

# Paths

The Magazine of UCD's

pagan soc

## Introduction

You have probably noticed our stand from afar and are wondering how we came to be in UCD. We are a fairly new society, having only been founded a year ago. Don't be frightened of us. In fact, you may learn that we are not all that different from any of the other people wandering around. Despite rumours flying around that can only be described as *crazy*, that you may have heard, we will only be charging two euros to join, NOTHING more, and this is only if you wish to join.

Many Pagans also share the same hobbies and interests as anyone else, like going to the cinema, or eating pizza with friends, just like you. You may be even shocked to learn that some of your peers regard themselves as Pagan; that's right, we do indeed walk among you. But this is nothing to be afraid of.

The aim of the UCD Pagan Society is to provide somewhere that people who want to learn more about different forms of Paganism in a secure environment with like-minded individuals. There are no doctrines or "right" or "wrong" beliefs within Paganism, as Paganism itself is merely a broad definition of quite a number of individual belief systems, rather than one specific religion.

Most of the negative reactions to alternative forms of belief are due to lack of understanding. Some of my own friends with reacted with horror when they learned that I was involved in the UCD Pagan Society, only to ask some moments later what Paganism actually is, proving my point. If you find that you want to learn more, the best I advice I can give is to cast your assumptions aside and approach us with an open mind.

### **A word from the Auditor**

So here we are. We've survived our first year, and here we are again. We've got plenty of lollipops to tempt your souls, plenty of fruit, and an official Pagan sock!

You may notice a theme to this issue of Paths: besides trying to justify our existence as pagans, I feel we have a healthy sense of humour and irreverence running through not only through this publication but our posters and our meetings. To be perfectly honest, I don't think we can survive without it, as a society or just in general.

My relationship with my spirituality is a serious thing, but it doesn't mean that I can't have fun with it. I can play on the stereotypes of a pagan. Do I bite? Only if you ask nicely. Do I sacrifice and eat animals? Well, I get a butcher to do the sacrificing, as he's much better at it than I am, but I'd certainly eat them.

As a society we have played on the idea of running this society to harvest souls, and also on the idea that so many people running around the Freshers' tent sign over their student number and a few Euro for little more than a lollipop and a membership card. And why not? All it shows is that we have a sense of humour, and that we're poking fun at misconceptions and stereotypes of pagans. If we can't do that, it'd be no fun.

So, why do we seem to promote this emphasis on self-mockery and fun? I guess it's because an open mind is needed in a society like this, and I've found that quite frequently the ability to laugh at yourself, and not to take yourself so seriously, is a sign of an open mind. If you have an open mind, then you're more likely to respect other people's beliefs and backgrounds: be they Wiccan, Shamanic, Druid or Catholic, Muslim... anyone. And in that light the apparent self-mockery softens into a more good-natured acceptance.

At any rate, we're hoping to run various events again such as the Samhain Party (Halloween for all who don't know) and to also celebrate Imbolg in February. We'll also be getting caffeinated at our coffee lunches, which we should be running on Mondays in the Student Centre, hopefully from 12:00 to 2:00, all of which would be a bit empty if you didn't attend. So we hope to see you there.

Eoin Hughes

## **Committee**

**Auditor** - Eoin Hughes - is in third year science. His main interest is in Shamanism, and the egg of DOOM. He will not be going mad with power, and this isn't part of his intricate plan for world domination.

**Treasurer** - Cathy Mc Fadden- She is in Final Year Maths-Science and enjoys numbers very much. We all know she only volunteered for this job so she could count shiny, shiny coins. Her main area of interest is in Druidism.

**Secretary** - Adrienne Dunne - This year's secretary is in second year Science. Despite her choice in course, she is a New Age hippy. Of course, we all know that this is just an excuse so that she can rub her aromatherapy oils on people.

**Librarian** - Suzy Cantrell - This would be me, I am the society's librarian. I am also an Arts graduate, but I like to pretend that I'm still a student. I work part time in a haunted shop. And I don't see dead people.

**PRO** - Rose Farrell – Rose is in third year Science. She is the one responsible for making sure that people know about upcoming events in fun and new ways. She also has minions. She likes having minions. They are tasty.

