

HENGE HAPPENINGS

ISSUE 71 LUGHNASADH 2006

FROM THE PRESIDENT

I live in New York State, which has been hit hard by flooding this season, especially in the lower “southern tier” near Binghamton (along with Pennsylvania) as the mighty Susquehanna and Chenango Rivers swelled to bursting and finally overflowed their banks. Counties along the Mohawk River were also submerged as that powerful river left her banks and flowed over the land. People who have lived here all their lives are saying that they have never seen anything like it. People have been flooded out of their homes, reminiscent of the plight of New Orleans.

In central NY, we have had flash flooding and far too much rain this summer. As a result, our crops are suffering. With the last five inches of rain came a sweltering heat – perfect blight conditions. Hopefully we won’t get any more rain for a long while, and we will be able to pull through without too much damage.

When we have too much water pooling on the surface in the fields, which is what happens when we get too much rain all at once, we have to go out with shovels and dig trenches to try to let the water out so that the potatoes and onions don’t rot in the water in the field. Farming is always a crap shoot, as dependant on the moods of the Gods as we are. It is a humbling experience to be beholden to the whims of weather, but at least we have a lot of practice, unlike those who have recently had their homes destroyed by the rising up of a river.

For those Druids who have the skill to read the signs, the waters leaving their boundaries in a way never seen by the elders of a community gives a disturbing message. You may all recall that the King’s truth is paramount to the prosperity of the people, and approval is granted or withdrawn by the Goddess of the Land, or Sovereignty, according to his truth. Similarly, some of us see the strange natural disasters, both within our nation and out in the greater world, to be the direct result of an unfit leader or leaders who do not respect and protect the Land as they should so that the people may thrive.

I am loath to become what some may see as “political” here, however, I can’t see how Druids and politics could ever really be disentangled, given the nature of the beast. I feel it is my duty and my charge to simply say that Lady Sovereignty couldn’t be more obvious in Her messages to us, and it is far past time we heeded Her warnings.

Blessed Lughnasadh,
- TopazOwl

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *The Druid and the Blackberry Sprig*
- *Tree Legends, Lore and Whimsy (Part 1)*
- *A Summer Night’s Trance...*
- *St. John’s Wort*
- *A Feast of Age for Solitaires*
- *Death Comes Naturally*

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FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

The Druid and the Blackberry Sprig

Creating New Mythology

By Uken



BLACKBERRY

Summer storms in the valley of the Celts arrive on soft, playful kitten feet bringing relief from the summer heat for man and beast. The plants in the fields gratefully lift their faces to welcome a cool drink given of the Gods. These friendly visitors leave the air as crisp and clean as the newly washed linen that the young maid hangs in the sunshine to dry. This is usually the case, but not on this day, my children, no, not on this day.

This storm arrived roaring like the lions from the great forests of the south, with teeth tearing and claws snatching at the humble hovels of the villagers. Merchants dashed hither and thither moving quickly to protect their wares from the onslaught, and householders rushed home to prevent the rising waters from crossing their thresholds. More often than not, these heroic efforts were for naught. Little did the population of the valley know that this was only the first of a procession of pummelings that would increase in ferocity with each turn of the sun.

Living among the brethren, was a Druid of great renown; honored by the people and respected by kings and queens of many lands. Tall as the oak tree and thrice as strong, he is known to the people as ToeKnee; a name never forgotten as his great hand moves with purpose from his toe to his knee. So great is his power that he passes through the valley disguised by magick as a twin brother of a different mother detected by none, but leaving mild confusion in his mighty wake.

Other Druids in the land work their magicks with wands and staffs crafted of crystals. These draw upon the power of lightning to bring protection to the people through the communication of arcane knowledge. Try as they might on this dark day, no spark was available to come to their aid. The people despaired until it was recalled that ToeKnee was born of the oak in a storm such as this, and relied only on a humble sprig of blackberry to aid him in his work.

Among the people lived a woman, a queen among queens, her cloak of feathers so pure, white and bright that the people marveled they must have come from the moon. The tale passed from tongue to ear of ToeKnee's wondrous sprig, which only came to life in his learned hand. The story finally found Feather of the Moon, who had only the words of the ovates to guide her in bringing succor to her people. This mighty queen needed more. She needed the phenomenal visions that only came from ToeKnee and his blackberry sprig.

