

Beltaine 2009

Welcome to the Beltaine edition of EOLAS, the magazine of Ord na Darach Gile - the Order of WhiteOak. In this edition we have our usual mix of articles, poems, the ancient and the modern.

The sun is shining through the new green leaves in my garden, and as I type this I am watching a tiny bluetit flittering about the branches of a wild rose collecting small insects. Bees are buzzing around the small lavender hedge that sits alongside my path, bluebells and primroses are adding colour to the verdant scene, as the cycle of the year turns once again towards summer.

This time of the year is always one of my favourites, the summer heat of traffic jams and sunburnt skin is still a distance away, cool breezes blow the fresh new leaves. In a world of global recessions, swine flu and all the other trappings of modern life a simple walk within the majesty of nature can recharge even the most drained of souls.

If anyone would like to contribute to future editions of EOLAS, please send your contributions to membership@whiteoakdruids.org

Within the peace of the Oaks,
J Craig Melia – April 2009

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



The Order of WhiteOak has instituted a teaching program and system of fostership. For more details visit our website at www.whiteoakdruids.org or email us via membership@whiteoakdruids.org

Celtic Reconstructional Paganism – Learning from the Past, Looking to the Future J Craig Melia

Be not too wise, nor too foolish,
Be not too conceited, nor diffident,
Be not too talkative, nor too feeble,
If you be too wise, men will expect too much of you,
If you be too foolish, you will be deceived,
If you be too conceited, you will be thought vexatious,
If you be too humble, you will be without honour,
If you be too talkative, you will not be heeded,
If you be too silent, you will not be regarded,
If you be too hard, you will be broken,
If you to too feeble, you will be crushed.

Instructions of King Cormac

Polytheistic Reconstructionist Paganism is a relatively young movement, birthed in the late 60s/early 70s. As with anyone approaching their fortieth birthday there is often a period of introspection, of re-examining the past, and of looking to what the future may offer.

Many who were born around the same time as Polytheistic Reconstructionist Paganism are now becoming Elders within the movement themselves. A new generation is inspired, seeking illumination, learning, and wisdom, and this is as it should be, for the duty of an Elder is not to better their own standing, but to inspire others, and to prepare the way for those who are to come. They are the torchbearers of tradition.

Celtic Reconstructionist Paganism, as a distinct separate movement can be traced back to the late 80s and early 90s, making CR a young adult having survived its difficult teenage years. In spite of the occasional tantrum and a few bruised egos the movement appears to have now reached a level of maturity.

The catalysts for many who follow a celtic reconstructionist pathway can be varied, from a rejection of “Western” values, ecological and environmental issues, dissatisfaction with organised religions, through to societal concerns. Although still for the main part decentralized and non-hierarchical, the movement has grown into a social as well as spiritual community.

The community, or maybe more correctly *communitas*, which many seek to build is based on the ethical insights,

qualities and behaviour which the ancient Celts valued and aspired to. Fused into this are our spiritual and religious beliefs, as well as upholding those virtues held as a sacred duty; justice, impartiality, conscientiousness, generosity, hospitality, honour, beneficence, capability, honesty, eloquence, truth in judgment, and mercy.

One of the main focal points that separates and defines polytheistic reconstruction is the importance of Orthopraxy rather than Orthodoxy, of “correct action” rather than “correct thinking”. We define our practices as a lifestyle, and identify “correct action” as living life in accordance with the specific ideals and principles of cultural traditions.



A greater understanding of pagan ethics and morals has become the focus of many books over recent years from Emma Restall Orr’s “Living with Honour”, Dr Brendan Myers’ “The Other Side of Virtue” to John Michael Greer’s excellent “A World Full of Gods”, which focus on the philosophy of our beliefs. These books reflect the changes with Reconstructionist Paganism and within the wider neo-pagan movement as a whole where pagan theology and philosophy are now discussed on a level with more “established” religions.

Many within the pagan movement, but especially those within the reconstructionist paths have long focused on scholarly research, whilst seeking to find balance through poetical inspiration, in order to maintain living, viable traditions.

