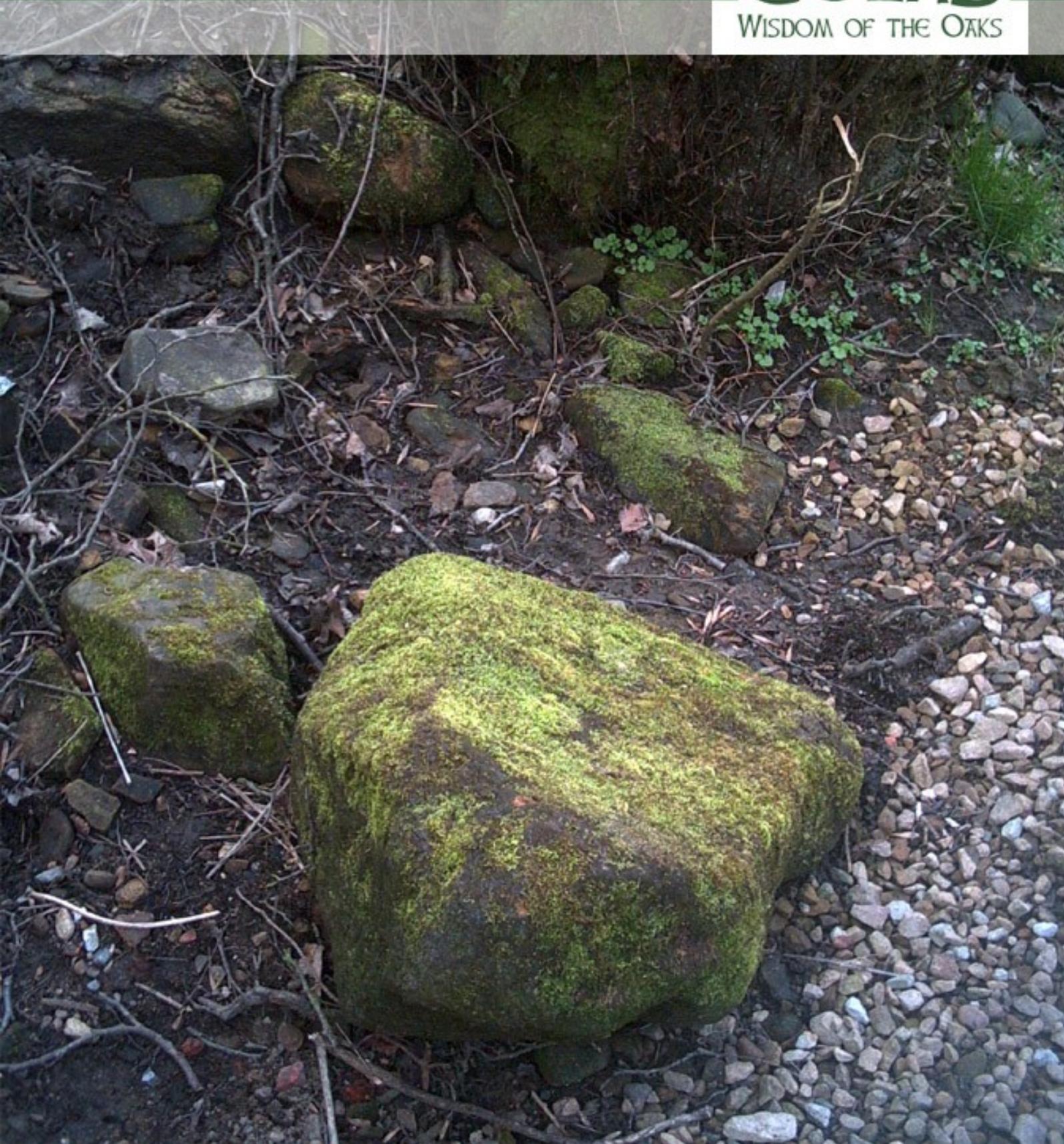


beltaine 2011

eOLAS
WISDOM OF THE OAKS



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Dear Editor

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!

