

GURPS

Celtic Myth

By Ken and Jo Walton

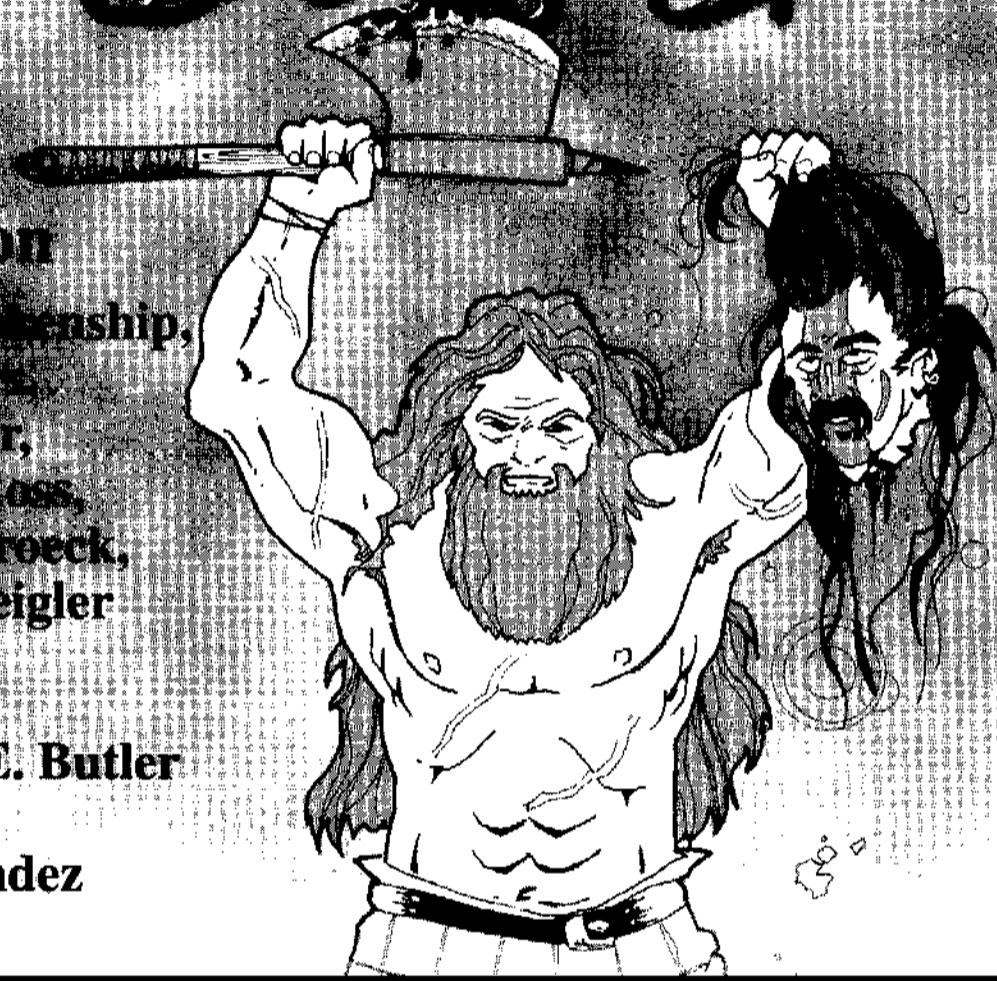
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Thanks to: Derek Stokes, Helen Marsden, Jim Riley, Mary Lace, Lancaster Library and the library of the University of Lancaster for help with books; Lesley Grant of Trinity College Dublin for solving the problem of the Picts; Jez Green, Phil Masters, Steffan O'Sullivan, Andrew Morris, and Cuchullin for helpful comments and suggestions; everyone on rec.arts.sf.written who suggested modern Celtic fiction; Robin D. Laws, and James Wallis for "Woad Warrior" jokes; Mary Lace, and Nora & Allan Walton for babysitting above and beyond the call of duty and, last but not least, to my grandmother, Nancy Lace, for introducing me (Jo) to these stories in the first place.

Special thanks to Ahasuerus the Wandering Jew for help with dating.

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ISBN 1-55634-195-4

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

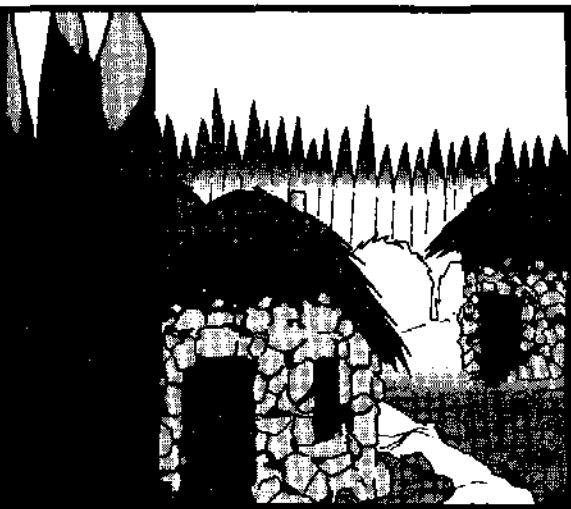
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ABOUT GURPS

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PAGE REFERENCES

See *GURPS Compendium I*, p. 181, for a list of abbreviations for *GURPS* titles, or for the most recent list, visit our Web site at www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html.

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition, Revised*. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *GURPS Basic Set* – e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition, Revised*. M denotes *GURPS Magic, Second Edition*; G refers to *GURPS Grimoire*; BB means *GURPS Bunnies & Burrows*, S is *GURPS Supers*.

Introduction

Two druids make a woman out of flowers to be a king's wife. A warrior chases a white deer into a green hill and finds himself in another world. A fisherman in a coracle sees a horse riding across the waves, but the rider claims that he sees a plain of blossoming trees.

This book is about roleplaying in the world of the pagan Celts, the people who lived in western Europe before the coming of the Romans, and of Christianity. It is about the mythological and magical lives of the Celts.

"Celtic"

The word "Celtic" has many meanings; in this book it means the lives of the pagan Celts as remembered in their stories and rediscovered by archaeology. Much later "Celtic" folklore (such as leprechauns) has been excluded, and some liberties have been taken with the evidence to provide a world suitable for roleplaying. (For instance, there is little solid evidence about the druids.)

Spelling and Pronunciation

Two Celtic languages, Welsh and Irish, are used for names, places, and objects in *GURPS Celtic Myth*. Welsh is phonetic and is left unchanged, but Irish is far from phonetic (for more on Celtic pronunciations, see *Glossary*, p. 123). Where a standard or familiar Irish form exists, it is used. If there is no commonly recognized form the spelling has been phoneticized.

As for the pronunciation of the word "Celt" itself, the "hard c" is most likely correct (the ancient Greeks reported that these people called themselves the *Keltoi*, and that is the usage found in most modern Celtic lands). People preferring to use the "soft c" pronunciation can make a case for it as well (that's the version used in the Celtic regions of France).



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Ken Walton lives in Lancaster, England. He is a full-time RPG writer. He has published in *White Dwarf*, *Pyramid*, *Arcane*, and other magazines. He has projects forthcoming for *Warhammer FRP* and *Heliograph*.

Jo Walton lives in Swansea, South Wales. She is a graduate in Classics and Ancient History from the University of Lancaster. She has just published her first novel, *The King's Peace*, from Tor Books, New York. It reflects her long standing interest in things Celtic; indeed, if she hadn't written *GURPS Celtic Myth*, she probably wouldn't have gone on to write it and its sequel, *The King's Name*, coming out in 2001. She has published a number of short stories in magazines. She has written some roleplaying bits and pieces, on her own and with Ken, for Hogshead, Last Unicorn, and others.

1 The Celtic World



PRYDAIN AND ERIU IN TIME

Fixing a time for events in a *Celtic Myth* campaign can be difficult. Prydain (Britain) and Eriu (Ireland) rested within a span of time that has its beginning at the arrival of Partholan in Eriu (circa 2800 B.C.) and its ending with the arrival of the Romans in Prydain (43 A.D.) and of St. Patrick in Eriu (432 A.D.). The fact that these last two events are separated by 400 years, while Prydain and Eriu are separated by a strip of water that can be sailed in an afternoon, says much.

Because of the magical nature of the lands, and because of the close proximity of the Otherworld, Celtic time was a shifting dimension. Time progressed in a normal linear fashion for anyone who stayed in one place, but for those who traveled, time made strange skips and jumps; a man could set out at sunrise for a nearby dun, and return at sunset to find his familiar home a weed-strewn ruin, abandoned for centuries. Anyone with Sidhe ancestry, or who was in any way magical, carried magic items, or traveled with anyone who fulfilled those conditions, was especially likely to experience some time displacement during travel.

Travelers who wandered freely would be pulled by the land toward certain times especially suited to them, and it would be hard for them to resist, or even to be aware that it was happening. Travelers who set out from Emain Macha in the time of Connor (circa 100 B.C.) to seek Cu Roi in Mumu may find him, or they may find the Tuatha de Danaan in full possession despite the fact that the Tuatha relinquished their hold on Eriu a thousand years earlier. What such people find should depend on the desired plot.

In general, the strength of purpose of the voyagers should help keep them on track. They should never be able to rely on time displacement to get them away from their enemies. If this doesn't suit the style of campaign, then keep everything within one time frame, or use the Otherworld (see p. 65) to change time frames.



"There are two things to which the Gauls are devoted: the art of war and subtlety of speech."

— M. Porcius Cato



The Celtic World-View

The Celts saw the world as a place on the borders of possibility, as both mysterious and familiar. They accepted magic and the Otherworld as easily as the grass and trees. They accepted wonders, strange things found in the fields. They loved hearing tales of mysterious places far away and of great heroes long ago. If those great heroes turned up one day out of the mists looking for lodging, they were welcomed. The Celts didn't expect the world to be completely predictable, nor did they seek an explanation for everything. The Celts accepted this approach to the world, and would find our mechanistic world-view strange – and probably amusing. The how and why of the world was arcane and better left alone. Their attitude to magic and wonders was, "Druids may meddle with that sort of thing, but while a warrior isn't surprised by it, he doesn't ask questions about it either."

This doesn't mean that they didn't care what happened to them. They cared very much for their honor, their clan, and their reputations; everything that was important to the Celt, particularly to the hero, was important *personally*.

The day-to-day reality of a Celt's life was very real and more concerned with dealings with other Celts than with the gods, the Sidhe (pronounced *shee*), or other magical beings. The worst thing that could happen to a Celtic hero was to be thought poorly of by his peers; he would genuinely prefer death. As examples, Ferdiad went to fight Cuchulain, his best friend, knowing he'd be killed, to avoid ridicule; Cuchulain broke a gesa (see p. 9) and ate dogmeat to avoid being thought haughty.

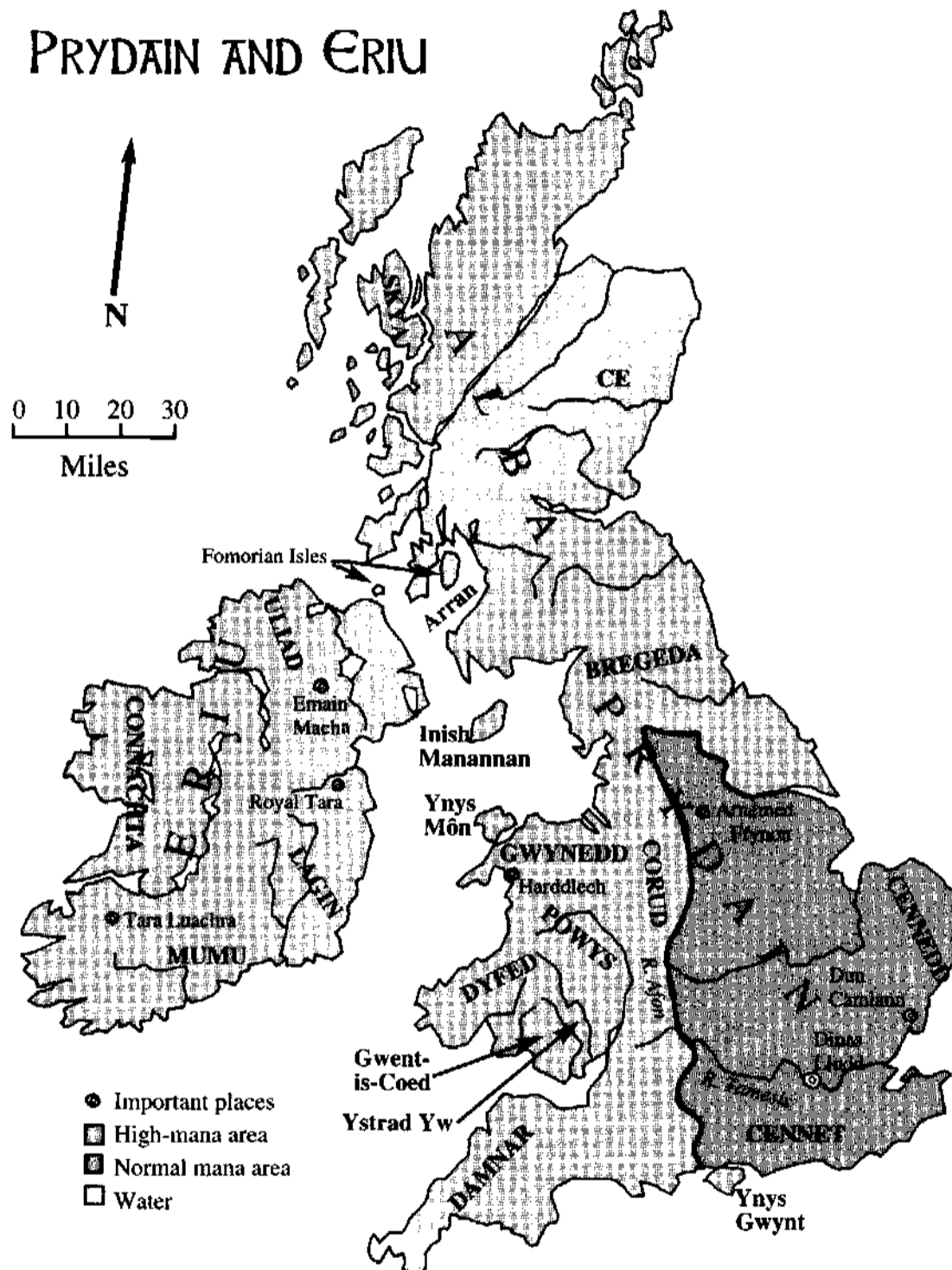
They enjoyed life to the fullest – restraint was not a Celtic virtue. They had the ability to throw themselves into their endeavors, to give all they had to what they were doing. What they had they gave with both hands. Cailte, talking about his leader Finn Mac Cool, could find no higher praise than to say, "If the brown leaves falling in the woods were gold, if the waves of the sea were silver, Finn would have given away the whole of it."

The Celts loved life, and lived it with the immediacy and vividness of those who know that they could die at any minute. Theirs was not a sanitized world-view: Deirdre discovered the image of her true love in a raven tearing at a bloody carcass in the snow (see p. 34). They found nothing in the natural world disgusting, or shameful. The only shameful things were human behaviors – attacking a guest, refusing a fair fight, telling lies (as opposed to speaking less than the whole truth), et cetera. There were many joys to be found, but even the greatest joys were touched with sadness. While a story might be thigh-slappingly funny in the middle, it often ended on a down-note; the hero could be struck down in his prime, or live to melancholy old age to tell the stories of great days gone by to the next generation.

The greatest wish of a hero was that the story of his deeds would live on; thus storytellers and bards were among the most honored Celts (see sidebar,

p. 9). The mood of these stories was one of *hiraeth*, a Welsh word meaning longing, nostalgia, or homesickness. *Hiraeth* celebrated what had passed away, or was about to depart, not what was present. The most famous Celtic poem of all began "Maytime is a splendid time" and continued to celebrate Spring before saying that winter's frosts come all too soon to wither the bright promise. The ability to slip into this mood of pleasant melancholy at any time was typical of Celts. (For examples of these bittersweet tales, see Chapter 3.)

PRYDAIN AND ERIU



CELTS AND THE NATURAL WORLD

The Celtic world was very close to nature. Outside the walls of the dun, beyond the fields, the natural world spread for hundreds of miles. There could be pathways through this wilderness, but they were few and far between. The great primeval forests still covered Prydain (Britain) and Eriu (Ireland), the great boglands and marshes had not even begun to be drained, and the mountains were largely unclimbed.

GEOGRAPHY

Prydain tilted gently southwestward, so the northeast end, Alba (Scotland), had raised beaches while the southwest end, Damnar (Cornwall) and Dyfed (Wales) in particular, had sunken valleys. Much of the western and northern part of the island was mountainous, while the southern and eastern parts were flatter. Although the mountains weren't tall relative to mountains in other parts of the world, they rose directly from sea level and not from a high plateau. This meant that every foot of height had to be climbed directly. It also meant that there was no problem with lack of oxygen at the top. The highest mountains in northern Prydain, around Ben Nevis, were snow-covered all year. The low-lying areas were fertile and produced wheat and grapevines.

Eriu was generally softer, with more rounded contours and no very high mountains. It was very green and fertile, with many lakes, streams, and rivers.

Climate

The climate of Prydain and Eriu was unpredictable. It was rarely possible to go to bed at night sure of what the weather would be like in the morning. Prydain and Eriu were predominantly wet; annual rainfall varied between 25 and 100 inches. Eriu, western Prydain, and Alba averaged 40-60 inches. Eastern Prydain averaged 30 inches. The islands were also windy, especially around the coasts. Gales were frequent in spring and autumn everywhere except far inland. Thunderstorms predominated in the southeast in summer, especially in Cennet (in southeastern Prydain).

Temperature varied according to location. Eriu in general was milder than Prydain and rarely fell below 36° in winter. Temperatures in Alba could fall below 33° and in the rest of Prydain the coldest temperature was between 33° and 35°. Coastal areas tended to be warmer than inland places in winter and cooler in summer. Snow was uncommon and short-lived everywhere except in the highlands of Alba. In Eriu it was very unusual for snow to settle at all. There were always exceptions – hard years when the winters were bitter – but in general winters were damp and chilly rather than frosty. Winter lasted from Samain until Imbolc (see p. 26), and sometimes came early and stayed late. Summers could be wet, too, and high summer temperatures tend to range from 66-72°.

Continued on next page . . .



GEOGRAPHY (CONTINUED)

Flora and Fauna

Much of these islands was forested. Common trees included the 18 Magic Trees (see *The Tree Talismans*, p. 93). There were many wildflowers in spring and summer, including bluebells, daffodils, and wild roses. Wild animals included bears, boars, and deer. Small animals like mice, shrews, hedgehogs, stoats, weasels, and red squirrels were very common and would be seen in any quiet place. Fresh water teemed with edible fish.

KINGDOMS

The kingdom names marked on the map on p. 7 are either those used in the mythology or the names of the pre-Roman tribes of the area translated back from Latin to P-Celtic (see p. 123). These areas may represent confederacies, many separate kingdoms, or simply a convenient geographical division. In the Celtic world, borders in general are less distinct than they appear at first.

Using Modern Maps

Modern maps of Great Britain and Ireland are far more detailed than the map on p. 7, and they are ideal for physical information on an area. The problem with modern maps is that in the 2,000 years that divide us from the Celts there have been a Roman invasion, a Saxon invasion, Viking raids, a Norman invasion, and an Industrial Revolution. Many of today's cities were open fields only 200 years ago. (This is less of a problem with Ireland, which is still primarily agricultural, than it is with mainland Britain.) Be very careful with names on modern maps; however old and unusual they may seem, they are unlikely to be Celtic.

Consequently, the Celts knew a great deal about the natural world and its plants and animals. Hunting and trapping were part of everyday life, and one of the most common magical things which could happen to a person was being turned into an animal.

Unlike some primitive cultures, the Celts did not believe in a host of strange monsters lurking in the dark forests and moorlands. They knew the real animals that lived there; if there was anything supernatural, it was likely to be exactly that – “super” natural. Creatures of the Otherworld were not hideous monsters with strange powers, but natural creatures writ large.

The few strange beasts that did exist were unique creatures, created by magic for a particular purpose, not whole species. If someone came across a cat which could turn into a ball of fire, guarding a treasure, it was fairly certain that there were no more of these creatures nearby. Such creatures could be considered wonders (see sidebar, p. 9) rather than actual living animals.

Animal Intelligence and Speech

In a mythical Celtic campaign, many animals are seen as intelligent creatures with their own aims, eager to help or hinder humans. If this is the case, all animals born in wild-mana areas (and many others) have IQ 10, and the ability to understand human speech and to speak, although they do not often do so. This would mean that the cattle of the Sidhe, for example, would be intelligent enough to resent poor treatment, and capable of doing something about it – at the very least refusing to submit meekly to being butchered.



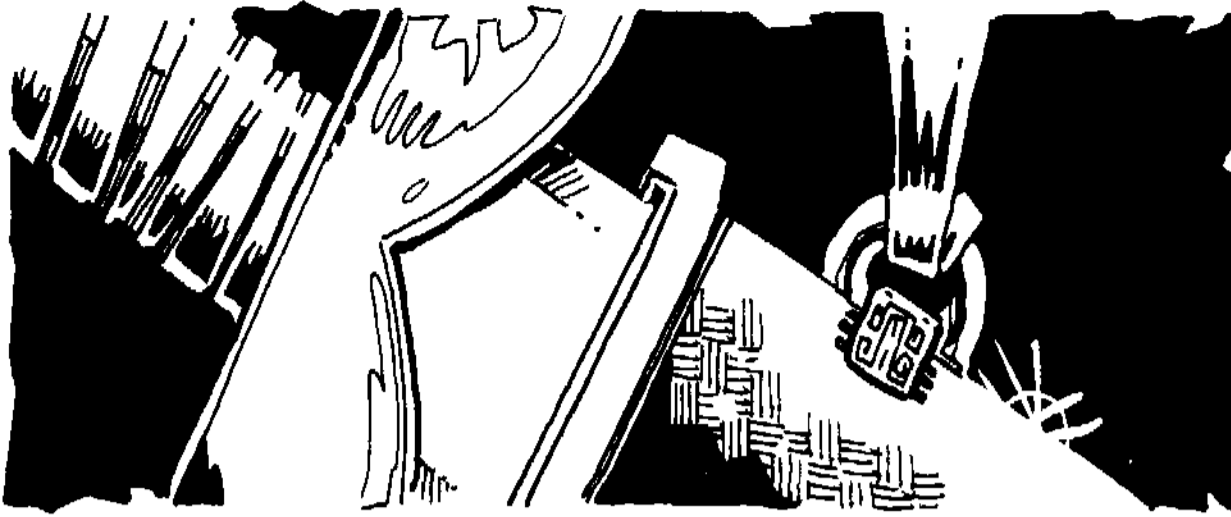
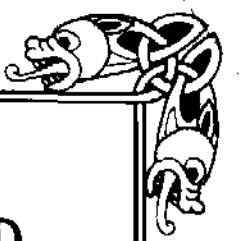
Celtic Honor

“A man lives after his life, but not after his honor.”

– Finn Mac Cool

Nothing was more important to Celts than personal honor. Guilt and innocence were unimportant compared to reputation. The worst thing that could happen to a Celt was to be laughed at. The mere threat of being satirized (see p. 18) was more than enough to get most people moving. The three great virtues of Celtic honor were hospitality, generosity, and bravery. No Celt wanted anyone to think that he lacked any of





WARRIORS AND STORYTELLERS

For Celtic heroes, doing great deeds was not enough – these deeds had to be remembered in stories and songs. Toward this end, most player character bands should include at least one bard, harpist, or satirist who can witness feats and create compelling tales to be told in the king's hall later.

If none of the PCs are storytellers, the GM should ensure that an appropriate NPC takes that role. This NPC doesn't have to be a passive recorder of events; he can play as active a role as the heroes in his own way. If the storyteller isn't entirely sympathetic to the heroes (for example, if he's a satirist with a grudge against one of them, following the group in order to ridicule its failures), the warriors have to work to impress their chronicler, and his satires can goad them to more awe-inspiring deeds. An antagonistic storyteller can even spread lies about a hero, forcing him to defend his honor in some way other than merely killing the liar, as killing a storyteller is unlikely to endear the hero to other bards.

these virtues. Most would genuinely have preferred to die than to acquire a reputation for cowardice or meanness. In fact many *did* die for this reason, glorious reputations intact.

Another important aspect of honor was loyalty to lord, clan, and kingdom. These definitely came after personal honor, but were still important. If someone swore to defend his lord or kingdom, he would fight to prevent even a simple insult to them. Unscrupulous people sometimes used this against heroes, by threatening to make up an unfair satire if the heroes didn't do what the blackmailer wanted.

Vengeance was another aspect of honor. If it was too late to prevent an insult or an injury, it was never too late to avenge one. Forgiving enemies was alien to Celtic culture. It *was* possible to accept atonement for an insult, but not fully honorable. When Lugh's father was killed Lugh imposed a nigh-impossible task on the murderers (see *The Sons of Tureen*, p. 119), and even when they performed it he wouldn't use his healing powers to save their lives. Vengeance could take a long time, particularly in the case of the Sidhe, who were prepared to wait generations for the perfect moment for vengeance to arrive.

THE GESA

The gesa was a kind of personal taboo, a magical restriction or demand such as "Must be first to draw a weapon" or "Must not be woken from sleep." If gesas were broken, swift and unpleasant retribution would *inevitably* follow. (For more information on gesas, see p. 86).

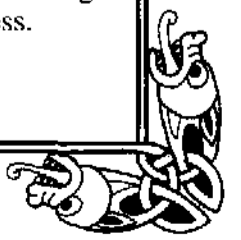
Heroic Celts spent a lot of time trying to discover what their gesas were, and trying to do the best they could in the world before their gesas or disasters overtook them. The more heroic and important a person was, the more gesas surrounded him.

Often a hero had to choose between his gesas and his king or his friends. If he chose to break a gesa, then he was knowingly inviting some doom on himself. If he chose not to, then he had to live with himself after betraying his honor. Sometimes circumstances forced the breaking of a gesa, especially in the case of death gesas when certain conditions had to be fulfilled before someone could die; a hero would try to keep these conditions secret, but they couldn't be avoided forever. (See *The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel*, p. 38 for an example.)

WONDERS

Wonders were inexplicable magical things unique to Celtic mythology, which might be seen when wandering about the Celtic world. They don't add anything to a plot or serve any purpose. They don't *do* anything – they are just wonders. In game terms, wonders are created when a true critical success is rolled in a wild-mana area (see p. 93), the wonder remaining forever thereafter. If someone investigates one he just finds it, whatever it is, doing whatever it does; it can't be changed, derailed, or used. There are examples in many stories, and they are something which can easily be put into an adventure to make the world stranger.

There are any number of things that could happen to people who attempt to meddle with a wonder. If they find an apple tree, one side of which is blossoming while the other is burning but not being consumed, touching it might burn them – or the fire might be cold. A branch broken off may stop burning, or it may burn until it is consumed, or it may continue burning but not being consumed as if it were still on the tree. Or it may be impossible to break a branch by any means. In this case the GM may not mind the party having a branch which burns with cold fire and cannot be consumed, but by and large make sure they are relatively useless.



DOING IT BY THREES

The Celts believed in organizing everything in threes. Thus the "Triads Ynysydd Prydain" (the "Threes of the Islands of Britain") are lists of facts arranged in groups of three: "The Three Most Generous Men of the Prydain," "The Three Greatest Drunkards of Prydain," and so on. This is still a common superstition in Wales today; one event has no significance, but if two similar things have happened then a third is sure to follow. There can even be a sense of relief at a third disaster, because at least that series of events is concluded.

When possible, GMs should arrange events in a campaign so that they can be viewed as happening in threes. The party could be attacked three times on a journey . . . for three different reasons, by three different groups of people, but three times rather than twice or four times. The attackers could be three warriors, a young one, a middle-aged one, and an old one, giving mythic significance to an otherwise random event.

Doing things in threes can also build anticipation: if the heroes have barely survived a flood and a landslide, they will start to worry about what third natural disaster is coming their way.

It can also be an effective way of organizing enemy actions. If an NPC has made three unsuccessful attacks, then a fourth will use a different method even if the third nearly succeeded. On the other hand some things *always* happen the same way . . .

Using threes to give players information about people and places can make giving routine information more poetic and avoid breaking the Celtic atmosphere. Either give out three pieces of information ("tall, dark, and handsome," or "at the sea's edge, a busy place, ruled by a queen"), or say that it is one of the three best/worst of its kind ("one of the three most gullible men in Prydain," or "one of the three smelliest towns in the Island of Prydain").



The Living Countryside

The Celtic world, where nothing was clearly defined and things could exist in more than one state, was perpetually open to possibilities. Borders of all kinds, including those between this world and the Otherworld, between life and death, between one time and another, were hazy, and easily passed, like veils which could be drawn aside either by accident or by someone who knew the way. That way was always enigmatic, mysterious, and better not investigated. Those who did inquire were drawn to the druids, who said that the way was mystical riddling, impossible to explain in a straightforward manner.

Everything in the Celtic world was potentially alive. Hills could be the homes of powerful Sidhe lords. Standing stones could be entrances to the Otherworld. Many trees were inherently magical, both in themselves and as druidic symbols. Animals had an animal wisdom, different in kind from human but neither superior nor inferior; people had things to learn from them.

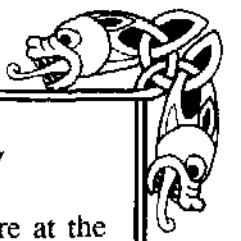
It was a world where the strange could never become familiar but where the familiar could easily become strange. In fact, a great deal of the Celtic world-view can be discovered by musing on two points. The very word "Celt" comes from a root meaning "hidden" or "concealed," the same root that gives us the word "kilt." And in the Celtic art style everything is abstracted, obscured by swirls and curves, beautiful but non-linear. With the Celts the straightforward explanation was never simple, the truth was valued but so was a clever verbal trick that skirted the line between truth and lie, and the shortest distance between two points was inevitably a spiral.



So Much Magic

Everything in this world, no matter how mundane, was potentially brimming with magic. Most people had no control over this magic, but would not be overly surprised if something they'd previously considered inanimate began talking to them. Indeed, there was so much ambient magic that any object which had some spell cast upon it could, in time, develop a mind of its own (see sidebar, pp. 70-72).





TECHNOLOGY

Technologically, the Celts were at the beginning of Tech Level 2. They used iron, but had not yet discovered steel.

Weaponry: The main weapons of the Celtic warrior were spears (used both as missiles and in hand-to-hand combat) and thrusting broadswords. Large knives were also used in battle, and daggers for eating. All weapons were of iron, and could be considered cheap (see p. B74); Celtic warriors often stood on bent swords during battle to straighten them out, or even did so with their teeth! Short bows were available, but not usually used in battle, being more hunting weapons; slings were a much more common missile weapon. See p. 60 for details on weapons.

Armor: Warriors generally wore no armor; spearmen (Celtic mercenaries) often went into battle naked! Occasionally a conical helmet was worn, often elaborately decorated with horns, wings, or metal animals. Most warriors used a small, round wickerwork or wooden shield with metal rim, but occasionally a larger, decorated oval shield was used. A rare king might have a breastplate or a mail shirt.

Travel: Most travel was on foot. Warriors traveled to the battlefield in chariots pulled by two horses. Farm produce was moved in four-wheeled carts drawn by two oxen. Roads were, on the whole, poor or nonexistent. Some of the more important forts had reasonable roads leading to them, to make chariot travel easier. Boggy areas were sometimes crossed by wooden causeways, but bridges across rivers were rare; there were usually fords and common crossing places.

Continued on next page . . .

The Celts did not treat magic as a science, which, if it worked on Monday, it would work the same on Tuesday. Magic was peculiar, and only a druid could understand it. Many Celts had a little magical learning – enough to know which trees were inherently magical at least. Still, people could be aware that rowan would protect them from magical harm, but they wouldn't know how, or to what extent. In a wild-mana or high-mana area, those with Magical Aptitude might be able to use this belief to work actual magic without training (see *Non-Druid Magic*, p. 93), but on the whole, only members of the Druidic Order would actually have learned spells and be able to cast them intentionally.

The riddling nature of the druidic world-view led druids away from action and toward mysteries. Druids were mysterious and riddling without intending to be – to them it seemed the clearest way of expressing their meaning. Druids didn't divide magic from other forms of knowledge; they regarded both seeking and gaining information as important.



Kings, Warriors, and Scholars

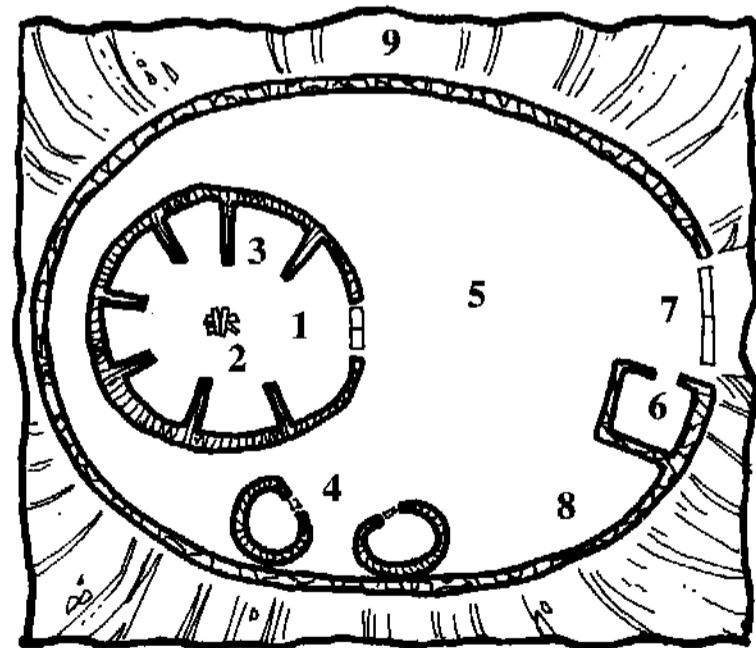
Celtic society was strictly hierarchical. At the top was the king. Below him were the warrior-nobles, those whose tales were generally told in the Celtic stories. Rising out of this group were the Filid, the druids, bards, and other men of learning, equal in status to warrior-nobles. The next class down were the gentlemen farmers, who owned their own land; equal to them were craftsmen, particularly blacksmiths, who were highly respected. At the very bottom of society were peasants and slaves.

