

## Samhain 2009

Welcome to the Samhain edition of EOLAS, the magazine of Ord na Darach Gile - the Order of WhiteOak. In this edition we have our usual mix of articles, poems, the ancient and the modern.

Another year's turning has completed and we stand at the gateway to the next. At this time we honour those who have gone to the summerlands ahead of us, those who guide us, those who have trodden the path before us. Samhain is for many of us a time for introspection, for the transition between the worlds, the conclusion of one part of our lives and the promise of the new beginning.

If anyone would like to contribute to future editions of EOLAS, please send your contributions to [membership@whiteoakdruids.org](mailto: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 Dear Editor section.

Within the peace of the Oaks,  
J Craig Melia – October 2009

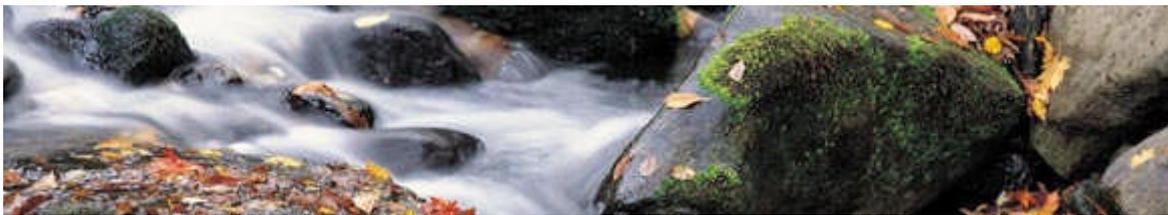
## Visit our Virtual Shrine

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.celticheritage.co.uk/virtualshrine](http://www.celticheritage.co.uk/virtualshrine)



The Order of WhiteOak has instituted a teaching program and system of fostership. For more details visit our website at [www.whiteoakdruids.org](http://www.whiteoakdruids.org) or email us via [membership@whiteoakdruids.org](mailto:membership@whiteoakdruids.org)

## The Awakening of Angus Òg

Amongst the hills and mountains of Scotland, nestled in the gold and purple heather, the young God, Angus Òg, lay sleeping in a hollow in the ground. The tallest growing thing on the granite mountainside was a mountain ash, which grew halfway up the side of the mountain. The sun danced from its leaves and branches. It was a beautiful tree and it was under this ash that Angus dreamt. The mountain stood guard and Angus slept on.

The day sparkled, the sun warmed the earth and the stream that ran from the hollow danced and sang as it made its way down the mountain. Angus lay sleeping and the peace of the earth protected him.

Under the earth the Goddess Orchil worked at her weaving. Orchil looked upon Angus and felt a soft happiness at the sight of him. Angus dreamed the joys of the world and people everywhere smiled. Musicians, artists and poets - all were inspired by the dreams Angus brought to them. As Orchil thought about Angus, three old Druids came over the brow of the hill and walked slowly to where Angus slept. Orchil knew they were not really three old Druids, but three of the Ancient Gods. They tried to wake Angus, but Orchil had breathed a spell of peace across him - and Angus Òg slept on, ignoring the three Gods' attempts to wake him.

'Awake,' said Keithor, and his voice was the sound of the wind through the forest and the song of the wind in the grass.

'Awake,' said Manan, and his voice was the boom of the sea against the shore.

'Awake,' said Aesus, and his voice was the life and pulse of the world and the dancing of the sun.

But Angus Òg dreamed on. He dreamed of the creation of worlds, of sending his laughing, summer song dancing across them. He dreamed of dancing, silver rain that fell on many forests and green places. He dreamed of the four harping winds of this world. He dreamed of the four birds that are his kisses following the winds and spreading his happiness through the shadows.

'He will awake no more,' sighed Keithor and the unhappiness of the God of the green world was the sad sigh of the wind lamenting through the reeds and grasses.

'He will awake no more,' sighed Manan, and the unhappiness of the God of the seas was the gentle sounds of the waves lapping against the shores of the Isle of the Dead.

'He will awake no more,' sighed Aesus, and the unhappiness of the Unseen God was the dying of the grass and the dimming of the sun.

