

Imbolc 2009

Welcome to the Imbolc 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. As the tiny green shoots of snowdrops peep out from beneath a blanket of snow I am reminded that Imbolc always symbolises new hope, as well as new life, to me, but with the chill wind of winter never far away, we should be mindful of the hard times ahead. Many people hold similar views of hope following the recent elections in America, but we have a long cold winter to survive yet. I pray that your hearth fires keep you and yours warm.

I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome Damian Carr to the Editorial Team of EOLAS. Damian has been a regular contributor to EOLAS for a number of editions now and I'm sure the quality of his work is well known to our readers.

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 – January 2009

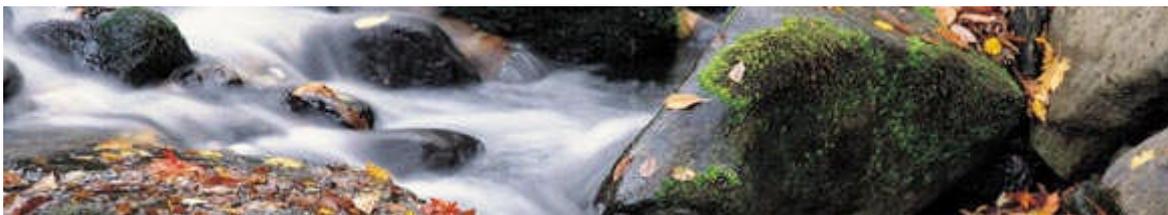
Visit our Virtual Shrine

The Virtual Shrine Of The Goddess Brighid 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

Elen of the Ways – J C Melia

“Thereafter Elen thought to make high roads from one stronghold to another across the Island of Britain. And the roads were made. And for that reason they are called the Roads of Elen of the Hosts...”

From the banks of the River Conwy in Clwyd, North Wales, through the majestic beauty of Betws y Coed and Dolwyddelan in Snowdonia, down to Dolgellau, near the mighty Cader Idris and a small field known as Camlan, continuing down across the Brecon Beacons to Carmarthen in the south of Wales a collection of roads known collectively as Sarn Elen (Elen’s Way or Road) connecting the north Walian coast with the south.

This ancient trackway was certainly used by the Romans during their occupation of Britain but there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that it is much older. Within certain stretches it forms a “ridgeway” comparable with the elevated trail utilised by ancient farmers local to the megalithic Avebury region.

Within Welsh folklore Elen, called the mother of Custennin Fawr within the Brut y Brenhinedd, and Helena, mother of Constantine the Great within Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*. The fact that she lived some sixty years later than Helena of Constantinople, the real mother of Constantine the Great seems to have been lost on a number of “historians” since, but this shouldn’t distract from what can be gleaned from the myths.

One of the earliest tales that mentions Elen is *The Dream of Macsen Wledig*, one of the tales which makes up the collection known as the *Mabinogion*. The tale is a romanticized story about the Roman Emperor Magnus Maximus. The tale begins with Macsen Wledig, emperor of Rome, falling into a deep sleep after going hunting, dreaming of a mysterious court within a far away country. In the dream, a stately old man sat on an ivory throne, carving chess pieces out of pure gold. Two red haired youths, dressed in black silk, sat before him, playing *gwyddbwyll* (an ancient Celtic game similar to chess) upon a silver board with golden pieces. Within his dream he sees a great vision of beauty, a red haired maiden, seated on a throne of red-gold, and falls instantly in love.

Sending out messengers throughout the empire they eventually arrive in Britain and the castle of Eudaf, son of Caradawg. There they see the two red haired youths, his sons Cynan and Gadeon, and the maiden, his daughter, Elen. She informs the messengers that if Macsen wishes to marry her he must come to Britain. Leading his army Macsen invades Britain and makes his way to Elen who asks for the three islands of Britain as her dowry. Elen Lluyddog (‘Elen of the Hosts’) has roads built from one fortress to another throughout the land to protect her domain.

Tied into the tale is some historical truth, Macsen Wledig (Magnus Maximus) did come to Britain, and did marry the daughter of a native chieftain, but within the tale there are also links to much older traditions. Elen has a number of characteristics of a sovereignty goddess, the fact that Macsen has to prove himself in order to woo Elen and Elen asking for the land as he dowry all hint towards Elen as a goddess of the land itself.



There are a number of Elens and Elains within Brythonic and Arthurian tales all who seem to share certain characteristics. In the *Vulgate Cycle* and later works, Elaine of Corbenic was a lover of Lancelot and mother of Galahad. She is the daughter of King Pelles, the Fisher King, and is herself a Grail Maiden. Her son Sir Galahad is one of only three achievers of the Grail. Elaine of Benoic was the wife of King Ban and the mother of Lancelot. She is the sister of Evaine, wife of King Bors and mother of Sir Lionel and Sir Bors, another achiever of the Grail.

As with many others Elen was absorbed into the mythos of the expanding christian church becoming St Helen of Caernarfon, and there appears to be an almost deliberate fusing of this Elen with St Helen (Helena of Constantinople) the mother of Constantine the Great. Elen herself is said to have had a son called Custennin Fawr (Constantine the Great, though not THE Constantine the Great), and was seen as ancestrix of almost all of the royal houses of Britain.

Throughout Britain Helen was a popular dedicatee of churches particularly within the North of the country. More “holy” wells were named for Helen than for any other non biblical female saint. The saint was invoked for the finding of lost objects and possessions, including cattle. It is clear that the dedication to St Helen replaced an older dedication to some unknown Northern Goddess, whether this was Elen, or even that she was a Goddess, is open for debate.

And the road goes ever on....

The Traditions of Business Or “Where did it all go wrong?”

Damian Carr

As a self-proclaimed ‘Modern day Druid’ it seemed fitting that for the Imbolc edition of EOLAS I would concentrate on the purification aspect of the main thread of negativity most prevalent in the western World today – namely finance and business. Personally I’m dismayed that we have drifted so far from our connection with the Ancestors, the Universe and our Gods that we can’t see how the reasons for the ‘crisis’ and the solutions to move forward can be broken down to that most important of commodities - ‘intent’.

