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Editor's Notes

Isaac's death in August still reverberates in the community, like a mighty cedar tree falling in the forest, leaving a great gap in the canopy. As you know the last issue was dedicated to him, and now we resume a new Celtic year with our standard format. I hope that you all invoke Isaac's memory at Samhain, Ellen also forwarded to me a list of Pagan Pioneers from Oberon Zell, you might wish to commemorate a few others.

Deadline for the **Yule issue** is December 10, 2010. For Submissions of essays, poems, cartoons, reviews, conferences, events, grove news, articles of interest, etc: Send to mikerdna@hotmail.com



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Sacred Groves

News of the Groves

A fuller list of the known active Reformed Druid groves is available at
www.rdna.info/wheretrove.html
<http://rdg.mithrilstar.org/grovelist.htm>

Habitat Grove: News from Quebec

Since my wife and kids did not go to Japan to spend the winter with the grandparents, many of my cross-country trips that I planned had to be cancelled. I apologize for the short notice. I should know the country of my Nov 2011 next posting before December, but it will likely be a very long ways from Northfield MN (either Asia or Europe or Africa).

Koad Protogrove: News from Ohio

Koad Protogrove of Toledo, Ohio celebrated the Autumnal Equinox and our second anniversary as a Protogrove! Bran and Morgaine were welcomed into the 2nd Order and we happily moved into our 3rd year as a Protogrove, hoping to soon become a Grove

Yours in the Mother,

Phagos

Koad Protogrove

Clan of the Triple Horse: News from Oregon

Clan of the Triple Horse, Medford, Oregon, recently welcomed several guests to a meet and greet coffee in Medford. Guess enjoyed a chance to relax, meet several members, and learned about our path.

Several newcomers also joined us in celebrating the Autumn Equinox, a time of bounty and thanksgiving, at the beautiful Labyrinth at Rogue Valley Medical Center, Medford. As we journeyed to the Center we offered thanks for what we have manifested and harvested during our season of growth. We also offered a brief thanks for the life of ADF Founder Isaac Bonewits, who crossed the Veil August 12, 2010. We will have a more formal commemoration of his life during our Samhain Rite.

We will hold our Samhain Rite at the home of founders Aigeann and Seven Tines. Plans will also include the burning of a Wickerman to burn away all our troubles as we come to the close of the Celtic year. Details will be announced on our Web site,
<http://triplehorses.weebly.com/>

Japan News:

Brother Avery has followed my example, and he is now in Kyushu Island of Japan for a few years. If you'd like to meet him, contact me, and I'll patch you together.



POEM: "REGRET"

By Phagos

I gave flowers to the Goddess
And the woods were very still
I listened and I listened
And all I heard
Was the wind whispering by

I lit a candle for the Goddess
And held it up for her to see
I watched and I watched
And all I saw
Were the shadows from the flame

I said a prayer for myself
And sent it to the Night
It left my lips
Without speaking
It passed my ears
Without listening
It left my vision
Without seeing
It left me standing
Without feeling

I walked home
With Regret,
Cruel maiden:
She fed me
Bitter cherries
And cold pieces
Of yesterday's dreams



Dr. Druid

A column for medical questions, 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!

Reflections of a Physicians Apprentice

Irony Sade

September, 2010

I went outside last night and spent a hand full of minutes watching the red moon rise. For just a few moments there was silence. No demands. No summoning voices. No computers. Nothing to question, or drive a needle into. It was nice.

It was the first time in weeks I have slowed down intentionally to admire the worlds beauty, the first time I paused to simply be. I used to be good at that. I used to dedicate entire days to experiencing the world around me, the scents, sights, feelings of being present without the thoughts and plans and calculations the mind vomits forth. I once spent an entire day just fasting and gathering firewood, another under a vow of silence to observe what my thoughts did when I could not speak them aloud. I miss that simplicity.

In the last two months I took an acting internship in the Emergency Room at Upstate, and was very glad to find I still enjoy emergency medicine. I spent four weeks with a bone surgeon in Auburn, learning how to speak "ortho" when describing an x-ray over the phone. I had my Quality Improvement intervention torpedoed by my preceptor's three partners, and had to restart that months-long project from scratch. I applied to sixteen residency programs, only two of which represent conceivable commutes from our little farm. I spent ten days on erythromycin and more on steroids for a respiratory bug, then sat my nine hour boards exam coughing into my sleeve. At the clinic I handled my first bad miscarriage, diagnosed my first new atrial fibrillation, and reinserted my first displaced suprapubic catheter.

I feel spread thin. Unfocused in time. My concern is stretched over so many people, projects, plans that I fear I will lose track of someone, that something will slip. So I work harder, get up earlier, make lists.

Right now I don't know if my residency will last three years or five, if it will be here or in Seattle, or even if I will be lucky enough to get one. I don't know what the future will bring my family, my patients or myself. In truth one never does, and in general that never bothers me. Maybe that is because in general I am more grounded in the present than I feel right now. Today, distracted, scattered, with an uncertain future I must find a way to be unusually well grounded if I am to be of any use to my patients and family.

That is what I learned from taking a moment to watch the red moon rise.

Reflections of a Physicians Apprentice

Irony Sade

October, 2010

Rustle-crunch...

Rustle-crunch...

Leaves churn over my toes as I walk, hidden in the grey light. Not many. Not yet.

Only a few are down, from most trees. More cling to the maples, pale and sickly on one, a joyful riot of colors on the next, one last celebration before the long dark. It is a strange time. The Ash, the Thistle, the Sumac, have given up the ghost. They know what is coming, knew it from the first touch of frost. 'Time to go,' they sighed, and set all their summer's burdens down. They stand mute. Naked. The not-yet-winter wind hisses through their bones.

Rustle-crunch...

And yet I see flowers. Pale faces shining from the dark field. 'See?' they say. 'It's not over! There is still time!' 'I am still beautiful! See!' For them perhaps there is time, time to spread their pollen on the wind, to witness one more sunrise, to feed one last butterfly, late hatching in the cold. For those that live a mere season, one more week is a real gain, a triumphant defiance against the rising night. The trees know better. They have seen many flowers fade.

Rustle-crunch...

The sky pinks. Sea-gulls scatter west against the wind. Maybe today will be warmer. Maybe I will take that walk, past the fence, beyond the stream: outside my habit driven bounds. How many days are left in which I might? Something rustles in the brush as I brush past. A mouse? A chipmunk? Some small live thing still harvesting seeds for the winter. A warm, breathing, rustling, thing alive with nervous industry that has so far escaped the cats, the foxes, the hawks, the bringers of the sudden crunch.

Rustle-crunch...

Clinic duty today. Mostly minor injuries. Mostly-harmless aches. Yet also the first sieve, the first winnowing out of real illness. Am I going to ruin someone's morning? Will I have to tell them that mild fatigue, that faint swelling of your shins is not the pill you missed? It is not the cooler air, the party you threw, the food you ate. It is your heart failing. You can't go home today.

Rustle-crunch...

I halt. Breath. Look up. The sky's brief pinks are gone. The clouds pale grudgingly, but spread, close ranks against the sun. I turn back. Maybe tomorrow I will take that walk, maybe tonight, when all my work is done. Perhaps there will be a sunset; perhaps the stubborn trees will still wave their defiance against the cold. Perhaps there will still be flowers in the fall. A hawk drifts high and dismal as I pass back by the brush.

Rustle-crunch...

Rustle-crunch...

Rustle... Crunch.



Reformed Druid Shamanism.

Willem Hartman, Reformed Druid
(2nd Order - Elder Grove, France)

My Druidic Path can be quite 'Shamanic' at times. This September I went to the 4th UK Conference of the Society for Shamanic Practitioners. It's the third year in a row I'm going and to be honest it's such a great place to be that I'm looking forward to it all year long.

The conference is organized by the SSP (Society for Shamanic Practitioners), which is an organization created by shamanic practitioners who

are also professionals in the medical profession (therapists, doctors, etc) - but is open for all other types practitioners, like me.

Participants are from a large section of styles of shamanism. There are also people who do not have a lot of experience in shamanism, or have just been introduced to it.

It is necessary to know how to make a 'shamanic journey', but newbies can learn this technique rather quickly. There is a pre-conference workshop on how to journey, on the day of arrival exactly for that purpose.

There are many workshops, so many that one has to make a pick and choose your favorite. One can chose between shamanic styles from basically all continents, including new modern occidental styles.

One style which is both occidental and new is Celtic Shamanism. It is new, yet it is inspired by ancient Celtic culture. I used to have a period of more strict adherence to Reconstructionism, yet for now I do not want to go into a discussion whether Celtic Shamanism is truly Celtic, or whether these two terms mix. One thing for sure is that there is something to learn in everything and so I decided to avoid the question and simply keep an open mind and see what's in it for me. Even if it was only a question of respect towards those who give the workshops.

Both in 2009 and this year in 2010, author Tom Cowan was present and I had the honor to follow his workshops. Next time I'll speak about the 2009 workshop, for now I want to concentrate on this years workshop. I would like to say that this is my version of what happened and what was said. Tom could probably correct my following text and sift out the personalized version.

The workshop was on the topic of the Great Song, also called the Oran Mor. This word can refer to a Creator God but also to Creation itself.

There are three notes emanating from De Dagda's harp. In another story these notes are personified by three Tuatha De Danaan. They are named Goltrai, Geantrai and Suantrai and are the sons of Boand, wife of Uaithne, who is De Dagda's Harper.

Geantrai means Happiness, Suantrai means Lullaby and Goltrai means Lament.

During the workshop we were encouraged to journey towards Creation, to Song and to the Three Brothers. We were asked to see how we relate to the notes of Happiness, Lament and Lullaby.

Since Core Shamanism is based upon personal interpretation, everyone has a different experience and everyone comes away with their own particular insights and new knowledge.

I can only speak about my own.

The Three Brothers came to my as: Joy (Geantrai), Sadness (Goltrai) and Beauty (Suantrai).

Joy-Geantrai appeared to me as Expansion, Sadness-Goltrai as Contraction and Suantrai-Beauty as the middle point, almost as the synthesis of the two first (as the new thesis, the product of the confrontation of thesis and anti-thesis).

I found that there's no beauty without Sadness and Joy. You cannot have either only joy, or only beauty without the occasional sadness. This has taught me a lesson in acceptance. Sadness (and in a larger setting: suffering in general) is part of existence, inescapable and instead of resisting, accepting and coping is better. It made me think of ACT, or Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. Silly question: did the Tuatha De do ACT?

The Three also appeared to me as the Wheel of the Year. Sadness, being Contraction in my Journey, was the Dark Half of the Year (Season of Sleep in our own terminology), Joy/Expansion, was the Light Half (Season of Wakening). Beauty appeared as the Harmony between the two. Beauty was kind of always present.

I have to note that this is purely a personal experience and is not dogma in any way. It's only 'true' for me and for those who have the same type of experience.