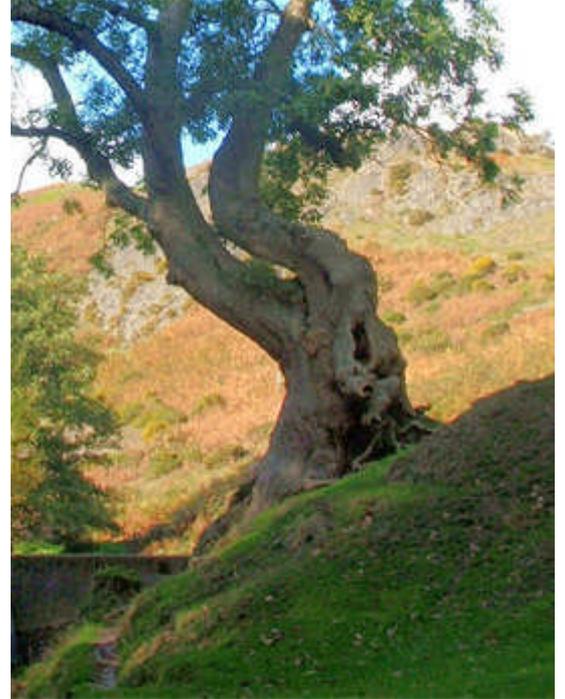
Angus Òg had the deep, peaceful sleep of the granite upon him and he slept on. Orchil smiled: 'The Ancient Ones are so old; they do not see eternity at rest. Angus is the God of Youth and only he is eternal and unchanging.'

Winter turned to summer and back again. A thousand years passed. Once again, Orchil lifted her eyes from her weaving. Once again, the three Ancient Gods came onto the mountainside.

'Wake up, Angus,' they cried, 'for the world needs you. It has grown cold and chill.' They had a grey sadness on them as they stood in silence, watching, as Angus dreamt on.

Then Orchil spoke: 'Keithor, tell me this. If death came to you, what would happen?'

'The green world would die, the wind would blow without purpose and the crops shrivel,' replied the God of the Land.



'Manan, tell me this. If death came to you, what would happen?'

'The seas would run dry, sand would fall instead of water and the world would fall into the void,' answered the God of the Seas.

'Aesus, tell me this. If death came to you, what would happen?'

'There would be no heartbeat at the heart of the earth, no star shining against the light of the sun, all would be darkness and silence,' answered the God of the Skies.

Orchil was pleased with these answers and she laughed. 'Angus Óg has slept the sleep of a thousand years and none knew it. For a thousand years, the beating of his heart has been the beating of the world. For a thousand years his breath has been the coming of spring in the human heart. For a thousand years the breath of his life has been warm against the lips of lovers. These memories of his joy mean he has not been forgotten.'

'Who is he?' asked Keithor. 'Is he older than I, who saw the green earth born?'

'Who is he?' asked Manan. 'Is he older than I, who saw the first waters flow on the earth?'

'Who is he?' asked Aesus. 'Is he older than I, who saw the first comet, who saw the first moon and who felt the heat of the first sun?'

'He is older!' cried Orchil. 'He is the soul of the gods!' And with that, she blew a wind across the granite and it took away the deep sleep from Angus.

'Awake, eternal spring!' she cried. Angus awoke and laughed across the land. With his laughter, the whole green earth was covered in blossom. Four birds flew around his head, singing sweetly. The water in the stream gurgled gently, the sun shone brightly and the wind caressed the gods with a warm, gentle breeze.

'Get up, Angus the Ever Young,' she cried. Angus got up and he smiled. With his smiling, the old brown world dressed itself in dewy green and the world became beautiful. Feelings of love and joy burst into every beating heart.

'Walk happily, immortal hope!' Orchil cried. Angus Óg walked in the sunlight, weaving rainbows and dreams, spreading a wild, glad joy throughout the land as he walked.

And this is why, as Orchil weaves in the dark underworld; when Keithor is blind, and Manan lies heavy with sleep and Aesus is grown white with frost, this is why Angus Óg, the young God, is more ancient than they - yet is forever young. The ancient three - the land, sea and sky - have a set time and they will come to an end, but in the heart of Angus lies Time and Eternity, eternal joy and eternal hope.

The Awakening of Angus Óg - retold by Fiona McAllister from William Sharp's collection of folklore gathered from the Highlands and Islands of Scotland .

This version is Fiona McAllister's retelling of an old tale published here previously in 2007:  
[www.manygods.org.uk/MGMV/magazine.html](http://www.manygods.org.uk/MGMV/magazine.html)

Fiona comments;

"The original Sharp version is in the public domain but it is very, very wordy! He was part of the 19th C Scottish Literary Revival and he collected these stories from our part of the country and the Islands."

## The Three (On the Birth of Three White Ravens in the UK)

What mystery is this?  
What sign,  
What omen stares back at us,  
Like the pale death,  
Here in County Durham?

The Three,  
Found starving in the courtyard of  
The House of the Lord,  
Hearken back to a different time,  
Stretch back to a different world.  
But where was the Hospitality?  
Why were His doors closed?  
Why were His ears sealed?  
Why were His eyes elsewhere?