CELTIC KINGS

The king was an important and respected figure in Celtic society, but he wasn't all-powerful, and kingdoms were very small. Actually, a king was a chieftain ruling one fortress and the surrounding farmsteads; the next kingdom could be literally a stone's throw away. The most powerful kings had several thousand subjects; the least powerful, a few dozen. The king was very much the "first among equals," and only kept his place at the whim of the warriors who fought for him.

At the death of a king, the warriors of the kingdom met to decide who should succeed him. The new king was chosen from "royal kin" made up of the descendants of a common great-grandfather, so the son of a king didn't automatically succeed his father.

A king had to be physically perfect; any deformity or disfiguring wound disqualified him. Nuada, king of the Tuatha de Danaan, lost his left hand in battle. Dioncet made him a magical hand of silver, which



PLAN OF A TYPICAL DUN

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. King's Hall | 5. Weapon practice ground | 7. Main gate |
| 2. Central fire | 6. Watchtower with weapon stores | 8. Wooden or stone palisade |
| 3. Cubicles | | 9. Ditch |
| 4. Servants' huts | | |

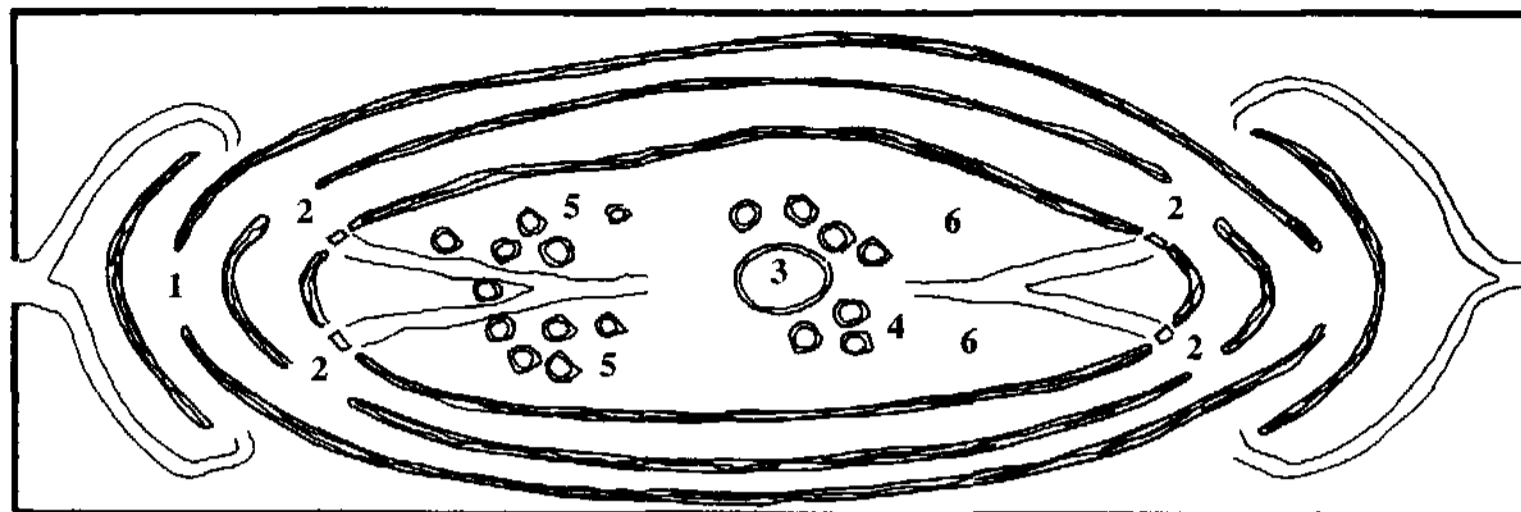
0 10 20
Feet



PLAN OF A TYPICAL HILL FORT

(After A. H. A. Hogg, *A Guide to the Hill Forts of Britain*.)

0 100 200
Feet



1. Defensive earthworks
2. Main gates with watch-towers
3. King's Hall
4. Champions Halls, etc.
5. Village
6. Open ground for combat practice, cattle, etc.

TECHNOLOGY (CONTINUED)

Medicine (TL2): The Celts had almost no knowledge of modern medicine or surgery, relying instead on what we would call "home remedies." A common cure for toothache was a powder made from baked lizards and "nasty beetles." Typical sayings of physicians were: "A cold mouth and warm feet will live long" and "If thou desirest to die, eat cabbage in the month of Coll (August)." (In a fantasy campaign folk medicines are used because they are actually effective, but in a realistic campaign, such remedies should have as much or little effect as they would today.)

Druids and physicians had some knowledge of healing herbs, including such staples as willow bark to reduce fever and spiders' webs to staunch wounds. Small as this knowledge was, it was greater than the medical knowledge in most of the rest of Europe of the time. (There was a famous hospital at Emain Macha, established by Macha of the Red Tresses.) Magical healing was common; while it was unsporting to use magic in combat, it was considered perfectly fair to resurrect the dead and send them back into battle the following day. Certain springs or other bodies of water were famed for their curative powers (see p. 29).

Magic: Magic pervaded the Celtic world. Strange events and wonders abounded. Heroes, however, were usually on the receiving end. Only druids had more than a sketchy knowledge of magical skills, although magical items such as Druid Wands could be used by anyone. Enchanted weapons (often doomed) were quite common; see p. 70, for more details. Even in a realistic Celtic campaign people's attitude to magic should be that, potentially, anything could happen.

worked just as well as the original; nevertheless Nuada could no longer be king, because he was no longer perfect. Later, when Dioncet's son Miach made Nuada a hand of flesh and blood, he regained the kingship.

Usually kings were male, but occasionally a female member of the royal kin was chosen to rule as queen. She then had all the powers a king would have. Such a one was Maeve, queen of Connachta; although she was married to King Ailell, there was no doubt in anyone's mind who ruled the kingdom.

Good kings were associated with economic prosperity, and vice versa: in bad times new kings could be chosen frequently in an attempt to make things better. This sometimes resulted in very unusual people being tried in the role, although they still had to belong to the royal kin. If a king didn't have the respect of the warriors, they wouldn't obey him and would force him to abdicate. In such cases, a new king was chosen. Former kings sometimes continued living in the kingdom "back in the ranks" but some moved to a neighboring kingdom in disgrace, only to return years later at the head of an invading army.

THE WARRIOR ELITE

Directly below the king in the Celtic hierarchy were the warriors, the nobles of Celtic society. They led a life similar to that of King Arthur's Knights of the Round Table, but Celtic warriors were much more interested in battle for its own sake. The entire story of the *Tain Bo Cuailgne*, the great epic of Irish mythology, concerned the efforts of Queen Maeve of Connachta to steal a bull from King Connor of Ulaid (see *The Tain*, p. 36). The title means "The Cattle Raid of Cooley," and the valiant deeds of the great hero Cuchulain were an attempt to prevent the theft of that one bull. The small scale of these wars and raids did not mean that they were unimportant. Nothing was unimportant where honor was concerned. The warrior's honor and the honor of the kingdom mattered more to him than anything. His real desire was for undying, unsullied fame, which encouraged deeds of ridiculous heroism – anything to be remembered. The warrior was also prepared to go to any lengths to avoid ridicule; better to be forgotten than to be remembered for the wrong reasons.

The warrior had his own farmstead, where his wife and children (if he was married) and usually some servants lived. There were also peasants living in huts nearby who worked the land for him. But a warrior's true place was in his king's fortress, helping to guard it, going out on raids against neighboring tribes, and (mostly) having a good time.



Something which Cuchulain said in the *Tain* summed up the attitude of the Celtic warrior: "It is a wonderful thing, if I am but one day and one night in the world, provided that my fame and my deeds live after me."

LIFE IN THE KING'S HALL

The king's hall was the center of the cultural life of the Celts. It was here that the bards performed, feasts were held, and hospitality could be had by any passing stranger.

Because of the way that a person's generosity reflected on his reputation, any traveler could expect free food and lodging at any king's hall. It was considered impolite to ask a stranger about himself before he had eaten, and the stranger could refuse to answer questions if he wanted to, although this was unusual and rude. The extent of a king's hospitality was a measure of his worth as a king. A king who was stingy soon found the story of his meanness spread throughout the land, sung by bards to make him look ridiculous. Once King Gwawl offered to fill a beggar's bag with food (see p. 40), he had to continue, even though the bag was magical and couldn't be filled, lest he become the target of gossip and satire.

A good evening in the king's hall included lots of food. Pork was the main meat, although goose and other wildfowl were also eaten. Mutton was also common, especially in stews. Beef was served only on very special occasions when a whole cow would be spit-roasted in the fireplace. Milk, cheese, and other dairy products were also available. The primary drink was ale (made from barley or oats, and sometimes spiced or sweetened with honey), although at more important feasts, imported wine might be served. The ale was served in a common cup, passed around frequently from hand to hand with everyone taking a mouthful. Another common drink was mead, a very strong drink made from honey. The king's Bard performed, usually songs praising his king and poking fun at other kings. Sometimes a traveling Bard performed, and perhaps the old tales were told. A party of travelers containing a Bard would be expected to tell the tale of their adventures as "payment" for hospitality given.

An important part of the custom of hospitality was the King's Peace. People weren't allowed to bring weapons into the king's hall, nor were they allowed to fight there, even if they were bitter enemies. It was considered one of the worst crimes against society to fight in the king's hall. "Step outside and say that!" was therefore often heard.

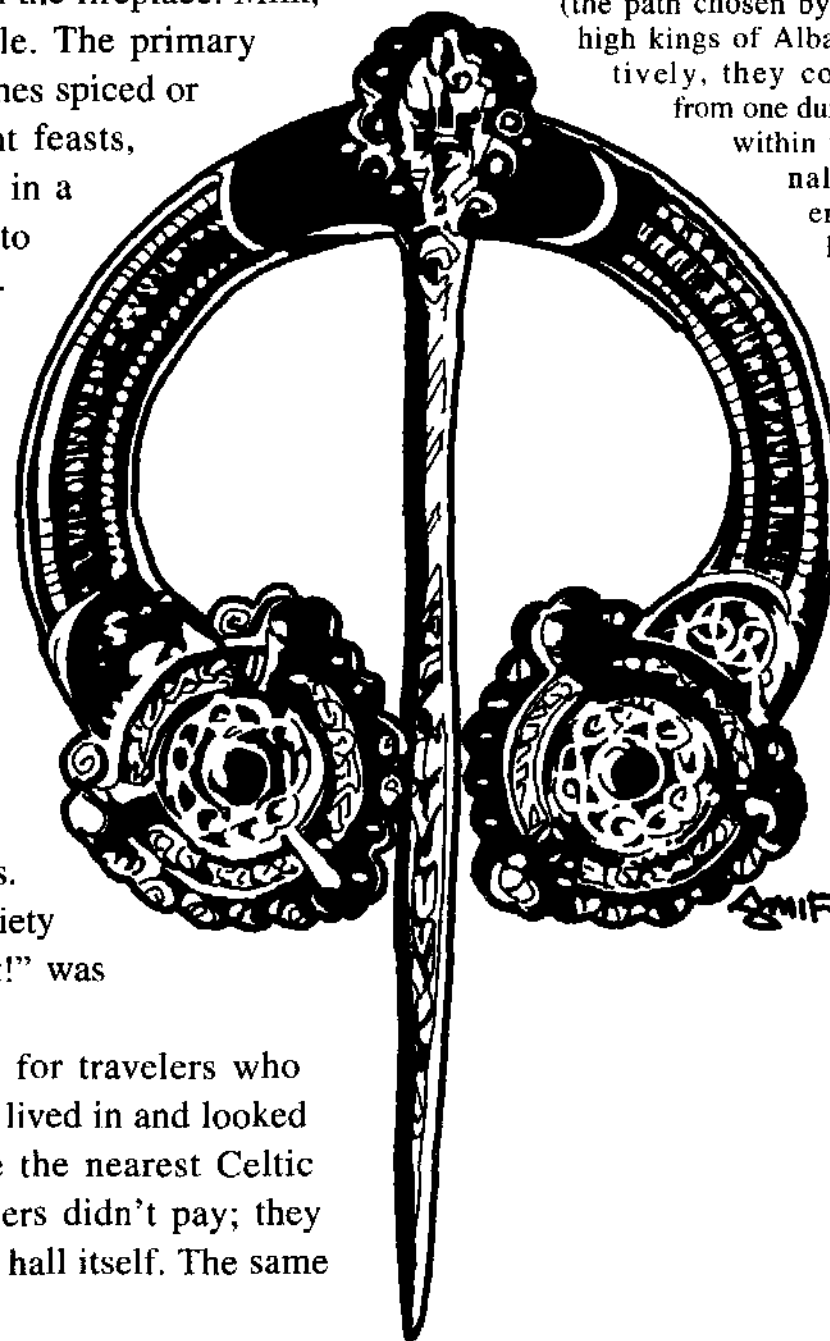
A king with a large realm often set up hostels for travelers who weren't passing near the king's hall. Each hostel was lived in and looked after by one of the king's subjects, and they were the nearest Celtic equivalent to an inn. The difference was that travelers didn't pay; they were fed and entertained as if they were in the king's hall itself. The same customs with regard to weapons and fighting applied.

THE HIGH KING

The idea of a high king was dear to Celtic hearts, and most Celts acknowledged some distant "king of kings" as long as he didn't bother them too much. The Gaelic term for high king was Ard Ri (Ard Righ), and there was always an Ard Ri of Eriu. Sometimes he was the high king at Royal Tara, titular ruler of the whole of Eriu but controlling only a pocket-handkerchief kingdom of his own. At other times he was the king of one of the four *cuiga* of the island and held the title of high king in addition. The four *cuiga* of Eriu were themselves confederations containing many petty kingdoms, so the kings of Ulaid, Mumu, Lagen, and Connachta all had the right to consider themselves overkings or high kings.

In Alba the position of the high king was very precarious, and susceptible to collapse if he asserted his authority. The high king of Prydain was always the ruler of some kingdom who felt himself strong enough to claim the title. If other kings didn't accept the claim there might be war, but this rarely happened.

High kings could choose to remain at home enjoying their titular status (the path chosen by most wise high kings of Alba). Alternatively, they could travel from one dun to another within their nominal kingdom, enjoying the hospitality of the lesser kings.





DRESS

Celts were proud people, and dressing properly was a part of that. Celts were always smartly dressed, especially if going into battle (see sidebar, p. 21).

The thing which the Romans particularly noticed about the Celts was their trousers. Nowhere in the Classical world were trousers worn, whereas they were a hallmark of the Celts. Although most Celtic men wore trousers, the Irish were less fond of them, the aristocracy wearing knee-length tunics, and only servants wearing trousers.

The main items of Celtic clothing were:

A woolen tunic, which came halfway down the thigh (or all the way to the knees if trousers weren't being worn). This had sleeves, and occasionally had a hood, although most Celts would not want to cover their heads for fear of spoiling their fine coiffures. Women wore long tunics which came down to the ground.

Leather boots or shoes. Poorer people could wear leather shoes with wooden soles.

A huge woolen cloak, fastened at the neck with a brooch, worn by both men and women. This was just a large rectangle of woven wool, striped or checked in bright colors. The number of colors allowed in the tartan pattern of the cloak was a measure of status, with a king being allowed seven colors and a peasant only one.

The Celts also wore much jewelry, with golden arm- and neck-rings (torcs) being the most common. The brooch which fastened the cloak was very finely made, of gold or silver, with intricate workmanship of knotwork and stylized animals common. Finger rings were also worn in large numbers by those who could afford them.

LEARNING AND LITERATURE

One curious aspect of Celtic society was the high level of learning among the common folk. Knowledge of poetry and the ability to make up a poem or story, as well as a talent for sophisticated word-play, were considered normal for Celtic warriors. Celts weren't empty-headed barbarians in the Conan tradition, but sophisticated men with a deep knowledge of the oral tradition of their people. It was said that both Cuchulain and his wife Emer knew the secret language *bérta na filíed* which the poets spoke.

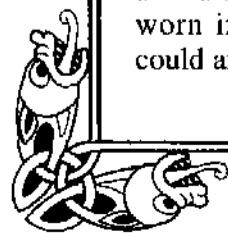
One of the duties of all members of the Druidic Order (see p. 82) was to teach children. All children of warriors, kings, and learned men received the same education, mostly in the form of bardic poetry which taught them history and religion. This education began at the age of seven, when children were fostered. How much they learned depended on their aptitude and intelligence. Lessons were generally held in the open air, or in the king's hall in cold weather. If children lost interest and stopped turning up, their parents could reproach them but the druid would not; thus everyone had the amount of learning that suited him. Those who really enjoyed the lessons continued learning and eventually became druids themselves (see p. 82).

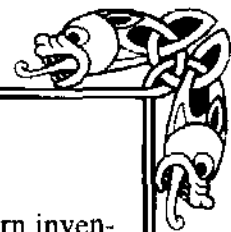
The important thing to remember is that the "literature" of the Celts was *oral*. The songs, poems, stories, and epics of the Celts were all memorized. A good poem could be made up on the spot in the king's hall, and then remembered and passed on by its hearers. Most people knew the most popular portions of Celtic epics by heart, if not all the minor sections. While druids knew Ogham, the Celtic writing system, it was mainly used for spells and short messages carved in wood or stone. It was only taught to children with real aptitude for druidic learning who were likely to go on to become druids.

The Filid was the name given to the class of learned men, including but not limited to druids. All judges and legal experts also belonged to this class.

PEASANTS AND SLAVES

Below the kings, warriors, and druids were peasants and slaves. The dividing line between peasants and slaves was blurred. Slaves were usually peasants from other settlements who were captured in battle. Neither group played a





great part in the heroic life of the land. They acted as servants and farm laborers for the warrior elite and were rarely mentioned in the stories. They lived in poverty in mud huts and weren't allowed to carry weapons under any circumstances. When battles were fought, they were fought between warriors, and peasants and slaves took no part.

However, the peasants were very important . . . they did the work of tending animals and growing crops to feed the rest of the society. Their lives revolved around agriculture, so they cared deeply about the fertility of the land and were closely involved with the religious rituals that kept it fruitful. They also had a special direct relationship with the king, because a good king made the land rich and a bad king could make it barren.

The life of a peasant could be very hard; for example, they had a high infant mortality rate. But the peasants didn't starve while others feasted, because they could claim hospitality like anyone else. They did not often do so, but in very bad times they could shame the king into sharing some of what had been taken from them; thus everyone suffered in times of famine.

Peasants didn't have the glamour of warriors and druids, nor did they have their individual doomed fates. They had their own dignity and were not despised by those with other stations in society. They could choose to become (mercenary) spearmen if the life appealed to them, and a good spearman occasionally rose from the ranks to become a warrior. They also, more unusually, became members of the Druidic Order if they showed aptitude. Peasant children were expected to work hard, but they could join the other children for lessons with the druid.



Celtic Women

Women in Celtic society were the nominal equals of men. Being the wife of a Celtic warrior usually involved staying at home and looking after the children, but even when women were "mere" wives, their husbands listened to their counsel and often acted on it.

There are examples of very strong women in all the stories, such as Queen Maeve of Connachta and Rhiannon of Dyfed. There are also examples from the historical period; Cartimandua and Boedicea were real Celtic warrior women, queens who led their people against the Romans. On the other hand there are plenty of examples of weak-willed women doing what their families told them to do. Maeve was absolute ruler of Connachta; her husband and everyone else did her bidding. Her daughter Finavir, however, raised no objection to being offered in marriage to whomever could defeat Cuchulain.

There were female poets and satirists: Levarm, the foster mother of Deirdre, was one. There were female druids, such as Birog who saved Lugh's life as a child. Most impressive of all were the fighting women. Skya was the best warrior in Prydain and Eriu; when she got older she set up a school for warriors on the island of Skye to train the next generation. Buannan was another warrior woman who retired to run a school for warriors. Cuchulain's

KILTS

The kilt was a relatively modern invention. For many centuries, the Highland clans of Scotland had been wearing "plaid," a sort of tartan toga they wrapped around their entire bodies, leaving the knees bare. But after the Jacobite Rebellion, England passed the Disarming Act of 1746, which banned the clans from carrying weapons, wearing any tartan, or playing bagpipes ("an instrument of war" - see below).

In the following years, the Celtic revival began, started by the publication of James MacPherson's *Ossian*. The Highland clans underwent a transformation of image, from violent brigands to noble savages. When the Disarming Act was repealed in 1782, everything Scottish became fashionable and tartan was "in." But the gentlemen of Edinburgh wanted something slightly easier to wear than a toga. The kilt was born, with all the romance attached to tartan and bare knees, but none of the inconveniences.

When George IV visited Scotland in 1822, he did so in full Scottish regalia in a grand affair stage-managed by Sir Walter Scott. This led to the kilt being afterwards associated with the Establishment, worn by royalty on ceremonial occasions, and to its becoming part of the uniform of various Scottish regiments.

Bagpipes

Some people say that bagpipes are a musical instrument, others, an instrument of torture. They consist of a bag, held under the arm and squeezed, which forces air through tubes in an approximation of musical notes. At their best they can be awesome. At their worst they are merely ghastly. They are always extremely loud and start very unexpectedly. Scottish regiments play them when going into battle.

People encountering bagpipes for the first time should make a Fright Check. On subsequent occasions this should become a Fright Check +2. Bagpipes can be as disconcerting in a concert hall as in a battlefield. They are a relatively modern invention and were not part of Golden Age Celtic culture (but see p. 17).



LIVING ON HOSPITALITY

Since hospitality was such an important attribute, particularly for a king, strangers were always invited in and given food and shelter. A poor peasant family might not have had much, but what they had they shared. A stingy person could stick to the letter of hospitality, not the spirit, hiding all the best food and drink and only sharing the worst, but he would never eat the best while giving guests poorer fare. It would be perfectly possible for a group of Celtic adventurers to travel around the Celtic world indefinitely, living on hospitality.

Of course, travelers were expected to give something in return, usually in the form of entertainment. Singing, playing a musical instrument, or telling the tale of their adventures were all acceptable. A present to the king or head of household would also be acceptable, as long as it was given in the spirit of a gift, and not as payment for the food. If the travelers gave nothing in return for hospitality, nothing would be said openly, but they would be less welcome if they called back at the same place, and they would gain reputations for being inhospitable themselves. A second visit could see them sitting with the servants rather than with the king and his warriors.

A settled group of heroes would be expected to be generous in their turn, giving hospitality to people visiting their homes. Adventurers who spent all their time feasting in the king's hall and never hosting their own feasts would soon gain a reputation for stinginess, and satires would be sung about them.



mother, Dechtira, was charioteer to her half-brother King Connor before Cuchulain's birth, and Ayfa, the sister of Skya, was a woman warrior whose prowess tested even Cuchulain's might!

There is no evidence as to how many women chose to learn weapons, poetry, or magic. While women warriors were by no means common, they were not disapproved of, or indeed seen as anything out of the ordinary. This was quite different from the Roman records that mention Cartimandua, Boedicea, and Gaulish women fighting beside their men; the Roman writers were clearly shocked and horrified. There were Irish historical records of women fighting in battles alongside men up until the 6th century A.D.



Warfare

Warfare was part of everyday life to Celts. Hardly a day went by without some sort of conflict in a Celtic settlement. Given the Celts' reputation for throwing drunken feasts, and their love of boasting, it wasn't surprising that fights broke out. But since fighting in the king's hall was against the law, these fights took the form of formal challenges. Sometimes these boasts and challenges led to war with other clans.

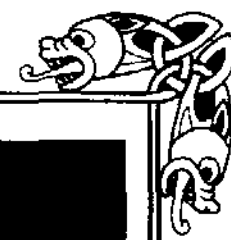
Fighting between warriors of the same dun could take the form of brawls, or weapons could be drawn, depending on how friendly they felt. Kings took a dim view of champions who reduced the kingdom's fighting strength by maiming or killing other champions. The intensity of combat was agreed between the combatants before the fight began; the sight of someone drawing a weapon in a fistfight would break up the single combat as all the watchers came to the aid of the victim. Drawing a weapon in a fistfight, or starting a fight in the hall, earns the perpetrator a -3 Reputation. Fighting in self-defense in the hall when someone else started the fight was permitted, but only with the aim of getting the fight outdoors and keeping the King's Peace.

SINGLE COMBAT

One of the most common customs of Celtic warfare was the single combat, including the challenge in the king's hall, and individual heroes choosing opponents on the battlefield and fighting them alone. One of the most famous (and tragic) single combats in Irish mythology was that between Cuchulain and Ferdiad during the war between Ulaid and Connachta (see *Cuchulain and Ferdiad*, p. 37).

Fir fer, "Men's Truth," was a rule of conduct according to which a man who offered single combat should not be opposed by more than one. It was considered the height of bad manners for others to join in a fight between two champions, even to save the life of a friend. Often, when two kings had a grievance, they approached each other with their armies, prepared to do battle. In the parleying before the battle, it could be agreed that the two kings would fight in single combat, with the loser and his army abiding by the result. For an example, see p. 44.





Boasting and insults played a great part in single combat. Often the combatants circled each other for some time, boasting of their past deeds and casting doubts on the opponent's battle prowess before actual combat occurred.

THE CONVENTIONS OF WAR

The Celts, while great warriors, put little faith in complicated strategy or tactics. A battle usually involved the combatants charging into battle in a great mass, each trying to outdo his comrades for the number of heads he could collect (see sidebar, p. 22). While this worked perfectly well against other Celts, it was less effective against disciplined soldiers such as the Romans.

An effective strategy before battle was the attempt to frighten the opposing army. Tacitus described the Celtic army before the Roman attack on Ynys Môn: the warriors stood in a dense mass, and among them ran women in black robes, waving burning brands and screaming. All around them, druids lifted up their arms and called down dreadful curses on the Roman soldiers. Tall, animal-headed trumpets, called *carnyx*, were blown, with a loud braying note. The warriors rattled their spears against their shields and performed feats of arms, to show off their prowess.

In the tales, great heroes traveled to battlefields in chariots, and then got out to fight single combats with enemy warriors. It was more likely, however, that they actually fought from their chariots, throwing spears as they passed each other. Heroes probably only left the relative safety of the chariot when the battle was too thick for the chariot to be of any use.

A Celtic battle was a noisy, chaotic affair, with each individual fighting for his own honor, even at the expense of the overall battle plan. Even as late as 1746, at the Battle of Culloden, many of the MacDonald clan refused to fight because they had been placed on the left of the defenders, while the right side was considered the honorable place to be.

Chariots and Charioteers

The camaraderie between the warrior and his charioteer was legendary. Fighting from a moving chariot, without holding on, required great trust in the person driving. Similarly, the charioteer trusted his warrior companion to defend him, since it was difficult to drive and fight at the same time. Charioteers were expected to be friends and helpers as well as drivers. They often cheered a warrior up when he worried before a battle, and bound his wounds afterward.

FOSTERAGE

The custom of fosterage was widespread among the warrior classes and remained in existence in Scotland up to the 18th century. It wasn't considered appropriate for parents to bring up their own children once they'd reached the age of reason, so parents chose suitable foster-parents (often blood relatives) and arranged for the child to live with them from the age of approximately seven years old. The children would live with their foster-parents until *aimsir togu*, "the age of choice," – 14 for a girl and 17 for a boy. At that age they could return home, remain with the foster-parents, or marry. During their fosterage they learned music, poetry, literature, *fidchell*, hurley, and the skills of war and single combat from their foster-parents and the druids. They also absorbed the values of the community and the importance of honor. The ties formed at this time often lasted a lifetime. The relationship between the foster-parents and the child was often very close, and foster-brothers and -sisters were as close as blood relatives. Almost every Celtic hero was fostered, and exceptions were so rare as to be notable.

Sometimes, when there was a particularly well-born or notable child, competition for fosterage was intense. When Cuchulain came to Emain Macha people almost came to blows. It was unsurprising that relationships between foster children and foster parents who had some choice in which children they'd invite to their households were often warmer than those between children and their blood-parents, where there was often a certain formality.

Just as marriages could cement alliances between countries, warriors would prefer not to attack neighboring countries where their children were being fostered. Thus, offering the son of a hero or king into fosterage with an enemy or an ally of questionable loyalty was a way of asking for peace or strengthening allegiance.





RESPECT FOR THE BARD

In every king's hall sat a bard, singing traditional songs and compositions of his own. Most Bards were members of the Druidic Order, recognizable by their distinctive tonsure, but the title of Bard could be bestowed upon any harper or minstrel whom a king wished to honor or compliment. The Bard's position in the hall was a high and dignified one, and he expected respect as well as gifts and hospitality from his host and any notable visitors.

The bard's duty was to entertain, inform, educate, and remember. The bard was expected to "immortalize" any notable events in song; how well the events were remembered had as much to do with how good the song was as with how interesting or important the events were. Good bards were highly valued, as everyone wanted above all else to be remembered. Two kings could compete through the skills of their bards as easily as on the field of battle or on a *fidchell* board. Wandering bards were treated very well, were given gifts, and could be asked to stay if they caught the king's fancy.

Poets and Satirists

Because poets and satirists could make or break reputations, everyone treated them cautiously. Some satirists took advantage of this and blackmailed people into doing what they wanted by threatening satires. Athairne the Impertunate virtually held two kingdoms for ransom this way. Other people used satirists as weapons, as long as the satirists cooperated; this was a trick of Maeve's during the *Tain*.

A satire could be dangerous in more ways than just by making someone a laughing-stock, although to the Celts that was bad enough. It could have permanent *physical* effects. The high king Meilge's warriors killed a young girl when she was in the form of a deer. Although they did this unknowingly and Meilge was prepared to pay compensation, the girl's brother composed a satire on Meilge which made three blotches appear on his face.

Celtic war-chariots were light, two-wheeled affairs, pulled by two specially-bred ponies. They had sides of wicker (or sometimes wood), fittings of bronze, and wooden wheels with iron rims. There are tales of kings going into battle in chariots plated with silver. The charioteer used an iron goad to get the horses moving.

The driving of a chariot involved etiquette. If two warriors pulled up alongside each other with the horses facing in opposite directions and the shield sides facing each other in a defensive posture, it was a sign of mistrust or hostility, while drawing up on the opposite side was a sign of trust. Deliberately drawing up with shields facing when the reverse was expected was taken as a deliberate insult.

SPEARMEN

Along with the heroes in chariots came spearmen, mercenary warriors who went into battle wearing a sword belt and scabbard, and a collection of golden arm rings and torcs, but otherwise completely naked. Their nakedness had ritual significance, since they believed that it protected them from the weapons of their enemies (see *Spearman's Invulnerability*, p. 80). They were clanless warriors, who fought for any king who provided them with the golden ornaments they desired.

CATTLE RAIDING

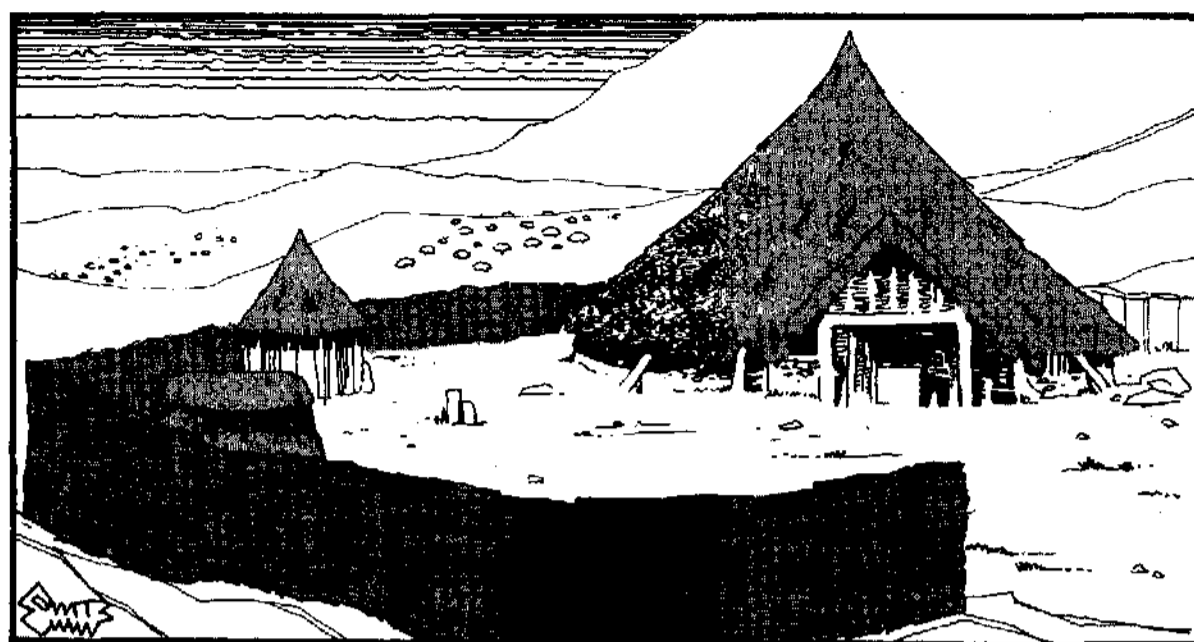
While the Celtic heroes were great warriors, they were also landowners and farmers. One of the main measures of a man's wealth was the number of cattle he owned; this led young Celts to increase their wealth by attacking neighboring duns and stealing their cattle. This caused a constant state of warfare between some settlements, particularly since revenge for the death of clan members was such an important part of Celtic honor. A cattle raid by one dun could escalate to a clan war, which could, in the end, only be sorted out by the intervention of a druid. Even the Sidhe weren't above this practice, and on occasion stole cattle from mortal men.



Celtic Law

Law-giving was something Celts considered very important, and many famous kings organized law codes. A well-ruled land was one where everyone was content that the law was being wisely managed. The ideal for Celtic law was wisdom, not fairness or impartiality.





HALLS AND FORTS

A typical Celtic king's hall was a circular building about 50 feet in diameter with one entrance. It was made of a framework of wooden poles (often elaborately carved) to which were attached wickerwork panels and a thatched roof with a wide overhang. Inside, the hall had curtained partitions around the walls where individual groups (warriors and their friends, the king and his guests, etc.) could eat and talk in relative privacy. During meals, the curtains were pulled back so that the people within the cubicles could see entertainers performing in the open area in the center of the hall. The Celts sat on the floor, with food and drink on low platforms in front of them.

The center of the hall contained the cooking fire, with the smoke going up through a hole in the roof. The fire usually had a cauldron for boiling meat and vegetables over it, unless this was replaced by a spit.

