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Spring Equinox, Year 43 (March 20, 2006)

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Spring Equinox, balance, the Sun crosses the Celestial Equator, and the Night equals the Day. The lengthening of the daylight hours which were just starting to be evident at Oimelech is quite apparent now. Though the nights are still cold, the days are getting warmer and inside activities transition to outside ones. With the coming of warmer weather, the thawing of the land, and the danger of frost gone, Spring was the time of year the ancient Celts made ready their fields for plowing and planting. Grains such as emmer and spelt, rye, barley, and oats were grown. Barley was grown for brewing beer as well as for food. Plowing was not done in Winter in

anticipation of the sowing of the crops in the Spring as inclement weather on furrowed land could lead to runoff and soil erosion and less abundant crops. The fields were first cleared of stones which were then used for walls to define the plots. Field boundaries were defined in less rocky country by fences and hedges. The plowing was done by using by a triangular-shaped timber point called an ard. The ard was drawn through the soil without turning the surface up like a modern plough, and was done so either by manpower or by yoked cattle.

Evidence of field systems in Ireland dates back to Neolithic Stone Age times. Investigations of settlements show a pattern. Areas with plenty of elms, oaks, and hazels were sought out as they would have indicated rich and fertile soils. The trees would have been felled using stone axes made of porcellanite or by burning to make clearings for planting. The reduction in the percentage of tree pollen of oaks and elms, the finding of charcoal suggesting that the trees were slashed and burned, followed by the cultivation of wheat and barley, show this. At several areas in County Mayo layouts of fields and stone walls have been unearthed under the peat bogs. At Belderg Beg in County Mayo, irregular stone walls were found and marks made perhaps by the ard, a primitive predecessor of the plow, along with cultivation ridges comparable to 19th century "lazy beds" or spade ridges, still seen on many upland locations in Ireland today.



Evidence of agriculture continues during the Iron Age in Ireland, which began late in comparison to the Iron Age on the Continent, ca. 600 BC vs. 1000 BC, though it is probable that at that time agriculture was in decline. From investigations in Red Bog in Co. Louth and Littleton Bog in Co. Tipperary and at other sites provide us with an interesting picture. During the prior Later Bronze Age there was a period of forest clearance and agriculture but then it gradually fades. However in several parts of Ireland pollen studies in raised bogs suggest a decline. Weeds associated with cultivation as well as cereals and bracken gradually disappear. At the same time evidence of hazel trees grows and the amount of pollen of ash, elm, and oak trees begins to rise, showing the growth of the returning woodlands. The excavations at Dun Ailinne in Co. Kildare produced only thirteen grains of barley even though a large area had been excavated, and 19,000 animal bones had been found at the site, as well as a large quantity of hazelnut shells. Barley, rye, and oat grains were recovered from a pit at Carrowmore in Co. Sligo.



What of the tools that were used in these early agricultural times? Bog deposits have provided us with well-preserved evidence. Ards or light plows were in most common use. The ard scratched a furrow in the soil but did not turn it. By careful tilting the dug-up soil could be formed into a ridge on one side of the furrow. The head of the ard was wooden and made of oak. The ards "had a long shaft and a sub-triangular head which was flattened on one side, gently convex on the other. They were mounted in a curved wooden frame (beam) which was drawn by oxen and may have had a narrow oak blade (the foreshare) attached. Experiments have shown that such implements were surprisingly efficient and could plough to a depth of 20 cm."*

*Rafferty, Barry. Pagan Celtic Ireland. London: Thames and Hudson, 1994.



News of the Groves



For the [Full Grove Directory](#)



Digitalis Grove: News from D.C.

Well, the biggest news is that I will begin training with the Department of State on May 1st, and I expect to remain in D.C. during arduous training until perhaps November 1st, after which I will go overseas. (How Druidic can the timing be?) It's the culmination of 9 years of persistent effort, and the salary will be doubling what I get now, so I am not complaining. Naturally, I will be most careful while I am abroad, so don't worry too much about me. Hopefully, I'll stay in touch pretty regularly, visit D.C. every few years after my first posting, and perhaps you'll come and visit me?

Brother Azeem visited me and we had another lovely lunch in Dupont circle and talked about various things, but mostly about our longer term career plans, and how Druidry would fit in and influence them. We hope to meet again for Saint Patrick's Day/Spring Equinox and certainly again for Cherry Blossom Festival in April.



Missionary Order of the Celtic Cross: Muskogee/Mother Grove: News from Oklahoma

Shannon S. has re-taken up her duties as Co-Archdruid of the M/M Grove, and has started up rituals, it appears, in Sallie Ball Park on nights of the Full Moon. So, then, the trees that have stood guard over Muskogee are just rollicking in their root-places. She's also got an idea for an herb garden that looks like it may have some hope of actually making it, with emphasis on native medicinal plants.



Missionary Order of the Celtic Cross: Rowan/Oak Grove: News from Tulsa, OK

Since everything looks like it was doing well in Muskogee, I pulled up roots and moved, with boyfriend in tow, to Tulsa. Rowan/Oak Grove is still making do, and is about to re-start rituals. After some problems, it looks like some things are getting resolved and the sun is shining again. There was a big set of job hunts and a lung infection for me, thanks to lots of sugar and cinnamon floating around in the air, and I'm living right next door to the Rowan/Oak Grove Archdruid for the time being. Mostly, I'm working and working on lesson plans for the classes I give from time to time, waiting on the dandelions to start appearing in the parks so I can take a nice loooooong walk. Peace until next time...

Myrddin A Maeglin,
Former Archdruid, MOCC Muskogee/Mother Grove



Rose Rock Grove: News from Moore, OK

Winter barely nodded in our direction. No one really noticed, because influenza hit everyone hard. We heard from a couple just east of us by e-mail once, and they may come join us someday if the mood strikes them.

Delila rode for a while with her Druid-on-the-go, and will be back in town soon. We plan on doing Tai Chi together. I'll be glad to have my dear friend nearby again. Her kids, critters, and friends are happy to welcome her back in time for Spring Equinox.

Stacey, however, must be back on the road before then, so we plan to send him off with a care package of dyed eggs, spring buns, and other things that will travel well and remind him of the gang back home. After a few company changes, he's settling back into routine again. He says he hopes to have time to get his Druidy musings into computer format soon.

Jeff is about to celebrate his eighteenth birthday. He has his driver's license and is taking to responsibility like a duck to water. He's been a staunch brother-wrangler and right-hand Druid. We haven't seen Chris lately, but hear he's through the worst of the teenage change and returning to human. Congratulations, boys.

Crystal is busy with Campfire USA, her studies, and a boyfriend. She still manages to put in her two cents worth, though. She'll be helping put together the care package for our Druid-on-the-go. Her mouse population is down to two, as age catches up with our little rodent friends.

My Heathen hubby helped arrange the living room for Yule, and rearrange it for Spring. He rescued our bathroom and front door from disaster. Yay for having a handyman in the house!

Arrow, my old canine friend, has been on an intensive weight-gain diet, and has managed to gain two much-needed pounds over the winter. He still has to gain a couple more, and is showing more strength and energy with every ounce.

Doves are back in the neighborhood, cooing away and sitting in the middle of the road till the last second. The squirrel highway across our roof is very noticeable, now. The craggly, bare, black trees suddenly sprouted white blossoms yesterday...Hm. I think Spring has arrived.

Yours in the Mother,
-Mouse



Moose Breechcloth Proto-Grove: News from Minnesota

Salutations all!

I know we're supposed to love and care for all of the Mother's critters, but right now I'm cursing Punxatawny Phil. Ever since that blasted rodent saw his shadow and went back down under for another six weeks, winter in Minnesota has not been the place to be.

We're in this goofy limbo here...not winter, not spring. Not getting snow for winter activities, but too cold and icy for spring activities. Everything is coated with that disgusting gray haze of ice that is typical of late winter in a metro area. Dirty snow and ice (or "snirt" as we call it snow + dirt = snirt) covers everything, without any promise of a fresh clean blanket to cover it, or the sun's warming rays to melt the rest of it away.

In a dash of winter madness, Lou and I busted out the mountain bikes last night and went for a ride...complete with parkas, hats, mittens, and neck gaiters. Aside from the patches of ice, the ride was long overdue and a welcomed activity amid the Minnesota winter gray.

Our beloved Brother Ross was a welcomed addition to my birthday dinner at my favorite African restaurant in Saint Paul late January. It had been since the 2004 reunion since I've seen Ross (shame, shame on us). Two Druids who live so close, and we never see each other...shame. The Ghana beef stew, fried plantains, and chicken whatnot was a hit with everyone, except the toddler in our group.

Apparently fried plantains look nothing at all like macaroni and cheese.

Lou and I very nearly bought a cabin property up north this past month as well. The plan was to move The Moose Breechcloth's HQ to that site. Unfortunately, the cabin property disintegrated with my tax return this year when I accidentally bumped myself into the next income tax bracket up by selling 53 shares too many. The capital gains tax all but tarred and feathered my checkbook. While it won't happen this year, Lou and I are far from giving up hope on the cabin property up north.

In seasonal news, however, the end of February DOES herald one tradition that I dearly love. It's that time of year where I kiss my dining room goodbye for the next two months, as the dining room is converted into a greenhouse. This past weekend, I got all of my seeds in their starter soil, and I have the plant lights glowing 24/7 on them. In 7 to 10 days, the first little sprigs should appear. Each day, even though I know it's too soon, I run to the dining room to check on germination.

It's the usual fare this year; two varieties of tomatoes, peas, beans, bell peppers, two different kinds of hot peppers, dill, spearmint, peppermint, and strawberries. However, I caved in this year to Lou's will and bought 3 dormant raspberry bushes, and 3 dormant blackberry bushes. It will take 2 - 3 years to get a decent yield out of them, but fresh berries are always a treat.

Hoping the warming rays of spring aren't far behind....

Gigawabamin nagutch,
and yours in the Mother,

-Julie Ann and Lou-



Rockspray Grove: News from Indiana

Rockspray Proto-grove is a little short on activity at the moment but we have things planned for spring time. Going to have group discussions around bonfires, nature walks and energy workings to help out two of our newer members get acquainted. I am hoping to get a higher attendance in coming months working with some of the local groups as well as advertising.

Natures Blessing

Matt

Canine Grove: News from Washington State



depending on the weather the soggy druid of outer portland oregon is considering wandering among the various spectacular waterfalls nearby and connecting with nature during the Spring Equinox. Her trip to the Washington stone henge replica didn't pan out due to unbelievably bad weather.