After struggling through the storm with the wind and rain rending her beautiful cloak of feathers, the queen entered the hall of the Druid she sought. She begged him to climb the mountain and bring visions of when the storms would abate. The queen was amazed that with no thought of the perilous journey, ToeKnee anticipated the need of the people and ascended the mountain on his own volition. Under the caress of ToeK-

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...THE DANGER
WAS REAL.



Vice P

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THE BARD'S PATH

Tree Legends, Lore and Whimsy

Part One: Fairies, healing and general folklore

By Randi Hendrickson

[A previous version of this article was published over 15 years ago in "A Year and a Day."—ed.]

For countless ages forests have been a source of awe and mystery to humankind. Trees provide us with wood for our homes and fuel for the fires that keep us warm in the bitter cold of winter. They shelter the small wild ones from storm and heat and cold. We hug them and talk to them and seek the aid of the various tree spirits. And we lean against them and reach down through the roots to feel the very heartbeat of the earth.

Forests held special significance to ancient peoples, though it is difficult for modern people to comprehend the sheer power and feeling of "entity" of the vast primeval forests. Along with the dangers of animal attacks and human or Fairie foes, was the belief that the trees themselves could waylay an unwelcome intruder. But today, humankind has lost much of that respect in his attempt to control that which he once held in the profoundest awe. Vast deforestation has so drastically reduced these once mighty forests to shadows of their former selves that Gary Snyder in "The Practice of the Wild" was moved to say: "There are seven million homeless children on the streets of Brazil. Are the vanishing trees being reborn as unwanted children?"

Several modern authors have reawakened some of that lost respect with their stories - based in folklore - of wondrous forests and those that dwell within. Once read, who could forget the power of Tolkien's Tree Ents, the mystery and deceptive beauty of Robert Holdstock's *Mythago Wood*, or Charles DeLint's magickal Canadian woods where distant piping can be heard, and if followed to its source, one might glimpse a huge stag before it bounds away, or perhaps it was a man with stag antlers on his brow and upon his back a mantle of green leaves?

Not only forests, but groves and individual trees were considered sacred and this reverence has persisted through the centuries in Ireland. To cut down a "bile", or sacred tree, was considered a terrible crime. In the ballad of "The Two Brothers", one brother kills another as punishment for "cutting down a hazel bush that might have grown into a tree." Sacred trees often grew over or near springs or wells. The tree and well are considered sacred sources of power because they connected the Underworld, the Land and the Sky towards which the tree's branches reached. Also, because of their longevity, trees were seen as living links between the many generations of the lands inhabitants, and often marked ritual centers or places of public assembly. According to one Irish source, the "*cran bethadh*" (or tree of life) stood in the center of a clan's territory and tribal raids by rival clans would be made for the sole purpose of destroying that tree to demoralize the enemy.

THE OAK
HAD A
GODLIKE
STATUS



Randi Hendrickson

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A summer night's trance...

By Ailim



The glowing face of the moon rises
bringing shadows to the forest.

Reflections of clouds on their journey,
stream across the water's edge.

The breeze moving gently through the trees,
stirs the whispers of voices long unheard.

An owl takes flight with wings spread wide,
in search of her chosen destiny.

Fairies dancing in their circle round,
bringing magic back to the garden.

Wisdom is renewed as the spiral turns,
night becomes day with the promise of her return.

FROM THE MAILBOX

INNER TRADITIONS NEW TITLES—FALL/WINTER 2006

Dan Brown mania continues with most of the new offerings from Inner Traditions being about the Grail, Knights Templar, and freemasonry. For those on the Seer's Path, *Plant Spirit Shamanism: Traditional Techniques for Healing the Soul* by Ross Heaven and Howard G. Charing looks particularly interesting. It promises an in-depth look at the role of plant spirits in shamanic rituals from around the world. It also explores the "core methods" of plant shamanism — Soul retrieval, spirit extraction, and sin eating. Destiny Books: Publication Date: September 2006.