On formal occasions, such as special banquets, everyone sat together in a large circle around the fire, passing food and drink around the circle. Drinks such as ale and mead were served in a common cup, passed around so that everyone could drink.

The hall was usually within a defended enclosure, known as a dun or fort. (London was originally Dinas Ludd, "Ludd's Dun".) This had a palisade of wood or a stone wall around it, and often defensive earthworks. There was a single gate with a watchtower, where the doorman kept watch and held the weapons of anyone visiting the dun. Inside the enclosure, in front of the hall, was a large open space, used for weapons practice, playing hurley, and the like. A larger dun could have small huts for servants to live in, but the warriors had their own duns on their own land, some distance from the king's.

Some of the more powerful Celtic kings had large hill forts, built on hilltops, surrounded by extensive bank-and-ditch earthworks, to make it difficult for attackers to get up the hill. These forts had many small huts (usually round) within them, where the king's servants and craftsmen lived. They also had a large open space, and the settlement's cattle could be brought within the walls in time of war, to prevent raiding. The center of a hill fort was still the king's hall, much as that described above, although possibly bigger and more ornate.

For descriptions of two other, regional, types of construction, see the sidebar pp. 65-66.

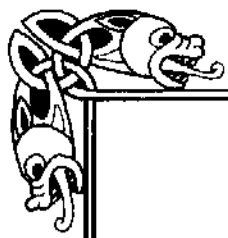
Celtic law was complex, extended, and subtle. It considered only problems arising between individuals, and was concerned with righting personal grievances and obligations. In most cases, a law wasn't so much a prohibition against something as a prescription for compensation in the event of something happening. One duty of druids was judging legal disputes, and some druids specialized as judges, or *brehons*. Not all judges and legal experts were druids, and the study of the law was not accounted a mystery. Kings were expected to be versed in law and to be able to give judgments on occasion. If they felt that the judgment was too difficult for them, they turned to a *brehon*.

Some laws were established by druids as *gesas* that had to be adhered to by everyone, such as the law against bringing weapons into a king's hall and the law that the first fire in Eriu on Beltain must be made at Royal Tara. If any of these *gesas* were broken, then great evil or great change would come to the land.

In general, legal disputes were between families and centered on appropriate redress rather than guilt. The law forbade treacherous killing, but not deaths during a fair fight. The dead person's family could demand compensation (see p. 20), and often the victor agreed to pay it. There were few crimes so terrible that there could be no compensation and for which the criminal had to suffer capital punishment, the primary ones being the murder of a guest or host within a house and kin-slaying. The general punishment for anyone who wouldn't agree to a judgment against him was the *Glam Dicin* (see p. 83), the equivalent of exile from society. When the atonement had been made then the crime *should* be forgiven and no grudge carried forward.

A murdered man did not pass happily to the Otherworld. He would do his best to have the murderer brought to justice. He could return at Samain and tell his family what had happened, or work through inanimate objects near the site of his burial to spread his story. When Lugh passed the spot where his father was stoned to death (see p. 119), the earth spoke to him, naming the murderers. In another case a body was buried under a tree. When the tree was eventually cut down and a harp made of the wood, the harp sang a song naming the murderer.

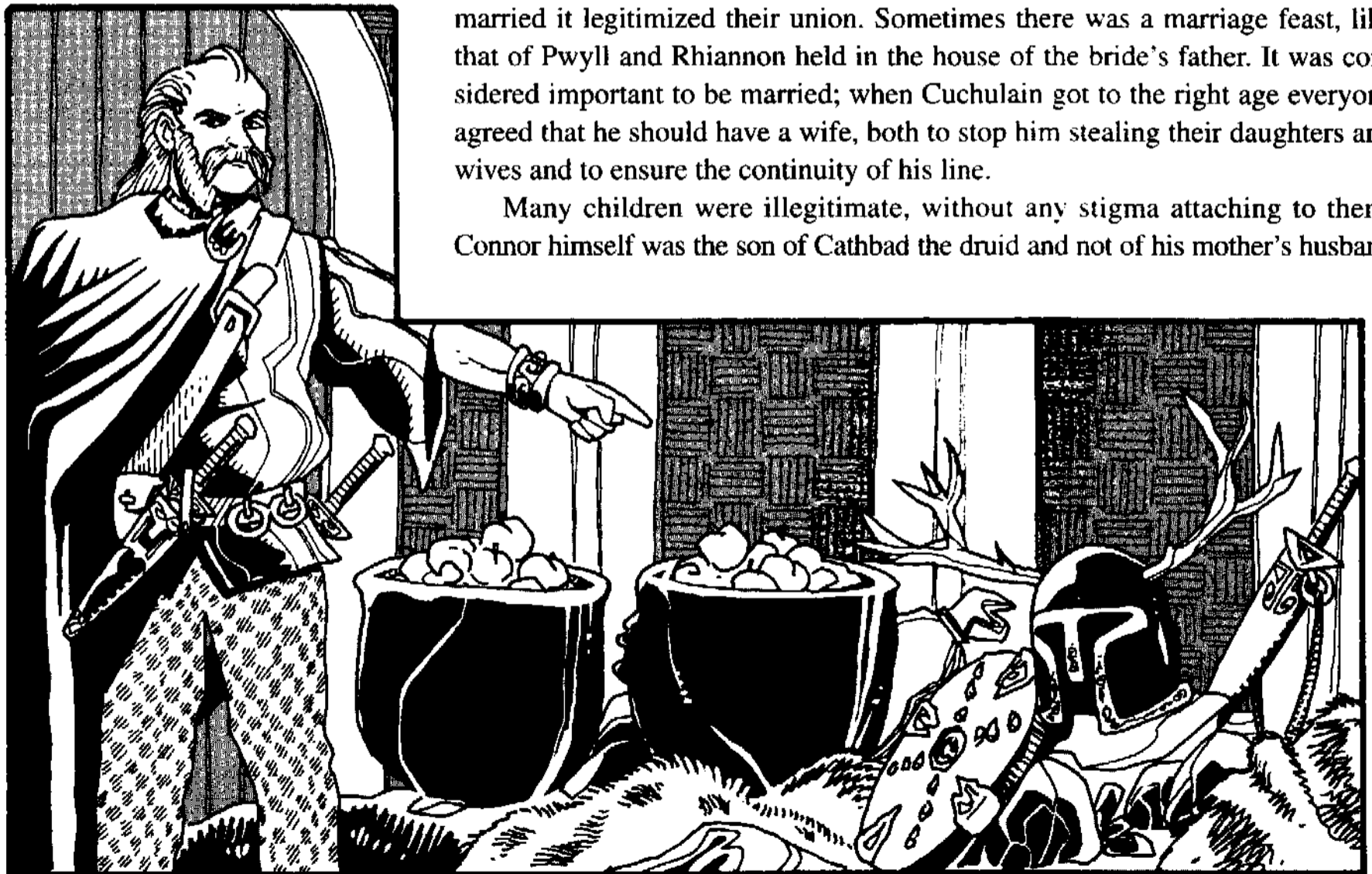
Crimes against property weren't regarded as terribly serious. Stealing cattle was a way of life for some people, including kings and heroes. These cattle raids often led to skirmishes and sometimes war, but more often the response was either a demand for payment for the stolen livestock, or a counter-raid.



THE HERO'S PORTION

One important tradition in the king's hall was that of the hero's portion. When the meat was served in the hall, the largest or most savory portion was supposed to go to the greatest hero present. Great insult could be given if the hero's portion were given to the wrong person. In some cases the meat was carved and then taken to each person individually. In other cases the carver would ask, "Who claims this portion?" The stories of Bricriu's Feast and Mac Da Tho's Pig (see pp. 34 and 37) are good examples of this.

Adventure Seed: When the party is visiting a dun, the king's wife takes a fancy to one of them. He, not realizing that she is the queen, returns her flirtations, and when the food is served, she brings him the hero's portion. The king's champion (or the king himself, if he is the best warrior) challenges the hero to single combat. (If a light-hearted twist is desired local custom could demand that they fight naked, armed only with holly branches, or some similarly symbolic weapon, ridiculous to the modern mind but magically significant to the participants.)



There was a sneaking admiration for a wily thief who managed to steal through clever trickery instead of blatant actions, especially when the trick repaid the victim's poor hospitality. In many stories a hero asked for an item and only if it was refused did he trick the owner or steal it.

HONOR PRICE

If a Celt suffered a wrong, he could demand compensation from the offender. The restitution, or *lòg-n-enech* ("honor price"), that the brehon decided on varied not only according to the offense, but according to the social rank of the victim. The base honor price of an individual was what he would normally earn in two weeks' time, and the severity of the offense would multiply this amount. It was possible to refuse an offer of an honor price if it was considered insufficient, but once an honor price had been accepted it was considered improper to hold a grudge.

When Evnisien mutilated Matholwch's horses (see p. 40), the horses, gold plate, and magic cauldron Bran offered Matholwch in compensation were his honor price. Since Matholwch was a king the restitution was far higher than the original injury; for a lesser victim, the price might have been simply the replacement of the horses, or even less than that. Matholwch's retaliatory ill-treatment of Branwen after he accepted compensation was sufficient cause for the war between him and Bran.

MARRIAGE AND LEGITIMACY

The Celts had an interesting attitude to marriage. There was no marriage ceremony; if a man and woman lay down together with the intention of being married it legitimized their union. Sometimes there was a marriage feast, like that of Pwyll and Rhiannon held in the house of the bride's father. It was considered important to be married; when Cuchulain got to the right age everyone agreed that he should have a wife, both to stop him stealing their daughters and wives and to ensure the continuity of his line.

Many children were illegitimate, without any stigma attaching to them. Connor himself was the son of Cathbad the druid and not of his mother's husband



Fiachna (see p. 32). Dechtira, Connor's charioteer, had a child by Lugh of the Long Hand – Cuchulain (see p. 33). Some women, such as Arianrhod, did not make their illegitimate offsprings' lives easy (see p. 45).

Many heroes had one or another parent from among the Tuatha, the Firbolg, or even the Fomor, and had half-brothers and sisters who were children of their parents' legitimate relationships. There was a strange story about the conception of Cuchulain that said he was actually conceived three times – twice the father was Lugh, and once it was Saltuf, his "human father." Family trees of any major heroic family were very convoluted.

Infidelity was generally considered humorous and not necessarily shameful, and this sexual freedom extended to women as well as men. In the story of Etain, it was not her intended adultery with her brother-in-law Ailell that was frowned upon as much as the fact that she was going to do it just to save his life "even though she was not in love with him." Among the Tuatha de Danaan infidelity was even less important. Still, fidelity was respected and appreciated.

Rape was considered reprehensible, and entirely the fault of the rapist. It didn't shame the victim, nor did the rapist gain the woman if he was prepared to offer matrimony, as in some cultures.



The Celts at Play

When affairs of state weren't pressing, King Connor divided his day in three parts. The first third he spent watching the boys playing games and hurley, the second third was spent playing *brandubh* and *fidchell*, and the final third was spent eating and drinking until sleep came over him. With the addition of some hunting, this was the ideal life for a Celtic king.

HUNTING

As well as being a useful source of meat, hunting served as a pleasant diversion for the king's warriors, a chance for excitement, and weapons-training less risky than warfare.

Wild birds were commonly hunted, particularly water birds such as ducks. These were usually brought down with slings, or occasionally with bows. Warriors competed to see how many birds they could catch in a hunting session. They used chariots for bird-hunting, and took great delight in shooting birds out of the sky while charging at full speed.

Deer were also hunted. A group of warriors only had to see a deer (particularly a stag, which was especially honorable to catch) to be off after it. Deer were hunted on foot with hounds, or rarely in chariots.

The best hunting was the wild boar, for it was the best opponent. Celts saw boars as creatures from the Otherworld, endowed with great power. A boar hunt often ended with the boar at bay, fighting for its life with sharp tusks and trampling hooves against warriors armed with thrusting spears. The trick was to impale the boar without being impaled in return, not an easy task considering the strength of a boar.



DRESSING FOR WAR

Armor was rare in Celtic culture. Although a great hero or a king might have an iron breastplate, or a mail shirt, most heroes went into battle protected only by their skills and their shields. This didn't prevent them from dressing the part. A king usually had a fancifully decorated pot-helm, with a sculpted bird on top, or possibly horns attached. (Unlike the Vikings, who *never* had horns on their helmets, the Celts occasionally did.) Other warriors spent a long time decorating their hair before battle, spiking it with lime to make it stand up in a fearsome fashion. Wealthy warriors employed a hairdresser.

Use of woad and other dyes for decorating the body before battle was common; naked spearmen might be blue all over, or covered in fanciful designs. Looking good and making a good impression were much more important to a Celtic warrior than protection from enemy spears.

Chariots also had fanciful decorations, either bronze or simply painted on the sides. Horse-helmets have been found which both protected the horse's head and blinkered it as the charioteer drove it toward the enemy.

Every warrior tried to look his best for combat, and rich warriors looked splendid indeed. It was said that Cuchulain went into battle wearing a fair, well-fitting, purple-fringed, five-folded mantle, a brooch of silver inset with gold, a tunic of silk bordered with fringes of gold, silver, and bronze, and a dark-red apron of royal satin. He was equipped with a gold-hilted sword and a purple shield trimmed with silver.

Torcs and arm-rings were worn in battle, affording minimal protection but looking very impressive. This wealth made robbing dead enemies profitable and not at all shameful. Carrying off the head of his victim entitled the victor to the rest of the spoils as well.



HEADHUNTING

One of the most common practices of Celtic warriors, and the one which seemed most barbaric to more civilized neighbors such as the Romans, was the habit of headhunting.

When a Celtic warrior killed an enemy, it was considered perfectly normal to take the head as a trophy. These heads were hung on the side of the chariot, or on the warrior's belt, and it was a matter of great pride to collect the most heads in a battle.

The heads were taken home and hung around the door of the warrior's house, or put in special niches in the door-posts. Sometimes they were set up on posts outside his house. The Celts believed that these heads would cry out at the approach of an enemy. The heads of the most famous and honored heroes were embalmed in oil and kept in wooden boxes; they were brought out and shown to strangers to impress them with the warrior's prowess. The more ferocious or important an enemy was, the more desirable it was to take his head.

In almost every recorded fight, the taking of the head was noted. There was undoubtedly a religious significance to the custom, as can be seen by the archaeological finds of stone and wooden heads. There were tales of severed heads speaking: Bran's head lived for seven years after his death, and Conary Mor's head thanked Conall Cearnach for a drink he gave it. (See the *Reanimate Head* spell, p. 97.)

Headhunting was widespread and long-lasting. It declined as a general practice with the coming of Christianity, and had almost vanished by 1000 A.D. The last known instance was recorded in 1561 when Shane O'Neill of Ulster led an armed rising against England. He was defeated and fled to Scotland, where he was murdered. His head was removed and was sent to the English. They pickled it and sent it to Dublin where it was displayed on a castle spike.

BOARD GAMES

The most common game, which people of any worth were expected to play, was a variant of draughts or checkers invented by Lugh of the Long Hand, called *fidchell* in Eriu and *gwyddbwyll* in Prydain. The name, in both languages, meant "wooden wisdom," and the game occupied the same social niche as chess did in medieval chivalry. Sometimes a king's *fidchell* board had a name, in much the same way as a weapon. Often guests were asked to play against the king, and were expected to try their best to beat him; playing to lose as flattery was considered bad form.

The pieces were wooden pegs which fit into holes in the board, although some of the great kings were said to have golden boards with silver pieces. Boards varied in size, and there were variants such as pieces being allowed individualized moves, in the manner of chess, or increased numbers of allowed moves. Usually, the game was played just for fun, but sometimes it was played for a prize (see p. 25). Those who actually want to play the game should refer to p. 66 of *GURPS Vikings*.

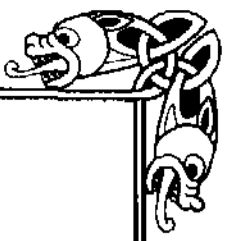
HURLEY AND OTHER FIELD SPORTS

Boys expecting to become warriors were encouraged to play team sports, particularly hurley, an extremely rough form of field hockey. It was played in teams, with curved wooden sticks and a small ball. Serious injury and even death during play were not unknown. There was no set number of players on a team – if someone wanted to join in a game, he could, but had first to ask to join one of the teams, or risk being attacked by all the other players. (As a boy, Cuchulain joined in a game without asking, and ended up playing alone against a team of 150. Needless to say, he won.) *Báire*, the hole-game, was a similar sport, involving getting a ball into a hole rather than through the opponents' goal.



Celtic Religion

The religious life of Celts was so integrated with other aspects of their life as to be almost invisible to casual observers. What might appear to us to be pointless superstition was actually an important part of their religious beliefs. In day-to-day life they were not so much concerned



about the gods as they were about luck and fate. They worshipped the gods in the proper season; not to do so would be unlucky. It would also be impolite, and no Celt would be rude to the gods. But equally no Celt would avoid telling a good joke, even if a god were the butt of it. This wasn't blasphemy or irreverence, as the gods were seen as *real*, able to take a joke like anyone else.

The Otherworld and those who dwelt there were very much a part of the real world. While the common folk were always reverent toward them, heroes often had opportunities to interact with the gods on a personal level. When gods appear in person and demand hospitality as a regular occurrence, it is perhaps no wonder if heroes felt a lessening of devotion. There were no sharp lines between magic and religion, and people in stories could be men or gods, with nobody knowing or caring. The old gods, the Tuatha de Danaan, and the veneration of the natural world were all irretrievably entangled in Celtic religion. Only a druid could truly unravel them, or would even try.

Stories about the gods were confused and contradictory, but to Celts that wasn't important. In one story a god had one face or name, but in another story he could have a different face or other aspects. Often this was the result of similar gods from different regions (such as the river deities of two locales) being swapped to make a story more relevant to local listeners, and over time some local gods became subsumed into larger, general gods (such as the local river god becoming just an aspect of the more powerful god of all rivers). None of this bothered Celtic listeners.

Since anyone could become a god (see p. 67), the gods weren't that different from anyone else. On the other hand, people became gods by drawing away from their own humanity, and so the gods were unpredictable. Some concerned themselves with mortals, others didn't. Some gods moved so far away from humankind that they became merely expressions of their strongest traits and appetites.

FASTING

If someone was wronged by another (through the loss of property, the murder of a loved one, or any other offense), and if a challenge to single combat was not an honorable option (because one or both involved weren't warriors), fasting was a recognized way of bringing a grievance against the offender.

The aggrieved person publically announced his intention to fast, and then sat in front of his opponent's house, allowed to drink water, but nothing more. The person in the house was honor-bound not to eat either while the plaintiff was fasting outside. If he *did* eat, he was obliged by hospitality to offer food to the faster outside, which was seen as an admission that the fasting person was in the right. The fasting continued until one party gave in and ate, at which point the other had won. If the person inside the house ate without offering the other anything, he lost all honor in the eyes of his peers.

Starvation is covered on p. B128. Voluntary fasting requires a daily Will roll at -1 for every 2 points of ST the protester has lost. The specifics of the situation and moral determination of the faster can affect the Will rolls at the GM's discretion.

This method of settling grievances only worked if both sides had the same sense of honor. There are many examples of brave Celts starving themselves to death for the sake of a cause while puzzled foreigners finished their dinners.



THE FITNESS OF THINGS

Celts had a great belief in the "fitness of things." Honor was all-important to them, and this included telling the truth and playing fair. Many times in Celtic mythology truth and fair play had great consequences. It was said that if the land had a fair king the land would burgeon and be filled to overflowing with fine crops and plentiful fishing and hunting. But a poor king led to the land becoming barren and lifeless.

The Celts were fond of calling the most dire results on themselves if they broke a bargain. A common oath when sealing a treaty or making an important promise was the Threefold Oath. The heroes of Ulaid swore to their king in this fashion that they wouldn't leave a battle: "Heaven is above us, and earth beneath us, and the sea is round about us. Unless the sky shall fall with its shower of stars on the ground where we are camped, or unless the earth shall be rent by an earthquake, or unless the waves of the blue sea come over the forests of the living world, we shall not give ground." Although separated by hundreds of years and miles, a group of Celtic mercenaries fighting for Alexander the Great swore in these same terms.

Many magical items in Celtic mythology had the ability to detect the truth. In one tale there was a magic pig, which could be cooked and eaten one day, and would be whole and alive again the next day. The pig had another strange property: it could only be cooked while true stories were being told. As it turned on the spit, someone told a true story, and one quarter of it cooked. This happened three more times until the whole pig was cooked. However, since the first story told, by the pig's owner, was the story of how the pig functioned, and since the others were presumably too hungry to tell a false story, just in case, it might just have been a wonderful piece of blarney on the part of the Sidhe lord! Later in the same tale, there was a golden cup, which broke into three sections if three lies were told in its presence, and could only be mended by three truths being told.

RITUALS AND RITES

Religious rites were performed by druids on behalf of the whole community, and were regarded as an important part of life, holding the balance of the world and the position of man within it. They involved complex invocations and rituals, often including animal (or even human) sacrifice (see sidebar, pp. 25-26). They had to be performed in exactly the same way each time; any stumbling over words, or any variation in what the druid was wearing or how sharp the knife was, could spoil the ritual, with disastrous consequences for the community.

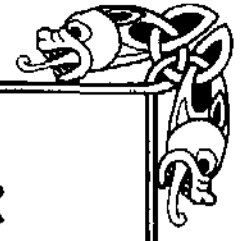


The specifics of religious rites were learned and memorized by druids during their years of training; none of it was recorded in writing. In game terms, when performing the ritual, the druid must make a Theology roll to remember it correctly, with penalties if it is one he has not performed for a long time; some rites are very old, and many are imperfectly understood. In addition, the druid must obey many *gesas* while acting as priest. He could not eat or drink before a sacrifice, he must shave the front of his head, wear the correct robes for the correct ceremonies, and so on.

Any natural feature could be the abode of a god, or divine in its own right. Trees were magical and holy, and running water was particularly venerated (see p. 29). Rituals took place in sacred groves a little way apart from dwelling places. Being barred from attending the sacrifice, the *Glam Dicin*, was part of the penalty for being an outcast.

DRUIDS AS PRIESTS

The Druidic Order had three ranks: Bard, Ollave, and Druid. Only Ollaves and full Druids acted as priests. Any druid who reached the rank of Ollave had priestly duties to fulfill, including performing animal sacrifices, tending the sacred groves, and representing the community in the Otherworld. The druid's position as priest was really one of interpreter, explaining the wishes of the community to the gods and vice versa. As a courtesy, any important events in



the community were announced to those in the Otherworld. Thus new kings were invested with solemn druidic ritual, and the investiture of Ollaves was an important religious ceremony.

As well as honoring the gods, the sacrifices, rituals, and festivals were seen as appeasing fate. Heroes assumed that fate concerned itself with them personally, and the most they expected druids to do for them was to reveal their *gesas*. The druid represented those members of society who had no separate, individual destinies. Religion was thus considered extremely important by the peasants.

Some druids felt called to specialize as priests (though not devoted to any particular god). They were drawn to the area of deciphering holy mysteries. In ordinary circumstances any Ollave or Druid could perform religious duties when necessary, but in times of particular difficulties, a community called on specialists. Large communities could support such a large number of druids that those who did not specialize in performing religious rites were never called upon to exercise their powers in this way.

See Chapter 5 for more information about the general beliefs, attitudes, and role of druids.

CELTIC FESTIVALS

Four great festivals were celebrated all over the Celtic world, with the days of the festivals set aside on the calendar as belonging to no month, and each of them sacred to one of the great trees. A host of traditions was associated with each festival, some purely local, and others as widespread as the festivals themselves. New gods and traditions could easily come to be associated with old festivals; the festivals themselves were changing but changeless, the markers and turning posts of the year.

The festivals had some traditions in common: they all began with sacrifices, and were accompanied by feasting, fairs, markets, and a temporary truce between warring parties. The festivals weren't timed to coincide with important events of the solar year (such as the solstices or equinoxes), but to fit with



PLAYING FOR HIGH STAKES

Although games were usually played just for fun, sometimes they were played in deadly seriousness. It was especially dangerous to play with a *Sidhe* for secret stakes.

In a series of games, Midir tricked Eochaid into giving away his wife, Etain. Midir deliberately lost at first, and gave Eochaid fine greyhounds and performed many tasks for him, such as building causeways and clearing forests. Then in the final game he suggested that they play for hidden stakes, and when he won he demanded a kiss from Etain. Despite all Eochaid could do, when Midir and Etain kissed they turned into swans and disappeared through the smoke-hole in the roof.

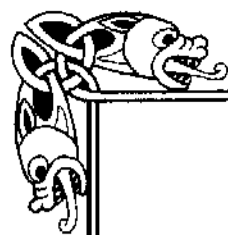
Before the First Battle of Moytura, when the *Firbolg* were to fight the *Tuatha de Danaan* for the rulership of Eriu, there was a hurley match. The two sides had agreed to a truce until both got their weapons ready, but many of the young warriors were eager to come to grips with the enemy. So Rua the Bloody and the 27 sons of the tribe of Miled (allies of the *Firbolg*) challenged the *Tuatha* to a hurley match. The *Tuatha* were good players, but no match for the mountain men of Rua, who fell upon them savagely. They not only won the game, but left many of the flower of *Tuathan* youth dead or grievously injured on the field.

SACRIFICES

Healthy unblemished animals were sacrificed to the gods at regular intervals. Pigs, sheep and, on special occasions, cows were suitable victims. The animal was wreathed for sacrifice, and in the case of cows the horns were bound with colored cords. The druids, and in some cases all participants, had to fast before the sacrifice. The officiating druid cut the animal's throat, then slit its belly and examined the entrails, reading therein if the sacrifice was acceptable. If it was, the animal was roasted and eaten by all the participants in a great feast. This was done at prescribed occasions and also if the druid, the king, or the community felt that some natural disaster needed averting. Agricultural disasters in particular could be averted in this way, and so sacrifices were made to prevent floods, drought, and unseasonable frosts. Only those who witnessed the sacrifice were entitled to participate in the feast.

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SACRIFICES (CONTINUED)

Human Sacrifice

It is very difficult to form any clear picture of Celtic human sacrifice. Julius Caesar specifically said that it was practiced, but this was exactly the kind of thing he might have made up to provoke the Roman Senate against the Celts. The archaeological evidence is ambiguous. Many heads are found associated with sacred sites, but they were probably heads removed from slain enemies and set up on spikes (see sidebar, p. 22). The so-called "Druid Prince" found in a peat bog in Lincolnshire certainly appears to have been murdered but the evidence for a ritual murder is still contended. There were few references to human sacrifice in the sources and all were disapproving.

If human sacrifice is desired in a campaign, it might take place in some areas and not in others. In that case, likely victims would be prisoners of war, criminals, or sacred kings offering themselves for sacrifice. For excellent fictional treatments of this idea, see Mary Renault's *The King Must Die* and Marion Campbell's *The Dark Twin*, neither of them Celtic, but both admirably adaptable.

HOLY GROVES AND TEMPLES

Near every center of habitation there was a holy grove or "Nemed," and most of the community's worship took place here. Ideally it was planted with one of each magical tree (see pp. 93-94). Sometimes it was entirely made up of one type of tree. Every grove was different, and had a different emphasis, set of rites, and effectiveness of intercessions, depending on what trees were present. A druid coming to a new grove needed to spend some time there growing used to the grove's individual peculiarities before he could effectively perform a sacrifice there.

Some groves were exceptionally powerful, either because of the combination of trees or because of their ages. Druids in their last years as Bards and their first years as Ollaves visited as many of these groves as possible. Fine specimens of trees growing alone on a plain could become sites of worship under some circumstances.

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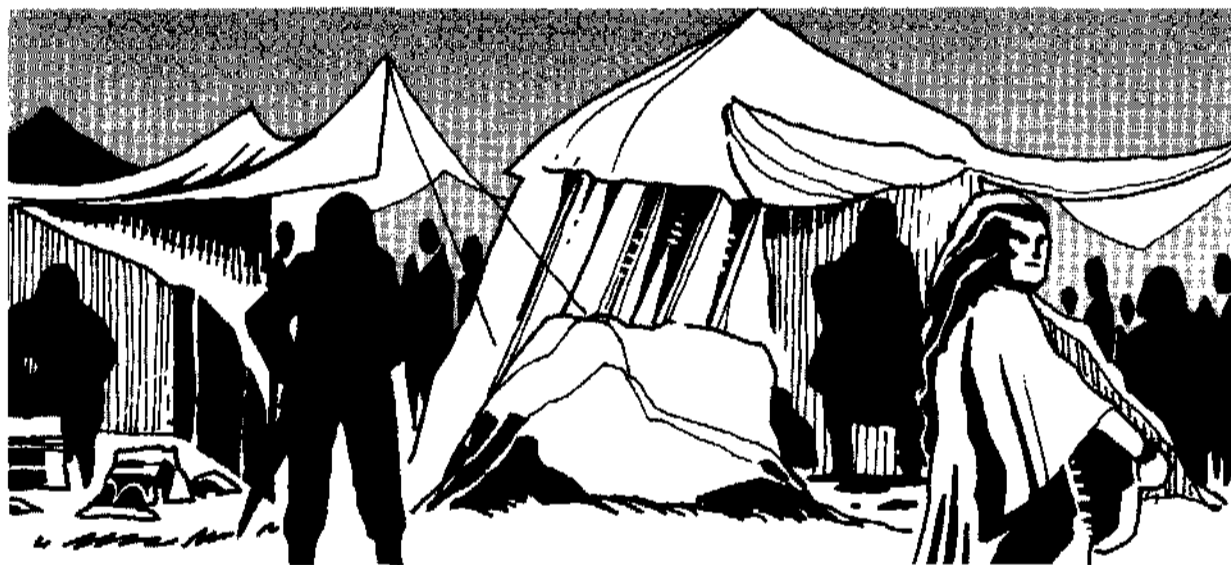
the human cycle and the farming year. They marked the times when the Otherworld drew closest to this world, times when events of significance to humans were likely to occur. The festivals ran from dusk to dusk, taking a night and a day (or two nights and two days, in the case of Samain).

The year began at Samain (November 1), turned through winter until Imbolc (February 1), through spring until Beltain (May 1), through summer until the beginning of harvest at Lughnasa (August 1), and on through autumn until its end and new beginning at the next Samain.

Samain

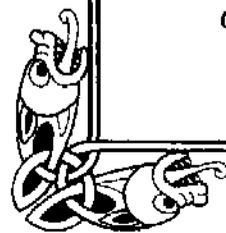
Samain marked the beginning and end of the year, and occupied two days, Samain Eve, October 31st, and Samain itself, November 1st. It signalled the beginning of winter, and was the most uncomfortable of the four festivals, because this was the time when all the doors between this world and the Otherworld stood open and things could freely pass between the worlds (a belief echoed in the ghosts and goblins of a modern Halloween).

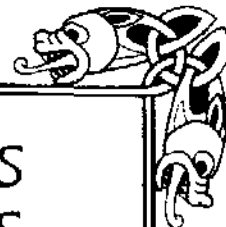
Samain was traditionally a time when the dead walked among the living. It was also a time of slaughter, when the animals which wouldn't survive the winter were killed. Some were eaten at the feast; others were smoked or salted and put away for eating when food was scarce. The death cries of the beasts and the smell of fresh blood, hung in the air. The festival was celebrated with manic cheer but little actual enjoyment, and most were glad when it was over.



Samain was celebrated by the lighting of ritual fires; all fires everywhere in the Celtic world were extinguished and rekindled on Samain. The first Samain fire to be rekindled was lit at Tlachtga Hill, 12 miles from Royal Tara, by druids, often magically using alder twigs, and all other fires were lit as druids saw light from that fire, or from fires lit by those seeing that fire. This spreading out of fire from a central point was also practiced elsewhere, but there was no central starting point in Prydain. The fires were generally extinguished at dawn and rekindled at dusk. The ritual fires were lit on hilltops so they could be seen from afar.

The god Samain only appeared in one story, as a Tuathan who allowed Balor of the Evil Eye to trick him out of a cow. Samain Eve was associated with yew, the tree of death and bad luck. Samain Day was associated with aspen, the tree of shielding.





HOLY GROVES AND TEMPLES (CONTINUED)

Groves could become aspected for particular colleges of magic depending on which trees grew in them. For example, groves with a preponderance of hazel trees give +1 to any Hazel spells cast in them. Groves with at least one mature example of each magic tree give +2 to all spells.

The Celts didn't build temples for sacrifice and worship; however, they did build "square houses" for ritual feasting on special occasions. These houses had three walls and a roof, the fourth side being open. Animals were killed and a feast was held in the square house, after which it was allowed to decay. It could be restored for later feasts, or a new house could be built. Suitable occasions for square-house feasts were when invasions, rebellions, or great communal enterprises were being planned. They served the dual purpose of gathering and feasting the participants, and of inviting the favor of the gods on the enterprise.

Imbolc

The festival of Imbolc took place on February first, the beginning of spring in Eriu (earlier than that of much of the U.S. and Canada because of a favorable climate). Imbolc was strongly associated with birth. It was the beginning of the lambing season, and it fell exactly nine months after the fertility rituals of Beltain, so a clustering of human births was expected each year. Babies born at Imbolc were thought to have good luck, and were ideally timed to survive in a hard world, having time to grow strong before the next winter. They would also be weaned at Lughnasa, a time of plenty.

Imbolc was sacred to the goddess Brigid, or Bregheada, whose name may have meant "High One." Brigid was associated with healing, childbirth, smithing, fertility, and poetry; she had been worshipped for a very long time. Some stories called her a daughter of the Dagda; others said she was mother to all the gods; she was at least the mother of the sons of Tureen (p. 119). She ate nothing but milk from Otherworldly cows and sheep, and had the powers of increase; she could take an empty vessel and fill it to overflowing. She bore the title "Mother of the Flocks," could ease animal and human childbirth, was said to have tamed wild boars, and was also associated with fish. She was clearly an important pastoral goddess.

Imbolc was sometimes known as Oimelg or Oilmelc, meaning "Ewe's milk." The tree associated with it was the silver fir, the tree of birth and creation.

Beltain

Beltain was the great May Day festival, and marked the beginning of summer. Like Samain, Beltain was a fire feast, when the fires were extinguished and rekindled. There was a great gesa on Eriu that the first fire must be lit at Tara.

Beltain was the most joyous of the festivals, celebrating the strength and power flowing through the Celtic world. The extinguishing and relighting of the fires symbolized a fresh start for everyone. Some cattle from each herd were driven in circles between fires as a symbol of purification. Rituals for the fertility of people, animals, and crops were enacted by druids. It was regarded as the most lucky of all times to conceive a child.