Those of us that understand magickal concepts and spiritual practise should be well aware that intent is the most important element in ensuring that things turn out well without detriment to anyone else – and if we all know this, how come the rest of the world has chosen to forget (or ignore) this fundamental principle?

The business world has an uncanny similarity to the magickal word and even uses some easily recognised concepts and terminology if examined side-by-side. Take for instance the word ‘Logo’ – we’re all aware that to succeed big in business that the ‘brand’ is all important, and primary to a well developed brand is getting your logo right.

Businesses spend thousands on ensuring that they get their logo right as this will be the focus, the identity, of the whole company to the outside world. The importance of this is fiercely defended and protected with trademarks and legions of legal teams.

A logo is basically a symbol, or sigil, which represents the company. Some of the most famous and easily recognisable logo’s transcend language and cultures such as the Nike ‘tick’ and McDonalds ‘golden arches’, both of which take further ‘ancient’ knowledge into account in their creation. Nike was the Greek goddess of victory and the golden arches uses concepts of sacred geometry and precious ‘divine’ metals taking them to new corporate levels – with that much magick invoked how could the world of business ever fail??

Well they obviously have, or are very closely on the verge of doing so, and the simple fact that they have put profits before intent has been a major factor. Without the magickal glue of ‘intent’ to hold it all together then matter will crumble and fall away as with the human body once the spirit has left.

Added to this we are constantly being bombarded by the media telling us that we are failing, that money is lacking, that we are going to lose our homes and jobs – so why is it a surprise that those things are actually happening and the problems are escalating. We are all undergoing a mass hypnosis of negativity and failure and it is up to us to turn it all around.

So how do we turn it all around?

It is my belief that this has already begun and with the increase in interest in ‘ethical’ business the process will continue to grow and evolve moving us into a new era of positive growth. But that doesn’t mean all we need to do is sit back and wait for it to happen, we need to get out there and increase the positivity, do something that will help shift the balance.

It is within the ethics of business and our consumer responsibility that we develop the intent. Once we accept that there needs to be an element of profit to ensure survival we then need to look at what else we can achieve that can benefit ourselves, and society, in many other ways. With the increase in access to information, mainly through the use of the internet, many people are choosing which companies to spend their money with on the strength of their principles rather than just looking at the cheapest option. The way a company conducts itself is as valuable a commodity as the product they provide.

Now you’re maybe thinking “What has this got to do with Druidry?” and if so, thanks for sticking with me this far, but I believe that this has ‘Everything’ to do with Druidry.

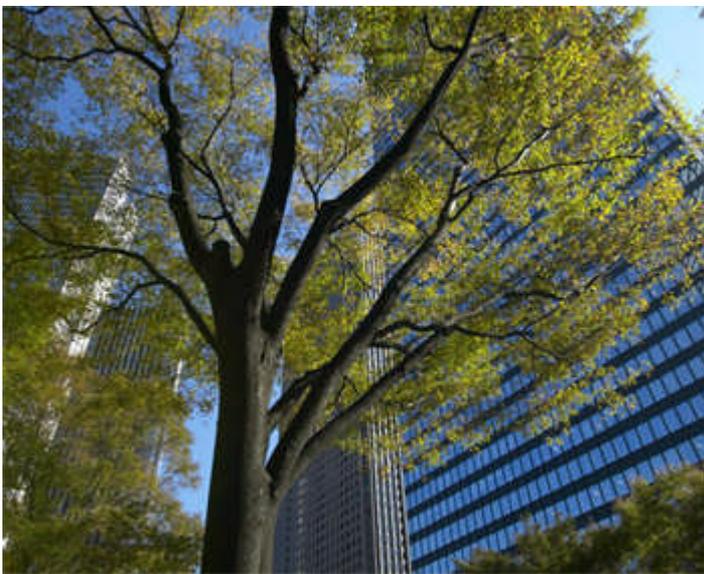
The Audacht Morainn at face value is merely a list of what is good and bad attributes of a leader and advice to a new King, but delving deeper you see that the never ending cycle of challenge and lesson-learning is at play. So too that the Goddess will always endeavour to influence a return to a state of balance in all things through her interaction with the world and we too have a responsibility in the part we play within the scheme.

Darkness yields to light
Sorrow yields to joy
An oaf yields to a sage
A fool yields to a wise man
A serf yields to a free man
Inhospitability yields to hospitality
Niggardliness yields to generosity
Meanness yields to liberality
Impetuosity yields to composure
Turbulence yields to submission
A usurper yields to a true lord
Conflict yields to peace
Falsehood yields to truth.

This clearly states that the movement from one to the other is definite, it isn't "Darkness 'may' yield to Light" or "Conflict 'can' yield to peace", but a much more solid and defined, even predetermined, journey in its transformation to the greater virtue. So too will the transformation of negativity currently primary in the business world be forged and directed by those divine forces that work through us; and subsequently will guide us to a better place, but only if we meet them halfway and have the right frame of mind. It is our moral duty to integrate these Truths into our daily journey and not avoid them when it is easier to do so in order to gather selfish personal gain or go for the slightly cheaper option to save a penny or two.

To follow a Druid path in this modern age is to set yourself a tremendous quest, and the tasks you have been given lead you to become a wise and inspiring member of an evolving society that has lost its way. It is our role, as was the role of our Druid ancestors, to set an example that others may aspire to.

We cannot avoid the fact that we all need to engage with business on a day-to-day basis either as a user, a provider, an employee or maybe an employer; but in this area of our life we have been tasked to ensure we make it our duty to ensure that the principles we hold dear in our spiritual lives is carried on with the intent of our business lives.



We should take the time to review our own personal and business focus to ensure we are actively giving something towards positive evolution. We also need to ensure that we work together to transform society for the better never forgetting that our principles not only define ourselves but also the world we live in.

Justice, Generosity, Charity, Honesty and Truth are all virtues that we need to champion and hold dear, or otherwise the media will be right and we will be observers to the collapse rather than those in a position to gather round our grandchildren to tell the tales of how we played our part as saviours of a flawed society.