AILIM

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THE SEER'S PATH

St. John's Wort

(Hypericum Perforatum)

By NIONE



COMMON ST. JOHNSWORT
HYPERICUM PERFORATUM L.
ST. JOHNSWORT FAMILY

Since St. John's Wort is an herb of the sun and one of the honored deities at Lughnasadh is the Sun God Lugh, it would seem appropriate to discuss this herb at this time.

St. John's Wort is an herb which is very useful medicinally as well as magically, and has been used by herbalists for centuries as a calming agent, pain reliever, anti-bacterial, anti-inflammatory and as an anti-viral. Taken internally, either in a capsule, tincture, or tea, it can relieve mild depression. The normal dosage as a tea is one teaspoon of herb to one cup of boiling water taken two to three times a day. Some people will find that they will notice a difference within a week, while others may take a month before noticing a difference. St. John's Wort, like many other herbs, acts subtly to nudge the body back into alignment, and it does this without causing drowsiness or fatigue. Science is not exactly sure how St. John's Wort works and many theories abound, but one thing researchers all agree on, it does work. St. John's Wort has been found as effective as Elavil and Trofranil in treating mild depression. Please discuss taking this herb with your doctor, especially if you already are taking prescribed anti-depressants, as this herb may enhance the action of the drugs you are already taking.

Ear infections, herpesvirus infection (cold sores) and mastitis have all been successfully treated with St. John's Wort. The anti-viral activity of this herb is enhanced when one is exposed to the sun and in some individuals may cause sun sensitivity.

St. John's Wort can also help relieve headaches, mostly those caused by tension. It contains compounds which relax the blood vessels thus improving blood flow to the brain. Though St. John's Wort will not help you sleep for longer periods of time, it will help you sleep deeper. Thus improving the quality of the sleep that you do get. I would advise that if you are preparing for any surgeries that require anesthesia, you stop taking St. John's Wort for about two weeks prior to the surgery as this herb will enhance the effects of the anesthesia.

When infused in olive oil and made into a salve, St. John's Wort has been found to speed healing of burns and cuts. It has also been useful in the treatment of psoriasis and warts.

It is the tops and flowers of this plant which are used. The flavonoids and components are easily extracted in water, alcohol or olive oil. Harvest at midsummer when it is flowering, bundle it loosely and hang upside down in a dark, cool, airy place until dry, then simply crumble and store in a glass jar out of direct sunlight. Sunlight will rapidly fade your herbs making them less effective or even render them useless. Before you harvest, please remember to sit with the plants and let them know your reason for harvesting, they are generally very willing to help you with your needs as long as you are respectful and polite.



NIONE

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The magickal uses of St. John's Wort are as varied as the medicinal. The gender of this herb is male and the ruling planet is the Sun, the element is fire. As stated in Ellen Evert Hopman's book, *A Druid's Herbal for the Sacred Earth Year*, the Welsh called this plant the "leaf of the blessed" It was understood to be an ideal combination of water and fire, the ultimate healing essence." This is a very powerful herb when used in healing rites, it is also useful when hung in the room of someone that is ill.

St. John's Wort is also a symbol of invincibility, courage, power and fertility. It can banish several forms of malevolence from the home. This herb is a good choice for protection or to encourage love to be brought into one's life.

For divining purposes wear St. John's Wort, drink it in a tea or burn in an incense blend to ease one into the proper mind set. It has also been said that placing St. John's Wort under the pillow of an unmarried woman will help her to dream of her future husband.

This herb is a truly blessed plant and will bring health, happiness and blessings to those who use it wisely.

As Always,
Walk with Wisdom

ST. John's Wort Salve

1 cup olive oil

1 moderate handful of St. John's Wort

1-2 tbs. bees wax

Place St. John's Wort and olive oil into a clear glass jar and set in a sunny place to infuse. After about 8 hours in the sun, strain the spent herb out of the oil and add the bees wax to the oil. Warm this on the stove until the wax is melted, do not let boil. Place into a tin or jar to harden. Store in the refrigerator to prevent spoilage as this contains no preservative. Apply as needed.