Beltain was named after and sacred to Bel, who had powers over life and death, and also over the sun. He bore the title "father of gods and men," and was one of the oldest of all the gods.

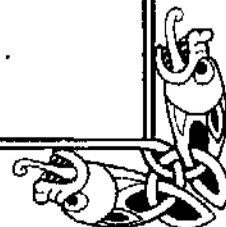
GODS OF THE CELTS

The Tuatha de Danaan were mortal when they came to Eriu from Murias and fought the Fomor. After the coming of the Milesians they moved into the Otherworld and also literally underground, many of them living inside the hollow hills. After living in the Otherworld for some time many developed godlike powers. (See Chapter 4 for more on the Tuatha de Danaan.)

Considered here are the mysterious old gods, who were gods before the Tuatha came and were still powerful afterward. These gods had many different names in different places, yet were recognizably the same person. In most cases it is only possible to identify a type of god and then mention some of the names he was known by. Many were associated with a type of bird, they liked to change into. This balances the tradition with the archaeological evidence, leaving many rough edges.

Tribal Father: This was the king of the gods, who was good at everything, a figure found throughout Celtic Europe. He went by many names, the most familiar to us being the Dagda, the "good god." He had responsibility for rain and the male side of the fertility of the land. A name for this god preserved in Gaul was Sucellos, "the good striker." Another Irish name was Nemglan.

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GODS OF THE CELTS (CONTINUED)

Mother: The tribal father was often mated with the mother goddess, who was part of the land and responsible for the female side of fertility. She was often identified with a river, or associated with cranes. Some names of this goddess were Anu, Danu, Nantosvelta, Don, and Arianrhod.

Triple Goddesses: Goddesses often came in threes – three sisters, three goddesses with the same name, goddesses identified with new moon/full moon/old moon – which fitted well with the general Celtic attraction for things in threes (see sidebar, p. 10). The Morrigan was such a triple goddess, as was Brigid. Brigid was very pastoral and the Morrigan was chiefly concerned with war, but both had three aspects. Carvings of cloaked and triple goddesses, or “matres,” were common in Romano-Gallic and Romano-British sites and unknown elsewhere in the Roman world. The Morrigan’s bird was a battle raven.

Ogma: This son of the Dadga was the patron of eloquence and literature and the inventor of the Ogham script. He was known in Gaul as Ogmios. His Irish titles included Grian-aineach (“of the sunny countenance”) and Carmait (“of the honeyed mouth”). He was one of the few gods who seemed to keep his name and his attributes throughout the Celtic world, but by the time of the stories he had withdrawn considerably.

Horse Goddesses: The Gaulish name for the horse goddess was Epona; Rhiannon (Latin *Rigatona*) appears to be the same individual.

Sun Gods: Bel, also known as Belinos and Beli, was a widely-known name of the sun god (see *Beltain*, this page). Later in the tradition he resigned the sun to Lugh of the Long Hand, a Tuathan, who in early aspects was clearly good at everything. Lugh was known in Gaul as Lug, and as Lleu in Wales. He gave his name to many places throughout Celtic Europe, such as Lyons (and possibly London). These gods were associated with healing and with water birds; the sun was pulled across the sky by a cormorant.

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The tree associated with Beltain was gorse, the most magical of all trees, which came into flower at about this time.

Lughnasa

Lughnasa, on the first of August., was an agrarian festival, celebrating the gathering of first fruits, the beginning of the autumn harvesting. Lughnasa was celebrated with dancing, feats of prowess, competitions, and sacrifice. Although Lughnasa was only one day, the markets and celebrations often lasted half a month before and after the festival.

Lughnasa was celebrated everywhere, but there was one great Lughnasa gathering in Eriu every year at Teltin where games and competitions were held. Many kings, champions, and druids attended and competed in chariot-racing, mock-fighting, and poetry contests held in honor of Lugh’s foster mother Telti, who was buried at Teltin. The high king always attended and presented the prizes. It was a good place for a young warrior to find a war band or to make a name for himself, and thus a good setting to begin a *Celtic Myth* campaign.

The chief god honored at Lughnasa was Lugh of the Long Hand, a Tuathan also known as Lugos and Lleu. He was the patron of arts and crafts, and was associated with the sun. Lughnasa’s tree was heather, which bloomed in August and gave the hillsides a purple glow. Heather was a symbol of luck and blessing.



OTHER FESTIVALS

There were other festivals, some specific to a location or deity, which were celebrated in some places and not in others. Every grove and every holy place had its own local and specific festival, which could fall at any time of year, usually celebrating some specific occurrence. For instance, a fishing village could hold a feast that celebrated Llyr or Manannan, or a festival at a time of net-mending. Most of these were celebrated exclusively by locals; only a few were worth traveling to, although druids seeking the answers to holy riddles would seek out even small and obscure feasts. Kings wishing to make themselves and their kingdoms more important would invite neighboring kings to their local feasts.

BIRTH AND DEATH

To Celts, life began with birth, but didn't end with death. Dying was merely an end of one stage of life, a moving on to the Otherworld. There people lived and died again and passed on through more and further Otherworlds, each stranger and more magical, until at last they would be reborn in this world. For the dead, the Otherworld was a bright and joyful place where all were welcome, not a prize for good behavior but a certain destination for everyone. (See Chapter 4 for more details on the Otherworld.)

The dead were cremated or buried with everything they'd need to make the journey to the Otherworld. As a great honor a tree was sometimes planted to mark the grave of a particular hero, the appropriate type of tree being chosen by druids. If the hero continued to be important in his new life in the Otherworld, his tree sometimes began to be worshipped. The burial places of great heroes were considered important, and many poems and sagas ended by mentioning where the hero was buried.

HOLY PLACES

Many places in the Celtic world inspired a feeling of awe or religious terror, often without apparent reason. A hillside, or a stream in a valley where a torrent struck a boulder, might seem outwardly no different from any such other place, but still might make the hairs stand up on the back of the neck. These places could represent sites where doors to the Otherworld had been opened, places where momentous events once happened, or even spots marked by wonders. These spots were venerated but also shunned and considered unlucky places to linger.

Other places had a specific association with one god because of something done there, and could become places of pilgrimage for druids. Some places, like Tara and Tlachtga, had a particular ritual significance. Others included the lake Llyn Cerrig Fach in Ynys Môn, Brocelita in Bregheda, and Ffynon Arnedd.

Wells and Fountains

The Celts revered water: running water was often given the name of a goddess and worshipped as such. Wells and fountains had a special status, because they provided drinking water for a community. They were honored by the immersion of valuable offerings and by regular ceremonies wreathing the well-head or basin with flowers and leaves. Some especially old wells and fountains with particularly clear water gained reputations as healing wells (+1 to First Aid; wounds washed in this water do not become infected). The trees that grew near wells could have an influence upon them. It wasn't uncommon for a hazel tree (the tree of knowledge) to be planted to shade a well or pool so that some of the nuts would fall in the water. It was also very common for rowan trees (symbolizing protection) to grow beside mountain streams. A holy well known as Nennach stood within the fortifications of Tara.

Offerings

Celts made offerings to the gods on impulse, in exactly the same way that they gave presents to their friends. These offerings weren't given to druids, but were placed in holy wells, fountains, and rivers. They were generally either

GODS OF THE CELTS (CONTINUED)

Horned Gods: The god with the head of a man bearing antlers, often known as Gaulish Cernunnos, was widespread. He may actually be two gods, one with antlers and one with horns, or they may be aspects of the same god. This god was *not* "Herne the Hunter"; Herne was a poacher hanged in the 1400s, the subject of a popular 15th-century ballad. A misunderstood reference in Shakespeare has led to his modern identification with the Celtic horned god. Worship of the horned god was associated with reverence for nature and fertility. There are no surviving stories about Cernunnos and we do not know much more than that he was important.

Love Goddesses: Aine was a goddess clearly associated with love, who often fell in love herself and meddled in mortal matters to ensure the success of love. All the Celtic goddesses were sexually active and could be very angry if spurned. Love goddesses were associated with swans.

Animals: Animals which had ritual or religious significance were boars, horses, cows, bulls, stags, rams, dogs, and salmon.

Local Gods: There are a few local gods whose names, but not much else, are known. Often they cannot be identified with anyone in the stories with any degree of certainty. Examples of these are Coventina, who was very popular in the north of England, and Sul (Sulis), who had a cult center at Dwr Sulis (Bath) in Lloegyr.



STONE CIRCLES AND STANDING STONES

All over Britain, Ireland, and (especially) Brittany there are mysterious stone circles and standing stones. Some of these are quite small and others are huge. Some are simple rings, others are approached by avenues of standing stones, some have "hengés" or doorways of stone slabs set on two big stones set in a circle. The best known is Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain. Tradition says that it was built by Merlin, and there have been newer tales since the 17th century in England that associate stone circles with the druids.

The circles were actually built by Neolithic peoples thousands of years before the Celts reached the regions where they stood. When the Celts found them, the druids *may* have used them for worship, contrary to their usual practice of worshipping in groves of trees. The rings may have originally been temples, or astronomical observatories (in the case of Stonehenge and Avebury, an even larger monument nearby, this seems to have been proved by the very accurate astronomical observations that can be made there, but many people still dispute it).

Unlike the megalithic tombs (the "hollow hills") in Ireland, these circles were not generally associated with the Sidhe, and the Celts in general probably had little to do with them. They are, however, clustered in "Celtic" parts of the world and seem to be irretrievably associated with the druids in the popular imagination. If a *Celtic Myth* campaign wouldn't "feel right" without druids summoning magical fire from the center of a ring of standing stones, then by all means put them in.

Standing stones, especially solitary stones in isolated places, might well have been erected by the Sidhe for their own mysterious purposes or to mark the site of a gate to the Otherworld. Sometimes such stones were marked in Ogham to inform the knowledgeable of their purpose. They did have a Celtic tradition, and were especially loved by the Morrigan. It was one of these isolated stones that was the site of Cuchulain's last stand (see p. 38).

carved heads or valuable metal objects, which were sometimes copies of large objects (e.g., chariots or swords) and sometimes genuine objects, ritually broken as part of the offering. The guests of a king at a time when he decided to make an offering were expected to come up with something of their own to add to it.

Royal Tara

Royal Tara was the seat of the high king of Eriu before the site was forever cursed by St. Ruadan circa 600 A.D. Situated on a hill overlooking the sea near the eastern coast of the island, the principal fortification was the Rath Righ, "the Court of Kings," whose earthen ramparts, 853 feet in diameter, the longest in Eriu.

There were two ramparts with a ditch between them and a stone wall on the inner rampart. Within the enclosure was a public meeting house, and *Lia Fail*, the Stone of Destiny. This stone cried out when the rightful high king of Eriu stood on it. There was also a circular hall, erected by Cormac Mac Art, and a hall in which hostages to the royal court lived. In addition there was a great Sidhe mound.

On the northern slope of the hill outside the fort was the king's mead hall, a wooden building 45' high and gaily painted. It had twelve doors and the usual alcoves in the walls. Other halls and hostels stood outside the walls. Tara was a huge city by Celtic standards, bewildering in its complexity to people visiting for the first time. Anyone could receive hospitality in the outlying halls, but people had to be invited inside the walls. This was holy ground, where the first fire was kindled at Beltain and Samain and where the high king was inaugurated.



THE CULT OF THE HEAD

The Celts were very fond of headhunting (see pp. 22 and 91). The head of a dead enemy was not only a trophy but a religious item. The head was the seat of learning and the spiritual center of the body. Severed heads were believed to retain many abilities, as house alarms, for example. Merely having the head of a fallen foe gave one some of the power he had in life.

As well as the real heads of dead enemies, Celts made many statues of heads, which were appropriate votive offerings, many of which survive. These stone and wooden heads with their emphasis on the eyes were clearly important, if mysterious. What purpose these stone heads served is unknown, but druids could be expected to have some sitting around in their homes.

2 THE TALES



SMITH

THE IRISH STORIES

The stories of Celtic Ireland do not exist in the coherent form in which they are set down here. Bits and pieces of the cycles exist, written in different books by different people at different times. Some stories were written down as early as the 7th century A.D., but the stories also remained within the oral tradition, growing and changing. A story recorded by Christian monks in the 9th century may seem more authentic than one written down by anthropologists in the 19th, but sometimes the later version contains a vital link putting two otherwise unconnected episodes into context.

Some stories seem to have been preserved remarkably unchanged, which may be due to the almost religious respect they were given. Other stories have grown in the telling, as the addition of Vikings to the tale of Finn shows. Despite monkish resetting of events within the scheme of Christian history, despite more than 2,000 years of playing "broken telephone" at fireside retellings, the stories have the marks of belonging to a single authentic tradition.



SWT3
MAY

*"Good luck to all who retell and all who listen to these stories of the Celts.
Good luck to all who learn these stories by heart."*

— a traditional ending to many Irish stories

The heart of a *Celtic Myth* campaign will be epic stories, both those resulting from the adventures of the player characters and those that illustrate the history of the setting and describe the exploits of the many NPCs the heroes will meet. While the authors recommend that readers seek out the originals and retellings mentioned in the bibliography, some of these stories are hard to find. What follows is a summary of them, beginning with the stories of heroic Eriu.



The Ulster Cycle

Fachtna Fathach was king of Ulaid and his wife was Nessa, the daughter of the high king. One day Nessa was sitting outside the dun at Emain Macha when the druid Cathbad, one of the greatest readers of omens ever, came by. Nessa called out to him, "For what would this day be fortunate?" Cathbad replied that this was a day made for begetting a king upon a queen. There being no other men around, Nessa embraced Cathbad and that day conceived Connor, greatest of all the kings of Ulaid.

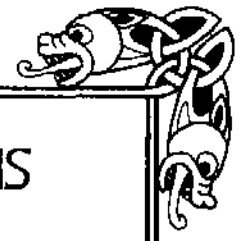
When Fachtna died he was succeeded by his brother Fergus. Fergus had no wife and wanted to marry Nessa. Nessa said that she would marry him if he would allow Connor to be king for a year — afterward he could retire to the ranks of the warband retaining the dignity and honor of having been king. Fergus agreed, and Connor became king. Connor was a good king, especially generous and openhanded to all the important men of Ulaid. At the end of the year the men of Ulaid begged him to stay on as king, and Fergus became one of his warriors.

One day Cathbad and Connor were visiting the house of a chieftain named Felim MacDall. His wife was in labor, and Cathbad put his hand on the woman's stomach to prophesy what the child would be. He said that it would be a girl called Deirdre, that she would be the most beautiful girl in Eriu, and that she would cause dissension and sorrow. Some said that she should be killed as soon as she was born. Connor dissented: he said that she must be brought up apart by the satirist Levarm and when she was grown he would marry her himself. So Levarm took charge of the baby and brought her up far from everyone.

SETANTA

Cathbad had three daughters by his wife Maga, whom Connor counted as sisters, since Cathbad was his natural father. The oldest, Eva, married Usli and had three sons, Noisi, Ainle, and Ardan. The second, Findchaem, married Amairgen and had one son, Conall Cearnach. The youngest, Dechtira, was Connor's charioteer. One day these two were out on the plain when a fog arose and they had to seek hospitality at a strange dun. There they were entertained by a great lord, and when they retired the lord lay with Dechtira, telling her in

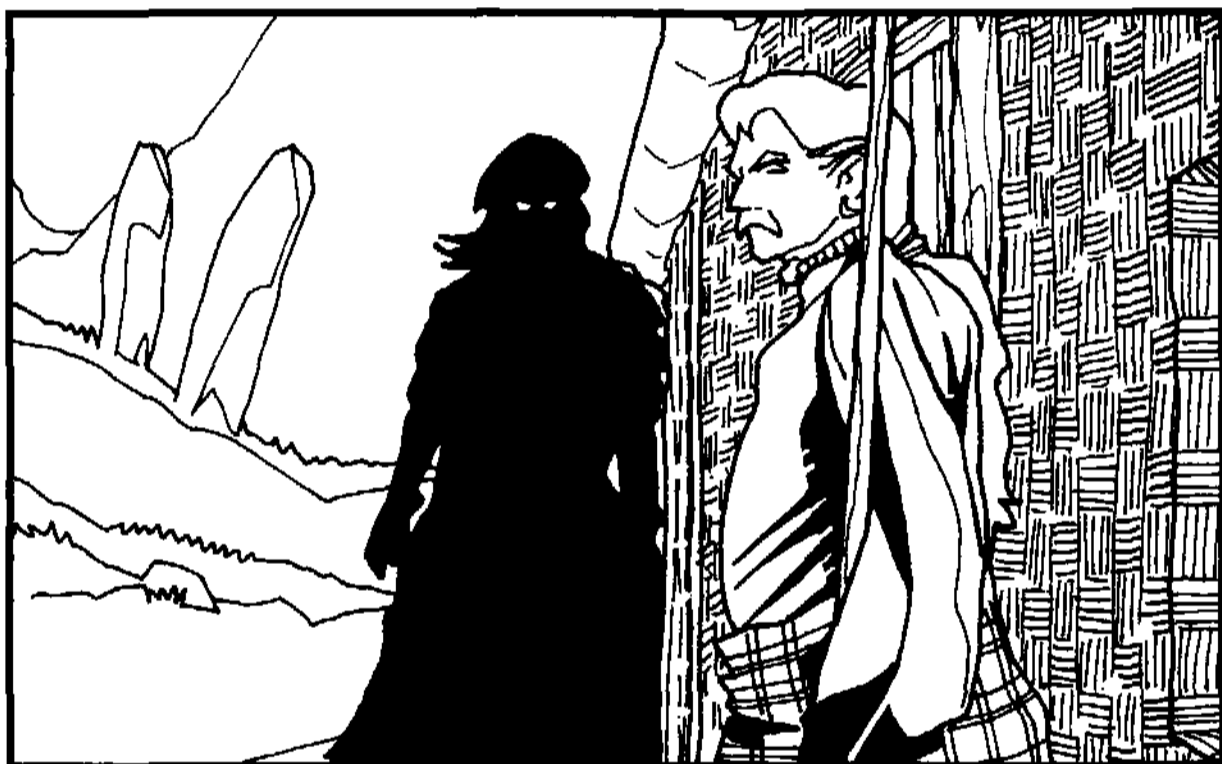




secret that he was Lugh of the Long Hand (see sidebar, p. 28), lord of Tara. In the morning the dun had vanished and in its place was a simple hut. To avoid complicated explanations Connor and Dechtira said that they had sheltered in the hut.

In time it became clear that Dechtira was pregnant. There was much whispering that Connor and Dechtira had lain together in the hut and the child would be incestuous. To quiet this Connor persuaded Dechtira to marry one of his warriors, Saltuf.

She did so, and her son was known as Saltuf's son and given the name Setanta. He grew quickly and when he was seven years old he went alone to Emain Macha. There he encountered the Boy's Troop, all the boys of the dun, playing hurley. He joined in the game without asking, and found that they all played against him. Nevertheless he managed to win. There was much competition for fostering Setanta because he promised to be an exceptional warrior and was Connor's nephew, and some still said Connor's son. He was finally fostered by Connor's sister Findchaem and her husband Amairgen.



THE HOUND OF CHULAIN

One day Connor and the court set off to visit Chulain the smith. Connor invited Setanta to go with him, but Setanta was busy playing and said he would catch up later. By the time Setanta reached Chulain's house, Chulain had closed the doors for the night and let out his ferocious guard dog. Setanta fought and killed the dog and went into the hall. Chulain was distressed at the loss of the dog, and Setanta said he would guard the hall in the dog's place. Thus he gained the new name "Cu Chulain" – Chulain's dog.

A few years later, Cuchulain was walking past Cathbad as the druid instructed his pupils. "For what would this day be favorable?" they asked. "The youth that took up arms on this day would gain great fame but an early death," replied Cathbad. Hearing this, Cuchulain went into the hall and demanded that Connor give him his arms that day. A little while after that Cuchulain met and fell in love with a girl named Emer, the daughter of Forgall the Wily. Forgall said that Emer was not ready to marry, and suggested that Cuchulain first go and train in Alba.

THE INVASIONS OF ERIU

The history of Eriu appeared in the *Book of Invasions*, an apt title, for the early history of Eriu was one invasion after another. According to literary sources, Eriu was first settled by Cesair and her people around 3000 B.C., then invaded in successive waves by the Fomor, Partholan, Nemedians, the Firbolg, the Tuatha de Danaan, and some 2,000 years later the Milesians.

Cesair's people drowned in a flood. The Fomor were a hideous and evil people who were eventually driven out by the Tuatha, although some Fomor lingered in the islands between Alba and Eriu. Partholan and his people died of a plague. Partholan's kinsman, Nemed, and his people were driven out or killed by the Fomor. The Firbolg were oppressed by the Fomor and then remained in Eriu in the Tuathan Age, enjoying mostly friendly relations with them. The Tuatha de Danaan fought the Fomor and eventually conquered them at the Second Battle of Moytura. The Milesians were the ancestors of the present-day men of Eriu, the Celts.

Although the Milesians were individually less powerful than the Tuathans, they defeated them, forcing a retreat to the Otherworld. Manannan Mac Llyr helped organize the retreat and gave the Danaans their two great blessings, the Feth Fiada (invisibility) and the Feast of Age (immortality). After this time they were usually known as the Sidhe.

The period before the Tuathan retreat was known as the Tuathan Age. It was followed by the Heroic Age, the time of Cuchulain and Maeve, which gave way to the Fenian Age, the age of Finn Mac Cool and his bands of Fianna. This age ended with the arrival of St. Patrick in Eriu in the 5th century A.D., and the introduction of Christianity.

THE SECOND BATTLE OF MOYTURA

The Tuatha de Danaan arrived in Eriu from four great cities. Nobody knows where these four cities were, although some say they were in Carre'r Gwaelod and others in drowned Atlantis. They came to Eriu from the air, and the place where they are said to have landed is well inland in Mumu. They brought with them four great treasures: the Spear of Victory, the Cauldron of Plenty, the Sword of Light, and the Stone of Destiny (the last kept later at Tara).

Continued on next page . . .



THE SECOND BATTLE OF MOYTURA (CONTINUED)

On their first landing the Danaans fought a battle with the Firbolgs at Moytura. There was then a period of peace before war broke out with the Fomor. Nuada, who had been the king of the Danaans, lost a hand in the first battle and was thereafter ineligible for the honor (see p. 11). Dioncet made him a silver hand, with which he could fight even better than ever, but his brother Bres took over the kingship.

The leader of the Fomor, Balor of the Evil Eye, had one huge eye covering virtually the whole of the front of his head. Its eyelid was so heavy that it could only be opened by four men pulling at a wire attached to it. It was only opened on the field of battle, where it caused instant death to all it looked at. Balor had a death gesa that he could only be killed by his grandson. Therefore he kept his only child, his daughter Ethlinn, locked up in a tower on Tory Island. Kian, the son of Dioncet, came there seeking a stolen cow, and seduced the maiden. When she bore a son she put him in a boat and pushed it away from shore. It was found by the druid Birog, who arranged for Manannan Mac Llyr to foster the child.

The boy, Lugh, was brought up by Manannan, Govan, and Taiti. When he was grown he went to Tara and begged for admittance. The doorkeeper asked him what he could do, but whenever he named a skill, the doorkeeper said that they already had someone who could do that. At last Lugh asked if they had anyone who could do all those things; the doorkeeper had to admit they did not and let Lugh in. This is how Lugh got his name, Lugh Lamfada, Lugh of the Skillful Hand. A while after this, Dioncet's son Miach managed to grow Nuada a new hand of flesh and blood and he resumed the kingship.

When war broke out again, Balor's evil eye was killing whoever he looked at, but Lugh managed to throw the Spear of Victory into his eye and kill him. The battle was a victory for the Danaans and the Fomor were thrown out of Eriu. Nuada was killed in the battle and Lugh became king of the Tuathans. (See pp. 64-65 and 119 for some of the preparations the de Danaans made for battle.)

Cuchulain did so, training at the school of the warrior woman Skya, where he learned many fighting techniques. There he met his best friend Ferdiad, son of Daman the Firbolg. While he was there, Skya was attacked by her sister Ayfa, whom Cuchulain overcame in single combat. As a reward Skya gave him his great and terrible spear, the *Gae Bolga* or belly spear. He also had a brief affair with Ayfa while she was in captivity: she eventually bore his only son, Connla. On his return he married Emer.

Meanwhile Deirdre had become a woman. One winter day she saw Levarm killing a calf in the snow, and a raven came down to drink the blood. "I could love a man with those colors," Deirdre said, "red as blood, white as snow and black as a raven." Levarm told her that Noisi the son of Uslu had those colors – white skin, black hair, and red lips. Deirdre contrived to meet him and they ran away together. Connor would not forgive them and they fled to Alba, with Noisi's brothers.

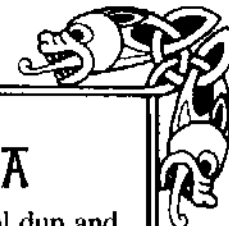
BRICRIU'S FEAST

There was a man at Connor's court called Bricriu of the Poisoned Tongue who delighted in stirring up trouble. He arranged a feast and told Cuchulain, Connal Cearnach, and Leary Budach individually beforehand that they should each claim the hero's portion. They all did so, and had it not been for the intervention and judgment of the druid Sencha the matter might have ended in blood. Sencha's judgment was that the three men should go to the court of Maeve and Aillel at Cruachan in Connachta and let the decision be made there.

Then the time came for the women to enter the hall, and Bricriu had provoked the wives of the three champions so that they would not give way to each other, and fought a word battle as to which of their husbands was the greatest. At last Conall and Leary tore down pillars of the dun to let their wives in, and Cuchulain lifted up the side of the building to admit Emer. When he dropped it again the building fell to bits.

Now Maeve was queen of Connachta in her own right, and although Aillel was called the king it was clear to everyone who was the more important. She was a vain woman, both about her importance and her beauty. And she hated Connor and all of Ulaid.





EMAIN MACHA

Emain Macha was the principal dun and capital of Ulaid. It was built by Macha of the Red Tresses, a Tuathan queen, with the help of captured enemies. It was a typical hilltop fort with extensive earthworks, and covered 11 acres in which there were four great halls.

The name Emain Macha is curious; it may mean "the Brooch of Macha," as there was a story that Macha took off her cloak pin and drew the plans for the dun on the ground, leaving the prisoners to build it. The name may have been allegorical, in that the fort was a decoration for the land as a brooch might be for a cloak.

Another story about the name concerns another Macha, a horse goddess, who was, in mortal form, wife to an Ulaidman named Crunniac. Crunniac boasted of her that she could run as fast as a chariot, and the king ordered her to run a race against his chariot. She tried to refuse because she was pregnant, asking the crowd of spectators for help in the name of all mothers since "a mother has borne each of you," but none came to her aid. She ran the race and won, but at the finishing post she went into labor and produced twins. Then with all her life force she put a gesa on the men of Ulaid that whenever the country was in most need they would feel pains such as hers come upon them and would be in agony for five days and four nights. She then died, and the gesa, the Pangs of Macha, took effect, lasting for nine generations. The field where she'd run became known as Emuin Macha, "the twins of Macha."

When the Ulaid warriors came before her she tested them with an Otherworldly cat from the cave of Cruachan which only Cuchulain was able to vanquish. After the fight Maeve tried to seduce each man in turn, failing only with Cuchulain. Instead of awarding him the title fairly, Maeve decided to give each man a cup in secret. Leary was given a bronze cup set with jewels, Conall a similar silver cup, and Cuchulain a gold one. When they got home and showed their cups, the other two accused Cuchulain of having bribed or seduced Maeve into giving him the prize.

Sencha now judged that Cu Roi, king of Mumu should decide. The three set out for Tara Leucra, but Cu Roi was absent. His wife asked them to take turns guarding the fortress at night. Cu Roi, who was a powerful druid, transformed himself into different shapes and attacked them in turn. Leary and Conall ran away; only Cuchulain stayed and fought the monsters. In the morning Cu Roi returned and said that Cuchulain was the winner. Again on the return to Emain Macha the other two refused to accept the judgment. Cuchulain said he did not want any more argument on the subject, and so there was no hero's portion awarded for a time.

Then one night a giant appeared in the hall at Emain Macha and proposed a bargain – any man could strike off his head if he could do the same in return the next night. Leary accepted the challenge, but after he severed the giant's head the giant picked up his head and walked away, horrifying Leary. The next night Leary was missing, but Conall was there. Conall also accepted the challenge, but when the giant returned on the third night neither Conall nor Leary was there to fulfill their part of the bargain. Cuchulain was there however, and he struck off the giant's head. The next night he was still there at the giant's return, and he knelt and bowed his head for the giant's blow. The giant then transformed himself back into Cu Roi and proclaimed Cuchulain the Champion of Ulaid before the assembled people.

CONNOR, FERGUS, AND NOISI

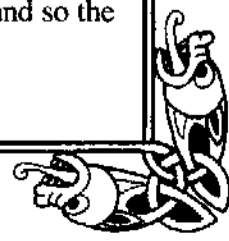
When this matter was settled Connor decided to try make peace with Noisi. He sent his mother's husband Fergus to Alba to bring Noisi and Deirdre back. Because Noisi trusted Fergus he came with him, even though he suspected a trick. Connor did indeed plan a trick. It was a gesa of Fergus' that he could never refuse a drink. Connor arranged for someone to invite Fergus for a drink on the way back so that Noisi and Deirdre would leave his protection. After the two arrived alone, Noisi kept Deirdre hidden, but Connor sent a servant to spy on them. The servant peeped through a cranny and saw Noisi and

THE LOSS AND RECOVERY OF THE TAIN

The *Tain Bo Cuiligne* was originally inscribed in Ogham characters on staves of wood by Fergus Mac Roy soon after the events it described. Eventually, the staves were lost when the bard entrusted with them traveled to Italy and never returned.

Some generations later, the *Tain* was slowly forgotten, so that some bards knew one part and some another of the great epic of Cuchulain, but when all the fragments were combined the tale was still incomplete. One bard, Muirgen, was commissioned to recover the whole.

On his way to Italy, Muirgen stopped by the tomb of Fergus Mac Roy and made up a poem, saying that if Fergus were there they would soon have the entire poem. Such is the power of verse in a place of magic that Fergus himself appeared and spirited Muirgen to the Otherworld where he taught him the *Tain* as it should be told, and so the story was found again.



THE DEATH OF MAEVE

Maeve was killed at last by Connor's son Forbai. He knew that she bathed in a certain pool, and he measured how far it was from the pool to the nearest cover. He practiced with his sling from that exact distance until he could hit very precisely, and then hid himself in the trees waiting until she came to bathe. Then he slung a stone at her, hitting her directly between the eyes, and that was the end of Maeve.

CUCHULAIN: "HOUND OF CHULAIN"

Cuchulain appeared in the stories as a boy and a young man, and was only 27 when he died. As a half-Sidhe, Cuchulain was handsome and had a number of Sidhe advantages, including Wild Mana Generator and the "Spurt of Speed" version of Heroic Running. He was quite intelligent (IQ 13), and had some druidic learning. He was also exceptionally dexterous (DX 17), allowing him to succeed at feats which no normal person could attempt.

Normally his Strength was only 12, but when his *riastradh* (battle frenzy) came over him, when Berserk in battle, his Strength became 18, accompanied by a change in appearance from that of a normal young man to a Hideous monster (see the description on p. 64). Faced with this image, 100 of Maeve's warriors fell dead on the spot.

Cuchulain studied under Skya (see p. 34) and was acknowledged the best warrior in Ulaid. He was married to Emer and had only one son, Connla, whom he killed himself (see *Connla and Cuchulain*, p. 87). He had a number of *gasas*: Must not be woken from sleep, Must not eat dog-flesh, Must not refuse the first request made to him every day, and Can only be killed with his own spear. He had a magical weapon, the *Gae Bolga* or Belly Spear, which was cursed, forcing him to kill someone he loved every time he used it.

Deirdre playing *fidchell*. Noisi saw him peeping and threw a playing piece which put out his eye. Connor used this act of violence as an excuse to start a war. He called out the warband and fought the sons of Usli and those who defended them. A warrior called Eoghan killed Noisi, and Connor forcibly married Deirdre.

When Fergus returned he felt betrayed, and he led a group of Noisi's friends and those who thought that Connor had acted badly (including Cuchulain's friend Ferdiad) into exile at the court of Maeve. Deirdre's marriage with Connor did not last long. He threatened to give her to one of his men, and she leaped from a fast-moving chariot, dashing out her brains on a rock.



THE TAIN

One day Maeve was in bed with Ailell when he claimed that he had more possessions than she did. They got out of bed and compared everything, and they were equally matched except for a magnificent white bull in Ailell's herd. Maeve demanded a bull as fine; the only one to be found was the Dun Bull of Cooley (*Cuailgne*), in Ulaid. Maeve made this the excuse for a full-scale invasion (the *Tain Bo Cuailgne*), knowing that the bull would be undefended as the men of Ulaid were overcome with the Pangs of Macha (see p. 35), as helpless as women in childbirth.

As soon as Connachta invaded the Ulaidmen were all afflicted, except Cuchulain, because he was still a beardless youth. He held off the army of Connachta singlehandedly for days. Sometimes he harassed the army at night, and finally fought single combats at the ford which marked the border, the army agreeing not to cross until Cuchulain was defeated. As Cuchulain killed champion after champion, Maeve tried to bribe and taunt Ferdiad to fight his friend, but he refused to do so. When Cuchulain was eventually overcome with wounds, his father Lugh appeared and healed him in two days. During those two days the Boys' Corps of Ulaid arrived, fought, and were all killed. At last Maeve provoked Ferdiad into fighting by threatening to have a satire written about him.

CUCHULAIN AND FERDIAD

The two warriors and their charioteers met at the ford. Cuchulain was dismayed to see his friend and brother, but Ferdiad told him to put aside their friendship for something that had to be done.

At first they fought with light javelins, but failed to wound each other. Later in the day they changed to heavy spears, and the blood began to flow. Finally, at sunset, Ferdiad suggested that they stop for the day. They embraced and then went to rest together, sharing their fire, food, and healing herbs, and sleeping beside each other.

On the second day, they fought from their chariots with heavy spears. By the end of the day, they were both heavily wounded, and they embraced and camped together as before.

The third day was spent fighting with swords; by the end of the day they were both wounded and parted from each other with no friendly signs.

