

A DRUID MISSAL-ANY

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ughnasadh is the celebration of the funeral games given by the God Lugh for his father, Cian, who was slain by the sons of Turenn. Cian was a shape-shifter and magician, i.e. one of the Druid or clergy-caste. Rhys considers Him a minor solar deity, but in mythology He acts more the part of shaman and ambassador. The games show Lugh's filial piety, as Lugh represents all that the ancient Celts thought good in a young man. He is the multi-competent god, defender against oppression, patron and teacher of craftspeople and artisans, God of commerce and its wealth, protector of travelers, and Lord of the Harvest.

The figure of the young boy-God, son of one of the old Pantheon, who saves the people from an unjust ruler, in the myth of Lugh, King Breas the Fomor, is a very old and widespread theme in sacred literature. Many cultures have myths dating back probably to the Neolithic, of a young agricultural and solar deity born on the Winter Solstice, who defends the people, exemplifies morality, teaches the arts of civilization, and is associated with the harvest: Lugh, Balder, the Balkan New Year God, Prometheus, Zeus in His battle with the Titans, Mithra, and some aspects of the Moses and Jesus myths. (The early Judeo-Christian writers grafted these age-old aspects of the Young God into the founders of their faith, just as they did with numerous sayings, rituals and ideas borrowed from the older cultures surrounding them. These things were not new.)

Lugh in His defender role was also a tax protestor. When the Celts had fallen under the sway of Breas, a half-Fomor from "under the sea," Lugh, son of the old God, Cian, appeared. Breas, in one of his acts of mis-rule had levied an oppressive tax on the Tuatha de Danann by means of a deception. Breas is portrayed as a smart man (or demi-god) and clever with words. When he first joined the de Danann pantheon, before the first battle of Moy Tura, he was the one chosen and sent out to parley with Streng of the Fir Bolgs. But later as king, he perverts his intelligence into trickery. Like Loci in the German myths, Breas has a legalistic, literalistic, conniving turn of mind. And like Loci he is an outsider, possibly an adopted God from the pantheon of the Pre-Indo-European inhabitants of the region. He has ancestral ties to the long term enemies of the Pantheon he now serves, Breas represents the negative aspects of intelligence, as Lugh represents the positive ones. The Battles of the Gods, as one school of theology holds, are the battles of the archetypes and choices within the human conscience. "Mythology is not about how things are; it's about how they feel," Joan Carruth, circa 1983. Breas had the Tuatha de Danann agree to surrender to him the milk of every cow, in Ireland that was brown and hairless. They agreed. He then caused every cow in Ireland to be passed through a fire which made them all brown, scorched and hairless. A more moderate version of this fire ceremony was part of the annual Beltaine purification rites. This may have made his proposition seem at first hearing acceptable to the Tuatha. Then after perverting the sacred purification rite into a destructive one, he claimed the milk of every cow in Erin. Crops also failed to prosper under Breas' rule. The people were starving. Lugh came and won acceptance into the Pantheon with his multitude of skills, high character and regal bearing. He vanquished Breas, restored Erin to the Tuatha de Danann and their king, Nuada. Under Nuada's rule the land prospered and harvests were bountiful. This, in the Celtic theory of sovereignty, was the mark of a true and rightful king.

Celebrate Lughnasadh by offering up to Lugh the first fruits and produce of your gardens, any plants you've grown or windfall profits received. (no animals!) Dance, sing, be grateful for the harvest!

—Emmon Bodfish, reprinted from A Druid Missal-Any, Lughnasadh 1989

NEWS OF THE GROVES

Mango Mission: News from Southeast Asia

Mike has a new son, Lio, and as a result, Mike is involuntarily performing nightly vigils with diaper-changing ascetic practice. It is amazing how the time disappears with the little fellow. While swinging the baby to sleep, I

have plenty of time to think about projects, just no time to enact them, which is frustrating, as I have three or four article's worth of ideas, two or three murder mysteries worked out and several books I'd like to review. Ah well, with time, with time. You'll notice that this issue of the Missal-Any is not illustrated, just can't put the hours together on this season's issue, hopefully my schedule will fix itself by September.

The Local Woodland Druids: News from the Ottawa Valley

We are pretty busy here. As for myself, I'm a dad again. Our second boy Luca was born on the 19th of June. But as for the grove, well we are getting ready to host the first Druid Assembly in the Ottawa Valley. It will be a gathering of Local Druids from deferent druid groups such as OBOD, ADF and myself RDNA. It's actually a local OBOD Druid initiative. We will be gathering probably at the end of summer in my back yard.

Also and Important note! It would be nice if this was posted on RDNA website.

I have also created a RDNA Facebook community. I invite everyone to join.

That's it for now.

Sébastien Beaudoin

Hemlock Splinters Grove: News from New York

Hemlock Splinters Grove has been ceded to the skunks for a month while Irony explores the mysteries of evolution and interdependence in the Galapagos Islands.