The ghost of trees:  
Wandering the courtyard  
Where no food,  
No comfort,  
No gentle hand  
To feed them,  
To protect them,  
To touch them

Their names are old,  
As are their souls,  
Tortu, Dathi, Usnech,  
They sank their roots deep  
For the waters of life;  
They grew wide branches  
With leaves green and gold;  
They reached for the sky  
And the Gods far above

And they fell,  
And they fell to the axe,  
And they fell to decay,  
And they fell to the coming of Rome

Hearty and bustling  
Drinking the wind and sun  
Like a banquet of old  
From these roots,  
An island emerged  
Yet, who are these starving strangers,  
Newly transformed from darkest night  
To shining day  
Washed of their disuse and forgotten nature  
Cleansed of the Roman stain  
Reborn in the rays of Bel?

One is the forgotten well,  
It reaches deep into the bosom  
Of the Mother  
To where all life begins  
Where the fires of the Gods - white hot,  
Were lit in the oldest days  
And their warmth is felt  
Again

One is the neglected tree,  
Seen for so long as only wood  
But truly so much more,  
The Bile has returned radiant  
And it will not be denied  
Roots in the earth  
Branches in the sky  
Again

One is the now-silent sky,  
Home of the winds and clouds  
The voices of the Gods  
Sing the world into Being in a brilliant light  
Under the vault of the sky  
The Three have come home  
Their wings wide and inviting  
Now

The courtyard is shattered  
The church is long empty  
The song of the waves  
And the earth  
And the sky  
Have returned to this isle

The three have come home  
And they herald the Old Ones  
Long sleeping,  
Long waiting,  
Long forgotten,  
Now discovered again

What mystery is this?  
What sign,  
What omen stares back at us,  
Like the pale sun arising,  
Here in County Durham?

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## Celtic Cult of the Head? – J Craig Melia

Citing iconographical evidence, classical quotations and mythological evidence we are presented with the existence of a tradition of a widespread belief in the head as the seat of the soul (common amongst many peoples) and that this represented a medium for communication with the OtherWorld.

It is generally taken as fact that in the early Celtic period :

1. that the head was believed to be the vassal of the soul.
2. that great honour was to be found in collecting the heads as trophies in battle.

There is, however, much debate amongst Celtic Historians as to the validity of the so called Celtic “Cult of the Head”.

Authors such as Dr Anne Ross have speculated the Cult of the Head as a pan-Celtic religious tradition. Others disagree.

Professor Ronald Hutton has the opinion that “the frequency with which human heads appear upon Celtic metalwork proved nothing more than that they were a favourite decorative motif, among several, and one just as popular among non-Celtic peoples”, that the use of the head as icons is merely due to the practice been a favoured artistic image.

Marian Green, in *The Gods of the Celts* states that 'there is no doubt that the head was considered the most important part of the human body – the emphasis on head-hunting demonstrates this – and the stress on the head in Celtic art is incontestable. Yet I believe it is a mistake to think in terms of a specific head-cult.'

The taking of heads as trophies is well documented, with enough classical, mythological and archaeological evidence to back it up. It is however harder to prove the reasons for the practice, did it imply a sacred act, a way of demonstrating prowess on the battlefield, or a combination of the two?

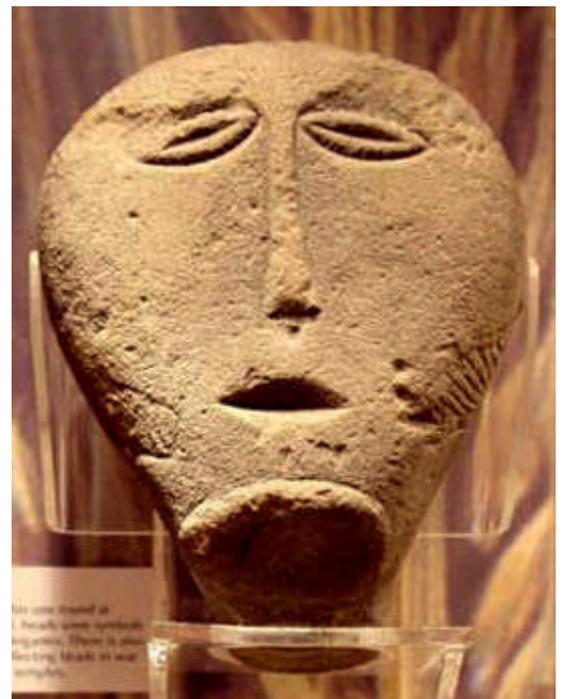
## Iconography

Iconographical evidence to back up the theory is always going to be open to individual interpretation, whether the 'tete coupee', or severed head, is an artistic motif or religious motif.