They did not appear to me in an anthropomorphic form, but as weather phenomena, like wind, and rain, as well as forests and falling leaves and other landscape based elements.

What was interesting was that all of nature and the changing of the seasons, was basically music. The World Is Music.

It wasn't far away from the first chapter in the Silmarillion, the Ainulindalë (the Song of the Ainur), where Eru, known as the One, has his/her thoughts becoming reality and take the shape of Powers (Ainur). They make music and their concert is the Universe and Time.

Afterward they descent into their own song and become Air, Water, Land, Vegetation, Animal, etc. Their story from that on has actually been sung by them beforehand (if beforehand exists, since their time with Eru can be considered to be outside of time - which is not far a way from how many shamans see the Spirit World). When they sandg the song they sang with the voices of wind, water and land as well as the sound of fire and ice, of trees and and animal. The World is a Song. Is it possible to listen, not 'hear' – but truly Listen? And could we learn how to sing with the Tuatha (or the Ainur, depending on your personal mythology). Can we sing in harmony – and, most of all... can we find the deep silence inside of us which allows us to hear the song, already present in our body, in our heart, in our soul?

With that rather Socratic question I leave you, dear reader, in confusion perhaps, or boredom, and wish you all the best of Druidism to happen to you, mostly as a blessing.

/I\

Copyleft by

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Druids in the Media

Noticed that this company was a sponsor to an event in Montreal.
Software company at www.druide.com



The Druid Network Charity Press Release

After a four-year fight, The Druid Network has finally been given charitable status by the Charity Commission. The first Druid group ever to be accepted by the Charity Commissioners and entered onto the Register of Charities, the move establishes Druidry as a bone fide religion under English Charity Law, and gives Druidry equal status with other qualifying religions. It also recognises that The Druid Network exists to advance religion for the public benefit.

Phil Ryder, Chair of Trustees for The Druid Network, had overall responsibility for making the application. He says: "It was a long and at times frustrating process, exacerbated by the fact that the Charity Commissioners had no understanding of our beliefs and practices, and examined us on every aspect of them. Their final decision document runs to 21 pages, showing the extent to which we were questioned in order to finally get the recognition we have long argued for."

Emma Restall Orr, founder of The Druid Network, hopes this landmark decision will make it easier for other modern Pagan traditions to get charitable status for their aid organisations. She says: "The Charity Commission now has a much greater understanding of Pagan, animist, and polytheist religions, so other groups from these minority religions – provided they meet the financial and public benefit criteria for registration as charities - should find registering a much shorter process than the pioneering one we have been through."

The full acceptance document can be found on the Charity Commission's website, at http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/Library/about_us/druiddec.pdf



Druids recognized as religion for first time in UK

By SYLVIA HUI, Associated Press Writer Sat Oct 2, 3:52 pm ET

LONDON – Druids have been worshipping the sun and earth for thousands of years in Europe, but now they can say they're practicing an officially recognized religion.

The ancient pagan tradition best known for gatherings at Stonehenge every summer solstice has been formally classed as a religion under charity law for the first time in Britain, the national charity regulator said Saturday. That means Druids can receive exemptions from taxes on donations “and now have the same status as such mainstream religions as the Church of England.

The move gives an old practice new validity, said Phil Ryder, the chairman of the 350-member Druid Network. “It will go a long way to make Druidry a lot more accessible,” he said.

Druids have practiced for thousands of years in Britain and in Celtic societies elsewhere in Europe. They worship natural forces such as thunder and the sun, and spirits they believe arise from places such as mountains and rivers. They do not worship a single god or creator, but seek to cultivate a sacred relationship with the natural world.

Although many see them as robed, mysterious people who gather every summer solstice at Stonehenge — which predates the Druids — believers say modern Druidry is chiefly concerned with helping practitioners connect with nature and themselves through rituals, dancing and singing at stone circles and other sites throughout the country believed to be “sacred.”

Ancient Druids were known to be religious leaders, judges and sages among the Celts during pre-Christian times, although little evidence about their lives survived. There are now various Druid orders and about 10,000 practitioners in Britain — and believers said the numbers are growing because more people are becoming aware of the importance to preserve the environment.

The Druid Network fought for nearly five years to be recognized under the semi-governmental Charity Commission, which requires proof of cohesive and serious belief in a supreme entity and a moral framework. After initially rejecting the Druid Network's application, the Charity Commission decided this week that Druidry fit the bill.

“There is sufficient belief in a supreme being or entity to constitute a religion for the purposes of charity law,” the commission said.

Adrian Rooke, a Druid who works as a counselor, said Druidry appeals to people who are turning away from monotheistic religions but still long for an aspect of spirituality in their lives.

“It uplifts the spirit,” he said. “The world is running out of resources, and in that context it's more important to people now to formulate a relationship with nature.”

NOT EVERYONE WAS PLEASED WITH THE NEWS:



Melanie Phillips

Druids as an official religion?

Stones of Praise here we come

By [Melanie Phillips](#)

Last updated at 9:36 AM on 4th October 2010

Will someone please tell me this is all a joke. Until now, Druids have been regarded indulgently as a curious remnant of Britain's ancient past, a bunch of eccentrics who annually dress up in strange robes at Stonehenge to celebrate the summer solstice.

However, according to the Charity Commission, they are to be recognised as a religion and, as a result, afforded charitable status, with the tax exemptions and other advantages that follow.

After a four-year campaign, the Commission says it accepts that the Druids worship nature and that they also believe in the spirits of places such as mountains and rivers, as well as in 'divine guides'.

This, apparently, makes them qualify as a religion.

Can it be long before the BBC transmits Stones Of Praise, or solemnly invites listeners to Radio 4's Thought For The Day to genuflect to a tree?

Some might shrug this off. After all, the Druids don't do any harm to anyone. What skin is it off anyone else's nose how they are categorised?

Cult

Well, it actually matters rather a lot. Elevating them to the same status as Christianity is but the latest example of how the bedrock creed of this country is being undermined. More than that, it is an attack upon the very concept of religion itself.

This is because Druidry is simply not a religion. Now, it's true that religion is notoriously difficult to define. But true religions surely rest on an established structure of traditions, beliefs, literature and laws.

Above all, they share a belief in a supernatural deity (or more than one) that governs the universe.

By these standards, Druidry is surely not a religion but a cult — a group defined merely by ritual practices but which stands outside mainstream religion.

Nor does it seem to conform to the definition of a religion according to charity law.

When Radio 4's Sunday Programme suggested yesterday morning to Phil Ryder, chairman of the Druid Network, that the legal definition of religion included a

'significant belief in a supreme being or entity', he saw no contradiction. Druids, he said cheerfully, might venerate many gods, inanimate objects or nature.

How very inclusive of them! But the key point is surely that none of these beliefs involves a 'supreme' being that exists beyond the Earth and the universe. On the contrary, Druids worship what is in or on the earth itself.

When asked further how Druidry benefited the public interest — the key test for charitable status — Mr Ryder burred that its ethical framework consisted of forming 'honourable and sustainable relationships' with everything in the world, including animals, people and nature.

But there are many who subscribe to no belief system at all and who would say they, too, want to live in harmony with the earth and everything in it. Are they, therefore, also to be regarded as religious folk and given charitable status?

Maybe Prince Charles, who famously talks to his plants, could register himself on that basis as the founder of a new religion? Duchy Devotions, anyone?

If the Druids qualify as a religion, can other cults such as the Scientologists be far behind?

Can it be long, indeed, before the wise and learned theologians of the Charity Commission similarly grant charitable status to sorcery, witchcraft or even the Jedi — the fictional Star Wars 'religion' which the 2001 census recorded as having no fewer than 390,127 adherents in England and Wales.

The whole thing is beyond absurd. But it is also malevolent. For it is all of a piece with the agenda by the oh-so politically correct Charity Commission to promote the fanatical religious creed of the Left — the worship of equality.

The Commission was primed by Labour for this attempt to restructure society back in 2006, when charity law was redrawn to redefine 'public benefit' as helping the poor.

This put the independent schools in the front line of attack, since education was no longer itself considered a benefit — as it had been since time immemorial — but only insofar as it furthered the ideology of 'equality'.

Extraordinary

Thus, we have arrived at the extraordinary situation where some of these schools, which have delivered such inestimable benefit to the nation, face the loss of their charitable status, which is to be given instead to people who dance naked around stones and worship the sun.

But the new respectability of paganism cannot be laid entirely at the Charity Commission's door. For in recent years, pagan practices have been rapidly multiplying, with an explosion of the occult: witchcraft, parapsychology, séances, telepathy and mind-bending cults.

Astonishingly, around 100 members of the Armed Forces now classify themselves as pagans, and a further 30 as witches.

There are thought to be about 500 pagan police officers. A Pagan Police Association has even been set up to represent officers who 'worship nature and believe in many gods'.

They have been given the right to take days off to perform rituals, such as leaving food out for the dead, dressing up as ghosts and casting spells, or celebrating the sun god with 'unabashed sexuality and promiscuity'.

Britain's prison authorities are equally hospitable to the occult: under instructions issued to every prison governor, pagan 'priests' are allowed to use wine and wands during ceremonies in jails. Inmates practising paganism are allowed a hoodless robe, incense and a piece of religious jewellery among their personal possessions.

Political correctness gone mad or what? As one disgusted police officer exploded: 'What has it come to when a cop gets time off so he can sit about making spells or dance around the place drinking honey beer with a wand in his hand?'

Barking

How on earth has our supposedly rational society come to subscribe to so much totally barking mumbo-jumbo?

In part, it developed from the New Age embrace of Eastern beliefs in the inter-connectedness of everything in the universe. The defining characteristic of such faiths is a spirituality which is concerned with the self rather than the world beyond the individual.

These beliefs were, therefore, tailor-made for the 'me society' which turned against Biblical constraints on behaviour in the interests of others. They were subsequently given rocket fuel by environmentalism, at the core of which lies the pagan worship of 'Mother Earth'.

And they were then legitimised by the doctrines of equality of outcomes and human rights — which, far from protecting the rights of truly religious people, aim to force Biblical morality and belief out of British and European public life altogether.

This is because human rights and equality of outcomes are held to be universal values. That means they invariably trump specific religious beliefs to impose instead equal status for all creeds.

But if all creeds, however absurd, have equal meaning then every belief is equally meaningless. And without the Judeo-Christian heritage there would be no morality and no true human rights.

There is nothing remotely enlightened about paganism. It was historically tied up with both communism and fascism, precisely because it is a negation of reason and the bedrock values behind Western progress.

The result is that, under the secular onslaught of human rights, our society is reverting to a pre-modern era of anti-human superstition and irrationality. From human rights, you might say, to pagan rites in one seamless progression.

Anyone who thinks radical egalitarianism is progressive has got this very wrong. We are hurtling backwards in time to a more primitive age.