Swamp Grove: News from South Florida

We are attending a local Pagan Picnic with other locals of like mind, this used to be a monthly deal several years ago but dropped off because of the usual drama and lethargy. Hopefully this will jump start them again, there are plenty of Pagans in the area, however, just getting them together can be difficult. They are held at a state park that used to be a village founded by a group of religious nuts in the early 1900s, (not much different from the religious nuts of 2007) who believed that we live inside of the earth. They didn't believe in sex, so the last of them died out in the 60s (go figure). The park is nice and the old buildings have been restored, it is the site where the local earth day celebration was held, full of cool tropical plants and a lazy river that runs through it where you can kayak down to the Gulf of Mexico.

Rockspray Proto-grove: News from Indiana

Rockspray Grove is finally active. We held our first group meeting to put names to faces and it was a great turn out. We got a new focus and discovered what the active members were looking for.

Natures Blessing,

Matt

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/RocksprayGrove/>

Moose Breechcloth Proto-Grove: News from Minnesota

Seasonal salutations siblings!

Dog days indeed. Just got back from our 4th of July vacation in Wisconsin. Lou and I were at the Buell Motorcycle Homecoming. (Think motorcycle pow wow for Buell motorcycle owners; or the Buell version of Sturgis if you're still confused)

Homecoming was at the Buell factory in East Troy, Wisconsin. Buell owners from all over the US show up for this. We camped on the eastern shore of Lake Winnebago (just south west of Green Bay).

They days, they were hot. The nights, they were warm. The cleavage, she's a-sunburned.

We also spent two days at the Road America race track for motorcycle races (still in Wisconsin). 98 degrees, humidity to match, no shade, all asphalt...nuff said. The races were pretty cool though. We got our tickets through Buell. That put us on the inside of the track; in the pit area where the racers were.

Been putting on some good ol' fashioned feeds lately for friends as well. If you aren't familiar with the term "feed"...it's a disgusting food orgy. For example, our last feed was eight people...eight racks of ribs, four pounds of shrimp, a two-gallon bucket of potato salad, a huge pot of corn on the cob, various side dishes, and "muchos mas margaritas por la senorita." Our friends were reduced to whimpering after they ate...but they sure do perk up quick when I announce another feed in two weeks.

In other news of the ridiculous...this weekend is my dragon boat race. My co-workers and I are sponsoring a dragon boat this year for the Saint Paul yearly festival. Most of them have never been in a canoe, much less a dragon boat. While my experience in a dragon boat is nil, I wound up being the most experienced digging with paddles ala Boundary Waters in northern Minnesota. So guess who got tapped to be the trainer. Hi. No pressure. I'll have to let you know how we did in a future installment.

Well, that's about all that's been going on around here...camping, motorcycles, en masse bbqs, and training for a dragon boat race.

Come to think of it...life is pretty good.

Until next time, siblings...
gigawabamin nagutch,
and yours in the Mother,

—Julie Ann and Lou—

Clan of the Triple horses: News from Oregon

Prayers answered.....

For approximately two years now, our group has been looking for a more or less permanent site to hold our rituals.

Our former site, a stone circle created by a handful of us, is no longer safe to use. We have been alternating between ridges and residences since then.

Laughing Badger and his lovely wife, have offered us the ongoing use of their site for our rituals. The name of their property is: Elkshadow. Pictures taken by Wolfsong of the site can be seen here-
<http://home.earthlink.net/~triplehorses/id10.html>

This stone circle, also handmade, is large enough to handle our usual attendance comfortably. The stones are of natural basalt. The surrounding trees are mature and of mixed varieties. They are close enough to provide cover in a gentle rain, yet open enough to allow sunshine.

There is a year round creek close enough to allow us to purify our hands and gather well water/waters of life for rituals. It sang to us throughout our Summer Solstice rite.

Best of all, two mule deer (Cernunnos and Aige, perhaps?) napped a few feet away during our celebration. What better sign that we were "home"?

Our next local ritual will be our Lughnasadh celebration -- an outdoor ritual at Elk Shadow -- on Saturday, August 18 and be followed by a free and public workshop on organic foods, choices and nutrition by our very own pre-med student, HEATHER

Early Fall blessings!
And please don't forget:

August 3-5, 2007
West Coast Gathering
<http://rdg.mithrilstar.org/2007wcdruiddat.htm>

Saturday, September 29, 2007
Eight Winds Mountain Earth Gathering
<http://home.earthlink.net/~triplehorses/id7.html>

Our email contact is: triplehorses@gmail.com

Poison Oak Grove, News from California



The "Druids of Summer" theme for Poison Oak Grove's Summer Solstice seems to have become an annual tradition. After the High Day service (note to the wise: though the RDNA liturgy notes for the Summer Solstice recommends an especially big fire in the altar be aware of your grove's surroundings! Our grove site is surrounded by trees and brush and is on the side of a steep hillside. Though we have running water at the site, it is still a good idea to have a care. There was a slight bit of wind and the flames were whipping around and we all nervously kept one eye on the fire throughout the service.) we had peanuts, Crackerjack, lemonade, grilled hot dogs and chicken apple sausages, potato salad, and "Curve Ball" ale. We sang the filk song we wrote collectively last year "Take Me Out to the Grove Site For desert we had root beer floats and roasted marshmallows. Before we roasted them however we erected Mallow Henge on the Salisbury Plate. Whole Foods makes a "natural" square marshmallow, available in their bakery section, that is perfect for this task.