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THE DRUID'S PATH

A FEAST OF AGE FOR SOLITAIRES

BY AUTUMN ROSE

For a Grove or study group the Feast of Age may be a day-long event, with a whole pig slowly roasting and lots of time given to socializing. For Keltrian solitaires something briefer may be preferred. The following Feast of Age was composed specially for solitaires. Note: the sacred fire in this rite also serves as a cooking fire. The rite as written calls for the altar to be set up in a kitchen and a stove burner used as the fire. If setting up in your kitchen is impractical or not to your liking, consider using a fondue or chafing dish on your altar in its usual location. As presented here, the ritual uses several slices of bacon to symbolize Manannan's swine; vegetarians may wish to substitute a quick-cooking vegetable and utensils other than those named. You will also need a cloak to represent Manannan's cloak of invisibility; and since this rite centers around a feast, you should provide food for a meal. For the "four truths," tell any four brief (two or three paragraphs when written) true stories from your own life or other sources of your choice. The ritual begins and ends in the standard way, and you will need your regular altar appointments in addition to those peculiar to this rite.



KELTRIAN DRUID
ALTAR

THE RITUAL

STANDARD RITUAL OPENING.

EXPLANATION OF RITE.

I come to the Grove today to observe the traditions ordained long ago by the Lord of the Blessed Isles, Manannan Mac Lir: to speak four truths over the cooking of the pig that is eaten and afterward is alive again; to join in the Feast of Goibniu and drink the ale that confers immortality; and to don the cloak of Manannan, which gives the power of invisibility.

LIGHT THE SACRED FIRE

Turn on one stove burner to medium heat. Take the Goddess candle in right hand and hold over Sky cauldron. **Goddesses of the Tuatha De Dannan, I call you forth from this vessel and ask that you join your spirits to this flame, that your faces may shine upon me during this rite. So be it.**

Take God candle in left hand and hold over Sky cauldron. **Gods of the Tuatha De Dannan, I call you forth from this vessel and ask that you join your spirits to this flame, that your faces may shine upon me during this rite. So be it.**

Gods and Goddesses of the Tuatha De Dannan, with the flames of your spirits I light this sacred fire. Dip both candles over already lighted burner. So be it. Return

... FOUR
TRUTHS WERE
SPOKEN OVER IT.



AUTUMN ROSE

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Death Comes Naturally

By Carole RavenDancer

[From the 2005 Lughnasadh Workshop at Nanny Oak Farm.]



BLESSINGS of the Land upon you! Lughnasadh—the beginning of the end of harvest. Here in the USA it is the beginning of the death season that will come full circle at Samhain. Much like the harvest crops we know that we are going to transform! Our physical bodies will die and become something else. It is a natural process!

We know that we are going to die. Most of us do not know when or how.

Most of us are not prepared. Most of us are scared. Most of us do not know what to expect, nor do we believe that we have choices in the manner in which we depart for the next world. Naturally, we do have choices! And, it is time to begin our inner discussion (knowing full well that inner actions become manifest in the outer worlds) of what each of us need to do to prepare for death in the mundane world and life in the otherworld.

It is not a good idea to wait until you think you will need to plan. Though we would like to live to a ripe old age, accidents occur, illness can set in, as well as CRAFTS (can't remember a F***** thing syndrome), plus our tendency to put off what we perceive as not important! It is our personal, family, and community responsibility to formally choose and implement our earthly decisions. It is especially important to legalize your choices if you are a partner in a non-legal relationship.

There are many books, websites, and organizations that can provide us with information or help us prepare for a traditional mundane death. There are many options available to us in the USA, and abroad. But how do we legally inform others of our choices? A health care proxy, living will, power of attorney for health care, and palliative care directive are some of the tools that we can use to announce those “end of life” choices. Then there are funeral, burial, and memorial services options—someone has to choose--hopefully it will be you!

Though states in the USA, and other countries use different terminology and have slightly different laws, today in the mundane world the health care proxy is recognized as the single most important legal document to ensure that the medical and health care professions will honor your choices. This document may be called a health care proxy, medical directive, power of attorney for health care, advanced medical directive, or palliative care directive. The purpose of this document is for you to legally assign responsibility to a health care agent who will act on your behalf if and when you are unable to make health care decisions. You must sign this document while you are of “sound mind” and in the USA either have it “witnessed” by others or notarized.

