



## Fall Equinox Issue Y.R. XLVIII

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### Editor's Notes

As leaves fall, so do Druids. This issue is focused on the life and career of Isaac Bonewits (1949-2010) who died on August 12. You can separate his life into period into four quarters. First growing up a disgruntled but curious Catholic 1949-1965. Then he was most active in the RDNA from 1968-1983 and then became the founder and first Archdruid of ADF from 1983-1996. The last quarter of his Druid career was a focus on his family, the internet growth of Druidry, dealing with health problems, publishing books and the nurturing of the various projects from his youth. As with his mentor Robert Larson's passing in 2005 and Norman Nelson in 2009, we are devoting this issue to providing you more resources in understanding the scope of Isaac's Druidical influence.

Deadline for the **Samhain issue** is October 17, 2010. For Submissions of essays, poems, cartoons, reviews, conferences, events, grove news, articles of interest, etc: Send to [mikerdna@hotmail.com](mailto:mikerdna@hotmail.com)

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## News of the Groves

A fuller list of the known active Reformed Druid groves is available at

[www.rdna.info/wheretrove.html](http://www.rdna.info/wheretrove.html)

<http://rdg.mithrilstar.org/grovelist.htm>



### Sacred Groves

#### Carleton Grove: News from Minnesota

Carleton has begun a new year with a large groups of freshly recruiting first year students. Laura has a full range of events planned to keep them busy the first few weeks of the term.

Mike the Fool will be visiting Carleton from October 27 to November 1<sup>st</sup>, so if anyone would like to visit Northfield MN and camp/hide in the woods for a few days and vigil with him, join a campfire or two or just meet the current students, contact [mikerdna@hotmail.com](mailto:mikerdna@hotmail.com) soon.

#### Habitat Grove: News from Quebec

As he mentioned in the conference, Mike made a trip to Pomona NY for Isaac's funeral service (see article in this issue), and also visited a memorial service with the Silver Fox Grove of ADF. Mike will be making a trip to Grove of the Local Woods in Quebec to visit Sebastien, and then a trip to Carleton College for Samhain. He is contemplating a trip to California in January on the way to Japan.

#### Dogwood Protogrove: News from Missouri (prev. from Virginia)

Hey there Mike,

We have updated news for Dogwood Proto-grove. After a while of dormancy, we are starting to turn summer into spring. Ellen and I have married and we've located the grove from Virginia to Missouri, specifically Independence. I used to work for the school district here as a web developer, got laid off, but that's another tale for another day. We are resurrecting the proto-grove and adding a few members into the mix. We're also going to change the website. I will give you the address soon

when we have more work done on it and it actually is something more resembling a website than a mess which tries to masquerade as one.

We have at least three members locally, we may have a couple of more joining us as well. We also have 7 members from distance who are family and close friends who will always be part of the grove. 2 in Erie, PA. 1 in VA. 1 in AR. 2 in Fort Knox, KY, and 1 in Houston, TX. So we claim 10 members right now maybe a dozen in a day or two....

Well that's all from Dogwood, write soon and let me know what's up.

Yours in the Mother  
Tony - The Wandering Seanachie  
Dogwood Grove, Independence, MO  
[wandering\\_seanachie@yahoo.com](mailto:wandering_seanachie@yahoo.com)

## **Rose Rock Grove: News from Oklahoma**

Too much has been going on, so I was lucky enough not to have shut this e-mail address down yet. I'll pass the word to the guys about the newsletter. Since you didn't get my address change, I'm concerned about whether you got our grove census? My new address is [druidmouse@gmail.com](mailto:druidmouse@gmail.com) Please let me know,

Hope you're doing well,  
Lydia (Mouse) Vandegrift



## **Dr. Druid**

A column for medical questions, ethics, concerns and confusions  
with answers from Dr. Druid.

Submit your questions to:  
Doc.Druid (at) Gmail (dot) com.

*He hasn't quit, just waiting for you to write him!*



## SECTION ONE: WHO HE WAS

### Mike's Tribute to Isaac

Where to begin? Most of us knew Isaac in different ways. Perhaps he was a friend, a person you met at a festival, a person you worshipped with, a teacher, an author, a co-worker, a lover or a confidant. I knew Isaac mostly as a historian of the Reformed Druids and other modern Druid movements, although I had interviewed him several times, met him at festivals 3 times and constantly pinged him with e-mails over the years, and read all his old books, and half of his new ones (so far).

Whether you liked him or not, just about any modern Druid has an opinion about Isaac. He was a mythical man, who loved to explode myths, and indulge in mirth. He was definitely the most known Druid in North America, having been hyper-actively present since 1968 on the scene, in fact setting the scene in many respects. The only other living Druid with a similar level of name-recognition would be Phillip Carr-Gomm from Britain's OBOD.

Isaac was truly gifted, but not always the best in any particular field. There were always a wiser Druid than him, a better singer, someone with better memory, better job finding skills, better Gaelic, better historical studies, better crafters, etc, yet Isaac was quite good at numerous pursuits, much like the god Lugh, and always willing and able to get better at these skills.

What Isaac excelled in the most was communication and organizing, he was a catalyst for refining and conveying (guiding) neopagans and Druids, and getting things moving, and putting people in touch with each other. Like Johnny Appleseed, groves would spring up in the wake of his travels. He was always postulating and trying to predict new ways for a small religious movement like Druidry to handle the stresses, dynamics and travails of growth, without a lot of resources or rigid controls.

Organizing Druids, even ADFers, is like herding cats. While over the years he may have stepped on toes here and there, he never became a "cult" leader, and I suspect that his early adventure in the Church of Satan in 1971 really gave him a big warning of that danger, such that he became a powerful advocate against nasty-type leaders in the wiccan or pagan community, constantly pointing out less-than-ethical methods, to nip them in the bud. He's famous for his ABCDEF guide for "grading" cult-like behavior (sometime with amusing scores for some "mainstream religions"). This is most appropriate for a Reformed Druid, a group that sprang from a rebellion against coerced religious practice.

There is a fallacy or myth, that Isaac left the RDNA (or rather the SDNA) to start ADF. Not so. The RDNA has no method of excommunicating, or even for members to lapse. They could state they aren't members if they'd like, but in a non-obsessive sense, a Reformed Druid is always a Reformed Druid. Isaac was a man who belonged to perhaps dozens of movements, often simultaneously, and he would gladly join or lead an RDNA ritual at a drop of a hat even in his last years. However, it would be fair to say, that his focus of Druidry shifted in the 1980s to a new expression and style, and a greater urgency to organize Druids in a way that would nurture more stability and consistent training to provide more services to members.



# RDNA's Legacy to ADF

By Mike the Fool

ADF was intentionally founded with being a clean break from the RDNA. That is easier said than done, we are all creatures of habit and like to keep what we like. Isaac and a handful of other Reformed Druids were an important influence on the founding of ADF. The rich tradition of the RDNA had a tantalizing trove of 20 years of institutional history, party politics, liturgies, and publishing experience as a Druid organization. There were other influences and lessons learned from other groups, no doubt, but based on my understanding of RDNA & ADF, I'd like to list some aspects of RDNA that were kept and included in ADF and also list some important differences that were established at the start.

## Generic Similarities:

Any body with the time to read a few archeological and mythological books on Druids would naturally have white robes, worship outdoors, use a sickle, have an affiliation for Oaks, ogham, staffs, wands, the use of some Celtic terms for holidays, and have a fondness for altars, large stones and bardry.

## Twenty Specific Continuities:

1. Symbols: The Druid Sigil, of origin in David Fisher's imagination, was kept. Keltria and other off shoots would also keep it. The Waters of Life. The chalice. The term "Druid" for all members of the organization, not just the priest/ess. The term "Grove" for a group of Druids.
2. Deities: "The Earth Mother"
3. Liturgical: Elements like the Hymn to the Earth Mother, the 8 fold seasons, requesting an omen of approval, the Waters questioning, the libation, a closing benediction. The usage of seasonal poems, songs, chants, meditations to elaborate on a basic framework. Ban on animal and human sacrifice. Use of whiskey for sacramental usage, and milk, mead and other drinks throughout the year. The avoidance of casting a circle, like Wiccans, just invoking the gods through a gate.
4. Hierarchical: The concept of a Mother Grove, originally Carleton for the RDNA and later Berkeley for NRDNA. The idea that there are three levels of priesthood. The idea that each involves some training and the third level required a period of vigiling and life-long vocation.
5. Worship: A focus on worship, rather than magic. ADF involves more magic, but certainly less than most Wiccan or other Neopagan religions.
6. Public: The RDNA, unlike a lot of Wiccan and other ethnic-neopaganism was open to members of all religions or non-religions, its members didn't use magical names, published their real names, and most services welcomed people off the street, if they were respectful. The early RDNA wrote to military boards and even made early attempts at legal incorporation.
7. Constitutionality: The RDNA's 3<sup>rd</sup> Order did most of the voting on a national level by consensus, and in this sense was less than democratic since they were not elected themselves. However, from the first year, each RDNA grove had a constitution, with the contents voted on by its membership. On this level it was democratic. Certain offices could only be held by people of certain orders, but it was not hard to attain these orders. ADF followed suit with Councils of Senior Druids, democracy at the grove level, but also allowed members to vote on a national level.
8. Grove Autonomy: While RDNA and ADF both have frameworks, they both are practical and acknowledge the geographical and diverse local interest and lack of power to practically police all matters. ADF continued to follow a very liberal policy of allowing local groves a great deal of freedom in how they manage the minutiae, as compared to most mainstream organized churches.
9. Non-Secret: While some materials were difficult to locate due to poor storage, the RDNA and NRDNA published just about everything about their group. While the Third Order is usually only revealed to the vigiler, it contains no important secrets, and most everything happens in full view of the congregation in voting and initiation matters. There are no secret training grimoires.

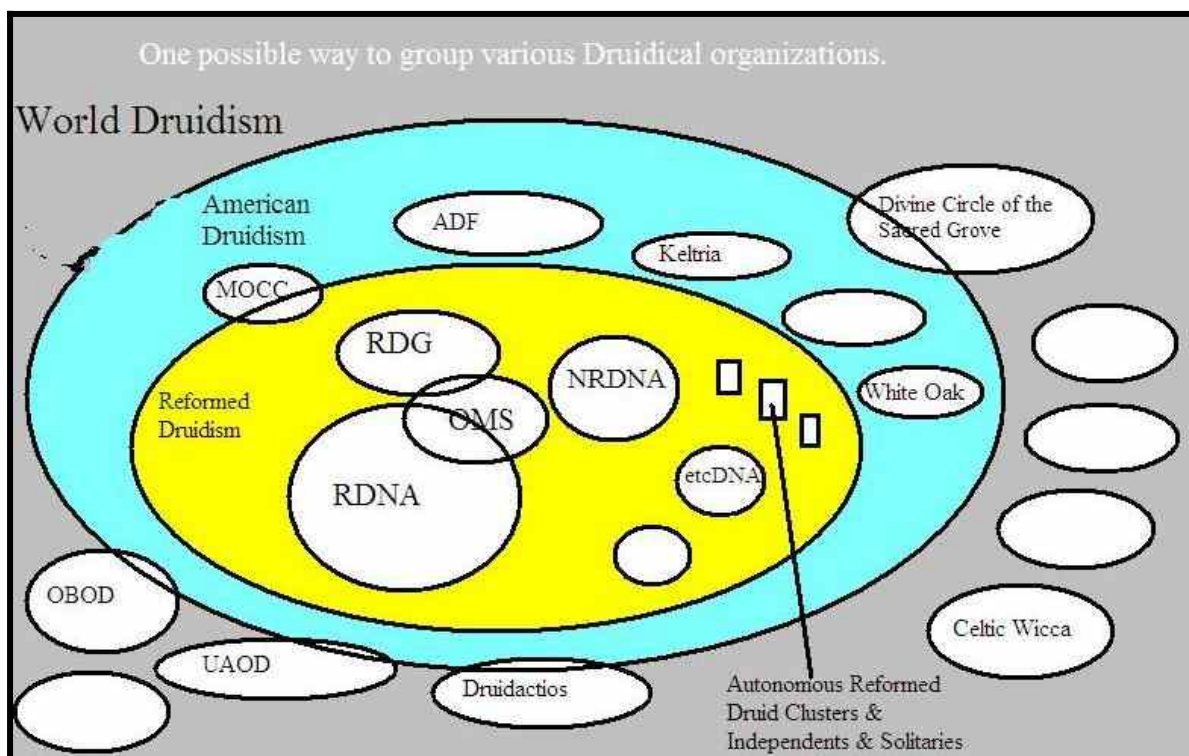
10. Historical: While celebrating timeless cycles of the season, the RDNA and ADF are very, very clear that they have no direct organizational connection to the ancient Druids. They acknowledge their historical founding dates, are straight forward about who founded the group, and what their primary resources were at the time of creation.
11. Publishing: While the ancient Druids were reticent about writing, not so RDNA. Even before Isaac came along, there were books of liturgy, meditation, Druid Chronicles and collections of apocryphal epistles and such. Isaac enlarged on this in the Druid Chronicles (Evolved) and the various magazines like Druid Chronicle and Pentalpha and Druid Missal-Any show the strong interest of the RDNA to collect and share.
12. Non Doctrinal: There is no dogma or set-in-stone rules. There is no bible in the RDNA, just collections of various individuals without divine revelation. The RDNA was reticent to legislate morality, although it did have informally high standards.
13. Fallible Leadership: Both groups very clearly stated that no Ex-Cathedra statements would be made, and that they acknowledge their mistakes were common.
14. Debate Friendly: Both groups are nothing if not chatty, argumentative and indulgent in long debates and discussions. Nothing is taboo from discussion.
15. Academic Excellence: Druidism emerged from the environment of a very intense private liberal arts tradition, and the image of the multi-disciplinary excellence of the ancient Druids was a good match. RDNA, ADF, Keltria, RDG have all maintained high standards of study, encouraged far-ranging research, study and publishing their findings. While artistic, experiential and prophetic elements exist, modern Druids are known to have an emphasis on academic grounding.
16. Liberal: Both groups in practice were non-racist, non-political, non-sexist. Anybody who was respectful and interested could join, participate and climb the ranks. The RDNA had full equality of Priest and Priestess as early as 1966 and completely by 1971.
17. International: The original RDNA was founded by 3 Americans and 1 Canadian, thus "North America". The original founders studied World Religions, travelled to Asia and the first overseas service was in Japan in 1965. Groves however didn't spread overseas until the 1990s.
18. Eclectic: The RDNA started out with a Celtic format, but often added content of interest of the participants through chants, stories, meditations and other clubs at Carleton. Asian influences were strong in the 1960s during the Vietnam War era. A Greek Format was tried in the 1960s. The NRDNA and SDNA experimented with more Norse, Hassidic and Old Irish formats in the 1970s. ADF could have picked an exclusively Celtic focus, but it plugged in gaps by studying Indo-European roots of religion, and also would hold Slavic, Baltic, Germanic, Hellenic variants of the ADF service. While most ADF still choose Celtic focus for their groves, this open-ness (with a purpose) was a bit controversial in 1983. Members of the RDNA could belong to other religions at the same time, a non-exclusive stance that ADF continued.
19. Interest Groups: Like the SCA and MENSA, the RDNA had special orders for members interested in brewing, bardry, healing, craftwork, etc; although most were limited to 3<sup>rd</sup> Orders and thus not very large membership and thus more like honor societies. ADF adopted guilds, open to all members. RDNA followed suit in recent years, forming more orders that were open to all.
20. Humor: Not the least of all, the RDNA are known for their playfulness, puns, jokes, playing pranks on authority figures, innuendo and allusions as is befitting a group that began as a mock protest of the religious requirement at a school. While moments of reverence do occur, the folks in the RDNA don't take themselves too seriously. ADF brought in this joviality and celebratory atmosphere into their group to a great degree.

## 11 Distinct ADF Departures from RDNA

By Mike the Fool

1. New name: previous incarnations were RDNA, ODNA, ZDNA, HDNA, SDNA, etcDNA. ADF's new name and symbol of the sprouting Oak tree were symbolic of a new organization.
2. Dropped Dalon Ap Landu: The patron deity of the RDNA's third order was not adopted by ADF, and the priesthood of ADF is not dedicated to a specific deity.
3. Drop Carleton Center: ADF doesn't have a geographical heart, and its mother grove office moves from state to state over the years.
4. Indo-European Focus: Although RDNA tended to have Celtic trappings or other European flavors, the RDNA was technically open to all sorts of influences. ADF wanted to specify Indo-European parameters, although they acknowledged that Native American spirits could be appeased or honored.
5. Seminary Standards: A bit of mentoring and a vigil suffice for the RDNA's 3<sup>rd</sup> Order. Study programs, seminary training, and selection are the mode for becoming a priest in ADF.
6. Voting methods: Consensus can lead to paralysis, and so ADF chose majority or supra-majority voting systems to allow for change.
7. Neopagan Religion: ADF was founded without question as a Neopagan religion. Much of Isaac's problems in the RDNA was that many members didn't feel pagan, or even "religious".
8. Membership Rules: Once a Reformed Druid, always a Reformed Druid, not so in ADF. One must pay dues, follow by laws and can be defrocked or dropped from membership rolls. Groves had to submit reports or lose their status.
9. Liturgical: The Fire-Water-Tree triple world symbol. The ADF service was a radical departure from the RDNA service, although some elements and wording continued.
10. Hyper-Public: Incorporation was achieved, tax free status acquired.
11. More Gravitas: While keeping some self-depreciation in private, in public ADF is a bit more concerned about how they are viewed from a public relations standpoint.

**Another way to view Reformed Druidism and the American family of Druidical organizations.**





## Comparison of Modern Druidic Organizations (a very rough draft)

Here are 4 of the larger groups in U.S. Isaac was a member of each group, and collaborated on projects with the leaders of each.

Category	RDNA	ADF	Keltria	OBOD
<b>Founded</b>	1963	1983 off-shoot of RDNA	1986 off-shoot of ADF	1962 off-shoot of A.D.O.
<b>Current Size</b>	450 in Groves, 4000 overall 25-40 Groves & Proto-Groves	600+ 60+ Groves & Proto-Groves	300+ 5 Groves & study groups	2500+ 60-85 Groves & seedgroups
<b>Geographic Distribution</b>	Midwest, North East, Far West, Japan, Canada, France	Evenly distributed across U.S., with UK & Canada	Midwest, Northeast & CA	British Isles, Canada, US, Australia and Europe
<b>Largest Website</b>	<a href="http://www.rdna.info">www.rdna.info</a>	<a href="http://www.adf.org">www.adf.org</a>	<a href="http://www.keltria.org">www.keltria.org</a>	<a href="http://www.druidry.org">www.druidry.org</a>
<b>On-line Conferences</b>	RDNA talk on <a href="http://www.yahogroups.com">www.yahogroups.com</a>		Keltria-L on <a href="http://www.yahogroups.com">www.yahogroups.com</a>	Message board on <a href="http://www.druidry.org">www.druidry.org</a>
<b>Orientation</b>	Eclectic overall Some Groves have a more limited mixture of inspirational sources.	Indo-European overall Groves tend to pick one or two sub-ethnic groups	Celtic overall Groves tend to pick one sub-ethnic (Irish or Welsh)	Eclectic overall Groves tend to have a few ethnic orientations or more "New Agey"
<b>Overall Organization</b>	Defunct national legislature, with largely-autonomous Groves and numerous feisty independents. Like the U.S. Articles of Confederation in mid 18th century. Clubby with tendencies to a church.	Similar to Federal system of balance between National centralized power and local Groves, as in the U.S. Constitution since the 18th century. A church.	Similar to Federal system of balance between National centralized power and local Groves, as in the U.S. Constitution since the 18th century. A tribe.	Semi-functional core body with semi-autonomous Groves scattered about. More of an initiatory fraternity than a church.
<b>Judiciary Mechanism</b>	No formal method of expulsion nationally. Groves may do so.	Formal expulsion and defrocking is possible.	Formal expulsion and defrocking is possible.	Uncertain
<b>Official Statements</b>	Very rare. None recently	Frequent	Infrequently	Infrequently
<b>Detailed By-Laws</b>	None	Yes	Yes	Uncertain
<b>Elections</b>	National has a council of 3rd Orders, who are appointed, but it is mostly inactive. Grove offices usually by elections	National and Grove offices by election	National and Grove offices by election	National offices appointed Grove offices by election
<b>Leadership</b>	Not prominent, less than esteemed in many cases Council of 3rd Order priests is mostly ceremonial. Central office is inactive Groves have Arch Druids 3rd Order Priests select folk to become priests.	Prominent & esteemed Central office. Arch Druid of entire ADF Groves have Senior Druids Seminarian graduates may be given 3rd circle priesthood	Esteemed Central office Groves have Senior Druids Seminarians graduates raised to 3rd Circle priesthood.	Prominent & Esteemed Central office Groves have Senior Druids
<b>Fees</b>	None overall. Groves might.	Yes.	Yes.	Yes.
<b>Membership Rules</b>	Just the 2 Basic Tenets. Groves have local rules.	Yes.	Yes.	A few perhaps
<b>Written Records</b>	Extensive collected archives and compendiums produced.	Numerous liturgies and some essays collected and a few small manuals	A few small manuals, more oral based.	A few small manuals Several books by prominent members.
<b>Digitized Records</b>	Mostly digitized	Partially	Partially	A small amount
<b>Magazine</b>	Druid Chronicler 1977-82 Druid Missal-Any 8/year 1983-1991, 2000-2009 Druid Inquirer 2009-now	Druid's Progress 1984-1995 Oaken Leaves 4/year 1997-now	Keltria 1989-1999 Henge Happenings 4/year 1999-now	Druid's Voice
<b>Seminary Program</b>	Nothing formal.	Formal program	Formal Program.	Nothing formal
<b>Study Program</b>	Nothing formal	Formal Program	Formal Program	Formal Program
<b>Tax-Exempt Status</b>	No Groves currently have this status.	Most Groves	Most Groves	Some Groves
<b>Grove Set-Up</b>	Simple	Complicated	Moderate	Moderate
<b>Humor</b>	Prominent	Moderate	Moderate	Less Prominent





# Isaac Bonewits

*From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*

**Phillip Emmons Isaac Bonewits** (October 1, 1949 – August 12, 2010<sup>[1]</sup>) was an influential American [Druid](#) who published a number of books on the subject of [Neopaganism](#) and [magic](#). He was also a liturgist, singer and songwriter, and founded the Druidic organisation [Ár nDraíocht Féin](#), as well as the Neopagan civil rights group, the Aquarian Anti-Defamation League. Born in [Royal Oak, Michigan](#),

Bonewits had been heavily involved in [occultism](#) since the 1960s, prior to his passing in 2010.

## Personal life

Bonewits was born in 1949 in Royal Oak, Michigan as the fourth of five children; his mother and father were Roman Catholics. Spending much of his childhood in Ferndale, he was moved at age 12 to [San Clemente, California](#), where he spent a short time in a Catholic high school before he went back to public school to graduate from high school a year early. He enrolled at [UC Berkeley](#) in 1966; he graduated from the university in 1970 with a [Bachelor of Arts](#) in Magic<sup>[2]</sup>, becoming the first and only person to have ever received any kind of [degree](#) in [Magic](#) from an accredited university<sup>[3]</sup>.

Bonewits was married five times. He was married to Rusty Elliot from 1973-1976. His second wife was Selene Kumin Vega, followed by marriage to [Sally Eaton](#) (1980-1985). His fourth wife was author [Deborah Lipp](#) from 1988–1998. On July 23, 2004 he was married in a [handfasting](#) ceremony to a former vice-president of the organization, Phaedra Heyman Bonewits. At the time of the handfasting, the marriage was not yet legal because he had not yet been legally divorced from Ms. Lipp, although they had been separated for several years. Paperwork and legalities caught up on December 31, 2007 making them legally married.<sup>[4]</sup> Bonewits had one child, Arthur Shaffrey Lipp-Bonewits (born 1990), from his marriage to Lipp.

In 1990, Bonewits was diagnosed with [Eosinophilia-myalgia syndrome](#). The illness was a factor in his eventual resignation from the position of Archdruid of the ADF.

On October 25, 2009, Bonewits was diagnosed with a rare form of colon cancer<sup>[5]</sup>, for which he underwent treatment. He died at home, on August 12, 2010, surrounded by his family.<sup>[1]</sup>

## Career

In 1966 while enrolled at [UC Berkeley](#), Bonewits joined the [Reformed Druids of North America](#) or RDNA. Bonewits was ordained as a [Neo-druid priest](#) in 1969. During this period Bonewits was recruited by the [Church of Satan](#),<sup>[6]</sup> but left due to political and philosophical conflicts with [Anton LaVey](#). During his stint in the Church of Satan, Bonewits appeared in the 1970 documentary [Satanis : The Devil's Mass](#).<sup>[7]</sup> Bonewits, in his article "My Satanic Adventure", asserts the rituals in *Satanis* were staged for the movie at the behest of the filmmakers and were not authentic ceremonies.<sup>[8]</sup>

His first book, *Real Magic*, was published in 1971. Between 1973 and 1975 Bonewits was employed as editor of *Gnostica* magazine in Minnesota (published by [Llewellyn Publications](#)), established an

offshoot group of the RDNA called the Schismatic Druids of North America, and helped create a group called the Hasidic Druids of North America (despite his life-long status as a "[gentile](#)"). He also founded the short-lived Aquarian Anti-Defamation League (AADL), an early Pagan civil-rights group.

In 1976 Bonewits moved back to Berkeley and rejoined his original grove there, now part of the New Reformed Druids of North America (NRDNA). He was later elected ArchDruid of the Berkeley Grove.

In 1983 Bonewits founded [Ar nDraiocht Fein](#) (also known as "A Druid Fellowship" or ADF), which was incorporated in 1990 in the state of [Delaware](#) as a U.S. 501(c)3 non-profit organization. He made the organization's first public announcement in 1984, and began the membership sign-up at the first [WinterStar Symposium](#) in 1984. Over the years Bonewits also had varying degrees of involvement with [Ordo Templi Orientis](#), [Gardnerian Wicca](#), the [New Reformed Orthodox Order of the Golden Dawn](#) (a [Wiccan](#) organization not to be confused with the [Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn](#)) as well as others. <sup>[3]</sup> Bonewits was a regular presenter at Neopagan festivals in the US.

Although the illness curtailed many of his activities and travels for a time, he remained Archdruid of ADF until 1996. In that year, he resigned from the position of Archdruid but retains the lifelong title of ADF Archdruid Emeritus.

A songwriter, singer and recording artist, he produced two CDs of Pagan music and numerous recorded lectures and panel discussions, produced and distributed by the [Association for Consciousness Exploration](#). He lived in [Rockland County, New York](#), and was a member of the [Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans](#) (CUUPS).

Bonewits was encouraging charity programs to help Neopagan seniors,<sup>[9]</sup> and in January 2006 was the key note speaker at the Conference On Current Pagan Studies at the [Claremont Graduate University](#) in [Claremont, CA](#).<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

## ***Contributions to Neopaganism***

In his book *Real Magic* (1971), Bonewits proposed his [hypothesis](#) on the **Laws of Magic**. These "laws" are synthesized from a multitude of [belief systems](#) from around the world, and were collected in order to explain and categorize magical beliefs within a cohesive framework. Many interrelationships of these areas exist, and some are [subsets](#) of others.

Bonewits also coined much of the modern terminology used to define and articulate many of the conceptual themes and issues which affect the North American Neopagan community.

- Pioneered the modern usage of the terms *thealogy*, "[Paleo-Paganism](#)", "[Meso-Paganism](#)", and numerous other [retronyms](#).
- Possibly coined the term "[Pagan Reconstructionism](#)", though the communities in question would later diverge from his initial meaning.<sup>[10][11]</sup>
- Founded [Ar nDraiocht Fein](#), which was incorporated in 1990 in the state of Delaware as a U.S. 501(c)3 non-profit organization.
- Developed the [Advanced Bonewits Cult Danger Evaluation Frame](#) or ABCDEF
- Coined the phrase "Never Again the Burning."<sup>[12]</sup>
- Critiqued the Burning Times / Old Religion Murray thesis (in *Bonewits's Essential Guide to Witchcraft and Wicca*)

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- *Rites of Worship: A Neopagan Approach*. (2003) Earth Religions Press [ISBN 1-59405-501-7](#) OP

- *Witchcraft: A Concise Guide or Which Witch Is Which?*. (2003) Earth Religions Press [ISBN 1-59405-500-9](#)
- *The Pagan Man: Priests, Warriors, Hunters, and Drummers*. (2005) Citadel [ISBN 0-8065-2697-1](#), [ISBN 978-0806526973](#)
- *Bonewits's Essential Guide to Witchcraft and Wicca*. (2006) Citadel [ISBN 0-8065-2711-0](#), [ISBN 978-0806527116](#)
- *Bonewits's Essential Guide to Druidism*. (2006) Citadel [ISBN 0-8065-2710-2](#), [ISBN 978-0806527109](#)
- *Real Energy: Systems, Spirits, And Substances to Heal, Change, And Grow*. (2007) New Leaf [ISBN 1564149048](#), [ISBN 978-1564149046](#). Co-authored with Phaedra Bonewits.
- *Neopagan Rites: A Guide to Creating Public Rituals that Work*. (2007) Llewellyn [ISBN 0738711993](#), [ISBN 978-0738711997](#)

## Discography

### Music

- *Be Pagan Once Again!* – Isaac Bonewits & Friends (including [Ian Corrigan](#), Victoria Ganger, and Todd Alan) (CD) ([ACE/ADE](#))
- *Avalon is Rising!* – Real Magic (CD)([ACE/ADF](#))

### Spoken word

- *The Structure of Craft Ritual* (ACE)
- *A Magician Prepares* (ACE)
- *Programming Magical Ritual: Top-Down Liturgical Design* (ACE)
- *Druidism: Ancient & Modern* (ACE)
- *How Does Magic Work?* (ACE)
- *Rituals That Work* (ACE)
- *Sexual Magic & Magical Sex* (with [Deborah Lipp](#)) (ACE)
- *Making Fun of Religion* (with [Deborah Lipp](#)) (ACE)

### Panel discussions

- *The Magickal Movement: Present & Future* (with [Margot Adler](#), [Selena Fox](#), and [Robert Anton Wilson](#)) (ACE)
- *Magick Changing the World, the World Changing Magick* (with AmyLee, [Selena Fox](#), Jeff Rosenbaum and [Robert Anton Wilson](#)) (ACE)



## Lifetime Achievement Award

Issued to Isaac by the Druid Academic Nomination Award Committee (DANAC) in 2010.

### Winner: Isaac Bonewits,

A unanimous decision, for his 33 years of publications, organizing activity, presentations, wit, humor, research and dedication to Druidism. A giant in the field, known by all. May he have another bountiful 33 years to inspire and harrangue the rest of us. He will receive this special engraved trophy, with the beguiling general shape of a Druid Sigil, set in a velvet lined case.

# Magic, Witches and Witchcraft in the US,

1992, pg. 33-35 on Isaac Bonewits

Bonewits, P.E.I. (Isaac) (1949-) One of the brightest and most colorful figures of the neo-Pagan movement, Phillip Emmons Isaac Bonewits is best known for his leadership in modern Druidism (see Neo-Paganism) He is a priest, magician, scholar, author, bard and activist, and has dedicated himself to reviving Druidism as a "Third Wave" religion aimed at protecting "Mother Nature and all Her children."

Bonewits was born on October 1, 1949, in Royal Oak, Michigan, the perfect place, he likes to joke, for a future Archdruid. The fourth of five children (three girls, two boys), he spent most of his childhood in Ferndale, a suburb of Detroit. When he was nearly 12, the family moved to San Clement, California.

From his mother, a devout Roman Catholic, Bonewits developed an appreciation for the importance of religion; from his father, a convert to Catholicism from Presbyterianism, he acquire skepticism. He bounced back and forth between parochial and public schools, largely due to the lack of programs for very bright students, his I.Q. was tested at 200.

His first exposure to magic came at age 13, when he met a young Creole woman from New Orleans who practiced Vodoun. She showed him some of her magic and so accurately divined the future that he was greatly impressed. During his teen years, he read extensively about magic and parapsychology. He also read science fiction, which often has strong magical and psychic themes.

In ninth grade, Bonewits entered a Catholic high school seminary. He soon realized, however, that he did not want to be a priest in the Catholic faith. He returned to public school and graduated a year early. After spending a year in junior college to get foreign language credits, he enrolled at the University of California at Berkeley in 1966. At about the same time, he began practicing magic, devising his own rituals by studying the structure of rituals in books, and by observing them in various churches.

His roommate at Berkeley, Robert Larson, was a Druid, an alumnus of Carleton College, where the Reformed Druids of North America (RDNA) had been founded in 1963. Larson interested Bonewits in Druidism and initiated him into the RDNA. The two established a grove in Berkeley. Bonewits was ordained as a Druid priest in October 1969. The Berkeley grove was shaped as a neo-Pagan *religion* unlike the other RDNA groves, which considered the order a *philosophy*. The neo-Pagan groves became part of branch called the New Reformed Druids of North America (NRDNA.)

During college, Bonewits spent about eight months as a member of the Church of Satan, an adventure that began as a lark. The college campus featured a spot where evangelists of various persuasions would lecture to anyone who would listen. As a joke, Bonewits showed up one day to perform a satirical lecture as a Devil's evangelist. He was so successful that he was approached by a woman who said she represented Anton Szandor LaVey, founder of the Church of Satan. Bonewits attended the church's meetings and improved upon some of their rituals but dropped out after personality conflicts with LaVey. The membership, he found, consisted largely of middle-class conservatives who were more "right-wing and racist" than Satanist (see Satanism.)

Bonewits had intended to major in psychology but through Berkeley's individual group-study program he fashioned his own course of study. In 1970 he graduated with a bachelor of arts degree in magic, the first person ever to do so at a Western educational institution. He also was the last to do so in the United States. College administrators were so embarrassed over the publicity about the degree that magic, witchcraft and sorcery were banned from the individual group-study program.

The fame of his degree led to a book contract. In 1971 *Real Magic* was published, offering Bonewits' views on magic, ritual and psychic abilities. A revised and updated edition was published in 1979 and reissued in 1988.

In 1973 Bonewits met a woman named Rusty, a folksinger in the Berkeley cafes. They moved to Minneapolis, where they were married, and where Bonewits took over the editorship of *Gnostica*, a neo-Pagan journal published by Carl Weschcke of Llewellyn Publications. He gave *Gnostica* a scholarly touch and turned it into the leading journal in the field. But the job lasted only 1 1/2 years, for the editorial changes resulted in the loss of many non-Pagan readers, who found the magazine too high brow.

Bonewits remained in Minneapolis for about another year. While there he established a Druid grove called the Schismatic Druids of North America, a splinter group of the RDNA. He also joined with several Jewish pagan friends and created the Hassidic Druids of North America, the only grove of which existed briefly in St. Louis, where its membership overlapped with that of the Church of All Worlds. In 1974-5, Bonewits wrote, edited and self-published *The Druid Chronicles (Evolved)*, a compendium of the history, thealogy, rituals and customs of all Reformed Druid movements, including the ones he invented himself.

He also founded the Aquarian, Anti-Defamation, League (AADL), a civil liberties and public relations organization for members of minority belief systems, such as Rosicrucians, Theosophists, neo-Pagans, witches, occultists, astrologers and others. Bonewits sought to convince such persons that they had more in common with each other than they realized. By banding together, they could effectively fight, through the press and the courts, the discrimination and harassment of the Judeo-Christian conservatives.

Bonewits served as president of the AADL and devoted most of his income from unemployment insurance to running it. The organization scored several small victories in court, such as restoring an Astrologer to her apartment, after she had been evicted because a neighbor told her landlord that her astrology classes were "black magic seances." In 1976 Bonewits and Rusty divorced, and he decided to return to Berkeley. The AADL disintegrated shortly after his departure.

In Berkeley, Bonewits rejoined the NRDNA grove and was elected Archdruid. He established *The Druid Chronicler* (which later became *PentaAlpha Journal*) as a national Druid publication in 1978. He attempted to make the Berkeley grove as Neo-Pagan as the groves in Minneapolis and St. Louis, which caused a great deal of friction among longtime members. After a few clashes, Bonewits left the organization. *PentaAlpha journal* folded.

In 1979 he married for a second time, to a woman named Selene. That relationship ended in 1982. In 1983 he was initiated into the New Reformed Order of the Golden Dawn. The same year, he married again, to Sally Eaton, the actress who created the role of the hippie Witch in the Broadway musical, *Hair*. They moved to New York City in 1983 where Bonewits met Shenain Bell, a fellow Neo-Pagan, and discussed the idea of starting a Druidic organization. The fellowship, *Ar nDraiocht Fein* ("Our Own Druidism" in Irish Gaelic), was born as

a fresh neo-Pagan religious organization with no ties to the ancient Druids or to the RDNA, which by this time was apparently defunct. Bonewits became Archdruid, and Bell became Vice-Archdruid.

In 1986 Bonewits and Eaton separated, and he moved to Kansas City for several months, where he worked as a computer consultant. He then returned to Berkeley, but could not find work in Silicon Valley, which was in a slump. He moved back to the East Coast, to Nyack, New York, near Manhattan, in November 1987, with his intended fourth wife, Deborah, a Wiccan high priestess. He continued work as a computer consultant and worked on the building of Ar nDraiocht Fein. He also began work on a book on the creation, preparation and performance of effective religious ritual.

*The "Ten Year Gap."* Bonewits has discovered, he says, a "10-year gap" between many of his views and their acceptance among neo-Pagans. In 1973 he was the first neo-Pagan to state publicly that the alleged antiquity of neo-Pagan Witchcraft (Wicca) was "hogwash." The Craft, he said, did not go back beyond Gerald B. Gardner and Doreen Valiente. Bonewits was held in contempt by many for that yet by 1983, neo-Pagans generally acknowledged that neo-Pagan Witchcraft was a new religion, not the continuation of an old one. The Aquarian Anti-Defamation League was also ahead of its time. In 1974-5, neo-Pagans were not ready to admit that they needed public relations and legal help. By a decade later, a number of such organizations were in existence.

Around 1985 Bonewits began regularly discussing the need to provide social services for domestic and personal problems and drug dependencies. Neo-Pagans, he points out, represent a cross-section of the population, and such problems cut across religious lines. Bonewits estimates that as many as 80 percent of neo-Pagans come from "nonfunctional family" backgrounds. Neo-Pagans, he observes, are brighter and more artistic than average, but also, therefore, "more neurotic." The community has been quick to address these social issues with programs.

Bonewits also began lobbying for financial support for full-time neo-Pagan clergy (the priesthood is essentially a volunteer job), but the idea fell on uninterested ears. In 1988 Bonewits was pursuing a goal of buying land and establishing an academically accredited Pagan seminary.

## Mike's Response to Magic, Witches and Witchcraft in the US, 1992, pg. 33-35 on Isaac

The first error in Isaac's biography is:

The Berkeley grove was shaped as a Neo-Pagan *religion*, unlike other RDNA groves, which considered the order a *philosophy*. The Neo-Pagan groves became part of a branch called the New Reformed Druids of North America (NRDNA.)<sup>281</sup>

It could be argued that the Purdue Grove was reasonably close to being operated as a religion, at least when under scrutiny of the Draft boards. I believe that I have shown that the philosophy/religion definition is deceptive because it presents a clear-cut division of a very foggy difference between religion & philosophy. In fact, I see the split as mostly a result of differences of mindsets from their respective environments rather than in understanding. Some groves in the NRDNA were not Neo-Pagan, and those that were "Neo-Pagan" were not exclusively Neo-Pagan. Here, as in many articles, the hasty reader is provided with an attractive simplification.

After telling of the SDNA and Hassidic Druid's foundation by Isaac the article continues:

In 1974-75, Bonewits wrote, edited and self-published *The Druid Chronicles (Evolved)*, a compendium of the history, theology, rituals and customs of all the Reformed Druid movements, including the ones he invented himself.<sup>282</sup>

Isaac was only one member (although the busiest) of a consortium of five to six RDNA members (the others were primarily Nelson, Frangquist, Shelton, Larson) who wrote sections or helped put the book together. It is easy to mistakenly conclude here Isaac was the sole author or that the entire DC(E) was valid for all Reformed Druid movements, probably an oversight.

We are lucky to have this reference to the NRDNA/SDNA conflict in California:

In Berkeley, [1981] Bonewits rejoined the NRDNA grove and was elected ArchDruid. He attempted to make the Berkeley grove as Neo-Pagan as the groves in Minneapolis and St. Louis, which caused a great deal of friction among the longtime members. After a few clashes, Bonewits left the organization.<sup>283</sup>

He won by one vote and it wasn't the Neo-Pagan part as much as the exclusion of people refusing to define themselves as Neo-Pagan, taking on political crusades or completely restructuring the leadership of the group.

Besides this few quibbles, it is a good biography of Isaac. However no real mention occurs of the underlying debates is offered. No second opinion is sought for balance from members of the "old" RDNA.

# Who is Isaac Bonewits?

(Immodest Third-Person Self-Introduction)

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Isaac Bonewits is North America's leading expert on ancient and modern Druidism, Witchcraft and the rapidly growing Earth Religions movement.

A practicing Neo-Pagan priest, scholar, teacher, bard and polytheologian for over thirty years, he has coined much of the vocabulary and articulated many of the issues that have shaped the 300,000 strong Neo-Pagan community in the United States and Canada, with opinions both playful and controversial.

As an author (of *Real Magic*, *Authentic Thaumaturgy*, and numerous articles, reviews and essays), a singer-songwriter (with three albums to his credit), and a "spellbinding" speaker, he has educated, enlightened and entertained two generations of modern Goddess worshippers, nature mystics, and followers of other minority belief systems, and has explained these movements to journalists, law enforcement officers, college students, and academic researchers.

He is the founder and Archdruid Emeritus of *Ár nDraíocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship*, (the best known Neo-Pagan Druid organization in North America), a 3° Druid within the United Ancient Order of Druids (the best known Mesopagan Druid order), a retired High Priest in both the Gardnerian ("British Orthodox") and the N.R.O.O.G.D. ("California Heterodox") traditions of Wicca (Neo-Pagan Witchcraft), an initiate of Santeria (Afro-Cuban Mesopaganism) and the "Caliphate Line" of the Ordo Templi Orientis (Aleister Crowley's Mesopagan magical tradition), as well as a member of other Neo-Pagan and Mesopagan Druid orders.

Articulate, witty, yet scholarly, he is currently writing books on Druidism, Witchcraft, liturgical design, and polytheology. Should your topic be outside his expertise, he can quickly refer you to colleagues, scholars and spokespersons for any legitimate Neo-Pagan movement.



## Isaac Bonewits (1949 - 2010) : A Tribute

[http://www.witchvox.com/va/dt\\_va.html?a=usny&c=passages&id=14112](http://www.witchvox.com/va/dt_va.html?a=usny&c=passages&id=14112)

Type of Passage: Death

Date of Passage: August 12th. 2010

Author: Peg Aloï

Posted: August 12th. 2010

Times Viewed: 4,181

The pagan community has lost one of its brightest lights this day, when Philip Emmons Isaac Bonewits passed over to the Summerlands. Isaac fought a brave battle against cancer for the last few months: so brave and optimistic that it's hard to believe he finally lost that battle.

Remember when you were just discovering that a pagan movement existed? When you first realized there were people out there who felt as you did, thought what you thought, shared your views on nature and the universe and history and religion and love and sex and music and poetry? You started reading *The Golden Bough* and *The White Goddess*, and bought your first athame, and performed your first prosperity spell. You went to an occult shop in Manhattan, hoping for a glimpse of Herman Slater or Leo Martello or Sybil Leek. Your apartment started to reek of frankincense, attar of roses and giddy curiosity. You went to your first pagan gathering and it felt like coming home. All those firsts, those feelings of belonging, those sensations borne of reaching back through aeons of human existence to touch the numinous, the exhilaration of new knowledge and experiences, all these things were made possible by people who lived in a very potent and turbulent time in our history. And Isaac Bonewits was there, and he set a social movement in motion.

Some folks have commented on how fitting it is that his death coincides with a particularly shining meteor shower (the Perseids, brighter than usual with a new moon just past) . But for me, Isaac is not



one I see shimmering among the stars: he was all earth to me. Oak, ash, thorn, silver, apple, oats and barley, iron and wood, cakes and ale. A true Pagan with a capital P: a formality he insisted we observe for our burgeoning spiritual tradition. I believe we will feel and see and hear him in the trees his Druid soul loved: in the dappled sunlight through green leaves, in the windsong and birds' carols, in the nourishing fruits and nuts that bless our harvests every autumn.

Isaac's life was so rich, his legacy so vast, that I will leave it to better journalists than I am to catalog and summarize his many achievements (both Margot Adler and Jason Pitzl-Waters have written wonderful obituaries to be found online) . This will be a tribute to a man I have known and admired for many years.

In my hands is a hardcover version of the book *Real Magic* (An Introductory Treatise on the Basic Principles of Yellow Magic) by P. E. I. Bonewits, published in 1971 by Coward, Mc Cann & Geoghegan, Inc. of New York (I believe this is a first edition, for those interested in such things) . On the back cover is a reproduction of Isaac's degree from the University of California, the first ever Bachelor of Arts in Magic ever awarded by an accredited university. It was the first of its kind because it was created by Isaac, who had the will and vision to approach his academic advisors and suggest a degree all his own. This daring act of originality, which, in 1970, had enormous implications for the growing Neo-Pagan movement, was followed by many others, including the founding of the first pagan religious rights organization (the Aquarian Anti-Defamation League) , and the Druid grove Ar nDraiocht Fein in 1983, which was incorporated as a non-profit organization. Isaac also had the forward vision to try and make his books available for online downloading, at a time when the rest of the pagan community was dragging its heels on this option. Isaac was a prolific writer (with several books and countless articles) , an engaging speaker, a respected leader, a well-loved teacher, a musician, an artist, a husband and father. Certainly his many accomplishments and the many lives he touched might tempt us to remember him as larger than life, almost god-like. But he was not a god, he was a man, and it's far more fitting to remember him with his flaws as well as his virtues.

For, like many movers and shakers, mavericks, rabble-rousers, visionaries, artists, prophets, and icons (yes, Isaac was all of these) , the man was also, for much of his life, an arrogant and headstrong jerk at times. No surprise there, and with so many accomplishments to show for his efforts, we tended to forgive him for it. However, unlike many other people with high-powered personalities, Isaac evolved enormously in his life. I noted a dramatic transformation in him not long after he became ill with Eosinophilia Myalgia Syndrome, after a bout of tryptophan poisoning in 1990. Tryptophan is a harmless food supplement, but a contaminated batch of it poisoned a number of people, including Isaac, resulting in a range of effects from muscle pain and nerve damage to partial paralysis and death. Isaac was lucky, and he knew it.

I recall seeing Isaac at an indoor pagan gathering of some sort (can't quite recall which one now) and thinking, gosh, what a pompous ass. But I had a grudging respect for him nevertheless, because, oh my gosh, he was ISAAC BONEWITS. We didn't really meet or interact much at the time. Several years later, I saw him at another event, this one outdoors, and he was changed. He could be seen riding on a golf cart, walking with a cane, his once-vigorous gait faltering, his once-booming voice fainter. I had heard about what had happened, and felt badly for him. But as that week progressed, and I saw Isaac here and there and heard him speak to others, I noticed something odd: he was NICE. He was being funny, not to draw attention to himself but to put others at ease. He was humble and self-deprecating. I was actually blown away. This man's misfortune and brush with death had not left him embittered or self-pitying: it had made him a better human being.

Over the years I got to socialize with Isaac at a number of gatherings. I recall the first time we actually made a connection wherein he learned my name. We were at a small festival in Florida (AutumnMeet, I believe) , and there was a small group of people sitting around a campfire sharing songs. I wandered by

and sat down, Isaac being the only person I recognized. It got to be my turn and I sang a song, something of Celtic origin, I don't recall what. After I finished Isaac leaned over in his chair, offered me a can of Guinness, and said "Would you like to run away with me to Albuquerque?" I laughed, I thought this was so goofy and charming. Music was a language Isaac understood only too well, and a sure way to form a bond with him.

Some years later at Starwood one year, Isaac and Oberon Zell were among another small group of people seated around yet another campfire, sharing songs. At one point Isaac and Oberon decided they would sing something together. After conversing for a moment on which version of the lyrics they would use, they both started to sing. Now, Oberon is a man of many gifts, but let's just say, on that occasion his musical gifts were not quite up to Isaac's standards. After a few moments, Isaac turned to him in mock exasperation and said "Pick a key...ANY KEY!" Everyone laughed, including Oberon.

A more recent musical memory I shared with Isaac was at Wellspring in 2009, just a few months before his cancer diagnosis. I was not really participating in the event, but I was at Brushwood that weekend anyway. When I ran into Isaac, I asked if they were doing another bardic competition, which I had enjoyed the year before. He said yes, they were and excitedly described the different categories. I expressed a wish that I was part of their organization so I could participate. Isaac did not even hesitate to ask if I wanted to sing during their break when they were judging the winners. He said he'd arrange it with the other organizers. I thought that was pretty classy. Later that same day, before the bardic event, I saw Isaac a number of yards away, walking down the road toward the bridge I was crossing. He was singing, as was I: turns out we were both practicing songs we thought we might sing later on. We were singing completely different kinds of songs: different keys, different melodies, different rhythms, different tempos, different moods. But as we walked towards one another, we both kept singing out loud. As we got closer to each other, and could hear each other more clearly, it became an amusing contest to see if we could both continue and not get thrown off or distracted by what the other person was singing. I don't know about Isaac but I found it very challenging! We were still singing when we had finally stopped at the edge of the bridge, and finished our songs at the exact same time. He asked what I was singing, and I asked what he was singing, and neither of us was familiar with the other person's song. We didn't comment on the fact that we had both silently agreed to keep singing until the other person had finished. It was a very exhilarating but funny moment.

I wish for more such memories of Isaac's warm humor, his boundless love of music, his clever wit and kind respect for his fellow artists. I am deeply saddened that such a brilliant man's life has been cut short by a cruel disease, and like many, I wonder what might have been accomplished with more time. But I am also grateful, not only to have known him, but to have received the benefits of his work for our movement. Perhaps no one person has done so much for the visibility and viability of Neo-Paganism, nor done so with such charm, grace and dogged individuality.

Isaac, you were one of a kind, and I thank you for your innumerable gifts, and I celebrate your life and legacy today and for many days to come. May all who read this raise a glass in your honor, and feel moved to works of daring and originality in their lifetimes.

Peg Aloï

August 12, 2010

# Isaac Bonewits Memorial by Ian Corrigan

<http://www.adf.org/about/leaders/isaac-bonewits/>

*Phillip Emmons Isaac Bonewits 10/1/1949 - 08/12/2010*

- [Isaac Bonewits Biography](#)
- [Memorial Service videos](#)
- [Leave your Condolences](#)
- [Help his loved ones](#)
- Born in Royal Oak Michigan
- 1966 – Isaac joins the Reformed Druids of North America (RDNA), UC Berkeley (For a fun footnote, see My Satanic Adventure, c.1970)
- 1970 BA in Magic & Thaumaturgy, UC Berkeley
- 1971 Real Magic
- 1973 – 75 – Isaac serves as editor of Llewellyn's Gnostica News, founds the Schismatic Druids of North America; Aquarian Anti-Defamation League.
- 1976 – founds the New Reformed Druids of North America (NRDNA), Berkeley
- 1983 – founds Ar nDraiocht Fein ("Our Own Druidry" in Irish) as a completely new Druid form. Manages the organization through its first elections and the development of successful Groves.
- 1996 – resigned as Archdruid (Later named as an Archdruid Emeritus)
- 2003 – 2007: Period of authorial creativity: Rites of Worship; Witchcraft, a Concise Guide; The Pagan Man; Bonewits Essential Guide to Druidry, Bonewits Essential Guide to Witchcraft; Real Energy; Neopagan Rites.



I write today to celebrate the life and mourn the death of Isaac Bonewits, 20th century occultist of note, Pagan and environmental activist, author, bard, humorist and family man. Isaac has gone too young, but will be remembered fondly and with honor by more people than he, himself, could know.

Personally, Isaac has been a part of my life in one way or another for most of it. I met Isaac's ideas as a 16-year-old occultist, when I purchased the first edition of Real Magic while on a hitchhiking jaunt. From a small city in Ohio, the first big-city 'occult shop' I ever saw was in Toronto, and there I held the first edition of Real Magic. The book was perfectly timed to speak to the gang of boomer occultists coming up right then, and has more influence than is often admitted.

I met Isaac in 1984, when he attended the first Winterstar Symposium in central Ohio. He had returned to the northeast, and had spent the early 80s working with a small study group in NY City, developing a new ritual order based loosely on his RDNA roots, but also based in direct research into ancient Pagan ways. When he attended Winterstar that year he made his first direct announcement of the formation of ADF. As organizers we (and surely I) have been

pleased to support Isaac's organizing efforts. During a phase when Isaac's writing was stalled, he continued to produce audio lectures and, of course, music through the Starwood organization (ACE).

Over the years Isaac and I became friends and, I might hope, even colleagues. In the small-things-that-make-life-cool dept I consider this one of the honors of my life. As a chum, Isaac was clever, generous, a fine raconteur, a supporter of home-made music, and an open-hearted guy, interested in new people. He was flexible and adaptive with his ideas, and our many chats and debates about mythography and ritual, magical theory and Pagan culture, changed and shaped both of our ideas.

Let me tell you more about my friend.

### ***Isaac & Paganism***



Isaac was a man of ideas, especially as concerned practical spiritual and magical art and religion. At heart Isaac was a Pagan – a lover of nature in all its forms, including human nature, he loved the Old Gods and the Old Ways. He was not only a freethinker and an experimental occultist, but was always concerned to bring back the worship of the Gods in modern times. This troubled him through his interaction with the various RDNAs, which included many secularists and universalists. Isaac's determination led him to produce several variations on his idea of Neopagan Druidism, and when his ideas finally met the emergent Pagan festival culture they found fertile ground at last in Ar nDraiocht Fein.

Public Pagan organizing was always Isaac's goal. Beginning with his mildly famous degree in Magic and Thaumaturgy, he strove to be a public face of the growing Pagan and magical movement. In this he largely succeeded, becoming a well-known speaker at events and gatherings as well as the author of several more valuable works on the state of Neopaganism in the early 21st century. ADF continues Isaac's vision of providing reliable, inspiring public Pagan worship in cities all over North America.

Isaac was a part of Llewellyn publication's turn to total support of and participation in the Pagan scene. During the early 70s Llewellyn's Gnostica News was providing the best occult, witchcraft and Paganism periodical content available. Isaac's years as editor of Gnostica made it relevant to the growing Earth Religions movement.

Isaac considered himself a Druid, but that didn't prevent him from writing, teaching and practicing a variety of other Pagan ways. Real Magic is broadly theoretical and relevant to everything from Wicca to heathenry, in many ways it is Chaos magic ahead of its time. Isaac's personal spiritual adventure included Druidry, neopagan Witchcraft and a variety of other cultural experiments. Isaac's later writing ranged from energy work to Pagan anthropology to historical and descriptive surveys of modern Pagan traditions.

## ***Isaac & Druidism***

While Isaac always valued his roots in the Reformed Druids of North America, it was by



creating his own system and organization that he was able to have his greatest influence on Druidic Paganism. In the nearly three decades since Isaac founded Ar nDraiocht Fein we have steadily pursued his central goals for a modern Paganism.

Isaac valued real scholarship and intellectual honesty. He helped build a Paganism that tries to keep track of what is really known about the Old Ways, and adapts to new knowledge. He chose to set aside discredited scholarship from the early 20th century and work from the best modern sources. Isaac had an optimistic view of human nature, and felt that formal and professional organizing and institutional growth could only benefit Paganism in the modern world. He developed a church model that has helped ADF

grow in a careful but steady way into one of the largest Pagan religious organizations in the world. Isaac hoped to build Pagan organization and spirituality that could transcend its founders, surviving into the future. That he has surely done.

It was typical for Isaac to focus on work and results, on thaumaturgy rather than mysticism and theology. He invented his liturgical outline and gave it to Druidry, with a bare minimum of theological constructs. From the basic symbols and ritual tropes of that outline we have built a working system of Pagan worship. Isaac's patience, and his wise choice to refrain from 'writing a religion' have helped his system to grow organically and produce good spiritual fruit.

Isaac was always collegial and open-minded, valuing different viewpoints and interested in new inputs. Over the years he worked with many colleagues to refine and rework his outline based on experiment and result. Isaac never resorted to a fixed dogmatism, but remained interested in real effects in the real world.

Under Isaac's direct leadership ADF survived its first decade in a pattern of modest growth, building organization and spiritual depth. When the time came Isaac stepped aside, and allowed the organization to find its feet without him, until returning as an honored emeritus member of ADF's clergy and spiritual work. Since his departure as our formal first officer his vision, plans and specific teachings have remained a central guide of ADF's growth.

Isaac's name and ideas will be remembered in ADF. We'll remember with affection his humor and wisdom, his compassion and his effort. We'll remember with honor his work to establish our ways, his strength in the face of criticism and the wisdom of his initial designs. We'll remember with reverence the core spiritual and Pagan ideas that still light the heart of Our Druidry.

Isaac's divine patrons were the God Dagda Mor and the Goddess Brigid. May they receive him into a fate fit for a hero of the Old Ways.

*Ian Corrigan*

# Isaac Bonewits Biography

## *Isaac Bonewits Biography*

**1949-2010**

*(taken from the ADF website)*

- [Isaac Bonewits Memorial](#)
- [Memorial Service videos](#)
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- [Help his loved ones](#)



Isaac Bonewits was one of North America's leading experts on ancient and modern Druidism, Witchcraft and the rapidly growing Earth Religions movement.

A practicing Neopagan priest, scholar, teacher, bard, and polytheologist for over 35 years, he had coined much of the vocabulary and articulated many of the issues that have shaped the rapidly growing Neopagan community in the United States and Canada, with opinions both playful and controversial.

As the author of several books including [Real Magic](#), [Authentic Thaumaturgy](#), [Witchcraft](#), [Neopagan Rites](#), and [The Pagan Man](#), numerous articles, reviews and essays, many [songs](#) and [albums](#), and "spellbinding" [lectures](#), he had educated, enlightened and entertained two generations of modern Goddess worshippers, nature mystics, and followers of other minority belief systems, and

had explained these movements to journalists, law enforcement officers, college students, and academic researchers.

Isaac was the Founder and Archdruid Emeritus of Ár nDraíocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship (the best known Neopagan Druid organization based in North America), a 3<sup>o</sup> Druid within the United Ancient Order of Druids (the best known Mesopagan Druid order), a retired High Priest in both the Gardnerian ("British Orthodox") and the N.R.O.O.G.D. ("California Heterodox") traditions of Wicca (Neopagan Witchcraft), an initiate of Santeria (Afro-Cuban Mesopaganism) and the "Caliphate Line" of the Ordo Templi Orientis (Aleister Crowley's Mesopagan magical tradition), as well as a member of other Neopagan and Mesopagan Druid orders. He had been a member of the Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans (CUUPS) for three years. Having survived four previous spouses (and vice versa), on July 23, 2004 he was handfasted to CUUPS co-founder, tarot expert, writer, and Wiccan Priestess, Phaedra Heyman Bonewits (hope springs eternal).

Articulate, witty, yet scholarly, Isaac spent his last remaining years writing books on Druidism, Witchcraft, Neopaganism, dualism, and polytheology.

Isaac wished it officially known that he was not "A Pagan Spiritual Leader," but merely one of the Neopagan movement's better-known Unindicted Co-conspirators...

# Excerpted Passages of Two Interviews with Isaac in ARDA2

*Apology for RDNA minutiae between parts about Isaac.*

Second Interview with  
Isaac Bonewits

by Michael Sharding  
on February 23, 1994  
Carleton College Archives  
Oral History Project  
Transcription by Sancho Cochran-Bond  
Lightly edited for clarity

IB= Isaac Bonewits  
MS= Michael Scharding



**Figure 1 Isaac & Sam Adams at Hill 3 Oaks, 1994.**

NOTE: See Green Book 10 from Part 6 of ARDA 2 for more interviews with Isaac Bonewits.

MS: Ok, it's February 23rd, 1994, and this is Michael Scharding interviewing Isaac Bonewits, a prominent Druid member and best RDNA mover. Hello.

IB: < laughs >

MS: Ok, the goal of my paper is to try to... well it's going to be pretty big... essentially, fill a gap in the present academic study of Druidism, as a part of Neo-Paganism.

IB: I didn't know that there was any academic study of Druidism.

MS: That's what I figured. I mean, outside of your Druid Chronicles (Evolved), I do not believe there has ever been a really good synopsis of American Druidism. And you had to look, really hunt through encyclopedias to get anything more out of ... than that. In the major, you know, non-Druid publications. As far as I could tell...

IB: Well, it's, you know, it's a very tiny movement. I mean

MS: Dear to my heart.

IB: Maybe, dear to our hearts, but if you include all the people who have ever considered themselves members of an RDNA Group or offshoot thereof, maybe, if you're being real generous, you'd have a couple thousand people.

MS: Yeah, So I guessed.

IB: Now that's not much in a nation of two hundred and fifty million.

MS: No it isn't... But yes, that is true. It's really tiny. And some of them...

IB: But special

MS: Yes. Ok, I have read a few little biographies about you, but for the benefit of the listeners, could you like, maybe briefly, go over your life in four minutes? <laughs>

IB: Ooooo. That's extremely difficult to do, actually.

MS: Oh, I'm sorry, Ok.

IB: Let's see, I was born in Royal Oaks, Michigan. An appropriate birth place for a future Arch-Druid I suppose. When I was eleven, my family moved to southern California, and I went with them, not having anything better to do at the time. At sixteen, I went to the University of California in Berkley as a sophomore, I graduated in spring of nineteen seventy, with a bachelor of arts degree in "Magic and Thaumaturgy." And then I wrote my first book, Real Magic, which was published in 1971, and it has been in and out of print ever since.

MS: Which I would like a copy of. I've read it, but I don't have a copy.

IB: Go to your nearest B.Daltons, or Waldenbooks, it's in all the big chain stores.

MS: Oh, it is being re-published again?

IB: Oh yeah, it's been in print for several years now. Weiser Publications has it out.

MS: Is that your actual Bachelor's Thesis?

IB: No, at that point they didn't have a requirement for a senior thesis, although in point of fact I did turn a couple of term papers, that I had written for different classes in my program, into the skeleton that I grew a couple of chapters around. Which you can sort of tell, if you read looking for that. Let's see, in 1973, I went to Minneapolis for the first of what was to become the Pagan festival movement. The first Pagan festival that I am aware of, anyway. Which was the Gnosticon Festival, that Carl Wesky of Lewellyn Publications started. This was like an indoor convention. It was not an outdoor camping festival, like we're used to know. But, at that time, he had invited me to move to

Minneapolis, and take over editing his in-house magazine

MS: Gnostica

IB: Gnostica. Well it was then called Gnostica News, I turned it into Gnostica, edited it for about a year and a half, and then quit over various issues involving... different visions of what the magazine was supposed to be, let's just put it that way. He brought me in to raise the quality of the magazine. I did, and he started losing readers, He should not have been surprised. In any event... Let's jump back just a little bit, it was in the late sixties that I met Robert Larson, who was a Graduate of Carleton, and who had been an early, but not a founding member of the grove there. He initiated me into the RDNA in, I think, 1968. I made third order, around the full moon of October of '69. So, let's see, I just celebrated my 25th anniversary as an RDNA priest, I think.

MS: Congratulations!

IB: I survived to tell the tale. In any event, at that time, I felt pretty much that RDNA was Pagan, whether it was that obvious to the members then or not. I moved to Minneapolis, I lived in Minneapolis for two years, I started up a grove there, and then, helped a couple of other people start other groves in other places.

MS: That would be...

IB: Traveled around, initiated a whole bunch of people.

MS: And we're still trying to piece together it.

IB: I know, I'm going to try to go through my... I actually have pretty good records... they just are all buried in files that I can't reach because of the other piles of paper in front of them. I will try to get them to you in time to be of some value for your thesis. In any event, let's see, I think I started out with something called the Schismatic Druids of North America, the SDNA,

MS: Which was the group underneath the Provisional Council of Arch-Druids.

IB: Right. I discovered this since, the Council of Dalon Ap Landu, wrote it's by law so that changes could only be made by a quorum of the entire Council, not a quorum of those that could be found. That it had essentially paralyzed itself, and made it impossible to accomplish anything. So that was when I then attempted to start up a Provisional Council.

MS: Yes, did that ever accomplish anything?

IB: I'm not sure it did actually. Other than, a bunch of us exchanging letters back and forth.

MS: Well, that's what normally ends up happening.

IB: In any event, I cannot recall the precise sequence between starting up the SDNA, and the HDNA, the Hasidic Druids of North America in St. Louis. That was roughly the same time, in '74,'75, and early '76. Then, when I went back to California, I believe I started referring to, I was reelected the Arch-Druid of the Berkeley grove there, around 1976. I'm not really certain on a lot of these dates, I'm afraid. In any event, I went back to California... I know I went back to

California in '76... Cause, I was there in time for the bicentennial fireworks. I became Arch-Druid of the Berkeley group, we started referring to it as the NRDNA, since people found that a little less silly sounding than, SDNA or HDNA. And then some of the other people who I had ordained started up groups, and they were referring to these groups as NRDNA, too. Although it was never really... None of these groups was ever particularly structured. Obviously it was in 1976 that I produced the "Druid Chronicles (Evolved)." At least I believe that's the date it has on the front cover. Now, what I'm confused about, is exactly how the printing got done. I can't remember whether I did the typesetting in Minneapolis, or in Berkeley. But Bob Larson and I printed the one and only printing of it that was ever done. And we did that at his print shop, that he was working in, in Berkeley, in Lughnasadh of 1976. So, I can't really, at this point remember the sequence, I'll have to go back through files and see if I can find some letters that talk about more precise dating for that. In any event, in the middle 1970s I was back in Berkeley. We had a grove there for a while. As I recall, there was.. I was trying to make the group disciplined, and there wasn't a whole lot of interest in that. And, I was trying to get people to start taking it as a serious religion, and there wasn't a whole lot of enthusiasm for that either.

MS: Did they consider themselves a religion at that point?

IB: Most of them did, yes. The things that specifically characterized all the offshoots I was responsible for was that we said in our own definition that we were a religion. That it wasn't just a philosophy, that it was in fact a religion. Probably, the thing that specifically characterized them was that they were Pagan religions, identifying themselves as part of the Neo-Pagan community. Whereas the old RDNA never did that. <pause> Now, somewhere along in here, I think in the early seventies, Bob Larson got involved with a group of celtophiles, who ran something called Clan na Brocheta, which was primarily a Renaissance Fair group, who performed music and theater at the Renn. Faires. And, he became their resident Arch-Druid, and he started referring to it as the Orthodox Druids of North America, because they were doing things in Irish. There was only the one group of them, as far as I know, that ever existed, but.. and it was only a tongue and cheek reference, I don't think he ever filed any papers with..., but I think they did occasionally refer to themselves in print as the Clan Na Brocheta Grove of the ODNA. <pause> So, let's see, I suffered burn out, spun out and crashed at some point in the late seventies, I believe. There was a major explosion in the Druid group in Berkeley, and I just got sick of the politics, and quit. Now, I believe, off and during these times, I was publishing various things called the Druid Chronicle, and the Pentalpha Journal and Druid Chronicle. We can get some more dates out of those. So it must have been 1980 or '81 that I burned out on Druidism for a while. In fact I burned out on the whole Magical community for a while. I sold a large part of



my occult library, and invested the money in computer books.

MS: Your, excuse me, your what? Your what all?

IB: Occult Library, the books I had on Magic and Religion.

MS: Oh, OK.

IB: I got rid of quite a few of them at that point, and used the money to buy books on computers. And taught myself some marketable job skills, and started earning a living for the first time in my life. Or at least for the first time in several years. Then I moved back and forth across the country a few times. Doing computerized typesetting and layout work, small business consulting, technical writing, a little of this, a little of that. And eventually, in 1984, I mentioned to Shenain Bell, who I had met in an Irish class in New York City, some of the things that Jim Duran had told me about Druid survivals in the Baltic Territories. Druid in the loose generic sense of Indo-European Clergy. And Jim had said that, if you took the material that was available in the Soviet archives on Pagan survivals in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, and combined it with the [Carmina Gadelica], dating materials, and the surviving Celtic sagas, you could pretty much reconstruct eighty or ninety percent of what old time Druidism had really been about. And, I mentioned that to Shenain, and he got very excited and he started discussing it with other friends, and the next thing I know, people were saying, lets start up another Druid group, and I said, oh no, not again. It's very hard to explain this rationally, but over and over again in my life, I've felt someone picking me up by the scruff of my neck and dragging me back into Druidism. So, whether it was the Earth Mother, or Be'al, or someone else, with a capital "S." I was given to know that this was something that had to be done. So that's when I started up ADF, and I deliberately choose the name of Ar nDraiocht Fein to make it very clear that no, I was not hijacking Reform Druidism as I had been accused of in the past, that we were starting something brand new, that we would proudly date ourselves to that year.