Beltaine 2011



Welcome to the Beltaine edition of EOLAS Magazine. In this edition we have our usual mix of articles, reviews and interviews.

The trees that but a few short weeks ago remained bare are now vivid and green with new growth and the landscape seems to be filled with the sound of new life, the promise of warmer days and the harvest that is to come.

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

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

Macha, Goddess of Sovereignty

Morgan Daimler

Macha is one of the Tuatha De Danaan who appears in at least three different places in Irish mythology. She is a daughter of Ernmas, sister to Bodbh and Nemain, who some people consider these three sisters to make up the triple Morrighan.

In the first story she appears as the wife of Nemed, of the third race to settle Ireland, and in this tale she "dies" clearing the plains of Ireland for farming. In alternate versions her husband cleared the land and she died there so he named it for her. In either case she is linked to the earth and its produce. It is also possible that her name "Macha" may mean plain or field.

Next she appears as a fairy woman who marries a peasant named Crunnchu, and becomes pregnant with twins. He goes to a festival held by the king who is bragging of the speed of his horses. Crunnchu, despite being warned by Macha not to speak of her to anyone else, brags that his wife could outrace any horse, and the furious king demands that Crunnchu bring her immediately to race or forfeit his life. Macha begs for a delay as she is in labor, but is denied and forced to race anyway. She wins, collapsing and birthing her twins just past the finish line and curses the men of Ulster with nine days of labor pain in their greatest hour of need for "nine times nine" generations before dying. To this day the spot carries her name, Emain Macha, where for a long time festivals and assemblies were held, especially at Lunasa. It is from this story that her associations with horses, childbirth, pregnancy, justice and, again, the produce of the earth - by marrying a peasant - are seen.

In the third story we see her connection to sexuality, sovereignty, and battle. She is Macha Mog Ruadh, Macha Red-Hair, daughter of one of three kings who share the rulership of Ireland, each ruling for seven years in turn. When her father dies, Macha steps up to rule but is challenged by the other two kings who do not want to co-rule with a woman. She battles them and wins, and when her seven years are up she refuses to turn leadership over to the others since she is Queen not by blood but through victory in battle. One of the two kings dies, leaving five sons who would challenge her, so she goes to them in the appearance of a crone or leper and seduces them one by one, tying them up afterwards and thereby defeating them and enslaving them. Finally she marries the last of the original three kings, Cimbath.

Traditionally the severed heads of enemy warriors were called "Macha's acorn crop" another sign that she was a warrior goddess. My unverified gnosis is that in each story when she "dies" she is actually just returning to the Otherworld from whence she came, having accomplished what she intended in our world.

I have found her to be fiercely loving and protective of those she calls her own, with a strong "mother" energy to her, but she can be very no-nonsense and unbending as well. She always appears to me as a red haired warrior woman wearing a cloak of black feathers and riding or walking next to a black or white horse, sometimes both. To me she is a goddess of the sovereignty of the land, a protector of the weak, and goddess of women and women's issues, especially pregnancy and childbirth - which is definitely a form of battle.

Morgan Daimler, Druid of the Order of the WhiteOak. Author of the book *By Land, Sea, and Sky* and contributor to the anthologies *The Pagan's Muse* and *Voices of the Survivors*, as well articles and poetry for *Idunna*, *EOLAS*, *The Wiccan Road*, and *Witchvox.com*.

