

Imbolc, 2005



EarthTides Pagan Network News



Living in Maine, Celebrating the Earth

Honoring Fire

I write at Imbolc in honor of fire, the unifying and stabilizing element at the center of all things. Across time and space, fire has always been associated with life, deriving no doubt from the material relationship between body heat and being alive. It is but a short conceptual distance, then, to link fire to spiritual energy and the mystery of life itself.

Alchemists understood fire as the mystical seed which is reproduced in each successive life – fire within fire within fire.

They wrote of two kinds of fire: earth fire and air fire. Earth fire is eroticism, animal passion, and physical energy. It animates the body, creates new life, and propels us in our work. Air fire is mysticism, purification, and spiritual energy. It illuminates the soul, grows the spirit, and inspires us in our practice. Vesta, the Hearth Goddess, has earth fire as her emblem – the flame at the center that warms and illuminates. Mercury/Hermes claims air fire as his emblem – the flame that enlightens and inspires.

Although fire is unifying and stabilizing, it is not constant and stable in itself. Instead, fire devours all created things and returns them to their original unity with the essential heart of the Universe.

Paracelsus, the 16th century chemical philosopher, speculated on the parallel between fire and life, showing that both must feed on other lives in order to keep alive. Through his scientific studies, he articulated the wisdom of ancient understanding about the duality of fire and life. In this regard, fire is the primary symbol of transformation and regeneration, personified by the Great Kali, the black-faced fire goddess of India who eternally creates

and devours life. As Kali-Durga, riding atop the lioness, she is all-consuming time, the fire at the center of the Wheel that perpetually turns and has no beginning or end.

At Imbolc, we practice purification, and fire is the ultimate tool for this task. Water merely cleanses the surface, but fire burns away the dross and leaves the essential core. Fire consumes illusion, returning us to the pure state of unity with the Divine. When we pass through fire, we transcend the human condition of alienation from Spirit, and glimpse the heart's home.

Since fire is my element, I often practice fire meditation as a way of grounding before doing Tai Chi Chu'an, yoga, spell work, or ceremony. I close my eyes and breathe deeply, and at each exhalation, I see embers glowing brighter and brighter til they burst into flames. Then I listen for the crackling, sighing sound of rapid conflagration and visualize an enormous bonfire in the night. I imagine myself burning away till all that's left of me is a pure golden feather. Then I start my practice.

Bright Blessings,
Marigold

EPN Annual Meeting

This is an open invitation for all concerned to join us for the Annual Meeting of the EarthTides Pagan Network on Saturday, Feb. 26 from 2—4 pm in Waterville. For directions, and to submit items for the agenda, please call 532-2455 or email us at: griffith@mfx.net

Inside this issue:

From Marigold's Desk	2
In Memorium	2
About the EarthTides Pagan Network	2
The Celtic Cross-Quarter Day of IMBOLC	3
About the EarthTides Pagan Network News	3
Kitchen Witch: Purifying Lemon Pie	4
Invocation to Briget	4
Green Witch: Candle Blessing Oil	5
EarthTides Member in Augusta Art Exhibit	5
Imbolc in Maine	6
Another View on Imbolc	8
Calendar of Events	10
Networking	11

Newsletter Staff:

Editors: Anu Dudley
and Fred Griffith

Contributors:

Marigold,
Leigh Griffith,
Jane Raeburn,
Sig Lonegren,
Phillip Andrew Bernhardt-House

Assistance:

Aree Blackcat
Cassius



From Marigold's Desk:

As you are all aware, *EarthTides* has been going through some challenging months as we have worked to reorganize and put in place a new editorial team. Many thanks to Fred Griffith who has filled in by laying out, and getting out, the newsletter for the past several issues.

We had finally found someone to format the newsletter full time. Unfortunately, she had to back out of the commitment. Luckily, Fred will fill in again while we continue to search for a full-time newsletter formatter.

On the positive side, Karen Gorten and Sharon Emery will be creating a new column, which you will hear about in subsequent issues, and will contribute materials and assist with the details of getting the newsletter into your mailboxes in a timely manner.

We who produce *EarthTides* have two primary goals for the new year. The first is to have issues completed and mailed to you so you receive them at least two weeks before the intended Sabbat. This way, calendar items and articles are still timely and usable. The second is to include more information about, and more contributions from, you, our readers. What issues are engaging your energies? What do you want to hear more about? What particular interest of yours would you like to share with others in Maine's pagan community?

I suppose there is also a third goal, which is to increase the readership of *EarthTides* so it can become a more useful forum for pagan networking and discussion. Consider giving a gift subscription

to somebody who is seeking to get connected. We very much wish to hear from all of you about what you want from this newsletter. Please tell us what you would like to see on these pages. You can email me at anu@umit.maine.edu, or send a note or a submission care of *Earthtides*.

