

## **Beltaine 2008**

Welcome to the Beltaine edition of EOLAS, the magazine of Ord na Darach Gile - the Order of WhiteOak.

With poetic timing the hawthorn in my garden announces the season's turning, marking the arrival of the summertime with the first burst of ivory splendour. The robin, the bluetits and the darting wren flit around the branches, whilst the mistletrush and blackbird gather building materials for their nests. The recognition of the divine in nature is something in common within many Pagan pathways the seasons turning and the deep symbolism within that is the very heart of modern Druidism.

The Beltaine edition features our usual mix of articles and poetry, featuring contributions from far and wide, including an article on the subject of Courage, Fear and Honour by Emma Restall Orr. We are also pleased to announce the WhiteOak (Ord na Darach Gile) Lughnasad Druid Conclave to be held in Western Massachusetts during August 15<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup>.

If anyone would like to contribute to future editions of EOLAS, please send your contributions to [membership@whiteoakdruids.org](mailto:membership@whiteoakdruids.org)

Within the peace of the Oaks,  
J Craig Melia – May 2008

## **Visit our Virtual Shrine**

The Virtual Shrine Of The Goddess Brigid is dedicated to all people who are suffering and to their loved ones who are in need of help. It is also a place to celebrate and commemorate significant life passages. It is intended for the use of all People of Faith, here you may offer prayers, give thanks or write petitions within our Messages area.

We take our lead from the ancient and sacred places used by our Ancestors, those Ancient Shrines and Holy Wells that dot the landscape, allowing the traveller to give thanks and to make offering for safe journey and good fortune.

Our Blessings and Remembrance sections offer words of wisdom and prayers from many traditions, not just Celtic but also Northern Traditions, Hinduism and Buddhism.

The shrine can be viewed at [www.celticheritage.co.uk/virtualshrine](http://www.celticheritage.co.uk/virtualshrine)



The Order of WhiteOak has instituted a teaching program and system of fostership. For more details visit our website at [www.whiteoakdruids.org](http://www.whiteoakdruids.org) or email us via [membership@whiteoakdruids.org](mailto:membership@whiteoakdruids.org)

## Courage, Fear and Honour - Emma Restall Orr

Whether metaphysically relevant, the comfort of religious habit, or actually a valuable and directive tool of perception, Druids have a tendency towards threes. It makes me smile then, after a few years of quiet, to have three books published within the space of a year's cycle. Most writers I know, while comfortable within the human solitude of their craft, recoil at the idea of telling folk about their work, and particularly so if a good measure of British reserve fills their soul. It takes more than a little courage to share the information here.

Indeed, courage has been poignant for me throughout my life. Often reckless in my younger days, claiming my freedom, as my path bore me to adulthood and my awareness of consequences grew, the call of freedom grew no fainter. For many Pagans the same is true: choosing a religion and its concomitant lifestyle that is sometimes radically out of the groove of normality can take considerable courage.

For what is courage but the quality of our self-aware human nature that allows us to step forward and face the forces of fear. As a polytheist and animist, while I may find guidance within the ranks of our mythic heroes and ancestors, fear to me is a divine force of nature, a god that does not allow itself to be anthropomorphised.

Yet empathy and experience mean that too often we too subjectively perceive its power; if we are to relate to it constructively as deity, we must walk the road to understand it. We must acknowledge it as a power of nature driven by its own unique intent. Each Druid makes that journey alone, facing the god of fear and learning how to stand fast, neither bending in submission nor wielding that hubristic or delusional sword of control.

The journey has taught me some of the most powerful lessons of life, not least that the inherent purpose of fear is, quite simply, to be wide awake. It floods the child about to be beaten, drenching the rabbit as the trap snaps shut, yet I see the same force of nature in the earth itself, pummelled by torrential rain: wide awake.

Such an understanding of this god is helpful. But as tender, self-aware human beings, acutely sensitive, alert to every sound, fear inspires us to feel, sometimes to the point of pain. And if we aren't to close down, to become numb and dumb, we need to find courage.