**Webmaster** - Stephan Swanton – Stephen is in third year Physiotherapy. With a knowledge of human anatomy and experience as webmaster, there is no telling what kind of havoc he may wreak upon the world.

## **Editorial**

Okay, I'm afraid that I'm going to have to shatter some possible illusions held by some of you curious enough about our society to pick up one of these pamphlets. You will learn that many people who claim to be Pagan do not dress in black, ALL the time and some of us do actually smile occasionally. This is not the world of Dungeons and Dragons, where a wizard can summon fireballs to vanquish their enemies, or a Druid can turn into a bear and eviscerate all those who oppose them.

Last year, we had many people ask us at the stand if we run around naked in the woods and jump over fires, for...fun, or something.

Let me just say this: we live in Ireland, and it is far too cold for most of the year to engage in such activities. If you feel the need to do this, I'm afraid that you will have to do it in your own spare time. I am ashamed to say that someone also asked me if we would be sacrificing animals at the Samhain Ball. Many of our members are in fact vegetarians and the only time that most of us want to see a dead chicken is Sunday lunch.

I'm afraid deciding that you want to learn more about Paganism does not mean that you will suddenly be able to turn people into toads or other animals. Nor does it mean that by looking at us or accepting one of our lollipops you are turning to "the dark side". I can't tell you exactly what Paganism is because it is something that means something different to everyone. If you were to ask each of the committee what it means, we would all give you a different definition, accompanied by stammers and uncertainty. I cannot tell you what is the "right" path, or what you need to believe as I have no right, and one of the central beliefs of our society is that everyone must find their own path.

I could talk forever about what Paganism is *not*, but if you want to learn more about what Paganism *is*, then read on.

Suzy Cantrell

There are a number of common strands shared by most, but not all pagan belief systems. These include:

**Polytheism**, a belief in multiple gods. Generally there are two supreme male and female godheads analogous to the male and female aspects of God in the Old Testament. Other deities tend to be allegorical representations or personifications of various aspects of the universe. This shares an interesting parallel with the Roman Catholic veneration of God, Mary and the Saints. Shamanism and other purely nature based spiritualities would not be as much concerned with gods as with animal spirits, and a generic force of Nature.

**Universal binary:** The difference between male and female is one of the most fundamental, and basic laws of the natural world. As such the significance of the mutual opposition of male and female forces is fundamental to many religions, from Taoism and Buddhism to neo-paganism. It is



represented in Eastern philosophy by the yin and the yang. In the yin-yang symbol, the yin contains yang, and the yang contains yin representing the interdependency of the binary opposites.

**Belief in reincarnation:** Belief in reincarnation is common to almost all pagan religions, and was even held by some Christian sects until it was banned as heresy.

**The Elements:** The fundamental forces of Earth, Fire, Air and Water, associated with the cardinal points of North, South, East and West, respectively play a huge role in the ceremonial and spiritual beliefs of most pagan religions. Some minor variations exist between different traditions, for instance, Asatru replaces Earth with Ice, while Witches in the Southern Hemisphere reverse the north/south associations of Earth and Fire. While the Asian system of five elements may appear to be a contradictory, mutually exclusive system, the fifth, central element of Spirit brings the Western total up to five pointing at least to a superficial similarity. The Asian elements are Metal, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth. While the cardinal associations of the Asian elements can vary from tradition to tradition, Earth is normally considered the central element, or quintessence, made up of the other four.

### **Respect for Nature**

Almost all pagan celebrations are linked to the natural world, being based upon Solar events, such as solstices and equinoxes, and lunar events. Paganism fosters a respect for the natural world and a responsible use of this planet's resources which we have not only inherited from our ancestors, but borrowed from our descendants.

### **Types of Paganism**

The main groups which fall under the category of Paganism can be summarised roughly as such:



**Asatru (Odinism, Heathenism):** The pre-Christian beliefs of the Scandinavian, Germanic, Icelandic and Anglo-Saxon peoples. The main deities of the Asgard, or Asatru pantheon are Frey, Odin, Thor and Tir, Frigg, Freya and the Norns (Fates). The legends of the northern tradition form a rich mythology which are central to the understanding of

European cultural heritage.

