

Druid Beliefs. One of the most striking characteristics of Druidism is the degree to which it is free of dogma and any fixed set of beliefs or practices.

This is more than mere interest; imbued with wonder, gratitude, respect and a sense of the perpetual flow of time, it inspires a devotional commitment, an acknowledgement of the sacred and a recognition of deity male, female and non-gendered gods within these currents of nature. This is the foundation of Druid practice. The issue as to whether modern Druidry has any clear link back to pre-Roman Britain is debated. Historically Druidry was essentially an oral tradition and no texts are available written by our pre-Roman ancestors. A good deal was incorporated into Christianity when it came to these lands, particularly surviving in rural churches where Paganism continued side by side with the new religion. This scrutiny continues today and Druids use this as a link to their ancestral past. As a religion today, Druidry is ever evolving. So common practice is gained through Druids coming together and sharing their experiences, rituals and celebrations. Diversity Many come to Druidry because of its diversity. Freedom of expression and personal connection to deity is, for them, of paramount importance. As a polytheistic religion, individuals devote themselves to and revere deities who express different aspects of nature and ancestry. For example, Cerridwen is a goddess of the dark, the waning moon, the cauldron of potential; Brigid is a goddess of fire, light and assertive action. The rituals and practice of Druids honouring one or other of these as their principal deity would differ accordingly. Druids take their inspiration from Nature. Within the British Isles we have a huge diversity of landscape and this is reflected in the practice of individuals and local groups or Groves. If a Druid is inspired by their local north sea coast, his gods and religious focus would be different from a Druid inspired by the rolling hills and woodlands of the Cotswolds, or the open moors of Devon. Similarly a Druid grove celebrating the festival of midwinter in an urban garden in Kent will look and feel very different from a grove celebrating in the Highlands of Scotland, were most of its members are dependent on rural or agricultural livelihoods: All these individuals and groves are equally honouring and seeking relationship with Nature. Druids are inspired too by their ancestors. To a Druid, ancestry is not a vague concept, but a gathering of individuals, each with their strengths and weaknesses, their own stories of success and failure. Again, such practice may appear significantly distinct, say, if we were to observe a farmer, a blacksmith, a writer or healer. As Druids, all are honouring their ancestors, nonetheless, by using the skills inherited and so expressing the spiritual devotion, gratitude and reverence required of the Druid. The reverence for nature that is integral to Druidry also provides a morality or ethical base that is common to all Druids. Like any moral code, whether religious or secular, it is interpreted with slight differences. However, honour, respect, truth and justice are of primary importance and constitute the basis of all Druid practice. Thus, paradoxically, diversity is both a strength and a cohesive element of Druid practice. There are further elements of Druid practice and ritual that are common to all within the tradition and these we shall explore. Major Festivals Most adherents of modern Druidry celebrate eight major festivals and these can be further subdivided into the Solar Festivals and Celtic Fire Festivals, which may also be known as agricultural, pastoral, seasonal or cross quarter festivals. Some Groves and individuals only work with the Solar and some only with the Fire Festivals. Placed around the course of the year, they occur every weeks, and generally Druids will at this time make ritual, giving offerings. The purpose of the festivals is to ensure two things: The Druid is always spiritually awake to the cycles of nature, the seasons, the tides of growth and decay, together with the gifts the gods offer at these times. The Druid attunes his own soul to the cycle of nature around him, working with the seasons internally, spiritually, instead of pushing against them and risking stress, depression, exhaustion, complacency and so on. Druids will also make ritual at various phases of the moon, though which phase is most important to any individual Druid will depend on their own nature. Some Druids will regularly meet with their grove at the dark or new moon, others preferring the full moon, and some acknowledge the quarter moons. Some points that may be celebrated are: Weddings, often called Handfastings. Rites of Passing that may include funerals, memorials or honouring of the dead. Rites of Separation – acceptance and release are important. Breakdown of any relationship should

be acknowledged. Rites of Elderhood – these occur for men and women between the ages of 55 – 70, acknowledging their changing place in society with retirement, menopause or the arrival of grandchildren. Dedication – for some it is important that they declare their dedication publicly. This may be a dedication to their Gods, their work, their community or any other important areas of focus. At such rituals, it is common practice for Druids to honour the gods, the landscape, the ancestors, the community and nature in general. The Grove or gathering acknowledges the part played by each of these entities; they are thanked, offerings made and celebrations shared. Public Gorseddau Traditionally gatherings of Bards, these are now generally understood as public ritual for those studying the tradition, and those wishing to share in a wider community of Druidry. They are held throughout the country and indeed the world. They are usually held on the weekend closest to the actual date of the festivals mentioned previously. Free and open to all they are a gathering to celebrate the festival and to perform rites of passage. Space will also be included in the celebration for the poetry, song, music and other creativity that is such an important part of Druidry. While not all Druids regularly attend Gorsedd Rites, all Druids will acknowledge the importance and validity of such gatherings and rituals. Grove Practice A Grove is a group of people who come together to honour deity, land, culture, heritage, ancestry and each other within the Druid tradition. Essentially they are run by Druids local to an area, and because they take their inspiration from the locality, each is consequently and appropriately different. How the Grove is run entirely rests on those who facilitate it; theirs is the time, energy and inspiration that enables it to be. In practice, when a grove has reached its limit of members, usually someone will leave to form a new Grove and so Druidry continues to grow. There are some Groves who choose to be closed to new members. These Groves are usually comprised of close friends who are studying together a particular area of Druidry and do not have time to facilitate an open Grove or facilitate the learning of newcomers to the tradition. Again these Groves are willing to give help and assistance to anybody who approaches them; this may be in the form of individual teaching offered, or by directing the enquirer to another local Grove or to organisations like The Druid Network who can offer a high level of assistance. As said previously, all Groves are different, but again there is identifiable commonality of practice. Private Practice Druidry cannot be considered a religion that is practised only at certain times or festivals. Because it is essentially a celebration of life, all time not spent at public celebration could be considered as private practice. There are those within the tradition that have the time to immerse themselves fully and there are many others with work and family commitments that make time and opportunity limited. However, life is cyclical and circumstances change, therefore the depth of private practice supports this. A mother whose life is wrapped around the bringing up of children will usually return to committed Druidic work once the children are more independent, until that time remaining content as a part of the Druid community if not a student of the mythology, theology and deeper practice. Belief implies blind faith and that is not the Druid way. Experience of sacred connection, wonder and understanding are the foundation stones of the tradition, not reliance of blind faith in something that one has not personally experienced or perceived. All Druids, however, seek to connect with the same source – nature – and that source provides some common areas of understanding if not belief. The following points are therefore presented as statements of common Druidic understanding. Nature is considered to be unconditionally sacred and an expression or manifestation of deity and divinity. Everything exists as an interconnected web. Although everything is interconnected, for many people that connection is not felt. They stand apart from the natural world and in many cases consider themselves superior to it. A Druid seeks to re-connect, use their senses and seek to develop them, open their spirit to the spirit that flows around them, to connect with that flow, that divine source. In other words, experience of the web is essential for honourable living. All Druids honour the powers of nature, as environment the Three Worlds of land, sea and sky, as ancestors of our blood, of our history and land, of our mythology, as heritage and wisdom, and through reverence for the sacred and for deity. What does this mean? In terms of an integrated system of belief and practice, Druids would be expected to: Respect the natural world non-human, care for the environment, to study nature from trees to winds. Respect human nature, work on their own intellectual and emotional development, care for the community, family and colleagues. Respect our history, learn about our heritage, ancestors, their stories, languages, ways of life. Respect the gods, the forces of nature that influence our