The following is the deadline schedule for the coming year. The deadlines seem mercilessly early, we agree, but are necessary if we are to get *Earthtides* out on time.

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
Ostara	February 7, 2005
Beltane	March 6, 2005
Litha	April 26, 2005
Lughnasad	June 6, 2005
Mabon	July 28, 2005
Samhain	September 5, 2005
Yule	October 27, 2005
Imbolc	December 12, 2005

Bright Blessings,
Marigold

In Memorium

Those of us in the EarthTides Pagan Network share our love and condolences with Cassius, long time member of the Network, for the loss of his mother in January. May you find strength and know you are loved. May she cross the river Styx without incident and rest well in the Plains of Asphodel.

About the EarthTides Pagan Network

The Maine Pagan community is diverse, independent and geographically distant. We worship in groups or alone, but sometimes need contact and a shared forum to express our ideas and concerns for this community.

The Earthtides Pagan Network was established in 1989 as a support resource for Maine Pagans. All solitaries and groups are welcome to join.

A subscription to this newsletter is available for a suggested donation of \$11.00 per year. Single copies may be obtained by sending a \$1.50 donation and a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: EPN, P.O. Box 161, E. Winthrop, ME 04343.

E-mail: epn@maine.rr.com

**Submission deadline for the Ostara
newsletter is: February 7, 2005.**



The Celtic Cross-Quarter Day of IMBOLC

The Sun marks the year at four clear points called the Quarter Days - the Winter Solstice (longest night), Spring Equinox (equal night and day), Summer Solstice (longest day), and Autumnal Equinox (once again, equal day and night). The Celts divided the year in to eight by inserting the four Cross Quarter Days at roughly November 1st (Samhain), February 1st (Imbolc), May 1st (Beltane) and August 1st (Lughnasad). These points are roughly half the number of days between the Solstices and the Equinoxes.

Samhain (Halloween/All Saints Day) is the end and beginning of the Celtic year. By November 1st, the harvest is in and the seeds of the winter crops are planted. These seeds will lay dormant until Imbolc, called Candlemas by the Church, at the beginning of February when (in the British Isles) they move by themselves for the first time. The seed now has demonstrated that it is a living entity on its own. By Beltane, May Day, the plants are up and fertility is of extreme importance. Then at August 1st there is Lughnasad, Lammas in the Christian calendar, when the harvest begins. All the crops should be in by Samhain (pronounced "Sowan") when the cycle begins once again.

If the Quarter Days start a season on the cycle (Winter Solstice starts winter, Spring Equinox starts spring, etc.), the Cross Quarter Days mark the high point of each season. For example, here in Vermont, the old-timers say that you should have half your hay and half your wood by Candlemas (Imbolc). We also have our coldest nights (40 to 45 degrees below zero) just before the first of February. High Winter.

As it is the February Cross Quarter Day that



is coming up, I would like to address the rest of this article to Imbolc. This day is sacred to the Celtic fire-Goddess Brighde, "the Bright One" also known as Bridget, Brigid, and Bride. Other cognates are Brigantia and Britain. Bride was a Sun Goddess who presides over the hearth and smithy, over the inspiration and skill of sacred art and craft, and over the world of crops, livestock, and nature. In particular she is important to sheep who (on the British Isles) begin to lamb at this time of year. The starting of their lactation is a sign that Imbolc is near. Milk has always been important to Bridget. You can see her above the south western door of the tower on Glastonbury Tor. She is milking a cow.

Another "holiday" around the time of Imbolc is Groundhog's Day. While perhaps it might not seem that way on the surface, there's something very ancient about this one - especially because it has to do with the Sun and whether it shines or not, and whether the groundhog sees its shadow.

In the context of sacred space, this is very interesting. There are shadow paths that have been found in Britain where, due to the gently downward curvature of the land, a single standing stone casts a shadow that is half a mile long! Shadows and light play an important role in any sacred space, and the lowly American groundhog has become the recipient of a much older, I suspect European, tradition.

Another connection between Groundhog Day and Imbolc has to do with weather prediction aspect of this day in early February.

(Continued on page 7)

About the EarthTides Pagan Network News

This newsletter comes out eight times a year, around the Sabbats. Literary, poetic and artistic contributions are welcome, as are opinion pieces. Please keep submissions to no more than two pages, double-spaced. Please submit on disk or e-mail to anu_dudley@umit.maine.edu

Subscribers' names, addresses and other personal information are kept confidential except to other network members. EPN will aid in establishing contact between individuals, but accepts no legal responsibility

for the results.