After six months of planning the Arch Druid went on the vision quest up at Mount Shasta, mentioned in the Last Missal-Any. It is traditional to not talk about what happened on the quest for a year, so the readers will have to wait. The photos pre and post quest included below will have to suffice for now. The best idea is to go in without any expectations to what might come up. It might be a surprise. Or not. Prior to the quest several of the questors and supporters took a drum-making workshop in town. The hides were elk and the frames were willow oak. They were dry in time to take on the mountain with us.

After the quest the AD stayed an extra day at her favorite bed and breakfast Shastao so she could pay a visit to her mentor and founder of the Missal-Any Emmon Bodfish. It is run by two Philosophy professors who offer organic vegetarian meals and philosophical discussion. It has become like a second home and a perfect place for a druid to stay. This time the escorting monk let her have a good long visit. On the way back from the grave the monk took her to see the decorations for an upcoming festival in Buddha Hall. Out of the blue he started talking to about fear, how one gets from fear to courage to compassion, and that fear can't hurt you. It was amazing that he spoke to something that came up on the quest without knowing what it was and said exactly what she needed to hear. This is not the first a monk at the Abbey had done that; that had happened once before past at one of the Sunday Dharma talks. How do they know?



Mount Shasta in the Summer



Our Drum-making Class



Building the Sweatlodge



Coming back from four days in the woods



The Questors joining the Group of Supporters

Missionary Impossible File 4: Strategic Ambiguity

By Mike the FOol

Diplomacy sometimes sheds light on Druidism

One interesting diplomatic skill that you learn quickly is the ability to talk for hours without actually commit to anything. In some of the most delicate issues, there are even times when you go out of your way to avoid

accidentally turning a de-facto policy into a de-jure one, by saying what your side really wishes to do. Take for instance the U.S. policy towards the Republic of China (i.e. Taiwan). Nearly every government in the world has knuckled down under pressure from the People's Republic of China (i.e. mainland China) to state that Taiwan is part of China, and then to withdraw diplomatic recognition of Taiwan. The U.S. tends to claim that Taiwan is part of "one China", but that doesn't apparently, in practice, mean that extends to a full political dimension, remaining in a quasi-philosophical principle level only now. What you have is three sides agreeing to one statement but interpreting the statement in very, very different ways. This is generally known as "strategic ambiguity", with inherent advantages when a side has internal contradictions and doesn't really know what its policy is, but has risks, in that other sides may misunderstand what you're saying.

Now go back to Reformed Druidism. We, as a group, are rather noteworthy for our avoidance of policy or strict definitions. While individuals, or possibly even a grove, may have strong opinions or even policy on politics, membership, theology or what not; the Reform (as a whole) does not generally take sides. As an example, do we believe in Celtic gods, Jehovah, universal Creator, etc? We don't say. I have my own personal preferences, which may be quite different from other members of my grove, and my grove may be quite different from the next grove. As I wrote in "Less is More" about a decade ago, Reformed Druidism is often better explained by what we don't do than by what we do do, when comparing with other types of Druidism, which often explicitly state what they believe, how they make decisions official and define their terms.

Why do we tend to avoid defining things? That's a hard thing to explain. Probably because it is divisive, in that anytime you take an official position, those who disagree will be disgruntled, and feel put upon to support that definition as part of the group's new identity. In general, most of the founders believed the membership had diverse opinions, so it was best to accept that was the case, and concentrate their energy on spiritual development and noting the lessons of Nature; rather than organizational development and policy polishing. As you can tell from the Isaac Affair in the 1970s, when a policy position is brought up, it may lead to interesting and expressive conversation and different final interpretations by many individuals or groves, but rarely to adoption on the total level of the Reform.

One area that came to mind is how we approach the Order of Worship, our standard liturgy. As any actor can tell you, a script is a script, but how you read or perform it makes a big difference in the end result. Why do we enact this liturgy, what is its "tone" or purpose? When newcomers or concerned parents of Reformed Druids ask what you do during a reading of the liturgy, how do you describe it to them in the initial 20-30 seconds that people are most receptive to a nutshell explanation? Do you call it a "rite", a "ritual", a "service," a "worship," a "ceremony", a "meeting" or a "celebration"? Each of these words carries a different connotation, but are often carelessly used interchangeably. A reading of the liturgy may be approached by a grove as very still and literal with few flourishes, no mention of deities, no theological insertions, very dry and cerebral, and thus they may prefer to term it a "meeting" or "service". Other times "worship" may carry the right implication, as deities are brought up, beseeched, thanked, addressed and honored. Sometimes the liturgy may be shift to different tones in the course of the enactment, based on the section you are in, and several factors like; the leading members personality, number of members, season, weather, purpose of meeting, the group's present mood, and just plain Fate.

So what this means, that when describing what Reformed Druids do and don't do; it's usually a very good idea to use a few qualifying words like; "most of us", "often, but not always", "depending on", "prefer", "we tend to", "in a few groves," "I'm not sure as a group, but our grove...." and so on to leave the impression that while sub-sets of Reformed Druidism follow this or that, we acknowledge that other sub-sets do not follow this, and that we respect that divergence of opinion in many areas of contention, and that we are not "more proper" or "better" Reformed Druids, just different. That built-in ambiguity of Reformed Druidism allows Christians, Atheists, Neo-Pagans, ascetics, ritualists, ceremonialists, etc. to be part of a movement that explores Nature, raising questions together, but coming to spiritual answers individually.