worlds. All these are religious tasks, performed not just as a way of serving the gods, ancestors or community, but as a way of connecting with the gods, seeking religiously meaningful and, at times, ecstatic union. Because the gods are forces of nature and heritage, they exist within every aspect of nature. Instead of reaching to a single abstract concept of deity a unique creative supernatural god , Druids find the divine through study, ritual, music, meditation, prayer, dance. In other words, by singing an old song, learning an old language, sitting by the grave of an ancestor or within an old stone circle, meditating in the rain, planting trees or tending the garden, the Druid opens his soul mind, consciousness, heart to connect with the forces of nature gods present and influential within that aspect of nature. He open his soul to his ancestors and the gods who guided them into sacred relationship, fulfilment and peace. This is religious practice seeking connection with deity, the sacred powers of existence and is found within all Druidry, throughout the world.

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The druids, who were occupied with magico-religious duties, were recruited from families of the warrior class but ranked higher. Thus Caesar's distinction between druides (man of religion and learning), eques (warrior), and plebs (commoner) is fairly apt.

See Article History Druid, Celtic: They seem to have frequented oak forests and acted as priests, teachers, and judges. The earliest known records of the Druids come from the 3rd century bce. According to Julius Caesar , who is the principal source of information about the Druids, there were two groups of men in Gaul that were held in honour, the Druids and the noblemen equites. Caesar related that the Druids took charge of public and private sacrifices, and many young men went to them for instruction. They judged all public and private quarrels and decreed penalties. If anyone disobeyed their decree, he was barred from sacrifice , which was considered the gravest of punishments. One Druid was made the chief; upon his death, another was appointed. If, however, several were equal in merit, the Druids voted, although they sometimes resorted to armed violence. Once a year the Druids assembled at a sacred place in the territory of the Carnutes, which was believed to be the centre of all Gaul, and all legal disputes were there submitted to the judgment of the Druids. Caesar also recorded that the Druids abstained from warfare and paid no tribute. Attracted by those privileges, many joined the order voluntarily or were sent by their families. They studied ancient verse, natural philosophy, astronomy , and the lore of the gods, some spending as much as 20 years in training. The Druids offered human sacrifices for those who were gravely sick or in danger of death in battle. Huge wickerwork images were filled with living men and then burned; although the Druids preferred to sacrifice criminals, they would choose innocent victims if necessary. Caesar is the chief authority, but he may have received some of his facts from the Stoic philosopher Poseidonius , whose account is often confirmed by early medieval Irish sagas. In the early period, Druidic rites were held in clearings in the forest. Sacred buildings were used only later under Roman influence. The Druids were suppressed in Gaul by the Romans under Tiberius reigned 14â€”37 ce and probably in Britain a little later. In Ireland they lost their priestly functions after the coming of Christianity and survived as poets, historians, and judges filid, senchaidi, and brithemain. Many scholars believe that the Hindu Brahman in the East and the Celtic Druid in the West were lateral survivals of an ancient Indo-European priesthood. Roman soldiers attacking Druids in the 1st century ce, 19th-century engraving.

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A druid (Welsh: derwydd; Old Irish: druĀ-; Scottish Gaelic: draoidh) was a member of the high-ranking professional class in ancient Celtic cultures. While perhaps best remembered as religious leaders, they were also legal authorities, adjudicators, lorekeepers, medical professionals, and political advisors.

Smith, the gold gorget collar copying Irish Bronze Age examples. In his description, Julius Caesar claimed that they were one of the two most important social groups in the region alongside the equites, or nobles and were responsible for organizing worship and sacrifices, divination, and judicial procedure in Gaulish, British, and Irish societies. Druidic lore consisted of a large number of verses learned by heart, and Caesar remarked that it could take up to twenty years to complete the course of study. What was taught to druid novices anywhere is conjecture: All instruction was communicated orally, but for ordinary purposes, Caesar reports, [22] the Gauls had a written language in which they used Greek characters. In this he probably draws on earlier writers; by the time of Caesar, Gaulish inscriptions had moved from the Greek script to the Latin script. Sacrifice[edit] An 18th century illustration of a wicker man, the form of execution that Caesar claimed the druids used for human sacrifice. Celts and human sacrifice, Threefold death, and Ritual of oak and mistletoe Greek and Roman writers frequently made reference to the druids as practitioners of human sacrifice. A form of sacrifice recorded by Caesar was the burning alive of victims in a large wooden effigy, now often known as a wicker man. A differing account came from the 10th-century *Commenta Bernensia*, which claimed that sacrifices to the deities Teutates, Esus and Taranis were by drowning, hanging and burning, respectively see threefold death. Diodorus Siculus asserts that a sacrifice acceptable to the Celtic gods had to be attended by a druid, for they were the intermediaries between the people and the divinities. He remarked upon the importance of prophets in druidic ritual: Mass graves found in a ritual context dating from this period have been unearthed in Gaul, at both Gournay-sur-Aronde and Ribemont-sur-Ancre in what was the region of the Belgae chiefdom. The excavator of these sites, Jean-Louis Brunaux, interpreted them as areas of human sacrifice in devotion to a war god, [24] [25] although this view was criticized by another archaeologist, Martin Brown, who believed that the corpses might be those of honoured warriors buried in the sanctuary rather than sacrifices. Rives remarked that it was "ambiguous" whether the druids ever performed such sacrifices, for the Romans and Greeks were known to project what they saw as barbarian traits onto foreign peoples including not only druids but Jews and Christians as well, thereby confirming their own "cultural superiority" in their own minds. With regard to their actual course of studies, the main object of all education is, in their opinion, to imbue their scholars with a firm belief in the indestructibility of the human soul, which, according to their belief, merely passes at death from one tenement to another; for by such doctrine alone, they say, which robs death of all its terrors, can the highest form of human courage be developed. Subsidiary to the teachings of this main principle, they hold various lectures and discussions on astronomy, on the extent and geographical distribution of the globe, on the different branches of natural philosophy, and on many problems connected with religion. Mackenzie speculated that Buddhist missionaries had been sent by the Indian king Ashoka. Druids in mythology[edit] Druids also play a prominent role in Irish Folklore, generally serving lords and kings as high ranking priest-counselors with the gift of prophecy and other assorted mystical abilities - the best example of these possibly being Cathbad. The chief druid in the court of King Conchobar mac Nessa of Ulster, Cathbad features in several tales, most of which detail his ability to foretell the future. This prophecy, ignored by the king, came true. Thus Amergin called upon the spirit of Ireland itself, chanting a powerful incantation that has come to be known as The Song of Amergin [34] and, eventually after successfully making landfall, aiding and dividing the land between his royal brothers in the conquest of Ireland, [35] [36] [37] earning the title Chief Ollam of Ireland. Female druids[edit] The *Druidess*, oil on canvas, by French painter Alexandre Cabanel " Irish mythology has a number of female druids as well, often sharing similar prominent cultural and religious roles with their male counterparts. Which deities they honored is unknown. They call them Gallizenae, and they believe them to be endowed with extraordinary gifts to rouse the sea and the wind by their incantations, to turn themselves into whatsoever animal form they may choose, to cure

diseases which among others are incurable, to know what is to come and to foretell it. They are, however; devoted to the service of voyagers only who have set out on no other errand than to consult them. I am an anonymous author and artist