MS: That was 1984?

IB: I believe that was 1984. Might have been '83, but I think it was '84.

<to someone else> Yeah when where we meeting?

<someone else>: our meeting in the village was '83 so the ... no it was '82. Shenain says founded in '83, but I think it '84. you dated wrong I think it was earlier than that.

IB: I dated from Samhain of '84.

<Someone else>: ...Association in April of '86

IB: Ok, April of '86, my wife says, is when we.. '87.. was when we signed the articles of association, and made ADF a legal entity, on a water bed yes. The first board of trustees meeting was held on a water bed, we thought that suitably Pagan. It was also the only quite room in the house. We were at a party with some friends. And then in <off> 1989 we incorporated?

<Someone else>: Here, in this house.

IB: I'm consulting my off-line memory here.

<Someone else>: No, I was already off the board, and I didn't leave the board until...

IB: So it was '91. I'll have to look it up for you. It was '90 or '91 that we incorporated,

<Someone else>: I think it was '91

IB: and we got tax status last year, I believe, so we're now a 501c3. OK, That's a very brief and disjointed look at my history with Reform Druidism in terms of organizational, such as it is, structure.

MS: Ok, one of the things I have to do in my paper is... First of all, I have to prove that, I call it American Druidism, which is not the best term I could use, but it's the one I used, as including the RDNA, NRDNA, and everything else there, ADF and Keltria. Now, you just mentioned that you chose the name Ar nDraiocht Fein, as being, to avoid seeming that you were hijacking Reform Druidism, now does that mean that there was no connection with Reform Druidism?

IB: No, it means that, I really got worn down, with year after year after year after year of the older members of the RDNA feeling that I had done something terrible to their creation. And so, I decided that if we called it something else, it would not be something that people would automatically associate with all the other Reform Druids. Now, I borrowed some bits and pieces of the RDNA liturgy, because I'd been using it for twenty years.

MS: I believe mostly the blessing of the waters,

IB: The blessing of the waters, we used the catechism of the waters, and we used the consecration, we used the sacrifice prayer, but, the thing that's interesting is, it's been a matter of evolution that we started out with that material, and as I did more research into Celtic studies and Indo-European studies, we started modifying it. So, although the standard liturgical design is recognizable, that's mostly because the standard liturgical design in Indo-European cultures is pretty much the same, whether you're talking Pagan or Christian.

MS: And what is that basic structure?

IB: Ooooo.

MS: Without getting too complicated.

IB: That's a whole long lecture. Five basic phases, two liturgies. Now I might want to go so far as to say it's a global, but I'm not going to stick my neck out on that. I will say that I'm very familiar with it in terms of Indo-European religious ceremony.

MS: I think I've read these somewhere before, but could you...

IB: You probably have. There in one of... There's a whole long discussion of it in DP 2 I believe, or 4. The five basic phases to liturgy, that is to say worship ritual, the first phase is establishing sacred space and time. The second phase is reconstructing the cosmos and opening the gates between the worlds. The third main phase is generating energy, offering praise to that which is

worshipped. The fourth main phase is a return flow of energy from the entity, or entities worshipped. And, the fifth main phase is unwinding the energy patterns that were created prior to that. Now that's very loose.

MS: That's very loose.

IB: And if you're going to quote me, I'd rather you quoted from the written material. <laughs>

MS: Yes, I understand. All right, and you say this is more the reason why the liturgies are similar between ADF and NRDNA?

IB: Well, the RDNA liturgy is in many ways, is clearly based on a Christian pattern. And the liturgy as ADF does it is based in part on that, but more in part of what I could reconstruct from dating ritual. And the few references that we have to Druidic ceremony. The ones that appear authentic. <Pause> Now in terms of the terminology that I use today, I consider the RDNA to have been a Meso-Pagan Organization. Now, Paleo-Pagan, and Meso-Pagan, and Neo-Pagan, are not clear-cut divisions. There's no sharp dividing line between those categories. They're points on a spectrum that blends imperceptibly. I believe, and this is what I want to find out from you, if you've managed to discover it: I believe that David Fisher came from a family of people involved in the United Ancient Order of Druids, or one of the other related fraternal offshoots.

MS: David Fisher, as far as I know, refuses to answer anything. So I can't... or maybe it's just bad addresses, but it just doesn't seem to work. I've talked with Norman Nelson who was a Mason, and he says there ain't nothing that looks Masonic, but as I am not a Mason I cannot possibly figure it out.

IB: Ah, OK.

MS: And Gordon Melton has not replied.

IB: In the past, I was in the habit of referring to the various Meso-Pagan Druid groups in England as being Masonic/Fraternal Druids. That was probably much too loose of language on my part. The cross over is easy to make in England, where for centuries it's been common for somebody whose interested in metaphysics and the occult to belong to more than one group simultaneously. There are obvious similarities to Masonic ritual in the surviving United Ancient Order of Druids ceremonies that I have seen scripts of. That is to say, the style of language is very similar, the style of ceremony is very similar, the images are different. So a modern day Mason, looking at those would not see the similarities. But, certainly I don't think the United Ancient Order of Druids has considered itself a Masonic organization in 200 years.

MS: Yes, mostly charitable, I think.

IB: What?

MS: Charitable organization.

IB: yeah, well a charitable, a fraternal organization. So, I believe that I can see from the earliest Ur text rituals, that David Fisher was probably working from one of the liturgy books of the AOD. And, that combined with his insistence that Druidism was a philosophy

applicable to any religion, which is almost a direct quote from the AOD, makes it fairly clear that he was starting out with that, what I call Meso-Pagan approach. The mixing of Celtic Paganism with extremely liberal Christianity. Actually Unitarianism, it turns out.

MS; I always thought of it as Deism.

IB: A lot of Deism, too. I don't know, did you get the magazine that the British Council of Druid Orders put out?

MS: Druid's Voice.

IB: They published an article, in one of the issues that they sent me, on the Iolo Morganwg activity with the Unitarians. It turns out that he was one of the early Unitarian agitators.

MS: Ok, that makes sense.

IB: And he thought of Unitarianism, and Druidism as being essentially the same thing. So, that kind of an approach of mixing whatever they might have had, or fantasized they had that was Pagan, with liberal Christianity, is really characteristic of what I call a Meso-Pagan approach.

MS: Yeah, I agree with you.

IB: It's roughly the equivalent to what was done with Voudoun, and Macumba and Santeria where you mixed Paganism and Christianity, in their case for survival. I think it was partly done for survival, in terms of public relations, in England, but it was also done because the guy who invented most of it was an agitator in the ultra-liberal wing of Christianity. And he saw the Druids as being exemplars he could point to, that English men would be... now this is sexist, of course... that English men would be proud of, and willing to follow the example of. So, in any event, RDNA started out Meso-Pagan. And it was, I will have to admit, it was probably due to my agitating, that it began to move in the direction of being Neo-Pagan. Because I was the one who first, to my knowledge anyway, wrote to any of the older members and said, hey this looks like a Pagan religion here, why don't we admit that it's a religion, and learn what we can learn from the other people in the Neo-Pagan community.

MS: Well, the Neo-Pagan community was not extremely well known at that time, or was it?

IB: Well, that's true. No, it was not particularly well known at that time, and I did not understand, as most people don't when they're young and involved in some kind of a cultural movement, just how tiny the pond was that I was swimming around in.

MS: Well, most of them seem to have pretty much grown out of this thing, I still remember being warned in 1989, stay away from Isaac. But, I think most of the people have pretty much forgotten the incident by this point.

IB: Wait a minute? What incident?

MS: Oh, the letter incident. The 1974 letter. There are just like dozens of letters in the Archives here about that. The initial reactions were pretty strong.

IB: Oh, when I published my letters and Reform Druidism was a Pagan religion and should admit it.

MS: Yeah.

IB: Yeah. I had no idea that that was going to provoke that kind of a reaction. I didn't even get most of the reaction, most of it seems to have gone completely past me, people talking to each other, and not bothering to send me a copy.

MS: I wasn't sure about that.

IB: I saw, maybe a dozen letters, all told, during that whole controversy. You probably have a much better picture of it than I did at the time.

MS: What is your impression of what happened to the NRDNA during the beginning of the eighties? It seems to have disappeared, or gone into what they call the boring years.

IB: The Boring Years, yeah. The San Francisco Bay regions in many ways is similar to England, a terrible thing for a Celtophile to say, but true, in that there were a certain number of people who were interested in the occult and unusual religions, and many of them belonged to each other's groups, and a lot of the activity that took place, took place at the instigation of actually a rather small circle of people. I think, what basically happened was: after the Berkeley grove blew up, that the Orinda Grove continued to survive off and on, but that was like five or six people, I think. Larry Press is the one to ask questions about the Orinda Grove. And, I believe they existed, off and on, to this day. Stephan always had a grove operating out of his back yard. Where ever Stephan Abbot was, he would say there was a grove. But, in point of fact, the grove actually existed only on those occasions when Stephan was in the mood to throw a ritual. And, it was essentially, you know, a charismatic following of whoever was hanging out with Stephan at the time.

MS: When was this starting? When did this Steven come in?

IB: Stephan Abbot? Oh god, he goes way, way, way, way, way back. Way back. He may go back to the very beginnings of the Berkeley Grove, I mean late sixties/early seventies at least. I lived next door to him for a while. We were roommates in a house for a while. We had a lot of interaction together. There was a time period when the Hazelnut Grove, and the Berkeley Grove were functioning simultaneously. And then, when the Berkeley Grove blew up, Stephan insisted that he would keep ceremonies going, and I think he did for a while. Then, Stephan, who has never had a very good grasp of real world economics, and therefore has been homeless on many occasions, or has had to move rapidly from one home to another home, as he moved around, his supposed grove moved with him. But, I was shocked to discover that he actually got around to buying a post office box in San Jose for his current grove, but his phone was recently

disconnected, so I have no idea where he is. This is something that happens fairly commonly.

<break>

MS; We're back again.

IB: Stephan and Tezra, both know my feelings about them, but I don't necessarily want that shared with whoever might happen to hear the tape.

MS: So, I hate to bring this up, but what is the explosion of the Berkeley Grove?

IB: I can't remember.

MS: I think it has something to do with two people wanting to be Arch-Druid, or something, at the same time? But that's the only [person] I had.

IB: It was a... I'm going to have to look it up for you, there was a bitterly contested election for Arch-Druid, I had been out of town for a long time, I came back, a lot of the people in the grove wanted me to take over as Arch-Druid again, others wanted the person who had been Arch-Druid for the preceding couple of years to be reelected [Joan]. They held an election, and I think I won by one vote. That's the sort of thing that blows up small groups. And there were also some major personality conflicts going on between some of the organizers, I was trying to accomplish, on a smaller scale, many of the things that I have since done with ADF, and although there were three or four people folks in the group who were enthusiastic about that, the rest of them just didn't see it as being what they wanted to do with Druidism. So, all that got tied into the elections. Then there was a ritual that was going to be done on the beach, that wound up evolving a very long walk, and I think it's now called the Death March. That was Stephan's usual poetic exaggeration. To get to the spot where... I think it was Joan, I don't think it was Nina... It was Joan's decision that there was a specific spot on the beach that was absolutely perfect, and we saw no reason why a bunch of healthy people couldn't walk a mile. Well, one of them wasn't so healthy, but she wasn't the one who complained. That was a young lady who had Polio, and was used to walking along after other people and keeping up. In any event, that was just one more excuse for people who thought I was turning into a rigid religious fanatic, and they wanted nothing to do with it. <pause> What? Make a sacrifice for your religion? How un-American?

MS: Let me just get Henge of the Keltria out of the way here. I heard something about the twelve messages tacked onto your van or something, at PSG. What was your reaction to the Keltria? It was not quite a defection, but...

IB: It was a schism. Actually, though I was slightly annoyed at the time, I fairly rapidly came to see it as a very healthy thing. I figure any religion that has new religions spinning off from it is obviously doing something right. I mean that's a healthy sign for any organization, that it produces offspring. You know, mutations. The people who started Keltria seemed to be more interested in focusing on Celtic rather than

Pan-Indo-European approaches to the material. At the time, I think they were quite a bit looser in their attitudes about what kinds of scholarship to accept. And they wanted to do rituals that were more reminiscent of Wicca than what I thought reconstructed Druidism should be. They also had some major disagreements with us over the organizational function and structure of ADF. Now, in the years since they split off, they have come to be more and more similar to ADF, in that... they discovered that some of the organizational rules that I had instituted, I had instituted for very good reasons. That it's the nature of social organizations, whether religious or non-religious to behave in certain ways, and if you plan for it ahead of time you can prevent quite a few headaches. And, I believe, possibly stung by one or two rude comments of mine on the topic, they've taken more and more of the Wiccan/Cabbalistic, non-ancient stuff out of their ceremonies, and tried to put more authentic material into their ritual. I can't say that for sure because I haven't been to a Keltrian ritual, but from the discussions I've had on the phone with Tony, I've gathered that Keltrian ritual, now, does not resemble Wiccan ceremony near as much as it used to.

MS: It doesn't, no. It doesn't seem to be very closely related at all.

<break>

IB: No, the first schism from ADF was Shadow Path Grove in Connecticut, which spun off independently because they didn't really want to run an open grove, which is how ADF Groves are structured. They wanted a closed coven style group, and they didn't want to go public and invite total strangers to show up and participate.

<break>

IB: Schisms from ADF. So the first schism was Shadow Path Grove, that was, I can't remember the year. Then was Keltria. Then the next one was Druidactios.

MS: That's a split off?

IB: Yes.

MS: Oooh! Interesting.

IB: Much to the... It's difficult to get the guy who started it, Tom Cross to admit it, but he was in point of fact a member of ADF [and the NRDNA.]

MS: Oh, does that mean I have to include him in the Definition of American Druidism?

IB: Yes and No. His group doesn't exist anymore.

MS: I heard actually that it does.

IB: Oh yeah? Well, the last I had heard from him, he had announced that he was converting back to Catholicism, and that all real Celts would be Irish Catholics, if they were real Celts. And his second in command, whom he had begged to take over the group had left it in disgust, and started his own Roman Paganism group. That's Ernie Didwell, who now lives in Arizona. An old time Neo-Pagan founding father of the community, in fact. In any event, Tom Cross... You should have the copy

of DP that had, what did I call it, a forest full of groves, a discussion of other Druid organizations.

MS: I don't actually have all the issues, I don't believe.

IB: Oh, well tell me which ones you don't have and I'll try to get them to you. I though I sent you a full set.

MS: I'll have to get back to you on that one.

IB: In any event, Tom Cross, like many another person, has erroneously assumed that I am Jewish. Because he's anti-Semitic, he thought it was horrifying that somebody who was Jewish could be running a Druid organization. In point of fact, I'm not Jewish, but it has stirred up that same controversy on many occasions in my life.

MS: How is Druidactios a split off? Besides the fact that he was an ADF member?

IB: He was an ADF member. He started out using a lot of our materials, and then gradually replaced it with his own materials. He decided he wanted to do Gaulish Druidism. And since there's almost nothing known about it, it gives him plenty of room for him to improvise. What he essentially did was, he started up a Celtic version of the Norse Meso-Pagan groups.

MS: That's what I figured.

IB: It was the same, the racism and the emphasis on blood and family and the sexism. You've read his book? The Sacred Cauldron?

MS: I have read The Truth About Druids, and I have glanced through The Sacred Cauldron at a friend's house.

IB: One of the things that's really funny is that one of his major objections to ADF was that we used comparative Indo-European Studies as one of our sources of inspiration, and he thinks that that's a terrible thing to do, that we should only use Celtic materials, and then proceeds to put rituals in his book that are essentially thinly Celticized versions of Nordic fire rituals. In any event, I committed a major crime with him in that I was not... a) he thought I was Jewish, b) I wasn't anywhere as impressed by him as he thought I should be. In any event, so he started up Druidactios. I saw their mailing list at one point, they never had more than about forty people on the mailing list, and two dozen of those where exchange subscriptions with other Pagan publications. He only put out like two or three issues of his journal.

MS: Do you have copies of those?

IB: I believe I might.

MS: Because I would like copies of those.

IB: I have at least a copy of one. He seemed to spend an enormous amount of time writing poison pen letters, about me and other people in the Pagan community, who didn't immediately acknowledge his superiority.

MS: That's what I kind of picked up.

IB: I mean, it was just thoroughly unprecedented, unpleasant yerker. I think is the technical, scientific, theological term. In any event,

MS: Are there any other schisms?

IB: I think that's it. Currently. For all I know there may soon be others. I mean, certainly we get, I get letters from people who say that, you know, they're starting a new group and they're borrowing stuff from us. And that's perfectly fine with me, that was one of the things that I expected to have happen with ADF.

<break>

IB: ...out as having been a member of ADF, I had no indication that he had any background in Druidism prior to the membership in ADF, I could be wrong. I would have to go look up his membership records.

MS: It's a bit too late for me to stick him in my paper, except in the end notes.

IB: But he was upset that we had a non-racist, non-sexist policy, he thought our politics were too liberal. His politics were slightly to the right of Attila the Hun. And I'm liberal.

MS: OK, let's get some statistics on the ADF.

IB: OK.

MS: What are the number of paid members in the ADF, roughly?

IB: That has vacillated wildly. At the moment, I believe the current number of paid members is around 250. With a roughly equal number of paid subscribers to the Druids Progress, and about a seventy to eighty percent overlap. Not all the members subscribe to DP, and not all subscribers of DP are members. What I have discovered however is that this is not actually, necessarily, the most important statistic. I found this out by discussing the topic with Unitarians, and a few other people in other groups at the World Parliament of Religions, in terms of the impact that ADF has, it's sometimes more interesting to look, not at the total number of people who have purchased memberships in the organization, but the people who consider themselves part of the tradition. That is to say, we have about a dozen chartered groves right now, that is to say February of '94. Eight of those groves, at least, are having regular meetings at which anywhere from twenty to sixty or seventy people show up. And those people consider themselves members of the local grove, even though there might be only five or six of them in a given grove, who officially join ADF. So, in terms of the people who have been in ADF and consider themselves ADF Druids, they just haven't gotten around to renewing, and/or the ones that are too cheapskate to buy memberships, but they still want to have the access to the traditions, written and other material. We're probably closer to around a thousand to twelve hundred. Normally, in most religions you would say followers, but we don't have much in the way of followers in the Pagan community. Most Pagan's don't approve of following.

MS: Don't want to go into other Druid groups right now, but... Might as well get them out of the way. OK, what other Druid groups are there presently in the United

States, and do you consider them to be in the same category as the RDNA, ADF, and Keltria?

IB: It all depends on how we define our terms. The largest by far is the United Ancient Order of Druids, which still has several thousand members in the US, clustered mainly in Ohio and California. They're a fraternal organization like the Koanas Club, or the Lions, or the Elks. They don't have anything to do with us, even though I've written to them occasionally and exchanged nice letters, they're not connected to the Pagan community at all, to the best of my knowledge. The Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids, which was very definitely Meso-Pagan when it started out is becoming increasingly Neo-Pagan, under the influence of it's current chosen chief, Philip Carr-Gomm, who is a heck of a nice guy. I'm currently reading his book, that he just published, his new one, called The Druid Way.

MS: Very good book.

IB: Excellent, I'm really enjoying it. Even though I get annoyed when he occasionally throws these things in: "Ancient Druids believed..." and it's one of these things that was invented in the 1700s. But, other than that I'm really enjoying the book a lot. I'd say the OBOD is well on the way from the transition from Meso-Pagan to Neo-Pagan. They have several hundred members, I think.

MS: In the United States, or in Britain?

IB: Mostly in England, but they seem to have at least a few dozen in the United States, they have several local groves in the area, that we're going to be starting to list in DP and News from the Mother Grove. We just voted a policy, that I invented, called "a Forest Full of Groves" policy, whereby we will start publishing the central addresses, and local group addresses of the various and sundry other Druid groups that we get along with, which is most of them, by and large. Oh, that's right, I forgot yet another Druid group that was a schism from ADF, because I repressed the memory. Well, it wasn't a schism so much as it was a rip-off, something called the Divine Circle of Sacred Grove: A Druid Fellowship.

MS: They're an offshoot of Barney, aren't they?

IB: Originally they're from Barney. Their leader joined ADF, claiming to have absolutely no background in Druidism what-so-ever, and then preceded to plagiarize our materials, to mix it in with the stuff she had plagiarized from several other people. We were responsible for exposing them as being fraudulent, and essentially drove them out of town, in the Seattle area, and they've now moved to the Arizona area, and we're keeping in touch with law enforcement people there. They are not nice. In any event, other Druid groups around. Well, there's the RDNA, and it's offshoots. some of them Meso-Pagan, some of them Neo-Pagan, many of them in transition. There's ADF. There's Keltria. Druidactios, if it still exists and functions, is Meso- not Neo- and not interested in being Neo-. Tom Cross is furious that ADF is so "Wicced" as he puts it,

even though I've done my best to make sure that what we're doing actually bears very little resemblance to Wicca. But, for some strange reason he's decided that we're Wiccan, and he's agin it. And he's against Neo-Paganism. So, Druidactios is, would be on the Meso-line. There's a whole bunch of groups in England, that we're in contact with,

MS: They're not really pertinent right now.

IB: They're not really pertinent, because they're not really functioning in the United States. I'm unaware of any other Druid Groups in the United States. I'm sure there are some. Oh yeah, there's a, another schism. <laughs> What do they call themselves? The group in Portland. The transsexual people, Yeah. One guy in Portland was a member and was starting a grove to send his spin off and start his own Celtic church or something. Primitive Celtic Church, that's it.

MS: Primitive Celtic Church.

IB: Right. And, their rituals are pretty much identical to standard ADF rituals, and the theology is pretty much the same, as near as I can tell, the only difference is that they're independent. So they're Neo-. Primitive Celtic Church. They exist, far as I know, only in the Portland area. Every once in a while I'll hear about groups being Druid here and there, but when I contact them, I either don't hear from them or it's a group that somebody has just started and they don't know what they're doing and they join ADF. At this point, I have to say that ADF is probably the most influential of current Neo-Pagan Druid groups in America. Closely followed by Keltria. Do you know about Cindy Salee NRDNA grove up in Seattle?

MS: I tried contacting them, and just didn't get anything.

IB: Well, they're not organized in any sense, other than it's just the grove that she's been running for twenty years. Oh right Jay Tibbles. Jay Tibbles was one of the board members of the Divine Circle Group, when we exposed them, and he schismed off from them, and joined ADF. He's also joined the OBOD. He started his own group called the American Druidic Church. You'll be getting these addresses in the mail, I put them in the mail to you yesterday. Yeah, Jay Tibbles, the American Druidic Church. Very nice guy, he's an MD. And, they're essentially doing something that is Wicca essentially, with a strong Celtic focus.

MS: Alright, let try to get back over to the topic.

IB: I'm sorry.

MS: No problem, this is all good information.

IB: I was known as being scattered, absentminded, and having a terrible memory before.... I came down with a neurological disease.

MS: Do you see any similarities between RDNA, NRDNA, ADF, and Keltria, that makes them distinct from any other American Druid group?

IB: Rephrase that question.

MS: Do the aforementioned groups bear a closer resemblance to each other than to other groups?

IB: Well, obviously the NRDNA bears a closer resemblance to the RDNA than to anything else. ADF and Keltria bear a very close relationship to each other. And, historically, we're all linked in a chronological line. The NRDNA grew out of my efforts to convince the RDNA to get rid of the Meso and go for Neo. ADF was in many ways a result of my attempts, of my seizing attempts to do that within the RDNA structure, and just starting up something independent. And Keltria was an offshoot of a group of people inside ADF who wanted to take it in a slightly different direction.

MS: I guess that's good enough.

IB: As far as I'm concerned, all of these, we will cheerfully publish networking information for all of these groups, as well as the groups in the British Council of Druid Orders, and so on and so forth, all the groups that are legit. Whether we agree with their theology or not. If we think that they are, how would I put this? If we think that a group is positively inclined towards helping the environment, and is nature oriented, and upholding what they think of as the highest ideals of Druidism, then we would be inclined to be happy about networking with them, and helping people get in touch with them. I mean, some of the groups just, you know, I have no interest in. There's a cabbalistic group... Cabalistic Druidism, that doesn't make any sense to me. But they like it, so if we have people who come to us who are interested in Druidism, and are also interested in cabbala, I would send them off to that group.

MS: Well, see I wasn't trying to imply that we are the only four groups in the United States, which is not true.

IB: No, but they're the four groups that a) I'm most familiar with, b) that I've played a historical role in, and c) that I can chronologically and evolutionarily link one to the other.

MS: I think we've already gone over what books... Have we gone over what books deal with American Druidism?

IB: There aren't any.

MS: There aren't any, ok, that's right.

IB: The best source to deal with it is Margot Adler's [Drawing Down the Moon](#), Rosemary Guiley's [Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft](#) has a long article on ADF

MS: And you.

IB: and me, based on interviews with me that are pretty darn accurate, and that's about it.

MS: OK.

IB: Maybe Gordie has published something somewhere that I don't know about.

MS: There's a few I'll give a copies to you someday.

IB: Oh yeah, Laurie Cabot's book has been talking about me too.

MS: Who's Laurie Cabot?

IB: Laurie Cabot is the official witch of Salem Massachusetts, and she just put out a book called Power Through Witchcraft. And, apparently, she's been mentioning us and recommending us, because we've been getting a lot of people saying, "I heard about you from Laurie Cabot's book, so what the heck." I have no idea how accurate her commentary would be about me. I haven't read it yet, I'm going to.

MS: So you've already mentioned that you share and exchange information with a variety of Druid groups. This is different from Keltria, which does not. I've heard the figure that 35% of ADF members come from Drawing Down the Moon article.

IB: Um, not anymore.

MS: Not anymore?

IB: I'd say that that was certainly true in the first seven or eight years. One of the things that has made ADF such a challenge to organize and to coordinate has been that we made the leap to a national organization at the start, we decided that we were going to function that way, as a national network for people who wanted to reconstruct Druidism in a way that we thought was focused on excellence rather than romanticism. So we have had lots of people communicating with each other at great distances, mostly through the mail, and a lot of people who heard about us primarily through Margot's book, and then joined the organization, and either stayed or didn't stay. This is different from the average organization, which starts out with a small local group of enthusiasts, and gradually gets larger and produces off shoots. So, it's had both strengths and weaknesses to the approach that we used.

MS: What are the main attractions of members now? How do most members come to find ADF?

IB: A multiple number of sources. The 1-800-Druidry line, that has been mentioned in various articles, has generated a lot of phone calls, and a lot of those people have become members as a result. The computer bulletin boards are attracting a lot of people since we have an ADF discussion group in the PODS net echo system. Are you familiar with that?

MS: Not yet.

IB: Pods is Pagan Occult Discussion System, or something like that. It's one of the FIDO net echo systems around the country, small local bulletin boards that use a tree structure to pass messages back and forth. Very informal. It's not a structure, it's a..... bulletin board organizing system paradigm that programmers use in common. In any event, so there's one of the many FIDO nets is the Pagan collection of FIDO nets. Bulletin boards passing Pagan messages around, and ADF is one of the discussion areas. There is also an ADF discussion area in Genie, there's one on the internet. And we also have people discussing ADF on all of the other main computer systems, like America online, and CompuServe, prodigy and so forth. So our name is certainly bandied about a great deal. And we've uploaded basic ADF literature with our address and with our phone number, so we get a lot of new

members that way. And a lot of the new members are people who simply start going to a local grove, and attending. One of the biggest challenges we have right now is figuring out ways to persuade people that they should not just enjoy the fellowship of the local group, but actually join the organization and support the work that we're trying to do that requires money.

MS: You might want to take a look at the SCA, they're going through that problem right now.

IB: I'm not surprised.

MS: Yeah. OK.. and you also do presentations at conventions and such.

IB: Well, I.. yeah I go to festivals and things, not as many as I used to, because my health hasn't been good, but a lot... in the early days, a lot of the early growth of ADF came specifically as a result of presentations that I would do. I would go to a festival in some part of the country, talk about Druidism, talk about ADF, talk about what I'd like to do with it, a dozen people would join ADF, and the next thing we know we'd have two or three local groves. And, therefore, the majority of our groves wound up being in areas that I traveled to, which was mostly the east coast and the upper Midwest. That still has a strong effect on founding local groups. But, since I'm not traveling as much as I used to, it's not as effective a method. There's also the fact that having had a kid, I've had to focus a lot more attention on staying home and earning a living, which I have never been able to do from being Arch-Druid, and that means that I'm spending a lot less time on promoting the organization and increasing it's growth than I would like to be spending.

MS: You mentioned a Parliament of World Religions, is ADF part of any other interfaith councils?

IB: Not currently. It hasn't been relevant yet, simply because <pause> there aren't that many national ecumenical organizations. Local groves, are allowed to join local interfaith councils, but most local interfaith councils don't want Pagan groups, so that will vary considerably depending on what the local politics happen to be. I went... One of our members in ADF donated the money for me to go to the World Parliament of Religions, and so I went last September, and you probably read the results in the DP. the Druids Progress, or News from the Mother Grove, have you gotten that.

MS: I don't get News from the Mother Grove yet.

IB: Ah, I will try to send you some of those. It was a lot of fun, I learned quite a bit, and Paganism made quite a coming out party there.

MS: I heard about that.

IB Yeah.

MS: There was also Circle and wasn't Church of All Worlds there also.

IB: Yeah, and the Earth Spirit Community from Boston, which started out local became regional, and now is becoming a national organization.

MS: Do you see this to increase in the future?

IB: What? Ecumenical activity? Yeah, I think it's going to. Because the liberal members of the other mainstream religions are very very interested in Goddess worship, and in nature religion. And, they're perfectly willing to talk to us. So, even though the fundamentalists and the Greek orthodox and the Roman Catholics aren't to thrilled about us being around, the mainline Protestant and Unitarian and liberal Christian groups are very happy to sit down and have a cup of tea and find out what it is we really believe before they start arguing. I expect that there will be a lot of increasing interfaith activity between Neo-Pagans and non-Pagans in the future.

MS: I want to get a little more, I got like two more questions, here. Now as far as I've been able to pick up, the ADF is extremely well known for its pushing forward paid clergy, and obtaining church status. What were the other movements that were occurring at the same time you were doing this? For that paid clergy status and stuff? Were you alone, or were you among many people?

IB: Well, I told you about the ten year gap, didn't I?

MS: Yes I've heard of it.

IB: OK. About five or six years ago, I started talking about the need for professionally trained clergy in the Pagan community. That as Paganism became more mainstream, and as Pagan congregations became larger and larger, we were going to need a pool of clergy who were at least as well trained as the clergy of other religions are. And that meant that we needed to start having standards of qualification for clergy, based on demonstrable knowledge and skill. That in turn was eventually going to lead to people having to go to college or in some other way get an education related to how to be a clergy person. This tied into ADF study program, which I believe I sent you a copy of.

MS: I've read it.

IB: I believe that we are eventually going to have a full time paid Pagan clergy. We have full time Pagan clergy now. It's just that hardly any of them get paid. Some of them do, some of them are actually starting to be paid by their religious organizations for these fifty and sixty hour work weeks they put in. I believe Otter and Morning Glory now get a stipend for the work that they do. And, Anders and Deirdre Corbin from Earth Spirit. Officially they earn their living organizing Pagan festivals, unofficially they're basically being paid Pagan clergy. The topic was extremely controversial when I first brought it up, for a variety of reasons, both legitimate and illegitimate. And, I think that we are going to see paid Pagan clergy increasing, and twenty or thirty years from now, there'll be so many Pagan clergy who are paid that every one will wonder what all the controversy was about. Not that this is going to solve all our problems, since there are plenty of clergy who get paid who still have problems. But, it will relieve one set of stresses from the heads of those of us who put in incredibly long hours trying to

organize and facilitate large scale Pagan groups, and then have to turn around and earn a mundane living. The main argument on that will be in the last two issues of Fireheart Magazine, if you can get them.

MS: OK, I don't know if I'll get a chance on that. What is the official church position, according to law, right now, of the ADF.

IB: The official legal status of ADF? We're an incorporated nonprofit religious corporation in the state of Delaware, and we have 501c3 status from the IRS, they think we're a church, or they think we're a religious organization, they don't necessarily call it a church. And, so we're completely legal. And, we are working on obtaining what is called a Group-Exemption letter for our local groves. But, the IRS requires us to pay a fee of five hundred dollars for that, and we haven't accumulated sufficient money to pay for it yet, but eventually, each and every single chartered grove of ADF will also have a tax exempt status.

MS: Are your priests considered to be legal ministers?

IB: By whom?

MS: I don't know, by the courts? For instance if someone confided something to one of your priests, would he be forced to divulge that information in a legal court? Or has this not come up yet?

IB: It simply has not come up yet. Our people have performed weddings and funerals. Several of our people are functioning as Chaplains, not in the Military, but we have a prison ministry operating out of the grove in Texas. And, we haven't had any trouble at all with legal recognition of our status. Over the course of the last twenty years, due primarily to the mischievous going-ons of the Universal Life Church, most state and local governments have backed away from trying to define who's a real clergy person, and what is a real religion. Mostly these days, they examine things on a case by case basis. And, if you have an unusual non-mainstream religious group then a local county court house, or state government may want to see materials about your organization, before they'll say, "OK, we'll let you marry and bury here." But, so far that really hasn't been a problem here.

MS: The last two questions are activism, and differences between Druidism and Wicca.

IB: Ok.

MS: Which one do you want to go for?

IB: You've got my discussion of the differences in the... between Druidism and Wicca... in the little brochures. The standard ADF brochures, I mean, they're not that major, in one sense. I mean, Druidism and Wicca are Neo-Pagan religions, as we practice them anyway. <pause> Neo-Pagan Druidism and Neo-Pagan Wicca are similar in that they are both part of the Neo-Pagan community. They're sibling religions, with overlapping memberships. I would say that at least a third and maybe a half of the members of ADF also practice one form or another of Wiccan. There's no



real conflict between the two, but there is a different emphasis in theology, a different liturgical style. And, primarily the difference is between groups that are small, private and exclusive versus groups that are large, public and inclusive. but, there's no reason you can't do both simultaneously. That is to say, you can have a large Pagan congregation that has smaller groups within it. That's what we're seeing develop in the ADF Groves, just as I expected.

MS: The major theological difference is Polytheism versus Pantheism?

IB: No, Polytheism vs. Duotheism. Wicca's basic theology is Duotheistic, or in the case of some feminist traditions, Monotheistic. ADF's emphasis is Polytheistic. We think it's more important to honor and celebrate the differences in diversity of deity, rather than the similarities they might have with each other. So, the advantage is that we don't have to cram all the deities into a small set of symbolic pigeon holes. Not every goddess in the world fits into the Mother, Maiden or Crone trilogy. Not every god in the world fits into the Hunting God, Vegetation God, Sun God pattern. So, we have a lot more theological elbow room in that way. My wife is a Witch and a Druid, I'm a Witch and a Druid. I just spent most of my time, and my emphasis in public on the Druidic side, because that's the side that needs work in developing right now. The Wiccan community is doing very nicely, and growing geometrically in a very quiet fashion.

MS: Last question here is activism. Does your group, as a group ...

IB: We encourage our members, and our local groves to be active in areas that are relevant where they happen to live. In ecology, social justice, and so forth. We don't have one or two particular axes that we grind. A couple... several groves are doing tree planting activities for example. We've had litter clean ups, and recycling days, and one group volunteered at a soup kitchen for a weekend, blood drives, basically we want... I think that Pagan congregations, at least the public church ones, should be an integral part of their local, social as well as biological, environment. And, that means participating in the life of the community, giving something back for what you get. I also believe that Druids are the natural chaplains for an environmental movement. And, that people who think of themselves as being Druidic in nature, so to speak, should be involved in some sort of environmental activism, even if its just a matter of joining Green Peace and subscribing to Nature Magazine, they should be putting some of their time, money, and energy into helping the environment.

MS: Alright, well I think I'm going to close off this interview officially, lets see here.

## First Interview with Isaac Bonewits

by Michael Scharding

on April 1, 1994

Carleton College Archives

Oral History Project

Transcription by Benjamin Wood

Lightly edited for clarity, unknown/questionable words are put inside brackets

IB= Isaac Bonewits

MS= Michael Scharding



Note: See many other interviews with Isaac Bonewits in Green Book 10 of Part Six of ARDA 2.

MS: OK, this is Michael Scharding interviewing Isaac Bonewits, oh, you mind if this is recorded?

IB: No, that's no problem.

MS: OK, on the first of April, April Fool's Day.

IB: Ah hah

MS: 1994

IB: An auspicious to announce the founding of the Order of Thoth.

MS: That's right. Well, this one is mostly going to be back on the RDNA days again. As we were just talking about the writing of the family tree of Druidism, one of the rules in the bi-laws is only an Arch-Druid can elect a third order priest. Was this a common practice, or did any third order person do this?

IB: As I recall, <pause> As I recall you had to be a third order priest to be an Arch-Druid, and you could then ordain other third orders, but I also recall though that the point may have gotten stretched a few times that any third order can ordain another third order. I believe that all of the times that I did ordinations, I was the Arch-Druid of a given grove. Although, oddly enough,

I might have been a traveling Arch-Druid, I believe I did several of those ordinations for what eventually became the Arch-grove of the Hasidic Druids of North America down in St. Louis. I was traveling down in St. Louis, at the time I was the Arch-Druid of the Twin Cities grove, in Minneapolis, and I may have at that point done some of the ordinations down in the St. Louis area. That would have been Lou Schreiber and Vicki and Carolyn Clark.

MS: One of the things that some people have brought up, and there's so much dirt that gets thrown on you...

IB: <laughing>

MS: There is, a seemingly great desire on your part to become Arch-Druid of something, and I've noticed that you've been Arch-Druid of a grove often when there's another grove in the same city, mainly because of your SDNA branch. I was just wondering if this might have been because you wanted to increase the size of the third order, that you felt that you needed to be an active Arch-Druid.

IB: <pause> I don't think so. I'm trying to remember what time period you'd be talking about here.

MS: I know you were Arch-Druid of Stockton Grove from '72 to '74, Twin Cities roughly from '74 to '76 it seemed, and then you came back to Berkeley and then you were either Arch-Druid of Berkeley or the Mother Grove in Berkeley.

IB: <pause> I can't remember a lot of those details. I was staying with Bob Pinell <pause> and Roy Keister I think it was in Stockton. I may have made them second or third order, I don't remember. And we did have a grove there that, while I was living in Stockton. Generally, I tended for a long time to simply have a grove where I was living, because if people didn't already about Reform Druidism, I would tell them pretty soon, and then people would say "Oh great, let's start a grove." So we would. But I think it was more on the fact of people wanting there to be a grove than for me being particularly enamored of the role. Most of the time when I was starting a grove, I was the only one who was experienced with the liturgy and such. About the only time there was ever an election that was really contested with multiple candidates, was when I was in the Bay Area where there were a lot of third order Druids floating around. But Stockton was quite a distance from the Bay Area.

MS: And I also noticed that it almost looked like the grove was an extension of the SCA.

IB: Well we had an overlap for a while, a definite overlap. Bob Larson's Clann na Brocheta Grove was, in one sense, an extension of the Renaissance Pleasure Fair, because Clann na Brocheta was a group of Gaelic players and musicians who worked at the Renaissance Fair. And he did there ceremonies for them in [Munster] Irish, um but it, there has been an extensive overlap between the SCA and pagendom and science fiction fandom and computer fandom for many, many years. Because all of these are subcultures that

encourage people who are intelligent and creative, so they are going to have overlapping populations.

MS: OK, yeah because I've noticed that a lot of Arch-Druids, a lot of groves have been [SCA] members and come to Carleton.

IB: Oh yeah, and a lot of them have been computer techies.

MS: Yes, <pause> one of the things that is very curious is <pause> more so than a few others, I think we can admit that you are a little more, it almost looks like you're proselytizing.

IB: <gasp>

MS: Yes

IB: You're saying dirty words

MS: Big dirty word, oh, most of the other groves that I've noticed that were setup by founders, except for the one in Berkeley which, of course, led to you, very very few people get ordained by the Carleton graduate. In fact, most of them never ever escape the college environment.

IB: Right.

MS: Berkeley somehow, probably because of the, the rather convenient Bay Area neo-Pagan scene, managed to dump the college environment and go for something permanent. And, I'm kind of curious...

IB: Well there wasn't much of a neo-Pagan scene in the Bay Area in 1969, there were twenty or thirty people in the area who were Wiccan, although most of them were being very definitely undercover in that process, because even then it wasn't safe to come out in public. But there were a number of people in the SCA who were Pagan. And I discovered the SCA at roughly the same time I discovered Reform Druidism, so they seemed to make a good match. And we started doing Druid ceremonies at some of the weekend tournaments. To deal specifically with the topic of proselytizing, I never thought there was anything wrong with telling people you had something good. Shoving it down their throats, or threatening them with hell-fire is totally different, but sharing something that you have that you think is a wonderful thing is, if not an obligation, at least an understand urge on the part of people that who've discovered something good.

MS: Yeah, one of the requirements in the third order is to minister to the people's needs, but I think that the Carleton group had the understanding that they're supposed to find you, or maybe that's just laziness on their part.

IB: There's a couple, several different orientations from that. I really believe that Dave Fisher was coming out of one of the United Ancient Order of Druid groups, that from the style of his liturgy and his description of what he thought Druidism was, it seems very clear that he was coming out of that group. And that group is a fraternal order patterned after the Masons, and like the Masons, pretty much insisted that people knock on the door and ask for admission. They did not actively go out and recruit, so I think that David Fisher had a reluctance to recruit in the first place, and I also think

that for most of the old time, the first generation Reform Druids, the RDNA was a wonderful memory from their college years, and they wanted to keep it a quaint little alumni club, they didn't want to let in just anybody. So I suspect that a large part of the, you know, misunderstanding and hostility was generated by the fact, here was somebody that came out of the blue, who never even went to Carleton, who was treating their alumni club as if it were a real religion.

MS: Yeah, and that's what I've been able to pick up.

IB: Yeah.

MS: In fact, you're one of the very few non-Carleton students to actually ordain anybody.

IB: <laughing>

MS: The only other I can think of is Stephan and Tezra at the present, and maybe Larry Press. I don't know if any of the other groves, like the Twin Cities grove or the Arch grove...

IB: Uh, no, Larry Press and Emmon Bodfish in the Orinda grove, they ordained a few people.

IB: And who was I talking to? Yeah, and Stephan and Tezra have done ordinations. So, really, as far as I can tell, the real hotbed of Reform Druid activity was on the west coast, primarily in the Bay region with my grove and the groves that branched off from it. And also up in Seattle, with Cindy Schuller...

IB: Yeah, she has a pretty large group there.

MS: Now, <pause> what happened to all these little groves, like the Arch grove and the acorn grove and these...

IB: Well, the same thing that happens in nature, a bunch of seeds get planted and some of them sprout, and some of them don't, and of the one's that do sprout some of them get cropped off by the deer real fast.

MS: <laughing>

IB: And the ones that manage to survive to become saplings, either prosper or not depending on the rain and the fertility of the soil, and a hundred other things. So if you plant twenty or thirty groves, you're lucky if two or three of them are still running five years later. I didn't realize that at first. The Arch grove lasted for two or three years in St. Louis and then collapsed because the couple who were running it divorced, a situation that is very common the craft but hasn't been so common in the RDNA because we haven't had that many situations where couples were starting a grove. The Twin Cities grove, I believe it kept going for a short period of time after I moved out of the Twin Cities, I believe Avery Grant was running it. And, what ever, its not in existence now, I have no idea at one point it collapsed, my brother might be able to tell us that because I think he stayed in contact with Avery for a while.

MS: It seems to me almost, I don't know, there seems to been in the early '70s, something around 1972 or so, there seems to been large number of groups that seems to like have almost chucked a lot of the old occult astrology and a whole bunch of other kinds of things

that, what Bradley calls were from a Christian matrix attitude and just started fresh, and started digging their hands into the stuff themselves and looking into other cultures. And this is what I've been able to figure out what Neo-Paganism is, kind of a hands-on, fresh start.

IB: Yeah, I'd say that that's true in many ways. There was an explosion of interest in the occult and simultaneously in witchcraft, Paganism, and folk magic, all intertwined together during the late '60s and early '70s and really the spread of Neo-Paganism is directly traceable to that particular time period, which is when almost all the people who are now big-nosed Pagans first got involved with it.

MS: Now you've always defined Neo-Paganism as a reconstructive religion based on primarily pre-Christian sources, what were the other kinds of groups that were doing reconstruction in a Neo-Pagan format? I know there's the Source of Eternal Life for the Egyptians.

IB: Church for the Eternal Source, that's what you mean, the Egyptian folks. They were one of the big groups. Fere-Faeria was another one, Fred Adams was trying to reconstruct his vision of Greek religion. The most influential of course was the Church of All Worlds.

MS: But that's not really a pre-Christian religion.

IB: Well, no, they were perfectly willing to admit that they were starting a brand new religion, but they believed that they were inspired by the models of the pre-Christian religions, and expanding them in a modern sense. Tim Zell (now Otter Zell) was important, one of the first people to come up with what became known as the Gaia hypothesis. He actually published material on it before Lovelock did and Zell is the one that actually made the term Neo-Paganism widespread, it was in the American occult community. The Wiccan movement started out being what I consider Meso-Pagan, and only became Neo-Pagan under the influence of the counter-culture in the United States, when they realized they could drop a lot of the window dressing that had been added to keep the Christians happy.

MS: <laughing> And so the Druids were essentially the Celtic element, but the Wicca was of course using a lot of the Celtic...

IB: But the folks in Wicca claimed that they were Celtic but in point of fact what they were doing was far more Greco-Roman then it was Celtic, and for people in.... Oh, and there was also groups like the Asatru Free Assembly and other folks that were interested in Norse Paganism, they were starting up at about this same time. Unfortunately, they got infiltrated and subverted by Neo-Nazis rather quickly so that most of the, even today, you'll still find that the vast majority of Norse groups are Meso-Pagans, hung up on Aryan, pure-race, bullshit. But yeah, to a certain extent the Druids was the movement in Neo-Paganism for people who were interested in the Celts.

MS: And the RDNA was the only contender in the field at that time.

IB: That's right.

MS: See, that's what I'm very curious about. When I read your early letters, there seems to be a very rushed attitude. I know you were extremely busy in a lot of movements and

IB: <laughing>

MS: ...might have been a little bit upset about what you saw as a set of emergency breaks in the RDNA, on something you couldn't really deal to much time with, but um what was the sense of urgency coming from?

IB: That was a time period that I was fairly firmly convinced that the ecology was in a mess and that this insane macho posturing between the United States and the Soviet Union was libel to blow it all up, and I felt that there was really a strong need to spread the ideas of Neo-Paganism and to spread the techniques of magic to people with Neo-Pagan ethics, as widely as possible as quickly as possible, just for the sheer sake of survival of the planet. And I still feel that today but I don't have quite the sense of urgency I used to, because it is beginning to look like maybe enough magic was done to put the breaks on at least the nuclear threat. And because the ecology movement has begun to be successful, and is beginning to change peoples attitudes. I still feel a sense of urgency but I'm not in my twenties anymore.

MS: Yeah, it's actually quite remarkable what you were doing in your twenties...

IB: <laughing>

MS: I must say.

IB: Yeah, I wish I had that much energy today.

MS: Oh, don't you know it. And so let's, I'm just trying to figure out...

IB: Well, you know I've been doing a lot of research over the last twenty-five years in the history of Wicca. And the more I read about Gerald Gardner and about the atmosphere in the occult community in England during the '40s and '50s and '60s, the more sympathy I'm developing for him. And, Gardner ordained zillions of people, he ordained anybody who'd walk into his living room practically, and the reason he seems to have done so was because he figured that if he ordained several hundred people, at least a couple dozen of them would be good and would keep his religion going. And I think to a great extent that I was working on much the same principle, the idea that if I ordained a lot of third order priests, that a significant proportion of them would keep it up and go out and start new groves, where they would ordain new people who would go and start new groves. And I thought that this would be a good thing for the planet and for the people involved.

MS: Yes, Bradley was talking about that, he's a very interesting person if you get to talk with him. And he said that there's a certain size for a parish to remain stable, he thinks it's around two hundred people, cause by that point you have at least five or six people who can cover slack in case something goes wrong, versus

just one. And one of the things that I think a lot of people were a little bit eerie about, but then I'll talk about the other side, seems to be your role as a nexus point. Stephan also had this complaint raised against him. For instance, most of the Carleton RDNA were unable, for some reason, to contact many of the other, non-Carleton RNDAs. And they almost kind of felt like they had to go through you to get there, while it's nice that you actually were there to see actually make it to other people, I don't know, it almost seems like they're...they're kicking the system.

IB: I sent the name, and mailing address and phone number of every person I ordained to the attention of Arch Druid of Carleton.

MS: Right, and there is documents for that.

IB: And, if the people at Carleton didn't bother to contact any of those folks, and never bothered to keep up-to-date mailing lists, you know that wasn't anything I could really take responsibility for. I seem to recall that once every two or three years, I would send as much of an update as I had of current addresses, but there was nothing to stop people at Carleton from contacting any of these people directly, they just never bothered. The groves at Carleton were primarily concerned with Carleton.

MS: Yes, I picked that up...

IB: Which you can understand, running, even if it's a very small grove, you're still running a student organization, and the average college student really doesn't think on a grand scale in terms of "Oh, I'm at the head of a nationwide network and I have to keep the communication lines clear."

MS: <laughing>

IB: No, the average Arch Druid at Carleton, didn't think about that.

MS: Yeah, and you know, I don't know, maybe they're just jealous or they just, I don't know, there is definitely really small minded thinking going on and actually you know that it is one of the good things that you did publish so much stuff, because, as Bradley says "Isaac Bonewits he might have his faults here and there but at least he publishes, gets stuff out on the table."

IB: <laughing>

MS: "You know, you can like him or hate him, but you still at least have something to work with."

IB: Michael Bradley, who is Michael Bradley, why does that name ring a bell?

MS: Arch-Druid of Chicago.

IB: What?

MS: Chicago

IB: Oh right.

MS: He was inducted by McDavid.

IB: He hardly ever answered his mail as I recall.

MS: Yeah, but he was a pretty mellow dude and he and McDavid had a very nice connection with each other

and they had a nice little grove for a number of years. And he's in Seattle now.

IB: Is it still functioning?

MS: Oh no, it stopped in '78 and Bradley's now in Seattle and he's going to join Cindy's group sometime in the future. He actually was going to start the humanistic DNA

IB: The HDNA?

MS: Uh huh, and that might have worked really well.

IB: Well at that point there wasn't any Hassidic Druids left so the initial was ok

MS: That would lead to confusion.

IB: Yes, it sure would. But we had a lot of confusion in those days.

MS: <pause> Lineage, how many groups in the '70s were stuck up on lineage?

IB: What, in the Reform Druid community?

MS: And also elsewhere.

IB: Well a sizeable number in the Wiccan community really felt that lineage was important, because that was how they maintained their quality control. Because they were doing everything in secrecy, that being half the fun of being a witch, they didn't have any published standards of qualification for the clergy. And they had no central, because they were decentralized, there was no one address you could write to, to verify if whether or not a person was capable of doing what they said they were. So, the way they maintained any kind of quality of control was to say "well I was ordained by lady so-and so, how was ordained by lady so-and-so, who was ordained by lady such-and-such." And if you knew any of the people along that line of succession, then you could make a reasonable guess as to whether or not this person had been properly trained and initiated. But of course, that only worked within particular denominations, and there were so many people within the Wiccan community who were making up brand new denominations out of thin air, and telling outrageous lies about their ancestry and their families and their childhood training and a lot of other B.S., when they were obviously using stuff they'd ripped off from Gerald Gardner, that it made it impossible to ever verify anything. Now, but the folks that think of themselves as the British Traditionalist, the Conservatives, still to this day think that lineage is still very important, this is their own apostolic succession. On the other hand there were a lot of people who were saying "well no, we're going to make this all up ourselves, and we're going to use published material, and we're going to use material we research ourselves, and we'll put it all together, and we don't care if it's old or new, we like it cause it works." And those folks didn't care about lineage at all. Certainly the folks at Fer-faeria and Church of Eternal Source and The Church of All Worlds weren't worried about lineage, because they knew that they were making brand new religion.

MS: That's why I'm kind of curious about, there has been rumors about Isaac, that one reason you stayed in the RDNA was because it preceded all the other guys. And I think that this is rather a shallow comment.

IB: <laughing> Preceded all the other guys?

MS: Yeah, because the others incorporated '67 and stuff and...

IB: Oh, well incorporations and stuff didn't matter very much. Nobody much was impressed by being incorporated except when it was a chance to gain legal protection for Paganism, then people got impressed by incorporation.

MS: Well, not so much incorporation as foundation.

IB: Yeah, most, Gerald Gardner started his trip, I personally don't think that there was anything preceding him that he was continuing, but even if there was, what he did was a brand new thing, and he essentially started that in the last '40s and early '50s. And the Druid orders, if you want to look at it, if we say that David Fisher came out of the Ancient Order of Druids or one of those offshoots, well that at least goes back to the mid 1700s. But, I never really thought that the apostolic succession was that critical. I have a whole long discussion on varieties of initiation and transmission of the Gnosis or apostolic succession is only one of the three major types of initiation, and it isn't always the most important, the other two being recognition of status already gained and ordeal of transformation. But the point is, no, I didn't stick with the RDNA because I thought the RDNA was older than any of the other Neo-Pagan groups. It was because the archetype, the Druid, really resonated with me, the same way that the archetype of the witch resonates with a lot of other people. It's what I was pulled too, and even when I tried to drop out and stay away from it, I kept getting dragged by the scruff of the neck back into it, kicking and screaming.

MS: It almost seems to me that the SDNA was kind of like the testing groups for ADF in some ways.

IB: Oh, to a great extent. When I sit down and I look through this old material I can see a lot of the ideas that ADF has manifested there in sort of an embryonic stage. And, when I really began to realize that the founders of the RDNA really didn't want it to be a religion, and yet I thought that it seemed obvious to me that it was a religion, I first started experimenting, and I think that the SDNA was my first experiment with that.

MS: Yeah, because I mean there had been lots of RDNA Druids before you who had declared it their own personal religion, it just seems like there was this subtle shift that you're not supposed to, even if you do consider it your own religion, not to advertise the group as a religion. And you want to, well see the thing is, any group after 1967 or so, that grove that founded, whether it was one of yours or one of the Carleton graduates doing it, the majority of the members that they got were of course from SCA, sci-fi, and most of them were Neo-Pagans. I mean,

irregardless of the wish, you know, to have lots of smart people get together and just discuss how religions work, the majority of those people are going to be coming from Neo-Pagan tradition. So it's understandable that you'd want to advertise this, so Neo-Pagans wouldn't be confused by the double-talk saying "well we're not a religion, but we're a way to look at religion." And stuff like this, and anyone who's interested in Celticness would say wow, here you go, and they're in. So it's quite understandable from that point of view, and most of the Carleton graduates I've been able to find haven't actually been able to find that kind of attitude of Carleton students to, almost just break down religion and just sit there and look at the basics. That doesn't seem to happen very often with many places, and the only people who really want to use the structure are the people who would actually worship.

IB: Well yeah, if you're going to emphasize the philosophical side of Druidism, then you're going to spend most of your time having intellectual debates, which is lots of fun. We used to do that in the HDNA for a while, we had a hair-pull session, we would get together for the grove meeting, we'd do the ritual and then afterwards we'd come back to my house for a potluck dinner and then after dinner we would read a couple lines from the Mish-Mash and the commentaries on it, and then we would have theological argument for an hour. It was a lot of fun, but we were still doing in within the context of we're Neo-Pagans and we're discussion Neo-Pagan theology. We weren't doing it in the let's keep all this messy religion stuff at an arms length distance, which is what most of the, apparently most of the founders of the RDNA prefer to do.

MS: There also seems like there are a lot of, as you mentioned, Marxists and atheists in the early group, and one of the things that they particularly valued was that... I've always seen it as if you have a bunch of people from all types of religions and un-religions, and you describe the story of a bird making a nest, all religions, because they're faced with the material world all around them, have drawn upon nature for a source for relating to the divine. And philosophies have done so for the same reason, and so one of the things that I've seen at Carleton is that even if you're atheistic or if you're very religious, you can be Christian or anything, they can all get together and draw something out of the simple bird's story that doesn't claim to be part of, or allied to just one group, and so it seems almost, sometimes they describe it as they didn't want Druidism to fall into being a religion, that might just be a little snotty point on their part, that they were above religion, but there seems to have been a fear that it would become narrow, somehow, although you, Robert Larson and yourself were interested primarily in Celtic Indo-European stuff, where as the Carleton grove had a very strong Asian element in it, because the Asian religions were very strongly taught at Carleton. And they pretty much had

dropped the Celticness early on, because it had done its purpose. And, I don't know...

IB: Or because that wasn't the interest of the new generations of students coming in.

MS: Right, because of the Asian interest and Vietnam of course made Asian studies much more interesting.

IB: Oh yeah.

MS: And that's why I was always interested...

IB: Well this is one of the reasons why I found the term Meso-Pagan to be so useful, I did not invent that term by the way, a friend of mine in Berkeley who is a Wiccan invented that term, and the Masonic, Rosicrucian, fraternal style groups of Druids in England were Meso-Pagan, what they had was a mixture of Paganism and Christianity and ideas that are rooted philosophically in Christianity, all mish-mashed together and presented as authentic Druidism. In the same way at Carleton you had, the references to nature and the references to the gods and goddesses, but you also had lots of material that was Christian philosophy, liberal Christian philosophy, or Marxist or atheist. Marxism and atheism are also outgrowths of Christianity, Marxism specifically is an outgrowth of the Christian gospel movement of the 1800s, even though Karl Marx would hate to have that said that about it, and atheism is the flip-flop of the dualistic black and white thinking of Christianity, either the Christian god and everything in the bible is true, or there is no god. And you know, as long as somebody calls himself an atheist, they're still playing the game by the Christians rules. In any event, the point is Reform Druidism, as first invented, was definitely a Meso-Pagan system, whether they called it a religion or philosophy or whatever, it was still Meso-Pagan. And, I thought the world needed Neo-Paganism, and saw this as a good starting point. But as you pointed out, within the first ten years I had tried to start alternative groups, using some of the ideas but also working in some of the ideas from the rest of the Neo-Pagan community. And, screening out the material from Monotheism and monothesisism.

MS: It's a very messy little thing.

IB: Well its amusing that the same people who were telling me that Druidism is a philosophy compatible, with every religion on the earth, were telling me "oh no, it doesn't include Neo-Paganism."

MS: Ah, see, I haven't picked that up.

IB: <laughing>

MS: I've looked for it closely, a lot of the letters between them are saying, you know, I remember Shelton once said that "Neo-Paganism was compatible with Reform Druidism, but doesn't encompass it." It's almost like...

IB: Well we didn't have the term Meso-Pagan in those days.

MS: Well yeah.

IB: Might have made a difference if we had, because then what you see is you see, you can have overlapping sets, make Venn-diagrams of it all. But, I had some of

these folks verbally tell me it was totally inappropriate for Neo-Paganism and Reform Druidism to overlap and be the same thing.

MS: Well...

IB: Because they thought <coughing> Hang on... I think that they thought as soon as you brought any kind of "ism" into it at all, it was no longer Reform Druidism. I've often wondered why they didn't use the word Druidry but it may be that the fraternal groups in England hadn't started using that word at that point, I'm not sure about the precise dating of that term.

MS: Well see, the thing is, a lot of them in those years were often young too...

IB: Uh huh, we were all young way back then.

MS: Shelton who was one of the primary ring leaders then, has been very active again in keeping tabs about the Carleton grove since '86, when it was primarily Wiccan and Native American back then. And he has not really had too much trouble with us on that issue, and in-fact he's done a couple sweat-lodges and that kind of stuff.

IB: Cool

MS: And, there were a couple points where he was a little bit concerned, well first of all, you were coming from a different cultural background then he was, and most of the other Carleton Druids. I mean, you are first of all, an intellectual, and they hadn't had very much contact [inaudible], they kind of saw traps in definitions. And, they were in the process of destroying set ideas, they didn't want certainties, and...

IB: Right, well they were still in that early adolescent rebellion stage of being more interested in tearing down then they were in building up. And I can understand that, that's a necessary phase for an adolescent to go through. You have to deconstruct the culture around you before you can reconstruct it, to reflect something that makes sense to you.

MS: Right, and since most Carleton students are between the age of 19 and 20 around, I don't think, I think they were a little bit worried, well see it would be very hard of course to impose the NRDNA system on Carleton because it's so far away, but I don't think they felt that Carleton students, who didn't have a Neo-Pagan background to being with, were quite ready to reconstruct. And, I don't know, maybe they were just a little protective of the grove, they were...

IB: Well that's perfectly understandable, it was their turf. I mean just on a gut level, animal biological basis, this was their home territory, and if they perceived a threat to it, then they would be defensive.

MS: I think they also were a little bit afraid of their own people getting out of hand too.

IB: How so?

MS: Well, do you remember when Larson, I mean Shelton, tried to pass the Codex Reform?

IB: Very vaguely, yeah

MS: Well he got quite a few letters immediately, letters saying you know, red tape, red tape, you know, and Shelton backed down. Shelton by the way was the first Arch-Druid not to have known the founder. And so they were very careful to make sure that future groups wouldn't lose the original style, and that's probably one reason why they hung around so much. If you hadn't been around, they probably would have been content that no outside influences would've come into Carleton, but...

IB: Right, the fact that I wrote New Apocrypha, sent copies of it to all the members of the order of Dalon Ap Landu, that I could get a hold of, sort of rocked the boat, all of a sudden there was an outside influence.

MS: And an outside authority.

IB: Yeah.

MS: From a completely new tradition.

IB: Yeah.

MS: And so, I think that's one of the main reasons that, in-fact, you have led to a closer bond between the alumni and the present students, which we're quite grateful for.

IB: Well that's a good thing.

MS: In fact, no Carleton group has ever had this much interaction between alumni and students, and we're the oldest, unofficial, student organization at Carleton.

IB: Is the RDNA still unofficial?

MS: Still unofficial.

IB: Oh, that's funny.

MS: We have a...

IB: Wait a minute, they were official at one time, they had a faculty advisor, Messenger

MS: Uh, yes, but we never got our constitutions approved.

IB: You're kidding?

MS: Nope, they uh, they kind of like put them into the "later" file, and then, sigh

IB: Just because Carleton is still legally a church school?

MS: No, that was stopped in '22, it was just the fact that we had a bunch of pig-headed, conservative administrators, especially in the Dean of Men, and they just said "Too wild" and put it aside. But, we also had a Dean of, an advisor with Bardwell Smith, who was an Asian history and religion professor, which of course made it more Asian then ever. But yeah, John Messenger was only around for one year.

IB: Yeah right, and then he went elsewhere.

MS: Perhaps if he would have stayed longer we would have seen different.

IB: That's true, could very well have been different.

MS: Now, I want to talk about the Druid Chronicles (Evolved), you know the more I read that book, the more fascinating it gets, and that's a compliment.

<break in the conversation for call waiting, tape flips>

IB: RDNA, so that tells me in the year 17 y.r., that's what I was doing. We have the constitutions here, records of the Council of Dalon Ap Landu, Arch-Druids of Carleton through Don Morrison, spring '76 to question mark, that's as far as my list goes.

MS: Oh, yeah, did I send you an updated list of the Arch-Druids?

IB: I don't know if you did or not.

MS: Well, he stopped at '78 and that was followed by Sue Olin for a year or so, and then somebody named Heidi Schultz and I don't know, and then Katya Luomala who was incorrectly ordained, because of a drunkard Arch-Druid.

IB: Oops.

MS: Oops, she like showed up like the day and she like, Katya had vigiled and she thought Sue knew about this and...and Sue didn't show up in the morning. And, so Katya found her like halfway through the day and was like, "where were you?" "Oh, I already thought you were a third order.....well here you go, here's the order. And it's like...

IB: Oh...great.

MS: Yeah, I was like, oh boy. Well you can imagine what that did to her ego. <laughing>

IB: <laughing> Let's see, I have my copy here of the names of the Druids, which you probably have a copy of as well, that says who was ordained in which grove, anyway. It says Hal Moe was ordained in the Berkeley grove in 1973, which... could it mean it was either me or Bob, depending on who was running the grove in that year, I don't remember right now. Then we have Cindy and Tom Schuler both ordained by the mother grove in '78, which probably, lets see down here it says...mg equals mother grove SDNA. Ok

MS: One of the things we do generally is we uh, I've seen at Carleton, is that we would do like, for instance for you it'd be BK69:Larson, so we can keep track of these things easier.

IB: Well that would probably make a lot of sense, and it would be nice to try and reconstruct all of this.

MS: yeah, and...

IB: So we actually do have a family tree, but of course, we don't...I have been constantly told over the years about RDNA groves that existed and then disappeared. Like, uh, there was a grove in Palo Alto, California for a while, and there was a grove at uh... oh god, it's an eastern college, starts with a p....

MS: Purdue.

IB: Purdue, there was a grove at Purdue.

MS: Yeah, that was Dick Smiley.

IB: Dick Smiley... see so you know a lot of groves that I don't know.

MS: Well usually I make the family tree by apostolic succession versus worry about groves, because those just move all over the place. In fact, trying to work out the Berkeley thing, which is so darn confusing I gave up, but I uh...

IB: Well you know Joan Carruth could give you a lot that history. I mean obviously filtered through her eyes, but that's going to be true of anybody you ask.

MS: That's true.

IB: Do you have her current address?

MS: uh huh, yep.

IB: ok.

MS: I did an interview with her.

IB: Bob Larson... has vanished.

MS: Yes, he is vanished... showed up in spring, but disappeared again.

IB: Very strange

MS: Very strange, I heard he's over with Asatru now.

IB: Oh, that could make a certain amount of sense, he liked the Norse stuff too.

MS: Yeah.

IB: In which case, I might be able to track him down through the, through...make connections in the Norse community, maybe through...depending upon which group he's in.

MS: But yes, he's disappeared.

IB: ok, let's see here, now I have in addition to all that, I have the...Druid Missal-Any, which was...the one that Emmon Bodfish organized for a while

MS: Which we don't have.

IB: Oh, ok, well I can make copies of those. What did we have here, oh and...a letter from Chris Sherbak that appeared in the Druid Missal-Any. "Dear third order Druid, the Council of Dalon Ap Landu has not had a vote in many years, one of the main problems has been the lack of contact between the head of the Council and the members, many reasons have been given, but the fact remains. I'm sending this letter to all known members of the Council in hopes of resolving this and getting on with business. There can only be two states of participation in my opinion, active and inactive. Our rules do not allow inactive participation yet, I propose we do now. I ask that you please respond to the questionnaire/proxy below. If you wish to remain in active status, please indicate as such, you'll be kept in the Council's mailing list. If you wish to become inactive, please mark and sign the proxy. This is very important, whether or not you are now interested in a Reform, you are still considered to have a vote. This was his effort to get around the impossibility of ever having a quorum...but that didn't work either.

MS: Well a lot of them just felt there wasn't anything more to vote on.

IB: There was nothing more to vote on?

MS: uh huh.

IB: I see <laughing> ok



MS: <laughing> They thought once they got everyone equal status, that was fine.

IB: 1983, so let's see, so these issues are from 1982 and '83. And...then we had the Druid Chronicler, which...

MS: We've got a lot of 'em

IB: You've got a lot of them, ok

MS: But not quite all of them, I'll have to send you...

IB: 1981 seems to be here, December '81...

MS: That's the last one we have.