The next important legal binding document is the living will. In the USA this document may be termed living will, declaration, or advance directive. The purpose of this document is to notify your family, doctor, hospital, and legal courts of your decisions regarding the withholding or withdrawing of health care treatment. In your state

[WE] NEED TO
CREATE OUR
OWN SPIRITUAL
AND MAGICAL
PROXIES!



CAROLE
RAVENDANCER

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FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

(Continued from page 2)

nee's capable fingers, the blackberry sprig sprang to life and shared the vision with the queen. In brilliant colors, she could see that a miracle had occurred. The storms divided and passed along each side of the valley. The Gods had spared the people, and all would be well soon. Grateful and satisfied that the vision was true, the queen departed to spread the news throughout the village.

At last, the clouds did indeed part. The sun blessed the valley with his beneficent smile once more, and the Celts were left hale and hardy to battle another day.

So ends another tale of the valley.

What really happened: It's true that the site for the Pagan Spirit Gathering is a rather remote location, and most cell phone services are not available there. We were rather surprised that Tony's blackberry had reception. In fact, I was really surprised when I called from home and he answered in a porta-potty! Anyhoo, Moon Feather, who is on the festival staff,

heard that the blackberry was working, so she went find him and add to her radio information from the national weather service. The best reception was on top of the hill so Tony trudged up there and saved the video information from www.weather.com. It provided a visual showing the worst of the weather had passed on either side of the festival site without major damage. Some reports were warning of hail and tornado threats that would be devastating for people spending the week in tents. We did indeed have good reason to worry; the danger was real.

It is also true that we usually camp next to a gentleman who bears a rather remarkable resemblance to Tony. John has been mistaken for Tony and vice versa more than once over the years. One afternoon, John's wife and I dressed Tony as John was that day, and sent him down Merchants' Row. This did indeed cause some confusion providing for much hilarity in the Keltrian camp.

If you would like to hear more about creating new mythology, let me know and I will be happy to oblige.

*Walk with wisdom,
Wren*

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THE BARD'S PATH — TREE LEGENDS, LORE AND WHIMSEY

(Continued from page 5)

Trees of all types are quite often associated with the Fairie Folk. An Irish author tells of how a "Fairie tree" that stood in the back yard of his home when he was a child was moved to the front of the house by his father. While the tree had remained in the back, his father had had good fortune in money matters. But soon after it was moved, his father lost much of his wealth. Once convinced of the reason for his loss, his father returned the tree to its original location and soon prospered again.

Other trees, such as the "ymp-tree" (a grafted apple), were believed to be "under the influence of Fairies" and any who slept beneath one was likely to be "carried away by Fairie ladies". "Fairie Folks, are in Old Oaks", is so common a rhyme, that many still find it familiar. Mini whirlwinds of leaves, so often seen during the fall, are said to be physical evidence of a "Fairie dance". The tiniest of Fairies are believed to ride on falling leaves. If a leaf is caught in the air, before it has touched the ground, the Fairie must grant the "catcher" a wish. At a natural outcropping of greenstone on the hill above the vicarage in Newlyn, Cornwall, the Troll of Tolcarne, described as a little old man dressed in tight-fitting leathern jerkin with a hood upon his head, could be called upon for assistance if someone held in their hand three dried leaves of ash, oak and thorn, and pronounced the appropriate charm. W. Allingham says in his poem "The Fairies":

*They have planted thorn-trees,
For pleasure, here and there.
Is any man so daring
As dig them up in spite,
He shall find their sharpest thorns
In his bed at night.*

In England, Oakmen, who are described as squat dwarfish people with red toadstool caps are the guardians of animals and are believed to tempt intruders into their wood with disguised food made from fungi. The woods where they live is a thrice-cut coppice (grown from fallen or cut trees rather than seed) and is full of bluebells. An oak coppice was often considered an evil and dangerous place to travel through at night, especially if it was a blue-bell wood. Why such a place is considered to be so malevolent may be explained by the following rhyme:

*Ellum do grieve,
Oak he do hate,
Willow do walk
If you travels late.*

Since the oak had a god-like status, and it has the ability to grow back from the roots of stumps, it was believed that the oak bitterly resented being cut. Because of the elm's (ellum) tendency towards death from disease it was believed that neighboring elms died from grief. The willow is a more sinister tree in that it had the habit of uprooting itself at night and

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following lone travellers, muttering.