On the fourth day, Ferdiad feared that Cuchulain would use his dread spear, the *Gae Bolga*, and prepared himself with special care, hanging a huge flat stone over his belly, with an iron breastplate over that. They fought with spears and later swords, but neither gained advantage. Cuchulain's charioteer, Laeg, made fun of him, hoping to goad him to an angry battle frenzy. It worked, and the *riastradh* (battle frenzy) came over him. Now they fought at close quarters so fiercely that the waters of the ford recoiled in terror.

At last Ferdiad sank his sword deep into Cuchulain, so that the river ran red with his blood. Hard-pressed, Cuchulain called Laeg to throw him the *Gae Bolga*. Cuchulain leaped up and brought the *Gae Bolga* over the rim of Ferdiad's shield, through his breastplate, and into his chest. Then Cuchulain transferred the spear to his foot and thrust into Ferdiad's belly from below, bursting the stone into three pieces. Cuchulain caught Ferdiad as he fell and carried him to shore. He laid Ferdiad down, and then a fairness came over him. "Rise up," cried Laeg, "for the hosts of Connachta will be upon us. They will fight no more single combats now that Ferdiad is dead." But Cuchulain refused to move.

With tumult and rejoicing, the host of Connachta poured across the border into Ulaid. Meanwhile, Cuchulain and Laeg buried Ferdiad, and placed a stone over his head with the tale of his deeds and lineage written on it in Ogham.

Although the men of Connachta successfully stole the bull, Cuchulain's efforts had delayed them, and the next day the men of Ulaid were restored to strength, able to drive the hordes from Connachta back. The two bulls met and killed each other, trampling Bricriu to death in the process.

Cuchulain had many other adventures, including an affair with Manannan's wife Fand and travels in the Otherworld. He accidentally killed his son Connla when the boy refused to break a gesa (see sidebar, p. 87).

THE DEATH OF CUCHULAIN

Maeve hated Cuchulain, and would not leave him in peace. She stirred up Lewy, son of Cu Roi, and the sons of Calatin to kill him with treachery, arms, and magic. The sons of Calatin cast spells on him to make him see imaginary battalions marching against Ulaid, and despite the best efforts of his wife and Cathbad, he couldn't be restrained from fighting, and wore himself out against these phantoms.

THE TALE OF MAC DA THO'S PIG

Sometime after the death of Cuchulain, Mesgora Mac Da Tho became king of Lagen. He was a good fighter but not very clever. Luckily his wife Buan supplied all the cunning the kingdom needed. He had three claims to fame: a dog which could outrun any wild beast in Eriu, the largest boar in Eriu, and a reputation for stinginess.

Although preferring to stay neutral in the fighting between Connachta and Ulaid, Mac Da Tho was drawn into the conflict when Maeve and Connor sent offers of riches and alliances in exchange for his wonderful hound on the same day. Not wanting to decide between the two offers, Mac Do Tho, at Buan's suggestion, arranged for them both to come to a feast on the same day to collect the hound, and to let them fight it out between them.

For the feast he killed his great boar, and Bricriu of the Poisoned Tongue suggested that the warriors should debate who was the most fit to carve it. Cet Mac Maga, Maeve's greatest warrior, amiably bested the tales of all the Ulaid heroes until Connor's champion Conall Cernach entered. Cet yielded to Conall's claim that he'd never spent a day of his adult life in which he didn't kill a man of Connachta, but said, "It would be a different story if my brother Anluan was here." At that Conall laughed and said, "Anluan is here!" picking up a severed head from his trophy belt. In the resulting melee the hound both sides had sought was killed.

A few years later the satirist Athairne the Importunate visited Lagen. His demand to sleep with Buan was refused, although this defied the custom of hospitality. He then went to Emain Macha and demanded that Connor invade Lagen. Connor put Conall Cernach in charge of the invasion, which was successful. Conall slew Mac Da Tho and offered himself to Buan, but she chose to die instead.

THE DEATH OF CONNOR

Conall Cernach made a tathlum (see p. 91) from the brains of Mesgora Mac Da Tho, and Cet, a great warrior of Connachta, stole this brain-ball and slung it at King Connor. The ball lodged in the middle of his forehead and couldn't be removed. The druids advised Connor to live a quiet life, because if he became overexcited the ball would kill him. Eventually he lost control of his emotions, though, and it slew him.



THE DESTRUCTION OF DA DERGA'S HOSTEL

Conary Mor was the son of Mess Buachalla, daughter of the high king of Eriu, by Nemglan, a powerful Sidhe whose particular concern was birds. Although Conary was of the royal kin he did not expect to be made king. After his grandfather's death he rode out in his chariot and began casting stones at birds, whereupon his father appeared and revealed the conditions by which Conary could become king.

Nemglan also revealed all of Conary's *gesas* to him. He must not kill birds, because his father was a bird. He must not go righthand-wise around Tara, nor lefthand-wise around the plain of Bregia. He must not hunt the evil beasts of Cerna. He must not sleep away from Tara for more than nine nights at a time. He must not sleep in a house where the firelight showed through the door. He must prevent any looting and rapine in the country. He must not allow a single person to enter a house where he is after sunset. He must not interfere in a quarrel between peasants. Finally there was the death *gesa*: he would not die until he followed three red men into the house of Red.

Conary ruled for a long time in peace and happiness, until he broke the first of his *gesas* – that he should not settle a quarrel between two servants. Then the other *gesas* came upon him thick and fast until he realized he was following three men dressed all in red toward Da Derga's hostel ("Derga" means "Red"). He tried to avert the *gesa* by sending his companions ahead to make the red men ride behind, but they couldn't catch up with the red men; they were a portent, sent by destiny to allow the conditions to be fulfilled. At last the fire gleamed out of the building, reavers saw it, and Conary found himself fighting for his life in the ruins of the hostel.

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Afterward, on his way to the real battle, he saw a woman washing blood-stained clothes in the ford where he'd killed Ferdiad and recognized them as his own. He urged his charioteer on and passed three crones roasting a dog. They asked him to share their meat; when he refused, they said he wouldn't do it because they were too humble for him. He took a piece to avoid discourtesy, but when he ate the roast dog he lost all strength in the right side of his body because he'd broken two of his *gesas* (against refusing requests and eating dog-flesh).

When he reached the battle a satirist demanded the *Gae Bolga*. Cuchulain threw it at him, killing the man and nine behind him. Lewy threw it back, killing Laeg the charioteer. Another satirist demanded the spear, so Cuchulain threw it again, killing another ten enemies. This time Erc, king of Lagen, returned it, mortally wounding Cuchulain's horse, Liath Macha ("The Gray of Macha"). A third satirist demanded the spear, and Cuchulain threw it a third time. This time Lewy threw it back and it struck Cuchulain a mortal blow.

He staggered away and then tied himself upright to a standing stone. There he stood dying, keeping away his enemies because, even half-paralyzed and mortally injured, he was the best fighter in the world. At last he died of his wound, but when Lewy came forward to check that he was dead, Cuchulain's sword fell and severed Lewy's hand. Lewy one-handedly cut off Cuchulain's head and rode away.

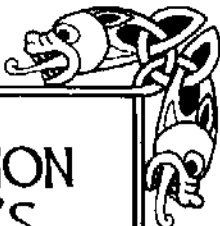
Later, Conall Cernach rode up and saw Liath Macha, dying. The horse led him to the stone where Cuchulain's headless body hung. Conall followed Lewy's tracks until he caught up with him, and they fought. To make it an equal fight Conall tied one of his own hands behind his back. After a lengthy fight, Conall won, retrieving Cuchulain's head and taking Lewy's head as well. Then Conall returned to Emain Macha, "*but he made no show of triumph in entering the city, for Cuchulain, Hound of Ulster was no more*" (Rolleston).



The Stories Of Prydain

A number of Prydain's tales, such as the Four Branches of the Welsh *Mabinogion* and the Tale of Taliesin, remain relatively complete, but many more are totally lost than are even partially remembered. The surviving stories are retold here.





The First Branch: Pwyll, Prince of Dyfed

While still a young man, Pwyll, prince of Dyfed, became separated from his men while hunting and brought down a stag which was being chased by another pack. A strange lord rode up to him and reproached him for this discourtesy. Pwyll offered to make amends and the stranger, Arawn, king of Annwn, said that the only amends he would accept would be for Pwyll to take his place as king for a year, at the end of the year killing his neighbor king, Hafgan. Arawn explained that Hafgan had strange powers (the Alternate Blows advantage, p. 75) and a death gesa that he could only be killed by a mortal man. Pwyll agreed, and Arawn cast a spell so that the two exchanged appearances.

Pwyll took Arawn's place in Annwn and Arawn took Pwyll's place in Dyfed. He found that he magically knew the layout of Arawn's hall and the laws of the land. He ruled the land for a year, dispensing justice as well as he could.

At the end of the year Pwyll went to the appointed place and fought Hafgan. Hafgan recognized that Pwyll was not the Sidhe Arawn, and implored him to make a second blow (which would heal him), but Pwyll refused. King Hafgan died, and his realm became part of Annwn. Hafgan's friends in the Otherworld thus hated Pwyll, and did all they could from that time on to spite him.

Then Arawn and Pwyll again exchanged places, and on his return to Dyfed, Pwyll found that Arawn had ruled well. Arawn, for his part, worried about his wife, but discovered that, while Pwyll had lain down each night beside her, he had turned his back on her although she was the most beautiful woman Pwyll had ever seen. Impressed, Arawn swore eternal friendship with Pwyll, and in the years to come the two kings and lands grew closer together.

PWYLL AND RHIANNON

Pwyll's principal court was at Arberth. Behind the court there lay a hill called Gorsedd Arberth where two worlds met. One day when seated on this hill Pwyll saw a strange wonder: a beautiful woman rode by on horseback stopping for no one and overtaken by none. He tried to catch her for several days, and at last implored her to stop. She did so and explained that she was Rhiannon, daughter of Hefeydd the Old, and that she wished to marry Pwyll and not the man to whom she was promised. Although Pwyll could tell she was a powerful Sidhe, he agreed to marry her at her father's court. On the appointed day he rode there for the marriage feast.

At the feast a noble-looking man appeared and asked a boon of Pwyll. "Whatever you ask of me I shall give you, as long as it is in my power," was Pwyll's reply. The man,

THE DESTRUCTION OF DA DERGA'S HOSTEL (CONTINUED)

After he and his men fought prodigiously, Conary sent Conall Cearnach to fetch water to slake his thirst. The same forces which maneuvered Conary into breaking his gesas dried up all the lakes and rivers in Eriu as Conall approached them, until at last he found a lake that didn't disappear in time. When he returned, Conary had been killed, but Conall gave his severed head a drink of water, and the head thanked him.

When Conall came home the first thing his father asked was whether the king was alive. When Conall replied "no," his father reproached him: "Then what are you doing still alive yourself?" Conall showed his father his many wounds, and shortly thereafter died.

RHIANNON, PWYLL, AND PRYDERI

Rhiannon

Rhiannon was a very powerful Sidhe, who was wise and knowledgeable, and who gave good advice. She had the Sidhe advantages Enhanced Strength and Heroic Running, and was a Wild Mana Generator. As well as being very wise (IQ 14) she was very beautiful. She had Status +6 as queen of Dyfed, and retained this Status even after Pwyll's death and her marriage to Manannan. Gwawl and Llwyd were powerful enemies of hers. She was exceptionally good at riding and could shapeshift herself into a horse. She appeared beautiful, gentle, and soft-spoken at first, keeping her intelligence and strength hidden.

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RHIANNON, PWYLL, AND PRYDERI (CONTINUED)

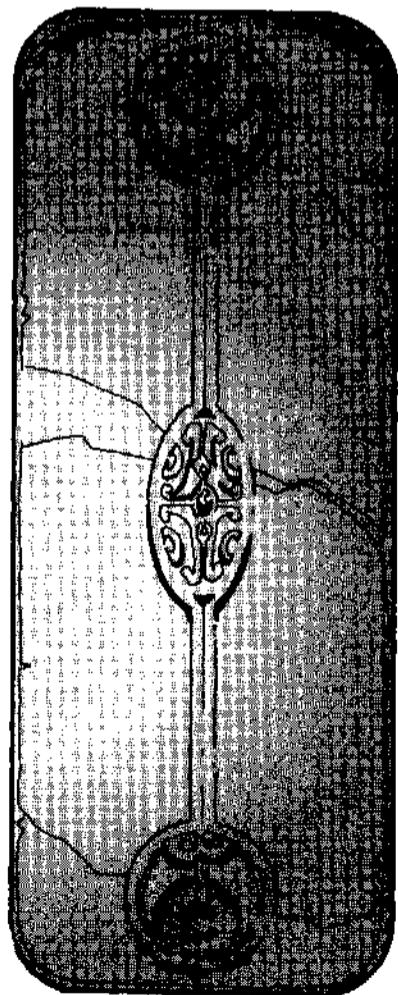
Pwyll

Pwyll was a mortal, although he spent time in the Otherworld. His most noticeable characteristic was his restraint; he always thought before he acted (he had the Common Sense advantage). He wasn't good at concocting plans, but was good at calming people down and making them agree to wait. He was neither as strong nor as clever as his wife Rhiannon. He had Status +6, as king of Dyfed. He had a powerful Patron in Arawn, and the same enemies as Rhiannon.

Pryderi

Pryderi was a half-Sidhe, child of Rhiannon and Pwyll. He inherited his father's calm, and was good at most things, but a natural follower in any enterprise, not a leader. He had Status +6 as king of Dyfed, and a high Reputation for having added Ystrad Tywi to the kingdom.

Pryderi was inclined to believe any story travelers told him, and to reward them generously (he suffered from Gullibility and Generosity). He shared the same enemies as his parents until Manannan dealt with the situation. He was good at winning friends, and was married to Cigfa, the daughter of Gwyn Gohoyw, the high king of Bregheda.



Gwawl, was a friend of Hafgan and the spurned suitor, and he laughed and demanded Rhiannon. Rhiannon quickly made a plan and arranged a new date for a wedding feast for her and Gwawl.

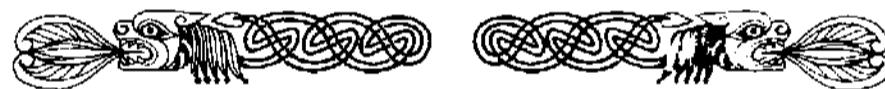
Pwyll arrived on the appointed day dressed as a beggar, carrying a magical bag that could never be filled. Begging for alms, Pwyll asked Gwawl to fill the bag, but even the whole feast didn't fill it. At last Gwawl got in to find out what was wrong, Pwyll tied him up in the bag, and he and his friends kicked the bag until Gwawl agreed to let Pwyll have Rhiannon.

THE NAMING OF PRYDERI

For the first few years of their marriage Pwyll and Rhiannon were happy. Then Rhiannon bore a son, who was stolen away by Otherworldly means on the night of Beltain while she and her women slept. The women woke first and, fearing punishment, killed a dog and smeared the sleeping Rhiannon with its blood. When she awoke they claimed she'd killed her own baby. In punishment she was made to wear a horse collar, carry visitors into the dun, and tell them her story.

Meanwhile, Ternyon, king of Gwent-is-Coed, had a mare whose foal was stolen away each year on Beltain. That same year he stayed up to catch the thief, and managed to save both the foal and a baby which was dropped in his stable in the confusion. Ternyon brought the child up as his own, but when he heard Rhiannon's story he realized that the boy resembled Pwyll. Immediately, he took the boy to Arberth to meet his real parents. When the matter was explained to Rhiannon she inadvertently gave the boy his name, saying, "If this is true, then all my cares ("Pryderi") will be lifted from me."

Pryderi at length succeeded his father as prince of Dyfed.



The Second Branch: Branwen, Daughter of Llyr

Bran ("raven"), high king of Prydain in his time, was a giant. He had the death gesa that he could only be killed inside a house. Since there were no houses large enough to hold him, he found this easy to avoid. He had one sister, Branwen ("white raven"), who was beautiful, wise, determined, and stubborn, and traveled with her brother's court until her marriage. They had one full brother, Manannan, one of the best men and wisest counsellors in Prydain, and two half-brothers, the twins Nisien and Evnisien. Nisien was a gentle peacemaker and Evnisien was a quarrelsome troublemaker.

One day Bran was at Harddlech in Gwynedd when he saw ships crossing the sea towards him, coming from Eriu. They contained Matholwch, king of Mumu, who hoped to gain the hand of Branwen. Bran and Branwen thought the match an excellent idea, and the marriage was celebrated with great feasting and rejoicing. In the middle of the feasting Evnisien returned from an errand and asked what all the fuss was about. When it was explained, Evnisien felt slighted because he had not been consulted. He lost his temper and mutilated Matholwch's horses.



Matholwch was offended and left immediately. Bran sent messengers offering recompense, and eventually Matholwch accepted a payment of sound horses for each one maimed, a staff of silver, a plate of gold, and a magic cauldron which brought the dead back to life. Taking this reparation and Branwen, Matholwch returned to Mumu. Matholwch was under no obligation to accept these presents as compensation, but once he had the matter should have been closed.

GWERN

Matholwch and Branwen lived in peace for a year and Branwen bore a son named Gwern, "Alder." After this, Matholwch's champions derided him for accepting compensation for his horses when the culprit escaped without punishment. They persuaded him to turn against Branwen, and she was forced to live in the kitchen and have her face slapped every day by the butcher. She tamed a starling and sent it to Bran with a message about her treatment.

When Bran discovered what had happened to his sister, he was furious. He assembled an army, and all the men of Prydain came together as part of it; only seven fighting men remained behind in Prydain, with Caradawg, son of Bran, in charge of them. The army crossed to Eriu in boats, but Bran was so big no boat could carry him; so he waded through the sea.

The men of Mumu were frightened when they saw the army coming. They tried to fight, and they tried to run away, and when neither solution worked they tried to make peace. Matholwch offered to restore Branwen and resign the kingship in favor of their son. A meeting was arranged, and ostensibly to honor Bran, Matholwch had a great tent raised, large enough for Bran to fit inside. But Matholwch planned a trick – he placed flour sacks against every pillar, and in each sack was hidden a fully-armed warrior, ready to spring out and overpower Bran and his delegation.

Evnisien checked the tent, saw the bags, and inquired about their contents. The guide told him that they contained flour, and Evnisien squeezed the head of every bag, killing the warrior within. At the meeting, Matholwch was agreeing to terms when Evnisien, seeing that peace was about to win out, seized Gwern and flung him on the fire. There the child blazed up as fast as an alder twig and there was nothing to do but fight.

THE MANY DEEDS OF FINN MAC COOL

When Finn was a boy he met the druid Finegas on a riverbank. Finegas, who had been fishing in that river for many years, had finally caught the Salmon of Knowledge. The fish had eaten nine magical hazel nuts and it was said that whoever ate the fish would become wise. Finegas set Finn to cook the fish, and when Finn accidentally sucked his greasy thumb he acquired the wisdom for himself. After that time he knew the answer to any question simply by sucking his thumb.

In the time of Finn's parents the institution of the Fianna grew up, warbands which sworn allegiance to their leaders and their king, forsaking the ties of their clans. Finn's parents were from opposing clans, and by the time their son reached manhood the Fianna were divided into factions. In the time of the high king Cormac Mac Art, Finn managed, after some fighting, to unite all the Fianna bands with himself as their leader.

He went on to defend Ireland from any number of enemies, natural and supernatural, including the Fomor. His Fianna also spent much time hunting Otherworldly deer and visiting Sidhe in their homes, often allying with them in their battles with each other.

The adventures of the Fianna came to an end while Finn, Cailty, and Oisín were in the Otherworld. King Cormac died and his son refused to give the Fianna the traditional present on his accession. A war ensued, and all the Fians were slain. Too late to help in the battles, Finn returned from the Otherworld in time to mourn and bury his grandson, Oscar.



THE MABINOGION

The title *Mabinogion* was given by Lady Charlotte Guest to her 19th-century translation of a group of Welsh stories found in the *Red Book of Hergest* and *The White Book of Rhydderch*. Properly, it refers only to the first four stories, the "Four Branches of the Mabinogi," which appear to be of greater antiquity and more authentic tradition than the other stories.

"Mabinogi" means something like "Junior" and there are a number of conflicting theories about the meaning of the name. The most likely is that these branches were apprentice pieces which all aspiring bards had to know. Originally these stories had small poems linking the parts, but only one branch (Math) retains these poems.

THE DEATHS OF BRANWEN AND BRAN

At first the fight went to Matholwch's men, because whenever they were killed they were revived in the cauldron Bran had given him. When Ebnisien saw this he was furious. He lay with the dead men, and when tossed into the cauldron, the might of his hatred cracked both his heart and the cauldron.

Deprived of this asset, the battle continued until only Branwen and seven men remained alive of the army from Prydain and only five pregnant women remained alive in all Mumu. Bran was mortally wounded, and asked his men to cut off his head, which would then be able to talk and keep them company. Pryderi and Manannan took the head, and they returned to Prydain.

As soon as they reached shore, Branwen's heart broke in sorrow, and she was laid to rest. The rest of the party met a delegation coming to tell them that Caswallon, the son of Beli, had seized power and Caradawg and the seven warriors left behind were dead. They proceeded to Harddlech, then inland, following the instructions of Bran's head. While the head was with them they felt no sorrow, but one day one of the band broke a gesa that Bran's head had set on them. Thereafter the head lost its powers of speech, and they sadly took it to Dinas Ludd to bury it on the White Mount, as Bran had requested, to protect Prydain from plague and invasion as long as it was buried.



The Third Branch: Manannan, Son of Llyr

After Bran's head was buried, Pryderi invited Manannan to return with him to Dyfed. He did so, and at the urging of Pryderi married Rhiannon, who had been ruling at Arberth in her son's absence. For a time all went well, but Gwawl and his friends hadn't forgotten Pwyll's family. Pryderi, Cigfa, Rhiannon, and Manannan went up Gorsedd Arberth on Samhain, hoping to see a wonder. A mist rose up, and when it disappeared the population of Dyfed had vanished.

The four friends decided to go into the other kingdoms of Prydain, where things were normal. They three times decided to make a living at honest trades, as shoemakers, shieldmakers, and saddlemakers, and in each case were chased out of town after a year by the other craftsmen, jealous of Manannan's good work. Finally they returned to Dyfed and lived by hunting.

After another year, on Samain, they were pursuing a boar when they saw a great fortress where previously there had only been a hill. Manannan advised against entering it, but Pryderi went to investigate. Pryderi saw a beautiful bowl in the center of the deserted courtyard. He touched it and found that he was stuck fast, unable to either move or speak. The other three waited for him for a long time, and at last Rhiannon went in, saw Pryderi, but touched the bowl herself and was also rooted to the spot. Manannan and Cigfa waited for some time, but the others didn't return. At nightfall the fortress vanished.

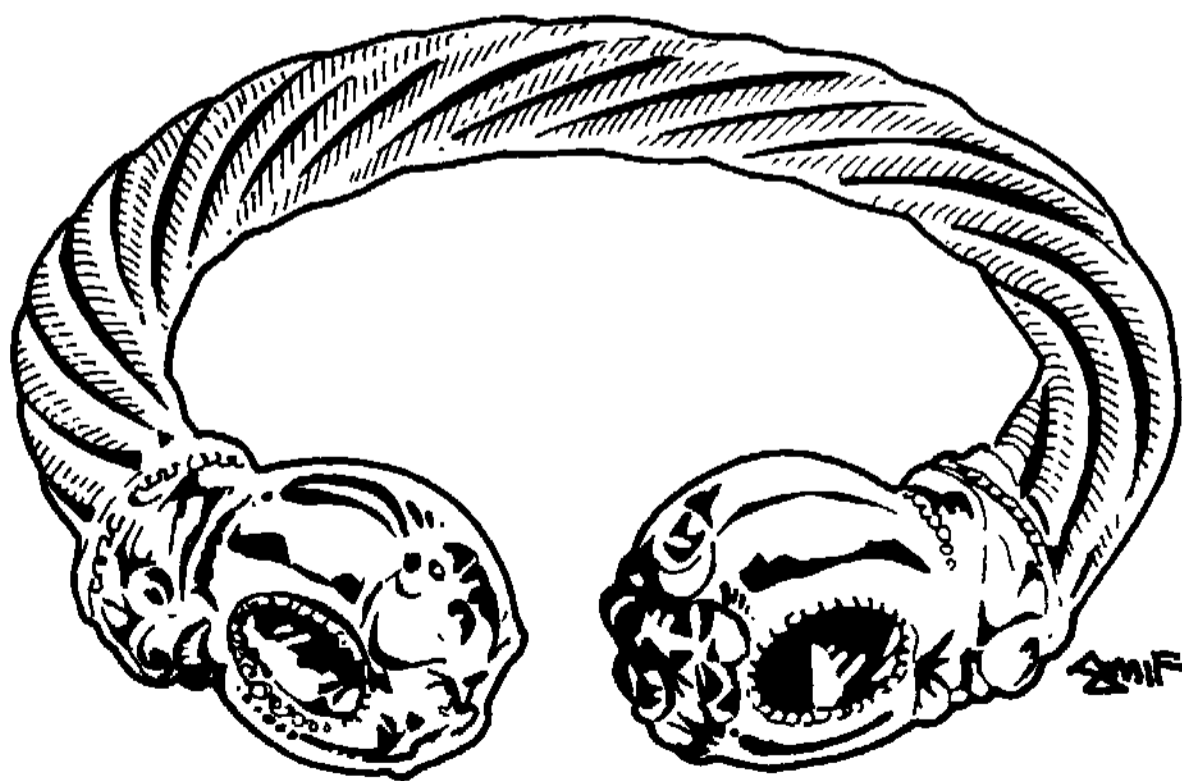
AN ARMY OF MICE

With only two of them left, they could no longer provide enough food by hunting, so Manannan began to plant wheat. He laid out three fields of wheat and waited for it to ripen. The morning that the first field should have been ready for the harvest, it was stripped bare with not a spike of wheat left. The following day, the same happened to the second field. The next night, Manannan decided to watch over the third field.

At last he saw a great army of mice come into the field and begin nibbling at the wheat. Manannan tried to catch them, but they were all too fast except one which seemed heavy and ran slowly. Manannan caught it and took it home to show Cigfa. "What are you going to do with it?" she asked. "Hang it," replied Manannan, "That's the proper punishment for a thief."

The next day he went up on Gorsedd Arberth and began making preparations to hang the mouse, building a tiny gallows. As he was doing so a man came along the road. Manannan was surprised, as it had been years since he'd seen anyone in Dyfed apart from his companions. The stranger asked him to spare the mouse, saying that it was beneath Manannan's dignity to kill such a creature. Manannan refused. Another man came and asked the same thing, and at length a third, dressed as a druid. The druid offered a reward, and when Manannan refused it the druid said, "Then name your reward." Manannan asked for Rhiannon and Pryderi to be freed, for the people of Dyfed to be released from the enchantment, and for vengeance not to be taken upon them.

The druid agreed to all this, and explained that he was Llwyd, son of Cil Coed, a friend of Gwawl and the Sidhe Hafgan. The mice were the warriors and ladies of his court, whom he'd turned into mice to eat the wheat. The mouse in Manannan's hand was Llwyd's wife, who was pregnant and couldn't run as fast as the others. Manannan released the mouse, and immediately saw Pryderi and Rhiannon returning. Life returned to normal in Dyfed, and if the people wondered how they had passed from Samain to Lughnasa without remembering a thing, it isn't recorded.



AND ARTHUR HIMSELF . . .

"The Three Most Generous Men of the Island of Prydain:

Nudd the Generous, son of Senyllt,

Mordaf the Generous, son of Serwan,

Rhydderch the Generous, son of Tudwal Tudglyd.

(And Arthur himself was more generous than the three.)"

Although Arthur was a genuine historical figure from the post-Roman Celtic period, he was so impressive that he made "guest appearances" in much older Celtic stories. He and his knights were mentioned alongside people centuries older in the Triads, sometimes as parenthetical additions as above, and sometimes Arthur or one of his knights displaced an older example of a virtue or vice. The Triads and the *Mabinogion* story "Culhwch and Olwen" (see p. 46) represent the oldest surviving strand of Arthurian tradition.

Arthur lived sometime in the late 5th or early 6th century A.D. In the following 500 years he remained an important figure among the surviving Celts in Britain, as they were pushed back into Wales, Cornwall, Scotland, and Cumbria by invading Saxons. The Saxons weren't interested in Arthur, but the Norman invaders, after 1066, were. Many of William the Conqueror's "Normans" were actually Bretons, descendants of refugees from Britain who could understand Welsh and Cornish. They took up these songs and stories, which thus became popular in both England and France.

Arthur came back to Britain from France very changed, but his Celtic roots were still visible. Most of the names in the story were still recognizably Celtic. For example, Arthur's sword, Excalibur, had the same name (Latinized and corrupted) as Fergus Mac Roy's sword, Caledbwlech, famed both for its prowess (its name means "hard denter") and for the fact that it left rainbow trails in the air behind it as it was swung.

There is much interesting information outside the main thread of the modern Arthurian tradition preserved within Celtic mentions of Arthur. In "Culhwch" there is fascinating genealogical material on Arthur and details about his knights and their deeds. In addition to this, anyone seeking more information on Arthur's Celtic roots should seek out the Triads and Gillian Bradshaw's *Down the Long Wind*, a very Celtic retelling of the Arthurian cycle.

LLUDD AND LLEFELYS

Beli Mawr, the son of Manogan, was high king of Prydain. His wife was Don, a Sidhe, daughter of Mathonwy. They had nine sons (Lludd, Llefelys, Caswallon, Nyniaw, Amaethon, Gofannon, Peibaw, Gwydion, and Gilfaethwy) and two daughters (Arianrhod and Penardun). Lludd succeeded his father as high king and founded the city of Dinas Lludd around the sacred grove of kingship. Llefelys studied druidry and became king of an area of Gaul. Gofannon used his Bellows Breath advantage to become a famous smith. Amaethon became a farmer. The three youngest children, Gwydion, Gilfaethwy, and Arianrhod, were fostered by their mother's brother, Math ap Mathonwy, king of Gwynedd.

During the kingship of Lludd three plagues came into Prydain. The first was a strange race of Sidhe called the Coranyeid, who caused dissension in the land. Nobody could plot against them because they could hear any word that was spoken on the wind. The second was a great scream that was heard every year at Beltain which caused people, animals, and the land to be barren. The third was that however much food Lludd brought into his court, whatever was not consumed on the first night vanished. Lludd took counsel with Llefelys, meeting in a boat in the middle of the sea and speaking through a brass tube so as not to be overheard by the Coranyeid. Llefelys told him about certain insects which would kill the Coranyeid, about two dragons who screamed at Beltain and how to catch them, and about a giant who was stealing the food. Lludd then dealt with the three plagues as his brother suggested.

After Lludd's death, Nyniaw became high king, while Peibaw was king of Trefan; their brother Caswallon became king of Coridan. Nyniaw and Peibaw quarrelled about the meaning of the stars in the sky and fought. Their uncle Math lost his temper and turned them both into oxen for their stupidity.

After this Bran ap Llyr, son of Penardun, became high king. He was chosen because the whole of Prydain was tired of the sons of Beli. When Bran was killed in Eriu while making war on Matholwch, king of Munster, Caswallon attacked his young son, Caradawg, who had been left as regent, and made himself high king of Prydain.

The Fourth Branch: Math, Son of Mathonwy

Math was one of the three great druids of Prydain, wise and riddling and able to hear anything that was whispered aloud by anyone out of doors. He ruled Gwynedd from his court in Harddlech and had a gesa that, unless the country was at war, he had to keep his feet in the lap of a maiden.

Math had two nephews and a niece living near him, the children of his sister Don by her husband Beli. The niece was Arianrhod, whose home was a Dun Arianrhod. The nephews were Gilfaethwy, a warrior, and Gwydion, a druid and his uncle's pupil. It happened that Gilfaethwy fell in love with Math's footwarmer, Goewin. He couldn't speak to anyone about this without Math overhearing, but his sighs and moans were enough for Gwydion to guess his difficulty.

Gwydion deliberately incited a war between Gwynedd and Dyfed so that Goewin would be freed from Math's feet, and Gilfaethwy would have a chance to seduce her. Pryderi, prince of Dyfed, had been sent some pigs from Arawn of Annwn, the first pigs that had ever been in this world. Gwydion went to Pryderi's court and tricked him into giving him some of the pigs in exchange for fine gifts which were illusions. When the gifts disappeared, Pryderi pursued Gwydion and there was a war. While Math was away fighting, Gilfaethwy returned to Dun Dathyl and raped Goewin.

When the two armies faced each other, Pryderi challenged Gwydion to single combat. Gwydion accepted and won, although he cheated by using his magic in the fight. Pryderi was buried at Maen Tyriawg and the men of Dyfed





returned home to mourn him. Math returned to Dun Dathyl where he discovered what had happened to Goewin. He married her and set her up as mistress of his court, and waited for his nephews to return. They and their warband wandered Gwynedd for a long time, and so Math sent word that they were under the *Glam Dicin* and that no man was to give them hospitality. At this they returned for his judgment.

Math said that nothing they could do would make amends for the dishonor done to Goewin and the unnecessary death of Pryderi, so he punished them by turning them into animals; first deer, then pigs, then wolves. The next year they bore children to each other in animal form and a year later Math transformed these children into humans and fostered them. At the end of three years Math forgave his nephews and restored them to his favor.

ARIANRHOD AND LLEW LLAW GYFFES

Math then began to look for a new footwarmer. Gwydion suggested that he ask his sister Arianrhod. She came to court and said that she was a virgin, but when she stepped over Math's wand she gave birth to two children. One of them Math named Dylan Eil Ton ("Seaborn, son of the Wave") and fostered. Dylan was amphibious and had toad-eyes, eventually forsaking the land entirely for the sea. The other child Gwydion fostered.

When the second child was old enough, Gwydion took him to Arianrhod. Arianrhod was furious at being reminded of her shame and asked what the boy's name was. On being told that he had none, she put a *gesa* on him that he should have no name until she gave him one. Gwydion left, and later returned in the guise of a shoemaker. He made a pair of shoes for Arianrhod, and while she was trying them on she saw the child shooting with a sling. "The fair-haired boy has a skilful hand," she said. "That will do for his name," replied Gwydion, and the child was known as Llew Llaw Gyffes ("fair-haired and skilful-handed") from then on.