All signed articles and artwork are the property of their creators, and ads are the property of our advertisers; these may not be used elsewhere without permission.

All other content is copyright 2005 EarthTides Pagan Network, all rights reserved. The EarthTides Pagan Network News and the EarthTides name and "Moon-over-Maine" logo are copyright 2005 EarthTides Pagan Network, and may not be used without written permission of the EPN Council.



Kitchen Witch: Purifying Lemon Pie

What foods better purify magically than our friends from the citrus family! Grapefruits, lemons, and oranges are all equally powerful in purification rituals. At this sabbat dedicated to purification, we can partake during ceremony by eating grapefruit halves or orange sections, or drinking the juice of half a lemon squeezed into a glass of water. Anything with lemon in it is very purifying. After ceremony, I like to indulge in lemon meringue pie. Here is my grandmother's recipe. It's the real thing, the kind that gives you that little shiver when you eat it!



1. Prepare and cool a nine inch baked pie shell.
2. Mix in a double boiler top
 - 4 T. cornstarch
 - 4 T. flour
 - 1/2 tsp. salt
 - 1 1/2 cups sugar
3. Add 1 1/2 cups boiling water; cook and stir over direct heat until mixture boils (use a wire whip for this step). Then set over hot water in a double boiler pan, cover and cook 20 minutes on medium heat (use a wooden spoon for this part).
4. Add, using wire whip to blend it,
 - 1 T. butter
 - zest of one lemon (finely grated yellow skin)
 - juice of one lemon
 - 4 egg yolks, slightly beaten
5. Cook and stir with wooden spoon until thick. Remove from heat and cool.
6. Make meringue using 4 egg whites; beat whites with egg beater until soft peaks form when beater is lifted out. Gradually beat in
 - 1/4 cup sugar

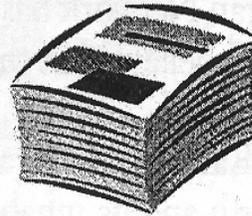
1 tsp. vanilla
few grains of salt

7. When filling is cool, pile into pie shell. Spoon meringue on top, spreading well so it touches the crust all around, otherwise it will shrink when baked.
8. Bake at 425° until delicately browned – about 5 minutes.

Pure and bright blessings, Marigold

Bradford Copy Center

Color copies, bookbinding, blueprints, UPS shipping, more...



(207) 641-COPY (2679)

Toll free: 1-877-267-2679

Fax: (207) 641-2FAX (2329)

bradford@celticweb.com

Open 8-5 M-F, 9-12 Sat

Invocation of Brigid

(Light white candle)

Goddess of Healing,

Enter into my body

Enter into my life.

Help me to shed that which has held me back

Help me to use my strength for the good of all.

(Light red candle)

Goddess of Smithcraft,

Temper me in thy forge.

Help me to use the resources of thy land

With wisdom and honor, for the good of all.

(Light yellow candle)

Goddess of Poetry,

Bless my creativity.

Help me to cast aside fear and constriction

Help me to be as thy poets of old,

A speaker of what is and is not.

Help me to bring forth beauty and truth.

From: Celtic Wicca by Jane Raeburn



Green Witch: Candle Blessing Oil

The White Sabbat of Imbolc is the time I like to bless a supply of candles for the coming year. Many people put in a store of different colored candles for various ceremonies. I prefer plain beeswax tapers and simply tie colored ribbons around the bases to signify the intent of the event. But I do like to prepare a special herbal blessing oil and purify and anoint the candles for the coming Sabbats and Esbats.

If your herbal tools have not already been cleansed and dedicated, do so before preparing any magical oil. My preferred tools include a marble mortar and pestle for grinding herbs, a small round wooden cutting board just for magical herb preparation, and a small kitchen knife for cutting and chopping (I wish I could find one with a white handle – I'm still looking!). Save small, wide-mouth glass jars with tight-fitting lids. Now you are ready to begin.

Blessing Oil

1 tsp. lavender	2 drops juniper berry oil
1/2 tsp. rosemary	2 drops rose oil
1 tsp. St. Johnswort	2 drops balsam of Peru oil
1/4 c. base oil	3 drops vetiver oil

Thoroughly grind herbs to a fine powder. (If you are making this in the summer from fresh herbs, just grind to a smooth paste.) Slowly add the essential oils drop by drop as you continue to grind. When well mixed, slowly add the base oil (such as olive, safflower, sunflower, or almond), stirring with the handle of a wooden spoon to thoroughly blend it into the paste. Pour into the jar, cover tightly, and store in a cool, dark place. It is ready to be consecrated and used as soon as it is made.