There is evidence to suggest that the positioning of skulls, discovered during excavations of Celtic earthworks, indicate that heads were displayed upon entrance gates of hillforts and sanctuaries. The shrine at Roquepertuse in modern day France was entered through a brightly painted stone archway, into which human skulls were placed in niches within the upright pillars.

A stone tete coupee, complete with grasping hand was unearthed in Entremont, along with numerous head groupings. Many have been found throughout the British Isles, with a great many found within the kingdom of the Brigantes in the north of modern day England.

There is, however, an over use of the phrase “Celtic Head” as a catchall term to describe the often crudely carved stone heads that are found around the British Isle



and mainland Europe. Some are prehistoric in origin, others from the early Christian period (although they themselves may be considered a continuation of the “sacred head” as a motif) and it is important that we view these as separate, although connected.

## Classical Citations

"(The Gauls) cut off the heads of enemies slain in battle and attach them to the necks of their horses. The blood stained spoils they hand over to their attendants and carry off as booty, while striking up a paean and singing a song of victory, and they nail up these first fruits upon their houses just as those who lay low wild animals in certain kinds of hunting. They embalm in cedar oil the heads of the most distinguished enemies and preserve them carefully in a chest, and display them with pride to strangers, saying that, for this head, one of their ancestors, or his father, or the man himself, refused a large sum of money. They say that some of them boast that they refused the weight of the head in gold" - Diodorus Siculus.

There are a number of Classical Writers who cite a reverence to the taking of heads as a seemingly sacred act, including Strabo, Diodorus Siculus, Livy and Julius Caesar.

We do however have to be very careful with using classical references as legitimate sources of information. Both Siculus and Livy were writing from a second hand source, both received their information from Poseidonius, whose main focus of interest was the south of Gaul. Strabo too quotes Poseidonius as a source.

"There is also that custom, barbarous and exotic, which attends most of the northern tribes, when they depart from the battle they hang the heads of their enemies from the necks or their horses, and when they have brought them home, nail the spectacle to the entrance of their houses. At any rate Posidonius says that he himself saw this spectacle in many places, and that, although he first loathed it, afterwards through his familiarity with it, he could bear it calmly" – Strabo

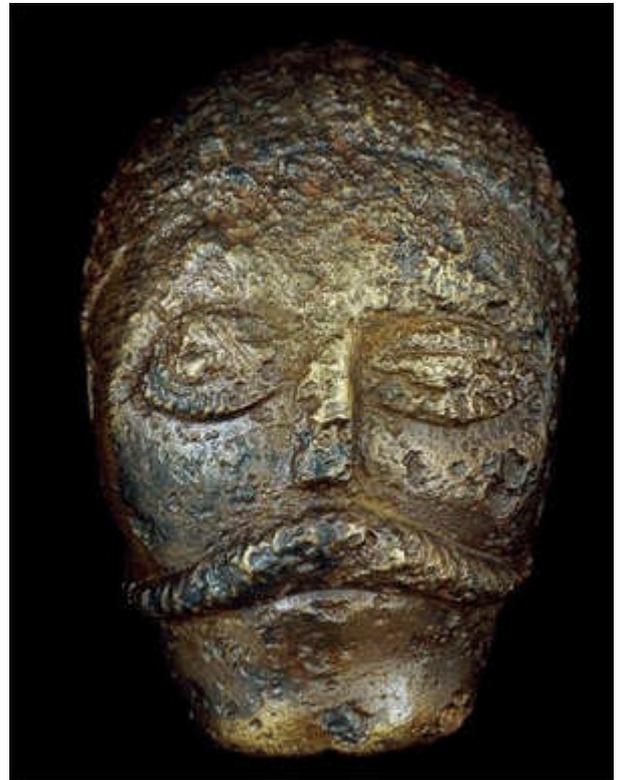
Julius Caesar makes a single reference, which is taken by many to refer to the act of head hunting, namely where Indutiomarus, a leader of the Treviri is slain by Labienus, having been overtaken at the ford of a river, his head is taken and carried to the camp.

It has been suggested that someone such as Caesar, to whom acts such as head hunting would have been used for propaganda and political capital, and taking into account his level of detail of the customs of the people he came into contact with in Gaul and Britain, it seems interesting that he is completely silent on the subject.

## Pagan Celtic Britain

Dr Anne Ross, is one of the strongest supporters of the Celtic “Cult of the Head”.

"The cult of the human head then constitutes a persistent theme throughout all aspects of Celtic life spiritual and temporal and the symbol of the severed head may be regarded as the most typical and universal of their religious attitudes."



