



## **Beltane Issue Y.R. XLIX**

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### **Editor's Note**

The forty-ninth year of the Reform has begun, and the 50<sup>th</sup> starts May 2012, and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary is May 2013, just to keep it clear. ☺ Mark your calendars, we'll do something special in 2013 for a big reunion.

I began the year with a completion of my work overseas, and I'm back in Washington and I'm restarting the Monument Grove of Washington DC Metro Area. Services will begin on the Solstice, write to me if you are on the east coast and want to visit, attend, or vigil this year.

This is a short issue, very short. Promise to do more for the Solstice issue. Deadline for submissions is June 13 to [mikerdna@hotmail.com](mailto:mikerdna@hotmail.com) You see interesting stuff, all the time, so share with the rest of us.

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A lovely Ostara Altar by Jackie Greer. Note the box of Peeps!



## Sacred Groves

### News of the Groves

A full listing of Grove can be found at [www.rdna.info/wheretroves.html](http://www.rdna.info/wheretroves.html) I've recently updated the list of groves. As usual, many e-mails contact addresses have gone dead, so I assume that that person has lost interest and that the grove is closed, perhaps only temporarily.

**Hemlock Splinters Grove of Syracuse NY is moving to Burlington VT.**

**Habitat Grove of Montreal QC is moving to Washington DC and retitling to Monument Grove.**

#### Monument Grove: News from Washington DC metro area

Back from Canada in April 2011. Will begin services June 2011. If you would like to visit, correspond or vigil on the east coast, or during a visit to the American capital, tell me your schedule.

#### Blackthorn Protogrove: News from Kentucky

Mike, thanks for updating Blackthorn Grove Protogrove's location. One thing though - you've got us in the Lost, missing, gone groves section, and we're still here! I realize we haven't attained to full Grove status yet (don't know if we ever will, for that matter), but we're still operating at least on the eight holy days, and other times, as well. Our email is still [blackthorngrove@earthlink.net](mailto:blackthorngrove@earthlink.net). Please return our listing to the regular RDNA section at your convenience. Thanks much!

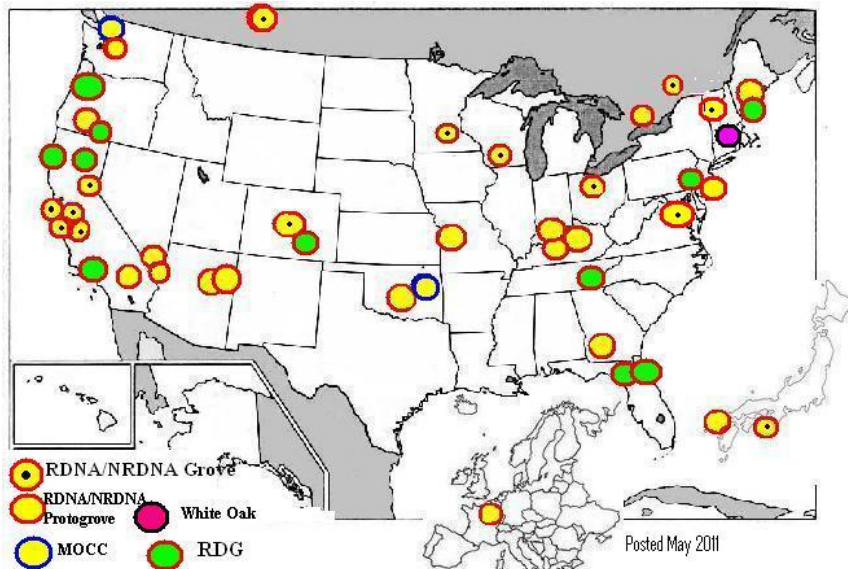
Yours in the Mother,

Christopher Gregg  
Blackthorn Grove

#### Clan of Triple Horses Grove, News from Oregon

Clan of the Triple Horses Grove, Medford, Oregon, honored the Spring Equinox and Ostara with a Labyrinth Walk at one of our favorite sacred spaces, the Labyrinth at Rogue Valley Medical Center, Medford. The Center of our journey was beautifully decorated thanks to Grove Founders Aigeann and Seven Tines. Senior Druid Wolfsong provided offerings of lavender, symbolizing what we wish to bring into our lives to balance them, and herbs, symbolizing what we need to let go. Several guests joined us for the first time for a brief but moving and meaningful Rite.

We welcome the community to our Beltane Celebration Thursday, May 5, 2011 at 5:30 p.m. at the same location.



## Stand

I stand half-submerged  
In the night  
I reach out  
And I am consumed  
Into oblivion  
And silence

I speak half-voiced  
Into the night  
And my words  
Are still  
As they bend  
Into the darkness  
That holds me  
In its world

I peer into the half-light  
And my vision  
Diminishes  
In the void  
That absorbs  
Every iota  
Of my being

I pause  
And the ambiance  
Of the night  
Reveals a deer  
In the darkness  
That turns,  
Looks my way,  
And is gone

In that moment  
Of recognition  
My soul blends  
With hoof and earth  
And stands  
On the precipice  
Of night  
Before fleeing,  
Sure-footed  
And free

-Jean Phagos, Koad Grove





CELTIC STUDIES CENTER  
PRESENTS

## CELTIC FAIRY FAITH TRADITION

Part 2 of 2

Compiled by Daniel Hansen, Msc.D.