Bright Blessings,
Marigold

EarthTides Member in Augusta Art Exhibit



Tranquil Haven, © Copyright Leigh C. Griffith, 2004

Leigh Griffith, an EarthTides founder and Fiber Artist, has been selected as one of eleven artists chosen to participate in the About Maine Exhibit - The County: Aroostook Communities. This exhibit, sponsored by the Maine Arts Commission, is now set up and will be open through February 25th.

Leigh has three art quilts on display. "The Green Man is Watching Us" is in the Legislative Galleries, "Tranquil Haven" (shown here) is in the reception area, and "July in a Barrel" is in the Governor's State House Gallery Communications Office.

Leigh will join the other artists and Gov. John Baldacci at an artist's reception on Tuesday, Feb. 8 from 2:00 to 3:30 at the Blaine House.



Imbolc in Maine

At Imbolc, we are halfway between the Winter Solstice and the Spring Equinox, three months since Samhain. Though still cold, the days are brighter and the sun shines longer.

Called Imbolc, Candlemas, Groundhog Day and others, many cultures around the world have recognized the significance of this midpoint. The Chinese celebrate their New Year, the origin of which is too old to be traced, as the beginning of Spring. The Saxons viewed this juncture as a pivotal time of the year. Would it remain cold and bleak, or would the sun start warming the Earth?

English and German folklore have similar folk sayings stating that if the day is fair, the Winter will continue, but if it is stormy, Spring is not far away. German immigrants to this country brought their saying, "When the bear sees his shadow at Candlemas, he will crawl back into his hole for another six weeks". The bear was eventually replaced by the groundhog.

Scandinavian countries celebrate the feast of St. Brigid with young women wearing crowns of candles. St. Brigid was the daughter of a Celtic chieftain who converted to Christianity in the fifth century and was canonized in 1391. Over time, she has accumulated the attributes of the earlier Pagan Goddess, Brigid or Bride.

Brigid (Bride) is the radiant triple muse of smithcraft, poetry and healing. I think of her as the "Career Goddess" because just about any career you can think of can fit under one of those headings. Not only that, but it was a traditional time for spiritual initiations and initiating new endeavors (or careers).

For the Celts, February 2nd was celebrated as Imbolc, the festival of the ancient fire Goddess Brigid or Bride. Imbolc, which literally means, "in the belly", signifies the end of the dark, hungry days of winter. It represents the fetal stirrings of Spring, when you know warm weather is coming, but you can't feel it yet!

Some of us can relate to that time of pregnancy when the body of the mother doesn't look any different to family and friends, but the mother-to-be feels all kinds of wiggles, squirming and life "quickenings" deep within. Any

woman who has carried a child knows exactly what I'm describing in those weeks when "something" is going on, but it will be a while before it will look like much to those around her.

Isn't that exactly what's happening outside right now? It looks like winter, it feels like winter, it smells like winter, but under the snow banks and tree bark, a lot is starting to happen. Soon streams, brooks and maple sap will gurgle, melting and thawing in the afternoon. Roads heave and buckle, daylight lingers a bit longer, and branches show signs of budding. It is a time to celebrate the potential heat of a new growing season.

For me, Imbolc is a fire festival, with the emphasis on light rather than heat and traditionally the time to light a purifying "new fire" in every stove and hearth. The first items to go into this fire were all the boughs and branches used to decorate for the Yule season. To keep these decorations beyond this time was considered unlucky. (Possibly in part, because of the fire hazard of keeping tinder dry decorations in a home that was warmed and lit by open flame)!

We spoke earlier how the historic St. Bridget personified much that the Goddess Brigid represented. One of the sacred animals of the Goddess was the cow. If you drive through the town of Vassalboro, look for the statue of St. Bridget outside the church bearing her name. Lying at her feet is her sacred cow! I think that it's a hoot that this unadulterated Pagan symbol is still honored here in Maine.

Leigh Griffith





Apple Valley Books
 Rita Moran and Eric Robbins, prop.
 Branwen Robbins, junior partner

(207) 377-3967
 121 Main Street
 Winthrop, ME 04364

**New and Used Books • Gift Items
 Special Orders Discounts!**
 E-mail: orders@applevalleybooks.com
www.applevalleybooks.com

Locally owned and operated!



The Celtic Cross-Quarter Day of IMBOLC

(Continued from page 3)

The major role this simple herbivore plays is to give us the answer to a most important question in northern climes:

"Will winter end soon or will it drag on?"

