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# PAGAN WORLD



Hi all and welcome to Pagan World!

This bit of news from Morgana:

We are very pleased to announce that Jana has accepted the function of PFI Interfaith Coordinator, replacing Turtle.

Jana is not new to the Dutch Pagan Community, but let's hear from Jana herself:

"When I started writing book reviews, articles and the news section for the magazine Wiccan Rede in 1985, I was already interested in interfaith, and a member of an interfaith organisation. If I had gone to university, it would have been to study comparative religion. Instead I went to a "School for Librarians", and recently was trained to conduct - and assist people to develop their own - funeral rituals.

As Interfaith Coordinator, I want to be of service to Pagans who take part in local interfaith groups, and to represent the PFI at interfaith meetings. In 2006 I was one of the PFI representatives at LEMUN (Leiden Model of the United Nations), see Pagan World 33. You may expect more reports about interesting events and developments.

I would also like to address the Labour Movement and the Police Academy to inform them what Paganism is about. Even some Dutch employees have experienced problems when 'coming out' as a Pagan, and what would a police officer think of an athame in a handbag, or of small groups celebrating rituals in the woods after sunset? I believe giving information, and providing an address in case questions arise on Paganism, will be of help to individual Pagans and to the Pagan community."

We would like to thank Turtle for her time and effort and wish her every success in her future endeavours.

Good luck Jana and also looking forward to your reports and news in "Pagan World".

Bright blessings,  
Morgana

***Neolithic medicine - better than a hole in the head?***  
***By Hugh Wilson***

It's a revolutionary new theory. According to two of Britain's leading archaeologists, Stonehenge was the ancient British equivalent of Lourdes, a place where the sick came to be healed. Professor Timothy Darvill and Professor Geoff Wainwright have turned accepted wisdom on its head. Stonehenge, says Darvill, was "the A & E of southern England."



And if Stonehenge was a place of healing, it stands to reason that it would attract healers. The two archaeologists think that, as Stonehenge's reputation grew, a permanent camp of healers may have grown up to service a ready supply of potential clients. If that's true, it begs a couple of further questions. What medicine could late Neolithic Britain offer those ailing pilgrims, and would it actually make them better?

It's true to say that by our own standards, late Neolithic Britons lived short lives and died of trivial illnesses. Children, in particular, were vulnerable to ailments that we consider little more than nuisances, and child mortality rates were high. But experts believe the situation was more complex than those bare facts suggest.

"Don't regard life then as being nasty, brutish and short," says Professor Wainwright. "These were people with a sophisticated society. Life expectancy was quite variable. Yes, there was a high mortality in the 20s and 30s, but on the other hand people did go on for a lot longer than that."

To go on for a lot longer than that required luck, a solid immune system, and sometimes the intervention of skilled healers. There is no written record from Neolithic times, but Wainwright believes herbal remedies would probably have been well known, and their secrets passed from generation to generation. Neolithic Britons were not entirely at the mercy of the viruses and infections they would inevitably contract.

Nor were they helpless in the face of injury. Some ancient Britons could be pretty handy with a surgeon's scalpel (even if it was made of flint). According to archaeological forensic pathologist Jackie McKinley, our ancient ancestors practised a primitive form of brain surgery.

"There is quite a lot of evidence of trepanation from this period and that's basically brain surgery," she says. "They would make a hole in the skull by scraping away with a flint tool in small, circular motions. It's really quite sophisticated, because they'd worked out how to do it while causing the least damage. A lot of people survived the operation."

But why bore into someone's skull? Our ancestors believed that many problems could be healed by relieving pressure inside the head, from severe headaches to mental illness. And for one problem, at least, they were right. "They knew that if you got bashed on the head and fractured bits of the skull it was helpful to remove the bits of the skull from the brain," says McKinley.

Trepanning must have been a wholly unpleasant experience, but people survived it. Indeed, they often did so without signs of serious infection. That suggests something else about ancient healers and medicine men. They probably knew the importance of keeping wounds clean, and the Neolithic first-aid cupboard might have included some form of plant-based antiseptic.

Our ancestors even had one or two natural advantages that we don't enjoy. A diet high in red meat and raw vegetables created strong immune systems and surprisingly good teeth. Severe tooth decay only became endemic when 'stickier' foods, based on wheat and pulses became common. By contrast, our Neolithic ancestors ate a diet that tended to scrape their teeth clean.

A Neolithic version of the Atkins diet also meant that diseases of nutritional deficiency - like anaemia - were relatively rare. And a couple of our 21st century health hang-ups were less of a problem for those living in 3000 BC. "They obviously did have stresses in their lives," says McKinley, "but they didn't have lots of stress in terms of living space or having to fight for food.

"Also, they had very active lifestyles. Now that opens you up to potential problems (of injury), but the body is designed to be active; it's stimulated by movement, not by sitting in a chair in front of a computer all day."

In other words, obesity was not a problem for ancient Britons, even in times of plenty. Their bums never looked big in anything. And they didn't suffer the intense psychological stress that comes from polishing off a whole packet of biscuits. In that respect, at least, they were a lot better off than us.

Of course, in a thousand other ways, they weren't. Something as trivial as tonsillitis could kill. When you died at 35 in 2500 BC, it may well have been from the sort of non-specific infection that might mean a week off work in 2008. A fractured ankle could mean a lifetime of limping. There was probably no such thing as a trivial illness in Neolithic Britain.

And that's why Professors Darvill and Wainwright believe so many made the long journey to Stonehenge. Did the bluestones of Stonehenge have healing powers? As recent studies on the power of the placebo effect have shown, belief can be a powerful thing. If our ancient ancestors believed the rocks would make them feel better, it's quite possible that, at least some of the time, they did.



## ***Viking Religion*** ***By Gareth Williams***

We like to think of the Vikings as pagan plunderers. But, as Gareth Williams explains, they were quick to adopt Christianity at home and in the lands they conquered.

Burial mounds and church at Gamle Uppsala

### ***The age of conversion***

The Viking Age was a period of considerable religious change in Scandinavia. Part of the popular image of the Vikings is that they were all pagans, with a hatred of the Christian Church, but this view is very misleading. It is true that almost the entire population of Scandinavia was pagan at the beginning of the Viking Age, but the Vikings had many gods, and it was no problem for them to accept the Christian god alongside their own. Most scholars today believe that Viking attacks on Christian churches had nothing to do with religion, but more to do with the fact that monasteries were typically both wealthy and poorly defended, making them an easy target for plunder.



The Vikings came into contact with Christianity through their raids, and when they settled in lands with a Christian population, they adopted Christianity quite quickly. This was true in Normandy, Ireland, and throughout the British Isles. Although contemporary accounts say little about this, we can see it in the archaeological evidence. Pagans buried their dead with grave goods, but Christians normally didn't, and this makes it relatively easy to spot the change in religion.

As well as conversion abroad, the Viking Age also saw a gradual conversion in Scandinavia itself, as Anglo-Saxon and German missionaries arrived to convert the pagans. By the mid-11th century, Christianity was well established in Denmark and most of Norway. Although there was a temporary conversion in Sweden in the early 11th century, it wasn't until the mid-12th century that Christianity became established there. As part of the process of conversion the Christians took over traditional pagan sites. A good example of this can be seen at Gamle Uppsala in Sweden, where the remains of an early church stand alongside a series of huge pagan burial mounds.

### ***Pagan belief***



Silver Thor's hammer amulet, possibly worn for protection while at sea

We know almost nothing about pagan religious practices in the Viking Age. There is little contemporary evidence, and although there are occasional references to paganism in the Viking sagas - mostly composed in Iceland in the 13th century - we have to remember that these were written down 200 years after the conversion to Christianity. We know that chieftains also had some sort of role as priests, and that pagan worship involved the sacrifice of horses, but not much more.

We know rather more about the stories associated with the pagan gods. Besides occasional references in early poems, these stories survived after conversion because it was possible to regard them simply as myths, rather than as the expression of

religious beliefs. The main sources of evidence are the Eddas, wonderful literary works which represent the old pagan beliefs as folk tales. Even here there is some Christian influence. For example, the chief god Odin was sacrificed to himself by being hanged on a tree and pierced in the side with a spear, and this was followed by a sort of resurrection a few days later - a clear parallel with Christ's crucifixion.

Even so, the Eddas provide a huge amount of information about the Æsir (gods), and their relationship with giants, men and dwarfs. The most powerful god was the one-eyed Odin, the Allfather, god of warfare, justice, death, wisdom and poetry. Probably the most popular god, however, was Thor, who was stupid but incredibly strong. With his hammer Mjollnir, crafted by the dwarfs, he was the main defender of the gods against the giants. He was also the god of thunder, and he was particularly worshipped by seafarers. Amulets of Thor's hammer were popular throughout the Viking world. The brother and sister Frey and Freyja, the god and goddess of fertility, were also important, and there were many other minor gods and goddesses.

### **Gods and giants**



The great enemies of the gods were the giants, and there were often conflicts between the two races. Among the gods, only Thor was a match for the giants in strength, so the gods usually had to rely on cunning to outwit the giants. Odin himself was capable of clever tricks, but whenever the gods needed a really cunning plan, they turned to the fire-god Loki. Like fire, which can bring necessary warmth or cause great destruction, Loki did many things that benefited the gods, but he also caused them great harm, and often the problems he solved had been caused by his mischief in the first place.

*A stone cross from the Isle of Man showing Odin (with raven) fighting the Fenris wolf at the time of Ragnarok. Detail from the stone cross (right)*

Despite the tension between gods and giants, there was a fair amount of contact on an individual basis, and a number of the gods had relationships with giantesses. One of these was Loki, who had three monstrous children by his giantess wife. His daughter Hel became ruler of the underworld. One son, Jormunagund, was a serpent who grew so large that he stretched all the way around the earth. The other son was Fenris, a wolf so powerful that he terrified the gods until they tricked him into allowing himself to be tied up with a magical chain which bound him until the end of time.



It was believed that the world would end with the final battle of Ragnarok, between the gods and the giants. Loki and his children would take the side of the giants. Thor and Jormunagund, who maintained a long-running feud with each other, would kill each other, and Odin would be killed by the Fenris wolf, who would then be killed in turn. A fire would sweep across the whole world, destroying both the gods and mankind. However, just enough members of both races would survive to start a new world.

### ***Pagan and Christian together***



*(Silver 'St Peter' penny from York. The final 'I' of 'PETRI' takes the form of Thor's hammer)*

The raids on the Frankish kingdoms and the British Isles brought increased contact with Christianity. Although Vikings often seem to have maintained their beliefs throughout the periods of their raiding, there was considerable pressure to convert to Christianity if they wished to have more peaceful relations with the Christians. This could happen on a political level, as in the Treaty of Wedmore in 878. The treaty bound the Viking leader Guthrum to accept Christianity, with Alfred of Wessex as his godfather, and Alfred in turn recognised Guthrum as the ruler of East Anglia.

Another more or less formal convention applied to trade, since Christians were not really supposed to trade with pagans. Although a full conversion does not seem to have been demanded of all Scandinavian traders, the custom of 'primsigning' (first-signing) was introduced. This was a halfway step, falling short of baptism, but indicating some willingness to accept Christianity, and this was often deemed to be enough to allow trading.

