

Crane Chatter

February 2008



Imbolc
Edition

Three Cranes Grove, ADF



Around the fire



I sitting here looking at what I wrote about Imbolc for my DP. "It's a time when animals begin lactating as they prepare to give birth to the first litters of the year. The crocus blooms through the snow and the ice begins to crack and give way to small green patches. All around the *first* signs of spring are in the air. It's when we celebrate the festival of lights to encourage the full return of the sun. We gather our tools and prepare to return to the fields. It is time for spring planting and taking inventory of the livestock. The mother earth that has been in incubation now shows signs of her pregnancy. I think that this is the promise of spring and Ostara is the true start of spring with Beltane being the promise fulfilled. It is the time for purification and cleaning. (Spring Cleaning) We have made it through most of the winter. Many women would clean and renew the hearth fire at this time. Imbolc is associated with Brigit. She is Goddess of poetry, music, inspiration, the hearth, the smith etc..."The problem is I'm sitting here watching the snow fall and adding to what appears to be 2 inches already on the ground. Now I know this could change in a day but it don't seem much like the coming of spring to me. I just think we would be better off if we moved the calendar back a month. If we could just start January over again on February 1st, then I think the calendar would match what is happening out side my window.

Next High Day: Ostara (March 23rd)

Neo-Pagan name: Ostara
Gaulish name: Sonnocingos

The spring equinox is a time of planting, where the ground is thawed and new things can be initiated. It's a time to think about plans for the future, and to gather together all the things you will need for the work you will do in the year to come.

In ancient days, the folk would bring their tools to the priests who would then "charm" them. This charming or blessing would keep those tools in good working order throughout the year, and would thus sustain the lives of the folk through the always dangerous time from planting to harvest.

The Grove celebrates by bringing forth the tools we use in our work and blessing them in the "working" portion of our rite. Many also celebrate by taking their first spring hikes in the crisp spring mornings.

Crane Swag



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Then, two weeks ago, I was sitting in meditation at the local Universalist Unitarian church I attend. The meditation was a guided one, where we came to a water source. Mine was a spring, coming out of the ground. Around the spring, the earth had eroded away, leaving a small pool around it. Looking into it, it seemed to be miles deep. I tasted the water, splashed my face with it. It was cool and refreshing. A voice said "You have the wisdom of the well within you." Again, from out of nowhere it seemed, words I needed to hear.

As I pondered this, I felt roots sprout from my feet. My skin hardened and became furrowed. Branches sprouted from my head and I stretched and grew into a medium sized oak tree. Bridhe's voice against said to me "You have the strength of the oak within you."

Strength and wisdom. These are the gifts of Bridhe, and if you seek them, you don't have to look far. You may not even have to look at all. She may give them to you when you least expect it, but when you need it most.



The first thing that comes to mind when I think of Imbolc is that Three Cranes lights the 20 candles for Brigando / Brigit. With each candle we recite a part of a poem. I really love that, one year Mark's young son did it with us and I really liked the fact that we were all there, so many different people, different ages, walking together. Another favorite memory of Imbolc is from a couple of years ago we rented the lodge at Black-lick Park and it was a beautiful snow covered day and outside the lodge there must have been twenty five cardinals. It was quite beautiful. We have also for the last couple of years done a working, where we "charm the plow". We use some of the waters of life and bless our work tools. I also remember the year that Shinning Lakes had to come down with a Brideog and bless our grove's houses as part of a payment for a lost bet between Ohio State and Michigan ...we stopped that bet because it was so unfair. I mean Michigan loses every year so what's the point?

I hope the year is going well for everyone. I know it looks to be a busy year for The Cranes. We have a full schedule of events on the horizon. I know both Mike and I are presenting at Desert Magic in May, we have the national meeting and "National Warrior's Guild Games" also coming in May at Wellspring. Com-fest is right around the corner as is the full schedule of summer festivals. I hope to see everyone out and about and as much as possible. May we walk in service, in balance, and in honor!

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



Running With Trees Part 3

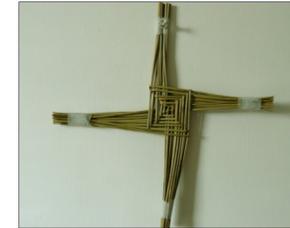
In this "chapter" of Running With Trees, we continue our discussion of the members of our ogham forest. We will move to the first two of the ogham fews, the Birch and the Rowan.



