

The Henge of Keltia

Henge Happenings

Public Edition

Samhain 2011 - Issue 92

Druidism for the 21st Century™

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from the president

Samhain 2011

By Tony Taylor

This issue's cover of the Kilclooney Dolmen captures the magickal nature of the sacred site as well as the quietness of the portal tomb. A stunning photograph by Henge member, Steward of the Wood. And no, it wasn't photoshopped.

Projects

Due to technical problems, the minutes of the 2011 Annual Meeting aren't available. They will be available shortly and we expect to present them in the Imbolc issue of Henge Happenings

Tony and TopazOwl, with the help of Nick and Ailim, are working on marketing the Henge by improving search engine rankings, and increasing our Facebook presence. If you have a website, please create a link to the Henge website. Please mention the Henge in your blogs and postings, which will help create a buzz about the Henge. Be sure to "Like" the Henge of Keltria on Facebook. We are also looking into a more focused email marketing process. If you are interested in assisting in these activities, please contact the Henge Office or the webmaster.

Various board members are working on new and improved publications and other resources. The Council of Elders is working on a "Book of Keltria" which will provide a central place to learn and understand the key elements of Keltrian Druidism. Others are working on a new and improved Grove Leaders Handbook, which will incorporate special rituals, such as handfastings, coming of age, and other rituals.

I look forward to next year's Gathering of the Keltrian Tribe and Annual Meeting. If you would like to host the Gathering, please submit your proposal to the Board of Trustees, via the Henge Office, by Winter Solstice. Please see the article in

this issue for more information.

Thoughts

Certainly Samhain is traditionally the time for reflection on those who have passed on to the otherworld. As I grow older I see more and more of my contemporaries pass on. Fortunately, the Henge had only one Henge member, John Brown, take that journey.



Please remember him in your Samhain remembrances. Many of us experienced the loss of loved ones; family, personal friends, and, of course, special animal friends. If you know of someone who had a particularly close spirit pass over, please acknowledge the loss to them and ask their permission to include them and their loved one in your prayers. If you suffer a loss be sure to let the Henge Office know so we may remember them and give solace to you.

In the Keltrian Tradition, Samhain is also the time to make your plans for the coming year which is declared in ritual. This should not be something simple to be accomplished by Imbolc, but a longer, more ambitious goal. What is it that you want to accomplish? We would like to hear from members



President Tony

Continued on page 11...

the bard's path

A poem (from the first ogham *fid*): *Beith*, the birch

by Jenne Micale

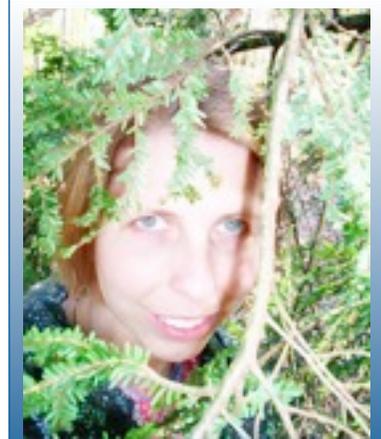
The pale lady dances on the old field
the fences graying, crumbling to dust
goldenrod, mullein, Queen Anne's lace, cornflower
where once cows bustled to the new barn.

But that has ended in the long-ago.
The pond forgets the farmer's dull tread
as its mud swallows the memory of boots.
The field is wild now, pasture for deer.

The birch wasn't the first on the dance floor.
She wasn't the moment of ending
the passage of one song to another.
She is, instead, the scrawl on the wall

that marks the first words of the new poem.
Forgotten the farmer, forgotten the field
and only her high step through the meadow
a wraith in her white sheath, garlanded green.

Quick in the breeze now, a shimmer of hair
as mice clamber in the gold at her foot
the bobcat, all stillness, hunting them down
as she writes with her light foot on the green.



Jenne Micale

Henge of Keltria Lists:

The Henge maintains several lists, general discussion, Initiates Only, and Correspondence Course Students Only. To join any of the lists, send an e-mail to the appropriate list:

Keltria-L-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

General Discussion List

Keltria-G-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Genealogical and Ancestor Discussion List

K-Students-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

CC Students Only

K-Initiate-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Initiates Only

Important Henge eMail addresses:

Please use the form at <http://www.keltria.org/emails2.htm> to contact any of the Henge Officers: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Trustees. Also, you may contact the Council of Elders: Archdruid, Elders or any of the Keltrian Groves or Study Groups via that webpage form.