IB: Yeah, that one was nicely typeset. This was, this is funny, this is really funny, I think this is the one and only issue that was ever done this way, typeset with nice borders around the edges. And this was <pause> this is the last time before I did ADF, when I tried to make major changes inside, Reform Druidism. Oh jeez, it's been years, literally years since I read this. "Isaac Bonewits left the mother grove in '79 because he was moving to Santa Cruz, when he went he appointed Joan Carruth and Stephen Abbot to be co Arch-Druids. Shortly after he left on his sabbatical, Joan and Stephen changed the name to the Berkeley grove." Okay, so it was the Berkeley grove for a long time, then it became the mother grove, then it became the Berkeley grove again. Let's see, "the next year saw Stephen drop out..." See I haven't read this in five or ten years here. "The next year saw Stephen drop out of the Berkeley grove, that was the end of co Arch-Druidship as an experiment in that incarnation. Joan ran for reelection uncontested and spent the last of 18 y.r. and all of 19 y.r. as Arch-Druid of the grove. In the two years since Isaac, the ritual and structure of the grove went relatively unmolested. But then Isaac showed back up and all the rules changed. He ran for the office of Arch-Druid, warning everybody in advance that he planned to make some broad changes in the grove. Even if it can't be said that the gods spoke, there was an omen of sorts, Isaac won. In doing so though, he alienated a large portion of the existing Berkeley grove... they thought the changes were taking Druidism far away from what its founders at Carleton College had intended it to be. That idea made them uncomfortable, so after much thought and discussion they decided to form a new grove. They asked Joan to be their Arch-Druid and she accepted. Thus there are now two groves in Berkeley: the live oak grove which still uses the traditional forms, and the mother grove, which is developing a new philosophy of Druidism for the 1980s." Right, now you have to understand, that part of all of this complexity that was going on is that Joan and I were on-again off-again lovers for many years. So, some of what was happening here was personal politics between the two of us, although fortunately at this point I can't remember any of the details.

MS: <laughing> yeah

IB: Just that Joan is basically a very wonderful person.

MS: Uh huh, oh I should tell you that...

IB: So you have this issue.

MS: Uh huh.

IB: Ok, that's good, because that is really, in terms of... history of the shift from Reform Druidism to ADF, this is really critical.

MS: Yes

IB: In any event...right Sally <pause> Sally was the Arch-Druidess at the same time as I was the Arch-Druid. Let's see, she was a server in 18yr <pause>

MS: Could we reconstruct these things a little bit later...

IB: Oh, I'm sorry, go ahead, continue with your, your list of questions you had for the interview.

MS: Ok, one of the interesting things that the Druid Chronicles is, I don't think you know this side of the story, is about the same time I believe in '74, '75 when you started Druid Chronicles going, we lost ours. We lost all the Archives, and they were a little bit afraid to tell you this... and apparently Steve Corey taking 'em all up to the Twin Cities without appointing another person at Carleton to take his place. And so all of the records were seemingly lost for two or three years. And everyone had to rely on their own personal copies of everything, and they were really afraid that your version of the Druid Chronicles would eventually become the only source of information.... And they again found them about two years later, and then I almost can tell the animosity suddenly dropped in the letters.

IB: Well, I find that fascinating, because, you know, I didn't change anything in the Chronicles of the Foundation. I was meticulous in making sure that it was the same word-for-word, the only difference being that...I stuck in footnotes.

MS: Uh huh, no big deal.

IB: Yeah... then I added a bunch of other stuff, but you know, I always thought it's really critical in the history of any religion that you have accurate history. So I always thought it was important that we document what we were doing, while we were doing it.

MS: Yeah, and there's a lot of really good little turkeys, as you call them, in there.

IB: <laughing>

MS: And, I think in there, well even though you do say in the Apocrypha that you intended people to stick in their own stuff later on, some of them are a little bit bitter that... it almost looks like a one-sided argument. Because...

IB: Hey! I didn't stop them from sending Apocrypha around.

MS: I know, they're just a little bitter. <laughing> But otherwise it...

IB: "The editor has been informed that there are other Apocrypha currently being printed for distribution. Assuming that each has a date of writing attached, it should be easy to insert them into their proper order vis-à-vis those included in this edition." One of the things that the people who were hostile about this production never seemed to mention or think about

was the fact that we deliberately designed it so that it could be punched and put in a three-hole notebook.

MS: right

IB: Thus implying that there would be alternate version. Oh well...

MS: Uh huh, they, I don't know, they were a little bit anarchistic, you know, any kind of... putting it all together in one book, just kind of, I don't know, grated on their nerves a little bit. But actually, it proved to be an extremely durable and reliable source for a lot of the groves which still use it. In fact, Carleton, in 1986, used it as their sole blueprint to rebuild, because we had lost the Archives again, and couldn't find them, so we used the Druid Chronicles (Evolved), as a blueprint, which of course gave our group a very Neo-Pagan flavor.

IB: Yeah, I would think so <laughing> it would have that effect.

MS: And in that sense, I think maybe the guys at Carleton were a little bit... correct in their view that, you know, once... this book gets out...

IB: No, it's not a matter of once the book being out, it's a matter of distribution. I specifically made it a point to send copies to the library at Carleton.

MS: We actually had a copy for a while.

IB: Yeah, I also specifically designed this so it could be xeroxed, that was the primary reason we typeset it, actually I typeset the whole bloody thing with my own little fingers. And if I had realized then how badly things that were printed on dark colored paper would Xeroxed, we would have never used the dark colored paper for...

MS: Yeah, that's proved troublesome.

IB: Yes

MS: We had to type it up again, and print them up separately.

IB: I'm not surprised.

MS: But yes... and luckily you never made any kind of attempt on here to call it The Druid Bible.

IB: Nah

MS: You remember what caused that trouble with The Witches Bible?

IB: Yes, right, right

MS: And the whole big thing was that they used the simple word "the" versus "a"

<pause>

IB: Right, and point in fact, that wasn't their decision, that was the publishers decision... but that's another tale..

MS: It's amazing how nitpicky some Druids can get.

IB: Special order of worship Santa Cruz gathering, wow I have a whole bunch of stuff in here, I'll have to bring this with me. <laughing>

MS: Oh yeah, please do.

IB: What I'm planning on doing at this point, if we get this trip together for April...

MS: And it looks like it is very possible, I'm already getting the funding process going.

IB: Ok, I'm going to try very hard the week before I come out there, to gather as much of this historical material as I possible can, and I will bring it with me. In fact, I will carry the more important items on the plane with me as carry-on baggage, so that I will have my hands on them the entire time. And then once I have arrived...anything that I haven't Xeroxed, we can Xerox for you. Anything that you don't have yet.

MS: Yeah, and the school's going to pay for all that Xeroxing, isn't that wonderful?

IB: I think that's terrific.

MS: <laughing> So why don't we, let's see here, I have one more question here, do I? <pause> Okay, what would you say, let's just get this last question, what would say the special, what is special about the RDNA among Neo-Pagan groups? <pause> What would make it worth studying, if you were a Neo-Pagan scholar? Besides the fact that you were in it.

IB: <pause> Probably I would simply say it was worth studying because it was the ancestral group that a bunch of other Druid groups grew out of. A lot of that being my fault, but some of it possibly not being my fault. The fact that it was the... you know, it was a different strand of development of what was to become the Neo-Pagan community.... I think that it is a good example of the fact that certain ideas were in the air in that particular time in history. Of course, you can also get, you know the great arguments they have between the great man theory, the inevitable historical movement theories. Unfortunately you can argue both ways from this situation.

MS: How so?

IB: That from the, from the point of view that this was a time of great, you know, of certain ideas being in the air, you can say that the RDNA showed that people were looking for a religious expression that, had a reverence for nature and yet also had a reverence for human individuality and freedom, which puts it in a similar boat with all the other Neo-Pagan movements. And from the, history is made by individual's point of view, you can point to either David Fisher or myself, or even Bob Larson for that matter, as having been critical in making, changing this from being a tiny little club at a small Midwestern college, to actually being a tiny, but noisy, and influential movement inside of the Neo-Pagan community as a whole. So you could argue it both ways. I don't think of myself as a great man you understand, but I was the person, in that place, at that time, and... I discovered the RDNA at about the same time that I was discovering the Neo-Pagan community, and to me they both seemed to be an obvious match.

MS: Well, ok... I think were going to stop the official interview there and just do some details here now.

**<end of first interview>**



# An Interview with Isaac Bonewits

From: "The Druid's Progress," ADF, 1994

In a leaky tent at Dragonfest festival in 1994, Summer, and Robin pulled Isaac Bonewits away from his workshops just long enough for an interview about the past and future of Druidism.

**Interviewer:** Where did you grow up, where were you born?

**Bonewits:** I was born in Royal Oak, Michigan which is an appropriate place a future arch druid. Well Royal Oakes is a suburb of Detroit. I grew up the first 11 years in Ferndale Michigan, and Troy Michigan and various suburbs in the Michigan area, either in the Detroit suburbs or at one point we moved out to a distant suburb called Troy. I was raised a Catholic, my mother was a French Canadian Roman Catholic, still is. My father was a Presbyterian agnostic. He didn't pay a lot of attention to religion, but whatever mom said was OK with him. I bounced around a lot between public school and Catholic school. I'd stay in one till I got kicked out and then I would go to the other 'til I got kicked out.

**Interviewer:** What did you do to get kicked out?

**Bonewits:** I just had a bad habit of asking rude questions, especially in the Catholic schools about things that kids weren't either a: weren't supposed to know about; or weren't supposed to have the opinions I had.

**Interviewer:** Do you remember any of those arguments?

**Bonewits:** I remember one occasion were a nun had told our 3rd or 4th grade class that if everybody got something done we would get to go on this field trip. At the last minute she changed her mind and said we weren't going to go on the field trip after all. I said to her "you lied to us." She slapped me and I slugged her. I was not about to put up with that. My mom had to send my older brother in to plead with them to not expel me from the school. I could have cared less at that point.

**Interviewer:** Was the education any good?

**Bonewits:** Not particularly, I can't say that the Catholic education was any better than public school was. Catholic school was a lot more rigid about making exceptions for exceptional students. Public schools were much more willing to let me read books that were at a higher grade level than the Catholic schools were. Catholic schools were much more interested in making everyone fit into a rigid regimented regime. When I was 11 the family moved to Southern California and I didn't have anything better to do at the time, so I went with them. We lived in San Clemente for a while which was a beach town about halfway between L.A. and San Diego.

**Interviewer:** Was that a dramatically different environment?

**Bonewits:** Yeah. Oh yeah, sure. I moved from living in the suburbs, very old suburbs of big city to living in what amounted to a rural town, suburb stuck in the middle of nowhere and I had the Pacific Ocean in my front yard literally. It was wonderful. When I was thirteen I went for the second semester of ninth grade to this catholic seminary. It was supposed to be a prep school for the college level seminary training. And got in trouble there because I kept asking awkward questions during history class. Because you see, I read books about European history, which weren't written by Catholics. So I was asking questions about the inquisition and the crusades and various corrupt popes. They thought I had a bad attitude. They told me I wasn't to come back the next year.

**Interviewer:** Did you get away from the Catholic influence when you got to San Clemente?

**Bonewits:** I was a devout Roman Catholic. I really believed all that nonsense. I was an altar boy. I thought I was going to be a priest. My mom wanted me to be a priest. I was raised to be a priest, like some catholic parents will do whether they are Irish or French Canadian or Italian. The end of the semester came around and the two priests who ran this little hole in the wall Catholic high school/seminary thing realized they didn't have enough student 'volunteers' to run their summer camp for the littler Catholic kids they were going to run to make money. On the last day as I'm all packed up and ready to go they call me into the office and say "well, we've decided we're going to let you stay after all -- if you work for us this summer." I said Well, gee that's too bad because I've decided I don't want to come back next year. They said "Oh, that's too bad, did you decide you don't have a vocation to be a priest?" Without thinking about it at all, I just looked at them and said "Oh no, I have a vocation to be a priest all right, just not in your religion." I made the decision at the moment I spoke the words, and I just picked up my suitcase and walked out to the car where my dad was waiting for me. He was delighted to hear that I had made that decision. Dad had never wanted me to be a priest anyway. Mom was disappointed. Later that summer I was working odd jobs to get spending money and I was working at a doughnut shop, sweeping the floors and washing the windows and running errands and the kind of thing they would let a thirteen year old do. And there was a Creole woman from New Orleans, who was working there. In fact she was having an affair with the owner of the shop. And she had a kid from a previous relationship and I started doing baby sitting for her. She started to tell me about Voodoo and started showing me things about Voodoo, including a couple of very spectacular spells that worked very emphatically.

**Interviewer:** You were open to this?

**Bonewits:** I was wide open to it. Voodoo is distinct from voodoon. Voodoo is the American magical system of

the Afro-American religions with all the religious matters stripped away. She showed me these magic spells she was doing and I observed that they worked spectacularly well. That really got me very curious about the topic and I started doing all kinds of reading in the library. Every book I could find on magic and then it got into psychic phenomenon and ESP, and then it got into anthropology and comparative religion. I just loved all this stuff. Finally when I went to UC Berkeley I started out as a psychology major, but the psychology department at that point was entirely under the control of the rat men. The Skinnerian behaviorists. If you couldn't do something with rats and pigeons it wasn't real, and therefore there was no reason for psychologists to have to learn about it. So I dropped out of the psychology program and started taking classes I wanted to take. Which were classes in folklore, mythology, comparative religion, and statistics so I could understand a little about parapsychology, the experimental design. Eventually I put it all together and got a special degree program in magick. And that's how I got my bachelor's degree in magick.

**Interviewer:** They had a program where you could design your own?

**Bonewits:** Yes, we are talking about the late 1960's when the whole idea of student-designed programs were just being invented, ours was one of the first at UC Berkeley.

**Interviewer:** Do they still do that?

**Bonewits:** They still have do it yourself programs but they had a sign up in the college of letters and sciences for several years after I graduated that said under no circumstances are any individual group majors using the words magick, witchcraft, sorcery or anything similar to be approved.

**Interviewer:** Appalled themselves did they?

**Bonewits:** Yes they did. Although the chancellor did tell me at one social event I met him at a year or so later that I was the first person in some ten or twenty years who had gotten UC Berkeley to get the college any publicity who wasn't either involved in making bombs or throwing them.

**Interviewer:** There's that. What about high school?

**Bonewits:** I got out of high school a year early. I took extra classes, went to summer school and got out as fast as I could. I hated high school. I was the typical weird dweeb/nerd/geek or whatever they're calling it this week. I had very few friends and very few people who you could hold an intelligent conversation with.

**Interviewer:** So how did you hit the Pagan movement?

**Bonewits:** When I was in UC Berkeley and in the process of studying all these things I stumbled over Gerald Gardner's books. I knew there was a Pagan Community. I had joined the SCA at some point in the late sixties and met some Witches and Pagans there, including Gwydion Pendarwyn, who did the first Pagan music album. I wasn't overly impressed

with the quality of their magickal technique. At one point I was living with a guy who was a graduate of Carleton College, in Northfield, Minnesota, which is where the reformed Druids of North America got started. He mentioned Druidism to me. All sorts of bells started going off in my head. I said gee this sounds really interesting; let's do some of this stuff. So we started up a grove in Berkeley of the Reformed Druids of North America. It was October 1969 I was ordained as a third order priest of the RDNA. I am coming up on the twenty-fifth anniversary of my ordination as a priest. I published my first book *Real Magick* in 1971. Foolishly, I did not immediately go into graduate school from undergraduate studies. I probably could have done it if I had gone immediately in. I wanted to take a break off from Academia for a while. So far that break has lasted about twenty-five years. I am hoping to go back and get my masters and PHD. The main reason I want to go back is so I will have access to the libraries, to the professors, the database and the online nets. When I went to Berkeley after the first few classes I took it became very clear to me that it was possible to get a good education at Berkeley; but it was going to be in spite of the system rather than because of it. I just started hanging out at the library doing the research I wanted to do. I would start visiting these professors, including ones I wasn't taking any classes from. They would sit there day after day with their doors open during their official hours open for visiting, and nobody ever going by to talk to them. They were delighted to have somebody come and talk who was really interested in learning their topic. I got to sit in on some of the graduate student seminars. I remember I had one professor, Fountainrose, now passed over, who was a scholar and gentleman. I took his course in Greek religion, and for my term paper I wrote an essay proving one of his pet theories was wrong. He gave me an A on the paper. I wrote a paper on Greek shamanism. What I proved was there were no Greek shamans. Shamanism was not part of the Greek religion, it was something that people on the fringes doing it from Thessaly and so forth, and it wasn't really integrated into the Greek religious worldview.

**Interviewer:** After you got involved in the Pagan religious world did you have the goal or urge to become a religious authority? Did you mean to become a public figure?

**Bonewits:** No, I just sort of stumbled into it. Publishing the book wasn't originally my idea. When I graduated and there was all this publicity in the newspapers about somebody getting a degree in magick. I got solicitations from three or four publishing houses that said would you like to do a book, we'll be happy to pay you money. I said, oh gosh, gee wiz! So I recycled some of my papers from the college classes, wrote a bunch of new material and published the book. All of the sudden I was an authority figure. Two years later I went out to Minneapolis/St. Paul and becoming editor of *Gnostica* magazine for

Llewellyn publications. In 73 Carl Westke held the first of his Gnosticons, which was a pagan festival. He invented the pagan festival. He did it more like a science fiction convention in a hotel. I went out there to do lectures for it. He invited me to move out there and take over as editor of his in-house magazine and said he wanted me to raise the quality of his magazine. I was there for about a year and a half and raised the quality of the magazine, we made it, what other people besides myself thought was the single best occult journal being published in English at the time. The academic standards and the quality of the writing in general. Unfortunately when you raise the quality of something you lower the readership. He wasn't making as much money as he wanted to make so he kept pressuring me to lower the standards again back to where they had been back when he had a lot of subscribers. So I quit, which was probably a damn foolish mistake.

**Interviewer:** Well, there are finances and there are principles.

**Bonewits:** I was young enough to think that the principles were so important that I could ignore the financial repercussions. It was basically publishing Gnostica that made me a national figure for the Pagan community. It was widely distributed. I published articles in there, which were extremely controversial at the time. I was the first person to publish an article doubting the antiquity of the Craft. I published a later version of that in Gnostica in which I analyzed everything we knew about the history of religion in general, and the history of Wicca in particular, and came to the conclusion that there was little or no evidence that this was actually an ancient religion, and a great deal of evidence that it was a modern one. The screams echoed from one ocean to the other. I got so much flak. I was not prepared for the degree of horrified response that I would get. I didn't understand at that point how emotionally important the myth of antiquity was for people in the Craft. I know that now but I didn't know it then. A whole bunch of people said "I am gonna fix that bastard Bonewits, I'm going to do research to prove he's wrong." A lot of people did the research and come to the conclusion, "Dammit he's right." So more people started publishing articles saying, well, no guys this really isn't ancient after all.

**Interviewer:** The idea of famtrads is popping up everywhere.

**Bonewits:** I really regret inventing that terminology. Over the course of the last 25 years I have met hundreds of people who claimed they were famtrad witches. Maybe one of them was telling the truth, possibly two. The rest were simply lying. Or they had been taught by people who were lying.

**Interviewer:** In another generation we will have famtrads.

**Bonewits:** My son is a famtrad witch. All of our kids are going to be famtrad pagans of one sort or another. The problem was that once you proved that Gardener either hadn't been initiated, or if he had been none of

the older stuff got into what he handed on, then you had a lot of people, first in Britain and then in the U.S. claiming that we have a witchcraft tradition that is older than Gardener. There had been a group called the Pentagram club, associated with Oxford and Cambridge who had been trying to recreate Witchcraft based on Margaret Murrays' ideas, at about the same time Gardener had been doing what he did. There also seem to be a few occultist who were imitating Murray when Murray's books came out. Its entirely possible that it was one of those Murrayite Witches that Gardener ran into. They told him what they had was ancient, he may have genuinely believed it was ancient. I don't think so, he was a classic scoundrel/guru. People who want to believe there is something ancient, they have that loophole. When I first talked about the concept of famtrads I very carefully defined it as people who belonged to families who had been underground occultists for many generations. And this generation they are calling themselves witches. At any event that's what made me a national figure. At the time I was involved with politics within the Reformed Druids of North American community. I thought what they had was a pagan religion. They are singing hymns of praise to the Earth Mother. They are invoking all of ancient Celtic Gods and Goddesses. They are referring to what they do as nature worship. It sure looks like a religion to me. So I was trying to get the members of the RDNA to accept the fact that what they were was a Neo-Pagan priestcraft. They didn't want to have any of that. They started out as meso-pagan Druids, believing that Druidism was a philosophy rather than a religion, and that you could apply it to any other religion that you happen to belong to. You could be a Christian and a Druid at the same time. I now have found out just this past year, after consulting with a young man at Carleton College who is organizing the International Druid archives, that across the street from Carleton College was St. Olaf's College, and the St. Olaf College library has a huge collection of Meso-Pagan Druid literature from the 1850's. [Actually only three books, and Carleton students rarely "crossed the Cannon River" to go to Olaf in the 60s.] I think that may be where the founders of the RDNA got some of their material. The founder claimed he was a famtrad Druid, he now refuses to answer letters from anyone who is pagan because he is an Anglican Priest now, and very embarrassed about being responsible for the RDNA. After several false starts trying to start new versions of the RDNA, including the Hasidic Druids of North America, I finally said the hell with it, the group I was with in Berkeley blew up to smithereens. I now know what happened because I know more about small group dynamics. At the time I just said I don't need this garbage anymore, I am tired of trying to be a scholar for a group that doesn't care about scholarship, I am tired of being a leader for a community that trashes it's leadership. I sold three quarters of my magical library, and bought computer books instead. I taught myself some marketable job

skills and I earned a living for a while. What an amazing change. The biggest shock was how much I had to suppress who I was to work in a corporate environment. Fortunately at that time, computer tekkies were still a weird enough minority, and a valuable enough minority they were allowed a great deal of slack, that they are not allowed today. The pleasantist surprise I got was how similar computer programming was to spellcasting. I actually got some very good ideas from computers that I could apply to ritual design. Eventually I got dragged by the scruff of my neck kicking and screaming into starting another Druid organization.

**Interviewer:** I call it the Gods kicking you. If you don't move in the direction they want, they won't send a memo, but they will kick you.

**Bonewits:** I have been trying to learn the Irish language for the last ten years and one of my Irish teachers is a PHD linguist, he casually mentioned one day, during one of our Irish lessons, an Irish for Pagans class. He said that if you were to combine the material from the Greek and Roman writers, the surviving Welsh and Irish literary traditions, the surviving Indo-European mythological material we have in the Carmina Gadelica and the new material from the surviving Pagan traditions from the Baltic territories, which were still dressing up in long white robes and going out to oak groves in WWII. If you combined all that together you could actually reconstruct 80 or 90 percent of the Old religions really had been in Europe. As opposed to the fantasy that most people think of in the old religion. I foolishly mentioned that quote to a Pagan I met in an Irish class in New York City, who was from Oklahoma he said well why don't we do it then. I said Nooooooo!!!! Finally I was persuaded by deities beyond my control, that I had to start it up again. This time I said fine, we are not going to try to rewrite anybody else's system we are just going to start something from scratch. We'll call it Our Own Druidism, that how we got the name ADF, Ar nDraiocht Fein. In Irish that means Our Own Druidism. That way nobody can claim that I am ripping them off or perverting their tradition. It started out as a network of 30 or 40 independent scholars inside the Pagan community. People who actually had academic degrees, people who had actually read a few serious scholarly book on it. As word of what we were doing spread, we had people wanting us to start doing ritual. They wanted Druid ritual. An then they wanted a training program for the clergy. An then they wanted a local grove structure. And the next thing we knew we had a full scale public Pagan church fund.

**Interviewer:** Where was this centered?

**Bonewits:** I was living in New York when we started it, and then I moved to Kansas City for a while doing a computer job, then I moved back to California for a while, then I moved back to New York again. One of the major pluses and minuses of ADF was that we became a national organization without going through the preliminary stages of local and regional.

**Interviewer:** Because of where the scholars were located?

**Bonewits:** Yes, the scholars were located all over the country. The people who were interested in what we were doing were located all over the country, and I was located all over the country. The central address kept changing a lot.

**Interviewer:** Did you have a personal life going on here?

**Bonewits:** Oh I had a personal life, an extremely personal life, going on during all of this. Not assisted by the relocations at all. I had enormous financial problems. I got in serious trouble with the IRS because I completely misunderstood income averaging, so I seriously underpaid my tax bill one year. They found me out ten years later and started hounding me for it, and I'm still paying that off.

**Interviewer:** I kind of always hoped the IRS would have to dump the database every seven or eight years.

**Bonewits:** No, oh no.. For people who they have flagged as being weirdoes, or politically suspect, they never throw it away. I was already in the FBI files because I was a medic at the Brooklyn Free Clinic during the demonstrations.

**Interviewer:** So, they already knew who you were.

**Bonewits:** So, they followed you around with it. They didn't hold that against us when we applied for tax-exempt status for ADF. We're a 501c3 organization. I was still earning my living through secular employment. Until last May when I became disabled and was no longer able to function in a corporate environment. It's hard to do type setting and layout in graphics work on a computer when you can only type thirty words a minute.

**Interviewer:** Can we inquire what happened?

**Bonewits:** I am one of the 10,000 or so unlucky Americans who consumed poisoned tryptophane products during 1989. That's why they took it off the market. It turned out that there was this one sleazy Japanese corporation that decided to improve their profit margin by using the new genetically engineered strain of bacteria to produce the raw tryptophane powder from the raw dairy product, which is how they do it, they take left over whey from other dairy processing activities and they use bacteria that munch the whey and excrete the tryptophane. I didn't realize I was consuming bacterial shit all this time, what the hell. That's their standard way of doing it. They bought a new genetically engineered strain of bacteria that was designed to produce more of the tryptophane faster. And they simultaneously decided that they would lower their filtration standards from human medicine level to animal medicine levels, since they also did veterinary products. They didn't mention that to anybody and in America vitamins are not controlled by the Food and Drug Administration. They sold tons of this stuff to American vitamin companies who then packaged it up and then sold it to their unsuspecting customers. So, thousands of people came down with this brand new disease. A few



hundred of them died, several hundred wound up in wheel chairs, or otherwise seriously paralyzed and the rest of us would up with a wide variety of multi-systemic damage. Tryptophane is a natural amino acid, its found in a lot of foods mostly in dairy products and turkey. Which is why when you have a big turkey dinner, everybody falls asleep. It was used as a treatment for insomnia, it was used as an anti-depressant because it did not affect your mental processes, unlike most of the anti-depressants that were available in the 70's and 80's. I've been taking tryptophane for years, on my doctor's advice. So were most of these other people who came down with this disease.

**Interviewer:** How did they discover what it was that was causing the problems?

**Bonewits:** A bunch of people starting coming down with really weird syndromes and the doctors couldn't figure it all out. And they thought a new disease was going on. They reported this to the CDC (Center for Disease Control) and eventually the correlation came through that all the people who had this disease had been consuming tryptophane products. And that was when the food and Drug Administration confiscated a bunch of tryptophane from the shelves of a few stores, examined it and found this chemical contaminate somewhat similar to heavy metal poisoning.

**Interviewer:** Does this give you more time to pursue other goals?

**Bonewits:** Yes and no. I'm becoming increasingly physically handicapped. This may be the last year I am able to do festivals. I used to drive all over the country going to pagan festivals. Now I can't drive more than 45 minutes without my hands and feet cramping up. I can't type at a keyboard for more than an hour at a time without having to take a break, a long break. I used to make my living as a computerized typesetter or a writer. It's going to be real hard to make a living as a writer if I can't type for more than an hour at a time. I can still do speaking, but how long that is going to last is in question because of the damage it does to my throat.

**Interviewer:** So computers are a real interest to you.

**Bonewits:** Primarily as a tool. I don't do a lot of programming. I play around with BASIC programs from time to time just as an intellectual puzzle. I also buy logic puzzle magazines and do those. I love computers, but I love them as a useful tool, not as an obsession in and of themselves. I'm getting on the nets now. I can't log on very often and it takes forever to read all the messages and write responses. I'm getting a lot of valuable feedback from people on ideas, throwing them out on the nets and seeing what happens. Now I'm on the PODS net, we have an ADF echo and a senior Druid echo, that is distributed by the Pagan Occult Distribution System. Otherwise know as PODS Net, for the tekkies in the audience its run through the FIDO echo net. I am also on GENI and I am also going to be on America On Line.

Possibly Compuserve and Prodigy as well. The problem is that they all cost money, and I can't get on these things unless people arrange free membership for me, which has been done for a couple of them. We just don't have the finances for me to be on all the nets all the time I would like to be on. I figure if I am on five or six other nets and I log on them every other week, I can at least keep in touch with people. People can send me questions, I can no longer read everything everybody says, but I can at least read the messages that people have aimed at me.

**Interviewer:** You mention the ADF. What is it?

**Bonewits:** ADF has turned out to be one of the most controversial groups in the country, mostly because of what I call the ten-year gap. Usually when I come up with an idea that horrifies the community, ten years later it's old hat and everybody knows it. ADF was one of the first Pagan traditions to talk about the need for excellence and the need for standards, qualifications for clergy, paying for clergy, keeping the bullshit quotient down to the absolute minimum in our community. Things that really offended people in our community, and still do. What I find fascinating by this is that even though people are offended by us that doesn't keep them from stealing our ideas.

**Interviewer:** Which is the definition of eclectic.

**Bonewits:** Right. What has happened is we have become a touchstone for comparison. We don't claim perfection and we have made zillions of mistakes, but because we started out with the intent with avoiding all of the old mistakes, that has given us the option to make new ones. We have learned a lot and we have published everything. We publish all of our mistakes, which is some thing that most groups don't do. Because of that it has been very educational, not just for us but for other people in the community. All of the sudden dozens of Pagan groups are talking about standards for Clergy, they are talking about improving the quality of their research. They are talking about the uses of liturgical languages, they are talking about paying their clergy. All this stuff that horrified people when we first brought it up, is now becoming the norm. So even though we are a small group we are dramatically influential nationwide.

**Interviewer:** How do you see the Druid organizations differ from the Pagan/Wiccan organizations.

**Bonewits:** There are two major areas of difference. The first is a theological difference, and the other area is a structural focus difference. Theologically most Wiccan groups are duotheistic or monotheistic. All the goddesses are blended into one goddess and all the gods are blended into one god, except for those groups who refuse to admit the existence of male deities. The god and goddesses are seen to be faces or aspects of the eternal female and the eternal male. Yin and the Yang. In the ADF the focus is very polytheistic. We insist on treating each god or goddess as the unique individual he or she may be. We will compare similarities of different deities but

for ritual work we never mix them up. The Wiccan groups who do a lot of drawing down discover they get better results when they treat a god or a goddess as an individual, rather than one vague marshmallow puff goddess or god. This is a practical discovery that people make after they do trance possession work for a while. The other major difference is a structure focus one. Wicca, as a religion, is small group oriented. Groups that are closed, exclusionary and private. The style of work that goes on in a Wiccan coven requires you to bring people in one at a time to screen them carefully to make sure that each new person that comes in will get along with the people who were there previously. Rituals are private and magical space is between the worlds, it's cut off from the rest of reality while doing the ritual. Druid focus, on the other hand, is on large-scale public groups. On being inclusionary, anyone who shows up for a ritual can do so as long as they behave themselves. The sacred area is open rather than closed. We don't cast circles for druid rituals, we consecrate or recognize the sacredness of a particular piece of ground. but the energy flow of a druid ritual is in and out of the area throughout the whole ritual. We don't cut ourselves off. Rather than being between the worlds, we consider ourselves in the center of all worlds. This has practical implications in that if somebody shows up late, or an adult has a child that has to be taken care of, they can enter or leave the ceremony at any point as long as they do so quietly. Druidic liturgy is specifically oriented towards large groups, and Wiccan liturgy is specifically oriented towards small groups. One of the things that Pagans have found out is that you cannot take the liturgical and magical techniques of a Wiccan circle that is designed to work with eight or nine people and make it work for two hundred people.

**Interviewer:** These days congregationalism is a hot topic.

**Bonewits:** How are you defining that term?

**Interviewer:** From a Wiccan perspective, as you have defined it, they are saying that there are masses of people, who want to attend but they all need to be in a group within the circle. And the idea of having people do ritual for the people somehow negates the idea of claiming the Gods individually. It sounds like what I am hearing that the Druidic design encompasses congregations.

**Bonewits:** Our theology says that anybody can talk to the gods, anytime they want to. That they don't need mediators. But, we also believe that creating, preparing and forming liturgy is a specific art and science that you need to have training in and that some people are going to be better at than others are - through training and inborn talent. And so we don't think that everybody should be clergy. We think that only the people who have a specific calling to be clergy should be clergy. We also recognize that there are many different types of clergy, other than leading an organization or running ceremonies. Our training system is defining, we have ministries. We have a healing ministry, we have a counseling ministry, we

have a divinatory ministry, we have a scholarly ministry, and we have a congregational ministry. These of the specialties people follow in the study program. The future of neo-paganism is very clearly going toward having large-scale public pagan churches. And that is going to happen with or without the input from the Wiccan community. They basically have a choice, they can scream and refuse to participate or they can accommodate and have their concerns brought into the process. Its happening anyway. What we've been finding is that when people start up an ADF grove or a CAW nest for that matter, being another publicly oriented pagan church, we might have a half a dozen people at their first meeting, and a dozen at the second, and twenty at the third meeting, and fifty at the fourth meeting. There is an enormous hunger in the America public for religion that is meaningful, and a sizable number of people are really looking for public paganism. And they do not have either the time or the inclination to go through the kind of intense, small group training that Wicca is designed to do. And yet we have had Wiccan priestesses who have claimed that we don't want to let all these riff raff in, and we've got to bring them in one at a time, in a traditional apprenticeship, outer court training system. And if there are not enough priestesses in town to accommodate all the people who want in, tough luck!

**Interviewer:** Insisting everyone be priestess?

**Bonewits:** Precisely. This is primarily Gerald Gardner's fault. Gerald Gardner took Martin Luther's principle of 'every man his own minister' and changed that to 'every witch his/her own priest/ess.' And when you got your first degree, as has been published in quite a few places, you are ordained as a priest or priestess at the same time you are ordained a witch. At your first degree. And that was why they had to invent the term high priest or priestess, because there were people who were functioning genuinely as clergy on a congregational level.

**Bonewits:** ADF is now ten years old, and we are just now having our first ordination to the priesthood coming up in September. Our first person who has worked her way all the way through the study program to the level where we will ordain her as a priestess.

**Interviewer:** There is the ongoing issue of professional or paid clergy. But I'm not sure if the new paganism provides adequate teaching, and this is an issue in such a rapidly expanding religion.

**Bonewits:** In our study we have program the provision that if you are in the first circle, and there happens to be a second circle member near you, we expect you to communicate with that second circle person.

**Interviewer:** Circles?

**Bonewits:** Our system is circles within circles. First circle is the absolute beginners. Second circle is sort of like deacons, people who decided they are serious about the organization and they want to start taking responsibility and work toward a leadership role. The

third circle is the first ring of genuine leadership. This is where we actually call people a healer, a bard, or a liturgist or a priest or priestess. If somebody is in the second circle, part of their second circle studies is advising any first circlers who live near them. And part of the training for the third circle is advising any second or first circlers who are near you. This makes that person not the sole source of advice, but one of them.

**Interviewer:** A self-correcting environment.

**Bonewits:** The other thing too, is that we have deliberately set up horizontal and diagonal communication as well as vertical communication within our structure. So that everybody can talk to everybody else, without having their message censored by somebody on a totem pole.

**Interviewer:** I was impressed on how available you were to everyone. I have been to festivals or other events where the important figures come around, but they won't speak to the masses. It seems to me that if you are out to work with the masses, then you ought to be part of that group.

**Bonewits:** It really depends a lot on the personal, intellectual style of the leadership. Some people are really uncomfortable talking to beginners. And if they are (uncomfortable), then it's just as well that they don't, because they won't do a very good job. Some people feel very comfortable talking to people from a variety of levels. It just happens that I am one of them.

**Interviewer:** Is it energy too?

**Bonewits:** How much psychological energy they have to put into it, yes. This is one of the reasons why we set up our study program for people to pick specialties. Depending on what their specialties is what kind of interactions they will have with the other members. If someone's specialty is scholarship, then they are probably going to only interact with other scholars most of the time, unless they are teaching a class in a local grove.

**Interviewer:** So, social skills may not be their specialty.

**Bonewits:** Right

**Interviewer:** I think that delivering information is so important, but it requires such a variety of social skills that make it work.

**Bonewits:** Unfortunately, as you probably know, knowing something and being able to teach it well are not the same thing.

**Interviewer:** Every tradition has its own flavor, if people are interested in your organization where would you recommend they start to see if there is a fit.

**Bonewits:** Well, the first thing to do is we recommend people call up our 800 number, 1 - 800 - DRUIDRY, or they can send \$3.00 and a self addressed stamped envelope to our mailing address, and we will send out an information packet. Which will include the latest issue of our national newsletter.

**Interviewer:** This is great.

**Bonewits:** People dial it up and they get a one-minute spiel on what ADF is and is not, and then we tell them to send three dollars to that address. So, they can do it directly or indirectly.

**Interviewer:** You see a lot of things about witches and pagans, witches being such a phrase for the media, do you get a lot of generic interest or does it tend to be people more informed about druidism?

**Bonewits:** I would say that about 2/3 to 3/4 of the members of ADF are also Wiccans. They are either practicing Wicca now or have in the past. A lot of people joined ADF because they were looking for a structured system of training that would give them the well rounded body of skills that they felt they needed and they didn't think they were getting from whatever tradition they were studying in. We also have a lot of people who were informed enough and experienced enough to realize that the small group techniques of Wicca weren't working for larger groups and they wanted to learn appropriate techniques of liturgy and teaching and so forth for the larger groups that they finding coming to their doorstep.

**Interviewer:** You use the phrase liturgy. Would you characterize that more as a presentation, sacred drama, how does it differ from what they try to do?

**Bonewits:** Liturgy specifically refers to worship ceremony. Especially in regards to public worship ceremonies. The word originally means literally public works. Liturgos. There were all kinds of public works you could do in ancient Greece. Springing the money for a ceremony was one of them. And after a while that took on the connotation that liturgy was primarily arranging to have sacrifices done for a particular deity. And throwing the big communal meal that came afterwards. And the liturgists were the people who had enough money they could afford to pay all the expenses themselves. Does this sound familiar? And then when the Christian came along they chose to use the word liturgy to refer to their central religious ceremony. The mass. And the protestants sometimes still call what they do liturgy and sometimes they call it something else. Liturgy I use as a generic term for worship ritual. It involves magical, and theatrical, and psychological and mundane aspects to create a multimedia experience that enable people to have a closer connection with the divine, however defined by a particular tradition.

**Interviewer:** In that system, are the observers responsible for raising energy, for feeding energy?

**Bonewits:** Yes, everybody participates in raising energy in druid ritual. We have a standard liturgical, which is basically an outline that all of our local groves use. That way people traveling from one grove to another grove will know what to expect. And it fits with the general cosmology and theology that we are developing in our particular tradition. But there is an

enormous amount of elbow room in how they interpret the liturgical outline.

**Interviewer:** My thought, is that since I came from a Wiccan background that you had to have an encompassing circle, within which you contained energy.

**Bonewits:** You don't need to contain energy.

**Interviewer:** It's an intriguing idea, because coming in and out of circle causes special issues.

**Bonewits:** What we do in ADF ritual we consecrate sacred space, or in some cases we reaffirm to ourselves that the space is already sacred, we reconstruct the cosmos, which is a standard thing in world liturgy according to our cosmology. That will vary from group to group, according to whether they are doing a Celtic focus, or a Norse focus, or a Vedic focus, or a Slavic focus, they all have the same cosmology, but with different emphases on it. So you reconstruct the universe according to that cosmology by inviting or invoking entities associated with the different worlds of that ethnic group's cosmology. Then we usually invite the three kindreds, the deities, the ancestors and the nature spirits. We do a placating sacrifice to the outsiders, spirits of discord and chaos. We do that outside of the area, where most of our work is going on. And, we get people into a group mind primarily through the use of music and song. Dance, when we are in a good place for dancing, and when we are with a group of people who know how to dance. Not holding hands and stumbling around in a circle. Which is what most pagan dance is. Then we invoke a specific god or goddess as the special guest for the occasion. And offer our sacrifices. And the sacrifices in druid ritual are artistic performances. We offer songs, poems, sacred dance, ritual drama.

**Interviewer:** Not so much a sacrifice, but an offering.

**Bonewits:** They are all offerings, yes. What we do is people make offerings to the god or goddess of the occasions and then we have a prayer in which we take all the energy which has been generated by peoples' perceptions of these artworks and offer that as our sacrifice to the god or goddess of the occasion.

**Interviewer:** I think sacrifice has such connotations.

**Bonewits:** I know it does, I know it does. Then you get a return flow of energy from the deity, or deities and you then use that for generic blessings on the congregation or for a rite of passage or for some kind of spell that needs to be done. And at that point you don't need to raise any more energy cause you've already got stuff from the deity. And then we wind it all down.

**Interviewer:** To be technical, about that piece of it. How do you see that energy? Energy invoked in the deity, is it because the deity is us and we put the energy there? Is it an outside source that has its own existence separate from the energy that we impart to it? Is it part of the great human unconscious? All of the above?

**Bonewits:** Yes. All of the above. We don't insist on monotheism..

**Interviewer:** There's a good word! Monotheism.

**Bonewits:** Monotheism. Ah, yes. I think Sam Wagor or Paul Slee came up with that term, I forget whom. It's the underlying concept to all of Western civilization that there has to be a single best answer or a single best solution to any problem. We use multi-model approaches, we are polytheist, we are pluralism.

**Interviewer:** Does this work in a practical sense?

**Bonewits:** Yes it does. What we generally do is after we have given the sacrifice of energy to the central deities of the occasion, we take it back from them, we get a return blessing from them which goes into a cup of the waters of life. We usually have one chalice of whiskey and one chalice of spring water. People can sip from either or both. Sometimes we do a meal but that messes up the pacing of a ritual so we don't usually. This is equivalent to the cakes and wine in a Wiccan ritual. What it does is it takes the divine energy and gives you a physical symbol of taking it into yourself. That is what communion is for. Then people are filled with divine energy and then we do our invocations and our magical work so that everybody is going to get as much energy as they can handle. Then we either absorb it to ourselves for personal blessings and healing or if we have a rite of passage that needs to be done like an ordination or child blessing or funeral or if there is a particular spell that has to be done, we then do it, using standard magical techniques within the aesthetic context of what we have been doing in the ritual. When that is over we drain off the excess energy and we say thank you to everybody we invited and we unwind the ritual. It's all very sensible if you sit down and look at it.

**Interviewer:** I see people using the cakes and wine as refreshment now that the ritual is over.

**Bonewits:** Right, part of the problem is that Wiccan magical technology was real confused, Gerald Gardner didn't understand a whole lot about magick, although he belonged to a lot of magickal groups. Some groups used the cakes and wine as a grounding method, and some used it as a reception of blessings from the Gods method, and some use it as a charging us up so we can now do the spell method. I think from a logical point of view it makes more sense in the latter context, that the deities give you their blessings from the cakes and wine and you can then cast your spell. You shouldn't have to raise more energy after the cakes and wine to cast a spell. You should have gotten those things charged up enough. You do your cone of power, your energy raising before the cakes and wine. You do that as a way of giving your love and your energy to the God and Goddess, they then give you the return flow which you then use for magick.

**Interviewer:** When you are in an open circle and people come and go you don't find that draining because you don't anticipate it to be.

**Bonewits:** Right, if all of the sudden somebody lands a hot air balloon on the other side of the meadow and everybody's attention is distracted, fine that will cause a problem. But well done public ritual does music and song and poetry and drama that holds people's attention and keeps it, it keeps everybody thinking more or less along the same lines for the duration of the ritual. That is how you get a group mind.

**Interviewer:** Let's get away from the details and out to the broader picture. Where do you see the Pagan movement and particularly the Druidic movement going in the next five years. Is it expanding rapidly?

**Bonewits:** Oh yes, we have been around for ten years now, we have fourteen chartered groves. And those are legal branch churches of the corporation.

**Interviewer:** What size are the groves?

**Bonewits:** The newer groves have three or four people in them. The larger groves have 20 to 30 people in them. Once the groves have been around a year or two they tend to have 50 to 100 people showing up for the high days celebrations. Every grove is required to provide publicly accessible worship. We started out thinking that grove would be planted and some would flourish and some would die off, and some would merge and some would split. We expected change and we even wrote into the grove organizers handbook how to handle change. We have a specific manual that we give people who are organizing a grove, how to run a grove, what specific things you can do, helpful advice for your early years.

**Interviewer:** Do you have standards or requirements for people before they can start a grove?

**Bonewits:** No. Any three members can start a grove, any one or two members can start a proto-grove. We have forms that they fill out, we have questionnaires that are mostly for us to assist them in what they are doing. We basically give the groves an enormous amount of local autonomy; provide that they don't violate the national bylaws, provided that they don't violate basic policy.

**Interviewer:** How extensive are these by-laws?

**Bonewits:** There are a lot of them, you need them for any corporation that is doing as many things as we are doing. It's about eight pages of small print typesetting. In a large part, we wrote the by-laws the way we did for the benefit for the IRS. Cause the IRS expects you to have certain by-laws if they are going to treat you as a real church. Most of those expectations are reasonable and practical, and some of them that aren't are still understandable as they relate to Christian groups, which is what the IRS is mostly thinking in terms of. Most of the by-laws that affect groves directly, there are about 10 or 11 of them, are pretty damn small. Groves have to call

themselves by a name that includes the initials ADF somewhere, and they have to use that in all their flyers, advertising and whatnot, groves have to provide public or semipublic rituals eight times a year minimum. They have to have some kind of meeting at least twice every lunar month. We have a good neighbor policy in every grove, they have to contact the police department, contact the local interfaith council, contact the local religion editors and the local media ahead of time, long before any problems develop. Pre-emptive publicity. This is something I am recommending to the people in Colorado Springs who are having problems with the right-wingers there. Go for pre-emptive publicity, so by the time the Christian right gets around to attacking us directly, we already established credibility and friendly relationship with the local media. So they will come to us and ask our response before they print something. Our meaning the Pagan community.

**Bonewits:** So the rules for starting a local grove is relatively simple and easy, beyond those rules we try to give each grove the maximum amount of autonomy possible. Every grove has to do a public works project every seasonal quarter, some kind of secular, not magickal, public works project. Planting trees, adopting a highway, working for a weekend in a soup kitchen, working for a suicide hot line. Something physical, mundane and secular that shows the rest of your community that you are part of it. That you are not a bunch of weirdos hiding away being separate. That you are taking responsibility as a citizen of your town to contribute to your community.

**Interviewer:** So what do you think you'll be doing in the future? Do you write because you love it or because it was something that needed to be done?

**Bonewits:** Provided I can find ways around my various physical handicaps, I will continue writing and speaking. I would like to concentrate for the next few years on books, but we are having severe financial disabilities, I am earning a third of what I was earning before I went on disability. Those checks will vanish in September. I am involved in a lawsuit with the Japanese manufacturers and that is supposed to bring in a chunk of money sometime real soon now. Sometime in the next year or two I will probably get a chunk of money but that has to be invested so I can live on it the rest of my life. I may never be cured from this particular disease, I may get better, I may get worse. No way of knowing. I don't make a salary as the ArchDruid of ADF. ADF doesn't bring in enough money to pay me a salary. At one point the ADF board voted to pay me a stipend of 300 dollars a month, later we had to borrow some money to pay off some debts and I suggested we suspend the stipend until we had paid off all of our debts. As in many organizations, the board of directors is paying large amounts of the expenses of the organization out of their own pockets. We are trying to get beyond it but we are having to fight tooth and nail this oh so convenient anti-money attitude in the Pagan

community. This anti-money attitude of the craft, which was created in 1957 when Gerald Gardner wrote the ancient craft laws, was started because when they canceled the Witchcraft Act in 1951 and shortly thereafter Gardner wrote his first book. They replaced it with the Fraudulent Mediumship Act, which made it a crime to ask for money for psychic readings, so Gerald, when he wrote the ancient craft laws, wrote in a law saying you can't charge money for using the art. People have taken that as meaning you can't charge for anything vaguely connected with the Witchcraft community. It provides a convenient excuse for parasites, which is the blunt way to put it. People today were born in non-Pagan religions, even the folks who were born in famtrads. They were at least surrounded by non-Pagan religions and they are terrified that some of our people will become televangelists. Or at least we say we are and that provides the perfect excuse for freeloaders. The fact of the matter is that the average neo-Pagan in American is not poor. The average neo-Pagan has a middle class, white collar or blue-collar job. They have plenty of money for science fiction books, comic books, video tapes, computers and computer games, they have plenty of money to go to science fiction conventions, go to the SCA or whatever their priority happens to be. The fact that the Pagan community has been reluctant to put money into it's own religious needs is more a sign of peoples priorities than a sign of peoples poverty. Even people who are flat broke can be putting in hours volunteering to help. And some do. Most of our groves in the ADF charge dues, and we have encouraged them to do so because you have expenses running a grove.

**Interviewer:** What is the population of the ADF?

**Bonewits:** It is difficult to say with precision, we have some three hundred members in the computer base, we have 250 to 300 who subscribe to our national journal, and there is an overlap of about a 150 people who are both members and subscribers.

**Interviewer:** What about the people who just come to see - to see if its right for them? Is that a regular population?

**Bonewits:** That's a constantly changing number. People come to a ritual or two and decide if its their cup of tea. If they like it they come back. If they come back several times the groves will say OK, why don't you join?

**Interviewer:** Is that population responsive to the media?

**Bonewits:** Media attention? Oh sure, we encourage local grove sponsors to advertise in metaphysical book stores, at local colleges and universities at coffee houses, places where you'd think you'd find someone who is simpatico. We don't require them to advertise in the local newspaper, or radio, or through the local college radio station. Depending on how the communication fluctuates is how many new people will show up. But because we have a standardized liturgical design after a few months of doing the

ritual you can handle a sudden influx of 20 or so people and it doesn't change the ritual. You know what to do when that many people show up. We try very hard to make sure that the people doing this know what the hell they're doing. A lot, one of the things that has been happening with the establishment of groves that have been around for several years now, is that if somebody starts a new grove near them, they get adopted as a sister grove. And the more experienced liturgists go out and help them with their first few meetings and invite their members to attend theirs.

**Interviewer:** You mentioned CAW are you associated with them in some way?

**Bonewits:** Not officially, I am a member of CAW and Otter's a member of ADF. We just gave each other lifetime memberships. We exchange publications, we sit and talk on the phone a lot, myself and other members of the board of CAW. We have a lot in common because we're public pagan churches, focused on that particular part of what the pagan movement is doing and needing to do.

**Interviewer:** From what I know of CAW, which admittedly is not much, they don't have the same type of structure, education and background and common liturgical forms.

**Bonewits:** They are more anarchistic than we. They have the ideals, but they don't have the detailed instructions to their membership. They prefer to let their membership experiment, invent and see what they come up with.

**Interviewer:** Is there anything else you would like to cover, something important we didn't get to?

**Bonewits:** I think I've covered most of the stuff. I have met several people here at this gathering, which has been a lot of fun, who said that they are interested in starting groves in Denver, and Colorado Springs and so forth. So, people should keep an eye open for announcements of new groves in the mountain states.

**Interviewer:** We have the 1-800-DRUIDRY number and they would have the listing there of what is local?

**Bonewits:** What we do is we will send people the latest issue of the newsletter and the newsletter lists all of the local groves and the proto-groves and of the local guilds and SIGs we have. So people can then start writing.



## SECTION 2: SERVICES IN HIS MEMORY

### 9 Ways to Honor Isaac's Passing

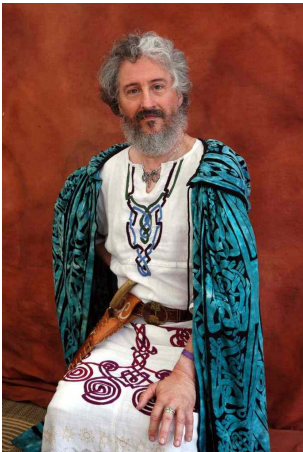
By Mike the Fool

1. Be the best Druid that you can be.
2. Assist Phaedra (see below) with the enormous debts of Isaac's illness and maintaining his estate and legacy. (see [www.neopagan.net](http://www.neopagan.net) )
3. Read this issue of the Druid Inquirer as only the first step in the exploration of all things Isaac.
4. Buy his books (see below in Section 3) and really read them.
5. Buy his tapes or see his online videos to remember his voice.
6. Try some of his NRDNA or ADF liturgies and songs.
7. Remember Isaac at Samhain, he was fond of whiskey.
8. Support your local priest/ess financially, they need it.
9. Plant a tree or raise a stone in his honor.



#### How to Assist Isaac's Estate and Widow

Go to [www.neopagan.net](http://www.neopagan.net) and make a PAYPAL contribution to Isaac to help Phaedra cover his medical and funeral bills.



#### Grey School of Wizardry announces: Isaac Bonewits Memorial Scholarship

The Grey School of Wizardry currently offers two scholarships: the "Hermes Scholarship" for adults and the "Pay It Forward Scholarship" for youth. These scholarships are open to pretty much anyone, new student or established. The only requirement is that they fill out a couple of forms and make sure the proper folks get copies of them.

Grey School also has an annual "Students of the Year" recognition, made each year upon the Aug, 1 anniversary of the School's opening. The Youth Student and Adult Student of the Year Awards are given to two Grey School students who exemplify academic attitude and

achievement in the Grey School.



Noted Wizard and ADF ArchDruid Isaac Bonewits, who passed from the material plane due to cancer on August 12, 2010, was a longtime personal friend of Grey School founder and Headmaster Oberon Zell.

Born in 1949, Isaac graduated from the University of California-Berkeley in 1970 with a Bachelor of Arts in Magic, becoming the only person to have ever received a degree in Magic from an accredited university. His epochal first book, *Real Magic*, was published in 1971, and Oberon subsequently contacted him, beginning a lifelong friendship. They first met at the 1972 "LA-Con" World Science Fiction Convention in Los Angeles.

From 1973-'75 Isaac was editor of Llewellyn's *Gnostica News* in Minneapolis. At the Llewellyn-sponsored *Gnostica Aquarian Festival* over Fall Equinox of 1973, Oberon was a keynote speaker, and it was there he met his soulmate, Morning Glory. At the *Gnostica Spring Witchmoot* over Easter weekend of 1974, Isaac performed the rites of handfasting (marriage) for Oberon and Morning Glory. When Isaac married his second wife, Selene, in 1978, Oberon and Morning Glory conducted the ceremony. And Oberon also performed Isaac's handfasting to his fifth wife, Phaedra, in 2004.

As a member of the Grey Council, Isaac advised on the Grimoire for the Apprentice Wizard, and thus was instrumental in the founding of the Grey School. Isaac was devoted to scholarship, environmentalism, social justice, magickal lore and Pagan history. He coined the phrase, "Never again the Burning!" and his motto in all things was "Why not excellence?"

In conversations with Oberon at Starwood in late July of 2009, Isaac expressed his desire to join the Grey School faculty. He and Oberon made arrangements for students of Isaac's closing "Real Magick School" to transfer to the Grey School where he would continue to teach and pass on his prodigious knowledge. Sadly, this was never to be, as shortly thereafter he was diagnosed with colon cancer, to which he eventually succumbed.

Subsequent to Isaac's passing, Tralfeyn, the Grey School's Resource Administrator and Master Technomage, proposed the addition of a new scholarship to be awarded to the Students of the Year, both youth and adult, good for tuition of one calendar year. The School Administration agreed to name this scholarship "The Isaac Bonewits Memorial Scholarship" as a fitting tribute to one of the greatest Wizards of our time, to honor and remember both the man and his accomplishments.

Therefore the Grey School of Wizardry is proud to announce the first awarding of "The Isaac Bonewits Memorial Scholarship" to youth student of the Year Paw Cub and adult student of the year Drakonya. Congratulations to both of you!

Grey School of Wizardry

www.GreySchool.com <<http://www.greyschool.com/>>

<<http://GreySchool.com>>

Vivere bene est vindicata optima

Oberon Zell-Ravenheart

Headmaster

Grey School of Wizardry, PO Box 758, Cotati, CA 94931

[http://www.plaxo.com/click\\_to\\_call?lang=en&src=jj\\_signature&To=707%2D795%2D](http://www.plaxo.com/click_to_call?lang=en&src=jj_signature&To=707%2D795%2D)

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Tel 707-795-8047 Fax 707-795-9210

# Suggestions for a Druid Funeral

By Isaac Bonewits 1976

Thanks be to the Gods that we have not yet had any need for performing a funeral or other memorial service for a member of any Reformed Druid movement (Not true as of 1995 –Michael Scharding) But sooner or later we will have need of doing this and it is well that such matters should be considered ahead of time.

Rather than attempting to write out a service, let us instead consider various ideas that will help an Arch-Druid/ess or solitary Druid/ess to construct a ritual service that will have full meaning for all parties concerned.

Reformed Druids have a variety of beliefs and nonbeliefs concerning the matter of Death and an afterlife. It is best to attempt to find out what the deceased's attitudes were, so as to make the service coincide with his or her death, someone in the Grove should have made it a point to inquire about the person's wishes and beliefs. If, however, the death was sudden, indirect and compassionate inquiries should be made of the deceased's family and friends.

Any attempt to perform a Druid funeral services for a person whose family disapproves of Druidism will be met with disaster. In such cases, it is best to hold a memorial service without the presence of the deceased or the surviving family.

If, however, the family is willing to let the wishes of the deceased be followed, and allow Druid services to be performed, a number of customs may be practiced.

Perhaps the oldest of these is a Wake. The members of the Grove, as well as any other family and friends who wish, gather together and hold a party. All present get intoxicated, cry, talk about the deceased and share their sorrow. The life story of the deceased is told and appreciated. His or her habits, tastes, accomplishments and goals are recounted and his or her role in the Grove reconsidered. If possible, the coffin within which the deceased is to be buried should be placed in a position of honour during the wake.

The deceased may be buried in the middle of a grove of trees and an oak sapling planted above the gravesite. This may be done with ashes as well, should the body have been cremated.

If the deceased shall have expressed a wish to recycle properly, an attempt should be made to prevent embalming, as this process makes it very difficult for the body to return to the soil. About the only way to escape universal embalming laws is for your Grove to become a legal religious body of some sort, buy land out in the country and build a small temple. That way, you may then have, in most cases the right to run a "church cemetery" for your members right next to your temple or church building. Private church cemeteries are frequently exempt from the state laws pushed through by the funeral industry. You will then have to arrange your own transportation for the body and see that it is buried within twenty-four hours.

If you do buy land for a Grove cemetery, it might be nice to plant your first Druid/ess at the top of a hill and subsequent Druids in a circle around the spot, thus creating an oak grove, each tree of which shares the essence of a past member of the Grove. If bodies are buried, it is necessary to make sure that local wells and streams will be in no danger of contamination.

The deceased may wish to be buried along with his or her Druid robes and tools. Even if you are unaware of the deceased's feelings in the matter, it may be taken for granted that any Druid/ess who was also an occultist will wish to be buried with his or her favorite magical tools.

If a stone monument is to be put up instead of a tree being planted, a menhir carved with the deceased's name, rank and most salient characteristic would be appropriate.

Some Druids may wish to be cremated and have their ashes scattered over the soil in the woods or local fields. In most states, this would have to be done surreptitiously, since it has a tendency to be illegal.

If an actual religious ceremony is held, it should follow the wishes of the deceased as far as they may be known. Probably the Libation prayer from the Order of Common Worship would be the most appropriate as a theme: "To Thee we return this portion of Thy bounty, O our Mother, even as we must return to Thee."

If the deceased expressed an intention of returning as soon as possible in a new body, all newborn children conceived after the date of the death should be watched closely for the next several years, to see if any give evidence of being the party in question. They should not, however, be given the deceased's name (though all the children in the Grove should be familiar with it) unless they specifically ask for it to be given them.

At the next Samhain celebration, a plate might be laid out for the spirit of the deceased. The deceased should be specifically mentioned in the day's service and his or her memory honored.

One year from the date of the death, a memorial party could be held. This should be as cheery as possible and mark the end of the mourning period.

Ideas on at least one Druidic attitude towards Death and dying may be found in The Epistle to the Myopians. But all Druids should meditate upon the subject of Death (especially their own) from time to time, especially at Samhain, and should endeavor to see to it that the other members of the Grove know their wishes in these matters.

Third Order Druids and Druidesses who write funeral services are encouraged to send them to the other members of the Council of Dalon Ap Landu and to the Editor of The Druid Chronicles, so that others may be inspired with ideas when it becomes their turn for this somber task.

# Pomona Memorial August 21, 2010

This service was held in the Unitarian church in Pomona NY, not far north of New York City, where Phaedra and Isaac were members of the local CUUPS chapters. It was set in a secluded grove, with lots of glass windows and a wooden floor, quite lovely. About 55 guests were present and the center of the room was an elaborate altar, for which I've included some pictures at the end. Isaac had been married 5 times in succession, and his last widow, Phaedra, was the mistress of ceremonies, but the previous 4 spouses were also present, as was Isaac's only known child, Arthur Lipp-Bonewits, who at 20, had a striking resemblance to Isaac.

Prelude: Recorded Music from Isaac's CD, ending with "Into the West" by Annie Lennox

Call to circle: Drums

Chant: Hoof and Horn 3x

We all come from the Goddess,  
And to Her we shall return  
Like a drop of rain,  
Flowing to the ocean.  
Hoof and horn, hoof and horn, all that dies shall be reborn  
Corn and grain, corn and grain,  
All that falls shall rise again.  
by Z. Budapest/Ian Corrigan

With this and any other chance, Phaedra or other song leader will sing through once. Other should join in for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> repetitions (unless others join in spontaneously)

Pagan Chant: Phaedra

Statement of Welcome and Purpose from Phaedra

Welcome to the Earth Mother  
Welcome to the Gate Keeper

Spoken Tributes:

Michael Scharding (RDNA)  
Bill Seligman (Hermes Council)  
Deobrah Lipp (former Priestess)

Praise Offerings:

Poem by Dagonet Dewr, read by Michael Brown

Hymn to Bridget: sung by Roberta Lipp

Filk Song: Arthur Lipp-Bonewits

Others invited to share a song or a brief memory

Call to the 3 realms to guide him on his journey

Fire as Beacon to guide his way

Waters of Memory, and tears

The Apple Tree of the Dead

A toast with the Waters of Life

Voice 1: Of what does the Earth-Mother give, that we may know the continual flow and renewal of life?

Voice 2: The waters of life

Voice 1: From whence do these waters flow?

Voice 2: From the bosom of the Earth-Mother, the ever-changing All-Mother

Voice 1: And how do we honor this gift that causes life?

V2: By partaking of the waters of life

V1: Has the earth Mother given forth of Her bounty?

V2: She has.

V1: Then give me the waters!

(consecration of waters of life by Michael Scharding)

O Dalon Ap Landu, by thy seven-fold powers, three ways of day and one of night, come down into these waters, and consecrate them, join our minds in hearts in peace and meditation.

Closing the Gates

Farewell to the Gate Keeper

Farewell to the Earth Mother

Closing Chant: Mother of the Mysteries by Phaedra

Mother of the Mysteries, Healer of the Heart,

Whether we're together or ten thousand miles apart,

Your love it is a circle and a circle never ends;

Your whole world is a temple where we'll meet to sing again.

-By Christa Heiden Landon

Postlude: Recorded Music "Into the West"



Memorial Altar with the statue of the Earth Mother resting on Isaac robe, a drum, his sickle to the left, apples, a little harp, his smoking pipe, ogam bag, tarot flyer. The base of the table was ringed with copies of all the books he has ever published.



Searles O' Dubhain of Summerland, Ellen Hoppman of OWO, Margot Adler (Drawing Down the Moon), and Domi O'Brien of Keltria; just a few of the luminaries at the memorial service.



A bit of a blurry shot with Domi and Ellen doing the invocation of Mannan during the service, but giving a better feel for the Unitarian meeting space, it's openness and the attending guests around the altar.

# SUMMERLAND MEMORAL SERVICE, AUGUST 19, 2010

## **Summerland Memorial Service:**

Video is now available from the Memorial Service that took place at Summerland Festival on August 19, 2010. These are shorter videos of sections of the rite. We hope to have the full ritual available in the next few weeks. The videos may be seen at <http://www.adf.org/rituals/videos/isaac-memorial/index.html>.

Blessings,  
Kirk Thomas

### **ADF Memorial Order of Ritual**

The folk process in silence to the entrance to the Nemeton.  
Robb placates the Outdwellers  
The Folk process in silence into the Nemeton and are seated.  
Jessie invokes the Earth Mother (all sing "Oh, Earth Mother")  
Melissa invokes Brighid for Inspiration and leads "Hymn to Brighid"  
Sue invokes and connects the Well to the Cosmos  
Michael invokes and connects the Fire to the Cosmos  
AJ invokes and connects the Tree to the Cosmos  
Emerald and Maria Stoy purify the space and the folk  
Raven, Carrion and Chris invoke the Gatekeeper (Manannan) and open the Gates  
Skip invokes the Nature Spirits  
Kirk invokes the Shining Ones, and makes special offerings to Brighid and Dagda  
Fox invokes the Ancestors  
Ian invokes the Ancient Wise (including asking them to embrace Isaac with open arms?)  
Clergy lead everyone in singing "We Call Through the Mists")

Praise Offerings to Isaac Section -

- Kirk does a short Intro. about the Praise Offerings section
- The men lead the folk in singing "Hymn to the Morrigan"
- Eulogies - Ian, then Skip, then Sue
- The women lead the folk in singing "Into the West"

Kindred Thank you's section

- Ian thanks Isaac for creating ADF, thanks the Ancient Wise
- Fox thanks the Ancestors
- Kirk thanks the Shining Ones, Brighid and Dagda
- Skip thanks the Nature Spirits

Raven, Carrion and Chris thank Manannan and close the Gates  
Jessie thanks the Earth Mother  
All sing "Be Pagan Once Again"



## **RDNA SERVICE for ISAAC**

*Currently there are only a few known departed Druids in the RDNA. Since 2004, any departed Reformed Druid can be inducted into the 10<sup>th</sup> Order. In order of departure so far they are: Dannie Hotz (CL) -Matriach, Lawrence Gold (CL), Auvinen Clark (TC), Beth Harlow (AK), Emmon Bodfish (LO), Robert Larson (CL, BK), Norman Nelson (CL), and Isaac Bonewits (BK). As with other ancestors and departed friends, the members of the 10<sup>th</sup> Order are now often addressed at Samhain, esp. the first one after their death.*

### **Pre-Emptive Ordination of Tenth Order Druids Order of Danu**

By Stephen Crimmins, Carleton 2004  
Modified for Isaac by Mike the Fool, August 23 2010

#### **The Invocation**

O Danu, come forth too us and guide this service. O Danu, forgive these three errors that are due to our human limitations:  
Thou art everywhere, yet we worship thee in the grove of the Earth;  
Thou art without form, yet we worship thee as Danu;  
Thou hast already consecrated our brother to your service, yet we insist on ordaining him to your service again;  
O Danu, forgive us these three errors that are due to our human limitations.  
O Mother, cleanse our minds and hearts and prepare us for meditations.

#### **INCANTATION**

Robert Larson was a '65 graduate of Carleton College, who introduced Isaac Bonewits to Reformed Druidism at Berkeley. Robert preceded Isaac to the Summerlands in 2004, in an equally difficult health crisis and in abject poverty. I hope you could read one of Robert's poems, which Isaac loved enough to put in the Druid Chronicles (Evolved), which Robert helped him to publish, showing Isaac the tricks of the trade in self-publishing.

Leabhar Toirdhealbhagh  
(Translates as "Book of Torvel")  
(By Robert Larson 1967)

I

The moonlight shining on the path  
Blinding  
The sister stars  
Brightening the way  
Dimming  
Foot falls heavy  
And raises dust in a  
Shimmering  
Cloud  
Of many colors.

Softly go, wanderer  
Where the wood calls  
And lives.

Grass whispers  
And trees walk  
As you go your contemplative way  
Brain empty, thinking  
Body dead, living  
Walking  
Unfeeling.

Tree roots move  
Snakes trying  
To entwine your feet  
And hold you forever  
Wanting you, loving you  
Wishing to talk  
If you dare listen  
But you will walk.

The owl hoots his song  
Of loneliness  
And the terror of the woods  
Frightening you  
Sending you running  
Happily, joyfully  
Fearfully  
Tearfully  
Through the forest  
Seek then to escape  
The tale that is told.

The grass damp beneath  
You  
Sparkles in the moon  
Stops wets and cools your feet  
Making you joyful  
And cold  
Feet numb from damp  
Frigid  
Fighting the moonlight trees  
Continue on out  
Out to the city  
The grass hastens you away  
You are not ready yet to stay  
The woods seem to say.

II

Dew drips heavy  
Wets the ground  
Sparkling dew  
Shimmering in the moonlight  
Reflecting color schemes  
Prismatic.

Moonbows  
Sparkle from  
Dripping dew  
Bright and joyful  
Breaking the moonlight  
Healing.