Quite often those that harmed the oak came to harm themselves! The following quotes, from the late 1600's, demonstrate this.

*"No murd'ring Axes let 'em (oaks) feel.
Nor violate the Groves with impious Steel..
Avenging Deities inhabit there:
For Poets tell how wounded Oaks have bled..
Denouncing Terrors from their awful Head.
And thence of old religiously rever'd,
Their ancient Groves our pious Fathers
spar'd."*

"There was one Oak in the great Wood call'd Norwood, had Miselto. Some persons cut this Misselto, for some Apothecaries in London and left only one branch remaining for more to sprout out. One fell lame shortly after: Soon after, each of the others lost an Eye, and he that fell'd the Tree, about 1678 (tho' warned of these Misfortunes of the other Men) would not withstanding, adventure to do it, and shortly broke his Leg."

In 1824, a ballad was printed and circulated bemoaning the destruction of the Mile Oak near Oswestry. The following verse is from that ballad:

*"To break a branch was deemed a sin,
A bad-luck job for neighbours,
For fire, sickness, or the like,
Would mar their honest labours."*

Not only the oak, but ash and elder were also con-

sidered sacred and dire misfortunes would befall any who dared to harm them. In the parish of Clenor in County Cork is a sacred ash whose branches were never cut though firewood was scarce. Another ash in Borrisokane which was used in May Day rites, could cause the house of any man "who burnt even a chip of it" to be burned down. Such a fate a cottager brought upon himself when he tried to cut a branch from a sacred elder that overhung a sacred well. In his three attempts, twice he stopped because it appeared that his house was on fire. Both times were false alarms. The third time he ignored what he saw and cut the branch, only to return home to discover that his house had "burnt to the ground". In Lincolnshire, it was believed that the elder tree's permission must be granted before cutting a branch. The charm was: "Owd Gal, give me of thy wood, an Oi will give some of moine, when I graws inter a tree".

Among it's many properties, the ash was known for healing. It was believed that to apply a chip from a cut ash, of one, two or three year's growth, at the hour and minute of the sun's entering into Taurus could stop a nose bleed. Another belief was that passing an injured or ill child through the opening of a young, flexible ash that had been severed and held open with wedges, would cause the child to be healed as the ash tree healed after it had been carefully bound up. The child was to be passed through three times by its mother. On the mornings of the three successive days, the child was to be washed in the dew from the leaves of this tree.

CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE....

THE DRUID'S PATH — A FEAST OF AGE FOR SOLITAIRES

(Continued from page 9)

candles to their holders.

THE RITE OF FOUR TRUTHS

The swine of Manannan could not be fully cooked unless four truths were spoken over it. I honor this tradition now by speaking four truths

over this pork as I cook it.

Place bacon in skillet on lighted burner.

*Tell the first true story.
Turn the bacon.
Tell the second true story.
Turn the bacon.
Tell the third true story.
Turn the bacon.*

(Continued on page 16)

(Continued from page 15)

Tell the fourth true story.

Remove skillet from burner, drain and pat bacon dry, arrange on serving plate. (Leave burner lighted. Remember, this is your sacred fire).

THE FEAST OF GOIBNIU

Blessing the Feast

Place chalices, plate of bacon and other foods at front of altar. **Tuatha De Dannan, Gods and Goddesses of my tribe, you who partake of Goibniu's ale are blessed with immortality. I ask you now to bless me, too, with many years. May these cups be filled with strength and long life.** Consecrate chalices with branch and sickle. **So be it.**

The swine of Manannan, however often it was cooked and eaten, was always afterward alive again, so that there was never lack of meat in Manannan's house. Gods and Goddesses of my tribe, I ask you to bless this pork with renewal, that there may never be lack of meat in my house. May all these foods be blessed with life and health. Consecrate bacon and other foods with branch and sickle. **So be it.**

THE LIBATION

Elevate the chalices. **These are the waters of strength and long life. From each cup I share a portion with the Tuatha De Dannan, who are my guests at this feast.** Libate. Replace chalices at front of altar.