But never forget that in our endeavours to join the ancestors at the table of the Tuath that we are also human, we have needs and must survive and prosper. My dream would be that the current monetary system collapses completely and we return to better days where we shared our individual skills for the benefit of our community in fair exchange for others skills and produce, but until we see the return of that Celtic utopia we must exist and prosper within the age into which we were called to be born – the here and now.

Looking around the spiritual community I see we have much to learn and overcome within our own understandings. The skills we share, the work we do and the knowledge we hold are all viable commodities and as such we should promote ourselves with great worth.

To do 'free' healings or readings while our own situation and families go without because it is 'right' to do so is totally unacceptable and I see far too many people of every faith suffering for holding this false and damaging belief.

How many people do you know who create amazing things only to give them away as gifts when they could earn a well deserved wage for doing what they love? Why is it perceived a bad thing in our community?

Imagine how much more we could do if we had a surplus we could use to further our charitable and socially beneficial deeds and projects. Imagine how much suffering we could relieve and how much of a positive difference we could make. Imagine if we all did this and worked together to promote a better way. Imagine if we only chose to spend our money where those principles we hold dear are also valued by the organisations themselves.

Well that time is nigh and you'd best prepare – with a little effort and a lot of thought that way is not that far out of reach. It is simply a matter of choice and that is the burden of having free will.

These are exciting times and I am looking forward to seeing how the world develops, it is a great time to be alive and we are honoured to be chosen to be the stewards of this age. Make your choices wisely my brothers and sisters – the Tuath are watching with interest at how we carry on their story and the world is waiting at what choice we make.

Damian /+\
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Elmaren Chronicles

Aren woke with a start! “IMBOLC, by the Tuath how did that come round so quickly?” it was Imbolc morn and he hadn’t even started to prepare for the celebrations ahead. As the local Druid it was his role to ensure that the signs and messages from the Gods were interpreted to decide if the coming year’s weather would be beneficial for the crops and herds or if it would be a lean year once again.

Jumping out of bed and throwing on his robes he quickly splashes water on his face and salutes the morning, thanking Lugh for a new day that it may be fruitful and full of wisdom.

The preceding week had been a real trial in patience and a particularly busy week for boil tincture; in fact Aren couldn’t remember a worse week for boils. “Twenty years of my life spent learning the complexities of nature, the oral histories and the connections between the Worlds and I spend most of my time treating repugnant maladies”.

Shrugging this thought away he steps out into the day and breathes in the clean, crisp and still very chilly air before striding off down the lane towards the forest. He always enjoyed this time of the morning to immerse himself in the feel of the Goddess and to allow his thoughts to flee while he communed with her as he walked. All time seemed to stop as he walked on the cusp of the worlds and he valued these private moments away from the demands of his role in the community.

Turning a bend in the path Aren spied a face he hadn’t seen in many moons. “Cedren of the Dell!” exclaimed Aren at the sight of his friend, “How are you? I don’t believe our paths have crossed since that evening at Belgars court”.

“A night I’d sooner regret”, mumbled Cedren, “I still have to avoid Belgars lands and I’m told he still sports a bright blue, and much inflated face due to my over exuberant error with the mixture to prepare him for his wedding night”.

“Ha ha, indeed, you should have concentrated more on the liquids you poured in the crucible rather than the amount of liquid you poured down your throat that day”.

“If I remember correctly, and believe me that day is more than a little hazy, it was through YOUR enthusiasm and continued encouragement that I tested more than my fill of that particular batch of mead”

“Ha ha, by the unending way it flowed and the vigour you showed in encouraging that flow you would have thought you’d have supped from the Drinking Horn of Gwigawd itself”.

“Yes, it was definitely a night to remember good friend”, smirked Cedren.

“I suppose it didn’t help that you also decided to celebrate the occasion by creating that catchy ditty that spread far and wide, how did it go?”

Cedren paused for a moment gathering his thoughts and steadying his posture to recite his most famous creation.

“Belgar the proud at the side of his Bride
Master of battle and feared far and wide
Prepares for the night where he’ll bed his wife fair
By asking wise Cedren a brew to prepare

It should make my skin glow and my manhood extend
Because it is lacking, I’ll need to pretend
The strength of my arm, and the width of my brow
Is not carried on, way down below

So off Cedren goes to do as he’s asked
A miracle potion, an incredible task

THE **ELMAREN**
CHRONICLES



With herbs and liquors and root and flame
He catches the Awen and raises his game

But alas just for colour, the truth to be told
He topped up the bottle with far too much Woad
And with excitement handed brave Belgar the brew
With directions to take a most hearty swill

In anticipation and haste Belgar popped off the top
And downed the contents, draining every last slop
He turned to the crowd as the brew took effect
All eyes on his pants, as you'd likely expect

But suddenly things took a turn for the worse
And Belgar fell to his knees, beginning to curse
You see the result had caused much humour and mirth
Swelling his head, not his loins or his girth

So the lesson to learn from this tale you should know
Is that if ever you want something tiny to grow
Especially something that's not changed since your birth
Don't bother, try harder with what the Gods deemed you worth"

As Cedren finished the recital of his now famous poem he looked at Aren who was doubled up unable to breathe from laughing. "What can I say", said Cedren, "I had a lot of time to waste while I was hiding in the Forest of Culhwch Mawr for five moons following the incident, plus I was a little annoyed too", he began laughing himself.

"I'm making preparations for the Imbolc celebrations, a hearty fire tonight and if you'd care to join me in the chamber this evening I'd have no better companion to join me in welcoming the first rays come sunrise" suggested Aren recovering himself.

"I'd be honoured to join you and with Brighids blessing I eagerly await the lengthening of the days and return of the warmth, these bones feel the chill bore deeper with each turn of the wheel", replied Cedren rubbing his legs before they set off further into the forest together. They trudged on for a while stopping now and then to point out an emerging bud or to watch the journey of a beetle across the forest floor, each moment deemed a positive sign or portent for the coming year.

As they reached a fork in the path marked with three stones, Aren lifted his finger to his lips to usher silence and then led the way carefully and slowly towards an outcrop of rock peppered with holes. Aren settled down and ushered Cedren to sit beside him while he recited an incantation he'd spoken many times before.

"Early on Bride's morn
The serpent shall come from the hole,
I will not molest the serpent,
Nor will the serpent molest me."

