

Beltaine 2010

Welcome to the Beltaine edition of **EOLAS**, the magazine of **Ord na Darach Gile - the Order of WhiteOak**.

Beltaine, and the fires of summer are lit, green shoots and blossom adorn the landscape, and songbirds flit around gathering materials for their nests. It is a time of renewal and rebirth.

If anyone would like to contribute to future editions of EOLAS, please send your contributions to membership@whiteoakdruids.org - we are also keen to hear from you about your opinions on articles or important matters, so please feel free to write to us at the above email address for our Carnyx section.

Within the peace of the Oaks,
J Craig Melia – April 2010

Visit our Virtual Shrine

The Virtual Shrine Of The Goddess Brighid is dedicated to all people who are suffering and to their loved ones who are in need of help. It is also a place to celebrate and commemorate significant life passages. It is intended for the use of all People of Faith, here you may offer prayers, give thanks or write petitions within our Messages area.

We take our lead from the ancient and sacred places used by our Ancestors, those Ancient Shrines and Holy Wells that dot the landscape, allowing the traveller to give thanks and to make offering for safe journey and good fortune.

Our Blessings and Remembrance sections offer words of wisdom and prayers from many traditions, not just Celtic but also Northern Traditions, Hinduism and Buddhism.

The shrine can be viewed at www.shrineofbrighid.com



The Order of WhiteOak has instituted a teaching program and system of fostership. For more details visit our website at www.whiteoakdruids.org or email us via membership@whiteoakdruids.org

Contemplation – the Stillness of the Stones

Tim Prevett

Several years ago I was invited to write an article concerning Megaliths and Spirituality for an embryonic Journal of Contemplative Spirituality, *The Still Voice*. Sadly, it folded before it got going, leaving me with this article. I do not consider it fully polished, but it remains a considerable personal reflection of my own spiritual angle(s) on ancient sites. If you wish to explore the contemplative dynamic of megaliths, please read on. This is an original article, to which I retain copyright.

If you have ever visited a standing stone or two, it is likely you may have sensed something special. The megalith has been there for millennia, standing as a tacit witness to the procession of people over the centuries who have passed its way. It has been a focus of interest for a variety of reasons, but has it really been so silent?

There are many tangents one could explore in considering ‘megalithomania’. Earth mysteries and the paranormal can make for absorbing pursuits. While acknowledging for many these aspects make for important if not central tenets of their interest; for the purpose of this exploration, the focus is on the qualities of the stones in relating to their sacredness and encountering the voice of the Divine.

As for those who visit the stones, a wide cross section of faiths (and those of none) do so. A poll on the Megalithic Portal website recorded nearly a thousand votes, giving an indication of the spirituality of those who frequent megalithic places. Unsurprisingly, the neo-Pagan spectrum took the largest group with nearly 50%; atheists took the next largest group at 20.54%, Christian 18.72%, agnostic 5.57%, Buddhist 2.83%, Muslim & Hindu each receiving 1.21%, and Jewish 0.61%. It is clear that the stones do not belong to a particular faith group – they belong to whosoever seeks them, for whatever reason.

Many years ago, I experienced Down Tor Stone Circle and Row on Dartmoor; a remote, powerful location. This gave birth to a latent, gestating interest in megaliths, putting these special locations firmly within my spirit and psyche as objects of fascination, as places of renewal; and where I sometimes seek to hear from their stillness.

Some may find the idea of the stones speaking somewhat



laughable. However, if they have engaged in contemplation in a natural environment, the concept of the Divine speaking in and through that environment should be nothing strange. The stones’ still and sometimes dynamic voice can be heard. A sense of connection, of relationship with the Divine can be felt. These old places are still empowered to impact the intellect, emotions, and spirits of the contemporary contemplatory visitor.

What is it that calls people to the stones? Cairn circles, ring cairns, stone circles, standing stones, stone rows, dolmens (also known as cromlechs, quoits or burial chambers) and other various nomenclature of lithic monuments attract numerous visitors. One might think that a stone is a stone. That is not so; M. Scott Peck remarks that “...each site has a different flavor, an atmosphere all its own. So it is with dolmens and other megalithic monuments. Some might feel that once they’ve seen one great, hoary prehistoric stone, they’ve seen them all. Not so for us. No two stones are alike. And when you add in factors of their arrangement, their location in the landscape, and even the weather, each site is memorable in its own way.” (1)

They are often removed from obvious modern settings, and give a sense of entrance into space set aside for a specific use – i.e. sacred; usually relating to the Divine, but not necessarily so. Like places of worship, gardens of remembrance, or graveyards (for in effect and actuality, that is what many megaliths are), they give a sense where something ‘other’ meets our usual life. Somewhere people come to invest their thought, time, feeling, and to remember. A place where the quiet noises that we so easily miss - the soft footsteps, the birds, the insects, the wind – these can be heard with an unfamiliar yet comforting volume. The stones can help shape your very being.