Elevate the plate of bacon. **This is the swine of Mannanan, over which four truths were spoken. I**

share a portion of this, too, with my guests, the Tuatha De Dannan. Libate the bacon and each of the other dishes included in the meal.

THE FEAST

Eat and drink. Afterward remove food dishes from front of altar and return chalices to their usual places.

THE RITE OF FETH FIADHA

Take up the cloak. **This is the cloak that Manannan of the Mists wore when he wished to pass unnoticed. I don it now to take unto myself that same power of invisibility. From this day until the day when I don the cloak again at the next Feast of Age, whenever I wish to pass unnoticed among my fellows, I shall imagine myself wearing this cloak, and it will be as if I am not there.** Put the cloak on and visualize yourself blending and disappearing into the background. When you feel ready, lay the cloak aside.

CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENT

Thus have I observed the traditions ordained by Manannan Mac Lir. Now the time has come to end this rite; but first, it is fitting that I should thank those whom I called to share in it.

RETURNING THE DEITIES

Hold the two candles over the Sky cauldron. **Gods and Goddesses of my people, I bid you now return to the cauldron of the Sky.** Return candles to their holders.

STANDARD RITUAL CLOSING

THE DRUID'S PATH — DEATH COMES NATURALLY

(Continued from page 10)

or country, this information may or may not be contained in the health care proxy. You must sign this document while you are of "sound mind" and in the USA either witnessed by others or notarized.

It is important to research the laws in your state in order to be sure that your choices will be upheld by local, state, or country law. Along with numerous reference books noted at the end of this article you may find the following websites helpful:

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<http://www.caringinfo.org/>
<http://www.finalchoices.calhealth.org>
<http://www.heritagewills.co.uk/advance.shtml>
http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability_rights/hr_disab/Wills_DP/wills_dp.html#introduction

It is very important that once you have completed a health care proxy and/or living will that you make multiple copies and keep a few with you at all times! It is NOT enough to have one on file with your doctor, hospital, partner, etc. In an emergency, the hospital staff, your partner, or your doctor(s) are NOT going to look for your proxy! They are going to react to the emergency! If you don't fancy carrying an 8"x11" document with you, check your state requirements to determine how much information is required in an emergency situation. Some states will accept a business card size document, much like an organ donor card.

Please note: It depends on your state's laws, but chances are you do not need a lawyer to prepare the health care proxy or living will. The websites listed above contain current information and forms for the USA, UK & AUS. For those of you in other countries using web search key words such as "living will" or "medical directive" will point you in the right direction.

We, as Western Mystery practitioners, need to create our own spiritual & magical proxies! Documents to indicate how our magical tools will be disposed of. Documents that should name whom we wish to have present as our trusted guide(s) at the occasion of our death. If it is not possible for our guide(s) to be physically present, the means of contacting them should be documented. If you choose not to have a death attendant in this world that too should be documented.

The purpose of the spiritual proxy is to give permission for your guide or death attendant to work on your behalf. This spiritual proxy should become a part of your health care proxy, and must be honored by family, doctors, hospitals, hospices, etc. Sign this document while you are of "sound mind" and have it witnessed or notarized according to the same terms and conditions as the health care proxy. Your health

care agent should be comfortable with and trusted to carry out the terms of your spiritual proxy.

The magical proxy is to give instruction and permission to use or dispose of your magical tools properly. You may also want to have a legal will that includes your wishes regarding the future of your magical tools. In the USA, a legal will governs the disposal of material goods. Sign this document while you are of "sound mind" and have it witnessed or notarized. (Note: in the USA lawyers can prepare, witness, and notarize such documents.)

It is beyond the scope of this article to present information about the many types of funeral or burial arrangements available both in the USA and other countries. Check your state's funeral and burial laws, choose a method, and most importantly discuss, discuss, discuss your choices with your trusted family or friend(s). Some excellent reference books to get you started are listed below. You may also wish to include your choice in your legal will.