Burning the Wicker Man

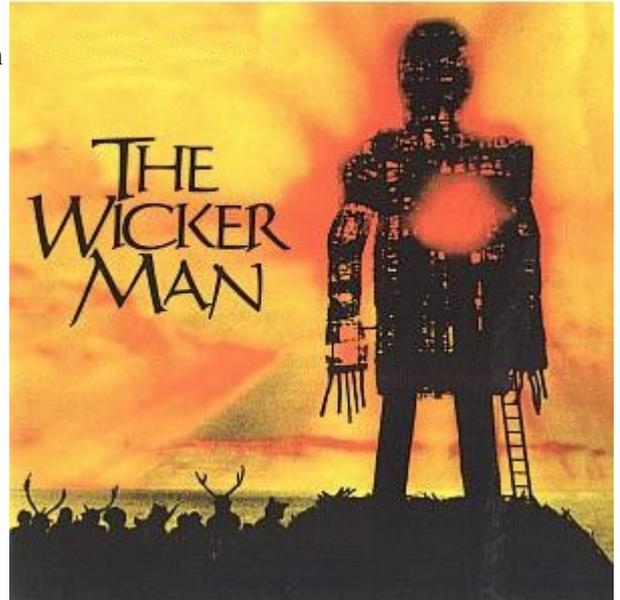
Michael Macnaghten

Alba's biggest problem is misrepresentation, not so much politically but in the sphere of culture. This has stemmed from our revisionist history, which has underplayed Celtic cultures that existed in Alba a long time before the revisionist discourses of Tartanry, Kailyard and Clydesideism.

Our cinematic tradition only accentuates this sense of a lost culture, from the proto-fascist *Braveheart* (1995) to the dismal social commentary of *Trainspotting* (1996).

We find in both films representations of the same cultural of revisionism and also of outsider interest in the country. That is a Scotland with the malignant qualities of Alba removed; something that appeals to tourists concerned with scenery and bagpipes.

Another consideration that presents itself is the infamous Calvinist reserve that has been more than content to have a more concealed culture away from the eyes of outsiders. Consider one of the quintessentially British Horror films, *The Wicker Man* (1976). It's mix of Neo-Paganism is something that seems to have far more relevance. Indeed compared to a film like *Trainspotting*, which could be set anywhere, could the *Wicker Man* have been set anywhere better than Scotland?



Cinefantastique described *The Wicker Man* as "The Citizen Kane of Horror Movies", and indeed the film has much to say on the genre as well as Scotland.

Scottish history has been one of conflict and this has been primarily religious, as just one example, the infamous Scottish battle on British soil, Culloden, more Scots were massacring Scots than Englishman.

The Wicker Man is a key text insofar as it actually bothers to reflect real historical themes, even if ambivalent with facts themselves. The common leitmotifs represent that usually represent true Scottish discourses: The Laird, conflict over a curse/religion, 'dark communities' and freethinking spaces.

Scottish history is riddled with revisionism, which is one of the meta-conflicts in *Braveheart*. Davidson points out that "The adoption of Highland symbols and cultural artefacts by the Scottish evoke as a whole was a complex process. For these symbols were by no means authentic products of a traditional culture, but had been significantly modified in order to make their adoption possible." (P.129: 2000)

The mode of the Celtic and by extension Pagan revival can be seen to take several forms, whether it is the large investments in sustainable energy. Or the comfortable rise in attendance of festivals such as Up Helly Aa, in Shetland or similar festivals such as Burning of the Clavie in Burghaed. These owe a lot to Norse mythology as well, though the overarching theme of atavistic religious life not being so much reborn, but transcending the discourses that have hitherto been dominant.

Celtic Neo-Pagan cultures (or elements of) show no sign of disappearing, with even the aptly named Wicker Man Music festival in Dundrennan continuing to attract visitors.

This resurgence is hopefully not going to take the form of worshipping a dead culture, but will hopefully reintegrate with this authentic culture in Alba which in not so much an arbitrary fashion but an ideology which makes itself necessary today.

Michael Macnaghten is a writer living in Glasgow, Scotland. As young boy staying at Samye Ling the monks declared him as having lived many lifetimes, while he remains unsure about that, he does try and keep busy in this one. His major areas of interest tend are culture and society, with his major focus being Psychoanalysis.