Even more furious at being tricked, Arianrhod put a new *gesa* on Llew, that he should never bear arms unless she herself armed him. Gwydion disguised himself and the boy as a wandering bard and his apprentice and returned to Dun Arianrhod. Outside the walls of the dun he set an illusion of war and attack such as would need every able-bodied man to fight it off. Arianrhod and her women

THE TALE OF TALIESIN

There was once a Sidhe druid named Ceridwen who lived with her husband Tegid near Llyn Tegid in Gwynedd. She had a son who was the ugliest and stupidest boy in the world. Ceridwen decided to work a great magic to make him clever. She gathered potent herbs and made a potion which had to be stirred for a year over a fire. She hired a child named Gwion to stir it for her. On the last day of the year a scalding drop flew out of the cauldron and landed on Gwion's thumb. He put his thumb in his mouth to ease the pain and immediately became the wisest man in the world.

Ceridwen was furious and began to chase him. Using his new found wisdom, Gwion transformed himself into a hare. Ceridwen, being outrun, transformed into a greyhound. When he came to a stream, Gwion changed into a salmon; Ceridwen changed into an otter. To escape the otter, Gwion became a swallow; Ceridwen became a hawk. At last Gwion decided to stop running and to hide. Flying over a threshing floor, he changed into a grain of wheat, indistinguishable from all the others. Ceridwen changed into a hen and ate the grain that was Gwion.

But she didn't kill him, for nine months later she gave birth to Gwion. Ceridwen put the baby into a bag and threw him into a stream, from which he was rescued by Elffin, prince of Gwynedd. Elffin raised the foundling, naming him Taliesin, "shining brow," because of his wisdom. At the age of 13 he was able to confound all the druids and wise men of Gwynedd, dazzling them with his wisdom and prophecies and putting a spell on them so that all they could say was "wub-a-wubble" (the sound a child makes pulling his lower lip with his fingers). Taliesin was recognized as the greatest druid in Prydain, and some of his riddling verse survives to this day.



CULHWCH AND OLWEN

Culhwch, the son of Cilydd and first cousin to King Arthur, had a gesa put upon him by his stepmother that he must never touch a woman unless he married Olwen, the daughter of Ysbaddaden the giant. Ysbaddaden had a death gesa that he would die on his daughter's wedding day. Culhwch went to seek Arthur's help, and Arthur gave him many knights to be his companions.

When, after many adventures, they reached Ysbaddaden's house, the giant set a long list of things (the full list covers seven pages in the Everyman translation of the *Mabinogion*) which Culhwch had to bring him before he could win Olwen. This list resembled in some ways the list Lugh gave to the sons of Turen (see p. 119), but was even longer. Examples include: Nyniaw and Peibiaw transformed into oxen, flax from a field that was sown 20 years before but had not yet sprouted, the cup of Llwyrr son of Llwyrrion, the harp of Teirtu that could play by itself, the blood of the black witch, and the magic bottles of Rhyannon Stiff-Beard in which no liquid ever turned sour. Ysbaddaden justified his requests as requirements for the wedding feast; the bottles were needed to provide enough milk for everyone to drink, and the flax to make Olwen's bridal veil.

After many more adventures but rather less difficulty than might be expected, Culhwch and his companions found everything demanded and returned to Ysbaddaden. Culhwch then married Olwen and her father duly died in fulfillment of his gesa.

came to the bard's room and asked him to fight. Gwydion agreed, and said, "Let the women arm me, while you arm the boy." Arianrhod did so, and then Gwydion dispelled the illusion and laughed at his sister.

Arianrhod was now so furious that she lost all caution; she pronounced the gesa upon Llew that he should never have a woman to be his wife. Gwydion took Llew to Math and explained the situation. "Then let us," said Math, "use our magic and make him a wife who is not a woman." They took the flowers of oak, broom, and meadowsweet and made a wife, calling her Blodeuaedd ("Flowers"). Math gave Llew a great district to rule, and a home in the hills of Ardudwy. Llew began to learn magic from Math and from Gwydion.

LLEW AND BLODEUAEDD

Blodeuaedd betrayed Llew with Gronw Bebyr, lord of Penllyn, because she had been given to Llew without being asked. Pretending to be worried, she asked him in what way he would die. He explained to her his death gesa: he could only be killed by a spear that took a year to make, neither in nor out of a house, and neither on horse nor on foot. He would only be vulnerable if, for instance, he were stepping out of a bath on a river bank which had a thatched roof and put one foot on a goat's back just as the spear was cast. When she heard this she sent word to Gronw, and he began making the spear.

When it was ready a year later, she went again to Llew and said that she was worried about his death gesa. "Show me," she said, "how it is you could be getting out of a bath and put your foot on a goat . . ." Llew did this, and Gronw flung the spear. Llew did not die, but was transformed into an eagle, and flew off. Gronw and Blodeuaedd returned home and ruled Ardudwy together.

When Math and Gwydion heard of this they were upset, and Gwydion went off to try find Llew. At last he found the eagle sitting in a tree, and he sang a beautiful poem to it. At the end of the poem, the eagle came down to Gwydion's lap. Gwydion struck him with a druid wand, and he resumed his proper shape. They went to Ardudwy, and Gronw and Blodeuaedd fled before them. They caught Blodeuaedd; Gwydion turned her into an owl and her name was changed from Flowers to Owl ("Blodeuwedd"). To this day all other birds hate and shun the owl.

Llew then said he would kill Gronw by throwing a spear at him from the same place where Gronw had stood to throw a spear at him. Gronw begged for mercy and asked for a stone to be put in the way to protect him. Llew agreed to the stone, but the spear passed through the stone and killed Gronw anyway. And to this day, the stone and the hole through it can still be seen in Llech Ronw.



3 Characters



When Lugh came to Tara for the first time in the reign of Nuada he went to Camel, Nuada's doorkeeper, and asked for admission. "What can you do?" asked Camel. "I'm a good carpenter," said Lugh. "We have a carpenter," said Camel. "I'm a good smith," said Lugh. "We have a smith," said Camel. The dialogue continued with Lugh saying that he was a poet, a harper, a healer, and a warrior, only to be answered each time that they had one. Then Lugh asked Camel if they had anyone who was master of all of those skills. Camel asked Nuada, who admitted that they did not, and welcomed Lugh within. Nuada then gave Lugh the nickname "Ildanach" meaning craft-skilled.

Characters in Celtic mythology were a pretty powerful bunch. Even the minor ones were usually famous for some feat or other. (Otherwise they wouldn't be mentioned in the stories!) A realistic campaign should start with 100-point characters, but in a campaign full of the magic and heroism of Celtic myth, beginning characters should be *at least* 150 points, probably more, with 1 level of Sidhe Blood. In a campaign with all Sidhe characters, they should be in the 500- to 1000-point category – Celtic Supers!

Every character should take the Celtic Code of Honor disadvantage (see p. 53) unless he doesn't abide by it, in which case he should take an Odious Personal Habit (-10 points), for being known to be without honor, or the Secret "Has No Honor" (-5 points), in which case he may have to live by much of the Code of Honor in order to protect his secret, anyway.



Character Types

Bard

Bard is the first level of the Druidic Order. A Bard knows many stories, poems, and histories, and has some skill at composing new songs and sagas. Bards don't necessarily have Magical Aptitude; what they must have is a good memory and a talent for riddles. Bards are keepers of history, teachers, and people who can immortalize heroes in song.

Advantages: Useful advantages for a bard are Eidetic Memory, Extra Fatigue, Musical Ability, and Voice. Bards are Status 3, and must have Literacy (Ogham) (p. 52). A harper is an appropriate Ally.

Disadvantages: The Odious Personal Habit (Arcane) is suitable. Since a Bard must have spent seven years as an initiate, Youth is inappropriate.

Skills: A Bard must have Consonant Tree Lore (p. 57), Bardic Lore (p. 57), and Poetry, all at 11+. A Bard will certainly know the Tree Talisman spells, and must be able to play the harp, although he may have a harper to play for him. Most Bards also have skill in Satire (p. 57). Bard and Performance skills would be useful.

Some people are content to remain Bards throughout their lives; others are training to be Ollaves. Those in training may well be working on Vowel Tree Lore (p. 58). As the Ollave ordeal is religious in nature, many Bards wander from sacred grove to sacred grove in preparation.



Gesas: Gesas on members of the Druidic Order are likely to be obscure and related to their work: "Must always rise before dawn," "Cannot praise a man to his face," or "Must play the first song in the dun every day."

Blacksmith

A blacksmith works with iron to make weapons and armor. This is a respected craft in Celtic society, as are all crafts. Because of the magical nature of iron, blacksmiths are regarded as partly magicians and people to be wary of. Not every village has a blacksmith, so some wandering smiths do the work as they pass through, shoeing horses and mending swords, for example. This is a profitable job and one that fits well with adventuring and moving from place to place.

Advantages: A blacksmith has Status 1, and a good one may have a Reputation. A good smith has ST 13 or higher, and may well have high DX if he does much artistic jewelry work. A Sidhe smith almost certainly has the Sidhe advantage Bellows Breath.

Disadvantages: A blacksmith may be Hard of Hearing from banging an anvil all day.

Skills: Blacksmith/TL2 and Armoury/TL2 are musts. A Celtic armorer can specialize in Hand Weapons; bows and arrows are likely to be made by individuals needing them. A more artistic blacksmith may also have Sculpting and Jeweler. Weapon skills are required, since a good smith needs to be able to use a weapon to know whether it's a good one or not. Merchant and Fast-Talk are useful.

Gesas: These are likely to be connected to metal-working, such as: "Must never work metal with my back to the forge," "Must light the forge before dawn," "Must make a horseshoe every day," or "Must never make a spear point."

Charioteer

In the stories every warrior had a charioteer to control the horses as the warrior fought from his chariot and, in the last resort, to run away in the chariot and bring news of the hero's death. Being flung from a speeding chariot is very dangerous but the warrior does not hold on; he relies on the charioteer's skill to control the horses. Charioteers also advise their warriors; gods are known to take the guises of charioteers to give warnings and omens before battle.

Advantages: Charioteers who act as advisors should have Common Sense. Animal Empathy is useful for dealing with the horses. One or more Sidhe advantages may help in battle. His warrior must be an Ally, unless he is another PC. Strong Will may help talk a warrior out of – or into! – fights.

Disadvantages: Youth is suitable, since many charioteers are younger than the warriors they drive. Cowardice or Low Pain Threshold might be an amusing disadvantage to have; why else would a warrior be a charioteer instead of a warrior? A Sense of Duty to the warrior is likely.

Skills: Animal Handling and Teamster are musts. Diplomacy is useful with particularly temperamental warriors. First Aid will help in treating wounds after combat. Tactics is useful in getting the chariot to the right part of the battlefield. Some weapons skills are necessary, in order to defend the warrior when he gets in trouble. Veterinary/TL2 would also be handy.

Gesas: "Must never yoke a black horse with a white," "Must take the same warrior to battle three times." Any gesas suitable for a warrior are also suitable for a charioteer.

Craftsman

See *Blacksmith*, p. 48. Other types of craftsmen are also honored. Trades which are respected in the Celtic world and good for travel include shoemaker, leatherworker, shieldmaker, and jeweler.

Druid

An Ollave who trains for at least seven years is eligible to become a full Druid (see *Druids*, p. 82). Druids are not particularly appropriate as player characters because they are too powerful and peculiar.

Advantages: As Ollave (see p. 51), but with an extra point of Status and a +2 Reputation as a full Druid only among members of the Druidic Order.

Disadvantages: Druids *must* take the Odious Personal Habit (Arcane). It takes a minimum of 21 years to become a full Druid, and often much longer. Consequently, most human Druids have the Age disadvantage.

Skills: In addition to the skills of an Ollave, Druids are at least seven years older and have Mixed Tree Lore (p. 57).

Gesas: Gesas pertaining to magic are appropriate, such as "Must not cast the same spell twice in one day," "Cannot refuse a request for magical assistance," or "May only use birch spells."

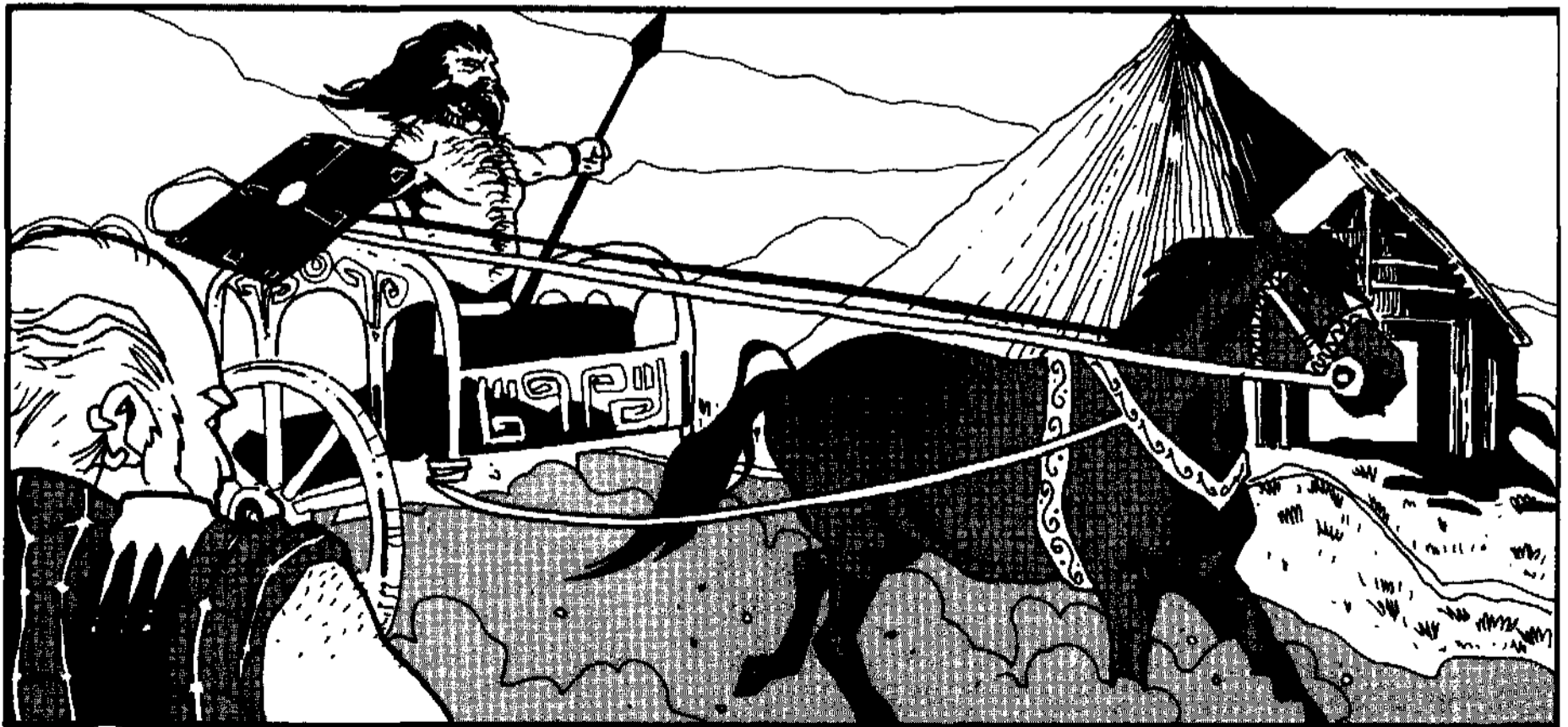
Fianna

A member of a Fianna, or war band (see p. 116), dedicated to the honor and safety of Eriu over clan or family concerns.

Advantages: Absolute Direction, Alertness, and Combat Reflexes all stand a Fianna member in good stead. Most members of Finn's Fianna were said to be descended from the Sidhe, so one or more levels of Sidhe Blood and some Sidhe Advantages are possible. Magic Resistance would be useful when dealing with the Sidhe.

Disadvantages: The Fianna Code of Honor is necessary. Compulsive Carousing and Impulsiveness are common disadvantages. Enemies may include individual Sidhe.

Skills: A Fianna member has Weapons skills at a fairly high level and many Outdoor skills, particularly Fishing, Naturalist, Survival, and Tracking. Savoir-Faire is a must.



Gesas: Any gesas suitable for a warrior are suitable for a Fianna member. A common gesa seems to be "Must hunt otherworldly animals."

Harper

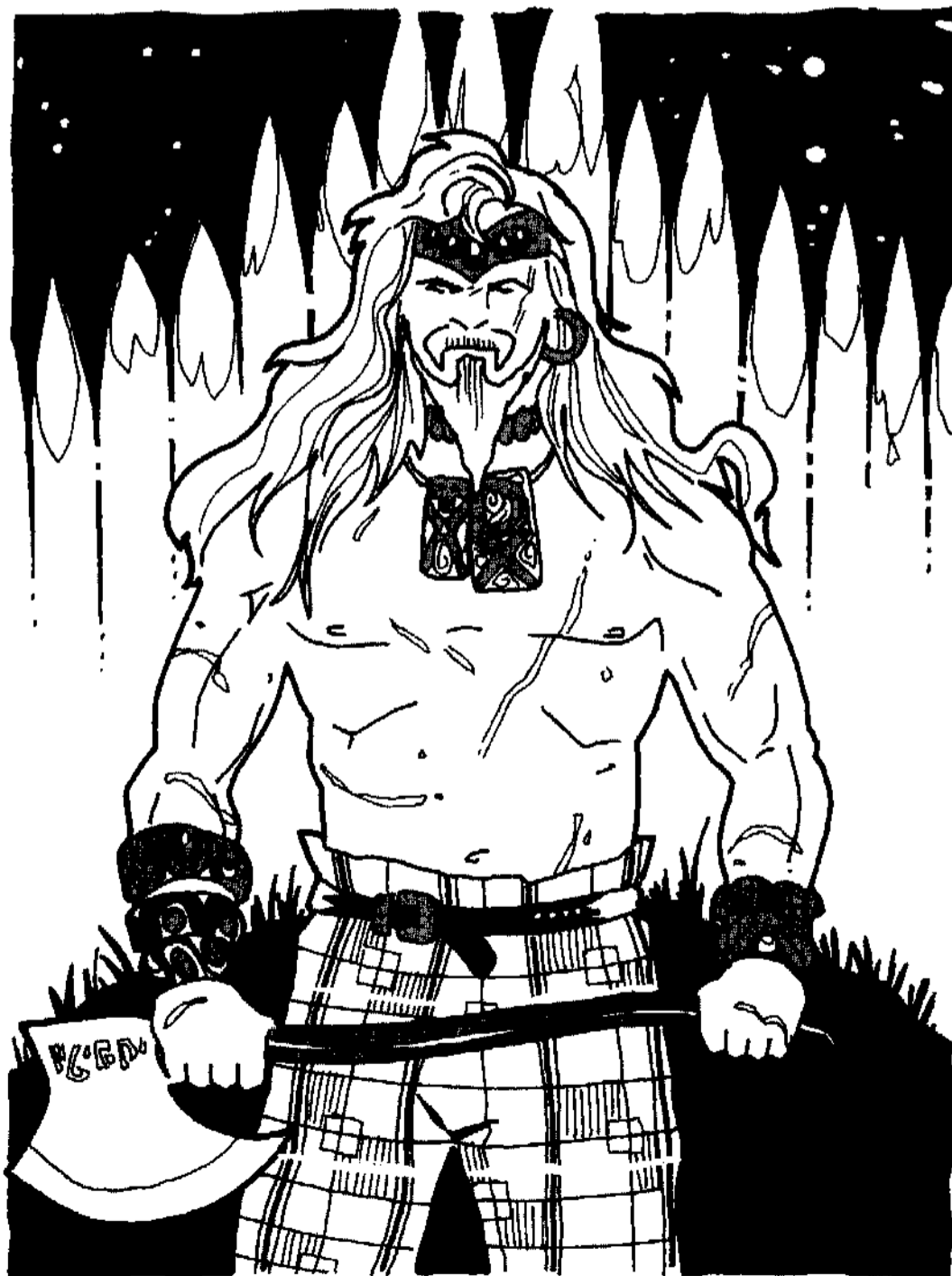
A harper is someone who plays the harp, often in a nobleman's hall. A harper is not a Bard, has undergone no long training, and probably knows no magic. Harpers usually have skill in composition as well as a great store of old ballads. Bards who travel to king's courts to perform their work often take a skilled and sweet-voiced harper along to accompany or actually perform the pieces; as a result, kings sometimes call harpers Bards.

Advantages: Musical Ability and Voice are appropriate. A harper's Bard may be a Patron or Ally.

Disadvantages: Many harpers are Alcoholic and/or Lecherous, disadvantages they have plenty of opportunity to indulge. Youth is another possible disadvantage, since some harpers are initiates traveling with the Bard to learn from him as well as play music for him.

Skills: Bard is essential, as is Musical Instrument (Lap-Harp). Poetry and Bardic Lore (p. 57) are useful.

Gesas: "Must not let anyone else touch your harp," or "Must only sing sad songs."



Healer

Traveling healers are much in demand at hall and hut alike. Medicine is at TL2 except in the TL3 hospital at Emain Macha.

Advantages: Empathy is always good for a healer, as are high DX and a steady hand.

Disadvantages: Many healers are warriors who acquired an interest in medicine at first hand. Healers may have physical disadvantages: Age, One Leg, or even One Eye.

Skills: A healer knows Herbarry (p. 57), First Aid, and Surgery at TL2. He may also have learned some healing magic as a craft skill – Lend Strength, Lend Health, Minor Healing, and even occasionally (and especially in the case of Sidhe healers) Major Healing, Regeneration, and Resurrection.

Gesas: "Must never refuse to heal anyone," "Must always amputate leg wounds," or "Must not heal anyone between dawn and dusk."

Initiate

An initiate is someone studying to become a Bard. He spends most of his time studying with members of the Druidic Order. Before the Bard ordeal is attempted (p. 84) the initiate must have spent seven years in study.

Advantages: Literacy (Ogham) and any advantages suitable for a Bard. Ollave, or Druid. An Initiate is Social Status 2. Whoever is teaching him is a Patron.

Disadvantages: Youth is likely, as is Sense of Duty to Patron. The Odious Personal Habit (Arcane) is possible, but unlikely, as it is normally the years of study that cause this disadvantage.

Skills: See Bard, p. 48. An Initiate has Bard skills at lower levels and may know some magic.

Gesas: Some Bard and Harper gesas would be appropriate.

King

Celtic kingdoms were often no bigger than large farms, so there were many minor kings as well as overkings (such as the king of Connachta or Lagen) and high kings (such as the Ard Ri of Eriu).

Advantages: Many rulers have a Reputation. Their champions are an Ally Group. They have Status 5 or higher.

Disadvantages: Some rulers rely on browbeating their subjects into submission; Bad Temper and Bully are suitable disadvantages. Conversely, a ruler could have the Compulsive Behavior (Generosity.) A ruler can grow old in his post and may have Age. All rulers have a Duty to their subjects.

Skills: Diplomatic skills are valuable. Rulers also have fighting skills, having been warriors before their elections. Fast-Talk is appropriate and useful. Politics and Savoir-Faire are musts. Leadership and Intimidation may also be appropriate.



Gesas: Rulers have plenty of gesas – the more they have the more Fate is taking notice of them. Any are suitable, although ones like “Must not refuse a request” or “Must not refuse a second request” (Lugh’s gesa) can be particularly amusing. One of the oddest and most limiting was Math’s: “Must always have his feet in the lap of a virgin.”

Ollave

A Bard who has trained for seven years can undertake the Ollave ordeal (see p. 84). As an Ollave, he is expected to act as priest, judge, and diviner as needed.

Advantages: As Bard, with Clerical Investment and an extra point of Status.

Disadvantages: Duty to the Community: must perform as a judge and a priest when asked to do so (-5). Youth is highly unlikely, but Age is a possibility. The Odious Personal Habit (Arcane) is likely for those who continue their studies.

Skills: As for Bards, with the addition of Vowel Tree Lore (p. 58) at 11+, Divination at 12+, and Poetry at 13-. Ollaves who continue their studies may have Mixed Tree Lore (p. 57) and know a Mixed Tree spell or two. Ollaves may specialize in particular fields of knowledge: judging, medicine, prophecy, etc.

Gesas: Suitable gesas for an Ollave include: “Cannot sacrifice a white pig,” “Must never drink milk,” “Must never refuse a riddle,” “Must answer a riddle every day,” or gesas pertaining to magic (see *Druid*, p. 49).

Satirist

A satirist is a harper or Bard who makes a habit of composing satires and could be hired for this skill for use against an enemy. A satirist is rarely popular and finds it hard to make friends, but is usually very good at getting his way. See Satire skill, p.57.

Advantages: Musical Ability and Voice are appropriate. Allies and Patrons are unlikely; people do not generally hire satirists for the long term.

Disadvantages: Satirists are bitter people, or people with grievances; the Odious Personal Habit (Poisoned Tongue) is appropriate. Many have Stubbornness. They are highly likely to have Enemies, although people are careful not to directly offend them.

Skills: Satire 12+ and Bard are essential, as is Musical Instrument (Lap-Harp). Poetry and Bardic Lore (p. 57) are useful.

Gesas: Suitable gesas for a satirist include: “Must Always make fun of people with big noses,” “Must always satirize his host,” “Must not make fun of old people,” and “Must never praise a woman.”

Spearman (Mercenary)

Take your clothes off, paint yourself blue, take up your weapons, and run screaming into battle. The spearman is the TL2 equivalent of cannon fodder. Many warriors have several spearmen with them for use in emergencies. Of course before and (sometimes) after battle they need feeding and equipping. In battle spearmen fight other spearmen and leave champions to fight among themselves. Spearmen are usually among life’s NPCs but the occasional PC spearman can be an interesting addition to a party.

Advantages: Overconfidence and Berserk are almost essential. See the Sidhe advantage *Spearman’s Invulnerability*, p. 80; being a spearman may not be as dangerous as it sounds. The champion who hires the spearman is usually a Patron.

Disadvantages: Paranoia, Sense of Duty to Patron, and Delusion: “I Can Survive Battle” are appropriate.

Skills: All fighting skills are appropriate, but not chariot-ter skills.



Gesas: Suitable ones include: "Will be killed by a sword," "Will be killed by a spear," and "Will be killed when wearing no clothes and painted blue."

Warrior (Noble)

Warriors are the nobles of Celtic society, who live in the king's hall and defend the kingdom against its enemies.

Advantages: A warrior is usually Status 3, Comfortably Wealthy, and may have a Reputation or Triadic Reputation (see *Reputation*, p. 53). He is very likely to have an Ally: Charioteer, and possibly an Ally Group: Spearmen. Other advantages useful to warriors include Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Sidhe Blood, and some Sidhe advantages.

Disadvantages: Duty to the king and Dependants (spouse and possibly children). Warriors often have Stubbornness and even more often Berserk or On The Edge.

Skills: Warriors are trained in weapons skills (Sword, Spear, Spear Throwing, Shield, Sling) at 11+. They might also have Teamster for handling the chariot in an emergency. They are expected to be able to play *fidchell* and to know how to behave in the king's hall (Savoir-Faire).

Gesas: Warriors always have at least one gesa. Any kind is appropriate; see *Gesa Ideas*, p. 86.

Advantages

Allies *see p. B23*

Any warrior is likely to have a charioteer as an Ally, probably built on 75-100 points.

Ally Group *see p. B232*

A Celtic warrior may have a group of warriors who are loyal to him. This is particularly true of kings. Other possibilities for Ally Groups are foster-brothers, who may be very close friends, and spearmen.

Clerical Investment *see p. B19*

Any Ollave or Druid must have this advantage. In a historical campaign, this advantage costs 5 points, but in a campaign with working magic. Clerical Investment costs 10 points. Ollaves have spent 14 years in study; Druids, a minimum of 21. (See Chapter 5.)

Eidetic Memory *see p. B20*

This is a very useful advantage for Bards, Ollaves, and Druids, giving them a head start at all the memorization their training requires. This advantage does not eliminate the need for the Bardic Lore skill – Eidetic Memory only controls memory, not learning.

Literacy *see p. B21*

In the Celtic world, Literacy of any kind is a 10-point advantage. However, Literacy in only one alphabet costs only 5 points..

Ogham Alphabet: This represents the knowledge of and ability to use the Ogham alphabet to communicate, not only in a written form, but as a sign language, using the thigh or nose as a straight line against which to put fingers (see *The Ogham Alphabet*, p. 95). This advantage is required of Bards and is only taught by the Druidic Order to those interested in progressing in Tree Lore. A child can learn Ogham without necessarily becoming a Bard – Cuchulain and Emer both knew it – but a Druid will not teach it to an adult who has no interest in the craft.

The following two literacies are only of value in historical campaigns.

Greek Alphabet: Greek Literacy means knowledge of the Greek alphabet, not necessarily of the language that goes with it. The Druids of Gaul were familiar with Greek letters, having learned them from the Greek colony at Massilia (Marseilles). Anyone wanting this advantage must also take an Unusual Background. It is of little use except for reading works of classic Greek literature and philosophy (if they are available) and communicating with "civilized" people.

Latin Alphabet: As with the Greek alphabet, it is possible to know the Latin alphabet without speaking Latin. In terms of

relative advantages, Latin letters were considered unsophisticated and rather inferior to Greek in the Mediterranean world at this time – even by Romans. It has very little advantage over Greek for communicating with educated Romans. This again requires an Unusual Background and is regarded as an eccentricity in the Celtic world.

Magical Aptitude (Magery) *see p. B21*

Magical Aptitude isn't needed to cast spells if the Celtic world is declared a high-mana area. Since certain spells have Magery as a prerequisite, Ollaves and Druids with this advantage are more magically effective than those without. The Celts are completely unaware of this advantage and just know that magic works better for some people than others. It is not a requirement for joining the Druidic Order.

Patron *see p. B24*

A good Patron for a Celt is the king, since kings only rule small areas and are likely to be personally known to people. Anyone with a king as Patron might also have a Duty to him. Other patrons include parents and foster-parents (see *Fosterage*, p. 17). A Sidhe relative makes a powerful Patron.

Reputation *see p. B17*

Most Celtic heroes have a reputation, often based on a Sidhe advantage, some strange and interesting *gesa*, or some great deed performed in the past.

Triadic Reputation: You are mentioned in a triad (see *Doing Things by Threes*, p. 10). This reputation is known to all members of the Druidic Order and all learned people. Others may know it as well. A Triadic Reputation may be very good.



very bad, or very embarrassing. Being known as one of the Three Greatest Drunkards of Prydain would earn a -2 to reactions (-5 points). Being one of the Three Greatest Swordsmen of Prydain would grant a +3 reaction (7 points). Some trivial mentions might be mere quirks or even cost no points, such as being one of the Three Loudest Laughers of Prydain.

Disadvantages

Any physical disadvantage is sufficient to bar someone from being king. Any character who *is* a king, and gains a physical disadvantage in play, is forced to abdicate, and a new king is chosen.

Addiction *see p. B30*

The only addictive drug available to the Celts is alcohol. Some druids experiment with "magic mushrooms" (*psilocybin*), but these aren't addictive and are available only in late spring. They may, at the GM's discretion, give +1 to Divination rolls, or a mystic vision. Otherwise, you just *think* you've had a vision!

Berserk *see p. B31*

This is quite common among Celtic warriors. Such Sidhe advantages as *riastradh* (see p. 78) may be triggered by going Berserk.

Code of Honor *see p. B31*

The Celtic Code of Honor: This consists of three parts; hospitality, truthfulness, and revenge. Celts respect hospitality highly, and if anyone visits you in your home, you are expected to feed him and give him a bed for the night without asking questions. On the other hand, if you accept someone's hospitality, it is polite to tell who you are and why you are there. No one is respected less in the Celtic world than an inhospitable person. You must even give hospitality to a sworn enemy, as long as he is under your roof.

Celts strive to tell at least the letter, if not the spirit, of the truth. If they make promises, they fulfill them no matter the consequences; there is a proverb, "Eating a mouse includes the tail."

Vengeance is one of the driving forces of Celtic culture. If someone kills a member of your clan, it is your duty to get revenge on the clan that did it. But you can't get this revenge by subterfuge: an open challenge to combat is the usual way, and if someone challenges you to single combat, no one else must join in, no matter how badly you are doing.

The Celtic Code of Honor is worth -10 points in a campaign in the Celtic world. In a campaign in which a Celt is mostly among non-Celts, this is a 15-point disadvantage.

The Code of Honor of the Fianna: Anyone who joins a Fianna (see p. 49) must swear to follow this code. This code replaces and incorporates the Celtic Code of Honor; a character cannot have both.

These are the maxims of the Fianna, as explained by Finn to Geena Mac Luga, a new recruit:

Should you wish to be a warrior, be quiet in a great man's house, and quiet in the mountain pass.

Do not beat your hound without good reason; do not accuse your wife of anything without proof.

In battle, leave buffoons alone; they are just fools.

Do not criticize anyone of high repute; do not get involved in brawls; have nothing to do with madmen and wicked people.

Show two-thirds of your gentleness to women, little children, and poets, and do not be violent to the common people.

Do not boast, or say you will not yield what is right; it is shameful to boast if you cannot carry out your boasts.

Do not forsake your lord as long as you live; do not abandon those you are sworn to protect, for gold or any other reward.

Do not abuse a clan in front of its chief, because that is not the work of a man of gentle blood.

Do not gossip or tell lies; do not talk too much or criticize others; do not stir up hostility against yourself, no matter how good a fighter you are.

Do not frequent drinking houses, or make fun of old people; and leave poor people in peace.

Be generous with your meat, and do not make friends with miserly people.

Do not force yourself upon a chief, or cause him to say bad things about you.

Keep hold of your gear; do not let go of your arms until the fight with its weapons-glitter is ended.

Be more keen to give than to deny, and always be gentle.

The Fianna swear to defend Eriu against its enemies, and also had to swear *not* to take vengeance on those who attacked their families, but to report such acts to the king, so that they can be sorted out in a lawful fashion.

The Code of Honor of the Fianna is worth -15 points.

Compulsive Behavior (Generosity)

see p. B239

Generosity is considered a praiseworthy thing in Celtic culture, but it is possible to be *too* generous. Still, you will gain a +2 Reputation with all other Celts over time (if you wish to start the game with this Reputation it must be purchased separately).

Delusions

see p. B32

A good delusion in a magical *Celtic* campaign would be: "I have the Spearman's Invulnerability Sidhe advantage (see



p. 80). I take all my clothes off before charging into battle, sure that this will protect me." This is worth -15 points.

Miserliness

see p. B34

Generosity is considered the norm for Celts, so Miserliness causes all other Celts to react at -2 to you.