You may contact the following directly via eMail:

The Henge Office at Henge-Office08@keltria.org

Submissions to Henge Happenings at Submissions@keltria.org

Keltria webmaster at Webmaster@keltria.org

the bard's path

KILCLOONEY MORE PORTAL TOMB

Part 1 of 2

by Steward of the Wood

She met Steward of the Wood at the gate to the track, riding side saddle on the white mare with a black dog and young, brown filly running playfully beside her. Epona, Goddess of Fertility and Bounty, smiled down at him in all her glory with that warm, welcoming smile and the aura of health and abundance emanating from her. As the mare beneath her stood still, the brown filly gently nursed the mare and the black dog nudged Steward's hand. "We are glad you came, Steward of the Wood. She has been expecting you and I am to guide you to the Veil." Only then did he remember that Epona was also known to be a guide to the Otherworld (Summerlands, *Tír na nÓg*).

Steward was awe-struck. Little had he imagined such an encounter on this fine September day in Donegal, Ireland. As a Druid, he was in search of the Gods and Goddesses and the Nature Spirits of this ancient land. In the planning of this quest, his body, and it's very DNA, tingled at the prospects of encountering the Ancestors, including his own Irish ancestors. Now he was here, in Donegal, at the site of the Kilclooney More Portal Tomb and looking into the beautiful face of a Goddess, Epona, with her long, dark brown tresses cascading over her shoulders and along the back of her white woolen tunic to grace the mare's back.

"I greet you Goddess Epona and your companions," he said, searching for words in his faltering wits. "I come in love and peace and seek communion with the Gods and Goddesses, those who I honor with my devotion. I am a child of this ancient land through my ancestors," he continued.

"We know them... and you," she said as a sly smile graced her lips. "We also know what you seek. She is waiting for you on the other side in the

Grove and I promised her that I would lead you to the Veil."

A flush of humility overtook Steward of the Wood and he replied, "I am overwhelmed at your generosity and tell me, who she is, and what will I learn."

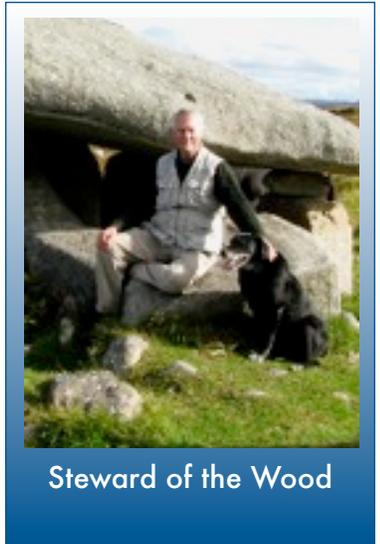
"Ah," said Epona, "that is a good question. She will reveal both to you, but come, she waits," at this.

Epona turned the mare and led them up the grassy track.

Strolling in the warm sun-bathed afternoon through the verdant land, Steward silently thanked Danu, Earth Mother, for this chance to be with Her and Her children, his brothers and sisters, the Nature Spirits. Wrens danced on the air and serenaded them as they walked through grass and sedge punctuated by white wildflowers. Their floral fragrance hung sweetly on the air.

He began to detect a gurgling sound, almost laughing faintly on the gentle breeze, low at first but gaining strength. Pausing and turning to Steward, Epona nodded to the side of the track and said, "Refresh yourself at the sacred spring. Cleanse and prepare yourself."

"Gladly," he replied with a bit of relief. "I want to enter the Otherworld ready to receive knowledge."



Steward of the Wood

At that, he walked the short distance to the spring which bubbled, laughing, from the warm, rich ground at the base of a small hummock. Lush, green plants with abundant white flowers encircled the small pool. The Spirit of the Spring, standing beside the pool, beckoned him. He could almost discern her form, that of a slender woman, young but ageless, in a gossamer raiment, but she was elusive...with form and then without. Her voice was that of the spring. When he approached, he could faintly make out her lithe arms as she beckoned him to her and the spring.

“Thank you, beautiful Spirit,” Steward said. “I come to you in love and peace.”

She replied, barely audible above the gurgling sound, “we know. You are expected. She told us you were coming in search of her inspiration.”

