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# Lughnasadh, Year 43 (July 22nd, 2005)

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**L**ughnasadh, one of the four great festivals of the Celtic calendar, marks the beginning of the harvest. It was a time of great feasting and games, and of assemblies where political, monetary, and legal matters were settled.

Lughnasadh, the "Games or Assembly of Lugh," was an agrarian feast and was held on or around the first of August. It celebrated the ripening of the grain and the harvesting of crops and the weaning of calves and lambs. Offerings of the first fruits were made in anticipation of and to insure a bountiful harvest. Widespread like the festival Oimelc and the goddess Bride at the direct opposite point on the Druid calendar, it was

connected with Lugus in Gaul, Lugh in Ireland, and Lleu in Wales. According to Anne Ross in *The Celtic World* (Routledge 1996), Lughnasadh is "indicated on the Coligny Calendar under the name Rivros, 'great festal month.' Rivros has been equated with the Irish month Lughnasadh; the notation at the thirteenth day of Rivros has been interpreted as 'great feast of the god.'" Coligny located not far from Lugudunum (Fortress of Lugus) in Gaul, modern day Lyons, and was supposedly founded by Lugus. When the Romans conquered Gaul the Feast of Lugus was replaced by the Feast of the emperor Augustus. This is an example of the Roman religion co-opting the older native religion's celebrations (This practice wasn't just done by the early Christians!)

It is believed that Lughnasadh might have been introduced into Ireland by Celtic settlers. In Ireland there were two great assemblies were traditionally held at Lughnasadh and both were associated with goddesses. There was of course ?nach Tailten, held at Teltown in County Meath. According to early Irish tradition the festival was established by Lugh himself to commemorate his foster-mother Tailtiu, who died at Teltown on August 1. Lugh himself was said to have led the horse racing and martial arts contests.

The other assembly was ?nach Carmain. Carman or Carmun was a malevolent figure and the leader of many battles. She and her three sons Dian (The Fierce), Dub (The Black), and Dothur (The Wicked) devastated Ireland by destroying its crops and plundering, until they were defeated by the Tuatha De Danann. The sons were forced to leave Ireland and their mother was left captive. She died of grief and asked that a feast be held in her honor. This festival, held in Leinster, was according to Rees and Rees in *Celtic Heritage: Ancient Tradition in Ireland and Wales* (Thames and Hudson 1961), to insure "an abundance of corn (editor: grain) and milk, freedom from conquest, the enjoyment of righteous laws, comfort in every house, fruit in great abundance, and plenty of fish" and "deeds of violence, abductions, the repudiation of husband or wife, and the levying of debts were all prohibited- and the penalties were severe." In essence it was a time of armistice. This seems to be typical of assemblies in general. Lughnasadh spread to other parts of Ireland and was celebrated at Emain Macha in Ulster and at Tara for the whole of the island. The Feast of Lughnasadh traditionally lasted for a month, 15 days before August 1st and 15 days after.

The festivals and assemblies changed in nature during Christian times, but were still of importance. Lughnasadh became a traditional time for harvest fairs where-- in addition to horse racing and horse swimming, hurling, and other sports and trials of strength, musical and poetry competitions commerce, the buying and selling of goods took place. In the evenings big fires would be kindled and the young men would run races around them. One of the most notable ones still held is the Puck Fair in County Kerry. The harvest was also a time when young people came together, gathering at hilltops to sing and dance, eat and drink, and flirt and court, and possibly wed. The anticipation of meeting one's true love during harvest time survives in the traditional Irish folk song "Star of the County Down," where the singer hopes of the young maid he sees on the street

"At the harvest fair, she'll be surely there,  
So I'll dress in my Sunday clothes,  
With my shoes shone bright and my hat cocked right  
For a smile from my nut-brown rose.  
No pipe I'll smoke, no horse I'll yoke,  
'Til my plough is a rust-colored brown,  
'Til a smiling bride by my own fireside  
Sits the Star of the County Down."





# News of the Groves



For the [Full Grove Directory](#)



## **Awena Grove: News from Alberta, Canada**

I (Athelia) was ordained into the 3rd Order on May 8, 2005 after spending a very cold vigil outside at Split Rock in Calgary, Alberta.

Vigils - Canadian Style!

May is not usually a warm month in Calgary. Most years, we get a dump of snow (usually a big one) around May 8th, so I was a little worried. There were bog clouds and we were worried about rain or snow happening. (We had no precipitation at all in the end)

Luckily for me, spring actually arrived somewhat on time this year and there was no snow. The temperatures still tended to drop to about -5 degrees Celsius at that time, so I bundled up, brought a sleeping bag and a lot of logs. (I also snuck in some tortilla chips and salsa) My husband also decided to brave the elements with me, so he bundled up, but not as warmly (men...go figure!).

As soon as the sun went down, we set to work setting up our area. There is a sort of natural 'fireplace' that is a natural sandstone formation just to the right and down a bit from Split Rock. We used this as our 'home' for the night.

We lit the fire and hunkered down for the vigil (7:00pm). The nights are still quite long, so it was about a 9 hour vigil.

We spent most of the night discussing Druidry as well as how homeless people must feel living like this every day. All night, there was this 'whoop, whoop, whoop' sound over our heads, like some bird was flying around us...but we could not see it! It drove us nuts, but kept me awake (my husband fell asleep at around midnight).

At around 3 am, we started to get cold, so we took a walk through the valley. When we got back, we relit the fire and tried our best to stay warm.

At about 3:00 am, I got a feeling that we should leave our place and we packed up to go sit in the car since my husband and I were showing signs of hypothermia.

We got into the car and started it up. Some punks in a large truck came just at that moment and started trying to terrorise us. (Good thing we were getting too cold...who knows what may have happened?)

We just drove off and went to the other side of the park we were in and sat there with the heater on for an hour before returning to where we were.

The punks were gone and we went back to our place. That was when my cell phone rang. It was Mike, ready to do the Ordaining.

It was a little awkward, getting things set up, but we did get it all together to do everything.

The omens were all good, with flying geese (in early this year), nice breezes and the sun coming up looking very pink (the thick clouds made it look like only half a sun). From all directions, everything was blessed and I was filled with renewed energy. Until that point, I was about ready to fall over with exhaustion! I think the 'Waters of Life' (I chose Glenfiddich as my 'waters') helped a bit too...

So, with my husband as witness and Mike performing the ceremony via the wonders of wireless technology, I emerged from our cold little roost ordained into the Third Order.

The biggest thing I got from that? A new appreciation for the many homeless folks I see downtown every day. When I worked as a security officer, I grew a hard skin against them, but this helped bring me back into appreciation. It is very expensive to live here and many working folks are homeless.

We went home and slept. After that, my in-laws called, telling us to come over right away! We did, and they gave us more than enough money to pay off our debts and put a down payment on a house. (They had just sold their cabin and split the profits with us)

Whether the all-night vigil and our constant meditation on the plight of the homeless had anything to do with it or not, our seemingly impossible dream of buying a house came true within 12 hours of starting our vigil!

We saved the last log from the cord we bought for the vigil and will burn it on the first night in our new house as an offering of thanks to the Gods for giving us the gift of a house.

In honour of the homeless folks, we are making a huge donation of clothes and such to the local homeless shelter sometime this summer (we are going through all of our stuff now to see what we can donate).

We also plan on serving food at the soup kitchen at least once or twice a year (during the 'off-seasons') at the soup kitchen.

Blessings,  
Athelia /\



### **Digitalis Grove: News from D.C.**

Word has come from Carleton that their letters in Latin that the Carleton Druids sent to encourage and advise the new Pope of the Roman Catholic received a disappointing standard format reply (in English) thanking us for our interest and giving us his blessings.

Well, after a rather rocky six weeks of rescheduling and organizing my life, things are settling down again in Washington DC. All the books that I mailed out before the Solstice seem to have reached their destination safely. Phillip Carr-Gomm of the Order of Bards Ovates and Druids (OBOD) in England asked me to write an article about the RDNA for their group's magazine. I also attend the fireworks on the 4th of July with several friends and past grovemates from George Washington University.

The Solstice Missal-Any article by Julie on animal skin tanning was quite inspiring to me, and I noted that she has been investigating her Ashhinnabe and Celtic heritage for several years now. So on the Solstice I dedicated myself to looking into my own miniscule Cherokee background on my father's side. I have a large load of books that arrived from Amazon.com. Linguist that I am, I will also steadily learn a bit of the

language and its noteworthy syllabary spelling system (rather similar to Japanese Hiragana in structure).

Related to that Cherokee research, I am knee-deep in planning for a murder mystery set at Carleton College where a student of mixed-Cherokee background dies under strange circumstances, and the Druids are initially implicated in the stream of events. The discoverer of the body, Phillip, tries to piece together the clues and placate the anguished lingering soul of the victim. Once Brother Stephen of Carleton and I have completed collaborating on the basic structure of the story this summer, I'll write it up this November during National Novel Writing Month.

Sister Oriana from California graciously paid me a visit this summer in Washington DC while attending a convention for her employer. A wondrous person, this young Druid treated me to dinner and delighted me with tales of life on the West Coast. As planned, she was ordained into 2nd Order at Rock Creek National Park in North Western DC (not far from the Zoo). I performed the clear ribbon bestowal for the first time during this visit.

### Clear Ribboning Service

Many cultures around the world bestow a scarf or a lei of flowers onto visitors or honored guests, so I thought it a nice idea to begin a new practice in my Grove. You are welcome to use or modify it for your needs too.

Preparation: Take about 12 feet of clear packing tape and double it back onto itself to form a six foot ribbon of about one to two inches wide. Beforehand, you can also insert various texts, hairs, plants or other symbols between the two layers to assist the wearer. I like to have a little of the material 'stick out' a bit from the tape's edge so it can 'breathe' a bit. You can determine a period of time before it should be burned or buried, if you'd like.



The clear ribbon can be worn about the neck, as a sash over the shoulder, as a belt, or running through the two sleeves (across the back) and pinned at the inside wrists to the shirt. This clear ribboning can be also used for other options like healing, blessing, ordination/vigiling, or protection of someone in need. Extra prayers can be added, as seen fit, when bestowed.

Last month, I was thinking, since third order and most higher and special orders have ribbons, why not second order too? So, I now bestow a clear ribbon to friends on journeys and to Second Order initiates to help them on their path in my grove tradition. I like to insert the five leaves of the Chant of the Earth Mother (maple, elm, pine, birch, oak) plus some seeds, grass and flowers with the following extra lines to the Second Order Service:

Arch Druid : Brother/Sister, to mark your devotion to the Earth-Mother and her followers, I hereby give you this clear ribbon. I hope your difficult path will be clear of further obstacles and your responsibilities easy to see and carry out. Will you accept in and wear it with honor?

Second Order Druid: I will.



### Lark Grove: News from Florida

The Lark Protogrove in Tampa still exists with all its initial members but is very amorphous in nature. I personally consider its continued life a tribute to the curiosity and tolerance of some modern Christians, since most of Lark's members are officially



either Catholic or Protestant. I have asked them if the group should be disbanded and they all vote an emphatic 'Nay!' Please keep us in your thoughts, and hope and work toward the goal that even those who lay claim to an exclusive truth may respect the validity of others' beliefs.

One Way Among Many.

Esther



## **Missionay Order of the Celtic Cross/Mother Grove: News from Oklahoma**

Whenever you think of summertime in Northeastern Oklahoma, I would encourage each of you to allow two things to come to mind: abundant humidity and unbearable heat. It is theologically debated in Northeastern Oklahoma as to whether this is a curse laid upon the state by persons disturbing ancient Indian burial mounds, such as those found at Spiro, or whether in one of the unmentioned acts of Creation, the Abrahamic

Deity (Jehovah, hereafter named Joe) managed to somehow do something absolutely improper to the local environs. For instance, did the Holy Joe design Northeastern Oklahoma to be some sort of cosmic septic tank? The greenery around here would somehow lend this credence simply because the roses always do bloom better over by the septic tank, do they not? Why, of course, Joe, yes they do. Or, are all the tornadoes indicative of the flushing motion of the universe, Joe. Joe says, of course they are.

So, then, Summertime in Oklahoma somehow is reminiscent of Joe's john. It is in this hazy, humid...horrid...summertime heat that I am in the midst of composing this epistle to you. In the time since I have past written to you, there has been a number of changes in the Muskogee/Mother Grove of the MOCC, mostly dealing with the back and forth decisions of one Archdruid and the de facto Archdruiding of another. The fact that the two of us are cousins (somewhat related through Belle Starr, the famous out-lady-law) makes the whole situation somewhat humorous and requires a person to have a program to know all the players. This, in the middle of compiling the new Annotated Liturgy Manual, is somewhat stifling--or is that the humidity? Temporarily, the Grove has not been having rites, but has been determining what is right for the Grove from what is not right for the Grove. Ultimately, it seems that the two main opinions line themselves nicely into two separate camps. The Old School, which is mostly concerned with tribalism instead of adherence to the strict observance of ritual AND greatly concerned with the correct things to put into a curriculum, and the New School, which is mostly concerned with when the next rite is as opposed to tribalism AND not being sure about what the curriculum is, much less what it should contain. Most likely the final happy medium will be found sometime after the Annotated Liturgy Manual is compiled and won't be included in it, but will look back on the ALM as a quaint record of what the group once went through.