Just as Christianity divides God into three - Father, Son, and Holy Ghost - Goddess cultures many times divided her in to three as well - Virgin, Mother, and Hag /Crone/ Wise Woman. Imbolc celebrates Goddess in Her manifestation as the Virgin Bride. There is a lovely Irish prayer to Saint Bridget (the Christianized version of Brighde) that I would like to share with you:

INVOCATION TO SAINT BRIDE

Dear Saint Bridget of the Kine
Bless these little fields of mine,
The pastures and the shady trees,
Bless the butter and the cheese,

Bless the cows with coats of silk
And the brimming pails of milk,
Bless the hedgerows, and I pray
Bless the seed beneath the clay,
Bless the hay and bless the grass,
Bless the seasons as they pass,
And heaven's blessings will prevail,
Brigid - Mary of the Gael.

While she has been turned in to a saint and made analogous to the Virgin Mary, in this prayer, Bridget also remains the Goddess of Imbolc - of the kine (cattle) and of the seed that moves for the first time by itself "beneath the clay."

What seeds that have been planted in you, that have been laying asleep through the winter, have just moved on their own in your life? Can you sense an impending something in your life? Is there something that is yet to manifest above ground into physical reality, yet it lies there just sprouting under the dark covering blanket of Earth in side you? How can you nurture this seedling in the coming days and months?

Imbolc is the time to ask these questions. This is especially powerful when it is done in some kind of ceremony. You can do this alone or with friends. You might begin by creating a sacred/safe space by marking the Four Directions, making a circle on the floor, burning sage, or any other way of demarking the space you plan to work within. As Imbolc is sacred to Bridget, you will want to call Her into your space in some way. She will come to you if you call Her.

(I was looking for the little book that had the "Invocation to Saint Bride" in it. I couldn't find it, and as I have piles

of books all around, I spent a lot of time rummaging through this pile and that. I couldn't find it, so I went back to writing this article. Then after a while I looked again. I still couldn't find it. Yet I knew it would go well in this article. In desperation I said out loud, "Bridget, help me find that book." My hand was on it within five seconds. Call Her, She'll come to you.)

In any event, at Imbolc, after invoking Bridget and any other deities of choice that you might want to have with you, spend some time thinking about the seed (or seeds) that are quickening within you.

While the four Cross Quarter Days were know as Fire Festivals by the Celts, as there were four of them, I suspect that each one of them was also ruled by one of the four elements. For me, Imbolc is ruled by Water. It is a time to look in to the future. February, just before spring is the time of year that many need to take a deep breath and look

forward to the year ahead. You might want to spend some time planning how you will protect and nurture the new part of you that is now quickening inside you.

Each of the four elements can be used for scrying. Water speaks of the future. Fill a small bowl with water. Put it on a table, and in a darkened room look at the surface of the water. Perhaps a candle would be use-

ful to provide some reflection. Think about the seed quickening inside you. Unfocus your eyes as you gaze into the bowl. (I usually try to look at the surface of the water from a 45 degree angle.) Don't look for, or at, anything. You won't "see" it with your physical eyes anyway. When something comes, remain relaxed. Maybe you'll think you saw something, maybe that triggers something aural through your ears. Pay attention. Don't jump up and shout, "Far out!" Stay calm and allow more specifics to come into your consciousness. Maybe you will "see" only one image, maybe you'll see and hear a whole movie. Maybe it will come as a feeling.

After your time of scrying the future in water, spend some time thinking about the seed, the image/movie you "saw", and the future. What associations can you make between them? How do they all fit together? Do you have a better sense of what the year will be like?

When you have worked all of that through, and any friends who might be there with you have shared what

(Continued on page 9)





Another View on Imbolc

The holiday of Imbolc (also called Oimele) is known and celebrated in Ireland and by many Celtic neo-pagans, yet the true meaning of it has been lost and forgotten, and the celebrations which remain leave a great deal to be desired. An examination of some of these traditions, followed by a new interpretation, will be found herein.

Imbolc is celebrated on February 1 or 2 (officially, the night of the 1st and day of the 2nd, as the Irish day was reckoned to begin with sundown) as one of the four important quarter-days of the year (the others being Beltaine on May 1, Lughnasad on August 1, and Samain on November 1), skewed off the solar holidays of the solstices and equinoxes by roughly forty days.

These holidays are certainly Celtic in origin, with the indigenous Irish megalithic monuments of the Neolithic and Bronze Ages generally having a solstice or equinoctial orientation, with a few exceptions in Southwestern Ireland: some of the stone circles have an alignment to the quarter of the year from November to February. The Celtic quarter-days were agricultural in nature, and Imbolc or Oimele is often analyzed linguistically to mean “ewe’s milk,” the beginning of Spring and the re-introduction of fertility to the land.