The very name “Reconstructionist” gives us one eye constantly on the past, we look to the Audacht Morainn, the Brehon Laws, the Mabinogion, the Mythological Cycles, the Wisdom Texts, historical and archaeological research to better understand the beliefs and practices of the original faith of the pagan Celts. But this alone is not enough.

The beliefs and traditions that were practiced during the early centuries of the present era were shaped by the society and

culture of which they were born. Likewise our own mores and beliefs reflect the world in which we find ourselves today, regardless of the traditions we follow, and that is as it should be, for otherwise reconstruction could become re-enactment and with it spiritual stagnation.

To attempt to live in an age gone by is folly, all cultures absorb the practices of their neighbours, and the ancient Celtic (and for that matter the modern Celtic) peoples were no different. To isolate and insulate ourselves against the world would leave us disconnected.

With the maturing of our movement there are many important questions which we must address. The first questions "Who are we?" and "What are we?" are still open, but much discussed. The questions we should be asking now are "Where are we, and where are we heading?"

Overriding these as the key question which is at the core of them all is the one oft quoted of Carlos Castaneda – "Does this path have a heart?"

For me there is only the traveling on paths that have heart, on any path that may have heart. There I travel, and the only worth while challenge is to traverse its full length. And there I travel looking, looking, breathlessly.

Don Juan, A Yaqui Warrior - Carlos Castaneda

From my perspective those fellow travellers I have met upon this path are people of good faith, to whom virtue, honour, wisdom and truth are far from empty words. It is a path where excellence in all things is held in high esteem and knowledge, learning and experience are respected. As a movement, as with any group, we are far from perfect (however you define that) but all we do comes from the heart.

Celtic Reconstructionist Paganism aptly exists within three worlds, it seeks to learn from the past, whilst at the same time looking to the future, and, most importantly, it lives in the present.

J Craig Melia
Ord na Darach Gile



Lughnasad Druid Camp in Canada - July 31

We invite you to join us for the Celtic Gathering 2009. Located at the Mansfield Outdoor Centre, just an hour's drive north of Toronto, the Celtic Gathering offers seminars, workshops, rituals, and a chance to meet like-minded pagans. Speakers and workshop presenters are travelling from England, Wales, US, and Canada.

Running from July 31st to August 3rd, organizers are hoping for warm, bright days and cool, clear nights. Situated on three hundred acres of beautifully wooded hills and valleys, the site offers nature trails, river banks, and fire pits.

Camping and all meals, showers, talks and workshops are included in the admission cost of \$C 165.00 for the entire weekend. For those that prefer indoor accommodations, shared rooms are available for an additional \$C 10.00 (for the weekend).

Scheduled speakers include:

Brian Walsh - Lughnasadh: The Feast of Lugh
Ceallaigh S. MacCath-Moran Introduction to Celtic languages
Marija Kuncaitis - Eastern European Paganism
Caryl Dailey - Self Made by Celtic Magic
Nigel Dailey - Exploring Concepts of the Celtic World Tree

Scheduled workshops include:

Brian Walsh - Into the Valley
Seba - Interactive Celtic Mythology Theater
Donata Ahern - Working With the Medicine Wheel
Ceallaigh S. MacCath-Moran - Bodhran Drumming

Mark this on your calendar and plan to join us!

Register online at www.druidicdawn.org/node/1381

We hope to see you there

Lismullen Henge – Ireland’s latest National Monument near Tara, Ireland **Dr. Muireann Ni Bhrolchain**

In April 2007 a most amazing archaeological site was revealed in the Gabhra Valley, Co Meath, Ireland on the route of the motorway that is being built through the landscape of Ireland’s premier archaeological and historical site – Tara (Temair). The National Roads Authority (NRA) archaeologists advertised that a henge existed in the townland of Lismullen (the enclosure of the mill). It had escaped detection when they carried out their original investigations. Close by was the careful burial of a large hound.

The experts on Tara are of no doubt that this ritual site, a temple, is part of the extended Tara complex. It is about 500metres from Rath Lugh, a promontory fort that overlooks the site and is also threatened by the motorway route. The small area also contains a barrow and a souterrain. In December 2007 a second extraordinary find emerged in a second souterrain – a stone with megalithic art similar to stones at Newgrange and Knowth.