Within Pagan Celtic Britain, Dr Anne Ross gives over an entire chapter to the study of the proposed cult, detailing at length countless carvings and various mythological tales. Reference is also made to examples of folklore pertaining to sacred wells which seem to be a continuation of ancient belief. Although the book was first published in 1967 it is one of the most important studies on the subject.

## Mythological Evidence

Dr Anne Ross states that “the evidence for the cult of the head furnished by the iconography, and testified to be the comments of the classical writers, is fully supported by the literatures of the British Isles.”

The main corroboratory evidence from British Mythology is that of the Head of Bran. The Tale of Branwen, Daughter of Llyr, the Second Branch of the Mabinogion, refers to Bran, sometimes Bendigeidfran, who is fatally wounded in battle. He asks his comrades to bury his head within the White Mount in London, later Tower Hill.

"And take you my head," said he, "and bear it even unto the White Mount, in London, and bury it there, with the face towards France."

In another tale from the Triads, Arthur has the head of Bran dis-interred as he himself wishes to be the defender of Britain.

Additionally within Gaelic Mythology, from the tale of the Tain Bo Cualinge we have numerous references to the practice of head taking -

“When they found him they fought foul and fell on him all 12 together. But Cu Chulainn turned on them and struck off their 12 heads. He planted 12 stones for them in the ground and set a head on each stone.”

Later tales, such as those pertaining to the Celtic Saints, as well as tales such as Sir Gawain within the Arthurian Cycle all hint at an older mythos and tradition.

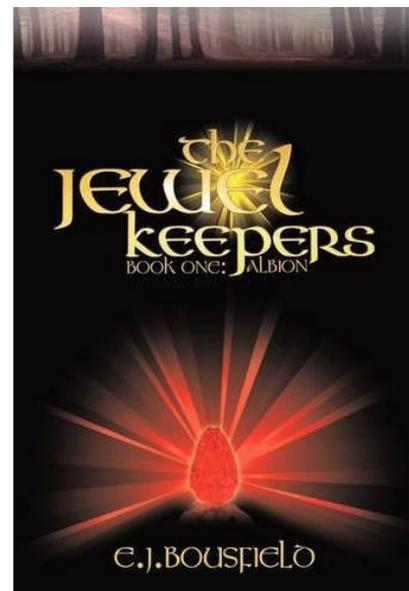
Peter Berresford Ellis, within Celtic Myths and Legends states, that “it is important to remember that, for the ancient Celts, the soul reposed in the head”, and although this in itself does not signify a Cult of the Head, it does imply a reverence of the head was seen as a belief amongst Celtic people from Gaul to Britain and Ireland.

## Book Review of The Jewel Keepers – Book One: Albion E.J. Bousfield - Kings Hart Books - ISBN: 1906154147

Aimed at younger readers, but appealing to more mature ones too, The Jewel Keepers – Book One: Albion is a modern tale that links the pre-Roman Bronze Age with modern day Britain. The novel is E.J. Bousfield’s debut, and will be part of a history-based fantasy trilogy, revolving around two young girls separated by two thousand years but connected through a mysterious jewel.

Of particular interest to readers of this magazine is the story which deals with Mortunda and her dealings with the mysterious order, the Seronydd, Celtic seers and wisdom keepers who train on the Isle of Mona. Her part of the story takes place just prior to the Roman invasion of Britain.

The story is enjoyable and well crafted, taking an intelligent approach to modern issues effecting young people.



## A book review of *The Path of the Blue Raven* – Mark Townsend

Review by Damian Carr

I was really honoured to have been sent a pre-release copy of this book by the author so that EOLAS could print a review prior to the November release date. But I was even more honoured when having read the book and sent a courteous reply to Mark that I discovered a true friend and spiritual companion too.

What I want to get across before I get into the nitty-gritty of the book review is that Mark Townsend is a genuine, honest and enthusiastic guy. Since receiving his book we've had many lengthy exchanges via e-mail and he is most definitely a man who sees the magic in the world and constantly strives to awaken that magical spark in others in both his writing and his day job as a magician, spiritual guide and minister.

When I read *The Path of The Blue Raven* I immediately wanted to go out and buy 5 copies to give as gifts for my friends who will definitely recognize the struggles of the spiritual seeker.

I love it. It's so authentic! I love that I can connect with the honesty. I love that I can connect with SO many parallels. But most of all I LOVE how I keep hitting points that will help people I know who are struggling with their own journey.

It's a book you'll want to share. I have many friends who are active Christians, and recently a couple of them have been saying, "You just HAVE to read *The Shack*. It's about a man's meeting with God and it'll make SO much sense to you." No problem, once one of them gets round to buying me a copy of course I'll read it, and I'm sure I'll find worth in it too, because I'm very open to other people's opinions and ideas.

