

Samhain 2007

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

Samhain for me is always a time for great introspection, particularly surrounding memories of those who have passed. This Samhain will be spent attending a funeral for a very dear uncle who recently died, including several days with relatives and friends celebrating a life well lived. That in itself has brought this particular festival into sharp focus.

In this edition we have an update on the Druid Vets Headstone Project, an effort to provide US Veterans with a symbol of their faith. We also have our usual mix of poetry, news and opinions, as well as a delicious recipe for Steak and Kidney Pie. We are also very pleased to announce the 10th Anniversary of the formation of the Order of WhiteOak, which was begun at Samhain in 1997.

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 – October 2007

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

Recalling the Druid Summit - Justin Fisher

In 1994, before the founding of the Order of the WhiteOak, yet deeply connected with that order, there was a gathering of Druids in New England, called by Ellen Evert Hopman to bring together Druids from diverse backgrounds to celebrate, to socialize, and to discuss issues of pagan ethics.

Ellen generously offered her backyard as a campground, and it was quite filled with the tents of Druids from near and far. Accommodations were rustic (the privy was a pit dug in the woods) yet pleasant, with the beauty of nature abounding. It has always struck me as mysterious how Ellen's home seems to exist in a world by itself, especially in the twilight and early morning.



We honored the Three Kindreds with varied rituals at a bubbling stream, at the Quabbin Reservoir, but especially in the ritual space behind the house.

This space, for those who haven't experienced it, is a wonderfully apt space for Druid ritual: a clearing in an oak grove, with a huge rock in the north, a fire pit in the center, and a stream nearby. In late summer the leaves afford privacy and sense of separation from the modern world, making the circle an ideal ritual space.

The procession from the convivial patio by the house to the profoundly otherworldly circle in the grove brings the participants into an altered state of consciousness; it is truly a voyage of discovery.

The weekend continued in this way, traveling between the sacred and the everyday, revealing the deep unity underlying the apparent differences. It is in the stillness of the forest clearing that we can hear the quiet voices, our ancestors speaking to us with the wisdom of ages, the natural world pleading with us for mutuality and respect, the High Ones guiding us on our journey through life.

As we returned to the feast we brought our heightened awareness of the sacred with us, and we appreciated anew the sacrifice of the animals for our nourishment, the efforts of our ancestors in teaching us the ways of brewing and cooking, the inspiration of the High Ones as the bards among us made music.

It is this melding of sacred and everyday that is the very foundation of Druidism as I see it. There is no once-a-week excursion into the realm of the sacred for Druids, it is a full time thing; it is not a belief system but rather a way of life.

This is why for some of us the inclusion of worldly political issues in our discussions can never be seen as intrusions: speaking up for the earth is an inseparable part of who we are, for we are a part of the earth.

And since we are passionate people and seekers of wisdom, we will engage in spirited disputes over the proper action. If we remain committed to the quest for truth and pursue it with honor, then we will stay on the Druid path, traveling between worlds for the betterment of all.

Happy Solar Return!

The **Order of the WhiteOak – Ord na Darach Gile** is officially 10 years old. Samhain 2007 marks the tenth anniversary of Ord na Darach Gile.

The Order was founded officially on Samhain 1997, after a full year of debate about structure, tools, rules of the Order, and the teaching program. Congratulations to everyone for helping us to reach this important milestone. Though we are but a tiny sapling yet, we are healthy and still growing. The Gods be praised.



Pagan Chemistry - Mhaille

Well its that time of year again. When those scary folk come out of those crumbling old buildings to rant and rage, spitting fire and venom. Its Hallowe'en, and the local clergy are screaming blue murder again.

One local not very reverend recently denounced Paganism as "*an evil way to practice*" whilst another is quoted as saying "*I feel that Hallowe'en encourages and trivialises the forces of evil. It deeply saddens me that people worship paganism or practice witchcraft because they are missing the light and joy of the gospel and opening themselves up to powers that they don't understand.*"

I am completely appalled at the religious intolerance and sheer ignorance. I have been a practicing pagan for thirty years and during that time have had to face open hostility by a small minority of christians.

I personally do not like to see how "hallowe'en" is "celebrated", it bears little to no resemblance to the religious practices of many pagans, much as christmas (another pagan holiday) now bears little resemblance to the christian festival of yesteryear. We live in a commercialised world, so though I do not like it, I have to accept it to some degree.