Oddly enough, I've spent some time looking to some local trees for inspiration. After all, much like a book, they seem to have amassed a number of leaves, too. It can be argued that the mulberry even provides its own ink. While I look to the trees for inspiration, they only seem to give me one bit of advice: Drink water, think Green, and let your tootsies play in the mud. Now, some people may think this bit of advice to be somewhat non-theological, perhaps not even philosophical, but I personally believe it to be advice of exceeding great worthiness. It's not every year that I manage to write on the Liturgy Manual, and I'm pretty sure that that is a good thing. This time, in fact, the words sometimes used in describing it include 'dry as the catechism' and 'Druidry Vulgate' for the length and the amount of footnotes dangling at the bottom of seemingly every page. There are also some very nifty illustrations that have been included, and the fact that a lot of the footnotes are from other members of the MOCC than myself commenting...over the years...on various topics brought up in the MOCC's Rule (read Constitution or Bylaws or whatever) and Tenets (which are usually appended to the Original Basic Tenets of Reformed Druidism) and the Ritual (which really doesn't bear a lot of resemblance to the original RDNA rite other than having a beginning, middle and end)...well, drinking water, thinking Green and playing in the mud are sometimes much needed reality checks for me. The trees appear to remain

wise and give good advice. Even theologically proper advice, which is admirable, especially considering this doggone humidity that we have here in Northeastern Oklahoma.



## **Rogue River Grove: News from Oregon**

Our group has a portable labyrinth which we used on a fine Saturday morning near a babbling stream among the wild lilac in bloom.

Our Lughnasadh ritual will be on Saturday, July 30 and held outdoors if the weather permits. It will be family friendly and open to the public. Please email for details: aigeann at earthlink.net.

### **Dancing in the Mud**

(A review of the 'Cob and Sacred Space' workshop held June 18-19 in Talent, Oregon, sponsored by House Alive--by Michelle Thorla and Aigeann)

How many of you always wanted to design and build your own home, but were been intimidated by the myriad of skills and equipment required in such a massive project? Not to mention the cost. If so, it is time you were introduced to 'cob.'

What is cob?

Some jokingly refer to it as the building of a mud hut, but that's essentially what it is. It's a building material comprised of clay, sand, water and straw. The clay is the sticky glue, the sand gives it structure, and the straw gives it strength. This is mixed in small batches using bare feet until the desired consistency is achieved. You use this mixture to essentially sculpt your structure.

Since it's mixed in small batches, and applied in loaf-shaped 'cobs', small enough to toss along an assembly line, you don't need a whole work crew, or heavy equipment. You build primarily with what you have on site, and it stays on site, making it very economically, as well as ecologically, sound. It's incredibly manageable. When wet, cob is pliable and sculptable; and once dry, cob is incredibly strong with fine insulating and fireproof qualities.

Building a project with cob is a slow, creative process involving your entire body in the physical labor, as well as your mind and your spirit. It frees you to really become a part of the surroundings, the place you're building. Your structure becomes a living, growing artistic creation in itself. Truly rising from the earth where it eventually stands.

There are many health benefits to working with cob as well. The clay draws toxins out of your body, and the action of mixing the cob acts as a reflexology treatment for your feet.

Cob building workshops are normally a week or more, in order to cover all the details involved in building a cob structure. This abbreviated and specialized two-day workshop went through the basics regarding the best straw and similar substances for specific uses, how to compensate for the less than ideal clay that you may find for use on your own property, the different mixtures for different uses, do's and don'ts of building walls, trimming and finish plastering. This seminar also touched on the topics of wiring to code, preparing the cob walls for door and window frames, appropriate roofs and roofing material. Additionally, the discussions regarding the finding and using of recycled materials including how to create virtually earthquake proof foundations out of 'urbanite,' creating windows from broken panes or even glass jugs, building your own

doors from used lumber along with what logs work best for the rafters makes this the ultimate earth-friendly shelter.

Cob is often used in combination and in conjunction with other 'alternative' building techniques such as cord wood and straw bale.

The other half of the workshop was the integration of Sacred Geometry into your building plans. Also referred to as the Golden Mean or Golden Proportion, Sacred Geometry is the mathematical relationship of proportions. Shapes following this relationship are pleasing to the eye in Western Cultures and are reflected all around us. Examples in Nature include the human fetus, petals on flowers, snail shells, crystals, the number of needles in a bundle on a pine branch, as well as the structure of planetary systems, etc.

In summary, even after just taking this very abbreviated weekend workshop, you will feel confident about building a cob structure all by yourself. How can one be any more self sufficient than having the knowledge of how to create a permanent structure for yourself?

A special thanks goes to Coenraad Rogmans, Lead Instructor, House Alive.

For more information about Cob, please feel free to review the following websites:

<http://www.housealive.org/>

<http://www.cobcottage.com/>

<http://www.greenhomebuilding.com/>

<http://www.cobworkshops.org/>

And for your personal library:

'The Hand-Sculpted House: A Philosophical and Practical Guide to Building a Cob Cottage' (The Real Goods Solar Living Book) by Ianto Evans, et al, ISBN: 1890132349

'A Beginner's Guide to Constructing the Universe: Mathematical Archetypes of Nature, Art, and Science' by Michael S. Schneider, ISBN: 0060926716



## Sunset Protogrove: News from California

Was able to meet up with Mike Scharding during recent trip back east. Enjoyed a wonderfully snarky, Japanese lunch. Met a couple days later for a service and was gifted with an ordination to 2nd Order.

It was a particularly beautiful service. Michael chose a particularly meaningful meditation passage, which will become a main bullet in my personal Green Book. (Service possibly made even more beautiful due to the newly ordained's state. I am still baffled by the intensity of the outpouring of emotion from self. Intensely spiritual or drunk? One can only guess.)

After services, we enjoyed a Fun Philosophizing Footsoak in the creek, (F.P.F.) complete with a book baptism. Lots to ponder over for years to come.

Many thanks to Mike for making an otherwise sticky, humid trip to the East Coast...one to remember for a lifetime. It was a truly special opportunity.



Now on to watching Gatorr.

Oriana



### **Nemeton Awenyddion: News from California**

All is going well here as the first harvest approaches us. Our apple trees will have apples this year and it looks like a plentiful supply. Not much new news other than our online class will be starting a new Seekers class soon if anyone is interested please send me an e mail at [mewnol\\_siwrne at yahoo.com](mailto:mewnol_siwrne@yahoo.com)

peace,

Rhiannon



### **Poison Oak Grove: News from California**

Publisher of "A Druid Missal-Any"

For our High Day Socials we try to gear the food towards the theme of that particular High Day. For the Summer Solstice this year we took a little departure from our usual High Day Social and celebrated "The Druids of Summer." This all started when the AD sent out the announcement for the service and got on a baseball kick. And it just went downhill from there. The menu was peanuts (in the shell), Cracker Jack, all beef hotdogs in whole wheat buns, potato salad, Curve Ball Ale, lemon- and limeade, and It's It chocolate covered oatmeal cookie ice cream treats (The AD threatens to make them using bannocks and goat's milk ice cream).

For fun Grove members worked on the song "Take Me Out to the Grove Site."

"Take me out to the Grove Site,  
Take me out to the Oaks.  
Bring me my sickle and waters-of-life,  
Or a can of Budweiser and swiss army knife.  
And it's root, root, root for the Dru-ids

For it's one, two, three ways of day and one of night!"

As you can see there was one line we were having trouble with. Send your suggestions in care of A Druid Missal-Any to the address at the end of this newsletter.

**New Altars and Ballachulish**

By Morag Nic Bride  
Server, Poison Oak Grove



Standing stones abound in Scotland. Some of the more famous are the Calanish stones (An Tursachan na Calanais) on the island of Lewis, known also as the Fir Bhriega, or 'False Men,' because from a distance they look like human sentinels, and the Ring of Brodgar, in the Orkneys.

These are spectacular, and inspire the senses with awe of the ancient and unknowable, especially if one has the good fortune to see them in the light of the setting sun as it flashes from beneath the edge of a cloudy sky.

There are many other, less famous sites where one may find standing stones, or stone rings, and there are also many instances of solitary standing stones, or small groups of two or three, in fields accessible to hikers and walkers.

On the Isle of Skye are remnants of ancient Caledonia, the Pictish brochs, forts which were most likely constructed for refuge during raids. Some of these can be mistaken at first for natural structures, for the surrounding terrain has many an outcropping of native stone, grey and lichen-covered like the building material of the brochs, or 'duns,' as they are named, Dun Beag, for example, literally, 'Fort Little.' Any sign to alert the visitor to their locations is apt to be modest, and some have no designation at all, except on the map. Several times I drove past one such pile situated by a brook in a sheep pasture before I realized that it was the one I was looking for, right where the road to my bed and breakfast intersected with the main road from Port Righ.

What may escape the visitor's notice is the presence of single stones appearing at the side of the road, or at an entrance to a hostelry or other public establishment. It takes a moment for one to realize that these were in place before the road or building was constructed, unless the way itself is as old as the stone. There is one marking the Skye Life Museum far to the north in Trotternish, one of the regions of Skye, and a set of two where the road from Ballachulish joins the main highway north of Glencoe, at the entrance to a hotel. These, like the stones of the brochs, are weathered and lichen-splotched, but were originally dressed to some extent, for their surfaces are relatively smooth.

Dun Gerashader, the broch near my inn, was much larger than Dun Beag, and in greater disrepair. It looked to have been built somewhat like a ziggurat, with two tiers, but it was so overgrown and tumbled down that it was hard to tell. It was easy to see the reason for the broch's location. It furnished an unblocked view of the land around it, and, toward the north and east, there looked to be some other man-made structures, but I could not really be sure.



At the top, I found a few stacks of small stones, little cairns made by other hikers, perhaps in play, or offering. I left one myself, with a bird's feather, in thanks for the look into the past and the beauty of the present.

There is one place where standing stones are of more recent origin, in the old slate quarry of Ballachulish.

The town stands at the northern end of Glencoe Valley, its entrance within a mile or two of the road leading off the main highway into Glencoe village. For two hundred years, from 1755 to 1955, it was the home of a slate quarry, which has now become a park. There is a path with displays depicting the history of the quarry and the lives of its workmen, who worked long hours for little pay, and very little play. The path follows the perimeter of the quarry, including the pond which occupies part of the area. The main road down the middle of the quarry, of dirt and gravel, and now a walking path, is marked by upended slabs of slate cut in shape



similar to the ancient standing stones less than a mile away at the afore-mentioned hotel access road. At the foot of each is a slate plinth. On those flat surfaces I found offerings: small stones, for the most part, and what might have been greenery, too, but plainly items placed there by people.

I had already walked far, and was short on time, so, to my regret, I did not return to the quarry walls to pick up another fragment to lay upon these new altars. The offering I could have left, I brought home instead, for the altar of my grove, but that bit of quartz came from the rocks of the quarry at Ballachulish.

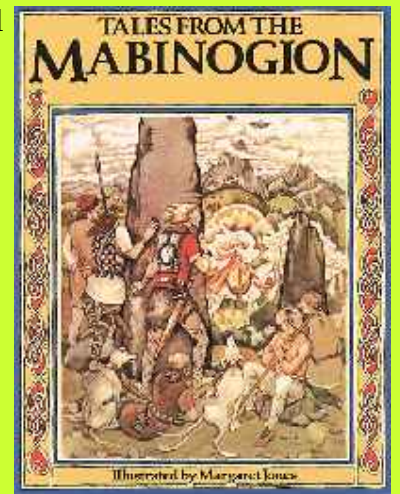


## Celtic Numbering Part Two of Four: Dualism

By Daniel Hansen, Olympia Grove WA

Dualism is a term used to describe the interdependent relationship between opposing concepts of life and death, good and evil, positive and negative forces, day and night, light and dark. Many Celtic and Romano Celtic cults demonstrate this ambiguity and a close interaction between apparently opposite aspects of the supernatural. A good example of this is the imagery of the mounted Sky god of the Jupiter columns. Here the forces of good life and light represented by the horseman interacted closely with the negative, dark forces, depicted in the form of a chthonic giant with snake limbs. The Sky god's horse often appears to trample the monster into the earth, but the relationship is ambivalent, and the giant sometimes supports the horse. In a sense, what is displayed is a kind of seasonal imagery, where death is necessary for life, winter for spring, dark for light. Similar dualism may be observed in other cults, such as that of the Mother goddesses, who are concerned with life, growth and fertility, but who may also preside over death and the afterlife.

Little or nothing is known to us of the religion of the ancient Celts as an ethical religion. The references to it in classical writers, the evidence of inscriptions, the Welsh and Irish texts, and the witness of folk survivals reveal it almost whole as a Nature religion. To some extent the dualism which is more or less present in all Nature religions characterized Celtic mythology, but how far it was also an ethical dualism is quite obscure. As the religion of a people who were largely engaged in agriculture, there was a cult of divinities and spirits of growth and fertility whose power and influence might be aided by magical ritual. Opposed to growth and fertility were blight, disease, and death, the evidence of which was seen in pestilence, in bad seasons, and in the desolation of winter. As growth and fertility were the work of beneficent deities, so those evils were probably regarded as brought about by personal agencies of a supernatural and evil character. The drama of Nature has shown that the sun was sometimes vanquished by cloud and storm, though it soon renewed its vigor. That summer with all its exuberant life died at the coming of winter, but that it returned again full of vitality, that vegetation perished, but that it revived annually in ample plenitude. What was true of Nature was also true, in mythology, of the personal and supernatural forces behind it. Beneficent and evil powers were in conflict. Year by year the struggle went on, year by year the gods of growth suffered deadly harm, but appeared again as triumphant conquerors to renew the struggle once more. Myth came to speak of this perennial conflict as having happened once for all, as if some gods perished, nevertheless, went on year by year. The gods might perish, but only for a time. They were immortal; they only seemed to be wounded and





to die.



