Greetings!

Many apologies for the lateness of this Newsletter. Various reasons for this, the main one being connected to the recent success of TDN becoming a Registered Charity. Things have been rather busy in our household these last few weeks! Phil has written an article about the process which is included below.

News From The Druid Network

We are pleased to announce that four and a half years after submitting the original application The Druid Network has finally been accepted for registration by the Charities Commission of England and Wales. To put it in more ‘official’ language TDN has been accepted as being ‘established for exclusively charitable purposes for the advancement of religion for the public benefit’. You can view the decision document on the Charity Commission website here http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/Library/about_us/druiddec.pdf

This recognition firmly establishes Druidry as an accepted religion in English Charity Law and is an historic legal decision as we are the first pagan charity to be registered under the Charities Act 2006. However, there has also been much talk in the media and in pagan circles that this makes Druidry an ‘officially recognised religion’. This is not quite correct. There is no
definition of religion in English Law and all spiritual beliefs are already protected under other legislation. So, just what does it mean for TDN and the wider community?

What it does NOT mean is that we have defined Druidry for all Druids. The Charity Commission considers all cases on an individual basis if they are not covered by an umbrella organisation. Others are free to submit their own interpretation. The decision by the CC is that Druidry and its practice as put forward by TDN is recognisable as a valid religion.

What it does mean is if organisations can meet the other requirements for registration and use our definition they will be accepted. If they use one that differs greatly they will need to explain through the review procedure, as TDN has had to do.

However, in making the application we spent four and a half years in putting our case. The Charity Commission lawyers had little if any understanding of what we meant by polytheism, animism, pantheism or indeed any theism other than monotheism. In addition pagan philosophy was fully alien to them. It wasn’t that they were being deliberately obstructive; they simply had no way of understanding us. That through persistence we managed to break down those barriers is both a credit to our persistence and to the Charity Commission for having the open minds to try to understand. And finally they did! In our first meetings with them our attempts were met with blank stares and mumbled replies. My last meeting by telephone conference highlighted the change in perception, they really knew what they were talking about and asked very pertinent questions. And that is the greatest success. The Charity Commission now has a much broader definition and understanding of religion. This will help all other minority faiths, not only those who wish to register, but in many other areas of society where there is misunderstanding of the term ‘religion’. Because there is no definition of religion in English Law other bodies look to the Charity Commission for clarity. And there is now much greater clarity, TDN hasn’t defined Druidry for all, it has helped clarify the definition of religion in Charity Law!

So what does it mean for TDN? Well it means we are an organisation that is regulated by the CC and therefore it gives a level of acceptance and credibility. It means we have access to services that otherwise would be denied to us. And to a certain extent it should give us a voice that isn’t dismissed out of hand. There is also the financial benefit that we can claim tax relief on behalf of the donor for donations given to projects that are charitable. So, every £10 that someone donates to a tree-planting project becomes £12.50 after tax relief. But financial benefits were not the reason we applied.

So, why did we put ourselves through this process, just why did we do it? Quite simply because we had to, it is a legal requirement for us to either register as a not for profit company or as a charity. TDN Ltd didn’t seem right so we chose the latter option. In English Charity Law you have to register under certain specified ‘heads of charity’ and being an organisation providing information for and facilitating a pagan religion we had to register as ‘furthering religion’. The initial application was rejected and so the journey began, and what a ride it has been.

Phil Ryder – Chair of Trustees.
Autumn’s Song.

The Autumn Song it filled me,
   Made my bones grow chill,
Sweeping colour through my nerves,
Burning reds and hues of yellow gold.
   Yet no leaf had fallen,
When I felt the season turn.
   But the wheel curved,
   The seasons sang,
   And my spirit heard.

Reap all that you have sown,
Savour summer’s sultry balm,
For as summer bows the autumn in,
   Nature plays its violin,
   All harmonise,
   And sing as one,
   Autumn’s precious song.

SHerri 2010
Darkness

It is then that a whisper comes, the song of an ancient breeze
A murmur those deafened by thought do not hear
A quiet hum that soft-touches the crows’ blackest down
Marking that silence their tribe has known through millennia
The pause, before the rising, when gathering they circle high
Crying out in your honour, my Lady, my endless night

As dusk falls, souls creeping within the shelter of walls
Each seeking ways of retaining their requisite shape and form
I watch those that linger, those curious, those content to stay
As your presence seeps in, quiet-drenching the air
And edges begin their softly greying corrosion, blurring, yielding
Into delicious dissolution, plurality diluting into your night

And so do I call out, in the voicelessness of wonder - my Lady!
Take this my pale soul-skin, for a moment your mortal cloak
Fill me, utterly, with some droplet of your exquisite flood! -
Hearing the words of my devotion held entangled by the ache of need
My plea instantly emptied by the force of your purest nature
The disappearing meaning drifting, saturated by the thrill

Unheld, my soul shimmering, the ground gives way beneath me
The scaffolding of knowing crumbling in the absence of light
And as weakness flutters off and away from my open fingers
The fissure within me yawns with an indolence that seethes
Its breathing the ageless soundless shrieking of a presence
That is inside, that is virtually every thing yet no thing - nothing, at all

And so blessed by your blade that cuts, freeing me once more
I learn again to move these limbs, to dance in darkest grace
No more bound by the twines of care that tightly binding so cripple
And no longer ensnared by the spider’s trembling web, I find my smile
As the smile of moon in black water, watching old-man time sleeping
I close my eyes, in flawless ecstasy, and await your command.