Paganism is not evil, it is at heart an earthbased spirituality, and is life affirming, as is christianity and other organised religions. Pagans do not worship or believe in "satan" which is a christian concept. Satanists, therefore, are inversed christians.

If these comments had been made against Jews, Muslims or any other religious pathway then the individual would have been pilloried by the press and good minded people everywhere. Why are pagans not afforded the same rights to practice their faith, without these unwarranted attacks?

I would defend anyone's right to their own opinion, but when those beliefs are based on ignorance, and when people use their position within the community to discuss the ill-informed bigotry they have towards a belief system they do not understand then that is wrong, regardless of the religious beliefs involved.

So, how do we as pagans address this?

Thankfully in recent years more and more pagans have become involved in inter-faith discussions. My feelings are that the ignorant may very well remain that way, but I am increasingly

bouyed by the fact that people of faith are coming together to have open debates on their beliefs and works within their own and the wider community. One group in my native Liverpool have worked together to provide counsellors of faith within local hospitals and for prisoners.

Overall, whilst respectfully acknowledging the things that set us apart, the major surprise for many has been the number of things that we hold in common.

Why should I care whether my neighbor believes in one god, or twenty, or none at all? It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg - Thomas Jefferson

The paths to divinity are as many as the breaths of man, and like many others the candles *this* Pagan lights this Samhain will be in remembrance of people of many faiths and beliefs.

I am also hopeful that the light will shine a little into the darkness of ignorance.



A Samhain Bed-time Story

In mossy hollows near dampened seeps,
The tiny mortal weesit sleeps
and dreams of eating children small
the laugh and bones and fingers all!

He gnaws the belly-button first,
and stirs the toenails in his wurst,
He weaves bright jackets from the hair
and when he's done there's nothing there!

Only sneaking 'round at night,
Waiting 'til they're tucked in tight,
He slinks from underneath the bed,
Sometimes the foot, sometimes the head.

Blinks his wicked bright red eyes,
Tries not to giggle with surprise,
Then drawn just like the wolf to mutton,
He finds that tiny belly-button!

But not all children disappear,
Else there'd be no grown-ups living here,
Those who close their eyes and sleep
are safe from lurky weesit creep,

But those who cry and carry-on,
Will find surprise before the dawn,
No sleeping child with tousled head
But a tiny jacket on the bed.

So, go to sleep, my beauty child,
Protected from the weesit wild,
The weesit's planning on another,
And will you truly miss your brother?

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Merlinbeag na Tuatha
Garrán na Collach Rua

The Ritual

The fire pushes
back the veil,
hissing, gnarling,
through the pale,
with pleas to gods
we wait the dawn,
seeing wisps
of those now gone.
We ask their presence,
yet stand struck dumb
lest the dead might
truly come,
and mock us
for our mewling praise
and jeer us for
our worldly ways,
and find us, wanting,
thin-blooded, weak,
without true fire,
born to seek.
Age-old questions
fill ones head,
no sudden insight
from the dead,
This knowledge, you
will ne'er acquire,
'til standing here,
...beyond the fire.

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Witching Hour

Wonder where I'll be tonight,
In the silent land of nod.
Taken there by heavy eyes
Closed against the hours long.
Here the dreams come quick and wise,
Invented tales and mysteries spawned.
Night's denizens, their wits belied--
Gathering threads of stories long.
Hovering now, the dreams rely
On whispered shadows, fragile song.
Until the cloak of night's disguise
Renders light, the coming dawn.

© Susan "Moonwriter" Pesznecker

Short Pastry for Tarts

Half a pound flour. half a pound butter, 1 oz castor sugar, 1 egg YOKE.

Rub the flour and butter until smooth.

add the sugar.

add the egg YOKE

mix with a little cold water into a stiff paste Roll it to size and place over stew in dish.

NOTE I like to let the pastry settle in the fridge for about 30 minutes or more. Actually I usually do the pastry the day before and leave in the fridge or a cool place wrapped in plastic wrap, or in a bowl with a damp cloth over it.

Once pastry is in place, put the pie in an oven preheated to about 375 or 400 and bake until the crust is golden brown. NOTE don't be skimpy with the gravy or you will end up with a very dry mess.

About 30 minutes before serving put a few pounds of tatties in a pot of COLD water and a bit salt, and bring to a boil. When done mash the tatties adding a bit of the tattie water, a bit butter and a drop milk. NEVER use anything but a hand tattie masher or the tatties will starch up on you.