Such a dualistic mythology as this seems to be represented by the euhemerized account of the battles between Fomorians and Tuatha de Danann in the Irish texts. Whatever or whoever the Fomorians were in origin, whether the gods of aboriginal tribes in Ireland or a group of Celtic tribes at war with another group, it is evident that they had come to be regarded as evil and malicious, and could thus be equated with the baneful personages already known to Celtic mythology as hostile to the gods of growth and fertility. It is evident that the Irish Celts possessed a somewhat elaborate mythical rendering of the dualism of Nature, and this seems to survive in the account of the battle or battles of Magh Tuired, but, after the Christianizing of Ireland, the old gods had gradually come to be regarded as kings and warriors, and this euhemerizing process was completed by the annalists. Hence in the account of the battles, while it is evident that in some aspects the hostile forces are more than human, the gods are described as kings and great warriors or as craftsmen. The Fomorians appear as the baneful race, more or less demoniac, inhabiting Ireland

before the arrival of the Tuatha de Danann, but we also hear of the Firbolgs and other peoples, who are clearly the aboriginal races of Ireland, and whose gods the Fomorians are sometimes said to be. The Tuatha de Danann is certainly the gods of the Irish Celts or of some large group of them.

Early Irish literature knew of only one battle of Magh Tuired, in which the Firbolgs and the Fomorians were overthrown together. However in later accounts the battle is duplicated, and the first fight takes place at Magh Tuired in Mayo, and the second at Magh Tuired in Sligo, twenty-seven years after the first. In the first battle the leader of the Tuatha de Danann, Nuada, loses his hand, and for this reason the kingdom was temporarily taken from him and given to Bres, the son of a Fomorian by a woman of the Tuatha de Danann. There is the usual inconsistency of myth here and elsewhere in these notices. The Tuatha de Danann has just landed in Ireland, but already some of them have united with the Fomorian in marriage. This inconsistency escaped the euhemerizing chroniclers, but it clearly points to the fact that Fomorians and Tuatha de Danann were supernatural and divine, not human races successively arriving in Ireland, and, though in conflict, like conflicting barbarous tribes, occasionally uniting in marriage. The second battle took place on Samhain, the festival that began the Keltic winter. Meanwhile the Tuatha de Danann had been forced to pay tribute to the Fomorians and to perform menial duties for them, in spite of their having been the conquerors. This shows that the euhemerists probably misunderstood the old myths, which may have been known to them only in a garbled form. Myths must have been told of the temporary defeat and subjection of the beneficent Nature gods, followed by their final triumph, not of a subjection after a victory.

Following the annalist's account, we find that the exaction demanded by Bres led to discontent. For his niggardliness he was satirized by a poet, and 'naught but decay was for him for that hour.' Meanwhile Nuada had recovered his hand, and Bres was forced to



abandon the throne. In grief and anger he went to collect an army from his father, who sent him to Balor and Indech? These assembled their forces and prepared to attack the Tuatha de Danann. In the course of the battle, which followed, Indech wounded Ogmá (probably a culture god), and Balor (a personification of the evil eye) slew Nuada, but himself received a mortal wound from Lugh (perhaps a sun god). This put an end to the battle; the Fomorians were routed and fled to their own part of the country.

Another inconsistency in the euhemerized account is that while the first battle is fought on Beltane, the beginning of summer, the second is fought on Samhain. One would naturally expect that the powers of blight would be represented as vanquished not on the winter but on the summer festival. Perhaps the old myths told of the defeat and subjugation of the gods on Samhain and of their victory over the powers of blight on Beltane.

It is clear that the Fomorians, in their opposition to the Tuatha de Danann, and from the sinister character assigned to them in folk tradition, had come to be regarded in mythology as identical with beings who, to the Celts of Ireland, represented the powers of Nature were hostile to man and his gods. Blight, disease, fog, winter, the raging sea, and all influences of evil are personified in the Fomorians. Before them men trembled, yet they were not wholly cast down, for they knew that the blight of immortal gods, who gave light and caused growth, were on their side and fought against their enemies.

A similar euhemerized versions of the old dualistic myths, though presented in a more romantic form, is perhaps to be found in the Welsh story of and Lludd and Llevelys.



Lludd is an old divinity (perhaps equivalent of the Irish Nuada) who, in this story, figures as a king of Britain. His country is subjected to three plagues: that of the race of the Coranians, who hear every whisper wherever spoken; that a shriek heard all over the island on May Eve, which scares every one, and leaves animals, tree, earth, and water barren, and of the mysterious disappearance of a year's supply of food. From these three plagues Llevelys' his advice releases Lludd and people. He gives him insects that he must bruise in water. Then, having called together his people and the Coranians, he is to throw the water over them. It will poison the Coranians, but not harm to the men of his own race. The second plague is caused by the attack: made on

the dragon of the land by a foreign dragon, and Llevelys instructs Lludd how to capture both. This is done and Lludd buries them in a kistvaen at Dinas Emreis in Snowdon. A magician (dark druid) who while every one is lulled to sleep by his magic causes the third plague carries off the store of provisions. Lludd must therefore, watch, and whenever he feels the desire to sleep, must plunge into a cauldron of cold water. Following this, advice, he captures and overpowers the magician, who becomes his vassal. The Coranians are described, in the Triads as a hostile race of invaders, and contrary to this story, they are said never to have left the island, but the method of getting rid of them, as well as the incidents of the dragons and the magician, shows that we are not dealing with actual tribes. As it has been shown, they, may be a race of dwarfs, their names probably being derived from corr, 'dwarf.' They also survive in Welsh folk belief as a kind of mischievous fairy. The Breton dwarfs fairies, the Corr and Corrigan.

The question arises whether there is not here something analogous to the strife of Fomorians and Tuatha de Danann. In all three incidents we have a whole realm suffering from plagues, in the last two, fertility and plenty are destroyed, women lose their hope of offspring, animals and vegetation are blighted, and food is stolen away. The dragon plague occurs on May Day (Beltane), and in a Triad the plague of the Coranians has its place taken by that of March Malaen from beyond the sea, and is called 'the oppression of the first of May.' It is pointed out the similarity of March of Morc, a Fomorian king who levied a tax of two-thirds of their children, corn, and milk of the Nemedians every Samhain eve, and has also that Malaen is perhaps connected with words denoting something demonic.

The incidents of the Welsh story may be based on based on earlier myths or on ritual customs embodying the belief in powers hostile to growth and fertility and to their gods. Lludd, like Nuada, probably a god of growth, and this may be referred to in the tale, not only in the fact that he overcomes beings who cause dearth and barrenness, but in the fact that his generosity and liberality in giving meat and drink all who sought them are particularly mentioned. It is not clear however, why the hostility should have been most active on May Day, but this may be a misunderstanding, as in the Irish story, and it is said that dragons are overcome on



May Eve.

It is not unlikely that these dualistic myths were connected with ritual acts. Another romantic Welsh story, based upon an earlier myth, is strongly suggestive of this.

Lludd had a daughter Creidylad, who was to wed Gwythur, but before the wedding Gwyn abducted her. A fight ensued, in which Gwyn was victorious, forcing one of his antagonists to eat his dead father's heart. On this, King Arthur interfered, and commanded that Creidylad should stay at his father's house, while Gwyn and Gwythur were to fight for her every year on May first until the day of judgment. Then the victor should win her hand.

The myth on which the story is based may have arisen as explanatory of actual ritual combats in which the beneficent and hurtful powers were represented dramatically. Traces of these ritual combats survived in folk custom.

Thus, in the Isle of Man on May Day a young girl was made Queen of May and was attended by a 'captain' and several other persons. There was also a Queen of winter and her company. Both parties were symbolically arrayed, and met in mimic combat on the May festival. If the Queen of May was captured, she was ransomed by her men for a sum of money, which was then spent on a feast in which all joined.

Such mimic fights between human representatives of Summer and Winter are common in European folk customs, and are survivals from primitive ritual, which was intended magically to assist the beneficent powers of growth in their combat with those of blight and death, while at the same time auguries of the probable fertility of the seasons were no doubt drawn from the course of the fight. The ritual was connected with the dualistic idea of 'a quarrel or uproar between the two powers. Summer and winter are at war with one another, exactly like Day and Night; Day and summer gladden, as Night and winter vex the world.' In the ritual 'summer comes off victorious, and winter is defeated, the people supply, as it were, the chorus of spectators, and break out into praises of the conquerors.



As the true meaning and purpose of the ritual were gradually forgotten, the mythical ideas that they dramatized would be expressed differently in some cases, perhaps, more elaborately. Both myth and ritual of a dualistic kind probably gave rise to the story of Creidylad, the daughter of a god of growth. Nor, indeed, is it impossible that the stories of the battle of Magh Tured may have owed something to the suggestiveness of those ritual combats. These took place at the beginning of summer, when the powers of growth had increased, and that of the powers of blight had as clearly decreased. This, which was regarded as the result of a long combat, was so represented in the ritual and described in myth.

In general the ritual of the Celtic festivals was largely directed to aiding the sun and other powers by which fertility was increased. The bonfire, which had so prominent a place on these occasions, was a kind of sun charm. It is probable also that the human victims slain at an earlier time at these festivals, as representatives of the spirit or god of vegetation, were later regarded as sacrifices offered to propitiate the evil powers which arrayed themselves against man and his beneficent deities, unless they were simply regarded as propitiating the latter.

The activity of hostile powers of blight was naturally greater in water, and this appears to be referred to both tales in the Irish texts that are debris of old myths, and in popular traditional beliefs. In these, demoniac beings of all kinds are regarded as peculiarly active and malevolent at Samhain (beginning of winter). 'Malignant bird flocks' issue from the hell gate of Ireland every Samhain Eve, to blight the crops and to kill and animals. 'demon women' always appear on that night and they resemble the Samhanach, a November

demon believed in the Highlands to steal children and work other mischief. The activity of witches and other evil beings, of fairies who abduct human beings and of the dead at that time is also suggestive in this connection. Nor is it likely that some of the demoniac beings of later Celtic superstition were not simply older beneficent gods or spirits to whom an evil character had been assigned as a result of the adoption of a new religion, it is probable that already in Pagan times they represented the powers of Nature in its more hostile aspects.

Thus, though the evidence for Celtic dualism is not extensive, and is largely inferential, there is no reason to doubt that a certain belief in opposing powers, such as is a necessary part of all Nature religions, did exist. How far that ever became a more ethical dualism is quite unknown.



## Druidry and the Future: An Open Letter to the Druid Community

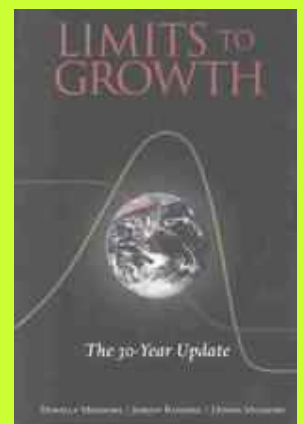
By John Michael Greer  
Ancient Order of Druids in America  
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As members of the Druid community in the first decade of the 21st century, we need to face up to the hard realities of a world in crisis. The soaring energy prices and destabilizing climate that claim space in today's headlines are only the leading edge of a wave of problems offering no easy solutions. Distinguished scientists are warning that the global environment on which we depend for survival is spinning dangerously out of balance, while demand for the resources that fuel our industrial society is outrunning the Earth's remaining supplies. It's a recipe for a difficult future.

These events come as a surprise only to those who haven't been paying attention. In 1972 the Club of Rome published an epochal study, *The Limits to Growth*, showing that if industrial society didn't change course, it would collide disastrously with ecological limits sometime in the first half of the 21st century and come unraveled. The threat they foresaw isn't a single problem with a simple solution. It unfolds from the inevitable collision between infinite economic growth and a finite planet.

The Earth is finite, and only has room to hold so much oil, so much coal, so much fertile soil-and so many people. Economists with no background in environmental science often insist that economic growth will make up for these limits. The *Limits to Growth* and dozens of other studies, though, showed that in a finite environment, the costs of resource depletion and pollution driven by economic growth ultimately rise faster than growth itself. As the demands of a growth-oriented industrial society go past the limits of sustainability into what ecologists call overshoot, rising demand for resources overreaches what natural sources can supply, while rising outputs of pollution overloads what natural systems can absorb. In the end, the costs of growth overwhelm growth itself and bring industrial society to its knees.

Caught between rising costs and shrinking resources, a society in overshoot faces an impossible dilemma: it has to feed, clothe, and house its work force, maintain and replace its industrial plant and infrastructure, and keep drawing down natural resources to fuel and feed its economy, all at an ever increasing rate, while costs spin out of control and resources run short. The result isn't the end of the world, or the sort of Hollywood apocalypse that features in so many fantasies about the future. The collision between an economy in

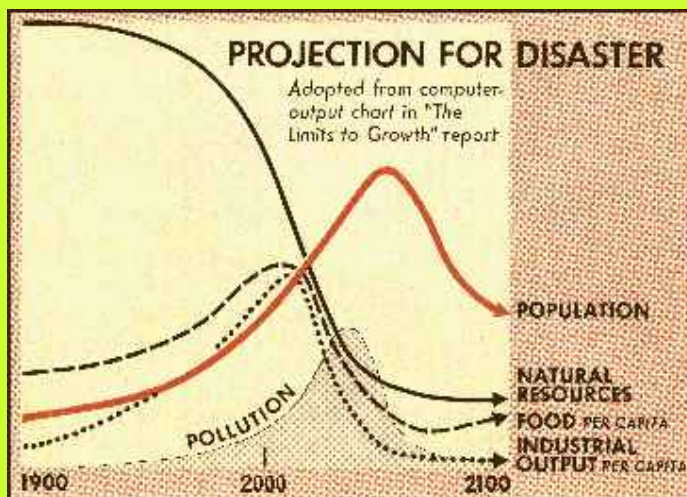


overshoot and the limits of a finite world doesn't add up to a return to the Stone Age or a Road Warrior future; it adds up to what social critic James Kunstler calls the Long Emergency, a slow, difficult transition from modern industrial civilization to the sustainable civilizations of the future.