Bindii the Soaked



Clan of the Triplehorses: News from Oregon

Clan of the Triplehorses (formerly Rogue River Protogrove) celebrated Imbolc with a ritual and a barbeque on a ridge overlooking the entire area. The day was sunny and the temperature was close to 70 degrees.

On Saturday, March 11, we will have a combined Spring Equinox and Home Blessing ritual. Afterwards, those interested will be carpooling to

Howling Acres Wolf Sanctuary (www.howlingacres.org). For more information, please email: aigeann@earthlink.net



Sierra Madrone Grove: News from California

The Sierra Madrone Grove has been very active lately. We enjoyed a wonderful Imbolc full of revelry and cheer with 24 people in attendance. The rain let up long enough for us to enjoy the Ritual and have a nice pot luck. We had the fire pit going, and everyone made personal offerings into the hearth.

Nine Blessings!

A D Sean mac Dhomhnuill
Sierra Madrone Grove



Sunset Protogrove: News from California

Went out searching for a new grove site last weekend, was not successful. All but the trail itself was either cow pasture or bare wild grasses. Of course the desirable side of the trail was fenced off and inaccessible as one would expect around here- suburban sprawl at its finest. I have a few more ideas on where to find one and so the search continues. Will have to go the next city over to look for it.

We are currently getting one of our last good soakings of the season. As normal just as the trees begin to bloom, the rain returns for one final reminder of winter.

Both of our four footed babies had their birthdays mid Feb- Penny turned 4 and Daisy 1. They have ribbons on their necks, and fur is shiny and clean. Perfect for the time of year. As ever they are totally unaware of their species difference. The dog and the cat play wrestle and lie down to sleep together.

Was recently in Austin Texas where I was privileged enough to experience the WONDERFUL gingerbread pancakes. If anyone has an exceedingly good dark brown gingerbread pancake recipe (without nuts) please

forward to grove email. I have tried a couple- both have been a dismal failure in comparison.



Poison Oak Grove: News from California

Publisher of "A Druid Missal-Any"

PantheaCon Report. The AD went this year after not going the last and had a blast. It was the best time I've had there. There were more druid and Celtic-oriented sessions than there has ever been. Met Isaac for the first time. He was littler than I thought he would be (Brother Mike is tall and for some reason I thought Isaac would be too). I asked Brother Mike to make introductions via email prior since he didn't know me from Adam. I recognized him from pictures (and confirmed it was him from his name badge). Busy guy that he is, he took the time to chat with me for awhile about RDNA stuff etc. He remarked how his prediction, suggestion, that the RDNA become largely pagan came true (oh that old saw?!) Attended a lecture on Brigit, Danu, and the Morrigan by Isaac which was delightfully Celtic and not just generic pagan and attended my first ADF ritual. In solidarity I wore my robe, ribbons, and sickle in the ritual. I wanted to see if there were any similarities to the regular RDNA Order of Common Worship service, and the one that stood out the most was a variation on "To Thee we return this portion of our bounty oh Our Mother, even as we must return unto Thee." Isaac still has that old RDNA sense of humor and made a very bad pun on the origins of "So be it" in Russia (don't remember the whole thing, but ADF says so be it in Irish Gaelic and we were told we could say it too in response as part of the ritual) but something about the "So be it" Union." It reminded me of Preceptor Ignatz and his puns.

ADF had a hospitality suite. The door was closed but I went in any way. They looked like they were in the middle of something and they said they were practicing for their ritual. Someone said we're ADF and I said I'm RDNA and a person replied, "Cool!" The person at the desk recognized me from 2000 when she came to a service and Larry couldn't make it and I wasn't Third Order yet and I led a proto-grove service. She told them all that it was because of me she got into druidism!!! Then another person piped up and said I was the first druid she had met when she moved to the bay area. This was really funny because we had met through the bay pagan list and arranged to meet at PatheaCon several years ago when it was in SF. We had waited in line together to get food and I turned around and she was gone. It was like she couldn't wait to get away from me fast enough. And then on Sunday, because someone spoke of me in glowing ways she added that she knew me too, like suddenly I had become an important person! Har, har!

I talked to people I knew from the local Renaissance faire too and after 5 met up with a friend from faire I hadn't seen in six years. Met Oberon Zell-Ravenhart who founded CAW and got his number for Brother Stephen Abbott. Met another druid from the White Oak list and bought his book and had him sign it. Stephen had ordained him Second Order last Belteine.

I stayed the latest I ever had and went home very tired and happy.



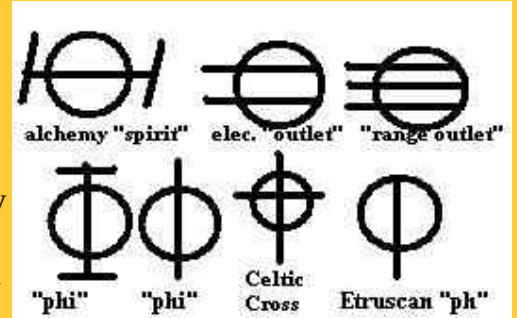
Druid Sigil: A Tiny Masonic Link to Druidism?

By Mike of Digitalis Grove of DC

The Druid Sigil, a circle with two parallel lines down the middle has been a rallying symbol to the RDNA since 1963, and it is remarkably unique in the field of symbols, despite its rather simple design. Various people have speculated that it resembles a picture of an ancient temple foundation shown in Stuart

Piggot's 1966 book, "The Druids", but that's obviously too late. Others wonder if it is related to the alchemical symbol for oil, the electrician's symbol for an outlet or that it is a yunic symbol. All of these are quite fruitful for meditation, but none have been proven, and perhaps none ever will be proven sufficiently for everyone in the Reform. It remains a mystery, but recently it has become even more intriguing.

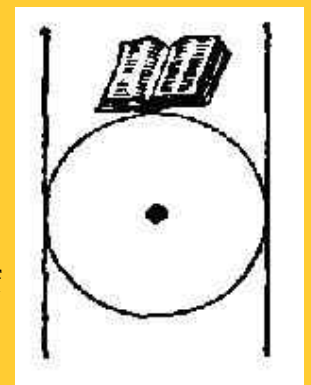
About two years ago, Alice Cascorbi '86, a former Archdruid of Carleton, sent me a photograph of a Masonic lodge with a circle and two ADJACENT parallel lines over the door (one line on either side of the circle). Now, I knew that some of the RDNA Founders had been linked to Masonry; Fisher to the child-hood Order of DeMolay, and Nelson's family history is rich with it. Other elements of Masonry are vaguely apparent: three primary orders, and seven honorary orders (like Scottish Rite Masonry), the interfaith nature of the search for wisdom, intriguing initiation rites, the prevalence of alcoholic beverages at events, and a fascination with antiquarian folklore. In fact, charitable fraternal groups like Ancient Order of Druids in Britain sprung off the Masons in the 18th Century, leading to more paganish groups like OBOD in 1964.



That the RDNA symbol might possibly be related to one of hundreds of Masonic symbols was therefore no big surprise. However, I couldn't find any definitive answers from folks at the time of the founding. None of the founders really have any memories of how they came up with the sigil. Apparently, with the modernization of Masonry, and falling away of ritualism, many current Masons don't understand or use this symbol much anymore either. Naturally, this caused me to do research, and I finally found this 50 year old article that describes the meaning of the Masonic symbol. I thought the lengthy essay intriguing enough to present it to you in its near entirety.

**The Masonic Service Association of the United States
Vol. 32 July 1954 number 5**

*"There is in every regular and well governed Lodge,
a certain point within a circle,
embordered by two parallel perpendicular lines. . . ."*



Familiar to every Mason, this ancient symbol is too often considered merely as one of many, instead of what it really is, among the most illuminating of the entered Apprentice's Degree. It is particularly important not only for its antiquity, the many meanings which have been and may be read from it by the student, but because of the bond it makes between the old Operative Craft and the modern Speculative Masonry we know.

No man may say when, where or how the symbol began. From the earliest dawn of history a simple closed figure has been man's symbol for deity - the circle for some peoples, the triangle for others, and a circle or a triangle with a central point, for still others. The closed figure, of course, represents the conception of Him Who has neither beginning or ending; the triangle adds to this the reading of a triune nature. It is to be noted that the Lesser Lights form a triangle placed in our Lodges in that orientation which expresses Wisdom, Strength and Beauty. In some Jurisdictions a Lodge closes with the brethren forming a circle about the Altar, which thus becomes the point, or focus of the Supreme Blessing upon the brethren. Nor must we consider that a reading which is wholly beyond the monitorial explanation of the point within a circle is beyond Masonic conception.

A symbol may have many meanings, all of them right, so long as they are not self-contradictory. As the point within a circle has had so many different meanings to so many different people, it is only to be expected that it have meanings for many Masons. We find it connected with sun worship, the most ancient of religions; ruins of ancient temples devoted both to sun and fire worship are circular in form, with a central altar, or

"point" which was the Holy of Holies. The symbol is found in India, in which land of mystery and mysticism its antiquity is beyond calculation.

This is the more curious and interesting when a second ancient meaning of the symbol is considered - that the point represents the sun and the circle the universe. Indeed, this meaning is both modern and ancient, for a dot in a small circle is the astronomical symbol for the sun, and the derivation of this astronomical symbol marks its Masonic connection. The Indian interpretation makes the point the male principle, the circle the female; the point became the sun and the circle the solar system which ancient peoples thought was the universe because the sun is vivifying, the life-giving principle, for all the lives. The two parallel lines, which modern Masonry states represents the two Holy Saints John & John, are as ancient as the rest of the symbol, and originally had nothing to do with the "two eminent Christian Patrons of Masonry."

It is a pretty conception, but of course utterly without foundation. The Holy Saints John & John lived and taught many hundreds of years before any Masonry existed which can truly be called by that name. If this is distasteful to those good brethren who like to believe that King Solomon was Grand Master of a Grand Lodge, devised the system and perhaps wrote the ritual, one must refute them with their own chronology, for both the Holy Saints John & John the Baptist lived long "after" the wise King wrought his "famous fabric."

The two perpendicular parallel lines are sometimes thought to have been added to the symbol of the point within a circle as a sort of diagram or typification of a Lodge at its most solemn moment, the point being the brother at the Altar, the circle the Holy of Holies, and the two lines the brethren waiting to help bring the initiate to light. But it is obviously a mere play of fancy; the two lines against the circle with the point date back to an era before Solomon. On early Egyptian monuments may be found the Alpha and Omega, or symbol of God, in the center of a circle embordered by two upright serpents, representing the Power and the Wisdom of the Creator.