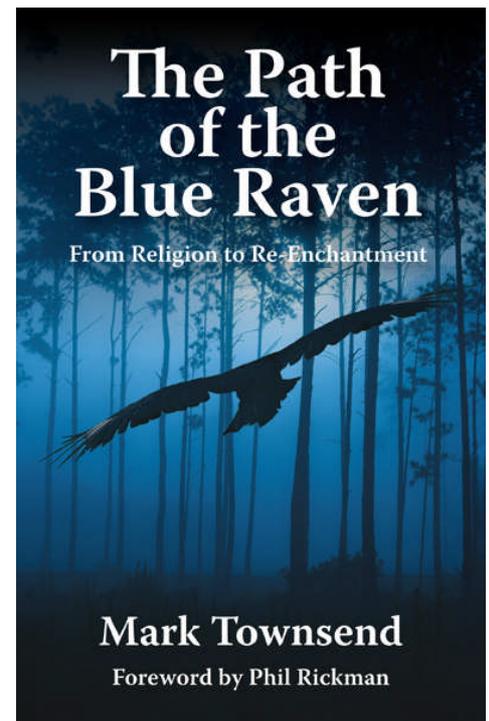
But now I have a way to reciprocate thanks to Mark!

This is a true story of the authors own journey from being drawn to Christianity from an early age, through accepting his calling and ordination to his chance meeting with Druidry and a new found understanding of the magic that he thought he'd never find.

This is not a book for any Christian committed to their faith and ignorant of alternatives as it has already ruffled some feathers within the Church, but in my opinion we should all go through points in our journeys where we have a major crisis of faith and it either makes that faith stronger or we move on to what feels right. And that is just what Mark describes and he chose to join us in Druidry.

I thoroughly recommend this book as gift for anyone out there that doesn't understand what Druidry is all about but who wouldn't plough through one of the hefty tomes detailing ancient Celtic practice. This book is easily accessible and you are immediately drawn into the story of a man who isn't afraid to bare his soul and laugh at his own failings in order to assist the reader in attempting to ease their own struggles.

I sincerely wish Mark all the best with this book and the future ones I already know are in the pipeline. Mark Townsend is name you should keep an eye on – I know that this is just the start of a writing career that will add a lot to the Druid community, the wider pagan movement and will attract a lot of people still on the fringes to join us in our Druidic journey.



## THE BOOK OF ENGLISH MAGIC

By Philip Carr-Gomm and Richard Heygate

John Murray Publishers, London, 2009

ISBN 978-1-84854-058-3

Reviewed by Ellen Evert Hopman

First a warning to potential readers, this is an aggressively English book. In order to successfully penetrate its pages you will have to look past the almost hysterically pro-English tone.

In the preface we read that England has “the richest history of magical lore and practice anywhere in the world” (What about Siberian Shamanism, Hebrew magic and the Kabala, the magic of ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome, Native American spirituality, not to mention Paleolithic and Neolithic magic as displayed in Altamira, Lascaux, etc.?) Even Welsh and Scottish magic are excluded (other than a passing mention of Iolo Morganwg and the Welsh Gorsedds in the Druid section).

According to the book the best place to learn about magic is not Cairo or Calcutta, not Paris, New York, San Francisco or Prague, but London! Specifically Treadwell’s Bookstore which is the store for modern Witches and Wizards! (One wonders if the authors have a financial interest in the store.) Here’s another direct quote;

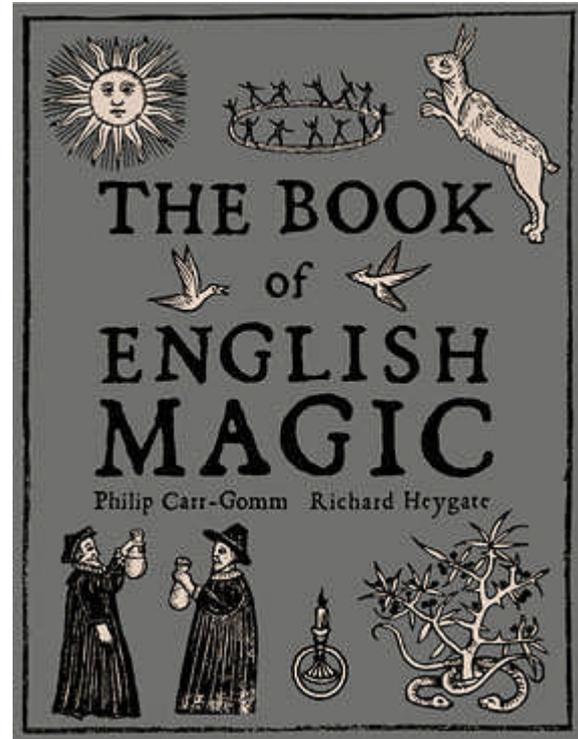
“England, in particular its capital, has over the centuries become the most important repository and breeding ground of magical arts in all the world” and another quote “England just happens to have acquired over the centuries the most varied, most extraordinary magical history of all the countries on earth”.