Serve on a plate with sides to avoid dripping the gravy, Try and serve in squares with the pastry on top of the meat and then pour a drop of added gravy where the meat is, not over the pastry though, they can add their own tatties.

Enjoy.

HINT if you have left over tatties try adding a bit boiled cabbage to it and frying it up in the morning. Bubble & Squeek.



Steak and Kidney Pie

A recipe from "Dave" who grew up in the Highlands

The kidney. Only use beef kidney as pork and others is probably too strong for your taste. Steep the kidney in milk or salt water or a combination of both for several hours. I usually cut the kidney into say one inch by one inch pieces but you can decide when you see it. Change the milk/water several times until the water is next to bloodless. This helps take away the strong smell and taste of the kidney.

Okay about 1 or 2 pounds of Kidney and the same of beef. I like the fatter beef cuts for the flavour say a seven/European cut. Stewing beef. Some Bisto or other stock/beef gravy enhancer. The above is the traditional English Steak and Kidney Pie. Below welcome to the Hielunds.

You will need at least 2 large sliced onions, slice them a bit on the thick side. [] about this thick. Slice up at least 2 pound one kilo of carrots. Same thickness as onions, or I prefer larger. One large or 2 medium Swedish orange turnips. Forget what you call them in America, but they are usually below what you call turnips. A can of peas. For sweetness add a couple of parsnips. DO NOT add tatties.

Now this is not called for but like when I make soups I roam the fridge and cupboards for toss-ins. Corn, peppers, cabbage, cauliflower, sweet potato, and such. Perhaps leave these out first time round. At times I will also add garlic and spices such as ginger, curry etc. Remember I will add garlic to apple pie if I can get away with it.

Get a big pot and cover the meat with water say to about 6 inches over the meat and slowly bring it to the boil. After an hour or so turn off the pot, and let it cool. Once cool place the pot in the fridge or freezer for a wee while until the fat forms at the top and is hard. Remove the fat from the top. This way you get all the flavour at a quarter of the fat.

Now on a medium to low heat put the pan back on the stove, add the vegetables, and cover them with at least 2 inches of water over them and slow cook under a lid until the veggie is softish. You can put a fork in but not squish the carrots etc. About 45 minutes under slow heat. In a separate glass add BISTO or other Gravy enhancer, (beef) slowly stir in cold water until well mixed and no lumps, pour that in with the stew and cook until vegies are softish

During cooking make up your pastry or use store bought. Many like the French type pastry I prefer, at times the traditional thick pastry. If you prefer the French buy it at the shop it is just too big a pain in the posterior to make. Traditional.

When stew is cooked, place an egg cup in the center of a good size baking pan. NOT Aluminum it tastes awful. The egg cup or other device is to keep the pastry out of the juice/gravy during baking.

The Fires of Tara - Saille

As with all the Fire Festivals bonfires were a central aspect of the celebration. In ancient times a great central fire was lit by Druids at Tlachtga, (near Tara), the burial place of the daughter of Mogh Ruith the Druid. Herself a great sorceress, Tlachtga became conflated with the Land Goddess to whom the fire was dedicated.

The fire was made with nine sacred woods; Willow, Hazel, Alder, Birch, Rowan, Yew, Ash, Elm and Oak, or all Oak. All household flames were extinguished and runners carried torches back to the provinces, bearing fresh flames from the Goddess' pyre. Thus, as at Beltaine, the kingdoms and tribes were spiritually united through the medium of sacred fire.

Both the Beltaine and the Samhain fires were built by nine men using nine kinds of sacred woods or just oak and the fires were kindled by friction.

The number nine was the number of change, transformation, and high magic. The identity of the "Nine Sacred Woods" varied slightly from area to area but in general these woods were from trees that held profound practical and spiritual meaning for the Celts.

From the Morrighu's Prophecy;

odhb do crann	A knot for a tree
crann do ten	a tree for the fire
tene a nn-ail	a fire in a stone
ail a n-uír	a stone in the soil

This is an ancient fire lighting chant that some may wish to employ.