Mackey reads into the symbol an analogy to the Lodge by observing that as the Master and Wardens represent the sun in three positions in the Lodge, and as the Lodge is a symbol of the world (or universe) the circle can be considered as representing the Lodge, the point the sun at meridian, and the two lines, the Wardens or sun at rising and at setting.

This also seems to many students to be a mere coincidental reading. That derivation of the symbol which best satisfied the mind as to logic and appropriateness, students found in the operative craft. Here is more to encourage than in all the researches into ancient religions and the symbolism of men long forgotten. Fully to understand just how the point within a circle came into Speculative Masonry by way of Operative Craftsmanship, it is necessary to have some mental picture of the times in which the Craftsmen of the early middle ages lived and wrought. The vast majority of them had no education, as we understand the word. They could neither read nor write - unimportant matters to most, first because there were no books to read, second because there was nothing which they needed to write! Skilled craftsmen they were, through long apprenticeship and careful teaching in the art of cutting and setting stone, but except for manual skill and cunning artifice founded on generations of experience, they were without learning.

This was not true of the leaders - or, as we would call them - the Masters. The great Cathedrals of Europe were not planned and overseen by ignorance. There, indeed, knowledge was power, as it is now, and the architects, the overseer, the practical builders, those who laid out the designs and planned the cutting and the placing of the stones - these were learned in all that pertained to their craft. Doubtless many of them had knowledge of practical and perhaps of theoretical mathematics. Certain parts of this theoretical knowledge became diffused from the Master Builders through the several grades of superintendents, architects, overseer and foreman in charge of any section of the work. With hundreds if not thousands of men working on a great structure, some sort of organization must have been as essential then as now. And equally essential would be the overseeing of the tools. Good work cannot be done with faulty instruments.

A square and upright building cannot be erected with a faulty square, level or plumb! The tools used by the



cathedral builders must have been very much what ours are today; they had gavel, mallet, setting maul and hammer; they had chisel and trowel as we have. And of course, they had plumb, square, level and twenty-four inch gauge to "measure and lay out their work." The square, the level and the plumb were made of wood - wood, cord, and weight for the plumb and level; wood alone for the square. Wood wears when used against stone. Wood warps when exposed to water or damp air. The metal used to fasten the two arms of the square together would rust and perhaps bend or break. Naturally, the squares would not indefinitely stay square. Squares had constantly to be checked for the right-angledness.

Some standard had to be adopted by which a square could be compared, so that, when Operative Masons' squares were tried by it they would not "materially err." The importance of the perfect right angle in the square by which stones were shaped can hardly be over estimated. Operative Masonry in the Cathedral building days was largely a matter of cut and try, of individual workmen, or careful craftsmanship. Quality production, micrometer measurement, interchangeability of parts were words which had not yet been coined; ideas for which they stand had not even been invented. All the more necessary, then, that the foundation on which all the work was done should be as perfect as the Masters knew how to make it.

Cathedral builders erected their temples for all time - how well they built, a hundred glorious structures in the Old World testify. They built well because they knew how to check and try their squares! Today any school boy knows the simple "secret of the square" which was then the closely guarded wisdom of the Masters alone; today any school boy can explain the steam engine which was a wonder two hundred years ago, and make and use a wireless which was a miracle scarce ten years gone by. Let us not wonder that our ancient Operative brethren thought their secret of a square so valuable; let us rather wonder that in time in which the vast majority of men were ignorant of mathematics, so many must have known and appreciated this simple, this marvelous, geometrical secret.

Lay out a circle - any size - on a piece of paper. With a straight edge draw a line across through its center. Put a dot on the circle, anywhere. Connect that dot with the line at both points where it crosses the circle. Results - a perfect right triangle. Draw the circle of whatever size you will; place a dot on the circumference where you will, it makes no difference. So be it. So be it the lines from the dot meet the horizontal line crossing the circle through its center and they will form a right angle. This was the Operative Mason's secret - knowing how "to try his square." It was by this means that he tested the working tools of the Fellows of the Craft; he did so often enough, and it was impossible either for their tools or their work "to materially err." From this, also, comes the ritual used in the lodges of our English brethren, where they "open on the center."

Alas, we have dropped the quaint old words they use, and American Lodges know the "center" only as the point within a circle. The original line across the center has been shifted to the side and became the "two perpendicular parallel lines" of Egypt and India and our admonitions are no longer what they must have once been; . . . "while a mason circumscribes his "square" within these points, it is impossible that "it" should materially err."

Today we only have our Speculative meaning; we circumscribe our desires and our passions within the circle and the lines touching on the Holy Scriptures. For Speculative Masons who use squares only in the symbolic sense such an admonition is of far greater use than would be the secret of the square as was known to our ancient brethren. But - how much greater becomes the meaning of the symbol when we see it as a direct descent from an Operative practice! Our ancient brethren used the point within a circle as a test for the rectitude of the tools by which they squared their work and built their temporal buildings. In the Speculative sense, we used it as a test for the rectitude of our intentions and our conduct, by which we square our actions with the square of virtue. They erected Cathedrals - we build the "House Not Made With Hands." Their point within a circle was Operative - ours is Speculative! But through the two - point in a circle on the ground by which an Operative Master secretly tested the square of his fellows - point within a circle as a symbol by which each of us may test, secretly, the square of his virtue by which he erects an Inner Temple to the Most

High - both are Masonic, both are beautiful. The one we know is far more lovely that it is a direct descendant of an Operative practice the use of which produced the good work, true work, square work of the Master Masons of the days that come not back. Pass it not lightly. Regard it with the reverence it deserves, for surely it is one of the greatest teachings of Masonry, concealed within a symbol which is plain for any man to read, so be it he has Masonry in his heart."

*** **

Thus, we have cause to wonder if our Druid Sigil may or may not have been adapted from an earlier Masonic meaning. Although the Druid Sigil was never assigned any explicit meaning, many have personally attributed different meanings to it. You may read some of their thoughts at <http://www.rdna.info/sigil.html> I leave it up to you to decide whether the connection exists and, if so, what to make of it.

Mason Links:

http://www.rdna.info/lodge34/torrione_ldg.symbol.html A little more on the circle with two lines.
<http://www.freemasons-freemasonry.com/claudy1.html> Discusses the book on the top graphic.



Doctor Druid

A recent entry in the Memepool.com site has a link to super heroes and their religions. In looking through the list I wanted to find one that practiced druidism. I don't think I could have found a better example than...Doctor Druid!

<http://www.marveldirectory.com/individuals/d/drdruid.htm>



Real Name: Anthony Druid
Occupation: Psychiatrist, occult expert
Legal Status: Citizen of the United States with no criminal record
Former Aliases: None (Note: His name has erroneously been reported as "Dr. Droom.")
Marital Status: Single
Known Relatives: Amergin (10th Century ancestor)
Group Affiliation: None
Base of Operations: Mobile
First Modern Appearance: WEIRD WONDER TALES # 19

History: Anthony Druid got his medical degree from Harvard, then went on to study psychiatry. He retired from his psychiatric practice after several years to devote more time to his growing interest in the occult. He supported himself by writing popular books on psychology and related matters and by lecturing. In the midst of his research for a second book on the occult, Druid was summoned by an ailing Tibetan lama apparently in need of medical aid. The lama put Druid through a series of bizarre mystic and spiritual tests to ascertain Druid's worthiness. Finding him worthy, the dying lama opened Druid's mind to its hidden powers and taught him the mastery of certain mystic arts. He has thus become a practitioner of the occult arts.

Druid had remained in seclusion for several years, investigating occult matters personally and in secret. At

one point, he teamed up with other clandestine "monster-hunters", including Bloodstone and the Eternal Makkari, in stopping a threat from the Deviants. Soon, the Fantastic Four appeared, ushering in Earth's Age of Marvels, and later, Druid would find himself aiding the hero team Avengers against the Celtic monsters known as the Fomor.

Doctor Druid was instrumental in freeing Avengers Mansion from its occupation by the fourth Masters of Evil, and he applied successfully for Avengers membership shortly thereafter. Not long after joining, Druid fell under the mental control of Ravonna (then called Nebula, later Terminatrix), who used Druid's mental powers to manipulate the Avengers into aiding her search for an ultimate weapon. Druid manipulated the other Avengers into electing him chairman to this end, but the Avengers soon discovered the plotters and opposed them in a conflict that ended with Druid and Ravonna being lost in the time stream.

Druid eventually escaped, free of Ravonna's influence, rejuvenated into a younger version of himself, and with a renewed purpose. He renewed his association with the Avengers as an occasional inactive reservist in hopes of mending fences with the group. For a time, he led the occult adventurers called the Shock Troop and later served with the Secret Defenders as the team's puppet leader under the auspices of Doctor Strange.

Recently, he embarked on an obsessive quest to augment his magical powers, one which eventually led to his death at the hands of his then-lover, the villainous Nekra.

Height: 6 ft. 5 in.

Weight: 310 lbs.

Eyes: Green

Hair: Slack

Strength Level: Doctor Druid possesses the normal human strength of a man of his age, height, and build who engages in intensive regular exercise.

Known Superhuman Powers: Doctor Druid is a master of certain special disciplines of the mystical arts. His abilities are derived from two major sources: personal powers of the body and mind developed under the tutelage of the Tibetan lama, and the employment of the arcane lore of his Celtic forefathers. Because he does not manipulate ambient and extradimensional magical energy, Druid cannot be considered a sorcerer. His use of ritualistic Celtic Earth magic does qualify him as a mystic, however.

Doctor Druid possesses a number of yogic physical powers. He has control over the involuntary functions of his body, such as his heartbeat, respiration, bleeding, and reaction to pain. He has also developed certain mental powers generally classified as psionic (utilizing an unknown form of energy generated by the mind). Druid has great telepathic capacity, enabling him to broadcast and receive thoughts. He is able to scan virtually any mind or project his thoughts to anyone on Earth, provided he knows where to reach the mind he seeks. He also possesses the ability to mesmerize people to his will, controlling what they see, hear, or do. This mental domination is only possible over those minds who are less adept than his own. His control over a person (or persons) persists until such time as the subject completes the task he or she was given, until Druid willfully releases him or her, or until the effect of the hypnosis loses its potency (generally a matter of hours for most minds). By means of hypnosis, Druid is able to achieve a number of illusory effects: invisibility, power-bolts, transformation, sudden materialization, etc. He also has certain psychokinetic powers, enabling him to levitate objects at will. The maximum weight he can lift with his mind is equivalent to the weight he can lift with his body, approximately 300 pounds. He can even levitate himself off the ground while in meditation, but he does not have sufficient skill to use this levitation to fly to any real extent.