Living as I do in an oak forest in Western Massachusetts this all sounds rather odd to me. I have been a student of Druid magic for almost thirty years and have never yet set foot in Treadwell’s nor have I focused on English magic in any significant way. I do not feel the poorer for that.

Plowing ahead we read “There are now more practicing Wizards in England than at any time in her history” (How do they know that? What about in Celtic times?). Mention is made of a few 12,000 year old paintings still left in a cave at Cresswell Crags as evidence of the ancient pedigree of English magic (but the Chauvet cave in France is far older and the German and Austrian goddesses of Swabia and Willendorf are not even mentioned).

Barrows, stone circles, holy wells and mounds such as Silbury Hill are described (but similar monuments can be found in Ireland and in Native American mound Cultures and the great Serpent Mound in Ohio). Ley lines are mentioned (but no mention of the ancient Nazca lines of Peru) and we are given some practical instruction for how to trace them using an ordinance survey map. Then dowsing and crop circles are briefly covered. Suggestions are made for tourists to visit circles, barrows, tumps, wells, groves, Inns, and crop circles. The chapter ends with a list of places to visit and books to read on the subjects covered.

The Druid section briefly mentions that Caesar first encountered Druids in Gaul and that Gaulish Druids met at the site of Chartres Cathedral but spends the bulk of its pages on other things. We learn of the Masonic beginnings of the Romantic Druid revival, of the Arch Druid William Blake, of Iolo Morganwg and the founding of the Welsh National Eisteddfod, then of the Druidic initiations of Winston Churchill and Queen Elizabeth, the former Queen Mother, and Rowan Williams, the current Archbishop of Canterbury.



Interestingly the authors write that “Most of the information about them (the Druids) and their lore comes from Wales, Ireland, Scotland and Brittany” yet only the very last phase of the Druid revival is written about, centered in London with The Universal Bond of the Sons of Men, the Ancient Druid Order and the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids. (As an American Druid whose path has always been centered on the vast corpus of Celtic and Irish lore, this looks hopelessly Anglo-centric to my eyes).

A brief foray into Druid teachings follows; first the “tree –language of the Druids” is mentioned (called Ogham in Gaelic this is the original Irish alphabet). “Druid Herb lore” focuses on just three plants; mistletoe, vervain, and woad. “Druid animal lore” mentions salmon, bear and stag. “The Druid as Shaman” section (never mind that the word “Shaman” is Siberian) focuses on the work of Caitlin Matthews and gives some examples of journeys to the lower, middle and upper worlds.

Then we are given more touristy “things to do” such as where and when to attend a public Druid ritual or take part in a Druid pub crawl, followed by plenty of promo for OBOD’s podcasts and correspondence courses.

In the chapter called “Star-Cunning and Wyrd-craft” we learn about Anglo-Saxon sorcery and about J. R. R. Tolkien who got his elves, orcs, demons, dwarves and goblins, magical swords, rings, wizards and sorcerers from Anglo-Saxon lore. We read about runes (from Scandinavian “Runa”) “an alphabet that came originally from Scandinavia but developed its own variant in England” There are simple instructions for rune-casting, rune-charms, rune-spells, etc.

Mention is made of the Lacnunga, magical Anglo-Saxon texts from the 10th to 11th centuries that cover prayers, herbs, charms and rites of Anglo-Saxon Wizards. We read how to repel dark elves and use entheogenic plants and fungi, and of the powerful “Nine Herbs Charm” that is sung while healing herbs are brewed, and when to pick magical plants by the moon. We learn how to increase the fertility of a field and of charms against elf-sickness.

In “The Matter of Britain” chapter there is a brief section on Merlin and the writings of Geoffrey of Monmouth. We read about Arthur and The Grail Quest, and are given more suggestions for places to visit on the trail of the Arthur legend (no mention is made of the French claims that Camelot was in Brittany however a French painting of the Round Table is offered on page 162!)

Next is a chapter on Witches and Witchcraft, folk magic, Cunning men and women, Witch hunts and persecutions. The modern Witchcraft revival and the invention of Wicca by Gerald Gardner are discussed with a brief mention of Aleister Crowley who helped to inspire the Wiccan movement and of Doreen Valiente who gave it further shape. Spell casting and curses are covered (with a nice bit of advice from Craft elder Maxine Sanders) and more suggestions are given for books to read and historical pilgrimage sites for Witches in England.

