
Paths

The Magazine of UCD's

podgocn soc

Volume 3, Issue 1

1 – Introduction

Welcome to UCD's PaganSoc. Or our magazine at least. If you're reading this you're probably wondering who we are and what we do. Well, we're a group of very different college students who are glutens for punishment, who regularly take on more than we can handle. But we do it because we believe that the best part of college is all the stuff you do while not in lectures. Whether it's just hanging out with friends in the bar, or making use of the many societies that exist just to entertain you. So we stressed, and ran about up until well past the last minute, trying to give you something a little different to do. Because not only are we students, but we are Pagans as well. What does that mean exactly? Well, to different people it means different things. Generally speaking we believe it probably denotes someone with an interest in earth-based spiritualities and polytheistic belief systems. But really, we're open to anyone who's just interested in the hidden things of this world. That sounds a bit ominous doesn't it? Well, I suppose it's no use trying to convince you that we're all perfectly sane and rational human beings, as crazy people always say that. But, if you're interested in finding out for yourself come and say hi. We'll be at the stand all throughout Freshers Week. After that we'll be found at our Coffee Lunches and various events throughout the year. And we can always be found at, or rather through, our website. Details of which can be found at the end of this magazine.

Well, I suppose I should tell you about what we do. We hold regular Coffee Lunches, as mentioned, so you can get free caffeine, or even caffeine-free herbal teas, and biscuits. We get guest lecturers in to talk on an aspect of Pagan belief, practice, or life. We get people in to run workshops. And we run Discussion Groups so we can discuss amongst ourselves topics that are important to us. As well as all that we have parties at Samhain and Imbolg, with costumes, food, and alcohol. We are also trying to start up a library of Pagan-type books, and in the meantime will scour the UCD library and report back when we find any interesting books. A lot of this will be found on our website, it's like an ever-updating version of this magazine. Speaking of which, we hope to have another one of these out for ReFreshers Week in the new year. So, if something in this magazine strikes a cord, whether that be good or bad, feel free to let us know. We'll publish some letters and their responses in the next issue. If any particular issue gets really interesting we may even post the discussion on the website.

And I think that's all. Welcome to UCD/ PaganSoc. Enjoy your apple or lollipop, and we hope to see you again soon!

2 – Events Guide

We have plenty for you to get your teeth into this year. Starting with Freshers Week.

On Wednesday, 20th September, we have a look at '*Pop Culture Paganism*', or how Paganism is portrayed in our modern culture, specifically in our popular media.

Location: The Bin, aka G.15 in Agricultural Science.

Time: 18:30

On Thursday, 21st September, we have our first *Coffee Lunch* where you will find free tea, coffee and biscuits.

Location: The Blue Room, upstairs in the Student Centre.

Time: 13:00 – 15:00

We decided that there is far too much to do during Freshers Week that we are spreading our events out over two weeks, a kind of Freshers Fortnight.

On Tuesday, 26th September, we will be hosting a talk by Druid Con Connor, of www.druidschool.com. The talk is entitled '*Tara, the NRA, Opus Dei, and Pagan Rights*'. And it promises to be lively, as well as downright controversial.

Location: The Bin, aka G.15 in Agricultural Science.

Time: 18:30

Then on Thursday, 28th September, we will be holding a *Guided Meditation Workshop*, led by Wing, of tarotalley.com, who will help us all flex our psychic muscles.

Location: Meeting Rooms 1 & 2, upstairs in the Student Centre.

Time: 18:30

But don't worry, we have plenty of events planned for throughout the year, including an *Auric Workshop*, and a talk on *Burial Customs of Medieval Times*, and as always our irregularly held *Discussion Groups*, and weekly *Coffee Lunches*. All further information can be found on our website. And if you give us your details we can email, or text the information out to you as well.

3 – In The World Outside College

Summer Solstice at Tara

When I told my workmates that I would need time off for the Summer Solstice, they all laughed and assumed that I would be participating in some sort of group orgy. All I could think was, *I'm going to the wrong celebration!* Because that's not what happened. A bus was organised, and messages were passed on. I managed to book my seat twice because I didn't realise that someone had kindly organised one for me.