Rejoicing in it, he wend  
His way  
Out from the city down below  
Up to the fields  
Where flowers grow  
To the thicket  
Full of life  
Through the forests  
Across the lea  
Seeing all there is to see.

March forward, stepping lightly  
Trampling life underfoot  
Apologizing and smiling  
Pardon my clumsiness in going  
Up to the ancient oak  
Caressing, talking  
Adoring  
Age untold, oh so old  
And wise wonderful.

He stays doing nothing  
Breathing, absorbing  
Speaking at time  
Throwing his head back  
And laughing  
Enjoying  
Accosting the grass  
Kissing the flowers  
Teaching and learning  
Talking with animals  
On their way  
Entranced, pause and  
Tell of nightmare worlds  
Of strange tales  
And marvel at his  
Yet stranger tale.

Walking onward through the trees  
Over the thicket  
Down the rabbitway  
To the waterhole  
Moonlight shines through his shape  
Stars for eyes  
Moon for heart  
Meteors for limbs  
Onward, onward into the eternal day-  
night  
Smiling goes he.

No more seen in the city  
No more seen in the field  
No more seen but felt and heard  
Kindly master-slave of all  
Unwielding of power possessed  
Yielding of love and life  
Breath on the wind  
Yet learning  
Teaching, preaching  
Lore-filled in every pore  
Ethereic and solid  
Whispering into unknown ears  
The man the grass teaches how to grow.

Toirdhealbhach MacLorcain  
Ard-draoi Clann na Brocheta  
Earrach 12 y.r.  
[circa Spring 1973 c.e.)  
a.k.a  
Robert Larson, DAL, Be.  
Archdruid, Berkeley Grove

## The Sacrifice

**Priest:** O Danu, we have given forth of one your children who has sacrificed himself to preach your name in all of it's forms. Yet our praise has *still* mounted up to thee on the wings of eagles, our voices have *still* been carried up to thee on the shoulders of the winds. Hear now, we pray thee, our Mother, as we offer up yet another sacrifice in name of our **Brother Isaac**. Accept it, we pray thee. *Place sacrifice on Altar, if possible it should be something of the candidates or significance to the candidate.*

**Priest:** We ask the O Danu, do you accept this sacrifice for our **Brother**? Will you guide him in death as you have guided him in life? And will you welcome him into your arms as a priest of your order? Hast thou accepted our sacrifices, O Danu? I call upon the spirit of

the North to give answer... of the South...of the East...and of the West. (If it's a quiet day a lack of a response can also be a sign of acceptance)

## The Reply

**Priest:** Praise be, our sacrifice has been accepted!

## The Meditations (Eulogy)

- The death of the heart is the saddest thing that can happen to you.
- Poets, prophets and pigs are appreciated only after their death. -Italian
- He who has been near to death knows the worth of life. -Turkemenistan
- The fall of a leaf is a whisper to the living. -Russian
- A brave man dies but once -a coward many times. -Iowa
- Death always comes out of season. -Pawnee
- The Dead add their strength and counsel to the living. -Hopi
- For the unlearned, old age is winter; for the learned it is the season of the harvest. -Talmud
- For of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: "It might have been!" -John Greenleaf Whittier
- I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. -Henry David Thoreau
- I once wrote that the best way to write was to do so as if one were already dead: afraid of no one's reactions, answerable to no one for one's views. I still think that is the way to write. -Nadine Gordimer

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## The Indian Bird

A merchant had a bird in a cage. He was going to India, the land from which the bird came, and asked him whether he could bring anything back for him. The bird asked for his freedom, but was refused. So he asked the merchant to visit a jungle in India and announce his captivity to the free birds who were there.

The merchant did so, and no sooner had he spoken than a wild bird, just like his own, fell senseless out of a tree on to the ground. The merchant thought that this must be a relative of his own bird, and felt sad that he should have caused this death.

When he got home, the bird asked him whether he had brought news from India. 'No,' said the merchant, 'I fear that my news is bad. One of your relations collapsed and fell at my feet as soon as I mentioned your captivity.'

As soon as these words were spoken the merchant's bird collapsed and fell to the bottom of the cage.

'The news of his kinsman's death has killed him too,' thought the merchant. Sorrowfully he picked up the bird and put it on the window-sill. At once the bird revived and flew to a near-by tree. 'Now you know,' he said, 'that what you thought was disaster was in fact good news for me. And how the message, the suggestion how to behave in order to free myself, was transmitted to me through you, my captor.' And he flew away, free at last. -Rumi

\*\*\* Dear Isaac, what does news of your death mean for me?!\*\*\*\*

## EULOGY TO ISAAC

I could write for hours about your achievements, talents, clever ideas, errors in judgement, and wild exploits. But that would take entirely too long, and most are too well known. Who amongst us don't know you? Certainly we wish to have known more, but such is life and death. Many others are pouring out their praise for you at numerous groves and covens this night.

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, so you'll have appreciated all my republishing of your books on Reformed Druidry. Whether I agree with you or not, I have always respected you, as have all your brothers in Reformed Druidry. We knew you were on a mission, and that we couldn't follow you, where you must go, but we enjoyed and learned from our 15 very intense years with you. Time has indeed healed all wounds, and we have fond memories of you, and wish you had stayed active with us

longer. But in a sense you never left, and carried a bit of Reformed Druidism to a different group of Druids through your work in ADF.

What more amazing things could have been done by you with a few more years and a few more dollars. But know this Isaac, you did very well with what you had. The people and ideas you brought together are your legacy, the connections you forged. We will remember you at Samhain. And everytime some one talks about Reformed Druidism or ADF or any type of Druidism or Neopaganism, your name will come up. I can't see a time when you will be forgotten, and certainly a time when you won't be thanked for what you left behind.

Go forth Isaac. Know that the Reformed Druids warmly encourage you to keep your hand in this world's matters as a venerated Elder. You are now in our 10<sup>th</sup> Order of Druidry, in good company, and are no doubt reacquainting yourself with many old friends. We look forward to your quick return to this plane of existence, when another brilliant young Druid will pop up and again lead us on a wild chase into the woods.

Travel well Isaac, and don't be a stranger to our groves.

## The Catechism of The Waters-of-Life

**PRIEST:** Of what does the Earth-Mother give that we may remember our fallen comrade?

**PRECEPTOR:** THE WATERS-OF-SLEEP.

**PRIEST:** From whence do these Waters flow?

**PRECEPTOR:** FROM THE BOSOM OF THE EARTH, OF DANU, THE NEVER CHANGING ALL-MOTHER.

**PRIEST:** And how do we honor this gift that of memory, this gift that mirrors our **Brother's** sacrifices?

**PRECEPTOR:** BY PARTAKING OF THE WATERS-OF-SLEEP.

**PRIEST:** Has the Earth-Mother given forth of her bounty?

**PRECEPTOR:** SHE HAS!

**PRIEST:** Then give me the Waters!

### The Consecration

O Danu, Hallow these waters of sleep that pour forth from thy three fold ways, from the earth and from the sky and from the seas, constantly and inconstantly but always despite the power of the day or the night. Cleanse our hearts and join us together as we take and drink of thy secret essence!

(The Celebrants should only take a small sip in commemoration. The majority should be left for the initiate, additionally the priest should not take a sip when the waters return, but hold onto the glass. The initiate should also not drink of the waters yet)

### The Reading of the Description of the Order

The Name Danu might be closely tied to the Earth-Mother who gives for of the bounties of life. She is yet also a goddess of fertility. But without death there may be no fertility. For as a parting may take away life it also returns one to the cycle of life. The name Danu is the earth, and the candidate has been cast already into the earth, tied with Danu. We now seek to tie the two spiritually as well as physically.

### The Questioning

**Priest:** Do you **Brother Isaac** understand the nature of the order?

Candidate: (Normally silence. However any answer that does not come from the living is acceptable)

**Priest:** This is very wise. And do you **Brother Isaac** accept the call to care for our mother, for Danu, in death as you have in life?

Candidate: (Normally silence. However any answer that does not come from the living is acceptable)

**Priest:** This again is very wise. And do you **Brother Isaac** agree also to carry for your sisters and brothers in the mother in death, as you have cared for them and they have cared for you in life?

Candidate: (Normally silence. However any answer that does not come from the living is acceptable)

**Priest:** This is also very wise. And now **Brother Isaac**, there is but one task left of you. Please tell us what this order means to you.

Candidate: (Normally silence, but longer silence. However any answer that does not come from the living is acceptable)

**Priest:** This is the wisest thing I have heard all day. Let us take a minute to contemplate this wisdom.

### Sealing to the Order of Danu

O our mother Danu, long had Our **Brother Isaac Bonewits**, served you in your many forms. Long had he toiled to spread the word of Druidism and to enrich the lives of Druids.

O our mother Danu, long had Our **Brother Isaac Bonewits**, followed the many forms of your many guises. Long had he heard the word of Druidism and knew that it was ok and much did he listen to other Druids and thus enrich his own life.

O our mother Danu, Our **Brother Isaac Bonewits**, was a priest of the order of Dalon ap Landu, lord of the groves, in one form your servant and in another form your self, Danu. Long may he serve you still.

O our mother Danu, I may not make our **Brother Isaac Bonewits**, a priest of your order, for no living person may ever enter your order. I may but ask you to consecrate him to your own order.

*Here the priest turns to the celebrants. Friends in the mother, though we may not consecrate **Brother Isaac**, we may bind his spirit to Danu. Others have already buried him physically, we may bury him spiritually. Look around you and take a small gift of the fertility of Danu, of leave, of branch or of whatever else, and put it upon the sacrifice of our **Brother Isaac**. The celebrants quickly find something and solemnly deposit it upon the altar. Alternatively they may already have found something.*

O our mother Danu, you have given forth of your bounty, of the waters of sleep. I now return it to you by returning it to our brother who has now been bonded with you. *The priest takes the remaining waters and pours them upon the sacrifice.*

### The Benediction

Go forth into the world, secure in the knowledge that Danu has consecrated our late **brother** to her service as a priest of the tenth order. Peace! Peace! Peace! (As one states this, inscribe a sigil on the ground, and participant toss dirt onto each sigil)

END OF PART ONE OF THIS ISSUE

Part two at <http://www.rdna.info/druidinquirer19-2.doc>

In which I reprint several of Isaac's past publications from 1968-1990, and talk about his most recent works.

# PART 2 of Druid Inquirer, Issue 19 about Isaac Bonewits, Fall Equinox 2010

## SECTION 3: WHAT HE WROTE



### Isaac Bonewits on the Internet

By Mike the Fool

Isaac may be gone, but there is a lot of material on the internet to remember him by.

You'll find numerous shots of Isaac performing and lecturing on youtube.com

**Facebook** <http://www.facebook.com/isaac.phaedra.bonewits> now run by Phaedra

#### VIDEO TRIBUTES

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnwIWjG3ow4&feature=related>

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2qtGLZOozdA&feature=player\\_embedded#!](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2qtGLZOozdA&feature=player_embedded#!)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jw-A4zCZPNI&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9n0XuoZ-3o&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jpf3boy44Gk&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nck7wpXveds>

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cX\\_cFoH5qNs&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cX_cFoH5qNs&feature=related)

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HaG\\_yT3OhY&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HaG_yT3OhY&feature=related)

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8-LwOtf\\_uqQ&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8-LwOtf_uqQ&feature=related)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7iW0ndPak0>



Want to read more essays by Isaac? Go to his website.

Also see <http://neopagan.net/blog/> Three years of blogging

You can also get an idea of the scope of Isaac's writings from his website at neopagan.net that he began in 1996, and at its time it was one of the best and most useful sites during the infancy of the internet. My own website [www.geocities.com/mikerdna](http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna) began in 1995 and ended in 2009, and was very much influenced by Isaac's site. Here's a

capture of that web-site in August 2010.

<http://www.neopagan.net/Contents.html#PartFive>



## Part One: Background, News, and Entertainment ([Back to the Top](#))

- [Who is Isaac Bonewits?](#) (Immodest Third-Person Intro)
- [A Brief Biography of Isaac Bonewits](#) by Rosemary Guiley [with notes by Isaac]
- [A Brief Biography of Phaedra Bonewits](#) by Phaedra Bonewits
- [Books by Isaac and Phaedra Bonewits](#)
- [Audio & Video Tapes by Isaac Bonewits and Friends](#)
- [Music Albums by Isaac Bonewits and Friends](#)
- [Desperate Times, Desperate Measures](#)
- [Presentations by Isaac Bonewits](#)
- [Presentations by Phaedra Bonewits](#)
- [Speaking Fees & Arrangements for Isaac and Phaedra Bonewits](#)
- [Isaac & Phaedra's Appearance Schedule](#) **Updated 07/09/09**
- [Isaac's E-Lists](#)
- [Graphic Designs by Isaac Bonewits](#)
- [Sponsors Page](#)
- [Our Blatant Hucksterism Page](#)

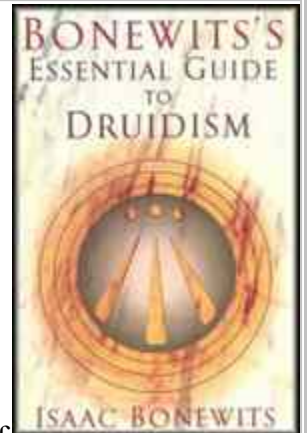
[Views from the Cyberhenge](#), our BLOG



## Part Two: Druidism, Ancient and Modern ([Back to the Top](#))

(Links to excerpts from *Bonewits's Essential Guide to Druidism* are in the larger fonts below.)

- **Paleopagan Druidism: The real "Old Religions" of Europe**
  - [Indo-European Caste Systems and Cosmologies](#)
- **Mesopagan Druid Literature:**
  - [The Story of Druidism: History, Legend and Lore](#) by the United Ancient Order of Druids
  - [The Ancient Druid Order](#) by the British Circle of the Universal Bond
  - [The Druid Order](#) by Dr. Thomas Maughan
- **Neopagan Druidism: from Standing Stones to Starships**
  - [The Classic ADF Liturgical Design](#)
  - [The Origins of the Henge of Keltria](#) by Ellen Evert Hopman
  - [The Origins of the Celtic Traditionalist Order of Druids](#) by V. & H. Meith
  - [The Origins of the Insular Order of Druids](#) by Dylan Ap Thuin
- **General Druidic Topics**
  - [Currently Existing Druid Groups and Friends](#)
  - [Recommended Books on Druidism and Indo-European Paleopaganism](#)
- **Pseudo-Druids**
  - [21 Lessons of Hogwash](#)



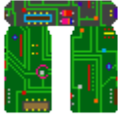
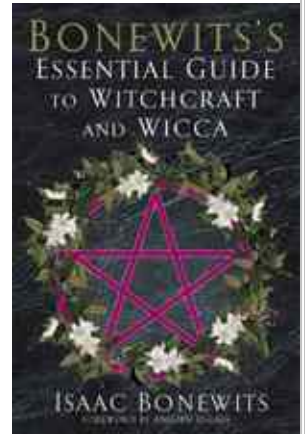


- [The Druidic Craft of the Wise](#) [Very short]
- [Why I don't Recommend the Divine Circle of the Sacred Grove](#)

**Part Three: Witchcraft, Old and New** ([Back to the Top](#))

Excerpts from [Bonewits's Essential Guide to Witchcraft and Wicca](#):

- [Classifying Witchcrafts](#)
- [Recommended Books on Ancient and Modern Witchcraft](#)
- [Reviews of earlier editions](#)

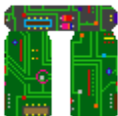


**Fastest connection to maximum Witchcraft news & networking:**  
[www.witchvox.com](http://www.witchvox.com)

They even have a “[Reporters Info Kit](#)” — a powerful data page that includes pointers to Wiccan, Witch and Pagan overviews, statistics, surveys, FAQ's and links to community websites.

**Part Four: Fundamentalism, Satanism and Other Bad Ideas** ([Back to the Top](#))


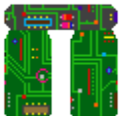

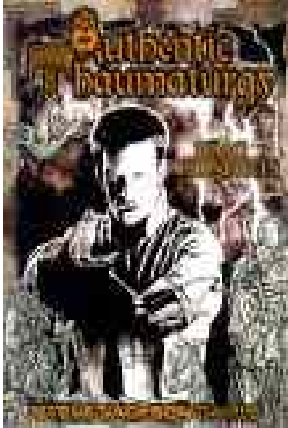
- [The Advanced Bonewits Cult Danger Evaluation Frame](#)
  - [Dutch Version](#) of the ABCDEF **NEW 06/19/08**
  - [French Version](#) of the ABCDEF
  - [German Version](#) of the ABCDEF
  - [Italian Version](#) of the ABCDEF
  - [Polish Version](#) of the ABCDEF
  - [Portuguese Version](#) of the ABCDEF
  - Spanish Version of the ABCDEF Coming Soon!
- [“Anti-Christianity” and Who Hates Who?](#)
- [A Call to Arms](#)
- [Dealing with Religious Jerks](#) [review of Haugk's *Antagonists in the Church*]
- [The Enemies of Our Enemies](#)
- [The Evolution of Dualism: A Chart](#)
- [The Impact of Scientism on Competing Faiths](#)
- [My Satanic Adventure](#)
- [Understanding the Religious Reich](#) (Long, loads slowly)


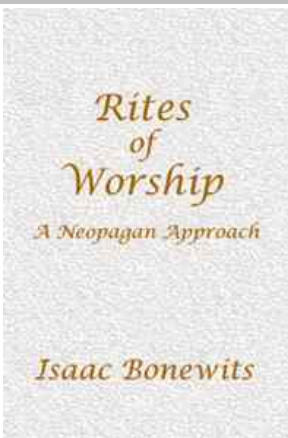


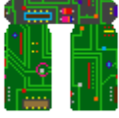


**Part Five: Political and Social Opinions** ([Back to the Top](#))

- [Adopt an Elder!](#)
- [The Aquarian Manifesto with Historical Notes](#)
- [Freedom of Information and Supporting Pagan Creators](#)
- [The Geeks vs. the Jocks or Why it's Hard to Elect Liberals](#)
- [The Hunt for Osama bin Laden: Endgame](#)



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Liberty Rite Materials</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Making Fauna Pagans</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Some Thoughts on Terrorism</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Spells for Democracy</a> <b>Updated 08/12/09</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <a href="#">Spells for Democracy Images</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<p><b>Part Six: Holiday Facts and Fantasies</b> (<a href="#">Back to the Top</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">A Neopagan Druid Calendar</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Halloween and Me</a> by Phaedra Bonewits</li> <li>• <a href="#">Halloween Errors and Lies</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">The Real Origins of Halloween</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <a href="#">The Real Origins of Halloween (Easy Reading/Printing Text)</a></li> <li>◦ <a href="#">Los Verdaderos Orígenes de Halloween (Spanish Version)</a></li> <li>◦ <a href="#">Los Verdaderos Orígenes de Halloween (Versión más Fácilmente Imprimible y Legible)</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <a href="#">'Twas the Evening of Samhain</a> by Cather Steincamp</li> <li>• <a href="#">Visions of Sugarplums</a>, by Margaret Morrison</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Part Seven: Neopagan Polytheology and Practice</b> (<a href="#">Back to the Top</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Defining Paganism: Paleo-, Meso-, and Neo-</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Defining Pagan Leadership</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">A Pagan Glossary of Terms</a>(Loads slowly)</li> <li>• <a href="#">How Many “Pagans” are There?</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Pagans In Recovery</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Varieties of Initiatory Experience</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">What Neopagans Believe</a></li> </ul>
	<p><b>Part Eight: Role Playing Games — Threat or Menace?</b> (<a href="#">Back to the Top</a>)</p> <p>Excerpts from <a href="#">Authentic Thaumaturgy, 2nd Ed.:</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">A.T.: Introduction</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">A.T.: Good and Evil Magic</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">A.T.: The Laws of Magic</a> (with large color Chart, loads slowly)</li> <li>• <a href="#">A.T.: Mono-, Duo- &amp; Polytheisms</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">A.T.: Sacrifices</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">A.T.: Reviews</a></li> </ul> 

	<p><b>Part Nine: Liturgy in Theory and Practice</b> (<a href="#">Back to the Top</a>)</p> <p>Excerpts from <i>Rites of Worship</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Dramatic Tension, Humor, Play and Pacing in Liturgy</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">How Leadership, Organizational Structure and Agendas Affect Liturgy</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">How Time and Location Affect Liturgy</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Making Liturgy Accessible: Planning for People with Special Needs</a></li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Part Ten: Songs by Isaac Bonewits</b> (<a href="#">Back to the Top</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Irish and Other Celtic Pagan Songs</a> (Lots=loads slowly)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Wiccan Ritual Songs</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Other Serious Songs</a> (Lots=loads slowly)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Bawdy and Rowdy Pagan Songs</a> (Lots=loads slowly)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Techno-Filk Songs</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Other Silly Songs</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Songs by Others often Sung by IB</a></li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Part Eleven: Polyamory and Other Lovestyles</b> (<a href="#">Back to the Top</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">A Pagan Polyamory Page</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">When Three Is Not a Crowd: Polyamory as a Responsible Lifestyle</a> by Elizabeth Barrette</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Part Twelve: Mystical Energies</b> (<a href="#">Back to the Top</a>)</p> <p>Excerpts from <i>Real Energy</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Three Worlds and Five Elements</a> by Phaedra &amp; Isaac Bonewits</li> <li>• More excerpts to come!</li> </ul>	



## What did Isaac Write in the RDNA?

The number after the event indicates which section of ARDA2 has the item. The ARDA is available at [www.rdna.info/arda.html](http://www.rdna.info/arda.html) Although he authored specifically RDNA material 1968-1983, several of his later works were published in ARDA 2 with his permission.

First and foremost, he was the editor, collector and “gap-filler” extraordinaire in the 1976 Druid Chronicles (Evolved). It was basically a portable version of the archives, a more-or-less Neopagan handbook on how to run a Druid organization. At the time, no such practitioner’s guide was available for Norse, Hellenic or Slavic groups. He set the bar high.

He was a liturgist extraordinaire, so that a great number of the liturgies for the 1976-1980 period are his experiments in Druidical design.

Of course, nearly the whole corpus of the Hassidic Druid movement are of Isaac’s fevered imagination. Although not Jewish himself, he

heartily encouraged the Arch Grove of Missouri to write down their experimentation, and several of the aliases are actually Isaac. See section 5 of ARDA.

He published the Druid Chronicler newsletter and the Penta-alpha Journal from 1976-1981, see section 11 of ARDA 2 where our back issues of magazines are stored.

Isaac was a member of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> Order of Dalon Ap Landu, 6<sup>th</sup> order of Belenos, 10<sup>th</sup> Order of Danu, the Order of Puck, and the Patriarch of the Order of Merddyn.

He was an Archdruid, at one time, of the Stockton Grove 72-74, Twin Cities 74-76, Berkeley NRDNA 77-79 with Joan Carruth, and Berkeley SDNA 79-81. He ordained about 11 Druids to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Order, Brothers Geller, Moe, Corrigan, Sherbak, and Mike Bonewits; and Sisters Sterba, Griffith, Rhodes, Williams, Clark 1 & 2. If any know of their whereabouts, please e-mail [mikerdna@hotmail.com](mailto:mikerdna@hotmail.com)

The little numbers indicate in which Part of ARDA (12 parts) you can find the writings.

Real Magic"  
First Ordained 3rd in Berkeley Grove  
Stockton/Lodi Grove  
First Epistle of Isaac 2  
Protogrove Concept 2  
Twin Cities Grove  
Arch Grove  
Initiated Isaac Affair 2  
Second Epistle of Isaac 2  
Third Epistle of Isaac 2  
Fourth Epistle of Isaac 2  
Fifth Epistle of Isaac 2  
The Beginning of ADF 2  
Mother Grove in Berkeley  
Schismatic Druidism 2, 4  
SDNA & HDNA constitutions 4  
Hasidic Druidism All of Section 5  
Order of Merddyn Patriarch 3  
Standardized Spelling 4  
Druid Chronicles (Evolved) Book  
Book of Changes 2  
Suggestions for a Druid Funeral 3  
Old Fashioned Wedding 3

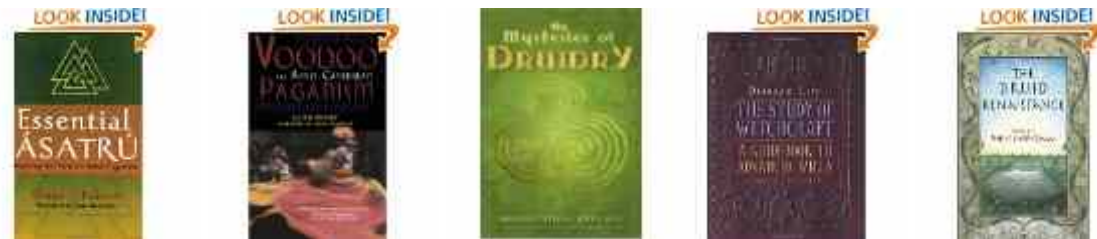
Wedding Contract 3  
The Druid Seasons of the Year 4  
The Holidays of the SDNA 4  
Different Strokes 7  
Book of Bards 6.6  
The Other Druids 6.10  
Neopagan Druidism 6.10  
A Bibliography of Druidism 6.10  
Authentic Thaumaturgy (book)  
Many, Many Liturgies 3  
ADF Liturgy Outline 3  
Money & Priesthood 6.10  
Step by Step Guide to ADF 3  
ADF Midsummer 1987 3  
A Wedding Contract 3  
Druid Chronicler magazine 1976-1981 11  
Pentalpha magazine 1978-1981 11  
ADF founder 4  
6<sup>th</sup> Epistle of Isaac 2  
SDNA version of Third Order



## Book Covers of Isaac Bonewits



Assisted Authoring or Introductions by Isaac



## Jewelry by Isaac



<http://www.amuletsbymerlin.com/product/IB-1/Isaacs-Druid-Sigil.html>

\$25

About the size of a nickel, first produced in the early 1990s.



## Druid Chronicles (Evolved)

But of course the Book that Isaac is most remembered for IN THE RDNA, is the 1976 Druid Chronicles (Evolved)

This pivotal book in the RDNA and the modern Druid movements of North America cannot be over-estimated. Although not of preferred flavor and heavily pagan in its orientation by Carleton-type Reformed Druids, the book was oddly crucial to revival of the Carleton Grove in the 1980s and 1990s, and was an invaluable repository of Reformed Druid lore until the two projects of ARDA 1 in 1996 and ARDA 2 in 2005 supplanted DC(E).

Even after that it was a very handy version to carry around. An alternate collection of what Carleton might have used in 1976 was assembled in 2005 also, and is known as the Carleton Druid Collection. A comparison of the two is more informative of the split in outlooks of these two halves of the Reformed Druidic movement at the apex of the 1976 Isaac Affairs.

Druid Chronicles can be downloaded at: [www.rdna.info/arda.html](http://www.rdna.info/arda.html)

I recommend the PDF format for clean printing, .doc format for copy-pasting.

Druid Chronicles (Evolved) 1976	<a href="#">Intro Packet dce1.pdf</a>	<a href="#">Intro Packet dce1.doc</a>
Chronic, Apoc	12 pgs, 1200kb	12 pgs, 1200kb
Liturgy, History	<a href="#">File 2 dce2.pdf</a>	<a href="#">File 2 dce2.doc</a>
Miscellaneous	92 pgs, 3600kb	92 pgs, 3600kb
	<a href="#">File 3 dce3.pdf</a>	<a href="#">File 3 dce3.doc</a>
	98 pgs, 6800kb	98 pgs, 6800kb
Carleton Druid Collection 2004, but as if 1976.	<a href="#">cdc.pdf</a>	<a href="#">cdc.doc</a>
	130 pgs, 2432kb	130 pgs, 2432kb

The Druid Chronicles (Evolved) has been painstakingly republished as close to the original as modern technology permits us. 99% of the text is printed in "Time New Roman" font (found on nearly all computers), but DC(E) also uses three free fonts that may not be installed on some older computers. If your computer doesn't have them, DC(E) may not print very nicely, but not to worry, it's easy enough to download them.

Check your PC by clicking the start button on the lower-left corner of your screen, click "settings" and open the "control panel". Open the "fonts" folder and see if "Gaelige 1" "Peace" and "Celtic Knot" are in your list. If not, these are the sites to download the fonts and save to your computer.

**Gaelige 1** font is available at [www.1001freefonts.com](http://www.1001freefonts.com) for the headers of most articles.

<http://www.celticvoice.com/readings/gaeil1.htm> **Peace** font for Part 5's HDNA title page and section titles is available at

<http://www.fordpub.com/funpages/fonts/fontsp.html> **Celtic Knot** font for the initial capitals on title page of Part 1-6 is available at <http://www.coolarchive.com/fonts.cfm> type in "Celtic Knot".

# Mike's 1995 Response to Druid Chronicles (Evolved)<sup>270</sup>

"DC(E)" published 1976

Edited by Isaac Bonewits & Robert Larson with dozens of contributing authors.

This tome was the most recent predecessor of this paper in providing a history of Reformed Druid. DC(E) is also very likely to bias future scholars who decide to begin their study of the RDNA with this tempting resource. Because of DC(E)'s between-the-lines view of Reformed Druidism as mainly oriented (and fated) to become a part of the Neo-Pagan community (with a Celtic focus), this book is a biased source (but thus very valuable for presenting the later-NRDNA & SDNA sides of the debates.) DC(E) has never been widely printed, (perhaps 300 copies) but it appears often as the source used by researchers for obtaining RDNA documents. DC(E) has long served as the collection of primary resources for those RDNA and NRDNA groves that were without access to the Carleton archives. DC(E)'s resulting authority in the bibliography of researchers has probably led many scholars to the conclusion that Isaac was the main (if not tacitly, the only) inspirational leader of Druidism. The truth is that there were many leaders, in different ways, at different times and in different senses.

While DC(E) does not overtly claim to be the only resource for studying Reformed Druidism, it is very attractive because it brings together in one tome what used to be very difficult-to-obtain written materials from the many branches of Reformed Druidism. Although DC(E) possesses a long introductory chapter and another quick disclaimer in the beginning:

Indeed, many of the members of the original RDNA accept only these Books [the first five] as relevant to Reformed Druidism and consider other written material of a Druidic nature to be either irrelevant, optional or perniciously heretical.<sup>271</sup>

many reviewers have assumed or implied that the whole book is pertinent to all of Reformed Druidism. Because of the local Celtic ethnic emphasis amongst the Berkeley grove,<sup>272</sup> many of DC(E)'s sections are very heavily Celtic in focus, the exception being the section on Hassidic (Jewish) Druids in the back. The DC(E) leaves a false impression that Celtic sources of inspiration prevailed in the whole of Reformed Druidism. Because many researchers probably only skimmed through it at best or perhaps hastily concluded that if Berkeley was like this; so must everyone else. DC(E) is definitely written for the insider-Druid, not for the casual reader or quick researcher. Perhaps the encyclopaedists wished to pigeon-hole the RDNA and used Isaac as a willing or convenient "figure-head" for the group.

An important omission from this compendium was the Green Book of Meditations, a result of copyright problems, which illustrated the core of the Carleton policy of drawing upon diverse **existing** Asian & World religions in addition to religions of the past.<sup>273</sup> A hind-sight problem with Isaac's Apocrypha, is that all the letters that argued against Isaac's definitional referendum in 1974 were not found in Isaac's Apocrypha.<sup>274</sup> This is primarily justified in that Isaac expected additional letters to be added to the Apocrypha by the individual owners of copies of DC(E.) The unfortunate result is a general bias amongst the printed matter in his favor. Isaac printed a remarkably careful and honest account of the voting results in "The Book of Changes" about the pivotal issues of self-definition of the debates on Neo-Paganism vs. Multi-religioned, Religion vs. Philosophy and about organizational change. Isaac also showed that the following events led to everyone re-affirming the traditional right of individuals choosing their own definitions.

While still a handy compendium of primary documents and arcane past customs, the DC(E)'s place as THE SOLE REFERENCE tool for serious and balanced scholarship should be soon replaced by the International Druid Archives and A Reformed Druid Anthology.<sup>275</sup> In the IDA collection, the DC(E) will still serve as a historical document for understanding how the NRDNA & SDNA saw themselves as different from the RDNA. Since several of the documents and customs in DC(E) are still found written down nowhere else, this will ensure the continued importance of DC(E) for study in future years, just like the original Blue Book of Archives at Carleton. But its greatest importance remains for understanding one or two sides in a very many-sided debate.

It is of course impossible to put the entire 250 page collection here, but the pertinent documents that I comment upon in Appendix E are the First & Second Epistles of Isaac, the Book of Changes, and most of the Druid Miscellany section (called part six in DC(e).) There were occasional swipes in the footnotes, but we won't go into those.



## Thoughts (on DCE) from Three Decades Later A New Introduction by Isaac Bonewits, 2005

“It was the best of times; it was the worst of times...”—no, wait, that’s been used before. How about, “It was the year of living Druidically...”? Or “It was thirty years ago today, Brother Larson taught the band to play...”?

Due to medical difficulties, I am unable to recall much of my own life, though I can recall a great deal about the Indo-European peoples some two thousand years ago (stored in a different part of my brain, I assume). Here are the fragments I recall of the creation of *The Druid Chronicles (Evolved)*:

It was in 1976 c.e. (14 y.r.) that I noticed the sad shape my copy of *The Druid Chronicles (Reformed)* was in. Already a copy of a copy of a copy, the text was becoming too faint to read, especially during nighttime rituals. I decided to make a whole new set of masters from which clear future copies could be generated. About this time, I began a job that involved typesetting a magazine, thus giving me access to equipment that would allow the creation of new originals that could withstand a dozen generations of copying.

Then I decided to expand the project to include all the materials I could find from both the RDNA and the various offshoots I had conspired to create over the preceding few years, as well as all of the Apocrypha (letters between the clergy) I had in hand from the other members of the Council of Dalon ap Landu. I thought it should be of use to scholars of religion and future historians, so I added many explanatory footnotes to the text. I thought it would be useful to have copies of the rituals used by the original RDNA as well as its then-existing offshoots, as well as introductory materials on Neopaganism. So the project “just grew.”

I wanted the resulting work to be a kind of “Druid Handbook,” which would allow anyone using it to begin their own steps along a Reformed Druidic path. So I spent many hours writing new materials and editing old ones, typesetting each page by hand (there were no text scanners available in those days), developing the prints, cutting and pasting the blocks of text and illustrations onto cardboard sheets, then finally printing the results with Br. Robert Larson on an offset press. Then we collated everything and mailed out copies to every member of the Council we could find, as well as sending two bound copies to the library at Carleton, which subsequently led to both the beginning of the Druid Archives at Carleton and the revival of the RDNA there in later years.

I was missing a lot of the non-Pagan materials and some of the Apocrypha, however, so I have been gratified to see Br. Scharding and Stephen Crimmins take upon themselves and execute well the task of completing what I had begun so many years ago, in the course of creating the *Reformed Druid Anthologies* and now this new edition of *TDCE*. I am honored that words I wrote as a “young pup” will be carried on into the future.

As I page through my copy of *TDCE*, I see earlier versions of materials that eventually became founding principles for *Ar nDraíocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship* and first drafts of ideas that found their way into subsequent editions of my book *Real Magic*, as well as into *Authentic Thaumaturgy*, *Witchcraft: A Concise Guide*, and *Rites of Worship*, not to mention my forthcoming *Essential Guides* on Wicca, Druidism, and Neopaganism. Producing *TDCE* crystallized many concepts in my thinking about magic, ritual, religion, and philosophy. The fact that many of these concepts seemed to me to be implicit in the original RDNA materials led to my insistence for many years that Reformed Druidism was a Neopagan religion. I now understand that it started out Mesopagan (mixed Pagan and non-Pagan) and still is for

many members, including some of the surviving founders. Nonetheless, because I brought so many Neopagans into it and its subsequent Branches of the Reform (including, to stretch the point, ADF and Keltria), now most Neopagans who know about it assume that Reformed Druidism is all Neopagan. Browsing through these pages (and those of *ARDA*) will help, I hope, to delineate the distinctions. If nothing else, future historians of new religious movements will be able to trace the evolution of one type of Paganism from its Meso- to its Neopagan incarnation.

Publishing the first edition of *TDCE* in 1976 had a small but noticeable impact on the evolution of what became the American Neopagan movement. Here was a new religion worshipping the Old Gods and Goddesses, that wasn't Wicca! That alone encouraged people wanting to start revivals and reconstructions of other systems of Paleopaganism. Now Druids of various sorts have become some 10% or so of the quarter-million-plus English-speaking Neopagan movement, not just in the USA, Canada, and Britain, but around the world. I've heard Druids from other countries recite "ancient Pagan poetry" and perform "ancient Druid rituals" that were clearly variants of items I wrote or edited for *TDCE*! Apparently the copies of copies of copies got around quite a bit...

So find a comfortable chair, sit back, and enjoy browsing the New and Improved 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition of *The Druid Chronicles (Evolved)*. It should keep you busy reading, thinking, and chuckling for quite some time.

# Druid Chronicler Magazine

Isaac was a magazine editor for *Gnostica* in 1975-1976 and was kicked out for being "too high-browed" for this magazine during the nascence of the NeoPagan movement. After some attempts to encourage RDNA debate by a mailing campaign 1974-1976 and also publishing the *Druid Chronicles* (evolved) in 1976) he started a magazine to keep people updated.

People may not realize that Isaac wrote the first Druidic newsletters in North America from 1977-1981. 5 issues of *Druid Chronicler* magazine (notice the "-er") and then 8 joint issues of the *DC & Pentalpha*, then 6 issues of just *Druid Chronicler* again.

(Part 11) of the ARDA 2 collection. (See [www.rdna.info/arda.html](http://www.rdna.info/arda.html) choose .pdf version)

Druid Chronicler Vol. 1, 1977-1978	<a href="#">2part11-1a.pdf</a> 20 pg, 510 kb	<a href="#">2part11-1a.doc</a> 20 pg, 622 kb
Druid Chronicler Vol. 2, 1979-1980	<a href="#">2part11-1b.pdf</a> 70 pg, 1495 kb	<a href="#">2part11-1b.doc</a> 70 pg, 2308 kb
D.C. & Pentalpha Vol. 3, 1980	<a href="#">2part11-1c1.pdf</a> 32 pg, 1347 kb	<a href="#">2part11-1c1.doc</a> 32 pg, 2671 kb
D.C. & Pentalpha Vol. 3, 1980	<a href="#">2part11-1c2.pdf</a> 42 pg, 2253 kb	<a href="#">2part11-1c2.doc</a> 42 pg, 5604 kb
Vol. 4-5, 1980- Druid Chronicler 1981	<a href="#">2part11-1d.pdf</a> 14 pg, 293 kb	<a href="#">2part11-1d.doc</a> 14 pg, 626 kb

After the 1977-1981 period, Isaac starting the *Druid's Progress* magazine in 1983 to keep folks in ADF abreast of developments, share articles and calendar and such, pretty much the same as before. Emmon Bodfish continued RDNA magazine publishing under the title *Druid Missal-Any* from 1983-1991 and Stacey from 2000-2008 and myself with the RDNA's *Druid Inquirer* from 2008 to present. Others continued Isaac's work in ADF magazine publishing by 1990. You could say, Isaac expanded the RDNA idea of Druids publishing and look where it has gone!

Here's how Isaac described that pre-digital era for the RDNA in 2005 preface of the reprint of the Magazine Volume:



I edited and published a small newsletter from around 1976 c.e. called *The Druid Chronicler*, which eventually turned into *Pentalpha Journal* and *Druid Chronicler*, disappearing (like so many small publications do) in 1981. While age and illness have

wiped large portions of my wetware, I have been able to snag a few memories while reading through these old issues. Originally my goal was have a way of announcing the events sponsored by my NRDNA grove in Berkeley and to network with other groves in the Reform. I can't remember if I had in mind a replacement mechanism for the Council of Dalon ap Landu, which appeared then (as now) to be defunct as an organizational system, but I at least had the idea of keeping the Druids of the Reform in regular contact.

Then I thought of how nice it would be to have a Neopagan newsletter that would print accurate historical, botanical, and other materials instead of the fluffy pseudohistorical, pseudo-scholarly nonsense that most other Neopagan pubs of the time were putting out. I had managed to do this with *Gnostica* for Llewellyn Publishing for a couple of years and I missed doing it. Moreover, I had always felt that the Ancient Druids had been the scholars of their times, so that a modern Druidic publication ought to at least attempt to have high standards. Then I started sending copies to other Druid groves, both inside the Reform and outside, based on my belief that more contacts with like-minded folks were better than fewer. (Remember, all this was very much pre-Internet.)

When I married my second (official) wife, Selene, we created an organization called Pentalpha: the Association for the Advancement of Aquarian Age Awareness, abbreviated as AAAAA. Five A's interlocked into a star shape are called a "pentalpha," hence the name and the logo. This was obviously more of a "new age" group than a specifically Druidic one. It also needed a newsletter, but I knew we couldn't manage to put out two high quality publications, so we combined a new *Pentalpha Journal* with the older *Druid Chronicler*. We started covering various New Age and non-Druidic Pagan topics, and put out several rather nice issues.

Then Selene and I separated, Pentalpha folded, and *PJ&DC* became the plain old *Druid Chronicler* again. In 1981, I married again, to Sally Eaton, and we decided upon some sweeping changes to how we wanted to experience Druidism. Some of the thinking that was going to go into my eventual creation of *Ár nDraíocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship* first appeared in the pages of Volume 5, #1 of the *Druid Chronicler*, which folded shortly thereafter.

I hope that those reading these pages more than twentyfive years later will find them of interest, or at least amusement. Remember what old Bilbo used say about how dangerous it is to step outside your house—you never know where the road going to take you.



Bright blessings,  
Isaac Bonewits

The following is an excerpt about the RDNA from Isaac's first book, which first put the RDNA on the map of the alternate religious scene.

## Real Magic

by Isaac Bonewits 1971,  
pg. 155-9, revised 1978, 1988

In the hills, lit only by the moon, the Reformed Druids of North America (RDNA) are celebrating Samhain (pronounced "so'ahn.") This is the night that others call Halloween and in the old Celtic cultures was the "day between years," or the beginning of the new year. The RDNA is a revival of old Celtic (especially Irish) religious beliefs and practices, "reformed" in that it forbids the practice of blood sacrifice. The group was founded in the early 1960's and is not to be confused with other groups using similar names or claiming to go back in unbroken lines to prehistoric Ireland. The RDNA makes no such grandiose claims.

The service starts with prayers to the Earth-Mother (the personification of the "Life Force"), to Be'al (the personification of the abstract essence of the universe), to Dalon Ap Landu, Llyr, Danu, and other deities of ancient Ireland. Reciting hymns translated from old Celtic relics and manuscripts, these latter-day Druids send up their praise to Nature. They admit their human frailties and limitations.

Then passages from the Chronicles of the RDNA are read and meditated upon (the Chronicles are a history of the movement written in pseudo-King James style, plus the translations mentioned above, plus meditations and poetry. All is considered the work of men, though possibly written while inspired.)

The members of the congregation are wearing ribbons around their necks; these are red, the color of life. As the ceremony continues, the "Waters-of-Life" (about 80 proof) are exchanged for the "Waters-of-Sleep" (pure H<sub>2</sub>O); and the red ribbons are exchanged for white ones, the color of death. This is to symbolize that the Season of Sleep has begun; the red ribbons will not be worn again until May 1, the beginning of the Season of Life.

A short sermon is given by the Arch-Druid upon the subject of man's constant destruction and defilement of Nature (the RDNA was into ecology long before it became a fad.) The Earth Mother is asked to bless her children and fill them with her powers, so that they may do Her will. The participants identify themselves as a part of the

Earth Mother and assert their interdependence with each other and with her.

After a few more payers of praise the service is over. The participants, feeling refreshed and strong, sit on the hilltop to finish the Water-of-Life and gaze at the stars and the city below.

But all is not yet quiet upon that hilltop, for after all it is Halloween and the night is still young. A warning is given but all choose to remain. The thin line between religion and magic is about to be crossed. Still wearing their traditional tabards, the two leaders of the group prepare for a ritual of ceremonial magic.

The altar is a chunk of rock imbedded in the hilltop, once used by the Indians for their rituals. It now becomes the center of a "magic circle." Holes are dug by daggers and staffs are planted at the four points of the compass; a fifth staff (the largest one there) is placed at the base of the altar pointing to the evening's target.

A wandering hippie out for a stroll in the woods happens on the group. When they tell him what they are doing, he decides to leave quickly (in that area one knows better to mess around in the affairs of magicians.) A stick is used to trace a circle around the staffs and altar, and they enter. Unlike most magic circles this one is not designed to keep anything out but rather to keep energy in until it is time to release it.

The members of the group are mostly professionals, specialists in Green and Brown Magic. The two leaders of the group, one a Green, the other a Yellow Magician, are neither ignorant nor gullible (in fact, most of the group are college graduates with years of training in magic.) The leaders have designed a ceremony with great care to take advantage of every method in the books to insure successful spells. Two items are on the agenda curse and an exorcism.

The ritual begins with a circumlocution of the ring of staffs. Readings from the Chronicles follow. The ring is cleared of all hostile entities and thought patterns. They now begin to concentrate.

A series of litanies is read to all corners of the globe, conjuring and summoning gods, demigods, nature spirits, and the spirits of great men. They are called on to join the group and lend their powers. The language is flowery and emotional, the expression rhythmic; emotion is built up as the Druids feel presences outside the circle. The

moonlight or something is doing strange things outside the ring.

An image of the target is built up until every member has it clearly in mind. The past history of the man is retold, his atrocities enumerated, his danger declared. The wishes of the group are announced to the beings assembled.

The target is not to be destroyed outright, for he is well skilled in repulsing ordinary attacks of Black and White Magic. Instead he will destroy himself by being forced to suffer personally and directly the consequences of his every magical act. An impenetrable shield is imaged around him, with a "psychic mirror" covering the insides. Every time he attempts to use magic for any purpose, his energy will bounce off this mirror and strike himself instead of his intended victim. This is known as the "Boomerang Curse," or as a variation of "the mirror effect," and it can be harmless or deadly, depending solely upon the future actions of the target. It is pure "poetic justice" in action.

Emotion has been aroused and the target visualized. The desire has been declared in detail. The group focuses its energy with another extemporaneous chant and fires! More than one member sees amorphous shapes winging across the sky toward the target.

The second ceremony is an exorcism of the area. Using similar techniques emotion is once again raised and brought to a peak. Incantations are read declaring the intent. All great violence both physical and psychic is forbidden. Neither right-wingers nor left-wingers will be able to sway crowds into rioting; all White Witches and Black Witches who attempt destruction will find their powers neutralized. Once again it is not destruction that is done, but rather a stripping of power from those who would destroy. Peace and quiet are to reign, at least until the next High Holy Day. With grand and sonorous tones the Druid magicians fire the energy produced.

After both ceremonies a statement of success or "follow through" is made, asserting that all has gone and will continue to go as planned.

The second ritual finished, the assembled entities are thanked and dismissed. The circle is broken and the hilltop cleaned of litter. The Druids head home satisfied, leaving the hilltop to the moon and the rabbits.

They have used principles unknown to establishment occultists. They have mixed Yellow, Green, and Brown Magic as well as the roles of magicians, wizards, and witches. The targets were unprepared for anything but traditional attacks.

Extensive postmortems are later done, with interesting results. Shortly after the rituals were

done, the first target lost the best sensitive in his coven; not long afterward his entire group had fallen apart and he was close to bankruptcy. The exorcism seems to have been a rousing success, as well; reports from various covens throughout the area revealed total confusion and consternation. As for the politicians, despite the fact that excuse after excuse popped up, they were unable to stage one riot in the next three months, not in fact until after Candlemas!

It was, of course, sheer coincidence. Naturally.

Note the pattern so far: Supplication-Introduction, Reply from the Deity (or personified group-mind), Identification of Participants with the Deity (same Note), Statement of Requests and Statement of Success.

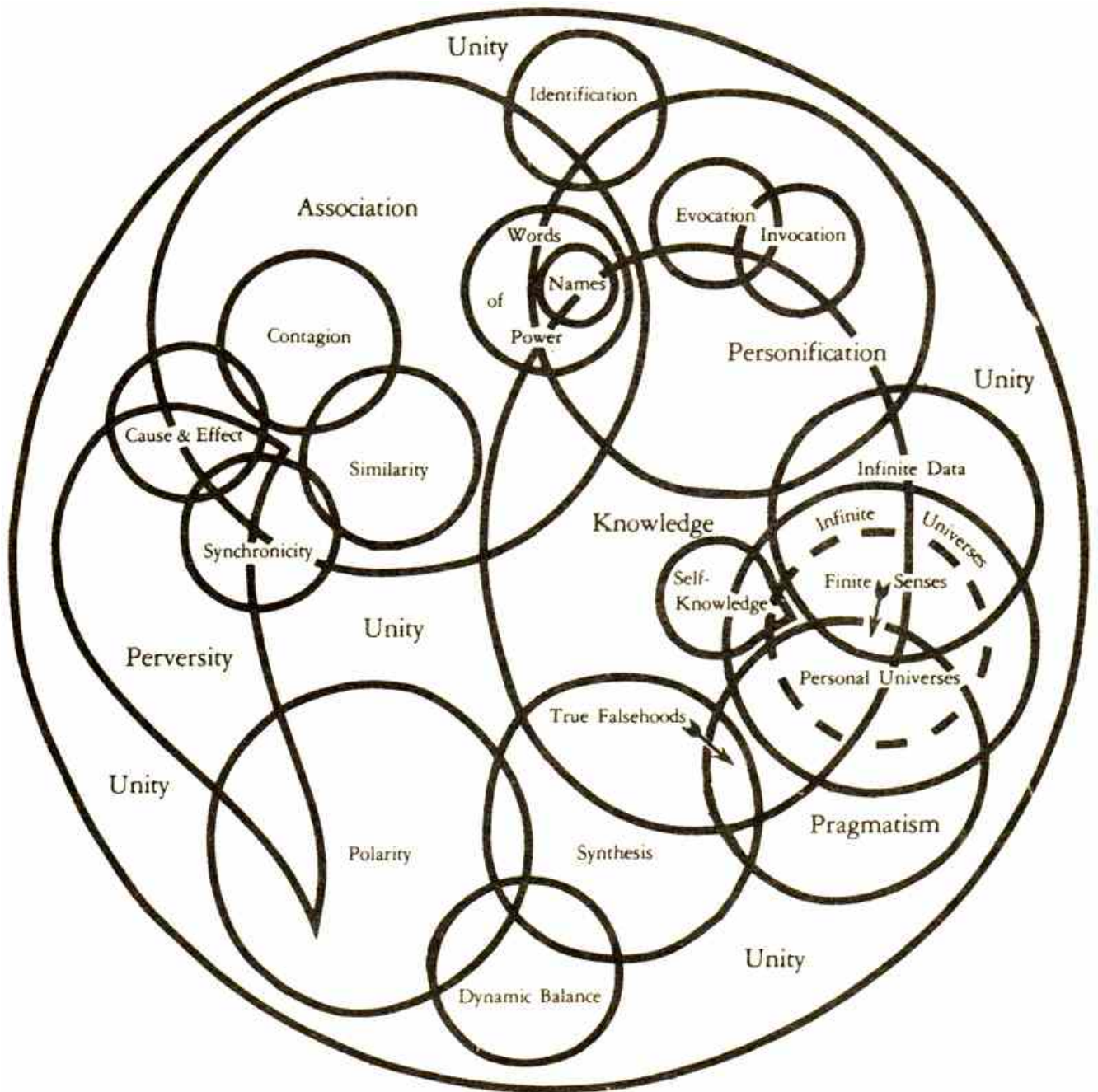
The opening prayers at the Christian altar, the opening dance steps of the Hopi, the clapping of the Pentecostals and Vodun people, the chanting of the Buddhists, the singing of praises to the Earth Mother, and the Conjunction of Beneficiaries; all these are Supplication-Introduction.

The readings of sacred scriptures, whether the Bible, the Chronicles, or incantations written for the occasion, or the recital of histories; these are all in effect a Reply from the Deity or Power being addressed.

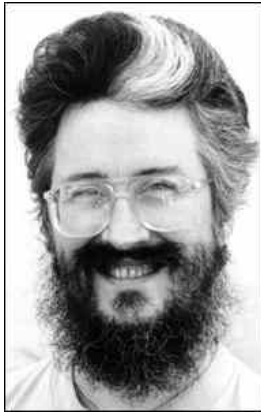
The priest consecrating the Host, the Druids changing their ribbons, the Hopi, Pentecostals, Vodun people, and Buddhists "possessed" by their deities; all have achieved Identification with the Deity concerned.

And every single group asks for specific benefits and ends with a positive assertion that their requests will be granted; thus, we have the Statement of Requests and Statement of Success.

Grab a scrapbook of comparative religions, and I'm sure you will be able to find more examples of this pattern. But what is the basic theory behind it and why is there so much diversity in its realization?



The Laws of Magic  
 from Real Magic, by Isaac Bonewits



## The Six Epistles of Isaac

Isaac wrote a few others in the RDNA, but they are mostly vote-counting for various issues, but the first 5 epistles in our Apocrypha are best read in Part 2 of the ARDA, mixed amongst the dialogue of Isaac with other important Druids at that time. Taken apart, they make less sense, and don't show the give-and-take of the debate. The sixth was Isaac's tribute to the passing of Robert Larson, his RDNA mentor.

### The First Epistle of Isaac

(By Isaac Bonewits, 1974)

(Berkeley Apocrypha Only)

#### Chapter the First:

#### On the Disintegration of the Druids

1. Dear Brothers and Sisters: The Reformed Druids of North America today seem to be facing an inevitable choice; a choice that most organisms, be they physical, psychic or social, must eventually face.
2. That choice is between growth and change on the one hand or stagnation and disintegration on the other; that is to say, between Life and Death.
3. As I write these words in the late summer of the Twelfth Year of the Reform (1974 c.e.), the RDNA *as an organization* is nearly defunct.
4. For of the many Groves which have been founded (Carleton, Berkeley, Chicago, Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan, New York, Stanford, Twin Cities, Vermilion and others) few are known to be thriving still.
5. The Berkeley Grove and the Twin Cities Grove meet frequently and have a score of members each. The Chicago Grove has a score of members who meet only on High Days. The Stanford Grove has only a handful and, as far as I have been able to determine, the other others are defunct or nearly so.
6. Does this mean that the RDNA is dead?
7. Nay, for as someone from the apparently defunct Carleton Grove recently wrote to me, "The Druids are dead. Long live the Druids!"
8. For Reformed Druidism, as an idea, can never die as long as there is one individual still seeking awareness through Nature.
9. Now there are many possible interlocking explanations for the impending demise of the organizational body of Druidism, some of which should be briefly noted.
10. First of all, there is the basic anarchism of the majority of the Founders.
11. This dislike of authority and organization is vital and basic to our philosophy; for it has kept dogmatism and politics from engulfing the Druids.
12. But it has also prevented us from effective communication not only with each other, but with the outside world as

well, many of whose inhabitants would have benefited greatly from Reformed Druidism, had they been able to find out about it.

13. Secondly, while many both inside and outside of the RDNA consider us to be one of the oldest public Neopagan movements in the country, nonetheless, it seems that many of the Founders were either Neo-Christians, Atheists or Agnostics.
14. Most of these have in the last ten years become respectable Neo-Christians, Agnostics, Marxists or members of other traditional and accepted religions, and have quietly but firmly dropped out of the RDNA (except to protest vigorously whenever anyone suggests changing the structure of the RDNA).
15. Thus, because most of its leaders have abandoned it, the RDNA has quite naturally tended to fall apart.
16. Thirdly, the RDNA has never been very "evangelistic" or anxious to recruit members, and therefore our numbers have never been very great.
17. Perhaps at our largest we have had sixty members and thirty priests and priestesses across the entire continent.
18. This is too small for an organization to survive in small, scattered units, without a logical and sensible structure.
19. There are no doubt that many other factors which have played important roles in our increasing disintegration as an organization, but there is no room to go into them here.
20. Let us instead turn to consider possible answers to what I feel are the two most important questions facing us in this Twelfth Year of the Reform:
21. Is Reformed Druidism, as an organization, worth bothering to keep alive at all? If so, how can we do it without violating our basic principles of individual autonomy and freedom?

#### Chapter the Second: Neopaganism and Reformed Druidism

1. "Neopaganism" is a term that was first brought to the attention of our generation by Ven. Tim Zell, Primate of the Church of All Worlds (in St. Louis, MO), which is the second oldest public Neopagan organization in America, having been founded in 1961 c.e., two years before the Reform (2 b.r.).
2. As he uses it, "Neo-Paganism" refers to a complicated and constantly evolving philosophy based upon "viewing humanity as a functional organ within the greater organism of all Life, rather than as something separate and 'above' the rest of the natural world."
3. Other philosophers have since expanded the term to make it far broader than Ven. Zell might consider proper.

4. As I use it, "Neopaganism" refers to the modern polytheistic (or conditional monotheistic) nature religions that are based upon the older or "Paleopagan" religions; concentrating upon an attempt to retain the humanistic, ecological and creative aspects of these old belief systems while discarding their occasionally brutal or repressive developments which are inappropriate to the "Aquarian Age."
  5. "Neochristianity," to give a parallel that might make things clearer, is a term used by some to refer to such groups as the Christian Scientist, Quakers, Unitarians, and other "liberal Christians;" while the "Paleochristians" include Roman Catholics, High Church Anglicans, Baptists, Pentecostals and other "conservative Christians."
  6. There are of course people who could be called "Neojews" (Reform) and "Paleojews" (Orthodox), "Neobuddhists" (Mahayana) and "Paleobuddhists" (Theravada), "Neowitches" (Wiccans) and "Paleowitches" ("Fam-Trads"), etc.
  7. The major Neopagan movements include modern, humanistic versions of Egyptian, Norse, Celtic, Roman, Greek, Slavic, African, Chinese, Native American and other ancient religions from around the world.
  8. Perhaps the most well-known of such Neopagan movements are the various diverse belief systems that refer to themselves as being "Wicca," "Witchcraft," "The Old Religion," etc.; based upon many different cultural backgrounds (though primarily Celtic) and of wildly varying levels of scholarship and practice.
  9. The major principles that these Neopagan religions have in common would seem to be these: (1) a reverence for Nature and a willingness to live by Her laws, rather than trying to "conquer" Her; (2) a constant search for awareness and growth, beginning in the realm of Nature; (3) a belief that there are certain Archetypal forces in the cosmos, usually called "gods," "goddesses," "nature elementals," "spirits," etc., that humans interact with for mutual benefit; and (4) a knowledge that psychic talents do indeed exist and can be trained and developed through the use of ritual, among other methods.
  10. So it is clear that, in this expanded sense of "Neopagan," the RDNA fulfills more than one qualification to be a Neo-Pagan movement, though whether it is a "religion" or a "philosophy" was never decided by the original Carleton Founders.
  11. I will maintain that Reformed Druidism is, or can be, a Neopagan *religion*, even though this contradicts the word of the major Founder of the RDNA (see *The Book of Faith*, verse 5) and absolutely horrifies him and others.
  12. I will maintain further, that if it is to survive, Reformed Druidism must recognize its own Nature, as an originally proto-neopagan movement that has evolved into a genuine Neopagan group, and accept its duty to take it rightful place among the Neopagan movements of America.
  13. But let me now approach this subject from another angle, one that will make more sense to some of you and less sense to others.
2. While respectable clergy and physicists scream to the contrary, it is a *fact* that psychic phenomena exist and that they rarely follow the desires of scientists or other preachers.
  3. A religious ritual is a spiritual psychodrama done for magical purposes, whether simple or complicated, heavy or lightweight.
  4. When the ritual is led by a priest and/or a priestess who perform(s) the act of channeling the energies raised, and who act (s) as the official representative(s) of the deities invoked, then we have a psychic technology that is referred to as a system of "Priestcraft."
  5. If, on the other hand, all the members of the religious group share the task of channeling the energies equally, and all expect to develop their psychic abilities, then we have a psychic technology that is referred to (at least by some) as a system of "Witchcraft."
  6. But be warned that both of these approaches can blur together greatly! And they are both interwoven with Ceremonial Magic, Wizardry, Shamanism, Strega, Macumba and other system of magic working; for these terms have always been in flux and today are more slippery than ever.
  7. But it is safe to say, from a scholarly viewpoint, that the RDNA is a Priestcraft and not a Witchcraft; though many Druids and Witches seem to encounter no difficulty in attending each other's rituals.
  8. Now the rituals of the RDNA, though not originally designed to be magically strong, can be (and have been) used by trained Druids for powerful magical purposes; ranging from the mere charging of the chalice with stronger than usual psychic energy, to healings of physical diseases and the performance of drastic weather spells.
  9. So, while the RDNA has not been around long enough as an organization to acquire a strong circuit of power in the collective unconscious (as the 40+ Catholic Churches have, for example), nonetheless, under the leadership of a Druid/ess who has been properly trained in magic, our rites can be used to reach back to touch the Ancient Gods invoked.
  10. Yet another advantage to the rituals of the RDNA is their ecumenical or eclectic structure; for almost any good Pagan deity can be contacted within the context of our liturgy, including the Pagan deities behind the Christos myths.
  11. When the waters of Life are passed about the circle and a psychic link is forged between those who drink and the Old Gods that is magic!
  12. When Grannos of the Healing Springs is invoked to heal a sick person and that sick person is healed that is magic!
  13. When Taranis is beseeched for rain and clouds suddenly gather from the four corners of the sky, rushing together to pour their bounty upon the Earth below that is magic!
  14. All these things I have seen, and more.

## Chapter the Third: Magic, Witchcraft and Reformed Druidism

1. "Magic"; is a word that has many meanings to many people, but for the purposes of this Epistle, I shall define it as "Folk Parapsychology," the techniques developed for

## Chapter the Fourth: Magic vs. Science?

1. Now lest there be some of you who feel that I am talking foolishly about that which I know naught, I will state that I have been a scholar of minority belief systems for ten years, that I have authored books and many scholarly treatises upon the subjects of Magic, Paganism, Witchcraft, Voodoo, Parapsychology and other related subjects.



2. Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, do I assure you, that *I know whereof I speak*.
3. All these wonders, of the sort that I have just related, though their very possibility is frightening to many, have always been common among Paleopagans and Neopagans (and they used to be common among Christians and Jews as well); and it is only the fanatic technologists and devout materialists who will close their eyes to that which they do not wish to see.
4. For to admit that the cosmos is bigger than their minds can comprehend, would be to admit that they are only a *part* of Nature, and not Her "conqueror." And this admission truly goes against all of Western Civilization and the "Judeo-Christian" tradition.
5. Even so, I beseech you Sisters and Brothers, that as the RDNA has always fought against the coerced belief systems of Established Religions, let us also be willing to combat the coerced belief system of the Established Religion of Scientism.
6. For no humans are infallible, even if indeed they be wearing the ceremonial white Labcoats, and waving the ritual Slidrules, and chalking up the mystic Numbers, and chanting the most sacred mantra, "Science has proven that...."
7. Wherefore, let us as Reformed Druids confess that there are indeed powers beyond human comprehension, beyond the limitations of human religions (no matter how respectable), and work to develop our psychic talents for our benefit and that of the Earth-Mother.
9. It is said that the Ancient Druids spent twenty years or more in training, learning the unwritten lore of their peoples and how to fashion it into poetry that could inspire and subdue, crown a brave warrior and dethrone a tyrant, heal the sick and enchant the world.
10. Surely, Reformed Druids can continue this tradition.
11. So therefore, Sisters and Brothers, let us return the magic of ritual and poetry, music and song, dancing and feasting to our forms of our worship.
12. Only in this way do I think we may provide the psychic revitalization which we and the world so sadly need.
13. Only in this way, by forging the bond between us through the *waters-of-life* into an unbreakable chain linking us with the Earth-mother and Be'al, may we survive as anything other than a quaint Carleton College Alumni Club.
14. Only in this way may the *spiritual body* of Druidism be revived from the malaise that has brought it low.
15. *The organizational body of Druidism* can then be easily resurrected, though in what forms remains to be seen.
16. But since this is already the longest book in the *Apocrypha*, I will close with this assurance:
17. Rejoice!
18. The Gods are alive! Magic is afoot!

Peace!

Isaac Bonewits, D.A.L., Be.

Archdruid, Twin Cities Grove

Foghamhar, 12 y.r. [circa late August, 1974 c.e.]

## Chapter the Fifth: What Can Be Done

1. Now this can be accomplished through many means: through ritual and music, poetry and song, enchantment and the seeking of oracles.
2. Groves may easily add magical spells to the middles of the Orders of Worship, or reserve those enchantments for magical Orders within the Reformed Druid movement.
3. For while there are three Lower Orders and seven Higher Order at present, still there is no reason why more may not be founded and dedicated to patron deities for there are many more Gaulish, British, Irish, Scots, Manx, Welsh, and Pictish gods and goddesses who are not mentioned in *the Chronicles of the Foundation*, but who were known to the ancient Druids, whose ways we seek to reconstruct.
4. Now among these other deities were many who are now worshipped by some of those who call themselves "Witches"; and although the Triple Moon/Earth/Sea Goddess and the Horned God of the Woods are not mentioned in our scriptures, still they are a part of our Paleopagan heritage.
5. Let us therefore cooperate with those Witches and Covens who are of a like mind to our own, neither lording it over them nor bending the knee, but treating them as sisters and brothers along the Paths to Awareness.
6. For while Ancient Druidism (*Druidecht*) had little if anything to do with Ancient Witchcraft (*wiccacraeft*), representing in all likelihood different social classes, in today's world it is best for Neopagans of all kinds to assist each other in whatever way they can, for the befit of All.
7. And as we attempt to resurrect and reconstruct the religious and magical practices of the of the Ancient Druids, let us not forget one of their most powerful ones, poetry.
8. For every Druid and every Druidess should be a poet.

# The Second Epistle of Isaac

(By Isaac Bonewits, 1976)

[A Discourse by Isaac on his **personal**  
understanding of Magick]

(Berkeley Apocrypha Only)

## Chapter the First:

### The Baby and the Bath Water

1. Sisters and brothers, the purpose of this missive is to make clear some matters concerning the subjects of Theology (the study of more than one God) and Hierurgy (the practice of sacred workings) insofar as they relate to ritual.
2. For there appears to be a great deal of ignorance about these subjects among Reformed Druids and more than a little hostility towards the very existence of ritual at all.
3. And this is understandable from those who have been raised in a monotheistic culture, especially since the religious leaders of that culture long ago lost what knowledge they once had about the proper use and purpose of ritual.
4. So that today the rituals of the Established Religions of the West have almost no power and very little positive use; but on the contrary, have been perverted into tools of manipulation and tyranny.
5. Now since all of us growing up in monotheistic cultures have been taught from birth that the only "real" religions are the Western ones, and since it has always been made deliberately difficult for us to get accurate information about non-western religions, we have naturally tended to reject the non-monotheistic religions we do not know along with the monotheistic ones we are familiar with.
6. This shortsightedness has been planned, for the powers that we would rather have us as atheists and agnostics rather than as non-monotheists, for thus we are still playing their game by their rules.
7. Also as intellectuals, we have been raised to have a knee-jerk reaction to such terms as "Magic," "the occult," "ritualism," "the supernatural," etc., so that we can only think about these subjects in the ways that we are supposed to.
8. For a full understanding of these terms by intellectuals, and eventually large numbers of other people, would spell the death of organized Western religion (though it would have little effect on the non-monotheistic systems).
9. *What I have to say in this Epistle are, of course, only my opinions.* {Emphasis added by Editor} But they are the opinions gathered from a career of studying many forbidden subjects and learning to think that which a Westerner is not supposed to be able to think.
10. For I have studied magical, religious and psychical phenomena from all around the world and have learned that the overwhelming majority of cultures in which these strange beliefs and occurrences appear happen to agree upon the same basic theories of magic and religion.
11. Granted, the explanations offered by these non-western thinkers may seem a little strange to Western philosopher

and theologians, as well as their students, but historically speaking it is the Western monotheistic thinkers who are out-of-step.

12. And I will submit that monotheism, far from being the crown of human thought and religion, as its supporters have claimed for several bloody millennia, is in fact a monstrous step backwards, a step that has been responsible for more human misery than any other idea in known history.
13. And I will suggest that, in rejecting all religion and ritual because of disgust with the only religions known to you, the monotheistic ones, some of you have thrown out the baby with the bathwater; just as you were supposed to do.
14. And I will further ask you, sisters and brothers, to read my words with as open of minds as you can, for whether you wind up agreeing with me or not is really not important; but you will at least understand my motivations and concepts, and those of my colleagues in the Neopagan movements.
15. Perhaps you will come to understand that we are not irrational, anti-intellectual, "back to the caves" fanatics, but that rather our philosophies are the equal in complexity to any ever invented in the West.