Sometimes the Divine may be revealed through the stones without any seeking; the need within will be met without an explicit request. This is how I first experienced stones, and indeed many others too; "...you tend to find what you need - which is not necessarily what you want." (2)

Just before becoming switched on to stones, I was at theological college, at a place of deep questioning, spiritual emptiness, and an increasing flirtation with ideas and expressions seen as 'New Age' or 'Pagan' to my peers – and to be treated with the utmost suspicion as satanically inspired counterfeit spiritualities.

I was also rather impassioned by a school of thought called "Process Theology". This sees God as existing in two opposite poles – one aspect of God which is completely 'other than'; the all powerful, all knowing Deity not to be confused with creation. The opposite pole is the Divine also existing in a radically immanent sphere – being bound up with and participating in every process, and therefore experiencing the lives and deaths of everything on an inanimate, animate, human, personal, global, and universal scale. Joined with the understanding of the Person of Christ as that of the Greek concept of the Logos; the very principle which holds all things together (as seen in John 1:1), this positive incorporation of pain, struggle, periods of personal darkness, and just humdrum daily life into a meaningful expression give me a God whom I can relate to.

Up to then, I had been a very effusive Christian for a number of years, involved with Evangelical and Pentecostal churches, and very much a Biblical literalist. I was no stranger to 'full on' Charismatic worship - the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, and "Toronto Blessing" style phenomena were my forte. Then came an opportunity.

It was to spend a weekend with a group of Christian friends, some of whom I had not seen in a while, and had had strained relationships with for a number of years. At the last minute I decided to go. The combination of many strands in my life set the stage for a paradigm shift in my spirituality which I had not anticipated.

The weekend dawned warm and cloudless. The decision was taken to camp on Dartmoor at short notice, and while setting up camp late in the day, numerous hurtful actions came to a head, leaving me feeling actively rejected.

Spying some stones not far distant, I set off to watch the sunset from them. As the sun went down against the backdrop of the stones, I sensed an overwhelming connection with them, and also the landscape, the sun, and even the stars as they came out of the deepening blue into black sky. Though Christian 'friends' may reject me, the Divine aspect in this holy location, the holy presence manifesting itself powerfully, was accepting me. I resolved to return there early the next morning.

I did so, and found the place alive. Unseen energy imbued the air with a magical ambience. No one else up. No one for miles. Myself, the stones, and a warm summer morning. In the middle of nowhere, with the young day pregnant with meaning and life. The Divine Still Voice was speaking powerfully of acceptance, of connection, and interconnection. I returned from that weekend pushed in a new spiritual direction and expression. It proves something we need to bear in mind when we spend time at these sites; the contemplative catalyst to hearing the Still Voice is carried within those who visit them - their situations, hopes, desires, and feelings.

Many visit stones for the same reasons as visiting any place of worship. To be still, find solace, and hear that Still Voice more clearly. Some may contend that the voice heard could be that of various spirits – fairies, wights, or even the local deity. Others will perceive God speaking through the stones and the natural environment. Whatever theology (or even psychology) is used to articulate the experience of stones, their stillness combined with their prehistoric age perhaps suggests a wisdom waiting to be imparted to those who have ears to hear.

To hear the Divine voice, I need to grasp the sense of place, and the relation of the stone with its environment. I recognise that the stone is within the context of creation. Those who built it placed it at that location for a reason, as part of a relationship with other features – such as other stones and burial monuments, hilltops near and far, and astronomical events at given times. The whole landscape becomes interconnected, invested with ancient meaning.

The Greeks had two words for place; chora and topos. Topos relates strictly to the geographical location, i.e. what we term as topography. Chora is very different. This is a sense of 'mythic presence', a place of experience. (3) Another relevant word, from Latin is 'Numen' (meaning Divine will, power, divinity), from which the words numinous and numinosity derive. This is an other-worldly characteristic about a place, communicating the Divine in a subtle, suggestive way. Ancient sites are often laden with numinosity – a combination of something more than just their discernable characteristics.