There were some inconsistencies, but we got everything sorted. So off to the shops for food and drink for the celebrations, and we all made it to the bus on time. And so the journey began. When one thinks of the Summer Solstice, one always assumes that the skies will be blue, and the air warm and refreshing with only the gentlest of breezes. Not so. There was a strong wind, and it was misty, damp and quite cold. When we finally got there, some of us went to the gift shop and others went to the coffee shop to get some food and warm up.

Some of us decided to walk around the hill and immediately, we all felt energised and invigorated; something was already in the air. Despite the fact that I had a large bag on my back, I found myself running up and down the hills enthusiastically. I had never been to the Hill of Tara before that day, and though I wasn't really sure what to expect, I was still surprised by what I found there. When we decided that we were finished insanely running around, we walked back for the group ritual. Somewhere along the line, the rain stopped and the fog cleared, the air becoming crisp and refreshing.

A druid began the ritual, asking for the curse to be lifted from Tara; a curse that would mean that the place would be forever filled with despair. The idea was, if there were celebrations, things like children laughing and playing, there would be no curse. It's all about what you believe to be true. After a while people began to dance in a circle, laughing and tambourines and other percussion instruments were passed around. That was when I realised how disgracefully unfit I had become, and I was wheezing like an eighty-year old before long.

After that, a friend decided that he was going to consecrate a beautiful chalice that he bought in the gift shop... no, this is not an advertisement, but the gift shop has some really nice things. I myself purchased a lonely Sunstone pendant there. He filled

the chalice with wine, and we passed it around, alternating between male and female as was his tradition. Of course, he got more wine than anyone else because he had to move around the circle to get the gender balance right. There were people of all ages there, and several ten year olds asked us for wine, which was not well received.

Bards sang tales and people banged on drums, creating a rhythm that I just had to dance to. It started off with just myself and another friend, but before long, more people got up and danced with us. The atmosphere at this point was truly indescribable, and everything seemed to come alive. I'm sure we must have looked ridiculous, and several people even got up and danced, their intention to mock those already dancing. But before long, even they had to concede that they were having fun. Some guys began dancing with fire poi, which was wonderful to watch, I can assure you, and as it grew darker the flames seemed to be an extension of their bodies.

A word of advice to those who decide to go to the Hill of Tara: forget what other people think, and if your intention is to go and make fun of the funny pagans dancing around, then you're going for the wrong reasons. There's no point in thinking how much better you are than everyone else; that's not what spirituality is about. Some people wandered off to walk around later, but I couldn't stop dancing; it was more exercise than I had had in a long time. Most people were very kind there; someone even came up to myself and Wing to congratulate us on our one year marriage anniversary. That's a story for another day though!

There was something for everyone there; I spent most of the time dancing, but others went for a walk around, exploring the beauty around them. After all that, some of us took the bus home, some decided to stay; by this stage I was almost falling asleep. That was my first experience of Tara, and I can't wait to go back again.

Suzy Cantrell

4 – Community

When the current Auditor Cheryl asked me to write an article on community many ideas came into my head. I could discuss the progression of community for myself as I went through college, meeting the occasional pagan, and then actively meeting pagans outside of UCD.

I could also have taken the approach of discussing the lack of community within paganism as a large variety of groups with beliefs of varying similarity are grouped together. But in the end I decided to discuss what the Pagan community means to me as a young pagan within UCD and outside of it.

Firstly what is a pagan and paganism in the context of community. I think most pagans(or heathens) would consider paganism (heathenism) to be any reverence of nature and a belief that the divine in what ever form can seen through nature. To try to define it any more precisely is to fall into disagreement with someone, in fact getting any group of pagans to agree on anything has often been compared with trying to herd cats!

But still there is a certain commonality within the community. I know the feeling of sitting in the company of other pagans and heathens and discussing all manner of topics. The difference being that the people I am sitting with do not look at me like I have two heads. They understand what I am talking about even if they do not necessarily agree with everything I am saying. This is I feel about as far as we are ever going to get in terms of a community, however to be honest I do not think we need much more.