Kanu y Med (The Song of Mead) - From the Book of Taliesin

I WILL adore the Ruler, chief of every place,
Him, that supports the heaven: Lord of everything.
Him, that made the water for every one good,
Him, that made every gift, and prospers it.
May Maelgwn of Mona be affected with mead,
and affect us,
From the foaming mead-horns,
with the choicest pure liquor,
Which the bees collect, and do not enjoy.
Mead distilled sparkling, its praise is everywhere.
The multitude of creatures which the earth nourishes,
God made for man to enrich him.

Some fierce, some mute, he enjoys them.
Some wild, some tame, the Lord makes them.
Their coverings become clothing.
For food, for drink, till doom they will continue.
I will implore the Ruler, sovereign of the country of peace,
To liberate Elphin from banishment.
The man who gave me wine and ale and mead.
And the great princely steeds, beautiful their appearance,
May he yet give me bounty to the end.
By the will of God, he will give in honour,
Five five-hundred festivals in the way of peace.
Elphinian knight of mead, late be thy time of rest.

A World of Druids: Interviews with Druids & Celtic Inspired Pagans

Welcome to the first of a new series of interviews with people from the Druid and Celtic-inspired Pagan community, which hopefully provides us with an insight into our community.

Interview with Susan Pesznecker

Susan “Moonwriter” Pesznecker is a Hearth Pagan and Druid-in-Training. She lives in the Pacific Northwest (Oregon, U.S.A.) and loves to read, camp, garden, and write. She is the Dean of Students and Dean of Nature Studies at the online Grey School (www.greyschool.com) and the author of *Crafting Magick with Pen and Ink* (Llewellyn 2009).

What was your introduction to Druidism? What led you here?

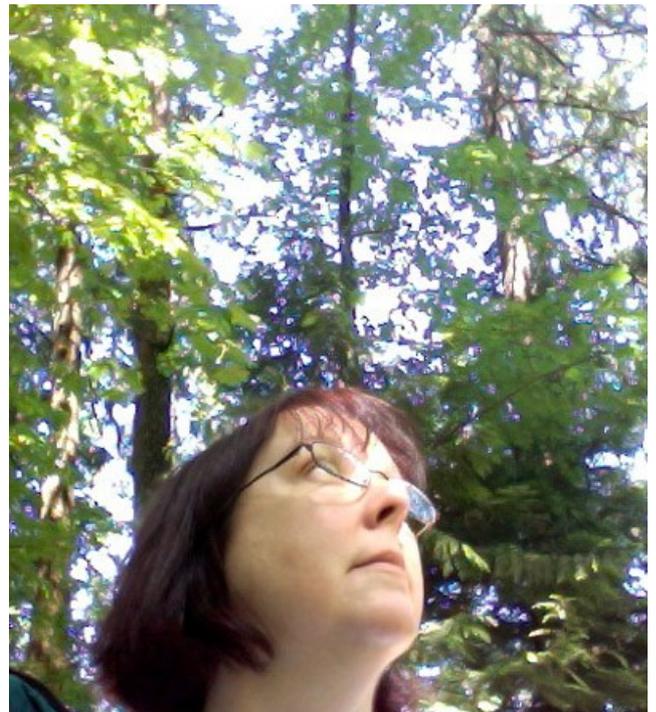
As a magickal person, I’ve always been aware of Druidism, but when my path took me more deeply into the woods, so to speak, I began thinking more about the Druid’s path. One of my first moves was to explore some of the more publicly known paths: the Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids; Árn Draíocht Féin, and the Ancient Order of Druids in America. None of these resonated with me.

OBOD seemed organized and had a nice structure to it, but the expensive price was off-putting and made me skeptical that they might be more interested in selling their product than in training Druids. The ADF had the history and tenure, but nothing pulled at me—I didn’t feel any call. And the AODA, once I researched it and discovered the reliance on “created” lore and dogma, didn’t please the scholar within me. I’m all for respecting one’s own *imbas*, but I wouldn’t be comfortable following a path that uses a random mixture of authoritative versus manufactured content.