Odious Personal Habits

see p. B26

Arcane: You are a member of the Druidic Order who spends so much time unriddling the ineffable that you cannot give a straight answer to a straight question. You see significance in everything, which sometimes leads you to great insights but often makes it hard to communicate with ordinary people. "Can you tell me the way to Aberdare?" "Many are the streams that lead to the valley of the Oak River, but only one stream flows in at the mouth." (Aberdare means the mouth of the Dare, or Oak, River, and stands at the place where the river Cynon – "Stream" – joins it. The instructions mean that the traveler should follow the River Cynon, but unless he is also a druid he is unlikely to work this out!)

This disadvantage may earn you a reputation for wisdom, but it is difficult for you to achieve much in the mundane world. Bards should not take more than one level of it; full Druids may have three. At high levels this is better for NPCs than PCs. GMs may choose to make players roleplay it, or can subtract 1 per level from any reaction rolls as NPCs fail to grasp the druid's meaning. -5 points per level.

Poisoned Tongue: You can't resist sowing dissension. You meddle in any quarrel, and try to start trouble between friends. You can work with other people, but cannot curb your tongue no matter how urgent the mission. People react to you at -3 if they know that you have this disadvantage. -15 points.

On the Edge

see p. B241

All Celts react to you at +2, since there is nothing wrong with dying heroically in battle. Druids may be able to tell the difference between bravery and madness, and nicknames like "the reckless" or "the doomed" are likely.

Secret

see p. B238

No Honor: You pretend to abide by the Celtic Code of Honor, but when alone or in an emergency you don't necessarily keep up the deception. If this secret is revealed people react to you at -2. It is possible to be falsely accused of having this disadvantage: such an accusation may lead to a challenge to single combat. This Secret is worth -5 points.

Social Stigma

see p. B27

Druid's Ban: You are under the *Glam Dicin*, are not entitled to hospitality, and have no honor price. People react to you at -3. This is worth -15 points.

Youth

see p. B29

Women are considered adult at age 15. Men are not considered adults until they have beards.

New Advantages

“Good” Gesa *see p. 88*

Natural Spellcasting *15 points*

You have the natural ability to learn and cast spells which you have not been taught. This only works in times of great stress, and Magical Aptitude is still required. You can cast known spells in the normal way; however, in life-threatening situations you may attempt to cast some previously unknown spell. You cannot use this advantage in practice or in anything other than a life-threatening situation. In addition, this ability can only be tried once during any one emergency. After a new spell is successfully cast using this advantage, you learn the spell and eventually are able to cast it normally. You must have one unused character point available to spend on the new spell.

To use this advantage to cast a new spell, you ask for a particular result and then try to make a successful die roll. This request should be reasonably specific without going into great detail. (For example, you could request “Get him away from me,” but not “Teleport him 10 miles due east.”) The GM determines a specific spell which, if it were successful, could accomplish the desired result. (The GM could say the resulting spell was Fear, or a Simple Illusion that would cause the enemy to run away, instead of Teleport Other.)

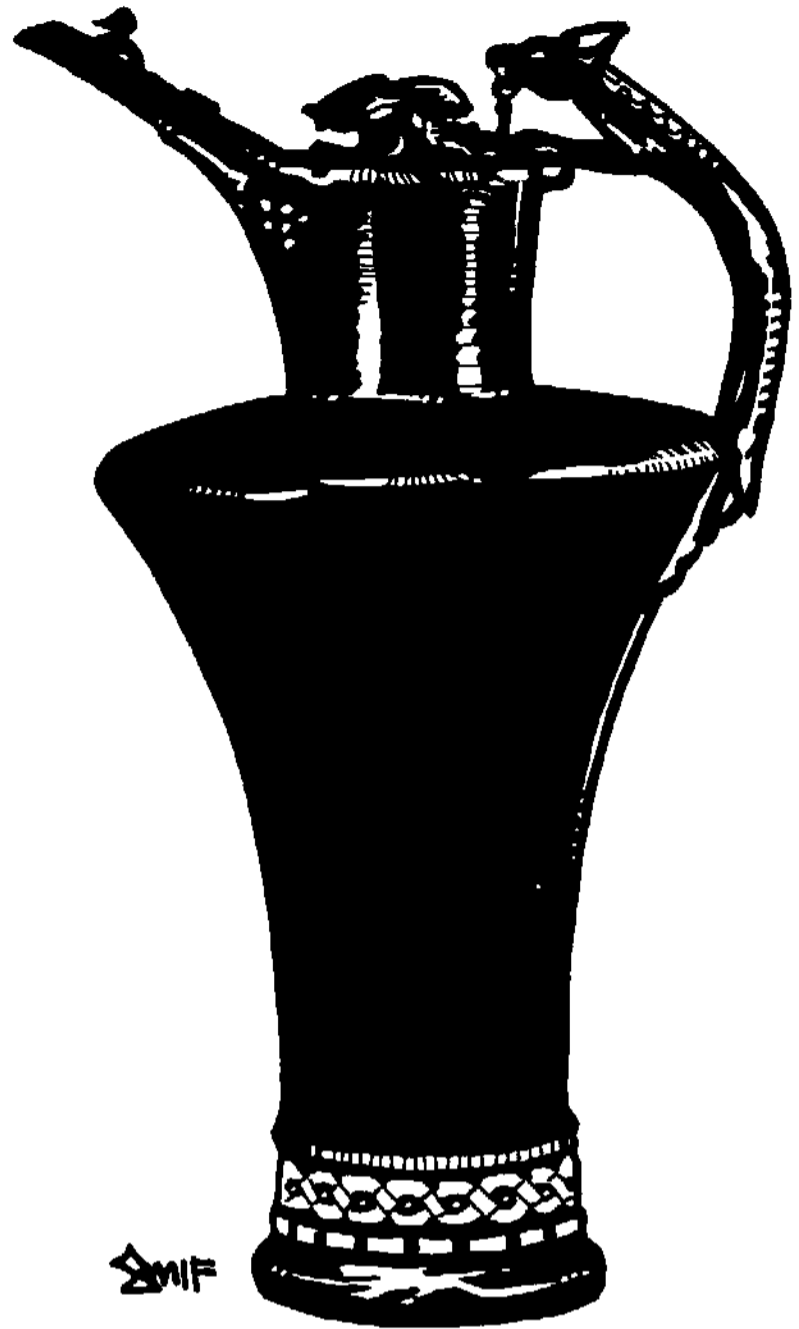
Any new spell is at a -4 penalty the first time it is tried. If possible, the GM should make the new spell one for which you already have the prerequisites. If this is not possible, you will remain at an additional -4 (-8 total) to cast the spell until you learn all prerequisites.

A successful roll means that the spell has its normal effect and fatigue cost; the spell is now known (at a cost of one character point). You cast the spell at a -2 penalty for one month after you first used it; thereafter you can study and improve it just like any learned spell. A critical success means the spell is fully learned immediately, without the one-month penalty. The -4 penalty for unknown prerequisites lasts as long as the prerequisites are unknown.

A failed die roll means the spell has no effect – you still do not know it. In the event of a critical failure, you pay the character point but do not learn the spell; the character point is permanently lost. A critical failure will also produce normal backfire results (pp. B147).

You pay the normal fatigue cost if the spell is successful, with the cost coming first from ST and then from HT. The spell is unsuccessful – and is not learned – if there is insufficient ST and HT available; HT cannot go below 0.

Sidhe Blood *see p. 79*



New Disadvantages

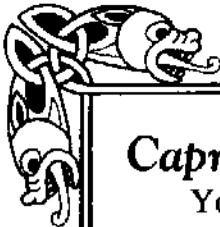
“Bad” Gesa *see p. 88.*

Gesas do not count against the 40-point disadvantage limit.

Beardless *-10 points*

You are unable to grow a beard. The best you can manage is a ridiculous fluff on your chin, which makes people smile when they see it. In the Celtic world, you aren't considered an adult, no matter how old you are. Warriors often refuse to fight you when you challenge them. (Cuchulain had to stain his chin with blackberry juice to simulate a beard so that one of Maeve's champions would fight him at the ford between Connachta and Ulaid.) Women giggle behind your back. You have to try very hard to make people respect you. People react to you as though you had the Youth disadvantage (see p. B29).

This disadvantage may only be taken by adult male characters, who may *not* also take Pangs of Macha. In Gaul (and those areas of Prydain most influenced by the Continent), beards were not always in fashion, but moustaches served the same purpose.



Capricious

-15 points

Your moods are totally unpredictable. One minute you are happy and laughing, the next you are ferociously angry or burst into tears. People who know you are extremely wary around you, since they do not know how you will react to anything they do or say; they react to you at -2. If you are in a position of authority, or have the power to get your own way due to physical or magical power, your subordinates are afraid of you and react at -4.

In any stressful or emotionally-charged situation you must make a roll on 1d. On an even roll, your emotions stay the same; on an odd roll, your emotions become completely different. The GM may require you to make a Capriciousness roll at any time, for whatever reason, or simply roleplay it.

Capricious is a disadvantage particularly suited to Sidhe characters.

Pangs of Macha

-10 points

You are an adult male native of Ulaid who bears the curse of Macha (see *Emain Macha*, p. 35). Whenever Ulaid is invaded, for five days and four nights you suffer a pain equivalent to that a woman feels in childbirth. A Will roll must be made in order to do anything at all, and all your skills are at -8. Even those accustomed to bearing wounds bravely are laid low by this pain, and a Will roll must be made to refrain from crying out.

This is a much better disadvantage for NPCs than for PCs.



Skills

Games

see p. B243

The most common game in Celtic culture, which people of any worth are expected to play, is a board game called *fidchell* or *gwyddbwyll*. This specialization includes variants such as *brandubh* (in which the use of dice is added to the game).

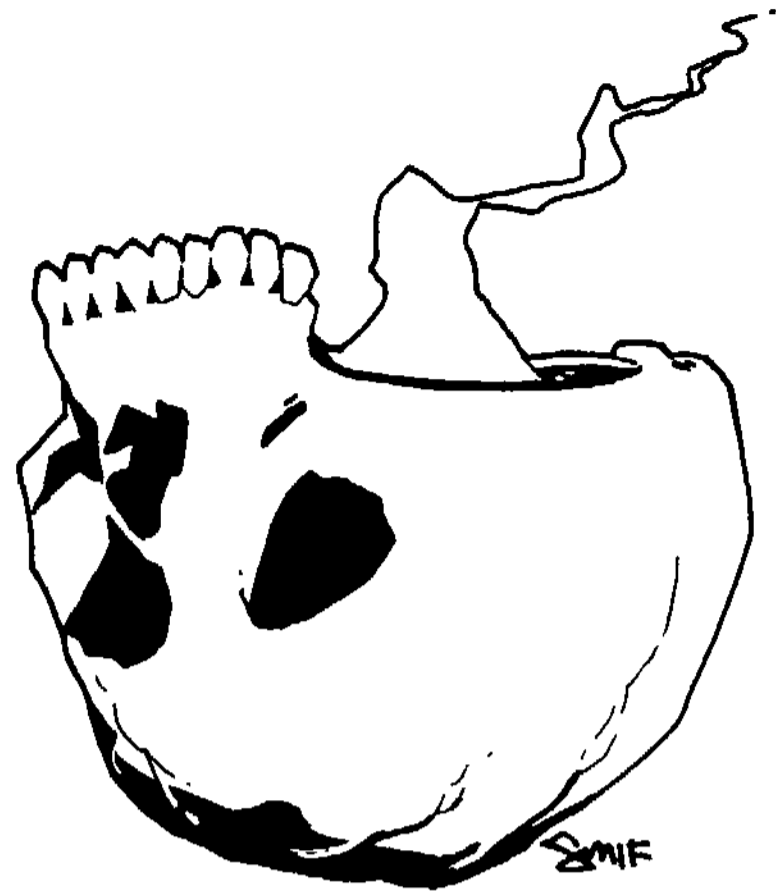
Language Skills

see p. B54

In a Celtic fantasy campaign based on the myths, everyone speaks a variant of the Celtic language. Goidelic (Irish and Scottish) and Brythonic (British, Welsh, and Gaulish) default to each other at -1, as do *all* other languages. Irish heroes never had any trouble making themselves understood, even when speaking to the king of Persia!

In a realistic historical setting, Goidelic and Brythonic have no default to each other. See *Celtic Languages*, p. 123, for more on Celtic languages.

In a historical game Latin and Greek are available and possibly useful (see *Literacy*) and are both Mental/Average. Romans and Greeks wishing to learn Celtic languages find them Mental/Hard because of their obscurity and complexity, and their highly metaphorical nature. Very few Romans ever learned Brythonic, and the Celts were quick to learn Latin to protect the secrets of their own language.



Medical Skills

see p. B56

In the Celtic world, medical skills are at TL2, except in certain places. There was a famous hospital at Emain Macha and smaller ones at some of the bigger duns and at Tara, where medical skills are at TL3. Anyone wishing to have medical skills at TL3 must have learned medicine at one of these hospitals, and have a 5-point Unusual Background.

Musical Instrument

see p. B47

The most common Celtic musical instrument is the lap-harp. This is small enough to be carried on the back as the harper wanders from dun to dun. There are larger harps which are not so portable, but these are less common. Each type of harp defaults to the other at -3.

Other common instruments include pipes, drums, and a variety of other stringed instruments.

Naturalist

see p. B57

This is a very common skill because Celts lived close to the natural world. Naturalist at 12+ gives you knowledge of the 18 Tree Talisman spells (see pp. 93-94).

Sports

see p. B49

The main sport of the Celts is hurley, which can be considered an extremely rough form of field hockey (see *Hurley and Other Field Sports*, p. 22). GMs may want to decide the outcome of a game using the Mass Combat rules!

Teamster

see p. B47

This skill is necessary for a charioteer, and many warriors also have it so that they can drive their chariots if something happens to the charioteer.



New Skills

Bardic Lore (Mental/Hard)

Defaults to IQ-6

A true bard will know many songs and poems, long and short, memorized word for word. On a successful roll, he can perform one accurately; a failed roll means he forgot or garbled something. A separate roll, using Bard skill, is necessary to make the performance *exciting!*

A harper does not necessarily have skill in composing new poems and songs (although the best do). Those abilities are covered by the Poetry and Musical Composition skills, respectively.

Consonant Tree Lore (Mental/Hard)

No default

You know the secret magical nature of the Consonant Trees (see p. 96), and the names of the spells organized in each Tree. You may have chosen to learn some of the spells. This skill is a requirement for becoming a Bard.

Hairdressing (Mental/Average)

Defaults to IQ-4

Hairdressers are honored members of Celtic society: all warriors wear their hair long and have it dressed before a battle. Some warriors dress their own hair, but most use a hairdresser. A warrior going into battle with undressed hair is scorned and might earn a rude name such as "Dylan the Unbarbered."

Herbary/TL (Mental/Hard) No default

Prerequisite: Botany-12

Herbary is a venerable English word meaning, among other things, the science of herbs. This skill is the knowledge of herbal concoctions from harvesting, to storage, to effects, to delivery, to potency. Once an herbalist has correctly identified a

plant with Botany skill, he must then roll against Herbary skill to successfully transmute the raw material to an active herbal concoction.

Herbary skill level determines the *number* of prepared herbs a beginning herbalist starts with. These concoctions *must* be chosen from plants he is familiar with – see Botany skill, p. B60.

This is taken by Druids instead of the Physician skill.

Mixed Tree Lore (Mental/Hard) No default Prerequisite: Vowel Tree Lore

As Vowel Tree Lore but concerning the Mixed spells. This is *not* a requirement for Druids (see *Druids*, p. 82) but many Ollaves with Magical Aptitude choose to study these spells.

Satire (Mental/Very Hard)

Defaults to Bard-4

This is the ability to compose a satire or lampoon on any subject. When a satire is sung in the presence of the victim, roll a Quick Contest of Satire skill versus the best of the victim's IQ, Poetry, Bard-2, or Satire skill. If the satirist wins, everyone laughs at the victim, who cringes.

If the satire is a truthful one, and it is sung in a high- or wild-mana area, the victim rolls against Will minus the amount by which he lost. If he fails this, he might break out in boils or black blisters, or suffer whatever other effects the GM chooses. The punishment should fit the crime – a satire about a king who made a stupid mistake may make him drool like an idiot, for example. Such effects last for seven days. This can render a king unable to retain the throne.

If the satirist loses the initial contest or if the satire is untrue, the victim comes back with a sharp retort. If he loses by three or more in a high-mana area, he may suffer some minor problems of his own, such as a few boils (lose one level of Attractiveness for 1d days) or being rendered tongue-tied (-4 to Bard skill rolls and the like for a week).

This is magic, but it is not a spell and has no energy cost. The satirist is composing a song – it is the truth stated in the satire combined with the magical ability inherent in music and the area, not in the satirist, which gives it its effect.



Vowel Tree Lore (Mental/Hard) No default Prerequisite: Consonant Tree Lore

As Consonant Tree Lore, but concerning the Vowel Tree spells. Vowel Tree spells can only be performed by people with Magery, so for most this knowledge is only theoretical. This skill is a requirement for Ollaves.

Appearance

The ideal of Celtic beauty in the mythology was tall, pale-skinned, blond-haired, blue-eyed men and women. No doubt many Celts were like this, but it is likely that these were the Celtic (particularly Irish) aristocracy. There are many records of the other "archetypal" Celt, the short, dark-haired type. Cuchulain was of this sort, but was still considered beautiful. In this type, dark hair was very dark brown, not black, and even this hair developed golden strands after prolonged exposure to sunlight. There were also a large number of red-haired Celts. The number of blond-haired Celts was affected by the fact that many Celts dyed their hair with lime-wash (according to the Romans) to make it blonder. Eye color was likely to be related to hair color, with blond Celts having blue or gray eyes, red-haired Celts having gray or green eyes, and dark-haired Celts having brown eyes, although there was room for a lot of variation.



Height was only an inch less than the norm given in the table on p. B15, due to the high amounts of protein in the Celtic diet. Women were only a few inches shorter than men. Optionally, a dark-haired person could be three inches shorter than normal, in contrast to the taller blonds and redheads.

Social Status and Wealth

Few parts of the Celtic world had "money." A few areas of southeastern Prydain adopted coinage from the European mainland just prior to the Roman conquest, but there was no standard. The Celtic economy was based largely on cattle. Most trade was by barter, which Celtic law formalized using the *set* (in *GURPS* terms, \$250). This abstraction represented half a cow, as a basic unit of comparison. Lengths of iron resembling unworked swords could also be used as currency.

The custom of hospitality was so common in the Celtic world that ordinary people used barter and money only on very rare occasions; only the few merchants used such things at all commonly. Most warriors had their own duns, with peasants to grow their food. When traveling, these warriors could hunt, or ask anyone for hospitality. When they first became warriors their foster parents provided their weapons. The king was generous with gifts, his subjects generous with tribute. This was why being thought ungenerous was such a terrible thing for a Celt.

Starting wealth for characters is \$1,000. Warriors probably spend 50% of their wealth on "adventuring" gear (sword, spears, chariot, gold arm-rings, and the like), the rest being spent on a home, furnishings, et cetera. Other people have only 20% of their money to spend on adventuring equipment. Excess wealth for a Celt is in the form of gold jewelry, particularly arm-rings and torcs. (A plain gold torc was worth about a *set*.) These can be exchanged for goods and services, but not at any standard exchange rate, and with no hope of receiving change!

If desired, the GM can assume that standard *GURPS* copper, silver, and gold coins are available, with plenty of fractions and multiples as needed, but this doesn't accurately reflect heroic Celtic culture. Most warriors considered any transaction involving less than the value of a torc to be dull stuff, not worth too much attention. To maintain this atmosphere, GMs should refrain from making PCs too poor too often. If they get too rich, there are plenty of ways to take the money away, especially as they should be very nervous about gaining any reputation for stinginess.

SOCIAL STATUS

The following table gives an idea of social status for different types of character. Bear in mind that status depended very much on reputation; a warrior's prowess in battle, a king's generosity (or lack of it), a druid's wisdom, all affected his status. Women shared equal status with men, and any reference to king in the table also applies to a queen in the same situation.

The number of colors a Celt could have woven into his tartan was determined by his social status. He could wear one more color than his Status level, with a minimum of one for farmers, laborers, and slaves, and a maximum of seven. Therefore, a quick count of the colors worn by a stranger can give people some idea of his status. For example, a charioteer might wear three colors while the warrior he drove for could wear any number from four to seven.

NAMES

Names were very important to Celts. Most names had some meaning, which could affect the life of the bearer. A Celt was usually known as the son of his father, or occasionally of his mother. In Brythonic, "son of" was "ap"; in Goedelic it was "Mac" or "Mong" (daughter of). Many people gained nicknames which replaced these patronymics. For example, Leary Mac Ugaine was better known as Leary Budach. "Leary the Triumphant."

Nicknames count as a Reputation and work in exactly the same way, with costs depending on how many people know them. Even to strangers, an impressive nickname gives a +1 to reactions. However, nicknames are as easy to earn for embarrassing episodes as for truly heroic feats. Rhys One-Tooth must have wished for another nickname. Bestowing a nickname was seen as a compliment, and almost everyone has *some* nickname.

If a character earns a nickname (good or bad), encourage the players to use it when meeting NPCs; no matter how much a player mutters "Gwyn ap Liwyd" have the NPCs pick up on "Gwyn the Butterfingers" until he lives it down. Anyone with a heroic name, "the Mighty," or "of the Victories," who fails to live up to it should be ridiculed unmercifully.

The following are genuine names which were either common, belonged to people whose deeds were forgotten, or were the names of very minor characters in Celtic stories.

Goedelic Names

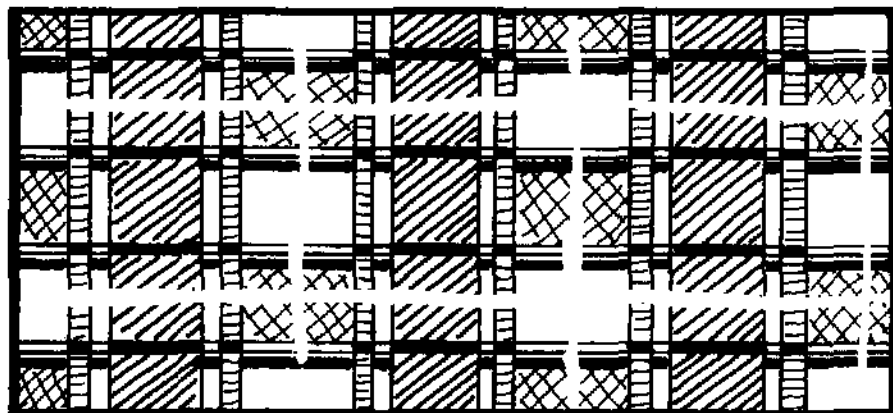
Male: Anind, Arannan, Bres, Bruinn, Cellach, Clonach, Gann, I bath, Niul, Ragalach, Ronan, Senach.

Female: Arva (Arbha), Bri, Cliona (Cliodnha), Clothra, Daireann, Evla (Ebhla), Fanach (Fuamnach), Irnan, Liadin, Nessa, Odras, Scena.

Brythonic Names

Male: Casnar, Gwyn, Gwyddno, Heilyn, Hywel, Ifor, Rhitta, Rhys, Syfwlch, Tegid, Trachmyr, Wledig.

Female: Angharad, Ceri, Cerridwen, Eirwen, Elen, Goewin, Gwyar, Heledd, Luned, Menna, Rhian, Sian (pronounced *Sharn*).



Status Table

Status	Examples	Monthly Cost
8	Extremely famous Sidhe (Lugh, Manannan, etc.)	Incalculable!
7	High king, High king's Chief druid	\$20,000
6	Overking, Overking's Druid	\$10,000
5	King of small kingdom, Druid	\$5,000
4	King's hero, Ollave, Captain of Fianna band	\$2,500
3	Warrior, Bard, member of Fianna	\$1,500
2	Charioteer, spearman (mercenary)	\$1,000
1	Craftsman, blacksmith, shoemaker, hairdresser, rich farmer	\$800
0	Farmer	\$600
-1	Laborer	\$400
-2	Slave	\$20
-3	Clanless criminal	\$20
-4	No equivalent	-

Those without the Celtic Code of Honor or the Code of Honor of the Fianna were considered Social Status -3. This applied equally to Celts and foreigners; a foreigner who kept within the Celtic Code when dealing with Celts was treated as though his status were normal for his station.



Jobs and Income

The rules for this Job Table are slightly different from those in the *Basic Set*, pp. B192-194. The Monthly Income shown isn't paid in cash, but is a measure of the standard of living of the person during the month he is employed, since he lives on the hospitality of his employer. The money shown can't be saved, since it is paid not in cash but in food, drink, entertainment, and the like. However, if a critical success is rolled, the person's employer gives him a gift equal to half a month's wages, anything from a fine cloak or gold arm-ring to a sword or Druid Wand. This *can* be used or bartered later. GMs should choose the nature of the gift based on the type of worker and his employer.

If a character is a self-employed subsistence worker (e.g., trapper, fisherman, or farmer), he makes sufficient surplus to barter for other things, in which case the GM may rule that he must barter them immediately (before they spoil), unless he is living in a part of Prydain where a money economy prevails.



Job Table

Job (Requirements), Monthly Income

Success Roll

Critical Failure

Poor Jobs

Beggar (no qualifications), \$0 (living expenses)

Best of HT or IQ

2d/O

Slave (no qualifications), \$0 (living expenses)

IQ

2d/4d

Struggling Jobs

Apprentice (Craft Skill 10+), \$0 (living expenses)

PR

2d/4d or LJ

Hunter/trapper (Survival 11+, Tracking 11+), \$70

best PR

2d/3d, -1e

Average Jobs

Blacksmith (Armoury/TL2, 13+), \$140

PR

-1e/-2e or 1d/2d

Hairstresser (Hairstressing, 13+), \$120

PR

-1e/-2e

Craftsman (Craft skill, 13+), \$100

PR

-1e/-2e

Small farmer (Agronomy, 11+), \$85

PR

1d/2d, -1e/-2e

Fisherman (Fishing, 11+), \$75

PR

1d/2d, -1e/-2e

Spearman/mercenary (Weapon skill 12+), \$100

PR

2d/4d, -2e/O

Charioteer (Teamster 13+), \$100

PR

2d/4d

Comfortable Jobs

Warrior/Fiana member (Savoir-Faire 12+, one Weapon skill 11+), \$450

best PR

2d/4d, LJ/O

Bard (Poetry 11+, Consonant Tree Lore 11+, Bardic Lore 11+), \$400*

best PR

LJ/O

Ollave (Poetry 13+, Vowel Tree Lore 11+, Clerical Investment) \$450*

best PR

LJ/O

Druid (Mixed Tree Lore 11+, Clerical Investment), \$450*

PR

LJ/O

Wealthy Jobs

King** (Savoir-Faire 13+, Politics 13+), \$1,500+

worst PR

2d/3d, or LJ/O

King's champion (Savoir-Faire 11+, one Weapon skill 14+), \$1,000

best PR

2d/4d, or LJ/O

King's Chief Druid (Savoir-Faire 13+, Vowel Tree Lore 14+), \$1,000

best PR

LJ/O

Key to Table

PR = Prerequisite (at least half a point must be spent on a skill prerequisite; default values are not permitted); LJ = Lost Job; "d" = dice of damage suffered (the GM may game this out as an adventure); "-1e" = one months' wages worth of lost equipment; "-2e" = two months' wages worth of lost equipment.

"O" = outcast; the character has been placed under a Druid Ban (see *Social Stigma*, p. 54) due to his behavior. This is likely to involve being forced to do something against his employer's wishes by one of his gesas. GMs should play out the incident, to give the character a chance to redeem himself.

If there are two entries separated by a slash, use the second result only when a natural 18 is rolled.

* The figures quoted for income are a guide to what these occupations could *expect* to earn. Since a Bard, Ollave, or Druid lives entirely on the hospitality of those he visits, and isn't actually working for anyone, his income varies according to who he stays with. Anyone he stays with endeavors to give him the best of everything, but this depends on whether he stays with the high king or a peasant farmer. The figure quoted is an average and could actually range from \$25-\$1,000.

** A king who loses his job is dethroned by his people for being a bad ruler. He goes back to being an ordinary warrior. Any king maimed in battle automatically loses kingship. The

income for a king includes gifts to other people and so on. An ungenerous king may have some income left at the end of a month, but gains a reputation for Miserliness.



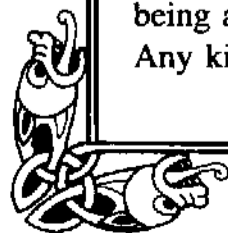
Celtic Weapons

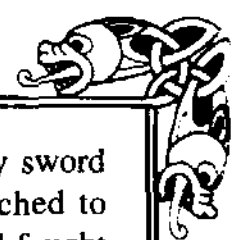
The main weapons used by the Celts were the thrusting broadsword, the spear, and the sling.

Swords

The broadsword was usually made of iron (although the earliest Celts used bronze). It was used for cutting and thrusting, and therefore had a point. Most swords had some decoration on the hilt, usually in bronze, and the scabbard was decorated with iron and bronze. The price given below is for a standard Celtic broadsword with a little decoration – more decorative swords could cost up to ten times the listed amount.

Celtic swords are considered *cheap* (see p. B74) unless otherwise stated. A *good* sword costs two and a half times the listed price, a *fine* sword ten times the listed price, and a *very fine* sword 50 times the listed price. *Very fine* swords were





almost always made by Sidhe smiths, usually for use in making Willful Weapons (see sidebars, pp. 70-72).

Bronze weapons are considerably weaker than iron ones, and have a 1/3 chance of breaking in a hard parry against an iron (or magical) weapon. *Fine* or *very fine* bronze weapons are more lavishly ornamented than average weapons, but do no more damage than normal weapons and have the same chance of breaking during a parry against weapons of superior metals.

Optional Rule for Celtic Weapons: There were many cases in Celtic mythology and history of warriors straightening their bronze or soft iron swords out after a blow. If the GM wishes to game this, use the following rule. Any blow that does 4 or more points of basic damage bends the sword blade which made the blow. Unless the sword is straightened, the fighter is at -4 to Broadsword skill, and all basic damage for the sword is halved.

Straightening the sword is usually done by standing on it with the foot. This takes one second; during this second, the warrior can block with a shield but cannot make any other attack or defense. It then takes another round to ready the weapon for use again. A blade can be straightened and be ready to use in one second if the user straightens it with his teeth, but he must make a DX roll to avoid doing 1d-2 cutting damage to his face.

Spears

Due to the somewhat fragile nature and high cost of Celtic swords, broad-bladed thrusting spears were often used in

combat, although a warrior might prefer a poor-quality sword to a good-quality spear because of the prestige attached to swords. Most warriors normally carried two spears and fought with both. They could also be thrown, although this was less common, since Celts preferred close combat whenever possible. Spearpoints could bend or buckle occasionally, but it was considered bad luck to straighten a spearhead with one's teeth.

The Belly Spear was a particularly unpleasant weapon. It had a spiral head with barbs pointing backward that did normal impaling damage when entering the body, but when removed from a wound did another 3d damage. In a realistic historical campaign, this was what the *Gae Bolga* of Cuchulain was; in a magical campaign, the *Gae Bolga* was a Willful Weapon (see sidebar, p. 70).

Slings

Slings were commonly used by Celts for hunting birds, but rarely in battle. There were cases in Celtic mythology of people using slings to kill people from a distance by surprise, but this went against the Celtic Code of Honor.

Knives

Many Celtic warriors also carried long knives for use in close combat. These were decorated in the same way as swords and were cheap, but the optional bent-weapons rule does not apply, as knives were much harder to bend, being shorter.

Weapons

HAND WEAPONS

Weapon	Type	Amount	Reach	Cost	Weight	Min. ST	Special Notes
Broadsword (DX-5, Shortsword-2 or Force Sword-3)							
Thrusting Broadsword	cut	sw+1	1	\$600	3 lbs.	10	
	imp	thr+2	1				
Spear (DX-5 or Staff-2)							
Spear	imp	thr+2	1*	\$40	4 lbs.	9	Used 1-handed. Throwable.
		thr+3	1, 2*				
Belly Spear				\$100			As above but does 3d damage when pulled out of wound.

*Must be *readied* for one turn to change from long to short grip or vice versa.

RANGED WEAPONS

Weapon	Type	Amount	SS	Acc	1/2D	Max	Cost	Weight	Min. ST	Notes
Sling (DX-6) 2 hands to load, 1 to fire. 2 turns to ready.										
Sling	or sw	12	0	0	ST x 5	ST x 10	\$10	1/16*	-	Fires rocks.
Spear Throwing (DX-4 or Spear Thrower-4)										
Spear	imp	thr+3	11	2	ST	ST x 15	\$40	4 lbs.	9	
Belly Spear							\$100			As above but does 3d damage when pulled out of wound.

*A sling stone weighs one ounce.

Cost is in \$ for *cheap* quality weapons, with a small amount of decoration. Fine decoration can multiply the cost of a weapon up to as much as ten times the base cost of a weapon of its quality.



Celtic Armor

The Celts wore very little in the way of armor. A chief might have a decorated helmet (treat as a pot helm, PD 3, DR 4, \$200, 5 lbs., covers areas 3-4) but most warriors went into battle bareheaded, so that their amazing hairstyles could be seen better.

Body armor was almost unknown, although see the Spearman's Invulnerability Sidhe advantage (p. 80) for a way of becoming better protected. During the winter months, a warrior wore winter clothing, which protected at PD 0, DR 1. A few kings had mail shirts (see p. B210) but these were so rare that a price cannot be given. They were unlikely to be for sale; any PC wishing to begin a campaign with a mail shirt must have a 10-point Unusual Background.

Shields

Most shields used by the Celts were small, wooden, and round – the small shield on p. B76. This type of shield was easily destroyed in combat, and the GM may wish to use the optional *Damage to Shields* rule on p. B120.

Richer warriors could have the long Celtic shield – use the large shield on p. B76. These were quite often decorated with pictures, either painted or in bronze, which helped to identify the wielder of the shield in battle.

Many shields in Celtic mythology were enchanted. See *Willful Weapons*, p. 70, for more details.



Livestock

Prices are for a typical animal: the best breeding stock costs more, and a mangy animal is worth a lot less. A particularly fine bull (e.g., the Dun Bull of Cooley) is literally priceless.

