counterparts. The main terms in question were ‘Druid,’ ‘Arch-Druid,’ (or Archdruid, in Bonewits’ spelling), and ‘Priest.’ Of the three, accompanying ‘Priest’ with the feminine ‘Priestess’ was most readily accepted by Shelton. Priestess had been used in both *The Records of the Council of Dalon ap Landu* and *The Druid Chronicles (Reformed)*. In those cases where it was used it is clear that a distinction was being made. Nonetheless there was a tendency towards using Priest as a dual gender term now that there was no distinction of role between male and female members of the Third Order. Shelton pointed out that his wife “who had a strong dislike for sexism in language calls herself...priest of the Third Order.”¹³ Later Shelton admitted at least that “there is some ambivalence in the use of...priest vs. priestess.”¹⁴ There he was allowing Bonewits to keep those two terms separate, however it seems to have been a sacrifice so that he could at least convince Bonewits that ‘Druidess’ was unnecessary. There is less evidence of Bonewits’ opinion on this in his letters, however one is particularly interesting. He begins a paragraph “I fear we are going to have a heavy disagreement over the matter of gender phraseology.” He indicates, but does not directly say that Druid is a male gendered term; he writes that “the blithe assumption that a male term automatically includes females may make sense to some (and is certainly true grammatically in many cases), but it is a supreme example to most feminists of male arrogance.”¹⁵ He notes here and elsewhere that he is taking the advice of a number of feminists in sorting out language issues. However, even if Shelton would’ve agreed that male terms couldn’t be turned into genderless terms, there was still the question of whether or not ‘Druid’ was originally gendered. On that point Shelton responded that ‘Druid’ was previously a genderless term and by using it opposite ‘Druidess,’ would lead people to believe that “‘Druid’ must be masculine.” That would, according to Shelton, “introduce a sexist element that has never before been present.”¹⁶

I do not have a letter by Bonewits which replied to that point. I think, however, that a comment by the other original editor of *The Druid Chronicles (Evolved)*, Robert Larson may be an appropriate finishing point for this section. “As far as the “sexist” language issue is concerned, I tend to agree with Dick [Shelton]...What we are seeing now is egalitarian euphemism similar to the sexual euphemism of Victorian times, and I feel that it too will disappear as its causes disappear. In many cases, it’s a good example of not being able to see the forest for the trees. However, we are living in the present and it behooves us to bend to the winds of the present.”¹⁷

And Reformed Druidism?

So why the contention? One might ask what is all the trouble coming from a book? However, as can readily be seen in the discussion of sexist language words, can have a surprisingly noticeable effect, like it or not. Anyone not otherwise familiar with the RDNA would have only the *Druid Chronicles (Evolved)* to judge the whole of the Reform by. This led Shelton and others, as mentioned, to a “fierce resentment...of the association between the terms “Druidism” and “Neopaganism” in the eyes of the public—an association that saddles us with religious baggage which is not ours.”¹⁸ In some ways the association of ‘Druid’ and ‘Neopagan’ was unavoidable but nonetheless regrettable.

However, connected with the publication were a variety of issues within the structure of the Reformed Druids. Although, through the influence of Isaac Bonewits, new groups such as the New Reformed Druids of North America (NRDNA) and the Schismatic Druids of North America (SDNA) were formed, these groups remained technically within the structure of the RDNA. Shelton worried about their members’ influence and even discussed the possibility of formally disassociating the groups lest the Neopagan membership grow and become able to take over the organizational structure of the RDNA.¹⁹ Of course, the fears were only that; Bonewits had never intended to take over the Council of Dalon Ap Landu once he found out that the Carleton Grove was still alive and that his style of Druidism had considerable differences with the original style of Reformed Druidism.

However, instead of taking over the Council of Dalon Ap Landu, another group, entitled the Provisional Council of Arch-Druids (PCoAD), was created to foster communication and make limited decisions for member Groves. As can be seen from the Book of Changes and Isaac’s first Epistle, Bonewits was strongly in favor of a more stable organizational structure. Shelton, on the other hand, felt that “Carleton with its rapid turnover provides a regular infusion of new blood, and effectively combats the ossifying influence of organization.”²⁰ The PCoAD returns us to the *Druid Chronicles (Evolved)*. As can be seen in the end of the Book of Changes one of the tasks set for the PCoAD was to arrange and approve the DCE.²¹ From a number of letters it is clear that the approval of the PCoAD was noted elsewhere within the DCE in earlier drafts, however a number of the Arch-Druids felt that there was too little time to ensure corrections were made before printing and thus were unwilling to endorse the work, at least for the first edition.²²

¹³ *Words of Green*, unpublished section.

¹⁴ Shelton to Bonewits, May 26, 1976.

¹⁵ Bonewits to Shelton, May 16, 1976.

¹⁶ Shelton to Bonewits, May 26, 1976.

¹⁷ Larson, General Letter, July 2, 1976.

¹⁸ The Epistle of Richard.

¹⁹ Shelton to Frangquists, May 5-8 1976. Bonewits dismissed the possibility of ousting the members of other Branches in his “What and Why is Reformed Druidism in the 70s?”

²⁰ *Words of Green*.

²¹ Ch. 4; “That the new edition of *The Druid Chronicles* being prepared by Isaac Bonewits and Bob Larson should be edited to remove obsolete passages * and sexist phraseology, but that the original readings (for the benefit of those who prefer them, as well as for historians) of all passages changed drastically would be retained in *The Book of Footnotes*. That the revisions to *The Druid Chronicles* as well as all associated materials to be published with them, would be agreed upon by the Provisional Council of Arch Druids *before* printing, and that in cases of disagreement, the original readings of each controversial passage would be retained in the body of the text, and the alternate readings be placed instead into *The Book of Footnotes*.”

²² C.F. Morrison to Larson, July 15 1976.

The shaping of the DCE, as has been seen, was hardly without contention. What was produced was a work that many, Richard Shelton especially, felt had been altered too much from the original and often gave a poor representation of Reformed Druidism. However, as Larson pointed out in a general letter regarding the publication, “since we have included something to offend almost everyone, objections to content will not be considered; the only corrections made will be those pertaining to fact and general proof-reading.”²³ The work in the end was guided mostly by Neopagan Druids and was colored based on their, and especially Bonewits’ beliefs. This new edition has not sought to correct any misconceptions left in. Rather it will serve as a retrospective on the original edition and the occurrences surrounding it. Where I am aware of particular contentions I have made footnotes mentioning them. Finally, I would like to add that despite that hostility displayed at times between many of the main actors, especially between Bonewits and Shelton, as time has passed people have come to accept each other’s differences.

-Stephen Crimmins
Northfield, MN
2005

²³ Larson, General Letter.

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*Left to right (standing): David Frangquist, Adr. David Fisher and Norman Nelson.
Seathed: the members of the Grove. Photo provided by Dr. John Messenger.*