Much of the festivity of Imbolc is tied up with the figure of Brigid, both an Irish Goddess and Christian Saint (“St. Mary of the Gael,” sometime said to be the wet-nurse of Jesus), whose day, the Féile Bríd, is celebrated in Ireland on February 1-2, and has also become Candlemas in the universal Christian calendar (the holiday in the U.S., Groundhog Day, on February 2 has a similar theme of anticipating the return of Spring). The day is still celebrated with dances and music at a ceilidh in Ireland, with costumes of cornhusks and straw, mummings and observances (sometimes involving cross-dressed “biddy-boys”), and the “Brigid’s bratt,” the latter being the Old Irish word for “mantle”—a piece of cloth is left outside, and if it increases in size (presumably from collected moisture), it means good luck for the year.

The goddess Brigit was a triplicity of goddesses, said to be daughters of the Dagda, who presided over smithcraft, healing, and poetry according to Sanas Cormaic (Cormac’s Glossary). By this description, someone like Brigit or the tutelary goddess of the springs at Bath in England, Sulis-Minerva, is probably the “Gaulish Minerva” reported by Julius Caesar, a goddess who “teaches the elements of skill.” In the tale Cath Maige Tuired, the half-Fomor half-Túatha Dé Bres (a leader of

the Fomoiri in the battle) is married to the Túatha Dé woman Bríg, and when their son Ruadán is killed by his uncle Goibniu the smith, Bríg mourns, and is said to be thus the inventor of “weeping and shrieking in Ireland,” in effect the first keening-woman, a regular fixture at Irish funerals and wakes (often opposed by the Church) until recently.

But much in the lives of Brigid the saint (the earliest hagiographies in Ireland are of Brigid, from the early seventh century) also point toward her previous incarnations as a goddess. The eternal flame of Brigid burned in her abbey at Kildare (Cill Dara, “Church of Oak”) and only female virgins could come into its enclosure, a wonder that remained and fascinated for centuries, as evidenced by many Mirabilia texts from the later medieval period (in this regard, there was a similarity to the Vestal Virgins of Vesta/the Greek Hestia). She was said to have had a miraculous and marginal birth, and many signs involving visions of fire accompanied her early life. She was invested with the power of a bishop accidentally, but wielded this power for the rest of her life. She became intimate friends with one of her nuns, Darlugdach (“daughter of Lug”), and some interpreters have seen some homoerotic elements in her relationship with her disciple.

Folklorists have seen in Brigid a reflex of a northern European bear-goddess, like the Continental Celtic Artio (related linguistically to the Greek Artemis, and therefore the more well-known Roman Diana, the virgin huntress). In Ireland, a number of figures who would have been bears elsewhere become wolves, since bears have been extinct in Ireland since the Mesolithic—for example, Cormac Mac Airt’s surname means “son of bear,” yet there are no bears in his life, but he was in his infancy taken care of by a she-wolf, and kept a pack of wolves hostage in his later reign as High King of Tara to insure the good conduct of the world’s natural forces. Brigid performs a miracle in her life in which a wolf shepherds some sheep without harming them at her command (one of the saints deriving from Lug was said to have performed a mass for wolves as well; in much later and very different contexts, St. Francis was said to have tamed the wolf at Gubbio). Like Diana in later traditions, it might be possible that Brigid is a werewolf-goddess as well.

There is an odd Gaulish inscription to the Romano-Celtic god Mars-Cicollos, who is elsewhere unattested. The name “Cicollos” appears to mean “great-breasted”; an Irish reflex of this linguistic root appears in the toponym

(Continued on page 9)



Another View on Imbolc

(Continued from page 8)

for the two mountains in Kerry known as the “Cích Anann,” the Paps of Anu. Why would the belipotent Mars be said to have big breasts? There is a direct statement in the autobiographical Confessio of St. Patrick (an amazing and lucky survival indeed) that when he escaped slavery in Ireland and met up with some young warriors who aided him in leaving the country, that he “refused to suck their breasts (sugere mammellas).”

The pre-Christian Irish had youthful warbands that were highly identified with wolves and werewolves (Indo-European equivalents to the Germanic berserkirs and their bear connections). In the story of Romulus and Remus, the twins are the sons by a mortal woman of the god Mars; in their threatened youth, a female wolf (lupa—meaning female wolf, but also unruly woman or bitch) is sent by Mars to suckle them.

What this breast-sucking probably indicates is the act of coming under the protection and care of the warriors, and in effect being adopted into the warband, of whom a war-god or goddess is effectively the “mother.” It is an initiatory act, beyond any possible homoeroticism in this activity (it is interesting to note that despite the lack of homoerotic or gender-variant activity of Mars or Ares in classical myth, the Campus Martius in Rome was a well-known and popular cruising ground). Perhaps Mars the Big-Breasted is Mars the Wolf-Mother of the youthful warbands.