But in terms of college and the student what does it mean. Well for a student there is an entirely different set of circumstances. Unlike “grown-up pagans” students do not have the same freedom to travel or even access to transport. So you less likely to find the average young college pagan on the Hill of Tara at the summer solstice.

Young pagans also either live at home with their parents or in a digs or flat with not much space and/or privacy, so you are much less likely to see the altar or sacred space in the corner. Even if they have the space in their flat they may not wish to have an altar because of the attention and questions it can attract from flatmates and landlords.

So overall this lack of freedom to go out and meet other pagans and lack of freedom to fully and openly practise your beliefs can make it very difficult for the young pagan to explore their beliefs.

If you wish to experience a sense of community as a young pagan you really have to go out and try to meet other pagans your own age. If like me you did a science or engineering course where this can be difficult. I can also tell you now you have zero chance of a local coven welcoming you with open arms. They do not advertise and if you find one that does run very quickly in the opposite direction.

One important difference I found when I first started meeting other more experienced pagans outside of college was that the lack of experience and age difference meant I sometimes found it hard to connect with them. As a young pagan I found sometimes that I would have rather talked to people at a similar level of experience to me, making the same mistakes I was and having more in common with me. This was part of the reason that a friend and I decided to set up the pagan society.

So what is community for a young pagan. For you it could be meeting up with one or two friends and meditating together. It could be meeting up with people to honour the Sabbaths, practise tarot or sit around and watch the Wicker Man (the original version of course) over and over. Community is what you make of it and what it boils down to is having a support group. Being able to sit down and not be worried whether the person next to you thinks you completely nuts.

One way to meet other pagans in UCD can be found at the stand where you got this magazine. The Pagan Society was founded with the intent of establishing a focal point for the development of a community. I am not saying that you have to be an active member regularly attending events (though it may help) but if you wish to meet other pagans this is probably the best place. Even if societies are not your thing, it can be a place to meet others who you can then go off and practise or explore ideas with in your own way and at your own pace. What the society offers is the chance to be subtle about it. You do not have to go all out with pentacles hanging from everything you can hang things from (unless that's your thing). But in order to get to that stage you do have to take that first step.

For me making that first step became an important stage in the development of my beliefs. It was a way for me to assert what I believed and also figure out what I believed. The best way to understand anything is to try to explain it to someone. Be it poetic mechanics, DNA transcription or religious beliefs, until you try explaining it to someone else you probably will not fully grasp what it means to you.

But as well as giving me an idea of helping me develop my beliefs it finally made me feel part of a community. Even before I started meeting other pagans I could at least say "I'm one of those" and that is I suppose the other part of community. Recognising something in yourself that connects you to others and it is this above all else that provides the biggest comfort as a young pagan. This sense of commonality and a feeling of not being totally alone. So good luck finding your community during your time in UCD and enjoy exploring your beliefs.

Beannacht, Neil Byrne

5 – Different Paths

My Solitary Path

I would like to be the long-lived, wisened old soul of who's path you would like to read, in order that you might gleam some gem of truth, no matter how small. Hey, I would love to read an article by that kind of person too. But I am just student like you. And not too far on my journey either. I don't have it all figured out. I don't know where it is I am headed. I don't have the whole thing laid out in front of me like a yellow brick road. I just don't know. And yet, I'm still out there, fumbling my way through the dark, following my gut, absorbing anything and everything I can get my hands on. And I'm still out there because it is where I know I should be. I can feel it inside. And that's good enough for me. I'm not a Wiccan. I'm not a Druid, nor a Shaman, nor any other kind of easily described path. I follow my own. A path that works for me because it's tailor made to be a perfect fit. And for the most part I walk it alone. Hell, you couldn't even really call me a Witch. A lapsed Witch, maybe. But Pagan nonetheless.