Beith, the Birch: The ogham for this tree is one stroke to the right of the vertical stem line. The name is pronounced as "beh" (silly Old Irish!) It corresponds in our alphabet with the letter "B". Commonly interpreted as a few of beginnings, of making plans and of moving forward in a new direction. In northern

forests, it is one of the vanguard or pioneer species, moving in quickly to establish itself on open landforms such as abandoned farms. Later, other species will take over as the forest moves toward its climax community. Here in Ohio the most common birch species encountered are those of the River Birch (*Betula nigra*) and the Grey or White Birch (*Betula populifolia*) There are some really nice stands of birch down in the Hocking Hills State Forests. Unfortunately an insect known as the bronze birch borer has done quite a number on the Grey Birch populations. It also finds the European or Silver Birch quite tasty. It usually moves in and begins its feeding as the tree begins to slow down in its growth. This is usually just when the tree begins to be full grown and great looking. If you are considering having a birch live with you in your home garden, I would recommend choosing a River Birch as these are much more resistant to the birch borer. Usually multi-stemmed, the River Birch has very attractive peeling, cinnamon colored bark. As its name suggests, it prefers moister soils. In dryer locations/years the River Birch will drop leaves to "trim its sails" as far as its moisture use is concerned. Be sure to check its soil and give its shallow roots some extra moisture in July and August if needed!

Bridhe Meditations By: Tanninia



Two years ago at Imbolc, I sat in front of a blazing fire. Our task was a meditation on Imbolc, but my mind went elsewhere. As my eyes closed, I felt the heat of the fire on my face, and saw the brightness through my eyelids. Our guide was talking, but I didn't hear her. I was entranced by the heat and light.

I saw myself in a large building, open on all sides, to let heat out. It was old, wooden, and rustic, and had a number of benches and tables all around. Close to the center was an anvil. The clanging sound of metal hitting against metal could be heard. It was unbearably hot.

Near the fire, was a woman, with red hair tied back, wearing working clothes and a leather apron. She was holding something into the fire. I could hear the steam. She turned, took the item out of the forge, set it on the anvil, and went back to shaping it. I watched, not knowing what I was doing there, instead of where our journey was supposed to go. She took the item and placed it into the water. I heard the hiss as hot metal hit cool water. She turned and looked at me, and said: "You have the strength of the forge within you."

It dawned on me, that this was Bridhe, my patron, sending me an important message. I use this occasionally as an affirmation whenever I need it.

The Book of Three Cranes Grove

January 27 2008

Every so often, you make a mistake. You think, at first, that you are just transcribing a year worth of rituals. You think that you are merely copying what people wrote down a month ago, six months ago, or a year ago. You think that there are no surprises in the past, that there wasn't anything that you missed.

And then you realize that you're not just copying something down. You aren't just rehashing the past, or repeating someone's words. No, you're reliving the past. There is the first ritual Nick led. Here is where Bonnie first came to a Three Cranes rite. These three ritual omens spoke the same words to us from the Kindreds at three different times. There is a joy described, a sorrow felt, and a smile of pleasure at a ritual well-run or a mistake that's a thousand times more amusing an hour later.

In this year of rituals, we celebrated our fifth anniversary. We began to talk about how we pray with a good fire. We shared laughter and pain, and expressed deep faith in each other. We filled 58 pages with good omens, changes in ritual style, criticisms and compliments. We showed pride in the canned goods and toys we collected, and we wrote blessings to the Grove and the community.

The voices of the People of Three Cranes came through, loud and clear. And the future will have those voices to guide them, a strong vision to follow, and a standard of fellowship to live up to. As I wrote on our fifth anniversary:

"Guided by Garanus,
We make sacrifice to the Kindreds,
We pray with a good fire. Blessings on the People of Three Cranes."

-Rev. Michael J. Dangler



Luis, the Rowan: The ogham for this tree is two strokes to the right of the vertical stem line. The word is pronounced "Lweesh". It corresponds in our alphabet with the letter "L". Rowan is commonly interpreted as a few of magical protection, of magical insight. The alternative name for the Rowan, the mountain ash, refers to its growing at higher elevations. It is actually more related to the rose or apple than it is to the ash. Like the ash, however, it has a compound leaf. This means that each leaf is actually composed of smaller leaflets arranged in this case like the quills of a feather. A true multi-seasonal tree, the Rowan has beautiful white flowers in the late spring followed by wonderful red fruit clusters in the late summer. The small individual fruits, if sliced in half horizontally, contain seeds arranged in a pentagonal shape like the crabapple or the apple. The leaves turn a nice yellow in the fall. Fires made of rowan wood are especially powerful magically. An ancient Scottish charm made of the rowan consists of tying a small equal armed cross of rowan twigs with red thread. These can be hung up in the home or carried on the person or in the car for protection, particularly against enchantment and for safe travel. In my own practice, I find my Rowan wand to be very powerful for directing energies and for space clearing. For me personally, the Rowan is my true ally, and I find I communicate can with her quite effortlessly.

Triple Blessings,

Shawneen