NOT EVERYONE ACCEPTED SUCH A POSTING, HERE'S WHAT DRUID NETWORK RESPONDED



The Druid Network
Inspiring, Informing, Facilitating

<http://druidnetwork.org/files/core/Response%20to%20Melanie%20Philips.pdf>

A reply to Melanie Philips' article in The Daily Mail (Tuesday 5 October 2010) "Druids as an official religion?"

When the trustees of The Druid Network sent out the press release letting the world know the Charities Commission had granted us charitable status for the advancement of our religion, we did so - we now freely admit - perhaps with more relief and joy, than with full preparation.

It had been a long journey. With all respect to the Commission, although it was at times enormously frustrating, it was clear that they were not being obstructive through prejudice. Their idea of religion was firmly placed within the bounds of the Abrahamic faiths. Indeed, close questioning of their understanding of Buddhism and Hinduism was often met with some evasion, and at times an honest acknowledgement that their information was very sketchy. Countless letters, telephone conversations and meetings were filled with their questions and our answers. It took some five years of fastidious enquiry for the commissioners to grasp the idea of nature as deity. However, we don't believe the decision was made just to move us out of the in-tray; they knew that to register us would be an historic decision and have a considerable impact on many other minority faiths. I really think they had begun to understand.

It is hardly surprising, then, that Melanie Philips, as a journalist determined to retain a view of the world through the blinkers of old-fashioned right wing indignation, writes a piece that makes it very clear she has not the first idea of about our faith.

Druidry teaches us to live through honourable relationship. It is a phrase that can appear meaningless to the non-Druid, and indeed it takes a lifetime of Druidic practice to grasp the fullness of the words; it is as simple and yet huge a concept as a 'love thy neighbour' to the Christian. At the risk of being simplistic then, essentially it means this: every part of nature has its own inherent purpose, its place within the fabric or ecology of an environment, formed and held by its relationships, humming with the forces of nature, and in recognising that, we can make decisions that allow for harmonious and sustainable interaction. We are all part of nature and nature's ongoing creativity; living honourably guides us to create with grace and inspiration. Forgive my poetry. Without the poetic, I might put it like this: everything we do has an impact, so be awake and care-full.

It is not a philosophy based upon conflict. We learn not to assume oppositions and polarities that provoke an antagonistic reaction. Indeed, where someone hurls abuse and invective in our direction, we are taught not to fight back. We don't turn the other cheek, we defend our position, but by reviewing the context, exploring what and why the moment has come to pass, why there is anger or fear, we respond accordingly.

Melanie Philips' attack on Druidry, so thick as it was with her offensive attitude and lack of research or understanding, has provoked many within the Druid and Pagan faith communities to feel hurt and angry. There has been much discussion as to what would be the best course of action. Together with letters sent to The Daily Mail in response, we hope this reply will explain

a little more of what Druidry is.

The Daily Mail is not a newspaper read by many Druids: an obvious statement, no doubt. Many reading it have been horrified that such words could be published, but freedom of speech is an important part of our culture. Indeed, many

feel that Ms Philips has hoisted herself on her own petard of ignorance, and no further comment is needed. In many ways, that is probably true.

So do her individual points need to be addressed? I can find nothing in the article in terms of philosophical or theological statements that doesn't make me shrug and smile, frowning confused and bewildered. To begin with, I wonder if 'bedrock' was perhaps an unfortunate term to describe the creed of this nation as Christian, given that Druidry was the religion of this land long before the birth of Christ or the arrival of his followers in Britain.

Furthermore, given that Druidry is often erroneously accused of supernatural practices, I like the fact that Ms Philips declares the need for a supernatural focus in order for a set of beliefs to be a religion, a focus that Druidry, she says, fails to hold. Her dismissal of the explanation offered to the BBC Radio 4 Sunday Programme by my co-trustee Phil Ryder, that Druids might 'venerate many gods, inanimate objects or nature' (her words, not his) also made me laugh: she not only ignores the rich vein of pantheism in Western philosophy and spiritual practice, but reveals her ignorance about and prejudice against both animism and polytheism, traditions practised by countless millions around the world.

That we may venerate so many things, she decries with a tone of tired cynicism, is altogether 'very inclusive', as if to be inclusive is in itself laughable. She continues by dismissing our ethics of sustainable relationship in the same tone, and suggests the notion of 'equality' is ridiculous beyond words. That petard is happily flying in the wind.

Instead she calls for a return to reason. It is a battle cry that always somewhat confuses me. Where a Christian accuses Druidry as being irrational, I can again only direct him to the wealth of philosophical debate over millennia that, with flawless logic and rationality, questions the belief in a supernatural god. I must assume Ms Philips is not a Christian, but simply a proponent of non-religious 'Christian' conservatism; her attitude towards Druidry does not reveal Christian values. So is this fundamentalist atheism raising its ugly head? In which case, what is it about Druidry that is irrational? There is no blind faith or belief in something beyond nature. Nothing in terms of scientific discovery could undermine the Druid's view of the sanctity of nature. The 'spirits of place' which Ms Philips rightly points out we acknowledge are not 'ghosts in the machine' of nature, but the essence of nature, its constituent particles, energies, forces and patterns. Poetically we may use the terms spirits, soul, song, but we are talking about the stuff of existence, simply using our own religious language instead of that used by philosophers and scientists who are themselves exploring the essence of matter, consciousness and life. Where is the superstition?

Furthermore, on the simplest level, it is surely entirely rational to seek sustainability in this world. The tenets of Druidry teach us to live with respect for the environment and its human and non-human ecosystems. For Druids, this path is a religious one, instead of a secular one, yet neither is this evidence of a lack of reason. Our ethics are based upon devotion, study and gratitude, not imaginary spirits.

Ms Philips' ignorance or determined indignation continues beyond the definition of Druidry, but also shows how little she knows about charity law or the Commission. If an organisation is truly working for the public

benefit, caring for members of society and the world within which we live, then the Charities Commission should indeed consider their application. Does it matter what beliefs

motivate their work? Surely, an organisation whose beliefs are in any way detrimental to society would not be registered by the commissioners. To be a charity, the parameters are clear: the public must benefit from your work. To dismiss an organisation whose work benefits the public simply because you don't like or understand their beliefs is religious prejudice: the Charities Commission understood this and sought to understand Druidry in order to ensure that they were not themselves expressing such prejudice. Ms Philips fails in this regard.

And forgive me if I just mention, again: very few Druids go to Stonehenge at the summer solstice or at any other time.

So where does this leave us? Actually, I am finding it hard to understand just what the target was of Melanie Philips' article. Going through the words a good number of times, the focus appears to meander. What I am left with is a sense of what perhaps she would like to present as her own values. It seems to me that her world must be very busy, noisy, colourful - yet empty. Descartes and those who took onboard his mechanistic worldview were happy to dissect living animals in order to understand what made them tick. This notion of a clockwork world, where only human beings have souls, sentience or consciousness, is still reeking havoc, bringing our world deeper into environmental and social crisis. It feels plastic and soulless to me. I sense Ms Philips is still treading its path.

If someone whose beliefs are wholly atheistic lives a life that is rich with respect, for the human and nonhuman world within which they live, then I embrace them. I am interested to hear the vision and philosophy that underlies their ethics. I don't need to evangelise Druidry. However, the tone of Ms Philips' article does not express any such ethical base, and for that reason I am saddened to read her words, and saddened too by the hurt those words have caused within the Druid and Pagan faith communities of Britain and beyond.

I would end with a link to Keith Kahn-Harris' article in The Guardian, which addresses Ms Philips' perspective from another angle (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/jun/18/melanie-phillips-rightwing>), and to wonder if indeed we should have badges, like Stephen Fry, which celebrate that we are now 'hated by the Daily Mail'.

Emma Restall Orr

Founder and Trustee of The Druid Network

October 2010



Departed Pioneers

What is Remembered, Lives.

Departed Pagan Pioneers, Founders
and Elders
(listed in chronological order of
death)

Old George Pickingill (5/26/1816-1909)

S.L. MacGregor-Mathers (1/8/1854-11/20/1918)

Dion Fortune (Violet Mary Firth Evans)
(12/6/1890-1/8/1946)

Aleister Crowley (10/12/1875-12/1/1947)

Rosamund Sabine (probable matriarch of group
into which Gardner was

initiated) (2/5/1865-5/6/1948)

Old Dorothy Clutterbuck (1/19/1880-1/12/1951)

Pamela Colman-Smith (Pixie) (2/16/1878-9/18/1951)

Lydia Becket (Aradian Temple of Diana; Lawrence Museum of Magic &
Witchcraft) (d. 1952)

Austin Osman Spare (12/30/1886-5/15/1956)

Franz Bardon (12/1/1909-7/10/1958)

Katherine Oldmeadow (best friend of Dorothy Clutterbuck and probably a
member of the group who initiated Gardner) (6/10/1878-7/8/1963)

Gerald Brousseau Gardner (6/13/1884-2/12/1964)

Robert Cochrane/Roy Bowers (1734 Tradition) (1/26/1931-7/3/1966)

Ciarriadhe (Kerry Harvey) (Daughters of the Triple Goddess, Framingham, MA)
(6/21/1899-6/21/1969)

Norman Lindsay (Australian Pagan artist) (2/22/1879-11/21/1969)

Gleb Evgenievich Botkin (Church of Aphrodite-1930s) (7/29/1900-12/1969)

Barbara Vickers (Gerald Gardner's first initiate) (7/13/1922-1973)

Arnold Crowther (10/7/1909-5/1/1974)

Edith Woodford-Grimes (Dafo) (12/18/1887-10/28/1975)

Phillip Peter Ross Nichols (6/28/1902-4/30/1975)

Ernie Mason (hereditary Witch in the group who initiated Gardner)
(9/1/1885-2/26/1979)

Susie Mason (hereditary Witch in group who initiated Gardner, sister of
Ernie Mason) (8/22/1882-3/30/1979)

Monica English (traditional Witch from East Anglia and member of Bricket
Wood coven for awhile) (1/8/1920-9/30/1979)

Bonnie Sherlock (Delphic Coven, Lander, WY) (d. late '70s)

Rosaleen Miriam Norton (Australia) (10/2/1917-12/5/1979)

John Score (8/1914-12/30/1979)

Jack Bracelin (member of Bricket Wood coven, ran Fiveacres naturist club,
co-author of biography "Gerald Gardner Witch") (6/2/1926-7/28/1981)

Sybil Leek (Diary of a Witch) (2/22/1917-10/26/1982)

Monique Campbell Wilson (Olwen) (1923-1982)

Gwydion Pendderwen (the Faerie Shaman) (5/21/1946-11/9/1982)

George "Pat" Patterson (Georgian Wicca, Bakersfield, CA) (d. 1984)

Francis Israel Regardie (11/17/1907-3/10/1985)