This strategic ambiguity is often a difficult path, as is seen by the many schisms in the Reform, when you want to give a quick decisive reply to a posed question, and don't want to appear wishy-washy. I wish you good fortune in dealing with this sometimes liberating sometimes vexing characteristic of Reformed Druidism, and hope you become adept in handling the issue when it appears.

Yours in the Mother,

Animals and Birds in Celtic Tradition

By J Craig Melia

Introduction

From the iconographical evidence and their appearance in countless mythological tales we can see that Animals and Birds featured large in the Celtic Tradition. Despite the fact that most of the myths refer to the Warrior Caste it should be remembered that it was the common man of the land that made up the greater part of the population. And this may explain why animals and birds not normally associated with the Warrior Caste have survived within their myths, and often through to the modern day within folk tales.

The Celts were an agrarian society, hence they had a great respect for their environment, of natural phenomenon and the elements, and of the creatures who shared their sacred landscape. Animals affected every area of everyday life, from the economy to hunting and warfare, religious beliefs and rituals, in art and literature. Animals were central to all aspects of Celtic life.

Some Animals were held to be sacred in their own right, others were viewed as mediators between the mortal and the divine.

Often Deities are depicted with their associated animals or birds or in some cases both. We have become used to linking them together. Think of Epona and you think of horses, (C)ernunnos is linked to stags (despite both snakes and birds also been depicted).

It is worth making a general point regarding Deities. Regardless of the attributes they are given, most have their beginnings, and maintain their links with, the most basic human need, that of nourishment. A Sun God must shine upon the crops and the River Goddess must water them. Even the most martial deity in Europe, the Roman Mars had his beginnings as an Italic agricultural God.

Another important point is to have a balanced view regarding Deities. On the one hand, comparative study gives us a wider view, and with Gods as complex as Celtic Deities a very wide view is needed. When we compare two things, in good Celtic fashion, a third thing is created, a greater perception. It is important too, to remember that the Celts did not live in a closed society, they were influenced by and in turn influenced surrounding cultures, whether Roman, Greek, Germanic or whoever else they came into contact with.

On the other hand, there is a real danger of over simplification, of using the interpretatio Romano to neatly list and categorize Deities into Greco-Roman style Pantheons or slotting them into nice Indo-European models, losing sight of the original, more complex figures.

It is my hope that in this project I have been able to strike that balance.

J.C.Melia 1999

Part One Animals

Deities assuming Animal Forms is a widespread motif in Celtic Mythology, as it is within the myths of people around the world. Transformation would appear to be a well recognised theme.

In the Mabinogion Math turns his wayward nephews into deer, boar and wolves, each pair producing offspring. Math then transforms the fawn, piglet and cub into human form. Donn mac Midhir lures Finn to the Otherworld in the shape of a fawn.

The Goddess of Sovereignty is linked to and assumes the shape of both the Horse and the Cow, with Epona, Rhiannon, Macha and Boand been the obvious examples.



Boars and Deer frequently appear in tales of the Celtic Otherworld, as it is in the hunt that the hero begins his journey. This motif is the basis for many of the myths attached to Finn mac Cumhaill and boar-hunts particularly feature heavily in Fenian literature. Caeilte kills a magical boar which is able to re-appear as new after it has been eaten. The death of Diarmaid, killed by the supernatural boar of Benn Gulban.

In the tale of 'Kulhwch and Olwen' in the Mabinogion is given a series of impossible tasks to achieve before he will be allowed to marry Olwen. The final task is to take the comb, scissors and razor that are caught within the bristles of a certain boar, Twrch Trwyth. After completing all the tasks needed Kulhwch, Arthur and the others set out after the boar. Twrch Trwyth is chased throughout Ireland, Wales and Cornwall before he is overcome and the desired objects are procured. Yet still, the great boar lives, and is last seen running out to sea, still chased by two of Arthur's hounds.

It is clear that the Twrch Trwyth chased from Ireland is cognate with Torc Triath, the King of the Boars, mentioned in Lebor Gabala.

Throughout the lands under Celtic influence, boars appear to symbolise royalty, bravery and prowess in battle. Boars appear on coins and as bronze statues, warriors with boar shaped helmet crests appear on the Gundestrupp cauldron. The boar was often the main dish of warrior feasts.

Fionn's wife, Sabha is turned into a fawn by a Druid, and their son is called Oisín (Little Deer). In many tales of the Fenian Cycle, the heroes are led in an adventure by an Otherworld being disguised as a deer.



Bulls and Cows formed the basis for wealth within the community and were seen as a symbol of the Land and of material wealth. Meat, leather, milk and dairy products were of intense value to the tribe.

When a King was to be chosen a 'bull-feast' (Tarbfeis) would be held, in which a bull would be ritually killed and a broth would be cooked. The chief priest would bathe in and eat the broth, and would receive a vision of the new King as he slept. In the story of Conaire, it is foretold that the new King will be found walking naked along a road into Tara carrying a sling and a stone. Through divine intervention, Conaire fulfills the criteria and is pronounced King.