The earliest surviving literary evidence of the druids emerges from the classical world of Greece and Rome. The archaeologist Stuart Piggott compared the attitude of the Classical authors towards the druids as being similar to the relationship that had existed in the 15th and 18th centuries between Europeans and the societies that they were just encountering in other parts of the world, such as the Americas and the South Sea Islands. In doing so, he highlighted that both the attitude of the Early Modern Europeans and the Classical authors was that of "primitivism", viewing these newly encountered societies as primitive because of their lesser technological development and perceived backwardness in socio-political development. She refers to the first of these groups as the "Posidonian" tradition after one of its primary exponents, Posidonius, and notes that it takes a largely critical attitude towards the Iron Age societies of Western Europe that emphasizes their "barbaric" qualities. The second of these two groups is termed the "Alexandrian" group, being centred on the scholastic traditions of Alexandria in Egypt; she notes that it took a more sympathetic and idealized attitude towards these foreign peoples. Lovejoy and Franz Boas. They have suggested that the idea of the druid might have been a fiction created by Classical writers to reinforce the idea of the barbaric "other" who existed beyond the civilized Greco-Roman world, thereby legitimising the expansion of the Roman Empire into these areas. In that among the Persians there existed the Magi, and among the Babylonians or Assyrians the Chaldaei, among the Indians the Gymnosophistae, and among the Celts and Gauls men who were called druids and semnothei, as Aristotle relates in his book on magic, and Sotion in the twenty-third book of his Succession of Philosophers. A military general who was intent on conquering Gaul and Britain, Caesar described the druids as being concerned with "divine worship, the due performance of sacrifices, private or public, and the interpretation of ritual questions. He claimed that they recognized the authority of a single leader, who would rule until his death, when a successor would be chosen by vote or through conflict. He also remarked that they met annually at a sacred place in the region occupied by the Carnute tribe in Gaul, while they viewed Britain as the centre of druidic study; and that they were not found amongst the German tribes to the east of the Rhine. According to Caesar, many young men were trained to be druids, during which time they had to learn all the associated lore by heart. He also claimed their main teaching was "the souls do not perish, but after death pass from one to another". They were also concerned with "the stars and their movements, the size of the cosmos and the earth, the world of nature, and the power and might of the immortal gods", indicating they were involved with not only such common aspects of religion as theology and cosmology, but also astronomy. Caesar also held that they were "administrators" during rituals of human sacrifice, for which criminals were usually used, and that the method was through burning in a wicker man. One issue raised by such historians as Fustel de Coulanges [58] was that while Caesar described the druids as a significant power within Gaulish society, he did not mention them even once in his accounts of his Gaulish conquests. Hutton believed that Caesar had manipulated the idea of the druids so they would appear both civilized being learned and pious and barbaric performing human sacrifice to Roman readers, thereby representing both "a society worth including in the Roman Empire" and one that required civilizing with Roman rule and values, thus justifying his wars of conquest. Divitiacus supposedly knew much about the natural world and performed divination through augury. Alongside the druids, or as he called them, drouidas, whom he viewed as philosophers and theologians, he also remarked how there were poets and singers in Celtic society whom he called bardous, or bards. He states that these "terrified our soldiers who had never seen such a thing before These were all written by Christian monks. Irish literature and law codes[edit]

In Irish-language literature, the druids are draoi, plural of draoi are sorcerers with supernatural powers, who are respected in society, particularly for their ability to perform divination. The evidence of the law-texts, which were first written down in the 7th and 8th centuries, suggests that with the coming of Christianity the role of the druid in Irish society was rapidly reduced to that of a sorcerer who could be consulted to cast spells or practise healing magic and that his standing declined accordingly. Unlike the Irish texts, the Welsh term commonly seen as referring to the druids, dryw, was used to refer purely to prophets and not to sorcerers or pagan priests. Historian Ronald Hutton noted that there were two explanations for the use of the term in

Wales: It is speculated that they were used for divination. Eleven such pairs are known. Fitzpatrick, in examining what he believed to be astral symbolism on Late Iron Age swords has expressed difficulties in relating any material culture, even the Coligny calendar, with druidic culture. The archaeologist Anne Ross linked what she believed to be evidence of human sacrifice in Celtic pagan society—such as the Lindow Man bog body—to the Greco-Roman accounts of human sacrifice being officiated over by the druids. The crown is bronze with a broad band around the head and a thin strip crossing the top of the head. It was worn without any padding beneath, as traces of hair were left on the metal. The form of the crown is similar to that seen in images of Romano-British priests several centuries later, leading to speculation among archaeologists that the man might have been a druid. According to accounts produced in the following centuries, the new rulers of Roman Gaul subsequently introduced measures to wipe out the druids from that country. According to Pliny the Elder, writing in the 70s CE, it was the emperor Tiberius who ruled from 14 to 37 CE, who introduced laws banning not only druid practices, but also other native soothsayers and healers, a move which Pliny applauded, believing that it would end human sacrifice in Gaul. While the druids as a priestly caste were extinct with the Christianization of Wales, complete by the 7th century at the latest, the offices of bard and of "seer" Welsh: He wrote that after being excommunicated by Germanus, the British leader Vortigern invited twelve druids to assist him. In the lives of saints and martyrs, the druids are represented as magicians and diviners. They are represented as endeavouring to prevent the progress of Patrick and Saint Columba by raising clouds and mist. Before the battle of Culdremne a druid made an airbe drtiad "fence of protection"? The Irish druids seem to have had a peculiar tonsure. Next, as they endeavoured, with every possible effort, to move forward, but were not able to take a step farther, they began to whirl themselves about in the most ridiculous fashion, until, not able any longer to sustain the weight, they set down the dead body. Druid statue From the 18th century, England and Wales experienced a revival of interest in the druids. The roles of bards in 10th century Wales had been established by Hywel Dda and it was during the 18th century that the idea arose that druids had been their predecessors. Druids began to figure widely in popular culture with the first advent of Romanticism. Opera provides a barometer of well-informed popular European culture in the early 19th century: For its libretto, Felice Romani reused some of the pseudo-druidical background of *La Sacerdotessa* to provide colour to a standard theatrical conflict of love and duty. The story was similar to that of *Medea*, as it had recently been recast for a popular Parisian play by Alexandre Soumet: His writings, published posthumously as *The Iolo Manuscripts and Barddas*, are not considered credible by contemporary scholars. Williams claimed to have collected ancient knowledge in a "Gorsedd of Bards of the Isles of Britain" he had organized. Another Welshman, William Price 4 March 1823, a physician known for his support of Welsh nationalism, Chartism, and his involvement with the Neo-Druidic religious movement, has been recognised as a significant figure of 19th-century Wales. He was arrested for cremating his deceased son, a practice he believed to be a druid ritual, but won his case; this in turn led to the cremation act. Kendrick sought to dispel the pseudo-historical aura that had accrued to druids, [93] asserting that "a prodigious amount of rubbish has been written about Druidism"; [94] Neo-druidism has nevertheless continued to shape public perceptions of the historical druids. Some strands of contemporary Neo-Druidism are a continuation of the 18th-century revival and thus are built largely around writings produced in the 18th century and after by second-hand sources and theorists. Others, such as the largest druid group in the world, The Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids draw on a wide range of sources for their teachings. Members of such Neo-Druid groups may be Neopagan, occultist, Christian or non-specifically spiritual. Modern scholarship[edit] In the 20th century, as new forms of textual criticism and archaeological methods were developed, allowing for greater accuracy in understanding the past, various historians and archaeologists published books on the subject of the druids and came to their own conclusions. The archaeologist Stuart Piggott, author of *The Druids*, accepted the Greco-Roman accounts and considered the druids to be a barbaric and savage priesthood who performed human sacrifices. Montfaucon claims that he is reproducing a bas-relief found at Autun, Burgundy.

The Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids works with Druidry as a spiritual way and practice that speaks to three of our greatest yearnings: to be fully creative in our lives, to commune deeply with the world of Nature, and to gain access to a source of profound wisdom.

Beliefs and practices of the ancient Celts are being pieced together by modern Druids. Because so much information has been lost, this is not an easy task. Within ancient Druidism, there were three specialties. The Ovates worked with the processes of death and regeneration. They were the native healers of the Celts. They specialized in divination, conversing with the ancestors, and prophesizing the future. The Druids and Druidesses formed the professional class in Celtic society. They performed the functions of modern day priests, teachers, ambassadors, astronomers, genealogists, philosophers, musicians, theologians, scientists, poets and judges. They underwent lengthy training: Druids led all public rituals, which were normally held within fenced groves of sacred trees. In their role as priests, "they acted not as mediators between God and man, but as directors of ritual, as shamans guiding and containing the rites. It is not known whether female Druids were considered equal to their male counterparts, or whether they were restricted to special responsibilities. References to women exercising religious power might have been deleted from the record by Christian monks during the Celtic Christian era. The Celts did not form a single religious or political unity. They were organized into tribes spread across what is now several countries. As a result, of the Celtic deities which have been found, over occur only once in the archaeological record; they are believed to be local deities. There is some evidence that their main pantheon of Gods and Goddesses might have totaled about 3 dozen - perhaps precisely 33 a frequently occurring magical number in Celtic literature. Some of the more famous are: Many Celtic deities were worshipped in triune triple aspect form. Triple Goddesses were often sisters. Life continued in this location much as it had before death. The ancient Druids believed that the soul was immortal. After the person died in the Otherworld, their soul reincarnates and lives again in another living entity -- either in a plant or the body of a human or other animal. After a person has learned enough at this level, they move on after death to a higher realm, which has its own Otherworld. This continues until the individual reaches the highest realm, the "Source. We are just sparks from its flame. No Druidic creation story appears to have survived, although there are numerous accounts of the supernatural creation of islands, mountains, etc. There is some evidence that the Celts had a baptism initiation ceremony similar to those found in Buddhist, Christian, Essene, Hindu, Islamic, and Jainist sacred texts. Other researchers dismiss baptism as a forgery by Christian scribes as they transferred Celtic material to written form. Druids do not follow the Wiccan Rede which states in modern English one is free to do anything, as long as it harms nobody. The closest analogy are the Celtic Virtues of honor, loyalty, hospitality, honesty, justice and courage. A Druid is obligated to remain true to friends, family and leaders thus exhibiting the virtue of Loyalty. Honesty insists that one tell the truth the whole truth and nothing but the truth to yourself, your gods and your people. Justice desires the Druid understands everyone has an inherent worth and that an assault to that worth demands recompense in one form or another. Courage for the Druid does not always wear a public face; it is standing-strong-in-the-face-of-adversity, alone or with companions. Sometimes Courage is getting up and going about a daily routine when pain has worn one down without complaint or demur. Druids used many techniques to foretell the future: The Celtic Tree of Life, as interpreted here by Welsh artist Jen Delyth, shows a concept of the cosmos in which the universe is in the form of a tree whose roots and branches join. The flag of the Isle of Man, as interpreted here by Stuart Notholt, contains a triskele. It is an ancient Druidic symbol consisting of three curved branches, bent legs or arms radiating from the center of the symbol.

Chapter 5 : Druidism - Related Beliefs - Witchcraft

Definition. Druidism was the religion of the Celtic people that was administered by priests and priestesses called www.nxgvision.comts of Druidism still presently exist.

Origins[edit] An illustration of William Stukeley. One of the primary figures in the development of Druidry, he was also a significant influence on modern archaeology. The Druidic movement originated among the Romanticist ideas of the ancient druids that had begun to be developed in the 17th and 18th centuries. While many Early Mediaeval writers, particularly in Ireland, had demonised the ancient druids as barbarians who had practiced human sacrifice and tried to suppress the coming of Christianity, certain Late Mediaeval writers had begun to extol what they believed were the virtues of the druids, and reinvented them as national heroes, particularly in Germany, France and Scotland. It was also during this period that Conrad Celtis had begun to propagate the image of the druids as having been bearded, wise old men wearing white robes, something that would prove highly influential in future centuries. Stukeley himself, being a devout but unorthodox Christian, felt that the ancient druids had been followers of a monotheistic faith very similar to Christianity, at one point even stating that ancient druidry was "so extremely like Christianity, that in effect, it differed from it only in this; they believe in a Messiah who was to come into the world, as we believe in him that is come". Founded in and influenced by Freemasonry , its origins have remained somewhat unknown, but it subsequently spread in popularity from its base in London across much of Britain and even abroad, with new lodges being founded, all of which were under the control of the central Grand Lodge in London. The Order was not religious in structure, and instead acted as somewhat of a social club, particularly for men with a common interest in music. In it suffered a schism, as a large number of dissenting lodges, unhappy at the management of the Order, formed their own United Ancient Order of Druids, and both groups would go on to grow in popularity throughout the rest of the century. Born as Edward Williams, he would take up the cause of Welsh nationalism , and was deeply opposed to the British monarchy, supporting many of the ideals of the French revolution , which had occurred in Eventually moving to London, he began perpetuating the claim that he was actually one of the last initiates of a surviving group of druids who were descended from those found in the Iron Age, centred on his home county of Glamorgan. He subsequently organised the performing of Neo-druidic rituals on Primrose Hill with some of his followers, whom he categorised as either Bards or Ovates, with he himself being the only one actually categorised as a Druid. He himself practiced a form of religion he believed the ancient druids had, which involved the worship of a singular monotheistic deity as well as the acceptance of reincarnation. William Price , a prominent modern Druid. The most prominent figure in this was William Price " " , a physician who held to ideas such as vegetarianism and the political Chartist movement. His promotion of cremation and open practice of it led to his arrest and trial, but he was acquitted, achieving a level of fame throughout Britain. He would declare himself to be a Druid, and would do much to promote the return of what he believed was an ancient religion in his country. In Philip Carr-Gomm was asked to lead the Order. Nichols drew upon ideas from the Earth mysteries movement, incorporating many of its ideas about Glastonbury into his interpretation of Druidry. Fellow Druid Emma Restall Orr became co-leader of the group in the mids. The former was a branch of a British organization that had split from the Ancient Order of Druids, while the latter was founded in Massachusetts in Both were forms of fraternal benefit societies rather than religious or neo-pagan groups. As a form of humorous protest against this rule, a group of students, who contained Christians, Jews and agnostics within their ranks, decided to create their own, non-serious religious group. Their protest was successful, and the requirement was scrapped in Nonetheless, the group continued holding services, which were not considered Neopagan by most members, but instead thought of an inter-religious nature. From its beginning, the RDNA revolved around the veneration of the natural world, personified as Mother Earth , holding that religious truth could be found through nature. They had also adopted other elements of Neopaganism into their practices, for instance celebrating the festivals of the Wheel of the Year , which they had borrowed from the Neopagan religion of Wicca. Among those largely responsible for this transition towards Neopaganism within the organisation were Isaac Bonewits and Robert Larson, who