Then there is the 'genius loci', the spirit of place; whether one interprets this as a particular intelligence in a location, or just the ambience conveyed, perceiving this helps sense the immanence of holy ground. Paul Devereux, a noted and level-headed Earth Mysteries researcher has much to say on approaching ancient sites: "Adjust your mental frame so that you encounter the site as if it was a living, sentient being. I cannot emphasize this enough, for doing this allows the place to tell you its story." (4)

The success of stories in literature and cinema is testimony to the age-old power of narrative to enchant, inform and transform. The company of the characters with whom we travel in a story can certainly affect our own lives. Researching also reveals the stones' story. Many were not built immediately into the monument we perceive today. Within a few generations of construction, something once seen as complete was no longer so. Stonehenge, in its various phases, was not one long project consisting of continual development. It was not the progression of one linear idea. These phases were added by successive generations, with each redevelopment being seen as 'it', and the site altered as desire, need, or belief dictated. Also consider the later story of the site. Learn about the stones' geology, where they were quarried from, significant events for the stones and their landscape and environment, and even the folklore. As one pieces together the information, the stones' story is woven.

Comprehending the stones' wider relationship with other features, the landscape and even the heavens, serves as a mirror for reflecting on ourselves. Often we may feel fragmented, in need of re-integration, and gaining perspective on where we are in life, in relationships, in ourselves, and indeed, in the world and cosmos. The tool of ancient stones within a perceptibly sacred landscape weaves a mystical thread for helping pull things together that ought not to be apart. They give a sense of continuity with the past, linking to the ages gone, yet firmly grounding the spirit in the here

and now.

Focus on what they are. They are standing stones. That is it. They have a primeval stillness able to interact with the human mind and intellect; a numinous immobility which still inspires and connects to the Divine for many visitors today. In some ways they are 'Beings' as all they 'do', at a reductionist level, is stand there. They are not doing anything. So we need to learn to be Human Beings, not Human Doings. Doing is an important and inevitable part of our existence, but there are times when we need to 'be', just like the stones.



Sometimes entering a megalithic place gives a sensation of stepping from noise into a place that is in the world, but removed from it. Complete stillness. Learn to perceive that stepping over a threshold into a stone circle, or biding in the presence of a megalith, is to enter space set aside for a specific function. Sacred space, for millennia. It has developed an aura of sacredness, for "Whenever a spot has been used for religious purposes, no matter what religion, it becomes hallowed ground after a century or two." (5)

When at stones, be aware that the air you breathe passes around these stones, and maybe even through them, that the land you walk on, near and far, is the land the stones are rooted in. The animals, plants, insects, the sky, and planetary bodies – are all sharing and connected from one spot. All of these are part of a greater whole, and from a focus on the stones, a voice of oneness and interconnectedness can be heard.

I like to find somewhere that I can return to with regularity at different times of the year; perhaps on key dates relating to the movement of the sun or moon. I like to visit in different weather conditions – heat, freezing cold, fog, and driving rain (obviously being mindful of health and safety matters). Even though the conditions of the visit differ, the stone and all it relates to remain the same, and yet new facets are revealed, new moods experienced.

No megalith is an island. It has been placed there in relationship to many other things, to a greater whole. Become aware of the boundaries of a site; physical features near and far, other ancient places (look for cairns, barrows and more on maps), hills, work out where the sun might rise at a given time of year. Getting to grips with their environs will enable the voice of the Divine to be heard through their stillness.

A stone circle I like to frequent in Derbyshire is Nine Stones Close, also known as the Grey Ladies, which are said to dance at midnight and midday! The largest stones in the county, each with a unique shape, sit in a group of four in a field. To be here, back resting on a stone, is to be in comfort. It is a friendly place to be, with other ancient monuments nearby. A significant lunar alignment also happens with Robin Hood's Stride, a large natural rock outcrop a short way south. (6)

The Bradstone, another Derbyshire megalith, sits to the west of the town of Wirksworth. I have been fortunate to spend a few hours here, over many visits. This tall, fossil ridden, now solitary stone sits with prominent views to the south, and has a midwinter solstitial alignment where the sun rises at the edge of a hill to the south east. I have observed midwinter sunrise here, as well as Imbolc sunset, and others on less significant dates. It comes across as a powerful location, albeit lonely and somewhat melancholy.

Mitchell's Fold, Shropshire's best-known stone circle, sits in a cluster of ancient sites, all now ruined to varying degrees. On a ridge, with the brooding presence of Corndon Hill to the south, and spectacular views west into Powys, it has a sense of forgotten majesty about it. Having fallen in love with the county of Shropshire in the last few years, this is a site that says to me "get to know me better"; and having been there at midwinter solstice, and midsummer solstice two years ago, and invested my desires in a personal, symbolic ritual, I intend to return at other times to learn more.