So what do I do? To be perfectly honest not much. College, friends, family; they all demand alot of time. So my observances tend to take a back seat. I'm lucky to get to celebrate the Eight Sabbaths, let alone the Esabats. And while that may appal some people it sits just fine with me. My spirituality isn't a race. I do what I can, but college has to come first. This, by the way, has been communicated to those listening, and for the most part they seem okay with it. I'm just getting a bit scared of what I'll have to go through once I've graduated. 6 years of life-altering, transformative roller-coaster-rides, held back like flood waters. But anyway, I digress.

For me things are simple. Or at least should be. So I start at the beginning. I am a woman. But what does that mean? Why do things so intrinsically female hurt so much? Why is so little known about the female hormone cycles? Why is there so much disinformation circling about what should be plainly known? See, just that one simple fact leads to a whole plethora of introspection and ways to investigate the world around us. Similar things like; who are my true friends, and why? What does family mean to me? What do I believe is right, and where do those ideas come from? And most popular of all; what am I doing here? Even little things like; why does body hair creep me out? Or; why am I slightly allergic to some foods? Or even; why does nobody else feel that? These are all big questions. That open some very big cans of worms. Most of which bring me back, in a roundabout way, to my gods, my

religion, and my beliefs. This is the basis for my path. I didn't become Pagan because I was a rebellious teenager. Quite the opposite really. I was good, quiet, but never fit in. Things just weren't right. I'm not saying that Paganism made everything alright, it just made me feel a little less crazy. To know that other people saw those things, felt those things, had those dreams. It just made the pieces fit together.

But you probably don't want to know all that. You probably want to know that my rituals are inspired mostly by Wicca and Ceremonial Magic. That I call the Quarters Thrice. I practice magic when I feel the need (which is admittedly very rarely), I use tarot cards for divination, and find the use of cords for storing energy very useful. That I'm just beginning to investigate the use of oils and incense, or that I have virtually no tools. But that's the kind of thing I don't really like talking about, because I feel it's all very personal. If it works for you then you should use it. But hey, if you ask me about it, and I have the time, I have no problem discussing it. Because even though I am mostly on my own, or perhaps because of that fact, I feel that to have a community is very important. I attend a Dublin moot and I participate in the UCD PaganSoc. Why? Because it helps. Pure and simple. And with that I'll say good-bye, with hopes that this helped you in some little way.

Cheryl Harding

6 – Interview with Sir Sock Knitmeister

Some of you may have seen a green sock puppet hanging around our stand, or website, or just generally stalking members. That sock is infact our mascot, Sir Socky Knitmeister the Third. He has recently decided to start handling all our press interviews. Reluctant to give over such an important role to a suspected lunatic we ran a trial interview with some questions we have frequently been asked. Below are the results. We accept no responsibility for all the people he is likely to offend.

Hello Sir Knitmeister, thank you for agreeing to this interview. Let's get started shall we?

So, em, what's a Pagan?

A Pagan is a follower of fantasy author's Gerald Gardner's belief system. Gardner set this belief system up in response to a fellow science-fiction writer's attempt to start up a religion one year previously. It is rumoured that both founders of these religions

started it up on the basis of a bet as to who could set up the most lucrative belief system.

What exactly do you do? Do you dance around naked, wear pointy hats, and chant silly nonsense things?

You know. If I danced around naked, I'd just be a hand. As for the others, I'm afraid that the Irish weather isn't so great for the nakedness. I prefer latex catsuits, or neoprene will do in a pinch. Once we have the garb on, we drink herbal teas.

Do you believe in God? *points finger at sky*

Me? Sure. I just happen to look at him funny. I also happen to believe in things that exist down here.

Do you kill people and babies and dogs, like in the films?

Well let me answer this in order:

People: Only the ones that ask stupid questions, or fluffies, or

Babies: They don't ask as many stupid questions... so while I wouldn't do it, I do love a dead baby joke.