The great energy debates of the 1970s centered on this prospect. Many other studies tested the findings of *The Limits to Growth* and verified them, while ecologists, engineers, and organic farmers worked out key elements of a conserving society that could sustain advanced technology within the Earth's limits. A gradual transition to a conserving society could have been launched in the 1970s with minimal economic and social disruption. Unfortunately, this wasn't done. A series of disastrous miscalculations on the part of politicians and ordinary people alike wasted the decades that might have made the difference. Now, thirty years later, we're facing the consequences.

## The Arrival of the Limits

*The Limits to Growth* came in for a firestorm of criticism, much of it politically motivated and not all of it fair or well informed. Pro-growth advocates in recent years have taken to labeling it 'disproved.' Yet as the 21st century opens, the limits to growth are arriving on schedule. Oil production is falling short of demand, and a growing number of petroleum scientists agree that the Hubbert peak--the point at which half the Earth's oil reserves have been depleted and oil production begins its irrevocable decline, as predicted by geologist M. King Hubbert decades ago--is less than five years away, and may arrive as soon as this year.



Many people insist that market forces and increased investment are all we need to get more oil, but we've already had a trial run of that approach here in America and it didn't work. The lower 48 states hit their Hubbert peak in 1970. After a decade of waffling between different options, the US gambled its future on a free market solution, using huge investments, tax policies that amount to a trillion-dollar giveaway to oil corporations, and the best oil exploration and production technology in the world to increase production. Yet production has steadily declined. Some limits, it turns out, aren't flexible no matter how much money is thrown at them.

Declining oil production all by itself is a serious matter, because the industrial way of life runs on oil. Modern civilization demands fantastic amounts of energy, and oil is nearly the perfect energy source: there was a huge amount of it to start with, it contains plenty of energy per unit of volume, it can be extracted from the ground cheaply, it's very easy to transport and store, it's even easier to use, and it's fungible--it can be put to work in many ways; you can use it to produce heat, power motors, fuel cars or planes, generate electricity, or anything else you want. Oil provides 40% of global energy and nearly all transportation outside the Third World, and it's also the essential feedstock for plastics, lubricants, asphalt roads, and most chemicals used in industry and agriculture.

Oil is also irreplaceable, because every other energy source has severe problems with concentration, transport, supply, fungibility, or net energy--the amount of energy you have left after you subtract the amount of energy you have to put into getting it. Hydrogen, for example, has zero net energy--you have to put as much energy into manufacturing hydrogen out of water as you get back from burning it. Many proposed 'energy sources' have negative net energy; oil shale, for example, takes the equivalent of two barrels of oil to extract a single barrel of usable oil. Any way you cut it, it's a losing proposition.

Still, petroleum shortages aren't the only problem we face. Other fossil fuels such as coal and natural gas, and

conventional nuclear fuels such as uranium, are just as subject to depletion as oil, they're already well on their way to depletion, and they face special problems of their own. Coal can't be burned in any quantity without massive increases in the amount of carbon dioxide poured into the atmosphere; such an increase risks tipping the Earth's weather system into chaos and launching massive climate shifts that would cripple agriculture around the globe. Natural gas is being used up rapidly; in fact, North America faces natural gas shortages in the next few years. Uranium reserves are depleted worldwide and will not last much longer than oil.

More insidious is the fact that all other fuels receive a hidden 'energy subsidy' from oil. The equipment that mines, ships, and processes coal, for example, is powered by oil, not coal; converting it to burn coal would entail high costs and cut drastically into coal's net energy, since coal has only a third the energy per volume as oil. Thus as oil runs out, coal reserves have to be drawn down even faster merely to maintain current levels of coal production. Attempt to replace oil by coal using coal-powered technology, and seemingly huge coal reserves run out rapidly.

Exotic sources such as breeder reactors, nuclear fusion, and the like have often been touted as replacements for oil. So have massive programs of renewable energy. None of these have been tested on a large scale, all of them have serious problems with feasibility or net energy that haven't yet been solved, and converting an oil-based society to any of them would require huge amounts of money, resources, and time--all of which will be in very short supply once oil production peaks and begins its irrevocable decline. If the conversion had been launched in the 1970s, it probably could have been done. At this point, the window of opportunity is closed.

Meanwhile fresh water is running short through most the world's arable regions; environmental damage to the world's limited supply of topsoil has intersected with rising populations to push the global food supply to the edge of crisis, while fisheries that feed hundreds of millions of people are dwindling past the point of no return. Attempts by politicians to dismiss the threat of global warming are crashing headlong into ecological reality: the number and severity of storms worldwide has increased steadily each year for the last decade, and the West Antarctic ice sheet--which contains enough water to raise sea level 15 to 18 feet worldwide--began to break apart last year.



Thus modern industrial civilization has backed itself into a corner. It depends on an ever-growing supply of energy and other resources, and as global population continues to soar, climate spins further and further out of balance, ecological cycles break down, and once-reliable technologies turn out to have unexpected weaknesses and disastrous side effects, more and more energy will be needed to counter these problems. Yet 'more and more energy' is precisely what we can't count on. Instead, we need to get by on less and less energy, at least until some new energy source can be brought online--if that's even possible. Thus, just as The Limits to Growth predicted some thirty years ago, we are caught in a head-on collision between rising needs and dwindling resources, with six billion lives hanging in the balance.

### **The Failure of Politics**

Many people who have faced up to the hard realities of the situation have urged some form of political action as a response to it. The problem is that this has been tried for more than 30 years, and for all practical purposes nothing has been accomplished. We're further from an effective political response to the situation than we were in 1975, and it's crucial to understand why.

Our society demands energy and resource inputs on a scale, absolute and per capita, that can't possibly be maintained for more than a few decades longer. The energy sources that will still be available in the future



can only provide a small fraction of the net energy we're used to getting from the abundant fossil fuels of the recent past. As energy resources dwindle, in other words, everybody is going to have to get used to living on a small fraction of the energy, and the products of energy, we've been using as a matter of course.



This has implications few people take the time to think through. Consider a cup of coffee. The energy needed to run the coffee maker is a tiny portion of the total fossil fuel-derived energy and materials that go into the process. Unless the coffee is organically grown, chemical fertilizers and pesticides derived from oil are used to produce the beans; diesel-driven farm machinery harvests them; trucks, ships, and trains powered by one form of oil or another move them much of the way around the world from producer to consumer, stopping at various fossil-fuel-heated or -cooled storage facilities and fossil-fuel-powered factories en route; consumers in the industrial world drive to brightly lit and comfortably climate-controlled supermarkets on asphalt roads to bring back plastic-lined containers of ground coffee to their homes. In order to drink coffee by the cup, we use oil by the barrel.

This is exactly the sort of thing that can't be sustained much longer. We--and by this I mean people throughout the industrial world--are going to have to make the transition to something not far from a Third World lifestyle. There's no way to sugar-coat that very unpalatable reality. In the last century, fossil fuels and energy-consuming technology made it possible for most Americans and Europeans to embrace lifestyles that don't require constant physical labor, and allowed them to wallow in a flood of consumer goods. As the limits to growth squeeze industrial society and force a transition to less energy intensive lifestyles, all of that is going to go away. How many people are willing to listen to such a suggestion? More to the point, how many would be willing to vote for a candidate or a party that proposed deliberately bringing these changes now, so that a worse crisis could be prevented further down the road?

John Kenneth Galbraith has written a brilliant, mordant book, *The Culture of Contentment*, about the reasons why America is incapable of constructive change. He compares today's American political class (those people who vote and involve themselves in politics) to the French aristocracy before the Revolution. Everybody knew that the situation was insupportable, and that eventually there would be an explosion, but the immediate costs of doing something about it were so unpalatable that it was easier to do nothing and hope that things would somehow work out. His points can be applied equally well to the political class of every industrial country.



Thus in 1992, the same team that did the original *Limits to Growth* study ran the numbers again with current figures and pointed out that the industrial world was much closer to collapse than it had been twenty years before. Their book *Beyond the Limits* urged an emergency program to stave off disaster. They pointed out, however, that the level of cuts in energy and resource use necessary to stave off disaster would require the American people to accept a reduction of their average standard of living to that of Brazil. No politician or political party anywhere has advocated that, for obvious reasons. It's hard to think of a better recipe for political suicide.

Of course another form of government intervention in the energy situation is military, and it's no secret that access to oil has played an important part in recent global politics. Still, quarrelling over the last drops of oil won't make any more oil, and wastes energy, resources, and time that might go into more useful responses. Warfare also doesn't necessarily work; the Afghanistan and Iraq invasions put American troops in control of the world's last remaining undeveloped oil fields, but failed to make peace or secure access to oil, and these military adventures have pushed America into exactly the sort of imperial overstretch that Paul Kennedy warned about in his widely respected book *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*.

So while it may be appealing to fantasize about government programs (or military adventures) bailing us out



of the present predicament, such daydreams don't offer a practical way out of the situation. The thing that must be realized is that there is no practical way out of the situation. The collision between industrial society and ecological reality predicted in *The Limits to Growth* now defines our future. Industrial civilization is ending, and the road to the new civilizations of the future is going to be a rocky one.

The Long Emergency is a process that may take two centuries or more, and it's already under way. We're already seeing substantial declines in the real standard of living for most Americans and many people elsewhere in the industrialized world. We'll see quite a bit more in the next few years, especially if the economic juggling act that props up trillions of dollars of paper debt in America and elsewhere gives way. As standards of living slip, energy-dependent jobs become ever scarcer, public health declines, and political and economic institutions become steadily more dysfunctional, people are going to have to meet their own needs and care for each other in ways the developed world forgot more than a century ago.

And this is where the Druid community has an extraordinary opportunity to help shape the future of the deindustrial world.

## **The Role of Druidry**

Not quite two thousand years ago, as another civilization came apart at the seams, a religious group responded to the crisis of its time by carrying out a salvage operation on what was left of its society's cultural heritage, preserving thousands of important books, along with crucially important artistic, architectural, technical, and scientific knowledge. Behind the walls of Christian monasteries in Ireland and elsewhere, scriptoria held the remnants of Greek and Roman learning in trust, and when the chaos of Rome's decline finally settled out, these surviving books and skills became the foundation of new societies throughout the Western world. The same thing has happened elsewhere and in other times.

Such a role in the present crisis is one that modern Druids are well equipped to fill. Followers of a spiritual path in harmony with the world of living nature, drawing inspiration from societies whose values are radically different from those of today's Earth-ravaging consumer cultures, today's Druids have already learned crucial lessons that industrial society has ignored to its cost: the holiness of the living Earth and all its creatures; the necessity for human life to find a place of balance within a wider sphere of spiritual and material powers; the practical worth as well as the spiritual importance of primary values such as honor, generosity, creativity, and community; the futility and irrelevance of a system that treats endless accumulation of material trinkets as the highest goal of human life. Many Druids already practice ways of raising food, making goods, healing illnesses, and building community which harmonize with nature's cycles and do not depend on the wasteful use of rapidly depleting fossil fuels. Each Druid who does so--who plants and tends a garden with hand tools and organic methods, who weaves cloth or forges iron using traditional skills, who heals body and mind with herbs and other natural means, who passes on stories and songs from the past--is not only following a valid spiritual path for today, but helping to build a bridge to the future. Yet we can go beyond this, as individuals, as local groves and circles, and as an international community of Druids.



Of course many other spiritual traditions have their own places in the present crisis, and it may be that each Earth-honoring spiritual path will have its own unique task to fulfill as industrial civilization approaches its end. By singling out Druidry I mean no disrespect to these other paths. It is simply that the Druid path is the path I follow, and I am familiar with its potentials and the gifts it has to offer. Ultimately I can only speak to what I know. Those readers of this letter who walk other paths will need to assess the points made here in the terms of their own traditions, and respond accordingly.

Thus I offer this vision--the vision of Druidry as a force for continuity and

healing in a time of disintegration -- as a viable path for the Druid community in the future that presses upon us. It may be a difficult vision to follow in the coming years, as crises multiply and passions rise. The pressure toward political action will mount as troubles proliferate, and people on all sides of the political spectrum will doubtless find reasons to point the finger of blame ever more forcefully at their opponents; the quest for scapegoats is a constant temptation in difficult times. Still, even the most single-minded political activists need to recognize that something else must be ready to bear the burden of the future if their efforts don't succeed. The approaching transformation requires people, groups, and communities to be ready to preserve legacies for the future, so that as the vast tottering structure of industrial civilization comes apart, seeds can be planted that will bear fruit in times to come. I suggest that the Druid community prepare itself to fill that role, and to save and plant those seeds.