worked in a grove located in Berkeley, California. Arguing that it should draw from pan-European sources, rather than just those that were considered "Celtic", he placed an emphasis on academic and scholarly accuracy, taking a stand against what he perceived as the prevalent pseudo-historical ideas of many Neopagans and Druids. In , the Ancient Order of Masonic Druids in America changed its name to the current name the Ancient Order of Druids in America and started initiating women, which it had not done so previously because of its masonic origin. At the start of the twenty-first century, Druids could be found in most European countries and countries with large European-descended communities. Berger , Evan A. Leach, and Leigh S. Shaffer gained responses from Druids in the U. Of these respondents, This reflected a greater proportion of heterosexuals than in the broader American Pagan community.

Chapter 6 : Druidism | Definition of Druidism by Merriam-Webster

Druidry, sometimes termed Druidism, is a modern spiritual or religious movement that generally promotes harmony, connection, and reverence for the natural world. This commonly is extended to include respect for all beings, including the environment itself.

I feel that the confusion stems from misunderstandings and misconceptions. This article will attempt to explain some of these concepts that may confuse the Wiccan. In fact, the only people that the Rede pertains to are those who ascribe to it, it is unique to Wiccans and some kinds of Witchcraft. Some may even accuse the Druid of lacking morals. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, the moral concepts within The Law of Returns and the Rede, when boiled out of their archaic language, permeate Druidism. Normally Druids call this the Celtic Virtues. These six principals permeate the entire body of Druidic thought and ritual. Briefly stated the virtue of Honor requires one to adhere to their oaths and do the right thing, even if it will ultimately hurt others or oneself in the process. A Druid is obligated to remain true to friends, family and leaders thus exhibiting the virtue of Loyalty. Honesty insists that one tell the truth the whole truth and nothing but the truth to yourself, your gods and your people. Justice desires the Druid understands everyone has an inherent worth and that an assault to that worth demands recompense in one form or another. Courage for the Druid does not always wear a public face; it is standing-strong-in-the-face-of-adversity, alone or with companions. Sometimes Courage is getting up and going about a daily routine when pain has worn one down without complaint or demur. Outside of the scope of these six virtues, anything goes. Understand that the virtue of Justice demands that one consider the actions one is going to take before they are taken, since any harm to the inherent worth of another will demand that recompense be paid. Justice, by necessity, is just. For actions that harm others, you must pay a price, and actions that promote good thing will pay good back to you. It acknowledges the divine in each and every person. It makes sure that even enemies can sit down in a room together and be civil to one another. There has never been anything similar to this concept in European thought. These virtues do not preclude arguments or conflict. On the contrary, the Celts were some of the most combat-obsessed people we know. From myths we know Celts practiced blood feuds, had clan conflicts, wars. The individual Celt was proud, and fierce demands were made that independence was a supreme right. What the Celtic Virtues ensured were the continual functioning of an isolated tribal society. Think about these concepts when applied to the current government. What if all leaders were truly loyal to those who swore loyalty to them? What if all those who swore loyalty to a leader were coerced by society to be faithful to that oath? This is the ethical standard of most modern Druids. It is merely expressed in a different fashion. Calling Quarters and Magic Wiccan magic is concerned with projecting the willpower of the caster into the universe, normally through natural energy flows. Part of this magick and ritual is calling on the four quarters of the world, North, South, East and West. Generally there are classical Hermetic elements associated with those quarters, Air, Earth, Fire and Water. Druidry is votive in nature, meaning that a critical component of the spirituality and magic is the relationship one has with the Gods, for they are never ordered or commanded, but they are petitioned as friends and companions. Under very specific circumstances Druids occasionally used the same structure of calling upon the Natural World. In Druidic rituals the Land, Sea and Sky are called upon. Each of the Three Realms has specific attributes and very definite associations with them. If I were to ask a Wiccan where the Gods lived, many would not be able to tell me, for the Elemental Quarters hold no answer. Each Realm is associated with a time of life, a stage of development and a mental quality, as well as having several other associations, ranging from Magical to the Time of day. The Sea is the time before time, when we are not born. All life comes from the Sea. It is where we go at death; it is the source of Dreams and Inspiration. It is the realm that is traveled over to get anyplace when coming from or going to Ireland. The Land is the here-now. It is this moment, life, and creation, all that is around us. It is fertility, conscious thought, the Universe. All science fits into the realm of the Land, for it is all concerned with the physical realm. The Sky is the dwelling place of the Gods, the super-conscious, logic and thought. It is where logical ideas come from, and it is a place we hope to gain eventually, to become one with the Gods. It is also where