While Germanic legend and the associated spiritual heritage gained an unfortunate association with German Nationalism, culminating in the Arian philosophy of the National Socialist (Nazi) party in the 1930s, the teachings of the Asatru are in fact the antithesis to this kind of supremacist attitude. Despite popular opinion, Asatru is a pacifist religion whose magickal arts concentrate predominantly on healing.

**Druidry:** The druids were the priests, scholars and mediators of the Celtic world – Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall and Northern France. In Ireland, Celtic legend and poetry survives in a unique manner, having been written down by Christian monks, who were most likely druids themselves. Irish folk-culture, such as the belief in the power of fairy-forts, is steeped in the remnants of pagan Celtic religion. Interest in reviving the Druidic way began in Britain with annual gatherings at Stonehenge dating back to the Nineteenth Century, and possibly before. The central ceremonial location of Irish Druidry is Tara Hill. A number of groves are currently operating in Ireland.



**Ritual Magic:** Less a spiritual belief than an occult methodology, Western European occult practices based on Hermetic and Cabbalistic traditions have existed since the Middle Ages. This form of mysticism was often practiced by Christians, Jews and Moslems. The Order of the Golden Dawn was an organisation of such ritual magic, and boasted such auspicious members as Alistair Crowley and

W. B. Yeats. Practice of ritual magic or 'occultism' does not preclude obedience to most of the main world religions, but has sometimes accrued the negative connotations associated with secret societies.

**Shamanism:** While the shamanic revival among neo-pagans began a decade or so later than the Wiccan revival, Shamanic practices are based on anthropological research into ancient spiritual practices as well as the surviving aboriginal shamanic practices of Amazonian tribes, Native Americans, Aboriginal Australians, Maori and others. Shamanism is the root of all religion and relies on the manipulation of and communication with plant and animal spirits.



While most shamanic practices involve the use of herbal hallucinogens to induce a trance-state, we must caution against the use of any potentially unsafe or illegal substance without proper supervision.



**Witchcraft (Wicca):** Perhaps the most famous of pagan paths, Wicca claims its heritage from the underground continuation of pre-Christian religion in Western Europe. This claim was supported by the historian Margaret Murray (see *The Witch Cult in Western Europe*, 1924). In Britain, after the repeal of Witchcraft laws in the 1950s, Gerald Gardner published books detailing the practices of the New Forest coven of which he had been a member. While some covens claim to trace their heritage from separate, hereditary roots, most are influenced, at least in part by the writings of Gardner and his students.

**Voodoo (Santeria, Orisha, etc.):** The religious and magical practices of the African American Slaves, developed in captivity from the aboriginal practices of the Yoruba people of Nigeria, specifically in the Carribean Islands as well as some colonies on the American Continent. Many practitioners adopted superficial Christian trappings, such as the substitution of African deities' names with those of the Virgin Mary and Catholic Saints to avoid censor by the White slave-owners.

Santeria, as practiced in Puerto Rico, does involve animal sacrifice and divination by means of animal entrails. These practices are legal in Puerto-Rico. *Voudon* is the name for this religion in Haiti. These practices are often unfortunately associated with 'obeah' or spirit theft, a left-handed magical subset of voodoo. Voodoo also forms a rich part of Creole culture in places such as New Orleans.

Voodoo is often synonymous with 'Black Magic.' This is mostly an unfortunate racial stereotype created by years of bigotry.

**Other traditions:** The above list is by no means comprehensive, and each group described is not a cohesive tradition but rather a group of myriad traditions within that heading.

## Contact Us

Website <http://pagansoc.netsoc.com/>

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## Useful Books

The amount of books currently published about the various different pagan traditions is immense. To help you with the process of sifting the good from the bad, we will give you a short list of suggested reading for individual topics. This is by no means a definitive bibliography, but may be a helpful starting point for the curious. The society hopes to procure a collection of books for the use of its members, but for now, we will provide information on relevant books as best we can. Books available in UCD Library are given a shelfmark number

### Historical/Anthropological studies of Witchcraft / Occultism

- Frazer, J. G., *The Golden Bough*, 1925, Shelfmark Gen 290
- Kieckhefer, Richard, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 2000, Shelfmark Gen 133.4/KIE
- Murray, M., *Witch Cult in Western Europe*, Shelfmark Gen 133.4
- Moura, Ann, *Origins of modern witchcraft: the evolution of a world religion*, 2000, Shelfmark, Gen 133.4/MOU