A stone circle less than two miles away from there is the Hoarstones; this has a far more familial feel, even on a snowy midwinter solstice eve! A low ring of many stones in a boggy field is a surprising place to feel at home.

A site visited briefly a few summers ago was the well-known Avebury, which as most know, sits in a spectacular landscape rich with ancient monuments. The sheer scale of the stones, and indeed the whole place, gave a sense of connection with something beyond the physical.

Perhaps that is why it draws so many, and why, when a few hours earlier our journey changed to take in this World Heritage Site, I suddenly felt like I was on a pilgrimage.



The sad part of visiting special places is having to leave them. Parting these moments of sunshine pulls the heart and forces a sigh, but as has been said "all sunshine makes a desert." The quality of stones, or indeed of any special place, is that it is possible to 'be there', even when you are not there in person. When about the business of everyday life, closing your eyes or just casting your memory back can bring that place to you in the here and now. It will bring something of the sacredness of that place, and carry it with you. (7)

Just one word of caution. Sometimes you may pick up on something negative at an ancient site. Do as your instinct tells you. You will learn. If you start feeling oppressed, tired, or unhappy with a location, do not spend more time there than necessary.

Also, a word of exhortation. Meditate at sites, yes, but in a way respectful to the stones, their environment, and those who will visit after you. The ASLaN Sacred Sites Charter encompasses such issues. Maybe take an empty carrier bag with you too – to tidy up and help set an example. On several occasions I have taken away a bag filled with rubbish.

Contemplation, I feel, should be able to make a discernable difference to one's life, and be a catalyst for action. Out of 'being' comes 'doing'. It is not just a mellow, self-indulgent spaced-out trip, as enjoyable as that might be. Taking from the spirit of these places is beneficial indeed, but giving back to that site in a respectful demeanour, and using freely what has freely been imparted are important principles.

Some feel that stones are a vocation. I am inclined to agree. Wherever I go now, I feel the need to visit the old stones nearby. I have found it true that "...they wake up something within ourselves that draws us to the sacred places... it is not so much that we are going looking for them, but that they are summoning us." (8) The Stillness of the Stones can speak volumes. As Devereux writes, "...if the old places call to you, my advice is that you would do well to listen."(9)

Of Time, and Eggs, and Towers...

Nathan Lynch

Honey-thick time drips
Through the fingers of my cupped hands
To fill pools in shadow,
And boxes in a quiet attic.

Sleep waits by my bed,
A nervous new lover,
With gifts of opalescent potsherds
And slender-fingered caresses.

Waking and sleeping alike,
I dream.

My dream is this:
That life is only a slipshod concatenation
Of bright ribbons,
Trinkets of steel and knobs of brass,
Skeleton keys and shards of glass, embers,
Concrete columns, brick buttresses, granite faces.
Drops of water, icicles, and sunbeams.

Notes

- (1) Peck, M. Scott In Search of Stones Pocket Books 1997, 57.
- (2) Richardson, Alan Spirits of the Stones Virgin Publishing Ltd, 2001, 247.
- (3) Devereux, Paul Earth Mysteries Piatkus Books, 1999, 60-61.
- (4) Devereux, 63
- (5) Peck, 366
- (6) Burl, Aubrey A Guide to the Stone Circles of Britain, Ireland and Brittany, Yale University Press, 1995, 53-54.
- (7) Devereux offers some excellent ways to help carry the presence of stones when being there in person is not possible. See pages 70-72, 80-81.
- (8) Richardson, 26.
- (9) Devereux, 20.

Not referred to, but very influential, and much recommended is:

Peck, Chris Between Earth & Heaven Arthur James, 1997

Arranged in a precariously leaning tower of
Illusion and spiderwebs-

We're all magpies making our tower-nests,
Laying a single glowing egg before
It all collapses beneath us.

So-
Death waits by my bed,
A familiar friend,
With gifts of thoughtless mist
And feather-light kisses.

Pools of viscous duration coagulate
In places of dusty sunshine,
In long-forgotten boxes.
I am entombed peacefully in amber,
Without thought or memory,
Until the magpie's egg hatches again and I rise,
Piebald and squawking, from the ashes.

A Time of Fire (Beltane)

I have worked metals for many a year. I am the smith, and I have made many artifacts, forged in iron or copper, or bronze, for that is my skill, my art, handed down from smiths past, from generation to generation. This is our gift, to take fire and weave it with air and earth to bring a form from molten metals.