Within our human nature, I perceive courage as interwoven with reason. Trying to pull the two apart creates tangles that both complicate and ensnare. Very seldom is courage an automatic

response; it requires us to take a step forward, wide awake and hurting. Bravado, denial, pride, revenge, the desire to be seen as strong, wise or powerful, are all distractions from courage, allowing us to respond without integrity. Courage, I would say, as our ancestors have before me, is an intrinsic constituent of honour.

Some would suggest it requires faith, but in Druidry I see courage as fuelled by our sacred connection with the land, the ancestors and the gods, with the strong river of our heritage that teaches us so deeply. It was the importance of that connectedness within my own soul that inspired me to agree to co-write *The Apple and The Thorn*, when Bill Melnyk asked me to do so. It is a tale that weaves ancient and modern myths, mythic characters and gods, with archaeology, history, and our love of the land. Not attempting to reconstruct an authentic portrayal of the period (the Roman invasion), the aim was to explore the roots of Bill's Christianity and my own Druidry, finding where they lay at ease together and where they clashed.

The result of the book was Bill being forced to leave the Episcopal Church, sued for heresy for his involvement with Druidry. For the me the experience took me so deeply, I found I no longer had the ability to craft public ritual. Both the journey of writing it, and presenting it, took courage, prising us open to a new level of wakefulness.

*Living with Honour: A Pagan Ethics* is the book I then wrote, which is published this Beltane. To present the Pagan and Druid community internationally with a book suggesting a Pagan ethics might seem more foolhardy than courageous. Yet the foundation of the book is those key qualities of honour: generosity, loyalty and courage.



Each of these comes into play when we are in relationship, and again it is that connection to the sacred, the land and the dead, which provokes the student of Druidry to be ever more wakeful to the world around him. Being sensitive to each spirit's song, how can we live but with acute respect, treading softly, wide awake to the consequences of our actions. It takes courage to walk with integrity, with honour.

Published at Samhain this year is the third of my triad of books, *Kissing the Hag*. As the title suggests, this is a book about the dark goddess in human nature, and particularly in the female soul. She is the manipulative, the lustful, the needy, the bitchy, the smothering and selfish, the grumpy old bag, and in writing the book I spent a lot of time in her company.

Once more, I learned about fear and courage, as I found the words to describe how these forces can destroy us; yet how, if understood, they also contain such deep wells of wisdom and creativity. I would suggest it is not just a book for women, but one for men seeking the courage to deal with the wild dark women in their lives.

Looking back on the journey of these past few years of writing, I find myself in a new place: I now stand on a ridge looking out over an unfamiliar landscape, knowing it will be a few years before I once again distil my thinking into printed words.

The journey ahead will be another soul-deep adventure, the next part of the process of disintegrating and reforming that is the quest of any seeker of the mysteries. I have no idea what is ahead.

Holding to my courage, I settle a few dates into my diary: 21 September is PeaceOneDay. Questing ever deeper understanding of the god of fear, whose place in nature is simply to wake us, it is



pertinent to work with peace. In London we will gather outside the Houses of Parliament, with music and prayers; Druids are pledging to organise events, small and large, all over the world. With a history of pacifism in Druidry since Iolo Morganwg's time, with tales of our distant Druid ancestors bringing peace to tribal conflict, how do we make honourable decisions about whether to fight injustice or not to fight?

As I step off the well-trodden track into my next adventure, I am aware of the presence of that wizened old god, fear. Wide awake, and waking still, I feel my feet upon the earth, the sky in my lungs, the sun on my skin. And in the company of my people's dead, I feel the tingling warmth of courage. Pray, raise the meadhorn with me, and let us walk on.

