

Three Cranes Grove, ADF

December 2007

Yule Edition



Crane
Chatter



Around the fire



Hail and welcome to the Yule / Winter Solstice edition of the Crane Chatter. The sun king or deity returns. It is the time when the days begin getting longer again. The dark half of the year is replaced with the growing power of the sun. Saturn is unbound. Jesus is born. Insert cultural myth... Angus Mac Og, Belinus, Balder, Arthur, the list continues. Many burial mounds and stone circles are designed so that the light of the morning sun enters into a shaft or hits a certain stone, this shows that there was some kind of celebration. The return of light to the darkness, order restored, the wild chaotic nights and winter ice storms raging through the long nights begin to lessen with the growing sunlight. At least we hope so.

I think how screwed up we are because instead of listening to the cycle of nature and using this time of the year to recharge the batteries, we run all over heck and back to buy things etc. and how really busy we have made this time of year. I secretly love the ice storms and snow sometimes because it does slow us down. We need to slow down and go into our cave... Rebirth, renewal, the promise of the coming spring. Can you imagine living in the far north and not seeing the sun for weeks and then just the crack of sunlight of the horizon and the glare off the snow? No wonder this became a time of family, stuck together in a single room with everyone for the winter.

My memories or rituals are all jumbled together. I remember love and laughter. Christmas, Yule, Solstice, it all runs together. I remember Lees and I had a Yule party /ritual the last couple of years and there was much rejoicing and mead

. We all tied ribbons to a wreath representing our wants for the New Year or things we wanted to leave behind and then burned the wreath as part of our offering.

I remember for a few year's Three Cranes did a Saturnalia ritual for Jenni. I remember the first one we did at her house and she tried using a small fire indoors and her fire alarm going off in the middle of the rite. It was great doing a roman rite and learning about that culture. Last year we did 12 nights and I loved it! We will do that again. Again through it all what I remember most is smiles. The laughter and joy of family, of fellowship...I want to thank all the Crane-kin and extended family for how each of you have enriched my life.

May we walk in service, in balance, and in honor!

Seamus
Senior Druid –Three Cranes Grove
ADF - Warrior Guild Chief



Exploring the Gates: Fire

By Zimra

*We will kindle a Fire, Bless all, and with harm to none,
We will kindle a Fire, and offering pour,
We will kindle a Fire, A light 'neath the Moon & Sun,
We will kindle a fire, our spirits will soar.*
-from the Portal song by Ian Corrigan

Fire is a fundamental power. In many cultures it was said to be gifted by or stolen from the gods, usually by a trickster or a hero. Fire gave humans warmth in the cold, light in the darkness, and the means to develop a better quality of life. It helped to increase their odds of survival and allowed culture and civilization to flourish. Fire brings people together; it purifies and it blesses. Fire is a tool of transformation: hardening clay into pots, smelting ore into usable metal, turning inedible raw meat and grains into nourishing food. Fire energy flows upward, carrying offerings to the gods. It behaves like a living thing: moving, consuming, breathing. It is often seen as a metaphor for the spark of life that animates us, motivates us, and drives us. Yet it can also drive people apart and destroy almost any material. Fire is powerful and should be treated with respect and care.

In ADF, the fire is one of the three gates that we hallow and open while establishing the sacred center in ritual. This allows our offerings to be carried to the three kindreds (the ancestors, natural spirits, and gods/shining ones.)

When giving praise offerings or sacrifice through the fire, there are a few things to keep in mind:

- Make sure your offering is easily burnable, and please take the size of both the fire and your offering into consideration! A large mass of fresh flowers or plant material won't burn very easily (and may even suffocate the fire!), so consider offering them to the tree instead.



- When offering flammable liquids to the fire, be careful! Fire can “chase” back up into the container holding the liquid. Try pouring the offering around the edges of the fire, rather than into the center.
- Examples of things that can be offered through the fire: incense or herbs (though you may wish to simply light the incense and stick it in the ground, otherwise it will burn rapidly and without releasing its scented smoke), oil, wine or other beverages (be careful not to quench the fire with these offerings – pour slowly! Some deities may prefer that their libations be poured onto the earth rather than burned in a fire), butter (popular for the goddess Brighid), bread or other foodstuffs (it will burn in small quantities; for larger quantities it is better to give it through the tree) and meat (make sure to put this into the hottest part of the fire so it burns completely.)