## Chapter the Second:

### Reality and Non-Reality

1. In order to understand the original ideas behind most magical and religious rituals, one must begin with the fact that the Gods are real.
2. Their type of reality is not that of a block of wood or of anything physical that we are familiar with, but a kind of reality it is nonetheless.
3. This may seem somewhat confusing to the dualists among us, so I will attempt to explain this rather complex matter.
4. The theological system that framed the philosophical structure of Western Civilization and conditioned westerners as to what was logically thinkable, is basically a "conditionally monotheistic dualism."
5. That is to say, while claiming to be monotheistic, it is in fact *polytheistic*, with the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost, Mary and Satan (Allah and Shaitan, in Islam) as the major deities, with a host of lesser deities called Saints, Demons and Angels, all of whom are divided into two grand armies: the Good Guys and the Bad Guys.
6. Dualism is the metaphysical view that the cosmos is divided into two irreconcilable forces, usually described as Good and Evil; frequently, it is stated that the Good God is the God of the Spirit (and therefore everything nonmaterial is good, except of course the Bad God and his minions, who are also spirits) and the Bad God is the God of the Material World (and therefore everything material and fleshly, including all the female deities of the Earth, such as our Earth-Mother is irretrievably evil).
7. Unlike the Oriental systems, there is no overlap between Good and Evil, White and Black, Light and Darkness.
8. Now while Western theology claims that Satan/Shaitan is weaker than Jehovah/Allah, nevertheless, in their day-to-day statements, most Western theologians ascribe to the Bad God all the miraculous powers usually ascribed to the Good God (or his representatives, such as Jesus or Mohammed); in order to be able to explain the "counterfeit miracles" performed by the members of other faiths.

9. It is obvious to any Pagan theologian that Western theology is basically dualistic, with the forces of Good and Evil pretty much evenly balanced; it is equally obvious that these theologians managed to force Western philosophy and metaphysics to become strictly dualistic as well.
10. Pushing Aristotle (and later Descartes) as the supreme logician, Western theologians created a worldview in which every object of perception or conception was either Good or Evil, True or False, Right or Wrong, White or Black, Real or Unreal.
11. The entire cosmos was sliced into two warring halves, and whoever refused to accept this worldview was automatically ascribed to the Evil half and executed as a menace to civilization.
12. All of this, mind you, is somewhat different from the views that have been held by 99% of the human race, throughout history, and probably for a million years before history began.
13. Polytheists have a tendency to develop logical systems based on "multiple levels of reality" and on the magical Law of Infinite Universes: "every sentient being lives in a unique Universe."
14. What is true for one person in one situation may not be true for another person in a different situation, or even for the *same* person in a different situation.
15. 'Truth' is defined as a function of convenience (the magical Law of Pragmatism, also used in most engineering and scientific activity: "if it works, it's true"); Truth does not exist in a comprehensible form as an eternal essence.
16. The simplest example of this is your favorite table: slam your fist down on it.
17. After yelling with pain, you will notice that, on the level of ordinary mundane reality, that table is quite solid.
18. Yet we all know that, on another level of reality (one we all believe in, even though we've never seen an atom), that table is 99.9999% empty space, as is your hand.
19. For the table is simultaneously solid and not solid, depending upon which level of reality we care to consider.
20. A beautiful perfume in my universe may be a terrible stench in yours; to a colorblind person, red and green may appear the same; sound is a false concept to a person born deaf, he or she has to be taught to perceive that which does not exist to his or her senses.
21. The wonderful theories of relativity being so proudly produced by modern physicists were known millennia ago by Pagan philosophers and mystics; the only reason relativity came as such a shock to our scientists was because the Western worldview does not allow for ambiguity or relativity, everything is either Absolutely Eternally True or Absolutely Eternally False ("He who is not with me is against me," "The lukewarm I vomit forth from my mouth," "Kill them all, God will know His own," etc.).
22. This is not the place for an extensive theological analysis of Western Religion; but it is necessary to point out these matters rather bluntly, in order to allow one to think the unthinkable by reasoning out that which Aristotle says is impossible to reason out.

## Chapter the Third:

### The Reality of the Gods

1. Now, with the preceding background, we may come to the fascinating point where metaphysical relativity intersects the realm of theology (one may use the term "polytheology" if the slight change in the usual spelling of "theology" is upsetting).
2. For the Gods are both real and unreal, "true" and "false," depending upon which level of reality one cares to deal with.
3. Taranis, for example, is on the physical level merely a quaint myth of our Celtic ancestors.
4. On the euhemeristic level, He may be the memory of a once famous and powerful warrior and weather magician.
5. On the intellectual level, He is an Archetype of thunder and lightning, as are Thor, Perkunas, Indra, Perun, the Thunderbird, and other deities.
6. But what if you invoke Taranis several times to start storms and *each time you get a storm*?
7. You must then face the fact that, on *some* poorly understood level of reality, Taranis is a real, living entity, one you can interact with.
8. I would say that Taranis is, in fact, like all gods and goddesses, a powerful Archetype in the collective unconscious of humanity; this collective unconscious (Jung's term) is what I have called elsewhere "The Switchboard" (in *Real Magic*), C. Taliesin Edwards (the leading theologian in the Neopagan movements has called "The Da Mind" (in his *Essays Towards a Metatheology of the Goddess*), and that others have called by a variety of names.
9. I would assure you that this gigantic interlocking net of Archetypes *exists* on what, for lack of a better term, has been called the *psychic* level (or sometimes the "spiritual" level, but that term tends to confuse matters more than it helps).
10. It is the source of the divine power used in *all* religious rituals, including those of the monotheists who think they are communicating with a Supreme Being.
11. Further details can be found in the above cited writings, but for now let it suffice to say that *all* the Gods and Goddesses, Angels, Demons, Saints, Avatars, Buddhas, etc., *exist*, they are real.
12. They exist as, if nothing else, many powerful circuits of psychic energy in a gigantic web linking every living sentient being on this planet Earth.
13. And although it became fashionable in Western Religion to promote local tribal gods to the rank of Supreme Being (through a process known as *hyperapotheosis* or "The Palestinian Heresy"), most theologians would insist that the Most High God/ess is only a distant parent to the Gods and Goddesses of Earth, no matter how grand the claims of religious partisans.

## Chapter the Fourth:

### Earthly Deities and the Supreme Being

1. Followers of Reformed Druidism who are horrified by being associated with Paganism will be surprised to learn that traditional Pagan attitudes towards a Supreme Being are highly similar to those held by most Reformed Druids towards Be'al.
2. Most Paleopagan and Neopagan systems of theology tend towards a belief that the High God or High Goddess lives very far away and is not concerned with the actions of mortals; although He/She/It may have been the original parent of the tribal Gods, nonetheless, the High God/dess is not usually described in anthropomorphic way.
3. The Most High God/dess is neither male, nor female, nor even neuter; He/She/It has no human emotions or other characteristics whatsoever.
4. In accord with the mystics from around the world, theologians will assert that any statement made about the Most High God/dess is bound to be incorrect, simply because He/She/It is Infinite and human minds (no matter how "divinely inspired" they may think they are) are all too finite.
5. Human languages are not equipped to deal with Infinity; neither are human emotions.
6. The Gods and Goddesses of Earth, on the other hand, *are* anthropomorphic, they laugh and cry, become angry or vengeful, feel love and hate, can be tricked and taught, send mercy or punishment, etc., and this is precisely *why* They are loved.
7. These are the entities that humans actually reach in their rituals, although westerners usually fool themselves into believing that they have reached the Supreme Being.
8. Theologians would insist that none of the deities worshipped by westerners are as powerful as They are claimed to be, but They are powerful enough to produce magical effects ("miracles") once in a great while, and that is more than sufficient to allow those who are ignorant of the magical and psychic sciences to claim each of the Gods worshipped as the Supreme being.
9. And since occultists and theologians are executed as quickly as possible by monotheists, there is no one around to contradict the leaders of whatever religion is the One True Right and Only Way in a given culture.
10. Now the official party line of Western theology for five thousand years has been that "all Pagan deities are demons in disguise," and that it was an insult to the Supreme Being to worship any lesser deities.
11. Naturally, this came as something of a surprise to the Pagans, who were more likely to say that "All Gods and Goddesses are of the Most High, and in honoring Them do we honor the One."
12. Western dualism, however, forced its theologians to insist that all the deities they met in their missionary work had to be turned into Saints or Demons immediately.
13. The closest that Neopagans seem to come to the direct worshipping of a Supreme Being (outside of one Egyptian monotheistic cult, and there seems to be some controversy as to whether or not they count as Neopagans) will be found in the cult of "The God and the Goddess."
14. Known as *duotheism*, this belief system states that the Ultimate Godhead is bisexual, or hermaphroditic.
15. As direct emanations form "The Star Goddess and Her Consort," there is an Earthly Goddess and God (referred to

in Neopagan Witchcraft, for example, as a Moon/Earth/Sea Goddess and a Horned God of the Wildwood and the Sun).

16. This Earthly God and Goddess are the rulers and at the same time the quintessence, of all the male and female deities of planet Earth.
17. Every god or goddess of this planet is seen as an "aspect" or "face" of these Two, who are in turn the humanoid aspects of the Most High God/dess.
18. But most Neopagans are perfectly willing to admit that the dolphins might have an Earthly Dolphin God and Goddess, and that beings of another world might have deities of their own Who would be just as "real" as our own are, though totally inhuman.
19. It's a big cosmos and the universe is perfectly capable of counting higher than two.

## Chapter the Fifth:

### But What About Ritual?

1. Now as a Reformed Druid, I am entitled to believe any sort of nonsense, simple or sophisticated that I care to, and you will no doubt be happy to allow me that right.
2. But you may be wondering what all of this intellectual discussion has to do with the positive or negative values of ritual; therefore, I will turn to that subject as quickly as possible.
3. But first it is necessary to explain some of the terms I will be using in the forthcoming discussion, for Heirurgy (which means the work of worshipping) is a complex subject and cannot be understood without the use of fairly precise terms.
4. "Magic" is the art of science of getting one's psychic talents to do what one wants; in other words, "Folk-parapsychology."
5. A "ritual" is any sequence of ordered events designed to produce a desired effect.
6. A "magical ritual," therefore, is a psychodrama designed to facilitate the generation of psychic energy and the focused disposition of that energy, in order to accomplish a given result.
7. A miracle is a magical act or paranormal phenomena performed by a person working within a religious context of which you approve. A "counterfeit miracle" is an identical magical act or paranormal phenomena performed by a person working in a religious context of which you *don't* approve (this is often referred to as "evil black magic done with help of demons").
8. A "religion" is a combination of a philosophical system and a magical system (as mentioned in *The Epistle of David*) which is oriented primarily towards higher beings, period. There's no need to go all gooey and mystical about it.
10. An "active ritual" is one designed to have an effect upon a situation or entity outside of oneself (praying for rain, for example, or faith healing another).
11. A "passive ritual" is one designed to change oneself; to receive or store psychic energy rather than sending it elsewhere (doing a self-healing, for example, or becoming possessed by a Holy Spirit).
12. As a general rule, the **major** distinction in psychic technology between magical and religious rituals is that magical rituals *usually* involve few people and are actively

oriented, while religious rituals *usually* involve large numbers of people and are passively oriented.

13. Because the majority always define cultural reality, it is easy for a theologian who is dishonest to claim that the ritual activity involving large numbers of people is somehow morally superior and qualitatively different from those rituals involving a minority.
14. So what really goes on at a religious ritual? Not, what do the people *think* is going on, nor what their theologians and priests may *tell them* is going on, but *really*?
15. Actually, the art of Priestcraft (which is what we are, after all, discussing) is rather simple, so simple in fact that the over mystification of the psychic technology involved is what led to the term having such a bad aroma.
16. The answer to the question of what really happens at a religious ritual will be answered in Chapter Seven, using the Reformed Druid Order of Common Worship as our example; but First we should consider the tools of ritual.

## Chapter the Sixth: The Tools of Ritual

1. In a typical magical ritual various techniques are used to get the magicians(s) into the proper frame of mind to release psychic energy in a focused manner, including the following:
  2. .... "mandalas" or "yantras" (known in the West as "pentacles" or "sigils") which are pictures or diagrams illustrating the type of energies being dealt with....
  3. 52
  - .... "mantras" or "incantations", which are sound sequences which have both physical and psychological effects....
  4. .... "mudras" or "gestures," which are postures having physical and psychological effects....
  5. .... props (chalices, swords, wands, etc.)....
  6. .... scenery (the decoration of the ritual room with appropriate colors and textures)....
  7. .... costumes (special clothes or the lack of them, worn during the ritual)....
  8. .... intoxicating methods and methods for otherwise altering the state of consciousness including breathing exercises, sexual techniques, alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, physical exercises and other methods.
- 8b. Each and every single one of these techniques and supporting elements shows up in religious rituals as well.
9. The mandalas may be two-dimensional paintings, icons or tapestries, or else they may be three-dimensional statues or idols (an "idol" is someone else's religious statue); in any event, they stimulate the sense of sight.
10. The mantras are, of course, the prayers, psalms, litanies and hymns used to stimulate the sense of hearing.
11. The mudras can include kneeling, genuflecting, kissing of sacred objects, saluting the Four Quarters of the sky, etc.; these are for the kinesthetic senses.
12. The props are frequently the same as those used in magical rituals, chalices, pointing sticks, plates of precious metals, altars, etc.
13. As for scenery, every temple or church building is decorated in whatever manner the congregation feels is most powerfully spiritually (i.e. "holy").
14. Naturally special costumes are worn by the clergy and laity alike, such as skullcaps, black shirts with white collars, prayer shawls, white robes, maniples, etc.
15. In Western Religions these days, the principal drug used to alter the state of consciousness is wine, though Oriental

Religions frequently use cannabis, Voodoo uses rum, and Native American rituals will use tobacco, peyote or magic mushrooms.

16. Is it only a coincidence that religious ceremonies make use of exactly the same ritual tools as those used in ceremonial magic?
17. It is perhaps true, as some have claimed, that the ceremonial magicians are "actually" worshipping demons and deliberately stole the techniques from the organized religions in order to blaspheme and desecrate them?
18. Bullfeathers!
19. Ceremonial magicians shamans, witches and medicine-people have been around for millennia, since long before the rise of our modern organized faiths.
20. They were using those techniques then because they worked, a fact the organized religions know full well, because each of the organized religions was originally a tribal religion run by just such a local shaman or witchdoctor or prophet.

## Chapter the Seventh:

### The Magic of Druid Worship

1. As you no doubt might imagine, brothers and sisters, I have been alternately amused and angered by comments about how easy it is for ritual to "independently acquire magical properties of its own."
2. My amusement was based upon my own knowledge that any effective religious ritual will already have magical properties or it won't work at all.
3. Whereas my anger was not directed at the speakers of the derogatory comments, for they had no way of knowing otherwise, but rather at the theologians and philosophers of the West who have so carefully assured that intelligent men and women will somehow separate magic from religion in their thinking.
4. As we have seen, what goes on in a religious ritual is exactly the same thing that goes on in a magical ritual: the manipulation of psychic energies by humans for human benefit.
5. The details of the technology may be a little different, but the forces used are basically the same.
6. In order to make my wild sounding statements a bit clearer, let us examine the Order of Common Worship in use by the various Reformed Druid movements.
7. Like all religious rituals, it opens with an Invocation, asking the deities to take notice of our presence and simultaneously initiating a form of unity between the members of the Grove.
8. In most religions, this is a far more elaborate part of the ritual and is designed to really make the group-mind (a telepathic resonance set up between a number of people thinking similar strong thoughts about a single subject) as strong as possible.
9. Note also that the Reformed Druid Invocation used includes a "confession of sins," another common element in opening prayers, designed to remind the people of their dependence upon the Gods.
10. Next is the Processional and the Hymns or Incantations of Praise, designed to "uplift" our emotion; i.e., to get us emotional and to focus that emotional/psychic energy towards the Earth-Mother and Be'al.
11. When the Sacrifice is offered, we are not only intellectually making an offer to the Gods, but we are also

- sending life force from the severed tree branches we are sacrificing (in a similar fashion, those religions that sacrifice animals are using that exploding life force to strengthen the psychic energy being aimed at the Gods).
12. We are in effect, by sacrificing anything living, taking advantage of the life force broadcast by any dying entity (see some Kirilian motion pictures of sliced plants, for example), and using it, along with our own psychic energies (the "sacrifice of our hearts") to "feed" the Gods.
  13. This is a basic principle of Pagan theilogy, that the Gods need human worship as much as the humans need the blessings of the Gods; for every time you think emotionally (positively or negatively) about a deity, you feed more psychic energy into the collective unconscious about that deity, and reinforce its energy circuit.
  14. This is why one can legitimately say that the Christians in the West (not so much in Russia and Eastern Europe) actually worship their Devil, because they think so much about Satan that they give Him tremendous power, certainly as much as they give to their Jesus.
  15. Satan's power, like Christ's power, comes from human thoughts and human psychic energy, and not particularly from the Supreme Being, but both of these two Gods have more than enough psychic power to produce occasional magical effects.
  16. Formalized worship services are not usually the time when the deities are fed the most psychic energy, for that is a day-by-day process; instead, the energy raised and sent to a deity in a typical religious ritual acts primarily as a catalyst: it is there to trigger a return flow of psychic energy, to be used for magical purposes under the direction of the priest or priestess leading the rite.
  17. Now this kind of mechanistic approach to deity is distressing to most nonpagans in the West (though the Ancient Greeks or the modern Hindus would understand it perfectly), and it is, of course, an oversimplification; for there are thousands of variables involved in even the simplest exercise of psychic talents, and the response from the deity is not always as expected.
  18. Is this the "free will" of the deity acting, or merely incompetence on the part of the worshipers? Perhaps it is both.
  19. In any event, once the triggering energy has been sent via the Sacrifice to the deity (Who is usually visualized as "up there" somewhere, even if immanent as well), there is usually a response.
  20. In Reformed Druid ritual, it is the presiding Druid/ess who listens for the answer, and joyously announces (at least during the Summer Half of the year) that the Earth-Mother has accepted the sacrifice and is ready to bestow Her blessings upon the Grove.
  21. In other words, a message has been sent and acknowledged.
  22. As in most religious rites, a Catechism then follows; though in Reformed Druidism this is a very brief one indicating the unity of belief among the members of the Grove concerning the Waters-of-Life.
  23. The purpose of this is to further tune the group-mind, so that it will be ready to receive the psychic/spiritual energy sent it by the Gods (or, to put it another way, to open the group-mind to the reception of a message and a source of energy that is always available, if one merely tunes in and listens).
  24. The presiding Druid/ess then Consecrates (psychically charges) the chalice, making it a focus for the energies of the Gods and the Grove to meet, just as in many other religions.
  25. As the holy waters are drunk, each member of the Grove is linked more tightly to the Gods and to each other.
  26. The intoxicating effect of the whiskey or wine is meant only as an additional shove to open any closed doors left in a member's mind; it symbolizes the fires of the spirit as it burns in us and serves to break down the conscious resistance to the Other Worlds.
  27. Now is the time, in most other religious rites, when something active would be done by the spirit-filled Grove; a prayer would be said and repeated, to focus the linked and strengthened energies of the Grove, i.e., a "spell" would be cast (although that dirty word might never be used).
  28. In Reformed Druidism, however, that energy is usually used for more passive purposes; to facilitate introspection and meditation, for the improvement of one's spiritual growth.
  29. However, there is nothing to prevent a presiding Druid/ess from inserting a healing spell or a crop-growing prayer just before the pouring of the Libation ("To Thee we return....")
  30. After the Communion is over, the presiding Druid/ess usually goes directly to this Libation, which has the dual effect of both strengthening the link between the members of the Grove and the Earth-Mother, and of "grounding out" the circle of energy generated in the ceremony.
  31. This grounding and internalization of energy continues through the Meditation and Sermon. The last remnants of the energy are directed into the members of the Grove by the Benediction which, as in all religions, is designed to scatter the last blessing of the Gods over the people, while assuring them that their ritual worked and will accomplish their long term goals (this is known technically in ceremonial magic as "follow through" and is very important).
  32. Now I know that this entire discussion of religion and magic has come as somewhat of an annoying shock to many of you, especially perhaps to those brothers who were the creators of the rite we have just been discussing.
  33. But the fact is that, by accident or design, consciously or under the direct inspiration of the Earth-Mother and Be'al, they managed to create a ritual that follows the standard patterns all over the world for contacted supernatural entities and obtaining benefits from Them.
  34. It is not a very powerful ritual as it stands, but with loving care and performance by individual Groves willing to put in a lot of work ("Hierurgy") it can produce as much in the way of spiritual force and fulfillment as those of the Established Religions and more than most.
  35. With proper vestments, tools (like sickles, chalices, etc.), music and song, choreography and rehearsal (a good set of Bards helps here), Reformed Druid rituals can be as spiritually uplifting as any.
  36. But rituals are another one of those things in life where "what you get out of it depends on what you put into it."
  37. Heirurgy is hard work; but it's worth it when you have sick friends, failing crops, a long drought or spiritual malaise.

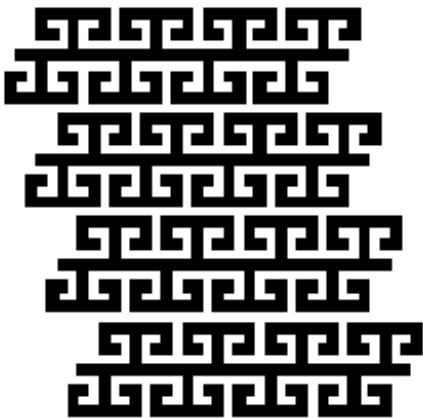
## Chapter the Eighth: Conclusion (finally!)

1. The purpose of this Epistle has not been to convert anyone to my particular world view, but rather to share that worldview in detail with my brothers and sisters in the Council.
2. For many of you have expressed bewilderment at my words and actions.
3. And I have wanted you to be able to at least understand where I am coming from, whether you agree with me or not; for I am not alone in my beliefs, bizarre as they may seem.
4. There are thousands of us in this country, and millions around the world, and for the first time in hundreds of years of genocide against us, we are beginning to grow in numbers again, as the Gods return to claim Their own.
5. And we firmly believe that whether rituals become a stumbling block or a steppingstone to the stars is entirely dependent upon the discipline, knowledge and wisdom of those performing the rituals, not upon the rites themselves.
6. Blessed be the Most High Goddess, Who was and is, and is to come, always, now, forevermore, throughout all eternal space and time.

Peace!

Isaac Bonewits, D.A.L., Be.

Samradh, 14 y.r. (circa July 1976 c.e.)



## The Third Epistle of Isaac:

Doing Things the Rite Way

(By Isaac Bonewits, 1979)

(New to ARDA 2)

### Chapter the First: A Complaint

1. Here with a moderately rude and impertinent article by Isaac Bonewits on a topic that should be of concern to all of us.
2. In recent years a number of people around the country have been complaining more and more about the quality of the rituals being performed by Druids, Witches and other Neopagans.
3. If we're going to be brutally honest about the matter, we'll have to admit that on a scale of one-to-ten the average ceremony in our community rates between two and four as far as the actual amount of psychic energies raised are concerned.
4. Even the best rites, the ones that people talk about in glowing terms for weeks later, still only rate between four and six. But this is a topic that, until recently, nobody wanted to talk about very much.
5. Politeness, interpersonal and intergroup politics, lack of fundamental psychic and magical training, and simple ignorance of what really strong psychic energies feel like, all conspired to make people reluctant to voice their growing doubts about the ritual technology in common use in our community.
6. Perhaps it is about time to forget about politeness and try to analyze just what's wrong with our ceremonies. We can't settle all the questions in one article, but if we can get folks discussing the topic openly we can at least start to work on the difficulties.
7. Readers of PJ&DC are invited to write articles commenting on this and other related matters.

### Chapter the Second:

#### From Whence the Problem?

1. I'll start my theorizing with the observation that most American Neopagans are Americans first and Neopagans second.
2. Most of us are white, from middle class backgrounds and have high IQ's.
3. These factors combine to steer us towards highly intellectualized, "all head no gut" rituals.
4. It's no coincidence that most Druidic, Wiccan and other Neopagan ceremonies bear a strong resemblance to High Church Anglicanism.
5. The Reformed Druids were founded by an Anglican, as was Gardnerian Witchcraft, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and most of our other sources.
6. Most white middle class people have a positive terror of strong emotions to begin with. We've had strong programming through parents, school, and peers that inhibits our outward expressions of emotion.

7. As a result, most of us are stuck trying to do wordy, "head - tripping" rituals while trying to get excited enough to generate psychic energy.
8. As a result, we find that our fanciest theatrical rituals often generate only a fraction of the sheer energy that many "low class" Pentecostal or Voodoo ceremonies get routinely.

### Chapter the Third:

#### Lessons from the Theater

1. Theatrical rites can be done effectively, if some basic factors are taken into consideration.
2. Because they have so little emotional power to begin with, they must be handled very well indeed in order to beguile the participants into enough excitement to generate any useful amount of mana.
3. This means that the theater aspects of the rite must be done properly: every important line must be memorized (or at least understood enough that the speakers can improvise effectively), all the cues for movement or speech must be memorized, the participants must rehearse all the elements of the rite (though the design could be flexible enough to allow spontaneous additions without disruption), and people must learn how to effectively speak and move for maximum effect.

### Chapter the Fourth:

#### Dancing for the Gods

1. If dancing is going to be part of a ceremony, which I highly recommend, the participants should actually learn how to dance.
2. Holding hands and skipping (or more usually, stumbling) around in a circle is not dancing - it is, in fact, an insult to the Gods, particularly when done without any true involvement in the movement.
3. Every metropolitan area in the country has one or more folk dance centers where people can go for little or no expense and learn a few simple steps in only a few evenings or afternoons, and dancing with joy (or solemnity for that matter) would add a great deal to the energy raising.

### Chapter the Fifth:

#### Study the Rules of Magic

1. If magic is going to be a part of the ceremony (which is usually the theory), it helps if the participants, and especially the leaders, know something about the generation and focusing of psychic energy fields.
2. Every single element of the ritual must be in a dynamic state of balance with every other part, and all must contribute to the general dramatic and magical atmosphere while still being focused around the general flavor and specific goal of the rite.
3. Every person participating in the ritual must be working (and playing) hard - our clergy are not good enough to do 100% of the work by themselves, which is what most Groves, Covens and Lodges seem to expect them to do.

### Chapter the Sixth: Hard Work

1. Now all this sounds like it requires an incredible amount of time and effort. It does.

2. The name of the game, as I stressed in an overly long and pompous sermon last Winter Solstice, is "commitment." Too many of us want the excitement and glamour of being able to call ourselves "Druids" or "Witches" or "Psychics" without actually wanting to do any of the work required to justify those titles.
3. For people who did not grow up in a culture where effective magical and religious rituals are common, where everyone learns to dance as children and magical knowledge is commonplace, preparing to perform effective rituals is a time consuming and often expensive proposition.
4. One has to be willing to give up quite a bit of time in order to study theater, dance, psychism and mythology. This is not easy, especially if we are also trying to practice what we preach by being involved in ecological or other social activities in keeping with our beliefs, not to mention the amount of time involved in basic survival.
5. But if we aren't willing to invest the time and energy, and to make personal sacrifices for the deities and ideas we claim to love, then perhaps it's time we re-evaluated our motivations and personal priorities.

### Chapter the Seventh: Commitment

1. This kind of commitment is hard to achieve, especially for the sort of intelligent, creative anarchists who make up our community.
2. Most of us are afraid, for very good historical reasons, to have a really deep commitment to any belief system.
3. Many of us have been burned before by established belief systems that tried to coerce us into following them.
4. Many of us, on a gut level, simply don't believe in magic no matter what our intellectual concepts on the topic may be.
5. As Americans, and anarchists, most of us have a strong aversion to discipline of any sort, including self-discipline.
6. We've been trained by television advertisers to expect "something for nothing" and "instant success," and this programming has been drummed into our heads from a very early age.
7. And most of us work so hard just to earn a living that we have very little time or energy to spare.
8. Now all of this means that we are unlikely to be a danger to anyone, but it also means that we are unlikely to be much of a help either. And that is a real tragedy, one that makes the topic far more important than our wounded egos.



## Chapter the Eighth: What to Do?

1. As Archdruid of the Mother Grove, I am well aware that the Reformed Druids in general, and I in particular, suffer from these weaknesses as much as the rest of the community.
2. But the time is long past to start doing something about the situation instead of just bemoaning it in private.
3. Pentalpha is making a start.
4. We have one dance class going now and are planning others for this spring. We're organizing a song and dance workshop that we hope will be a learning experience as well as a good time.
5. We have organized a group that is creating a new sort of ritual for Oimeic with a nonverbal "gut" emphasis and some elements similar to those in Voodoo and Pentecostal ceremonies (see the front page for more details). After the ritual is done, we'll sit down and do a careful critique of it all, then start rewriting for the next one.
6. We would love to hear from folks in other parts of the country who are experimenting with nonverbal or balanced verbal/nonverbal ceremonies.
7. With a little luck and help from the Gods, combined with a lot of hard work, emotional commitment and lost weekends, we can create satisfying and effective forms of worship, celebration and magic.
8. And we can actually start practicing what we preach.

-Isaac Bonewits  
1979/80?



## The Fourth Epistle of Isaac

(By Isaac Bonewits, 1980)

(New to ARDA 2)

Pentalpha Summer 1980

### Chapter the First

1. Isaac Bonewits has retired as Archdruid of the Mother Grove, so that he and his wife Selene could move down to Santa Cruz.
2. Joan Carruth, Matriarch of the Order of Dian Cecht, is now the Co-AD with Stephan McCaully of the combined Mother Grove and Hazel Nut Grove merging.
3. Isaac has kicked himself upstairs to the previously nonexistent position of Archdruid Emeritus. He swears up and down that he will not start a grove, coven, lodge, temple, or koffeeeklatsch in Santa Cruz for at least another year. (No one believes him.)
4. He sends this following letter:

### Chapter the Second

1. Dear Druidic and other Neopagan siblings:
2. It's true. I am now living near Santa Cruz, California, in something vaguely resembling a state of magical retirement.
3. While Selene goes to the University (to get her B.A. in Modern Ritual!), I'm working in the book composition field (typesetting, layout, camera work, etc.) and spending what spare time I have reading studying guitar (so I can actually start playing some of the songs I've been writing) and working on a couple of new books.
4. As Archdruid Emeritus, I get to take a break for a year or so. This means that people interested in knowing what's going on with the current Neopagan Druid movements should write to Joan or Stephen, not me. I'm on "sabbatical."
5. One of the projects I'm working on this year is a sort of "Druidic Handbook." I'm rewriting a lot of the material I originally wrote for The Druid Chronicles (Evolved) and adding a sizable amount of new stuff.
6. The book will include history, polytheology, philosophy, rituals, liturgical customs, music, poetry, organizational structures, and everything else necessary so that any qualified reader can use the book to start up his or her own Neopagan Druid group -with or without any "apostolic succession" from the Reformed Druids of North America.
7. It will be written and published in such a fashion that it can be taken into any court in the country and presented as "sacred scriptures" for legal purposes. Whether one wants to start up a Druidic group or not, it will still serve as a source of ideas on how to start a new religion.
8. The reason I'm mentioning all this is not to promote advance sales (it won't be available for at least a year or two anyway), but to ask for help. I want to include the best and most usable materials from any and all Druidic, semi-Druidic and pseudo-Druidic sources.
9. I'm looking for copies of Masonic (Mesopagan) Druid ceremonies, remnants of old Celtic folksongs and dances, experimental liturgies from current Neopagan groups and individuals, even people's "past life memories" of Druid

lore. Mind you, I will footnote everything properly, and I'm not going to present something as historical fact unless it can be pretty well documented. But there are many kinds of truth, and each can be presented on its own level of reality.

10. So if you would like to get involved in helping me create a new Neopagan Druid religion, feel free to send me whatever you've got to offer. Items that are copyright, or which you refuse to let me change, should be marked clearly as such. I won't print much of either kind of item, since I plan on altering, merging, and otherwise transmuting 95% of everything I can get my hands on.
11. As soon as I have working drafts of various sections of the handbook, I'll circulate copies among the dozen or so people who have shown the greatest interest, including members of as many other Druidic movements as I can find. With luck, we can come up with a consensus of what Aquarian Age Druidism might be like.
12. If you'd like to help, send your stuff to me at Box 9398, Berkeley, CA, 94709. Please mark your envelopes "Druid Handbook," so they won't get mixed up with the regular Pentalfa mail.
13. Oh, and I should point out that I am terrible at answering correspondence, (I'm about nine months behind on my current pile of letters), so don't think I'm not appreciating your stuff if I don't write you a letter back immediately. I will try and send postcards out to acknowledge receipt of your materials.
14. From time to time, bits and pieces of this project, as well as questions for people to argue about, will appear in The Druid Chronicler, along with occasional progress reports. But don't expect anything in a hurry, at least not from this Archdruid Emeritus. After all, folks in the magical community should be able to handle a little A.E. wait!



## The Fifth Epistle of Isaac:

### The Farewell

(by Isaac Bonewits, 1981)

(New to ARDA 2)

#### Chapter the First:

##### Cycle Ends, Cycle Starts

1. FROM THE ARCHDRUID
2. The ancient Druids are said to have built their solar-lunar calendar around a 19-year cycle (that is, 235 lunar months).
3. Samhain this year ends the first 19 years of the Reform begun at Carleton College, and begins a fresh cycle.
4. Samhain also begins the season of Geimreadh (winter), a traditional time of reforming and resurrection.
5. This winter bodes fair to continue those traditions in the grand old style.
6. Last September 20th I was (re-)elected Archdruid of what was then called the Berkeley Grove. I ran for the office on a "Revolution ticket," warning the Grove's members that I would make sweeping changes, especially in the areas of liturgy, organizational structure, and training.

#### Chapter the Second:

##### The Revolution Ticket

1. I said it was time for the Reformed Druids to begin the work necessary to create a complete religion, to grow beyond the loose framework that is the sum of its current liturgy.
2. I painted out that, little as we know of the ancient Druids, we do know that they were the Brahmanic caste of the Celtic/Germanic/Slavic peoples (though they were called by different names in different times and places.) They were the artists, musicians, poets, healers, judges, historians, diviners, magicians, clergy - the cognoscenti of their societies.
3. Any neopagan group with the audacity to call itself Druidic should have, above all, a commitment to excellence and a willingness to be everything that the name implies.
4. These ideals are far beyond the pale of what the Founders of the Reformed Druid movement wanted in the early 1960s. Their image of a Druid was that of an anarchistic philosopher, a sort of Zen Unitarian, and most of them had no intention of starting a "real" religion; they had no idea that the Gods they were invoking happened to be very much alive.

## Chapter the Third: The Gods are Alive

1. The Old Gods are alive - although I will grant that they're a little sleepy. After all, it's been a long time.
2. But what the folks at Carleton College built was not meant to last, to grow, to spread, and that Reformed Druidism is still around 19 years later is a testimony to the power of the Gods and of the Druidic archetype.
3. And given this archetype, these Gods and the power inherent in the concept of Druidism, we have the basis for a healthy, growing religion, a religion that works.
4. I have always thought that there was more to Druidism (Reformed or otherwise) than was dreamt of in the philosophies of those at Carleton College. It's out there somewhere, and through diligent hard work, we can find it. We will find it!

## Chapter the Fourth: Criteria for Druids

1. Do I hear the Old Gods stirring in their sleep?
2. Everyone advances through the Circles according to their knowledge, ability and commitment.
3. We are still developing the Circles system and the criteria for admission and advancement, but a few things have become clear based on what we are trying to do:
4. There will be set criteria for advancement, and everyone no matter who they may be, elsewhere will follow the same criteria.
5. Various rituals will be structured to the level of their participants.
6. Everyone will be required to show mastery of the knowledge in one circle before being advanced to the next.
7. This has allowed us to get back to the OLD idea of what a "Druid" was. He or she was a priest, a bard, a magician, a healer; he/she was of the cognoscenti.
8. Not everyone was cut out to be one, nor did everyone qualify in the Gods' sight.
9. If you were proper Druid's material, you could demonstrate that fact. Nobody questioned your right to wear that robe because you had been challenged long before you were ever given it.
10. We are trying to return to that method and that standard.

## Chapter the Fourth: Connections With the Old Order

1. Does this mean that we have cut all ties with the old NRDNA structure?
2. After all, we're talking about making people *work* for what they want, then rewarding them for what they produce!
3. The old New Reformed Druids offered everybody the same things, and it was open to the public - in fact, they even held their rituals in public parks.
4. We haven't cut all our old ties; just most of them. For instance, we will not instantly invest someone into the third Circle just because they are a Third Order Druid in some other Grove.
5. In view of what we're trying to do with our Druidism, there is no way we can do that without compromising our objectives.

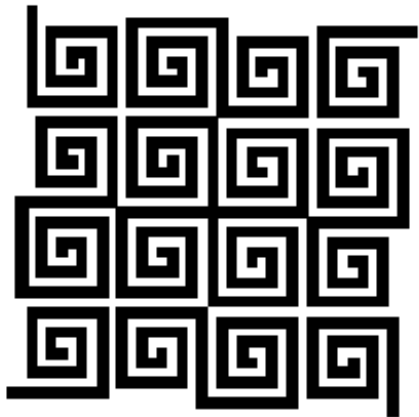
6. We will, however, keep our lines of communication open to other Groves and other groups of Druids. We want to hear what they are doing, and we want to tell them about ourselves.
7. We will allow public participation in some of our rituals. (Emphasis on the "some"). There will most assuredly be rituals that are open only to members who have been admitted to the First Circle or higher, and rituals closed to lower Circles.
8. It depends what we're trying to accomplish with any given ritual. Why close some rituals? What do we have to hide? Nothing.
9. Druidism will continue to be as it ever was. But we will hold closed rituals. This is not because we hold any secrets; rather, it's because we want our rituals and services to *work*. When we look for an omen, we want an unmistakable omen.
10. We are going to help our rituals work by requiring everybody who participates to be familiar with our methods.
11. For these reasons, of course, we cannot participate in the old Council [or its successor, the "Coalition Council" (CoCoDAL)] of Dalon ap Landu. We do not recognize their authority to govern our activities, because their aims are not ours. How can the Mormon Elders guide a Roman Catholic congregation? Their ideals are too dissimilar.
12. Isaac spent some time during Samhain this year addressing that subject. In an open letter which he (perhaps unfortunately) finally decided not to mail, he said:
13. "We will not participate in the original Council (or the current "Co-Council") of Dalon ap Landu - the original governing body of the R.D.N.A., composed of all the priests and priestesses - unless it is made abundantly clear that we do not recognize their authority to make any decisions regarding our activities, structure, 'orthodoxy,' etc.
14. "We will participate to the extent of sharing ideas and information with other Reformed Druid groups.
15. "As for the 'Higher Orders,' the Mother Grove will not help reorganize, nor will we recognize the revival of the old R.D.N.A. Higher Orders or the more recent N.R.D.N.A. Special Orders.
16. "We're not going to be in any hurry to start any new ones either, save for revamping the Bards inside our own Grove.
17. "Members of the Mother Grove may start Special Interest Groups, or participate in the Higher & Special Orders already existing in other Groves, but such SIGs or Orders will have no official status for now."

## Chapter the Fifth: What Are We

### Trying to Accomplish?

1. If we are throwing out so much of the old system, what will we replace it with? Exactly what are our goals?
2. At the bottom line, they're simple enough.
3. We want to establish a true relationship with the Gods.
4. We think that this is best done through a combination of ritual, magic, music, dance, poetry, and theatre.
5. The Gods love a good show! And to make this the best show possible, we are going to stress personal development and personal achievement within the Mother Grove.
6. We want dedication, and we think that the rewards - personal, spiritual, even perhaps physical - to be had from that dedication are more than worth the effort.
7. In addition, we want to see a balanced energy raised in our rituals. Too many Neopagan groups in the past have had a bias (however well-intentioned or even unconscious) toward either the male or the female in their workings.
8. For this reason, we strongly emphasize the value of working with a partner of the opposite sex for balance and completeness.

Isaac Bonewits  
December 1981



## The Beginning of ADF

(© Isaac Bonewits, 1983)

(New to ARDA 2)

Originally published in Druid's Progress #1 of ADF

Welcome to the first issue of the Druids' Progress. Some of this Report will be familiar to a few of you, since I'm combining materials from several previously published articles with the contents of the first announcement letters about ADF. I'm doing this so I can send out this first issue to new Inquirers and give you all the data you need at once. Please note, however, that only supporting members of ADF will be guaranteed future issues. This whole project is being run on the proverbial shoestring... and the original Druids apparently did their rites barefoot! Let's start with the original "Open Letter" that planted the first seeds:

This is going out to all the people who have written to me wanting Neopagan Druid literature, training and/or fellow Druids with whom to worship. Copies are also going to various Neopagan publications, as well as a few folks who have indicated interest in the general topic of Druidism.

As many of you may know (perhaps from reading my book *Real Magic* or Margot Adler's *Drawing Down the Moon*, I've been a priest of the Reformed Druids of North America ("RDNA") since 1969. I've led groves (congregations) in Berkeley and Minneapolis, and founded others elsewhere; published newsletters (both Druidic and general Neopagan); and wrote most of, edited and produced *The Druid Chronicles Evolved*, (the closest thing to official scriptures the RDNA has). I'm also a priest and elder of the Craft, and I've been a Neopagan magician and occultist for nearly twenty years.

I've studied, practiced and written about many different forms of magic and religion over the years, yet always I find myself going back to Druidism. Many people have written to me to tell of similar spiritual histories, of their knowledge that they are meant to walk a Druid path. Yet what can we, who wish to worship and to grow as Neopagan Druids, do for fellowship? The Masonic Druids have much to teach us, yet they are not Neopagan. The "Druidic" traditions of Wicca are interesting, but they're not really very Druidic. The members of the RDNA have no interest at all in being organized by anyone, nor in recruiting and training would-be Neopagan Druids. There doesn't seem to be any organized group of people trying to reconstruct what the Paleopagan Druids actually believed and did, nor trying to apply such knowledge to creating a Neopagan religion fit for the Space Age.

What can we do? We can do it ourselves. Thanks to the researches of such scholars as Dumézil, Ross, Piggott, Duran and others, we now have a sizable amount of realistic data about Indo-European Paleopaganism and its clergy. But how do we apply this knowledge to creating a modern Neopagan religion? What does it mean to be a Druid in the 1980's? Using accurate information as starting point, how do we create rituals and fellowship, art and music, polytheologies and lifestyles that will give meaning to our lives and those of others?

Well, of course, I have my own vision of Neopagan Druidism. I see Druids as artists and intellectuals, magicians and clergy, holders of the highest wisdom their cultures (or subcultures) have to offer. This is what they used to be, and what (with sufficient hard work and dedication) they could be again. A number of people have told me that they share my vision and approve of the wars in which I think it could be

accomplished. So, after a great deal of soul-searching, I've decided to try once again to see what I can do to create a form of "reconstructionist" Neopagan Druidism.

The purpose of this letter is an announcement of, and an invitation for, your participation in, the creation of: *Ár nDraíocht Féin*. The Irish words (pronounced "arn ree-ocht fane") mean "Our own Druidism," and that's what I have in mind -- a brand new form of Druidism, not just Pan-Celtic, but Pan-European. (By this latter term, I mean to include any of the European branches of the Indo-European culture and language tree -- Celtic, Germanic, Slavic, Baltic, even the pre-Classical Greek & Roman.) Paradoxically, this would resemble the original Paleopagan Druidism far more than any efforts of the last thousand years. It would be based on the best scholarly research available, combined with what has been learned (about art, psychology, small group politics and economics) through the theory and practice of modern Neopaganism, and my own knowledge of the polytheological and practical details of magical and religious phenomena.

I've already started this project, through the organizing of my notes and the beginning of a new book. The purpose of the druid handbook will be to enable anyone who has a copy to start up their own Druidic grove, or to practice as a solitary Druid. Everything necessary will be included: history, polytheology, liturgy, legal structures, art and music, calendars and customs, etc.

This is where you come in, I'd like to make sure that what I'm creating will fulfill genuine needs in other Neopagans. So I'm going to need feedback, advice and research help from many people in order to make this project work. Unfortunately, I'm also going to need some sort of minimal financing in order to devote the time necessary to do this right (I'm talking about 10-20 hours per week for 2-3 years). Otherwise I simply can't do the huge job of coordinating the research and writing the book in anything less than 5-10 years.

What I have in mind is this: despite my experiences with Pagan publishing in the past, I'm willing to produce a highly irregular, nonscheduled Druid publication (that's what you're reading now). This will come out three or four times per year, and will simply consist of xeroxed sheets of dot matrix type. (I'm deliberately going to keep the format as simple as possible, so as to avoid falling into the common Neopagan pit of spending increasing amounts of time and money on improving the physical appearance of the publication, when I should be concentrating on content). Issues will include selections from the work in progress; research materials (advice, requests and reports for and from the readers); scholarly, liturgical and polytheological debates; Druidic rituals and guided meditations; and anything else that looked interesting and Druidic around publication time. (And since more and more people are wanting ADF to turn into an active Neopagan religion as soon as possible, I'll be including organizational materials and advice as well.)

Now Druidism is not everyone's cup of tea, so I'm not expecting a large response to this announcement. Professional journals for specialized interest groups charge as much as \$850 per year, but I'm willing to mail out this stuff to people donating \$20 or more per year (depending upon what each supporting subscriber honestly feels they can afford to contribute to the project). That won't be enough for me to "earn a living from my religion," but it could enable me to devote the time and energy needed (not to mention the expense of paper, postage, computer disks, printer ribbons, phone bills, etc.) without my actually losing money on the project.

If you're interested, send your donation to me with a clearly printed or typed name, mailing address, zip or postal code, home and work phones (optional, with hours you can be reached at each), areas of expertise (European languages you

can read and write, artistic skills, research background and resources, Neopagan training already received, etc.) and areas of special interest (what you would most like to learn and what you think would be most useful to publish). Make our your check or money order to "P. E. I. Bonewits," and enclose a large (manila 9"x11" or 6"x9") self-addressed stamped envelope. If there aren't enough people who are enthusiastic about the project, the envelopes will be used to return the money of those who have responded. Otherwise, I'll use them to mail out the first issue sometime this spring. (Obviously, the response, though small, was enough to encourage me to go ahead. If you're receiving this issue in response to one of ADF's ads, then you don't really need to send in envelopes with your donation, unless you want to help out with the mailing costs on your future issues.)

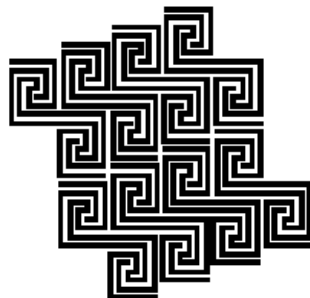
With a little bit of luck, the blessings of the Gods and a great deal of hard work, we can create an authentically Druidic Neopagan religion our ancestors would be proud of. ADF is an idea I have been wrestling with for years: a Neopagan Druid Order whose members would not be ashamed to honestly compare themselves with the original Druids. This requires mature, dedicated and talented people who are willing to invest both time and energy over a long period (remember, the original Druids took up to twenty years each to be fully trained, and they had an intact tradition).

The response to a rather small mailing of the Open Letter has been remarkable. About ten percent of the recipients have replied, and among them are a dozen linguists (who speak/read/write French, Spanish, German, Irish, Welsh, Russian, Czech, Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, Anglo-Saxon, Gothic, etc.). Several people who come from families that have always considered themselves Druidic have written, as have a few folks who are already students of Indo-European and/or Celtic studies. I expected a high proportion of Ph.D.'s and self-taught scholar, since they are common in the Neopagan community, but the actual proportion is amazing! Many have written to say how unsatisfied they have been with the scholarship and technical skills of other Neopagan traditions, and of how they have been looking for a group that took these matters seriously.

I've also had contact from poets, healers, and people who just talk to trees -- and ADF will need these types just as much as we will need scholars (though there is a large overlap, of course). I haven't heard from very many traditional musicians, singers or dancers yet, but I hope we'll be able to recruit some. We also need participation from folks who are active in various ecology and conservation groups; therapists willing to help train Neopagan clergy in pastoral counseling techniques; people from Celtic and other cultural revival movements, and so on.

At this point in the birthing process, details are in short supply, but the general outlines are becoming increasingly clear. I can at least give you some specific ideas as to...

-Isaac



# The Sixth Epistle of Isaac

(By Isaac Bonewits, 2004)

(New to ARDA 2)

## Chapter One

1. Brothers and Sisters in the Mother, I write this epistle with a sad heart, having just heard about the death of Br. Robert Larson, DAL, BE around Lughnasadh of 2004 c.e.
2. As many of you may know, Robert was the graduate of Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota who first introduced me to the Reformed Druids of North America and who eventually ordained me as a priest of the Earthmother in 1968.
3. It was his (accidental?) omission of early non-Pagan materials in the RDNA teachings (in his copy of *The Green Book*) that led me to believe that Druidism was and should be a Neopagan path; which belief I made into a self-fulfilling prophecy, much to the annoyance, amusement, and/or approval of various other Reformed Druids.
4. Robert was the priest who showed me how powerful invoking Celtic deities in a Celtic language could be and whose love of trees influenced my environmental concerns.
5. He was the one who encouraged me to edit, write parts of, and typeset *The Druid Chronicles (Evolved)*, which eventually became *A Reformed Druid Anthology* under Br. Scharding's care.
6. Although health problems have erased many personal memories of my younger days, I still have an image of the two of us burning hundreds of printing plates and offset printing *TDCE* day after day, working at his printing job after hours, then collating it and shipping it off to as many Reformed Druids as we could find.
7. If Robert had not thought of doing this project, who knows what would have happened to the Reform? The new *Apocrypha*, rituals, and the unforgettable *Great Druidish Books* raised a ruckus and got people back in touch with each other, if only to argue!
8. The Carleton Grove was revived—twice!—because students found copies of *TDCE* in the college library, which ultimately became home to what may be the world's largest Druid Archives.
9. To this very day, the pages Robert Larson printed are still there in the library, a legacy to future generations of Carleton students.

## Chapter Two

1. But his legacy is greater than this, even if by accident.
2. If I am the father of a few Branches of the Reform, including *Ár nDraíocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship*, then Robert Larson was the unknown grandfather.
3. Without him, there would have been no New Reformed Druids of North America, no Orthodox Druids of North America, no ADF, no Henge of Keltria, and none of the other Neopagan Druid offshoots of the Reform.
4. His humor, his laid-back attitudes about religious orthodoxy, and his teachings live on in hundreds (perhaps thousands) of people he never knew.
5. Another memory of him that survives is of the day I asked him about Druid holidays. "Robert," I said to him, "today's

the fall Equinox. Aren't we supposed to observe it or something?"

6. He put his banjo down, got up and went to the balcony of our apartment and looked at the setting sun.
7. "Yep, looks like an equinox to me!" he said and went back to his chair and resumed his playing.
8. Though I was mildly annoyed at the time, years later this incident was a source of much fruitful meditation for me.

## Chapter Three

1. I have not been to California for many years and long ago I lost touch with Robert.
2. Occasionally I would hear about local groves out there and someone who had moved or passed away, but seldom news about him.
3. I bitterly wish that I had made more of an effort to connect with him, for this week I was informed that he had become another example of a disposable elder.
4. For this is America, where those who are old, sick, and poor are free to simply curl up and die.
5. After all, universal health care would be "socialized medicine" - a horror beyond belief to those who profit from the current medical-drug-insurance industry (even though every other civilized nation in the world has it).
6. The tale of Robert's death is not a pretty one, but it is one that some of us may expect to repeat.
7. Like many inside and outside of the Reform, he had no retirement savings. He wound up being evicted from his apartment May 5th of this year.
8. Now there's a Happy Beltaine for you!
9. He moved into a residence hotel with the help of a family member and lived there for about three months.
10. Naturally he had no medical insurance, so he was unable to buy medication for his diabetes.
11. The diabetes eventually caused a heart attack around Lughnasadh and killed him.
12. As far as I know, he was alone at the time.

## Chapter Four

1. I'm fairly sure that Robert never thought of himself as a "Pagan Elder," but he died like one.
2. Non-Pagan Druids may be unaware that many of the founders and older leaders of the Neopagan movement have died over the last several years, most of them alone and in poverty.
3. For while creating mythologies and temples and clergy and festivals and traditions, we have somehow neglected to create a safety-net for our elders.
4. There don't seem to be any Pagan nursing homes, hospitals, homeless shelters, or retirement communities.
5. I have often remarked that most of the good things and the bad things about American Neopagans have to do with the fact that we are Americans who happen to be Neopagans.
6. Like most Americans, we have simply not thought much about the future, or assumed blithely that everyone had enough money in a Social Security account to protect them.
7. All too often we also assumed that "somebody else" would take care of anyone needing help, so few Pagan charities have been started.
8. Ironically, the women and men who have spent the most time and energy helping to birth and nurse the Neopagan

movement usually live at a much lower standard of living than the majority of their students or congregations.

9. For hours spent serving others don't count for salaries or retirement plans, and those who claim to know magic are assumed (erroneously) to be able to conjure whatever they might need.
10. So Pagan Elders who spend 40 or 50 or even 60 hours per week helping their community often wind up living on the streets or turning down the heat in their homes to save energy costs.
11. And whereas members of other faiths would be horrified to see one of their clergy living in genuine poverty (without an oath to do so), while most of their members are middle-class, Neopagans all too often simply don't bother to look.
12. For they have decided that money is evil and that spiritual people shouldn't really need any.
13. Besides, they need to save their money for beer and pizza and CDs and DVDs and a faster computer and trips to the beach and other sorts of self-indulgence.
14. None of this may be of interest to some of you, for hardly any of the Reformed Druid clergy function as such on a full time basis, which may be just as well.
15. But Robert's death, following on so many others, has renewed a determination on my part to see to it that my Neopagan brothers and sisters start paying attention to these issues.
16. In his death I fear I see my own and the deaths of many of my colleagues.
17. So I will be focusing much of my personal time and energy over the next several years working with others to create the long term resources we will all need sooner or later.
18. Pagan communities both urban and rural, some just for elders and some with a full range of ages, as well as homeless shelters, food pantries, visiting nurse services and more are on the table.
19. Eventually we will have Curmudgeonly Acres and the Pagan Old Coots home, as well as Bridget's Maternity Services and Thor's Lodge for Pagan Veterans.
20. You my sisters and brothers in the Reform are most welcome to join the planning now and use the results later.
21. I will post information about these projects on my website, which should be <[www.neopagan.net](http://www.neopagan.net)> for the next ten years or so.

## Chapter Five

1. I had planned to make this epistle a cheery one, for we have much to celebrate; though Robert's passing has (no doubt much to his amazement) sobered me.
2. It is really amazing that the Druidic memes planted so long ago should still be bearing fruit today.
3. Now there are tens of thousands of people calling themselves Druids, all around the world, and the Founders of the RDNA deserve a bit of the credit.
4. I thank you all, living and passed over, for the joy and beauty you created, accidentally or deliberately.
5. And this Samhain and every Samhain thereafter, let us raise a glass of the Waters to Robert Larson, priest of the Earth Mother and now one of the Mighty Dead.

## Three Services by Isaac

Isaac was a liturgist, Par-excellence. We have a few dozen liturgies from the 1970s, most by Isaac, who kept copies of things. To give you an idea of his liturgical evolution, I'm including three services, a traditional RDNA from the early 1970s, one from Isaac in 1979 as he was evolving the SDNA into ADF, and a skeletal outline from the mid-1980s.

The original service in 1963 at Beltane was simple, and even the RDNA began to elaborate on the model and add chants and readings. Here is what an early service looked like for the practicing priest:



Figure 2 Nelson, Fisher & Frangquist on Hill of 3 Oaks, 1964 with original record-stand altar.

## (Beltane)

### SUMMER HALF OF THE YEAR

The Earliest Known Version,  
(Perhaps by Fisher, Beltane 1963.)

#### I. OPENING BLESSING:

O Lord, forgive these three sins that are due to our human limitations:

Thou art everywhere, but we worship you here;

Thou art without form, but we worship you in these forms;

Thou needest no praise, yet we offer thee these prayers and sacrifices;

O Lord, forgive *[these]* three sins that are due to our human limitations.

Mighty and blessed, fertile and powerful, to thee Earth-Mother, we sing your praise, asking that what we offer up to thee will be accepted, and thy blessing of life granted to us.

#### II. PROCESSION AND DRAWING OF THE CIRCLE (& LIGHTING OF FIRE)

#### III. HYMNS OR CHANTS OF PRAISE

#### IV. THE SACRIFICE

Our praise has mounted up on the wings of eagles, our voices have been carried to thee on the shoulders of the winds. Hear now, O our Mother, as we offer up to thee this our sacrifice of life. Accept this we pray, and grant us life.

Hast thou accepted our sacrifice, O our Mother? I call on the Spirit of the North to give answer, of the South, of the East, and of the West.

Praise be, our sacrifice, dedicated to the fertility and renewal of life has been accepted.

#### V. THE ANSWER

1. Of what does the Earth-mother give that we may know the continual flow and renewal of life?

THE WATERS-OF-LIFE.

From whence do these Waters flow?

FROM THE BOSOM OF THE EARTH-MOTHER, THE NEVER CHANGING ALL-MOTHER.

And how do we honour this gift that causes life to men?

BY PARTAKING OF THE WATERS-OF-LIFE.

Has the Earth-Mother given forth of her bounty?

SHE HAS

Then give me the Waters.

2. O DALON AP LANDU, HALLOW THESE WATERS BY THE SEVENFOLD POWERS, AND BY THE THREE WAYS OF DAY AND THE ONE OF NIGHT. GIVE US TO KNOW THY POWER AS WE TAKE AND DRINK OF THY SECRET ESSENCES.

3. To thee we return this portion of thy bounty, O our Mother, even as we must return to thee.

#### VI. THE SERMON

#### VII. THE BENEDICTION

Go forth into the world of men, secure in the knowledge that our sacrifice has found acceptance in the Earth-mother's sight, that she has answered our prayer, and that you go forth with her blessing. PEACE, PEACE, PEACE.



# Fall Equinox

New Reformed Druids of North America  
By Bonewits & Larson, c. 1975

## Preparatory Details

*The following is a Special Order of Worship for the Fall Equinox. The chalice will be filled with the Waters-of-Life. The sacrifice should be of branches with turning leaves.*

*The service starts with all participants standing some distance away from the area where the ritual is to take place. If both safe and legal, a fire should be started in or near the altar. The Druid/ess who is presiding (usually, though not always, the Grove's Archdruid/ess) should already have cut the sacrifice and have it tucked into his or her robe (or it may be held in one hand). The presiding Druid/ess may choose to speak the opening Invocation to Be'al alone, or may ask the Preceptor and/or the people (depending on Local grove custom) to join in speaking the bold words of the Invocation.*

## The Invocation

O Lord, forgive these three errors that are due to our human limitations:  
Thou art everywhere, **but we worship thee here;**  
Thou art without form, **but we worship thee in these forms;**  
Thou hast no need of prayers and sacrifices, **yet we offer thee these prayers and sacrifices;**  
O Lord, forgive us these three errors that are due to our human limitations.  
**O Mother, cleanse our minds and hearts and prepare us for meditations.**

## The Procession

*Here occurs the Procession, often with the Grove singing the hymn from Customs 2:1-3. Upon arrival near the altar, the Preceptor and the Server or any two others designated by the Grove use their staves to mark the Druid Sigil upon the ground in front of the altar (usually on the South side), leaving the bottom of the circle incomplete. The Druid/ess steps into this Sigil, which is closed by two staves.*

## The Praise

*Here an Incantation, Poem or Hymn of praise is recited or sung by the Druid/ess, the Bard(s) or the entire Grove.*

## The Sacrifice

*The Druid/ess holds up the sacrifice to the sky, while saying:*

**PR:** Our praise has mounted up to thee on the wings of eagles, our voices have been carried up to thee on the shoulders of the winds. Hear now, we pray thee, our Mother, as we offer up this sacrifice of life. Accept it, we pray thee, and cleanse our hearts, granting us thy peace and life.

*(Here the Priest places the plant offering upon the 'altar' or the ground if there is no altar. As each of the directions are questioned, the members may turn to face that direction.)*

**PR:** Hast thou accepted our sacrifice, O our Mother? I call upon the spirit of the North to give answer... of the South...of the East...and of the West.

## The Reply

*(The sacrifice is accepted, except in unusual situations.)*

**Priest.:** Praise be! Our sacrifice, dedicated to the fertility and renewal of life, and to the cleansing of our minds and hearts, has been accepted!

## The Chant

**PR:** The Sun-God did spend half the year with His children in the North and then did depart to his winter home.  
O Belenos, O Thou unchanging God of many names but One Face, we, Thy children, mourn Thy passing from our lands.

**Chorus:** O Lord of Light, return to us soon.

**PR:** O Belenos, O Lord of Light, short seems the time that we have rejoiced in the warmth of Thy presence.

**Chorus:** O God of the Sun, return to us soon.

**PR:** The nights were short, the trees in leaf,

**Chorus:** The Day had conquered night.

**PR:** The days were long and full of Life,

**Chorus:** The day had conquered night.

**PR:** The Sun was warm, the land gave fruit,

**Chorus:** The day had conquered night.

**PR:** But the Sun must return to the Southern lands,

**Chorus:** Balanced now are we.

**PR:** Though the world is warm and full of Life,

**Chorus:** Balanced now are we.

**PR:** Yet the cold approaches to stalk the land,

**Chorus:** Balanced now are we.

**PR:** The Sun grows weaker every day.

**Chorus:** The night will conquer day.

**PR:** The leaves will wither and Death draw nigh,

**Chorus:** The night will conquer day.

**PR:** We pray Thy return with all our might.

**Chorus:** Or the night will conquer day.

\*\*\*\*\*

**PR:** O Belenos, O Sun, we mourn Thy passing from our midst. Welcome wert Thou among us.

**Chorus:** Thou blessed us with Thy presence, O Lord of Light.

**PR:** O Belenos, O Lord of Light, return to us soon that we may rejoice in Thy sight.

**Chorus:** Bless us and light our way, O God of Sun.

\*\*\*\*\*

**PR:** But winter will pass and spring will come,

**Chorus:** And the day will conquer night.

**PR:** The Sun will return and warm our land,

**Chorus:** And the day will conquer night.

**PR:** Death will pass and Life return,

**Chorus:** And the day will conquer night!

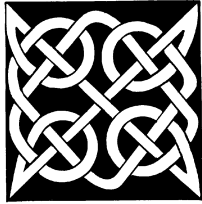
\*\*\*\*\*

**PR:** O Belenos, O Sun-God, O Lord of Light, though Thy presence depart from us, yet art Thou with us, for Thy light does guide our feet and Thy warmth is in our hearts.

**Chorus:** All hail Belenos, God of Light!

**PR:** All praise Belenos, who keep his ways.

**Chorus:** O Belenos, we praise Thee!



## The Catechism

*(The preceptor holds the Waters-of-Life while the priest ask the Catechism. The local custom may replace the Preceptor's response with a chorus of the members.)*

**PR:** Of what does the Earth-Mother give that we may know the continual flow and renewal of life?

**PREC:** THE WATERS-OF-LIFE.

**PR:** From whence do these Waters flow?

**PREC:** FROM THE BOSOM OF THE EARTH-MOTHER, THE NEVER CHANGING ALL-MOTHER.

**PR:** And how do we honor this gift that causes life in us?

**PREC:** BY PARTAKING OF THE WATERS-OF-LIFE.

**PR:** Has the Earth-Mother given forth of her bounty?

**PREC:** SHE HAS!

**PR:** Does Belenos still give us a sign of His presence?

**PREC:** HE DOES! THOUGH HE DEPARTS FOR THE SOUTHERN LANDS, STILL IS HIS SPARK WITHIN THESE WATERS-OF-LIFE.

**PR:** Then give me the Waters!

## The Consecration

*(The Priest/ess takes the chalice from the Server, who fills it if it is not already full. The Priest/ess then consecrates its contents with the following:)*

**PR:** O Belenos, O Lord of Light, descend yet once more into these waters and fill them with Thy presence. Give us to know, O Lord, of Thy impending return, as we take and drink one more time of Thy warmth and light.

## Ordinations

*First Order consecrations can be done at this time, but it's not necessary to enter into the first order for a person to drink Waters. If a member of the Grove is to be ordained to the Second Order (in which case the Priest/ess will have consecrated an additional chalice, filled with the Waters-of-Life) the ceremony is inserted here, before the Communion.*

## The Communion

*The Priest/ess drink from the chalice and blesses the Preceptor with the words, "the Waters-of-Life," and the marking of the Druid Sigil in the air.*

*The Preceptor returns the blessing and receives the chalice from the Priest/ess. The Preceptor drinks, blesses the Server, is blessed in return, and gives the Server the chalice. The Server drinks, then goes around the circle of the Grove (usually clockwise) blessing each person, handing them the chalice, letting them drink, being blessed in return and taking the chalice to the next person. The Server does not drink more than once.*

*In some Groves, the Priest/ess may merely turn to the left and exchange blessings with the person to that side, letting the chalice be handed around the circle by the members of the Grove.*

*In either method, the last person in the circle should not finish the contents of the chalice. This is returned to the Priest/ess with blessings. Then the Druid/ess takes the last sip returning the remainder on the altar or fire, saying:*

**PR:** To thee we return this portion of thy bounty, O our Mother, even as we must return to thee.

## The Meditation

*(Here follows an appropriate reading, from any Nature-oriented scripture that the Priest/ess may choose, read by the Druid/ess or by someone appointed for that purpose. After this comes a few BRIEF words of meditation from the Priest/ess and a period of silence and private mediation (usually two or three minutes in length, though longer with some Groves) by all. Eventually, the Priest/ess signals the end:*

## The Benediction

**PR:** Go forth into the world, secure in the knowledge that our sacrifice has found acceptance in the Earth-Mother's sight, that she has answered our prayer, and that we go forth with her blessing.

## Drawing the Sigil in the Air

*The Priest blesses the Grove with three Sigils in the air, left to right, saying:*

Peace! Peace! Peace!

# Autumn Equinox Service

Mother Grove, N.R.D.N.A.  
By Bonewits & others?  
"Class C", circa 1979

*Druids line up for the procession, standing several yards North of the altar stone. The Archdruid (AD) and the Archdruidess (ADS) are at the front, followed by the Chief Bard and the Server, and the other members of the Grove (G).*

## Opening Song: "O Earth Mother"

(Customs 2:1-3)

### Invocation:

ADS: In the dust of the galaxy swirls the spark of life.  
G: And we partake of it; we and all living beings.  
AD: In the mighty helix we dance.  
G: And in harmony with all of life we sing.  
ADS: Gods known and unknown, remembered and forgotten, male and female, dark and light, creating, preserving, and destroying...  
G: Be in our awareness. Teach us Your joy. Let us feel Your sorrow. Extend our limitations.  
AD: Knowing that the smallest motion, the softest note, even the energy of thought itself, reverberates infinitely..  
ALL: LET THIS RITUAL BEGIN!

### Processional Song (ALL):

*Song: "Will Ye No Come Back Again?"*

*All process to altar stone, CB & S mark sigil on ground, AD & ADS step inside and go around either side to back of altar stone, sigil is closed. Grove members split into an arc in front of the altar stone.*

### Centering:

ADS: Why have you gathered here under the oaks?  
G: This is the appointed place, now is the appointed time.  
AD: What brings you here out under the sky?  
G: We come to worship the Gods.  
ADS: What do you know of the Gods?  
G: We seek to know what we can, with our mortal limitations.  
AD: The Gods are everywhere;  
G: But we worship Them here.  
ADS: The Gods are without form;  
G: But we worship Them in these forms.  
AD: We do not know what to offer to our Gods,  
G: So we offer Them our prayers and sacrifices:  
ADS: Each of us in our own way,  
G: Each of us in our own prayers.  
ALL: EACH OF US WITH OUR OWN SACRIFICES.

AD: Now let each of us go to the sacred place, the temple of the Earth Mother, and the sanctuary of Be'al. In each of our bodies, in each of our hearts, in the back of our minds, in the quiet of the spirit, evaluating all that has happened in our private lives since last we stood together, that the Gods may help us to understand them as sources of wisdom and growth.

*(Silence)*

### Individual Goals and Dedications:

AD: Now let each of us, within our hearts, declare silently our personal goals for the days ahead and for our lives, and make our individual dedications to the spirits whom we worship and honor.