Further pressure came as Viking raiders settled down alongside Christian neighbours. Although scholars disagree on exactly how extensive the Scandinavian settlement was in different parts of the British Isles, few people would now accept that the Vikings completely replaced the native population in any area. In particular, the settlers often took native wives (or at least partners), although some settlers apparently brought their families over from Scandinavia. The children of these mixed marriages would therefore grow up in partially Christian households, and might even be brought up as Christians. Further intermarriage, coupled with the influence of the Church, gradually brought about a complete conversion.

The peaceful co-existence of pagans and Christians is suggested by some of the coinage of Viking York. One coin type carries the name of St Peter, rather than the ruler. This seems very obviously Christian, but on many of the coins, the final 'I' of 'PETRI' takes the form of Thor's hammer, and some of these coins also have a hammer on the reverse. These coins seem to carry a deliberate message that both paganism and Christianity were acceptable.



### ***Conversion in Scandinavia***

*Rune-stone from Jelling, showing the figure of Christ on the cross.*

Attempts to convert Scandinavia began even before the Viking Age. The Anglo-Saxon St Willibrord led a mission to Denmark in 725, but although he was well-received by the king, his mission had little effect. The Frankish St Ansgar led a second wave of missionary activity from the 820s onwards - with the support of the Frankish Emperor Louis the Pious. Ansgar and his followers established missions in both Denmark and Sweden, with the support of local rulers, but made little impact on the population as a whole.

Archaeological evidence suggests that Christianity was adopted piecemeal in Norway, with settlements converting or not depending on whether the local chieftain converted. The same idea can also be seen on a larger scale. In the mid-tenth century Hakon the Good of Norway, who had been fostered in England, tried to use his royal authority to establish Christianity. However, when it became clear that this would lose him the support of pagan chieftains, he abandoned his attempts, and his Anglo-Saxon bishops were sent back to England.

Harald Bluetooth of Denmark was apparently more successful. His famous runestone at Jelling tells us that he 'made the Danes Christian', and this is supported both by Christian imagery on Danish coins from his reign and by German records of the establishment of bishops in various Danish towns. This began the lasting conversion of the Danes. Although there may have been a brief pagan reaction after Harald's death, the influence of the Church became firmly established once Cnut became ruler of both England and Denmark in 1018.

Further attempts by Anglo-Saxon missionaries in the late tenth century had only a limited effect in Norway and Sweden. Olaf Trygvasson of Norway and Olof Tribute-king of Sweden were both converted, but this had limited effect on the population as a whole. A further wave of conversion in Norway under Olaf Haraldsson (St Olaf) (1015-30) was more successful and gradually led to lasting conversion. Sweden, however, faced a pagan reaction in the mid-11th century, and it was not until the 12th century that Christianity became firmly established.

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### ***A Short History of Pyramidology***

***By Kevin Jackson***

*Some believe the Great Pyramid was built by the survivors of a lost civilisation, others that it was the work of visiting extra-terrestrials. Kevin Jackson traces the strange cultural history of the awe-inspiring structure.*

#### **Fringe beliefs**

The Great Pyramid of Giza was built for King Khufu (known to the Greeks as Cheops)



some four and a half thousand years ago. It is a structure of such awe-inspiring dimensions that many people across the centuries have found it hard to credit its creation to human beings. And even harder to realise that these human beings had not fully mastered the use of, say, the simple rope pulley, let alone explosives, mechanical diggers, power drills, cranes and helicopters.

#### **The Great Pyramid at Giza**

Quite apart from its sheer size (until the construction of the Eiffel Tower at the end of the 19th century, it was by far the tallest building in the world), the Great Pyramid is also an astonishing feat of geometrical accuracy. And there is evidence to suggest that its builders had a remarkably precise knowledge of astronomy, too.

Today, thanks to the labours of generations of scholars, we have constructed a pretty clear account of how this remarkable work was achieved. Archaeologists have traced the technical development of the pyramid form from earlier types of Egyptian tombs;

uncovered the quarries from which its stones were cut and hauled; located the remains of the barracks complex in which the work force was housed; calculated and painstakingly re-enacted the process of its construction.

A few minor points of ambiguity remain: for example, though all the experts agree that some form of giant ramp must have been used in building the higher levels, it has not been settled what kind of ramp this was. For the most part, though, everyone who has studied the matter seriously now agrees that the Pyramid was built over the course of some 20 or so years by a work force of some 20,000 people, of whom 4,000 were the hard core of labourers. And despite the familiar Hollywood image, it is also known that the workers were not slaves, but short-term conscripts, performing a kind of National Service.

This account of the making of the Great Pyramid, although rich and coherent, does not satisfy everyone, and there are many who persist in attributing the Great Pyramid to some agency outside the human race. There is a whole branch of the publishing industry devoted to meeting this hunger for pyramidal mysteries, which is sharpened by movies such as *Stargate* and *The Fifth Element*, and shows no sign of tapering off in the 21st century.

This accumulation of fringe beliefs is sometimes known as 'pyramidology'; some of its major tendencies are described here, with catch-all names for the sake of brevity.

### **Occultists**

Looking into the early days of investigation and enquiry into the Great Pyramid, it is hard to separate the genuine scholars from those who would now be regarded as cranks, since the radical split between scientific method and religious faith that characterises modern societies had not yet taken place.



Sir Isaac Newton, for example, himself a keen pyramidologist, notoriously spent as much time on alchemical experiments and biblical interpretation as he did on the work in mathematics and physics for which he is now honoured.

Napoleon invaded Egypt at the end of the 18th century. Many of those inquisitive Europeans who made the trip to Giza in the 17th and 18th centuries were drawn by the promise that it in some way embodied mysterious ancient wisdom; and though modern Egyptology, born of Napoleon's invasion of the country at the end of the 18th century, gradually became more scientific as time passed, even a reputable scientist such as Scotland's Astronomer Royal, Charles Piazzi Smyth (1819-1900), working in the 19th century, was convinced that the structure's proportions were inspired by the Christian God.

Others, like the sometime structural engineer David Davidson, went still further. Davidson persuaded himself that the Pyramid demonstrated knowledge of the structure of the universe vastly superior to that of 19th-century science: 'the whole empirical basis of civilisation', he wrote, 'is a makeshift collection of hypotheses compared with the Natural Law basis of that civilisation of the past'.

Egyptology came of scientific age with the accurate and painstaking excavations of Sir Flinders Petrie and others from the late 19th century onwards. At the same time 'pyramidiocy', as it is sometimes called, reached epidemic proportions, with countless cranks purporting to explain just how the Giza structure predicted the First World War, the Second Coming of Christ, the Third Reich and what have you.

Not surprisingly, the Pyramid was also seized on by just about every one of the mystical cults that thrived in the late 19th and early 20th centuries - above all by the Theosophists, an influential group founded by one Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-91). In her widely read, if all-but-unreadable, books, *The Secret Doctrine* (1888) and *Isis Unveiled* (1877), she explained to her followers that the Pyramid was 'the everlasting record and the indestructible symbol of the Mysteries and Initiations on Earth'.

Thanks to Mme Blavatsky, the Pyramid became an essential point of pilgrimage for all self-respecting occultists. Among the notable necromancers and magi who made the journey were the Russian mathematician and mystic PD Ouspensky, whose cult is still alive in various forms today; the largely innocuous self-appointed guru 'Dr' Paul Brunton, who wrote a bestselling book, *A Search in Secret Egypt* (1935), where he recalled his conference with weird spirits inside the Pyramid; and the most famous of all Black Magicians, Aleister Crowley (1875-1947), who claimed to have spent his honeymoon in the Pyramid, bathed in supernatural light.



### **Atlanteans**

Occultists of all stripes continue to be keen on the Pyramid as a place of spirits and demons, but the traditional belief that it was the product of some 'lost wisdom' from ancient times took on a new wrinkle round about 1923, when a poorly educated American by the name of Edgar Cayce (1877-1945), who had already made something of a name for himself as a trance medium, began to tell his listeners that they had lived previous lives in the lost, sunken continent of Atlantis. He claimed that he too had lived on Atlantis, and had been a high priest there. 'Cayce insisted that it was the refugee Atlanteans who had constructed, or at least designed, the Pyramid around 10,400 BC.'

Cayce told his believers that the most enlightened members of the population of Atlantis had fled the coming deluge and set up home in Egypt around 10,500 BC. (Some eight millennia, that is, before the construction of Khufu's Pyramid). Cayce insisted that it was the refugee Atlanteans who had constructed, or at least designed, the Pyramid around 10,400 BC. What's more, he said, they had built somewhere close by it a Hall of Records, crammed with their most marvellous secrets; and he predicted that this Hall would be uncovered in the last 20 years of the millennium. Fringe Egyptological circles were in a state of excitement throughout the 1990s, expecting an announcement any day. None came.

### **Extra-terrestrials**

With the 1960s came something a little more space age. In 1969 - not so coincidentally, the year of the Apollo 11 mission that first put men on the moon - there appeared the first English-language version of the book *Chariots of the Gods?*

The author of this curiously written and much publicised work was a Swiss hotelier, Erich von Daniken, and its theme passed into popular consciousness, borne along by serialisation in tabloid newspapers.

Briefly, von Daniken contended that the earth had long ago been visited by superior beings from other worlds, whose technology appeared to our distant ancestors as a form of magic; that our most ancient monuments, including the Great Pyramid (von Daniken maintains that its construction by existing earthly methods would have taken at least 664 years, although the evidence he gives for this is not clear), are the material evidence of that visit; and that the world's religions and mythologies reflect garbled memories of the culture shock it engendered.

Although it is sometimes hard to penetrate von Daniken's prose, he also appears to contend that the Pyramid was a sort of freezing chamber, in which the significant dead could be preserved until such time as the sun god Ra (an astronaut, naturally) returned to revive them. Despite widespread derision, the refutations of scientists, and the promptings of plain old common sense, von Daniken's writings remain in print to this day, and help perpetuate one of the leading folk myths of our time.

### **New Agers**

The 1960s and 70s also saw the rise of that loose coalition of unorthodox and far-fetched beliefs known as New Age philosophy. The Pyramid plays as lively a role in this philosophical fashion as it did a hundred years ago in the heyday of Theosophy, and the mania for all things 'pyramidical' burns as ardently as ever.

One of the more novel aspects of the craze took off in the mid-1960s, when attention shifted from the physical presence of the Giza structure to its proportions. A Czech radio engineer, Karel Dribal, heard rumours of the remarkable preservative powers of tiny model pyramids, made some tests of his own, and then announced to the world that a used razor blade, placed inside a cardboard replica of the pyramid just 15 inches high, would miraculously regain its original sharpness. Before long, the media rang with reports of people using mini-pyramids to keep milk fresh, and to sharpen not only blades but also brainpower.

That particular fad appears to have died away; but others have taken its place. For every reader who is interested in the true story of Khufu's Pyramid, there appear to be hundreds who wish to read only of its mystical secrets, its occult alignment with the heavens, its connection with the so-called 'Face on Mars' (a fuzzy photograph of a rock form taken by the space craft Viking II, in which some people believe they can make out an approximately human profile, somewhat akin to that of the Sphinx), and a supposed 'hidden chamber', the 'door' to which was recently found by a remote-controlled camera.