At that he slowly knelt beside the spring and bathed his face, neck, arms, and hands in the silvery, translucent waters. It was incredibly refreshing, exhilarating, and renewing. “My mind feels alive; my skin tingles,” he thought. Then refreshed, he stood up and thanked the Spirit before returning to Epona who waited patiently by the track.

“Are you fully ready now, Steward of the Wood, child of Danu?”

“Fully,” he replied, “and I am ready to meet my destiny. I long for it. I have envisioned this in my dreams and meditations.” She motioned him forward and they continued their journey to the dolman which was only another 100 feet away atop a small rise in the undulating land. The ancient dolman stood silhouetted against the sky, the enormous grey cap stone resting atop four stone pillars.

As they approached, Epona stopped beside the dolman.



Looking intently at Steward, she said, “Praise and honor the Ancestors who made this most sacred monument to the Earth Mother as well as the Hidden Ones who guard it. Then enter her awaiting womb to pass to the Otherworld. You will be welcomed by Manannán Mac Lir who may allow you to enter. It depends on whether he deems you ready.”

Steward smiled. “Thank you Epona. You have blessed me with your presence and I honor you.” Then he circled the massive dolman deiseil, thanking

and praising those who made it, and those who guard the portal. After a brief pause, he bent over and entered between the two pillars that form the entry way. In the dim light, he could see the path descending steeply into the dark, brown earth...the womb of Danu. Faintly, he saw torches alternating on the walls. They illuminated ancient symbols carved lovingly into the standing stones lining the walls.

Walking past, Steward could see concentric circles, wheels, and spirals, ancestral images carved in the living stone by the Wise Ones to express their awe and visions of enlightenment. He tentatively touched a spiral, tracing it in the cool grey stone with the forefinger of his right hand and suddenly he knew. “This is the journey that my spirit makes in search of essence...the light of knowledge and understanding,” he proclaimed loudly. Only silence greeted his knowing.

The only sound was a slight crunching noise as his feet met the soil during the rest of his journey in the dimly lighted passage...the birth canal. A faint, musty odor was in the air. Then he rounded a corner and came face to face with an almost blinding light. Hard to grasp initially, his mind finally understood that it was a doorway...a doorway from the body of the Earth Mother into the Otherworld.

Slowly, Steward continued walking and just before he entered the door, he looked up and saw the symbols on the lintel stone over the door. It was a series of consecutive zigzag lines cut into the stone. "The nine waves," he said out loud, "and I am going beyond the ninth wave to Tír na nÓg."

Emerging into the diffuse light of a foggy place, yet still almost blinding after his dark journey, Steward stopped and blinked several times to regain his sight and finally his composure. There just 20 feet to his right stood the figure of a man but clearly more than a man. He was large, easily over six feet tall, with long flowing red hair and a full beard, both the color of fire. His eyes were the green color of seaweed and seemed to lightly sparkle. His clothing consisted of a tunic the color of varying shades of water, both blue and green. As Steward stood speechless, the God strode over to him and spoke with a deep, resonating voice. "Steward of the Wood, I bid you greetings. Your coming was foretold. Are you ready to pass through the Veil? Are you worthy? Is your heart clear of guile and are you truly ready to follow the Path no matter where it leads?"

"I am Manannán Mac Lir, Son of the Sea, Manannán of the Red Beard. I have prepared myself these last four years as I

studied the way of the Druid. Epona has guided me to you and I am ready to walk the Path of Knowledge."

"Your Ancestors are here as are the Nature Spirits and the other Gods and Goddesses," Manannán spoke in his deep, resonating voice. "You have been here before in past lives and now we welcome you in this life." As he spoke, he gently anointed Steward on the forehead with oil making the sign of Imbas. "May you be blessed in



mind, body, and spirit. Go forth in the Otherworld on this, your first visit in this lifetime. May it prove to be only the first of many such visits. Your destiny calls you back." As he finished speaking, the fog began to clear. Slowly at first and then increasingly Steward began to see the Otherworld across the watery Veil.

As perspective slowly returned, Steward realized that he was in a beautiful world. A sídhe was behind him with the entryway whence he had emerged. In front of him was a

grassy strip of land about 200 feet wide strewn with flowers of all hues...blue, red, yellow, white, and purple. Across the meadow lay a forest filled with ancient trees. They were huge and in leaf. A path led into the woods and disappeared around a bend.