**Emma Restall Orr** is founder and head of The Druid Network (<http://druidnetwork.org>), chief of The Order of the Yew, and founder and council member of Honouring the Ancient Dead (<http://www.honour.org.uk>). She was joint chief of The British Druid Order from 1994 - 2003. Her biography and bibliography can be found on [http://druidnetwork.org/profiles/people/emma\\_restall-orr.html](http://druidnetwork.org/profiles/people/emma_restall-orr.html)

*The Apple and The Thorn* (Thoth, Dec 2007)  
*Living With Honour : A Pagan Ethics* (O Books, 2008)  
*Kissing the Hag : The Dark Goddess and the Unacceptable Nature of Woman* (O Books, 2008)

For more information about PeaceOneDay, check <http://www.peaceoneday.org>

Images: Tony Eaglehart

## The Ways of the Lady

Ground me  
Surround me  
With your Love

Hold me  
Enfold me  
In your gracious arms

Crown me  
Abound me  
With Your wondrous Light

Light me  
Delight me  
With your wonders

Fill me  
Still me  
In the waters of your love

Keep me  
Heap me  
With your bounty

The Ways of the Lady  
Are short or long  
The decision is yours  
To find Her gateway  
To realms unknown  
One day we will know  
When we meet in the ever meadows

© KC Jay



## Chalice Well

From deep within her body it flows,  
Her blood passing through her bones,  
Flowing eternally without fail,  
Shed to nourish,  
While her children flourish,  
From high mountain to misty vale,  
We come to drink of her blood,  
From this place where starts the flood,  
Renewing our beings to our souls,  
Refreshing rejuvenating all,  
Whether we are large or small,  
Freeing us from our own controls,  
From human to beast,  
We are all released,  
From where the grail water flows.

© David P. Smith (Duir)

## Basic Economics 1847

The trees were all gone.  
At least of size enough  
for masts and spars,  
or single keel.  
The Colonies were rife  
with them, though.  
Sail West, empty, save  
for ballast to raise  
the waterline,  
unload the ballast,  
load the wood and  
return.  
No profit in bringing  
stones to Canada,  
they have plenty, there.

Then the canny Captains  
found weight that would  
load and unload itself,  
and pay for the privilege.  
Pack in the living, sail West,  
and those left alive would  
unload themselves,  
making room for the long timbers.  
Other than dying for the Queen,  
in battles not of their making,  
the next best use for  
the Irish.

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## WHITEOAK GATHERING 2008

WHITEOAK (Ord na Darach Gile) Lughnasad Druid Conclave East -August 15 -17, 2008

A primitive camping event (bring your solar shower, water, tent, potluckfood, cooler, bug stuff, etc.) In Western MA. There is a grill for cooking. NO DOGS ALLOWED.

Musical instruments, poetic offerings encouraged. There will be a poetry and a craft competition!

A gathering for members of all Druid Orders and their friends. Formerly known as the "Druid Summit", it is a place in the forest where Druids from all paths come together to share and discuss issues of common relevance.

This year we will feature a bardic competition and a craft competition as well as a ritual in the forest. It is a primitive camping event on the weekend of August 15 - 17, 2008 in the hills of Western Massachusetts.

The food and drink are potluck, bring your own solar shower (and extra wood and water), dried or fresh herbs and flowers (to offer to trees), silver coins (dimes and quarters) (to offer to water) and butter or oil (to offer to fire).

Plan to arrive Friday after 5 PM. Saturday we will do ceremony and Sunday morning we will have a blueberry pancake feast. We ask that you bring the bounty of the season to share with everyone (including pancake mix, blueberries, eggs, milk, bacon, etc. Please bring organic ingredients). Applicants will also be asked for a small donation to cover the rental of sanitary facilities.

\*Please note\* this is not a "Pagan" gathering or a gathering for the general public. It is for Druids and close friends and family only.