Some people may claim that such proposals are morally repugnant because they accept the unacceptable. These criticisms miss the point. Drivers do everything they can to avoid a crash, but there are situations in which one can't be avoided; thus we have protective devices such as seatbelts to help mitigate the effects of a crash. There's an important difference between a crash in which the car is destroyed but the passengers walk away, and a crash in which the passengers are thrown through the windshield head first. The same principle applies here and now. It's impossible at this point to prevent the industrial age from ending, and the best guess of many experts is that it's impossible at this point to manage a controlled transformation to sustainability, even if modern societies had the political will and leadership in place to do so--which they clearly don't. That means we face a future of crisis and uncontrolled decline. Yet when prevention is impossible, mitigation may still be an option, and in the present situation I believe that it's the only option that makes moral or practical sense.

Nor are all possible deindustrial societies of the future equal. It's possible to have a cultured, literate, relatively humane society with thriving cities and a vigorous exchange economy on a very limited resource basis. During the Tokugawa period (1603-1868), Japan closed its borders to the outside world in a successful effort to keep from being swallowed by European colonial empires. With few natural resources, Tokugawa Japan ran almost entirely on human muscle power. Yet this was one of the great periods of Japanese art, literature and philosophy; literacy was so widespread that the three largest cities in the country had 1500 bookstores among them, and most people had access to basic education, health care, and the necessities of life. Helping to foster the birth of such a society in the aftermath of the industrial age is a goal within reach, and one that resonates profoundly with the ideals and traditions of Druidry.

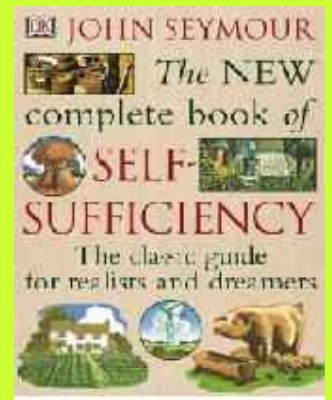
## **Steps Toward A Livable Future**

How might Druids prepare themselves to help create such a future? There are many different contributions that can be made to help build the sustainable societies of the deindustrial age, but three crucial needs have to be met if disaster is to be averted. First, natural ecosystems have to be preserved and restored as much as possible, to maintain the natural 'safety net' on which all human survival ultimately depends. Second, people need to be able to feed themselves without damaging the earth and without relying on energy-intensive technologies that will soon be gone forever. Third, methods of natural, low-tech healing need to be available to treat diseases and maintain health when today's high-tech medicine can no longer be supported by a disintegrating industrial society. On the basis of these three needs, I propose three essential elements of a Druid strategy for the deindustrial future.

First, I invite all Druids to learn the essentials of environmental science and natural history, practice the skills of restoring and maintaining natural ecosystems, and teach these to others. Human life depends on the surrounding natural world, to an extent that industrial civilization has forgotten but the deindustrial civilizations of the future will have to remember. Stable, healthy, and vibrant local ecosystems play a crucial role in maintaining climate, managing water resources, providing pollinators and pest control for agriculture, and many other processes without which human life is impossible. By learning and practicing the arts of practical ecology, today's Druids can take an active role in healing the damage industrial civilization has done

to the living earth, and can help shape healthy ecosystems that will support our great-grandchildren and their great-grandchildren.

Second, I invite all Druids to learn, practice, and teach the skills of at least one method of ecologically sound, human-powered farming. The ability to feed people sustainably without wrecking the Earth will be the bottom line of human survival in the future. Modern organic farming has made revolutionary advances, to the extent that it's possible to feed one person a spare but adequate diet year round on 1000 square feet of soil, while increasing the fertility of the soil and the viability of local ecosystems the whole time. Other natural approaches to food production such as permaculture are equally worth careful attention from today's Druids. By learning how to feed themselves by their own efforts without harming the Earth, and teaching others to do the same, today's Druids can lay the most crucial foundation for the sustainable civilizations of the future, and provide a desperately needed safety net for the inevitable breakdown of petroleum based industrial agriculture.



Third, I invite all Druids to learn, practice, and teach the skills of at least one system of natural healing. Modern medicine is one of the most energy-intensive aspects of industrial civilization, and it suffers from many of the same flaws that have made industrial civilization itself unsustainable. Meanwhile, global warming and ecosystem disruption risks introducing new diseases to an overcrowded and increasingly vulnerable world, even as antibiotic resistance spreads rapidly among existing microbes. The ability to treat wounds, cure diseases, and provide useful health advice, without drawing on the resources of a functioning industrial society, will be literally lifesaving in years to come. By developing these skills now and being prepared to share them with others, today's Druids can be ready to fill a vital role in making the future less bitter than it will otherwise be.

Of course there are many other things worth saving, within and beyond today's Druid traditions. The three branches of knowledge I've proposed here represent a core curriculum that can be built upon in many ways. The skills and traditions of pre- and nonindustrial cultures are well worth learning and practicing in this context. Another source of valuable knowledge is the appropriate technology movement of the 1970s, which developed a wealth of simple, effective technologies that could contribute much to the deindustrial future. Druids today might consider studying and practicing at least one skill relevant to a deindustrial society, over and above the three essential branches of knowledge outlines above. Many Druids today practice such skills already, so the foundations are already there.



Those who are familiar with other proposals for dealing with the approaching crisis may be surprised that I haven't mentioned firearms, for example, or isolated rural hideouts, or stockpiles of precious metals. This isn't accidental. Such proposals are based on Hollywood fantasies of overnight collapse and mass death that have nothing to do with the slow, difficult reality of decline and transformation we're facing. They're also rooted in the core delusion of modern industrial culture, the fantasy that if you just own enough of the right possessions, everything will be all right. Past examples of the decline and fall of civilizations show that this is consistently a losing bet; those whose value lies in what they have in their stockpiles can count on attracting many others who want to remove them and enjoy the stockpiles themselves, and eventually the ammo runs out. If your value consists of important skills that benefit others as well as yourself, on

the other hand, you're everyone's friend. This isn't simply speculation; even in the most violent cultures of the past, such as the pirate societies of the 17th-century Caribbean, people with necessary skills such as physicians and navigators led charmed lives because it was in everyone's best interest to keep them alive and happy.

Learning and practicing such skills can't be left until the first wave of crises hits, however. An astonishing

number of people in the industrial world, especially in the educated middle class, have no practical skills whatsoever when it comes to growing and preparing food, making clothing, and providing other basic necessities. An equally astonishing number are unable to travel any distance at all by any means that doesn't involve burning fossil fuels. Most can't even light a fire to keep warm or cook food without matches or butane lighters from a distant factory. Critical skills such as practical ecology, organic gardening, low-tech medicine, basic hand crafts, and the like need to be learned and practiced now, while there's time and leisure to make beginner's mistakes.

These proposals can be pursued most effectively by individuals, families, small groups, informal networks, and voluntary communities--that is to say, by the forms of organization at which today's Druid movement excels. They don't require government or corporate involvement, or the participation of a majority of people in the developed world or any of the communities that comprise it. One person can contribute mightily to any of them--say, by planting an organic garden and teaching others how to do so, by working together with other Druids to heal local ecosystems and preserve endangered medicinal plants, by helping to weave together local Druid networks, and by providing a vision of hope and possibility during a time when many people will see only hardship and despair.



It must be said that none of these suggestions will keep the approaching age from being a difficult, dangerous, profoundly challenging period of wrenching transformation, human suffering, and potential tragedy. Yet it's possible for such a time to be better than it might otherwise be; it's possible to lay foundations for a brighter age to come, and to practice and teach things that will make the difficulties of the deindustrial age easier to bear and bring its potential rewards within reach. This last concept may seem strange, but for those who embrace the future that lies before us, who accept its limits and work with its possibilities, the next few centuries will have their rewards--and some of those will far more real and lasting than the material wealth doled out by today's industrial system.

This is my vision for a future we as Druids can seek to build: a society emerging from the Long Emergency of the deindustrial age, enriched with green knowledge and Earth-honoring skills brought through by successors of 21st-century Druids who saw what was coming and took action while there was still time. Some people in the Druid community may not welcome such a vision; some may still believe in the mythology of perpetual progress, or imagine that infinite material growth is possible on a finite planet, or insist that there's nothing wrong with our present society that can't be fixed by getting one set of politicians out of power and another set in. I disagree, and offer this vision to those who may find it--as I do--a valid source of hope and possibility in a dark time.

### **Further Reading**

The following websites provide facts and figures to back up the image of the future outlined above. They make disturbing reading, though not half so disturbing as the unwillingness of political and business leaders to face the future that today's choices are shaping.

<http://www.energybulletin.net>

<http://www.hubbertpeak.com>

<http://www.oilcrash.com>

<http://www.oilcrisis.com>

<http://www.peakoil.net>

<http://www.wolfatthedoor.org.uk>

Other articles by John Michael Greer on the same subject available online are these:



The Coming of Deindustrial civilization: A Practical Response  
Facing the New Dark Age: A Grassroots Approach  
The Long Road Down: Decline and the Deindustrial Future  
How Civilizations Fall: A Theory of Catabolic Collapse



## SERIAL STORY



### **Druidical Treasure**

A.k.a. "The Dave Fisher Code"

Fiction written by B. N. Tavern  
For the Public Domain, 2004 CE  
**Part Three of Eight**

In photos, "Matt" is the blonde played by Ian Hill  
"Sean" is dark played by a fellow called Raven,  
Filmed by Stephen Crimmins  
On-site at Carleton College

*(Place mouse over pictures for secret messages.)*

### **In Our Previous Episodes**

Two poor undergraduate juniors, Matt (a Cricket & football star) and Sean (a philosophy major), are spending winter vacation under-employed at Carleton College in rural Northfield MN. Desperate for money, they followed up on a mysterious ad in a newspaper that implied a great treasure was hidden at Carleton for the future rightful heir of David Fisher, the founder of Reformed Druidism. Following a tip from the campus Chaplain, Sean infiltrated the local Masons, while Matt went ga-ga with the Druids. From the various clues they discovered, they decided that only possible solution to the mystery is to check the original written materials by David Fisher, which are stored at the Druid Archive Collection. They met the mysterious secretary, Dylan, but access was denied. With amazing ingenuity and great personal risk, they steal some documents from the Archives and discovered a lengthy poem holding a cryptic blueprint to the treasure written in disappearing ink. The previous two episodes can be read in their entirety at <http://www.rdna.info/treasure.html>

Now let's join our protagonists as they try to solve the second quatrain of the large riddle.

### **Chapter Ten: Obelisk Obstacles**





For the next few days, while Sean's ankle recuperated, Matt went out on a post-Christmas-sale shopping spree for items on their treasure-hunting list. The first day back, he dropped off a armful of DVDs to keep the bed-ridden Sean occupied, including the "Tomb Raider," "Mummy" and "Indiana Jones" series, which he said, "Might be helpful." He felt that action heroes oddly never seem to sufficiently draw upon pop-culture to deal with threats and disasters (like normal folk). They would not get a poison dart in the neck from a booby-trap by the same mistake! Then he left again for a few of the more unusual stores in the Twin Cities. Sean interspersed the videos with dry readings of RDNA anthologies, the Masonic Monitor, some phone calls, and struggling with the riddle's many verses of clues. Naturally, he was bored to tears.

Sean felt better by the 28th of December and walked gingerly to Matt's room to see the purchasing progress. Matt had neatly built up two separate piles of gear like something from an REI photo-shoot; heaps of rope, cameras, shovels, pickaxe, first-aid kits, backpacks, Swiss army knife tools, water bottles, tents, and a dozen other strange items.

"Matt, why do we need a bull-whip and a crucifix?" Sean said fingering them.

"Um, standard equipment, I think." Matt shrugged, "And it's cool. Do you think we will need this service revolver?"

"No, I don't think so. How much did all this come to?" Seam dreaded the reply.

Nonchalantly, Matt picked up a mountain of receipts, and replied, "About \$3,500, I think. Your card is maxed out, dude. Don't worry, I covered the last \$400 myself. But it's a good investment." Sean's jaw dropped, and he developed an uncontrollable eye twitch. But the usual explosion of anger surprisingly didn't happen.

"Uh,. . .huh," he managed to stay calm. Sean knew his father would be calling in a few days about this, but this fellow, Matt, had saved his tusch from expulsion a week ago during their break-in at the library, and well, they did have a hot lead on a reputedly fantastic treasure. Hopefully, he could find the treasure quickly and pay off the principal of the credit card, before the interest swamped him.

"How's the ankle, Sean?"

"Decent enough, I think."

"Well, then, we got the gear, we got the riddles, and I've got enough enthusiasm for both of us," Matt effused, "What do we do next, Mr. Riddlemeister?"

"My name is Ridmeister," Sean began to sort stuff into their backpacks, "Well, I've been thinking. Let's pack up and head outside. Here's verse two again:

*Two tenets there be in our Druidic code  
Tall pillars and strong, 'tho their base may erode.  
Between them you'll rise to great heights  
A name they will give to show the next site.*



Sean motioned and they picked up their packs and marched outside, their foothold a little uncertain because of the ice that had formed in the previous footprints in the snow trail, as a gentle snow began to fall. Meanwhile, Sean talked despite the clawing cold air on his throat, "Now on the surface of the riddle, it looks like an extollation of being a virtuous Druid by following the two basic tenets of Druidism which are. . .