Standing beside the path leading into the forest was a man. He wore a green woolen tunic the color of dark green oak leaves with a brown leather belt about his waist and brown woolen trousers. His hair was wavy brown and shoulder length and he had a moderate-length brown, wavy beard with auburn red hue. He looked strangely familiar to Steward. He almost recognized him.

At that moment, the man broke into a broad grin and motioned Steward to come to him. Crossing the grassy meadow, slowly, hesitantly at first, Steward approached the man who extended his hand in greeting.

"Welcome, Steward of the Wood, my friend. I have sensed you for many turnings of the wheel. It is good that you return home to us," the man said.

"I have longed all my life to be here but have only now found the way. I too have sensed the Otherworld and sought its portal in my travels throughout the world," said Steward.

“Now that you know the way, you can visit us at any time. There are many portals and you carry the best of all in your mind’s eye,” said the man.

“What may I call you,” asked Steward.

“Just call me Guide for now and I will reveal more to you later,” said the man. Guide continued, “I believe you know my companion, Spirit of the Buck.” At that he motioned to an enormous buck deer that was totally white in color with red ears and jet black eyes.

“Oh, I know the Spirit of the Buck well,” said Steward of the Wood. “His children, the deer, and I meet regularly and commune in the mundane world. They have gifted me many tokens that now grace my altar. I seek and call them and they visit me, imparting knowledge and skills like swift, quiet movement through the forest. Up to this point, I have sensed you and spoken with you, Spirit of the Buck, my totem. It is good to finally meet and I honor you.”

“At this, Spirit of the Buck gently nodded his head in assent and then suddenly Steward could hear Spirit of the Buck speaking his mind. “You have been one of my children, the deer, in a past life. You know full well how it feels to run swiftly in the forest on silent

hooves. As a human child in this life, you remembered this and were truly a child of the forest. We watched over you and nurtured you in the forests and mountains of Tennessee. Welcome home.”

Guide then said, “If you are ready, let’s go to the Sacred Grove. She is waiting for you. Change out of those strange clothes and don ones of the Otherworld. At times, these will be helpful as you seek to blend into the forest and become invisible.”



Then he handed Steward a brown pair of woolen trousers, soft brown leather boots, a dark green tunic like his and a brown belt with a beautiful quartz stone buckle, with carved triskele, and with a metal backing. Steward quickly changed and was ready to go. The rough wool against his skin took a while to get used to but then he felt even more at home.

They walked silently on the path through the ancient forest.

As a forester, Steward had been in forests worldwide in the mundane world but had rarely been in ones this ancient with these species of trees and understory plants. Perhaps the closest was Sherwood Forest in Nottinghamshire, England with its large ancient oaks. A variety of trees, both in size and species grew in the forest of the Otherworld. The understory plants were varied and abundant, especially in any small openings. The air in the forest was fresh and exceptionally clear with a

soft fragrance of flowers and the sun shone clearly from the sky. As he walked, Steward spotted species he recognized, including the sacred trees to the Druids: rowan, alder, willow, ash, hawthorn, oak, holly, hazel, apple, blackthorn, elder, pine, aspen, and yew. “I have friends and loved ones in these trees in both worlds,” he thought.

The forest also teemed with other life. Squirrels scampered on the forest floor as well as in the tree crowns, chattering and chasing each other like playful children. Wrens and finches sang merrily as they flitted through the trees in search of good meals...ah, a crunchy bug. Ravens perched in the trees and regaled them with their croaks and caws.

Continued next issue....

the bard's path

The Last Lesson

by Wren Taylor

[Ed Note: This article was first published in Henge Happenings in Samhain 1999 and is reprinted here in remembrance.]

3:30AM. I sit bathed in the cold light of the conical copper lamp suspended over the glass topped kitchen table. This is the only light illuminated in this empty, old house. I sit on a wooden chair bundled in layers of pink flannel and a thick, peach colored terry cloth robe. My arms are wrapped tightly around my knees. Shivering, I listen to the barrage of ice and snow born out of the February storm. The maple trees sigh under the weight of the onslaught. I believe the storm is attempting to capture me and turn me into a pillar of ice. It would be so easy to do right now.

This old house of my youth has the unmistakable scent of having been shut and empty for many months, which it had since Mom and Dad moved into my old apartment over their machine shop.