Which returns us to Imbolc. While “ewe’s milk” is possible as the etymology of the term, the word can be analyzed along other lines. The element “imb-“ means “butter” by the time of the Old Irish period, but probably referred to any dairy produce or milk products in the Common Celtic phase of the language in the past. “Olc” still means, by the Old Irish period, “wolf.” As a result, Imbolc might mean “milk-wolf.”

The Roman festival of the Lupercalia was celebrated on February 15, and to an extent is a memorial of the suckling of Romulus and Remus by the she-wolf in a cave on the Capitoline Hill, enacted by a sacrifice of a goat (ewes being involved in the Irish holiday) and a wolf or dog, and a libation of milk, followed by ritual laughter and a race, and the scourging of women in public with goat-skin thongs to promote fertility. (The Luperci priests were always youthful, and it is possible that Antinous might have been involved in this in some way while he was alive; in Naples, the equites Sufenas was a Luperci and a priest of Antinous, who was honored in a confraternity along with Eunostos, a hero who had a grove dedicated to him in which females were not allowed—an interesting counterpoint to the sanctuary of Brigit in Kildare, where males were not allowed.)

We find in Irish myth that the exploits of Cú Chulainn are often situated temporally in the dark quarter of the year, with events in the Táin and Tochmarc Emire involving sleeplessness from Samain to Imbolc. His scourging by the women Fand and Lí Bán in Serglige Con Culainn, though it takes place at Samain and the genders are reversed between the floggers and the flogged in comparison to the Lupercalia, is also a further relevant comparandum.

The dark quarter of the year is often the time in Irish stories of great battles—both the Táin and Cath Maige Tuired begin at Samain. Imbolc as a festival having to do with war and warriors—whether fertility plays into it or not—makes perfect sense as a result, since it is the end of this period, and may in fact reflect at a far distance the common origins of itself and its Indo-European sister-festival of the Lupercalia.

by Phillip Andrew Bernhardt-House
Courtesy of: www.liminalityland.com/imbolc.htm

The Celtic Cross-Quarter Day of IMBOLC

(Continued from page 7)

they have "seen," it is time to thank Bridget for being with you, and to release her. Finally, open the space you have worked in.

This is only one, very simple way that you can celebrate Imbolc. I have friends in Wales with whom I spent the whole day and night working on the themes of Bridget and Imbolc. They created a wonderful pattern of events. The women went to the holy well at Carreg Cennen, a

natural tunnel deep beneath an ancient Welsh Castle. We men gathered wood for the evening fire and spoke of Imbolc in many different ways. It culminated with a joyous gathering in the evening in a warm and cozy small building out in the woods where we sang songs and told more stories about this ancient Celtic Goddess. Bridget was there with us at that time of quickening.

Sig Lonegren

Courtesy of: www.geomancy.org/quarter&cross/imbolc.html



Calendar of Events

NOTE: If you'd like your event included in our calendar of events, please send us an e-mail, with Calendar Listings as the subject, to grove@ctel.net before the deadline for the issue in which you'd like it listed. Each issue of the newsletter lists the next deadline on the front page.

If you would like an extra copy of this calendar to post on a public bulletin board, please feel free to photocopy it freely. If you know a business in your area which would like to post one, please send the information to the above e-mail address and we'll add it to the mailing list.

As a service to the Pagan community, we seek to list as many events as possible that would be of interest to Maine Pagans. You need not be a member of EPN, or even a subscriber to this newsletter, to list an event here. All we ask is that events be non-profit -- that is, that any fees for participating not exceed the reasonable cost of putting on the event -- and submitted to us by e-mail or post by the publication deadline. (Those planning for-profit events are welcome to avail themselves of our very affordable advertising opportunities.)

We make no claim as to the value or safety of any of these events, and caution our readers to rely on their own best judgment when assessing any situation, particularly those involving strangers. That said, we also encourage you to participate in as wide a spectrum of the Pagan community as you can, both for your own enjoyment and because our community needs your positive energy and good fellowship.

FEBRUARY

5 Saturday

Open Imbolc Ritual, Immanent Grove, Readfield, 7 p.m.
For further information, please contact
bdraco@verizon.net.