Matt supplied the text by memory,

*The object of the search for religious truth, which is a universal and a never-ending search, may be found through the Earth Mother, which is Nature; but this is one way, yea, one way among many.*

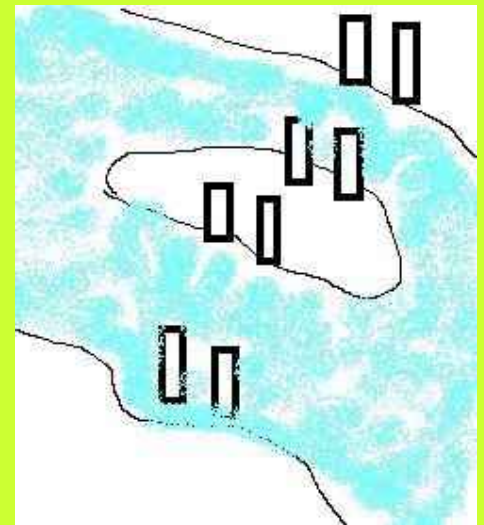
*And great is the importance, which is of a spiritual importance, of Nature, which is the Earth Mother; for it is one of the objects of Creation, and with it we do live, yea, even as we do struggle through life are we come face to face with it.*



The distant woods on the horizon grew closer slowly, as it took three times as long to go anywhere in the deep snow.

"Yeah, right, all that." Sean stopped at the entrance to the Lower Arboretum after crossing Highway 19, which separated the Campus & Upper Arb from the Lower Arb; which was closer to the river. He assumed a lecturing pose of a professor, "Now, both of those tenets and the riddle are about searching, directing us to search nature; yada yada yada; which leads me to think that we should be looking outdoors, the favorite haunt of Druids, right?" Matt nodded, and the two continued towards past the oasis of the forest-enclosed tennis courts. Behind them, their footprints began to fill in with fresh snow. "The 'tall pillars' may be referring to actual pillars, and many buildings on the campus have pillars, but not in pairs. And, why choose the word 'erode?' Well, after checking with the grounds department, there is only one place where two pillars are next to each other," and anticipating Matt's inquiry, "and they are right there before us. Voila!" They rounded a stark green bend of pine trees and Matt saw it.

Sean waved his hand before them at the landscape of the 100-foot-wide Cannon River dividing and running down the center of the Lower Arboretum's forest in front of them. Beyond the beach they were standing on, they could see a large wooded island in the river. On both sides of the island and on the opposite sites of the Cannon River, were pairs of obelisks. Smooth and tall, about 25 feet high and tapering towards the top. They stood watch over the river like foreboding giants on an eternal guard duty.



"What are they?" Matt gasped in the freezing air that had frosted his nose hairs already. The feeling was similar to how a lion felt running into an electric fence in the middle of a savannah; one that wasn't there the day before.

"They are abutments to hang suspended wire bridges to and from the island, and to cross the river." He began sketching a map with a stick in the snow. "According to my friend Greg on the grounds crew, the hanging bridges were damaged by groups of cross-country runners running in unison on the bridges in the late '80s, and later finished off by those amazing floods in 1993, that turned the entire Lower Arb into a massive lake. There should be some clue on them, and I'm suspecting up on the pinnacles, 'great heights,' mentioned in the poems. So we're going to have to scale them."

"All of them?" Matt was in dismay.

"I hope not. Now as you can see, three of the four pairs are pretty solidly on dry ground, but those two over there, are now in midst of the river due to extensive. . .



"River erosion," Matt exclaimed.

"Exactly. So let's concentrate on those two today. Now the river's not completely frozen near them, and it looks about three feet deep over there at the base, five feet from the shore, in really cold water, so we'll have to wade out, but we can't use a ladder with that kind of current, it'd just be swept away and unsteady."

"So?"

"So, we think," Sean said unhelpfully.

"Maybe we could use a telescope from a tree?"

"No climbable trees with good vantage points."

"Cut handholds into the side of the pillars?" Matt offered.

"Would take too long, and it looks kind of slippery."

Matt slammed his right mitten into his left palm, "Maybe we could try back-to-back pushing our feet off the opposing twin obelisks? Like in a Batman episode I saw, when they're stuck at the bottom of a well."

"You know, that might work. Get out the rubber waders." Sean pulled out the hip waders and dropped off their backpacks on the snowy banks and they waded out slowly. The two obelisks were about four feet apart at the base, maybe five feet at the top. They locked arms, pressed their backs together, and put a foot up and began to ascend jerkily towards the top, but after about eight or ten feet, Sean got tired and his footing was getting uncertain.



"Uh, Matt, this won't work, get ready to drop on three. 1 . . 2 . . 3!" They dropped eight feet with a large splash, Matt was a bit unsteady, but Sean flailed about and nearly fell over, and Matt grabbed him from tumbling dangerously into the main channel of the river, to be swept away mercilessly by the undertow below the ice. That was an unpleasant fate, Sean didn't want to contemplate again.

Holding his thumping heart in place Sean wheezed, "Thanks, Matt. I guess that's not going to work. I think I've got some water in my waders, and my left ankle hurts again, let's get back on the river bank." Sean made it back on the shore and poured the water out of his boots and grimaced at his cold toes, changing socks quickly. Always pack extra socks and underwear, his father had told him.

"Why would he choose obelisks?" Matt asked with a frown, rubbing the sides of the obelisk with his mitted hand.

"Masons have this persistent fascination with Egyptian and Greek symbolism, like columns and obelisks. I think traditionally, those are considered to be phallic symbols, and signs of strength and nobility, kind of like how they designed the Washington Monument over in D.C."

"Well, I wished these were ribbed, then it'd be a cinch to hold on to it. . . Matt muttered.

Sean looked up at him in near-joy, as close as his reputation permitted, "Matt, that's it! You're from Oklahoma right? I want you to make a lasso and rope me the top of both of those obelisks." Matt nodded seeing where it was going, "And now I'll wade out and attach a rope around the obelisk and cinch it tight, since it's tapering it won't fall down far. Now a few loops in each cirlet for hand and footholds. Maybe six or seven loops for each obelisk, spaced every two or three feet. Then at the top we'll securing a long rope by lasso to pull ourselves up, resting at the rings every few feet or so to steady ourselves."

"That's pure genius!" Matt exclaimed.

Sean sniffed, "Of course, how'd you think I got into Carleton?" The winds from the snow storm now began to blow hard spraying the sharp granular layer of snow-ice off the surface of the drifts and into their eyes.



They had plenty of rope and over the next hour or so, many lengths of rope were prepared. They both agreed that Sean was more nimble, so he did the climbing. The initial lariat was still tied on to the top of each obelisk and Matt tied a safety rope onto Sean in case he fell in the river again. Sean pulled himself up the right side obelisk first and reached the top in about 10 minutes, obviously tired, resting his feet on each of the rings, which slipped down a little at first, but held fast afterwards.

"What do you see up there?" Matt shouted from the shore.

"Nothing at all. It's absolutely smooth. No markings at all. I don't see any pigments or lettering. I'm coming down."

Sean worked his way down and hopped into the water; safely this time. "Let's try the other one." And began to laboriously scale that one by coiling a rope around it in sections, in the same manner, thankful his frozen foot was regaining some feeling, but he was also feeling pins and needles as it thawed.

"Anything?" Matt called, a bit worried. It was nearly sunset, 4:30 PM in Minnesota.

Sean swayed on top, "No, nothing," dejectedly, "Well, just some scratches on the edges, but that's the only difference from the last one!"

"Scratches, huh?" Matt bellowed.

"Yeah, isn't that strange? I mean, we get floods here all the time, but nothing like flood-wood would have scratched the top of this tall pillar, not this badly."

They paused. The powerful river coursed by them, deadly cold, urgently rolling its way to the Mississippi and thence to the wide ocean, minding its own business, filled with chunks and floating sheets of ice. Sean had secured the rope around his waist and was leaning back to relieve the strain of the position. A few minutes passed as Matt was searching for something at the end of his consciousness. He'd seen that before, but where?

"Hey Sean, are those scratches in any kind of pattern?"

"Well, kind of, I guess, in groups, like one or two or three, sometimes straight, some at angles, possibly hewn by primitive tools. Is it a code or something?"

"Sean, I think it's a Druidic alphabet, but I need you to make a copy and we'll look it up later. Do you have a



pencil and paper? Make a rubbing; that would be the best record." Sean nodded from the top, it made sense to him.

"Gotcha, Matt!" Sean wrapped the rope once more about his waist and secured it with his teeth, pulled out a sheet of paper and pencil from an interior pocket and began rubbing furiously the edges of the apex of the obelisk. For a second he looked back towards the edge of the grove of pine trees and he thought he saw something shadowy slip into the trees. Probably just a deer. He looked down at Matt and yelled, "There, that's it! I think I got all of them. I'm coming down." He stopped repelling halfway down. "I'm going to cut off the top rings to cover our tracks." Sean did so and when he got to the base, despite his fatigue, he climbed up again and removed the rings off the first obelisk.

"Let's get back inside." Matt pulled him back to shore and they shucked their waders and hobbled back to the campus, very cold. "You know the sexual implications of all this are quite striking, Sean. Why, in my anthropology class. . ."

"Matt, let's just keep this between the two of us, all right?"

"Yeah, sure, Sean." Matt smiled knowingly. "How's that ankle?"

"Fortunately, it's gone numb again." Sean stopped at the grove of pines and stopped. "Matt, do you see those footprints in the pine trees? Those are rather fresh tracks, don't you think?"

Matt peered down and put his boot by them for comparison. "Looks like a size 9. Probably just a townie out for a walk... That's odd, they trot away for about a few yards, then disappear by that tree." Matt looked up, nope, no one up in the tree branches.

The two stood there, gazing for a moment, then mutually shrugged, "Are you hungry, Matt?"



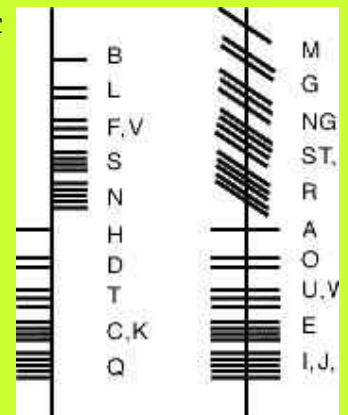
"Sure am, how about pizza, double pepperoni?"

"Make it triple, and I'll pay."

## Chapter Eleven: The Mystery of Karl

They were exhausted when they returned, but Matt fired up the computer and the heater and Sean took care of the gear, hanging it up to dry out, while Matt did some googling on the Internet. In a few moments, Matt printed out a few pages and showed it to Sean.

"That alphabet is called Ogham, take a look. The ancient bards would record music on sticks called 'ceolbran', or 'music sticks' with marks, and people would write names of people and tribal boundaries on the edges of rocks up until the tenth century in the Celtic countries with slashes and dots, like an ancient Morse code." He tapped the page with a smile, "Fisher would have certainly known about this. It's common knowledge to any mediocre researcher of Druidism, even in the 1960s."



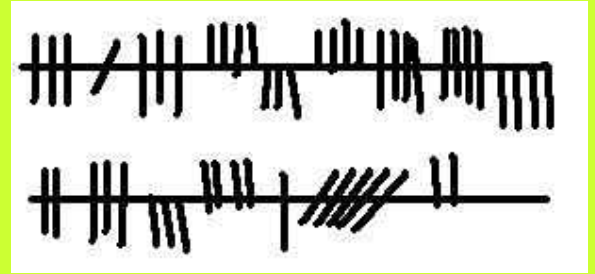
Sean scratched his head, trying to wrap his head around the alphabet, "So, it's a recording system, like a 'bar code' on groceries?"

"Actually, Sean, I like to call it a 'bard code', but yes," Matt smiled, chuckling to himself, immensely amused at his own wit to the exclusion of the world around him.

Sean winced, perhaps at his ankle or the pun, "So what does it say? Is the message in English or Irish?" Matt shrugged, and looked at the rubbings and scribbled next to them for a few moments, scratched his head, turned the scratches upside-down, and continued again for about ten minutes, meanwhile Sean ordered the inevitable winter-break pizza. Matt finally held the rubbing up to Sean, and read the Latin alphabet translation:

UMUSTSEECOUTCARL

"It's probably 'You must seek out Karl', because there's no K or Y in Ogham, I think, they don't use many consonants. But, who is Karl, anyway, Sean?" Matt puzzled.



Sean looked out the window, arms clasped behind his back, appreciating the falling snow, brilliant as it entered the lamp's cone-of-light outside. He responded over his shoulder, "I don't know. Maybe he's a local Mason or faculty or staff member here at the college?"

"Well, we might as well re-read our material, and let's do a word search on the file to keep it simple, eh? 'K-a-r-l' and 'Northfield.' " Matt hit enter and waited a few million nanoseconds, "Looks like a lot of links with Carleton, with a radio station here, since we're west of the Mississippi their call-signs all start with 'K', get it? KARLeTon! I remember Fisher's interview stated that he worked at a radio station here, too. What's Fisher's riddle poem say for the next clue?"

Sam pulled out a printout of the poem, and read it slowly;

*Our voices were carried on the wings of the birds,  
Borne on the winds, our words were far heard.  
Look under the speaker for the sign of the clan  
Whose leader now knows a key to the plan.*

"That sure does sound like a description of a radio station to me, doesn't it?" Matt laughed, rubbing his hands.

"It sure does, so let's go down and check it out tomorrow." As he was re-coiling the remaining rope, he said, "Thank goodness this next part is going to be indoors."