Possessing the racial memories of his Celtic ancestors, Doctor Druid employs the knowledge and skills of the ancient Druids after whom he was named. These skills are those of the natural or earth variety, employing candles, potions, mystic symbols, chants, runes, and other elaborate preparations. By such rituals, Druid is able to accomplish any number of specific magical feats, although the lengthy preparations required generally prohibit their more frequent use. Earth magic is designed to tap the inherent mystical energy in

natural objects and materials, and is not as efficient as the tapping of the ambient mystical energy in the environment as a whole.

Druid's other ancestrally derived knowledge is that of astrology. By a mystic awareness of the stars' and planets' positions, Druid has limited precognitive insights as well as a sensitivity to the balance of mystic forces. He can sense the presence of recent use of all forms of magic (even those he cannot employ) and trace them to their source.

Limitations: Druid's Druidic powers have a special vulnerability to iron, as did that of his ancestors. Iron tends to act as a "lightning rod" for the magical forces he employs, sometimes disrupting its effects.



Druidical Treasure

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

Fiction written by B. N. Tavern
For the Public Domain, 2004 CE

Part Eight of Eight The FINAL Episode

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

As you have read, Matt & Sean learned in the winter about a treasure hidden at their very own Carleton College, and followed the clues written on the back of the Druid's constitution. Their adventures led them to the mysterious frosty hilly St. Olaf campus to the fiery depths of a prairie fighter, through various buildings and unfrequented nooks of the forest; each location leading them to a new danger by an ingenious puzzle. Matt found love and wisdom, Sean found important lessons. Now with spring turning to summer, they are faced with the last puzzles to solve, to get the fortune they have earned, and to secure their funding for their senior year at Carleton.

The previous seven episodes can be read in their illustrated entirety at <http://www.rdna.info/treasure.html> or in earlier issues of the Missal-Any.

Chapter Twenty-Nine: The Stalking

A week after their harrowing escape from the woods of St. Olaf, Sean burst into Matt's room, yelling,

"Quick! Grab your jacket and come with me!"

Matt ignored him, pointedly hunkering over a large pile of books and note cards on his desk, "Ahhh Sean, I have a paper to write for finals!" bawled Sean in the late May heat.

Sean barked, "If we don't find that treasure soon, that will be the final paper you ever write, cricket boy!"

Matt sighed, and closed the book he was reading, "Well, okay, Sean. But guess what? I made a new cloak!" He held it up in his left hand, and then the other arm popped up with another cloak draped on it too.



"And what's that?" Sean said dubiously.

"That's your cloak!" beamed Matt.

"I don't need a cloak."

"Sure you do, what kind of Druid doesn't have a cloak? You've seen how useful they are." Sean didn't have a good reply and took the dark blue cloak. Matt continued, "See a cloak is a lot like the Druid who wears it. For me, it's a rakish mantle that I use to make little flourishes, and it's a portable blanket for a sylvan night rendezvous. For you, well, it'll be a symbol of being apart from society, a shield, and a way to convey how moody and pretentious you are. Some girls like that too." He clucked suggestively.

Sean was fidgeting as Matt put away his books. "So you'll be an Archdruid next year, Matt?"

"No, Iain's around for two more years, so I'll just help out during my senior year. He who leads, must also serve, and I like doing back-up."

"Who's in charge then?"



"No one's in charge, really, it's a big happy mess. You never know what's going to happen in the group, good or bad, it makes it interesting, you know, 'like a box of chocolates.'"

"Yeah, whatever. Let's get going."

Matt followed behind, and they ended up at the grocery store, Matt trailing Sean as he endlessly pushed a cart around the store, humming to himself, conspicuously trying not to look conspicuous.

Matt couldn't take it any longer after traversing the pasta aisle for the eighth time, "Sean, what are we doing in the supermarket? It's been three hours. Those employees are beginning to stare at us." Matt looked over his shoulder down the cereal aisle, at a few concerned-looking cashiers jockeying for a spot to spy on them. Sean nonchalantly pulled another box of cereal off the shelf and began reading the entire list of ingredients with pronounced interest.

Quietly, Sean murmured out of the side of his mouth, spy-style, "Waiting for proof. He'll be here in a few moments, every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon," he held up a finger. "Shh! Here he comes, look casual."

A middle-aged man with red hair, of medium build, came down the aisle with a basket on one arm, pulled a box of cereal off the shelf and went straight to the checkout, with a lilt in his steps. Sean and Matt walked

behind him for a little and then left the supermarket, Sean dropped a handful of change on the pavement as a ruse, and crouched behind a parked car, picking up the coins, while looking about.

The man came out and crossed the parking lot crossed the road and went into a tailor's store and turned the sign over to "CLOSED" and in a few moments exited and locked the door, heading towards the Carleton campus. Matt impatiently whispered to Sean, "When are you going to explain all of this?"

"Come on, Matt, if I'm right, I think I know where he's going to go. Don't get too close, give him a block or two." The man struck an erratic path amidst the campus buildings, then stepped into a music building and Sean waited outside for twenty minutes, while Matt twitched. Another man came out, dressed in a tweed jacket with a briar pipe clenched in his teeth, also bearing a grocery sack of a different color, but similar contents, his hair color different, brown now, ruddier complexion, and his nose was bigger. Smiling pleasantly and whistling a little tune, he wove an exotic path around sculpture, through hedges and cutting through buildings, descended the hill past Lyman Lakes, and walked up the highway towards the Lower Arb, crossed the road near the water tower and into the trees. Sean and Matt sprinted behind and caught up in time to see him enter the little white house by the dirt path, and flip on a light switch inside.



Sean was quite pleased, and sat down by the side of road watching Lyman Creek drain into the Cannon River, with a sly grin on his face. "I knew it, Matt, I knew it!"

Matt was pretty disgusted, "Explain it all now, already."

"That's our man," Sean stated firmly.

"No, it's not, it's a different man. What are you talking about?" Matt complained at the seeming illogic, and Sean's intensity frightened him. The look on Sean's face was like an addict seeing a pile of unattended drugs on the street corner.

"Okay," Sean excitedly rambled, "I'll show it to you in steps. First the beginning verse of the master riddle:"



To claim the treasure you must surmount many fears
For great it has grown over four hundred years.
Mending the souls from the journeys of sages
Rich, but cursed, is the wealth from his wages.

Grinning, he continued, "And there is the last verse of the main riddle, right?"

Finally you know to whom you must meet
Stare fast at him or he will certainly cheat.
His journey is endless, but no longer will roam
Not all that come here will return to their home.



Matt still had a blank visage.

Whipping out his handy PDA, Sean read out a file, "Then there is the last clue that we found under the minister's memorial stone at St. Olaf;"

To catch the keeper, know ye thy plants and nations
With quick words you'll stop his sly incantations.
So seek he who resides at the end of the speckled span.
Bring the four neighbour's herbs to bind the flight of Man



"So, do you get it yet?" Sean said, knowing the answer, feeling it was as obvious to the world. His hands were propped on his hips and his jaw stuck out with pride,

"No, not at all. What am I looking for?" Matt said straight-faced, and Sean's composure collapsed, like a leaking balloon.

Sean sighed, "Okay, you've been busy for two weeks, your grades, making up with Dylan and all, but I've thought this through really carefully... and I hope you're ready for the answer.." Sean said a bit obsessively, his hands nervously wringing at what he was going to say, Matt looked up at him a bit worried, Sean leadingly inquired, "If you walk on a long journey, what do you get?"



"Tired?"

"Worn-out shoes. The soles of the shoes need to be mended, and this is a city with two colleges, full of students who need shoe repair. That man works in a tailor shop, and does saddlery and shoe repair on the side."

"Yeah, but that's not the man who went in the house."

"Yes, it is. He just changed his appearance."

"But who is he, some kind of ex-spy?"

"Think, Matt. Who is the only man who is mentioned in connection with the Irish incantations in the Druid Chronicles?" Sean asked in a leading way.

Matt's eyes sparkled a little, "John Messenger, the assistant professor of sociology, who had been studying ancient folk customs of the Aran Isles in the west of Ireland. He was the advisor for the early Druids on campus, and taught the three ancient Incantations of Ireland from some old folk stories that they used in the liturgy. He taught only for a trimester c"

Sean grinned, "But the records never said he actually LEFT, does it now?"

Matt was excited, but protesting, "Well, no, but that's just assumed... What do you mean? Of course he did, there is no such professor here now."

"Not under that name," Sean examined his cuticles, "And perhaps he spends his time on the side doing shoe repair?"

"Why would he do that?"

"Force of habit, I think he's been doing it for centuries. Good money in that trade, you know."

Matt looked at him warily, and waved his hand in front of Sean's eyes to check if he was awake, "I don't believe you know what you just said. Are you okay, Sean, are you all right in there? Did something possess your mind?"

Sean brushed off Matt's hand, "Look at the clues, damn it, the riddle implies he's really, really old; and what do you think the speckled span is?"

"Well speckled means colorful, like a salmon's flanks," Matt trailed off as Sean spun his hands to encourage him to move forward, "spans are bridges, colored bridges, rainbows," Sean smiled motioning for Matt to continue. Matt furrowed his brows trying to follow the thread of reasoning, "rainbows, cobblers, old guys, incantations, c" Matt gasped and looked up with alarm. "You don't mean he's a...."

Sean full of self-assurance, "Yep, John Messenger was/is actually a leprechaun."

Matt burst out guffawing next to Sean, rolled once or twice on the grass, then sat up, eyes streaming with tears.



"Quiet, man! You don't believe me?" Sean asked, a bit taken aback, but straight-faced.

Wiping the tears away with his sweaty forearm, Matt chortled, "No, I believe you, it just sounds funny coming from you. Trust me, anyone who didn't know you better, and been through all these strange events, would think you're a looney." Sean wasn't sure that was a compliment. "Okay, Sean, let's assume he's a five-foot tall leprechaun, just for argument's sake." Another giggle. "How do we confront him and get the pot of gold, eh?"



"We need leprechaun bait, you saw his grocery bag: a bottle of whiskey, butter, bacon and Lucky Charms cereal, the average unhealthy Celtic diet. The clue implies that we need to gather some plants from his neighbors..."

Matt slapped him jovially on Sean's narrow shoulders, "But Sean, he lives in a house, far away from the rest of the campus, in the middle of the Lower Arboretum. He has no neighbors, unless you are talking about Mr. Deer and Mrs. Owl."

"Yes, you're right, that's a big problem." Sean murmured, kicking the dirt with the toe of his shoe. Matt looked at Sean's notepad again.

"Sean, why is 'Man' capitalized in the riddle?"

"Maybe he's a God? Do we refer to fairies with capital letters?" Sean asked.