Divine Inspiration comes from. Every single one of the associations for the elements in the classic Hermetic elemental structure exist in Druidic belief and practice within the three Realms. They are not broken out into separate aspects or spheres as they are in Wiccan beliefs and practices. There are no elementals, deva of the elementals, rulers of the elements or realms in Druidic belief or practice. The realms have no spirits, no consciousness of mystical places, and certainly no angels associated with them because the realms simply are all encompassing. For Druids, it would be like trying to reduce the entire universe down to one human consciousness. Which brings us to Druidic magic. In Wiccan magick, a Circle is cast, the Quarters are called, the Gods are preferably asked to bless the work, energy is raised and the spell is cast. The intention being that the energy will work to bring their desire to pass. A Druid, by contrast, is not raising energy. The Druid will invoke the Realms, invite the Gods to the ritual, possibly invoke the Hallows and Provinces depending on the ritual structure the Druid uses and then ask the Gods to do them a favor. In one ritual to help me with a job, I dedicated a blood donation to the Red Cross to Lugh for his Spear and used that as my sacrifice to him for a favor I needed. In the same ritual, I baked the Dagda some bread and offered it to him and then gave it to the birds. It depends entirely on what you are willing to give and what the Gods want in return. In this case, the reasoning is that as a druid, we are members of the Land. Things that could happen in the future belong to the Sky, where the Gods live. So, asking the Gods to make an action more likely to happen is an efficient use of your energy. The Gods will demand and have a right to demand a price from those who need something. If we want the object of the ritual, it makes sense for us to pay the price demanded in order to get it. As my teacher pointed out to me, the Gods are reasonable. If they did, it could be a test to see how strongly you are committed to gaining what you want. They may demand a feast for themselves, which the Druid and his family would also share. It should also be mentioned that witchcraft is a collection of granny-tales and native superstition, sometimes based in fact, but quite often based in protecting oneself from the Elves and Faery. Sacred Space and the Circle Along with Magic, a concept that often confuses Wiccans when dealing with the Druid is the lack of a Circle in ritual. They point out that Stonehenge and other places similar to it are in a Circle, mounds are circular in shape, many Griannes are circular, and so too are the Celtic forts or duns. Since we are part of the Land, and the Land is everywhere and includes everything we see, touch, smell and taste, all that we interact with is sacred already. How can we, at the beginning of the ritual, sanctify that which is already sacred? It is simply an area that is set aside as a doorway through which other beings and ancestors can travel if they so choose. The Druid will call upon the qualities associated with those provinces and use them to help in rituals. Each Order may use different processes in this case, and different representations. Most Druids stick with only invoking the Land, Sea and Sky. Another reason Druids do not use a Circle is that a Circle excludes as well as includes. When a Circle is cast, the primary purpose is to contain the energy raised by the chanting, dancing, singing and other energy raising activities. Additionally, it protects the people inside the Circle from external antithetical influences, and in some cases it is designed to protect those outside the Circle from what is going on inside. The twin purposes of a Circle, containment and protection, would cut the Druid off from the very forces he wished to invoke for the ritual. The Gods and Goddesses One of the major differences that Wiccans need time to understand is Druidism is not duo-theistic, but polytheistic. Duo-theism sees One God and One Goddess, both of which contain all the qualities possible within them selves, including attributes that could be assigned to the other sex. While an individual Wiccan may have certain deities they are more comfortable working with in a ritual, most groups or traditions call upon a genera-Goddess. In Druidism, the Gods and Goddesses are separate individuals. Lugh tends to be arrogant, The Dagda overconfident, and so on. There is also no Maiden-Mother-Crone equivalent deity in Druidic practice. This also restricts the Druid to the Celtic Pantheon, although there is some choice as to which Celtic pantheon Irish, Welsh or Gaulish. Shoving all the Gods together in one divine lump would be analogous to saying that I am the same as you, after all, we are both human. You have the same wants, the same needs, the same drives, the same hobbies, the same thoughts and opinions simply because we have the same general shape. To a Druid, this is not only incomprehensible, but also laughable to the point of idiocy since the Gods are not cardboard cutouts of each other. I feel this is probably the greatest sticking point for most Wiccans during their initial encounter with Druidism. But it can be overcome through the study of mythology. We may, as individuals, have a journal of

our growth as people and as Druids, a place where we put down our thoughts and feelings on different topics. This book of ritual structure and liturgy is about all they are given.

Chapter 7 : Druidism and Wicca; a comparison Â» Erin's Journal - Letters from the Editor

The Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids (OBOD) says, "As a spiritual way or philosophy, Modern Druidism began to develop about three hundred years ago during a period known as the 'Druid Revival'.

Preston, in commencing his history of Masonry in England, asserts that there are convincing proofs that the science of Masonry was not unknown to the early Britons even before the time of the invasion of the Romans. Hence, he suggests the probability that the Druids retained among them many usages similar to those of Masons; but he candidly admits that this is a mere conjecture. Oliver, it is true, denies that the Masons of the present day were derived from the Druids. He thinks that the latter were a branch of what he calls the Spurious Freemasonry, which was a secession from the Pure Freemasonry of the Patriarchs. But he finds many analogies in the rites and symbols of the two institutions which indicate their common origin from a primitive system, namely, the ancient Mysteries of the Pagans. The theory of those who find a connection either in analogy or by succession between the Druids and the Freemasons accounts for this connection by supposing that the Druids derived their system either from Pythagoras or from the ancient Mysteries through the Phoenicians, who visited Britain at an early period for commercial purposes. Before we can profitably discuss the relations of Druidism to Freemasonry, or be prepared to determine whether there were any relations whatever between the two, it will be necessary to give a brief sketch of the history and character of the former. This is a topic which, irrespective of any Masonic reference, is not devoid of interest. Of all the institutions of antiquity, there is none with which we are less acquainted than that of the Druidism of Britain and Gaul. The investigations of recent archaeologists have tended to cast much doubt on the speculations of the antiquaries of the 17th and 18th centuries. Stokely, for instance, one of the most learned of those who have sought to establish out of the stone monuments of England a connected history of Druidism, has been said by Ferguson, in his work on Rude Stone Monuments, to have been indebted more to a prolific imagination than to authentic facts for the theory which he has sought to establish. The skepticism of Ferguson is, however, not less objectionable in a critical inquiry than the credulity of Stokely. There is evidently a middle way between them. Ferguson cannot deny the existence of Druids in Gaul and Britain, since the fact is stated by Caesar. He supposes that there were two distinct races in the island; the original inhabitants, who were of Turanian origin, and, being more uncivilized, were driven by the other race, who were Celts, into the fastnesses of the Welsh hills long before the Roman invasion. Among the former he thinks that the religion of Druidism, consisting of tree and serpent worship, may have been practiced. And he accounts for the error of the classical writers in describing the priests of the latter race as Druids by attributing it to the confounding of the two races by the "uncritical Romans. Ignaz Goldziher, in his work on Mythology Among the Hebrews, [vii] which aims at a total annihilation of Druidism as a system of secret initiation among the ancient Britons, whose Druidism was only a national religion, and attributes its invention to the modern Welsh, who created it for the purpose of elevating and strengthening their own nationality in their rivalry with the English. The Cymri of Wales, becoming alive to the opposition in nationality between themselves and the English, felt the need of finding a justification of this opposition in the oldest prehistoric times. It was then first suggested to them that they were descendants of the ancient, renowned Celtic nation; and to keep alive this Celtic national pride they introduced an institution of New Druids, a sort of secret society like the Freemasons. The New Druids, like the old ones, taught a sort of national religion, which, however, the people having long become Christian and preserved no independent national traditions, they had mostly to invent themselves. Thus, arose the so-called Celtic mythology of the god Hu and the goddess Ceridolu Ceridwen , etc. The Druids, which word signifies magicians, [viii] were the priests of the religion of the ancient Britons, among whom they exercised almost unlimited influence and authority. They presided over and directed the education of the youths; they decided without appeal all judicial controversies; they were exempted from all taxes and legal impositions; and whoever refused to submit to their decisions on any question was subjected to excommunication, by which he was forbidden access to the altars or the performance of religious rites, and was debarred from all intercourse with his relatives, his friends, or his countrymen. Hence, no superstition was ever more terrible than that of the

