

Three Cranes Grove, ADF

Crane Chatter



Samhain Edition



October 2007

Samhain Lore

by Ian

The Festival of Samhain marks the ending and beginning of the Celtic Year. Samhain (pronounced "Sow-in") comes from the Irish Gaelic and means "Summers End". There is a great deal of distortion as to the true meaning of the Holiday, fostered in large part by religious propaganda perpetuated by overly superstitious fundamentalists. Sometimes one will hear of an "Evil God" named "Samhain", but such a deity never existed anywhere in Celtic lands or Europe for that matter. It was a literary fiction masquerading as scholarship from the early nineteenth century. Fables of Druids leaving "Jack-o-lanterns" at the homes of families who have helped procure a sacrifice for "Samhain" (or Satan) are likewise scurrilous at best.

Samhain can be viewed a number of ways.

First, it was an important agricultural observance, when the final harvest was taken and the folk were now dependent on stored food, hunting and slaughtering of animals for survival. Herds were culled to eliminate the weak and unnecessary and ensure that the limited amount of food would go around for the next six months. In this aspect, Samhain is a holiday of Plenty and feasting, laying in a layer of fat before the winter, and gathering together for safety and protection. The harvest being over, the seeds for the next years crops are planted. They'll lie dormant until Oimeic (Feb. 1st) when they will begin to sprout. By Beltain (May 1st) they will have shown growth, and it is this time of year that is concerned with the fertility of the coming crops. Those same crops will be harvested by Samhain, and the cycle begins anew.

In present times the importance of this part of the festival has diminished for most people living in this country, but you should try to see this from the stand- point of a tribal people for whom a bad season meant facing a long winter of famine in which many would not survive to the spring.

(S. McSkimming, Dalriada Heritage Trust <<http://www.tartans.com/samhain.html>>)



An Interview with the new Senior Druid

Crane Chatter: Congratulations on becoming the new Senior Druid.

Seamus: Thank you, I am both honored and humbled at the same time. This grove has some amazing people in it and they push me to be a better person. I feel really blessed to have found ADF and Three Cranes Grove.

CC: How long have you been involved with ADF and Three Cranes?

Seamus: For a while now, I was looking through old meeting notes and didn't realize that the grove hadn't really been around long before I joined. It was around about a year but they were only getting together about once a month and high days, now we see each other about twice a week on average. So to answer your question about 4 years now. I have served for two terms as the purse-warden. I joined ADF and the Cranes at the same time. I am also active in the Warrior's Guild as the guild scribe and I have a seat on the guild's Council of Honor.

CC: What did you do before ADF?

Seamus: I am also a member of an Asatru' organization called the Troth. I also did some Pagan/Wicca things with a local group called Stone Soup Circle. Before that I read a lot and have also done some Native American type stuff. My great grandmother was full blooded Navajo. So I guess I was searching.

CC: What do you like most about ADF?

Seamus: The structure. We are a neo-pagan church. We are heavy into lore and historical data. It's the religion with homework. Some people are afraid of the word church and some people want to run around in the woods basing their entire spiritual experience on unsubstantiated personal gnosis. Not that there is anything wrong with that. But I like the fact that we care about the history, the facts etc...why not excellence?

Interview continued...

Also that fact that we are a church helps bridge the gap between mainstream and the pagans in the woods. The pagan community needs to understand that we need recognized clergy with credentials. We need somewhere to look when we get sick, need healing, last rites whatever. We, by the very nature of being pagan, think that we have a personal relationship with our deities and have no need for clergy except for marriage but I think we forget the wise men and women of old and their place in the tribe or village. So I feel ADF is or will be in the future fulfilling that need for non Christian clergy...not to mention so many other things but I could ramble on forever...

CC: So what do you like least?

Seamus: Well I think we need to strike more of a balance. It's important to be scholarly but I sometimes think we do things too much from the head and not enough from the heart. Most recon neo – pagan groups spend too much time looking back and very little time looking ahead. It is very important to gather knowledge and to know your history lessons, but we need to adapt those lessons to today. So “once more with feeling” would be my battle-cry.