"No we don't, we only do it for Deities and Proper Nouns," Matt replied, glad to have minored in English. "That might be significant; like people's names, days of the week, or countries! The verse says, Nations, Sean!" Matt clapped his hands, suddenly feeling very clever.

Sean looked nonplused, "So?"

"There are six or seven modern Celtic Nations: Ireland, Brittany, Wales, Cornwall, Scotland and the Isle of Man; and perhaps Galicia in northwestern Spain. The Isle of Man is in the upper Irish Sea, and used to speak a variant of Gaelic, and (in addition to the Vikings) Man has been conquered and ruled at various times by Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and England."



"But, England isn't a Celtic country," Sean chided him.

"But it used to be, and the verse just says, 'neighbour' not 'Celtic.' So each of these bordering lands has an emblematic plant don't they? Maybe he's a Manx leprechaun? I didn't see any tail on him, did you?"

"Leprechauns don't have tails, you silly idiot," Sean chided, his eyes glowed though, "Yes, so I've got a plan to catch him tomorrow afternoon as he comes home, but we'll have to be real careful, leprechauns can be very dangerous when cornered, and we're going to need to bring a few frogs."

Chapter Thirty: The Confrontation

The next afternoon, the man came down the same road again, and was crossing the small lawn to his house, when he noticed a large picnic blanket under a tall elder tree, with a bottle of Glenfiddich, a box of Keebler Cookies and a few scones. The man looked furtively over his shoulder, rubbed his hands greedily and stepped on to the blanket and picked up the bottle, chuckling.



A voice cried out from the shrubs, "NOW!" and the blanket engulfed the man and he shot off the ground as Matt and Sean ran out of the bushes, tugging the rope behind them through a series of elaborate pulleys. Like a badger in a bag, the man kicked and squirmed for a minute, then stopped moving, swaying lightly back and forth. Matt secured the rope to a tree, and walked over to the bundle and tapped it.

From inside, a surprisingly calm voice said, "Okay. What are you doing?"

Sean leaned over and addressed him quickly, "Cis lie grada filed?"

The man in the bag spit back by rote, "A secht, ollam, an ruth, cli, cano... Hey! Wait a minute!" He caught himself, a bit too late.

Sean smugly continued, "I thought so. We're here to collect the treasure, Mr. Messenger. "

"Messenger?... I'm not.. Oh dear, you do know... don't you?"

"Uh, huh. Not many people are that conversant in Old Irish and Brehon law."

"You've must have had some great spiritual insights along the way. I don't suppose you'd accept that 'the search is its own reward'? Can we leave it at that and skip the money part?" Messenger asked hopefully.

"Nope. Religion may help you to wait, but it doesn't put food on the plate." Sean snapped.

"Let me down will you, I have a bad back." Messenger moaned a little. Sean nodded at Matt, his arms behind his back, "When did you figure it out?"

Sean began to loosen the rope and responded, "When 'Mary & Jesus' showed up on our last outing, I remembered that red-haired brat had a wee pipe sticking out his swaddling clothes. Most babies can't smoke or speak that well, so I remembered my childhood legends of Changelings being swapped for human babies. That and the clues made it all fit together."



The blanket relaxed and fell about the feet of Mr. Messenger, who stood up and dusted himself off. Sean pulled out a frog and pointed it at the leprechaun like he was holding a gun, since leprechauns can't vanish if they are watched.

Messenger saw the Frog, "Damn it, frogs don't blink, so you got me there. But frogs can't run." He stuck out his tongue, and turned to flee. Sean was ready with the other arm and threw a shotgun barrage of small tied cachet-bags at the running fellow. One hit him in the head, and he fell down, as if struck with a sack of hammers. He sat on the grass by the edge of the woods, rubbing his head, and shaking the other fist at him.

"Criminy, you got me good, you did, with the herbal bags, lads, so I can't flee anymore by the Rules of Engagement, but can you properly chant me to do your work with your poetic prowess? You only get one try." He crossed his arms.

Sean gestured at Matt who chanted forth dramatically waving his arms;

All your secrets to us you will leek.
Try a trick, and we'll clover you weak.
As the sun today a-rose, make no fuss.
Thistle teach you not to cross us.



He smirked, shook himself off, and laughed, "Well, that was clever for a young kid, not too good on the meter, but the rules of the Great Game require me to honor it, and you both are brothers of Fisher, aren't you both?" Matt and Sean nodded, watching him suspiciously. "So what do you want?"

"First, we want to know the whole story." Sean came over and squatted next to the sitting figure as some clouds passed by overhead on a rich blue sky.

"Pour me a cup of that Glenfiddich, and I'll tell you." Sean did so. "If you'll believe me, this is the story. Back in 1563, there I was minding me own business on the Isle of Man in a lovely field of heather, when an English sailor from Ramsay Port strolls up behind me and the bloody Sassanach pounds me on me tender noggin, and ties me up right brutally with a rosary. What could I do, but accede to his terrible demands? Well, Jebediah Fisher, aye, that was his name, pressed me into service as his valet for the rest of his life and that of his direct heirs, and that they be many, mind ye. I agreed and demanded payment in-kind for the treasure he'd ask of me, and he agreed. Short-term thinking foolish man, I found a loophole, and while he had 20 children at first, every generation, his direct heir had one less child, until we arrived at David Fisher, an only child, and he would have none. I thought that would be the end of the agreement, but Fisher created and adopted an enormous number of spiritual brothers and sisters (which while stretching the rules, still is legal, according to the Gnomes Legal Association) to continue the agreement, so I decided to settle down here in Northfield permanently as Fisher wished and await a worthy successor to ask for the treasure under the same



terms."

Matt noted, "You know Sean, this is strangely too easy, I guess the chase is better than catching the prize."

"Oh, laddie, that's because you haven't heard the terms, yet!" cackled Messenger, lighting up a pipe.

Sean asked, "And what are the terms?"

He smiled mischievously, "One year of your life in exchange for one year of my labor's profits." He blew a large puff of smoke in Sean's direction, to Sean's obvious discomfort.

Sean looked at him slyly with narrowed smarting eyes, "How much is a year's labor?"

Where do you get the money?"

"Oh, well, in mortal currency, in round numbers, oh, I gross about one-half million dollars, and I keep about \$100,000 in annual net profits. That's not counting my income of interest on money market accounts; and mind ye, compound interest is a powerful force when you can live 2700 years. And if you knew anything about leprechauns, me laddie, you'd know we make brogues for fairies and earth spirits, because they dance so much, they're always wearing them out, frolicsome beasties that they are." Messenger's chest puffed out with pride, and he pulled out a mirror to inspect a bruise on his forehead, "I also have a few patented designs with Nike, a good Pagan-named company, I thought. The American market, mortal and fairy, was wide open when I arrived here with Alexander Fisher in 1755, the New Land has indeed been good for this old fool. The workload is too much, so I even brought some Welsh cousins over to work for me, cheaper wages, mind you. Would be richer if not for the darn stock market crash of 1869 by those fools Gould and Fiske!..." Messenger trailed off into memory lane.



Matt inquired, "But wouldn't it be cheaper for the fairies to dance barefoot?"

He hushed Matt with a finger over his mouth, "Blimey, quiet man! Are you trying to ruin me business?" He turned and yelled over his shoulder towards the woods, "The woods are full of glass, old medical needles and dog poop! We WOULDN'T want to hurt our feet, would we?"

"How have you managed to bring so many relatives to this country, what about immigration and taxes?" Sean asked.

"Come on, how hard to you think it is for a leprechaun to get a Green Card, eh?" He smiled, "As for taxes, you learn a few tricks over the centuries, since fairies pay under the table, death and taxes are not certain for our kind."

"That contract seems fair and reasonable, but devilish," Matt chirped.



"Dang right it's reasonable, but it wasn't meant to be fair. Stealing and extortion are unsanctionable acts, even against leprechauns, and whoever benefits from such a bargain, deserves a remonstrance too. That's why I cursed the treasure thusly, I owe it to protect my fellow fairies, from encouraging looting rude humans." Looking pleased, Messenger continued "You see, well, it gets better. I get to pick which of your years to take, either from your youth or your old age, and I have a pretty good idea of how long each of you will live." Pointing at Sean, with a mischievous wink, "Now, I wouldn't be making too many withdrawals if I were you, me bucko."

Sean looked shocked at first, but relented, "It's true, most of my grand-parents died in their 50s." Sean sighed.

"What happens if you take one of my youth?" Matt asked.

"Then you lose all the memories, training and experiences of that year, from one birthday to the next. Part of your very identity would vanish like that!" Messenger snapped his fingers with a chuckle, "That's all you're left with as you age, you know, memories, and even those are often robbed from you weak mortals. It's not an easy choice, most folks when they learned the rules haven't collected even a penny. Actually, come to think of it, the only takers were the folks who smoked, because they don't seem to care much about dying early, I think. Fortunately, Leprechauns don't get cancer."

Matt murmured, "I'm not so sure that's a bad thing, I've got so many memories in my head, it'd be nice to clear some space for new stuff."

Sean's eyes narrowed, "You said, 'most folks,' do you mean we're not the first?"

Messenger laughed so hard his pipe fell out and bounced off the ground, "Ha ha ha! Oh you think too highly of yourselves, you do! Of course, you're not the first, these Carleton kids, and even one Ole, they are quite the smart crackers, they are! Under the terms of contract, I'm not allowed to reveal who they are, of course, and neither can they tell who I am, except under a mutually-agreed riddle, and each discoverer adds another verse and obstacle to the puzzle, at my expense, and the money can only be used by a legitimate heir, no sharing with strangers. You have to keep it in the family. The penalty for rule breaking of course is insanity and impotency." Messenger help out his cup for a refill of whiskey, which Matt obliged. "It's a dandy of a dilemma for you mortals, isn't it? When you are on your deathbed, most of you all would give the world for another day on this planet. Talk it over with yourself, I can wait."

Matt, stepped up without a pause. "I would like to trade five years, for money to share with my brother, Sean."

Sean shoved Matt and tried to dissuade Mr. Messenger, "Matt, what happened to that vaunted Druidical patience you told me about? Mr. Messenger, he doesn't mean it!"

Messenger downed another cup of whiskey, "Sorry, too late, those words are a binding contract. Matt, because your whiskey is good, and you put up with that rascal Sean, I've taken the compensatory years from your last five years of life, when you would be suffering anyway from dementia and long-term leukemia."

"How old will I be then?" Matt asked.