Finnbhennach Ai and Donn Cuailgne, the two great bulls that feature in the 'Tain', originated as two swineherds called Rucht and Rucne, who through a series of anthropomorphic incarnations in which they fight one another, meet their end as the 'Tain' reaches its bloody finale.

In the form of a crow, the Morrigan spoke to the Bull, urging him to defend himself.

....the Morrigan, daughter of Ernmas,
came from the sidh and sat on the pillar-stone in Temair
Cuailnge, warning the Donn Cuailnge about the men of Ireland:-
“So, pitiful one, Donn Cuailnge, be on your guard,
for the men of Ireland will come upon you and will carry you off
to their encampment unless you take heed.”
And so she began to warn him.....

Cattle raids seem to have been a much greater part of Celtic life than say inter tribal battles, and one is reminded of the raids practiced by numerous Native American tribes upon their neighbours.

A number of Goddesses are linked to the cow. Boand, a river goddess was identified with the cow itself, representing a widespread Indo-European motif of River-Mother Goddess providing life giving milk. The River Boyne (named after her) means white-cow ‘Bu-uinda’. According to some legends she was the mother of Aenghus Mac ind Og (linked to Mabon of Britain, linking Boand to Modron, the mother). She was drowned at Well of Nechtan becoming the river Boyne.

The Dadga, Mider, Mananan and various other Gods all had magical cattle, the envy of mortal men.

Dogs are probably the animal most associated with mankind and understandably they appear in many myths. Dogs are viewed as having all the characteristics expected from a ‘best friend’ - companionship, protection and loyalty.

The Celts, as already stated, were an agrarian people, and dogs were important in both hunting and the protection of flocks.

As the smith Culainn cries to Setanta, on the death of his guard-dog

You are welcome, boy, for your mother’s heart’s sake.
But for my own part I did badly from this feast.
My life is a waste, and my household is like a desert,
with the loss of my hound! He guarded my life and my honour.
A valued servant, my hound, taken from me!
He was shield and shelter for our goods and herds.
He guarded all our beasts, at home and in the fields.....

Setanta promises to perform the duties of Culainn’s hound, hence his name, for a year whilst he a puppy is raised from the same litter to take his place. Clearly, a great price is placed on this dog’s life.

Finn mac Cumhaill had two enormous hounds who feature in many of his hunting adventures. The hounds, Bran and Sceolaing, were also his cousins. He loved them devotedly, but once in a fit of impatience he struck at Bran who went and drowned himself from grief. Finn was heart-broken and would be haunted by the howling of his lost friend.

Dogs also seem have been thought of as denoting great strength in a warrior, and ferocity in battle. Cunobelinus, Cuchullain, Cu Roi, Cynon, etc. all have names linking them to ‘hound’. The very Dogs of War.

At the healing sanctuary Nodens (The Gaelic Nuada) at Lydney only one image of the God has been found, whilst at the same site many images of dogs were discovered. The dog was linked with healing, its saliva was thought to heal wounds until recently.

The Horse is firmly linked to a number of Celtic Goddesses, Epona, Rhiannon and Macha, and can be seen to be a symbol of sovereignty and political power. These three Goddesses are an example of the pan-Celtic Goddesses that had equine associations, were also Goddesses of Sovereignty, War, and Fertility, and probably served as a Psychopomp, carrying the dead to the Otherworld. In this, they may be linked to the Germanic ‘Valkyries’.

The horse's power, harnessed, provided the Celts with their military strength throughout Europe, coupled with the use of Iron. These mighty beasts pulling the chariots provide a potent symbol of the power of the warrior nobility.

Rhiannon, who's name probably derives from Rigantona - Great Queen, is linked to Macha, who in turn is linked to the Morrigan, who's name is also thought to mean Great Queen. A byname for both Macha and Epona is Rigona (Queen) and Macha is also called Roech (Great Horse).

In the myths we have, there are further links between Rhiannon and Macha. Both marry a mortal, appearing from some other realm and searching him out. Although Rhiannon at first rides a horse, she is later punished by been forced to act as one, as does Macha in the tale that explains the 'Pangs' of the Ulstermen in the Tain.

In the Dindshenchas Macha is given the name Macha Mongruad or Red-Mane. In this tale Macha shows her more War-like aspect, overcoming countless warriors, she appears not so much as the Goddess of Sovereignty, but as the sovereign herself.

Epona was the only Celtic deity to be taken into the Roman circle of Gods.. The Roman cavalry seems to have taken Epona to their heart, as iconography can be found throughout the Empire. She is given the byname Regina.

A common theme, seen both in Gaelic and Brythonic myth, is the horse born on the same day as, and therefore linked to, the hero. The Grey of Macha (Macha again!) and the Black of Sangliu, who pull the chariot of Cuchulainn follow this theme, to the point were the horses are killed on the same day as the hero. The same theme is seen in the story of Pryderi, who has a colt whose life is bound to his own.



The Salmon is associated with the gaining of poetic wisdom and magical knowledge, although this is indirectly because it eats of the Nine Hazelnuts of Wisdom that fall into its pool, which are the true source. The Salmon are usually described as been speckled which indicates a connection with the Otherworld. A doorway to the Otherworld was referred to as a speckled gate (cómhla breac).