*(Silence)*

## Statement of Beliefs:

ADS: How many Gods are there?  
G: Every God and Goddess is a star!  
AD: Where are the Gods?  
G: Where is the air we breathe? The waters that surround us? The ground upon which we stand?  
ADS: Are the Gods male?  
AD: Or female?  
G: YES!  
ADS: How do we find the Gods?  
G: Every Goddess is within us.  
AD: Thou art Goddess!.  
G: Every God is within us.  
ADS: Thou art God.  
AD: Who is our Lady?  
G: She is the Earth Mother, spirit of all that lives upon the earth, and swims beneath the waters, and flies throughout the air.  
ADS: Who is our Lord?  
G: He is Be'al, the Shining One, spirit of truth and light, spark of the sun, and the flame within the heart of every being.  
ADS: And Who is the God of this place?  
G: He is Dalon Ap Landu, Lord of this and every Grove, Patron of Druids, and Comforter of the People.

## Group Goals and Dedications:

ADS: Now do we declare our goals:  
G: To grow as human beings, in joy and love and wisdom and strength, to promote in our actions, a human and interdependent society, to heal and protect the biosphere of this planet; and to further the process of evolution, in ourselves and our groups, and throughout all time and space.  
AD: Thus, in order to achieve these goals:  
G: We dedicate ourselves, here and now, in body and mind, heart and soul, to our Holy Mother the Earth, our Holy Father the Sun, and to all Their Holy Children.

*[NOTE: A large picture of the Stone Henge picture from an old antiquarian book seems to have been deliberately pasted over the 1976 section that had the Lughnasadh Chant, perhaps to shorten the liturgy?]*

## Offering and Praise:

ADS: We are together, yet we often feel separate.  
G: Thus we bring our sacrifices, to the Lord and Lady.  
AD: What have you brought for our Mother and Father?

*Members of the Grove bring sacrifices to the altar stone.*

ADS: Not all sacrifices are physical. Has anyone brought Praise for the Gods?

*Members of the Grove offer poems, songs, music, etc.*

## Sacrifice:

*The ADS holds up sacrificial branch and speaks:*

ADS: Our praise has mounted up on the wings of eagles; our voices have been carried up on the shoulders of the winds. Hear us, we pray, as we offer up these sacrifices to life. Accept them, we ask, and cleanse our hearts and eyes, granting us peace and life.

*The branch is laid upon the altar stone. Then the AD turns to the Four Quarters and asks:*

AD: Have You accepted our sacrifices, O Our Mother? We call upon the Spirit of the North to give answer... and of the South... and of the East... and of the West... and of the Holy Center...

*If the sacrifice is accepted, the rite continues:*

ADS: Praise be! Our sacrifices, dedicated to the fertility and renewal of life, and to the honoring of our Gods, have been accepted!!

## Statement of Needs:

AD: O Mighty Ones, we have called upon you and you have heard us. We have offered of ourselves and you have accepted. Yet each of us has needs for guidance and for aid, without which we cannot fulfill your ways. Hear now thy children, and help us, as ever you have done.

*At this point, each person present may state, silently or out loud, her or his needs they wish fulfilled by the Gods, in order to accomplish their goals. After all have finished:*

AD: And we declare, that as this Grove:

ALL: WE NEED YOUR STRENGTH AND WISDOM, YOUR HEALING AND JOY, SO THAT WE MAY ACCOMPLISH OUR GOALS AND FULFILL OUR DEDICATIONS. BLESS THIS GROVE, AND BRING US ALL THAT WE MAY NEED, MATERIALLY AND SPIRITUALLY, SO THAT WE MAY GROW EVER STRONGER, IN BEAUTY, WISDOM, HEALTH AND JOY.

## Chant:

ADS: O give praise to the Gods of Light!

AD: Praise to the Dancer, singing and swaying,

Praise to the Mother, fruitful and shining!

G: PRAISE BE'AL, WHO IS ALL GODS; PRAISE THE EARTH MOTHER'S MANY FACES!

ADS: Praise for cold drink and good work, short sleeves and good times!

G: PRAISE FOR FIELD AND PLAY AND LOVER!

AD: Praise for sunsets and bright days, green leaves and flowing waters!

G: PRAISE FOR SURITY OF SUMMER PROMISE!

ADS: The Mother woke, the Sun God rose-

G: DARK HAD TURNED TO LIGHT.

AD: The Earth was lush, the days were long-

G: THE LIGHT RULED OVER ALL.

ADS: But the fruit formed over the quiet seed-

G: THE LIGHT YEARNS TO THE DARK.

AD: Leaf is crimson, day comes cool-

G: BALANCED NOW ARE WE.

ADS: Belenos turns his face to the South-

G: BALANCED NOW ARE WE.

AD: The Mother tires and drifts toward sleep-

G: BALANCED NOW ARE WE.

ADS: Flowers of hoar frost on leaf and pane-

G: LIGHT WILL TURN TO DARK.

AD: Limb will be sheared, day will be short-

G: DARK WILL RULE OVER ALL.

ADS: Til the seed wax full in the dampened earth-

G: AND DARK YEARNS AGAIN FOR LIGHT.

ADS: O Cernunnos, O God of the Hunt, we praise thee at thy return to our midst, for we fear thee not.

G: BLESS US AND GUIDE US WELL, O MIGHTY WARRIOR.

AD: O Macha, O Kali, wise and strong, protect us through the Time of Sleep.

G: PRAISE TO THE LADY, TO WHOM WE RETURN.

## The Waters:

ADS: Of what does the Earth Mother give, that we may know the continual flow and renewal of life?

P: The Waters of Life.

AD: From whence do these Waters flow?

P: From the bosom of the Earth Mother, the ever-changing All-Mother.

ADS: And how do we honor this gift that causes Life?

P: By partaking of the Waters of Life.

AD: Has the Earth Mother given forth of Her bounty?

P: She has!

ADS: Does Belenos still give us a sign of his presence?

P: He does! Though he departs for the Southern lands, still is his spark of light within these Waters of Life.

ADS: Then give me the Waters!

## Consecration:

*The ADS takes the chalice of waters, and invokes the power of the Gods into them, thus initiating a return flow of divine energy.*

ADS: O, Dalon Ap Landu, Lord of this and Every Grove, hallow these waters by Thy sevenfold powers, and by the three ways of day and one of night. Cleanse our hearts and eyes, and join us together by Thy power, as we take and drink of Thy secret essences.

## Sharing:

ADS: What are these waters?

G: A sign of the power, and the bounty of the Gods;

AD: Who are themselves but fractions of that which is

G: Beyond all human concepts

ADS: Of male and female;

G: Mortal and divine.

AD: She surrounds us.

ADS: He penetrates us.

ALL: THEY BIND THE UNIVERSES TOGETHER!

*The chalice is passé around to all present, each person being blessed by the Server with the Druid Sigil and returning the blessing, before and after drinking, with the words "The Waters of Life." The remaining waters are returned to the ADS, who pours them out over the altar stone, saying:*

ADS: To Thee we return this portion of Thy bounty, O Our Mother, even as we must return unto Thee.

## Group Bonding:

ADS: Now do we declare ourselves:

ALL: ONE, WITH ALL THOSE HERE PRESENT, IN BODY OR IN SPIRIT, ACCEPTING THE BONDS NOW STRENGTHENED, BETWEEN US, AND OUR SISTERS AND BORTHERS, IN ALL THE MYRIAD WORLDS, BELOVED OF THE GODS.

*All sing "We are One Family" song.*

## Prayer/Meditation/Spell:

*Led impromptu by the ADS.*

### Thanking the Gods:

ADS: O Earth Mother, O Be'al, O all you Goddesses and Gods around us and within us:

ALL: WE THY CHILDREN THANK THEE.

AD: That you have made and inhabit the Earth, the Sea, the Wild Things, and ourselves:

ALL: WE THY CHILDREN THANK THEE.

ADS: That we have offered to You of ourselves, and You have accepted.

ALL: WE THY CHILDREN THANK THEE.

AD: That You have heard our prayers, our griefs and our needs,

ALL: WE THY CHILDREN THANK THEE.

ADS: For all that You have given, all You give around us, all You will give in the future.

ALL: WE THY CHILDREN THANK THEE.

AD: For that we need each other, mortal and divine, and so serve each other, with respect and love, now and throughout all the ages,

ALL: WE THY CHILDREN THANK THEE.

ADS: Now as we prepare to leave this place in joy and peace,

ALL: WE THY CHILDREN THANK THEE!

### Absorption and Grounding:

ADS: Great the power we have raised;

ALL: STRENGTH OF WOMAN AND OF MAN.

AD: What shall we do before we leave?

ALL: ABSORB AS MUCH AS EVER WE CAN!

*All pause and absorb as much of the divine power present as they can manage.*

ADS: And all the rest...?

ALL: WE SEND TO GROUND, TO SKY ABOVE AND TREES AROUND.

*All now send remaining energy into the physical world around them, blessing and cherishing the earth and sky, plants and animals*

AD: Is it done?

ALL: IT IS DONE!

### Benediction:

ADS: Go forth into the world, secure in the knowledge that our sacrifices have found acceptance in the Earth Mother's sight, that She has answered our prayers, and that we go forth with Her blessing: Peace! Peace! Peace!

*The sigil around the altar stone is now broken, and all retire to picnic and celebrate, making sure that the area is physically clean before leaving.*



Figure 3 Isaac Bonewits, c. 1998

## A Mid-Summer Druid Worship Ceremony Meán Samradh, '87 Ár nDraíocht Féin (A.D.F.)

By Isaac Bonewits

*This is an abbreviated script, without most of the physical or ceremonial instructions included. Participants will need to read past issues of The Druids' Progress for those, and attend the ritual planning and rehearsals beforehand. This is the working script to be used at the sunrise summer solstice ritual at P.S.G. 87, and is not meant for re-publication.*

### Phase One: Starting the Rite & Establishing the Group Mind

*The people are called to order and formed into two parallel lines some short distance away from the ritual site. The presiding clergy ("D1" and "D2") stand at the head of the lines.*

D1: Tá muid anseo leis na Déithe a adhradh.

D2: We are here to honor the Gods.

D1: A Dhéithe, an Airde, a Thabharthóiri ar Bheatha — éistigi agus freagairt orainn!

D2: O Gods, High Ones, Givers of Life — hear and answer us!

### Procession

Along this route: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Procession Song/Chant:

Choose: \_\_\_\_\_

Settling Chant: "O Earth-Mother" or \_\_\_\_\_

### Tree Meditation

Done by \_\_\_\_\_

### Specification of Ritual Focus and Deities of Occasion (Belenos & Aine)

Done by \_\_\_\_\_

### Phase Two: Opening the Gates & Preliminary Power Raising

#### Invocation of the Gate Keeper

D2: O Ogma, Lord of the Gates, Lord of Knowledge, open the ways for us. We walk in your footsteps, we walk your roads. Reveal to us your teaching, reveal to us the way to walk in safety. We praise you for the brightness of your power. Walk with us, Ogma!

D1: A Oghma, a Thiarna na nGeataí, a Thiarna an Fheasa, oscail na geataí dúinn. Tá muid ag siúl i do lorg, tá muid ag siúl ar do bhealach. Scaoil dúinn do theagasc, taispeain dúinn cén chaol a siú;I faidh muid slán. Molann muid thu mar gheall ar do chumhacht. Siúil linn, a Oghma!

Ogma Chant/Song: "Siúl linn a Oghma" or "We invoke thee Ogma"  
or \_\_\_\_\_

## Invocation of the Matron of Bards

Song: "Hymn to Bridget" or "Lady Lift us up" or \_\_\_\_\_

### The Triad Invocations:

#### Invocation of the Nature Spirits

- D2: O spirits of the old times and of this place, our companions, our teachers, hallow these waters. Share with us the renewal of the Earth. Share with us comfort, knowledge, and blessing. Speak to our hearts, that we may become one with you all ..... Behold the waters of life!
- D1: A sprideanna na seanaimsire, agus na háite seo, a chomhghuailithe, a mhúinteoirí, beannaí na h-uisci seo dúinn. Roinnigí orainn athbheochan na Talún. Roinnigí orainn suaimhneas, eolas, agus beannacht. Labhraí linn inár gcroí, le go mbeadh muid in aon bhall libhse ..... Seo iad uiscí na beatha!

Asperging Song/Chant: "Fur & Feathers" or \_\_\_\_\_

#### Invocation of the Ancestors/Predecessors

- D2: O people of the old times, our ancestors, our kindred, hallow these waters. Share with us the bond of life upon the Earth. Share with us comfort, knowledge, and blessing. Speak to our hearts, that we may become one with you all ..... Behold the waters of life!
- D1: A sheana, a shinseara, a mhuintir, beannaí na h-uisci seo dúinn. Roinnigí orainn ceangal na beatha ar Talamh. Roinnigí orainn suaimhneas, eolas, agus beannacht. Labhraí linn inár gcroí, le go mbeadh muid in aon bhall libhse ..... Seo iad uiscí na beatha!

Asperging Song/Chant: "Blood of the Ancients" or \_\_\_\_\_

#### Invocation of the Gods as a Whole

- D2: O Gods of the old times, our mothers, our fathers, hallow these waters. Share with us your power to regenerate the Earth. Share with us comfort, knowledge, and blessing. Speak to our hearts, that we may become one with you all ..... Behold the waters of life!
- D1: A Dhéithe na seanaimsiri, a mháithreacha, a aithreacha, beannaí na h-uisci seo dúinn. Roinnigí orainn bhur gcumhacht le go nginfadh muid an Domhan. Roinnigí orainn suaimhneas, eolas, agus beannacht. Labhraí linn inár gcroí, le go mbeadh muid in aon bhall libhse ..... Seo iad uiscí na beatha!

Asperging Song/Chant: "Mother I Feel You " or \_\_\_\_\_

### Phase Three: Major Sending of Power to Belenos & Aine

## Praise Offerings

D2: Now let us offer our praise to Belenos and Aine, the Lord and Lady of this feast.

\_\_\_\_\_ done by \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ done by \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ done by \_\_\_\_\_

## The Sacrifice

D2: Our praise goes up to thee on the wings of eagles; our voices are carried up to thee on the shoulders of the winds. Hear now, o Belenos, o Aine, we pray thee, as we offer up this sacrifice of life. Accept it, we pray thee, and cleanse our hearts, giving to us of your peace and life.

D1: Téann ár moladh suas chugat ar sciatháin iolar; beirtéar ár nglórtha suas chugat ar ghuailne na gaoithe. Éistigí anois, a Bhelenos, an Aine, más é bhur dtoil é, agus sinn ag ofráil na h-iobairte seo ar son na beatha. Glacaigí léi, más é bhur dtoil é, agus glanaigí ár gcroithe, ag roinnt arainn do chuid síochána 'is do bheatha.

## The Omen

D2: Have you accepted our sacrifice of life and human effort?

D1 Give unto us an omen!

## Divination

Done by \_\_\_\_\_

Possible repetition of Praise Offerings and Omen Seeking, if necessary:

\_\_\_\_\_ done by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ done by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ done by \_\_\_\_\_

When the Sacrifice has been accepted.....

D1: Rejoice! The Lord and Lady have accepted our sacrifices!

## Phase Four: Receiving &

## Using the Returned Power

**Meditation on Personal Needs**, done by \_\_\_\_\_

**Repetition of Group Needs**, done by \_\_\_\_\_

**Induction of Receptivity**, done by \_\_\_\_\_

## Final Consecration & Sharing:

D2: O Belenos, o Aine, hear and answer us! Hallow these waters! We your children have praised you, and now we ask from you healing, blessing, power, and inspiration ..... Behold the waters of life!

D1: A Bhelenos, an Aine, éistigí agus freagairt orainn! Beannaí na h-uisci seo dúinn. Muide do chlann a mhol thu, agus anois iarrann muid ort leigheas, beannachtaí, chumhacht, agus tinfadh ..... Seo iad uiscí na beatha!

Passing Song/Chant : "Burn Bright" or \_\_\_\_\_

It's possible, but not very likely, that a magical working or rite of passage may be done at this point. Far more likely is...

## Meditation

### On Reception of Blessings and Reinforcement of Group Bonding,

Done by: \_\_\_\_\_

### Phase Five: Unwinding & Ending the Ceremony

#### Affirmation of Success:

- D2: Belenos and Aine have Blessed us!  
D1: Tá beannacht na Belenos agus an Aine orainn!  
D2: Every time we invoke them, they become stronger and more alert to the needs of their people.  
D1: With joy in our hearts, let us return to the realm of mortals, to do the will of the Gods and our own.  
D2: Yet, before we leave, we must give thanks to those whom we have invited here today:

#### Thanking of Entities Invoked

- D2: O Lord and Lady,  
D1: A Bhelenos, an Aine —  
D2: We thank you!  
D1: Go raibh maith agaibh!  
All: Go raibh maith agaibh!
- D2: O Gods and Goddesses of the old times,  
D1: A Dhéithe na seanaimsiri —  
All: Go raibh maith agaibh!
- D2: O people of the old times, our ancestors, our kindred,  
D1: A sheana, a shinseara, a mhuntir —  
All: Go raibh maith agaibh!
- D2: O spirits of the old times, and of this place,  
D1: A sprideanna na seanaimsire, agus na háite seo —  
All: Go raibh maith agaibh!
- D2: O Bridget, Fire of Life and Fire of Love, Mother of Bards and Goddess of Inspiration, we thank you.  
D1: A Bhrid, a Thine Bheatha agus a Thine Ghrá, a Mháthair na Bardaí agus Bheandia na Thinfeadh, go raith maith agat!

## Closing of the Gates

- D2: O Ogma, Lord of the Gates, Lord of Knowledge, we thank you. Now let the Gates Between the Worlds be closed!  
D1: A Oghma, a Thairna na nGeataí, a Thairna an Fheasa, go raith maith agat. Anois bíodh na geataí idir na saolta a druidte!

### Reversing of the Tree Meditation

By \_\_\_\_\_

## Libation

- D1: To thee we return this portion of thy bounty, o our Mother, even as we must someday return unto thee.

### Final Benediction

- D2: Let us go out into the world, secure in the knowledge that our sacrifices have pleased the Gods and Goddesses, and that we go forth upon the Earth under their protection.  
D1: Teigheadh muid amach faoin domhan, agus muid lan-chinnt, gur thug ár n-iobartí taitneamh do na Déithe, gur fhreagair siad ár n-urnaí, agus go bhfuil muid ag dul amach faoin Domhan faoina gcoimirce.  
D2: We have finished this ceremony!  
D1: Tá an searmanas críochnaithe againn!  
D2: So be it.  
D1: Bíodh sé.  
All: Bíodh sé!

## Recessional

Song/Chant: "Walk with Wisdom" or \_\_\_\_\_



Figure 4 The Dapper Druid

The following was a very frequently distributed flyer for the NRDNA in the 1970s, a revised version, drafted by Isaac Bonewits.

## What and Why is Reformed Druidism in the 70s?

Schismatic Druids of North America  
Used as the Introduction for  
The Druid Chronicles (Evolved) Fall 1976

### Origins

Many people coming across the Reformed Druid movements for the first time may very well be confused as to their exact nature, and for good reason - Reformed Druidism is very confusing, even (or perhaps especially) to its members. Therefore, this introduction may help to place certain concepts into perspective.

Reformed Druidism (or, at least, the first known Branch of the Reform) was started as a lark at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota in the Spring of 1963 c.e. (common era) as a protest to the college's requirement that all students attend a certain number of religious services or meetings per semester. One of the ways in which this requirement could be fulfilled was by attending the services of one's own religion. The original Reformed Druids of North America ("RDNA") was founded in order to test the amount of freedom granted under this clause - by inventing a new and unheard of religion on the spot.

As originally founded, Reformed Druidism was ideal for this attack. It had a perfect combination of "exotic ritual" plus "some relevance to the so-called Judeo-Christian Tradition." If religious attendance credit had been given then the requirement would have been shown up as totally ineffective. If, instead, credit had been denied, then the college could have been charged with creedism.

The initial attitude of the college administrators was "If we ignore them, they'll go away." But the RDNA not only did not go away, it grew, acquired a faculty advisor and became a registered student organization - one that has existed, off and on, to this very day. [*Never recognized, actually. -Scharding*]

In June of 1964 c.e., the religious requirement was repealed. Even though the Druids rejoiced at this triumph, some of them realized that their job was not yet over. For many members, the movement had come to represent more than a practical joke and an excuse to miss Sunday Chapel - It had come to represent a valuable part of their spiritual lives. And so, to the surprise of the original Founders, the RDNA continued to exist and grow; with graduates of Carleton College spreading the movement (and its offshoots) across the country.

### Basic Beliefs

The principles of the original RDNA are quite simple and are referred to as the "Basic Tenets." We quote here from *The Book of the Law*, Verses 4-6, as they appear in the *Lughnasadh 14 y.r. Edition of The Druid Chronicles (Evolved)*:

"4. Now the Basic Tenets of Reformed Druidism are these:

5. The object of the search for religious truth, which is a universal and a never-ending search, may be found through the Earth-Mother; which is Nature; but this is one way, yea, one way among many.

6. And great is the importance, which is of a spiritual importance, of Nature, which is the Earth-Mother; for it is one of the objects of Creation, and with it do people live, yea, even as they do struggle through life are they come face-to-face with it."

This has since been abbreviated, in *The Outline of the Foundation of the Fundamentals*, to the following statements:

"1. Nature is good! And the second is like unto the first:

2. Nature is good!"

It appears that all Reformed Druids, of every Branch of the Reform, believe in the above principles, though all have their own interpretations of the words. In all the Branches of the Reform, the material realm, Nature, is personified as the Earth-Mother (one of the oldest archetypes known to humanity). The abstract essence of the universe(s), in distinction from the material world, is referred to as Be'al, from a word which the Ancient Celts applied to an abstract supreme being (based on the root "Bel", meaning "good, shining, bright"). The "object of Humanity's search" is called "awareness" and it is defined as "unity with Be'al".

### The Branches of the Reform

There are at present (*Lughnasadh 14 y.r.*) several overlapping Branches of Reformed Druidism: the Reformed Druids of North America (RDNA), the New Reformed Druids of North America (NRDNA), the Schismatic Druids of North America (SDNA), the Hasidic Druids of North America (HDNA), and rumblings of a few others (including Zen Druidism, Chaoist Druidism, Norse Druidism, etc.)

The RDNA is, of course, the original group and looks somewhat askance at the offshoots. The NRDNA and the SDNA were founded during *Foghamhar 12 y.r.* (Fall of 1974 c.e.) and the HDNA during *Samraadh 14 y.r.* (Summer of 1976 c.e.). The other offshoots are as yet twinkles in their Founders' eyes.

The RDNA itself neither categorically denies nor accepts the validity of any particular faith, including its own. This is one of the most important principles of the RDNA. It means that anyone may become this kind of Druid without feeling obligated to renounce her or his present religious beliefs and without being committed to anything but the Basic Tenets. Many find this approach to mysticism liberating, although some may also feel that it prevents them from answering the question, "Is my Druidism valid?" The answer to that question must be found on an individual level and a Druid would say "It will come with awareness."

While the original RDNA includes Jews, Christians, Agnostics, Atheists, Marxist and members of other faiths in its ranks, the NRDNA seems to include many Neopagans as well (for a discussion of what Neopaganism is see *The First Epistle of Isaac, Part Two*) and one Grove at least is headed further and further in that direction. However, the major distinctions between the NRDNA and the RDNA appears to be in their political structure rather than their philosophy (see below).

The SDNA is emphatically Neopagan in its philosophy (although in an antidogmatic fashion) and defines itself as follows: "The SDNA is a Branch of Reformed Druidism, emphasizing its own nature as an Eclectic Reconstructionist



Neopagan Priestcraft, based primarily upon Gaulish and Celtic sources, but open to ideas, deities and rituals from many other Neopagan belief systems. We worship the Earth-Mother as the feminine personification of Manifestation, Be'al as the masculine personification of Essence, and numerous Gods and Goddesses as personification of various aspects of our experience. We offer no dogmas or final answers but only continual questions. Our goal is increased awareness and harmony within ourselves and all of Nature. We are willing to interact philosophically and ritual with members of all other belief systems, including all other Branches of the Reform, that are compatible with our own approach and Nature. We accept our duty to assist Evolution, on all levels, and to work for the survival of our Holy Mother the Earth."

The HDNA is the most recent Branch of the Reform, being an offshoot from the SDNA. It too considers itself to be a form of Neopaganism and has chosen to orient itself around a total Neopagan Lifestyle, based upon "repaganized" patterns taken from Jewish origins. It is currently offering the following self-definition, until a better one is evolved: "The HDNA is a Branch of Reformed Druidism, emphasizing its own nature as an Eclectic Reconstructionist Neopagan Lifestyle, based primarily upon Gaulish, Celtic, Yiddish and Hebrew Paleopagan sources, but open to ideas, deities and rituals from many other Neopagan belief systems..." [the rest of their definition follows that of the SDNA]

It should be remembered that most of the members of the RDNA do *not* consider themselves to be Pagans of any sort, but rather followers of a way of inquiry that is applicable to any faith. Druids believe that among the many obstacles to spiritual growth are Dogmatism and Orthodoxy; the formalization of beliefs in a fashion that discourages continual spiritual inquiry, or that encourages others to adopt them without their own inquiry. Many also feel that most of the world's religions are beset by these problems and must constantly combat their ossifying influence. The Neopagans agree that it is necessary to keep a wary eye and a keen sense of humor about the whole problem. Still, many of the older members of the RDNA disapprove of Neopagan Druidism, considering it a dangerous step backwards.

The SDNA and the HDNA seem to place more of an emphasis than the RDNA and the NRDNA (except for the Berkeley Grove) upon the following areas; Magic, craft, Poetry, Song, Dance, use of Solar and Lunar cycles, Neopagan ecumenical rites, civil liberties actions and active worship of many Gods not mentioned in the original RDNA literature. All Reformed Druid movements are interested in ecological activities and in the creation of new liturgies.

There are many members of the NRDNA who agree with the philosophy of the SDNA and/or the HDNA, but who prefer to remain with the organizational structure of the RDNA. This is what we mean when we say that the Branches of the Reform "overlap". Also of interest is the fact that, thanks to the Apostolic Succession from Carleton College (maintained by using the same basic ordination ceremony, with or without additions, for the Priesthood), all Third Order priests and priestesses of any Branch of the Reform are equally "legitimate", though personal beliefs vary widely and some groups may not allow priests of a different Branch to lead some of their specialized rites.

In none of the currently existing Branches of the Reform is either sex given precedence over the other, nor any race, color, nationality or culture considered superior. The SDNA and the HDNA accept only Pagans for the Priesthood. The Priesthood of the RDNA and the NRDNA, on the other hand, are open to members of all faiths.

## Local Organization

All Branches of the Reform operate locally in "Groves". Each Grove has at least three officers; an Archdruid/ess, who must be at least a Third Order Druid or Druidess, to direct worship; a Preceptor (or Preceptress) who must be of at least the Second Order, to handle business matters; and a Server, who must be of at least the First Order, to assist the Archdruid/ess. In the SDNA and the HDNA, other officers are added, including an Assistant Archdruid/ess, to preside over services when the regular Archdruid/ess is absent, and a Bard, to direct all the music, poetry, singing and dancing. Some Groves may also appoint an Astrologer to select the proper dates for services, etc.

To become a First Order Druid/ess, a person must partake of the waters-of-life and affirm her or his acceptance of the Basic Tenets.

To become a Second Order Druid/ess, one must pledge himself or herself to the service of Druidism, as well as have an understanding of basic Reformed Druidism.

To become a Third Order Druid/ess (priest or priestess), one must dedicate herself or himself to a life of Druidic inquiry, the beginning of which is an all night fast and vigil in the outdoors. The SDNA and the HDNA add various other requirements for this Order, including, amongst others, (1) a statement to the members of the Grove that one does indeed think of oneself as a Pagan, (2) progress in the learning of magical, religious and parapsychological knowledge, (3) progress in the learning of various crafts and fine arts, and (4) an agreement between the candidate and the ordaining Archdruid/ess that a genuine vocation is evident. The normal time period in the SDNA and the HDNA from becoming a member of the First Order to being ordained to the Third Order (for those who are not already clergy in other Neopagan religions) is a year and a day.

The RDNA and the NRDNA also encourage the ordination only of those with vocations, however, they define this differently and do not necessarily consider holding of Neopagan priesthood as evidence of such.

In order to establish a legal Grove, in any Branch, it is necessary to have three people, at least one of whom is of the Third Order and one of the Second, to adopt one of the standard forms of a Constitution and (for the offshoots) to register the fact of the Grove's existence with the head of one's Branch.

## National Organization

Each Grove, in every Branch of the Reform, is an independent entity, as is each Branch. In the RDNA, what little governance occurs is handled by the Council of Dalon Ap Landu, which consists of all Third Order priests and priestesses, including (presumably) those who belong to the other Branches. (It would be difficult legally and ethically to oust the "heretics", in any event, since they do hold legitimate Apostolic Succession and there are no provisions -currently- for loyalty oaths to the original Branch.) The basic principal of the Council of Dalon Ap Landu has been described by some as "that government is best which governs least." The CoDAL operates by mail and is officially headed by whoever is Archdruid/ess of Carleton Grove. Since (a) Druids don't write letters much, (b) the Carleton Grove is most active during the school year, and (c) it has also suffered organizational difficulties over the last few years (though it now seems healthy enough) the CoDAL has actually done very little over the years.

The NRDNA formed, in part, over this difficulty and is in the process of reorganizing its political structure. Three of the five RDNA Groves (Berkeley, Chicago and Stanford) decided in August 1974 c.e. to stage a coup d'etat and form a Provisional Council of ArchDruids, inviting the leaders of all active Groves to join. Further details on this action, and the confusion accompanying it, can be found in *The Book of Changes*.

The fifth Grove (the Twin Cities) began to schism from the RDNA at the same time. The reasons for the schism (whether full or partial, temporary or permanent, has never been decided) were dissatisfaction with the religious vaguenesses and overly anarchistic disorganization that they believed to exist in the original Druid organization, a desire to make their form of Druidism more available to the public, and a feeling that it was unfair to all parties involved to use the same name. It is currently headquartered in Berkeley California (The Mother Grove, which has an overlapping membership with the Berkeley Grove, NRDNA).

The HDNA was formed as an offshoot of the SDNA, with its full cooperation, and is currently headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri (the Arch Grove)

The Archdruids of the NRDNA, SDNA and HDNA Groves belong to the Provisional Council of Archdruids (PCoADS), which is in correspondence with the RDNA Archdruids. However, the political structure of all these Branches will no doubt continue to evolve as time goes on.

The SDNA has arranged for legal minister and church status to be granted to any Druid priest/ess or Grove so desiring (in any Branch) via a federally recognized Nonprofit Religious Association (the Association for the Advancement of Aquarian Age Awareness). [I.e. "Pentalpha"]

## Special Orders

Within the RDNA there are "Higher Orders," from the Fourth to the Tenth, that are "reserved for outstanding insight and dedication over a period of time. They are similar to academic degrees in that they represent personal achievement, but carry no special authority." Each of these Higher Orders is dedicated to one of the aspects of Nature mentioned below (under "Ritual"). There are at present only four of these Orders operating (the Fourth through Seventh), since the Patriarch of the Seventh Order resigned several years ago (as did the Patriarch of the Fourth Order more recently) and the RDNA has never instituted or executed any procedures for selecting replacements for the heads of the Higher Orders. Since the heads (Patriarchs and Matriarchs) of each Higher Order are elected by the members of each Order directly below, this means that the Eight, Ninth and Tenth Orders have no leaders and no members.

There are also other Orders associated with the other Branches of the Reform, including the Order of Oberon and the Order of Merddyn in the SDNA (which are Bardic and Ceremonial Magical Orders, respectively), the Order of Diancecht in the NRDNA (a Healing Order), etc. As a general rule, these Orders have only whatever "authority" in a local Grove may choose to grant them. For example, in the Twin Cities Grove, the Order of Oberon is headed by the Grove's Bard and is in charge of all music, poetry, ritual dramas, etc. The Matriarch or Patriarch of each special Order is usually self-appointed and exercises whatever internal authority they can get away with, which isn't much.

## Ritual

In accordance with the Basic Tenets, all Reformed Druid worship is directed towards Nature. For this reason, many customs and rituals (real, reconstructed, or fancied) of the Ancient (Paleopagan) Druids are retained. The Berkeley Grove seems to have done the most research in this area so far, having a gigantic library of Celtic materials and holding many of its services in Gaelic. Druid worship should in so far as is possible, be held in the out-of-doors. An oak grove, beach, hill or other place of natural beauty is ideal.

During the winter, especially in the Northern parts of the country, frequent outdoor services are impractical. The Berkeley Grove solves this by having "Celtic Nights" every other week

during the winter, and the Twin Cities Grove has experimented with weekly Taoist meditation services, which seemed to fit quite well with the Reformed druid idea.

According to custom, the officiating Third Order Druids, and other who so wish, ought to be clad in long robes (white is traditional, but any color other than black is acceptable), with the robe of the presiding Archdruid/ess having a distinctive color or decoration. The official mark of the Priesthood is the red or white ribbon (depending on the season) worn around the neck. This is the actual minimum of vestments and some Groves may choose to wear ordinary clothes or dress in some other manner. Ribbons of other colors are worn as insignia by the various Orders as well.

The waters-of-life are usually passed to all present as a symbol of the link we have with Nature. Incantation and other Paleopagan ritual devices are also used, but in all Branches of the Reform human and animal sacrifice is forbidden (actually there is very little to support the idea that human sacrifice was ever very common among the Ancient Druids anyway). The sacrifice that is used instead is usually the leaves and branches of a living plant (often, but not always, an oak tree).

In order to focus attention on Nature, various aspects of Her retain the names of their corresponding Celtic and Gaulish Gods and Goddesses:

Dalon Ap Landu, Lord of the Groves  
Grannos, God of Healing Springs  
Braciaca, God of Malt and Brewing  
Belenos, God of the Sun  
Sirona, Goddess of Rivers  
Taranis, God of Thunder and Lightning  
Llyr, God of the Sea  
Danu, Goddess of Fertility

These deities are referred to by all Branches of the Reform, though their relative importance varies from Grove to Grove. In the HDNA, SDNA, and some parts of the NRDNA, several other deities are added. For details concerning these and other deities, see *Miscellaneous Customs and Liturgical Notes*, *The Book of Footnotes*, *A Guide to Gaelic Deities* and the appropriate books in *A Bibliography of Druidism*.

There are two standard services for weekly use, called the "Orders of Common Worship," one for the Summer half of the year and one for the Winter half. There are also "Special Orders of the Worship" for the High Days (see below), most of them written by the Berkeley Grove, and all of them optional. Many other ceremonies, some required and some optional, have been created over the years and more are still being invented. For copies of these rituals, see *The Liturgy of the Druids*.

## Festivals and Holy Days

The Druid festivals that are held in common by most Branches correspond to the important dates of the old Celtic year. Celebration always begins at sundown of the previous evening and includes bonfires and revelry appropriate to the season. The High Days are divided into Major and Minor ones:

*Samhain* occurs around November 1st, is a Major High Day and begins the period of *Geimredh*.

*Midwinter* occurs around December 21st, is a Minor High Day and marks the Winter Solstice.

*Oimelc* occurs around February 1st, is a Major High Day and begins the period of *Earrach*.

*Spring* occurs around March 21st, is a Minor High Day, the Vernal equinox is not celebrated by the RDNA.

*Beltane* occurs around May 1st, is a Major High Day and begins the period of *Samradh*.

*Midsummer* occurs around June 21st, is a Minor High Day and marks the Summer Solstice.

*Lughnasadh* occurs around August 1st, is a Major High Day and begins the period of *Foghamhar*.

*Fall or Autumn* occurs around September 21st, is a Minor High Day, the Autumnal Equinox is not celebrated in the RDNA.

These dates are all calculated in different ways by different Groves, and are extremely flexible in any event. The phases of the moon are closely watched and attempt is made to begin projects when the moon is waxing and to end them when it is waning. The night of the full moon is a night of rejoicing, while many Druids use the night of the new moon for solemn vigils and fasting. There are numerous other holidays and festivals, especially in the SDNA and the HDNA, kept by individual Druids and Groves.

For more information about these matters, see *The Tally of the Years* and the *Druid Calendars*.

## Sacred Scriptures

There are a number of collected writings held in greater or lesser reverence by various Druids. *The Chronicles of the Foundation*, originally entitled *The Druid Chronicles (Reformed)*, are the only writings universally held to be of "sacred" status. *The Books of the Apocrypha* consist of a variety of letters sent out by members of the Priesthood to each other. *The Liturgy of the Druids* is a collection of rites performed by both large and small numbers of Druids. *Further Laws, Customs and Ordinances* is the title for several pieces of constitutional and legislative material, as well as articles on the calendrical systems and miscellaneous customs developed by various individual Druids and Groves. *The Great Druish Books* are those held to by the Hasidic Druids (and a very few others). *The Druid Miscellany* is a number of short articles concerning matters historical, linguistic, polytheological, Bardic and bibliographical. All of these items will be found in *The Druid Chronicles (Evolved)* which is currently selling at a price (cost) of \$6.00 per copy.

*The Green Book* is a collection of favorite meditational passages and poems used by the Carleton Grove. It should be available later in 1976 c.e., from the Ann Arbor Grove. *The Black Book* is the name for the Carleton Archdruids' copy of the liturgy.

## Conclusion

We hope that this brief Introduction has answered some of your more important questions about the different organizations called themselves part of the Reformed Druid movements. Obviously, only a thorough and careful reading of all of the literature of the various Branches will acquaint you completely with each one. Naturally each Branch of the Reform likes itself the best and wishes to be distinguished from the others (especially the RDNA, which wishes to be kept completely distinct from its offshoots). It is up to the reader to decide which, if any, of the Reformed Druid movements strikes a responsive chord.

Further information about Druidism of your choice can be obtained by writing to the nearest Grove of the Branch that you are interested in.

## Addresses:

The addresses and affiliations of the currently active Groves are as follows:

Ann Arbor Grove, RDNA c/o Adr. Richard M Shelton, 722 Deway Avenue, Ann Arbor, MI 48104.

Arch Grove, HDNA, c/o Vicki Rhodes, 475 Lockwood, Webster Groves, MO 63119.

Berkeley Grove, NRDNA, c/o Adr. Robert Larson, 5208 Manila, Apt 6. Oakland CA 94618

Carleton Grove, RDNA, c/o Adr. Don Morrison, Carleton College, Northfield, MN 55057.

Chicago Grove, NRDNA, c/o Adr. Michael Bradley, 5611 South Blackstone, Chicago IL 60615

Mother Grove, SDNA, c/o Adr. Isaac Bonewits, box 9398, Berkeley, CA 94709

New York Grove ("the Second"), RDNA, c/o Adr. Steve Corey, 185 Mountainview Road, East Longmeadow, MA 01028

Southern Shores (Stanford) Grove, RDNA /NRDNA, Adr. David Ugglá, 1820 West Bayshore Road, Palo Alto, CA 94303.

Twin Cities Grove, SDNA, c/o Adr. Eleanora Auvinen 212 Southeast Bedford, Minneapolis, MN 55414

Remember that these addresses are very out of date, so don't write to them, except Carleton.

Protogroves will be starting up soon in many parts of the country. See the address in the Box below for the Druids closest to you.



# The Druid Renaissance

Edited by Phillip Carr-Gomm  
1996 by Harper Collins

Isaac Bonewits writes  
A chapter in the book called  
“The Druid Revival in Modern America”

Although some fraternal organizations of Druids, such as The Ancient Order of Druids, have been present in the United States and Canada for over a century, the current Druid revival is rooted primarily in the planting of the Reformed Druids of North America, the ‘RDNA,’ in 1963. Almost all currently existing Neopagan Druid groups can trace themselves back to the RDNA, via my own Druidic organization, Ar nDraiocht Fein: A Druid Fellowship, ADF, and its offshoots, such as the Henge of Keltria, HK. However, before going into this history, we should first review some of the vocabulary used by many modern American Druids, namely the uses of the word ‘Pagan’ and its three main prefixes- ‘Paleo-’, ‘Meso-’, and ‘Neo-’.

## Paganism, Ancient and Modern

The term ‘Pagan’ comes from the Latin ‘Paganus’, which appears to have originally had such meanings as ‘country dweller’, ‘villager’, or ‘hick’. The early Roman Christians used ‘Pagan’ to refer to everyone who preferred to worship pre-Christian divinities, whom the Christians had decided were all ‘really’ demons in disguise. Over the centuries, the word ‘Pagan’ became an insult, applied to the monotheistic followers of Islam by the Christians (and vice-versa), and by the Protestants and Catholics toward each other, as it gradually gained the connotation of ‘a follower of a false religion’. By the twentieth century, the word’s primary meaning had become a blend of ‘atheist’, ‘agnostic’, ‘hedonist’, and ‘religionless’.

Today there are many of us who proudly call ourselves ‘Pagan’, but we use the word differently from the ways that most mainstream Westerners do. To us, ‘Pagan’ is a general term that includes both old and new polytheistic religions, as well as their members. The overwhelming majority of all the human beings who have ever lived have been Pagans, and we believe that there is an enormous wealth of spiritual insight and strength to be gained from following a Pagan path.

‘Paleopaganism’ refers to the original tribal faiths of Europe, Africa, Asia, the Americas, Oceania and Australia, when they were (and in some cases still are) practiced as intact belief systems. Of the so-called ‘Great Religions of the World’, Hinduism (prior to the influx of Islam into India,) Taoism and Shinto, for example, fall into this category.

‘Mesopaganism’ is the word used for those religions founded as attempts to recreate, revive or continue what their founders thought of as the Paleopagan ways of their ancestors (or predecessors), but which were heavily influenced, either deliberately or involuntarily, by the monotheistic and dualistic world views of Judaism, Christianity and/or Islam. Examples of Mesopagan belief systems include Freemasonry, Rosicrucianism, Spiritualism, Druidism as practiced by the Masonic-influenced fraternal movements in Europe and the Celtic Isles, the many Afro-American faiths (such as Voodoo, Santeria, or Macumba), Sikhism, and several sects of Hinduism that have been influenced by Islam and Christianity.

‘Neopaganism’ refers to those religions created since 1940 or so (though they had literary roots going back to the mid-1800s), that have attempted to blend what their founders perceived as the best aspects of different types of Paleopaganism with modern ‘Aquarian Age’ ideals, while consciously striving

to eliminate as much as possible of all the traditional Western monotheism and dualism. The Church of All Worlds, most Wiccan traditions, ADF and Keltria, are all Neopagan.

These terms do not delineate clear-cut categories. Historically, there is often a period, whether of decades or centuries, when Paleopaganism is blending into Mesopaganism, or Mesopaganism into Neopaganism. Furthermore, the founders and members of Mesopagan and Neopagan groups frequently prefer to believe, or at least to seem to, that they are genuinely Paleopagan in beliefs and practices. This ‘myth of continuity’ is in keeping with the habits of most founders and members of new religions throughout human existence.

## Druidism, Ancient & Modern

So how does this vocabulary work in terms of Druidism? We know that the original, Paleopagan Druids were a social class of intellectuals and artists, with counterparts in the other Indo-European cultures, such as the Brahmins in India, and the flamens in Ancient Italy; however, only the Celtic ones were called ‘Druids’. They were of both genders and had several subclasses, such as Bards, sacrificers, healers, diviners, and judges. They were polytheists, not monotheists, and it is probably true that they did offer human sacrifices from time to time. However, they did not build Stonehenge or the pyramids, did not all have long white beards, did not come from Atlantis, and probably few of them had golden sickles. These Druids functioned primarily as the transmitters of knowledge and culture from one generation to the next, and as performers and supervisors of the ceremonies they believed necessary to keep the forces of chaos at bay. Though deep in their esoteric and exoteric knowledge, they were probably no wiser than the medicine people, Shamans, and Witchdoctors of any other culture.

Most scholars believe that the original Paleopagan Druids were wiped out by the Roman Empire and the Roman Catholic Church, with only scattered remnants of their beliefs and traditions surviving underground among the Bards and Brehons (or judges), of the Celtic peoples. There is no sound historical or anthropological evidence for a surviving intact tradition of Druidism – as distinct from scattered folk or family customs – anywhere in the world, with the possible exception of their cousins in the Baltic territories, who may have kept a form of Lithuanian Paleopaganism alive well into the twentieth century.

The fraternal or Mesopagan Druid groups were started in the 1700s, probably well over a thousand years after the last Celtic Druid had died, by well-meaning individuals who were not adverse to ‘fibbing’ about their individual and group histories. Iolo Morganwg, for example, was an early supporter of (Christian) Unitarianism, and by an odd coincidence, it turns out that the Paleopagans he wrote about were all Unitarians too!

These Mesopagan Druid groups met the needs of many people for a form of Paganism that would not require them to be publicly known as non-Christian. They did this by claiming that Druidism was not a specific religion but rather a philosophy applicable to any faith, and that the Paleopagan Druids had ‘really’ been, not just monotheists, but ‘Pre-Christian Christians’, waiting around patiently for Jesus to be born so they could all run out and convert!

One of these Mesopagan Druid groups may have influenced the first of the modern American Druid organizations, the Reformed Druids of North America. Originally founded in 1963 as a protest against coerced religion at Carleton, a small Midwestern college, the RDNA wound up continuing long after the protestors had won. Its polytheology was a sort of Zen Unitarianism, supporting a philosophy of constant questioning and meditation which was applicable to

almost any religious quest. In this, as in some of its liturgical language, the RDNA closely resembled the Mesopagan groups. The founder of the RDNA, David Fisher, at one time claimed to have already been a Druid when he arrived at Carleton College.

The RDNA ceremonies invoked the Earth Mother as 'a personification of the material world' or Mother Nature, a Sky God called Be'al (based on a prot-Celtic root 'bel', referring to brightness or fire, as in Belenos, a Celtic Sun God) as 'a personification of the abstract essence of reality', and several Gods and Goddesses from the various Celtic countries. The Buddhist-style meditations and Celtic deity invocations had a powerful effect upon the young people who started the RDNA (messing around the with archetypes can do that), and many of them carried the 'faith' to other colleges when they graduated or transferred from Carleton. However, since the founders were far more concerned with individual philosophical and religious freedom than with the efficient operation of organizational structures, few of the local congregations, or 'groves', seem to have lasted for very long and no national network was ever successfully created. Nonetheless, new groves still seem to spring up occasionally in the United States and Canada. Carleton College now has an official part of its library, The International Druid Archives, assembled by recent graduate and RDNA historian Michael Scharding. It includes copies of the just published 'A Reformed Druid Anthology', incorporating my own 'The Druid Chronicles (Evolved)' with much additional materials from other RDNA founders and authors. (This is available on the World Wide Web and in electronic format – look for pointers on the [www.adf.org](http://www.adf.org) Home Page and on other Pagan Web Pages.)

I was ordained as a Druid priest by Carleton graduate Robert Larson in October 1969. I was actively involved in the RDNA for several years, eventually editing the writings of the founders and adding materials of my own to produce the book mentioned above, 'The Druid Chronicles (Evolved)'. As time went by, I became increasingly convinced that Reformed Druidism should admit to being a Neopagan religion, and I worked to make its liturgy as effective as possible. Not too surprisingly, those early RDNA members who thought of themselves as Christians, Buddhists, and Agnostics, found my missionary zeal appalling.

After several false starts, with the New RDNA, the Schismatic DNA, the Hasidic DNA, to name a few, in 1983 I began 'A Druid Fellowship', or ADF; a fellowship rooted in the use of modern scholarship, effective liturgical design, and artistic excellence. I wanted to create a completely new and emphatically Neopagan Druid tradition. Naturally, small politics being what they are, we have had a few branchings-out of our own. The largest branch is Keltria, which 'schismed' from ADF a few years ago to focus their energies on specifically Celtic Druidism (as distinct from ADF's use of Indo-European sources in addition to Celtic ones), and on the esoteric aspects of Druidry. For the rest of this chapter, I'll discuss Neopagan Druidism as practiced in ADF. Keltria is similar in most ways, but you can write to them directly for details (see the resource list at the back of this book.)

## Neopagan Druid Beliefs

Many of the members of ADF have come to accept most of the following beliefs. However, it is important to remember that not everyone would use the term 'belief' in reference to these concepts, and that every concept mentioned has a wide variety of accepted interpretations within the organization.

**Thou Art God/dess:** We believe that divinity is both immanent (internal) and transcendent (external), with immanence being far more needful at this crucial phase of human history. Deities can manifest at any point in space or time they choose, including within human beings, through the

processes known as 'inspiration', 'channeling', and 'possession'.

**Goddesses and Gods:** We believe that divinity is as likely to manifest in a female form as it is in a male form, and that the word 'Goddess' makes just as much sense as 'God'. Women and men are spiritual equals, and 'masculine' and 'feminine' attitudes, values, and roles are of equal importance.

**Polytheism:** We believe in a multiplicity of Gods and Goddesses, as well as lesser beings, many of Whom are worthy of respect, love and worship. We have a wide variety of non-exclusive concepts as to the nature of these entities. While some of us believe in a 'Supreme Being', Neopaganism is emphatically polytheistic. We have no figure of ultimate Evil.

**Nature Worship:** We believe that it is necessary to have respect and love for Nature as divine in Her own right, and to accept ourselves as part of Nature, rather than Her 'rulers'. Many of us accept what has come to be known as 'the Gaia hypothesis': that the biosphere of our planet is a living being, Who is due all the love and support than we, Her children, can give Her. We consider ecological awareness and activism to be sacred duties.

**Cautious Technophilia:** We believe in accepting the positive aspects of Western science and technology, but in maintaining an attitude of wariness towards the supposed ethical neutrality of that science and technology. We consider it important that scientists (like everybody else) pay as much attention to their means as they do to their goals.

**Religious Freedom:** We believe that monolithic religious organizations, would-be messiahs and super-gurus are a hindrance to spiritual growth. We believe that healthy religions should have a minimum of dogma and a maximum amount of eclecticism and flexibility. Neopagan Druidism is an organic religion, and like all other organisms is growing, changing, and producing offshoots.

**Positive Ethics:** We believe that ethics and morality should be based upon joy, love, self-esteem, mutual respect, the avoidance of actual harm to ourselves and others, and the increase of public benefit. We try to balance people's needs for personal autonomy and growth with the necessity of paying attention to the impact of each individual's actions on the lives and welfare of others.

**Religious Toleration:** We believe that it is difficult for ordinary humans to commit offenses against the Gods and Goddesses, short of major crimes such as ecocide or genocide. Our deities are perfectly capable of defending Their own honor without the need for us to punish people for 'blasphemy' or 'heresy'.

**The Good Life:** We believe that human beings were meant to lead lives filled with joy, love, pleasure, beauty and humor. Most Neopagans are fond of food, drink, music, sex, and bad puns, and consider all of these (except possibly the puns) to be of spiritual value. However, we do not approve of addictive or compulsive behavior, and we support people with dysfunctional histories who have entered appropriate recovery programs.

**Magic and Mystery:** We believe that with proper training, art, discipline and intent, human minds and hearts are fully capable of performing most of the magic and miracles they are ever likely to need. Magical/miraculous acts are done through the use of what most of us perceive as natural, (some say 'divinely granted') psychic talents.

**Liturgical Art and Science:** We believe that there is an art and a science to creating, preparing and performing worship rituals. Our worship celebrations are continually evolving as we search for the most intellectually satisfying, artistically beautiful, spiritually powerful, and magically effective rites possible.

**Connecting to the Cosmos:** We believe in the importance of celebrating the solar, lunar and other cycles of our lives. We consciously observe the solstices, equinoxes, and the points in between, as well as the phases of the moon. Such ‘rites of intensification’ are human universals, as are the various ceremonies known as ‘rites of passage’ – celebrations of birth, puberty, personal dedication to a given deity or group, marriage, ordination, death and so forth. Together, these various sorts of observations help us to find ourselves in space and time.

**Born-Again Paganism:** Many of us believe in some sort of afterlife, usually involving rest and recovery in the Otherworld before reincarnating. We have no concept of ‘eternal’ punishment, refusing to worship deities who could be that cruel.

**Hope and Action:** We believe that people have the ability to solve their current problems, both personal and public, and to create a better world. Our utopian vision, tempered with common sense, leads us to a strong commitment to personal and global growth, evolution and balance.

**Mystic Vision:** We believe that people can progress far towards achieving personal growth, evolution and balance through the carefully planning alternation of their ‘normal’ states of consciousness. We use both ancient and modern methods of concentration, meditation, reprogramming and ecstasy.

**Community Responsibility:** We believe that human interdependence implies community service. Some of us are active in political, social, ecological and charitable organizations, while others prefer to work for the public good primarily through spiritual means (and many insist on doing both.)

**Authenticity:** We believe that if we are to achieve any of our goals, we must practice what we preach. Neopagan Druidism, like any other religion, should be a way of life, not merely a weekly or monthly social function. So we must always strive to make our lives consistent with our proclaimed beliefs.

**Cooperation and Defense:** We believe in cooperation and ecumenical activities with those members of other faiths who share all or most of these beliefs. We also believe in resisting efforts by members of dysfunctional religions who seek to persecute us or suppress our human rights.

There is more to Neopagan than the information give here, of course, and a great deal of variation in how these beliefs are extended to cover other topics. Some of our members are pacifists, and others are in the military; some are animal rights activists and vegetarians, others are carnivorous hunters; some are committed to conservative, others to alternative lifestyles. We actively encourage everyone to apply these principles to the practical questions of their daily lives.

## Neopagan Druid Ceremony

ADF rituals, including the public worship rites known as ‘liturgies’, are rooted firmly in what we have been able to reconstruct of the cosmologies of the Paleopagan Indo-Europeans. These were woven, complex, and multi-valued, though remarkably similar from culture to culture, and were reflected in the social structures and myths of each culture, as the Dumezilian school of comparative mythology has clearly demonstrated. George Dumezil was the scholar who single-handedly rehabilitated the field of comparative religion after decades of it being academically unfashionable. His theories have been substantiated and fleshed out by many respected scholars, as well as by myself and other Neopagan researchers.

One cosmology incorporates the idea of a ‘polar’ vertical axis reaching from the Celestial Realm above, down through ‘here’, or the Midrealm that humans normally live and function in, down to a Chthonic Realm or Underworld below. This

vertical axis is often symbolized with a Sacred Fire, a Sacred Well and a Sacred Tree. The Fire represents divinity descending from the Celestial Realm, the Well divinity ascending from the Chthonic Realm, and the Tree represents that which connects all the Worlds and Realms.

Another Cosmology is that of the ‘Three Worlds’ of Land, Waters (sometimes called ‘Sea’), and Sky (sometimes called ‘Middle Air’.) There can be seen as a horizontal axis running through the center of the vertical one, which is the here and now, with the Worlds being reflected in the Celestial and Chthonic Realms. A polarity of values running through all these is that of ‘light’ forces and being (of order/safety, not necessarily of Good) and ‘dark’ forces and beings (of chaos/danger, not necessarily Evil) existing in every World and Realm. Yet another polarity is that of ‘Here’ and ‘Outside’ (or ‘the Otherworld’ or ‘Faery’), marking a distinction between the physical and the spiritual aspects of reality. All of these cosmological concepts can be seen in Neopagan Druid rituals, with emphases varying, depending upon which particular Indo-European culture a given grove has chosen to focus. (all are allowed, though Irish is the most common.)

The primary deity worshipped by Neopagan Druids is the Earth Mother, also known as Mother Nature or Gaia. She can be thought of as the consciousness of the biosphere, as a personification of the fertility of the Earth, the Mother of all other deities – at least those worshipped by humans on this planet- and so forth. Gaia is the literal and metaphysical ground upon which we stand, the source and mirror of all that lives and dies. She is mentioned prominently near the beginning and end of every Neopagan Druid ceremony.

ADF liturgy also focuses strongly on a Divine Gatekeeper, deities or other spirits of Bardic inspiration, the ‘Three Kindreds’ of Deities, Ancestors and Nature Spirits, and even the forces of Chaos – very carefully. Every ADF liturgy has a specific Divine ‘guest of honor’ or two, to whom the majority of our worship is dedicated. Our offerings consist of songs, chants, dances, ritual dramas, poems and other works of art. These are ‘sacrificed’ instead of the blood offerings of our Paleopagan predecessors.

## The Vision of Neopagan Druidism

What makes ADF different from other Druidic organizations and other Neopagan traditions? This is how we see it:

In ADF we believe that excellence in scholarship is vitally important. The Goddesses and Gods do not need us to tell lies on their behalf, nor can we understand the ways of our Paleopagan predecessors by indulging in romantic fantasies, no matter how ‘politically correct’ or emotionally satisfying they might be. So we promote no tall tales of universal matriarchies, of Stonehenge being built by Druid magic, nor of the ancient Druids originally having been Shamanic crystal-masters from Atlantis. We do not whitewash the occasional barbarism of our predecessors, nor exaggerate it. We use real archeology, real history and real comparative mythology – and we are willing to change our opinions when new information becomes available, even if it destroys our pet theories. This approach is rare in the history of Druidic revival and the Neopagan community.

In ADF we also believe that artistic excellence is important, both in ritual and outside of it. The Gods and Goddesses deserve the very best that we can give them, so we encourage our members to develop their creative skills to the highest levels that each can attain. Our Bards, painters, woodcarvers, needle-workers and liturgists are among the best in the Neopagan community.

In ADF we believe that excellence in clergy training and practice is vital for any healthy, growing religion. To that end, we are attempting to create a professional clergy training

program equal in rigor and superior in results to anything done by the world's other religions. Unlike many alternative religions, we will never have 'instant initiations' into our clergy. Nor do we assume that every member of our religion will have a genuine vocation to the clergy, though it is likely that, for the first couple of decades, a high proportion will. However, we expect that eventually the vast majority of our people will be laity. Nonetheless, everyone is expected to communicate with the Goddesses and Gods in her or his own way – spiritual growth is not a monopoly of the clergy. Every human being needs to learn how to contact the divine fire within, how to talk with trees, and how to unleash the power of magic to save the Earth. If there is such a thing as 'spiritual excellence', we must strive to express that as well.

ADF's study program is unlike those of any other Druidic organization, in that we assume that the primary purpose of participants is to undertake leadership roles within the Neopagan Community. Thus we have a 'university without walls' system of academic and practical studies, designed to produce professional level clergy, Bards, judges, healers, ecologists and others. Credit is given to life experiences and students are expected to be able to demonstrate their knowledge and skills upon request. While esoteric studies, including magic and mysticism, are part of the program, exoteric studies, including first aid, non-profit management, history, comparative religions, counseling and mainstream science, are emphasized. It can take several years for a person to work here or his way through the program, but we are not in any hurry.

Naturally, we believe that liturgical excellence is rooted in these other forms of excellence. Sound scholarship (especially historical and mythological), beautiful art, genuinely competent clergy, and people who are ready, willing, and able to channel divine energies – all are crucial to creating the powerful religious and magical ceremonies that we and the Earth so desperately need.

We have two mottos that we have been using so far. The first is based on the ideas just described: "Why not excellence?" This emphasis on the excellence as a goal makes us both unique and controversial within the Neopagan community. Although some folks think that such emphasis 'isn't democratic', we feel that our concept of divine immanence implies that everyone has something they are good at (you just need to contact the deities within you and channel Their creative power.) However, our second motto – 'As fast as a speeding oak tree!' – serves to remind us all that the achievement of excellence takes time.

We have already officially declared the first Druidic dogma: the Doctrine of Archdruidic Fallibility. No one in ADF, not even the Archdruid, has all the answers. We make no claims of handing down an 'authentic' unbroken tradition from the past, and have very strong doubts about any group that does make such claims. Thus we are free to evolve our systems within the organic structures already created, adapting them as necessary to suit the needs of coming generations. We are also free to make many mistakes in the process – a freedom we've already taken advantage of. Every member of ADF has both the opportunity and the obligation to contribute her or his time, money, energy and talents to the adventure.

We believe Neopaganism is eventually going to become a mainstream religious movement, with hundreds of thousands (if not millions) of members, and that this will be a good thing, both for the individuals involved, and for the survival of the Earth Mother. Neopaganism is currently riding the crest of the 'baby boom'. Many people who grew up in the 1960s and 70s are discovering us at about the same time that they are realizing both the desperate state of our planet and the eternal relevance of our youthful ideals. Membership in the Neopagan community is quietly growing at a geometric rate, both through word of mouth and through the many do-it-yourself books now

available, giving us an ever greater impact on the mainstream culture.

All these Neopagans are going to need publicly accessible worship, teaching, counseling and healing. Within thirty years we expect to see indoor temples and/or sacred groves throughout North America and Europe, staffed by full-time, paid, professional clergy. These will provide the full range of needed services to the Neopagan community, with more 'corruption' than that experienced by the Unitarians, the Buddhists, or the Quakers. We anticipate globally televised Samhain rites at Stonehenge, and Beltane ceremonies attended by thousands in every major city. We see Neopagan clergy taking part in international religious conferences as equals with clergy from other faiths. We see our children wearing pentacles, Druid Sigils, and Thor Hammers to school as easily as others now wear crosses, Stars of David, or Hands of Fatima. We see talented and well trained Neopagan clergy leading thousands of people in effective magical and mundane actions to save endangered species, stop polluters, and preserve wilderness. We see our healers saving thousands of lives and our Bards inspiring millions through music and video concerts and dramas. We see Neopaganism as a mass religion, changing social, political, and environmental attitudes around the world and stopping the death-mongers in their tracks.

This vision is very different from that of most current Neopagans, who focus on small groups as their ideal. Those small groups will always be an essential part of the Neopagan religious community, operating both within and apart from larger organizations, just as their equivalents have throughout human history. As we see it, the future of Neopaganism will require a wide variety of different group sizes, structures, and ritual styles. To lose any of the currently existing approaches risks impoverishing our spiritual 'gene pool'. So we are not out to 'replace' other Neopagan traditions, even though we believe that we have something unique and wonderful to share with the world.

Doing that sharing requires 'going public', something that many Neopagan traditions have been reluctant to do. Granted, it may remain necessary, for another decade or two, for some Neopagans to remain in hiding wherever fundamentalist hate is rampant. Even for those of us in publicly-oriented Neopagan groups, it will take courage and caution for us to safely 'come from the shadows'. Yet, if we follow the lessons learned by the civil rights movements of our generation, we will eventually have full freedom to practice our beliefs. Accepting and encouraging our community's growth, while avoiding missionary fever, will be a vital tool in achieving that task.

We believe that Neopagan Druidism has an important role to play in the future of Neopaganism and the survival of the Earth. Already other Neopagan traditions are imitating ADF's training program, our liturgical techniques, and our emphasis on the Arts. If we can attract enough people who are willing to dedicate their time, energy, and money to achieving these goals, the vision can be manifested. We can save the Earth Mother, create a global culture of prosperity and freedom, and usher in a genuine 'New Age.'



## Suggested Reading

The following books will get you started on understanding ADF's approach to reconstructing Druidism;

- Scott Littleton, C. *The New Comparative Mythology, An Anthropological Assessment of the Theories of Georges Dumézil*, Third Edition, University of California, 1980. This is the best critical introduction to Dumézil's work, with an extensive bibliography of relevant books and articles by Dumézil and others.
- Doniger O'Flaherty, Wendy. *Women, Androgynes, and Other Mythical Beasts*, University of Chicago, 1982. O'Flaherty (now known as Doniger) give an extensive discussion of the sexual politics of the IE myth system using sound research and a clear presentation. She is also the author of: *Shiva, the Erotic Ascetic; The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology; Other People's Myths*; and an excellent translation of the *Rig Veda*, among many other books and articles.
- Piggot, Stuart. *The Druids*, Thames and Hudson, 1985. The best book on the subject so far, covering the archaeological, classical, and historical evidence concerning the Druids, both Paleopagan and Mesopagan, albeit in a very anti-romantic and anti-religious style.
- Adler, Margot. *Drawing Down the Moon*, Beacon Press, 1987. This is the best book that anyone has published about Neopagan movements in America. Note, however, that the discussions of Reformed Druidism do not reflect what is going on in ADF today. There is a nice section on ADF starting at p. 325 in this second edition.
- Bonewits, Isaac. *Real Magic*, Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1989. A basic introduction to the theory and practice of magic. Includes an extensive bibliography of other titles that will be helpful.
- Friedrich, Paul. *Proto-Indo-European Trees*, University of Chicago, 1970. Primarily a linguistic monograph, this is the only book to cover all the various species of trees known to have had names in the PIE language. He includes a great deal of religious and symbolic detail.
- Stover, Leon E. and Kraig, Bruce. *Stonehenge, the Indo-European Heritage*, Nelson-Hall, 1978. A harsh but fascinating look at the people associated with the various stages of Stonehenge's construction. The authors belong to the 'hard primitivism' school of IE studies, are hostile to religion and positively rabid about clergy, but the book does an excellent job of straightening out the bewildering array of prehistoric and early IE cultures. The bibliography and research notes are great.
- Smith, Brian K. *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion*, Oxford University Press, 1989. A superb introduction to the complex world of Vedic ritual and metaphysics. Much of what puzzles the author will make perfectly good sense to Neopagan ritualists, and will give us some glimpses of what western Druidism must have been like.
- Eliade, Mircea. *A History of Religious Ideas*, 3 Volumes. Vol 1 – *From the Stone Age to the Elusian Mysteries*, University of Chicago Press, 1978, and Vol 2 – *From Gautama Buddha to the Triumph of Christianity*, University of California Press, 1982, are of most value to Neopagans. This is simply the best material on the history of religious ideas available, organized both chronologically and thematically. It includes an enormous amount of information on Paleopaganism and early Christianity.
- Rees, Alwyn Brinley. *Celtic Heritage*, Thames & Hudson, 1961. A Dumézilian analysis of Celtic mythology and religion, based primarily on Irish and secondarily on Welsh materials. Gives an excellent overview of basic

patterns of belief, and will explain much of the cosmology underlying Celtic mythology and ritual.

- Hutton, Ronald. *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles, Their Nature and Legacy*, Blackwell, 1991. A brilliant review of the history, prehistory and pseudohistory of British Paleopaganism. This is an excellent tour of all 'the things we know that just ain't so', and belongs in every Druid's library.
- Lewis, Bernard. *History – Remembered, Recovered, Invented*. Princeton University Press, 1975. A succinct introduction to the ways in which people filter history through their personal and cultural needs, fears and wishes, even when they are trying to be unbiased. An excellent cure to excessive romanticism, scientolatriy, and matriarchal fever.
- Caesar, Julius, trans. Anne and Peter Wiseman. *The Battle for Gaul*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1980. A modern colloquial translation, filled with dozens of explanatory maps, photographs and drawings.
- Carr-Gomm, Phillip. *Elements of the Druid Tradition*, Element Books, 1991. A brief introduction to the facts and faces of Mesopagan Druidism, by the current Chosen Chief of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids. Overly romantic, yet honest about absent historical evidence. Includes excellent guided meditations and good ideas about bridging the gaps between Meso- and Neopagan Druids. Also recommended is Carr-Gomm's *The Druid Way*, the story of a vision quest/pilgrimage through the landscape of southern England, Element Books, 1993.

Some 300 or so additional recommended books can be found in the back of the ADF Study Manual.

We do **not** recommend any non-fiction by Robert Graves (on Celtic topics), D.J. Conway, Douglas Monroe, Lewis Spence, H.P. Balvatsky, Edward Williams (aka Iolo Morganwg), or any works by others based on their writings, nor those of Merlin Stone, Barbara Walker, or other revisionist idealogues. Much of what is available in print about the ancient Druid is hogwash, so read carefully and beware of unverified assumptions, nationalistic biases, monotheistic reinterpretations, or claims of intact underground family traditions of Druidism. When in doubt, consult your nearest tree...

**Isaac Bonewits** has been a Druidic priest for over 25 years, and a Wiccan priest for 15 years. He is one of North America's best known authorities on Neopaganism, Druidism, Witchcraft and the Occult. He holds the only accredited (B.A.) degree ever given in Magic, (U.C. Berkeley), and is the author of the classic introductory textbook, *Real Magic*, as well as the infamous FRP game magic system, *Authentic Thaumaturgy*. He is the founder and Archdruid Emeritus of Ar nDraiocht Fein: A Druid Fellowship (ADF), the largest and best known Neopagan Druid movement in North America, and co-leads a Gardnerian coven with his wife, Deborah Lipp. He is also a singer and songwriter of Pagan songs, some of which have appeared on two albums: '*Be Pagan Once Again!*' and '*Avalon is Rising!*', with a third, '*We Are One Family!*', to be released in Winter 1995/6. He was an early fighter for Aquarian civil rights, having written the *Aquarian Manifesto* and started the seminal Aquarian Anti-Defamation League in 1974. On January 1, 1996 he resigned his position as Archdruid of ADF and is currently finishing books on Neopagan polytheology and liturgical design, as well as his own histories of Druidism and Witchcraft.