Messenger smiled, shook a finger and dismissed the question, "That would be telling, wouldn't it? You don't really want to know." He pulled out a small bag from his vest and handed it to Matt. "In fact, you'll probably want to forget about this whole treasure business. It's too tempting, and it's destroyed one man and a woman already. If you wish to forget, take a snort of this and the knowledge will be gone, not too much, it might be habit-forming. You should be receiving the cash in about a week, after I finish the currency exchange at the marketplace."



"Where'd you get that powder?" Matt asked.

Messenger smiled, "Let's say, I've taken a few classes in organic chemistry over the years here at Carleton. Besides, I have a bit of experience in, shall we say, faith-based chemistry. Quite useful you know."

"Nothing magical?" Sean asked. "You're not a fraud, masquerading as a fairy?"

"So you really believe I'm a leprechaun do you? Even in the twenty-first century? I guess the oldways aren't fully gone after all." He tapped his nose, "Why use magic when science is so easy now? Oh, and ibuprofen, that's my idea too. Speaking of which, maybe I should go to my medicine cabinet to get some after the rough treatment you gave me, it's like they always say, 'Punish the messenger for the bad news'." Messenger got up, "Now since Sean shouldn't ask for a withdrawal with his short life, I think our business is at an end today. I need to get inside and watch Shrek 2 tonight on cable. You have one week to consider another verse to lengthen the puzzle sequence, which I must agree with, then you are permitted one more visit in the future to ask for your last withdrawal." Hoisting the glass and returning it to Matt, he snatched the bottle and walked into the house, "Good evening folks, and Matt, say hello to my niece, she misses you." Then he walked inside and Sean and Matt returned to their dorms, oddly quiet.

Chapter Thirty-One: The After Math



Matt and Sean showed their idea to Messenger early next week, who agreed, and they picked up a bottle of Glenfiddich-colored ink and a golden quill from him, that they used to inscribe another verse on the back of the Carleton Constitution. The last day of classes arrived, and Sean and Matt resigned themselves to a long, lonely, hot stay on campus during the summer break. Sean and Matt had been checking their mailboxes three times a day for the promised check, even on Sunday. Craig and Alex, Sean's roommates had returned to Kansas for the summer. One day in his quiet dormitory, Sean was sitting in front of the powerful standing fan unit squeezed into the window, wondering what he was going to do this summer. At that time, Matt burst into the room waving an ordinary stamped envelope.

"It's here Sean, it's here! It's kind of thin, should I open it?" He held it up to the light. It shone with a halo in the overhead lighting, sparkling like a divine vision from Heaven. They looked dreamily upon it, thinking of their bright future.

A harsh Australian voice from the door behind him answered, "No, Sean, you should give the letter to me." They whirled about. Sarah, the campus intrepid reporter, was standing there in a jogging suit, sweating profusely, with a large grin on her face, and, yes, a touch of lively madness in her eyes.

"What are you talking about?" Sean asked, snapping the envelope out of Matt's hands and holding it tightly, with his arms defiantly crossed over his chest.

Sarah slinked into the room, "I've been following you two for months, I saw you assault the man in Olin

House by the woods, and heard something about a million dollars that you blackmailed from him, and something about calling him a fairy."

"Even if that's true, why do you deserve it, give me a good reason." Sean protested. "Actually, I was kind of expecting good ol' Jared to pop up yet again and cause trouble at this point."

"Well you go me to worry about now. Why should you two deserve it? It looks like you beat it out of that poor man by force."

Sean didn't have a quick come-back. Matt stepped in, "Well, Sean, she's got a point. It's difficult to justify the acquisition of huge amounts of money through extortion by any code of ethics, but you'd know more about that me...."

Sarah interrupted him, "Shut up. Besides, I have 10 good reasons, in here." Sarah pulled a semi-automatic pistol from her jacket, with a cold silencer on the end of it; it's solitary eye peering menacingly at them.



Sean and Matt stood back in shock and moved towards the corner. Matt's voice quivered a little, "Where did you get that?"

"Hello, this is America, mate, wise up," she said, keeping the barrel aimed at the two, "every girl is packing a piece out here in the Midwest, don't you know. Cowgirl style." With a grin she continued, "And I've been practicing in the woods for weeks with it on a stump, and I'm getting pretty good at point-blank range." She cocked it, slipping off the safety lock. "I realized that with all the dangers you've experienced with Denmad both here and at Olaf, to keep going, you had to be getting close to something quite valuable!"

"How did you know where we went?" Matt asked.

"You could say, Jared and I have a close working relationship."

"So that's how Denmad was always able to find us," Sean muttered, "But why would you betray a fellow Carl?"

"Let's just say I have... older loyalties," she said, "I'm not really Sarah Peterson from Australia."

"You don't mean..." said Matt in disbelief.

"Ja, you betcha! I'm actually, Sarah Pedersen, a transfer student from St. Olaf!" She followed with her best imitation of an evil chuckle. "I was sent to Carleton to keep an eye on the Druids and other deviant groups on this campus for Denmad, to hate them better, just in case." She readjusted her position and comfortably locked onto their location. "Now you're going to be good boys, don't you know, and hand me that letter, and give me that bag of powder I saw him give you. What does it do?"

Sean stepped forward, handing her the letter. "Here's the letter, but Matt can't give you that powder, it gives eternal youth, and ... I want it." Matt looked like he was going to correct Sean, but Sean stomped on his foot. Sean painfully smiled.



"Then I want it too!" She chuckled again, then got serious, "Hey... maybe this is some sort of a trick. I want Matt to take a snort of it first, then if he lives, I'm going to kill you both."

"You can't kill us, we're your biggest FANS," Sean said pointedly to Matt with a hand drawn across his chest. Matt stared for a moment, got the idea, then fell in step, pulled the bag out of his pocket, loosened the strings, and slowly sidestepped in front of the window.

Sarah's eyes were glazed with dreams of ambition, "If I live forever, I'll get new readers, own my own newspaper, I'll be rich, famous and forever young! Now snort it!" Sarah growled, her face twisted, mostly unflatteringly.

"Okay." Matt turned the bag upside down and the green powder fell into the mighty breeze coming from the fan blades, filling the air with an instant sand storm. Matt and Sean held their breath on cue, and Sarah fired twice in a panic amidst the green haze, Sean shoved Matt out of the line of fire, whipping the cloak off the chair, and covering their heads and obscuring their position. Sarah dizzily collapsed against the other wall, soon was staring at the gun in her hand in utter puzzlement. A few seconds passed, and a nearly blue-faced Matt peeked out of the cloak, the dust had blown out of the room into the hallway, and he took a big breath of welcome air.



Sarah had a blank look on her face, "Hey guys? What am I doing with a gun in your room?" Sarah asked.

Matt ad-libbed quickly, "Um, Sarah, you were going to a pistol practice downtown, and... it accidentally fired when you were showing it to us." Sarah looked convinced, and dropped the pistol.

"Oh, I'm terribly sorry, are you guys okay?" she asked with genuine concern.

"I'm okay," Matt murmured.

"No you're not you're bleeding from your chest!"

"Just a light flesh wound, something must have slowed the bullet..... Sean, how... oh my God, are you all right?"

Sean was on the ground stoically crying quietly to himself with blood streaming from his left shoulder. "Why is it always the left shoulder, huh?" he gasped reflexively. "And I'm a lefty, damn it!" It appeared that the bullet had gone clean through Sean before lodging in Matt's chest.

"Ah, Sean!" Matt murmured and pressed a nearby T-shirt over the wound. "It doesn't look too bad."

"Well it sure don't feel good."



"Okay. Let's get you to the hospital." Matt hefted him up wincing at the strain on himself, "Are you gaining weight?"

Sarah, still a bit confused, "You okay? Do you want me to call for an ambulance and stretcher? You shouldn't stress your chest wound, he's too heavy!" Sarah insisted.

Matt smiled, staggering a little himself, cradling the woozy man in his trembling arms, their blood running together, "It's alright, he's not heavy, he's my brother."

As Matt strode past her, Sarah held out the envelope, "Uh, this has your name on it, I think it's yours." Sean woke up briefly, snagged it from her hand and stuffed it in a pocket, then began to black out again. Sarah looked about nervously, swinging her fists together, "Um, I'll wait here, for, um, the police, ja, I guess I'll have to fill a report or something. 'Pulling a Cheny' and shooting people in America isn't such a big problem, right?"

His eyes unfocused, Sean hoarsely whispered, "Matt,.... thank you," and went unconscious, and his body loosened.

Tears in his eyes, Matt gulped, "No, Sean, thank you. Hold on buddy!" He ran as fast as he could for the parking lot outside.

Chapter Thirty-Two: Recovery

They made it to the hospital with plenty of time, and with Sean's lung reinflated, the surgery was a qualified success. Matt visited his room later that evening and sat by Sean's bedside, waiting for the anesthesia to wear off. People look different when they are sleeping, more natural and unaffected. Sean's breathing was regular and for a while it was for Matt easy to forget Sean's cynicism and sarcasm, and realize he was just a simple person caught in a complex world. Eventually, Sean's eyes flitted, and over a period of a few minutes, he gradually clambered out of the fog of the anesthesia and realized where he was.



"Oh, shit, where am I?"

"ICU, Sean." Matt whispered, his face looming over Sean's prone form.

"Yeah, I see you too, Matt, but is this a hospital?" Sean mumbled, his lips not working properly, gazing around the brilliantly white room, everything still foggy, "Or is it....?"

"No we're not in Heaven," Matt chided, "unless you believe that the Kingdom of God is co-existent and present in the material world, in which case, you'd be right."

"Same old Matt," Sean tried to move and yelped, "Can't be Heaven, because I'm in a Hell of a lot of pain."

"Bullet went right through you, Sean, it lodged in my sternum. You probably saved my life. Thank you."



Sean smiled, and noticed his right arm was in a sling, "I suppose I had my ulterior motives, there, but you're welcome. Good thing finals are over, or I'd never be able to write my exams."

Matt dropped something into Sean's hand, a deformed bullet welded lightly onto a simple little silver chain.

Sean marveled at the twisted, shapeless piece of metal, and mused, "Amazing how such a small thing can cause such a big pain."

"Oh, Sean, I've got good news," Matt pulled out a memo, "while you were in surgery, I was talking to the investigating officers who were booking Sarah, and I scored two paid internships with Northfield's police department for the summer. Just making coffee and running errands, but it'll be good for our resumes, I think."

Sean nodded, then remembered with a jerky sit up, "But what about the check? Did it clear? How much was in it?"

"A few million, plus change. Sean, you're a rich man. How does it feel?"

"Pretty damn good!"

Matt smiled mischievously, "Oh, by the way. You also are going to owe the IRS \$324,532.65 in gift taxes in a few weeks. Do you think you can fit all those numbers onto one check?"