In chapter six we learn about Alchemy (and its origins in China, India, Egypt and Greece and its refinement in Islamic cultures). We read of English alchemists such as Dr. John Dee and Roger Bacon and are given instructions for how to make The Philosopher’s Stone (amazingly I have all the ingredients on my kitchen shelf already!).

In the same chapter J.K. Rowling and Harry Potter crop up and we learn that Harry Potter’s progress through the books resembles very closely the Rosicrucian work “The Alchemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz (1916) and we are given yet more places to visit and books to study.

In chapter seven we learn that Dr. John Dee is England’s greatest magician (he was an astrologer, alchemist, cabbalist, mathematician, spiritualist and philosopher at Queen Elizabeth I’s court). The chapter ends with some nice basic exercises in Renaissance and Astrological magic, more places to visit and books to read.

The following chapter discusses Charmers, Fairy lore, Shamanic healing (there’s that Siberian word again), astrology, high and low magic, herbal charms, Wizard-craft and fortune telling and is peppered with personal interviews and anecdotes from living English practitioners.

Chapter nine focuses on Freemasonry and Elias Ashmole who was an alchemist, scientist, mathematician, lawyer, astrologer and Freemason and who provided us with the first written account of a Masonic initiation (you can read part of the Masonic rite in the book).

We learn that the oldest pub in England is Ye Olde Fighting Cocks which was once a favorite of Sir Walter Raleigh and of Oliver Cromwell.

We read how Masonry developed from the melding of guilds of stone masons and of Sufi's (the mystical branch of Islam) but no mention is made of French Masonry which pre-dated the English Masons. We are told that early Wicca incorporated most of the features of Masonic initiation (with a little nudity and ritual flagellation added to spice things up) and we learn of the origins of the "Five Fold Kiss" and the rudiments of numerology.

In Chapter ten we learn how to contact dead magicians for advice and profit and read that Joseph Smith, the creator of Mormonism, used Freemasonry as an inspiration as did the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and Rosicrucianism. There is a brief mention of the founding of The Theosophical Society, of Spiritualism, of ESP, and visits from angels.

In the chapter called "Opening Pandora's Box" we learn about the Great Beast himself; Aleister Crowley, and of how he fell out with the Golden Dawn, was detested by W. B. Yeats and that the O.T.O. which he joined was created along Masonic lines. Crowley is credited with the invention of Thelema and of Chaos Magic.

Next Dion Fortune appears, a student of Christian Science, Theosophy, Spiritualism and magic whose teacher was yet another Freemason. She founded The Society of the Inner Light, wrote books and coined the phrase "psychic-attack".

We are given advice about the pitfalls of magical practice such as ego-inflation and delusion, of feeling that one is being attacked by spirits. There is a quick intro to the Tarot followed by the usual lists of books and resources for further study.

The final chapter is called "The Wizards Return". In it we read in more detail about Gerald Gardner's creation of Wicca and of Ross Nichols' creation of OBOD. Both men were asthmatics, nudists, folklorists and nature lovers who co-created the modern Pagan "Eight-fold wheel of the year", used the Masonic three degrees, did their rituals in a circle, invoked the four directions and are credited by the authors with shifting the focus of neo-Paganism towards nature and away from Ceremonial Magic.

Chaos Magic and Thelema are described and discussed in more detail and finally some exercises are given to connect you with your own Higher Self or inner wisdom.

The appendix offers yet more places to visit in England, more book suggestions and other resources for the modern Anglophilic magical person. All the chapters are peppered with interviews of living English magicians, dowzers and Pagans.

This book glosses lightly over the subjects it covers and thus is most appropriate for beginners on the path and for those with the time and financial resources buy more books and to visit England. The work is myopic, however, in that it adheres strictly to English practitioners and ideas. The Celtic Reconstructionist aspect of Druidism and its attendant reverence for Celtic nature poetry and Celtic lore, so important for American Druids for example, is completely ignored.

To my eye the most valuable aspects of the book are the extensive book lists and historical venues where the reader can gain in-depth knowledge of each topic presented, should they have an interest. The book is a great overview for the dedicated Anglophile.

About the reviewer: Ellen Evert Hopman is the author of "Priestess of the Forest: A Druid Journey", "A Druids Herbal - Of Sacred Tree Medicine", "Walking the World in Wonder - A Children's Herbal" and other volumes. She is Co-chief of the Order of the Whiteoak. Visit her online at <http://www.celticheritage.co.uk/EllenEvertHopman/>