### Paganism in General

- Alder, Margot, *Drawing down the Moon*, Penguin, 1979
- Farrar, Janet and Gavin Bone, *The Pagan Path*,

### Asatru

- Blum, Ralph H., *The Book of Runes: A Handbook for the Use of an Ancient Oracle*, St Martin's Press, 1993
- Davidson, Hilda Ellis, *Gods and myths of Northern Europe*, 1990, Shelfmark Gen 293/DAV
- Dumézil, Georges, *Gods of the ancient Northmen*, Shelfmark 293/DUM
- Turville-Petre, Gabriel, *Myth and religion of the North : the religion of ancient Scandinavia*, 1964. Shelfmark Gen 293/TUR

### Witchcraft/Wicca (unfortunately none of these are in the UCD Library)

- Farrar, Stuart, *What Witches Do: A Modern Coven Revealed*, Phoenix, 1971
- Farrar, Janet and Gavin Bone, *Progressive Witchcraft*, New Page, 2004.
- Gardner, Gerald. *Witchcraft Today*. Magickal Child, 1954

### Shamanism

- Andrews, Ted, *Animal Speak, The Spiritual & Magical Powers of Creatures Great & Small*, Llewellyn Publications, 1993
- Harner, Michael, *Hallucinogens and Shamanism*, 1973, Shelfmark Gen 200.19

#### Druidism

- Green, Miranda J., *The Gods of the Celts* 1986, Shelfmark Gen 293/GRE

#### Religious Books

- The Bible. Available in multiple translations and versions. Should be read with an open mind by followers of any religious path. Shelfmark Gen 220.52/BIB
- New Testament Apocrypha, Hennecke E. (ed), Shelfmark Gen229/HEN
- The Koran, trans E. H. Palmer, Shelfmark Gen 291/SAC

#### Eastern Religions

- I Ching, (the texts of Confucianism), Shelfmark Gen 291/SAC
- Hoff, Benjamin, *The Toa of Poo and the Te of Piglet* Methuen, 1998, Shelfmark Gen 813/HOF
- King, Richard: *Indian Philosophy: an introduction to Hindu and Buddhist thought*, Edinburgh University Press, 1999, Shelfmark: Received

### **Essential Oils**

The art and science of using essential plant oils to treat both the body and mind are as old as paganism itself. The Egyptians were using aromatics almost 3000 years before Christ for medicinal and cosmetic purposes, as well as to embalm the bodies of their dead.

We know of some of the plants they used medicinally from papyrus documents (the earliest dating from 2890 B.C.) and now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is a welcome return to the natural alternative in a society where commerciality and lifestyle stress the body on a fundamental level. Whether in work, education or relaxation, essential oils have a large role to play and are versatile in their uses.

Readers may find the following oils helpful. All oils should be well-diluted and never used near the eye area or ingested in any form. Most can be used for massage once diluted well in a base oil. Those with specific illnesses or pregnancy should consult their doctor before

using, for there are a number of oils that should never be used when pregnant.

Basil oil is an excellent cephalic, second only to Rosemary for its clarifying effects on the brain. Often taken for alertness and mental fatigue, and is useful during exam times!

And after all that studying, headaches may abound. 3 drops of Lavender oil placed on a pillow will help, as well as relax, de-stress and calm the body.

Tea tree oil is unusual as it is active cure against all three categories of infectious organisms: bacteria, fungi and viruses. It is often used extensively for flu and cold-related symptoms, but as with all oils, tea tree must be well diluted in a base oil (almond or grapefruit oil for example) before usage. As little as 2 drops in a full bath for an adult has been shown to be effective against the flu. Some people may find it a skin irritant so those with sensitive skins should be wary, using very little or none.

Camomile, Clary Sage, Sandalwood and Ylang Ylang are just some the oils that are both sedative and antidepressant while Bergamot and Geranium are uplifting oils, without the sedative effect.

Rose, as well as lifting the mood, has been long renowned as an aphrodisiac! Indeed the Romans used to scatter rose petals on the bridal bed! It is probably the rarest and most expensive of all oils. Two tons of fresh petals in full bloom yield a mere one kg (2 pounds) of essential oil, however very little is needed for treatment as it is so highly concentrated.