These unorthodox theories are the stuff of many present-day bestsellers - some relatively sober and moderately well researched, others opportunistic or simply zany. Belief in them is harmless enough, no doubt, and may lead on to a further interest in matters Egyptological. But just as astronomers bemoan the persistence of belief in astrology, professional Egyptologists are exasperated by people's willingness to buy into fantasies about the Pyramid when the unadorned truth of the matter is so endlessly fascinating, and so easy to uncover.

## ***Creating a Sanctuary*** ***By Christopher Blackwell***

Last time we heard from Eric, he was sending articles from the war front. Now he's working on creating a Pagan sanctuary in Arizona.

Christopher: What started you thinking about creating this sanctuary? Why would one be of use to Pagans?

Eric: We started planning a Sanctuary because of all the discrimination and harassment we saw going on, and wanted to create a spiritual safe-haven and education center, since a lot of discrimination stems from not knowing what a Pagan belief really is. The concept of the Sanctuary then grew into a plot of land that anyone could come out and live on as a self-sustaining community. Solar and wind power was discussed and it was pictured as having a lake in the west for water, a fire pit in the south for fire, a stage for Full Moon concerts representing air and a community lodge in the north for earth. There would be several campgrounds for groups that wanted to come out and hold personal rituals and we would have classes in the lodge for candle making, wand making, herbal sachets, whatever folks wanted to learn.



As for what would a Pagan have use for such a Sanctuary? Well, reading the newspaper I do indeed see religious harassment and discrimination going on in the civilian world as well as the military and feel an education center as well as religious rights center would be in order. There is always strength in numbers and this is a community-based organization we are starting. Anyone can get out and teach a class, there will be a community-based garden and a working farm so there's plenty to do. I also planned on a Spiral Scouts group for the kids on the Sanctuary as the kids are our future and they must be taught our traditions as openly as the parents are willing to teach them.

Christopher: When did you start making this a reality?

Eric: I started the yahoo group in Aug. 2006 and had 13 for over a year, but it remained dormant. There were issues with agendas so we've since started the group over and many of the older members stuck with us. Thanks to some very strong people in Arizona the legalities are becoming a reality; we are already a 501c3 non profit under the umbrella of a very strong Sanctuary called Shanta Ista ULC.

Christopher: Why Arizona? What features are you looking for in the location and the land?

Eric: When we first started planning this project we were looking at New Mexico and after I returned started looking at Arizona, specifically the Sedona region, based on visions some people were having of future events and looking at maps of future earth.

Should disasters happen that region appears to be the safest. As for features we are looking at land as well as mountain, forested and a good healing environment, which Sedona has from studies I have done and in talking to people about the region. I have intensive survival skills and am willing to teach desert as well as mountain survival to whomever is willing to learn.

Christopher: Any idea where in Arizona you might look for land?

Eric: We are looking into Sedona, but open to anywhere in the northern side of Arizona. We are open to suggestions, but are recognized legally already in that state.

Christopher: What are the short-term goals for this sanctuary?

Eric: The shorter-term goals are establishing an education and legal center for religious persecution and harassment cases. We plan on having enough land for anyone to move onto, but we will be on the grid initially. We will hold Pagan Pride celebrations on the land and Sabbat celebrations in diverse traditions. The library and classrooms will be set up first.

Christopher: What are the long-term goals?

Eric: The long-term goals are being off the grid with power. We will have an open garden area and a working farm for self-sustainment and will be set up for public education and celebrations on an annual basis. I also plan on having a good disaster management program to aid whatever nearby community needs it in the times of natural disasters.

Christopher: How can Pagans become involved in creating this sanctuary?

Eric: We need financial aid in the way of donations or if anyone knows anything about grants and grant writing, that would also help. We are open to suggestions in any area of this project. I will also need people with talents such as contractors, construction workers, legal aid and medical. Gardeners and animal husbandry will also be needed. Any talent is welcome obviously as there will always be a place for them.

Christopher: Where can they find more information and how do they contact the organization?

Eric: The links needed are as follows. Our Yahoo group is at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/DesertMoonSanctuaryCharitableTrust/?yguid=156472064>

Our website can be found at

<http://www.desertmoonsanctuarycharitabletrust.org/>

This project has had its ups and downs; the core group I have established as well as our email list has been with us through thick and thin and I thank them all for their patience, as we all know this will materialize. I do thank you Christopher for taking this time to interview me as I feel the word will get out to those that matter and can benefit all in the Pagan community as its intended. I will be writing more articles as I do still write for Pagan Pages.

## **Viking Women** **By Judith Jesch**

The Vikings weren't just raiders, but farmers, traders and settlers - and they took their families with them when they moved from Scandinavia. Judith Jesch examines the role women played in the Viking world.

### ***Female Vikings?***

Could women be Vikings? Strictly speaking, they could not. The Old Norse word *vikingar* is exclusively applied to men, usually those who sailed from Scandinavia in groups to engage in the activities of raiding and trading in Britain, Europe and the East. But some Vikings stayed behind in these regions, and Scandinavian colonies were also established in the North Atlantic (Faroe, Iceland, Greenland).



Women could and did play a part in this process of settlement. Iceland, for instance, was uninhabited, and a permanent population could only be established if women also made the journey there. In regions with an established indigenous population, Viking settlers may have married local women, while some far-roving Vikings picked up female companions en route, but there is evidence that Scandinavian women reached most parts of the Viking world, from Russia in the east to Newfoundland in the west.

Most journeys from Scandinavia involved sea-crossings in small, open ships with no protection from the elements. Families heading for the North Atlantic colonies would also have to take all the livestock they would need to establish a new farm, and the journey cannot have been pleasant. The Viking colonists settled down to the farming life in their new home, or established themselves as traders and became town-dwellers. Both farming and trading were family businesses, and women were often left in charge when their husbands were away or dead. There is also evidence that women could make a living in commerce in the Viking Age. Merchants' scales and weights found in female graves in Scandinavia suggest an association between women and trade, while an account of a ninth-century Christian mission to Birka, a Swedish trading centre, relates the conversion of a rich widow Frideburg and her daughter Catla, who travelled to the Frisian port of Dorestad.

### ***Viking women in England***



The 'great Danish army' that criss-crossed and conquered much of England in the 860s and 870s probably had camp-followers, although these need not have been Scandinavian women. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle notes that a Viking army operating in the years 892-5 was accompanied by women and children, who had to be put in a place of safety while the army fought and harried. But this army arrived in England after raiding on the continent and at least some of the women

may have come from there. The first Viking settlers who turned their swords into ploughshares are unlikely to have had Scandinavian wives.

However, place-names and language suggest that there was considerable Scandinavian immigration into those areas of England controlled by the Viking invaders, later known as the 'Danelaw'. Although the nature and extent of the Scandinavian immigration is contested by scholars, the most convincing explanation of the evidence is that there was a peaceful migration of Scandinavian families to parts of the north and east of England throughout the tenth century. Recent finds of large numbers of low-grade, Scandinavian-style female jewellery, particularly in Lincolnshire, have been taken to show the presence of Scandinavian women there in the tenth century. These finds correlate well with the distribution of Scandinavian place-names in the same region: taken together, the evidence does suggest a significant Scandinavian presence.

There was a further significant influx of Scandinavians into England during the reign of Cnut in the 11th century. These new, higher-class immigrants left their mark in London and the south, areas not previously subject to Scandinavian settlement. The rune stone from St Paul's, London, with its fragmentary inscription which tells us only that it was commissioned by Ginna (a woman) and T-ki (a man), shows two Scandinavians asserting their cultural affiliations at the heart of the English kingdom.

### ***Scandinavian immigration***



Scandinavian immigration had a greater impact on the more sparsely-populated areas of the British Isles, especially the Northern Isles and the Hebrides. In these rural and maritime regions, the settlement pattern is less like England and more like the Scandinavian colonies of the North Atlantic, with the difference that there were indigenous populations (such as the Picts) to contend with. Whether these were driven out or whether they reached some accommodation with the incomers, the place-name evidence is

compatible with an almost total Scandinavian takeover of Orkney and Shetland.

Pagan graves provide plentiful archaeological evidence for early Scandinavian settlement in Scotland, and for female settlers. Two graves from Orkney show us two very different women: the young, stout and wealthy mother of newborn twins from Westness, and the high-status, elderly woman from Scar, buried in a boat along with a younger man and a child, a matriarch, perhaps even a priestess of Freya.

While the Northern Isles are completely Scandinavian in language and culture, the Viking-settled areas in and around the Irish Sea had a more varied population. The rich female grave from the Isle of Man, popularly known as the 'Pagan Lady of Peel', shows a woman with almost wholly Scandinavian affinities, but the 30 or so Christian runic monuments of that island reveal a much more mixed picture. These are basically Celtic crosses with some Scandinavian-style decoration, including mythological scenes. The inscriptions are in runes and Old Norse, but the personal names (both Norse and Celtic) and the grammatically-confused language suggest a

thoroughly mixed community. At least a quarter of these monuments commemorate women, mostly as wives, though a stone from Kirk Michael appears to be in memory of a foster-mother, and the inscription notes that 'it is better to leave a good foster-son than a bad son'.

### ***Daily life***



The mythological poem *Rígsþula*, written down in medieval Iceland, accounts for the divine origin of the three main social classes. But it also gives us a snapshot of daily life in the Viking Age. The woman of the slave-class wears 'old-fashioned clothes' and serves bread that is 'heavy, thick, packed with bran... in the middle of a trencher', with 'broth in a basin'. The woman of the yeoman class wears a cap

and a blouse, has a kerchief around her neck and 'brooches at her shoulders', and is busy with her spindle, 'ready for weaving'. The aristocratic woman is just busy preening herself: she wears a blouse of smooth linen, a spreading skirt with a blue bodice, a tall headdress and appropriate jewellery, and has very white skin. She serves silver dishes of pork and poultry on a white linen cloth, washed down with wine.

The archaeological evidence shows that women were often buried in their best outfits, including a pair of oval brooches of gilt bronze, which held up a woollen overdress worn with a linen underdress. Many spindle whorls have been found, as most women would have been engaged in spinning and other textile production much of the time. A Viking Age spindle whorl from L'Anse aux Meadows (in Newfoundland) is evidence that women also reached the New World.

The standard Viking Age house was rectangular and had just one room, in which everything took place around a central hearth. This house type has been found from Sweden in the east to Newfoundland in the west, in both rural settlements and in towns such as York and Dublin. As in most traditional societies, women spent much of their time indoors in such houses, cooking, making clothing and caring for children and the elderly, but they would also have had responsibility for the dairy.

### ***Women of influence***



Most women's lives were bounded by hearth and home, but they had great influence within this sphere. The keys with which many were buried symbolise their responsibility for, and control over, the distribution of food and clothing to the household.

Some women made their mark through exceptional status or achievement. One of the richest burials of Viking Age Scandinavia is that of the Oseberg 'queen', buried in a very grand style with a richly-decorated ship and large numbers of high-quality grave goods in 834. Later in that century, Aud the 'deep-minded' lived a veritable Viking Age odyssey. The daughter of a Norwegian chieftain in the Hebrides, she married a Viking based in Dublin and, when both her husband and son had died, took charge of the family fortunes, organising a ship to take her and her granddaughters to Orkney, Faroe and Iceland. She settled in Iceland, distributing land to her followers, and was remembered as one of its four most important settlers, and as a notable early Christian.