They both stayed up late trying to work out the next couple of clues, but they didn't make much sense of it, and decided to, again, go one step at a time; which like the proverbial cow, would eventually make it to the market at its natural pace.

The next morning, Matt knocked at Sean's door and the two walked to the student center. A dark area against the pale oak flooring caught Matt's eye. Yes, there at a table in the nearly empty auburn hue of the room at lunchtime. It was Dylan, dressed in black, again. She gave Sean the creeps. Sean tried to restrain Matt, but it was too late.



"Hey Dylan, remember me?" Matt waved too exaggeratedly to be ignored by even the most averse spectator. Dylan weakly waved back and Matt sat down at her table where she was drinking coffee and gnawing on an untoasted bagel.

"Hey, you're back from England already?"

"Wales, buster," she snapped.

"Oh yeah, Wales. Heh, heh. Did you do a lot of sightseeing, you know," nudging her shoulder, "Wales-watching." She broke form and actually smirked, an expression that made Sean cringe at its unnaturalness.

"Oh, it's always fun." She leaned over a bit conspiringly, "Hey guys, did you hear that someone broke into the archives a few days ago?"



"No," they both said as convincingly as possible, but perhaps not well enough, because Dylan's thin black eye brows shot up and narrowed a bit. "There weren't many students here over break. Whoever they were, they tripped the fire detector and flooded the archives with fire-fighting foam. I spent a few days wiping off some artifacts down there, but the papers are all fine, due to their boxing. You guys are sure you don't know anything about it?" She asked staring at their eyes, for hints of lies.

They both put on straight faces, waved their hands, flustered, and looked about in disbelief.

"Well, whatever, but it's going to impact your research. Police think the thieves were trying to steal either Frederick Schiller's bust or searching for rock samples, valuable ones, they said. There were a lot of boxes of rare mineral samples from the Geology department's section of the shelving knocked down by some klutz, and the area will be off-limits until maybe even February, due to clean-up and police work."

"Ah, shucks, man," griped Matt on cue, swinging a fist.

Shucks? Which decade are you in? Sean thought and threw up his hands, "This sucks, can you help us get in a little earlier?" Sean implored half-heartedly, but of course he didn't care anymore; mission accomplished.

"Fat chance of that. I think they suspect me, too, but I was overseas by that point, so my part-time job is protected for next term. Thank goddess, huh?" She rolled her eyes here and gnawed further on her cream cheese bagel.

"Hey, do you know where the KARL radio station is?"

"Sorry to tell you, it's gone, baby," Dylan smiled sipping her triple latte, enjoying the shock on their face. "We have a new radio station, KRLX FM and a KRLX AM station. I'm a DJ too, you know, I play inspirational music."



"Inspirational? Really?" Matt delved further into her eyes, already inspired.

"Yeah, you know, Nine-Inch Nails, Jane's Addiction, the Cure, Smashing Pumpkins," she waved her hand, "None of the depressing stuff." Matt nodded dreamily, twisting a foot back and forth reflexively.

Sean leaned in to rescue Matt's lost conversation thread, "Um, so they use the same studio as before right?"

"Nope," she said awoken from the shared dream, "Eric, he's the archivist, right? He says that KARL station was dismantled back in the '80s. All the equipment was removed, relocated and updated. I think the original

broadcasting booth is still locked up in Willis Hall; which is one of the oldest buildings in Northfield."

Sean looked confused and upset, "Whatcha talking about Willis?!"



"Oh, yeah, Willis was the highest elevated point for broadcasting back then, so the antenna was set up over there, and it was the old student center until the 70s." She toyed with her cup, and turned back to Matt, "You know, we have a slogan at KRLX which is at the end of the broadcast spectrum, 'KRLX 88.1 FM, it's better on the bottom.' Nice, eh? Perhaps we could do a joint show together." She growled, wagging an eyebrow.

Matt grinned like a jackanapes, "Mrs. Llewellyn, I do believe you are trying to seduce me."

Her dark eyes locked on his, she snarled, "You little fool, I've already succeeded."

"Oh, I think it's a mutual draw," Matt teased and there was a rather long pause, at least in Sean's excluded opinion.

Sean slapped him on the shoulder, "Matt, old buddy, we need to get going here,.. Uh.. Dylan, nice to see you again. A reality show is coming on in a few moments. Come on, Matt." Matt looked up dazed and grunted and scrambled to his feet, waving at her over his shoulder as he was hustled away. Dylan sipped her coffee and flicked her black-manicured fingernails in a dismissive kind of 'goodbye' manner.

"But Sean," whined Matt, "Who cares about reality shows, our real life is getting way more interesting?"

"You should be really more interested in finding that treasure trove than going after hers," Sean snapped, jerking Matt's bulky frame along. Matt dug in his heels and struck a pose:

*"Never try to put a price on a lady's hand,  
Or a word of wisdom that you learn,  
'Cause you'll end up a single lonely man,  
And dumb as dirt no matter how much you earn."*

Matt smiled with satisfaction wagging a finger at Sean, "Just made that up, you know, I'm inspired!"

"Come on Solomon!" Sean grinned pointedly, "We're going to Willis, now, before they lock it up for New Year's."

They hopped out of the student center, without coats on, and ran as fast as the ice permitted to Willis; which had a soaring rounded tower, with a steep slanted conical slate roof, a broken clock and a disheveled American flag, possibly a few decades old.

"I take philosophy classes all the time here in Willis, yet I've never been to the top floor, so that's where it must be." Sean said rubbing his hands vigorously to increase circulation.



"Sean, how come you take all these philosophy classes but you don't get any wiser?" Matt asked.

"When did you become such a great judge of character?" Sean snapped instinctively, but the question did hit him hard. "Are you your brother's keeper, or something?" Sean grouched as they reached the fourth floor.

"Well, perhaps, now wait just a minute, we can talk right?" Ah, college life, when serious issues can intrude on daily life. "But I mean what's the basis of Masonry and Druidry, eh? No really." Matt stood still waiting for a real answer, so Sean gave up and actually thought for a minute.



"Brotherhood, booze and ballyhooing," Sean stated, then reflexively wise-assed, "not necessarily in that order."

"Mostly, at first," Matt pushed Sean on the chest with a finger that reminded Sean, uncomfortably of the first-degree ceremony, "So before you talk about my priorities, you keep that in mind."

Not knowing where this came from, Sean sputtered, "Yeah, all right, dude. Whoa, this stuff is getting pretty serious for you."

"No, not serious," Matt said, "just important. Don't get me confused on that subject. But, hey, shouldn't we go back to the dorm room and get the crowbar or something?"

"It's my time to lecture you, Matt," Sean smiled, glad to recover momentum, waving a thin spray of wires from his pocket, "It doesn't also take a big solution for a big problem, a big hunk of metal is unnecessary when you have the rightly-crafted small tool."

Matt's mouth moved quietly, lock picks! "Hot dog!, you really know how to use them?"

"Of course," Sean knelt by the door for a better look, "How do you think I planted all those alarm clock toy bombs in the Assassin game last term? Now, keep watch over at the stairs, I will need a few moments."

Matt stared down the stairs, but nobody was coming into the building at this time of the year, and he heard a few clicks and curses, then a ka-chunk, and he turned around and Sean was smiling, with an ajar door and gesturing to go in.

The two entered and quietly closed the door behind them, and groped the wall to find a light switch and flipped it. A wan light from a 30-year-old light bulb dimly lit the dusty, round room, which had a small window on the conical roof, a few wires sticking out of the wall, a desk with many holes drilled in it for cables that were gone, a wooden chair and not much else but the lonely memories of a forgotten room of a past age.

"Man, even the air smells like the 1980s. I think this place might still be haunted by Van Halen," Matt mumbled. "Everything has been taken out, like Dylan said. What are we looking for?"

Sean read the poem on a printout by flashlight again.

*Look under the speaker for the sign of the clan*

*Whose leader now knows a key to the plan.*

Sean strolled about the room for a few moments. "I think I've got an idea." Sean crawled under the desk and scoured around, "Hey, I got something here. Take a look, Matt." Matt with boyish excitement, jumped under the desk, crowding Sean a bit with his bulk. Sean pointed to a large word, deeply cut into the underside of the desk table, and then inked in with indelible black marker.

"DENMAD," Matt breathed out, eyes locked in the awe of the moment, but a bit confused, and a bit angered. The two men mumbled something incomprehensible, and rude.

**DENMAD**

"Well, that's awful short isn't it?" Sean spat distastefully, "But what the hell does it mean?" Sean got up and paced the room like a tiger in a zoo cage.

Matt crawled out slowly and had a scared look on his face, "Oh, Sean don't you see? Read it backwards."

Sean paused in mid-step, speechless.

## Chapter Twelve: The Cursed Children

Without more ado, Sean and Matt slipped out of Willis and sprinted back to the dormitory of Davis Hall, Matt losing his balance once on a slick patch and falling sputtering in embarrassment into a deep snow bank, but they made it inside without frostbite or too much discomfort, and returned to Sean's dingy room, but a dark air over their muted conversation.

"DENMAD - DAMNED, huh?" Sean thought aloud, "Do you think Fisher was referring to the Druids, the group he started himself? That's real harsh, man."

"Wait, what's the next clue again, Sean?"

"Well, look here, the last verse and next verse are related,"

*Look under the speaker for the sign of the clan  
Whose leader now knows a key to the plan.*

*Those Cursed children who seek their salvation  
Live apart from you in a higher pure nation  
Safe in those castles that are built of strong stone  
Clothed in white samite with faces of cold bone*

"Whoa, you're right," Matt looked depressed, "I mean, if the Druid's founder is dissing on his own group, that's a big blow to their self-image. Does he think the Druids are, like Devil's Spawn, or something? Has he turned his back on them so coldly?"

Sean shook his head, "I don't think so, I mean, yeah, he had to renounce the Druids when he went into the Episcopal seminary, but you said yesterday that in his later letters in the 1970s, that he had returned to holding a kind of benevolent patronizing old-codger position towards the Druids."

"Yeah, but that poem was written back in 1965, he might have been more emotional at that decisive point in his life," Matt cautioned.



"Well, why would he leave the treasure to the Druids then, if he didn't like the way they were going, Matt?" Sean asked, scouring the text for other meanings.

"Cycles, man, I mean what comes around goes around. Eventually, perhaps he believed, the Druids would return to the course he believed in. Perhaps he took an oath of celibacy and poverty and didn't have anyone else to give the treasure to?" Matt suggested.

"Possibly, but why not just give it to his church, then? That doesn't make sense at all. 'Live apart from you,' that kind of implies another group here besides the Druids. After all, it's the Druids who are likely to be the ones to

find the message, isn't it?"

"I guess we'll know the answer to that when we reach the end of these riddles, now, won't we?" Matt raised his hands up to the ceiling, then dropped them and pointed hard at Sean, "Okay, for argument's sake, let's say there is another group, and Fisher wasn't bitterly remonstrating the Druids, then who would it be? Show me that text again."

"Salvation is a mostly Christian concept," Sean suggested, "Perhaps he's referring to a Jesus group on campus?"

"What about the castles?" Matt emphasized, "I know the 'Lord is a mighty fortress,' but so far his clues have been to actual locations, right? Most of the buildings on the campus are concrete or brick, rather squarish or artsy-fartsy."

"Oh yeah," Sean mumbled and thought. "Maybe he's referring to a torn-down building, or a place that isn't on campus, maybe there is some kind of castle in Minnesota, nearby? I'll search the Internet for some locations." Matt nodded with this logic and repacked some of the gear, and patched up some holes in his cloak with a needle and thread, while Sean fumed and tapped on the keyboard unproductively for an hour. Matt turned on the TV to watch some football.

"Hey, Sean, the Vikings are on," Matt called pulling out some munchies and pop from the fridge.

"I don't like football, and I'm too busy.." Sean paused in mid sentence at a sudden thought, did a quick search, "Matt look here!" Jabbing the monitor excitedly as his character permitted. "The castle is here in Northfield, on the campus!"

"What are you talking about?" Matt said sleepily looking up from the game. "I've never seen any castles around here."

"Not on Carleton Campus; on the other one," Sean chuckled, "How clever! It's at St. Olaf Campus, across town, almost all of their buildings are built of granite blocks and crenellated on the roofs, like a castle!"

Matt's attention was piqued, "And all the folks there are really Lutheran, and Scandinavian, with stereotypically pale complexions. That's got to be where the next clue is located. No Carl in his or her right mind would go there, or join a group of Oles."

"Right. So, I don't think the 'Cursed Children' the riddle is referring to means the Druids, it must be referring to a group of Oles at Olaf. This 'DENMAD' and their leader must have a key to the riddle. But who are they, and why did they convince Fisher to give the key to them?"



Matt stopped pacing and pulled up with a thought, "I believe Isaac Bonewits (the guy from California) claimed that there were some historical documents from the United Ancient Order of Druids at St. Olaf, which he thought might have influenced Fisher's concepts. Maybe Denmad is connected to them and brainwashed Fisher?"

"I don't think so. That seems ridiculous to me, Oles and Carls just didn't interact much in the 1960s, and they still don't even nowadays." Sean was wrapped in thought, arms folded, leaning his head against the wall.

"Wow, Sean. One answer to this riddle, only seems to produce more questions, it's so. . .Druidic," Matt spoke with a bit of misty vision of revelation of something in his head.

"It's a pain in the ass, that's what it is." Sean grumbled, "And I have no idea how we're going to convince this clan's leader to hand over the key."

"Clan? Do you suppose it's a branch of the K K K?" Matt was worried and quite serious.