In 2004, I began teaching in the Grey School of Wizardry, an online school of magick and lore that is nondenominational. Within the school, I was acquainted with two Druids: Skip Ellison, then Arch-Druid of the ADF, and Ellen Evert Hopman, a Druid Priestess associated with the Druid Order of WhiteOak. Now there was a group—WhiteOak-- I hadn’t heard of. I began asking Ellen questions. She introduced me to the Order’s email group, and I began reading my way through the required reading list. A year or so later, I began fostering, and now I am close to finishing my fostering in OWO under the tutelage of my foster, Coinneach. The OWO is a Druid reconstructionist group—that is, it bases its practices on what is known about Iron Age Celtic Society and Iron Age Druids, and seeks to integrate that knowledge with modern Druidism. It’s come to feel like a spiritual home.

How do your faith and beliefs affect your daily life?

I see Druids, first and foremost, as being inextricably linked to the land. Just as the Arthurian legend says, “I am the land, and the land is me.” I do my best to live an Earth-conscious life, and to me, this is the most important way that I *live* my Druidism. Living an Earth-conscious life means trying to live, work, and walk the Earth in ways that are ethical and environmentally responsible.



I garden organically and grow a surprising amount of my own food and herbs, and what I don't grow I try to purchase from a local Earth-friendly grocer or farmer's market. I am not vegetarian but eat little meat or eggs, and what I eat comes from sustainable, humane sources. I drive a car that gets a high mpg, and I don't drive any more than needed. I use, reuse, reuse again, and then recycle. I do everything I can to avoid plastics and excess packaging, and I never use plastic water bottles. I've recently reinsulated and put a new roof on vents, which has halved my heating bills. I could go on, but I think you get the idea. I am aware that Earth is a closed system, and that it's my responsibility to behave accordingly.

Many hold a romanticized vision of the Celts and Druids and their beliefs and practices. How important is maintaining authentic tradition to you?

I come from Scottish-Pict background, and I honor my Celtic and Druid ancestors. But I recognize that I do not live in the Iron Age. In fact, I'm a proud resident of the Digital Age, and while I love and respect the old ways that my grandmother instilled in me, you would also have to pry my MacBook out of my cold, dead hands.

I find that my practices merge the old and new. For instance, I honor the four cross-quarter days, but I also resonate deeply with the solstices and equinoxes, and so I celebrate them as well. I honor land, sea, and sky, but also find an ingrained harmony in the four elemental "directions," and those also find their way into my practices. I respect and work with Druidic tools, but my favored means of divination is via the DruidCraft Tarot, which certainly is not an arcane Druidic tool. In short, I value the old ways and use many of them, but I also find myself relying on my *imbas* to incorporate other traditions that have value to me.

I also apply Druidic practices to my own ethnogeographical area. As a child of Oregon's Pacific Northwest, I make my home among volcanic mountains and soaring conifers. My own nine sacred woods include cedar, fir, spruce, yew, larch, and hemlock; these differ from the traditional Druidic sacred woods, but they better suit my homeland, which is ruled by evergreen conifers rather than Ireland's deciduous hardwoods. I speak to the land, wildcraft herbs (sustainably, of course), and enact ritual that speaks to the mountains, rivers, and ocean.

One thing I do not do is drop silver (or any materials) into the water. This may have been fine back in the Iron Age, but in today's hyper-populated world with many bodies of water endangered by pollution, water quality, and the effects of damming, I cannot, in good conscience, drop non-degradable materials into living water. To do so would be a type of pollution, which defies the sacredness of ritual. If I wish to add anything to living water, I use small shells, pebbles, twigs, or sand only.

What role do you see for modern day Druids?