They both then sat in silence for a few minutes until a rustling noise grabbed their attention and a snake the length of a mans arm slithered from one of the holes into the light of the day. "It will indeed be a fruitful and abundant year my friend, see the serpent has given us his blessing" said Aren with obvious joy.

"Tis a shame the same could not be said for Belgar" replied Cedren causing a further fit of laughter from Aren as they begun their journey back to the village.

They chatted as they walked and as they entered the village they were pleased to see the strips of cloth hanging from each home waiting for Brighids blessing. "The Brideog will be tucked up in her bed by now" said Cedren, "Aye, and many young curs will be hoping to do the same with her giggling companions too" replied Aren nudging his friend in the ribs with a wink. "Let's hope that the only footprints

left in the ashes come the daybreak are those of Brighid as she weaves her way casting blessings as she goes and not some amorous night visitor with careless and sooty feet” smiled Aren.

They continued over to the clearing where a large fire was already burning bright and welcoming and joined the other men sat by its side. The warmth was welcome after their stroll through the woods and they were soon swapping stories of their adventures and sharing mugs of mead.

“Thank you for your hospitality and companionship Aren, it has been most heart-warming and you are indeed blessed with the Awen”, said Cedren, “but what I really came to see you and ask you is, could you have a look at this rather irritating boil I have on my backside?”

And as Aren raised his eyes to the heavens “Back to business” he thought.

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Turnings

Pirouette and turn
to unheard drums,
Seasons passing,
old, the new becomes,
After time so apropos,
ice and snow
will slowly go,
revealing green
that was forgotten,
sprigs arise from
leaves now rotten,
Hardly heartily
their life begun
when withered under
summer’s sun.
Too brief the summer
heat goes lost
nipped at the edges
by quick frost,
Shorter, shorter
time of light,
steady longer grows
each night,
More and more,
these old bones feel
the relentless turning
of the wheel.

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Dreams

In sleep, I dream
of Brigit, her voice
amidst the bleating
of the lambs,
the two sounds
temporal and ethereal
directing me towards
Imbolc.
Peering through the
keyhole into
the light, from
behind the door
of darkness,
I can almost
smell new grass,
hear the sound
of thaw upon
the ground.
Bones frozen by
years, in my heart
I caper and gambol
with the newly-born,
while Herself watches,
smiling.

Merlinbeag ©2008

Song to " Progress "

no swan , no snail must stop this dash
to tear around with wads of cash
and get at speed from A to B
and not to dawdle pointlessly
So - move Along ! - wont it be Grand !
when Ireland's just like Legoland

my work will only be complete
when Boyne to Liffey's all concrete
and Shoefayre stands where Fianna fell
and Leisureworld - and Next as well
IKEA - if we're really lucky
and drive-in Chicken from Kentucky
THIS is what we want to see
not grass and trees and history
but modern stuff - and this and that
and things on which we can put VAT
and if you want to get more slim
why walk ? - just buy a Multigym
When we're encased in cans of steel
both hands attached to steering wheel
and eyes fixed on the road ahead -
we may as well be effing Dead
this stretch of road - built over bones
is one of many thousand clones
did we just pass the Lia Fail ...?
it could be anywhere at all
just sit like this an hour or two
as if you've nothing else to do
and work and work all day and then
stay sober and drive back again
a quarter million cars a day
is just what Dublin needs I say !
amazing what they get to pay
to park the things - we're making hay !
cos there'll be car parks to be built
and lots of pockets to be filled
there'll be no end to means and ends
cos its so nice to have good friends

there is a railway - but you see
it closed in nineteen sixty three
it could be opened up again
but that somehow doesnt seem to happen

Mad Suibhne sitting in his tree
is keeping feathered company
he watches as the human race
is drifting loose from sense of place
and capsulated in a car
of who and where and what we are
so every weekday without fail
we slave to buy a better jail
or hang on to the one we have
by hook and crook and tooth and nail

and so far is now the space
and so far have we come apart
we even think to cut the Heart

"Progress" ?
though feathered Suibhne looks absurd
he doubts if it's the proper word

Marcellavee 1/08/07

An Imbolc Feast - Domi O'Brien

Our group is the Grove of the Golden Leaves of Druidic Association of North American, a NH non-profit religious organization formed in 1995 by a group of people who had all been involved in ADF and were formerly part of Garran Slat Glas (Grove of the Green Wand, ADF). We take a reconstructionist approach, but it is both Celtic Reconstructionist (the cross-quarters) and Norse Reconstructionist (the equinoxes and solstices). We have 8 regular Grove highholyday rituals a year with feasts ritual appropriate to the season and whether we are doing Celtic or Norse material, and 8 Lore (religious education/tradition) meetings usually 2 or 3 weeks before the holyday. The night before a ritual, a small group of us gather in advance to do the baking and some of the other food prep for the occasion and set-up; we try to coordinate so that everyone contributes to the feast and we get a good variety of appropriate dishes.

Imbolc is particularly associated with lamb, dairy products, and first spring greens (such as watercress or sorrel or returning herbs along the streams).

A typical Imbolc menu for our group:

Brown Bread	Oat and Barley Bannog	Stout Bread	Fruit Bannog	Butter; Assorted Cheeses
Watercress Salad				Salmon of Wisdom
Barley with Mushrooms				Roasted Winter Vegetables
White Beans in Cider				Herbed Roast Lamb
Cider Duck				Honey Cake
Mead, Wine, Hot spiced Cider, Chilled Sparkling Grape Juice				Apples, Pears, Nuts, Clementines

We tend to cook by feel and taste; all measurements are therefore somewhat approximate.

Basic Brown Bread

4 cups wheat flour; all whole-wheat is traditional, but many people prefer half white
2 teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon sugar, honey, or maple syrup
4 tablespoons butter, cut into little pieces (about 48 pieces)
1 and a half to 2 cups buttermilk, depending on moisture content of flour

Preheat oven to 400. Heavily butter a 10 inch round baking pan. Put flour in large bowl; add dry ingredients, mix lightly with large fork. Add bits of butter, toss to coat with flour. Gradually stir in buttermilk, using enough to incorporate all dry ingredients into a soft dough. Shape into a round loaf; place in pan. Score top deeply, with a sharp knife, into quarters. Bake immediately for 45 to 55 minutes, or until well-browned and cooked through.