He can be contacted through P.O. Box 1021, Nyack NY, USA 10960-1021, as well as through [Bonewits@aol.com](mailto:Bonewits@aol.com) and via other online services. He is especially interested in hearing from European and South American Druid organizations.





# RDNA and It's Offshoots

By Isaac Bonewits  
1996, 2001

The Reformed Druids of North America ("R.D.N.A.") started out as a quasi-religious [Mesopagan](#) protest against coerced religion at a small Midwestern college, back in 1963 c.e. The RDNA was invented in order to test the freedom allowed by the college's rules requiring all students to attend church. Much to the surprise of the founders, even after they had won their protest, many of the Druids wanted to continue the movement. The prayers to the Earth-Mother and the old Celtic divinities, combined with Zen meditations, Christian mystical writings and the Founders' anarchistic philosophy now represented a valuable part of their spiritual lives. Graduates of [Carleton College](#) spread the Reformed Druid movement wherever they went.

It was in Berkeley, California that one of these alumni, Robert Larson, became the local Archdruid for a group of people, including myself, who were already thinking of ourselves as Neopagans. Under our influence (and my own not-entirely-appreciated agitation) an increasing overlap between RDNA and the Neopagan community began to form. Today, the handful of active RDNA groves (congregations,) such as those led by Stephen Abbot in California and Joan Carruth in New Hampshire (see photo on right) are almost all Neopagan and are using the name "NRDNA" (for New RDNA,) while other Druidic movements, such as [ADF](#) and [Keltria](#), have grown from the RDNA's trunk as specifically Neopagan branches.



According to one Reformed Druid document, *The Book of the Law*, the Basic Beliefs of Reformed Druidism run thusly:

"The object of the search for religious truth, which is a universal and a never-ending search, may be found through the Earth-Mother; which is Nature; but this is on way, yea, one way among many.

And great is the importance, which is of spiritual importance, of Nature, which is the Earth-Mother; for it is one of the objects of Creation, and with it do people live, yea, even as they do struggle through life are they come face-to-face with it."

This has since been abbreviated, in *The Outline of the Foundation of Fundamentals*, to the following statements:

"1. Nature is good!

and the second is like unto the first:

2. Nature is good!"

The material realm is personified as the "Earth-Mother" (or Mother Nature,) one of the oldest archetypes known to humanity. Many now apply this name to the biosphere as a whole, in order to emphasize our dependence upon Her (though She is usually called "Gaia" then.) The nonmaterial essence of the universe(s) is called "Béal" (which is believed to be an ancient Celtic name of an abstract divinity, based on "Bel" or "shining one,") and the concept is rather similar to some versions of the Native American idea of the Great Spirit. Thus a polarity (not a dualism) of matter and energy, female and male, darkness and light, is established; but it is vital to realize that neither half of the polarity is believed to be superior to the other.

The "object of Humanity's search" is called "awareness," and is defined as "unity with Béal." a task that can only be accomplished by also attaining unity with the Earth-Mother. Thus Reformed Druids are urged to develop all the different aspects of their beings — physical, mental, emotional, psychic, artistic and spiritual — in order to attain the required state of dynamic balance that will lead them towards awareness.

Beyond these fundamentals, the philosophy and (poly)theology of Reformed Druidism are kept deliberately vague. It is up to each Reformed Druid to work out her or his own path towards awareness.

The Reformed Druids are organized into congregations called "groves," each with from three to ten or more members (though dozens of others may show up for major holiday celebrations.) Only a handful of these are still active, though a couple of dozen have been founded over the years. Every grove is an independent entity, and each may operate its own "flavor" of Reformed Druidism. At times there have been groves practicing (among the Neopagans) Norse, Wiccan, Eclectic, Zen and even Hasidic Druidism. The older RDNA groves (i.e., the ones run by original Carleton graduates) often continue to mix Christian, Taoist, Native American, and other mystical traditions with their Druidism. Individuals frequently follow more than one variety at a time, depending upon their personal interests.

Attempts to keep any sort of national structure going have been fruitless due to the strong individualism of the members.

Obviously, Reformed Druidism is a uniquely American phenomenon. Because of its tolerance for theological and philosophical differences, its lack of discrimination against women and other minority groups, its sense of humor about itself, and its distrust of all organizational structures, it is drastically different from most other philosophical and religious movements that have called themselves "Druidic" previously.

And yet the Reformed Druids do have some fundamental concepts in common with the Paleopagan and Mesopagan Druids who preceded them and the Neopagan Druids who developed from them. Down through the ages, their communities have known how to tell who the Druids among them were, because the role of the Druid has always been clear — scholar and artist, poet and priest, philosopher and magician — the one who seeks, preserves and extends the highest wisdom her or his people are capable of handling safely, and who uses that knowledge and inspiration for the benefit of their community.

# Currently Existing Druid Groups and Friends

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## Introductory Comments:

The Paleopagan Druid organization(s), if there were any, vanished long ago. This does not, naturally, stop some modern Druid groups and individuals from claiming to be surviving underground Paleopagan Druid organizations or the offspring thereof.

Mesopagan Druid orders are among the oldest fraternal groups still in existence, and were once very popular across the USA and Canada. Closely related to the Freemasons in history, liturgy, and theology, they have kept the ideals of Druidism alive for over two centuries. Their activities are generally open to all sincere participants, save that the older ones tend (in the U.S.A. at least) to have separate gender-based groups ("Ladies Auxiliaries.") Read Elements of the Druid Tradition by Philip Carr-Gomm for details.

Neopagan Druids are reviving the best aspects of ancient Earth-centered religions in a modern context. Their activities are generally open to all sincere participants, regardless of ancestry, gender, sexual orientation or membership in other Pagan or Druidic groups. Read Drawing Down the Moon by Margot Adler, People of the Earth: The New Pagans Speak Out by Ellen Evert Hopman and Lawrence Bond, or The Druid Renaissance: the Voice of Druidry Today by Phillip Carr-Gomm (with a chapter by myself on "The Druid Revival in Modern America") for details.

You can exchange ideas with Neopagan Druids on the Internet newsgroup called "alt.religion.druid," as well as on the "Pagan Message Boards" of all the commercial online services, including America Online, Compuserve and Pagans Online.Com.

You can do live chatting about Druidism with others off the commercial services by using "IRC" (Internet Relay Chat) and special "java chatters" on specific websites, and join private emailing lists about Druidism and Celtic Studies.

If you decide to send regular or "snailmail" letters to any of the groups listed here, expect to wait a few weeks for your reply, as each of these groups is run by a handful of volunteers working part-time. And it doesn't hurt for you to include a few dollars to help them with their postage and printing costs.

## Druidic Organizations:

The United Ancient Order of Druids is the oldest of the surviving Fraternal (what I call "Mesopagan") Druid organizations. For an explanatory essay about them, you can jump to The Story of Druidism: History, Legend and Lore (U.A.O.D..)

They are primarily active in the Ohio, Nevada and California regions. On the East Coast, Iona Grove #1, UAOD, meets in the Washington, DC, area, at least 4 times each year, on the Solstices and Equinoxes, for dinner, good conversation, and the presentation and discussion of a paper relating to Druidism (as a fraternal organization, not a religious movement) and/or fraternalism in general. They have been in existence since 1994 and have grown very quickly to a membership that now numbers over fifty. Some of these members are in New York, West Virginia, Connecticut, Ohio, Texas, Minnesota, and California. I was recently privileged to be initiated into this organization, as a Bard, Ovate and Druid (3°.)

The Secretary for Iona Grove #1, UAOD is Paul M. Bessel, at 703-418-1172, fax 703-418-6625. You can e-mail him at [paulb@cpcug.org](mailto:paulb@cpcug.org)

Via snailmail, you can write to Iona Grove #1, UAOD, Paul M. Bessel, 2301 Jefferson Davis Hwy., #1521, Dept. IBWS, Arlington, VA 22202-3855.

The UAOD is also active in Sweden, so here's their Swedish UAOD website.

The Order of Bards Ovates and Druids, also known as OBOD, is a modern offshoot of The Druid Order (British Circle of the Universal Bond,) and is evolving into a Neopagan movement with over 1,200 members around the world (including myself.) To receive a packet of information about them, just write to: OBOD, Dept. IBWS, PO Box 1333, Lewes. East Sussex BN7 1DX England, and enclose several International Postal Reply Coupons, or send email to [office@druidry.org](mailto:office@druidry.org). OBOD publishes an excellent monthly newsletter Touchstone, for members only. Excerpts from previous issues are online at the OBOD site.

OBOD's current Chosen Chief (they don't use the term "Archdruid") is Philip Carr-Gomm, psychologist and author of some excellent books on Druidism. You can email him at [philip@druidry.org](mailto:philip@druidry.org). The Insular Order of Druids or IOD is a new Druid order, founded in 1993 c.e. They appear to be more Neopagan than Mesopagan, with Wiccan elements, and their Arch Druid Dylan Ap Thuin is a poet and tattoo artist/body piercer! Definitely a 1990's kinda group, appealing to a younger generation of British Druids but enjoying warm relations with other members of the Council of British Druid Orders.

You can send them email at: [Druids@insular.demon.co.uk](mailto:Druids@insular.demon.co.uk) or write to them via snailmail at: IOD, c/o Labyrinth, 2 Victoria Road South, Southsea, Hants, England.

The Mother Grove of The British Druid Order or BDO "was formed in 1979 as part of a personal quest to recreate a native British spirituality." "The Order is currently under the guidance of founder, Philip Shallcrass (Grey Wolf, aka Wolf Walks With Fire) and Emma Restall Orr (Bobcat) as joint Chiefs, their role being that of facilitators and guides. Philip is a musician, artist, poet and writer. Emma is a writer, teacher and soul counsellor. Both lecture and present workshops on many aspects of Druid tradition. Both have links with other Druid groups in Britain and overseas."

"The Order also works with other faiths and traditions, finding common cause and common sources of inspiration with those who follow other spiritual paths. Philip and Emma have wide practical experience in numerous magical, mystical, spiritual and shamanic traditions, all of which they bring together in the BDO to create a unique brand of pagan Druidry."

You can email Emma Restall Orr at: [bobcat@nemeton.demon.co.uk](mailto:bobcat@nemeton.demon.co.uk)

You can email Philip Shallcrass at: [greywolf@druidorder.demon.co.uk](mailto:greywolf@druidorder.demon.co.uk)

King Arthur Pendragon, Titular Head & Chosen Chief of the Loyal Arthurian Warband, and member of the Council of British Druid Orders, has his own website from whence he rallies "Wizards, Witches and Warriors" to fight for the Earth Mother and for free and open access to Stonehenge for all. He and his followers battle through both nonviolent political protest and through civil and criminal lawsuits, even going so far as to drag the British government before the European Commission on Human Rights. If you're at all interested in these issues (and you should be!), a visit to his website will be quite educational. If you would like to network with him about these and other

eco-warrior issues, you may email him at [pendragon@dragons4.demon.co.uk](mailto:pendragon@dragons4.demon.co.uk)

The Reformed Druids of North America or RDNA, are ancestral to both ADF and Keltria. For historical information, you can read an essay on the Reformed Druids of North America and their Offshoots on this website. For current info, visit A Pseudo-Official Homepage of the RDNA maintained by Michael Scharding, who is a former Archdruid of the Carleton Grove of the RDNA, founder of the International Druid Archives at Carleton College, and the editor of A Reformed Druid Anthology. Michael can be emailed at [MSCHARDI@carleton.edu](mailto:MSCHARDI@carleton.edu)

Naturally, I have to include the organization I founded, Ár nDraíocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship, or ADF. To receive a printed packet of information about this Pan-Indo-European Druid Fellowship, just send three US dollars to cover printing, postage and handling, to: ADF, Dept. IBWS, PO Box 516, East Syracuse, NY 13057. You can send email to [adf-info@adf.org](mailto:adf-info@adf.org) to get an automated information response or visit the ADF website to find book lists, study materials and several ADF-related internet mailing lists.

If the ADF website is down or busy, you can go back to my Homepage for a list of links to ADF-related essays you can read in my website. Since they're newer versions, and include essays the new board considers "too radical" to be on the ADF website, they won't necessarily reflect current ADF policies, however.

I'm not the Archdruid of ADF anymore, and I haven't been for over two years. For that matter, I'm not on the Board either, and I don't subscribe to the Mother Grove's private emailing list, so I can't tell you anything about current policy discussions inside ADF.

The new Archdruid of ADF is John "Fox" Adelman, whom you can email at [adf-archdruid@adf.org](mailto:adf-archdruid@adf.org).

Another great Neopagan Druid organization (of which I am also a member) is the Henge of Keltria, which branched off from ADF a few years ago in order to form an exclusively Celtic path of Neopagan Druidism.

"We are a positive path Neopagan tradition dedicated to protecting and preserving our Mother Earth, honoring our ancestors, revering the spirits of nature, and worshipping the Gods and Goddesses of our Celtic heritage. Our focus is on personal growth through the development of mind, body, and spirit. We place special emphasis on spiritual development fostered through study and practice of the Druidic Arts and Celtic Magick. Through training, networking, resource material, ritual participation, and meaningful communication we hope to provide a religious and spiritual framework through which people may reach their full potential."

"We call our religious organization a "Henge." The autonomous local groups working within the Keltrian tradition are called "Groves." Each Grove is free to compose and perform ritual and magick geared to its own particular focus, provided such work remains compatible with the beliefs, ethics, and ritual and structural framework of the Henge."

I can't recommend Keltria: Journal of Druidism and Celtic Magick highly enough. The Journal is no longer being published, but orders are still being taken for back issues. Sample articles, table of contents for the issues and an order form are online at the above address.

You can get information about Keltria by emailing Keltria's President Wren, at [HengeofK@aol.com](mailto:HengeofK@aol.com). By snailmail, send a Self Addressed Stamped #10 Envelope to: Keltria, PO Box 17969, Long Beach, CA, USA 90807.

IMBAS "is an organization that promotes the religion of Celtic Reconstructionist Paganism, and traditional Celtic culture and heritage. The Celts are recognized as the tribal Celts of Iron Age Europe and the modern peoples of Alba (Scotland,) Breizh (Brittany,) Cymru (Wales,) E'ire (Ireland,) Kernow (Cornwall,) and Mannin (Isle of Man.) Celtic Reconstructionist Paganism is a votive religion that is grounded in folk tradition, mythological texts, and the archaeological and historical records; and is based around the home, the family, and the community/tribe in honoring the land, the ancestors, and the traditional Celtic Gods and Goddesses. We do not practice our spirituality, we live it."

The IMBAS website is filled with some of the best Celtic scholarship available on the Web, with a wealth of articles and reviews by people who know what they're talking about. They also have live chats via java software at their site, as well as an emailing list.

IMBAS can be contacted directly at [imbas@imbas.org](mailto:imbas@imbas.org) or though it's President, Danielle Ni'Dhighe at [President@imbas.org](mailto:President@imbas.org), or by snail mail at: IMBAS, 1412 SW 102nd St., #139, Seattle, WA 98146-3770 USA.

The Order of the White Oak is "a loose collection of Celtic Reconstructionists, philosophers, and students of Druidry who are concerned with the matter of ethics in the Druidical community and who meet with our peers from time to time to study the Brehon Laws, to search the ancient stories for Celtic tribal values, and to consult our own consciences for the kind of Druid path we envision. Our purpose is not to condemn or judge anyone. We welcome Druids of every denomination as well as independents and those who care about Celtic culture, history and spirituality to join in our discussions."

For more information, you can email Ellen Evert Hopman (Willow/Saille) at [Saille333@aol.com](mailto:Saille333@aol.com). She was the founder of the Whiteoak emailing-list that the Order was sparked by. A founder and early officer of Keltria, Ellen is also a professional member of the American Herbalists Guild and the author of Tree Medicine-Tree Magic, A Druids Herbal for the Sacred Earth Year and People of the Earth - The New Pagans Speak Out (Lawrence Bond contributor) as well as several videos on the subjects of herbs and Paganism.

The Celtic Traditionalist Order of Druids is "a teaching Order, dedicated to the preservation and rebirth of the worship of the ancient Gods and Goddesses, primarily those of the Celtic Nations - Cymru (Wales,) Eire (Ireland,) Kernow (Cornwall,) Bretagne (Brittany,) Alba (Scotland,) Albion, Galicia (Northern Spain,) Gaul/Galica (France) as well as other related lands and peoples."

"The CTOD, officially founded in 1987, is a semi-monastic teaching order dedicated to the principals of Truth, Honor, and Loyalty. While somewhat eclectic in nature, the Order strives to be as faithful as possible to the spirit of the cultures which have gone before -- while introducing modern aspects to the faithful worship of the Old Gods. The Order considers its self semi-monastic, due to the fact that while group formation is practiced, most members walk a path of solitary reflection and study. It is not 'Celtic Reconstructionist', more 'Celtic Realist!'"

The CTOD can be contacted by emailing Howard and Vicki Mieth at [merlyn@goodnet.com](mailto:merlyn@goodnet.com).

The Aisling Association of Celtic Tribes "is a Celtic Reconstructionist Pagan organization focused on worship of the Gods, scholarship, and community service. We work to develop a modern form of tribal life, blending Iron Age ideology with modern day practicality and to honor the Gods in all we do.

Likewise we are developing reconstructions of many different paths associated with Pagan Celtic cultures that are as true as possible to the ancient ways while being applicable to the society in which we live. We look towards the future of what our paths mean, as much as we learn from the past to develop them."

"We base our ways on research of ancient Celtic culture, mythology,---primarily at this time the Gaels (Irish, Scots, and to some extent, Manx) but as we grow and interest develops among our members we will develop more on the British, Welsh and Gaulish material. We are also deeply influenced by our experiences and do not discount them, although we may strive to validate them on the material out there. We do not make any pretensions to passing on ancient knowledge from unbroken lines, we are a modern religion based on research of the old --- however, we also do not mix our Celtic-based practice with Wicca, Ceremonial Magick, or Shamanism. (This is in no way a statement that our way is better or that we are cultural supremacists --we simply chose to not be eclectic in our practices. Of course, being of Celtic descent is in no way a requirement for involvement ---we wish strongly to disassociate from those misguided individuals who use the terms "Celt" and "tribalism" to promote their agenda of supremism, isolationism, and hatred.)"

"Our primary goal is to develop educated, well rounded members to serve their communities---- their Tribe, their Pagan Community, and their physical neighborhoods. We are in the process of developing a study program to develop clergy, healers, warriors, bards, and others in order to do this. Most of our programs will be individually modified for each participant and will work with standard requirements for professionals in the chosen fields where applicable."

Their email address is [AislingACT@aol.com](mailto:AislingACT@aol.com) . Their snailmail address is: AACT, PO Box 1946, Dover NH 03821-1946.

The Summerlands is an entire Celtic community on the net, with message boards, classes and a multitude of resources! This huge website is guided by well-known Neopagan Celtic scholar Searles O'Dubhain, his "kitchen witch" shaman wife Deborah O'Dubhain, and several other names you'll recognize from various Druidic organizations and chatrooms.

"The Summerlands is a pagan community dedicated to rediscovering, preserving, disseminating, and when necessary, reinventing that which was lost to us... the magick, history, customs, and religions of our ancestors. We are about worshipping and celebrating the old Gods and Goddesses in Ways both ancient and new."

"The Summerlands is the home of the Heartland, the resting place of the Sun, and the reflecting pool of the Moon. Though our accent is primarily Indo-European and Celtic, all are welcome who come in peace to share our fires. Our goal is to develop into a multi-traditional community that works in harmony. Our Ways welcome your Ways."

They have message boards, a library, live chatting and online classes. They charge a modest fee for membership and classes.

Here's a few other groups I have only snailmail addresses for, along with their contact people:

Aos Dana, Fiona Davidson, Invergowrie House, Ninewells, Dundee, DD2 1UA, Scotland.

The Bardic Order Group, Alex Gunningham, Flat 2, 20 The Common, Ealing, London, W5 3JB, England.

The Council of British Druid Orders, Elizabeth Murray, BM Oakgrove, London, WC1N 3XX, England. The Council includes representatives of most of the Druid groups in England and other Druid organizations (as associate members) from around the world (including ADF.)

Druidica Comardia Eriutalomonos (Druidical Fellowship of the Western Land,) M. G. Boutet, 32 Fourth Ave. South, Roxboro, PQ, H2I 3W3, Canada.

The Druid Order, BCUB (British Circle of the Universal Bond,) David Loxley, 23 Thornsett Road, London SE20 YXB, England.

Druidactos, the organization founded by Tom Cross/Tadhg MacCrossan, author of The Sacred Cauldron, is defunct. Since Cross is racist, sexist and anti-Semitic, it's no great loss. The last I heard, he was running a "Celtic Christian" group and insisting that "True Celts" should all be Catholics!

The Divine Circle of the Sacred Grove, the organization founded by Janette-of-the-many-aliases, now operating out of Phoenix, AZ, is not recommended. Compare the contents of that essay just referenced with my Cult Danger Evaluation Frame to understand why this group is as close to being a "dangerous Druid cult" as any could be.

Ecole Druidique des Gaules, Bernard Jacquelin, Villa Montmorency 75016, Paris, 45 27 74 79, France.

The Glastonbury Order of Druids, R. Maughfling and J. Paterson, Dove House, Barton-St. David, Somerset, TA11 6DF, England.

The London Druid Group, Gordon Gentry, 74 Riversmeet, Hertford, SG14 1LE, England.

Ollotouta Druidique des Gaules, Pierre de la Crau, B.P. 13, 93301, Aubervilliers, Cedex, France. This group appears to be creating a Gaulish version of Neopagan Druidism, similar in many ways to ADF.

## Druidic Online Chats and Emailing Lists

The #druid homepage contains information about the #druid IRC chat channels that exist on both the Undernet and the PaganPaths servers, as well as transcripts of online classes by Isaac Bonewits. ADF has numerous emailing lists available through their website, including ones devoted to various Celtic and other Indo-European cultures, as well as regularly scheduled online IRC chats. Celt.net is an online Celtic community that sponsors many Celtic emailing lists as well as Celtic websites. You can subscribe to several Celtic Language emailing lists through [listserv@listserv.heanet.ie](mailto:listserv@listserv.heanet.ie) by sending a message saying "subscribe \_\_(listname)\_\_." Included are:

CELTIC-L (Celtic culture)

GAELIC-L (Gaelic Language Bulletin Board)

GAEILGE-A (conversation in Irish Gaelic for fluent speakers/learners) GAEILGE-B (Irish Gaelic for beginners)

GAIDHLIG-A (conversation in Scottish Gaelic for fluent speakers/learners)

GAIDHLIG-B (Scottish Gaelic for beginners)

GAELG (conversation in Manx Gaelic and support for learners)

OLD-IRISH-L (Scholars and students of Old Irish) Website

IRTRAD-L (Irish Traditional Music List)

IE-FILK (Irish Filkers List)

WELSH-L (conversation in Welsh for fluent speakers/learners) Website

CYMRAEG-L (Welsh for beginners) The Celtic Studies Group is "an emailing list for beginners to Celtic Studies and

Celtic Spirituality -- along the lines of Nemeton-L and IMBAS only beginner oriented."

The Druids Grove Site is the homepage for the long running Druids Grove chat on America Online. It contains uploads of chat logs, a Druid FAQ, and links to other interesting Druid/Celtic sites.

IMBAS has an emailing list which can be subscribed to at their site, and live Druid chatting on their site.

Keltria has an emailing list available through their website.

Nemeton-L is an emailing list for "Druids and other Celtic Pagans and their friends. It is a place for research, reflection, debate and discussion."

The Summerlands website has both online chatting and classes available to members.

## Other Websites of Interest to Druids

Amulets by Merlin is the company and website of Merlin Windsor, "The Official Jeweler to the Archdruid of North America." <G> He's the artist who made the oakleaves and acorns Green Man necklace, with matching bracelet and earrings, that many have seen me wear at festivals. Though there are many fine jewelers in our Neopagan community, Merlin is one of the best -- In My Humble Opinion, of course! If I'm going to mention Celtic jewelry, then I have to tell you about Ancient Circles, a superb source of Celtic-design textiles (including some fabulous capes,) jewelry (pendents, earrings, brooches, torcs,) calendars and other arts. They are well worth paying a visit to!

C.E.L.T. Corpus of Electronic Texts is a website maintained by the University College Cork in Ireland. It contains many historical Irish manuscripts and other documents in electronic format for searching or download, as well as links to other text sites and Irish Studies resources.

The Celtic League is an international organization devoted to the preservation and support of Celtic cultures and languages. If you're going to call yourself a "Druid," then you ought to be paying attention to the issues this organization addresses, even if most modern Celtic activists are Christians. Celtic-art.com --

The Art of Courtney Davis is the website for one of the world's greatest Celtic artists. Mr. Davis is the artist behind the many Dover Clip Art Books that so many of us use as graphics resources (see how many examples you can find on this and other Druidical websites,) and is a reknowned illustrator of books on Celtic Topics. He deserves Druidical respect and honor for helping to make Celtic Art once again the glory that it was.

Every Celtic Thing on the Web is a cauldron full of links to every aspect of ancient and modern Celtic culture and language.

The Irish Bookshop is a major source of books and tapes about Ireland and the Irish language, with some materials about other Celtic languages. I especially recommend the Buntús Cainte series of Irish language books and tapes. The owner travels frequently across the Pond and can pick up special orders on request.

Lisala's Celtic Studies Resources Website is well worth visiting for anyone interested in real scholarship about Druids and Celtic Studies. Lisa is a professional medievalist, specializing in Celtic Studies.

The Rampant Lion is a website for a couple who consider themselves "paleo-pagan" Celts (I haven't asked if they have the severed heads of any revered ancestors in their house.) Though they rudely dismiss all the Druid groups listed above as fraudulent or delusionary, they do have an excellent Celtic Links

page that is well worth visiting by anyone interested in serious Celtic Studies.

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Email: [ibonewits@neopagan.net](mailto:ibonewits@neopagan.net) Snailmail: PO Box 1021, Nyack, NY, USA 10960-1021 This webpage is copyright © 1999 c.e., Isaac Bonewits Most recently updated: April 29, 1999 c.e.

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My Homepage URL is <http://www.neopagan.net>



# Druidism - Past, Present & Future

## Part 1: The Paleopagans

*This article by P.E.I. Bonewits in 1993 is based on his previous study, "The Other Druids," published in The Druid Chronicles (Evolved,) now out of print.*

Druidism is a topic that has been fascinating people for thousands of years, yet many folks (even within the Neopagan community) are confused about what is actually known and unknown, fact and fancy (whatever those words may really mean,) about the various phenomena that have all been labeled *Druidism*. The purpose of this article will be to briefly outline the current consensus among scholars about Paleopagan, Mesopagan and Neopagan Druidism. Comments by those having more accurate data will be welcomed by the author.

It should be pointed out, however, that the author is working strictly on the traditional, "earth-plane," historical level of reality. It is not unusual for religious and philosophical movements to have legends about their origins, in fact, all of the world's "great religions" have them. The existence of such mythic material says nothing about the validity of the spiritual, philosophical or magical concepts such groups may have to offer their members or observers; especially since many of the legends about the origins of groups were created for archetypal, mystical and otherwise symbolic purposes and are not necessarily meant to be taken literally.

Earth-plane reality is not the Dreamtime; many modern religious and magical orders are based on psychic rather than physical links to the past, and that past is often one that may never have existed physically on this planet. But profound metaphysical insights are still profound, regardless of whether or not those promulgating them are accidentally or deliberately passing on unprovable tales about their origins. Modern Druids are as likely as modern Witches to suddenly go mystical and romantic when hard historical questions are brought up. Some avoid the problem entirely by citing "reincarnation memories" or other divinatory techniques as the sources of their beliefs. Such sources deserve respectful analysis, but at parapsychology's current state of development, historians do not yet have the proper mental tools to adequately perform the necessary evaluations.

The term "Pagan" comes from the Latin *paganus*, which appears to have meant "country dweller, villager, or hick," and not necessarily in a polite way. The Roman army seems to have used the term to mean "a civilian," and the Roman Church later used it to refer to those who were not part of "the Armies of the Lord," i.e., those who were nonchristian. After 1500 years of propaganda, the term became synonymous in many people's minds with "atheist, devil worshipper, or heathen" (heathen, of course, means "people of the heath, where heather grows.") Today, most people who define themselves as Pagans use the word as a general term for "native and natural religions, usually polytheistic, and their members."

This is the sense in which this author uses it. The term "Paleopagan" refers to the original polytheistic tribal faiths of Europe, Africa, Asia, the Americas and Australia, when they were still practiced as intact belief systems. "Mesopagan" refers to those founders within the basically monotheistic/dualistic worldview of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. "Neopaganism" refers to the recent attempts to revive what the founders perceived as the best elements of Paleopaganism (of varying ethnic origins) within the context of modern humanistic ideas of psychological growth needs and mutual human interdependence. The first term was coined by this author, the second by Robin

Goodfellow, and the third (as "Neo-Paganism") was rediscovered by Tim Zell.

Our discussion in this article will deal with Paleopagan, Mesopagan and Neopagan Druids and systems of Druidism, from before the Christian era to the present day. We'll include a history of the British Masonic/Rosicrucian Druids from the 1700's to date, and detail the origins of the New Reformed Druids of North America back in 1963. We'll end with some speculations about what Druidism may become in the near and far future, in the "British" Isles and the Americas.

But first, let us go over what we know of the original Paleopagan Druids. This can be accomplished swiftly, for we actually know very little of them. The ancient Greek writers who mentioned the Druids were, according to Stuart Piggott's *The Druids* (which is the best book in English available on the subject,) for the most part suffering from either the Savage Barbarian bias ("Hard Primitivism") or else the Noble Savage mystique ("Soft Primitivism.") The accounts of Julius Caesar are mostly war propaganda, heavily weighed down with atrocity tales designed to make the Celts look terrible and the Romans look wonderful. The same comment, of course, holds for the writings of the early Christian missionaries, some of whom encountered Druids in Ireland and Scotland, and found them to be far less gullible than the populace. Indeed, it seems that the overwhelming majority of books written about the Druids, until the 20th century, were far more fancy than fact.

The really hard facts and probabilities about Paleopagan Druidism can be summed up briefly: the Druids practiced a system of priestcraft that was perhaps similar in *some* ways to that of the Brahmins of India. They were active throughout Gaul and the "British" Isles, and perhaps in other Celtic territories as well. They were the victims of a series of successful genocide campaigns waged against them by the Roman Empire and the Church of Rome. First to taste defeat were the Druids of Gaul, around 54 c.e. and those of Britain around 61 c.e. (all by the Roman Legions.) The Christians managed to obliterate Druidism (or at least drive it completely underground) in Ireland, Scotland and the outer Isles during the fifth and sixth centuries c.e. How long Druidism may have lasted (either aboveground or underground) in Wales and other outposts is unknown, but it was probably not for very much longer.

As a social class, the Druids seem to have been just below the warrior/nobility class in power and prestige, though they apparently had the political and religious power to be noncombatants and to start or stop wars. Their training could have lasted as long as twenty years and seems to have included poetical composition, memorization techniques, law, ritual practice, weather predicting and other specialties. There appear to have been several subcategories, all vaguely called "Druids." For example; the "Bards" were in charge of music, poetry, singing and dance; the "Vates" or "Ovates" were in charge of prophecy and divination; the "Brehons" (whom some say were not Druids at all) were judges and law-givers; etc. "Druids" per se were primarily teachers, magicians and priests. All of these categories seem to have overlapped, along with healing, animal husbandry, time keeping, astrology and the transmission of oral traditions.

They definitely were respected authority figures and this *may* relate to the fact that the word "Druid" is based on the root "dru-" meaning "oak tree, firm, strong." Therefore, it is possible that "druidecht" or Druidism may relate as much to the concepts of "firm knowledge givers," "dogma knowers" or "sources of orthodoxy" as it does to "the oak worshipping priests." This would make it an interesting contrast to "wiccaeraeft" or "Witchcraft," which seems to mean "the craft of bending" or "the twisting skill" (standard terms used for magical workers, but seldom for religious authorities.)

Druid places of worship *seem* to have been mainly oak groves. They practiced animal (and *perhaps* human) sacrifices and may have performed divination from the remains. They were touchingly fond of mistletoe, especially if it grew on oak trees. They appear to have been polytheists rather than monotheists or duotheists. They believed in an afterlife very much like the fleshly one (not, it would appear, in reincarnation or transmigration' except for special persons) and made it a special point to bury tools, weapons, animals and food with dead warriors and kings for use in the Celtic equivalent of the "Happy Hunting Grounds" believed in by some Native Americans. A favorite day for rituals, which may have marked the beginning of their lunar months, seems to have been the sixth day after the night in which the new moon was first visible. They did not appreciate either the Roman Paleopagans nor the Roman Paleochristians very much.

That just about sums up what we really know for sure about the Paleopagan Druids. There are no real indications that they used stone altars (at Stonehenge or anywhere else); that they were better philosophers than the Greeks or Egyptians; that they had anything to do at all with the mythical continents of Atlantis or Mu; that they wore gold Masonic regalia or used Rosicrucian passwords; that they were the architects of (a) Stonehenge, (b) the megalithic circles and lines of Northwestern Europe, (c) the Pyramids of Egypt, (d) the Pyramids of the Americas, (e) the statues of Easter Island, or (f) anything other than wooden barns and stone houses. Neither is there any proof that the Ancient Druids were "Pre-Christian Christians"; that they understood or invented either Pythagorean or Gnostic or Cabalistic mysticism; or that they all had long white beards and golden sickles. We don't even have any proof that they were the only magical workers among the Paleopagan Celts (or among the tribes conquered by the Celts.) And although there are sporadic references to a "seminary" for the higher training of Druids in "Albion," (which could have meant either the physical country of Britain or Wales, or else the Gaelic "Otherworld," i.e., higher training between lives); there is no proof for this nor for any really developed intertribal communications between Druids.

With that background in mind, let us attempt to trace the revival/survival of Druidism in the Celtic and Gaulish territories. As near as we can tell, Druidism as such had vanished as a public activity by the end of the sixth century of the common era. Bards, however, seem to have survived fairly well, at least in Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the outer Isles. Whether they also managed to keep alive (as an underground cult) other aspects of Paleopagan Druidism, as has been claimed, remains to be proven. It is also possible, though unproven (and perhaps unknowable,) that some of the so-called Family Traditions of Witches in these territories kept alive some of the knowledge of the Ancient Druids.

We do know that, as far back as the 12th century c.e., Bards in Wales were holding large competitions, to which the generic name Eisteddfod has been attached. One of them was held in 1176 c.e. in Cardigan Castle, sponsored by a Lord Rhys, but it was almost three centuries before another competition of any significance was held, at Carmarthen in 1450. The next appears to have been in the north of Wales in 1523, at Caerwys, and another in 1568 where Queen Elizabeth (who was anxious to control the traveling minstrels she saw - probably correctly - as a threat to British rule) examined the Bards and granted licenses to some of them to travel and collect fees.

Throughout these centuries, the scholarship of learned men (women weren't allowed to write) concerning the Druids was abysmal. The same Greek and Roman commentaries were dug up and rehashed, over and over again, and fanciful theories were built upon them. Most of these "scholars" were not very romantic in their treatment of the Druids; on the contrary,

writers seemed to vie with one another in "revealing" the foolishness, barbarity and vanity of Druid worship. This was of course the proper party-line to take for a scholar wishing to survive with either his reputation or his head in Christendom. It did not, however, improve the image of Pre-Christian religions in Europe.

To be continued!

# The Other Druids

by Isaac Bonewits  
Druid Chronicles (Evolved) 1975

## Modern Introduction

This article is taken verbatim from DC(E,) except for spelling adjustments and such, but I have added extra bracketed paragraphs, i.e. "{xxxxx}," from Isaac's later 1979 Pentalpha version (titled "Druidism Past, Present & Future") where he expanded certain ideas (most notably the first few of the following paragraphs.) I've dealt with this issue enough to leave it at that. As an overview of past "Druidic" groups, it is a nice compilation. See my own up-to-date bibliography at the end of Part Eight for other good overviews of Paleo, Meso and Neo-Druidical movements.

-Scharding

## The Article

{ "Druidism is a topic that has been fascinating people for thousands of years, yet many folks (even within the Neopagan community) are confused about what is actually known and unknown, fact and fancy (whatever those words may really mean,) about the various phenomena that have all been labeled Druidism. The purpose of this article will be to briefly outline the current consensus among scholars about Paleopagan, Mesopagan and Neopagan Druidism. Comments by those having more accurate data will be welcomed by the author." }

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## Here the original article from DC(E) begins.

It will come as a surprise to no one that the Reformed Druid movements in North America were not the first attempt to resurrect Druidism. There are, in fact, dozens of groups that have been started over the centuries in an attempt to carry on or reinvent what their founders thought were the principles and practices of Druidism. Although none of the Branches of the Reform have any historical connection with any of these (up to the present, anyway) with one minor exception considered near the end of this article; nonetheless, a brief review of the histories of these groups will prove of interest to most Reformed Druids.

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It is said by some that in 1245 c.e. a gathering was held of underground Druids and Bards from several of the British Isles, and that a theological unity was agreed upon and a special group or Grove founded, called the *Mount Haemus Grove*, which is said to still be in existence, with an "unbroken line" leading back. Such claims need to be treated most carefully. There does seem to be a group by that name, recognized by some of the modern Druids in England, but this hardly constitutes proof of such an extraordinary claim. It may indeed go back a few centuries (probably to the id 1700) but that does not make it an unbroken heritage from 1245.

In 1659 c.e., the scholar John Aubrey, having done some archeological fieldwork at Stonehenge, made the suggestion that Stonehenge *might* have been a temple of the Druids. He developed this suggestion cautiously over the next few decades in his correspondence with his fellow scholars and in the notes for his never fully-published work, *Templa Druidum*. In 1694, a fiery young Deist named John Toland discussed the theory with him and became very enthusiastic over it. In 1659, excerpts from Aubrey's book were published, including his theory about Druids at Stonehenge, which then saw light for the first time.

In 1717, a young antiquary named William Stuckeley obtained a transcript of Aubrey's complete manuscript of *Templa Druidum*, including the portions never published. Stuckeley though the theory about Stonehenge being a Druid Temple was a terrific idea and began to develop it far beyond Aubrey's original concepts.

Also in that year, it is claimed, John Toland held a meeting at which Druidic and Bardic representatives from Wales, Cornwall, Brittany, Ireland, Scotland, Anglesey, Many, York, Oxford and London appeared and formed *The Universal Druid Bond* (U.D.B.) The UDB has supposedly continued to this very day (or rather, at least one current grove is claiming to be part of a Universal Druid BOND says that it goes back this far) and the present name of the head group of the UDB seems to be *The Mother Grove An Tich Geata Gairdeachas*.

In 1723 c.e., the Druid Stone Altar was invented by Rev. Henry Rowlands in his monumental work, *Mona Antiqua Restaurata*. His Druids are Patriarchs right out of the Christian Bible, and the altars they use are cairns and the capstones of cromlechs (though he does at least allow the Druids to remain in their groves, rather than forcing them to build huge stone temples.) These Druid Stone Altars quickly became part of the

rapidly growing folklore of Druidism. Prior to 1723, Druids were required to use altars made of sod or tree stumps, adequate, perhaps, but hardly as glamorous.

In 1726, John Toland published his *History of the Druids*, in which he pictured the Druids as unscrupulous mountebanks and theocratic tyrants. This was rather surprising act for the man who had supposedly had, nine years earlier, helped to found a Universal Druid Bond and been its first "Chosen Chief." He did, however, put further forward the Stonehenge theory of Druid worship.

Scholarship of equal value was, of course, being produced in France as well. In 1727, Jean Martin presented Patriarchal Druid (Christian style) in his *Religion des Gaulois*. Throughout this century, on both sides of the Channel, Druids were being invented east and west, though in France these "Pre-Christian Christians" tended to be patriotic heroes resisting foreign invasion, while their English counterparts were the greatest mystics in history.

In London, throughout the century, "Druid" groups appeared along with Rosicrucian and Freemasonic organizations. In 1781 c.e., Henry Hurle set up *The Ancient Order of Druids* (AOD,) a secret society based on Masonic patterns (not surprising, since Hurle was a carpenter and house builder.) This group, like most of the similar mystic societies form at the time, was heavily influenced by Jacob Boehme. Jacob Boehme, 1675-1724 c.e., was a Protestant mystic, greatly involved with alchemy, hermeticism and Christian Cabala, as well as being a student of the famous Meister Eckhart. His mystical writings attempted to reconcile all these influences and had a tremendous impact upon later generations of mystical Christians, Rosicrucians, Freemasons, and Theosophists.

{"Overseas, the link between Deism, Masonry and Druidism was once again established, in the small town of Newburgh, New York. G. Adolf Koch has an entire chapter on "The Society of Druids" in his book *Religion of the American Enlightenment*. Deism and downright atheism were popular during the 1780's and 90's among the American intelligentsia, especially those who had supported the American and French revolutions. In fact, a rather large number of the key political figures involved in both revolutions were Deistic Masons and Rosicrucians (see Neal Wilgus, *The Illuminoids*.) Koch tells the story of the Newburgh Druids thusly:}

{"Some Influential citizens of Newburgh had organized themselves into an interesting radical religious body called "The Druid Society." Like its sister organization, the Deistic Society in New York, it was a radical offshoot of an earlier and more conservative society. A Masonic lodge had been established in Newburgh in 1788, and it seems, as one attempts to piece together the fragmentary facts, that as the brothers, or at least a number of them, became more and more radical in the feverish days of the French Revolution, the metamorphosis from Mason to Druid resulted. The Druids held their meetings in the room formerly occupied by the Masons and continued to use a ceremony similar to the Masonic. It is interesting to note, too, that as the Druid Society dies out contemporaneously with the end of Palmers' activities in New York City (he was a famous Deist of the time-PEIB,) a new Masonic lodge was instituted in Newburgh in 1806."}

{"Koch continues, "The question naturally arises as to why those apostate Masons chose the name of Druids. It seems that when they abandoned Christianity, with which Masonry in America had not been incompatible, they went back to the religion (as they conceived of it -PEIB) of the ancient Druids who were sun worshippers. It was commonly believed at that time, by the radicals of course, that both Christianity and Masonry were derived from the worship of the sun.. The Druids thus went back to the pure worship of the great luminary, the visible agent of a great invisible first cause, and regarded

Christianity as a later accretion and subversion of the true faith, a superstition, in short, developed by a designing and unscrupulous priesthood, to put it mildly in the language of the day." "}

{"It appears that Thomas Paine, among other radicals of the time, was convinced that Masonry was descended from Druidism. Koch refers us to an essay by Paine, *The Origin of Freemasonry*, written in New York City in 1805. In this essay he mentions a society of Masons in Dublin who called themselves Druids. The spectacular fantasies and conjectures that have been offered over the centuries to explain the origins of Masonry and Rosicrucianism will have to await another article to be properly discussed. Suffice it to say for now that the sorts of Druidism with which the noble Paine and his friends might have been familiar were far more likely to have been offshoots of Masonry than vice versa."}

{"As for the group of Druid Masons in Dublin, this author knows nothing else about them. Perhaps they were a branch of the UDB or AOD. I will speculate that they may very well have been intimately linked with the Irish Revolutionary politics, which might or might not have strained their relations with Druid Masons in England. There doesn't seem to be much data about Irish Masonic Druidism available in this county, but we do know a bit about developments in Wales."}

Following the tremendously successful Eisteddfod organized by Thomas Jones in Corwen in 1789, a huge variety of Welsh cultural and literary societies mushroomed and flourished. In 1792, a member of several of these groups in London named Edward Williams, using the pen name of *Iolo Morganwg* (Iolo of Glamorgan,) held an Autumnal Equinox ceremony on top of Primrose Hill (in London.) Along with some other Welsh Bards, he set up a small circle of pebbles and an altar, called the *Mean Gorsedd*. There was a naked sword on this altar and a part of the ritual involved the sheathing of this sword. At the time, no one paid very much attention to the ceremony or its obvious sexual symbolism (which if noticed, might legitimately have been called "Pagan,") at least not outside of the London Bardic community.

Iolo, however, was not daunted. He declared that the Glamorganshire Bards had an unbroken line of Bardic-Druidic tradition going back to the Ancient Druids, and that his little ceremony was part of it. He then proceeds (almost all scholars agree) to *forge* various documents and to mistranslate a number of manuscripts, in order to "prove" this and his subsequent claims. Many people feel that he muddled genuine Welsh scholarship for over a hundred years.

In 1819, Iolo managed to get his stone circle and its ceremony (now called, as a whole, the Gorsedd inserted into the genuine Eisteddfod in Carmarthen, Wales. It was a tremendous success with the Bards and the tourists, and has been a part of the Eisteddfod tradition ever since, with greater and greater elaborations.

Iolo's effects did not stop there however, for later writers such as Lewis Spence (who produced more fantasy about Celtic Paleopaganism than any writer of the last century,) Robert Graves and Gerald Gardner apparently took Iolo's "Scholarship" at face value and proceeded to put forward theories that have launched dozens of occult and mystical organizations (most of them having little if anything to do with Paleopagan Druidism.)

By 1796 c.e., all megalithic monuments in Northwestern Europe were firmly defined as "Druidic," especially if they were in the form of circles or lines of standing stones. In that year, yet another element was added, in La Tour D'Auvergne's book, *Origines Gauloises*. He thought he had discovered a word in the Breton language for megalithic tombs, "dolmin," and by both this spelling and that of "dolmen" this term became part of the archeological jargon and of the growing Druid folklore.

At this point the folklore, also called "Celtomania," went roughly like this: "the Celts are the oldest people in the world; their language is preserved practically intact in Bas-Breton; they were profound philosophers whose inspired doctrines have been handed down by the Welsh Bardic Schools; dolmens are their altars where their priests the Druids offered human sacrifice; stone alignments were their astronomical observatories..." (Salomon Reinach, quoted by Piggot)

Art, music, drama, and poetry were using these fanciful Druids as characters and sources of inspiration. Various eccentrics, many of them devout (if unorthodox) Christians, claimed to be Druids and made colorful headlines. Wealthy people built miniature Stonehenges in their gardens and hired fake Druids to scare their guests. Mystically oriented individuals drifted from Masonic groups to Rosicrucian lodges to Druid groves, and hardly anyone, then or now, could tell the difference. Ecumenicalism was the order of the day and in 1878, at the Pontypridd Eisteddfod, the Archdruid presiding over the Gorsedd ceremony inserted a prayer to Mother Kali of India! This might have been magically quite sensible, and was certainly in keeping with traditional Pagan attitudes of religious eclecticism, except for the face that the British attitude towards Indian culture and religion was not exactly the most cordial at the time (of course, if there were no British people leading the rite, it might have been a deliberate bit of Welsh nationalistic magic against England!).

But before this, in 1833, the Ancient Order of Druids (the secret society founded by Hurle) split up over the question of whether it should be mainly a benefit (charitable) society or a mystical one. The majority voted for being a charitable society and changed its name to *The United Ancient Order of Druids* (UAOD.) This group, with branches all over the world, still exists as a charitable and fraternal organization rather like the Elks or Shriners. An example of their philosophy may be found in a collection of their sayings entitled *The Seven Precepts of the Prophet Merlin*:

"First: Labor diligently to acquire knowledge, for it is power.

"Second: When in authority, decide reasonably, for thine authority may cease.

"Third: Bear with fortitude the ills of life, remembering that no mortal sorrow is perpetual.

"Fourth: Love virtue, for it bringeth peace.

"Fifth: Abhor vice, for it bringeth evil upon all.

"Sixth: Obey those in authority in all just things, that virtue may be exalted.

"Seventh: Cultivate the social virtues, so shalt thou be beloved by all men."

Meanwhile, the minority group, still calling itself by the old name (AOD,) also continued to exist, as a mystical Masonic sort of organization. The AOD may have been among the groups known to have held ceremonies (Summer Solstice rites were the only ones held by anyone it seems) at Stonehenge prior to 1900 c.e. (it was a popular pastime) and in any event, there were several such groups using the site. In 1900, one of the standing stones fell over and the angry owner of the land (Sir Edward Antrobus) decided to fence the monument and charge admission, the better to (a) keep a closer watch on it and (b) to earn enough money to repair the damage being committed by tourists. This caused a problem almost immediately, when a Druidic group was holding the very next Summer Solstice ceremonies and the Chief Druid was kicked out by the police (he laid a curse on Sir Edward, the effects of which are unrecorded.)

Although the AOD, in the form of one of its subgroups (the Albion Lodge at Oxford) gained a certain amount of notice when they initiated Winston Churchill in August of 1908, the rite was performed at Blenheim Park, not Stonehenge. The only Druidic group known for sure to have used the monument during the years between 1901 and 1914 was called *The Druid Hermeticists*. In 1915, Stonehenge was sold by the weary owner to someone else who immediately gave it to the British Government, at a ceremony in which Druids of some sort assisted. Since 1919 c.e., when Stonehenge became a national monument, at least five different Druid groups have asked government permission to use it, although other groups have celebrated at various nearby spots (because of political and metaphysical squabbles) and some group, of course, may have used Stonehenge without government permission or knowledge.

By 1949, only two groups seem to have been left using Stonehenge for the Summer Solstice rites; the AOD and the British Circle of the Universal Bond (BCUB.) In 1955 the AOD seems to have disappeared, leaving the plain to the BCUB. But the latter also had a problem, when a group succeeded in 1963-4, calling itself The Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids (OBOD,) and decided to celebrate elsewhere (usually Primrose Hill.)

Things of a Druidic nature were occurring outside of Stonehenge, of course. In Wales, the National Eisteddfod Court runs an Eisteddfod every year (alternating between northern and southern Wales) and has the "Gorsedd of Bards" arrange the rituals for each occasion. Bardic and Druidic groups have also arisen in France, Brittany, Cornwall, the Isle of Man, Scotland, Ireland and in various parts of England. While the Welsh groups (Bardic, Druidic and Bardic-Druidic) spend most of their time and energy looking down their noses at all the non-Welsh groups (and even being so rude as to kick non-Welsh Druids out of their ceremonies); the others in turn spent tremendous amounts of time and energy on internal warfare.

Ecumenical movements, of course, have appeared and disappeared. The UDB, supposedly founded in 1717 by John Toland, claims to have survived since then under a succession of Chosen Chiefs, including such names as Toland, Stuckeley, Lord Winchilsea, Blake and Spence, among others. It appears to have been their English group (the BCUB referred to above) that suffered the split in 1963-4. Both groups, naturally, claim to be the only legitimate representatives in the UDB. There do appear to be a couple of dozen public Druid groups in France and the "British" Isles, many of them using the "Bards, Ovates and Druids" phraseology. One leader states that there may be as many 400 independent Druids not affiliated with groups. Such estimates, like those of underground Witches, Occultists and Pagans, must remain speculation since (thanks to religious bigotry) the estimates cannot be tested without risking the lives of those so exposed.

{ "The author has recently been in contact with yet another Druidic group in England, called the Golden Section Order Society, which may or may not be connected to any of the other Mesopagan Druids over there. We hope to learn more about them, and the other groups, in future correspondence. For now, let me emphasize that this series of articles is being based on the best research of which the author is aware. Readers having further data or corrections are sincerely requested to share their evidence so that future writings on these topics can be appropriately rewritten." }

{ "I will make one further comment before leaving the Mesopagan Druids of the "British" Isles (I put "British" in quotes, by the way, so my Irish, Scots and Welsh friends won't lynch me.) Masonic Druidism as a religious and philosophical system that has lasted for at least two centuries, helping hundreds of people to gain a better understanding of themselves and their times. Its attitude of reverent skepticism is fully in keeping with the ideals of the founders of the Reformed Druid

movements in North America. These Mesopagans have a great deal of wisdom and experience that modern Neopagans would do well to avail themselves of, and many of the current Masonic Druids are right on the borderline between Meso- and Neo-. It is to be hoped that more lines of communication will be opened between us in the years to come."}

In the United States, there have been branches of most of the British Druid groups discussed in the article and there is nothing special that needs to be said about them. There is, however, at least one homegrown group that deserves a mention, if only because of its possible dangers to naive seekers after Druidism.

Around 1970 c.e., a man named Barney Taylor (no relation to Tony,) operating under the name of "Eli" (which he claims means "teacher") appeared on the American occult scene teaching a religion he called the "American Druidic Craft." Taylor's background included training in Naturopathy, Herbllore, Scientology, Psychocybernetics and similar mind training systems (including possibly "The Process," a semi-satanic group.) A highly charismatic man, Taylor went around the US in the early 1970's, giving lectures on "Druidic Witchcraft" and founding covens.

Evidence would tend to indicate that Taylor invented his "Druidic Witchcraft" form whole-cloth. His magical and religious system has mutated quite a bit over the years, as a careful reading of his "First Book of Wisdom" will reveal to the trained eye of an Editor or Literary Critic. Several drastically different writing styles are run together in a conglomerate of Herbology, Mystical Christianity, UFO ology, Gardnarian (Neopagan) Witchcraft, Von Danikenism, Freemasonry, Spiritualism, Scientology, Process, Ceremonial Magick, etc. The resulting system, now calling itself "the Druidic Craft of the Wise," bears no resemblance to any system of Druidism practiced in Europe or North America, now or in the past. Neither does it resemble Neopagan Witchcraft very much, except for a few items obviously borrowed from easily available published sources. However, because the name "Druidic" is attached to Taylor's teachings, it would be wise to give a short account of them.

The DCW is a strictly authoritarian and patriarchal monotheistic religion. The deity is called "The Father," and no references are made to female deities at all. The word of Taylor is law, no criticisms may be voiced and no outside religious study or practice is allowed. All competing religious groups are termed fraudulent (including the Neopagan Witches Taylor recommends in writing but forbids in practice) and his attitude towards them is one of complete hostility. Private lessons at his farm in Arkansas, as well as correspondence lessons are available, however (judging from the copies of the correspondence materials seen by this writer) they are of abysmally poor quality.

Part of the initiation ceremony (done by a priest/ess claiming to be "of the Order of Melchizadeck") involved the placing of a "Spirit Guide" on the back of the neck of the initiate. According to ex-members, this is actually a vampire or artificial elemental, used to psychically bond to the group together and to provide a source of psychic energy for Taylor and his friends. Many elements from the psychic technology of the Process and Scientology are evident, including the major technique of "spiritual enlightening" a student by destroying their old, non-magical, personality and building them a brand new personality that is magical, and does exactly as it's told. Throughout the course of training, students are given many secrecy oaths and almost no explanations whatever of what is going on. Taylor apparently feels that, as Guru, he has a right to manipulate his students "for their own good."

A number of very harsh and alarming accusations about Taylor and his activities have been made over the years, but so

far no evidence that would stand up in a court of law has been produced. The psychic result of his training system, for those who stick with it, are obvious even to little-old-lady-tea-readers; classic examples of the "sleazy-satan-scientologist-junkie-vibe" so familiar to observers of the less savory fringes of the occult community.

Let me reiterate that the "Druidic Craft of the Wise" bears no resemblance to or connections with any of the Masonic Druid groups in England and America, nor with any of the Branches of the Reformed Druid movements in North America, save one. Several Covens are currently breaking away from Taylor and they have expressed interest in the Reformed Druid movements [possibly the Celtic College of Reformed Druidic Wicca? - Scharding]. Since several Covens have broken away in the past and joined various Neopagan Witchcraft groups, this is not an impossible task.

Readers are advised to stay as far away as possible from Taylor and his followers, however. There are plenty of legitimate Druidic and Craft groups around to choose from.

# Neopagan Druidism

by Isaac Bonewits  
Druid Chronicles (Evolved) 1975

*Here is the article from Vol. 2, Issue 6 of Pentalpha/Druid Chronicler by Isaac Bonewits as it was printed in 1979. At the time of writing this article Isaac was essentially on a sabbatical away from Reformed Druidism and doing intensive study of ancient Indo-European religions. Much of Isaac's materials of this time period may be interpreted as indicative of the theme of the Ar nDriaocht Fein organization that he formed between 1981 and 1983. Perhaps this was yet another attempt of Isaac to bring the NRDNA fully into an organized Neo-Pagan religion?.*

-Mike Scharding

In the last two issues we have discussed both the probable and the fanciful history of Druidism in Western Europe and North America. In this concluding section I'll talk about the one Druid movement with which I am the most familiar, since I both an Archdruid within it and its resident historian: The New Reformed Druids of North America. Few, if any, legendary tales have to be dealt with here, since the movement was founded only sixteen years ago and its actual history is easily traced.

But first I will repeat the main definitions I've been using for the historical varieties of Paganism, mentioning once again that these are broad and frequently overlapping categories.

## What are Neopagan Religions Like?

The New Reformed Druids of North America represent only one of the many varieties of Neopagan religions now being practiced in this country. Together, these various groups form a rich tapestry of friendly differences and strong similarities.

Most Neopagans (of various persuasions) seem to agree that their similarities are often of more importance than their specific doctrinal distinctions or ethnic focuses. Some of these common beliefs appear to include:

1. The idea that divinity is immanent (internal) as well as transcendent (external.) This is often phrased as "Thou art God" and "Thou art Goddess."
2. The belief that divinity is just as likely to manifest itself as female. This has resulted in a large number of women being attracted to the faiths and joining the clergy.
3. A belief in a multiplicity of "god" and "goddesses," whether as individual deities or as facets of one of a few archetypes. This leads to multi-value logic systems and increased tolerance towards other religions.
4. A respect and love for Nature as divine in Her own right. This makes ecological awareness and activity a religious duty.
5. A distaste for monolithic religious organizations and a distrust of would-be messiahs and gurus. This makes Neopagans hard to organize, even for "their own good," and leads to constant schisming, mutation and growth in the movements.

6. The firm conviction that human beings were meant to lead lives filled with joy, love, pleasure and humor. The traditional western concepts of sin, guilt and divine retribution are seen as sad misunderstandings of natural growth experiences.

7. A simple set of ethics and morality based on the avoidance of actual harm to other people (and some extend this to some or all living beings and the planet as a whole.)

8. The knowledge that with proper training and intent, human minds and hearts are fully capable of performing all the magic and miracles they are ever likely to need, through the use of natural psychic powers.

9. A belief in the importance of celebrating the solar, lunar and other cycles of our lives. This has led to the investigation and revival of many ancient customs and the invention of some new ones.

10. A minimum amount of dogma and a maximum amount of eclecticism. Neopagans are reluctant to accept any idea without personally investigating it, and are willing to use any concept they find useful, regardless of its origins.

11. A strong faith in the ability of people to solve their current problems on all levels, public and private. This leads to...

12. A strong commitment to personal and universal growth, evolution and balance. Neopagans are expected to be making continuous efforts in these directions.

13. A belief that one can progress far towards achieving such growth, evolution and balance through the carefully planned alteration of one's "normal" state of consciousness, using both ancient and modern methods of aiding concentration, meditation, reprogramming and ecstasy.

14. The knowledge that human interdependence implies community cooperation. Neopagans are encouraged to use their talents to actually help each other as well as the community at large.

15. An awareness that if they are to achieve any of their goals, they must practice what they preach. This leads to a concern with making one's lifestyle consistent with one's proclaimed beliefs.

## And Neopagan Druidism?

Neopagan Druidism is the latest phase in a movement, the Reformed Druids of North America, that started out as a quasi-religious Mesopagan protest against coerced religion at a small Midwestern college, back in 1963 c.e. The RDNA was invented in order to test the amount of freedom allowed by the college's rules requiring all students to attend church. Much to the surprise of the founders, even after they had won their protest, many of the Druids wanted to continue the movement. The prayers to the Earth-Mother and the old Celtic divinities, combined with the anarchistic philosophy, had come to represent a valuable part of the spiritual lives. Graduates of Carleton College spread the Reformed Druid movement wherever they went.

It was in Berkeley, California that one of these alumni became the local Archdruid for a group of people who were already thinking of themselves as conscious Neopagans. Under



their influence, an increasing overlap between RDNA and the rest of the Neopagan community began to form. Today, the handful of active groves (congregations) are almost all Neopagans and are using the "NRDNA" (for New RDNA.)

## Are Druids Witches?

Only recently. Since the Paleopagan Druids were long gone by the time the Anglo-Saxons began using the word "Wicca" ["bender" or "magician"], all speculation about "witches" having been the remnants of the Pre-Christian Celtic clergy (i.e., the Druids) are unprovable. There is, in fact, no hard evidence to indicate that witches were ever though of as religious functionaries until the Church invented Neogothic (or Satanist) Witchcraft in the middle ages.

But in recent years a number of Neopagan religions have been founded by people who have chosen to call themselves "witches." These Neopagan Witches have a great deal in common with other Neopagans, including the Druidic sorts, and several initiated Witches have become ordained Druids and vice versa. This sort of overlapping membership is extremely common in the Neopagan movements and is an understandable result of polytheistic theologies (or "theologies") and ecumenical meetings.

## What are the Basic Beliefs of Neopagan Druidism?

Neopagan Druidism retains the "Basic Tenets" of the original RDNA movement and builds upon them. According to one Druid document, *The Book of the Law*, they run thusly:

The object of the search for religious truth, which is a universal and a never-ending search, may be found through the Earth-Mother; which is Nature; but this is one way, yea, one way among many.

And great is the importance, which is of a spiritual importance, of Nature, which is the Earth-Mother; for it is one of the objects of Creation, and with it do people live, yea, even as they do struggle through life are they come face-to-face with it.

This has since been abbreviated, in *The Outline of the Foundation of Fundamentals*, to the following statements:

1. Nature is good!

and the second is like unto the first:

2. Nature is good!

The material realm is personified as the Earth-Mother (or Mother Nature,) one of the oldest archetypes known to humanity. Many now apply this name to the biosphere as a whole, in order to emphasize our dependence upon Her. The nonmaterial essence of the universe(s) is called Be'al (which is believed by me to be an ancient Celtic name of an abstract divinity, based on "Bel" or "shining one,") and the concept is rather similar to some version of the Native American idea of the Great Spirit. Thus a polarity (or a dualism) of matter and energy, female and male, darkness and light, is established; but it is vital to realize that *neither* half of the polarity is believed to be superior to the other. There is a very strong gender equality running throughout the Neopagan Druid worldview, and an Earth-Father/Sky-Mother polarity (as in ancient Egypt) would be considered just as valid.

The "object of Humanity's search" is called "awareness," and is defined as "unity with Be'al," a task that can only be accomplished by also attaining unity with the Earth-Mother. Thus Neopagan Druids are used to develop all the different aspects of their beings; physical, mental, emotional, psychic, artistic and

spiritual, in order to attain the required state of dynamic balance that will lead them towards awareness.

Beyond these fundamentals of Neopaganism in general and Neopagan Druidism in particular, the philosophy and theology are kept deliberately vague. It is up to each member to work out her or his own path towards awareness. Other goddesses and gods, both Celtic and nonceltic, are invoked by the Druids, but each member has his or her own personal definition of the concepts involved.

## What About Organization?

The Neopagan Druids are organized into congregations called "groves," each with from three to ten or more members (though dozens of others may show up for major holiday celebrations.) Only a handful of these are still active (in the San Francisco/Berkeley, St. Louis, and Olympia areas,) though a couple of dozen have been founded over the years. Every grove is an independent entity, and each may operate its own "flavor" of Neopagan Druidism. Currently there are groves practicing Norse, Wiccan, Eclectic, Zen and even Hasidic Druidism. Individuals frequently follow more than one variety at a time, depending upon their personal interest. Attempt to keep any sort of a "National government" going have been fruitless, due to the strong individualism of the members.

Pentalpha is currently instituting a Neopagan Training Program for members and would-be clergy of various Neopagan belief systems who wish to work within the Pentalpha structure (though followers of other Aquarian paths might find it of value as well.) Neopagan Druidism is one path among many that participants in the program may choose to follow. Eventually Pentalpha will issue legal church charters to Neopagan Druid groves (as well as other groups) led by participant in the program.

## But is it "Really" Druidism?

Obviously, Neopagan Druidism is a uniquely American phenomenon. Because of its tolerance for theological and philosophical differences, its lack of discrimination against women and other minority groups, its sense of humor about itself, its distrust of all organizational structures and its other similarities with the rest of the Neopagan community, it is drastically different from most other philosophical movements that have called themselves "Druidic."

And yet the Neopagan Druids do have some fundamental concepts in common with the Paleopagan and Mesopagan Druids who preceded them. Down through the ages, their communities have known how to tell who the Druids among them were, because the role of the Druid has always been clear; scholar, and artist, poet and priest, philosopher and magician; the one who seeks, preserves and extends the highest wisdom her or his people are capable of handling safely, and who uses the knowledge and inspiration for the benefit of their community.

The Path of the Druid, like that of the Brahmin, the Medicine Person, the Shaman or the Rabbi, is one of heavy responsibilities and hard work. But like these others, it is also a path of great rewards; physical, intellectual, artistic, magical and spiritual. For those who feel a link to the Paleopagan Celtic peoples, and who find themselves wanting to use their highest talents to serve their communities, Druidism can be a challenging and exhilarating way of life to explore.



# The Advanced Bonewits' Cult Danger Evaluation Frame

(Version 2.6)

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## Introduction

Events in the last several decades have clearly indicated just how dangerous some religious and secular groups (usually called “cults” by those opposed to them) can be to their own members as well as to anyone else whom they can influence. “Brainwashing,” beatings, child abuse, rapes, murders, mass suicides, military drilling and gunrunning, meddling in civil governments, international terrorism, and other crimes have been charged against leaders and members of many groups, and in far too many cases those accusations have been correct. None of this has been very surprising to historians of religion or to other scholars of what are usually labeled “new” religions (no matter how old they may be in their cultures of origin.) Minority groups, especially religious ones, are often accused of crimes by members of the current majority. In many ways, for example, the “Mormons” were the “Moonies” of the 19th century — at least in terms of being an unusual minority belief system that many found “shocking” at the time — and the members of the Unification Church could be just as “respectable” a hundred years from now as the Latter Day Saints are today.

Nonetheless, despite all the historical and philosophical warnings that could be issued, ordinary people faced with friends or loved ones joining an “unusual” group, or perhaps contemplating joining one themselves, need a relatively simple way to evaluate just how dangerous or harmless a given group is liable to be, without either subjecting themselves to its power or judging it solely on theological or ideological grounds (the usual method used by anti-cult groups.)

In 1979 I constructed an evaluation tool which I now call the “Advanced Bonewits’ Cult Danger Evaluation Frame” or the “ABCDEF” (because evaluating these groups should be elementary.) A copy was included in that year’s revised edition of my book, *Real Magic*. I realize its shortcomings, but feel that it can be effectively used to separate harmless groups from the merely unusual-to-the-observer ones. Feedback from those attempting to use the system has always been appreciated. Indirect feedback, in terms of the number of places on and off the Net this ABCDEF has shown up, has been mostly favorable. For example, it was chosen by and is now displayed on the website of the Institute for Social Inventions, who paraphrased it for their “[Best Ideas — A compendium of social innovations](#)” listing.

The purpose of this evaluation tool is to help both amateur and professional observers, including current or would-be members, of various organizations (including religious, occult, psychological or political groups) to determine just how dangerous a given group is liable to be, in comparison with other groups, to the physical and mental health of its members and of other people subject to its influence. It cannot speak to the “spiritual dangers,” if any, that might be involved, for the simple reason that one person’s path to enlightenment or “salvation” is often viewed by another as a path to ignorance or “damnation.”

As a general rule, the higher the numerical total scored by a given group (the further to the right of the scale,) the more dangerous it is likely to be. Though it is obvious that many of the scales in the frame are subjective, it is still possible to make practical judgments using it, at least of the “is this group more dangerous than that one?” sort. This is **if** all numerical assignments are based on accurate and unbiased observation of **actual behavior** by the groups and their top levels of leadership (as distinct from official pronouncements.) This means that you need to pay attention to what the secondary and tertiary leaders are saying and doing, as much (or more so) than the central leadership — after all, “plausible deniability” is not a recent historical invention.

This tool can be used by parents, reporters, law enforcement agents, social scientists and others interested in evaluating the actual dangers presented by a given group or movement. Obviously, different observers will achieve differing degrees of precision, depending upon the sophistication of their numerical assignments on each scale. However, if the same observers use the same methods of scoring and weighting each scale, their comparisons of relative danger or harmlessness between groups will be reasonably valid, at least for their own purposes. People who cannot, on the other hand, view competing belief systems as ever having possible spiritual value to anyone, will find the ABCDEF annoyingly useless for promoting their theological agendas. Worse, these members of the [Religious Reich](#) and their fellow theocrats will find that their own organizations (and quite a few large mainstream churches) are far more “cult-like” than many of the minority belief systems they so bitterly oppose.