We are all part of the same macrocosm—all riding together on the same planet as we spin through the Universe. I believe that one of the most powerful ways anyone can add to that wonderful journey is by embracing a personal spiritual path. By becoming more in touch with spirituality, one's life is enriched and renewed; and likewise, by becoming a more "whole" person, one becomes a more effective, productive, intentional Earthling. In this regard, the more Druids, the better! 😊

Some point to the historic role of Druids as advisors, judges, and lawyers sitting next to and counseling Heads of State. I believe that moment has probably passed, at least in this country. The U.S. is founded on the separation between church and state; to ask a government official to seek specific advice or counsel from a specifically religious figure—in terms of decisions or directed policy making—probably will not happen. However, Druids are—by tradition—wise scholars, and I believe that those who are so inclined should get involved in local, regional, and/or world politics, where they may affect the course of destiny through their voice and their vote. As for me? I find I'm not so interested in politics, so I leave that to others.

Which brings me to: Must Druids do it all? The ancient Druids spent decades learning material that placed them in high positions in their local societies. They were expected to be masters of law, magick, medicine, and lore, among others. Do we need to aspire to this today? If someone has the time and inclination to do so, I say, "Have at it!" But in reality, the Druids I

know tend to pick one or two areas of specialty. Once I finish my fostering (this summer!), I hope to specialize in an area that involves Druidic “hearthkeeping.” I hope to become a source of information on how Druids lived (and live) their daily lives in a way that is intentional, celebratory, and harmonious. I believe that this model of each Druid selecting a specialty/focus area sets the stage for a strong, well-rounded Druid Order.

Are you involved in any Interfaith work and how important to do you think that working together with others on common goals is?

Besides being a member of the Order of WhiteOak, where I am working toward initiation, I have been a life-long Pagan. I also teach at the Grey School (www.greyschool.com), an online school of magick and arcane lore. The Grey School doesn't teach spirituality, but within the school I have worked with and encountered people from all over the world and from a wide number of religious traditions, which has enriched my life immensely.

What virtues from Druidism would you most like to see the world adopt?

I would love to see the world try living by the Brehon Laws. Detailed and practical, the Brehon codes took a pragmatic approach to matters of contracts, forfeitures, wrongdoings, and other legal issues, each of which was resolved with a fair eye. It would be wonderful to see this application of law in today's world. It makes me smile to think about it.

How important is it that modern Druidism is "seen" in the world?

May I give an obtuse answer to this question? I don't really care what the world sees of or thinks about Druid practices. What's important to me is that modern Druidism is seen as part of my life and the life of my Order. As for a wider view, my answer would be that it's no more or less important for Druidism to be “seen” in the world than for any other religion to be similarly acknowledged. No religious tradition I more or less important than any other, although many world religions have a big head start on us in terms of publicity. I'd like to see an increasing awareness of Druidism, and I believe this will best be accomplished through the actions of those of us who practice the ancient ways openly. I feel very strongly that no one should “hide” his or her spiritual preference.

To me, practicing secretly isn't honest and negates the positive energies associated with the practices. By stepping out of the Druid closet, we show our pride in the tradition and we give it a public face: I'm a Druid, He's a Druid, Wouldn't You Like To Be a Druid, Too?”

Where do you think that Druidism is heading, what is your vision of the future for Druids?

I believe there is an increasing Druidic presence, and this is mostly a result of the Internet and the Digital Age. The Web is bringing us new potential members and allowing us to locate and share information in ways we'd never imagined would be possible. On the flip side, it also brings us flavor-of-the-month newbies who don't stick around. But of course, that's fine, too—the Universe works these things out as it wishes to.

I see the future for Druids mirrored in what is happening within WhiteOak. WhiteOak is entering a new “era,” re-defined by new structures within the Order, new Initiates and Fosterlings, fresh views, and novel ways of doing things. It's given us a renewed feeling of energy, vitality, and possibilities, and I'm excited to see what effects this will have on our Order over the next year.

Likewise, Druid orders everywhere are growing, reaching out, and trying to broaden their knowledge base and their memberships. One thing I'd love to see would be more interactions between all of the Druid Orders. Imagine Druids from all over the U.S.—maybe even the world-- gathered at some sort of mass event every year or two. How wonderful would that be?

What message would you most like to send to those who share your pathway worldwide?