It was very similar to the art in the passage tomb of the Mound of the Hostages on the Hill of Tara. It is likely this stone was robbed from a nearby passage tomb during the construction of the souterrain in the early centuries AD. Indeed, it has been suggested that the large mound in the grounds of Lismullen house may be that of a passage tomb.

What we refer to today as a “henge” are two related architectural forms that come from the late Neolithic and the early Bronze age - from about 2500 to 1800BC. The majority of henges in the world are found in Ireland and England. They may consist of banks, earth enclosures and also timber circles as is the case with the Lismullin henge. Rath Medb at is an example of the earthen enclosure. They exist in both stone and wood, Lismullen is a wood henge and Stonehenge is the most famous.

It was built with wood first and then the more permanent stone structure was put in place. The timber circles can be quite different; there may be huge posts as was the case on the top of Tara or much smaller, slimmer ones as is the case with Lismullen. They can have multiple concentric rings as well single rings of post. Double rings appear to be more popular. But this one is, according to expert opinion, architecturally unique and it is middle-range size. There are three circles here, two large ones close together and a third, the inner sanctum, that is much smaller.

One of the oldest henges ever found is also in Meath, at Raffin Fort. It dates from c.3100BC and Conor Newman, the expert on Tara, carried out the excavation. Ireland is different from England in that these structures continued to be used well into the Iron Age and the latest timber circle is also found at Raffin, Co Meath and this dates the fifth century. This is the period of the arrival of Christianity to Ireland and it is significant that this henge was built at that time.



It is particularly significant that the Lismullen site included a funnel-shaped entrance avenue that is a feature of early Iron Age ritual enclosures in Ireland. Similar examples are found at all the other important kingship sites in Ireland: Dún Áilinne (Kildare), Emhain Mhacha (near Armagh) and Cruachain (Connacht) and, of course, at the henge on top of the Hill of Tara. These are the primary ritual as well as the primary kingship sites of Ireland.

The site has been described as “quite amazing” by Conor Newman who said in a press release issued on May 4 2007: “This is a monument of major significance. It compares with Iron Age monuments found at the related royal sites of Emain Macha and Dun Ailinne, and a discovery of this magnitude in a landscape so heavily invested with ceremonial monuments was predicted from the start.

The view expressed on MCC's website report that its position beneath the ceremonial complex on the Hill of Tara suggests that it may have served 'smaller or lesser political units' that might somehow have been skulking around the fringes of Tara is frankly asinine.”

This point in the Gabhra Valley is the entrance to Tara. It was more or less expected that a henge would be found in this location. They are usually associated with Passage Tombs. Conor Newman and Joe Fenwick recorded the existence of a straight line of Passage Tombs running from the river Boyne southwards right through the Gabhra Valley and up to the top of the hill.

The Mound of the Hostages is surrounded by a henge also, this is 200metres in diameter and is much larger than the Lismullen Henge that is 80metres, still a very large area. These two henges are about the same distance apart as Knowth and Dowth are from each other. No one would doubt that the latter two are related to each other.

It is no accident that this henge is exactly where it is. The fact that Rath Lugh is situated at this position is no accident either. This tells us that from the very earliest times this area was considered as an integrated, cultural landscape and this continued right into the early medieval period.

The famous Fianna had a battle in this area, known as the Battle of Gabhra. They were wiped out in the cataclysmic conflict. They fought the king of Tara, Cairpre the son Cormac mac Airt who was killed along with them. It is said in story and poetry that they were buried at the battle site along with the king of Tara.

(The aerial shot were taken April 24th by Paula Geraghty for the Campaign to Save Tara - the area covered by blue plastic is the henge. Towards the top of the photograph is Rath Lugh.)

Muireann Ní Bhrolcháin - <http://www.savetara.com>



Secret Fairy Falls

On a journey
through the forest
on a Winter's afternoon,
around a familiar corner
no longer hidden
by foliage and bloom,
I saw for the first time
the Faeries secret
waterfall.