"Damn! I need bigger checks!"

"And your father called. He was pretty upset about what happened to you, and should be here later this evening on a flight from Detroit." Matt held up a flight schedule print-out.

Sean sighed and rolled his head on the pillow towards the window. "I have much to talk with him, about."

"I'm sure you do, Sean."

"Matt?"

"Yeah, Sean?"



Sean looked a bit embarrassed, "It sounds a bit hokey, but after all these dangers, thrills, and searching, the real treasure we've found is our friendship, courage to think for ourselves and a newly appreciated sense of honor. I didn't want you to die because of the money. I needed to say that."

Matt beamed at him, and drifted off into a soliloquy, "Yeah, I guess so, I've gained a lot from all those initiations in the Masons, Druids, even those loony Denmads. Those experiences, good and bad, are an integral part of me now, although none of them are sufficient on their own. I have more paths to travel and explore in my future, I'm sure. I hope my fellow travelers prove to be as trusty as you, Sean."

"Matt..." Sean's eyes unfocused a little trying to follow all that deep stuff, "I'm really tired."

"Yeah. Don't sleep, but rest up, I've got a pizza coming in just a few minutes, double-pepperoni, with all the fixings to celebrate, and we have to begin planning our next adventure. There's an interesting police case that happened this summer, that we might be able to help them with..."

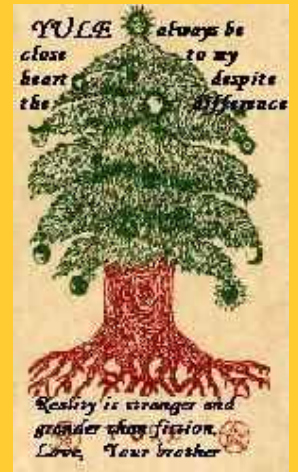
Epilogue

Sean didn't press charges on Sarah, who soon went to Africa to work on a mission, and disappeared suddenly in a revolution, and wasn't heard from again. Jared apparently caught a chill from his forced baptism, developed pneumonia, tried a few faith cures, and died soon thereafter, possibly from apoplexy, a raving madman.

The check in the envelope, in the form of an inheritance from a relative of Messenger, was sufficient to cover their tuition well throughout their remaining undergraduate years, through graduate school and even for a Ph.D. Matt's children with Dylan, were indeed quite unusual, disappearing for months at a time with their red-haired great-uncle.

The two men never did go back for another withdrawal, but there were other intriguing events in their senior year, before the responsibilities of the outside world would pull them apart on different tracks in different parts of the world.

However, even until their 50s, when Sean passed on, they still exchanged Yule-time cards to keep track of each other's fate, and there was always a new fairy tale enclosed in each one, but their closing message was always the same, "Yule always be close to my heart, despite the distance. Reality is stranger and grander than fiction. Love, Your Brother."



THE END

Thank you for reading this long and winding story, putting up with the puns, and constant puzzles and mini-lectures on Druidical history.



Bronze Age Sky Disc Deciphered



A group of German scientists has deciphered the meaning of one of the most spectacular archeological discoveries in recent years: The mystery-shrouded sky disc of Nebra was used as an advanced astronomical clock.

The purpose of the 3,600 year-old sky disc of Nebra, which caused a world-wide sensation when it was brought to the attention of the public in 2002, is no longer a matter of speculation.

A group of scholars who studied this archaeological gem has discovered evidence which suggests that the disc was used as a complex astronomical clock for the harmonization of solar and lunar calendars.

"This is a clear expansion of what we knew about the meaning and function of the sky disc," said archeologist Harald Meller.

A thirteenth month?

Unlike the solar calendar, which indicates the position of the earth as it revolves around the sun, the lunar calendar is based on the phases of the moon. A lunar year is eleven days shorter than the solar year because 12 synodic months, or 12 returns of the moon to the new phase, take only 354 days.

The sky disc of Nebra was used to determine if and when a thirteenth months she so-called intercalary months should be added to a lunar year to keep the lunar calendar in sync with the seasons.

"The functioning of this clock was probably known to a very small group of people," Meller said.

Bronze Age science

The 32-centimeter-wide (seven-inch) bronze disc with gold-leaf appliques representing the sun, the moon, and the stars is the oldest visual representation of the cosmos known to date. A cluster of seven dots has previously been interpreted as the Pleiades constellation as it appeared 3,600 years ago.

The explanation of the disc's purpose sheds new light on the astronomical knowledge and abilities of the Bronze Age people, who used a combination of solar and lunar calendars as important indicators for agricultural seasons and passage of time.

"The sensation lies in the fact that the Bronze Age people managed to harmonize the solar and lunar years. We never thought they would have managed that," Meller said.

According to astronomer Wolfhard Schlosser of the Ruhr University at Bochum, the Bronze Age sky gazers already knew what the Babylonians would describe only a thousand years later.

"Whether this was a local discovery, or whether the knowledge came from afar, is still not clear," Schlosser said.

From Saxony-Anhalt to Babylon

Ever since the disc was discovered, archaeologists and astronomers have been puzzled by the shape of the moon as it appears on the disc.

"I wanted to explain the thickness of the crescent on the sky disc of Nebra because it is not a new moon phase," said Hamburg astronomer Ralph Hansen.

In his quest to explain why the Nebra astronomers created a sky map with a four or five days old moon on it, Hansen consulted the "Mul-Apin" collection of Babylonian documents from the 7th and 6th centuries B.C.

These cuneiform writings represent, according to Hansen, a compendium of "astronomic knowledge from the earliest times." They also contain a calculation rule for the crescent that looks strikingly similar to the one from Nebra.

According to the ancient Babylonian rule, a thirteenth month should only be added to the lunar calendar only when one sees the constellation of the moon and the Pleiades exactly as they appear on the Nebra sky disc.

Knowledge comes and goes

The Bronze Age astronomers would hold the Nebra clock against the sky and observe the position of the celestial objects. The intercalary month was inserted when what they saw in the sky corresponded to the map on the disc they were holding in their hands. This happened every two to three years.

But the German researchers also discovered that in the 400 years that the disc was in use, its status had evolved. The perforations on the edge of the object as well as a ship that was later added to the map suggest that the knowledge about the lunar calendar's shortage of days was lost along the way.

"That means, that in the end the disk became a cult object," Meller said.

The disc was found in 1999 by two previously convicted treasure looters. It was seized by the authorities in 2002 along with other Bronze Age objects in a police operation in Switzerland.

Sources:

Deutsche Welle (27 February 2006), The Age (1 March 2006), The Times (2 march 2006)

<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,1915398,00.html>

<http://www.theage.com.au/news/world/sky-disc-revelation-shines-light-on-bronze-age/2006/02/28/1141095740221.html>

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,13509-2064962,00.html>



Walk in woods a religious experience: Practicing druid finds balance, harmony in nature

GRETCHEN MURRAY
Traverse City Record-Eagle
South Bend Tribume.com

March 18, 2006

WILLIAMSBURG, Mich. (AP) -- A walk in the woods is more than a relaxing escape for Jeffrey Hawkins.

It's a religious experience. There, among the oak and pine groves, he has found a path that leads to spiritual balance and harmony.

Hawkins, of Williamsburg, is a modern-day druid, one of a handful in the United States still following the ancient Celtic rites and rituals honoring the spirituality and life in nature.

Hawkins, 42, is a member of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids based in Sussex, England. It's one of only a few fellowships to offer formal training in ancient Celtic mythology and lore, Ogham (the Tree Alphabet form of writing) and other Celtic studies.

"I went as far as I could in other forms of spirituality and looked to go a step farther," Hawkins said. "I settled on OBOD because of the personal spiritual development it offered me." A longtime practitioner of nature-based religion, Hawkins recently immersed himself in a three-year study in Celtic mysticism that culminated in January with his consecration as a druid. He is now one of only 5,000 druids worldwide to achieve this highest level of mastery and be ordained within the religious tradition, and the only one in northern Michigan.

"I have gained a level of understanding of the metaphysical aspects of nature through my training, but I will

tell you, this is not about wizards and broomsticks. It's definitely not 'Harry Potter,'" said Hawkins, a former clinical psychologist from Massachusetts who works as a database administrator in Traverse City.

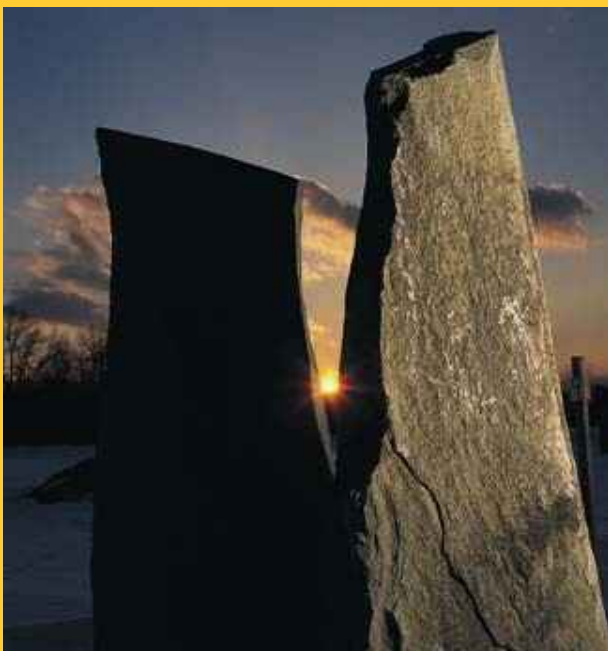
By completing three degrees or levels of training, Hawkins has gone from bard (which primarily focuses on the arts) to ovate (trained in the deeper mysteries of divination and healing) to druid, or teacher, and, as such, can mentor to other druids-in-training.

Far from being a secret society, the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids welcomes the curious to its Web site and is surprisingly ecumenical. Hawkins said that a conversion from one's own religion is not required to become a member.

"Druidism can stand on its own, but there are Christian druids, Muslim druids, Hindu druids -- there are no restrictions. If you believe your practice of spirituality is enhanced through druidry, you're welcome," he said. He has presented lectures at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Traverse City, where he is a member, although the church is not connected with the order.

Hawkins explained that the word druid comes from the ancient word for oak, the primary tree associated with druidry, and early rituals were conducted in groves. Even today, the druid calendar system, called a tree calendar, represents each month with a certain tree.

The practice also includes honoring the four directions and includes observances of solstices and equinoxes. Hawkins said their philosophy that regards trees, stones, springs, rivers, lakes and hills as sacred has a strong similarity to American Indian Shamanism.