Grady Louis McMurtry (OTO, San Francisco) (10/18/1918-7/12/1985)

Lady Gwen Thomson (NECTW) (9/16/1928-5/22/1986)

"Grandmaster Eli" (Barney C. Taylor) (Druidic Craft of the Wise)
(9/22/1917-11/15/1987)

Alex Sanders (Orrell Alexander Carter) (King of the Alexandrian Witches)
(6/6/1926-4/30/1988)

Edmund Buczynski (Lord Hermes) (Minoan Brotherhood, NYC) (d. 1989)

Simon Goodman (9/16/1951-9/23/1991)

William G. Gray (1913-1992)

Scott Cunningham (6/27/1956-3/28/1993)

Marija Gimbutas (1921-2/2/1994)

Margaret St Clair (Sign of the Labrys) (2/17/1911-11/22/1995)

W. Holman Keith (Neo-Dianic Faith) (6/11/1900-1996)

Lord Theodore Mills (d. 1996)

Kerry Wendell Thornley (Omar Khayyam Ravenhurst) (Principia Discordia)
(4/17/1938-11/28/1998)

Ayeisha (KAM, Baltimore-DC area) (d. 1998)

Annette Hinshaw (PEN, ESBAT, WPPA) (d. 2/22/1999)

Sandy Kopf (Covenant of the Goddess) (d. 7/11/1999)

Doreen Valiente (Ameth) (1/4/1922-9/1/1999)

Marion Zimmer Bradley (The Mists of Avalon) (6/3/1930-9/25/1999)

Grechon Leigh (founder of SageTree in Michigan) (d. 7/18/1999)

Cecil Hugh Williamson (9/18/1909-12/9/1999)

Stewart Farrar (Alexandrian Wicca, Ireland) (6/28/1916-2/7/2000)

Leo Louis Martello (Sicilian Strega, NYC) (9/26/1030-6/29/2000)

Gregory Hill (Malaclypse the Younger) (Principia Discordia)
(5/21/1941-7/20/2000)

Judy Foster (Calypso Iris) (1932-2000)

Victor Henry Anderson (Feri) (5/21/1917-9/20/2001)

Eleanor Ray Bone (Artemis) (12/15/1911-9/21/2001)

Pauline Campanelli (1/25/1943-11/29/2001)

Jessie Wicker Bell "Lady Sheba" (7/18/1920-3/20/2002)

Charles Clark (4/26/1930-8/17/2002)

Kay Gardner (Pagan feminist musician) (d. 8/28/2002)

Nelson White (The White Light) (10/29/1938-8/23/2003)

Ellen Cannon Reed (3/21/1943-10/7/2003)

Patalee Glass-Koetep (Lady Phoenix) (10/27/1943-11/11/2003)

Evan John Jones (1936-2003)

Donald D. Harrison (Church of Eternal Source) (5/31/1931-1/7/2004)

Donna Cole Schultz (Pagan Way, Chicago, IL) (d. 3/31/2004)

Lady Circe (Alliance of the Old Religion) (9/8/1921-5/29/2004)

Alison Harlow (Covenant of the Goddess) (8/29/1934-6/13/2004)

Joseph "Bearwalker" Wilson (brought 1734 Tradition to U.S.)
(12/11/1942-8/4/2004)

Robert Larson (co-founder and Arch-Druid of Berkeley Grove of RDNA)
(9/31/1943-8/6/2004)

Judy Carusone (Isian, HP of Lady of the Sacred Flame) (d. 9/21/2004)

Albert N. Webb (aka Ur) (West Coast Eclectic Elder) (1/8/1947-1/7/2005)

Elizabeth Pepper Ca Costa (The Witch's Almanac) (12/7/1923-7/14/2005)

Lady Galadriel (Jodi Monogue) (Grove of the Unicorn, Atlanta, GA)
(1956-2/8/2006)

Lee Ann Hussey "motogrll" (musician, Annwfn) (7/31/1961-5/16/2006)

Robert Anton Wilson (Illuminatus!) (1/18/1932-1/11/2007)

Shekhinah Mountainwater (10/24/1939-8/11/2007)

Lady Phoenix (Mimi Rohwer) (HPs & Nat'l Director 1st Celtic Wiccan Church,
Inc.) (6/21/1932-1/21/2008)

Cora Anderson (wife of Victor) (Feri) (1/26/1915-5/1/2008)

Frederick MacLaren Adams (Feraferia) (2/4/1928-8/9/2008)

Sequoia Greenfield (Dianic, Earth First!) (1944-10/10/2008)

Marion Weinstein (Positive Magic and Earth Magic) (5/19/1939-7/1/2009)

Ted Andrews (Animal Speak) (7/16/1952-10/24/2009)

Norman Nelson (Reformed Druids of North America) (d. 4/2009)

Shay Lee (SCPN, Santa Rosa, CA) (d. 10/16/2009)

Roy 'Cuchulainn' Moorman (11/18/1957-3/1/2010)

Susan Leigh Star (d. 3/24/2010)

Hummy Byron (1947-4/24/2010)

Robin Goodfellow (Stephen Richard Edwards) (3/11/1945-5/1/2010)

Svetlana Butyrin (wife of Fred Adams) (Feraferia) (11/2/1934-5/6/2010)

Alexei Kondratiev (1949-5/28/2010)

Harold Moss (Church of Eternal Source) (1/30/1944-7/15/2010)

Phillip Emmons Isaac Bonewits (ADF) (10/1/1949-8/12/2010)

Lady Sintana (Candace Lehrman White) (House of Ravenwood, Atlanta, GA)

(1937-9/17/2010)

Len Rosenberg (Black Lotus) (partner of Alexei Kondratiev) (1951-10/15/2010)

Dates of birth and/or death needed:

Lawrence Edward Lawrence (Lawrence Museum of Magic & Witchcraft)

Bill & Helen Mohs (the Mohsian Tradition)

Grandma Julie Tower (Tower Family)

Others who have significantly influenced our modern Pagan world, and have now left us:

Charles Godfrey Leland (8/15/1824-3/20/1903)

William Butler Yeats (6/13/1865-1/28/1939)

Sir James George Frazer (1/1/1854-5/7/1941)

Arthur Edward Waite (10/2/1857-5/19/1942)

Ernest Thompson Seton (8/14/1860-10/23/1946)

Eric Neumann (1/23/1905-11/5/1960)

Margaret Alice Murray (7/13/1863-11/13/1963)

Aldous Huxley (7/26/1894-11/22/1963)

Abraham Maslow (4/1/1908-6/8/1970)

Jim Morrison (12/8/1943-7/3/1971)

J.R.R. Tolkien (1/3/1892-9/2/1973)

Theodore Sturgeon (2/26/1918-5/8/1985)

Robert Graves (7/24/1895-12/7/1985)

Joseph John Campbell (3/26/1904-10/30/1987)

Robert Anson Heinlein (7/7/1907-5/8/1988)

Manly Palmer Hall (Secret Teachings of All Ages) (3/18/1901-8/29/1990)

Gene Roddenberry (8/19/1921-10/24/1991)

Timothy Leary (10/22/1920-5/31/1996)

Idries Shah (6/16/1924-11/23/1996)

Carlos Castañeda (12/25/1925-4/27/1998)

Terrence McKenna (11/16/1946-4/3/2000)

Albert Hoffman (1/11/1906-4/29/2008)

Dr. Cornelius Railey Lyle II (aka "Bud" (6/24/1921-1/25/2009)

Jean Dubuis (Noted French alchemist, esotericist, and nuclear physicist.
Founder of "Les Philosophes de le Nature") (1919-4/6/2010)

*And so many others we have known whose lives and works made our Pagan world
what it is today. We shall not see their like again.*

Please add whomever else you can think of...and let me know!

Blessed Be-Oberon Zell





The 2010 Annual Golden Oak Awards (The third annual "Oakie" Awards)



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

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

- Tony Taylor of Henge of Keltria (HoK) tony_taylor@keltria.org
- Skip Ellison of Ar nDraiocht Fein (ADF) skip@skipellison.usv
- Michael Scharding of the Reformed Druids of North America (RDNA) mikerdna@hotmail.com
- Ellen Evert Hopman of Order of the White Oak (OWO) saille333@mindspring.com
- Ellis Arseneau of the Reformed Druids of Gaia (RDG) pendderwydd@reformed-druids.org
- Thomas Harris of the Missionary Order of the Celtic Cross (MOCC) [previously known as Reformed Druidic Wicca, RDW] ra_sput1n@yahoo.com (note the underscore)

SIMPLE RULES

In the first round, each judge can nominate up to two entries for each of the eleven categories of awards, choosing Druids who belong to any of these six organizations. Naturally, most judged tend to nominate entries from within their own group, which they know the best.

In the second round, each of the judges can vote for one entry from each of ten categories, but can not vote for their own nominee. If any nominee received two or more votes in the second round, then it will be declared a winner. If a nominee receives only one other vote in the 2nd round, then it will be declared to be an "honorable mention".

Note: If anyone wishes to enter a piece into the 2010 Golden Oak Awards of the DANAC committee, then send an e-mail to one of those judges that you know (from any group), listing a work from one of the eleven categories that was first released or completed between December 21 2009 and December 21, 2010. The judges may designate an alternative judge if they would like to not participate in 2010. Different rules or categories may be used next year possibly.

You can see just the names of winners at the Hall of Fame at www.rdna.info/danac.html
You can see details of winners's entries for 2009 & 2008 at www.rdna.info/danac2009.doc

PRIZE:

Winners of each the 10 DANAC awards will receive a \$33.33 prize from the Druid Academy, a blessed pretty rock, and international fame and kudos

The Eleven Categories

The categories are again, as following:

1. Most interesting internal grove project begun or completed in 2010 Non-exhaustive examples include: liturgical design, fund- raising, recruitment, education, development, site-planning, web- development, meeting style, festival/meeting idea, etc.
2. Inspiring external project begun in 2010 by a grove or member (s) of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, RDG. Non-exhaustive examples include: activism, ecology, public outreach, legal moves, publishing, charity, civic involvement, interaction with other religious organization, etc.
3. Greatest hardship overcome in 2010 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, RDG. Publicly admissible, of course, no gossip please. Non-exhaustive examples include: persecution, financial obstacles, medical impairments, isolation, time constraints, educational restraints, etc.
4. Best poem or song released in 2010 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, RDG.
5. Best work of art completed or released in 2010 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, RDG. Non exhaustive examples: painting, drawing, sculpture, digital art, clay, collage, photography, etc. Dance choreography will be considered if an internet video is provided. Collaborating artists will receive a single prize.
6. Best craftwork completed or released in 2010 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, RDG. Non exhaustive examples: leatherwork, metalwork, clothing, needlepoint, moulding, weaving, jewelry, basketry, woodwork, stonework, etc. Food, drink, cosmetics and brewing can't be tested easily enough in disparate parts of the U.S. Collaborative craftspeople will receive a single prize.
7. Best academic book released in 2010 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, RDG. At least 50 pages in length, can be on any subject somehow applicable to "Druidism", modern or ancient, such as history, religion, crafts, art, philosophy, spirituality, ethnicity, language, etc.
8. Best novel released in 2010 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, RDG. At least 50 pages in length with a Druidical bent.
9. Best short story released in 2010 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, RDG. In principle, under 50 pages in length with a Druidical bent.
10. Best "Druidical" essay or article released or printed in 2010 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, RDG
11. Best movie or video-clip or instructional video, released or revised in 2010, that advances the positive perception of Druidism in some way produced by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, or RDG.
12. "Lifetime Achievement Award" for any member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO or RDG with usually 20+ years of activity in Druidism, exceptional contributions to the field of Druidism, and usually at a "retirement" point from intense public activity in their career. This special category

requires 3 or more judges to vote for the candidate, in addition to the nominator. A Druid cannot receive this reward twice. Generally, at most, one candidate will be awarded this in any year, and it should not be given out lightly. It is requested that a one or two page biography be provided about this candidate, if they are not well-known outside their group.