The Christianisation of Scandinavia in the 11th century gave women new roles, which are reflected in the rune stones from this period. On the Dynna stone from Norway, Gunnvor commemorates her daughter Astrid with pictures of the Nativity, while the Stäket stone from Sweden commemorates Ingirun, who went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Queen Emma sums up the cultural connections of the Viking Age. Her father was Duke Richard of Normandy, descended from its Viking founder Rollo, while her mother is said to have been Danish. Emma was married to two kings of England, the English Æthelred and the Danish Cnut, and was the mother of two more. With Cnut, she was a great patron of the Church, and after his death she commissioned the Encomium Emmae, a Latin account of Danish kings in England in the 11th century, ensuring that her portrait was included in the manuscript.

### ***Astrological Light Bulb Jokes***

How many Aries does it take to change a light bulb?

Only one, but it takes a lot of light bulbs.

How many Taurus does it take to change a light bulb?

What, me move?

How many Gemini does it take to change a light bulb?

II

How many Cancers does it take to change a light bulb?

Only one, but he has to bring his mother.

How many Leos does it take to change a light bulb?

A dozen. One to change the bulb, and eleven to applaud.

How many Virgos does it take to change a light bulb?

Five. One to clean out the socket, one to dust the bulb, one to install, and two engineers to check the work.

How many Libras does it take to change a light bulb?

Libras can't decide if the bulb needs to be changed.

How many Scorpios does it take to change a light bulb?

None. They LIKE the dark.

How many Sagittarians does it take to change a light bulb?

One to install the bulb, and a Virgo to pick up the pieces.

How many Capricorns does it take to change a light bulb?

The light's fine as it is.

How many Pisceans does it take to change a light bulb?

What light bulb?

How many Aquarians does it take to change a light bulb?

Have you asked the bulb if it WANTS to be changed?

***The Other Side of Missionary Work***  
***By Christopher Blackwell***

In our society, when we think of missionaries, we usually imagine some pious person going out into the wilderness to bring religion and civilization to the poor savages, often including not only modern religion, but education and medical care.

Certainly, the many people that donate to missionary causes believe that they are a good thing. After all isn't bringing the wonders of civilization good for these poor backward people?

There is an arrogance about it because civilized people assume that they know what is best for tribal people. They would never considering asking them if they want or need it. It is often the civilized people who are ignorant as to what is good for others.

What most of us civilized people fail to realize that these tribal people and their culture are not nearly as simple as we think.

All tribal people are people with often thousands of years of history. They have developed their own unique customs, rules, taboos and beliefs over time because they help the people function as a group and live in their own particular place on the planet. For a tribal people to function and survive, they must have very little conflict within the group and there must be ways to solve what conflicts do come up.

Each person in the tribe needs to know and understand what is expected of them and is raised with these standards so they do it automatically. Meanwhile there are respected elders to help keep order and to explain the way things have been and need to be.

The missionary comes in with a new set of beliefs that is often in conflict with everything the tribe believes and with a religion that is strange and unknown. When some members of the tribe convert, they have little understanding of the religion and become dependent on the missionary to help them understand what they have to do.

Their dependency gives the missionary a place of power over them. This conflicts with the elders and tribal religious leaders they would have consulted before. Conflict comes to the tribe and with it the breakdown of normal order necessary for the tribe to function.

Invariably the missionary has very different ideas about how the tribe should act, dress and what activities are proper and improper, based on his own culture and religious beliefs. Often this is in direct conflict with the normal needs and mores of the tribe. The missionary encourages his followers to spread their newfound religion and also the new cultural ideas. This creates arguments and breaks down tribal unity.

Often through education the tribal people are taught to desire things they cannot provide for themselves, things that require the use of money, which they have little or no experience with. They are taught that their tribal ways are evil or outdated. They are taught to want what is in the civilized world and what can be brought in from the outside world.

The unfortunate thing is this new way rarely works as well as the old ways. This leads to more unhappiness. Eventually they lose their independence as they are guided into a life they do not understand.

They become low-paid workers of the new economy, often having to move away from the land where they have lived to the growing slums of the cities far away. Violence and crime, prostitution, drunkenness and drug use become too common and the people are dissatisfied because they cannot afford the lifestyle they have been taught to want and desire.

A few may prosper, but that prosperity is not shared with the rest of their people. Within a generation no one has the old skills and there is no way to go back to the culture that they once had. History proves all civilizations come apart, and then who will have the skills needed to survive afterward?

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### ***You might be giving pagans a bad name if....***

- You insist that your boss call you "Rowan Starchild" because otherwise you'd sue for religious harassment.
- You've ever publicly claimed to be an elf, alien, vampire, faerie, or demigod, and been genuinely surprised when not everyone took you seriously.
- You've ever publicly claimed to be the reincarnation of Gardner, Merlin, Aleister Crowley, King Arthur, Cleopatra, Morgana Le Fay, or Jim Henson, and been genuinely surprised when not everyone took you seriously.
- Your Book of Shadows is a rulebook for Vampire the Masquerade with notes in the margins.
- You've ever affected an Irish or Scottish accent and insisted that it was real.
- You talk to your invisible guardians in public. (Score double if you save places for them in crowded restaurants) (Score triple if you admit to having sex with them)
- You own a ceremonial bong.
- You've ever tried something you saw on Sabrina, The Teenage Witch
- You claim to be a family tradition (hereditary), but you're not.
- You claim to be a descendant of one of the original Salem Witches
- You've ever used reincarnation as the intro for a pick up line.
- You request Samhain, Beltaine, and Yule off and then bitch about working Christmas.
- The thing that drew you to the Craft was the potential to dance with naked members of the opposite sex.
- You claim yourself as a witch because how early you were trained by the wise and powerful such-and-such. Of whom nobody has heard.
- You complain about how much the Native Americans copied from Eclectic Wiccan Rites.

**Harvest Deities in Ireland:  
The Dark God Crom, the Sun Goddess and their Corn Maiden Child  
© Alanna Moore, January 2008.**

***The animistic paradigm***

In the dimension of the Australian Aboriginal Dreamtime (also known as The Dreaming), the most ancient of continuing spiritual traditions, all places are sacred, but some are much more sacred than others. The Aboriginal sagas of mythos are of a vast totemic nature, emphasising the connection between all beings in nature and seeing nature as ecological guilds of conscious life forces at play.

The landscape is said to be created, or brought to life, by the first culture heroes' naming of the place. This is often a time when the place takes on its unique layers of identity as, and when, sacred 'place-events' occur, including episodes in the lives of the gods/goddesses/Dreaming heroes. These supernatural beings infuse the deepest of meaning to Country, such as is only fully revealed to initiated adults. The Dreamtime continuum may have started in earliest times, but it also flows into the present; for The Dreaming is more of an other-dimensional reality than just a simple time frame.

This Dreaming provides us with a contemporary model to help us understand many, if not all, of the most ancient forms of animist spirituality on the planet. Even Christianity is not immune to such influences and, within its supposedly anti-pagan tenets, aspects of totemism are strongly evident, as the identification of Jesus with the bread (sacred grain) and wine would indicate.

***Recycling the gods***

Over in Ireland, place legends and names also reveal, to initiated observation, ancient animistic traditions of sacredness, including associations with divine figures who personify the wisdom/consciousness and fruitfulness of the land. As in Australia, the Irish people revered their sacred sites, maintaining traditions of sacred pilgrimage to places, especially springs and hilltops, through thousands of years.

However, unlike in Australia, Ireland has been invaded many times and yet, through times of cultural and religious upheaval and change, a great many of its ancient sacred sites remain revered or intact (with a fear of fairy wrath being invoked if the place is violated in any way). When invading peoples swept into Ireland, bringing their own deities with them, these were able to be accommodated by the Irish. The endemic species of highly evolved nature beings (the devas and divinities) didn't go away, but just had to jostle for position amongst a bulging pantheon of indigenous and imported deities. A great deal of recycling went on in the characters of archetypal hero deities. Over the aeons many legends have been lost, fragmented and no doubt deliberately altered to suit prevailing tastes or politics.

The early Irish church and medieval writers had an interesting time recasting the raw nature of Ireland's deities and re-inventing them as saints and semi-divine heroes, integrating with folk beliefs. It would have been a tricky job dealing with the all-powerful Irish sun goddesses. The new patriarchal religion wasn't going to put up with them! Solar associations with women were anathema to the church, which suppressed all that was suggestive of positive feminine force, as well as any

indigenous practises that were vital and life evoking in animistic cultures they impose themselves upon.

But the power of the sun goddesses still filtered through. St Brigit was said, as a baby, to glow, no doubt as a result of her lineage of ancient solar goddesses. St Brigid Crosses, made for the first day of spring/Imbolc/February 1st, appear to depict the solar wheel, the quartered circle of the sun's year with its four seasons / directions. The sunny natured imagery of the great sun god Lugh, was also borrowed by the church to become the bright light of Jesus and St Patrick. But more lately New Age writers have fallen into the trap set by Christianity and they'll typically typecast deities as being of the light for men, and of darkness for women, ignoring the fact that a great majority of solar deities globally are female. By only claiming the moon, womankind remains a mere reflection of ultimate power the sun - when truly she can be an all-powerful and radiant being if she wants to be!

### **Dark god**

There was one early Irish god who just couldn't be church-washed easily and He enjoyed the highest of status in Ireland and other Celtic countries, before the church began it's cultural genocide. This was Crom Dubh, the 'dark, stooped one' who lived in the underworld throughout winter, emerging on 1st August to claim the 'first fruits', in the form of Eithne the corn maiden, and bringing her on his back (hence his stoop) down to the underworld. (It's interesting that the south-west American god of agriculture Kokopelli - is also depicted with a stoop, due to his carrying embryonic babies on his back.)

This ritual 'sacrifice' ensured continuing bounty from the Earth in which the seeds would germinate. The traditions vary from place to place. Crom is sometimes depicted as the last sheaf of corn cut at the harvest. An Ulster tradition was the taking of the last sheaf of corn and hanging it up in the home to represent the god. It would hang over the harvest feast table and was assigned oracular powers in the distant past, Cary Meehan informs us. In 19th century sources Crom Dubh was known as the 'god of harvest' and He was believed to emerge from the underworld - the body of the great Earth mother goddess Grainne-Aine - with the first great sheaf of wheat, as a sacred gift to our world, writes Michael Dames. Crom's popularity lasted long on the western seaboard, from Donegal Bay down to the Dingle Peninsula, and Crom was usually paired up with Aine as the premier pair of Earthy harvest deities.



Eithne means kernel or grain and this maiden daughter of Aine and Crom has had her name Anglicized in Ulster as Annie. She is depicted in 'maiden' corn dollies and in the astrological sign for Virgo, Dames points out. Corn 'dollies' were woven from barley, corn and oats and their diverse shapes evoke the glyphs of an ancient sun/fertility religion. (The word *corn* originally meant all types of cereal grains and *ethanol* would be a word descending from the name of the corn maiden.)

Crom's festival day was known as Domhnach Cromm Dubh and Black Stoop Sunday. Later on it was sometimes known as Garland or Bilberry Sunday (named for the festival's association with berry picking), in an attempt to erase the memory of old Crom. The event was celebrated either on the last day or last Sunday of July, or on the first day or first Sunday of August.