CC: What is your vision for Three Cranes?

Seamus: To not screw up what Mike started....no, really, I am very serious, we have created something wonderful here and I want to make sure that we continue to grow and tend our garden. There is so much we can do in the greater Columbus community. Not just the pagan community but all of it. I am excited about the people in my grove and what we can do. We can really service the pagan community with the public rituals, the outreach programs we have done thus far are only the beginning. The Comfest booth, the Pagan Pride Day, next year we want a booth at ULE, we want to do PPD again...it just stretches out before us. I want us to be a shining example of the ADF virtues and for people who see us to go “wow those Druids are cool, they know their stuff and are really good solid people that are walking in their truth...”

CC: Thank you for taking a minute to talk to us, any final thoughts?

Seamus: Thank you. Be good to each other. Make one person laugh everyday. Remember your blessings. Make lasting memories and leave nothing but footsteps.

Green Living: The High Cost of Bottled Water by Anne Delekta

Think about all of the bottled water that you see for sale in the stores. Now think about the fact that all of those bottles are manufactured, shipped (using a great deal of fossil fuel), and usually tossed in the trash. About 10% are recycled, but recycling requires a great deal of energy – which usually comes from fossil fuels. Bottles thrown into the trash are either burned (releasing toxic chemicals) or buried (taking up to 1,000 years to degrade.)

So why do we drink so much bottled water? For one thing, it's pretty darn convenient. People feel that it tastes better and is more pure than tap water, though this is often not the case. Bottled water has fewer regulations and safeguards than tap water. Many brands, including a few big-name best sellers, get their water from municipal sources – that's right, it's tap water. And blind taste-tests have shown that people often prefer tap water to the bottled stuff.

So what are our greener options? Treat yourself to a nice, reusable water bottle. (Bottled water bottles are hard to clean and the plastic degrades with repeated use, so reusing them is not recommended.) Plastic sports bottles made of polycarbonate (marked with a #7) are the cheapest option, though polycarbonate has been shown to leach a compound called bisphenol-A (when exposed to hot water and heavy detergents - so avoid washing them in those.) Nalgene is the most well-known brand of polycarbonate bottles. A better choice may be a bottle made of aluminum (the inside is coated to prevent the water from contacting the metal) or stainless steel. Sigg (<http://www.mysigg.com/>) and Klean Kanteen (<http://www.kleankanteen.com/>) are reputable brands of metal water bottles. Some larger natural food stores carry metal water bottles.

But what about the taste of tap water? Here in Columbus the tap water reeks of chlorine. A water filter will help remove the taste, as will letting the water to sit for a few hours (this will allow the chlorine to dissipate.) Affordable water filters do create landfill waste, but my carafe water filter can process 40 gallons of water before the filter needs to be replaced - and that is the equivalent of more than 300 half-liter bottles of water.

What do you mean this thing don't flush? By Tanrina

Last edition, we applied the ADF virtues of **wisdom**, **piety**, **vision**, **courage**, and **integrity** to surviving a pagan festival. I forgot to add one thing. I know these things are important and helpful for a good festival experience because I often forget at least one of them, and usually more than that. Then I reflect on what is going on and think, "Oh...yeah, I forgot." So, on to the last four virtues.

Perseverance is "drive; the motivation to pursue goals even when that pursuit becomes difficult." Sometimes it rains. Sometimes it's blazing hot. Sometimes it's cold and dreary. Sometimes the schedule gets changed with very little notice. I helped organize one festival where the group scheduled to perform the main ritual had a car break down on the way and was unable to make it. There was some confusion as we sorted that out, but it did get sorted. The point is: things happen, and you can either grumble about it or accept that things happen and make the most of it. Even better, if it's something you can help the organizers with, do so!