Druid Training

By Daniel Hansen
From his correspondence course

MAKING OF A DRUID

The ancient Druid, according to Caesar, took twenty years of training and studying to become Druids. From other sources, it can be gleaned that the process of becoming a Druid was a slow one.

According to one surviving British tradition, before an aspirant to the priesthood could attain to the exalted rank of Druid, he had to pass through the two preliminary and definite degrees of Bard and Vate or Ovate. Many of the youth of the land, however, who entered the service of the temple, did so with the express intention of remaining in the ranks of one or other of these two Druidic Orders. The first requisite for admission as a disciple was unimpeachable moral character. He was watched by all to find some fault and when none was found, he was initiated by graduating steps into the mysteries and instructed in the doctrines and practices of the Druids.

According to the ancient laws, there were three branches of the art of Bardism. First, the primitive bard, or a bard licensed by privilege, having his degree and his privilege by discipleship, from an authorized teacher, who was a presiding Bard. Then second, the Ovate, having his degree under the privilege of genius and commendable sciences, and the vote of confidence by twelve judges or justices of court. Third, the Druid Bard, who is the presiding Bard, graduated and warranted as to wisdom and sciences, and of elocution to demonstrate judgment and reason in respect to sciences. His function is to disseminate instruction and to demonstrate the sciences of wisdom and religion in the session of the Bards. Nine years was generally sufficient for graduation as a Bard, but his education was not considered complete, for the purposes of this graduation, until he had committed to memory some 20,000 verses containing, in allegorical language, the tenets of the Druidical faith. The duties of a Bard in some areas were to satirize, ridicule, or taunt, to mimic, to sue for or to entreat, to lampoon, and to reproach. Two Bards usually stood before a company, one to give in rhyme, at the others extempore, to excite mirth and laughter with witty quibbles. They also sang love songs, or amatory verses, in every kind of meter, with delicacy and elegance.

Other writers classify the Bards as Chronologers, Heralds, and Comics or Satirical Bards. Posidonius, the Stoic of Rhodes, describes the Bards as parasites of Celtic warriors, but he also states that they were not barbarians among barbarians: they were men of letters.

The Order of Bards wore the band of their Order, together with a white mantle and a blue cap, ornamented with a gold crescent. A fully-fledged Bard received the faculties to proclaim and hold a Gorsedd (assembly), admit disciples, and instruct others in the principles of the religion and morality. Blue was the favored color of Bards from the earliest times ... "True blue keeps its hue."

The candidates for the degree of Ovate had to be well versed in science, letters, medicine, and language. Each had to be proposed by a Druid or Bard, to whom he was known personally, or by a Judge or magistrate, or failing these, by twelve respectable men. The Ovates officiated as physicians and diviners, and are said to have been greatly knowledgeable and proficient in natural philosophy and the secret workings of nature. The Ovates from auspices and the entrails of victims predicted future events. Ovates wore green robes, which color being the color symbolic of learning. The badge of the Order of Ovates was the golden star, bearing the inscription: "The judgment of heaven will severely punish iniquity."

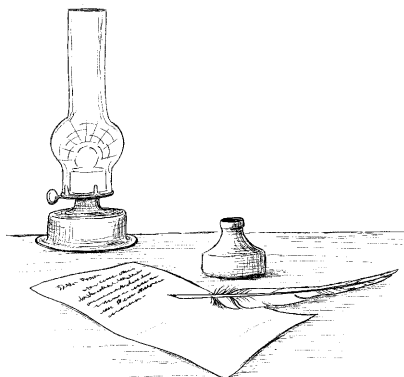
The ceremony of initiation for the Druids was thought to be solemn and arduous. The following initiation ritual is merely conjecture based on a number of assumptions based on fragments of Celtic folklore and Meso-Druidic speculation about the Paleo-Druids as found in Dudley Write's book "Druids and Druidism" (1964). It is generally believed that the candidate first took an oath not to reveal the mysteries into which he was about to be initiated. He was divested of his ordinary clothing, crowned with ivy, and vested with a tri-colored robe of white, blue, and green – colors emblematical of light, truth, and hope. Over this is placed a white tunic. Both were made with full-length openings in the front and, before the ceremony of initiation began, the candidate had to throw open both tunic and robe, in order to prove to the officiating priest that he was a male. The divestiture was also to symbolize his extreme poverty, which was supposed to be his character prior to initiation. The tonsure (a special hair cut) was one of the ceremonies connected with initiation. All hair in front of a line drawn over the crown from ear to ear was shaved or clipped. All Druids wore short hair, the laymen long; the Druids wore long beards, the laymen shaved the whole face save for the upper lip. The initiation took place in a cave, because invaluable secrets were in a consecrated cavern deep in the bowels of the earth as part of the chthonic aspect of Druidism. The cave was in a circular form. The Circle was thought to be an ancient Druid symbol representing eternity.

The candidate was next passed through a "Groaning Cheese" or large stone with a hole in the center. All rocks containing an aperture, whether natural or artificial, were held to possess the means of transmitting purification to the person passing through the hole. This was a symbolic rebirth from the Earth Mother. Then the candidate was placed in a chest or coffin, in which he remained enclosed – apertures being made for circulation of air – for three days, to represent death. The number three was a sacred divine number to the Druids. From this chest he was liberated on the third day to represent or symbolize

his restoration to life. A sanctuary was prepared in connection with the initiation. The candidate, blindfolded, was introduced to the assembled company during the chanting of a hymn to the sun and placed in the charge of a professed Druid, another Druid, at the same time, kindling the sacred fire. Still blindfolded, the candidate was taken on a circumambulation (sun-wise direction) nine times around the sanctuary in circles from East to West, starting at the South. The procession was made to the accompaniment of a tumultuous clanging of musical instruments and of shouting and screaming. It was followed by the administration of a second oath, the violation of which rendered the individual liable to the penalty of death. He was then immersed completely in water and emerged from the water on the opposite bank to that from which he had entered. He found himself in a blaze of light. The most dismal of howling, shrieks, and lamentations are said to have been heard during the progress of this ceremony, the barking of dogs, the blowing of horns, and the voices of men uttering discordant cries. The candidate, on arriving at the opposite bank, was presented to the Arch Druid, who, seated on his throne, explained to the initiate the symbolical meaning of the various ceremonies in which he had just taken an active part. After the initiation was completed the novice retired into the forest, where the period of his novitiate was spent, his time being devoted to study and gymnastic exercises. The Druids encouraged learning and candidates for the priesthood passed through the courses assigned.

Druidesses went through a similar initiation ceremony. They passed over an arm of the sea in the dead of night to certain smaller contiguous islets. The ship or vessel in which they made the passage represented the Ark; the arm of the sea, the Flood; and the islet, the fabled Elysian islands, where the passage terminated. Shadowed out the Lunar White Island.

Fortunately for the modern Druids, going through such an arduous three-day ceremony is not required. If it were, not too many people would want to become a Druid. Today we have no requirements for special robes or even a special haircut to become a Druid. Druidism is seen as a chosen path. It is attained through personal study and self-dedication to the Old Religion of the ancient Celts. Many of the modern branches of Druidism do offer specially created initiation ceremonies as part of regular rituals.



DRUID-BY-MAIL

One of the major problems facing the serious Druid seeker is where to go to get any kind of worthwhile Druidic training. It's not like there are any divinity school for the study of Druidism around because if there were they would either be inundated with sincere seekers or under siege from Right Wing religious fundamentalist groups or both. At this point in time there simply aren't any traditional types of schools dedicated to teaching Druidism.

Looking at the ancient or Paleo-Druids, it is clear that the Druids of old were not a pan-Celtic religious caste, but we are relatively sure that they were indigenous to Gaul, Eire, and Britannia. Despite this, or maybe because of it, the notion of the Druids has nonetheless captured the fancy of at least a small section of the American population.

Like many people, I was first introduced to the subject of Druids when I played a fantasy role-playing game. I recall playing a Druid, Bard, and Ranger in fantasy role-playing games like Dungeons and Dragons™ and other similar games. As a result I got hooked on the Druids and the concept of Druidism. Now play acting in any of these fantasy role-playing games is lots of fun, but it doesn't really qualify a person to be a Druid, though according to the various rules, all you need to do is to use a set of dice and roll up a character to play with the proper statistics, give them the necessary equipment, make up a list of useful spells, give them an appropriate name and presto... you're a Druid, Bard, or Ranger! Then using the rulebook as general guide you are off in a fantasy world where you encounter all sorts of magical woodland beings like dryads, green dragons, fairies, and elves, or battle bad guys and monsters. At least in game terms you are a Druid, rising in levels of power and able to use powerful magic spells and items. Too bad real life isn't like that, because if it was then everyone could be a Druid or anything else that they fancy.

According to the commentaries of Caesar, we know that the Paleo-Druids trained for twenty years beginning at about age seven. From the Irish and Welsh traditions the Bardic training took between seven to twelve years. This begs the serious question of how then can anyone, not born into a Druid tradition, be able to get the 12 to 20 years of specialized training to become either a Bard or Druid? Besides that, who has 12 to 20 years to spend training to be something that in today's world has no viable economic means of self-support or financial future? Another problem is finding a Druid teacher who has 12 to 20 years to dedicate to training you to be a Druid. A good question to ask in our modern culture, is it really necessary for anyone to train for 12 to 20 years to be a Druid? The surprising answer is "No" it is not.

Believe it or not, our public school system already teaches us many things that the Druids taught their students such as how to read and write, mathematics, history, government, and the sciences of biology, chemistry, astronomy, and geology. That would take care of at least twelve years right there. The only thing missing from this is specific information or training about Druidism itself.