To sign up please write to [membership@whiteoakdruids.org](mailto:membership@whiteoakdruids.org)

## IN THE SEVEN WOODS – W B YEATS

I have heard the pigeons of the Seven Woods  
Make their faint thunder, and the garden bees  
Hum in the lime tree flowers; and put away  
The unavailing outcries and the old bitterness  
That empty the heart. I have forgot awhile  
Tara uprooted, and new commonness  
Upon the throne and crying about the streets  
And hanging its paper flowers from post to post,  
Because it is alone of all things happy.  
I am contented for I know that Quiet  
Wanders laughing and eating her wild heart  
Among pigeons and bees, while that Great Archer,  
Who but awaits His hour to shoot, still hangs  
A cloudy quiver over Pairc-na-Lee.



### The Lady of the Lake

For more examples of the work of Cherrie Ann Button  
visit [www.sacredcircles.co.uk](http://www.sacredcircles.co.uk)

## The Salmon - David J Drew

In Celtic tradition this magnificent fish represents the very spirit of life; called 'bradan,' this term is derived from dan or destiny/fate. The salmon also appears as knowledge and wisdom in the story of Fionn Mac Cumhail. In the mythical 'Well of Segais' swims the salmon of all-wisdom, around the well are nine sacred hazel trees whose nuts drop into the waters to feed the fish. Fionn is sent to the guardian Druid Finneigais of the Well to finish his education, and during his stay there the Druid catches the elusive fish after several years waiting... knowing that he will become the most knowledgeable and powerful man in the world. So, he gives the salmon to Fionn to cook. A time later the young lad brings the roasted fish to the Druid, but after looking him in the eyes the Druid asks:

"And Fionn, did you taste at all of the Salmon?" and Fionn replies; "Well, not really sir, but I burnt my finger on its skin as I was cooking it, and I put the thumb in my mouth because of the heat...!"

And so, the ancient illuminating wisdom of the salmon of many ages was transferred to Fionn, and he became one of the most legendary heroes of the Irish myths. In another tale, The Hawk of Achille, the hero Finntan is transformed into a salmon:

The gods put me, to my misery...  
Into the shape of a salmon at every spring...  
Short...  
I thought, was my stay on the Boyne...  
After my coming over the ocean...

He charts the courses of all of Ireland's rivers before having one of his eyes plucked out by the hawk, and then is caught and eaten by a princess and then reborn into human form again. My poem echoes the spirit of transformation and migration, the ebb and flow of life, inspiration and realization:

## AVON

Coursing on the path of a swirling rivers beat,  
Stretch \_ ing from a pool of existence, to eternal thrashing...  
::: My spiralling spirit flows like wild salmon  
Bubbling dumb, slipping through shard currents.  
To return, to blend, within ferments of bubbles,  
Silvered bliss, understanding the deepest fragrance  
All consuming strength, pure and desirous  
My companions clammering through falls  
::: Millions spawning ... dense cloud of seeds of milk  
Mirrors of the past \_ passing in waves, blessed  
And the beauty of :: migrations in ebb and flow  
Into a fruitful womb... all enclosing.

::: And then there again: flapping, gasping, naked, crying for air... a breath...



## Musings of a Modern day Druid

Around a year ago I was stuck in a huge rut and not living an authentic and conscious life. I was holding down a job I had no passion for, to pay the bills, loans and credit cards that had long since replaced the chains they had once unlocked. My relationship had become stale and I was treading on egg-shells to ensure I was still in a position to nurture and support my kids. Then one night the final straw came and I found myself being berated by my partner receiving the blame for all the ills of her world. I was about to defend myself and join in the argument when I received a strong message which said simply “Go for a walk”.

“What?” I thought back, shocked as this was not my way. I am not a quitter, I do not abandon my family and I always defend my corner. I am a good man and I was trying my best to shoulder all the pressure myself and it wasn’t fair that she didn’t understand. “Go for a walk” came the message again, not louder or more anxious but very calm and strong.

So I did just that.

Over my shoulder came criticisms and taunts “that’s right, you walk away”, “you’re a coward and won’t face up to what’s going on”. But I’d never been more conscious in my life and I had been instructed to walk. I trudged down the road as the night became dark and headed towards a local beauty spot which contained country lanes and woods and headed out into the bleaker environment of the backbone of England – the Pennines.