The metal comes out, molten from the crucible, and it takes many forms. The horned helmets, swords and arrow heads for the warrior, harps and lyres for the bards, iron nails for the shipwright, statuettes for the temple, jewelry for the women, pans for food, coins for exchange, and amulets for protection.

For I am not only the smith, I am also the patterner, shaping the ways of our tribes, as I take the metal, and cast it in many forms.

And now the time of fire has come upon us, and I must forge a sacred pattern.

The charcoal fire is burning brightly, and upon it rests a crucible of gold. It is a shining fiery liquid, almost ready to pour into the clay moulds.

It is time to blow upon the hot metal, and cast the charm. And I intone the sacred words, and make the spell:

Here is gold, fire from the sun, and may the wearer bring a burning passion for justice among our tribe.

As the gold melts, so let the fairness of righteousness and harmony flow across our tribe in the coming years. This is the fire of binding and friendship.

Here is gold, refined from base ore, and may the wearer bring a burning passion for purity and wisdom to speak to our tribe.

As the gold shines, and reflects the brightness of the sun, so may our tribe be guided in the paths of light. This is the fire of holiness and glory.

Here is gold hardening, as the fire cools, and may the wearer take us along the paths of the dead.

As the charcoal turns to ash, so let ashes from the funeral pyre be cast into the wind, blown across through thin places into the summer lands. This is the fire of hope and ending.

And I draw in the air, the rune of closing, and the pattern is made and complete. For I am not only the smith, I am also the patterner, shaping the sacred ways.

Now I pour the gold into the clay mould.

When the mould is broken, the charm will be complete, and there will be an armband of finely twisted gold, and I will take this golden torque and hand it to the druid. And he will place it upon the arm of the priestess, and the time of fire will be fulfilled.

And when I am dust, and all my tribe are dust, blowing in that other wind, another people, a far distant tribe, may yet come across this sacred torque, buried beneath the soil of ages past, and wonder again at the mysteries of our past.

WORKING FOR WORLD PEACE

Ellen Evert Hopman (Saille)

Back in October I was invited to speak at the ICCS Conference on Spirituality in Indigenous Cultural and Religious Traditions. It was a great honor to represent Druidism and Celtic spirituality at a conference hosted in a Hindu Temple near Washington DC. The lectures and discussions covered themes that I had only ever heard at Pagan gatherings such as what to do about those proselytizing religions and why do monotheists want to dominate the world?

There were speakers from many different indigenous faiths present; Yoruba, Native American, Hindu, Vedantist, Shamanism, Druids, Witches and others. A major theme was "How can indigenous religions contribute to world peace?"

The Bhagavad Gita says that when there is calamity in the world everyone should work for world peace. As we all know, Fundamentalism in its many guises; Christian, Jewish and Muslim, is a major contributor to war and unhappiness in this world. I was previously unaware of the extent to which Muslim proselytizing had taken over previously Hindu nations and of how much pain and suffering has resulted from those incursions.

The Hindu religion is vast in its tolerance, seeing all ways to the Divine as valid expressions of spirituality. More than once I heard Hindus declare that God is so merciful that She created many different paths so that everyone can find a way to the Divine. But this profound tolerance has come at a steep price for formerly Hindu nations. Nepal was the last remaining Hindu nation in the world for example and it was recently declared a "secular nation" without a vote.

One speaker suggested that we should all write to the UN and ask them to host an interfaith conference specifically to ask participants what they and their faith communities can do for world peace. The speaker said that all religious schools should declare world peace a major cause and that all religions should take on world peace as one of their major missions. He also said that religious sanction should be removed from suicide bombing and that no religion should object to the education of girls.

He said we should all be anti-conversion, anti proselytizing, against power hierarchies between religions and nations, against uniformity and against war. Also that we should be PRO cooperation among religions and civilizations and that we should be self evolving as opposed to falling victim to imposed spirituality and exclusivist world views. He called for an end of persecution of Pagans, Witches and Jews by colonial powers.

As a Druid I found nothing in the content of the conference to object to and I was deeply impressed by the tolerance, love and goodwill I experienced at the conference and in the Hindu temple nearby. Here are some quotes I scribbled down;

"Infinite are the ways to the infinite"

"My self in other forms"

"We are all one family"

"We have certainly heard about Druids but until today I had never met one!"