### FAIRY FAITH

Although it was never the challenge to Christianity that Druidism was and never accumulated a dogma, liturgy, or priesthood, the fairy faith was once far more than the literary conceit and narrative device it has become in recent times. Individual Christian clergymen offered accommodating rationales for the lay adherence to fairy beliefs and practices. One was to suggest that fairies were descended from pre-Adamic beings or that fairies, which lacked human souls, might escort the souls of the faithful departed to the gates of heaven.

Occasional clerical condemnation of fairy belief seems to be at the root of the thesis that fairies must pay a yearly tribute of their own children to the lords of hell. Because of the human propensity to act in a superior way – and also because fairies seldom breed – the fairies often took thriving human children to spare their own children. Fairies were thought to seek out infants, especially the un-baptized. When mortal children were snatched for tribute, the fairies would leave their own as substitutes in their place; these ‘changelings’ were thought to bear a slight outward resemblance to the stolen children but were paler, sicklier and more irritable.

Certainly one of the strongest attractions of the fairy religion was its pervasive view of sexuality, typical of ancient matriarchal societies, living on in contrast to the harsh anti-sexual attitudes of orthodoxy. Fairyland was the heaven of the sexy angels, as opposed to the Christian heaven where “bliss” was specifically not sexual, not even in matrimony. The fairyland called Torelore in the romance of *Aucassin and Nicolette* was a home for lovers, as opposed to the Christian heaven of “old priests, and halt old men and maimed.” The fairy king lay in bed pretending to give birth to a child, in the ancient rite of couvades; the queen led an army against their enemies in a bloodless battle, the combatants pelting each other with symbolic foods such as apples, eggs, and cheeses. The king said, “it is nowise our custom to slay each other.”

It seems especially women, whose Goddess the patriarchal church kept trying to take away, practiced the fairy religion secretly through most of the Christian era, giving them no substitute but Mary, who lacked the old Goddess’s powers.

Secrecy attended many aspects of the fairy religion, for the very reason that it was carried on clandestinely under a dominant religious system that threatened its practitioners with torture and death. One of the charges that sent Joan of Arc to the stake was that she “adorned the Fairies and did them reverence.”

Certain French leaders of the Old Religion were described as “great princesses who, having refused to embrace Christianity... were struck by the curse of God. Hence it is that they are said to be animated by a violent hatred of the Christian religion and of the clergy.” Sometimes they were called

Korrigen, Korrig, or Korr, perhaps devotees of the virgin Kore. A Breton lay said: “There are nine Korrigen, who dance, with flowers in their hair, and robes of white wool, round the fountain, by the light of the full moon.” They seem to have been old women who used masks and makeup: “Seen at night, or in the dusk of the evening, their beauty is great; but in the daylight their eyes appear red, their hair white, and their faces wrinkled; hence they rarely let themselves be seen by day.”

As late as the 17<sup>th</sup> century it was said that there were shrines kept by “a thousand old women” who taught the rites of Venus to young maidens, and instructed them in fairy feats like shape-changing and raising storms. They were known as *fatuae* or *fatidicae*, “seeresses”, or sometimes *bonnes filles*, “good girls”.

Belief in fairies was still widespread in the early twentieth century, according to the testimony of W.Y. Evans-Wentz in *The Fairy Faith in the Celtic Country* (London, 1911). An American-born believer in fairies, Evans-Wentz traveled all the Celtic countries on foot to collect materials from all social classes, during which respondents spoke of their convictions without condescension or skepticism. In more recent times fairy faith has fallen sharply, and many residents of all Celtic lands have found inquiries about such beliefs to be insulting. Never the less, as late as 1990 a privately funded Fairy Investigation Society maintained an office in Dublin, dedicated to collecting reports of fairy sightings while promising to protect the anonymity of the contributors. It should be noted that many Celtic Wiccans believe in fairies and some see them clairvoyantly. Some Wiccans say their Craft was passed down from fairies through generations of their family.

Current ideas about fairy in the occult community range across the spectrum from Jungian analysis that conceptualizes them as psychological realities through Theosophically derived teachings that see them as participants in another current of evolution (one that starts with elementals and proceeds through fairies, divas, and angels to archangels and beyond), to Pagan conceptions that interpret them a simply one part of a complex fabric of spiritual reality, bringing the wheel around full circle. Which of these is closest to the truth, only the fay knows – and they’re not saying.



#### DEPARTING OF THE FAIRIES

From the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards stories reported that fairies have departed or are fading away. Some people believe that they are disappearing because humans have stopped believing in them. Others say pollution, urbanization, and technological advances are the main cause of their decline. Yet, however often they

are reported as gone, belief in fairies lingers, reports of sighting still occur and the traditions continue.

Around the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a man called Hugh Miller recorded what was supposed to be the final departure of fairies from Scotland at Burn of Eathis:

‘On a Sabbath morning... the inmates of this little hamlet had all gone to church, all except a herd-boy, and a little girl, his sister, who were lounging beside one of the cottages; when, just as the shadow of the garden-dial had fallen on the line of noon, they saw a long cavalcade ascending out of the ravine through the wooded hollow. It wined among the knolls and bushes; and, turning round the northern gable of the cottage beside which the sole spectators of the scene were stationed, begin to ascend the eminence toward the south. The horses were shaggy, diminutive things, speckled dun and grey; the riders, stunted, misgrown, ugly creatures, attired in antique jerkins of plaid, long grey cloaks, and little red caps, from under which their wild uncombed locks shot out over their cheeks and foreheads. The boy and his sister stood gazing in utter dismay and astonishment, as rider after rider, each one more uncouth and dwarfish than the one that had preceded it, passed the cottage, and disappeared among the brushwood which at that period covered the hill, until at length the entire route, except the last rider, who lingered a few yards behind the others, had gone by.