Oat and Barley Bannog

2 and a half cups barley flour
1 and a half cups old-fashioned rolled oats
two teaspoons baking soda
two teaspoons salt
1 and a half to two cups buttermilk, depending on moisture content of grains
(Water may be substituted for buttermilk; omit baking soda in this case; loaf will be very heavy and chewy).

Preheat oven to 400. Heavily butter or oil a 10 inch round baking dish.

Put barley flour and oats in bowl; add soda and salt; stir to mix; stir in buttermilk well to uincorporate all dry ingredients into a soft dough. Score top into farls (quarters) with a knife; bake immediately 45 to 55 minutes.

Fruit Bannog

4 cups white flour
1/3 cup sugar
2 teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon cream of tartar
4 tablespoons cold butter, cut into 48 tiny pieces
one cup dried fruit-- raisins, currants, finely cut apricots, fruit bits, etc
2/3 cup buttermilk
2/3 cup light cream
(additional buttermilk or cream if needed to make a soft dough).

Preheat oven to 400. Heavily butter a 10 inch round baking dish.

Mix dry ingredients together; toss butter bits with dry ingredients; add fruit, toss again; add cream and buttermilk; make sure well mixed; shape into round loaf; score top into quarters; bake immediately 45 to 55 minutes.

Stout Bread

4 cups whole-wheat flour, or mix of whole-wheat and white
2 teaspoons salt
1 12 ounce bottle of stout or dark ale

Preheat oven to 400; grease 10 inch round baking dish.

Mix ingredients well with large fork; if it seems a little dry you make add a few tablespoons of water.

Shape into round loaf. Bake 45 to 55 minutes.

Honey Cake

3 cups rye, whole-wheat, or barley flour
1 cup honey
4 eggs
1 cup candied ginger, cut into very small pieces

Preheat oven to 325 (honey burns easily in a hot oven) Heavily oil a standard loaf pan. Beat eggs and honey together; Stir ginger into flour; toss to coat pieces Gradually add flour-ginger mixture to egg-honey mixture. If it seems a little dry you may add a small amount of water, brewed coffee, or tea. Turn into prepared pan. Bake an hour to an hour and 20 minutes, or until a wooden toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean. This is best baked a day or two ahead and stored tightly wrapped; serve in thin slices with butter or soft cream cheese.

Barley and Mushrooms

one cup onions, finely chopped
1/4 cup olive oil
one pound pearl barley
8 cups vegetable broth or stock or meat or poultry stock (if you aren't feeding vegetarians!)
one pound mushrooms, sliced thickly
thyme, salt, pepper, nutmeg

Saute onion in oil until translucent; add barley and cook until golden; sprinkle with thyme, salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Add vegetable broth or stock; bring to a boil; reduce heat to simmer; cover; cook an hour and a half, or until barley is tender and broth is absorbed. Stir in mushrooms; cio; cover and cook an additonal half-hour.

(alternate method: surround meat or poultry in roasting pan with barley mixture; cook until well done, adding more water or broth if needed)

White beans with cider

Pick over a lb of white beans (navy beans, great northern, etc); cover with water; bring to a boil and cook 20 minutes, turn off heat; cover and leave overnight. In the morning, add a quart of cider and an onion studded with cloves, bring beans to a boil; reduce heat: cook until tender (probably 6 to 8 hours); add dry mustard, salt, and pepper to taste. (alternate: use 4 cans cooked white beans; rinse to remove excess salt; cook in cider with clove-studded onion; adjust seasoning)

Roasted Winter vegetables

Cup up carrots, turnips, parsnips, potatoes, celery, onions in large pieces to make 8 to 12 cups
4 to 8 cloves garlic, minced
salt, pepper, olive oil, balsalmic vinegar, rosemary

Toss vegetables with oil and vinegar, herbs and garlic; place in large roasting pan. Roast at 325 to 350 about an hour and a half, until very tender. (Alternate method: place vegetable around roasting meat or poultry in pan; bake together)

Cider duck

Soak a duck in a half-gallon of cider (or a quart of cider and a quart of sherry or apply brandy) for 12 hours to three days, along with a couple of crushed cloves of garlic and several sprigs of rosemary and a couple of quartered onions and a tablespoon of crushed black peppercorns. Drain marinate into saucepan; put duck in roasting pan. Preheat oven to 475; turn on exhaust fan. Bring saucepan of marinade to boil; reduce heat and simmer half an hour. Put duck in oven. After half an hour, reduce heat to 325; pour marinade over duck in roasting pan. Cook 3 to 4 hours additional, basting every half hour.

Salmon of Wisdom

Line a jellyroll pan with foil or parchment paper; oil paper. Put a fresh or thawed raw fillet of salmon on the pan; brush with honey or maple syrup; sprinkle lightly with salt, and dill if you like. After duck and lam are out of oven, increase heat to 425; roast salmon 15 to 20 minutes or so for a pound and a half to two pound peice

Herbed braised Lamb

While a whole baby lamb would be excellent, we settle for a half or whole leg of lamb. Rinse and dry lamb. Place in large roasting pan. Mix: 4 to 6 cloves garlic, minced; one tablespoon crushed peppercorns, and a teaspoon sa and a handful each of fresh basil, parsley, and rosemary, chopped, with a half-cup olive oil and a quarter-cup balsamic vinegar. Pour herb mix over lamb. Add 4 cups water or stock to botton of roasting pan. Leeks may be cleaned and roasted in the pan with the lamb. Roast at 325 to 350 about 2 and a half to three hours, basting occasionally, and adding water to the pan if needed.

A book review of Ellen Evert Hopman's 'A Druids Herbal Sacred Tree Medicine'

Once again Ellen has surpassed herself by sharing her extensive knowledge of Druid Lore and natural wisdom. Her latest book 'A Druids Herbal Sacred Tree Medicine' is a welcome return to her non-fiction series following her foray into the world of fiction with the 'un-put-downable' 'Priestess of the Forest: A Druids journey'.