Scattered before me on the table are the family's old photo albums. As I absently flip the leaves, the house softly sings to me with the ghostly voices of holidays and birthdays past. I close my eyes, let my head fall back and listen to the squeals of laughter, voices raised in sibling competition and the soft murmurs of affection exchanged while tucking five children into their beds. I remember...

Unconsciously, I lift my fingers to my face to chase away an annoying itch and abruptly stop. His scent... His scent is on my fingers... It's a combination of Corn Huskers Lotion and something else – something that is uniquely my "Da." He quietly passed to the Otherworld just over an hour ago. I pull my fingers away from my face and study them under the circle of light. I think, "How odd..." Like lightning, my left brain engages and responds, "It's not odd at all! He's only been dead an hour. After all you did for him today of course

they smell. Go wash your hands!" I ignore the practical advice and instead bring my hand back to my face. I close my eyes once more and review Greybeard's last lesson to his children.

When the call came, it was not unexpected. I was in the fortunate position to drop everything and book the transcontinental flight.

Greybeard, as we affectionately called him, was cognoscente and able to sit in his recliner for most of the first week. In a hoarse voice, he spoke excitedly of his anticipated adventure. He obviously enjoyed sending his children on treasure hunts to find specific items. He required particular pictures from the Hubbell telescope, CD's of whale songs and various other items to help him illustrate what he expected to find on his journey. It was fun in a curious sort of way to march to his chair-side in triumph clutching the found treasures. He lavished praise on us as though we were small children although the gray was obvious on our own heads.

We discussed his funeral and he declared that it would be a Viking funeral. (That old coot! All of these years, he told me he was a Southern Baptist when he really was "one of us"...) My mind immediately flashed to the local environmental group. I dubiously questioned whether we would be allowed to launch a burning boat with him on it from the town dock. The compromise was a model Viking boat to hold his ashes. It was decided that the small boat would be launched in



Wren Taylor

the brook that runs beside the building. He liked that idea. I suggested that since he had not realized his life long dream of punting on the Thames, the boat could be retrieved and I could take him with me when I travel to Stonehenge some day. All kidding aside, he liked that idea very much, too. He asked me to do a "Brunehilda" for him at his "party." Slowly I said suuuure, but would he mind if we waited for the warmer weather? I pointed out that the breastplate would be a killer in the sub-zero temperatures. He chuckled and said fine, fine with a sparkle in his old tired eyes.

He said he was having too much fun at the party to leave, but then, he was so very, very tired. Even so, I admired his cheerful attitude and sense of humor. In a somber moment, Greybeard did extract a solemn promise that under no circumstances would he be transported to the hospital. I couldn't blame him for that, however, the red Do Not Resuscitate order on the Hospice paper work gave me an indescribable shiver. He required around the clock care, but I was honored to be a part of it.

Reciting William Henley's Invictus, he went to his bed for the final time. His last spoken words were, "Love, love, love." This was Greybeard's last lesson to his children.

INVICTUS
by William Henley

*Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods my be
For my unconquerable soul.*

*In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud:
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbow'd.*

*Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.*

*It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.*

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Henge Happenings

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This publication is also:
"Protected by the Berne Convention"

review

The Gaian Tarot

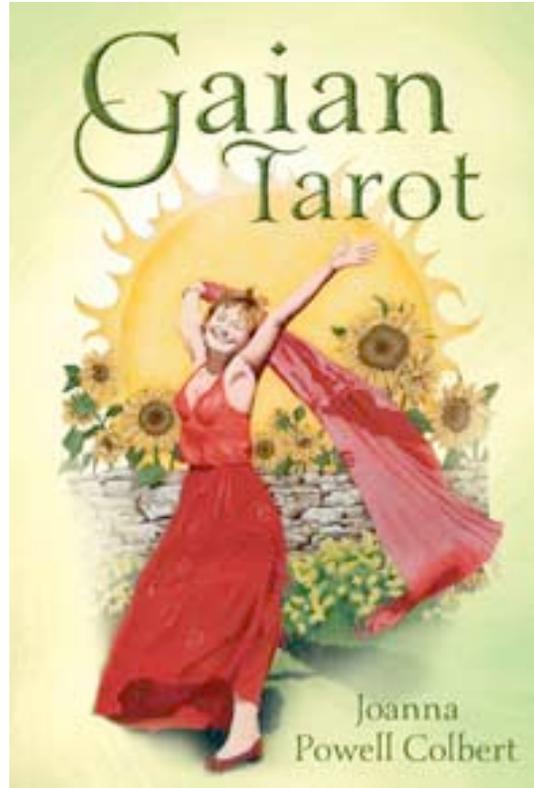
by Joanna Powell Colbert

Review by Jenne Micale

Many years ago, Joanna Powell Colbert's detailed and intricate drawings caught my eye when I was perusing a Pagan-themed book. When I learned several years ago that she was working on a Tarot deck, I was excited and delighted. *The Gaian Tarot* – published by Llewellyn – is the long-awaited result.