I'd ask my fellow Druids to concentrate less on dogma—on the ways we see ourselves as different—and instead to focus on the ways we're the same. It seems like Druid Orders today love to spend hours bickering about whose ways or "more authentic" or "more right," which writings are the "most sacred," etc. All this does is widen our divisions and pull us further apart. Just as with any religious groups, we must accept that while we're all Druids, each group will have its own litany, its own tools, its own rituals, etc. This diversity is worth honoring—after all, nature teaches us that diversity builds strength. By honoring our differences, we'll be in position to find common ground, allowing us to build bridges, share practices, and enrich our common Druidic experience. I can only see benefits coming from this sort of collaboration.

Thank you for allowing me to give this interview. If anyone would like to contact me, I have a facebook page as "Susan Pesznecker."

International Celtic Gathering, Ontario, Canada. 22nd - 24th July 2011

The Celtic Gathering 2009 was such a smashing success that DruidicDawn.org is hosting the 2nd Celtic Gathering scheduled to be held on July 22nd to 24th 2011 at the Mansfield Outdoor Centre, Ontario, Canada. The Celtic Gathering is all about participation and fellowship if you would like to speak, perform, teach, then please let us know and we'll see what we can do.

We can't guarantee everyone a slot, so we suggest you book sooner than later to give you every opportunity to "show and tell".

This fantastic event is being held at the best location in Ontario on 300 acres of mixed woodland. A unique opportunity to participate in various workshops centred on Celtic Beliefs and Druid Practices. To all of those who would like to know what a great event it was, have a look this video <http://www.druidicdawn.org/node/2363>, and you'll see what we're speaking about.

Places are limited, and we suggest you book now so that we can see you in July. The booking forms are on-line and let us know, if you wish to present and we'll endeavour to sort out the schedule to fit you in.

Information available from <http://www.druidicdawn.org/node/1381>, looking forward to seeing you there!



International Celtic Gathering
Canada

Mansfield Outdoor Centre
West of Alliston, Ontario

22nd - 24th July 2011



Enlightenment: A Meditation for Beltane – Tony the Prof

I remember charcoal burning on the brazier in a cold night in early May. The air was fresh with the scent of wild flowers, but as the sun set, a chill wind came across the land, and I huddled closer to the fire, the better to keep warm. And I was beset with a fever, and shivered in the cooling evening.

I am Gawain, a Knight sworn to chivalry, and this is my tale. In those days, I was a brave hearted young man, full of restlessness. I had heard of Arthur and his consort, the Lady Guinevere, his advisor, the Mage Merlin, and the Great Court of Knights that Arthur had summoned; I had pledged to join that noble band, and fight for justice and peace throughout the land. For ours was a time of discord, there were many bands of brigands in the forests, and local war lords held sway over their own domains, oft ensnaring the unwary traveller.

In the distance, I heard a hunting horn, and presently I beheld a man in rich raiment, coming along the woodland track, on horseback. He dismounted, and approached me. He told me he was the Lord of Cader Idris, and his castle was nearby, and if I would follow him, he would give me food and shelter for the night.

So it was that I journeyed to the keep of the Lord of Cader Idris, and outside its gate were three beacons, built of well dried wood, and ready for the burning. But I thought no more of this, and entered the castle, and was shown to my room by the Lady of the Castle; she was dressed in a fine green gown, and wore an emerald ring upon her finger. And there I remained for three days, recovering from my chill, and in daytime, I lay there in my bed restlessly, listening to the birdsong, and slowly regaining my strength, sleeping and taking sustenance as the servants brought me bread.

At times I slept; and then I dreamt fitfully, and in my dream I saw the silhouettes of an old lady and an old man, seated at a small table, lit by a small candle which did not suffice to light the darkness; they were moving the pieces of a finely carven chess set across the board, and every night the lady would take the knight up, and place it in a place of peril, and I would awake, hot and sweating.

And each night, the Lady of the Castle came to me in my room and brought with her a shining golden cup, and bade me drink deep of the mead within, and then servants came and lit the fire, so that I might remain warm. And after drinking this, I fell asleep and slept deeply and restfully each night until the dawn; a sleep unclouded with troubled dreams.