Finn mac Cumhaill is said to have gained his prophetic abilities from the Salmon of Knowledge, when cooking the salmon for his master, three drops burned his thumb which he thrust into his mouth. From that day forth all he had to do was place his thumb to his lips and he would 'know' all that he needed. Obviously, this motif of gaining of wisdom can be linked to the tale of Gwion Bach, who whilst cooking a 'special brew' of 'poetic inspiration' for Ceridwen, also had three drops burn his thumb and gained illumination to be reborn as Taliesin.

The Salmon was held to be the oldest, and therefore wisest of the animals. From the Book of Lismore

A year for the stake,
Three years for the field,
Three lifetimes of the field for the hound,
Three lifetimes of the hound for the horse,
Three lifetimes of the horse for the human being,
Three lifetimes of the human being for the stag,
Three lifetimes of the stag for the ousel,
Three lifetimes of the ousel for the eagle,
Three lifetimes of the eagle for the salmon,
Three lifetimes of the salmon for the yew,
Three lifetimes of the yew for the world from its beginning to end.

In the tale of `Kulhwch and Olwen`, a similar tradition is expressed, as, in the search for the mysterious Mabon ap Modron, progressively older creatures are asked in turn about him. Each, in turn, have no knowledge of him, but suggest asking an older creature. Eventually they reach the Salmon of Llyn Lyw, the oldest and wisest, who leads the questors to their goal.

Part Two Birds

Deities assuming Bird Forms are common throughout I-E myths, particularly as the means for a God to seek a union with a mortal. The myth of Leda and the conception of Castor and Pollux has clear commonality with a number of Celtic Myths. The conception of numerous heroes, including Cuchulainn and Conaire, involve an Otherworld figure taking the form of a bird. In the tale of Aengus and Caer, the Young God transforms himself into a swan to unite with Caer, also in swan-form, who then returns with him to his palace at Brugh na Boinne.

Of the Morrigan it is said, “She delighted in setting men at war, and fought among them herself, changing into many frightful shapes and often hovering above fighting armies in the aspect of the crow”.

It would appear that the eagle was originally of greater significance to the Celts, in line with other Indo-European traditions. However, by the time the tales were set down in writing, the eagle had been pushed into the background. In the ‘lists’ of the “oldest creatures”, the eagle is only out-done by the salmon and it should be noted that Llew, fatally wounded by Gronw, transforms into an eagle and perches atop a magical tree. This is undoubtedly a Celtic reference to the Axis-Mundi, and can be linked to other Indo-European tales. The tale of Odin, injured by a spear hanging in Yggdrasil, with an eagle in the upmost branch, seems to have originated from the same motif.



Ravens and Crows appear to be interchangeable in their use in the mythologies. That is not to say that the Celts weren't able to differentiate between them, but that they were viewed as having the same role within the traditions.

They are viewed in two different ways. Firstly, as a symbol of war, of prowess in battle, devourer of carrion. Probably the most famous Raven Goddess is the Morrigan, (equated with Macha and Badh in the Tochmarc Emire who are seen as hooded crows). The Corvids are the main carrion birds of Britain and Ireland, so the sight of them on the battlefield, stripping the flesh from the corpses of warriors, would be an image to stick in the mind of the survivors.

Secondly, they can be seen as a provider of prophetic omens and oracles. The Celts, like various other peoples performed Ornithomancy as a means to foretell the future. Many birds were used but the Corvids more than any other. The Morrigan, the Raven Goddess herself, offers many prophetic utterances, including this one, a vision of the end of the world:-

I shall not see a world which will be dear to me;
summer without blossoms, cattle will be
without milk, women without modesty, men without valor,
conquests without a king... Woods without mast, sea without produce...
False judgments of old men, false precedents of lawyers,
every man a betrayer, every son a reaver. The son will go to the bed
of his father, the father will go to the bed of his son.
Each his brother's brother-in-law. He will not seek any
woman outside his house... An evil time, son will deceive his father,
daughter will deceive her mother...

Other to actually prophecies, the future could be divine from the actions, the flight or the calls of ravens, and a large amount of Raven-lore was built up, with the direction and sound been interpreted as different outcomes. From the evidence, Raven-Gods wouldn't appear to be a Universal Concept amongst the Celts. Lugus, the Gaulish Lugh, was associated with ravens in ancient times. Lyon, France (formally Lugudunum) was said to have been founded when Ravens settled on the site. This was seen as a favorable omen and the city was built. Early coins from the city show the Patron God accompanied by ravens.

The most obvious candidate for a Raven God comes from Brythonic sources, Bran Bendigeidfran. Bran means Raven, and Bendigeidfran, though probably derived from other sources referring to his Wondrous Head, means Blessed Raven. Popular tradition links him to ravens through his association with the White Mount (Tower Hill). However, apart from his name and later folk-tales there does not seem to any real evidence allowing us to view him as a Raven God.

Ravens also feature in the Dream of Rhonabwy. In the tale, the army of Owein consists of three hundred ravens. It is of interest that Owein's mother is Morgan, whose name is cognate with the Gaelic Morrigan, the Raven Goddess. **Swans** Probably the most famous tale featuring swans is that of the Children of Lir, who are transformed by their step-mother, Aoifa. Tales of swans always portray them as people under enchantments, whether the Children of Lir, Aengus and Caer, Midhir and Etain, Derbforgaill and her servant.....