I found a spot
to park the car,
anxious to be sure.
As I ran across
the forest road
to explore
this secret place
my steps stopped short.

This was a sacred space
not meant for my foot step.
I turned my back
to retrace my path
when for the slightest moment
I could hear
Summer songs from Faery flutes
sweet laughter lilting
and the dancing of Faery feet.

Stephanie Pflumm ©Copyright 2008

Frozen Fog

Fog
frozen in the trees
transforms the dreary
forest.

Naked branches
dancing
with fallen clouds
on a freezing night,
leaves them touched
by this crystalline blessing,
a moment of grace
before
the quiet lifeless
Winter
returns.

Stephanie Pflumm ©Copyright 2008

Star

I am the sun,
she declared,
the brightest star.
The center of my
universe, and
all things revolve
about me.
You are allowed
some warmth
(with proper praise),
less than adulation
and you will
freeze, perish.

Happy in my
singular orbit,
I wonder how it is
she fails to see
that her brilliance
casts no shadow,
nurturing none.

Merlinbeag na Tuatha
Garrán na Collach Rua

Beginning in the next edition we would like to introduce a **Dear Editor** section to the magazine to allow us to publish letters from you, our readers.

If you'd like to comment on any of the articles, discuss issues or make announcements of interest feel free to drop us a line at
EOLAS@whiteoakdruids.org

We look forward to hearing from you!

Aye, 'til a Man's Heart Remembereth **Rev. David Gray**

A man I regard deeply for his authenticity and quiet, compassionate strength asked me to write something for EOLAS. That he asked me, a Christian priest, to contribute to a magazine of this particular quality is a sign that the illusion that separates beings into categories and even rooms of understanding is shimmering. It is indeed so.

Increasing numbers of people are realising that we live in a Matrioshka universe that no one mind or even organised collection of minds can fully comprehend. Insights as to the whole have been scattered like potent seeds across fields of vast variety spanning time and space. Again, as it was in the long ago, the tendrils are starting to reach out again to embrace each other.

From childhood, I have myself been a regarder of other ways of being. This has been one of the most enriching elements of my life. As a child, I was blessed to have friends that enabled me to sit at the feet of elders schooled in various paths, chiefly Christendom, Judaism, Hinduism and Islam.

At thirteen, I completed a thirteen weeks course that enabled me to explore my abilities as a medium (though I've been an extra large for quite a few years now since). By the time I was running the Religion / Philosophy and Occult section in a large Manchester bookshop in my mid teens, I had been identified and affirmed as a Yellow Magician. But the one life that ever drew me deeper was that of a man many in the know would be able to identify as a divine druid: Jesus.¹

While Jesus is undoubtedly my Lord, my experience of Him is rather different to that of many I know. While most can say that he loved all humanity unconditionally, few can grow this love in their own hearts. In time, I became a Franciscan tertiary, an Anglican priest and Methodist minister. For almost ten years I was editor of Mensa Interfaith and for the last five years have been a steering group member of Faith Network for Manchester.

Last year, with my bishop's blessing, I commenced ordination training with the Interfaith Seminary. It is to me a sign of humanities healing that my year group includes Buddhists, Christians, Jews, Muslims and Gnostics; a special personal comfort that a member of my own study

group is a descendant of Alice Nutter² and a follower of that gentle Craft that my Christian faith ancestors were so afraid of as to break every rule the Lord they claimed to follow gave them for a heritage.

Perhaps, we might think, with an Archbishop of Canterbury who is also a druid, our nation is ready to embrace anew the full richness of its heritage.

Alas, there is yet further healing to be accomplished. Yet, my personal experience has been that when we cease our sibling rivalry and gather to ask a favour of our divine parent, whole communities are touched by grace. Last year, for example, we celebrated a risen child in a restored temple in an event that was facilitated by leaders of many faiths and attended by people from across the faith and atheistic spectrum who, while they may not have shaped their understanding in words familiar to all, could all agree that they had been present when they were each touched by awe.