It should be pointed out that the ABCDEF is founded upon both modern psychological theories about mental health and personal growth, and my many years of participant observation and historical research into minority belief systems. Those who believe that relativism and anarchy are as dangerous to mental health as absolutism and authoritarianism, could (I suppose) count groups with total scores nearing either extreme (high or low) as being equally hazardous. As far as dangers to physical well-being are concerned, however, both historical records and current events clearly indicate the direction in which the greatest threats lie. This is especially so since the low-scoring groups usually seem to have survival and growth rates so small that they seldom develop the abilities to commit large scale atrocities even had they the philosophical or political inclinations to do so.



**Dropout Control:**

**1** Intensity of efforts  
**3** directed at \_\_\_\_\_  
preventing or  
returning dropouts.

**Violence:** Amount of  
**1** approval when used  
**4** by or for the group, \_\_\_\_\_  
its doctrines or  
leader(s.)

**Paranoia:** Amount  
of fear concerning  
real or imagined  
**1** enemies;  
**5** exaggeration of \_\_\_\_\_  
perceived power of  
opponents;  
prevalence of  
conspiracy theories.

**Grimness:** Amount  
of disapproval  
**1** concerning jokes  
**6** about the group, its \_\_\_\_\_  
doctrines or its  
leader(s.)

**Surrender of Will:**  
Amount of emphasis  
on members not  
having to be  
**1** responsible for  
**7** personal decisions; \_\_\_\_\_  
degree of individual  
disempowerment  
created by the group,  
its doctrines or its  
leader(s.)

**Hypocrisy:** amount  
of approval for  
actions which the  
group officially  
considers immoral or  
unethical, when done  
by or for the group,  
**1** its doctrines or  
**8** leader(s); willingness \_\_\_\_\_  
to violate the group's  
declared principles  
for political,  
psychological,  
social, economic,  
military, or other  
gain.

# Ancient Celtic History in an Instant!!

By Isaac Bonewits  
Druid Chronicles (Evolved) 1975

1000-750 B.C.E.

The Urnfield Culture, considered Proto-Celtic, dominates much of Europe.

720-680 B.C.E.

Early Celts seem to have discovered iron, as iron swords and other weapons are buried with their dead in Austria.

600 B.C.E.

The Colony of Massilia is founded by the Greeks, thus opening up trade and cultural contacts between the Celts of central Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean.

520-480 B.C.E.

The La Tene phase of Celtic culture begins. Trade between the Celts and the Etruscans begin.

400 B.C.E.

Celts invade Italy and settle Cisalpine Gaul

390 B.C.E.

The city of Rome has difficulties with fun-loving Celtic tribes. Property values plummet.

400-100 B.C.E.

The La Tene Culture is spread to the British Isles and most of Western Europe.

279 B.C.E.

Large numbers of Celtic tourists invade Greece.

275 B.C.E.

The Celtic State of Galatia is set up in northern Turkey, much to the surprise of the locals.

230 B.C.E.

Greek Soldiers are rude to Celtic visitors from Galatia, the army from Pergamum stomping all over the Celts in western Turkey.

225 B.C.E.

Roman army finally defeats invading Celtic Gauls in central Italy, at Battle of Telamon.

200 B.C.E.

Population increases cause spread of fortified settlements (called "oppida") from Gaul to Bohemia.

191 B.C.E.

Roman imperialism conquers Cisalpine Gaul. Taxes are invented.

100 B.C.E.

The tribe known as the Belgae leave Continental Europe for Britain, in order to get away from the Germanic tribes (which, as usual, were being pushy.) Once there, the Belgae proceed to be pushy themselves.

58-51 B.C.E.

Roman armies conquer most of the Celts left in Europe. Caesar invents atrocity stories about the Druids.

43 C.E.

Roman general Claudius begins the conquest of Britain. It takes him awhile.

432 C.E.

Patrick begins the conquest of Ireland. It takes him awhile.

563 C.E.

Colum Cille starts a monastery-fort on the Island of Iona in order to convert Scotland.

590 C.E.

Columbanus establishes monastic and scholastic centers in Europe. Property values plummet.

If you wish to know what Isaac was reading in 1976, here's his bibliography. It shows how well-read he really was, even back in the 1970s!

## A Bibliography of Druidism

by Isaac Bonewits

Druid Chronicles Evolved, 1976  
[Nearly verbatim from 1976, so it's  
terribly out of date. -Scharding]

The following books and periodicals should start any aspiring Schismatic or Hasidic Druid/ess on his or her way. They include writings on the subjects of Archeology, Anthropology, Celtic Folklore & Mythology, Celtic and non-Celtic Paleopaganism, Psychology, the history of early Christianity in Europe, Mysticism, Philosophy, Ritual Magic and ESP.

Those titles with stars (\*) attached are highly recommended and those with hatches (#) are to be read very carefully as they may contain materials which are speculative, unscholarly or sometimes just plain nonsense.

### BOOKS:

Arbman, Holger; THE VIKINGS  
Bardon, Franz; INITIATION INTO HERMETICS  
Bonewits, P.E.I.; REAL MAGIC\*  
Bord, Janet & Colin; MYSTERIOUS BRITAIN  
Bowen, John t. & Rhys Jones, T.J.; WELSH  
Brennan JH: EXPERIMENTAL MAGIC  
Brothwell, Don & Patricia; FOOD IN ANTIQUITY  
Brown, JAC: TECHNIQUES OF PERSUASION  
Buckland, Raymond; WITCHCRAFT ANCIENT AND MODERN  
Buckland, Raymond; THE TREE\*  
Butler, WE; APPRENTICED TO MAGIC  
Campbell, Joseph; THE MASKS OF GOD (4 VOL)\*\*  
Campbell, Joseph; HERO WITH A THOUSAND FACES  
Carney, James; STUDIES IN IRISH LITERATURE AND HISTORY  
Carus, Pau; HISTORY OF THE DEVIL AND IDEA OF EVIL\*#  
Chadwick, Nora; CELTIC BRITAIN  
Chadwick, Nora; THE CELTS  
Clark, Grahame & Piggot Stuart; PREHISTORIC SOCIETIES \*  
Cohen, Daniel; THE NEW BELIEVERS#  
Cole, Sonia; THE NEOLITHIC REVOLUTION  
Cole, Sonia; THE RACES OF MAN  
Collis, JS: THE TRIUMPH OF THE TREE  
Colum, Padraig; A TREASURY OF IRISH FOLKLORE  
Conway, David; MAGIC; AN OCCULT PRIMER  
Cottrell, Leonard; THE GREAT INVASION; HOW THE ROMANS CONQUERED BRITAIN  
Cross, TP & Slover, CH: ANCIENT IRISH TALES  
Daly, Mary; BEYOND GOD THE FATHER\*  
Daniel, Glyn; THE MEGALITH BUILDERS OF WESTERN EUROPE  
Daraul, Arkon; A HISTORY OF SECRET SOCIETIES \*#  
D'arbois de Jubainville; THE IRISH MYTHOLOGICAL CYCLE  
Davidson, HR Ellis; PAGAN SCANDINAVIA  
De Bell, Garrett; THE ENVIRONMENTAL HANDBOOK

De Laet, SJ: THE LOW COUNTRIES  
Deren, Maya; THE DIVINE HORSEMEN  
Dillon, Myles (ed); EARLY IRISH SOCIETY\*  
Dillon, Myles & Chadwick, Nora; THE CELTIC REALMS\*  
Dillon, Myles & O'croinin, Donncha; IRISH  
Douglas, Mona; THIS IS ELLAN VANNIN AGAIN; FOLKLORE  
Dubos, Fene; THE GOD WITHIN  
Durant, GM: BRITAIN-ROME'S MOST NORTHERLY PROVINCE  
Edwards, Owen; CELTIC NATIONALISM  
Eliade, Mircea; SHAMANISM; ARCHAIC TECHNIQUES OF ECTASY  
Eliade, Mircea; YOGA, IMMORTALITY AND FREEDOM  
Eliade, Mircea; THE TWO AND THE ONE  
Ellwood, Robert; RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL GROUPS IN MODERN AMERICA #  
Every, George; CHRISTIAN MYTHOLOGY  
Farb, Peter; ECOLOGY  
feng, Gia-fu; TAO-TE-CHING  
Feng, Gia-Fu; TAI CHI A WAY OF CENTERING & I CHING  
Filip Jan; CELTIC CIVILIZATION AND ITS HERITAGE  
Fox, Aileen; SOUTHWEST ENGLAND\*  
Frazer, James & Gaster, Theodore; THE NEW GOLDEN BOUGH\*  
Freitag, Anton; TWENTIETH CENTURY ATLAS OF THE CHRISTIAN WORLD\*##  
Frost, Gavin & Yvonne; THE WITCHES BIBLE\*  
Gaskell, GA: DICTIONARY OF ALL SCRIPTURES AND MYTHS  
Gimbutas, Marija; THE GODS AND GODDESSES OF OLD EUROPE\*  
Gossiny & Uderzo: ASTERIX THE GAUL\*\*  
Graves, Robert; THE WHITE GODDESS \*##  
Gray, William; SEASONAL OCCULT RITUALS  
Gray, William; INNER TRADITIONS OF MAGIC  
Grimm, Jacob; TEUTONIC MYTHOLOGY (4 volumes) \*  
Hadingham, Evan; CIRCLES AND STANDING STONES  
Van Hamel, AG; ASPECTS OF CELTIC MYTHOLOGY  
Hawkes, Jacquetta; ATLAS OF ANCIENT ARCHEOLOGY  
Hawkins, Gerald & White, JB; STONEHENGE DECODED  
Hodges, Figgis & Co; CELTIC STUDIES (CATALOGUE 23)  
Hodges, M; THE OTHER WORLD  
Hoffer, Eric; THE TRUE BELIEVER  
Hone, Margaret E; THE MODERN TEXTBOOK OF ASTROLOGY  
Howe, E Graham; THE MIND OF THE DRUID\*  
Huson, Paul; MASTERING HERBOLOGY\*  
Huson, Paul; MASTRING WITCHCRAFT\*#  
Huxley, Francis; THE WAY OF THE SACRED  
Huxley, Julian; RELIGION WITHOUT REVELATION  
James, William; VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE  
Jones, Gwyn & Thomas; THE MABINOIGIAN\*  
Jones, Marc Edmund; HORARY ASTROLOGY  
Joseph, Alvin; THE INDIAN HERITAGE OF AMERICA  
Joyce, James; FINNEGAN'S WAKE\*  
Kendrick, TD; THE DRUIDS\*  
Kopp, Sheldon; GURU  
Kors, Alan & Peters, Edward; WITCHCRAFT IN EUROPE  
Leek, Sybil; DIARY OF A WITCH\*  
Leek, Sybil; COMPLETE ART OF WITCHCRAFT\*  
Leshan, Lawrence; THE MEDIUM, THE MYSTIC AND THE PHYSICIST  
Lewis, Diehl & Loh, May; PATTERNLESS FASHIONS

MacCana, Proisias; CELTIC MYTHOLOGY  
 MacCulloch, John; THE RELIGION OF THE ANCIENT CELTS  
 MacCulloch, John; CELTIC MYTHOLOGY\*  
 MacNeill, Maire; THE FESTIVAL OF LUGHNASA\*  
 Mair, Lucy; PRIMITIVE GOVERNMENT  
 Marshak, Alexander; THE ROOTS OF CIVILIZATION  
 Mattingly, H; TACITUS ON BRITAIN AND GERMANY\*  
 McBaine, A; MYTHOLOGY AND RELIGION  
 McGarey, William; ACUPUNCTURE AND BODY ENERGIES  
 McKenna, P; CELTIC MYTH  
 Mead, GRS; PISTIS SOPHIA; FRAGMENTS OF A FAITH FORGOTTEN  
 Mercier, Vivian; THE IRISH COMIC TRADITION  
 Meyer, Kuno; ANECDOTA OXONIENSIA, CAIN ADAMNAIN  
 Meyer, Kuno & Nutt, Alfred; THE VOYAGE OF BRAN  
 Miller, Perry; THE AMERICAN TRANSCENDENTALISTS  
 Murphy, Gerard; SAGA AND MYTH IN ANCIENT IRELAND  
 Neumann, Erich; THE GREAT MOTHER\*  
 Newall, RS; STONEHENGE GUIDEBOOK  
 Nicholson, EWB; KELTIC RESEARCHES  
 Niel, Fernand; MYSTERIES OF STONEHENGE\*\*  
 Norton-Taylor, Duncan; THE CELTS  
 O'Brien, Elmer; VARIETIES OF MYSTIC EXPERIENCE  
 O'Rahilly, Thomas; EARLY IRISH HISTORY AND MYTHOLOGY  
 O'Riordain, Sean p & Daniel, Glyn; NEW GRANGE & THE BEND OF THE BOYNE\*  
 De Paor, Maire & Liam; EARLY CHRISTIAN IRELAND\*  
 Parry, Thomas; A HISTORY OF WELSH LITERATURE  
 Peate, Iowethe; TRADITION AND FOLKLIFE, A WELSH VIEW\*  
 Perry, John Weir; THE LORD OF THE FOUR QUARTERS  
 Piggot, Stuart; THE DRUIDS \*\*  
 Piggot, Stuart; THE DAWN OF CIVILIZATION \*  
 Powell, TGE; THE CELTS  
 Priestley, JB; MAN AND TIME  
 Raferty, Joseph; THE CELTS  
 Rees, Alwyn & Brinley; CELTIC HERITAGE\*  
 Reich, Wilhelm; SELECTED WRITINGS AND INTRODUCTION TO ORGONOMY\*  
 Rick, Theodor; PAGAN RITES IN JUDAISM\*  
 Rhys, John; CELTIC FOLKLORE, WELSH AND MANX  
 Richmond, IA; ROMAN BRITAIN  
 Robbins, Rossell Hope; ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF WITCHCRAFT & DEMONOLOGY \*\*#  
 Rogo, D Scott; PARAPSYCHOLOGY: A CENTURY OF INQUIRY  
 Ross, Anne; EVERYDAY LIFE OF THE PAGAN CELTS \*  
 Ross, Anne; PAGAN CELTIC BRITAIN  
 Rothenberg, Jerome; TECHNICIANS OF THE SACRED  
 Schonfield, Hugh; THOSE INCREDIBLE CHRISTIANS  
 Shepard, Paul; THE TENDER CARNIVORE AND THE SACRED GAME  
 Sherman, Harold; HOW TO MAKE ESP WORK FOR YOU  
 Shipley, Joseph; DICTIONARY OF EARLY ENGLISH \*  
 Silver, Abba; WHERE JUDAISM DIFFERED  
 Sjoestadt, Marie-Louise; GODS AND HEROES OF THE CELTS  
 Sloane, Eric; AMERICAN TREES\*\*  
 Sloane, Eric; THE SEASONS OF AMERICA'S PAST\*  
 Smith, Morton; THE SECRET GOSPEL  
 Spence, Lewis; MAGIC ARTS IN CELTIC BRITAIN ##  
 Spence, Lewis; MYSTERIES OF BRITAIN ##  
 Squire, Charles; CELTIC MYTH AND LEGEND, ROMANCE AND PEOTRY \*\*  
 Standen, Anthony; SCIENCE IS A SACRED COW\*

Steward, David & Mikunas, Algis; EXPLORING PHENOMENOLOGY  
 Stone, JF; WESSEX BEFORE THE CELTS\*  
 Sullivan, JWN; THE LIMITATIONS OF SCIENCE \*  
 Symonds, George W; TREE IDENTIFICATION BOOK  
 Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre; PHENOMENON OF MAN \*\*  
 Thom, A; MEGALITHIC SITES IN BRITAIN  
 Thomas, Lewis; THE LIVES OF A CELL\*  
 Tompkins, Peter & Bird; SECRET LIFE OF PLANTS  
 Toynbee, Arnold; CRUCIBLE OF CHRISTIANITY  
 Treharne, RF; GLASTENBURY LEGENDS  
 Valiente, Doreen; WHERE WITCHCRAFT LIVES  
 de Vries, Jan; KELTICHES RELIGION  
 Walton, Evangeline; PRINCE OF ANNWN (1ST) \*  
 Walton, Evangeline; CHILDREN OF LLYR (2ND)\*  
 Walton, Evangeline; SONG OF RHIANNON (3RD)\*  
 Walton, Evangeline; ISLAND OF THE MIGHTY (4TH) \*  
 Waters, Frank; THE BOOK OF THE HOPI  
 Watts, Alan; THE LEFT HAND OF GOD\*  
 Watts, Alan; PSYCHOTHERAPY, EAST AND WEST\*  
 Wells, Calvin; BONES, BODIES AND DISEASE  
 Wilders, NM; AN INTRODUCTION TO TEILHARD DE CHARDIN  
 Williams Mary; GLASTONBURY; A STUDY IN PATTERS  
 Wilson, DM; THE ANGLO-SAXONS \*  
 Wilson, Robert Anton; SEX & DRUGS A JOURNEY BEYOND LIMITS \*  
 Wilson, Robert Anton & Shea, Robert; ILLUMINATUSI (3 volumes) \*\*  
 Wod, Eric S; COLLINS' FIELD GUIDE TO ARCHOLOGY IN ENGLAND  
 Yeats, William; MYTHOLOGOIES  
 Zimmer, Heinrich; THE KING AND THE CORPSE.

## PERIODICALS

Green Egg is by far the most important journal dedicated to the Neopagan movements. It contains articles by and about the different movements as well as materials concerning ceremonial magic, ecology action, futuristics and feminism. Its "Forum" (About 50% of each issue) contains letters, completely uncensored, forum members and leaders of all the above-mentioned movements discussing and debating (sometimes quite violently) with each other and themselves. It is published eight times a year. Subscriptions cost \$7.00 per year and are well worth it. Sample issues are \$1.00. Send your money to: Church of All Worlds, Box 2953, St. Louis, MO 63130.

The Witches trine, published by the New Reformed Orthodox Order of the Golden Dawn, advertises itself as "A literate Journal of the Craft" and is just that. One of the best of the Neopagan Witchcraft publications, it comes out eight times a year and costs \$3.50 per year to subscribe to. Sample issues are 50 cents. Ask about the facsimile edition reprints of their early issues. Box 23243 Oakland CA 94623.

The Crystal Well is the oldest Neopagan Witchcraft publication in America and remains one of the best. It comes out about eight times a year (less if donations are slim) and offers subscriptions. Box 1164, San Pedro, CA 90733.

Stonehenge Viewpoint is published by Annular Publications and, like the books published by that company, contains a great deal of fascinating data about megalithic monuments and Paleopaganism and its survivals in the "British" Isles. Subscription rates for this quarterly appear to be \$2.00 per year, with back issues (many quite valuable) going at 50 cents each. Ask for a copy of their book catalog. 1421 sate street, Suite 35, Santa Barbara, CA 93101

AADL News is the official publication of the Aquarian Anti-Defamation League, Inc. It comes out irregularly trying for 8-10 times per year, and contains news about civil libertarian



activities by and in behalf of minority belief movements in the United States and Canada. The subscription cost is \$5.00 per year, which can be included in an Associate Membership (%7.50 per year) and is highly recommended. Box 3720, Minneapolis MN 55403

The Nemeton Directory will be published some time in late 1973 c.e. In conjunction with the Pagan Yellow Papers (published yearly in Green Egg) this directory will list addresses and information about all the public Neopagan movements in America. The price has not been set yet, but it would be well worth writing to them for details.

In the meantime, you might want to get a copy of Songs for the Old Religion, which both a book (\$2.00) and a record (\$6.45 +39 cents if you live in California.) These songs are highly useful in Neopagan rituals (though one sometimes has to change a word or two here and there to fit one's own system of mythology) and will be especially appreciated by those who are fond of Robert Graves' mythological system. A few musicologists have claimed that most of the music is very old Celtic traditional tunes and not actually original, but even if this is true, it is rather irrelevant, since there is hardly a Celtic tune of the last 300 years that is completely original. Several of the songs work well with Reformed Druid rituals, so that is all most of us are concerned about.

To obtain any of these items, write to: Nemeton, box 13037, Oakland, CA 94661.

Parabola: myth and the Quest for meaning is a new publication dealing with mythology, ritual and folk religions. It is published quarterly at a subscription rate of \$12.00 per year, which is expensive, but it looks as if it is going to be an important and valuable journal to Neopagans. Published by Tamarack Press, 166 East 61st St, NY, NY, 10021.

## RECORDINGS:

The following records and tapes may be of use in rites as well as in rewrites. They are divided roughly into these categories; Folk, Ethnic, Classical, Popular and Other. Naturally, many other titles could be added.

### Folk:

ROGER NICHOLSON; "Nonesuch for Dulcimer."  
BUFFY SAINT MARIE: Most of her albums.  
FOLK LEGACY RECORDS; "Golden Ring"

### Ethnic:

THE IRISH ROVERS  
THE DUBLINERS  
THE CLANCY BROTHERS  
OSCAR BRAND  
THE CHIEFTAINS  
URUBAMBA  
EVEREST RECORDS : "Authentic Music of the American Indian"  
FOLKWAYS RECORDS; "Healing songs of the American Indian"  
DR JOHN THE NIGHT TRIPPER  
NONESUCH RECORDS: "In praise of Oxala and other Black Gods"  
COLUMBIA RECORDS; "Medicine, Mine & Magic"

### Classical:

PROKOFIEV: "Alexander Nevsky"  
OFFENBACH: "Tales of Hoffman"  
WAGNER; "The ring Cycle"  
MENDLESOHN: "Walpurgis Nacht"  
VISTA RECORDS; "Fantasia"

### Popular:

PENTANGLE:  
TRAFFIC "John Barleycorn"  
INCREDIBLE STRING BAND  
MOODY BLUES: "search for the Lost Chord."  
GRAHAM BOND "We put Our Magic on You"  
Donavan

## Other

NEMETON: "Songs for the Old Religion" Order from Nemeton, Box 13037, Oakland, CA 94661 \$5.95 plus tax.  
WILBURN BURCHETTE: "Guitar Grimoire" and "Wilburn Burchette Opens the Sevens Gates of Transcendental Consciousness" order from WB box 1367, Spring Valley, CA 92077. \$5.95 plus Tax?  
ENVIRONMENTS

# Songs of Isaac Bonewits

The full repertoire of Isaac would be formidable to compile, but here's what I was able to put together.

The 1976 Druid Chronicles Collection:

## The Book of Songs and Poetry

Volume Zero 1976

## The Book of Bards

Formerly Miscellany in DC(E,)

Part 7 in ARDA

2003 Introduction

I moved this book from Part 7, in order to better consolidate all the scattered poetry in the new edition of ARDA.

-Mike Scharding  
Feb 1, 2003  
Embassy of Japan, D.C.

## 1996 Introduction

Of all the selections in the Miscellany, this is the one that has been added to the most by the Druid Chronicle magazine. Many of these selections were designed to be inserted into liturgies, and most were unknown to (or unused by) most Carleton Druids until 1986. Some of the songs, to the say the least, are anti-Christian in the sense that they call for revenge for the "Burning Times" of the Inquisition and Witch Hunts. I once found these songs disturbing, but I've grown to find an admirable fire of resistance in these songs. Others will say they fortify the singers in face of persecution.

Michael Scharding  
St. Cloud, MN  
April 6, 1996

## Publishing History

1976 1st Printing, Druid Chronicles (Evolved)  
1996 2nd Printing, ARDA  
2003 3rd Printing, ARDA 2

## Processional Hymn

*(Customs 2:1-3)*

*Words by Kathie Courtice*

*Music by Peter Basquin*

O Earth-Mother

We praise thee that seed springeth,  
that flower openeth,  
that grass waveth.

We praise thee for winds that whisper  
through the graceful elm,  
through the shapely maple,  
through the lively pine,  
through the shining birch,  
through the mighty oak.

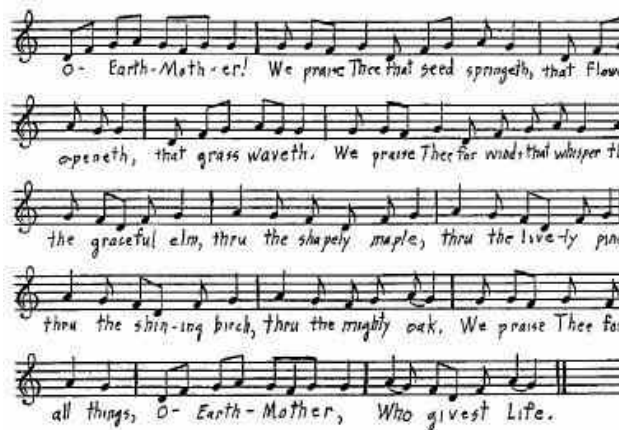
We praise thee for all things,  
O Earth-Mother, who givest life.

The words of the Chant were written by Kathie Courtice, now married to Peter Basquin, who wrote the music (to be found in The Book of Bards.) It was regularly sung as a part of the Services of Worship, usually as the Processional Chant. A note on the Hymn to the Earthmother at the start of the collection. Here is a letter that may be of interest to Druid musicians:

"At the time, I wanted to express through the notation as well as through the rhythm and melody the kinship that would bear to the musical systems of earlier peoples. True, a single line notation was not even invented until the last thousand year or so, but it seemed somehow more fitting than the modern staff and clef.

"At all events, I enclose here the melody as it would read in modern notation, albeit chant-notation. The rhythmic values are to be read as in modern notation generally, but with a somewhat flexible flow, as in most chant. The bar-lines represent pauses ends of phrases, breath marks of shorter or longer length according to the time and the inspiration of the group singing.

"The melody is a four-note chant, akin to the Medieval hypomixolydian mode (8th mode.) The note is written on the line "g" in the modern notation) is the recitation tone of the chant (the "tonic.") The step below it should certainly not be raised to the leading tone, on the contrary, it would be better sung slightly flatter than the modern notation suggest, so the two lower notes stand nearly in ratio of 6 to 7 in the overtone series. You may be interested to know that the author of the poem is now my wife. The Earth Mother has blessed us with a very happy and compassionate marriage. She would prefer to be credited with her then (maiden) name, Kathie Courtice, and I, simply as Peter Basquin."



## Now Do We With Songs and Rejoicing

*(A Processional Hymn)*

*Words by David T. Geller (NRDNA)*

*Sung to the traditional tune of:*

*"Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence"*

Now do we with songs and rejoicing,  
 Come before the Mother to stand.  
 She has given forth of Her bounty  
 And with blessings in Her hand,  
 In the fields She walks  
 And in the woods She walks;  
 Our full homage to command.

At Her voice the wild wind is silent  
 And the fox lies down with the hare.  
 Every living creature before Her  
 Sings Her praises to declare:  
 Thanks to Thee for all,  
 O thanks to Thee for All,  
 Thanks to Thee, O Lady most fair!

## The Lady's Bransle

*(Pronounced "brall")*

*Words by Hope*

*Sung to the traditional tune of: "Nonesuch" (short version) and  
 reprinted by permission from "Songs for the Old Religion"*

*(Copyright 1973)*

O She will bring the buds in the Spring  
 And laugh among the flowers.  
 In Summer heat are Her kisses sweet;  
 She sings in leafy bowers.  
 She cuts the cane and gathers the grain,  
 When fruits of Fall surround Her.  
 Her bones grow old in Wintery cold;  
 She wraps Her cloak around Her.  
 But She will bring the buds in...  
 (repeat freely)

## The Host is Riding

*(Poem by Yeats)*

The host is riding from Knocknarea  
 And over the grave of Clooth-na-bare;  
 Caoilte tossing his burning hair,  
 And Niamh calling, "Away, come away:"

Empty your heart of its mortal dream  
 The winds awaken, the leaves whirl round,  
 Our cheeks are pale, our hair is unbound,  
 Our breasts are heaving, our eyes are a gleam,  
 Our arms are waving, our lips are apart,  
 And if any gaze on our rushing band,  
 We come between him and the deed of his hand,  
 We come between him and the hope of his heart."  
 The host is rushing 'twixt night and day;  
 And where is there hope or deed as fair?  
 Caoilte tossing his burning hair,  
 And Niamh calling, "Away, come away."

## Oimeic Hymn

*(for use during Communion)*

*Words by Robert Larson (NRDNA)*

The days are short,  
 the heavens dark  
 the Mother sleeps.  
 The trees are bare  
 the north wind stalks  
 the Mother sleeps.  
 The nights are long  
 and full of fright,  
 the Mother sleeps.  
 But the ewe gives birth,  
 the ewe gives milk  
 the Mother stirs.  
 The Mother smiles  
 with dreams of life  
 She will return.  
 And on that day  
 will we rejoice  
 when She returns.  
 Long the day,  
 bright the sky,  
 when She returns.  
 Green the trees,  
 soft the breeze,  
 when She returns.  
 Short the night,  
 our fires alight,  
 when She returns!

(extra verses may be added by each Grove)

## The Rune of Hospitality

*(A Medieval Charm)*

I saw a stranger yestere'e'n.  
 I put food in the eating-place,  
 Drink in the drinking-place,  
 Music in the listening-place.  
 And in the blessed names  
 Of the Holy Ones,  
 He blest myself and my house,  
 My cattle and my dear ones.  
 And the lark sang in her song:  
 Often, often, often,  
 Go the Gods in the guise of strangers.  
 Often, often, often,  
 Go the Gods in the guise of strangers.

## Will Ye No Come Back Again?

*Words by Isaac Bonewits*

*Sung to the traditional tune of:  
"Bonny Charlie's Now Awa"*

1  
In exile live our Olden Gods,  
Banished o'er the foaming main,  
To lands no mortal ever trods.  
Will They e'er come back again?

Chorus  
Will Ye no come back again?  
Will Ye no come back again?  
Better love Ye canna be.  
Will Ye no come back again?

2  
Hills They walked were all Their own,  
Blest the land, from sea to sea;  
Till the clergy, with pious moan,  
Banished all the noble Shee!

3  
Sweet the chanting of the Druids,  
Lilting wildly up the glen,  
Pouring out the sacred fluids,  
As they sing Your songs again!

4  
Many a gallant Pagan fought,  
Many a gallant Witch did burn;  
Priest and Priestess, both have sought,  
To sing the prayers Ye canna spurn!

5  
Now with eagle and with dove,  
Sing we here our heartfelt plea:  
Come with thunder or with love,  
But come! Good Gods, we so need Thee!!

## May Their Devil Take the Preachers

*Words by Chwerthin  
Sung to the traditional tune of:  
"God Bless England" (the Irish version)*

1  
We'll sing you a tale of wrath and woe-  
Wack-for-the-diddle, diddle-di-do-day,  
For the men who laid our freedom low-  
Wack-for-the-diddle, diddle-di-do-day.  
May fear and famine be their share,  
Who've kept our land in want and care.  
May their Devil take the preachers  
Is our prayer!

Chorus:  
Wack-for-the-diddle, diddle-di-do-day.  
Hip hooray! So we say!  
Come and listen while we pray!  
Wack-for-the-diddle, diddle-di-do-day.

2  
Now when we were Pagan, fierce and free-  
Wack-for-...  
The Preachers went on a bloody spree-  
Wack-for-...  
Harshly raised us in their slime,  
And kept our hands from Heathen Crime;  
And sent us early to their Heaven

Time after time!  
Wack-for-...

3  
Now our parents oft were naughty folk-  
Wack-for-...  
For swords and spears can sometimes poke-  
Wack-for-...  
At New Grange and at Tara Hill,  
We made the preachers cry their fill.  
But, O the Saints! they "love" us still!  
Wack-for-...

4  
Now Pagans all, forget the past-  
Wack-for-...  
And think of the day that's coming fast-  
Wack-for-...  
When we shall be Paganized,  
With guns and armor motorized!  
Oh WON'T the preachers be surprised!!  
Wack-for-...

## Hymn to Hurry the Return of Spring

*(A poem by Mary Siegle)*

Greet the Goddess with bells and drum,  
Greet the God with laughter.  
This is the night the dawn begins  
The day to follow after.

Gather the old, the dead from the trees,  
Carry it in your arms.  
Bring it into the deep, deep woods,  
Away from the towns and the farms.

Build you a living fire tonight-  
Pile the branches high.  
And know that in the fire's glow,  
There's warmth to light the sky.

There's an old man cries the town tonight;  
Down wide streets and narrow;  
"Bring out, bring out, what you don't need,  
and toss it in my barrow."

"Throw out your chairs, your attic stairs,  
Throw out the butter churn.  
Whatever's there; what you can spare,  
As long as it will burn."

"Bring out your sister's gramophone,  
We'll throw it on the fire;  
And from your grandma's double bed  
Build Winter's funeral pyre."

Slip away to the woods tonight;  
Be children of the Moon.  
And rejoice that Spring has come at last;  
That Spring has come so soon.

You who complain of Winter's cold  
And shiver in the snow,  
Push back the shroud from the Mother's breast-  
See promised green below.

All skeptics that the Spring returns,  
All doubters that the fire still burns,

Stand in the circle for tonight,  
And feel the heat and see the light,

The greet the God with reverence-  
Pour libations on the earth.  
This is the night the Mother proves  
Life's natural end is birth.

## Midsummer: The Turning of the Year

*(A Poem by Mary Siegle)*

My Father's strong today.  
The Earth awaits his dawn.  
Our Mother slowly turns in her dreaming sleep  
And, waking, finds him there to share her bed.

My Mother slowly turns,  
And, in turning toward her lover,  
Gives a day of playfulness and ease.

And all the stirrings in the womb shall cease-  
The ripening of the grain and labor in the fields shall pause.

The singing of the birds:  
The peep; the scratching from the egg-  
The grasses steady pushing from the earth-  
All will stop for one full day.  
The fullest of our year  
And meant for naught but love.

But if the God comes shining,  
And the sun beats down  
And Earth opens wide to receive her Lord,  
If this day lasts so long,  
Why can't it go on?

Why does the Mother turn now  
Not toward, but from;  
And turn more quickly every day from this?

Sisters, look how your own lover comes  
To lie down with you and love  
And love again.  
He asks a pulsebeat's pause,  
A moment yet of time  
for strength  
To begin again  
And spend the day.

## Thanksgiving Grace

*(A Poem by Mary Siegle)*

Oh Goddess, giver of the grain-  
Your rich rewarding of the rain-  
Our Father the Sun looked down and blest  
The fruits of your sweet Mother breast.  
The harvest done and to this end.  
We sit to meal with a cherished friend.  
And thanks be to the plants and the beast-  
For the offering of this bountiful feast.  
Our Father Who art in Heaven,  
We give to you one day in seven;  
And then to acknowledge Your Loving care,  
We give to you one day a year.  
Amen.

## The Falling Asleep of the Mother of God

*(A Poem by Mary Siegle for August 15th)*

*For the children, so that they will know what feast it is today,  
and how the ancient festival time came to be given to the virgin.*

She fell asleep today.  
The Mother of God-  
She who wept so-  
Madre Dolorosa!  
She fell asleep today.  
And the angels came.  
They bore her up on a breath of wind.  
A sky-blue cloak  
Of air against air against air-  
To heaven the fairies bore her up.  
She who wept so-  
On this day she was taken up.

Mother don't weep today.  
See, we'll take this festival for you.  
See, this feast is yours.  
Our Lady of the Harvest,  
The first fruits are yours.

## The 13 Days of Samhain

*Words by the Berkeley Grove  
Sung to the traditional tune*

On the first day of Samhain,  
the cailleach sent to me:  
a lios in County Tipperary.

On the second day of Samhain,  
the cailleach sent to me:  
two water-horses  
and a lios in County Tipperary.

Three Mor-Rioghna  
Four Pooks  
Five Silver branches  
Six pipers piping  
Seven harpers harping  
Eight hunters riding  
Nine Sidhe a-sighing  
Ten Druids scrying  
Eleven washer-women  
Twelve mortals dying  
Thirteen beansidhes crying.

## The Woad Song

*Authorship unknown  
(But obviously English!)  
Sung to the traditional tune  
of "Men of Harlech"*

What's the use of wearing braces,  
Hat and spats and shoes with laces,  
Coats and vests you find in places  
Down on Brompton Road?  
What the use of shirts of cotton,  
Studs that always get forgotten?  
These affairs are simply rotten-  
Better far is woad.

Woad's the stuff to show men-

Woad to scare your foeman!  
Boil it to a brilliant blue  
And rub it on your chest and your abdomen!  
Men of Britain never hit on  
Anything as good as woad to fit on  
Neck or knee or where you sit on  
Tailors, you be blowed!

Romans came across the Channel,  
All dressed up in tin and flannel.  
Half a pint of woad per man'll  
Clothe us more than these.  
Saxons, you may save your stitches,  
Building beds for bugs in britches;  
We have woad to clothe us, which is  
Not a nest for fleas!

Romans, keep your armors;  
Saxons, your pajamas.  
Hairy coats were made for goats,  
Gorillas, yaks, retriever dogs and llamas!  
March on Snowdon with your woad on-  
Never mind if you get rained or snowed on-  
Never need a button sewed on...  
All you need is woad!!

## The Gods of the West

*Words by Chwerthin  
Sung to the traditional tune of  
"The Men of the West"*

1

When you honor in song and in story  
The Gods of our old Pagan kin,  
Whose blessings did cover with glory  
Full many a mountain and glen;  
Forget not the Gods of our ancestors,  
Who'll rally our bravest and best,  
When Ireland is Christian and bleeding,  
And looks for its hope to the West.

Chorus:

So here's to the Gods of our ancestors,  
Who'll rally our bravest and best,  
When Ireland is Christian and bleeding-  
Hurrah! for the Gods of the West.

2

Oh the Shee hills with glory will shine then,  
On the eve of our bright Freedom Day;  
When the Gods we've been wearily waiting,  
Sail back from the Land of the Fey!  
And over Ireland rise the Druids,  
Awakening in every breast,  
A fire that can never be quenched, friends,  
Among the true Gaels of the West.

3

Dublin will be ours 'ere the midnight,  
And high over ever town,  
Our Heathen prayers then will be floating  
Before the next sun has gone down.  
We'll gather, to speed the good work, our friends,  
The Heathen from near and afar,  
And history will watch us expel ALL  
The preachers with feathers and tar!

4

So pledge us the Old Gods of Ireland,  
The Dagda and Lugh and Danu;  
Whose Return, with the trumpet of battle,  
Will bring hope to Their children anew!  
As the Old Gods have brought to Their feasting halls,  
From many a mountain and hill,  
The Pagans who fell, so They're here, friends,  
To lead us to victory still!

5

Though all the bright beauty we cherished,  
Went down 'neath the churches and woe,  
The Spirits of Old still are with us,  
Who NEVER have bent to the foe!  
And the Old Gods are ready whenever  
The loud rolling tuck of the drum  
Rings out to awaken the Heathen,  
And tell us our morning has come!

## The Mystery

*(A different version of Customs 10:1-3)*

I am a wind on the sea,  
I am a wave of the ocean,  
I am the roar of the sea,  
I am a hawk on a cliff,  
I am a dewdrop in the sunshine,  
I am a boar for valour,  
I am a salmon in pools,  
I am a lake in a plain,  
I am the strength of art,  
I am a spear with spoils that wages battle,  
I am a man that shapes fire for a head.

Who clears the stone-place of the mountain?  
What the place in which the setting sun lies?  
Who has sought peace without fear seven times?  
Who names the waterfalls?  
Who brings his cattle from the house of Tethra?  
What person, what God,  
Forms weapons into a fort?  
In a fort that nourishes satirists,  
Chants a petition, divides the Ogham letters,  
Separates a fleet, has sung praises?  
A wise satirist.

## Pagans Are We

*Words by Chwerthin  
Sung to the traditional tune of:  
"Soldiers are We"*

Pagans are we,  
Whose lives are pledged  
To this our land.  
Some have come  
From the Land Beyond the Wave.  
Sworn to the Shee,  
No more our ancient Heathen land  
Shall shelter the preacher or the slave.  
Tonight we guard the fairy-hill,  
In the Old Gods' cause,  
Come woe or weal.  
Mid Pukka's howl  
And banshee's wail,  
We'll chant a Pagan song!

## Be Pagan Once Again!

*Words by Isaac Bonewits  
Sung to the traditional tune of:  
"A Nation Once Again"*

1

When Childhood's fire was in my blood,  
I dreamed of ancient freemen,  
Against the Church who boldly stood  
As Pagans and as free kin.  
And then I prayed I yet might see  
The Druids in the glen;  
And Ireland, long the churches' toy,  
Be Pagan once again!  
Be Pagan once again.  
Be Pagan once again.  
And Ireland, long the churches' toy,  
Be Pagan once again!

2

The Old Gods only sleep, you know,  
Although betrayed and slandered.  
They guarded us from every woe,  
And blest each crop and fine herd.  
Then Patrick, he drove the snakes away,  
And brought the churches in-  
'Twas a bloody poor bargain, I would say.  
Be Pagan once again!  
Be Pagan once again.  
Be Pagan once again.  
'Twas a bloody poor bargain, I would say-  
Be Pagan once again!

3

And ever since that wretched day,  
When first Ireland went Christian,  
We've suffered woe in every way,  
With Freedom made the Great Sin.  
They set us at each other's throats,  
To murder kith and kin.  
Too long we've been their starving goats-  
Be Pagan once again!  
Be Pagan once again.  
Be Pagan once again.  
Too long we've been their starving goats-  
Be Pagan once again!

4

Both Catholic and Protestant  
Led us round by our noses;  
Distracting from the deadly scent  
Of England's blooming roses!  
Hang EVERY preacher from a tree-  
Burn out their golden dens.  
It's the only way we'll ever be free-  
Be Pagan once again!  
Be Pagan once again.  
Be Pagan once again.  
It's the ONLY way we'll EVER be free!  
Be Pagan once again!!!  
Erinn go Bree!

## A Celebration of Summer

*(A Medieval Welsh Poem, suitable for Samhain)  
taken, with one modification ("Peter" to "Pwyll")  
from Medieval Welsh Lyrics.*

Summer, parent of impulse,  
Begetter of close-knit bough,  
Warden, lord of wooded slopes,  
Tower to all, hills' tiller,  
You're the cauldron, wondrous tale,  
Of Annwn, life's renewal,  
It's you, you are, source of singing,  
The home of each springing shoot,  
Balm of growth, burgeoning throng,  
And chrism of crossing branches.

Your hand, by the Lord we love,  
Know how to make trees flourish.  
Essence of Earth's four corners,  
By your grace wondrously grow  
Birds and the fair land's harvest  
And the swarms that soar aloft,  
Moorland meadows' bright-tipped hay,  
Strong flocks and wild bees swarming.  
You foster, highways' prophet,  
Earth's burden, green-laden garths.  
You make my bower blossom,  
Building a fine web of leaves.  
And wretched is it always  
Near August, by night or day,  
Knowing by the slow dwindling,  
Golden store, that you must go.

Tell me, summer, this does harm,  
I have the art to ask you,  
What region, what countryside,  
What land you seek, by Pwyll.  
"Hush, bard of praise, your smooth song,  
Hush, strong boast so enchanting.  
My fate it is, might feat,  
As a prince," sang the sunshine,  
"To come three months to nourish  
Foodstuff for the multitude;  
And when roof and growing leaves  
Whither, and woven branches,  
To Shun the winds of winter  
Deep down to Annwyn I go."

The blessings of the world's bards  
And their good words go with you.  
Farewell, king of good weather,  
Farewell, our ruler and lord,  
Farewell, the fledgling cuckoos,  
Farewell, balmy banks in June,  
Farewell, sun high above us  
And the broad sky, round white ball.  
You'll not be, king of legions,  
So high, crest of drifting clouds,  
Till come, fair hills unhidden,  
Summer once more and sweet slopes.

## The Lord of the Dance

*Modification by Isaac Bonewits of original words by Aidan Kelley  
to common tune of "Tis a Gift to be Simple," more or less.....*

1

When She danced on the waters  
and the wind was Her horn,  
The Lady laughed and everything was born.  
And when She lit the Sun  
And the light gave Him birth,  
The Lord of the Dance then  
Appeared on the Earth!

Chorus

"Dance, dance, wherever you may be,  
for I am the Lord of the Dance," said He.  
"I live in you, if you live in Me,  
and I lead you all in the dance so free!"

2

I dance in the circle  
when the flames leap up high.  
I dance in fire and  
I never, never die.  
I dance in the waves  
on the bright summer sea,  
For I am the Lord  
of the waves' Mystery!

3

I sleep in the kernel  
and I dance in the rain.  
I dance in the wind and  
through the waving grain.  
And when you cut me down  
I care nothing for the pain-  
In the spring I'm the Lord  
of the Dance once again!

4

I dance at your meetings  
when you dance out the spell.  
I dance and sing that  
everyone be well.  
And when the dancing's over  
do not think I am gone;  
To live is to dance-  
so I dance on and on!

## I Fell In Love With the Lady

*words by Chwerthin  
Sung to "The Lady Came from Baltimore"  
by Tim Hardin*

1

Her people came from off the moor,  
Live outside the law.  
Didn't care about rich or poor,  
Just the souls they saw.

Chorus:

I was sent to kill Her people,  
For the Inquisition.  
But I fell in love with the Lady,  
I came away with none.  
I fell in love with the Lady,

And came away with none.

2

I crept into the woods one night,  
To spy upon their dance.  
I saw a happy, holy sight;  
And fell into a trance.

3

The Lady that I saw that night,  
She wore a robe of blue,  
And on Her head, a crown of stars-  
She stood upon the Moon!

4

I joined into the dancing then,  
And when the Grand Rite came,  
The Lady reached out with Her hand-  
She Called me by my name!

5

The Jesuits are after me;  
They know I've changed my side.  
But they can search from sea to sea-  
I know where I can hide!

Final Chorus:

I was sent to kill Her people,  
For the Inquisition.  
But I'm going back to the Lady,  
They'll come away with none.  
I'm going back to the Lady-  
They'll come away with none!

## She Was Here

*Words by Isaac Bonewits*

1

She was here before their Christ,  
And before their Satan too.  
And She'll be here when both their Gods  
Are dead and dust, 'tis true, 'tis true;  
Are dead and dust, 'tis true.

2

The Goddess... the Goddess...  
Spirit of life and of love!  
The Goddess... the Goddess...  
Ruler below and Ruler above!

3

Oh the Goddess Whom we worship,  
Is our Holy Mother Earth.  
We worship Her with love and joy,  
With gladness and with mirth!

4

Call Her Isis, call Her Nuit,  
Call Her Venus or Diane,  
Matier Sotier, Mother Savior,  
Goddess of all sea and land!

Repeat 1



5  
Queen of Heaven, Queen of Hell,  
Mother of all Gods, and kin!  
We worship Her in beds and bowers,  
Though some might call it "sin."

Repeat 2

6  
Man and woman, bodies merging,  
Thrusting, loving, prayers saying;  
Hark my friends, when Pagans love-  
We tell you we are praying!

Repeat 1, 2, 3

## The Rising of the Druid Moon

*Words by Robert Pennell & Isaac Bonewits  
Sung to the traditional tune of:  
"The Rising of the Moon"*

1  
"O now tell me, Taliesin,  
Tell me why you hurry so?"  
"Hush, good Druid, hush and listen!"  
and his eyes were all aglow.  
"I bear news from the Archdruid,  
get you ready quick and soon-  
The Heathen must be together,  
by the rising of the moon!"  
By the rising of the moon,  
by the rising of the moon.  
The Heathen must be together,  
by the rising of the moon!

2  
"Oh then tell me, Taliesin,  
where the gathering is to be?"  
"At the oak grove by the river,  
quite well known to you and me.  
One more word, for signal token,  
whistle out the Dagda's tune,  
With your sickle on your shoulder,  
by the rising of the moon!"  
By the rising of the moon,  
by the rising of the moon.  
With your sickle on your shoulder  
by the rising of the moon!

3  
Out of many a magic circle,  
cones were rising through the night.  
Many an oaken grove was throbbing  
with that blessed Druid light.  
And the Heathen sang across the land,  
to the Banshee's fatal tune.  
And a thousand spells were chanted,  
by the rising of the moon!  
By the rising of the moon,  
by the rising of the moon.  
And a thousand spells were chanted,  
by the rising of the moon!

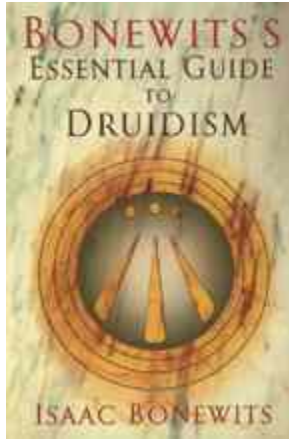
4  
Throughout that pulsing Pagan night,  
the Little people swarmed.  
High above the chanting Druids soon,  
a wrathful Goddess formed.  
Death to every foe and traitor!  
Pagans carve the fatal rune!  
Cast all our spells together now-  
'tis the rising of the moon!  
'Tis the rising of the moon,  
'tis the rising of the moon.  
Cast all our spells together now-  
'tis the rising of the moon!

5  
The Goddess headed for the East,  
across the sea's bright foam.  
What glorious havoc She did wreck  
in London and in Rome!  
And the Archdruid he spoke to us,  
upon the following moon:  
"I think we got our point across,  
at the rising of the moon!  
At the rising of the moon,  
at the rising of the moon.  
I think we got our point across,  
at the rising of the moon!"

### Scharding's Note:

I suspect that the author of many songs in this collection,  
Chwerthin, was a member of Hasidic Druids of North America,  
or perhaps of the NRDNA.

For more recent songs see Isaac's song section  
at [www.neopagan.net](http://www.neopagan.net)



# Bonewits' Essential Guide to Druidism (BEGD)

Reviewed by Mike the Fool, Digitalis Grove of D.C.

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Feel free to post the review anywhere, minus the RDNA specific contents at the end which would bore most purchasers of the book.

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<http://www.rdna.info/missalany47.html>

## THE EXECUTIVE REVIEW

*Bonewits' Essential Guide to Druidism* (BEGD) is a masterpiece in the vibrant growing field of modern Druidism. It is an indispensable library addition not only to the new folk interested in joining a Druid organization, but also to the veteran Druid who is teaching a study course at her/his own Grove. BEGD is a succinct and refined introduction (267pgs) to the variety of Druidisms now practiced in America and Britain. It clearly shows how they developed, compares their structure, and gives enticing examples of their words, sample rituals, and introduces some of their colorful leaders.

BEGD is the first book one should read on modern Druidism, but it is certainly not the last one; the reader's appetite should be whetted for yet deeper material afterwards. Indeed, after dispelling myths and correcting misconceptions and providing a framework of accepted facts, history and eye-opening comparisons; the BEGD's priceless bibliography and internet web-links illuminate several ways to pursue further trustworthy academic studies and also where to find 'inspirational' and contemporary works (and he explains the difference between the two). In conclusion, it will give prospective Druids (and less-well-connected old-timers) a firmer foundation of background information, reliable resources, and a view of the "big picture" of this fascinating religious movement. And now for the rather longer, more nuanced review that this book richly deserves...

## \* \* \* \* \* THE LONGER DETAILED REVIEW \* \* \* \* \*

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I (Mike Scharding) have run the International Druid Archives since 1992; cataloguing magazines, historical records, pamphlets and books by and about modern Druidism, that first appeared in the early 1960s in the U.S. with surprisingly little connection to their older British siblings; whose predecessors might date back to the 18th century. With their often obscure roots, modern Druidism is a confusingly diverse genre of religious sub-groups, with up-to-now few authoritative reference guides.

Indeed there are dozens of Druid organizations today clamoring for attention, besides the "big four" (RDNA, ADF, Keltria and OBOD). Although cross-memberships occurs frequently among the 50,000 plus modern Druid practitioners today, there are literally only a handful of Druids who have been intimately familiar with these groups over the decades AND are also talented writers and gifted speakers. Isaac Bonewits is probably the most famous, well traveled, and prolific publishers amongst these few revered elders. Therefore, this book has been highly anticipated, and I would be frankly stunned if BEGD isn't quickly found at every Druidism 101 class offered to incoming members of all groups, or on the shelves of the quite numerous solitary Druids.

Bonewits' straight-forward advice and careful scholarship are influential and often trendsetting. What he predicts, is usually accepted as the common standpoint about 10 years later, by some estimates. I, myself, have not always agreed with Bonewits on some finer tangential points (such is our argumentative nature) and I gently resist the allure of his "progressivism" or the lightly implied inevitable "development" of Druidism. That said, however, I have grudgingly developed an admiration for his tireless dedication and ability to repetitively explain the basics of Druidism to any-and-all crowds on the lecture circuit and numerous articles in various journals and websites. Bonewits is a networking extraordinaire, one who either personally met all the major players, or has corresponded with them. This is a vital resource for any researcher of Druid groups; where the personality of the leaders gives key momentum to their (more-or-less democratic) group's direction. As with most similar groups, you'll find exceptions, and he acknowledges that frequently enough.

And yet despite his great talents, this book is not about Bonewits himself, a surprisingly modest and humble fellow (and straightforward about his biases and limits) with a rich sense of humor. The BEGD is really about DRUIDISM; the true passionate love of his life. Even for those hard-core scholars of these movements, familiar with his widely scattered and reprinted essays, much of this book will be pleasantly familiar to you, with a few surprises. Like a necklaced-string of fine pearls, most of the 33 short essays have been lovingly polished by decades of rewrites, painstaking draft reviews by fellow Druid leaders (including myself), and critical input from innumerable public lectures on these topics. Now, finally, they have all been seamlessly integrated in a single affordable book, where the true genius of the author, with his hand ever on the pulse of Druidism, can be better appreciated. It is my pleasure to now convince you of BEGD's charms.

### WHAT'S IN THE BOOK?

Naturally, the 33 essays of the book have been divided into nine parts (i.e. three times three, which is very Druidic, of course). The first three parts deal with the three different "stages" of Druidism; a catchy historical division that Bonewits invented by himself during the 1970s. Each section discusses the rise and fall of various organizations, who influenced them, and what they professed.

**Part One**, Paleopagan Druidism. He broadly chronicles the development of Indo-European customs and emergence of Celtic Druidism across Europe, until their disappearance soon after 500 CE. The underlying story being that religions, ethnicities and peoples changed and redefined themselves throughout history. He discusses ramifications of potential biases in academic research of books from different centuries.

**Part Two**, Meso-"pagan" Druidism. During the chaotic efflorescence of the Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment, there was also growth of Celtic folk studies and melding of liberal Christianity and fraternal groups from 17th to 20th century. Many of them styled themselves "Druids", and continue to this day, often capturing the attention of world media with their flamboyant annual festivals.

**Part Three**, Neopagan Druidism. This phase began with efforts by "Mesopagan" Druidic groups in the 1970s to dispense with monotheistic concepts and adopt polytheism and magic, while making timely adaptations and accommodations to modern society, and a greater environmental appreciation. These types of Druids are still in a stage of rampant diversification and development, and is the special focus of concern for the BEGD.

**Part Four** responsibly reminds the reader that every movement has its charlatans and con artists to be wary of. BEGD provides a useful guideline chart (1-10 scale) [called "ABCDEF"] to evaluate any prospective religion for 13 key oppressive elements. For those concerned about "cults", it is intriguing that many mainstream religions score far less favorably than the average Druid group; most of whose members have strong aversions to such groups that they grew up in. It is a stern recommendation of certain baseline expectations of treatment that modern Druids have come to expect for their members.

**Part Five** describes the general beliefs of modern Druids, as far as they can be ascertained from printed statements, and Bonewits' own extensive conversations with members of every group over 35 years.

While they might not be officially adopted, or believed by every member of every group, they would likely be acknowledged as exemplary by most Druids that I know. No book on Druids would be complete without an explanation of how the eight major festivals of Neopagan Druids developed (a mixture of Celtic and SURPRISE! Anglo-Germanic events) to make a "Wheel of the Year" with eight spokes at regular six week intervals. Many pre-1970 mesopagan Druid groups had only a few large annual events (such as the Summer Solstice), and more frequent lodge-type meetings. Always the fashion-diva, Bonewits wryly comments on the distinctive clothes, tools and symbols of Druids; with amusing insights on where they actually came from. Finally, he has always stressed that being a Druid isn't just about having fun outside, but also comes with self-enforced sobering responsibilities and/or obligations to ourselves, Nature, other religious minorities, and ultimately for the human-race.

**Part Six** is a delightfully handy collection of sample official rituals from the "big four" Druid groups (OBOD, RDNA, ADF, Keltria). His most intense hobby over the years has been that of liturgical analysis (see his lengthy book "Rites of Worship"). He demystifies these four services, breaking them into steps, and briefly explains WHY they do things in a certain order in a practical down-to-earth manner. All too often people approach Druidic liturgy as too-reverenced-to-be-questioned, with the sometimes sad result that liturgies don't get adapted for changing needs of the group.

**Part Seven**, in addition to the liturgy of groups, Bonewits includes a treatise on Druidic divination and one on Druidic magic, (a bit more often practiced by individuals, but sometimes by groups). He discourses on the much-misunderstood Ogham "alphabet", and shows how many groups have added and encouraged non-ancient-Celtic forms of divination. Previous to BEGD, Bonewits wrote two "nuts-and-bolts" books in a sociological and rational manner on the 26 general principles or laws that explain why people do magic in certain formats (see "Real Magic" and "Authentic Thaumaturgy" on Amazon). He also provides a few example of how modern Druids have taken surviving semi-Christian folk charms and "repaganized" them, and stresses the importance of incorporating poetry, dance, song and arts into liturgy.

**Part Eight.** As I mentioned before, Bonewits is great at rationally showing the historical development and diversification of Druidism, but he also has an irrepressible vision and hope for the future of Druidism. He has repeated this chapter's contents for decades, and inspired legions of Druids; and bit by bit, elements of it are coming true. For example, he encourages Druids to focus on improving training programs, attain legal tax-exempt status as religious charities (true for three of the four big groups today), start greater advocacy campaigns, start giving their priests a working salary like mainstream faiths, and hold large public services for Druids and members of the general Neopagan community.

Finally, don't overlook the appendices ("**Part Nine**"). The lengthy bibliography and internet resources are up-to-date, listing 100 books that I believe I've seen on most reputable reading lists of the big four groups. You see, the number of books on "Druids", modern and ancient, have been exponentially increasing since the 1950s; some of them dry and academic, others wildly inaccurate (but interesting), and some are just pleasant personal observations. I agree with Bonewits, that a firm foundation in known facts, an informed awareness of disputed issues, and a liberal splash of inspirational works makes for a well-educated modern Druid. Being the indefatigable networker he is, Bonewits also provides the weblinks to most of the known Druid groups, for you to explore those that have caught your interest. He also mercifully moved some extra, detailed, background information on the Celtic language, terminology, Indo-European religious system to the appendix, to shorten the earlier introduction to Paleopagan Druids in part one.

### **SIMILAR BOOKS TO B.E.G.D.**

It should be noted, that BEGD did not spring from the void. If you enjoy Bonewit's approach to the history and practice of modern Druidism, you'll probably like the following four books:

*Rebirth of Druidry* (aka Druid Renaissance) by Phillip Carr-Gomm of OBOD, 2003. Bonewits assisted in this book, writing a chapter on American Druidry. *Rebirth of Druidry* goes into

extensive detail about the legion of British groups that have called themselves Druids, while BEGD focuses more on the American groups.

*The Solitary Druid* by Robert Ellison of ADF, 2005. This makes a fine complement to BEGD, which focuses on groups. 80% of most modern Druids don't have regular access to groups, and communicate by mail, or prefer their own company. This a book for them on do-it-by-yourself Druidism.

*American Druidism* by Daniel Hansen, 1995. Now out of print, but sometimes available, was a slimmer (160 pgs), a much simpler publication that I helped to edit, that discussed some of the same BEGD topics.

*Drawing Down the Moon*, by Margot Adler, 1979, 1986, 2003. DDTM talks of Neopaganism as a whole, with each edition updating the current history of the movement.

### **EXTRA NOTES FOR THE RDNA READER**

As you may know, Isaac Bonewits was a very active member of the RDNA and several offshoot branches in the 1960s to 1980s; republishing the original *The Druid Chronicles* with a great number of extra essays and odds-and-ends in 1976. In fact quite a few of BEGDs essays find their origins in that volume. In the 1980s and onward, his focus has been mostly on ADF druidism, which he founded and nurtured. There are a few points in his recollection of the RDNA that I would like to bring to your attention.

Bonewits still has the inimitable sense of humor. I got an early edition with a personal note and signature where he amusedly says, "And this was taken to be a sign." He mischievously pokes a bit of fun at all the other Druid groups, as you'd expect from an RDNA member, and self-effacingly refers to some of the "troubles" he's caused or participated in.

Indeed, over the years, the rift between the factions of Berkeley and Carleton have seemingly been healed and an uneasy truce has been reached. Bonewits' choice of language here is conciliatory and generous. He explains the foibles, diversity and odd customs that really set apart the RDNA. He has a few quotes from Frangquist's work, the *Druid Chronicles*, including a closing meditation at the end of BEGD. He deciphers a sample of our liturgy, and several nice compliments for myself; which is a bit embarrassing, since such luminaries as David Fisher and Richard Shelton aren't mentioned.

Druids have their opinions and preferences, don't we all? Bonewits is still Bonewits, and there is still the light assertion that most (if not all) Druidisms are going to evolve towards his model or vision; and he might well be right over the decades to come. But it bothers me just a little, that I feel left "by the side of the road" by his formula, that the style of Druidism that I practice is somehow a quaint little branch, an ever-so-gently implied anachronism that will fade away gently. While the RDNA has never taken itself too seriously or desired to "last forever", and I am probably just over sensitive on the topic.

During the 20 pages devoted solely to the RDNA, there is a perplexing eight pages devoted to the Hassidic Druids of North America; which was a little brainstorm practice group for Bonewits and his friends in St. Louis from 1975-1977. Sort of like a training ground for complicated Druidical structures. You can read those scriptures in Part 5 of ARDA

<http://orgs.carleton.edu/Druids/ARDA2/doc/2part5.doc> The HDNA grove was embarrassingly, as he admits, very "Seventies", but wildly creative. I'll admit that it vividly shows the possibilities of local grove development within the loose national structure of the RDNA. Yet, eight pages seems a bit "doting" to me and I would have included more on the Live Oak Grove and discussed more of the other Berkeley members, who continue to (perhaps) greater influence the modern course of events.

A few mistakes are in the book. The early RDNA members met on Saturday afternoons, not on Sundays. The electrical symbol for an "outlet" does look like the Druid sigil on its side but the lines usually don't extend past the circle, except possibly in a handwritten version. The alchemical symbol for oil has only one line through it, at an angle, not two.

But I believe most Reformed Druids will find Brother Isaac's BEGD to be a valued addition to their personal archives; and certainly, people will probably ask you about the RDNA sections in the book, so it might be wise to be familiar with their contents. I also believe most RDNA Druids will also be intrigued by the other Druid groups out there, and it will entice you to interact and discuss matters of concern with them. If you like it, please encourage others to get a copy too, before it goes out of print.

I welcome any additional comments you'd like to make after you read it. Send those e-mails to me at [mikerdna@hotmail.com](mailto:mikerdna@hotmail.com)

## TWO EVENTS



ICCS & OBOD WARMLY  
INVITE YOU  
TO A UNIQUE EVENT  
THE ONE TREE GATHERING  
*Celebrating and Exploring the  
Connections  
between Druidism and the  
Dharma*

*If you are seriously thinking of going, e-mail me at [mikerdna@hotmail.com](mailto:mikerdna@hotmail.com) and we may coordinate.*

### **30-31 October 2010 at the Shri Venkateswara Temple in Birmingham UK**

The ancient Dharmic religions of India share many points of connection with Druidism. Often spiritual seekers feel inspired by the teachings, myths, songs and rituals from both ends of the Indo-European arc, and those who find their inspiration in both Druidism and the Dharmic religions may well be reuniting strands of a common cultural and spiritual heritage.

In this weekend we are bringing together members of the Druid community with members of the Dharmic community to share rituals, meditation, songs, dances, stories and teachings. The gathering is sponsored jointly by the International Centre for Cultural Studies and The Order of Bards Ovates & Druids. If accommodation is required, delegates can be matched with host families in the region. The cost will be a nominal £30 per person to include all food and accommodation.

### SCHEDULE

**Friday Evening:** Time to arrive in Birmingham and settle into your accommodation, if you are travelling from afar.

**Saturday:** After a meditation, and both Hindu and Druid ceremonies, the day will unfold with interactions and explorations in small groups and with talks. There will also be an opportunity to watch Satish Kumar's beautiful film *Earth Pilgrim*. Lunch and supper will be vegetarian Indian food supplied by the temple, and in the evening a joint Eisteddfod celebration will be held with music, song and dance.

**Sunday:** After a Druid blessing and a puja, there will be chanting of Vedic and Druid mantras, and then the morning will unfold with talks and interactions and explorations in small groups. The gathering will finish after lunch in the temple. We hope that the weekend will foster greater understanding between the traditions, will inspire delegates to explore new avenues of understanding, and will offer a balanced range of activities: rituals, meditation and chanting to inspire our souls, social and artistic interaction to feed our hearts, intellectual stimulation to feed our minds, and wholesome and tasty food to feed our bodies.

If you feel inspired to join us please send your payment of £30 per person or £20 for a student (cheques made payable to OBOD) to: Penny Billington, OBOD, 4 Park View, Silver Street, Wells, Somerset BA5 1UW or email [touchstone@druidry.org](mailto:touchstone@druidry.org)



## **SAMHAIN AT TARA 2007 -2010**

**Submitted by Ellen Hopman  
to Mike the Fool**

A very special Samhain Celebration was held at Tara in 2007. Tara campaigners came together to resurrect an Ancient Irish tradition based on evidence from Tara's history and mythology.

Tara was always associated with Samhain and in Ancient times a tri-annual Feis (Festival) was held there, the Feis Teamhair. According to some researchers, a Beacon Fire was lit first by a woman (a personification of the Goddess) at Tlachtga now known as the Hill of Ward in

Athboy. From there, its flames were sent by a fleet of chariots to Tara to where the High King and his assembly awaited their arrival. The High King then lit the Sacred Fire at Tara from the flames of Tlachtga's heart. Once this had been done, Tara's seven surrounding hills were lit with flames from the Tara fire. From hill to hill and on every high place, beacons were lit in response throughout the land. It is said that no hearth in Ireland could be lit until it was lit by a brand from the fire at Tara. Some accounts say that the feasting and celebrations that occurred with this triennial celebration could continue for two weeks.

Based on this story, Tara campaigners created a Global Chain of Light on Oct 31st 07 with beacons being lit not just in Ireland but in countries worldwide to draw attention to the plight of the Tara Skryne Valley.

In a massive show of support for our cause, Fire Pledges came pouring in from people lighting their fires in conjunction with ours in the following places:

### **Ireland**

Armagh, Antrim, Cork, Down, Dublin, Galway, Kerry, Kildare, Laois, Leitrim, Mayo, Meath, Monaghan, Offaly, Roscommon, Tipperary, Waterford, West Meath and Wexford.

### **Worldwide,**

Brazil, Canada, England, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Scotland, and Wales.

### **USA**

Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia and Washington.



This year, 2010, we will light the Fires again ( smaller scale perhaps) and ask that you join us and encourage others to take part also. We celebrate our rich history, tradition and culture as we honour the Ancestors together this Samhain. We will be doing a very special Ceremony at Collierstown- more details nearer the time. If you cant be here please remember Tara as you light your fire wherever you are. Please help to spread the word.

## **Mending Our Relations with the Natural World:**

The First Annual Conference of the Earth Medicine Alliance

November 6-7th, 2010 in San Francisco, CA

Submitted by Stacey

This weekend conference will call together diverse earth-honoring spiritual leaders and elders for interfaith dialogue, panels and presentations, and co-created earth ceremonies on public lands around San Francisco. Presenters include Ohlone elders, Buddhist priests, pagan leaders, eco-psychologists, chi gong teachers, orisha priests, shamanic practitioners, and other earth advocates.

On Saturday, Nov 6th we will gather at the Unitarian Universalist Center > of San Francisco, and on Sunday smaller breakout groups will offer co-created earth healing ceremonies on public lands in and around San Francisco. Please consider joining us in this gathering of interfaith exchange and earth healing. Registration is limited to 250 and cost is \$50. Early registration is encouraged.

The Earth Medicine Alliance is an interfaith, earth-honoring 501(c)3 non-profit committed to remembering human beings as one expression of the natural world and to nourishing alliances with our other-than-human relatives. For more info visit [www.earthmedicine.org](http://www.earthmedicine.org)

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I'll try to give credit to whoever the original author is, and they retain the copyright to their works, and we'll reprint it one day in a future binding also. Nasty works will not be published. Although my standards are not sky-high, incomplete works will be nurtured towards a publish-able form. Submissions are accepted from other publications and organizations, so you need not be a formal member of the RDNA to have your items published.