Over in Scotland, Wikipedia informs us that there is (or was) a curious Scottish saying: 'Di-Dòmhnach crum-dubh, plaoisgidh mi an t-ùbh' meaning - "Crooked Black Sunday, I'll shell the egg."

The egg association must hark back to the seeds that Crom Dubh carries and lovingly places in the Earth each year at the beginning of autumn, when farmers also sow the next year's crop. Also known as Crom Cruaich, Crom probably originated as a deity who came with the earliest peoples from Iberia, heralding advances in agriculture and associated with bulls.

Mairie MacNeill, who reviewed a mass of folklore of Irish harvest festivals, has concluded that Crom is 'a version of Donn' (a very early god), and that 'he can be regarded as identical with the pre-Celtic food-providing gods Cormac, the Dagda, Elcmar, Midir and Balor'. Crom was a god borne from the beginnings of Neolithic agriculture, who later contended with the advent of new technologies, the coming of the Bronze, then the Iron Ages. He wielded the *rannach*, the staff of life, but was also associated with death. He even managed to survive the onslaught of Christianity but only just! The darkness of the underworld god Crom could only be interpreted by the church as the Devil, well eventually it did. At first Crom's redeeming features were actually praised by St Patrick!

Lugh, the god of sun/light, later took over Crom's role to some extent, after arriving around 500 BCE from continental Europe. The Tuatha de Danaan people were said to have brought Lugh and his spear of victory to Ireland, where he became known as the Master of Arts. The legends then have Lugh attempting to wrest the corn maiden Eithne from Crom's back for Lugh became Crom's adversary, and together they personified the battle of the light over dark, the two halves of the year. The great harvest feast of Lughnasa takes its name from him.

Lugh is called Lug in Gaul and his principal temple - the Lugudunum - was at Lyons in modern France. The Tuatha de Danaan also brought with them the great god Dagda (who had a cauldron from which no-one would go away unsatisfied), and he became more important than Lugh over time. These gods, who seem to have begun life as semi-divine ancestor heroes, must have personified the yin and yang of divine masculinity. While Lugh, with his flashy sword of light, and other gods were more recently venerated, it seems that the memory of dark old Crom has been the more deeply etched within the Irish psyche.

### ***Crom's stone assembly***

Crom was depicted with his 'sub-gods twelve' in standing stones covered with gold, silver and brass. Stones which represented the 13 'gods' were 'probably' located on the Hill of Darraugh (the 'Rath of the Oak Grove'), beside Ballymagauran Lake in County Leitrim, suggests author James Hayward in 1939.

The assembly of Crom Cruaich the central deity surrounded by (or adjacent to) a circle of his 12 sub-ordinates in stone - was echoed by the famous Assemblies of Tara, held at Ireland's royal centre for 142 high kings at the Hill of Tara, with the high king surrounded by a circle of vassals. (The famous megalith there, the Lia Fail, was said to cry out when approached by the legitimate king to be. Locally known as 'Fergus's phallus', the stone reminds us of the king's requirement to make a sacred marriage with the Earth goddess, before kingship could be approved by the land

itself.) And in Cornwall stone circles were used for coronations up until the fourteenth century, with the king in the centre and his noblemen arranged around him at each of their representative stones, as noted by an 18th century historian, Nigel Pennick relates.

### ***Connection with the Hill of Tara***

The sacred centre at the Hill of Tara has a connection with north-east Leitrim and north-west Cavan, the area where Crom's circle stood and once a stronghold of his worship. This was in the form of a royal road that connected the two places together (one of five royal roads that led to/from Tara), so that kings could worship the supreme god. The place of the god Crom was linked to the hill of the sovereignty goddess Maebh, and thus Tara is a huge landscape temple of linked sites where people would honour the bounty and cyclic renewal of nature and the dual male/female divinity of the land.

The general population, as well as the lords, chiefs and high kings of Tara, all worshipped this god and travelled along the ceremonial road from Tara direct to the site to pay homage to Crom. Showing how important it was, St Patrick followed this road on his mission to destroy Crom's worship and there are several St Patrick's Wells along the way. The fact that these were consecrated to Patrick signifies an intense effort to suppress the pagan practices encountered by the church there. Funnily enough, the annual pilgrimages to these wells are never held on St Patrick's Day, but around the time of Lughnasa on (or around) 1st August.

Legend has it that after Patrick confronted the god he noted Crom's good works and took possession of his soul, while putting to flight his demons and making him his servant! He even declared that "Crom's charities and good works were more than a balance for his sins." It says a lot for the attitudes of the Celtic church of the day.

Cary Meehan places the location of the 'banishment' of Crom by St Patrick at Killycluggin, near Ballyconnell in far-west County Cavan. The Killycluggin Stone is said to represent Crom. It is a rounded pillar stone once standing about 5 feet tall, elaborately decorated with spirals in the La Tene style (much like the more famous Turoe Stone in Galway) and with its top left hand side missing. A stone marker shows its original location and Meehan reports 11 stones in the adjacent stone circle.

These days the original Killycluggin stone is safely housed in the County museum at Ballyjamesduff. The top was damaged by St Patrick, the legend goes, but the stone itself "still exudes a very powerful earthy presence from its corner in the museum" writes Meehan in 2002. The Cavan museum booklet dates it at circa 200 BC, saying that it has a "religious significance associated in some way with fertility". The museum also says that a 1974 archaeological study found a burial cist beneath the great stone and dating from the early Bronze Age which made it "contemporary with a stone circle which stood nearby", alluding to the long period of use of the site and the relatively early age of the Killycluggin Stone. Perhaps the Iron Age invaders/immigrants smashed the ancient statues of Crom to replace Him with stones carved in the Celtic style, representing their god Lugh.

### ***The bull god's arena***

Crom's animal was the bull and his greatest surviving monument appears to be an enclosure for sacred bulls in County Limerick. This is Ireland's largest henge - the

embanked arena of Rannach Crom Dubh, otherwise known as the Lios and (on the local signage) as the Grange Stone Circle. Erected around 2500 BC, it is ringed by 113 megalithic stones and is located near the western shore of Lough Gur, once a significant cultural centre and a landscape 'owned' by the sun/landscape goddess Aine (pronounced Onya). The location is now farmland (and accessible to the public), from where the 'grange' in its name originates.



Across this sacred site complex Crom carried corn maiden Eithne, from Aine's birthing chair (a limestone slab beside Lough Gur, known as the Housekeeper's Chair). There is an alignment between these two (and other) sites on the Lughnasa/August 1st sunrise (as well as the Samain/November 1st sunset), on an axis of 59 degrees, when sunlight streams down the entrance path into the great circle. The stone-lined passageway on this alignment points towards a pair of stone 'horns', the tallest stones in the ring (although one of the top of the 'horns' has been knocked off). Beneath this stone pair was found layers of organic debris that suggest the annual slaughter and feasting upon of bulls.

It was along this path each year that Crom Dubh entered carrying the corn child, with his spear of life and the seeds of next years crop, which he symbolically buried in a sacred furrow, marked out in stone beneath the yellow clay surface of the arena. Crom's harvest feast day was locally called Black Stoop Sunday, for Crom is said to be bent from carrying the weighty sheafs of grain.

The arena may well have once hosted bullfighting, ritual battling between groups of men with ash staves, and contests of strength. Beneath the floor layer of yellow clay the symbols of the Neolithic god/goddess pair were discovered (but not initially recognised). Carefully placed limestone rocks delineate a buried staff 36.4 metres long (the staff was also the great god Dagda's symbol of office and in Old Irish the word *lorg* is used for both staff, wand of office and penis.) There is also a crescent new moon of the maiden goddess on the same scale.

Sitting beside the great Crom Dubh Stone in the Grange Circle, a pile of coins placed on a stack of concrete pieces (pictured, in August 2007) attests to the modern veneration that Crom still enjoys there.



### **Crom mountains**

Like other masculine deities elsewhere, Crom was associated with mountain tops and his worship survived longest in mountainous parts. In 1939 Hayward noted Crom traditions surviving in the mountains between Lough Allen, in County Leitrim, and Lough Erne, County Fermanagh. (The Tuatha de Danaan were said to have landed from a mysterious cloud on the Iron Mountain of Leitrim, which is in the region noted by Hayward.)

The original pilgrimage to the summit of Croagh Patrick in County Roscommon was a ritual visit to the sacred enclosure of the divine harvest duo Crom Dubh and Aine, and this probably involved a sun-wise perambulation around the summit (as modern

Christian pilgrims do nowadays). Excavations have uncovered a large asymmetrical enclosure at the top of the reek as well as an ancient oratory, a pilgrim's shelter.

In County Cavan the original Killycluggin Crom stone and circle of 11 other stones were not far away (1.5 miles) from a hill called Crom Cruach. Elsewhere in the county are found at least four other hills associated with Lughnasa hilltop celebrations.

On the Dingle Peninsula Crom was said to have resided at Ballyduff (Baile Dubh in Gaelic). Feasting, games and courtship once followed the annual harvest pilgrimage up to the summit of nearby Mt Brandon, the second highest peak in the country and originally called the mountain of The Dagda (the father god of the Tuatha de Danann). The festival rites, held on Crom Dubh's Sunday, the last Sunday in July, included a solemn cutting of the first of the grain, then carrying it to the summit and burying it there, as an offering to the deity. This would have been followed by a meal of the harvest food (the new potatoes, grains or berries) at the festival held down in the village of Cloghane on Brandon Bay (two miles from Ballyduff).

It's probable that the sacrifice of a sacred bull may have also taken place, followed by a feast of it's flesh and perhaps ritual dance play with a bull hide, not to mention the usual love making and faction fighting that characterised harvest festivals across the country, and angered the life-denying church.

A stone head in the ruined church at Cloghane was said locally to depict Crom. This disappeared in 1993 but was replaced in 1999 by a replica which is now kept in a safer location. The legends in these parts have it that local hero St Brendan was the one to have "converted" Crom to Christianity. (This is reminiscent of the European tradition, where Santa Klaus is said to employ the devil as a helper at Christmas time!)

### ***More recycling of Crom and Aine***

In the mid 19th century County Louth the annual harvest festival was known as the Sunday of Aine and Crom Dubh. At harvest time this divine duo were in their elder aspect and, as co-rulers of vegetation, one imagines that the pair may have been required to symbolically die each year to ensure the following year's harvest; while Eithne, their child, represents the new seeds for the cyclic renewal of life.



The early Celtic church had the good sense to be inclusive of Crom and his divine ilk. In later Irish chronicles we find less tolerance. Around the time of the Norman invasion in the 12th century new religious orders swept away the vernacular Celtic church. Yet the images of the old gods and goddesses never really disappeared and even flowered anew during the medieval era there.

Building facades started to depict the masked, vegetative faces of the Green Man sprouting over them in organic abandon. Churches and castles began to sport carvings of the naked, and often fearsome Sheela-na-Gigs, who probably represent the protective, all-knowing crone goddesses of earlier eras (with a hint of rebellion against the prudish new order). This iconic couple of figures suggestive of ancient landscape and vegetation fertility divinities, appear to provide expression for an exuberant re-manifestation of some of Ireland's most ancient divinities.