Weekend of Service December 2 2007

By Rev. Michael J. Dangler

Each ADF Grove is required to commit themselves to a level of community service. The requirement is not difficult: it is simply one community service activity per quarter. That means that once every three months, we need to do *something* to maintain our Charter.

As one of seven Fully Chartered Groves of ADF, and as the Grove with the fourth largest membership in our church, Three Cranes has always felt it was important that we should take a lead in providing community service within ADF. Our full community service activity can be found on our Service page, but today, I wanted to mention what the Grove did most recently.

This weekend, we set our feet along a new trail in our community service work: The Lower Scioto Multi-Use Trail. This trail runs from the confluence of the Olentangy and Scioto Rivers, past the central business district of Columbus, Ohio, and down to State Route 104. It is one of the most visible trails in Columbus, and it incorporates much of Columbus' history and community. The trail is just under 5 miles long, and a small contingent from the Grove said a short prayer to the Spirits of Nature, then set out at about 11 AM on a cold December 1st morning, and picked up as much trash as we could.

As our trash bags became heavier and the day grew brighter, we found ourselves laughing and enjoying the time together. We felt the Grove growing closer, as it always has and will during our service. We are a Grove that walks in service. Halfway through the cleanup, we saw a blue heron standing in the waters of the Scioto River. We stopped for a moment to watch him, and then continued on our way, feeling more blessed and more certain that we had made the right choice in this stretch of trail. While there were areas that we simply did not have the ability to clean thoroughly, we made a promise to return with more help in order to clean some of these areas in particular. Each of us removed about 45 lbs. of trash from the trail and the banks of the Scioto.



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Later that night, the Grove participated in an interfaith service for World AIDS Day, with our Senior Druid, Seamus, and our Grove Scribe, Shawneen, reading names at a candlelight vigil in the Topiary Gardens downtown, and I participated in the service itself, issuing a call to community and awareness to people of all faiths.

ADF Groves have never been only about public worship. It may be our primary focus, as offering public sacrifice to the Kindreds will always come first; but it is *vital* that our Groves remain part of the community, and that we be there when the Folk need us most. Our service and our outreach are the fruits that each Grove must produce in order to survive. When we are out in the community, tasting of these fruits, it is then that we know just how sweet they are. And when we embraced each other as a Grove and as friends, those fruits tasted sweet indeed.

May we grow in our service, and may we serve the Kindreds when we serve each other.

Ancestor Prayer

When you were born,
The earth became your body,
The stone became your bone,
The sea became your blood,
The sun became your eye,
The moon became your mind,
The wind became your breath.

When you passed to the Otherworld,
Your breath became the wind,
Your mind became the moon,
Your eye became the sun,
Your blood became the sea,
Your bone became the stone,
Your body became the earth.

When we were born, you did the same for us:
You called forth the earth and rocks;
The sea arose and the sun descended;
The moon shone down and the winds sang.
For those who come after, we shall do as you did for us
When we are gone, we shall do as you did before.

Ancestors, we honor you

Rev. Michael J. Dangler



Running with Trees PT 2 BY Shawneen

. In this "chapter" of Running With Trees, we begin the discussion of the specific members of our ogham forest. We will start with two seasonally significant species, the Oak and the Holly.

Duir, the Oak: The ogham for this tree is two strokes to the left of the vertical stem line. Commonly interpreted as a few of strength, of justice and as a symbol of gateway moments. Many of these are also characteristics of the tree which represents this ogham.



A stout strong wood, oak was considered the structural steel of the middle ages. Court room paneling and doors are also traditionally made of this wood.

Here in Ohio, the oaks most commonly found are the Northern red oak, *Quercus rubra* and the pin oak, *Quercus palustris*. Both members of the "red oak family". Members of this broad class have leaves with lobes ending in sharp points. The Northern red oak has a broader more rounded overall shape when compared to the more vertical pin oak. The pin oak has lower branches that point downward, mid branches that are nearly horizontal and upper branches that point upwards. The other broad family of oaks, the white oaks are represented here in Ohio's forests chiefly by the White oak, *Quercus alba* and by the swamp white oak, *Quercus bicolor*. The leaves of the white oak family have lobes that are rounded at their tips. The White oak is the "Mighty Oak" of our Ohio forests. The bark on these two representatives tend to be coarser and more stringy as compared to the reds.