Hospitality is the big one, and the one that's likely to get me in the most trouble with some readers. Think of it this way. If you were at someone's home for a meal or ritual, you would probably ask if you could help them with dinner preparation and clean up, or anything else. This is no different. The festival organizers have rented the property. Therefore, it is their 'home' for the weekend, and they have invited you there. Even though you are paying to go, you are likely not showing up early to clean, or staying long afterwards to clean again. Hospitality means being a good guest, just as it means being a good host.

What does this mean for the camper? First and foremost, follow the rules. You knew about them before you came (see **wisdom** in the last issue), so this should be no problem. Taking care of yourself and your campsite is also part of this. Also, if it is offered, preregister. Not only is it usually less expensive, but it also lets the hosts know the guest is coming.

Once on site, only camp where allowed. Some locations are larger than the festival, so stay where the organizers have indicated you may. Be kind to the nature spirit hosts as well, and don't camp where you will disturb them. Many veterans can help you with finding a suitable location. Try to avoid the obvious bad decisions. Dry creek beds don't always stay that way (and yes, I know someone who found that out the hard way).

I wasn't sure which virtue to put this under, but **taking care of yourself** is paramount. I suppose it fits here, since the hosts and organizers, who are typically very busy, do not have to take care of you much beyond the festival itself. Because this is important, and I've seen some bad things happen, this is worth a bit of a detour from the virtues themselves. First and foremost, drink plenty of water. I cannot stress this enough. Living "outside," especially in the heat, will cause more perspiration, and lead to greater chances of dehydration. If you indulge, or overindulge, in alcohol, being dehydrated can be dangerous. No one needs a wicked hangover or alcohol poisoning to ruin their trip. At the very least, not enough water can make certain bodily functions very difficult, which can make camping an unpleasant experience.

Almost as important as staying hydrated is to EAT!! To be blunt, deciding

What do you mean...continued

to start a new diet or fast while camping is stupid. Those with degrees in physiology can probably explain this better than I, but it takes more energy to live outside than we are normally used to. Skipping meals is dangerous. Eating less is dangerous. Just EAT. Don't use the excuse of being 'too busy.' Many festivals schedule meal hours, and many presenters don't mind if you snack during their presentation, or at least they shouldn't. If they do, reconsider attending their workshops. What to eat? I recommend PLENTY of fruit, both regular AND dried. Mostly for the health of the aforementioned bodily functions, but also because they also are a source of water and energy. Much better than the chips and soda I see some folks bring with them. In addition to fruit, almost anything healthy is probably okay for camping, but the extra salty stuff will make you thirsty, so avoid that. Remember, if you can't afford anything but three days worth of chips and soda, you should probably rethink whether or not you should go.

Now, pagans can be very hospitable, and someone may feed you out of the goodness of their heart. Be sure you aren't taking advantage of them, and be sure to find a way to pay them back for their generosity. And make sure this isn't a common theme!

Some festivals have their own meal plans. (You should still bring food for in between.) This is a great way to meet folks, at common meal times. This also helps keeping you fed and grounded. (And I say that from experience, not just because our grove provides a meal plan at a festival.) These do cost extra, and may also involve some volunteer time on your part. More on volunteer time later.

On the subject of food, and getting us back toward **hospitality**, many festivals have potlucks. The way potlucks work is that everyone brings a food item to share. Or at least that is how they are supposed to work. If you can't afford to bring something, even a loaf of bread for a potluck, you may want to reconsider going to the festival itself.

Lastly, under **hospitality**, many festivals ask you to volunteer two hours of your time helping the festival run. (From what I've seen, ADF rituals do not, and that's a shame). Volunteering does two things. First, it gives the organizers some assistance, and occasionally a much needed break. Running a festival is hard work, and organizers are entitled to a little relaxation. (In fact, even if there isn't official volunteer time, ask someone if they need help with anything.) Second, it's another great way to meet people. Most of the people in my current coven are folks I met while volunteering at my first pagan festival. There will be some that grumble at this. To those I would remind them that **hospitality** means "acting as both a gracious host and an appreciative guest, involving benevolence, friendliness, humor, and the honoring of "a gift for a gift." The hosts and organizers have given the gift of the festival. It is not too much to ask for an hour or two of help from guests.