This time, as the title suggests, Ellen has concentrated on the Celtic Tree Ogham and thoroughly expanded this to cover many unknown and interesting facts relating to the trees themselves.

This book is indispensable reading for anyone following the Druidic path and indeed anyone interested in the wider Pagan movement. But also it has been expertly written in a way that any modern practitioner of traditional healing methods or herbalist will find a wealth of knowledge that will inspire and guide them to a much greater understandings of the use and history of each tree.

Ellen skilfully expands on the History, Spiritual aspects and herbal uses wonderfully but, it is the Truth that she has discovered through her own journey just 'shines' through and with it the magic of the forest itself unfolds. She provides even more interest by including details of Native American healing methods thus expanding the Druidic focus into the wider realm of world-wide Shamanism.

Continuing the theme Ellen has included details of how each can be used in relation to Celtic festivals and rituals and also how each tree is utilised as a tool of divination. She also takes the time to explore the many different Oghams that have existed throughout history which opens up the subject for wider study and deeper reflection.

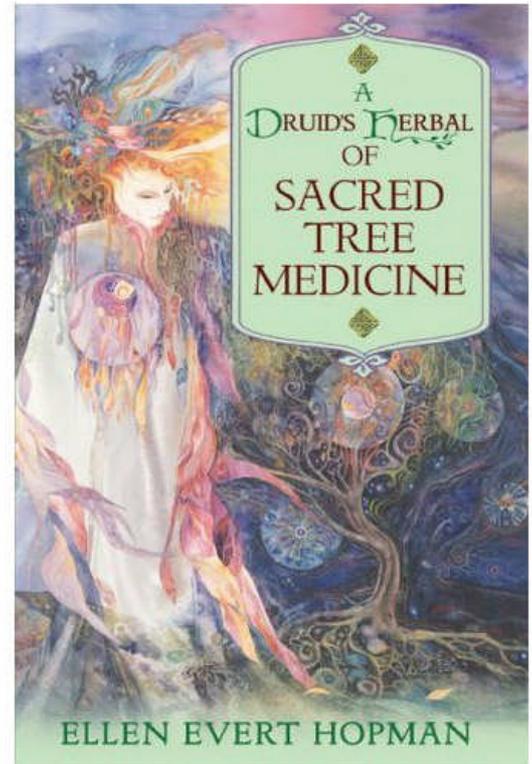
Overall the book covers the full 20 trees related to the Ogham in major detail and aids the reader in bridging the gap between the knowledge of the ancients with the modern ritualist and practitioner – a skill which Ellen weaves through her whole bibliography with incredible insight and attention to detail.

'A Druids Herbal Sacred Tree Medicine' would make an excellent addition to your library, a valuable tome that you will return to again and again finding new insights each time you return. And as a modern day Druid who frequently takes long sojourns in the woods and forests I'll never be able to view them quite the same again.

This has certainly added a new dimension to my own journey and I'm sure once you buy a copy that you will find it a wise companion on yours too.

Thanks Ellen for taking the time to share your wisdom and knowledge once more.

Celgerian /+\



Operation Circle Care Serves Deployed Pagan Troops at Yule for Second Year in a Row **By Rev. Paula Johnson, Coordinator Operation Circle Care, Circle Sanctuary**

I first conceived of Operation Circle Care in September 2007 after I was given the honor of being the Guest Priestess at the annual Pagan Pride Day celebration being sponsored by the Moon Path Chapter of CUUPS in Ft Lauderdale Florida.

At the time we were still celebrating the successful conclusion of Circle Sanctuary's lawsuit against the US Department of Veterans Affairs. The celebration was a very personal one for many members of the Ft. Lauderdale community as a dearly beloved member of our own Pagan community was among the very first to receive a pentacle on her headstone at Arlington National Cemetery on Beltane, May 1, 2007. Rev. Selena Fox, Senior Minister of Circle Sanctuary, Rev. Barry Lynn, Executive Director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State and Margot Adler were among the many people that traveled from all over the country to honor Jan's memory.

As a member of the Circle Sanctuary/Lady Liberty League Pentacle Quest team I began to interact with Pagan members of our military both deployed overseas in warzones as well as at home as a result of my involvement. I heard many stories from returning soldiers about how difficult it was to gain support for their religious and spiritual needs. Although the military recognizes Wicca and Paganism and its various denominations it has still yet to approve Pagan Chaplains. Pagan troops must often rely on Christian Chaplains who know little about Paganism to approve their requests for supplies.

I decided to turn the ritual honoring the "Pentacle Quest" at Pagan Pride Day 2007 into a ritual that honored veterans and deployed Pagan soldiers. I asked the Ft. Lauderdale Moonpath CUPPS group to request that all people attending Pagan Pride Day bring pentacles so that we could bless and dedicate them in our ritual that day. We empowered them to bring protection and safe return home for our brave warriors. Selena Fox and I brainstormed a name for our troop support program; we called it "Pentacles for Pagan Troops". Aleph the Seeker, a local Pagan shopkeeper and member of the Moonpath CUUPS group ordered hundreds of pentacles for people to buy for \$5.00 each so we could be sure to have lots of pentacles. CUUPS is short for the Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans. The ritual was beautiful. Many Pagan veterans attended the circle, were blessed and consecrated by the elements and thanked for their service by their community for the first time ever that day. Word began to spread on the internet about "Pentacles for Pagan Troops". I began to get emails from other groups sponsoring Pagan Pride Days all over the country and soon donations of Pentacles began flooding my mailbox.