The main motif regarding swans seems to be one of love. Aengus mac in Oc fell in love with Caer, who was under a magical enchantment by her father so that she was in the form of a swan for a year, followed the next year by being in the form of a human. Aengus transforms himself into a swan to unite with Caer, whilst she is still in swan-form, and the two of them return to his palace at Brugh na Boinne

Midhir and Etain escape from her husband's fortress in the shape of swans in order to be together.

The beautiful exterior often belies their strength and fierceness. They are viewed as destructive when they descend upon Emhain Macha and ravage the area as an omen of Cuchulainn's conception. Swans appear several times during his short lifetime. In the story of Cuchulainn and Derbforgaill, two magical swans chase the hero who casts a stone at them. He wings one, who falls to earth losing her enchanted state, revealing Derforgaill. Cuchulainn sucks out the stone that has wounded her. It is added that because he has tasted her blood, he can not have carnal knowledge of her, and so gives the maiden to his foster-brother Lugaid.



The Birds of Rhiannon are probably the most well known of the otherworld birds that feature in Celtic myth. Rhiannon is often linked to the Gaulish Epona, and it is interesting to note that iconic representations of the Goddess Epona are accompanied by both horses and birds.

In the tale of Bran and Branwen in the Mabinogion, the seven survivors of the battle against the men of Ireland, spend seven years feasting in Harlech, where the three birds of Rhiannon provide them with music of such beauty, that all other song appears unmelodious. Though the birds are beyond the waves, their song seems to come from the same room as the seven warriors.

In Irish mythology Clodna, an Otherworld Queen of Munster, also possesses three magical birds, whose song can restore the health of the wounded. Besides her residence in Munster she, like Rhiannon, is said to inhabit a magical isle where adventurers live in an Otherworld paradise, freed from the passage of time.

The Crane features on a number of iconographical images. The famous image of Tarvos Trigaranus - Bull with Three Cranes from Paris, the image of a tree containing a bulls head and three cranes from Trier, the Celtic shields from the Triumphal Arch, Orange and two images from Chesters along Hadrian's Wall.

Although the Celts would appear to have a great deal of knowledge on Ornithology, they would appear to join Cranes with Egrets and various other wading birds. As with Ravens and Crows I don't think that this was due to them not been able to differentiate between them, but because they were all viewed as having the same role.

Midhir of Bri Leith had three cranes guarding his palace, and to see these birds whilst travelling to battle was seen as a bad omen. Indeed, cranes can be found as decorations on swords and other weapons. It has been suggested that Cranes were envisaged as 'bad-luck', and that they adorn weapons to inflict this bad-luck upon the enemy.

Text and Images created by J. Craig Melia - March/April 1999

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Lark in the Morning

Irish Bronze Age Horns

One of the most exciting musical discoveries of the 20th Century was the re-awakening of the Bronze Age Horns of Ireland. An ancient mystery had been solved. For hundreds of years attempts were made to play each of the 104 horns that survive from the Irish Bronze Age. All were met with failure due to the large "single cavity" mouthpiece which is a feature of the bronze horn family. The breakthrough came in the 1970's when Professor Peter Holmes of London compared them to existing ethnic instruments including the triton conch, African animal horns and the Australian didgeridoo. His conclusions were taken up by Simon O'Dwyer in Ireland who began to make replicas and learn how to play them. Due to the rediscovery of the musical properties of the horns and the subsequent exploration and research, it is now thought highly unlikely that these instruments were ever used in battle. There are several reasons for this conclusion. First, it is quite clear that each horn required an enormous amount of skill, labor and wealth in its manufacture. If war trumpets were needed then long cow horns would make a louder noise and be far cheaper to produce. Such war horns were used in Scotland until quite recently. Second, a player will not achieve the sweetest sound from any of the Bronze Age horns by blowing too hard just for the sake of volume. The best

results are attained by finding the natural internal pressure of the instrument and playing around it. Only then does the horn begin to produce the beautiful rich harmonics and overtones which make it unique. Played in this way, the sound is not in any way loud or angry. It is mellow, haunting and deeply evocative. By no means could it be considered rousing, frightening or intimidating.

The most likely uses for Irish horns in the Bronze Age were either as very fine musical instruments, which they undoubtedly are; or as sacred ceremonial horns played with the bells for religious and other gatherings. Casting is the creation of a required shape by filling a mold with a liquid which hardens and acquires the shape. In the case of bronze, the most common modern means of casting is called Cira Perdu or "Lost Wax". This means that the shape is formed with wax. The wax is then surrounded with liquid clay or ceramic shell to make a mold. A pouring hole is left open at the top. The mold is heated to harden the clay and burn out the wax. Bronze is fired to a temperature of about 170C, when it becomes liquid and is then poured into the mold. If everything has gone to plan the shape should be in bronze inside when the mold is broken open. In the case of the horns this system requires a large amount of preparation, good luck and a lot of welding and clean up afterwards. In the Bronze Age, a two part clay mold with a central core was used to make horns. Professor Peter Holmes' study on original instruments concludes that the mold was formed around a solid shape in two halves and a core of clay was then positioned between and held in place with bronze pins or chapletts. The clay had to be fired before casting and this meant that the mold would shrink by 10%. Thus the shape of the horn had to be artificially altered to take this into account. He concludes that no finishing work was necessary after the horns were poured. A mold line can still be seen on instruments where the two clay halves did not absolutely match up, very much as one might see the mold line on a milk bottle today.