“What are ye, little mannie, and where are ye going?” inquired the boy, his curiosity getting the better of his fears and his prudence.

“Not of the race of Adam,” said the creature, turning for a moment in his saddle: “The People of Peace shall never more be seen in Scotland.”

(Hugh Miller, *The Old Red Sandstone*)



## CELTIC FAIRY

**Fairy** [Latin, *fata*; Old French, *faerie*]

Almost every country in the world has its own fairies (pronounced far'iz) from earliest times to the present day. Fairies are supernatural beings possessed of magical powers who are usually seen as small men and women and they are sometimes considered mischievous people, but they are often considered magical. These diminutive, supernatural beings in human form are frequently depicted in all modern Celtic traditions. In common with counterparts in other European traditions, Celtic fairies may be seen as clever, mischievous, and capable of assisting or harassing human endeavor. A discussion in English of this phenomenon is hampered by an often-indiscriminate use of the word 'fairy' to translate dozens of more precise terms from

Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Manx, Welsh, Cornish and Breton traditions. More confusingly, 'fairy' has sometimes been used to describe (and implicitly to dismiss) many characters from ancient Celtic myths, legends, sagas, and folklore. Yet the first citations of fairy lore appear in writings of the learned elite of the time, such as Giraldus Cambrensis (c. 1146-1223). These are few, however and the great bulk of fairy lore was recorded in oral tradition in modern times.

The word fairy derives from the Latin *fatum* ('fate') as in the Greek Fates – three sisters who spun the tread of life and determined the fate all human lives. In archaic English fairies are also known as fays, a term that means enchantment or bewitched, and in recognition of the skills of fairies were thought to have in prediction and even controlling human destiny. The word fay is seen in the state of enchantment or fayerie, which gradually evolved into faerie and fairy. This theory that fairies are the ones who bestow individual destiny or specific gifts is found in the widespread European figure of the Fairy godmother who endows a baby with gifts it will need for life. Fairies are thought to bring good or bad luck on a person and to possess magical power and ability to cast spells. This idea is found in the Welsh *Bendith y Mamau* and the French *Bonnes Meres*, as well in the Spanish *Feda* and Italian *Fata*.

Entries of the sort later known as fays, elves, and the like can be found in ancient Greek and Roman sources, where they blend in seamlessly with the realm of nature spirits and minor gods – the background fabric of classical religion. The stories of Classical Greek and Roman writers about such beings were the formal expression of a still older folk belief. Homer's human warriors wooed many a fairy love (nymph, Nereid, siren) and all fairy-wives, demon-lover stories of India and Europe, even the animal bride stories of North American Indians, are variations of the same most ancient motif. This same attitude can be found in Germanic and Celtic traditions, where the boundaries between the gods and elves are impossible to draw.

The coming of Christianity, here as in so much else, forced a division down the middle of this easy unity. Christian dualism demanded that all entities be either good or evil, servants of God or the Devil, and most orthodox accounts of the fairies assigned it firmly in the Devil's camp. The idea of morally neutral spirits persisted however, and both attitudes can be found in the medieval and Renaissance writings on the subject.

Although there's quasi-orthodoxy in the portrayals of fairies, much in Celtic conceptions bears a striking resemblance to those found in English, Scandinavia (e.g. *hulda-folk*), and Continental traditions. The lack of a single shared term for fairy implies the lack of a singular, discrete Celtic tradition: Irish *sidheog* (unreformed), *siog* (unreformed), *sheogue* (anglicized), *boctogai*; Scottish Gaelic *sithiche*; Manx *ferrish*; Welsh *y tylwyth teg* [Welsh Fair Family]; Cornish *spyrys* [Cornish, spirit]; Breton *korriganez*, *boudig*. Out of courtesy the fairy may also be known by a number of euphemisms: Irish *daine maithe* [good people], *daoine sidhe*, *aes sidhe/aos si* [people of the mound], *daoine uaisle* [the noble people, gentry], *bunadh na croc/bunadh na gcnoc* [host/stock of the hills], *bunadh beag na farraige* [wee folk of the sea]; Scottish Gaelic *daoine sith* [people of the mound]; Manx *ny guillyn beggey* [the little boys], *ny mooinjer veggey* [the little kindred], *ny sleih veggey* [the little people]; Welsh *bendith y mamau* [Welsh, mother's blessings]; Cornish *an bobel vyghan* [the little people]. Also see: *Alp-luachra*, the joint-eater; *boctogai*; *bugelnoz*; *buggane*; *cnu deireoil*, the fairy musician; *coraniaid*, demonic dwarfs; elf; *ellyee* Welsh elves; *enfant-oiseau*, sacrificial child-bird; *fetch*, the doppelganger; *fferyllt*, alchemist or magician; *ganconer*, the love-talker; *gille dubh*; *girle guairle*; *spriggan*.

The woods and mountains and caves of Britannia and Ireland are full of fairies, pixies, sprites, pucks, and elves. The different races of fairy peoples are found all over Britannia and Ireland. They are sometimes involved in territorial disputes such as those of the Cornish Piskies who fought the English fairies for possession of all the land west of the River Parrett and banished their enemies forever. Some territorial disputes seem more historical, like the long exile to the hollow hills on the Irish Tuatha de Danann who gave way to the human race of the Mileseians. Many otherworldly tribes of beings like dwarves, elves, and goblins are generically called "fairy folk", although they have distinctly different natures.