Open Imbolc Ritual, Forest Sanctuary, Jay. For further information, contact
forestsanctuary@yahoo.com

12 Saturday

Imbolc Celebration/Coffee Talk, Karnan House, 206 Court St in Portsmouth— Coffee Talk/potluck 2-6, Ritual 6-9 contact: nhpagans@numachi.com

26 Saturday

EPN ANNUAL MEETING in Waterville 2—4 pm
For information: 532-2455 or griffith@mf.net

Potluck, Forest Sanctuary, Jay. For further information, Contact forestsanctuary@yahoo.com

MARCH

19 Saturday

Open Eostar Ritual, West Gardiner, Saturday, March 19th, 7 p.m.,
Contact birchwood@ffmaine.com

Open Spring Equinox Ritual, Forest Sanctuary, Jay. For further information, contact forestsanctuary@yahoo.com

20 Sunday

Silver Cauldron Oestara, Saco. Details
oldelucy@maine.rr.com

APRIL

16 Saturday

Potluck, Forest Sanctuary, Jay. For further information, Contact forestsanctuary@yahoo.com

MAY

1 Sunday

Beltane on the Beach, Popham Beach. Details to follow, but mark your calendar now!
Contact: griffith@mf.net

Sixth Pseudo-annual Torch-race to Honor Pan, Popham Beach. Real race, real award; start training now! Details at: <http://www.ctel.net/~applebooks/torch-race.htm>

MONTHLY EVENTS

Druidry/Pagan Practice and Training, Bar Mills. For further information, contact Kevin at shazthod@sacoriver.net. These are two-hour sessions, held one Sunday afternoon per month, and open to beginners and more advanced practitioners; participants of all Pagan paths are welcome.

Pagan Coffee Klatch, Quilting Bee and Clothing Swap, Gardiner. For further information, contact Jani @ <fritti.cat@verizon.net>.



Networking

The people and groups listed here are mentioned because they have done two things: They have volunteered to serve as points of contact for those seeking Pagan community, and they have signed the EPN Standards, which pledges them to follow a set of basic rules of ethical conduct. Any person or group may be listed here by subscribing to this newsletter and agreeing to those Standards; please contact EPN to arrange such a listing.

EPN has no interest in serving as the "Pagan police," and explicitly supports the autonomy of each person and group in matters of faith, belief and worship. The Maine Pagan community encompasses a wide variety of people and practices, and seekers are cautioned that any person or activity that makes you uncomfortable is probably wrong for you.

Groups and individuals who seek networking opportunities but are reluctant to sign the Standards are encouraged to take advantage of our advertising columns.

> together to share their work and honor the Deities who inspire them.

AUGUSTA AREA

Bill and Johanna Chellis. Pantheists working with the circle, wheel and labyrinth. 685-3860

Immanent Grove. A fellowship of practicing Pagans of all persuasions. Members pursue their own personal relationships with the Gods. We're interested in corresponding with experienced Pagans who would like to work with us. Harper and Arwen, Immanent Grove, Box 2328 Middle Road, Sidney, ME 04330

OXFORD HILLS AREA

Khyrohn Ni Mara. Eclectic Wiccan focusing on healing through herbs and drumming. RR1 Box 2606, N. Waterford, ME 04267. 583-4215.

PORTLAND/YORK COUNTY

Temple of Brigantia. Wiccan group honoring the Goddesses and Gods of Britain and Rome. Offering open Full Moon rituals and accepting selected candidates for apprenticeship. Jane/Cassius, 646-6634 or temple@janeraeburn.com

Circle of the Silver Cauldron, Atlantic. Eclectic Wiccan coven emphasizing creativity and self-development. Great Day celebrations open to the community. Thea or Harry, 282-1491 or oldewtch@maine.rr.com

SPECIAL INTERESTS

Deaf Pagans. I would love to meet Deaf adults who are Pagan and other Pagan parents of Deaf children. Ede, 353-6202 (V/TTY) or ede@clinic.net

PanCraft. Pagan artists, musicians and others beloved of the Muses get together to share their work and honor the Deities who inspire them. Harper and Arwen, Box 2328 Middle Road, Sidney, ME 04330

ONLINE RESOURCES

EPN website <http://www.earthtides.org>

Maine Pagan Resource Page,

<http://www.janeraeburn.com/maine>

Maine Pagan Clergy Association website,

<http://www.mainepaganclergy.org>

Maine Pagan Mailing List, to join send blank e-mail to mepagan-subscribe@egroups.com

EPN Mailing List (open to newsletter subscribers only), to join send blank e-mail to:

earthtides-subscribe@egroups.com

Maine Pagan Politics List, to join send blank e-mail to meppolitics-subscribe@egroups.com

BE A PART OF EPN

Stay connected with the community! Annual subscription is \$11.00 for 8 issues of this newsletter.

NAME: _____

ZIP CODE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____

This is a (check one):

New membership

Renewal

STATE: _____

Mail to: EPN, P.O. Box 161, E. Winthrop, ME 04343.

EPN
P.O. Box 161
E. Winthrop, ME 04343
www.earthtides.org