Earlier this year, my interfaith companions and I visited a wonderful project that has done much to gather the children of heaven together in their particular community here on earth in a place called Pendle.³

Listening to the wonderful news that people from Christian, Muslim and Hindu backgrounds were working together to lift the life of all in their community, I was curious to know in what ways the Pagans were participating. My question was met by puzzled looks.

As the thread was teased out a little more, it was agreed that Pagans probably were the silent majority in that particular swathe of England, nor was it lost that their religion did not seem to be part of that undeniable past tension that had once threatened community cohesion in the area. At last, the only reason that could be given for the absence of Pagans in this healthy local partnership was that they were not organised in the ways that the other faiths were.

Perhaps some of you will know better than I if that is true. It reminded me of being told as the director of a project working among the homeless in Manchester during the Thatcher years that EEC food supplies could not be offered to the people I served because my project did not have a head office in London. Needless to say, I soon cut through that nonsense and was

rewarded with nine whole deep-frozen carcasses of beef being delivered to my council house - but that's another tale.

My personal take is that the thrust of interfaith activity has moved beyond the mere dialogue stage. It's no longer simply a shared interest movement of people visiting each others Mosques, Synagogues, Churches, Gurudwara's or Temples listening politely as we tell each other this is how we express our understanding of the Divine.

While this level of sharing will ever be important, it seems to me that Interfaith has moved into a passionate phase of cooperation to build an inclusive society made up of happier, healthier more wholesome communities.

We need the Pagan voice in the mix too. Anyone fancy a chin-wag?

Rev. David Gray

The Rev. David is a Franciscan tertiary, volunteer Anglican priest and Methodist minister, who is training with the Interfaith Foundation. He is secretary to Faith Network for Manchester and edited Mensa Interfaith for ten years.

Editors Notes

- 1 Perhaps following Columcille's famous quote "*Christ is my Druid*".
- 2 Englishwoman hanged as part subjects of the Pendle witch trials.
- 3 Pendle is perhaps most famous as the site of the Pendle witch trials during the 1600s, and has a significant local pagan population.



An Oregon White Oak – photo courtesy of Sue Pesznecker

The Oregon White Oak or Oregon Oak, has a range from southern California to extreme southwestern British Columbia, particularly southeastern Vancouver Island and the adjacent Gulf Islands. It grows from sea level to 210 m altitude in the northern part of its range, and at 300-1800 m in the south of the range in California.

Celtic Cosmology: Two Seasons, Three Worlds, Four Treasures, Five Directions; the Pillars of Druidism
Ellen Evert Hopman.

Ellen Evert Hopman is the current Co-Chief and a founding member of the Order of the White Oak (Ord Na Darach Gile). She is a master herbalist and lay homeopath who also holds a Master's Degree in mental health counseling.

Her previous works include: A Druid's Herbal for the Sacred Earth Year; A Druid's Herbal of Sacred Tree Medicine; Walking the World in Wonder- A Children's Herbal; Tree Medicine, Tree Magic; and Priestess of the Forest: A Druid Journey. Ellen is an established elder in the CR/Druid movement within Western Contemporary Paganism.

Essentially, this DVD is a recorded lecture that Ellen gave to a group of people in the fall of 2008 and the subject matter was also the topic of a discussion that she led at the 2009 Pantheon.

She presents a very genuine overview of Celtic Cosmology in a flowing narrative that I found informative as well as entertaining. She seamlessly blends progressively more complex but foundational principles of the Celtic worldview into a very honest and digestible format. I would propose that even those who don't agree 100% with the content would have to still admit that Ellen's down to earth and straightforward delivery style is a real treasure.

The importance of this kind of presentation at this point in the evolution of the Celtic Reconstruction spiritual movement cannot be overstated. The ability to present a coherent and graspable overview of what is currently regarded as the "theology" of CR is a skill that all of the adherents of the path should consider critical to cultivate. The ability to present foundational cosmological concepts in condensed form allows us to streamline a community understanding of where we are coming from as well as allowing us to generate talking points that are helpful in interfaith dialogs and, even, sharing what we believe with our friends and neighbors.

Establishing debatable points around which to have dialog within the larger community of adherents allows us as individuals to further deepen our understandings and clarify our points of separation. As a community of like minded people, time spent clarifying how and why we believe what we do helps us cultivate a greater sense of unity and purpose.