Fairies are seen as a race of beings somewhere between humans and spirits. They live as our neighbors, but because human beings have often failed to look after their part of the earth's stewardship, we seldom encounter fairies, for they regard us as boastful breakers of promises. If however, you can establish a good relationship with them, if you leave offerings to them – usually the first fruits of whatever produce you possess, as long as it is not meat – they will be good neighbors to you.

The gossamer-winged, butterfly fairy of folktales is derived more from the Persian Peri. Our present notions of fairies show a diminishment both of human respect and fairy size, for they are invariably portrayed as tiny, colorful, and be-winged creatures full of twinkle and no power. Such depictions are at odds with the vigor of real indigenous fairies that can appear in different sizes and whose actions are robust even lusty. Some are said to be fearsome creature with awesome powers, while others, like leprechauns or brownies are almost cute and loveable by nature. Whatever their shape or appearance, fairies are thought to have great affinity for nature. Fairies hold a trust for the sake of the whole earth. Their wisdom and guardianship is a reminder to humans of the respect we must give to our environment: vigilant, faithful and loving.

Wherever we look, we find that a common task of fairy folk is to protect the natural world in all its forms and in this they are nearer to elemental spirits like gnomes. In Greece we find fauns, centaurs, dryads, and nymphs. These beings have leaders who are usually half animal, half humanoid like Puck or Cheiron.

Celtic conceptions of fairies, which approach orthodoxy, depict them as diminutive or pygmy persons. Fairies are often invisible or can become so at will, often by donning a magical cap. They prefer to live underground, especially under a hill, in a cave or burrow, or in a heap of stones, such as the raths of Ireland. Their preferred color is green, not only for dress but sometimes for skin and hair as well; at other times they may favor the palest of whites. Fairies are not generally malevolent or harmful, but they are feared as abductors of children and as administrators of the fairy stroke, which may rendered the victim speechless; the colloquial use of the word 'stroke' for cerebral hemorrhage alludes to this once widespread belief. If affronted, a fairy will retaliate with resolute vengeance; common fairy punishments are burning houses and despoiled crops. Some of their pranks only tenuously linked to human provocations; including curdling milk or milking cows in the field, snatching unwatched food, and soiling clothes left out to dry. Often fairies are seen as benevolent, taking money or food to give to the poor, providing toys for children, or counteracting the spells cast by witches.

The widespread belief that fairies or other malevolent spiritual forces might secretly substitute one infant for another is amply represented in Celtic oral tradition. From the middle ages up to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when fairy belief peaked, infants who were ugly, retarded, or unruly were written off as changelings. It was believed that the changeling could be induced to confess if it were set on fire, and many babies may have died that way. A changeling is known by numerous names in the Celtic language: Irish *corpan sidhe*, *siodhbhradh*, *siofra*; Scottish Gaelic *tacharan*, *umaidh*; Manx *lhiannoo shee*; Welsh *plentyn a newidiwyd am arall*. [Britannia]

Some fairy folk have distinct tasks. We see elements of fairy folk in beings like the Scandinavian Valkyrie who gather the slain from the battlefield, while the Irish banshee keens her deadly screech over the impending departure of a soul under her care.

In the early middle ages, fairies were said to be visible to all. As time went on, they acquired more and more supernatural powers and became invisible to all but those with second sight. Fairies who were captured by mortals were said to pine away and die quickly if they could not escape. In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, when fairy beliefs were at their height, fairies and witches were often blended together. Both could cast magical spells; heal people and divine lost objects and the future. Both danced and sang beneath a full moon – often together – and trafficked with ancient deities. Both could shape-change, fly, levitate, and cause others to levitate. Both avoided salt and both were repelled by iron. Fairies were said to be familiars to witches.

In Britain, which evolved and passed magical traditions not found elsewhere, rites for summoning fay were in circulation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, if not before. Rituals published in skeptic Reginald Scot's *Discoveries of Witchcraft* (1584) included a ceremony for calling in three fairy sisters, Milia, Achilia, and Sybilia, to provide a magical ring of invisibility. The 1665 edition of the same book, which was expanded by the addition of a huge collection of magical rites, is including another rite for the summoning of Luridan, a helpful spirit who is associated with the Welsh bards, and announced by a group of gnome-like entities who speak ancient Irish. Contemporary records show that rite of this sort were being practiced in England through the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and ceremonies for summoning local fairy folk were in use in Germany by the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when one was published in *The Threefold Harrowing of Hell*, the most famous of the grimoires attributed to Faust.

## CELTIC ELVES

### Elf [Old English *aelf*]

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, due in part to Hollywood accounts of Santa's elves running his workshops at the North Pole, the elf has been associated with a diminutive creature, possessed of little magic, with almost nothing of its original qualities remaining, save for its original qualities remaining, save for its skill in making beautiful objects. Yet the old traditions portray elves as very different creatures.

Today the word 'Elf' is the familiar diminutive, magic-wielding creature that derives from Teutonic origins. Among the Norse, Teutonic and Scandinavian people, elves are tall, extremely beautiful, and very powerful. These supernatural beings are inferior in power only to the gods. They have only one close counterpart in the Celtic world, the Welsh *ellyll*. Other parallels can be found only through analog. The Irish leprechaun makes an inexact analogue, although the cluricaune and the dullahan and Cornish piskie come closer.