Tinne, the Holly: The ogham for this tree is three strokes to the left of the vertical stem line. Commonly interpreted as a few of balance, the union of opposites and of moving through conflict . It is thought that axles of chariots were made of holly as were spear shafts. Its lustrous white wood is often used in inlays. In America, *Ilex opaca*. the holly, is a medium-sized upright growing tree. In gardens it is often hybridized with asian species to create a smaller bush-shaped plant.

As mentioned in the last issue, the holly is a dioecious plant, having separate male and female individuals. Both are needed in order for the females to produce their characteristic red berries. A broad leafed evergreen, hollies do best when



protected from full sun in the winter. The hollies that live with me grow quite well on the north side of my home.

The oak is thought to "court the flash" or attract lightning whereas the holly is said to protect against lightning. These two plants represent the two halves of the year. The oak rules the light half of the year from Yule to Summer Solstice and the holly rules the dark half from Summer Solstice to Yule. As such they are symbols of death/rebirth, growth/decline. I find them useful in polarity work in my own life. They remind me to attend to my shadow self, balancing my strengths with my weakness Honoring both at the hinge days of the solstices is a part of my yearly cycle of devotionals. Consider adding or expanding your connections with them in your life this Yuletide. Dawes Arboretum, located just 20 minutes east of Columbus, is a great place to get a sense of both species. A single hillside in the park contains one of the country's best collections of both hollies and oaks.

Triple Blessings



Three Cranes Grove, ADF

A Good Morning with the Waters of Life

By Anna Gail

Summerlands is an ADF festival held in August just outside of Dayton, OH. In the past, 3CG has worked in the kitchen preparing the meals for those weary campers three times a day. It does not always leave much time for enjoying workshops or the evening revelries, but it is a time when the grove comes together and connects. This year was my first Summerlands in general and my first Summerlands with Three Cranes Grove.

There was music playing in the mornings and coffee brewing while we prepared to feed the masses. The coffee was most appreciated by me. Each morning we were up early preparing the food and asking how each other's nights were. Though bleary eyed and exhausted we provided meals for grateful patrons.

Sunday morning came with the realization that Three Cranes did not have to cook. Being able to sleep in and not worry about food prep and quantity were blessings for most of us. The festival was winding down and gear was getting packed up to return to our homes. It was decided that we would make a trip to a local spring to connect once more with the Earth Mother and bring back a little of the camaraderie of Summerlands with us for our rituals.

Eleven of us hiked down a steep trail to the spring, including our Vice Arch-Druid Kirk Thomas. Sliding down slippery trails and climbing over large fallen trees we finally gathered around the spring. We each asked for the blessings of the water and dunked our hands while offering private prayers. The water was cool and refreshing and one could feel the wonderful energy radiating from that life-giving liquid. We offered up a collective prayer, took a jug of the water for home and posed for pictures.

As we began the slow climb back up the hill we took with us the sure knowledge that each of us had been blessed; not only by the waters, but by the company of those that were present.

Summerlands ended as all good times must but the memories we made, the blessings we were given and the shared spirituality are still with me and I hope with all those in Three Cranes.



Crane Swag



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Three Cranes Grove, ADF

Who is Epona?

Epona is the only Gallo-Celtic goddess, which made her way into the Roman empire-pantheon, where she was highly worshipped - especially as the Protectoress of horses and foals. Almost every stable had a shrine for her and she was very famous in the Roman cavalry. Historians count more than 343 inscriptions worshipping her. Epona is



primarily a goddess of Western Europe, with only a single representation on the north coast of Africa that is known of, and none in the Near East.

Epona is the Protectoress of horses, animals, riders and stables; and her symbols include horses (particularly mares and foals), keys, apples, roses, and Cornucopias. Her feast day was held Dec 18th in Ancient Rome. Her modern aspects include sovereignty, fertility, dreams, peace, and the protector of women.

- Carmen

Next High Day: Imbolc (January 27th)

Neo-Pagan Name: Imbolc ~ usually celebrated around February 1st.

Gaulish Name: Ogranijā

Imbolc is a time of the renewal of the earth, where the bounty of the world returns in full. The animals begin to give birth, the first shoots may begin to appear through the melting snow and ice, and though winter is still holding her grip, the world is obviously changing. Historically, Imbolc is the time when the sheep begin to lactate, a sure sign that the winter will come to an end.