**THE LOWLANDS**  
**By Frigga Asraaf**

There's a saying: think globally, act locally. To me this saying expresses the difference between the Earth and the land. Although the time we live in brings the necessity to think, at least partly, globally the Earth is huge, for most part too big for me to comprehend. Many countries and places on this planet I only know from TV. Pollution is a bad thing everywhere, but the requested healing can be rather different for even an area a few kilometres further. As a seidhwoman I can work on various levels for healing, but what does a specific area need?



Therefore, I think it's better to stay close to home, close to the land we know. The land is what I feel beneath my feet if I walk on a street. The land is what I see when I look out of my window. So much is brittle, but the land will stay. It has been there long before I was born and it will be there long after I die.

My whole life I lived in Holland, the part of the Netherlands near the North Sea. I'm a true child of the flat land. I love to go abroad to see other countries, meet people, experience other cultures and landscapes. Mountains are impressive and lovely to dwell in for some time, but after a while I will long for the flat land, the wide meadows, the open view, the roads that disappear in a far distance.

The land colours my way of thinking and the way I perceive the world. For instance, the shores I've seen in Denmark are a bit odd to me. There's a strip of grass, a small beach and then the sea. There are no dunes, nothing between the sea and the land. To me, coming from land which is for a large part below sea level, a country of dikes and drainage, it's peculiar for my brains that a country is not below sea level and doesn't need the protection of dunes or some other kind of seawall the way it is in the Low Lands. Besides the fact that close to the shore the land rises into hills, but I needed some time to realise that. How different the land and through it our experiences can be, brings back a memory. Years ago after joining a workshop on oracular seidh by Diana Paxson and Freya Aswynn in London we sailed with a ferry to the Low Lands. I never will forget Diana's face and her words when she first set foot on Dutch soil: the land is moving! I was a bit surprised, but then realised how I'm used to it. The Netherlands are a country of two elements: earth and water. A year or so later visiting Norway, with its hills, mountains and rough nature, for the first time it was my turn to be amazed. There was solid rock beneath me which wasn't moving at all.

Talking about hills, my birthplace is the hill of a giantess. The story goes that there was once a giantess who had enough of wet feet every now and then. She walked to the beach and scooped up sand with her apron. Walking back, one of the ribbons of her apron was torn and all the sand fell on the ground. She decided to make a living where the sand had fallen. The place is still known as Hillegersberg 'Hillegonda's mountain'. Although I prefer the legend, history tells a different story. It was Hildegard of Flanders, married to count Dirk II of Holland and West-Frisia who gave her name to a Bergan, old Dutch for a fortified place or a hamlet. In the tenth century

the count was owner of a Bergan. This Bergan arose on a sand ridge in a peat area, a Pleistocene dune, formed of sand blown out of riverbed's that stand clear of the water. Upon till today the giantess Hillegonda with a torn apron is to be seen on the coat of arms of Hillegersberg, which is now swallowed by the city of Rotterdam.

I'm convinced of the importance of being connected with the land, the country one lives in, the continent one lives in and the world. But the land first! The land can teach us so many things. The wisdom of the land is in my opinion a combination of the soil itself which is partly formed by the vegetation, and the blood and bones of all kind of animals including us humans.

The people who die today will form another layer on the land. A layer in this time and age as a wonderful mixture of people from many countries, backgrounds and religions all with their own knowledge, experience and skills.

I see my garden as a tiny piece of the land which has been given to me to take care of. To observe the garden throughout the year makes me more aware of the seasons. A fertility blot will be for fertility in general, but I use my garden as a symbol for the land.

As well in my livingroom as in my garden there is a small heap of pebbles. Pebbles of most countries of North-West Europe, but also as far as from the Himalaya. Pebbles I found on all kind of places amongst them blotplaces where I participated in a blot. Years ago Frey suggested me to collect volunteers. Volunteers being pebbles connected with land-or waterweights of woods, open fields, moors, parks, rivers, lakes, pools etc, which are willing to move to my place. I will always ask if there is a volunteer who is willing to come with me.

Somehow a pebble will catch my attention if there's one. The last one I got recently and it is a small piece of stone from the shore of the river almost next to my house, where land and water meet. I felt the need to empower the strength of my land-and waterspirits heaps and get even more in touch with the land-and waterspirits who are my neighbours and dwell in and near the rivers, het Wantij en het Vlij.

Since a couple of years I live in Dordrecht, the oldest town of Holland (not the Netherlands). I'm surrounded by water, because Dordrecht is build on an island. There are many rivers around and crossing the island of Dordt, and my house is to be found on a small strip of land called De Staart (The Tail), an island connected to the town with a bridge.



The Netherlands are divided in two parts: above the big rivers and below the big rivers. I live in the area where some of the rivers meet. It is old land, with many stories. In The Netherlands we also have new land, the polders. What once was water is now land. It is good soil to life on, but it feels different from the old land yet is has a strength of its own.

Animism is part a my world view. So to me every country has a spirit of the land. It is a concept with is rather new to me. If a river has a spirit, if a pond has a spirit, if a wood has a spirit it makes sense a country has a spirit as well. We have a saying in the Netherlands: 's lands wijs, 's lands eer. If I'm correct the english translation is: so many countries, so many customs. A bit more literary it would be: the way of the land, the honour of the land.



In my opinion both the spirit of the land and the landwight's can teach us about the land and a country. When going abroad I always will greet the landspirits of the country I'm visiting. I pay them my respects and will bring a small offering, mostly dutch jenever I brought with me especially for that purpose. I'm visiting Denmark once a year for some time now and last spring I had this great experience. After arriving at the alting of Forn Siðr, this time on Jutland near the sea, I

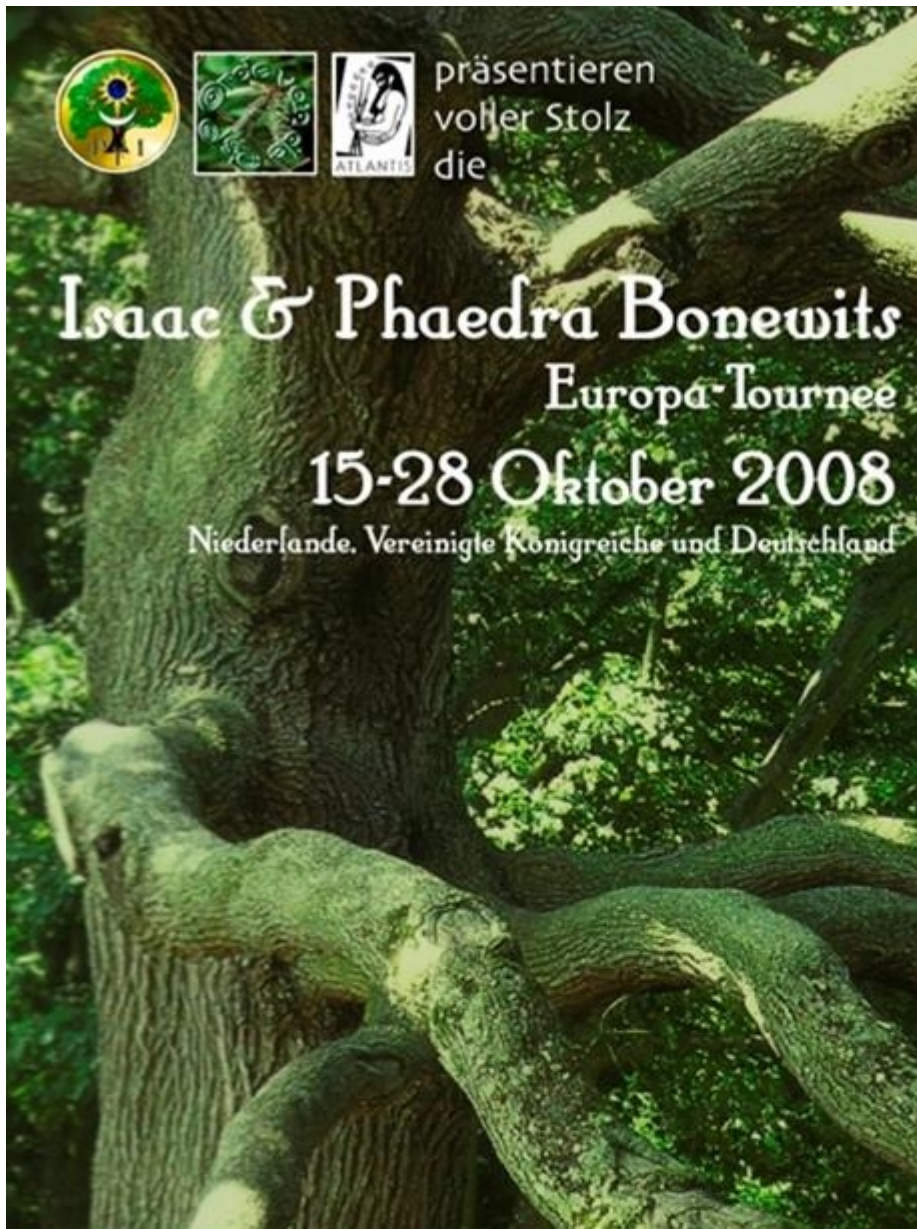
went outside in the twilight to say hello to the land and sea. It was the day after full moon, so there was a sparkling silvery/yellowish reflection on the water surface. The land and sea said hello back in a wonderful way: they wrapped me in a blanket of their strengths.




For more than a decade my relationship with the gods was great and I considered them to be my kin and friends. The behaviour of the gods the last one and a half year made me decide that they have to stay far away from me, at least until they will take responsibility for their actions and for what happened. I don't know what asatru is anymore, but the land is still there.

At first I didn't want to celebrate midsummer at all. I couldn't celebrate it with my blotgroup, because it would be to painful, to much a confrontation with all that is gone and has been ruined for no reason at all. But slowly I felt in my heart to think of another way, so I came up with a small and simple blot. It had been raining and it was darkish all day but the evening brought a more or less blue sky. I picked nine herbs from my garden and made a charm to invoke the healing powers and protection against harm from the herbs. I kindled a tiny midsummer fire and while repeating the nine herb charm, I threw the bundle of herbs in the fire. Afterwards I thanked the earth for feeding me, the water for quenching my thirst, the fire for it's warmth and the air for it's breath. The next day I scattered the ashes mixed with some soil in my front and back garden.

What do we need, what does the land need, what does the world need? Well, I speak for myself if I say I need balance. Looking around I see a need for balance. A lot is going on in the world. But how do we achieve balance in our personal lives, in the worlds we live in and with the land. A quest we all make in our own unique way, walking alone and yet walking together. To me, for the time being, it is back to the basic. Part of my basic is the land, the land which has been there long before I was born and will be there long after I've died. In the time I walk around in this world I hope to bring some balance where needed.