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Running with Trees BY Shawneen

In upcoming issues of Crane's Chatter, I hope to review elements and aspects of the various sacred trees of our Indo-European traditions. Before beginning that series of articles, however, I thought that it would be good to begin with a general discussion of techniques that can be used to connect with trees.

All of us, every day, are surrounded with things associated with or made from trees. From the paper we use for reading, writing and printing; to the homes we live in and the furniture we take our ease upon, our lives are touched by trees. Trees surround our homes, fill our parks, shade us in our comings and goings and even can be found in our sacred rituals.

But how many of us have taken the time to get to truly know our sylvan brother/sisters? How many of us have set aside the time to move in the timescape that trees move in? How many of us can be said to "run with trees"?

Now we find ourselves in the time of Samhain, the ending/beginning time of our Celtic tradition. What better time to make the commitment to change that? And so the question becomes, how does a druid go about beginning or expanding this pathwork? Begin by finding a tree to teach you. The best personal trainer for you isn't necessarily the most adept, the one with the most credentials. The best personal trainer is the one willing to help you on a daily basis. If you only see your sensei once or twice a year, the impact on your life especially beginning out won't be too large. So it is with trees. The best one to begin with is a tree located near your daily rounds. A tree you see every day, either near your home or perhaps near where you work. The choice is perhaps best left to the individual but here are some additional tips on selecting a tree friend to begin a relationship with. Try and find a tree whose branches are large enough to extend out over you, one you can get under completely. Trees roots extend out from their trunks as far as the furthest branches extend above them. By sitting/standing/lying under the over arching branches, you are actually placing your entire body within the energy body of your tree. This is one of the reasons why people sometimes recommend hugging trees. Your two auras are able to interact

Running with Trees

more fully and hugging also helps by de-arming your ego and helping you in becoming more humble. Plus it feels good to hug and be hugged, right? Trees react better to people who can keep their egos in check.

Once you have identified a possible tree to approach; quiet your self, find your center and consider making an offering to the candidate you have selected. Speak to your tree and explain to her/him that you wish to enter into a deepened relationship. Mention what first drew you to this particular tree...its height, its beautiful leaves, its location etc. In short, simple sentences, ask your tree if it would be willing to assist you in communicating with the nature spirits both within it and around it. Trees are the chieftains of their immediate environs so be respectful and honest in your initial and subsequent interactions. Everything that happens around a tree is ingrained (pun shamelessly intended) in the tree's memory. It is not possible to lie to trees, they know better than any creature around what has gone on around them. Remember to wait for the answer. You will know when one has been given. Leaves might shake, creatures living in the tree might appear but some sign will be given. Use your druid sense to interpret the answer. If the answer is no, thank the tree and gift it something as a thanking (one or two of your own hairs is an acceptable offering if you have nothing else on hand) If the answer is affirmative spend some time getting to know your new friend.

You might begin by taking note of everything you can discern about your tree. What species of tree is it? (Its ok if you don't know at first, more on this later) What shape are its leaves. What is its bark like? Are there any fruit or flowers? What do her/his fruits look like? (Most trees, by the way, are bi-sexual. For instance, of the Ogham trees, only holly has separate male and female individuals). What creatures make their home here? What noises does the tree make as the wind dances through its branches? Try and notice everything you can. Make a commitment to your tree. Commit to visiting it daily if you can. Start a journal just between the two of you.

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Each time you visit, take time to meet and greet your tree. Write in your journal anything that you notice, especially things that change. Write down any impressions that you receive. Don't worry if they don't make sense to you at the time you write them down. One of the things about trees is that they live in a different timescape than we normally do and it takes a while to attune to that. Sometimes the impressions that you receive will make sense only when viewed from a distance and in aggregate. This is why the journal helps. You will be able to see patterns in its pages that only make sense once you've attuned to your tree and its sense of timing.