As I began to prepare the pentacles for mailing I had an idea. Yule was not very far away. I decided to try to solicit donations from our community so I could send care packages for Yule instead of just pentacles. Selena Fox and I named our new project "Operation Circle Care". I called all the people I could think of for help. I spoke to singer, songwriter Michelle Mays who offered to contact all of her Pagan musician friends on behalf of Operation Circle Care and she created an exclusive compilation CD for our 2007 care packages with songs donated by Michelle, S.J. Tucker, Lady Isadora, Sona, Alexian, Music for the Goddess and Dana Davis. Each CD had a personal message and was autographed. Carl Neal, author of *Incense Crafting & Use of Magickal Scents* mailed copies of his books personally inscribed as well as beautiful packets of incense cones, made personally by his local Pagan community. I included freshly printed copies of Circle Magazine in each care package. The postage to mail the care packages came from donations sent in by Pagans from all over the country. I gift wrapped every package and hand wrote each and every Yule card so each soldier knew that they were someone special. I remember writing a card to a soldier named Josh. I told him that he was a precious human being and I thanked him for his service. I received an email not long after from Josh, who was deployed in Iraq. Josh told me that it brought tears to his eyes when he read the card I wrote because no one had ever told him that he was a precious human being before. I think it is the personal touch that makes Operation Circle Care special. This summer, at PSG, I met a soldier who had just returned from Iraq and told me that he had received one of my care packages at Yule and how much it meant to him.



As the holidays began to approach, just after Thanksgiving 2008 I began to get inquires about whether or not we were planning to continue Operation Circle Care for Yule 2008. I began to send out emails and a write up appeared on About.com's Pagan page alerting Pagans everywhere to get in touch with me and send donations for Operation Circle Care 2008.

The donations poured in this year much to my amazement. Even though the economy was hitting rock bottom, Pagans all over the country were stepping up to send their loving support to Pagan troops in warzones all over the world. The care packages were bursting with books, CD's, handmade amulets, pentacle and lots and lots of candy. Even my local Walgreens got in on the act and donated cases upon cases of candy to send to the troops. A Pagan group from a military base in Georgia got together and made the most beautiful care packages filled with candles, handmade altar cloths, wands and cards. These packages were truly a sight to behold.

I have begun to receive thank you notes from our troops. The holiday season was difficult and I heard that some deployed soldiers were unable to make morale calls home over the holidays and had limited access to the internet so I know these packages were even more important. I have seen firsthand the difference this program has made.



I have seen my community and others gather together to support our troops and I could not be more proud. It is my hope that next years packages will be as special as this year and that most importantly; our brave Pagan warriors know that we have not forgotten them. More than anything I wish for them to come home safely so we no longer need to send them packages at Yule but can hug them in person and wish them the blessings of the season.

If you would like to donate to Operation Circle Care or know a deployed soldier that would like to receive a care package email paula@circlesanctuary.org. Packages will be sent as donations permit year round.

++Rev. Paula Johnson is a 3rd degree Wiccan High Priestess from the Proteus branch of the Gardnerian tradition as well as an ordained minister for Circle Sanctuary. She is the Coordinator for Circle Sanctuary's Operation Circle Care, Pentacles for Pagan Troops and Circle's Coordinator for Campus Ministry. As Media Relations Liaison for Lady Liberty League, she was actively involved in the Pentacle Quest. In September 2006, she spoke about the Pentacle Quest at the World's Congress of Religions conference at McGill University in Montreal, Canada in her presentation, "A Pagan By Any Other Name: The Rhetoric of Nature Religion in the Media." In July 2007 Paula traveled to Arlington National Cemetery and participated in the dedication of the first headstone in US history to have a Christian cross on one side and a pentacle on the other. In November 2007 she presented her research on "Pagan Rights and the Internal Law of Public Administration" at the American Academy of Religions, Conference for Contemporary Pagan Studies. In March 2008, Paula participated in an interreligious pilgrimage to Haiti with Christian organization "Food for the Poor" and works with Catholic campus organization "The Neuman Club". Paula has a Master's Degree in Mass Communications and wrote her Masters Thesis on the role the media played in the Pentacle Quest. Paula is a religion writer and has contributed as a staff writer for Circle Magazine and other international publications.

Annual Golden Oak Awards (The "Oakie" Awards)

The Druid Academy Nomination Award Committee (DANAC) consists of a member drawn from six different Druid organizations that share a historical connection to each other and are primarily located in North America. The DANAC members wish to learn more about happenings in their own group, and in other groups, and encourage the best works of modern Druids by acknowledging their annual accomplishments.

The six judges are not official representatives elected by their respective groups, but were actually hand-picked by Michael Scharding, because he thought they were extremely knowledgeable famous folk who knew well both their own organization and the activities of other modern Druid groups. Therefore, their votes are therefore only a personal preference, not representative of any endorsement by their organizations.

- Tony Taylor of Henge of Keltria (HoK) tony_taylor@keltria.org
- Skip Ellison of Ar nDraiocht Fein (ADF) skip@skipellison.usv
- Michael Scharding of the Reformed Druids of North America (RDNA) mikerdna@hotmail.com
- Ellen Hopman of Order of the White Oak (OWO) saille333@mindspring.com
- Ellis Arseneau of the Order of the Mithril Star (OMS) and Reformed Druids of Gaia (RDG) penderwydd@reformed-druids.org
- Thomas Harris of the Missionary Order of the Celtic Cross (MOCC) myrddinamaeglin@yahoo.com



Note: If you wish to enter the 2009 Golden Oak Awards of the DANAC committee, then send an e-mail to one of those judges listing a work from one of the ten categories that was done between December 21 2008 and December 21, 2009. They may designate an alternative judge if they would like to not participate in 2009. Different rules or categories may be used next year possibly. If you'd like your Druid organization to be added to DANAC send an e-mail to mikerdna@hotmail.com to begin a discussion.

The results of the voting were as follows:

1. Most interesting internal grove project begun or completed in 2008 Non-exhaustive examples include: liturgical design, fund- raising, recruitment, education, development, site-planning, web- development, meeting style, festival/meeting idea, etc.

NO ENTRIES, NO WINNER.

2. Inspiring external project begun in 2008 by a grove or member (s) of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, OMS/RDG. Non-exhaustive examples include: activism, ecology, public outreach, legal moves, publishing, charity, civic involvement, interaction with other religious organization, etc.

WINNER #1: Healing the Lake Project

WINNER #2: Pagan & Christian: Breaking the Vicous Cycle

HONORABLE MENTION: DAMIAN CARR

3. Greatest hardship overcome in 2008 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, OMS/RDG. Publicly admissible, of course, no gossip please. Non-exhaustive examples include: persecution, financial obstacles, medical impairments, isolation, time constraints, educational restraints, etc.