Quarterly magazine Idunna, Autumn 2007



 präsentieren  
voller Stolz  
die

# Isaac & Phaedra Bonewits

## Europa-Tournee

### 15-28 Oktober 2008

Niederlande, Vereinigte Königreiche und Deutschland

Tourdaten:

18-19 Oktober  
2 Tage-Seminar  
Amsterdam,  
PFI Niederlande

21-23 Oktober  
Diverse Vorträge  
organisiert vom  
Atlantis Bookshop,  
England

25-26 Oktober  
2 Tage-Workshop  
Schwerte  
(bei Dortmund),  
PFI Deutschland

Wir hoffen Euch bei  
einer der obenstehen-  
den Veranstaltungen  
begrüßen zu dürfen,

Bright Blessings,  
Morgana  
Torc  
Caesaja  
William  
Geraldine



Für weitere Informationen, Reser-  
vierungen und Kosten emailt bitte:  
Für die Niederlande:  
[morgana@paganfederation.org](mailto:morgana@paganfederation.org) oder  
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Für Deutschland:  
[caesaja@paganfederation.org](mailto:caesaja@paganfederation.org)  
Für die neuesten Informationen zur  
Tour seht bitte auf das PFI Forum,  
Events:  
[www.paganfederation.org/forum](http://www.paganfederation.org/forum)  
and [www.de.paganfederation.org](http://www.de.paganfederation.org)  
Für Informationen über Isaac &  
Phaedra: <http://www.neopagan.net/>  
Bitte beachten: PF/PFI/ und  
IODHADH Mitglieder erhalten die  
Tickets zu verminderten Preisen!

## **MAKING HARVEST CORN DOLLIES**

**By Randy Kidd**

Wheat weaving is as old as farming, and a heck of a lot easier. If you can braid hair or tie an overhand knot, you'll be weaving in no time. Because I grow wheat right in back of my house, I've had plenty of experience making wheat handcrafts for a long time now. "Corn dollies;" which were designed over a century ago, are probably my favorite crafts project. For years, people have given these wheat-made figures to friends and family members during harvest time — they were originally created to represent the gods of harvest. (In Europe, corn once referred to all grains; "dolly" comes from the word "idol.") I've certainly given my own share of dollies as gifts, and I've saved several for myself, too. I love knowing that woven into each of these figures is a history as rich as the fields in which the grain grew. And now I pass the tradition onto you:



The first step to making a corn dolly is choosing the wheat you'll use, and there are some basic rules to follow. You should select long wheat stalks that stand erect and straight (stalks should measure more than 18 inches from the base of the head to the first joint on the stalk), and the stem of your stalk should be slender and golden. The stalks in the prime of ripeness are those that are most golden; avoid any stocks with green, which will never ripen to golden.

Just before you start your project, temper the stalks by soaking them for 20 to 40 minutes in cool to lukewarm water. Don't use hot water, which will remove the natural shine and gloss of the wheat. After soaking, wrap the stalks in a wet bath towel and let them set for about 15 minutes or so. The stalks are then ready for weaving, and you can use the wrapped straw all day long (or at least until it gets soggy).

There are a few different techniques used in wheat-weaving. The one that you will be using is called "weaving around a base." This creates a thick spiral of wheat with a hollow center — the hollow core's size depends upon the size of the dowel used. The design is made by working the wheat around a removable dowel core (or a core of "waste" wheat stems). You should probably start with a pencil-size dowel; then, as your fingers get better at weaving, you can move on to a larger size.

Now you're ready to begin. Take five pieces of straw with heads, and 20 to 30 more stalk stems. Tie the five pieces (with heads) around your dowel, making the tie as close to the wheat heads as possible with the clove hitch knot (see illustration). Bend each stem in a 90 degree angle, so that one head points in each direction. (Think of the north, south, east, and west points on the compass.) This arrangement will leave one extra straw that you'll aim just to your left, assuming you are sitting south of the compass.

Start with the extra "beginner" straw pointed toward you (the one just to the left of the south stem) and bend it up parallel to the dowel. Then bend it to the right over two wheat stems. If you're thinking compass: your first bend will be over the south and

east stems. Now, turn the dowel 90 degrees (a 1/4 turn) clockwise. The east stem will now become the south stem. Take your new south stem and bend it over two more stems. Again, turn the dowel 90 degrees, and repeat the process. It will take five bends to complete the circle, and you'll continue building up circles one on top of the other. It won't be long before you'll reach the end of a stem and run out of straw. Simply join another straw stem into the "run-out" one. To do so, cut the small end of a stem (the end nearest the top) at an angle and then slip this end into the larger, hollow end of the used-up stem. Try to use only one of these for each round around the dowel or it will weaken the spiral.

When you've made the size dolly you want, simply tie off the ends with a brightly colored ribbon or another piece of straw. Add the finishing touch by joining heads into the weave, which will leave you with straw heads at both the top and bottom of your weave.

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**Pagan Federation International Activities in Belgium**

***The First ever PFI Belgium Conference!***

***Saturday September 20, 2008***

***EMABB, Noeveren 67, 2850 Boom, Belgium***

***Continuous from 10:00 to 22:00***

***Mabon ritual, workshops, lectures, Pagan market, evening entertainment***

***Food and drinks are available for purchase***

***Entry price: PFI members €13.00, non-members pay €15.00***

***Registration is mandatory as the number of places are limited.***

***Contact & info:***

***Maya + 32 486 80 10 13***

***Or email [maya@paganfederation.org](mailto:maya@paganfederation.org)***

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***PaGE 2008***

***Pagan Gathering Europe 2008***

***Westmalle, Belgium***

***September 26, 27 & 28, 2008***

From Friday September 26 at 6:00 PM through Sunday evening at 6:00 PM there will be fascinating workshops, pathworkings, an opening and closing ritual, & Janet Farrar & Gavin Bone have confirmed their presence !

Children are welcome, but participation to the workshops and other activities is reserved for 18+. Parents remain responsible for their kids at all times.

**Price?**

Participation to PaGE is only possible in full board. The price includes lodging, breakfast, lunch and dinner and two coffee breaks. The price for the entire weekend for PFI members is €165, non members pay 175.

Registration is mandatory as the number of places are limited. See [www.arcadiacoven.be](http://www.arcadiacoven.be) for the registration form and for much more info. Questions? [fjierra@paganfederation.org](mailto:fjierra@paganfederation.org)

***PFI Netherlands Conference, May 10th, 2008  
by Wilwarin***

After a train journey of two hours we, Marion and I, arrived in Lunteren. Finding the venue was easy and we got there in plenty of time for the opening ceremony.

Inside we found a very relaxed atmosphere and people greeting each other enthusiastically. We had a little time to roam the stands, before we got ready for the opening ceremony.

In the hallway we patiently waited to be admitted into the big hall. Inside the hall the first thing I noticed was the sweet smell of incense in the air, and the four people sitting on the ground in a semi circle facing the covered altar. They wore white robes with hoods covering their heads and which made quite an impression on me with their unmoving silence.

With more and more people coming into the hall and the sun beating down on the windows and roof, the hall quickly turned into a furnace, but when Tante Toet took the stand to begin reading the story behind the Zoroastrian/Mithraic ritual all that fades to the background. When she is done two people (one man and one woman) performed the "Dance of the Dervishes", their costumes bright and colourful. When their dance was over it was time for everybody to join in a dance while chanting 'Anahita, Ahuramazda'.

It was then time for the first of the workshops that I had picked out for the day. Elliott Riviera told us about connecting with and celebrating our ancestors, and about how he adorns his altar to the tastes and wishes of whichever ancestor he wishes to contact at that time. He then lead us into a guided meditation, the purpose of which was to contact one of our ancestors and ask them for the answers to two questions: What is your favourite colour and what is your favourite food. The local church's open air auction which was being held right next door prevented me from meditating as deeply as I would have liked, but I still felt after awhile that there was someone sitting next to me on the mountain top which Elliott has made us envision. It was a deeply touching moment and I came out of my meditation with tears on my face. And I'm not the only one.

Next, Jack Stoop told us about laying cards for divination... Amongst other things he showed us various Tarot cards and explained the differences between the sets. He also told us stories of what you can come across while reading the cards for other people. It was a very interesting lecture.

Dagda & Oz are up next and between them they showed us the sense and nonsense about the Celts. It's a brilliant mix of humour and history and a quick lesson in Irish Gaelic (with an emphasis of course on Pagan words) I left them with a smile and a bit of wisdom about a people I have felt close to all my life.

The great hall was filled to almost bursting when Marian Green started her talk about the village witches of old and applying their wisdom to our own lives. In a very witty and often funny way she told us how these wise women held together their communities by simply keeping an eye out for trouble and by being a part of everyday life and about how we all can do the same by becoming active in our own

communities. It starts with something as simple as saying hello to the people we meet in the streets, or at the PFI Netherlands conference.

Felicia completely won my heart by taking her workshop outside to one of the magnificent trees and there, sitting in the grass, she took us into the wonderful world of healing plants. The way they grow, the way they bloom, their colour and scent all are indications of which ailments a plant can help cure. It's fascinating.

Ina Custers and The Temple of Starlight performed the closing ceremony. It is a resurrection of Osiris and many of the onlookers participate in the ceremony by being picked to stand and to be adored as Egyptian Gods and Goddesses. When the main part of the ceremony was over and we all filed back out into the hallway Ina and her team bless each and every one of us.

It is a very powerful end to what has been a warm and perfect day, during which I learned a lot and met new people.

Afterwards there was a meal and time to relax outside while inside the stands were being cleared to make room for the stage on which Stargazer and Raven Silverclaw would soon be performing.

Unfortunately I had to miss that, as my journey home is long. I said goodbye to the friends I had made there and joined our Turkish guest, on his journey back to Amsterdam.

Thanks to Lady Bara and the PFI team for a great day

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***The next issue of Pagan World will be published on November 1  
2008.***

***Please send your articles, news, or whatever else you may think  
may be of interest to your fellow PFI members to:***

***Diana Aventina***  
***email [diana@paganfederation.org](mailto:diana@paganfederation.org)***

***or by snailmail to***  
Begijnenstraat 44, bus 1, 3290 Diest Belgium

***And don't forget to stop by the PFI Forum!***  
***<http://www.paganfederation.org/forum/index.php>***



***Book Reviews***  
***By Morgana***

**"Making Magic with Gaia: practices to heal ourselves and our planet"**  
**by Francseca Ciancimino Howell**  
**English version: Red Wheel ISBN 1-59003-008-7**

This book was first published in 2002 and has recently been translated into Italian. However since my Italian isn't brilliant, Francesca recommended the English version for reviewing purposes. But first who is Francesca? She is a fascinating lady who is totally committed to the fight for a better and healthy environment. She is a Wiccan priestess and initiate of the Temple of Gaia (USA) and as an American/Italian her roots are firmly embedded in European culture and values. Her fiery enthusiasm has probably got her into a lot of trouble but her knowledge, wit and eloquence has made her the perfect ambassador for the fight for greater awareness of environmental issues. She is also a good example of a priestess who walks the talk.

In this book she has woven spiritual values with material values and made a practical, literally "down to earth", guide for the modern eco-warrior. Each chapter is supplemented with exercises, pathworkings (guided visualisations) and "Gaia Goals". These are handy do's (and some don'ts) that you can utilise to help contribute to a healthier planet.

In the first chapter Francesca helps us to make contact with Gaia and the world of nature spirits. Using basic magic training she also describes the use of ritual. She writes that they can be used to empower and "provide spiritual grounding that helps us to keep sane and centred". This is what she calls "magical activism".

Describing concepts such as "the Gaia Hypothesis" from James Lovelock and "Deep Ecology" (Arne Naess) she gives us insight into some of the background work of ecologists and the jargon used. Wiccan and pagan concepts are also dealt with and her own pagan background is evident. Her description of the Elemental Worlds will be familiar to many witches.