Uisneach -Tlachtga

Uisneach was the home of the perpetual fire of the Ard-Drui. Runners would come with torches and light them in the Fire Altar and then carry the lit torches to all the provinces. People would put out their household fires and wait for the new fire at Beltaine. Thus even though the land was composed of many petty kingdoms, everyone was spiritually united. (I have been very puzzled by the fact that Uisneach, which used to be a public park, was sold to a cow farmer. I understand that he is a good fellow but it seems an ignoble act for such an important ritual site).

The Samhain fire was lit from Tlachtga. There is some thought that this fire was lit by women in honor of the daughter of a famous Druid. There is also thought that Tlachtga may have been the local name of the Land Goddess.

From http://www.tarataratara.net/Tara_hills_about.htm



Update on the Druid Vets Headstone Project - Ellen Evert Hopman

At this point we are all waiting for a Druid vet to pass over. We can't do a thing until we have a deceased Druid and their family or representatives are ready willing and able to fight for the Awen symbol, which all major US Druid Orders voted on after I and the Order of Whiteoak (www.whiteoakdruids.org) organized a collection of symbols and a vote. JC Melia, who is Co-Chief of the Whiteoak Order designed the Awen symbol that was eventually selected and sent to the VA. I asked all the major US Orders to send the required details about Druids such as numbers of members, beliefs, etc., and I put the letters together into a packet. The packet with all relevant information has been sent to various individual vets, to the VA, to Selena Fox of Lady Liberty League, all US ArchDruids (of the larger Orders) have the packet, the Military Pagans Network has the packet and Phyllis Currot, a lawyer who was once First Officer of COG has the packet. Supposedly the VA is once again "revising" their rules. But if and when we have a deceased Druid vet we will be able to move full steam ahead. Rumor is there is an aged Druid Vet who has requested the symbol but the VA has told me on the phone that until we actually have a deceased Druid vet who wants the symbol they will not move on this.

I created the following list of basic facts about Druids which was approved by the Order of Whiteoak. It should be noted that we have members of many Orders on the Whiteoak list; RDNA, ADF, Keltria, and several British groups are represented as well as our own Whiteoak members. So this is a fairly all-encompassing description of what a Druid is;

Basic Facts about Druids

- 1) Dietary restrictions - none unless the individual Druid is under a geas (spiritual/magical prohibition) to not eat a certain food
- 2) Holidays; all Druids celebrate the major Fire Festivals which are Samhain (may be celebrated October/31/November 1 to November 11/12), Imbolc (May be celebrated February 1/2 to February 15 approximately, depending on the time of the annual thaw and when the local sheep are lactating). Beltaine (May be celebrated the last week of April to the first week of May) and Lughnasad (May be celebrated any time from the last week of July to the second week of August depending on when the harvest is ready). Some Druids celebrate the Solstices and Equinoxes as well.
- 3) Tools; common tools include a staff, a sickle (a curved reaping hook), crystals for healing work, one or more cauldrons, a bell-branch (a tree branch with bells attached), a wand, and one or more containers for sacramental drinks and offerings.
- 4) Ritual space: the ideal ritual space will have a fire, a water source such as a stream, lake, pond, the ocean, or a cauldron of water, and a tree. Sometimes one or more large rocks are used to mark a sacred circle. Circles of trees are special places for Druids or one old tree might become a ritual focus.
- 5) On formal ritual occasions a Druid will likely want to wear a ritual robe, a kilt, or other Celtic garb.
- 6) Druids may worship alone or in a "Grove", which is the term for a congregation of Druids.
- 7) Modern Druids offer fruits, vegetables, herbs, poetry, music, song, artwork and crafts to their Gods. Living animals are not harmed in any way.
- 8) Burial customs: a Druid may be buried by any means he or she has chosen either by internment in the ground or by cremation. American Druid Orders have voted for the "Awen" symbol to be placed on military markers and graves. Most Druids believe in reincarnation.
- 9) Common symbols that Druids may wear include the Triskel or Triskellion which is an ancient triple spiral design, oak leaves and acorns, the tri-line "Awen" symbol, and the "Druid Sigil" which is a circle with two lines through it.
- 10) Deities: Druids may be polytheist, monotheist, duo-theist, deist, pantheist, animist, pan-entheist, or any combination of the above. Most Druids pick a PatronGod or Patroness Goddess to work with. Some deities that Druids work with include; Brighid, Lugh, The Daghdha, The Morrigan, Anu, Danu, Diancecht, Miach, Airmid, Goibniu, and many others...Druids believe in the inherent divinity of nature, and by extension the inherent sacredness of all natural features, plants, trees, animals, and people. Druids believe in the Otherworld and seek to form a close familiarity with the Spirits and departed ancestors from that realm of existence.
- 11) Some Druids sing or recite prayers in Gaelic or in other Celtic languages.
- 12) Druids may be male or female.
- 13) Druids perform divinations using Ogham sticks, Ogham stones, and by other methods.
- 14) Most Druids have a profound respect for and love of; history, intellectual growth, artistic creativity, and the pursuit of truth and justice.