Every card in the deck features Colbert's incredibly detailed artwork and is replete with natural imagery, from the field of lavender in the Nine of Earth (in which the central figure is Colbert herself), to the turtle and fish in the Guardian of Water, the warring eagles in Five of Air, and the shining water and rotting bird in Death. The suits are divided according to element and the court cards according to age: Child, Explorer, Guardian, Elder. The humans depicted in the cards exemplify the range of human diversity and offer, in their way, a utopian vision of what our society could be.

The cards are loosely based on Rider-Waite, although they have their own take on traditional images. The Seven of Water, for example, displays not a woman lost in dreams (contained by chalices), but a man who chooses a chalice and drinks it to the full. While the Six of Pentacles is traditionally the alms-giver, the Six of Earth shows money being exchanged at a farmers' market. The



Eight of Earth – one of my favorite cards – shows a father teaching his daughter how to play djembe rather than a child carving a pentacle, although the Rider-Waite and Gaian tarot both express the dedication required in mastering a skill. The Fool is now the Seeker, the Empress the Gardener and the Devil, Bindweed – to name a few of the changes in the Major Arcana.

To a novice tarot reader, the departure from Rider-Waite may make learning this deck a little problematic. The relative dearth of negative cards may complicate readings for more mundane purposes; the Ten of Air – geese flying during the fall migration – espouses a theme of

endings, but not in the dramatic and traumatic manner of the Ten of Swords. But overall, the Gaian Tarot is excellent in giving guidance in spiritual matters – wise and gentle – and for meditation. **Highly recommended.**

[Gaian Tarot by Joanna Powell Colbert](#)

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- Pages 6, 7, 8, & 9 - Photos taken at the Kilclooney Dolmen were taken by Firefly and used by permission of Steward of the Wood.

From the President

Continued from Page 2

regarding what your goals are and how they were formalized in ritual.

For many years our Grove has taken a large piece of slate and had each of the Grove members make a drawing as a representation of that goal on the slate. The slate is displayed during rituals during the year to remind everyone of the goals and plans that were set forth that past Samhain.

Walk with wisdom, peace, and harmony.

The Henge of Keltria is a nonprofit church (501(c)(3)) dedicated to providing information, training, and networking to those who practice or who are interested in Keltrian Druidism, Druidism in general, and the evolution of mind, body, and spirit in an Irish context.

On the web at WWW.KELTRIA.ORG
Druidism for the 21st Century™



Keltrian Druid Beliefs

1. We believe in **Divinity as it is manifest in the Pantheon**, and that polytheism, pantheism, animism, and pan-polytheism are all valid perceptions of said Pantheon.
2. We believe that **nature is the embodiment of the Gods**.
3. We believe that **natural law reflects the will of the Gods**.
4. We believe that **all life is sacred**, and should neither be harmed nor taken without deliberation or regard.
5. We believe in the **immortality of the spirit**.
6. We believe that **our purpose is to gain wisdom through experience**, and that we may undergo several incarnations to facilitate the variety of experience necessary to gain said wisdom.
7. We believe that **learning is an ongoing process**, and should be fostered at all ages.
8. We believe that **morality should be a matter of personal conviction** based upon self-respect and respect for others.
9. We believe that **evil is not a matter of inheritance but of intent**; therefore, actions are not in themselves evil. Rather, it is through the intent behind actions that evil can manifest.
10. We believe in the **relative nature of all things**, that nothing is absolute, and that all things, even the Gods, have their dark sides.
11. We believe that **every individual has the right to pursue enlightenment** through his or her chosen path.
12. We believe in **honoring the Gods through the cyclical celebrations** of our Celtic ancestors.
13. We believe in a **living religion able to adapt to a changing environment**; therefore, we recognize that our beliefs may undergo change as our tradition grows.