WINNER: SGT COISICHE MACNUADA

4. Best Poem or song released in 2008 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, OMS/RDG.

WINNER #1: Where I Am - A View of the Path is a poem by Aauriane Veleda of KELTRIA is available at <http://www.keltria.org/hengehap/HH78-BP-Aauriane.htm>

WINNER #2: I Paint You in Dark Stars is a poem by Phagos of OMS/RDG that can be read at <http://druidsegg.reformed-druids.org/newsbeltane08-07.htm> Phagos can be reached at E-mail: koadprotogrove@yahoo.com

HONORABLE MENTION: At the Threshold of Tomorrow is a poem by Karl Schlotterbeck of KELTRIA that can be read at <http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/tommorow.pdf>

5. Best work of Art completed or released in 2008 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, OMS/RDG. Non exhaustive examples: painting, drawing, sculpture, digital art, clay, collage, photography, etc. Dance choreography will be considered if an internet video is provided. Collaborating artists will receive a single prize.

WINNER #1: The Stag is a recent sample by Dan Ivanov, aerachguy@gmail.com of RDNA His website can be found at www.designartz.com The author is a solitary druid living near Pittsburgh. The painting can be seen at <http://pic18.picturetrail.com/VOL916/4260765/8945341/339427991.jpg> or <http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/DANACdanivanov-2.jpg>

WINNER #2: Thomas Butler's Harvesting by Moonlight thomas_m_butler1@yahoo.com of the RDNA at http://www.care2.com/c2c/photos/view/132/568568132/New_Pieces_/druidess-harvest-.jpg.html or at <http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/harvesting-mistletoe.jpg> His other works can be viewed at http://www.care2.com/c2c/photos/view/132/568568132/New_Pieces_/

HONORABLE MENTION: "Sanctuary" by Wren Taylor of KELTRIA. You can send her E-mail care of : tony_taylor@keltria.org The photo can be seen at <http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/grove.jpg>

6. Best craftwork completed or released in 2008 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, OMS/RDG. Non exhaustive examples: leatherwork, metalwork, clothing, needlepoint, moulding, weaving, jewelry, basketry, woodwork, stonework, etc. Food, drink, cosmetics and brewing can't be tested easily enough in disparate parts of the U.S. Collaborative craftspeople will receive a single prize.

WINNER #1 A display of hand-made pottery by Sebastien Beaudoin of the RDNA in Quebec. Note the presentation, with the horn and decoratively grown moss. E-mail: sbeaudoin@persona.ca The photo can be seen at: <http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/pot.jpg>

WINNER #2: The Tree is a combination of the Celtic Four-Fold Wheel of the Year, the Qua-ballistic Map of Creation, Yggdrasil, represented as a Four-Fold Wheel, and the Time-Honored Bean Bag Toss. It was made by James Simpson, rustymon2000@yahoo.com of the RDNA. It is built on a 4X6 pice of 3/8s O.S.B. with built-up bas-relief features, and foam Acorns, Apples, and various doo-dads. It took me 4 weeks of after-work work to complete, and is rather light, thus easy to transport and set up. The photo can be seen at <http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/tree.jpg>

Honorable Mention: The Valley Forge Weaving - The material presented was woven by myself using 100% natural organic cotton in the warp, while the woof or weft is composed of an organic wool worsted-dyed in a brilliant shade of kelly green with a single thread of black wool twisted into the fiber. The Rev. Daibhaid O'BroderFiodoir_daibhi@bellsouth.net P.O. Box 98, Lindale, GA 30147

The rather large photos can be seen at:

<http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/owocraft1.jpg> <http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/owocraft2.jpg>
<http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/owocraft3.jpg>

7. Best academic book (or novel) released in 2008 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, OMS/RDG. At least 50 pages in length, can be on any subject somehow applicable to "Druidism", modern or ancient, such as history, religion, crafts, art, philosophy, spirituality, ethnicity, language, etc.

WINNER: A DRUIDS HERBAL FOR SACRED TREE MEDICINE (Inner Traditions Bear & Company,2008) by Ellen Evert Hopman of ORDER OF THE WHITEOAK. This book covers the herbal, magical and spiritual uses of the twenty original trees of the Ogham

alphabet along with details about trees in Brehon Law, Druid magic and poetry. Practical hands-on herbal advice on harvesting and preparation of medicines and foods from the trees is included. It can be bought at your favorite independent book seller or from Ellen's website; <http://www.celticheritage.co.uk/ElleEvertHopman/>

HONORABLE MENTION: TAKUHI'S DREAM is a Young Adult (ages 13-17) SciFi novel about a young professional woman who is pursued across the galaxy by a monster she cannot face and two men; one who clearly means her ill and the other who wants her for his latest mission. They find out what the monster actually is and enlist its aid in the settling of the new planet Sogdien 3.

9. Best "Druidical" essay or article released or printed in 2008 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, OMS/RDG

WINNER #1 Druids Across Europe in three parts, by Searles O'Dubhain of KELTRIA. A copy of it can be read at <http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/europe.pdf>

WINNER #2 Female Druids is an article that was published in The Magical Buffet, Imbolc 2008 issue. by Ellen Evert Hopman of ORDER OF THE WHITE OAK. The full article can be read at the link <http://themagicalbuffet.com/blog1/2008/02/29/female-druids/> .

HONORABLE MENTION #1: Encounters with the Horned God is an article that appeared in the summer 2008 issue of A BOND OF DRUIDS. It features the Horned God in His many guises, as I have known him. Written by Ellen Evert Hopman (Saille) of ORDER OF THE WHITE OAK. A copy of it can be read at <http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/2-bodsummer2008.pdf>

HONORABLE MENTION#2: Fiery Arrow of Bridget is a letter to the President, Oimeic 2008, by Topaz Owl of KELTRIA, (topazowl@twcny.rr.com) about the arrow's symbolism of Imbas; of which a copy can be found at <http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/arrow.pdf>

10. Best movie or video-clip or instructional video, released or revised in 2008, that advances the positive perception of Druidism in some way produced by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, or OMS/RDG.

NO ENTRIES, NO WINNERS.

Thanks to everyone who submitted work and greater thanks for what you do throughout the year in continuing to 'walk the walk'.