In Appendix B she describes "the Wiccan Circle Casting" which many will recognise as the British Traditional Wiccan casting. In Appendix C she has included an "Earth Healing Ritual" which she wrote in 1990. This is a simple but highly evocative ritual and can be easily adapted for smaller groups.

This small volume is deceptively full of excellent and practical advice on becoming a "Gaia Alchemist & Activist". Many of the exercises will be familiar and yet they have a wonderful freshness too. Not only do we learn how we can heal the earth we also learn how to heal ourselves. This is an important aspect of "Making Magic with Gaia" - especially when we learn to balance the elements within ourselves. And as we connect with Her, "... her power and her inspiration will touch you. The healing and love that you send to her will return back to you. You can experience a miraculous loop of healing energy, from which all can benefit. You've truly begun on the path of Gaian magic".

This is a wonderful book and I am sure it will be popular in Italy too. Highly recommended!

**The Gods Within**  
**– the Pagan Pathfinders Book of God and Goddess Evocations**  
**by Jean Williams and Zachary Cox (Moondust Books ISBN 978-0-9547498-1-1**  
**Available from Moondust Books & amazon.co.uk**

“Originally produced as a small pamphlet by the Neopanthelist Society in 1979, this is a fully revised and much expanded edition”.

Indeed a small volume but full of interesting material. It is also pocket history of the “Pagan Pathfinders” the experiential group Jean & Zach found in 1975. Still going strong PP, introduced many well-known witches and pagans of today to the world of paganism.

Jean & Zach are also well known for their involvement in the Pagan Federation – since the 1990’s.

“The Gods Within” is divided into two major sections: the how and why of using evocations. The word evocation is specifically used instead of invocation, “ .. traditionally, the occult use of the word evocation has referred to the magical practice of summoning a spirit or demon into manifestation in a triangle set outside a magical circle and to establish command over it, commonly regarded as a rather dangerous operation. This not what we do in PP nor is it the purpose of these evocations. The term is used in a psychological rather than magical sense; the aim is to evoke feelings, images and ideas from within the psyche of the individual”.

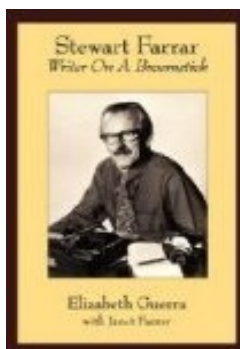
After an elaborate introduction we move on to the “Gods and Goddesses”. Divided into three sets – Graeco-Roman, Egyptian and Celtic 15 different gods and goddesses are

From Aphrodite to Dionysus, from Pan to the Morrigan, each god or goddess is described from mythological attributions followed by an evocation. The evocations follow a certain order and style and together they create a body of recognisable ritual texts.

This is a wonderful addition to any witches’ Book of Shadows.

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**Stewart Farrar – Writer on a Broomstick**  
**by Liz Guerra with Janet Farrar**  
**(R.J. Stewart Books, ISBN 978-0-978-91402-7-3)**



Stewart passed away on February 7, 2000, aged 83. Although I had had contact with Janet & Stewart since the early 80’s it wasn’t until 1987 that we first met in England, during a book signing session. We met again later in the Netherlands when they came over to do a workshop in 1997 – and our last meeting was in Ireland in 1998. It was the meetings in 1987 and in 1998 that triggered my “remembrances of Stewart” which are included in this biography.

I knew some of the episodes of Stewart’s life especially as a witch with Janet of course. Their books became classics and are still regarded as “must reads” for newcomers to Wicca.

However it was wonderful to read his biography – his years as a soldier, Communist, journalist and radio and film scriptwriter and his early years as a Witch.

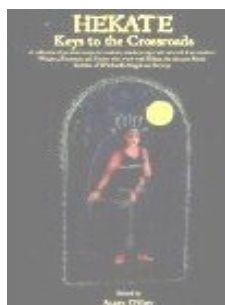
In a compelling style I read this book more-or-less in one go, wondering where Stewart was going next. Interwoven in his history Janet has included a brief autobiography and given a vivid recollection of the 25 years they spent together. This is a record of a fascinating adventure, including the period with Alex and Maxine Sanders, who opened the door to Wicca for him.

Stewart certainly didn't have an easy life and I am sure there must have been moments when he truly wondered whether the adventure into Wicca was worth it, considering the somewhat negative incidents he experienced. However I remember him as a truly devoted and dedicated man and this certainly shines through his biography. Congratulations to Liz for her painstaking work and presenting us with a delightful book and lovely memorial to Stewart.

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### **Hekate – Keys to the Crossroads**

**A collection of personal essays, invocations, rituals, recipes and artwork from modern Witches, Priestesses and Priests who work with Hekate, the Ancient Greek Goddess of Witchcraft, Magick and sorcery. Edited by Sorita D'Este**  
**Available via [www.avaloniabooks.co.uk](http://www.avaloniabooks.co.uk)**



As the title suggests this is a collection of essay covering a wide range of subjects concerning the worship of Hekate. In Part 1 “Her History, Myths and Powers” Sorita writes a foreword and includes her own encounter with Hekate and the formation of the magical group VITRIOL Grove (VG) which is now a network.

In Part 2 in “Hekate’s Witches” various people offer their experiences and a number of personal altars and other photos are included. It is interesting to read how everyone works with Hekate in her different aspects. Most people seem to work with the Greek Hekate but the one thing this book illustrates is the vast differences that exist even within the Hellenistic setting. And most if not all refer to blood sacrifices in on way or another. In any event working with Hekate is a life-changing experience.

I can certainly attest to that, thinking of the changes in my life after the Hekate experience in Caria, Turkey at Lagina, the oldest sanctuary to Hekate in the world. The essays are a source of inspiration and as I read them I could feel myself wanting to get out and do something!

As key-bearer or matron of childbirth Hekate is the guide to our own underworld, the “dark side of ourselves” (Ouch, how I hate that term..) in any event the place where we take charge of our life. In the last part there are practical tips, making preparations for the rituals, recipes for incense and food ... and including a “modern mystery play” written for the Lapis Companions – David & Sorita’s outer court group or “open learning circle”.

An excellent book for anyone who is interested in strengthening his or her connection with Hekate!

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**“A Thirst for Ireland” and “Saving Tara”  
– 2 films by Alanna Moore – Geomantica Films  
www.geomantica.com  
Email info@geomantica.com**

In the first film Alanna takes us to various sacred sites in Ireland including the stone circle “The Grange” near to Limerick, with the Crom Dubh stone. See also Alanna’s article in this issue of Wiccan Rede. “Harvest Deities in Ireland: The Dark God Crom, the Sun Goddess and their Corn Maiden Child”.

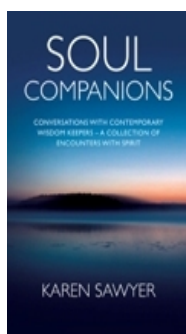
She also visits Newgrange, the Hill of Tara and other ancient sites. As an Australian of Irish descent she points out the similarity between ancient Irish and Aboriginal culture, but also how modern Irish who are often Christians still go back to the sacred wells. Pagan customs still alive and well!

In the second film she shows the plight of the ancient “Hill of Tara” as the bulldozer is threatening it. We hear how Opus Dei has deliberated caused the planned motorway to “be diverted”. The question is how come? And why is the Hill of Tara no longer important as a national monument?? Is there a conspiracy?

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**Soul Companions  
Conversations with contemporary wisdom keepers – a collection of  
encounters with spirit”  
by Karen Sawyer**

**Published by O-books www.o-books.net email: office1@o-books.net**



I won't pretend to have read this book :-p At nearly 500 pages it is crammed with conversations and essays from top authors such as David Spangler (Findhorn), R.J Stewart, Robert Moss, Simon Buxton, Denise Linn, Elliott Rivera (who was at the recent Dutch PFI conference), Leo Rutherford, William Bloom, Philip Carr-Gomm and Llyn Roberts.

“Join Karen Sawyer as she also talks with Elena Avilla, the 'Curandera' or curer from Mexico - Uncle Angaangaq, an Eskimo-Kalaallit Elder from Greenland - Icelandic Druid Jörmundur Ingi - Sami shaman Ailo Gaup from Norway - Rabbi Gershon Winkler, Aboriginal Jewish shaman - Tiokasin Ghosthorse, a member of the Cheyenne River Lakota Nation of South Dakota - Egyptian Sufi, Master Ali Rafea - Andras Corban Arthen, 'Cunningman' of the Glenshire witches in Scotland and many, many more.”

Divided into several sections – in total 11– she has grouped the various writers into natural categories, such as healers and artists – although there will be an obvious overlap it does make reading this compendium of spirit guides much easier!

On top of this marathon Karen is also involved in the Soul Companions Wisdom Keepers Gathering 2008 which will take place on Friday 19th - Sunday 21st September 2008 at the Stackpole Centre, Nr. Pembroke, Pembrokeshire, Wales, UK.

This, the first Soul Companions gathering, will be held on the inspirational south-western coast of Wales. Gathering together eight of the Wisdom Keepers whose experiences are featured in Soul Companions by Karen Sawyer, this promises to be a fantastic event not to be missed!

Featuring:

Chief of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids: Philip Carr-Gomm

Celtic shaman: Dr. Geo Trevarthen

The Crystal Skull Explorers: Joshua Shapiro and blue arrow Rainbow  
animal and nature communication with Billie Dean

Angels and hand reading with Anne Hassett

Psychic surgery with Gary Mannion

Keynote speaker; Cunningman of the Glenshire witches in Scotland: Andras Corban-Arthen

For more information, please visit the Soul Companions Community events page at [www.soulcompanions.org/index.php?pr=Events](http://www.soulcompanions.org/index.php?pr=Events)

For prices and links to pay securely online via Paypal, visit:  
[www.impish.uwclub.net/SCgathering19th-21stSept08.htm](http://www.impish.uwclub.net/SCgathering19th-21stSept08.htm)



**Book Review  
by Merlin**

**Beyond the Broomstick  
written by Morgana  
(Saga Whyte Tracks ISBN  
978-908885-023-3 )**

Finally the English version of “Twijgen uit de Bezem” – the original English version in fact – is now available.



“Twijgen uit de Bezem” was first published as a series called “Beyond The Broomstick” (1980, Wiccan Rede). It was translated into Dutch and published as a book in 1982. At that time there were virtually no books about Wicca available in Dutch.

Morgana wrote the eight-part series as an introduction to Wicca with particular emphasis on the philosophical thoughts behind it. Examining major concepts such as ‘Polarity’, the ‘Triple Goddess’, the ‘God’ and the ‘Elements’, Morgana has presented Wicca in a clear, easy-to-read manner. This is an excellent primer for beginners but is also a handy source of information for the already interested to learn more about ‘what Wicca is’.

“Twijgen uit de Bezem” is also available in a new printed and updated version.

Please check out: <http://www.sagawhytepress.eu/printbooks.html> for more details  
Email: [orders@sagawhytepress.eu](mailto:orders@sagawhytepress.eu)



**Contact us !**

On a national level, each country has a National Coordinator. This is the person you should write to with all your questions and you should keep him/her informed of changes of address or e-mail! If you cannot contact your National Coordinator, you can contact the International Coordinator.

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