If you are fortunate enough to be a member of a local Neo-Druid group [ADF, RDNA, Keltria, OBOD, MOCC, and others], then you might have it made. All you have to do is ask the high Druid or Druidess in charge to train you and allow your increased involvement in the proceedings. Hands-on training with a qualified instructor is the best kind of training there is. There is a down side and that is if the head Druid isn't actually well versed in Druidism. Fortunately, most individuals leading groups have either some degree of training or experience at running a group and ritual.

If you're not so lucky and don't live fairly close to an active Druid grove, don't lose hope. There are alternatives, though not as good as having a real live Druid to teach you. There is a truism that "Pagans are readers." This turns out to be very true for the

most part and because we are a new tradition, books are a key element of Druidic education. So read as many books on the subject of Druids as you can find. I can assure you that there are several out there such as “The Druids” by Peter B. Ellis, “The Druids” by Stuart Piggot, “The Druids” by Ward Rutherford, “The Druids” by Nora Chadwick, and “The Druids” by T.D. Kendrick (catchy titles don’t you think) just to name a few. It would also help to read books on the Celts and Celtic mythology. Most Celtic books quite often mention Druids in some capacity or another in them. A word of caution about books, just because something makes it into print does not necessarily mean that it is true and useful. While there are a number of good books on the Druids, there are even more that are not good and filled with misinformation or misconceptions. Now where do you find these books you may ask? Rather than going out and buying all these books you can find on the druids at a bookstore, you should first check out your local public library. If they don’t have the books you are looking for, then ask to see if they have an inter-library loan program. You would simply be amazed at what you can get your hands on this way. Now if you feel that you need your own personal Druid library, then go ahead and buy all the books you want.

All this reading is fine, but is it enough? For some people it is enough, but for others it is not enough. Most of the books out there are of the Paleo-Druids, that’s the Druids of 2,000 plus years ago. To get a bit of the modern Druid movement it would help to subscribe to any number of Neo-Druid or Neo-Pagan newsletters. These are written and produced by those who are themselves practicing Druids. This is part of the on-going Neo-Druid movement and a helpful reflection of modern Druidism.

For those who have Internet access, you have a whole new avenue of access to Druidic information. Use your search engine and type in the keyword “Druid” and almost instantly you have access to literally thousands of Celtic and Druidic websites. You can spend endless hours going from site to site. You can get on chat rooms, find local Druids, and basically acquire a considerable amount of useful and not so useful information. It is very easy to get lost in the sea of information that is available. Of course a lot of it is sheer repetition and there is a considerable amount of misinformation by people who just want to put up a web page. A bit of caution is advised for any looking for information about the Druids on-line. Don’t believe everything you read.

Newsletters and websites are good, but for some they are still not enough. I would suggest looking into taking a Neo-Pagan correspondence course (like the one in your hot little hands now). Correspondence courses are part of the modern concept of “college without walls.” Many Neo-Druid and Neo-Pagan groups, particularly Wiccan groups, offer such correspondence courses. You may be able find their advertisements in various newsletters or certain magazines. They range from basic introduction to specialized training in divination and herbalism. Most of the courses offered are for some variation of generic Wiccan can specialize in a form of Celtic Wicca such as in the Welsh, Irish, Scottish, or British traditions. At this point in time I see nothing wrong with taking any one of these courses, after all they do contain some elements of Druidism in one form or another. However, the best kind of course to learn about Druidism is one that specializes in Druidism. There are several Druid groups that offer such courses. The Henge of Keltria offers a course in Keltrian Druidism that is more comprehensive than most and

covers a wide variety of related topics in a competent and professional manner. The Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids (OBOD) offer three one-year courses in Druidism for each of the Grades. Ar nDraocht Fein: A Druid Fellowship offers an independent study program rather than a course. There are several other groups in Europe and America that offer similar courses in Neo-Druidism. This is not to belittle the courses in Wicca, they are good and if you follow their instructions they tend to achieve their particular goal, that is to teach Wicca. There are other related courses such as ones offering Metaphysical studies, which have a great affinity with the Neo-Pagan movement as well.

A side benefit of taking these correspondence courses is that they generally award either Druidic titles or certificates of completion. These are helpful in establishing yourself as a trained Druid in the Neo-Druid tradition as well as show your progress in along your personal spiritual path.

A final word, for those who don't have a handy Druid living nearby, then reading books about the Druids, checking out Druidic websites, and taking correspondence courses are the next best thing until Druidism has spread to every part of the country, or at least within easy driving distance.



MOVIES



The Secret of Kells (2010)

<http://newvideo.com/secretofkells/> for trailers

This was released in Ireland last year, it's a Belgian/Irish old-school animated film that won a heap of awards and nominations. Not having a TV, I missed most of the advertising, just saw the ad this week. I think it's a great stocking stuffer, or a present to a relative wondering about your Druid proclivities, although the part about Crom Cruach might not be the most flattering account.

I pulled a review from Amazon

The Secret of Kells, February 14, 2010 By

[Jason C. Wilkerson](#) (Green Bay, WI) - [See all my reviews](#)

This review is from: **The Secret of Kells (DVD)**

Brendan dreams of writing the greatest book of all time, but he's stifled by his uncle, Abbot Cellach, who wants Brendan to be practical and help build a wall around the village of Kells to help protect them from an impending Viking attack. When Brother Aidan turns up from another village that's already been attacked by the vikings, he captivates Brendan because he was a great writer, and he asks Brendan to help him finish the now legendary Book of Kells. Now, Brendan must defy his uncle's warnings and venture into the forest outside Kells and confront his fears of the "Dark One" to find inspiration to finish the great Book of Kells.



The Academy Awards have a tendency to nominate a lot of films that have only been released in limited release and are not very widely seen. Some people see this as a detriment, thinking that the Academy has lost touch because it typically doesn't look at the more widely seen and generally loved movies. In my opinion this is actually a strength, when awards season rolls around I'm looking up those other movies to catch the gems that I missed, knowing that something great is out there that should have been released wide. That's the case with The Secret of

Kells. To be honest, and it's kind of sad, I'm not too familiar with animation outside of anime and American anime. Thanks to the Academy Awards, though, I found out about this great animated feature.

Kells is the type of movie that kind of has one foot



planted in fantasy and legend, and another foot planted in reality. The Book of Kells is a real historical book created around the 6th to 9th centuries and is considered Ireland's finest national treasure. The origin of the Book of Kells is still widely disputed, so the creation of the book is ripe to be made into a film of sorts. In *The Secret of Kells*, the story revolves around an older monk teaching a child about inspiration and art to create the Book of Kells. In reality, it seems the major theme of this movie deals with one generation teaching another generation about the art of hand drawn animation. In a day and age when computer animation has all but taken over for the older hand drawn animation, it's great to see a film that's more of a call to the old traditions and does it so well. *The Secret of Kells* is beautifully rendered to the screen, as well as highly original, still looking better than a lot of computer animated features that come out these days which makes its message that much more potent as well.

I highly recommend this film to anyone that like animated features of any kind. You'll find certain similarities to anime, as well as older animated films like some of the early adaptations of Rudyard Kipling books like *Rikki-Tikki-Tavi* and the like. Honestly, this might even be my favorite animated film of the year so far, at least it's very close between this and *Up*. Definitely give it a shot, great animated feature!

The Wickerman “Trilogy”

For the real fans, there is only one “wickerman”, the 1973 original, full-length, director’s cut. The other two are re-imaginings, best forgotten and avoided. As usual, any country folk with a penchant for Nature, are eventually recast as murderous scary folk, sigh. *Children of the Corn*, anyone? Why not just visit a little Scottish isle, have a flat tire, some cute pagans fix the tire, and wave good bye, end of story? The reason the story is so compelling, is that we LONG for a real pagan town tucked away in the corner of Scotland, but we also wish the director hadn’t been so bloodthirsty, and we could change the last 10 minutes to something else, quite clever and interesting, rather than turn into a horror movie.



[Saga of the Wicker Man](#)

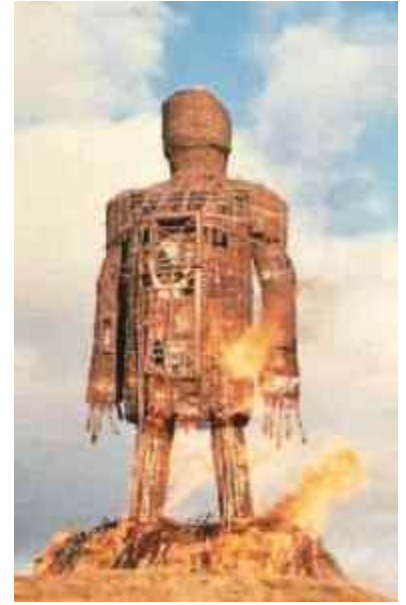
Posted on January 20, 2009 by Sarah Lawless

A history of the 1973 film for those like me who love it and can sing the words of the entire soundtrack. If anyone wants to reprint the article for any purpose or use excerpts from it please contact me via email or comment. Spoiler Warning!

A large figure looms in the skyline of a remote island in Scotland, it is consumed by crackling flames while the screams of livestock and a man trapped inside are carried by the wind over the sea as unconcerned people circle the figure dancing and singing an ancient tune. This large figure is a wicker man; a human form made out of sticks and branches from trees which was filled with animal and human sacrifices all burned together as offerings to pagan gods. Although there is evidence that the Celts practiced human sacrifice, the only account of this particular use of a wicker man we have comes from Julius Caesar. This Roman Emperor conquered the independent Celts of Gaul and reported their practices of human sacrifice. Julius Caesar described the colossal wooden figures created with wicker-work which were filled with live men, usually criminals, cattle and other livestock. These figures were

then set on fire as sacrifices. It was thought that the more sacrifices offered, the more fertile the land would be in the coming agricultural season.

The Wicker Man is a film based on these practices and pagan beliefs which was released in 1973. A virgin and god-fearing Scottish police officer, Sergeant Neil Howie, receives an anonymous letter asking him to help find a missing young girl on the remote island of Summerisle in the Hebrides famous for its export of apples. Sergeant Howie flies to the island and finds himself alone amongst an independent society of villagers who have reverted to practicing ancient pagan beliefs. As coincidence would have it, he arrives on the day before the island's May Day celebrations — an ancient fire festival and time of sacrifice for pagans. Disgusted by their practices, the Christian Howie focuses on finding the missing girl, but the villagers only seem to talk in riddles and lead him to dead ends. As the mystery unravels Howie finds out it has all been a ruse by the villagers to bring him to the island as a 'perfect' sacrifice to the gods of the orchard in order to assure fertility of the apple trees because Summerisle's apple crop failed the previous year.



The Wicker Man is a bizarre combination of the horror, mystery and musical movie genres. *The Wicker Man* is generally viewed as a horror movie and relates easily to the horror genre because of the classic horror elements present in the movie. Some of these elements include bizarre and traumatizing events, disturbing situations and horrific imagery to make the viewer uncomfortable, as well as direct attacks on the audiences' sense of safety and self-control. Horror is an important and much-loved movie genre that has been around since the start of filmmaking and unlike other genres, Westerns or musicals for example, the horror film has kept a constant level of popularity into present day.