priest-ridden Britons. The Druids were under the chief authority of an Archdruid, which office was for life, but originally elective. They were divided into three orders, the highest being the Druids, below which were the Prophets, and the Vates or Bards. They held an annual assembly, at which litigated questions were decided and new laws were made or old ones abrogated. They held also four quarterly meetings, on the days of the equinoxes and the solstices. They permitted none of their doctrines or ceremonies to be committed to common writing, but used a cipher for their concealment. This, Caesar says, consisted of the letters of the Greek alphabet; a statement by no means probable, since it would infer a knowledge by them of the Greek language, of which we have no evidence. The opinion of Toland is more plausible - that the characters used were those of the Irish Ogham alphabet. Sir James Ware, who wrote in Latin, about the middle of the 17th century, a work on the Antiquities of Ireland, says that: He adds that he himself was in possession of an ancient book or parchment filled with these characters. Stokely and other antiquaries of his school suppose that the megalithic monuments found in Britain, such as at Stonehenge and Avebury, were Druidical temples, but Ferguson denies this, and asserts that "there is no passage in any classical author which connects the Druids either directly or indirectly with any stone temples or stones of any sort. Their worship, like that of the ancient Mysteries, was accompanied by a secret initiation. Their doctrines were communicated only to the initiated, who were strictly forbidden to expose them to the profane. What were the precise forms of this initiation it is impossible to say. The Druids themselves, wedded to their oral system of instruction, have left no records. Oliver, depending on inferences that he has drawn from the Welsh triads, from the poem of the ancient bard Taleisin, and some other Cambrian authorities, aided by the inventive genius of his own imagination, has afforded us a very minute, if not altogether accurate, detail of these initiatory ceremonies. The account is entirely too long for reproduction, but a condensed view of it will not be uninteresting. The ceremony of initiation began by placing the candidate in the Pastos, chest or coffin, in which he remained enclosed for three days, to represent death, and was liberated or restored to life on the third day. The candidate, representing a blind man, is then introduced while a hymn to the Sun is being chanted. He is placed under the care of an officer whose duty it is to receive him in the land of rest, and he is directed to kindle the fire under the cauldron of Ceridwen, the Druidical goddess. A pageant is then formed, and the candidate makes a circumambulation of nine times around the sanctuary, in circles from east to west by the south. The procession is first slow and amid a death-like silence. At length, the pace is increased into a rapid and furious motion, accompanied with the tumultuous clang of musical instruments and the screams of harsh and dissonant voices reciting in verse the praises of those heroes who were brave in war, courteous in peace, and patrons of religion. Then succeeded a series of ceremonies in which, by means of masks, the candidate was made to assume the character of various animals, such as the dog, the deer, the mare, the cock, etc. The second part began with striking the candidate a violent blow on the head with an oar, and a pitchy darkness immediately ensued, which was soon changed into a blaze of light which illuminated the whole area of the shrine. This sudden transition from darkness to light was intended to shadow forth the same transition which Noah experienced on emerging from the gloom of the ark to the brightness of the renovated world. The light was then withdrawn, and the candidate was again involved in chaotic darkness. The most dismal howlings, shrieks, and lamentations salute his astonished ear. Thus, the figurative death of Noah, typified by his confinement in the ark, was commemorated with every external mark of sorrow. Alarmed at the discordant noises, the candidate naturally sought to escape, but this was rendered impossible, for wherever he turned he was opposed by dogs who pursued him. At length, the gigantic goddess Ceridwen seized him and bore him by main force to the mythological sea which represented the flood of waters over which Noah floated. Here he is supposed to have remained for a year in the character of Arawn, or Noah. This change produced in the attendants corresponding emotions, which were expressed by shouts and loud paeans that testified their rejoicings at the resuscitation of their god. With the performance of these painful ceremonies, the first degree of initiation into the Druidical Mysteries was concluded. He was now instructed in the morality of the order; taught that souls are immortal and must live in a future state; solemnly enjoined to the performance of divine worship and the practice of virtue; and was invested with some of the badges of Druidism. Among these was the crystal, the unequivocal test of his initiation. This crystal, or talisman against danger, was manufactured exclusively by

the Druids, and its color varied in the three degrees. In the first it was green, in the second blue, and in the third white. The one presented to the aspirant was a combination of these colors. The third was conferred only on persons of rank and consequence, and in it the aspirant passed through still more arduous ceremonies of purification. The candidate was committed to secluded solitude for a period of nine months, which time was devoted to reflection and to the study of the sciences, so that he might be prepared more fully to understand the sacred truths in which he was about to be instructed. He was again submitted to a symbolic death and regeneration, by ceremonies different from those of the first degree. He was then supposed to represent a new-born infant, and, being placed in a coracle or boat, was committed to the mercy of the waters. The candidate, says Oliver, was actually set adrift in the open sea, and was obliged to depend on his own address and presence of mind to reach the opposite shore in safety. Should he refuse to undertake it, he was contemptuously rejected and pronounced unworthy of a participation in the honors to which he aspired and for which he was forever afterward ineligible. But if he courageously entered on the voyage and landed safely, he was triumphantly received by the Archdruid and his companions. He was recognized as a Druid, and became eligible for any ecclesiastical, civil or military dignity. The whole circle of human science was open to his investigation; the knowledge of divine things was communicated without reserve; he was now enabled to perform the mysterious rites of worship, and had his understanding enriched with an elaborate system of morality. Among those institutions which are thought to be irrecoverably lost, one is that of the Druids; of which the learned have hitherto known nothing but by some fragments concerning them out of the Greek and Roman authors. Caesar, who derived his knowledge of the Druids, imperfect as it was, from the contemporary priests of Gaul, says that they worshipped as their chief god Mercury, whom they considered as the inventor of all the arts, and after him Apollo, Mars, Jupiter, and Minerva. Hence, his statement will scarcely amount to more than that the Druids worshipped a variety of gods. Yet Davies, who, notwithstanding his national prejudices and prepossessions, is, from his learning, an authority not to be contemned, concurs in the view of Caesar so far as to say that "it is an historical fact, that the mythology and the rites of the Druids were the same, in substance, with those of the Greeks and Romans and of other nations which came under their observation. Oliver, that he concurred to a great extent in the views of Bryant and Faber. Stokely, one of the most learned of English antiquarians, believed that the Druids were addicted to tree and serpent worship, and he adduces as evidence of the truth of this theory the megalithic monuments of Stonehenge and Avebury, in the arrangement of whose stones he thought that he had traced a serpentine form. On the contrary, Mr. Ferguson [xxviii] scoffs, in language not always temperate, at the views of Stokely, and not only denies the serpentine form of the stone remains in England, as described by that antiquary, but repudiates the hypothesis that the Druids ever erected or had any connection with stone temples or monuments in any part of the world. But as Ferguson adduces nothing but negative arguments in proof of his assertion, and as he even casts some doubt upon the existence of Druids at all in Britain, his views are by no means satisfactory. He has sought to demolish a palace, but he has not attempted to build even a hovel in its place. Repudiating all other theories, he has offered none of his own. If the Druids did not erect the stone monuments of Britain, who did? Until the contrary is conclusively proved, we have but little hesitation in attributing them to the Druids. But we need not enter into this discussion, which pertains more properly to the province of archaeology than of Freemasonry. Some writers have held that the Druids were Sun-worshippers, and that the adoration of the solar orb constituted the national religion of the ancient Britons. Hence, these theorists are inclined to believe that Stonehenge and Avebury were really observatories, where the worshippers of the Sun might behold his rising, his diurnal course, and his setting. Davies, in his *Celtic Researches* and in his *Mythology and Rites of the British Druids*, maintains that there was among them a mutilated tradition of the Noachic deluge, [xxix] as there was among all heathen nations. The legend was similar to that of the flood of Deucalion, and was derived from Samothrace and the East, having been brought by a colony from one nation to another and preserved without interruption. He therefore asserts that the Helio-Arkite god of the Britons, the great Hu, was a Pantheon a collection of deities, who under his several titles and attributes comprehended the group of superior gods whom the Greeks and other refined nations separated and arranged in distinct personages. Davies has been sustained by the opinions of more recent scholars, though they have traced the birthplace to a