Consider creating a small altar near your tree if this can be gracefully accomplished. It could be as simple as a single mark stone if privacy is a problem. Offerings can be as simple as water, or milled grains for the tree's animal associates. Avoid whole seeds as they will inevitably germinate and cause possible competition issues. Another technique can be to create small shafts with a piece of pipe hammered temporarily into the ground. These shafts can then be filled with balanced fertilizer for your tree. Make the shafts within the overarching branch zone near its outer perimeter. A handful fertilizer per time is plenty. No more than a pound of fertilizer per inch of tree diameter over the course of the year. Avoid this practice after midsummer to keep from encouraging growth in your tree that won't have time to harden off before frosts. Visit your tree often; speak to it as you would a close friend.

Use your library and internet resources to learn all that you can about the species and habits of your tree. If you don't know what kind of tree has joined your work, a good ID tool is located at this site <http://www.arboday.org/trees/WhatTree.cfm?ItemID=E6At>

Also, several of your grove members have scouting, wood crafting or horticultural backgrounds and would be a further resource to aid you. The more you know the better you can see things from your friend's point of view

Another deepening practice is to find a small piece of the tree's branches (plenty can usually be found on the ground especially after storms) and smooth it and carry it with you during your day as a touch piece. It can serve as a reminder of your connection and a stand in on the days when you can't make it out to your actual tree.

Running with Trees

Once you feel comfortable, in partnership with your tree, perform the two powers meditation with your tree friend. You have to speak the parts, of course, but begin by aligning your spine with the trunk of your partner tree. Be sure and use plural/group terms and invite your friend to join you in this effort. I can speak from personal experience that the effect can be amazingly powerful.

If possible, spend a minimum of a year and a day in the company of your tree. In this way you will be able to experience all of its yearly changes and habits. I still keep tabs with the tree that started me out on my first deepening. Many of the larger forest trees live on for far beyond the lifespan of your average human so the friendship you form in this process can be for life (Yours that is). The key objectives (other than making a new friend) in this process is to begin to see your life as interconnected more fully with your bioregion, to become a co-creator with the nature spirits in your magical and physical environment and to experience the world in an expanded trans-specific manor.

Hopefully these basic tips will spark deeper explorations and prove to be valuable tools in your journey

-Shawneen

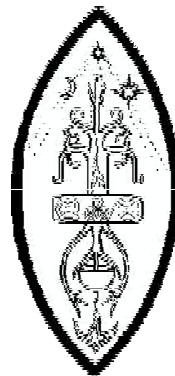
"Some of my best friends are trees"

Next High Day:

Winter Solstice (Dec. 22-ish):

The Celts did not really celebrate this Holy Day, and its later celebration probably came from Norse contact, where 12 days of Yule were celebrated. Rituals done at this time should probably be done to bring the Sun back, since until this day, the sun has been waning and is now showing nine and a half hours of light. The ancients, while they may have known that the Sun would return, likely did rituals of some sort to ensure the process.

In Neo-Pagan myth, the God is conceived (some say born, in which case he both dies and is conceived at Samhain) on the Winter Solstice. The symbolism is obvious when you compare the God to the Sun, which appears reborn from the darkness at this point.



What do you mean...continued

Moderation can involve many things at pagan festivals. Drinking is probably the one that comes to most people's minds first. It's very easy to drink too much at pagan festivals. The alcohol flows like water sometimes, and in the excitement of meeting new and old friends, we can sometimes lose track. And we've all done it. Or will do it soon, even if we have a lot of experience. The best advice is to know your limit and try not to go too far over it. Health issues aside, do you really want to be the person who keeps everyone up to all hours and gets escorted out for being disruptive? Do you really want to be known as "That person?" If you don't know your limit, now is not the time to find it. Be smart.¹

There is also a phenomenon at some festivals wherein people meet others to whom they are physically attracted. Be responsible, and remember the virtues.

Fertility for ADF is "bounty of mind, body and spirit." Don't just sit alone, at your campsite, with people you know well. Go to workshops. Stay up late for fire-side conversations.

¹There are substances besides alcohol that may circulate. The same considerations and comments from **moderation**, **courage**, and **wisdom** should apply to them as well.



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