Finally, Adept Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki "was taught that as a student of the Mysteries that it was the right of every Initiate to go over in full consciousness..." (The New Book of the Dead, pg. 18) Not everyone makes this choice, but it is an option! If this is what you want, you must prepare because it takes time, practice, and courage. It is important that you prepare the others who will assist you, and again this choice should be included in a signed, written document, perhaps included as part of your spiritual proxy.

Naturally, it is our responsibility to prepare ourselves for death and rebirth. We have options, choices regarding our health care, death walk, and burial that we should make in this world that will aid in transition to the otherworld. It is not fair to leave those choices to others—that is when guilt creeps in. So, please take the time now, at Lughnasadh the harvest, to research, discuss, and begin making those choices legal so that you will come full circle responsibly and with grace and dignity.

(Continued on page 18)

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Recommended books:

Mitford, Jessica, *The American Way of Death Revisited*. ISBN 0679771867. A must read for information on funeral & burial laws and the funeral industry in the USA.

Carlson, Lisa, *Caring for your Own Dead*. ISBN 0942679016. Another must read for information on funeral and burial methods and law. Website: <http://www.funeralconsumerinfo.org/>.

Nuland, Sherwin B., *How We Die*. ISBN 0679414614. Not a book for the faint of heart, Dr. Nuland documents the process of physical death and the healer as part of the death process.

Ashcroft-Nowicki, Dolores, *The New Book of the Dead*. ISBN 0850309514. A quote from this book: "such an Initiate will have prepared the death working long before and worked out exactly how they wish the

remains to be disposed of and where. If death comes quickly whether it be a natural or a violent death they will know enough to recognize its imminence: whether it is best to fight for life, or if this is the time to flow with the experience and spring free of the physical body." (pg. 65).

Kubler-Ross, Elizabeth, *On Death and Dying*. ISBN 0684839385. First written in 1969, this is remains a classic and is well worth reading.

Starhawk & M. Macha NightMare, *The Pagan Book of Living and Dying*. ISBN 0062515160. Though written from a Wiccan perspective, this is an excellent book with many chants, prayers and crafts to assist the dying and their families.

Golden, Thomas R., *Swallowed by a Snake: The Gift of the Masculine Side of Healing*. ISBN 0965464911. I found much wisdom in this book that basically deals with grief. A good reference book for those who plan a memorial or burial service.

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WWW.KELTRIA.ORG

DRUIDISM FOR THE 21ST
CENTURY™

KELTRIAN DRUIDISM IS A SPIRITUAL PATH DEDICATED TO REVERING THE NATURE SPIRITS, HONORING THE ANCESTORS, AND WORSHIPPING THE DEITIES OF OUR ANCIENT IRISH ANCESTORS. THE HENGE OF KELTRIA IS A NONPROFIT RELIGIOUS CORPORATION 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 THROUGH AN IRISH CONTEXT.

Keltrian Druid Beliefs

*We believe in **Divinity** as it is manifest in the Pantheon. There are several valid theistic perceptions of this Pantheon.*

*We believe that **nature** is the embodiment of the Gods and Goddesses.*

*We believe that **Natural Law** reflects the will of the Gods and Goddesses.*

*We believe that **all life is sacred** and should neither be harmed nor taken without deliberation or regard.*

*We believe in the **immortality of the spirit**.*

*We believe that **our purpose** is to gain wisdom through experience.*

*We believe that **learning** is an ongoing process and should be fostered at all ages.*

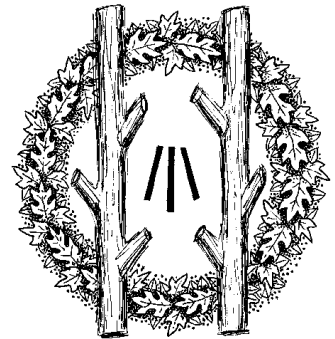
*We believe that **morality** should be a matter of personal conviction based upon self respect and respect for others.*

*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.*

*We believe in the **relative nature of all things**, that nothing is absolute, and that all things, even the Gods and Goddesses, have their dark sides.*

*We believe that **individuals** have the right to pursue knowledge and wisdom through his or her chosen path.*

*We believe in a **living religion** able to adapt to a changing environment. We recognize that our beliefs may undergo change as our tradition grows.*



KELTRIAN DRUID SIGIL