"No way, that doesn't fit Fisher's profile at all, he was too progressive for his time," Sean said, arms crossed, tapping his fingers on his shoulders, he picked up his heavy jacket and went to the door. "Let's go. We need to ask some advice again from our nosy reporter friend."

Matt followed along as they returned to the student center, and surprisingly Sean led him to the Carletonian newspaper office again. Sarah was there, talking on the phone with one hand and pasting a headline for the first issue for the New Year on her computer layout with her free hand. She saw their shadow in the doorway blocking the weak light of the wintry sun.

"Hey guys, you still hunting down that strange philanthropist's clues?" She said with a quirky smile and knowing eye and winked, "Come on, I know you are, tell me what you found."

Sean took the lead, rather than let Matt give it all away, "Well, kind of, we think he or she may be sending the messages, um, from St. Olaf."

"Olaf?" Sarah said seriously, taken aback, "Why would Oles be asking Carls to pick up some money? They usually steal beer from our campus parties."

"We don't know, they might be mixed up with a group calling themselves 'DENMAD.' Have you heard of them?"

She frowned and took the Palm stylus from behind her ear and chewed on it thoughtfully, tapping her cheek, and said, "Well, let me take a look, in our old file cabinet." She began leaving through some folders, "Dangerous Animals EDean of Students EHere we go, DENMAD." She pulled out a few articles, skimmed them and showed them to Sean and Matt on the counter.





"Looks like DENMAD has occasionally caused trouble on this campus, leaving graffiti stencils on doors of religious groups' leaders' doors for a few decades, about once every three or four years, sometimes stenciling with herbicide the letters "DENMAD" on the Hill of Three Oaks, really ticking off the Druids way back in the '70s and '80s." She tapped her foot while Sean read, turning to Matt, "So, what?, are these guys paying for those ads, cause that's kind of freaky."

"Well, we're not sure. But I think we're going to try to join them and find out more information," confided Matt. "I remember now, that there were rumors of guys dressed in white robes that would disrupt Druid services awhile ago in the '80s." Sarah looked mighty uncomfortable at him.

"Whoa, mates, better watch out, these obscure religious groups can be dangerous; you don't want to get in between some kind of War of the Illuminati you know."

"No problem, we're getting quite good at it," Matt assured her, smacking a fist into his open hand.

"Well, okay, as long as you're careful," she resumed smiling, "You know, you guys might want to become reporters; you have a nose for stories. Tell you what, I'll check my sources at Olaf's newspaper office and see if I can find a contact for their group, but you'll never fit in over there, like that," she said sizing the two up.

"Why not?" Sean asked.

"You're not blond and you're not wearing dress shirts," she said, stating the obvious. "You guys are obviously not too busy, so come over to Burton 424 tomorrow, and I'll give you guys a bleach job." She saw their hesitation, and laughed, "If you do it yourself, your hair will probably fall out! What's it going to be?"



"Sounds good, right Sean?" They both shrugged apathetically.

"And," she added, "I want a piece of this inheritance thingy, too." She shook her hand, "Nothing much, how about a nice dinner when it's over? Anyplace away from the Marriott food service would be fine." She stuck her tongue out, and pretended to choke, glurting and laughing.

### **END OF PART THREE OF EIGHT**

Tune in next issue, for the further adventures of Sean & Matt.



**Iceman shoes called superior to ours**



By Susanna Loof

Associated Press

7/11/2005

From The Buffalo News: <http://www.buffalonews.com/editorial/20050711/1030130.asp>

Ziln, Czech Republic - Lined with hay and held together by a net of rough string, the leather shoes look bulky, itchy and downright uncomfortable.

But if they were good enough for Oetzi, the 5,300-year-old man found in an alpine glacier in 1991, they're good enough for the modern foot, insists Petr Hlavacek, a Czech shoe expert who has created replicas, taken them out for a walk and pronounced them far better than most modern footwear.

"These shoes are very comfortable. They are perfectly able to protect your feet against hard terrain, against hot temperatures, against cold temperatures," he said, showing off the replicas in his office at Tomas Bata University in this eastern Czech town.

Despite their flimsy leather soles, the shoes offer a good grip and superb shock absorption, and are blister-free, Hlavacek said.

It's like going barefoot, "only better," he said. "In the Oetzi shoes, you feel something like freedom, flexibility."

Scientists have already learned much from the hunter nicknamed Oetzi (rhymes with curtsy) - that his last meal included venison, that he was killed by an arrow, and that he probably spent most of his life within about 50 miles of where his body was found.

And when it comes to re-creating his shoes, there's something symbolic about the challenge being taken up at the university whose founder's name, Bata, has been made famous by his worldwide footwear empire.

After studying the original shoes at the museum in Mainz, Germany, where they are stored, Hlavacek set out with his colleagues to duplicate them.

Vaclav Gresak, a university lecturer and saddler who describes himself as the "hands" and Hlavacek as the "brain," described the challenge in an interview in his university workshop.

First there was the string for the net that kept the hay in place - they had to figure out what it was made of. Ready-made string was out of the question. Eventually, Gresak happened upon an old man who remembered how to make it from thin strips of inner bark.

Then they had to get the right leather. Tests had determined it came from three different animals. Calf skin, no problem. Deer skin, ditto; deer are plentiful here. Finding bear skin for the sole, however, wasn't easy. Gresak finally got his hands on a tattered skin of a bear killed in Canada by a wealthy Czech hunter.

Then the team had to find a method to tan it that would have been available to Oetzi. Gresak tested vegetable fats with no success. Fats from marrow also failed.

Having read an ancient American Indian recipe for tanning, he boiled chopped pig liver and added raw pig's brain. The fatty goo was smeared onto the skin and left for three days.

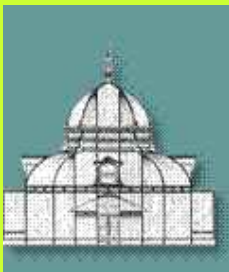
"It smelled very bad and there were a lot of flies," Gresak recalled. But it worked.

Today, Hlavacek is still learning lessons from his experiment. An expert on shoes for diabetics, he is

researching what materials could distribute pressure as superbly as the hay in the Oetzi shoes.

He hates plastic footwear, says most shoes are poorly shaped and is certain that future historians will view high heels as evidence of the modern era's stupidity.

But he doesn't wear Oetzi shoes and doesn't expect them to catch on with the public. They're difficult to put on, and the hay needs regular replacement.



## **Nature's Pharmacy: The Healing Power of Plants**

July thru October 16  
San Francisco

The Conservatory of Flowers, Golden Gate Park, will host Nature's Pharmacy: The Healing Power of Plants Tues. Sun. 9:00am-4:30pm. Nearly 75 percent of the world's population relies solely on botanical remedies as their primary medicine, and even in the U.S. doctors write millions of prescriptions each year for drugs derived from plants. This exhibit provides a look at the many plants from around the world that find their way into our medicine cabinets. Cost: \$5/general, \$3/youth 12-17, seniors, students, \$1.50/kids 5-11. Information: 415-666-7001 or visit [www.conservatoryofflowers.org](http://www.conservatoryofflowers.org)



## **Celtic Music Festival Season Begins!**

Dublin Irish Festival - Dublin, OH - Aug. 5 - 7. Cherish the Ladies, Eileen Ivers, Tannahill Weavers.

Mountain Laurel Celtic Festival - Bushkill, PA - Aug. 13. A brand new festival in the Poconos! The Tannahill Weavers, The Makem Brothers, Mick Moloney, Leahy, The Bridies.

Great Lakes Folk Festival - East Lansing, MI - Aug. 12 - 14. T?da, Steve Riley and the Mamou Playboys, Georgia Sea Island Singers

Milwaukee Irish Festival - Aug. 15 - 21. The king of them all! Liz Carroll and John Doyle, Cherish the Ladies, Hothouse Flowers, Dan E

**Pagan Alliance Lecture Series Presents:  
Fostering Activism in Pagan Communities**



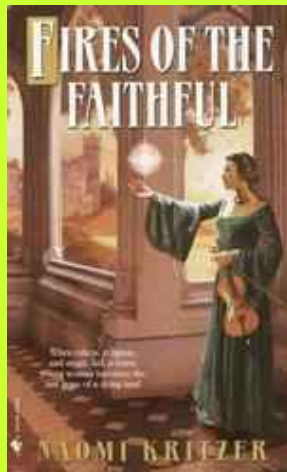
Saturday, Aug. 6, 2005, 3-5 p.m.  
With Jennifer Robinson  
Cost: Free Will Offering  
RSVP: 510-655-2405  
Change Makers, 6536 Telegraph Ave, Oakland, CA 94609

On using the magic of grass roots activism to invoke personal, group, and community change. We will discuss some of the pitfalls and benefits of promoting change as Pagans in today's culture, the Psychology of volunteer management and participation, and will cover the basics of grassroots activism. Bring your current projects and ideas to share with the group for feedback and networking. We will close the workshop with a short ritual to empower us in our work as community activists. More info at [www.thepaganalliance.org](http://www.thepaganalliance.org)

Jen is an avid incensor of the public, and has been encouraging community pride since her 2002 beginnings as a co-organizer for the San Francisco/Bay Area Pagan Pride Project. An Eclectic Kitchen Witch, Jen enjoys maintaining a comforting and healing hearth space in her home, exploring new things with her husband Jason, and relaxing with her cat, Bubba. Jen works as an Environmental Health and Safety Specialist for a large manufacturing company, providing guidance for protecting the earth and those on it, and at night attends school to attain her goal of attaining a PhD in Psychology with a focus on Human Sexuality.



## Book Review



### Fires of the Faithful & Turning the Storm

Written by Naomi Kritzer  
Reviewed by Mike Scharding, Digitalis Grove

Fires of the Faithful, Turning the Storm By Naomi Kritzer  
ISBN 0-553-58517-7 and 0-0553-58550-9. US\$6.99 each

This is the first review of a Fantasy novel in the Missal-Any, but the author does come from the Carleton College grove, and her central themes resonate with those of Reformed Druidism.

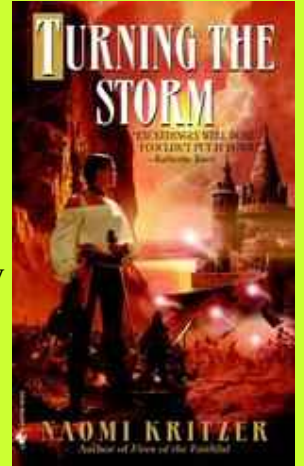
Last May, I unexpectedly ran across Naomi Kritzer's four novels at the bookstore, next to Katherine Kurtz and Mercedes Lackey on the shelf. Naomi E6 graduated two years after me (Mike E4), but I knew her well. I remembered her once talking about someday writing novels, but then I lost touch with her. A fiery spirit, vocative, gifted in music and prone to delighted rants against injustice; Naomi was a joy to be around, and a person who got things done. At Carleton, there are amorphous overlapping clubs comprising the Carleton Druids, SCA medievalists, Science Fiction Alliance, Folkdance and Folk music clubs, Theatre cliques and the MST3K bad-movie-critiquers. In addition to those evident influences, her religion major gives her writing an unusual flavor and deep sub-story; but without getting all preachy.

Her thrilling two-book, 740 page series (Fires of the Faithful, Turning the Storm) was published by Bantam



Spectra three years ago, and they are available in major bookstores and on Amazon.com. Her website, <http://www.naomikritzer.com> has book excerpts, suggested resources for aspiring writers, plus a sampling of her short stories. Her style is unpretentious, level-headed, easy-to-read, bereft of fluttery romances, and bravely tackling religious issues.

The alternate-world of her two-book series is a 14th century-like Italy, where after the 4th century period of tentative Aramaic Christianization, another faith (similar to a folksy duotheistic, gender-balanced Wicca) becomes the established religion for a thousand years because it harnessed actual magical powers of the certain commoners; such as fireballs, light and kinetics. However, this new form of paganism also relentlessly drove the gentle Gnostic Christians (and their rich musical tradition) into the role of an underground heretical rural cult called the Redentori. The basic principles and scriptures of both religions are favorably portrayed, but the story clearly points out that either religion, when hitched closely to imperial politics, eventually results in power-hungry mages and sanctimonious priests who hunt down any heretics and dissenters to raise their own prestige, all in the name of security and peace.



The ecology and villages of the borderland between two empires are laid to waste by war and magic, leading to cruel refugee camps dotted about the barren landscape. Revolted by the injustices of visiting Fedeli priests, a young bard named Eliana at a reclusive conservatory, runs away to the Wasteland to seek her lost family, makes odd friends, and suffers much from her idealism and new faith. She discovers powerful tools to lead and fight through the Redentori songs and dances. Scattered groups of aristocratic university students who champion religious freedom, known as the Reformers (sound familiar?) rally around her cause. With their aid, Eliana raises a coalition army of bitter rebels, against the theocratic priests and imperious mages. However, Eliana sadly learns that when revolution occurs, it is all too easy for the oppressed to blindly fall into the same behavior as their previous oppressors, in a never-ending viscous cycle of intolerance.



Astronomical Lughnasadh, when the Sun is half-way between the Summer Solstice and Fall Equinox, will occur this year on August 7 as 15 degrees of Leo at 3:04 a.m. Pacific Daylight Time, or alternatively as 16 degrees 18 minutes decl at 6:16 a.m. on the same day.

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Canyon, CA 94516

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This is the end of the Lughnasadh Issue



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Webmastered by Mike Scharding

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