Birth of a Legend

The film was originally planned to be based on British author David Pinner's novel *Ritual*, but the screenwriter Anthony Schaffer deemed it unworthy of being a screenplay and rewrote the film from scratch still keeping the theme of a police officer investigating the murder of a young girl. This film was the creation of Schaffer with his friend and business partner Robin Hardy for the film studio British Lion which was headed by Peter Snell at the time. *The Wicker Man* was filmed in various locations of Scotland with the main scenes being in Dumfries and Galloway. The movie is set in early Spring, but due to time constraints it had to be filmed during winter. Fake greenery and heaters were a common sight on set. *The Wicker Man* went through many troubles during filming including the short time allowance, the freezing weather, a very small budget due to the studio's financial troubles, disruptions and complaints from actors, as well as the changing hands of British Lion's studio executives. Despite all of these issues, the movie was completed within its limited budget and filming period.

The Wicker Man was directed by Robin Hardy (Australian TV series *E Street*), with the screenplay by Anthony Schaffer (*Murder on the Orient Express*, *Sleuth*, and Hitchcock's *Frenzy*), and original music composed by the late brilliant American musician Paul Giovanni. Both Robin Hardy and Paul Giovanni played small roles in the film with Hardy as a Catholic minister in one of the original cut scenes and Giovanni performing "Gently Johnny" also in a scene that was originally edited out. Some of the more well-known actors who participated in the film include: Christopher Lee as Lord Summerisle who claims this was his favourite role of all time; British actor Edward Woodward who accepted the main role after David Hemmings and Michael York turned it down; Diane Cilento as Miss Rose, who is more famous for her previous marriage to Scottish actor Sean Connery and is now wed to *The Wicker Man*'s screenwriter; Ingrid Pitt as Summerisle's archivist and librarian; and Swedish actress Britt Ekland who was hired to attract international appeal and whose voice was dubbed due to her inability to master a Scottish accent.

First Release and the Problems Therein

Yet another setback for the *Wicker Man* came just as the film was preparing for release. It appeared after British Lion's financial troubles reached a peak and there was a takeover ousting Peter Snell for Michael Deeley and Barry Spikings. Despite well-known actors being cast in *The Wicker Man*, the movie was given dismal reviews at test screenings and at which Deeley was said to exclaim it was one of the "ten worst films" he had ever watched. The new studio executives, not being as enthusiastic about *The Wicker Man* as Peter Snell, decided to edit the movie in order for it to be more acceptable to a general audience by their standards. To many fans and those involved in the production of the film, the editing was seen as an unjustified massacre to the story and the movie itself by two outsiders who came in after the movie's creation. It is thought that the sloppy editing of the film into a short 84 minutes is what led to its initial rejection by distributors.

The unfair treatment of this film went even further as *The Wicker Man* was almost never released to the public. It was shown for one brief week in London's West End in 1973 tacked onto another British Lion film, after which it disappeared into obscurity. Luckily the story of *The Wicker Man* doesn't end here. It wasn't until 1975, two years after its initial release, that *The Wicker Man* had its official theatre release as a feature film — this time in the United States.

Critics & Cults

Originally *The Wicker Man* was not well-received by critics in the UK. It was considered to be bizarre, disturbing, and uncomfortable with the hasty editing making the story confusing and out of order. Its short one-week release in London also did not allow for much critiquing to be done. The film's distribution in North America was much more successful where the movie gained a horror B-movie status. Today this movie is considered a cult classic and has been called the "*Citizen Kane* of horror films" by some reviewers. How did this film become a cult classic? The first thing to define is how movies become cult classics in the first place. A cult film is a movie that usually has a small, but devoted, group of fans who bond over their love for and subject of the film and who also share their interest by word of mouth, gatherings, the internet and other methods. Some of the reasons *The Wicker Man* gained cult status are due to its unusual combination of the horror and musical genres, the "it is so bad it's good" factor, the unusual story and incorporation of genuine pagan practices and British Isles folklore, as well as the mystery, rumours and controversy that have always surrounded this film. Another factor in its cult status was its embrace by the modern Pagan religious communities of North America and the UK. The use of pagan practices and folklore in this film has enabled many modern Neo-pagans to identify themselves with *The Wicker Man* — even to the point that many of them have myths about whom the director and screenwriter collaborated with to glean their knowledge of paganism from. Despite its obscurity, thanks to *The Wicker Man*'s cult status and devoted fans, the film will continue to survive today defeating its original mistreatment and obscurity.

The Hunt for Missing Footage

After the film had reached cult status, pressure started to come from fans to restore the movie to its

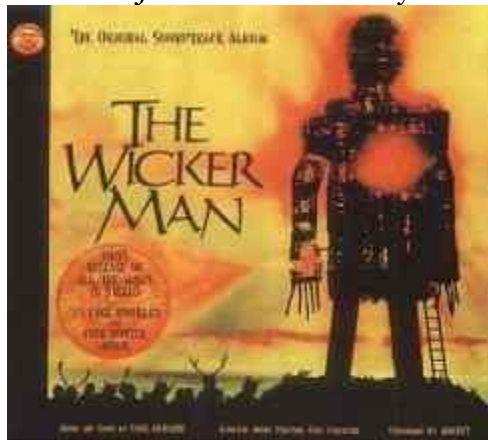


original length, which is just what Peter Snell and Robin Hardy set out to do. This was not an easy task as after numerous phone calls, contacts, and leads Snell was told that the original negatives of the edited scenes were in fact part of the rubbish buried under the M3 motorway construction in Britain. Thankfully, it was recalled that earlier edited versions of the original film had been sent to distributors for viewing and a copy of the original 102 minute film was found in the personal library of Roger Corman, dubbed the "King of Bs". This copy was restored and eventually released on video

as a director's cut. There have been many editions of *The Wicker Man* released all of varying lengths. Two notable ones include a dual DVD special edition set in a pyrographed wooden box which had a limited release in 2001 by Anchor Bay Entertainment, as well as another dual DVD release with even more added footage which was made available right after the debut of 2006 summer release *The Wicker Man* remake featuring Nicholas Cage.

Outgrowth of *The Wicker Man*

Like any cult classic *The Wicker Man* has spawned its own collection of memorabilia and products from t-shirts, posters, documentaries, and photos to books, magazines, and documentaries. There was a famous 1977 issue of the horror/fantasy film magazine *Cinefantastique* which was dedicated entirely to the film. Then in 1978, due to its success in North America, Robin Hardy and Anthony Schaffer turned *The Wicker Man* screenplay into a book of the same name. More recently Allan Browne wrote a biography of the film in 2000 titled *Inside The Wicker Man: The Morbid Ingenuities*. There was also a fan publication called *Nuada: The Wicker Man Journal* which had a short run of three issues also in the year 2000. There have been three documentaries on *The Wicker Man*: *Ex-S: The Wicker Man* by BBC Scotland in 1998, *The Wicker Man Enigma* by Blue Underground Inc in 2001, and *Burnt Offering – The Cult of The Wicker Man* by Nobles Gate for Channel 4 also in 2001. Despite all of these spin-offs



and memorabilia one of the most anticipated releases from *The Wicker Man* film was the first release of the film's full soundtrack by Silva Screen Records in 2002. The soundtrack was created from the original full-length master tracks of the songs used throughout the movie. It was originally Giovanni, Snell, Schaffer, and Hardy's goal to release a soundtrack along with the original film, but the movie's mistreatment led to the abandonment of the soundtrack after British Lion changed management. The sixteen track release in 2002 was a treat to both fans and those involved in the film's production. Although Paul Giovanni sadly died in the 1990s from AIDS, the music from his last film lives on for many fans and future generations to enjoy.

Reincarnation

In the summer of 2006 a remake of *The Wicker Man* was released, directed by Neil LaBute and starring Nicholas Cage as Sergeant Howie. Keeping only the bare foundation of the story and some of the original dialogue, the movie was met by dismal reviews from both fans and critics alike. Despite this disappointment, fans can look forward to a film sequel of *The Wicker Man* called *Cowboys for Christ* by director Robin Hardy which is set to be released in 2008 and is based on his book of the same name which was published in May of 2006.

The Wicker Man franchise continues to thrive despite its original odds as it is exposed to more and more viewers and one generation after another. Like the pagan beliefs presented in the film, the movie is continually reincarnating itself. *The Wicker Man* will live on through the decades unlike Sergeant Howie reverently sacrificed to the ancient pagan gods

2006 Wickerman "Remake"



The Wicker Man, 2006... What a Waste!

From Witchvoxauthor: Peg Aloï

Posted: September 3rd, 2006

Times Viewed: 12,188

Well, of the many cinematic moments I have eagerly awaited in the past decade of reviewing as the resident Media Coordinator here at Witchvox, I have to say this is probably the most anticipated one of all.

I am sad to report, it is also one of the most bitterly disappointing.

Thinking back to *The Craft*, *The Blair Witch Project*, *Harry Potter*, *Practical Magic*, *The Crucible*, and various silly remakes like *Bewitched* and *Satan's School for Girls*, it is not an exaggeration to say that all discussion of the portrayal of modern pagan witchcraft (to use Professor Hutton's term) in film must include awareness of and reference to *The Wicker Man*, a clever, artful and quirky film that *Cinefantastique*

magazine once called "the *Citizen Kane* of horror films."

I won't go into what made this 1973 B-film (which had its debut on a double bill with Nicolas Roeg's *Don't Look Now*) into an instantaneous cult classic. There are scores of sites on the web generated by a huge and illustrious fan base (one of the best I have come across recently is [this one](#) by Steve Phillips from the UK) so have a look around and you'll find loads of reviews and other goodies. The thing is, this film is not just a cult favorite of cinemaphiles; it is also a cult favorite of modern pagans.

I should qualify that; some pagans love it (for the music, the sex, the campy dialogue, the intelligent portrayal of a pagan worldview), and some hate it (for the suggestion that modern "enlightened" pagans engage in ritual human sacrifice!), and some are lukewarm (which I will never understand). As someone who has seen it dozens of times, and has compared several of the different versions (the film's original release was cut drastically from the original intended length; sadly some of that "lost" footage has never been recovered, and various "cuts" with various running times exist now), and having been invited to speak at the academic conference devoted to the film in Scotland several years ago, I am gonna go out on a limb here and call myself a fan.