Approaching the gate which entered the country park I could see that there were a number of youths blocking my way but in my current situation I had no fear for my own safety and was actually favouring making my own decision on how I would return to source. I walked through them and received torrents of abuse and threats but kept my pace and walked deeper into the dark wooded lanes.

Further along I noticed a path which I hadn’t seen before and decided that I’d head that way until I came to a bend whose future course was obscured from view but had a faint glow that I hadn’t seen anywhere else during my walk. I followed the path around the bend and could see a lone man strolling towards me in the distance which thought strange at that time of night. As he walked by he looked at the night sky and said “Beautiful isn’t it” to which I replied “It certainly is” but the subject of the beauty which I had realised in that instant was Life itself.

I followed the path and became aware that it was heading back home so in my new found understanding realised it was a clear sign to go back and change my world. I paused for a moment and projected the message that I understood and that I would give myself completely to the will of God and allow myself to be guided to do his work but asked that in return that my family would always be cared and provided for. I was taking a huge leap of faith but was committed to following the signs and following the path that would be revealed before me.

We now come to the present completing a full annual cycle of the wheel and the Universe has restructured my environment around me into an exciting and authentic present with a hopeful future.



The path has taken many twists and turns and I have followed each and every sign that has produced a series of connections which have sometimes been so uncanny and purely chance meetings that there is no other explanation but the direct intervention of the Divine.

My main realisation has been that each of the steps I took, with hindsight, completed various stages of the Druidic grades eventually leading me to be the inspiration and lead player in championing the proposal of an eco-centre and green corridor through inner city Manchester (UK). I'm being interviewed for newspaper articles and TV programmes and have just been asked to Chair a Community focused voluntary organisation that is actively and positively assisting the most vulnerable communities to overcome political contempt and develop the spirit to achieve personal and collective successes that were beyond their dreams.

Additionally I'm working with convicted offenders helping them explore their own attitudes to life and community which leads to them unlocking their potential and returning to help rebuild the communities they once preyed upon.

I'm also in the process of forming a project to build a stone circle in a run down park within one of the most deprived areas in Europe. The 16 stones will represent each of the sixteen schools in the area and will act as a focus for a sustainable programme of educational, inclusive and most important of all, inspirational activities.

All I have done has up to this stage been purely voluntary and unfunded and I have given totally to the Community with unconditional Love. I have asked for nothing in exchange trusting that I will receive my rewards in due time and having no doubt in my ability to live a conscious and inspirational life as long as I retain my faith.

Personally in the last couple of days the Universe has brought about that collapse again which will mean unemployment, financial meltdown, homelessness and an end to my relationship.

But this time although I still feel the pain I know and understand that all negativity is being cleared from my life and with it the Awen has begun to flow in torrents and I have been broken down to be reborn anew into a life full of promise and potential.

Much Love Damian Carr // \ x

### 'Auld Reekie' Cock-a-Leekie Soup

Ingredients: 3 lb boiling chicken (giblets removed); 3 rashers streaky bacon; 1 lb shin of beef; 2 lb leeks; 1 large onion; 5 fluid ounces Scotch Whisky; 4 pints water; 1 level tablespoon dried tarragon; one teaspoon brown sugar; salt and pepper; 8 pre-soaked prunes

Method: Mix the Whisky, tarragon and sugar in the water. Chop up the bacon and place the chicken, bacon and beef in a large bowl and pour over the Whisky marinade. Leave to soak overnight. Place the chicken etc in a large soup pot. Chop up the leeks (reserve one) and onion and add to pot. Salt and pepper to taste. Bring to the boil, cover and simmer for two hours, removing any scum as required. Remove the chicken from the pot, remove skin and bones. Chop the meat into small pieces and return to pot. Cut up the shin of beef, if required. Add the prunes and the last chopped leek and simmer for 10 to 15 minutes. It will serve up to eight people. The prunes are optional but traditional.