Note: It is important to buy essential oils from a reputable source and preferably undiluted as they can be added to a base oil later. Always store them out of direct sunlight.

*Please note, this does not constitute as medical advice. For serious conditions please consult a qualified practitioner.*

Adrienne Dunne

### **Running a society in its first year.**

When I first came to UCD many moons ago I had been exploring and practising a nature based mainly Wiccan pagan faith for about one and a half years. Excited about college I quickly threw myself into the college life getting involved with clubs and societies.

As soon as I found about societies within college, I decided I wanted to found one for pagans. After all there were several Christian societies, a Muslim society and back then still a Jewish society. So, why not one for Pagans?

Well, after three years of college, two of which were spent on society committees, I decided that I had better start organising something or I never would. Very true words, seeing as I was in my final year of college. So with the help of a friend of mine, Eoin Hughes, this year's auditor, we began the process of attempting to get recognised as a new society.

This involved several months of hard work, writing a constitution, mission statement, putting together a committee and getting a senior treasurer, whilst still trying to get my degree in biochemistry! Finally, we had everything possible done by way of preparation and I sat in front of the recognition committee and argued the case as to why UCD needed a Pagan Society.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2005, I received a phone call, telling me that we had received full recognition, by passing even the usual three-month provisional phase. Four years of dreaming and six months of hard work by both Eoin and myself had finally paid off and the college now had somewhere for Pagans to go.

But the Pagan society was never set up to function as a guide for other pagans. We did not start it to create an organization to show people how to be pagan. Paganism is about the individual path to Spirit and Deity through nature, how can a society show you your individual path? Instead, Pagan Soc was set up as to act as a place where pagans could meet like-minded people. If you are Pagan in UCD and wish to meet other Pagans, the society is a good place to start looking.

So what happened last year that made us a success? We started off the year with a meditation workshop. This was a great success with an excellent attendance. Marion Rose, co-chair of the Dublin Moots An Fáinne lead the workshop going through several different types of meditation techniques from chakra work to guided meditation.

Our other big events were a Samhain fancy dress. This included Tarot and Palm reading throughout the night. There was also a fabulous prize for the best costume. We later had an introductory talk on different Pagan Paths given by well-known authors Janet Farrar and Gavin Bone. In the second semester we had a really entertaining Imbolg party with song, food and drink. Several weeks later we had a crystals meditation workshop lead by Vinnie Woods, formerly of Yellow Brick Road.

We also had fortnightly discussion groups where people had a chance to compare and contrast different beliefs and views on everything from Star Signs to Sabbaths. Our weekly coffee lunches on Mondays also gave everybody an excellent opportunity to catch up and

chat in a completely informal setting. We finished the year with a display of methods to create and close sacred space in three different styles. One was a basic Wiccan method. The next was a more Shamanic style with the last being an eclectic/Druidry form of casting. This was a great chance for members to see first hand the different techniques Pagans use when performing ritual and raising energy for what is basically the same end use.

For my committee and I, it was a very busy year by any account. We had weekly events as well as some pretty large events and all in our first year. For me it was very rewarding but also very hard work. I had a great time made enjoyable not only by the fun had at events or their success, but also because of the great committee that I had. I know we would not have had anywhere near as successful a year as we did without the support and dedication the entire committee showed. Eoin, Cathy, Suzy, Conan, Adrienne, Stephen S, Stephen L, Rose and Rory, thank you for all the help, big and small.

In the end, I got my degree, but I left UCD with much more than that and left behind something I will always be proud of. I wish Eoin and this year's committee luck and success and know they will have a great year because they are a great team. See you at an event sometime.

Also thanks to my girlfriend for not dumping me after the hundredth busy evening preparing for or running an event.

Blessed Be, Neil Byrne – Inaugural Auditor & Co-Founder of UCD Pagan Society

(Writing on location in Rome with his girlfriend on a long promised holiday)

### **Name the Pagan sock competition.**

This year, there is a new and exciting addition to the society: the Pagan Sock. Not much is known about the sock, though we do know that its origins are connected with rogue knitting wool and the Boyne valley. However, due to language barriers between the sock and us, we have not been able to discern its name.

This is where you come in. We would like you to submit what you think would be a suitable name for our new friend, the prize being that your idea will be immortalised within the sock. You may even get a cookie.