Witness the Vernal Equinox at the UMass Sunwheel

**SUNRISE 5:45 a.m. and SUNSET 5:00 p.m.
MONDAY and TUESDAY
March 20 & 21, 2006**

Members of the University community and the general public are invited to the U.Mass. Sunwheel to witness the passing of the seasons with Dr. Judith Young of the U.Mass. Dept. of Astronomy for the upcoming Vernal Equinox, as we witness the rising and setting of the Sun over the tall standing stones in the Sunwheel. Visitors for the sunrise viewing should arrive at 5:45 a.m., and visitors for the sunset viewing should arrive at 5:00 p.m. The sunrise and sunset events will be held on both Monday and Tuesday, March 20 and 21, 2006. For those interested in learning about the sky, there will be a

presentation explaining the equinoxes and solstices, the cause of the seasons, the Sun's path in the sky, the phases of the Moon and the Moon's 18.6-year cycle, and the story of building the Sunwheel. Bring your

questions, your curiosity, and DRESS VERY WARMLY, including waterproof footwear. A \$3 donation is requested to help cover the cost of additional stonework for the Sunwheel; also, Sunwheel T-shirts and sweatshirts will be available for purchase.

The instant of equinox is 1:26 p.m. EST on March 20. On the equinox, any observer located on the Earth's equator will see the Sun pass directly overhead at local noon, and that person will cast no shadow at noon. For all observers on Earth (excluding the North and South poles), the Sun on the equinox is up for 12 hours and down for 12 hours, illuminating all latitudes. From the Sunwheel here in Amherst, we observe a very beautiful sight as the equinox Sun rises and sets through the stone portals in the East and the West.

The U.Mass Sunwheel is located south of Alumni Stadium, just off Rocky Hill Road. It can be easily reached from the center of Amherst, following Amity St. to the west, on the right hand side of the road about 1/4 mile after crossing University Drive. ALL VISITORS SHOULD WEAR WARM CLOTHING, SUITABLE FOR STANDING STILL ON FROZEN OR SOGGY GROUND. In the event of rain, the events will be cancelled, and visitors are encouraged to visit the Sunwheel on their own.

For more information, see <http://www.umass.edu/sunwheel>



DELL'ARTE IS COMING INTO SAN FRANCISCO WITH "SHADOW OF GIANTS"

One woman, one tree, one act of resistance. Shadow of Giants is about the struggle over one redwood tree. It is a struggle with international ramifications, a struggle that involves tree-sitters, ghosts, and mythology.

An athletic ensemble of five actors portray the ongoing conflict between environmentalists desperately fighting to preserve the last of an ancient forest, and the big timber companies who own them. It's a story of a divided community, greed, hope, and power, told through dynamic physical theatre.

At the Brava Theater Center in San Francisco

Friday, March 24 at 8PM - "Pay what you can"

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Call 415-869-5323 for tickets



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CINNÍTÉAR SEOMRAÍ SINGIL NÓ DÚBAILTE

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Application Deadline: 7 April 2006

Spríocdáta: 7 Aibreán 2006

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(with cheque payable to Harp of Tara, CCE) to:

Bob Mac Diarmid
202 Main Street,
Kingston, ON, K7K 5S3, Canada

NAME: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

Spelling of Name in Irish (for name tag):

Email: _____

Length of study in Irish:

No previous study __ less than 1 year __ no. of years __

Ability: nil __ odd words __

Can understand but can't converse __

Simple conversation __ moderate conversation __

Cainteoir líofa __

Are you currently attending classes: (Y/N) __

Teacher's name: _____

Workshop Saturday (check one): dancing __ singing __ Irish music __ Scots Gaelic __

Workshop Sunday (check one): dancing __ singing __ Irish music __ Scots Gaelic __

A complete application as a Word Document will be sent upon request.



Druid Workshops

Ellen Evert Hopman will be offering two workshops at Inspirit Common in May. To register for these events please call Inspirit Common at 413.585.1169.

* * * Who Were the Druids? * * *

Friday, May 19 : 7:30 - 10 pm

Saturday, May 20 : noon - 6pm

\$40

Our Friday evening lecture will explore the roots of Druidism, its origins in the ancient proto-Indo-European homeland of the Black Sea area, it's full blossoming in the Celtic cultures of Europe, it's demise and rebirth in the 17th century Romantic Celtic revival period of England and France, and it's establishment in the United States as a vibrant neo-Pagan religion of the present.

On Saturday we will continue our exploration of Druidism by performing a Druid ritual in the woods near the Quabbin reservoir. The rite will be out of doors. Please bring dried herbs to offer to trees, silver coins (dimes/quarters) to offer to water, and food for the pot luck afterwards. Dress for ritual out of doors. (Rain date will be Sunday, May 21. Directions will be provided at the Friday night lecture.

Pre-registration discounts and other information available at <http://www.InspiritCommon.com/druids.htm>

Inspirit Common ~ the wisdom of many traditions

123 Russell Street

Hadley, MA 01035

phone/fax (413) 585-1169

* * * Herb Walk Series * * *

May 14, June 11, July 9 & August 13

1 - 5 pm

\$180

Join Master Herbalist, author of TREE MEDICINE-TREE MAGIC, A DRUIDS HERBAL, BEING A PAGAN and WALKING THE WORLD IN WONDER - A CHILDREN'S HERBAL and Druid Priestess Ellen Evert Hopman for a series of herb walks in the Valley. We will meet four times on the second Sunday of each month, May to August, and explore fields, forests, bogs and swamps, to discover the edible and healing plants that grow in the Valley. We will meet at Inspirit Common to begin our day. Bring a hat, walking shoes, water, snacks, a notebook, pen, camera, bug stuff, and any plant and tree field guides you might wish to refer to.

ELLEN TEACHES A SIX MONTH HERBAL INTENSIVE FROM OCTOBER TO APRIL EVERY YEAR. SEE HER WEBSITE FOR DETAILS.

Pre-registration discounts and other information available at <http://www.InspiritCommon.com/walks.htm>

* * * About Ellen Evert Hopman * * *

Ellen Evert Hopman is an herbalist, author of TREE MEDICINE-TREE MAGIC, A DRUIDS HERBAL, BEING A PAGAN, WALKING THE WORLD IN WONDER – A CHILDREN'S HERBAL, and a Druid Priestess. See her books, videos and audio tapes at <http://saille333.home.mindspring.com/willow.html>. Ellen was Vice President of The Henge of Keltria Druid Order for 9 years. She is a co-founder of The Order of the

Whiteoak - Ord na Darach Gile [<http://www.whiteoakdruids.org/>].

* * * About Inspirit Common * * *

Inspirit Common is a unique mind/body/spirit center offering yoga, massage, healing arts, life readings, workshops and inspired gifts. We invite you to participate in our community: learn, practice, instruct, heal, or create.

Inspirit Common is located on Route 9 in Hadley, MA and is open most days from 10a - 6p. For directions, please visit our website at <http://www.InspiritCommon.com/directions.htm>



Caitlin Mathews: Gladdening the Ancestors: A Shamanic Experience

Two exciting events with Caitlin Mathews, a world celebrated - teacher of Western Spirituality and Celtic folklore, author of over thirty books. sponsored by the Center for the Divine Feminine at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology on Friday evening, June 2 at 7:30 PM and at Stillheart Retreat Center on Saturday and Sunday, June 3 & 4, 2006

Friday Evening, June 2, at ITP

7:30 to 9:00 PM

\$35.00

Reservations required

Saturday & Sunday, June 3 & 4, at Stillheart Retreat Center

10:00 AM Saturday to 3:00 PM on Sunday

\$150.00 Double Occupancy

Registration limited to 30

For more information please call Amanda Young at 650-493-4430 ext.284 or email Pat Luce @ pluce7@aol.com

Reservations are limited Please call before May 15th.

The Center for the Divine Feminine at
The Institute of Transpersonal Psychology
1069 East Meadow Circle
Palo Alto, Ca. 94303
www.CenterfortheDivineFeminine.com

Stillheart Retreat Center
16350 Skyline Blvd., Woodside, Ca. 94062
650-851-6622

Informational flyer available at:<http://www.centerforthedivinefeminine.com/Caitlin1.pdf>



TIP Six-Week Immersion: July 17-Aug 25 (Nova Scotia)

This six-week course in Scottish Gaelic language will employ the TIP (Total Immersion Plus) Methodology.

The TIP methodology does not employ reading, writing, or explanations of grammar for the first level course (approximately 200 hours of instruction). Learning is completely oral and Gaelic will be the only language employed or allowed in the classroom. Learning is activity based, making extensive use of props and creative play in a relaxed and fun setting that brings all the senses into the learning process. The course curriculum concentrates on the home environment and by the end of the course, students will be able to communicate in Gaelic on a wide number of subjects related to day-to-day family life and socializing.

Classes will run from 9:00 am - 3:30 pm daily, Monday to Friday. Prospective students are reminded that the Six-Week (TIP) Immersion will be conducted within the context of the Gaelic College Summer School. Evening activities regularly involve impromptu, informal gatherings involving Gaelic music, song and dance. There are also regularly scheduled concerts and events that will be available to students of the program. In addition, class field trips and excursions will be organized as availability permits.

This course is offered pending a minimum enrollment of seven full-time students and a maximum enrollment of fifteen students at any given time.

Instructors: Angus Mac Leod and Hector Mac Neil

Fees for the full, six-week course will be as follows:

Day Student (Tuition and Lunch Only) \$1,300

Live-In Student (Tuition, Dormitory Accommodation, All Meals) \$2,600

\$35.00 processing fee and Taxes, if applicable, are extra

Students registering for the Six-Week Immersion must include a non-refundable deposit of \$300.00 with their application.

US students attending in Canada may be eligible for certain Canadian tax rebates.

* Please consult Gaelic College Brochure, Summer 2006 for complete details on registering.

Students wishing to enroll for a period less than six weeks will be charged the normal Summer School fees. Please see Gaelic College Brochure, Summer 2006 for details. You can download the Summer Brochure, 2006 by visiting our website: <http://www.gaeliccollege.edu>.



A Druid Missal-Any

Spring Equinox will take place this year on March 20th at 10:26 a.m. Pacific Standard Time. Get up early and watch the Sun rise due East at approximately 6:12 a.m. give or take a few minutes depending upon where you live.

A Druid Missal-Any is published eight times a year. Post mail subscriptions are \$8.00 and email subscriptions are free. Or write an article or send us a cartoon and receive a year's post mail subscription free. Write to:

A Druid Missal-Any
P.O. Box 406
Canyon, CA 94516

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E-Mail: poppinjay@earthlink.net

This is the end of the Spring Equinox issue



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