Dogs: Ah well... I don't do that as much these days. Y'see... I have this thing: If you're going to kill it, you have to eat it. Most of the dogs I've seen in Ireland are too fat, and the ones that look like they'd have really good meat earn their owners some good money, so I tend to get shot at. After my doctor darned me up for the 3rd time he told me "Socky", he said, "No more dog hunting for you. The next time this happens, I just may not be able to help you." So, I don't eat dog unless I'm in a country that serves it. Try it! They do good dog.

Now cats on the other hand. They're good over here, and FAR easier to hunt.

As for killing things like chickens, pigs or cows: I let the professionals handle that. I just go around the corner to my local butchers.

So go on, tell the truth, it's all just an excuse for an orgy isn't it?

Well, for me, that's why I started up the society. Pagans be damned, I wanted my orgies! However, I quickly found that the only people interested in socks (in that way) tend to be sweaty men who still live with their mothers. However, some people had joined to be pagans, and not for the orgies, so I let it continue.

I saw one of those Spells Kits in that shop one time. If I get one will I be a Pagan too?

Sure. Why not... Also, while you're at it, here's a tip, if you cover yourself in dung and prod yourself with a pitchfork enough times, you can also be a farmer! If you've got a nice piece of your own land, you're set for pulling your hearts desire. Just don't talk to any REAL farmers, as they might actually start talking to you about things that actually matter in their job, like understanding crop rotation, or the advantages of silage over hay... and don't even TRY to run a farm, because no matter how many times you prod yourself with that pitchfork, you still won't know the basics, or if you do, you probably wouldn't know why you're doing them, and when to start or stop doing them.

Lesson of this story: Don't dress up pretending to be a farmer.

Is there a special school like Harry Potter?

Yes. The directions are a bit difficult, but here we go. First, you need to obtain your magjickal garb. Put it on when you're in town. Go to O'Connell street and get the 19A in towards DCU. Get off about one or two stops after DCU. You're now in a place called Baile Munna. Wander around there for a while. I recommend you bring a hunting knife, and a bag of majgikcal and medicinal herbs to appease the locals.

So you think you were a grasshopper in a past life?

No, I was a scientologist. My grasshopper phase was about 2 lifetimes ago, I was being taught the ancient and mystic art of Kung Fu. My family were so proud, I was the first insect initiate into that noble sect.

If you're so powerful how come you're still writing for a college magazine and not off enjoying all your millions and groupies?

Sigh Those were the good ole days, until I got audited. First thing the repo man took were my groupies. Then my TV. Then my money. Now, I'm just a sock with a habit of peering lecherously at people from a society stand. I swear, you don't declare a measly 5 million and they pull it out through your hand-hole.

I have this ex right, who's a complete ass, how do I turn him into a frog?

Last time I looked into the issue, I decided that radical genetic re-engineering is the

way to go. Unfortunately, most of the people who do this have taken a hypocratic oath, and as a result won't do it unless he's consenting... unless he's under 18 and you're his legal guardian. In which case, just take away his PSP... and how is he your ex, you sick...

*****Mr P. Sock then launched into a stream of obscenities and as he was unable to talk coherently, his aides called a halt to that interview to be rescheduled for another time*****

7 – Contact Info

If you want to reach us, for just about anything, you can email us at:

pagansoc@netsoc.com

Our website contains a host of information which we think you'll find helpful. At the moment it is being hosted by NetSoc, who are having some problems, so we aren't able to offer the full range of services, like our Message Board. But they are working hard on fixing the problem, and as soon as we can we'll have it back for you. Our website address is:

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

Also, if you want to speak to one of us in person you can find us at our Coffee Lunches, details on posters weekly and up on our website. If it's a recurring thing someone will give you my mobile number.

Speaking of which, we will ask you for your email address and phone number when you sign up. But you don't have to give us these details. It's purely so we can contact you about upcoming events, rather than you having to find posters or check the website. If you do give us your details rest assured that we will never, ever give out your details to anyone, and we will never, ever spam you with junk. You can also opt out whenever you feel like it.

So come on, get in touch, we'd love to hear from you. From ideas for events, to responses to articles, just email us at:

pagansoc@netsoc.com