Some commentators have said the word "elf" meant "alive", but there is little doubt that elves were the ancestral dead, still "alive" in their burial mounds; "it is well known that in Scandinavia the dead were formerly called 'elves'. The Kormaks Saga, Pagan Icelandic poem of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, describes sacrifices to them for curative purposes: "Redden the inside of the mound with bull's blood, and make the elves a feast of the flesh; and you will be healed".

The word elf was related to the *helleder*, people belonging to Mother Hel as Death Goddess. In general it meant heathen both dead and living. Sigvat Thordarson in the 11<sup>th</sup> century called heathen



people *alfar*, “elves”, which worshipped their deities at the feasts called *alfablot* (elf-blood) in certain “heathen holy” houses ruled by women.

Person may be said to have ‘elfin beauty’ when they possess fine bones, light and silken hair and large eyes. In Anglo-Saxon, there is an adjective, *aelfsciene* that means ‘as pretty as an elf’. In fact, the importance of elves in earlier Western culture can be inferred from the number of words and phrases of this kind that have survived into recent times. For example, ‘elf-shot’, which refers to prehistoric arrowheads picked up in plowed fields and assumed to be made by elves; ‘elf-bore’, which is applied to a piece of wood from which the knot fell out, leaving a shapely hole behind; ‘elf-child’ is one who may have been a changeling; ‘elf-cup’ is a stone with a hollow in it filled with morning dew; ‘elf-fire’ is another name for the Will-o’-the-Wisp; ‘elf-locks’ may be either knots of hair, said to be caused by elves deliberately tangling it during the night, or short springy curls; ‘elf-taken’ is a phrase used to suggest those who are temporarily mad; ‘elf-twisted’ is used for a person who has suffered a stroke; and ‘elf-bolt’ is a disease of farm animals said to be the result of being shot with elf arrows.

The paradise of *Alfaheim* (elf-land) was always matriarchal. It was inhabited by the female spirits who made the sun. Like their eastern counterparts the *dakinis* (angel of death), the Valkyries or fairies could be both beautiful and hideous, representing both birth and death. In the new creation after doomsday, the new female sun would be Glory-of-the-Elves.

Glory-of-the-Elves, the Norse name for the Sun Goddess, who would give birth to a daughter sun to rule the new universe after doomsday. She was probably modeled after the Aryan Sun Goddess Aditi, whose offering would be revealed on doomsday.

Christianity opposed this ancient female centered theology, as shown by accounts of elf-feasts as demonic sabbats where “cloven-footed dancers” trod their fairy rings. Henry More 17<sup>th</sup> century English philosopher and poet said they often appeared in northern England and in Ireland. Ballads merged the demon lover with the “elf-knight”, a wooer from Pagan northlands. The custom of the Wild Hunt of Night Ride, sacred to the elf king (Odin), was transformed into a procession of wind-riding demons, as at Halloween and other Pagan festivals. Leader of the night Riders was called the Erl King, from Danish *ellerkonge*, a king who belonged to Hel. He is associated with the sacred elder tree.

Erl King, the Danish *ellerkonge*, “king of the elves”, associated with the sacred alder or elder tree, and the underground land of the dead. As Lord of Death, he was a consort of Hel, Norse Goddess of elder trees. He was really a form of Odin, leader of the Wild Hunt composed of ghostly riders on the night wind.

Other plants associated with the elves were the holly sacred to Hel, the mistletoe, the mandrake, and various witch-herbs including rosemary, known as the Elfin Plant, named after the Goddess herself.

J.R.R. Tolkien, in his *Lord of the Rings* trilogy did something to set the record straight, although he borrowed aspects from a number of different cultures to create almost angelic elves who appear in his books. He drew heavily on elven traditions of the Alfa in the creation of his elvish races that played an important part of his books *The Hobbit* and the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Shakespeare also perceived elves as human-like in appearance, as we may see from the descriptions of the beautiful Oberon and Titania in *A Midsummer’s Night Dream*. But Shakespeare, who knew a great deal about English folklore and traditions, made their fairy subjects diminutive, thus combining two strands of beliefs.

In more recent times, there has been a general diminution of the elves. In Scandinavia, they have become associated with the Hulder, a small race with more kinship to dwarves or brownies. They also have acquired a tradition of being mischievousness and spiteful. The Anglo-Saxon traditions mention two races of elves or Alfa, the Liosalfa (Light Elves) and Svarta (Dark Elves), each of which possesses the attributes one would expect from their names. The Liosalfa are bringers of light and are extremely beautiful, being tall, with skins whiter than the sun. They live in a realm between Earth and the Heavens known as Alfheim. The Svarta, on the other hand, live beneath the earth and their skins are darker than night without stars. They are famous smiths and responsible for many fabulous weapons and magical armor. Despite their evil reputation, they are associated with fertility and had a strong following among the northern peoples. Both races are said to have originated from the maggots that ate the flesh of the cosmic giant Ymir. In Germanic mythology, the Forest Elves are called Schrat, while the Danish folklore has the Elen or Elle-Folk, who have an unfriendly relationship with humanity. In Sweden, the

Forest Elves are known as Elvor, Grove Folk. In more modern literature an elf is considered as a sprite or a fairy.

The Irish word *siabraid* is sometimes translated as 'elf'. The English word elf translates inexactly into the Celtic languages other than Welsh: Modern Irish *clutharachan*, *lucharachan*; Scottish Gaelic *sithiche*; Manx *trollag*; and the Cornish *spyryr*.