more distant region than the island of Samothracia. It is now very generally believed that the Druids were Buddhists, and that they came into Britain with the great tide of emigration from Asia which brought the Aryan race westward into Europe. If this be true, the religion of India must have greatly degenerated in the course of its migration. It is admitted that the Druids cultivated the art of magic, and in their rites, were accustomed to sacrifice human victims, both of which practices were repugnant to the philosophic spirit of Buddhism. The fact is that, notwithstanding the authority of the Welsh Bards and the scanty passages in Caesar, Tacitus, and a few other Roman writers, we are entirely at sea in reference to everything connected with the religious system of Druidism. Almost all on this mysterious subject is guesswork and conjecture - extravagant theories, the only foundation of which is in the imaginations of their framers and bold assertions for the truth of which no competent authority can be given. Much of the confusion of ideas in respect to the customs and manners of the ancient Britons has arisen from the ignorance of the old writers in supposing that the inhabitants of Britain, at the time of the Roman invasion and long before, were a homogeneous race. The truth is that the island was inhabited by two very distinct races.

Chapter 8 : Druid Beliefs | Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids

While not all Druids regularly attend Gorsedd Rites, all Druids will acknowledge the importance and validity of such gatherings and rituals. Grove Practice A Grove is a group of people who come together to honour deity, land, culture, heritage, ancestry and each other within the Druid tradition.

Since ancient Druidism was an oral tradition, they did not have a set of scriptures as do Christianity and other "religions of the book. Many people are attempting to rediscover their roots, their ancestral heritage. Most modern Druids connect the origin of their religion to the ancient Celtic people. However, historical data is scarce. The Druids may well have been active in Britain and perhaps in northern Europe before the advent of the Celts. This evolved into a group of loosely linked tribes which formed the Celtic culture circa BCE. Although the Celts had a written language, it was rarely used. Their religious and philosophical beliefs were preserved in an oral tradition. Little of their early history remains. Other data comes from the codification and modification of Celtic myth cycles by Christian monks. Unfortunately, much Celtic history and religion has been lost or distorted by an overlay of Christianity. The Christian Church adsorbed much of Celtic religion. Many Pagan Gods and Goddesses have become Christian saints; sacred springs and wells were preserved and associated with saints; many Pagan temple sites became the location of cathedrals. By the 7th Century CE, Druidism itself was destroyed or continued deeply underground throughout most of the formerly Celtic lands. There is some evidence that Pagan religions did survive in isolated areas of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into the 20th Century. Myths about Druids Ritual Killing: Many historians believed that the ancient Druids performed human sacrifices. All of these references can be traced back to the writings of one individual, Julius Caesar. He may well have been prejudiced against the Celts because of their continual warfare with the Romans. In war, the enemy is routinely demonized. Some remains of executions have been found in the archaeological record, but it is not obvious whether the victims were killed during religious rituals or to carry out the sentence of a court. There is one reference to human sacrifice in Celtic literature, but it appears to be a Christian forgery. The ancient Celts might have engaged in ritual killing; certainly other contemporary societies did. Modern Druids, of course, do not. Many people believe that the Druids constructed Stonehenge, the complex of standing stones in South Central England. The current formation was completed circa BCE. This was almost a millennium before the start of Celtic civilization. The Druids may have preceded the Celts in England. Thus, either the Druids or their fore-runners might have been responsible for the finishing of Stonehenge and other monuments. There is no historical proof that they were or were not involved. Even if they did not actually construct these monuments, they may well have performed rituals there, and understood its astronomical meanings and uses. In Ireland and the UK, there are many ancient "Druid" altars, beds, rings, stones, stone circles and temples. Again, ancient Druids may have used these megalithic monuments, but did not necessarily build them Ireland now has countless wells and springs dedicated to the Christian Saint Bridget. Bridget after the area was Christianized. This non-existent God is often mentioned at Halloween time. He is supposed to be the Celtic God of the Dead. No such God existed. Samhain is, in reality, the name of a Druidic fire festival. It can be loosely translated as "end of the warm season". Some writers have promoted the concept that Druids were basically monotheistic, following a sort of pre-Christian belief system. There is essentially no evidence of this. Druids worshipped a pantheon of Gods and Goddesses. However, some modern-day cultural Druids have merged Druid customs with a modern-day religion -- typically Christianity -- and are monotheists. The following information sources were used to prepare and update the above essay. The hyperlinks are not necessarily still active today. Greywolf, "A little history of Druidry," at:

Chapter 9 : Druidry (modern) - Wikipedia

Druids were people in ancient Britain and France who served a wide variety of roles – "philosophers, teachers, judges, the repository of communal wisdoms about the natural world and the.

The druidic spiritual tradition of death and rebirth is seen throughout the centuries. Thinkstock Who were the Druids? Their legacy is the most enduring and most mysterious Today the word conjures thoughts of magic, wizardry, and spiritualism, but in ancient times the definition of Druid was much broader. During the Iron Age, the Druids made up the higher-educated tier of Celtic society, including poets, doctors, and spiritual leaders. The legacy of this last group is the most enduring and the most mysterious. Candidates for initiation would crawl into the caves to be reborn into the light of day. This theme of death and rebirth remains a continuing thread in the spiritual practice of Druidry throughout the centuries. Christianity adapted many of their feast days to match. This spiritual tradition continued four and a half thousand years later into the sixteenth century when Christian clerics transcribed the key text of Druid spirituality from oral tradition. It is also thought to stem from a Celtic compound of "dru-wid" - "dru" tree and "wid" to know , which reflects the importance of trees in Celtic spirituality and symbols. The Old Irish form was "druí", and in Modern Irish and Gaelic the word is "draoi" or "druadh" magician, sorcerer. Educated ancient leaders Druidry. The prehistoric period saw tribes from Europe moving westwards towards Britain and Ireland as the Ice Age retreated. These people had considerable knowledge of astronomy and mathematics and great engineering skills. The megalith building culture developed at this time, and this period saw the rise of great mounds like Newgrange and circles of stone like Stonehenge. The Celts had "a highly sophisticated religious system, with three types of Druids: During this time, Celtic and Druid spirituality was preserved by the Christian clerics who recorded many of the old stories and myths conveyed by the Druids, who mostly converted to Christianity. St Patrick also recorded all of the old Druid laws of Ireland, thereby preserving information on the ethics and social structure of the pre-Christian Celtic culture. Along with the translation and printing of classical Druid texts, scholars discovered their ancestors were far from the savages the Church made them out to be. This period of revival has grown into a renaissance which continues to this day.