The production quality of the DVD does come across as slightly amateurish, with obvious edits and stopping points, sound and camera focus issues. However, rather than detracting from the subject matter, I feel that it serves to reinforce the idea that this is material presented from the heart of someone who is a devotee of the spiritual path. It is a worthy effort, the lack of a production budget is more than adequately compensated for by the authenticity of the presentation. I would give this DVD a heart-felt four stars out of five, well worth the sticker price.

Copies of the DVD are available from Ellen, by sending \$20.00 plus \$4.00 for s/h to POB 219, Amherst, MA 01004, USA



Living with Honour: A Pagan Ethics

By: Emma Restall Orr

ISBN: 978-184694094-1

A Review By: William P. Apple

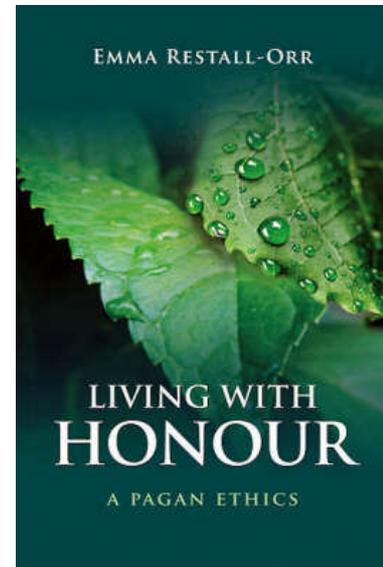
This book should have just been titled, A Pagan Ethics Course, and justifiably so because for the first time I feel that I have finally picked up a book worthy of that claim. And in fact I feel that a book like this has been long overdue. So, needless to say when I was offered this book to read and review I was very excited.

Orr sums up the need for this book very well when she says on pg. 341, “The distinct task of the Pagan is to be ever exquisitely awake to [nature’s] web in order to ensure that the difference he/she is making is always appropriate and positive; honourable.”, and this comes from the overwhelming sense that this perspective of “honour” within the pagan community is somewhat lacking. After reading *Living with Honour* I would have to say, as a student of ethics, that the pagan community finally has their first step to a better understanding of what that might mean and how to achieve it.

With that said, however, the book is not without its faults which mostly come in the form of contradictions. Orr, from the outset, announces that she is not an expert on ethics and that she is a “punk through and through” which she says gives the justification for even beginning to write a work on ethics because of her “somewhat anarchic education” from which to contrast against; which I can fully understand and agree with. However, there are contradictory paradigms that still shine through this piece, which all and all only negates some of Orr’s ultimate perspective and message. For instance, her take on Christianity is the same cliché take that the majority of non-Christians have on that religion; i.e. an oppressive, hypocritical, and judgmental religion that is immersed in corruption and greed. And unfortunately I can say that within the politics of the Catholic Church, and many “fundamental” institutions, this is true. However, due to many non-Christian’s personal negativity on this religion, which is evident within Orr’s words, they are unable to see through to the core of the Christian message; which is the complete opposite of the negativity aforementioned.

This being said, Orr misses the point of what ethics is truly; which she hits squarely on the head in her above mentioned statement that says, “The distinct task of the Pagan [or any individual] is to be ever exquisitely awake to [nature’s] web...”; which is all things. By continuing to speak negatively about Christianity as a whole without speaking of the positive core of that religion Orr is only encouraging further negativity and negating her perspective that, “The distinct task of the Pagan is...to ensure that the difference he/she is making is always appropriate and positive; honourable.”

Though the book continues to play off of this same sort of negative rhetoric at times, for the most part Orr is able to grind out a distinct piece of literature that is powerful and concise. Her voice – as usual – continues to provoke one to listen, and with most of her “code of pagan ethics” being positive, I would encourage anyone to read this book. It is truly the first foundational stone towards an institution for “A Pagan Ethics”.