### CELTIC DWARF Dwarf [Old English *dweorg*]

Not all adult persons of smaller than normal stature in Celtic literature are dwarves. Several of the denizens of fairyland for example, are portrayed as smaller than most mortals, but they are not dwarves. Allusions to non-fairy dwarves are not especially common in the Celtic world, as compared to with the Norse or Arthurian traditions. Dwarves in Anglo-Saxon mythology were small supernatural beings who dwelt in the bowels of the earth; they were described as little old brown men with long white beards and child stature. The most celebrated dwarf is probably the satyr-like fenodyee, a leading figure in the folklore of the Isle of Man. Welsh dwarfs are more

unattractive than those of Ireland or Gaelic Scotland. They were sometimes helpful, more often they were malicious and possessed great knowledge and cunning. They were the masters of metalworking and forged weapons for the gods. In Norse mythology they made Thor's hammer and the great chain that held the wolf Fenrir. The Welsh word for dwarf, *cor*, lies in the root of *Coraniaid*, a plague upon Wales in *Cyfranc Llud a Llefelys*. One of Culhwch's tasks is to retrieve the container of Gwyddolwn the dwarf, which is needed to keep warm the black witch's blood. The shape-shifting Eiddilig Gor is an enchanting dwarf. The Breton *korr* is easily identifiable in the roguish *korrigan*s of Breton lore. By contrast in Ireland the dwarf harpist of the court of Fionn mac Cumhaill, *Cnu Deireoil*, has golden hair and sings sweetly. The benign *Aeda*, dwarf of king Fergus mac Leti, accompanies the fairy bard *Eirirt* to the realm of *Iubdan*. *Abcan*, a poet, and *Luchta*, a wood-worker, were both dwarves of the *Tuatha de Danann*.

*Nibelungs* (ne'be-loongz) are a race of dwarves in Norway who owned and guarded the treasure of jewels and gold and the magic ring later won by the Teutonic hero *Siegfried*. In the *Nibelungenlied*, they are the kings of burgundy who secure the horde. The secret of its hiding place was lost when they were all killed.

The Old Irish word for dwarf is *abacc*; Modern Irish *abhac*; Scottish Gaelic *troich*; Manx *crivassan*, *trollag*; Welsh *cor*; Cornish *cor*; and Breton *korr*.



### CELTIC GNOMES Gnome [Latin *gnomus*]

Gnomes (pronounced nom) are a fabulous, diminutive race of beings who are supposed to dwell in the earth and guard mines and quarries. Late Germanic folklore has confused gnomes with dwarves and elves. In ceremonial magic, gnomes are the elemental of earth. Gnome is the name that the natural philosopher *Paracelsus* (1493-1541) coined in the 16<sup>th</sup> century to describe the elemental spirits of the earth. He also coined the words

“slyph” for an air sprit, “salamander” for a fire spirit and “undine” for a water spirit. Like many of his technical terms, it has no known etymology. However, “Gnome“ seems to be derived from a combination of Latin words and is itself a contraction of *genomus* or ‘earth-dweller’. The names of these elemental beings are solely used by magical and hermetic practitioners and do not appear in folklore or myth. Gnomes are more properly dwarves or goblins in that they are connected with the products and treasures of the earth. It is likely that Paracelsus created the category of gnomes after the earth-dwellers of his own land and culture, the mining dwarfs. This fabled race of treasure guarding dwarfs has few counterparts in Celtic tradition; only the knockers of Cornwall and the goric of Brittany are similar to gnomes. In ceremonial magic their king is Ghob, king of the earth elementals.

In Germanic folklore, the kobold (ko’bold) is a gnome-like spirit that lives in mines or underground caves and is skilled in the working of metal. A kobold is an ugly, mischievous and occasionally evil spirit. The word comes from the German word for ‘evil spirit’ and is often translated in English as goblin. Their name descended from Greek *kalballoi*, horse-riders, which formerly referred to “Amazonian” tribes led by the goddess. She was called Oberon’s spouse, Titania, queen of the Titans – who were, of course, the earth giants worshipped by the pre-Hellenic Pelasgian peoples, who resisted the Olympian gods. Similarly the kobolds lived underground, and resisted the rule of celestial deities. In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries they were usually depicted as little devils with a conical hat, pointy shoes, a hairy tail and bald feet in place of hands.

There are two types of kobold: a house kobold that is similar to a brownie, and a mine kobold that is similar to the Cornish knocker and the American Tommyknocker. The mine kobold is evil and will try to cause accidents and rock falls while miners are working. The household brownie-like kobold will help with households unfinished tasks and sing to the children in return for hospitality and the sharing of the family supper. They are of a mischievous disposition if food is not left out for them the kobold will become vindictive, hiding household objects or tripping people up.

Today gnomes are commonly found as garden ornaments or a character “race” of any number of fantasy role-playing games.



## CELTIC GOBLIN AND TROLLS

**Goblin** [Middle High German *kobolt*; Old French *gobelin*]

**Troll** [Old Norse *trull*, monster]

The name goblin may derive from the Greek *kobaloi*, meaning simply ‘evil spirit’, developing through the Latin form *cobalus* into the French *gobelin*, and finally the English *goblin*. It is now used as a general name for evil and malicious spirits, usually small and grotesque. Goblins are the household spirits who are akin to the Scottish brownies. This concept of the grotesque, malevolent, diminutive sprite originated outside Celtic tradition and is only applied to it figuratively.