"What separates us from one another separates us from God"

"Who can bring us to unity? Only those who have achieved unity"

"Embrace every human you meet as your own"

A Native American speaker said that seven hundred years ago the Mexican elders declared that the world was about to enter the time of the "dark sun" and that the knowledge held by the traditional religions had to be held and protected. But now we are about to enter the time of the "awakening sun" and we have to send out messages of healing to the world and seek true oneness with all people, not just tolerance.



May the new decade be a time when the last remnants of indigenous religions and cultures are cherished, may their ceremonies, relationships and practices re-emerge to bless the land, the people and every creature of this small blue planet.

Om! May all beings be happy; may all be free from afflictions; may all see the goodness in others and in everything; may no one suffer sorrow, Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti. Om Peace, Peace, Peace.

If you would like to attend next year's conference in the DC area or the 2012 conference in Rishikesh, India please contact MargFoundation@gmail.com or Dr. Radheyshyam Dwivedi (rsdwivedi@iccsus.org) or The International Center for Cultural Studies 1146 Carolina Ave. West Chester, PA 19380

The Valley's Plea - Roibeard McElroy

Where once peace was a dweller
in Tara's sun-filled chamber
the valley had a gentle glint
a land in fruitful favour
Erin's dawn has had its stint
the waves have lost their savour
the cradle rocks by a tyrant's held
the heartbeat's out of tune
Gabhra's trees are felled
the sacred graves now are strewn
of warriors, bards, kings and queens,
and goddesses, all now are scattered;
a wasteland's all that's seen
the green mantle now's tattered!

Where culture shone omni present:
Minstrels, Harpists, Bards, Brehons,
Feis, Pageants, lofty crescent,
the cycle of Tara has spun
of sagas and feats unrivalled,
of Lugh the Long Hand's joust
where the pilgrim road spiralled -
such glories they did oust:
the henge and its energy charge
and the manic step of Oscar,
sonic souterrains gala large;
the riddle of Rath Lugh's esker,
and the Gabhra's pallid luster;
for the feline and its profit
all's now a cast out misfit
where once flit
the Axis Mundi's spirit
all's dead embers where fires once lit.

But decry decry this material game
oh keep alive the vigil flame
each artefact's a remnant strum
the slightest stone a keystone become;
this chaos can be overcome
by the totem pole, distant drum,
oh if the valley's begun to succumb
re-energise the seismic drum.



Songs of the Harvest **Tony the Prof**

Wind takes the seed to scatter
And fertilise the land
Water feeds it; it is watered
By Mari's blessed hand
She brings the mists in autumn
Soft dew to swell the grain,
And breezes cloud the blue skies
Her soft, refreshing rain.

This is the blessed acre
John Barleycorn our star
But waning is his power
Three kings come from afar
They take the scythe and slay him
He falls, so stricken, dead
And we mourn him in our glen
Bless'd giver of our bread

Be thankful to Earth Mother
For the farmlands and the wood
The seed time and the harvest
She nourishes with food
Accept the gifts we offer
For the blessing in her arts
And how she feeds us daily
Bring to her thankful hearts.

The Desert Call **Tony the Prof**

I walk the desert sand by nights
Bleak, so desolate and wild
Watching where the scorpion fights
Existence here is Darwin's child

The sun so scorching all the day;
An empty desert, filled with dread
A spectre haunts the sand-strewn way
Life hanging on by slimmest thread

The refugees their sorrow share
Fleeing from the war zone's bane
Crying with unceasing prayer,
Children hungry and in pain

Where is hope in such distress?
Come all nations, hear their call
Starving in the wilderness
Now do not overlook this all

A portion gifted at the shrine
Such gladness ours shall be
Brothers and sisters, face divine
Calling us over land and sea

See, O see now, costing dear
The poverty that cannot hide
That we may bring some little cheer
And pray with eyes so opened wide

The 2009 Annual Golden Oak Awards (The second annual "Oakie" Awards)

The Druid Academy Nomination Award Committee (DANAC) consists of a member drawn from six different Druid organizations that share a historical connection to each other and are primarily located in North America. The DANAC members wish to learn more about happenings in their own group, and in other groups, and encourage the best works of modern Druids by acknowledging their annual accomplishments.

The six judges are not official representatives elected by their respective groups, but were actually hand-picked experts by Michael Scharding, because he thought they were extremely knowledgeable famous folk who knew well both their own organization and the activities of other modern Druid groups. Therefore, their votes are therefore only a personal preference, not representative of any endorsement by their organizations.