Kissing the Hag

By: Emma Restall Orr

ISBN: 978-1-84694-157-3

A Review By: William P. Apple

I have to say that after just finishing *Kissing the Hag* I am mixed emotionally and mentally about how the book was put together. You see, *Kissing the Hag*, is part memoir, part scholarly work, and part essay and placed all together I'm just not sure it works. Separately, I would have enjoyed each part on its own. Personally, I would love to hear more about Orr's life; it seems to be an interesting one filled with great experiences, and, in fact, I will take this opportunity to publicly encourage her to write a memoir of her life; I'm sure it would be truly appreciated. In addition I would love to see more of a scholarly approach taken to this topic, and in regards to the work as an essay...well, it works quite well.

Her interspersed memoirs, however – which are used to drive the direction of the work – forces the reader to shift gears in an uncomfortable way. And this is not because any part of the book is written poorly, but more so has to do with the fact that each piece is really a separate entity all unto itself. In addition to this, Orr adds pieces of archetypal fiction to help begin her story, and help conduct her story, and since it is truly archetypal it has an overall cliché and generalized narrative tone. All of this combined together, Orr takes us on a journey through the complexities of womanhood in a way that is as complex as any individual's mixed and uncontrolled emotions.

However, all this said, the book does somehow manage to hit its mark. Mostly *Kissing the Hag* is an essay – which is appreciated – and if I only look at this work as an opportunity for Ms. Orr to share her thoughts on this topic I completely enjoy it without any constructive remarks. I have never read anything by Orr until just recently and I feel compelled to say that I enjoy her style and voice. As anyone may agree about the often times drone and hum of essay pieces Orr articulates the meat and core of this piece in a voice that is clear and allows the reader to feel as though they are having a conversation about the history of womanhood with a truly “together” woman; and for many this may come as a breath of fresh air. Ignoring the book's faults, one can really immerse themselves into the story that Orr carves out of the history of the world to tell the behind the scenes look at womanhood – and in many ways manhood – in a way that is truly stimulating and inspiring.

Furthermore, Orr manages, for the most part, to stay away from the rhetoric of the feminist movement – which let it be known that I am a strong proponent of, but do not wish to hear the clichés – and instead tells her tale with the precision of a strong, intelligent, and individualized speaker. It is obvious that Orr manages to move away from the overtones of feminism and into her own core, her own voice – which is of course the power of feminism – and tell the tale of womanhood with eloquence and power to entice anyone to want more; and this is an encouraging and promising note.

Ultimately, *Kissing the Hag*, is a piece that I would encourage anyone to read if they are looking to hear an intelligent, witty, and passionate voice on the topic about the hidden things about women. Orr's take on the “unacceptable nature of women” is truly a work that needs to be read...despite its faults.

Roads & Trackways of North Wales

By Tim Prevett

Now and again, a book is published which adds significantly to public knowledge of our countryside and the history of the landscape in which it is located. 'The Roads & Trackways of North Wales', a new book, does just that. Driving along the A5 from Chirk to Anglesey, are a succession of signs stating that the road is a 'Historic Route'. This book shows that the A5 is a comparative newcomer, with many others in North Wales which are ten – twenty times older. Some of the roads were pre-historic when they were utilised by the Romans and two thousand years on, still remain in use.

The packhorse way being succeeded by the cart, coach and motor vehicle, in many cases preserves a route-way that had its origins in pre-history. The old road from Rowen to Aber – Bwlch Y Ddeufaen, or the pass of two stones – still has the two huge way-markers as well as a cromlech at the side of the roadway.

Author Tim Prevett begins the book looking at the evidence for such old roads and then moves on to examine the Roman roads, pilgrims' routes, drovers' roads and subsequent highways up to the turnpikes, including Telford's A5, the London to Holyhead route for Dublin-bound travellers. He has carefully included lots of maps and photographs to illustrate the text. They make it much easier to understand the locations he describes. There is a lot packed into the book's 160pp and it is competitively priced at £14.99.

With its eye-catching cover of sheep still using the Bwlch Y Ddeufaen route, the author shows us how much of our heritage we can easily take for granted and how much of our countryside has been shaped by our forefathers and mothers. The book can be purchased via www.roadsandtrackwaysofnorthwales.org.uk