In general, the term goblin seems to be used for any of the uglier and more malignant spirits such as Boggarts, Bogies, Bogles, and Ghouls. Some sources suggest goblins originally emerged from beneath a rock in the Spanish Pyrenees, from where they spread across Europe. They are also referred to as a group of fairies that lived in churchyards, crevices in rocks, and among the roots of ancient trees. Goblins are also believed to live in grottos, but may attach themselves to household, especially those that have lots of wine and beautiful children. In European folklore, goblins are generally described as knee-high, with gray hair and beards. Like the friendlier Brownie, they are often found in the home and can be propitiated by small gifts that make them better behaved. They may help with household chores but on some nights they show their mischievous nature and instead of doing chore will create chaos by moving furniture and banging on pots and pans. The best way of getting rid of a goblin is to scatter flax seed all over the floor, so that when the creature appears at night to do mischief he will be obliged to

pick up all the seed. He will seldom complete his task before dawn and after several attempts he usually gives up and goes away.

They are also said to count the dead among their companions and to be able to weave nightmares out of gossamer and insert them into the ear of the sleeping human. Legend has it that goblins like to borrow horse from stables and ride them all night, leaving the horses exhausted by the morning. It is also said that they sometimes steal women and children and hide them away underground. If a goblin woman takes a liking to a human baby she may steal it away and replace it with a goblin baby or a changeling.

Prefixing the word Hob is considered to make them less terrifying since Hobgoblins (hob'goblin) were believed to be helpful and well disposed toward men. A Hobgoblin is a being that is nothing like as pleasant as a Hob and perhaps not as nasty as a goblin, but this is a matter of opinion. Hobgoblin is the kind of name that English people have used to miscall the honest Hob when they are impatient, or an insulting what that Puritans have of addressing goblins that they associate with demons, imps, and tricky spirits. Shakespeare was aware that is you called someone a bad name, they will begin to take on that nature, for in his *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, and a fairy addresses Puck with:

*'Those that Hobgoblin call you, and sweet Puck,  
You do their work, and thy shall have good luck,  
Are you not he?'*

The tiresome habit of people, who feel they have evolved from belief in fairies and other such close neighbors of ours, actively encourages the metamorphosis of friendly spirits into unfriendly ones. They have become associated with Halloween and are said to roam the night when the veil between the world of the living and the world of the dead is at its thinnest.

J.R.R. Tolkien made good use of goblins in his book *The Hobbit* as adversaries for his heroes to battle; though in time they developed into the more fearsome and terrible orcs of his *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

Only a few supernatural creatures from Celtic folklore are called goblins: the Welsh *colynau* [a translation of the English] and *bwgan*, and the Irish *cluricaune* and *dullahan*.

The name troll means simply monster on Old Norse, and these beings are certainly monstrous in the various forms in which they are found throughout Scandinavian mythology. They can sometimes be described as hostile giants, though in the literature of the Middle Ages they appear more often as fiends who are sometimes responsible for black magic. In later medieval Icelandic texts and West Scandinavian folklore, trolls play a greater role than giants. They are described as larger than people but extraordinarily ugly. They live in mountain caves and prey upon humans. In Swedish and Danish folklore in particular, 'troll' is a name used to mean a kind of brownie. In fact there is almost no agreement as to their appearance so that in Denmark trolls are more like ogres with humps on their backs and extremely large noses. In Norway, trolls are described as malicious hairy ogres, though the female of the species can appear as beautiful

Trolls are Earth-demons, called *Trulli* in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. The word "trull", a loose woman, grew from the same root; thus the Troll was probably at first one of the Pagan Hags or earth-priestesses. Norse folklore said trolls commonly sat under bridges, waiting to seize and eat those who crossed the bridge without making them an offering. Association with bridges suggests the Valkyries who guarded Bifrost, the Bridge of Heaven; they too were "trulls" or "trolls". The angels of Death were said to congregate at a divine Sabbath called the *trolla-thing*.





## CELTIC GIANTS

### Giant [Old Irish, *aithech*]

From earliest times, giants (ji'ants) have had an important presence in the mythology and folklore of the world. Giants occur in the Celtic myths and sagas several times. The term for a giant in Old Irish was *aithech*. In Greek, Roman, Teutonic and Celtic folklore giants were monstrous manlike being of superhuman strength and powers, but ungod-like characteristics. From the ancient Titans of the classical world who preceded the gods to the blundering, easily fooled giants of folklore to the awful flesh-eating ogre of European folklore, they may be seen as supporting the world or playing a part in its destruction. The Fomorians of the Irish pseudo-history are sometimes seen as sea giants. During the Second Battle of Magh Tuireadh the Fomorian appear in the guise of giants and, indeed, when Oisín followed Niamh to the Otherworld he had to battle with a Fomorian giant.

Appearing in every mythology as a primal elder Race, giants were obviously projections of every child's earliest perception of the adult world. Like grownups seen through the eye of the toddler, giants tended to be fearsome, sometimes bloodthirsty but sometime benevolent; possessors of an arcane ancient wisdom; and adepts of magic. Giants can be friendly or unfriendly, clever or stupid; they can be vast as to be almost beyond our ability to imagine, or just simply larger than life. They seem always to represent a distant time or an older race, perceived as larger than us.