- Tony Taylor of Henge of Keltria (HoK) tony_taylor@keltria.org
- Skip Ellison of Ar nDraiocht Fein (ADF) skip@skipellison.usv
- Michael Scharding of the Reformed Druids of North America (RDNA) mikerdna@hotmail.com
- Ellen Evert Hopman of Order of the White Oak (OWO) saille333@mindspring.com with the assistance of JC "Craig" Melia in 2009.
- Ellis Arseneau of the Reformed Druids of Gaia (RDG) pendderwydd@reformed-druids.org
- Thomas Harris of the Missionary Order of the Celtic Cross (MOCC) [previously known as Reformed Druidic Wicca, RDW] ra_sput1n@yahoo.com (note the underscore) who was not available for voting in 2009.

In the first round, each judge could nominate up to two entries for each of the ten categories of awards, choosing Druids who belong to any of these six organizations. Naturally, most judged nominated entries from within their own group, which they knew the best.

In the second round, each of the judges could vote for one entry from each of ten categories, but could not vote for their own nominee. If any nominee received two or more votes in the second round, then it was declared a winner. If a nominee received only one other vote, then it was declared to be an "honorable mention". Most winner decisions were not unanimous.

Winners will receive a check for \$33.33, a certificate, and a blessed bronze oak leaf in the mail this summer. Kudos and congratulations to all the entries!

Note: If you wish to enter a piece into the next 2010 Golden Oak Awards of the DANAC committee, then send an e-mail to one of those judges that you know (from any group), listing a work from one of the eleven categories that was first released or completed between December 21 2009 and December 21, 2010. The judges may designate an alternative judge if they would like to not participate in 2010. Different rules or categories may be used next year possibly.

The results of the voting were as follows:

1. Most interesting internal grove project begun or completed in 2009 Non-exhaustive examples include: liturgical design, fund- raising, recruitment, education, development, site-planning, web- development, meeting style, festival/meeting idea, etc.

NO ENTRIES, NO WINNER.

2. Inspiring external project begun in 2009 by a grove or member (s) of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, RDG. Non-exhaustive examples include: activism, ecology, public outreach, legal moves, publishing, charity, civic involvement,

interaction with other religious organization, etc.

WINNER #1: Ellen Evert Hopman of OWO. saille333@mindspring.com elleneverthopman.com

For her Sacred Circle TV interview recorded in June 1999 and released online in August 2009, in 4 parts, at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9J7kSIvDbU> as she presents a ritual and discussion of Druidism as practice in England and the United States. These kinds of interviews and presentations on-line is crucial for public outreach.

More on Sacred Circle TV at :

<http://AthenaProductions.net> <http://www.elleneverthopman.com> <http://SacredCircleTV.org>

3. Greatest hardship overcome in 2009 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, RDG. Publicly admissible, of course, no gossip please. Non-exhaustive examples include: persecution, financial obstacles, medical impairments, isolation, time constraints, educational restraints, etc.

WINNER #1: Isaac Bonewits (ADF, RDNA, Keltria, etc.) ibonewits@neopagan.net

I'm been loosely following Isaac's health lately, so we're all very concerned for his fight against cancer, and his relentless continuation of Druidism at the same time. As his website www.neopagan.net states: Yes, it's true, Isaac has cancer in the vicinity of his root chakra. As of December 30th, he has finished what we hope will be the only rounds of chemotherapy and radiation treatments. He seems to be doing reasonably well and we are both grateful for the prayers and donations that are keeping our heads above water in this stressful time. Read our blog for occasional updates and our Facebook Fan Page for daily notes and news. All healing energies sent our way will be gratefully accepted. We are auctioning special autographed editions of our books at eBay to raise money for the cancer bills (search under "Bonewits" and look for books labeled "Cancer Fund".)

WINNER #2: Maudhnait of Keltria Muadhnaith@gmail.com for her many struggles to surmount the obstacles during and after Cody's passing.

4. Best Poem or song released in 2009 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, RDG.

WINNER #1: "The Labyrinth" by RDG Druid Scott Schumacher, scott@northerndruid.net

Come walk with me
Through forests and meadows
We can wind around trees
Turning ever inward
Spinning ever outward

Come walk with me on a spiral path
Returning to people and places we love
We can revel in our greetings
Mourn our goodbyes
Cherish every memory

Come walk on the edge with me
Far from everything we know
We can stretch our legs
Run and play
Sit and relax a while

Come walk with me on a sacred journey
Through the labyrinth of life
We can find the center
Take the final turn
Loving our forever path

WINNER #2: "The Earth Spoke" by RDG/RDNA Druid Jon Pagano, [ODAL mithriljean@yahoo.com](mailto:ODALmithriljean@yahoo.com)

5. Best work of art completed or released in 2009 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, RDG. Non exhaustive examples: painting, drawing, sculpture, digital art, clay, collage, photography, etc. Dance choreography will be considered if an internet video is provided. Collaborating artists will receive a single prize.