But loving the original should not automatically predispose me to hating the remake. So I knew I'd have to stay open-minded. **(Caution: SPOILERS AHEAD!)**

I realized the minute I found out Nicolas Cage was the executive producer that it would not be much like the original. I also experienced trepidation when I learned Neil LaBute would write and direct; he is a skilled filmmaker, but I have found him to be a very misanthropic one (check out *In the Company of Men*, or *Your Friends and Neighbors*, or *The Shape of Things*), and have not liked the previous adapted material he's filmed (he made A. S. Byatt's novel *Possession* into a film that only vaguely resembled the book, although the historical characters were wonderfully cast). As the many differences became known (it would be set in the United States, not Scotland; it would not be a "musical"; and many of the original characters would be changed or eliminated), I steeled myself for the end result.

The remake was mired in difficulty for some time. The original cast was shifted more than once (LeAnn Rimes was originally going to star in it). The final cast is not bad (Ellen Burstyn, Molly Parker, LeeLee Sobieski, and Diane Delano are all wonderful actresses); but their talents seem wasted, as does the

wonderful ability of composer Angelo Badalamenti, whose transcendent work on *Twin Peaks* established him as a genius of film scoring.

I am not going to complain about the obvious decisions made to differentiate this from the original. (If you have not seen the original, this review may not seem terribly helpful, so get thee to your local video store, pronto!) Moved from a remote island north of Scotland to a remote island near Puget Sound: okay. Not a "musical" (the characters in the original version sang songs within a logical performance context, such as while drinking at a pub or during a ritual, so it was not a typical film musical) anymore: okay. Lord Summerisle is now "Sister Summersisle": okay, but why the slight name change as well as the gender shift? In general the name changes annoyed me. Cage plays "Edward Mayless" and his ex-lover s "Willow Woodward." "Mayless" is a play on May Day I suppose, but the reference to Edward Woodward (who plays Sergeant Neil Howie in the original in an amazingly nuanced performance) is just kind of pathetic. Rowan is the daughter of Willow, and also Edward's ex-lover; Willow sends Edward a letter begging his help to find her missing daughter, after running out on him a decade ago...see where this is going?

The characters are no longer 1970s Brits but contemporary Americans: okay; this makes it fairly certain that Edward's virginity is not going to be an issue. Some of the changes were even somewhat clever: for example, the apple blight is now a failure of crops that leads to a shortage of honey, and the honey motif is carried through in some interesting (if occasionally disturbing ways). The matriarch, Sister Summersisle (why "Sister" and not "Lady"? I think it is some sort of weird cult reference, or maybe some pot-shot at feminism, which is typical for LaBute), is the sort of "queen bee" who presides over her "colony." When Edward commandeers the innkeeper's costume for the procession (Alder MacGregor becomes Sister Beech, played by Delano), it is not Punch but a bear; which seems to be some sort of silly joke. The men of the community are all apparently handicapped or deformed, many of them blind or mute, and one character is punished for helping Edward by having his eyes gouged out and his tongue removed --shades of Thomas Tryons *Harvest Home here*, obviously. I also detected a bit of an homage to *Don't Look Now* which is also, to some extent, about a missing girl: the quick shots and dream apparitions of Rowan dressed in a red cardigan echo the shiny red raincoat of Christine in Roeg's thriller.

The film's plot loosely follows the original, and at times the dialogue is lifted directly from the Anthony Shaffer script. But the words often have a hollow ring to them, and the actors often struggle with the stylized dialogue (even the usually-terrific TV actress Diane Delano can't quite deliver what this film needs: to embrace its camp pedigree). Some of the film's most powerful imagery echoes the original, as with the many masked community members in the ritual procession. It's also stunning to see the field where the beehives are kept, mowed into the shape of a giant honeycomb, and the dark forests where Edward searches for Rowan are wonderfully atmospheric.

But even the occasionally-effective visuals cannot save this film from being a ham-fisted, woefully misunderstood interpretation of the original. I suppose it is possible Mr. LaBute thought he'd found some deeper message within the original version and wanted to re-imagine the story as some sort of feminist manifesto. But if that was his intention I would have at least expected a more sophisticated script rewrite. *The Wicker Man* circa 1973 worked so well as a classy horror film because there was a deep-seated conflict of ideology at its heart. Sergeant Howie was a devout Christian who was offended by what he saw as a community corrupted by paganism: lawless, licentious, godless. He was sent to rescue a young girl, but instead sees his mission as one of exposing the evil that is Summerisle. In LaBute's version, Edward Mayless is only offended (and only mildly so) by the behavior of a bunch of "whackos."

In other words, Howie's psychological conflict is as deep as his own moral stance, and when he finds himself weakening it is a profound message of perseverance and passion that allows him to continue.

Even in the film's final moments, his words are inspired, almost beatific. But Mayless's only conflict comes from the fact that the missing girl may or may not be his daughter; and when he is eventually overcome by the villagers, there is no final epiphany or courageous sermon; he merely screams and flails helplessly. But it is true he punches out three women before he is captured.

And that is another real problem I have with this film. It's one thing to completely change the setting of the story without a whole lot of consideration as to what sort of history or cosmology might apply. A vague expository monologue by Sister Summersisle about her "Celtic ancestors" leaving Europe for Salem, Massachusetts, and then migrating to the Northwest after the persecutions began, and doing everything in service to "the great goddess" does not begin to explain the *reasons* for the matriarchal structure and agrarian economy of this community.** Give me Christopher Lee's diatribe on apples and Victorian feudalism any day! And Shaffer's original script celebrates a culture which embraces male and female sexuality equally; LaBute imagines a world where men are wordless freaks only kept around for their sperm contributions.

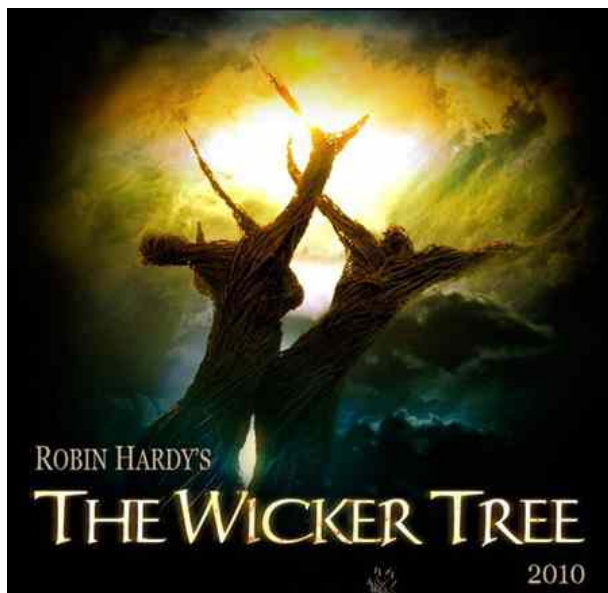
I am really sorry LaBute has these issues with women. But his roster of films thusfar (thoughtful and provocative though some of them have been) have revealed him to be a deeply misogynistic filmmaker. To butcher a complex and uncategorizable film like *The Wicker Man* and try to force it to serve his discriminatory vision shows a complete failure (or perhaps unwillingness) to comprehend his source material. Why shouldn't any filmmaker doing such a remake want to try to reimagine it on a scale that actually tries to improve upon the original? The nature of adaptation should be characterized by an intricate, even obsessed, relationship with a text, not a passing glance at it.

Peg Aloï

Media Coordinator - The Witches' Voice

Monday, June 7th.. 2004

Email: [\[Staff Email\]](#)



The Wicker Tree 2010

Another fan who couldn't resist tampering with a good thing, and making something awful. Based on a book called "Cowboys for Jesus", a good little chaste Christian couple evangelize the wrong island, which turns out to be full of bloodthirsty pagan Scots. Oops, that wasn't in the tour guide. The end is grisly, and is about as unfriendly to pagan communities as it gets.

As you know, nearly all religions did some nasty bits, but with modern respect for human rights, rule of law, science, humanism, etc. we've learned to put aside human and animal sacrifice, crusades, and religious bigotry, oh except for those Scottish pagan peasants!! There they go again! Someone stop Wicker IV!!

NEWS ARTICLES



Vandals chop down Two Harbors' 'honking tree'

April 30, 2009

Two Harbors, Minn. (AP) — Vandals have felled the iconic "honking tree" just south of Two Harbors in northern Minnesota, upsetting the residents of the small northern Minnesota town accustomed to tooting their horns whenever

they went by.

Lake County Sheriff's Department dispatcher John Brandt said a state transportation worker called it in Thursday morning. He found the tall, lone, white pine on its side.

"He was driving up to work in Two Harbors here and drove past there. He said something didn't look right, so he turned back around. The tree was laying there. Someone had cut it down with a chainsaw," Brandt said.

The tree has stood in the grassy median of the Two Harbors expressway for decades. It was called the "honking tree" because of the local custom to honk when driving past the tree. No one knows how the tradition got started.

It was also known to some as "Charlie's tree" for Charlie J. Hensley, who was chief inspector when the expressway was built in the 1960s. He died in 1967.

"He used to sit there (under the tree) and have his lunch," said Minnesota Department of Transportation regional spokesman John Bray. "He ordered the contractor to make sure that while the expressway was being built, that tree not be touched."

The tall pine stood about three miles south of Two Harbors. It was nominated for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Trees, a list kept by the Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit American Forests.

Plans to save the tree trunk were already being made Thursday afternoon.

"There are a lot of ideas floating around," said Steve Baublitz, the MnDOT worker who reported the downed tree.

One suggestion has been to carve it into an image to put on display, but nothing has been decided.

Word of the vandalism spread quickly through town. Mayor Randy Bolen mentioned it at an early morning downtown business association meeting.

At the SuperOne store, employee Treasaigh Anderson was shocked by the news.

"It was a tradition for us to honk as we headed home," she said. "The kids would say we had to honk for each one of them as we went by. When I was a kid, whenever I saw that tree I knew I was almost home. I'm almost in tears."

Alicia Larson of Two Harbors stopped to take a photo on Friday.

"It's like a memorial, everyone knows that tree," she said. "It's been spray painted before, but why would somebody just cut it down?"

Information from: Duluth News Tribune, <http://www.duluthsuperior.com>



Anne Frank's tree sapling heading to Canada

September 26, 2010

MONTREAL (JTA) -- A sapling grown from the famous Anne Frank chestnut tree in Amsterdam will be planted in Canada.

Montreal is the sole Canadian location that will get a sapling from the tree's cuttings, the Canadian Press reported.

The tree, which cheered the teenage diarist as she gazed out her attic window, made headlines last month when it toppled over during a heavy storm after being weakened by a fungus and insect infestation.

The planting ceremony is scheduled to take place Monday afternoon at the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre.

The other 11 saplings being sent to North America are going to the United States, according to the Canadian Press.

In her storied diary, Frank described going to her family's attic hideaway almost every morning to stare at the tree, and the little raindrops on its branches, knowing she could find some happiness looking out at the sky.

The tree was in the news as well in 2007 when Amsterdam officials, citing safety issues, ordered it cut down. Supporters who saw the tree as a symbol of freedom protested and it was granted a reprieve.

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 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



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.



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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.