Then at last I was recovered and the Lord came to me and told me that I must pay for my keep, and he would have me take three days in the hunt to match the three nights I had dwelt in his castle.

The first day I set off into the forest, a cheerful sunny morning, with the sunlight dappled through the canopy of green leaved branches. I wore a light jerkin, and took with me a sharp long knife, and this was to be the hunting of the wild boar. All day long I hunted him, and all day long he eluded me, so that I was forever catching a bare glimpse of him as he fled, until at length I came across a clearing where he was grazing on the grass, and I rested a while, for I was worn down by the chase. And I would have killed him, but I stayed my hand, and returned to the castle empty handed. Then the Lord of the Castle asked me why I had no prize to bring back. And I said to him:

“I bring back the lesson of fortitude that the hunt teaches me that like the wild boar, I must not give up at the first hurdle but continue, and persevere with all my strength until the last. The reward of the chase is not in the kill, but in the striving. This I learned from the hunt and it is enough.”

And the Lord said “Truly that is well said”, and he bade me light the first beacon, saying “Now is the Beltane fire that enlightens burning once more.”

The second day I set off into the forest, a cold and cheerless morning, with a cool dry breeze moving the branches above. I wore a light jerkin, and took with me a spear, and this was to be the hunting of the red deer. All day long I hunted her, catching stray glimpses of red amongst the greenery, until I was thirsty and exhausted by the long chase. Then I came across the deer, and she was panting by the running stream, and she gazed at me with soft sad eyes, and I bent down, and kneeling took water into my hands and drank deeply of that cool water. And I would have killed her, but again I stayed my hand and returned to the castle empty handed. Then the Lord of the Castle asked me why I had no prize to bring back. And I said to him:

“I bring back the lesson of delight that the hunt teaches me that like the red deer, I must not forget to turn aside from a pursuit of worldly aims and neglect the steams of living water, for those replenish the parched spirit of those who thirst after justice, so that they may not be worn down by the cares of the world. This I learned from the hunt and it is enough.”

And the Lord said “Truly that is well said”, and he bade me light the second beacon, saying “Now is the Beltane fire than enlightens burning once more.”

The third day I set off into the forest, a wet day, with rain dripping off the canopy of leaves above. I took with me a bow and arrow and this was to be the hunting of the fox. The fox was sharp, and on more than one occasion I came round the trunk of a tree only to see a bushy tail disappear from view behind some bushes. And I was soaked with the water, and it was a miserable day, overcast and grey clouds drizzling down upon me. But I presently I found myself in darker part of the forest than I had hitherto seen, and there was a dry floor of pine needles. And there, curled up and grooming itself, was the fox, and it looked slyly at me, as if daring me to go for the kill. And I would have killed it, but for a third time I stayed my hand and returned to the castle empty handed. Then the Lord of the Castle asked me why I had no prize to bring back. And I said to him:

“I bring back the lesson of hope that the hunt teaches me that like the clever fox, I must learn to think swiftly on my feet, and avoid the snares and traps of the commonplace, seeking instead a haven of calm; for many are those who turn aside to the distractions of the world, but the fox is a cunning beast that knows how to run the race unseen, and use knowledge in the quest for justice. This I learned from the hunt and it is enough.”

And the Lord said “Truly that is well said”, and he bade me light the third beacon, saying “Now is the Beltane fire than enlightens burning once more. And now your pact is kept, and you are free to stay or leave my domain, as you will.”

That night there was much merriment among those living in the keep, and a fiddler played a merry tune; I danced with the Lady long into the night. When at last I tired, I lay down my cloak, fell asleep, a good restful sleep, such as I had not had for many a night

When I awoke, I was in the clearing, and around me were the charred remains of the three beacons, the great Beltane fires, their grey ashes blowing gently across the scorched earth. But of the castle, there was no sight, nor have I seen it since these many years.