Emma Restall Orr
2009
Clan of the Triple Horses
Southern Oregon, USA

Clan of the Triple Horse Grove, Medford, Oregon, recently welcomed several guests to a meet and greet coffee in Medford. Guests enjoyed a chance to relax, meet Grove Founders Aigeann and Seven Tines, Senior Druid Wolfsong and several other Grove members to learn about our parent path, Ár nDraíocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship (ADF).

Several guests also joined us in celebrating the Autumn Equinox, a time of bounty and thanksgiving, at the beautiful Labyrinth at Rogue Valley Medical Center, Medford. Our brief Rite followed the ADF Ritual Order. As we journeyed to the Center we offered thanks for what we have manifested and harvested during our season of growth. We also offered thanks for the life of ADF Founder Isaac Bonewits, who crossed the Veil August 12, 2010. We will have a more formal commemoration of his life during our Samhain Rite but we will briefly offer thanks for his life and the spiritual Path he provided for modern Pagans worldwide.

We will hold our Samhain Rite at the home of founders Aigeann and Seven Tines. Time and date will be announced soon on our Web site, http://triplehorses.weebly.com/.

Latest News and Views from Janis - Su.endal Lodge & Hattin Lodge

September 21st
Mulan – a celebration of the cycles of the universe and the future to come

'All is before your eyes, if only you open them to see'

Greetings everyone.
The recent turn of the wheel is known by many names in all our various traditions; Mabon, the autumn equinox, Mulan (in the Gnostic cycle) and Alban Elfed in the druid calendar, to name but a few. The old Craft coven that I am a member of celebrated together on the night of 23rd September with an energy raising rite and meditation using sacred herbs and stones. Our coven which until recently was known as Stone Grove Coven has recently had a change of name and
an energizing uplift and we are now The Three Pillars. We have a good strong foundation in
this coven and yet, like all that is natural in life, the tides are continually ebbing and flowing so
folks do come and go, as is the way of things, especially all things sacred. Over the years the
core of the coven has grown together, learnt together, cried together even, but above all had so
much fun together which is of course very important. We do not all share the same paths
within the Three Pillars but come together in love, friendship, trust and unity.

My own path; that of the Gnostic Priesthood – The Knights Templars has proven to be a very
great joy to me. It is very challenging to say the least and has often caused me to question
everything I thought I ever knew about this beautiful planet on which we all reside. Yet when I
let go my heart learnt to fly with my spirit. The Templars and the Druids share many
commonalities within time with many connections and crossovers and indeed this path does
teach how all paths are interconnected with much more the same than is different.

The teaching lodge that I run here in Cambridge is called ‘Su.endal Lodge’ and after a little
summer recess I do kind of anticipate a season of renewed activity that can be an exciting and
fulfilling time for both tutor and student alike. Su.endal Lodge is not just for folks local to
Cambridge and anyone who is willing to make the journey to Cambridge is most welcome to
join us. Joining an existing lodge and working as a team with the other lodge participants will
enable all student to gain a wealth of knowledge and new skills in a very friendly environment.
By interacting in a fully working Craft Lodge with other Crafts, great insights, depths of
knowledge and many new skills will be gained.

Some of the topics taught are herb craft, magic, healing, the use of sacred stones, sacred
geometry and numerology. We are also taught a deep respect for this planet; that which
sustains and nurtures us, and of the sacred sites and alignment on the earth. The path is also
very much about ‘know thyself’ and of each individual’s place in the world. Everything taught
interconnects and is a part of a much larger picture; it is knowledge that the ancient peoples
knew that became lost in time. Of course it is the path of the Templars and is the knowledge
and teachings of the Templars. Much more of the Templars is revealed as time goes by.

There is always much to do behind the scenes, much preparation and providing each student
with unique hand crafted working tools, prepared with each individual student in mind. There
is a big commitment involved in respect of the tutor and yet also the greatest of joys too in
respect of witnessing the progress of all students and of the very special bonding of the
brothers and sisters of the lodge.

The online lodge Hattin Lodge welcomes and encourage all students, wherever they may be
based in the world, to gain access to the full teachings of the Gnostic Path. So if students are
unable to get to a physical lodge for various different reasons, whether they are near or far,
Hattin Lodge welcomes to its doors all those who wish to learn this path; to study and to follow
the path via the internet. Each degree has been very carefully designed in order for a ‘solitary’
student to practise in their own space, at a time and of a pace which best suits them. At all
times though the tutor is always at hand via email or telephone to guide, advise and encourage,
so the student has no need to ever worry about being on their own.

Over the last few months Hattin Lodge has gained new students from near and far. In particular
two new students from the USA who are at this moment completing their first three degrees
and I am so happy for them, a wonderful achievement. It is very challenging for me to teach
this path both on line and in person and yet I do feel that I have connected deeply to it before, I
am happy to share more in the future if you are happy to read 😊

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Many Blessings and In Love and Light
Reverend Janis Oulfkih
Craft Tutor of Su.endal Lodge and Hattin Lodge

‘Only when you embrace the darkness can you truly understand the light’

Blessings
Lynda

My usual thanks go out to those who have contributed to this issue of the newsletter.

Previous issues are available to members of TDN here:
http://druidnetwork.org/en/affiliatedgroups/newsletters

Please don’t forget to share this newsletter with the fellow members of your grove. This issue
sent by email is of a lower resolution than that available on the website to keep download time
to a minimum but a higher resolution copy can be emailed on request.

Anybody who wants to contribute to the Solstice Newsletter will be very welcome and the
deadline is Tuesday 28th December.
The Druid Network is pleased and excited to be hosting its first Conference. Designed to be a public presentation of Druidry in its many and diverse forms, from eco-protest through academic study, experiential ritual, healing and celebration.

Evening entertainment from Jim Faupel and Marianne van der Es

Tickets are now available at £12.50 per person
(£1 per child aged 5 - 16, other concessions available)