The most persistent lore of giants has more to do with the landscape in which they are set than with any distinct memory of an immortal race. Often where huge boulders are found lying in open country, left behind by retreating glacial ice, these are evidence of giant activity. Thus we hear of the Cailleach Bheur forming the mountains of Scotland and the Hebridean islands, or of Cormilion/Cormoran, who is said to be responsible for St. Michael's Mount in Cornwall; or there is the Giant's Causeway in Ireland said to have been built by Fionn mac Cumhaill to serve him as a bridge, and the various giant's cauldrons to be found in Germany, Norway, and Italy. The Irish said giant people still lived in "the chambered undergrounds of Tara where dwell the fourth race of gods who settled Ireland." These were the Tuatha de Danann, the people of the goddess Danu, builders of stone temples. Their goddess passed into medieval folklore as Titania, the Fairy Queen. Curiously, though she was a female Titan and the Tuatha de Danann were giants, they shrank as popular belief in their powers waned before the encroachment of the new religion. Eventually they became the fairies or elves, not giants but "little people", the size of children or smaller. This reduction in their size was surely related to a reduction in awesomeness. Significantly, their religious myths became "fairy tales" for children, and many of their liturgies and sacred songs reappeared in the guise of nursery rhymes.

There are so many different types of men and women of great size in Celtic tradition that the only thing they have in common is their size and strength. Irish and Cornish giants are often foolish and gentle, while those in Gaelic Scotland may be more astute. Some such as the mighty Bran the Blessed in Celtic tradition, clearly derive from gods. In Britain at least the vast chalk figures such as the Cerne Abbas giant and the Long Man of Wilmington are almost certainly representations of ancient deities. In the pseudo-history of Britain composed in the 12<sup>th</sup> century by Geoffrey of Monmouth, the earliest inhabitants of the island were giants whose leader was called Gogmagog – a conflation of the Biblical Gog and Magog, who themselves were giants. According to Geoffrey, this giant was defeated by the Trojan Corineus, who was equally mighty in stature and wrestled with Gogmagog, ending by throwing him from the top of the cliffs of Cornwall. Even the ancient name for Britain, Albion, is said to derive from an ancestral giant. Heroes may sometimes take giant form, such as Fionn Mac Cumhaill in oral tradition or Cu Roi; or giants may assist heroes, as Wnach aids Culhwch; or giants may exist only for

puny men to vanquish. It should be stressed that Fionn mac Cumhaill came to be regarded as a giant only in later legends.

The generic term ‘ogre’ is given to many of the cannibalistic giants of the world culture when mythology is beginning to lapse into folklore and fairytales. It was first used by the French storyteller Perrault in his *Contes* (1697), and more bizarrely by George Macdonald in his *Phantastes* where he uses the word ogre to describe a sinister, pointy-toothed woman who tempt the hero into looking into a certain cupboard by warning him against such action. This reverse psychology succeeds in making him look within. Ogre is a name loosely given to any bugbear or bogeyman that spooks you or follows you. The most cinematic appearance of an ogre is that of the foul-breathed Shrek who, against the odds wins the hand of the princess.

The mythology of the Norse and Teutonic peoples is thronged with giants, beginning with the Jotuns, vast beings that ruled over the Earth in ancient times. These derived from an even more primordial giant, Ymir, from whose dismembered body all life was generated. The same tradition also spoke of Frost Giants, Fire giants, and Earth Giants, all of who were so immense that they were capable of challenging the gods themselves.

## Kids Corner



### Yule Time Shenanigans

From Jackie Greer  
(Clan of the Triple Horses, OR)

A Grove member participated in our Yule Rite despite being busy with a toddler who had just joined her household. She is also a student so her schedule was overwhelming. As we said our goodbyes outside the Taco Bell where we had gone to indulge in some junk food after our Rite (budgets were also extremely tight), she whipped out her cell phone and played a brief recording I'll never forget.

The air rang with the loudest, most joyous, most uninhibited laughter I've ever heard. It was the laughter of toddlerhood, of innocence, of wild, primal, surging joy—and damned be anyone who tried to contain it, to make it conform!

A toddler boy's laughter rings in my memory as I contemplate Beltane. Daffodils, tulips and trees exploding in pink and purple are visions of that laughter, that play, that flirtation that is the first step to new creation.

A toddler's laughter makes me yearn to laugh that way, play that way, feel that way—the way I felt when school was about to pause for the Winter Holidays or summer vacation, when I sat around a campfire next to a snug little travel trailer that would soon shelter me for the night, when my Birthday arrived, on Christmas Eve. Everything faded into a bright mist of contentment and happiness.

Beltane's archetypes resonate with all living things. There is the obvious—sacred sexual encounters and the Chalice and the Blade uniting in the Great Rite. I struggle with that archetype because I am not sexually active. But that laughter brought the deeper meaning, the one that applies to all Life, into sharp focus. I am constrained by my workplace and by being spiritually in the closet at home but my Soul can soar with that passion. I can unite the Blade of my passion, energy and strength with the Chalice of receptivity to my every experience.

I can bring passion to answering letters and e-mails at work as completely and clearly as I can. I can bring passion to my relationships, especially a passion for what will serve my loved ones. I can bring passion to my stolen moments with the Nature Spirits and Shining Ones. I can bring passion to cooking to nourish my father and me. I can even bring passion to washing a dish or mopping a floor!

A little boy's laughter echoes from a cell phone speaker and Beltane's Needfires shout to me from ancient Celtic hills: "Don't hold back!" Cry, laugh, dance, release! "

Nothing can manifest without a union of Passion and Intent, of Yin and Yang, Male and Female, flint and stone. Hold back and there can be no spark to light the void. The time for rest, for constraint, is over. It is time to run, to shout, to roll in the grass, to fertilize the Universe and be fertilized by the Shining Ones.

What sparks will you ignite?



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