A Druid in Iraq

Greetings from Iraq.

On Sept.4th I was sent to the Promotion Board and passed. I will be promoted to the rank of Sergeant on Nov. 1st. I happen to be sitting in Winter Springs, Florida while writings this. I went on mid tour leave on Sept 16th and do not have to report back until Oct. 7th. It has been a wonderful leave and my wife and I had a splendid Autumn Equinox Ritual together.

In June We moved into our Outpost, an abandoned Iraqi Shopping Mall. Our sector of patrol is a rather small area in Baghdad.

This area is VERY quite. The residents here seem to like us and are usually quite friendly. I can count how many times we have been invited in for Chi Tea or drinks while on patrol. We have encountered only one IED since coming to our sector, which was easily found and dissposed of.

The Outpost was bad, we had no Air Conditioning, for the first two months, and no running water. Showers are a luxury.

In August we had a company of Iraqi Soldiers move into the Mall with us. We do everything together, from pulling security on our home to patrols. I can not say anything good about the Iraqi Soldiers, they are the most undisciplined, unmotivated group of people I have ever met. I fear for them when and if we ever leave this country The only good thing to come out of it is I am learning Arabic much faster than I thought possible.

A week in Iraq consists of 24 hours of guard duty, 24 hours of patrol, 12 hours of maintenance, 24 hours of guard duty, 24 hours of patrol and then finally I get 24 hours of rest, then start the cycle all over again.

My company is helping create neighborhood watches in the area and we had out many boxes of humanitarian aid each week. I have had the chance to meet some very nice Iraqi People and feel that what ever happens I am connected to these people as if they were my own.

More to follow next issue.

Travel True
Coisiche

SANDS

Sands blow, my eyes sting
Cars explode, there is nowhere to run
Dust rises, noses burn
Lives are stolen, souls do morn
I yearn for peace
But fight to win
I fight for freedom
For those who are afraid
I fight to clean up
The mess that was made.

Sands blow, my heart is true
Mo Anam Cara is far away
I fear the toll that she must pay
Tears fun free as I think of her now
Love runs stronger than ever before

Sands blow, My Gods stand tall
It is easy to hate but I care instead
These too are my people
Fate do we share

Oct 2007 - Coisiche

Statement on the Build Up to a Possible War With Iran

The Druids of old were known as peacemakers and were once so respected that when they stepped onto the battlefield all hostilities immediately ceased.

It is in the spirit of reverence for these ancient ways that The Order of the Whiteoak (Ord na Darach Gile, www.whiteoakdruids.org) wishes to affirm its support of peace and justice in the world.

War is properly the option of very last resort and pre-emptive war is both immoral and unethical. We urge our political leaders to use diplomacy to create goodwill, peace and harmony between nations, religions, and peoples.

Signed:

- Ellen Evert Hopman (Saille), Co-Chief of Order of the Whiteoak, Massachusetts, USA
- J Craig Melia (Mhaille), Co-Chief of Order of the Whiteoak, Lancashire, England
- Dr. Kenneth Proefrock, Surprise, Arizona, USA
- Justin Fisher, USA
- Cairril Adaire, Founder, Our Freedom: A Pagan Coalition, Indiana, USA
- Daniel Greywolf (Spiritunicorn), Hastings, East Sussex, England
- Dr. D.J. Gainey, Greenville, SC, USA
- Edwin Vanmontfort, The Netherlands
- Raven Finley, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
- Robert Bestwick, Massachusetts, USA Anakoomk - Peace (in Mic Mac)
- Diane L. Gaw, Worcester, MA
- Tricia Gill, Brighton, England
- Rev H.C. Kamerman, Druid Resident of the Netherlands
- M. Macha NightMare, San Rafael, CA

We welcome Druids from all Orders and other friends and supporters to co-sign this document.

Should anyone wish to add their name to this Peace statement please email your details to membership@whiteoakdruids.org