NO ENTRIES, NO WINNER.

6. Best craftwork completed or released in 2009 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, RDG. Non exhaustive examples: leatherwork, metalwork, clothing, needlepoint, moulding, weaving, jewelry, basketry, woodwork, stonework, etc. Food, drink, cosmetics and brewing can't be tested easily enough in disparate parts of the U.S. Collaborative craftspeople will receive a single prize.

WINNER #1 Sebastien Beaudoin (RDNA, Canada) celticoak@persona.ca for various further Earthenworks. He was a Oakie in 2008 for some pots. The gallery of three pieces can be viewed at <http://www.raymond.sanderregier.com/UIS/SBeaudoin.html>

7. Best academic book released in 2009 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, RDG. At least 50 pages in length, can be on any subject somehow applicable to "Druidism", modern or ancient, such as history, religion, crafts, art, philosophy, spirituality, ethnicity, language, etc.

NO ENTRIES, NO WINNER.

8. Best novel released in 2009 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, RDG. At least 50 pages in length with a Druidical bent.

WINNER: The Priestess in the Forest by Ellen Evert Hopman (OWO), saille333@mindspring.com
elleneverthopman.com

This is the first of two novels, available on amazon.com, following the travails and tribulations of Ethne, a young Druidess called from her contemplative life as a healer into the roiling maelstrom of the royal court life of Ireland in the 3rd or 4th century. Although spared the Roman legions, one of the more aggressive forms of Roman Christianity, had begun making deep inroads into the courts of Ireland, seeking to unseat the ancient religion of the peoples of Ireland. Various forces for tradition and change struggle for supremacy for the high kingship of Ireland, and with it, the power to tilt the favor towards the forces of the new or old religion. The well-researched historical fictional novel is especially stuffed with bits of herbal folklore and interwoven lore of the change of the seasons; not to mention a passionate romance. The sequel, "The Druid's Isle", was released the following year in 2010, and is also available now.

9. Best short story released in 2009 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, RDG. Under 50 pages in length with a Druidical bent.

WINNER #1 "The Black Crow Calls" by Druid Jeffery Heyer (RDG)
It can be read at <http://druidsegg.reformed-druids.org/newssamhain09-07.htm>

WINNER #2 Imbolc By Jackie Greer, Triple Horse Clan Grove (RDNA)

10. Best "Druidical" essay or article released or printed in 2009 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, RDG

WINNER #1 Talking about the Elephant , a book of essays, with an essay in there by Jenne Micale of Keltria.
dulcimer goddess@hotmail.com

The excellent book is available at www.amazon.com

Her other work can be seen at at the music Web site, www.kwannon.net, and a grove blog,
<http://whitecatgrove.wordpress.com/>.

WINNER #2 On Raising Children – by Irony Sade of RDNA Doc.Druid@Gmail.com
Viewable in the Oimeic 2009 issue at www.rdna.info/druidinquirer06.doc

HONORABLE MENTION: Two Seasons Three Worlds.... by Ellen Evert Hopman saille333@mindspring.com
elleneverthopman.com

Reprinted in the Druid Inquirer, Beltane 2010 www.rdna.info/druidinquirer16.doc this can be read there after May 1, 2010 publishing.

11. Best movie or video-clip or instructional video, released or revised in 2009, that advances the positive perception of Druidism in some way produced by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, or RDG.

WINNER #1 Tribeways Podcast (ADF),
A podcast of news, music, songs, poetry and essays by ADF. You are highly recommended to subscribe to their production. <http://www.adf.org/podcast/subscribe.html>

WINNER #2 Irony Sade (RDNA) with video playing harp Doc.Druid@Gmail.com
<http://www.esf.edu/success/sade.htm> playing and talking about Wire Strung Harps.

HONORABLE MENTION: Ellen Evert Hopman (OWO) Celtic Cosmology saille333@mindspring.com
<http://www.elleneverthopman.com/interfaith.cfm>

12. Lifetime Achievement Award

Winner: Isaac Bonewits

A unanimous decision, for his 33 years of publications, organizing activity, presentations, wit, humor, research and dedication to Druidism. A giant in the field, known by all. May he have another bountiful 33 years to inspire and harrangue the rest of us.

He will receive this special engraved trophy, with the beguiling general shape of a Druid Sigil, set in a velvet lined case.