HOR053) Side Blow Horn. Approximately 22" long with an oval mouthpiece set into the side and having a carrying ring and a holding ring at the end. Very suitable for intermittent playing and overtone harmonics. Notes can be altered by moving the hand in and out of the bell.

HOR054) Medium End Blow Horn. Length: 26" long. Mouthpiece at the end. Decorated with inlaid rings and spiral at bell. Carrying ring attached two thirds of the way along the instrument. Very suitable for circular breathing, playing punchy rhythms. Excellent for producing overtone series and harmonics. As in the Side Blow notes can be produced by using the hand in the bell.

HOR055) Large End Blow Horn. Length: 56". End Blow with carrying ring half way along at rear. Made in three pieces which fit together. Decorated with cones and rings. Plays a deep bass fundamental with three higher relatives. Can produce rich harmonic and voice enhanced chords. Very easy to circular breath. Similar in sound and technique to the Aboriginal Australian Didgeridoo but with a richer fuller sound.

HOR056) Crothal. Oval or pear shaped bronze bell. Hollow inside containing a small stone. Fitted with a ring at the top and decorated with a series of circles around the upper half Produces a beautiful resonance when allowed to swing free from the ring or can be used as a rhythm shaker if held between the palms of the two hands and swung repeatedly.

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EVENTS

Gaelic Summer Book Sale

A Chàirdean còire,

The following sales will be on until the end of the summer (Sept. 21st, 2007). A note to our US customers that US currency is right now 4% less than the Canadian currency.

Teach Yourself Gaelic

Was \$34.95 (Can)

Now \$21.67 (Can) **38% off**

Shipping for this sale (unless it is a group order) will be \$11.50 (Can) within North America which is more reflective of our S&H costs to most of our customers. 6% GST is also applied to Canadian orders.

An t-Oranaiche - The Gaelic Songster

Was \$55.95 (Can)

Now \$41.96 **25% off**

Shipping for this item will be \$13.00 (Can) within North America (plus 6% GST for Canadian orders).

Additional Gaelic Book News!

Scottish Gaelic in 12 Weeks (aka 3 Months)

It appears that this highly popular course and grammar will be reissued by Birlinn some time in the fall, though there might be delays. If it does come out as scheduled we should have copies by early next year. Est. Price: \$32.95 (book & CD edition), \$21.95 (book only edition).

Cothrom Ionnsachaidh CDs

The CI CDs are now out. You can get a pack of six CD for this course for \$59.95 or a one disk MP3 version for \$32.95 (pricing subject to change). This is a one-time offer as we are bringing in new stock of CI and may not order many extra copies.

Gaelic Map of Scotland

We have a limited number of the new Gaelic map of Scotland from Storlann. They are professional looking and are 32" X 23". My one criticism is that they have a large number of English placenames, even for easily translatable names, unlike Pederson's Alba map. They are \$14.95.

Atlantic Gaelic Academy

Are offering courses using Teach Yourself Gaelic in the fall. See <http://www.gaelicacademy.ca/> to register for this live on-line course. We are still offering TYG with CDs for \$21.67 plus \$11.50 shipping.

We accept Mastercard or VISA. To place an order you can call us now toll-free at (866) 863-0416 (I believe this number can be used outside of Canada).

Le gach deogh dhùrachd,

Trueman

Trueman Matheson

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Unveiling Celtic Treasures of Eire at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston: Sept 13, 2007, 6:30PM-9:00pm

See the unveiling of the MFA's collection of gold, Celtic treasures from Ireland (not currently on view to the public).

These objects, housed at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, found on a coastal town in County Cork, once adorned the necks of Celtic nobility in Ireland from the middle of the bronze age, dating back as far as 1200 B.C. Unveiling Celtic Treasures of Eire includes a brief talk and will be followed by a cocktail reception at Bravo restaurant inside the MFA.

Price: \$15
Phone: (866) 560-1050
http://www.eiresociety.org/calendar/view_entry.php?id=192&date=20070913

School of Celtic Studies Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies Summer School 2008

The School of Celtic Studies is pleased to announce that it will hold a Summer School in Mediaeval and Modern Irish Language and Literature from 14 to 26 July, 2008. Admission to the School will be limited to students and scholars whose interests lie within the fields of Celtic Studies, Linguistics, Comparative Philology, Comparative Literature, or History.

Further information is available on our website, and completed applications must be submitted by 1 November 2007.

<http://www.celt.dias.ie/>

CALENDAR

Lughnasadh, when the Sun is half-way between the Summer Solstice and the Fall Equinox, will occur this year astronomically on August 7th at 2:32 p.m. as 15 degrees of Leo or alternatively as 16 degrees 18 minutes decl on Saturday, August 7 at 5:43 p.m. p.m. Pacific Daylight Time. Grove Lughnasadh services will take place on Sunday, August 5th. New and Full Moon services tba.

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