Wolfhound	\$100
Milk cow	\$500
Bull	\$2,000
Draft horse	\$1,000
Chariot horse	\$1,200
Sheep	\$150
Sow	\$2,000
Boar	\$3,000

Miscellaneous Equipment

This category includes things which might have been available locally for trade. GMs and players should feel free to add to this list, remembering that imported goods were both rare and expensive. Fancy decoration adds considerably to the cost of items.

Fidchell/gwyddbwyll set	\$50
Gold torc	\$250
Cloak-pin brooch	\$100
Ox cart	\$400
Chariot	\$300
Coracle (small leather boat)	\$1,000

Celtic Equipment

Much standard "adventuring" equipment is available in a *Celtic Myth* setting, but the prices given below are only a guide, since most things are bartered or given away in a show of hospitality. Only in southeastern Prydain was there a money economy, and the prices there varied according to what the market could bear, foreign luxuries in particular fetching high prices.

Clothing

Prices are for typical clothing for the warrior class; peasant clothing was considerably cheaper, the clothing of kings up to 50 times the listed cost. Some typical examples:

Trousers, wool	\$10
Tunic, woolen	\$10
Hooded tunic, woolen	\$12
Floor-length women's tunic, woolen	\$18
Leather shoes	\$15
Leather boots	\$45
Cloak, woollen	\$200

4 The Sidhe



SIDHE IN THE CAMPAIGN

In a campaign where the PCs are not Sidhe, the Sidhe should always be played as powerful and mysterious people whose motives are obscure. This great power, combined with their capricious natures, should make the PCs wary when dealing with them. Even the most benevolent of the Sidhe should appear menacing, and the heroes should be nervous when dealing with them, unsure what might offend them, or what awful thing will happen if they say the wrong thing. Even when the Sidhe help them it should be a nerve-wracking experience, because if they do not show proper gratitude (or show gratitude when the Sidhe felt it wasn't necessary), something awful may happen.

Any mysterious, chance-met stranger *might* be a Sidhe. A few false alarms before being hit with a *real* Sidhe lord in all his glory may lull the players into a false sense of security! A Sidhe who has been crossed may attack immediately, or may bide his time and do something awful when the PCs have forgotten about him. Having an enemy Sidhe turn up in a situation, just when the players think things can't get any worse, can be a sobering experience.

The GM should remember when playing Sidhe NPCs that he need not be limited by the spells in Chapter 5 for magical effects. The Sidhe were great masters of magic, and were bound to have spells beyond the dreams of mere mortals. Having a Sidhe suddenly do something which the PCs have no way of countering is a good way of making them realize the power with which they're dealing.

"Every particle of him quivered like a bulrush in a running stream. His calves and heels and hams shifted to the front, and his feet and knees to the back, and the muscles of his neck stood out like the head of a young child. One eye was engulfed deep in his head, the other protruded, his mouth met his ears, foam poured from his jaws like the fleece of a three-year-old ram. The beats of his heart sounded like the roars of a lion as he rushes on his prey. A light blazed above his head and his hair became tangled about as it had been the branches of a red thorn bush stuffed into a gap in a fence . . . Taller, thicker, more rigid, longer than the mast of a great ship was the perpendicular jet of dusky blood which out of his scalp's very central point shot upwards and was there scattered to the four cardinal points, whereby was formed a magic mist of gloom."

— Cuchulain's *riastradh* (Rolleston)

The Sidhe were powerful Otherworld entities who shared the Celtic world with normal humans, interfering with their lives and often intermarrying with them. They had many powers and abilities that normal humans did not; however, humans with Sidhe ancestry (see *Sidhe Blood*, p. 79) could have some of these abilities, also. Most of the Fianna were said to have Sidhe blood.



The Tuatha De Danaan

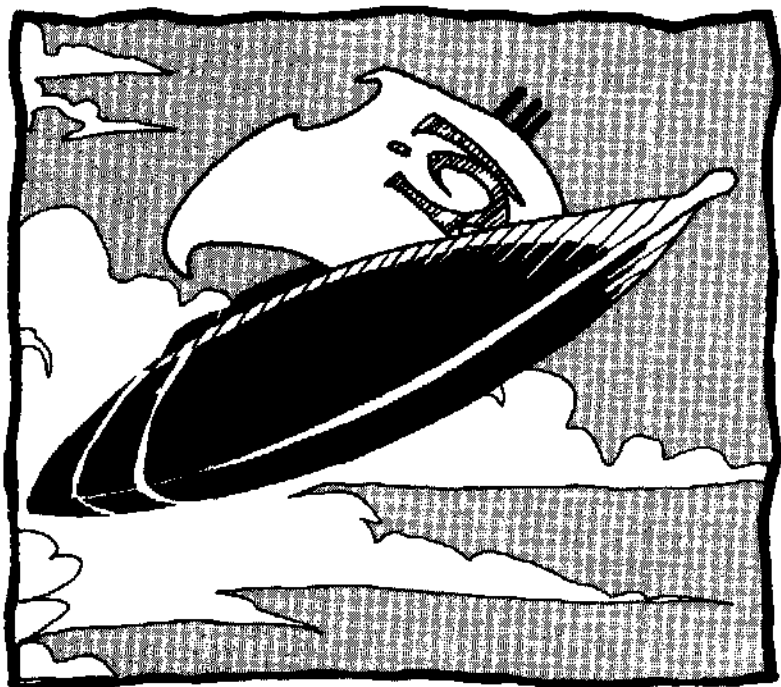
The Tuatha de Danaan were the most powerful of the Sidhe, the "children of the goddess Danu." They came to Eriu, it was said, from the high air, possibly in splendid flying ships. Very little was known about their original homeland, except that it must have been somewhere in the Otherworld and that it had four cities: "great Falias, and shining Gorias, and Finias and rich Murias in the south."

When the Tuatha came to Eriu, they brought the best of their people with them, people whose exploits later formed the basis of the religion and myths of the Celts. But even after their defeat at the hands of the Milesians, when they retreated to the hollow hills, they never stopped meddling in the affairs of the inhabitants of Eriu.

The Tuatha in Mumu

The Tuatha de Danaan fled their lost land in flying ships, bringing with them their Four Treasures, the Stone, the Sword, the Spear, and the Cauldron, and setting down in Mumu. They fought great battles with the Firbolg and the Fomor and became supreme over all Eriu. Then the sons of Mil defeated them, and they withdrew into the Otherworld.

The Tuathan Period, when the Tuatha de Danaan were preparing for the Second Battle of Moytura, was the era of Mumu's greatest importance. The high king was Bres, Nuada had his silver hand, and Lugh had recently arrived. Everyone knew that the battle was inevitable and meant death for many, but no one knew the day or the hour. All of Mumu rang to the



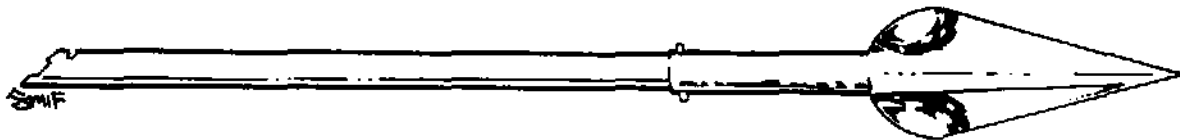


sound of Govan making Willful Weapons and the clash of arms as young men practiced. Fomorian spies were occasionally captured, and talk at night in the duns always turned to how the truce would be broken.

THE TUATHA AND THE FOMOR

When the Tuatha came to Eriu they found it inhabited by the Firbolgs and the Fomor. The Firbolgs were a primitive people whom the Tuatha fought and defeated soon after arriving, confining them to the *cuiga* of Connachta. The Fomor were very like the Tuatha in some ways, except that the Tuatha were supernaturally beautiful and the Fomor were supernaturally ugly. Along with numerous skirmishes, the two fought a great battle at Moytura, which the Tuatha won. They expelled the Fomor to a few small islands between Eriu and Alba, unpleasant places wreathed in cold, damp fog and snow-covered year-round.

The Fomor had the same advantages and disadvantages as the Sidhe (see p. 70) except that instead of being Beautiful, they had the disadvantage Hideous Appearance. Each Fomor was described as monstrous in a different way, but the deformity was merely a special effect, having no effect on abilities. For example, a Fomor with one hideous stump of a foot had a normal Move. Some Fomor could have extra levels of Monstrosity (see p. 77). Fomor could and did interbreed with Sidhe and with humans: having Fomor blood should be treated exactly the same as having the Sidhe Blood advantage (p. 99).



CELTIC SUPERS

A campaign with Tuatha de Danaan PCs would be an extremely high-powered campaign, with 500-point characters at the very least. GMs may wish to set adventures in the four cities of the Tuatha, before they came to Eriu, detailing the events that led to their departure. Were they exiled? Was there a great disaster? Was their homeland really Atlantis? The possibilities are endless.

Alternatively, a campaign could be set during the time when the Tuatha were establishing themselves in Eriu. Perhaps history could be rewritten so that the Tuatha continued to rule. Whatever happens, things will be spectacular, since all the PCs and NPCs are Wild Mana Generators, and have lots of Sidhe advantages. Players and GMs may want to take a look at *GURPS Supers* for some ideas about high-powered campaigns of this sort.



The Otherworld: Islands of Wonders

The Otherworld lay parallel to the real world, like a shadow where everything was much the same as in this world, except that it was bigger, brighter, and more magical. In some places, such as Eriu, the Otherworld drew nearer to this world, and the border between them grew thin from constant crossings. In other places the Otherworld withdrew, and in consequence this world was more mundane.

SIDHE PATRONS AND ENEMIES

An interesting use of the Sidhe in a campaign is as Patrons. Such a Patron would normally be a 15-point advantage, but due to the capricious nature of the Sidhe, it is only a 10-point advantage (modified by frequency of appearance). People with a Sidhe Patron should never be sure whether he will help them at any given time, and should always be a little nervous about asking. A Sidhe Patron can offer healing and other magics, advice, information, help in battle, etc., but he may choose not to, just on a whim. Having a Sidhe Patron let the heroes down from time to time is a good way of ensuring a proper respect for the Sidhe.

Worse than a Sidhe Patron is a Sidhe Enemy. A Sidhe Enemy should be a -15-point disadvantage (modified by frequency of appearance). A Sidhe Enemy is likely to turn up at any time. He may appear in the middle of the night, when the PCs are in bed, or help their enemies in a battle. Or, being capricious, he may turn up at the heroes' dun asking for hospitality; he is powerful and arrogant enough not to fear them, and it may entertain him for a while to act as though they aren't enemies. The humans will probably be too nervous to be anything other than polite and honorable. He may even turn up disguised as a traveler, and only reveal who he is on leaving, giving them a nasty shock.

BUILDINGS AND THE SIDHE

Fogous

A typical Damnanian building was the *fogou*, or concealed passage. This was an underground room, the walls slabbed with stone; its hidden, curving entrance had a step to trip unwary intruders. These rooms were unique to Damnar (Cornwall), and Damnanians didn't like to explain them to strangers. If asked, they would say that they were "for defense," although it was clear that the rooms would be useless for that purpose. If pressed people might say that the druids built them, with the implication that nobody knew why.

The *fogou* was sometimes used as a cold storage area for milk, cheese, and meat, but its primary purpose was indeed as a defense - against the Sidhe. These rooms were built by druids, who maintained them with occasional rituals. Mortals could negotiate them but Sidhe attempting the feat became confused and lost.

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BUILDINGS AND THE SIDHE (CONTINUED)

Glass Castles

In southern and eastern Alba (Scotland) are found "vitrified forts," or glass castles. These are duns built with dry stone walls, which were then covered with a timber framework and set afire. The burning fused the stone into a smooth, unclimbable glassy mass. Glass castles were highly defensible, their only weak point being their gates. Because of the difficulties of firing, most glass castles were fairly low, with walls not much more than 15 or 20 feet high. The only other place his type of fortification was found was in Gaul.

Many Alban Sidhe lived in glass castles. Being without the constraints on building which limited mortals, they sometimes built glass towers, rising for many stories above the hilltops where they were built. These towers were at least partly within the Otherworld, and could appear and disappear as observers approached.

Brochs

Brochs were found exclusively in northern and western Alba and the islands. They were thick-walled, and sometimes double-walled, stone structures, sometimes with stone towers 40 or 50 feet high. They tended to be small in overall size, reflecting the tiny size of kingdoms in the area; most brochs were little more than fortified stone farmhouses, as their kings were little more than farmers. Like the *fogous* of Damnar some brochs were built on a maze pattern to confuse Sidhe attempting to enter.



In our world the vast majority of the inhabitants were human. In the Otherworld the majority were Sidhe: immensely more powerful and magical than mere mortals, but living in much the same way, with kings' halls, feasting, druids, and all the normal trappings of the Celtic life. The Otherworld stretched out, kingdom after kingdom, in exactly the same way as the real world.

ENTERING THE OTHERWORLD

"And now the sun shone fiercely down, and the riders passed into a golden haze in which Oisín lost all knowledge of where he was or if sea or dry land were beneath his horse's hoofs. But strange sights sometimes appeared to them in the mist, for towers and palace gateways loomed up and disappeared, and once a hornless doe bounded by them chased by a white hound with one red ear; and again they saw a young maid ride by on a brown steed, bearing a golden apple in her hand, and close behind her followed a young horseman on a white steed, a purple cloak floating at his back and a gold-hilted sword in his hand. And Oisín would have asked the princess who and what these apparitions were, but Neave (Niamh) bade him ask nothing nor seem to notice any phantom until they were come to the Land of Youth."

— T.W. Rolleston

Certain places in this world provided entrance to the Otherworld, or existed in both worlds and therefore could be used as crossing points. Anything could mark such a place: Sidhe mounds, standing stones, trees, etc. It was possible to either find or make a gate to the Otherworld. These gates sometimes had quirks which meant that they opened only at certain times or to certain people, and it was necessary to discover what these quirks were before using a gate. The journey to the Otherworld could take place instantly, as simply a step from one world to another, or it could take a long time. Anyone looking back during such a journey saw strange warning portents in swirling mists. If he tried to turn back he became lost and emerged somewhere far from where he started or where he intended to go (and not necessarily anywhere on a line between the two). In addition, mysterious Otherworldly islands could often be found by sailing west from Eriu.

Another certain way of crossing into the Otherworld was to die. Everyone expected that when they died they would pass into the Otherworld and lead a life of feasting, hunting, singing, and honor. They could, of course, be killed in such a life; but this was only considered a gate to more and further Otherworlds, each stranger and farther from the world of men than the last. Otherworldly wisdom was acquired in such a journey, and some believed that, after passing through many Otherworlds, people were at last transformed into an animal in the real world. When that animal was eaten by a human, the dead person would be conceived as a new child by that person. The more powerful and famous anyone was the longer this process took, due to the extended adventures he was likely to have in each of the Otherworlds. This "passing on" could account for the petty nature of some Sidhe still living near the lands of men; they had grown away from their human natures but had not grown beyond that to unearthly wisdom.



MEN INTO GODS/ GODS INTO MEN

Mortals who stayed in the Otherworld for long became strange and mystical and drew away from their human natures. In most cases this led toward more and further Otherworlds, and at last to a rebirth in this world. In some cases of particularly strong and archetypal heroes, it resulted in them becoming more than mortal. When Lugh demanded admittance to Tara (see p. 48) he was no more than an exceptional warrior. As time went by in the Otherworld, he acquired powers and responsibilities, and eventually became one of the greatest of the gods, in charge of the sun itself.

As beings became more godlike, their concerns drifted farther from the normal world, and they became less approachable. What remained of the original person were his strongest traits, good and bad. Thus in the later stories, the Morrigan, although extremely powerful, became nothing more than the raven scouring the battlefield in search of war. Her love of fighting was all that remained of her original personality.

This process was sometimes reversed. Gods slide back toward humanity, pulled back by their concern for someone or something in this world. These declining gods did not die of old age, but could degenerate into mere spirits and child-frightening bogeys. They could, of course, be killed, and the sons of Tureen are considered by some to have been old gods "fallen on hard times." In later stories, the Dagda, "the god who is good at everything" and "the lord of great knowledge," becomes a caricature of his old self, depicted as a glutton strongly attached to food, drink, and sex (evidence of his prior associations with fertility and abundance).

HEROES IN THE OTHERWORLD

Many great heroes in the legends visited the Otherworld, and some lived there for some time. In some times and places there was much coming and going between worlds; Finn said, "There was hardly one of the Fianna without a wife or a sweetheart among the Tuatha." At other times and places the Otherworld was remote; Cuchulain visited it only to recuperate in his father's house.

There were many instances in which denizens of the Otherworld asked heroes for help. Finn was asked to bring his army to help the Tuatha de Danaan fight off another Otherworldly force. When he declined, the Sidhe began capturing his champions one by one until Finn changed his mind. Although the Sidhe were powerful magically, there were some things which, by their very nature, could be done only by mortal men – and the Sidhe usually had more than enough power to see that mortal men helped them. This happened even in places where the Otherworld was normally far away and was especially likely at the times of the great feasts.



The Many Otherworlds

Different Otherworlds, or different parts of the one Otherworld, had different names as used by local inhabitants. "Otherworld" was a term used by people coming from this world; Sidhe would refer to *this* world as "the other world." Some Otherworldly regional names are: Tir Tairnigiri (the Land of Promise), Tir Na t'Samhraidh (Land of Summer), Magh Mell (Plain of Happiness), Tir Na m'Beo (Land of the Living), Magh Da Cheo (Plain of the Two Mists), Tir Ildathach (The Many-Colored Land), Tir Imchiuin (The Very Peaceful Land), and Dun Scaith (Fortress of Shadows).

TIR BO THUINN – THE LAND BEYOND THE WAVE

The Otherworld was often reached by boat, and was often found as a series of strange islands on which wonders could be seen. It was perilous to get closer to these islands than the ninth wave away from the shore. To do so was to enter the Otherworld and risk possible time distortions. Sometimes it

THE FEAST OF AGE

Every so often, the Sidhe were required to attend the Feast of Age (Fleadh Aise), held at each Sidhe mound in Eriu in rotation. If they didn't, they ceased to be immortal, and slowly died. (They began to age, although more slowly than humans; they only require an Aging roll every 20 years.) Missing one or two feasts did not matter, since they aged so slowly, but any Sidhe who wished to remain in the prime of youth had to be sure to attend regularly.

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THE FEAST OF AGE (CONTINUED)

There is no record of how often the Feast of Age was held. It is suggested that every 100 years would be a reasonable period. As time is so unusual in the Otherworld an invitation to the Feast of Age could come unexpectedly to any Sidhe meddling in our world. What happened to a human who attended the Feast of Age was unknown, and could vary at the GM's discretion. Possibilities vary from no effect to extending a person's life span, or even to making him a Sidhe with all the attendant advantages and disadvantages.

The Feast of Age was one of the three boons Manannan (see sidebar, p. 70) gave the Sidhe when they withdrew into the Otherworld. The other two were the magical pigs which could be killed and eaten repeatedly, and the Feth Fiada, or ability to become invisible to mortals or to Sidhe. None of these boons were in existence when the Tuatha ruled Eriu openly.

BIGGER AND BETTER

In the Otherworld, everything was larger and more brilliant. Otherworldly animals were generally white with red eyes and ears, and at least half again the size of ordinary animals. The Otherworld also abounded in flowers, often unusual in size, shape, or color (occasionally found in the real world as wonders). Trees were abundant, the same types as normally found but larger, with lush foliage.

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was possible to go on shore and return without problems, depending on the strength of purpose of the traveler. Magical boats, either ordinary or transparent crystal, glass, or amber coracles, were sometimes provided by denizens of the Otherworld to encourage mortal visitors.

There were many different islands: the island of merriment where everyone became overcome with laughter, an island covered with treasure guarded by a burning cat, an island with four fences made of precious metal that enclosed cheese tasting like whatever the eater most wanted to eat, and so on.

These islands were always reached by sailing west from Eriu and were quite distinct from the real islands between Alba and Eriu inhabited by Fomorians and mortals. However, mists arose on the sea even more readily than on land; it was possible to become very lost and find a boat heading west instead of east. The only exception to this general westward rule was Inish Manannan (the Isle of Man) between Eriu and Prydain, which was the kingdom and throne of Manannan (see sidebar, p. 70). This was, like a Sidhe mound, in both worlds at once but far closer to the Otherworld than the mundane world.

TIR NA N'OG - THE LAND OF YOUTH

Tir Na n'Og was the name for one part of the Otherworld west of Eriu. It was visited by many heroes by way of a sea voyage or magical horses which could gallop above the waves.

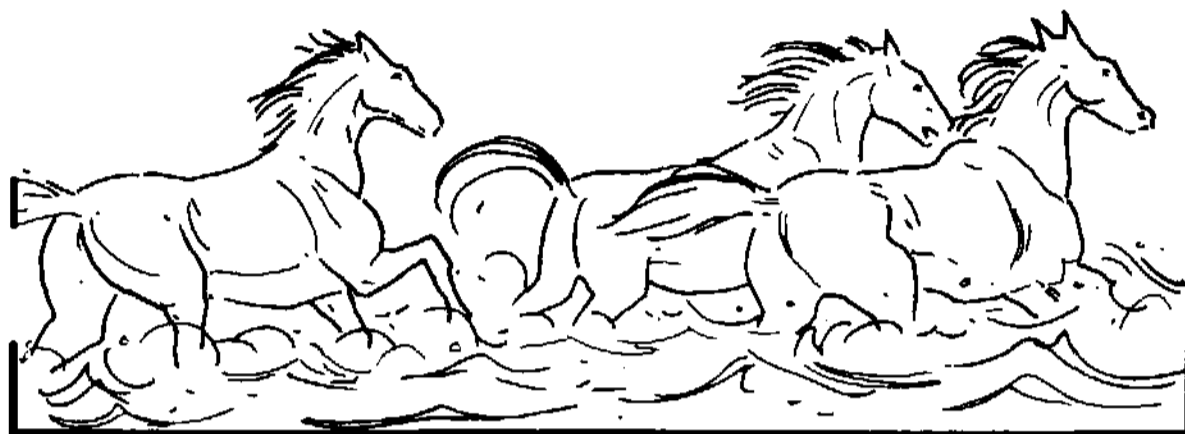
One of the most famous visits to Tir Na n'Og was that made by Oisín, son of Finn Mac Cool. His mother was Saba, a Sidhe woman who'd been turned into a deer. Oisín's name meant "little faun": his earliest memories were of being cared for by her in deer form. He was walking one day with Finn on the shores of Loch Lena when he saw an exceedingly beautiful woman coming toward him, riding a white horse. She greeted them both, and said that she was Neave of the Golden Hair, daughter of a king of the Land of Youth.

She explained that she had come to seek the love of Oisín. Overcome with her beauty, Oisín agreed to accompany her to her father's land. He got up behind her on the horse, which ran onto the water as if it were land and



galloped until it reached Tir Na n'Og. Oisín spent his time in pleasures, enjoying the delights of Tir Na n'Og. He had many adventures, and during this time, Neave conceived a daughter, Plu Na m'Ban ("Flower of Women").

At the end of three weeks Oisín became homesick and wanted to see Finn and the Fianna again. Neave lent him her magic horse to return to Eriu but put a *gesa* on him not to dismount until he was back at her side. Oisín was horrified to find his father's home overgrown with weeds and trees, and the men of Ireland no longer heroic. He dismounted to help some men move a boulder, and immediately became an old man – he had spent 300 years in the Otherworld!



ANNWN

Annwn was a part of the Otherworld close to Dyfed and Ystrad Tywi in Prydain (see *The First Branch*, p. 39), and was typical of the Otherworld: a prosperous land, home to many kings and chieftains.

Arawn was the greatest king of Annwn, and his court was the one nearest to the lands of men. It had "sleeping rooms and halls and chambers and the greatest show of buildings anyone had ever seen." The king and queen wore golden robes, and there were golden vessels to drink from. Arawn was a powerful Sidhe and plentifully supplied with magic, especially spells of transformation: he was a good friend but a bad person to cross. He was courteous and gently spoken but quick to take offense in matters of honor. His queen was "the fairest woman you ever did see," and "the most unaffected of women, and the most gracious of disposition and discourse." The company of Arawn's court was "the most comely troop and the best equipped anyone has ever seen." Everything was of excellent quality, larger and more brightly colored than in this world, but in other ways Arawn's court much resembled any king's hall.

THE HOLLOW HILLS

Sidhe mounds existed in both worlds at once. In our world they looked like green manmade hills, "hollow hills" which sometimes opened to provide passage between worlds. (Historically, they were usually Neolithic and Bronze Age burial mounds.) In the Otherworld they were the duns and palaces of the Sidhe. Sometimes to a bard or to someone who looked with his eyes open in just the right way, they appeared as both together, the green hill overlapping the splendid dun. There were Sidhe mounds everywhere in the Celtic world, but they clustered most thickly in Eriu, especially in Mumu, and in western and northern Prydain. Any smoothly-rounded green hill could be a Sidhe mound; it was best to tread warily in such a place on any day.

BIGGER AND BETTER (CONTINUED)

Hills and mountains were taller and more impressive than their equivalents in the real world. Cliffs were higher, meadows more rolling, rivers deeper and faster; occasional thunderstorms were more impressive. Sunlight and moonlight were more intense, the sky bluer by day and blacker by night. There were many mists, especially around the boundaries between one world and the other.

Time moved strangely, and people's perception of time moved more strangely still. The Otherworld had seasons, but it seemed to be early summer more often than it should have been, sometimes for centuries at a time. Sometimes a night's feasting with the Sidhe lasted for many years in the other world. Usually, short periods of time spent in the Otherworld represented long periods of time in this world, but there were exceptions, such as the story of Bec Fola who set out one morning for the Otherworld, spent a day and a night there, and returned to find it was the same morning and her husband was not yet awake.

Above all, the Otherworld was a magical place. Magic and mystery were part of everyday reality there. It cast a glamour on everyone who came there, making them strange – nobody passed through the Otherworld without being changed to some degree.

SIDHE PCs

Full Sidhe player characters should only be allowed in a campaign where all the PCs are Sidhe; since a Sidhe can be as much as a 1,000-point character, fitting one into a campaign where everyone else is built on 150 points would be rather difficult.

GMs and players should be very careful if running a full Sidhe campaign. With such powerful and impulsive people, it could easily turn into "power gaming" where the "heroes" spend their time picking on lesser mortals and being nasty to them. Players should remember that being Capricious does not mean being spiteful all the time – unexpected acts of selfless charity are just as likely as unprovoked attacks.

Most NPCs in a Sidhe campaign should be Sidhe as well, and the GM should make sure that poor weak mortals are not just helpless cannon fodder. There are times when the Sidhe cannot achieve their ends themselves, due to *gesas* or promises made, and must rely on mortals to do things for them.

A Sidhe campaign could revolve around adventures in the Otherworld, or rivalry with other Sidhe, but it could equally involve the PCs trying to save their favorite humans from the depredations of enemy Sidhe.

MANANNAN MAC LLYR

Just as Inish Manannan stood between Prydain and Eriu, Manannan Mac Llyr stood between those two islands and the old gods and the Celts. He had ties on both sides of the sea and spent much time in both kingdoms. He wasn't one of the Tuatha de Danaan, being much older and more powerful, and born on Inish Manannan. His father was Llyr, king of the sea, and his mother was Penardun, the daughter of Don and her husband Beli, high king of Prydain.

Manannan gave his aid to the Tuatha against the Fomor, and his boat and horse enabled the sons of Tureen to bring back the magic items Lugh needed for the battle. He would not fight with them against the Milesians, as he knew that the outcome was inevitable. After the battle he gave the Tuathans two gifts, the *Feth Fiada* (see p. 76) and the *Feast of Age* (see p. 67), and helped the Dagda divide the underground world among them.

He spent time with his brother Bran and accompanied him on his expedition against Matholwch, king of Mumu. Afterwards he accompanied Pryderi to Dyfed and married Rhiannon, helping Pryderi defeat the long-term Sidhe enemies of the family. He conceived a son in Ulaid, Mongan, who was one of the best kings the country ever had. Manannan was one of the Three Ungrasping Chieftains of the Island of Prydain and he never desired to be a ruler.

Manannan was one of the few selfless Sidhe, and intervened between humans and Sidhe on the human side if he thought the Sidhe were being unfair. He didn't do it openly but by disguising himself and by trickery. Manannan was a kindly Sidhe with a ready smile. He was very wise, although he was not a druid, and he could see a little into the future. He did things because he felt that they had to be done, and wouldn't help people wishing to go against the tide of destiny.

WILLFUL WEAPONS

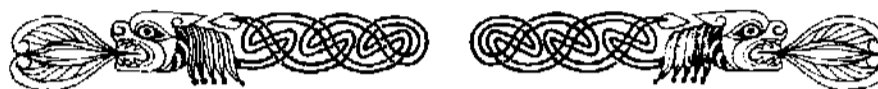
In the Celtic world there were many examples of weapons which had great magical powers and minds of their own. Cuchulain, for instance, had the spear *Gae Bolga* which never missed, and did nine times the normal damage of a spear when taken from its victim. But it could only be used when standing in shallow water, and always killed one of Cuchulain's friends or relatives when used.

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There was a large Sidhe mound at Royal Tara, where Kian's cow (see sidebar, p. 34) was buried and where there was a gate between worlds. The central dun at Rath Cruachan was built over a deep cave which was an entrance into the Otherworld. There were also many Sidhe mounds, stone circles, and standing stones in Damnar – inexplicable mists and strange disappearances were common.

Sometimes the lord of a particular Sidhe dun caused it to protrude into the real world for a time, for some purpose of his own or to meet travelers. (See p. 32.) Wanderers would come across an unexpected dun in the wilderness. Only someone with Area Knowledge could be *sure* that the dun was magical.

Sidhe lords and their companies often rode out of the mounds on the great feasts of the year, either to hunt in mortal lands or to dance at mortal festivals.



Sidhe

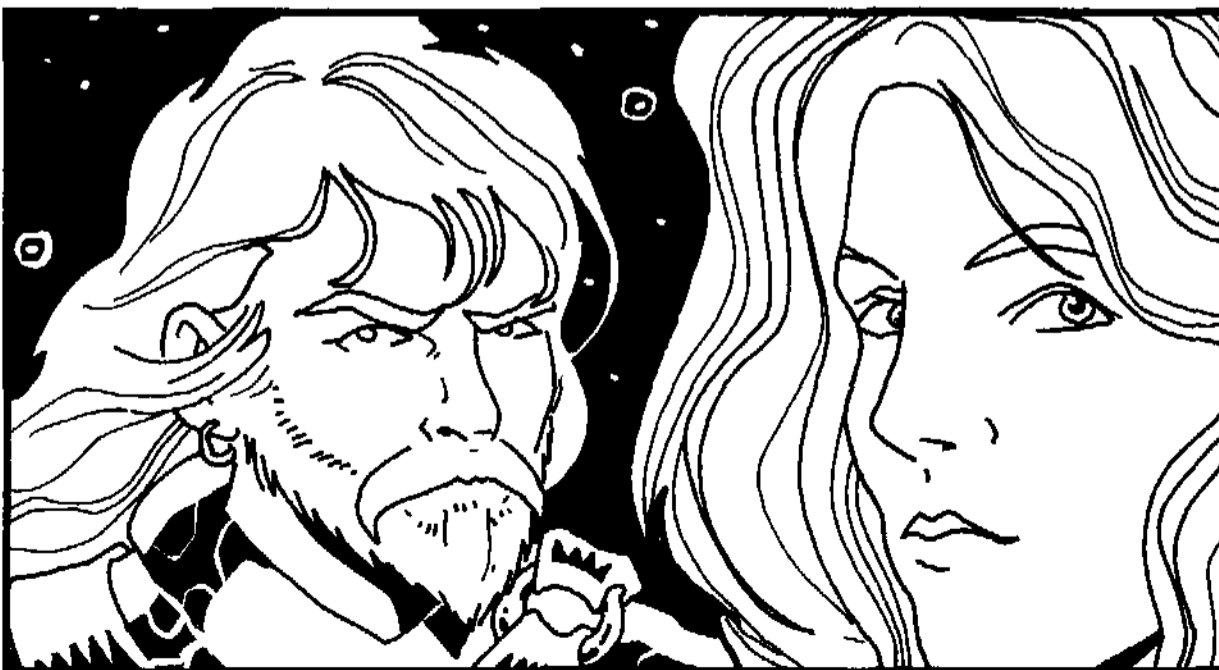
The Sidhe were the “elves” of Celtic lore, although they bore little resemblance to the common elves of fantasy roleplaying. They could pass themselves off as human, but they tended to be taller, stronger, more beautiful, and much more competent at everything they did than even the best human.

Their eyes were often blue, and their hair could be any color, but was usually blond or red like that of the Celts. They were generally taller than humans (determine height normally and add 3”). Sidhe clothing was always of the finest quality, since Sidhe craftsmen were the best in the world.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Sidhe have IQ +2 (20 points), DX +2 (20 points), ST +2 (20 points), and HT +2 (20 points), and the racial advantages Handsome (or Beautiful) Appearance (15 points), Charisma +1 (5 points), Feth Fiada (35 points), Magical Aptitude +2 (25 points), Sidhe Blood +5 (50 points), Unaging (15 points), and Wild Mana Generator (50 points). They have the racial disadvantage Capricious (-15 points). Each can have up to ten Sidhe advantages in addition to the four named here.

It costs 260 points to play a Sidhe.





PSYCHOLOGY

The first thing to remember about the Sidhe is that they were *powerful*. Their inborn magical abilities were so great that they were eventually seen as gods. They were supremely competent and confident in everything they did. At home, in the Otherworld, they spent their days feasting, hunting, and fighting. When they visited this world, they spent their time meddling in the affairs of humans, sometimes for good, sometimes for ill.

Because they were humanity writ large, their failings were as spectacular as their successes. They were capricious, and when thwarted in their desires, could be dangerous indeed. If thwarted in love with a human, a Sidhe did not hesitate to bring all his power to bear to get revenge.

Sidhe delighted in passing themselves off as human, in order to mix in human society for a while. They took great delight in the doings of their weaker mortal cousins and in showing off their own prowess. Posing as a traveler, a Sidhe would join a group of humans and travel with them for a while. Then, at an unexpected moment, he would reveal his full powers, astound his traveling companions, and disappear from sight with a chuckle.

THE SIDHE AT HOME

In the Otherworld, the Sidhe lived in a fashion not unlike to that of their Celtic human brethren on Earth. But since their craftsmen were the most competent, their bards the most talented, and their warriors the most skilful, life in the Otherworld was much more colorful than life on Earth. Their days were spent in high halls with walls of beaten gold, drinking from golden horns and eating from golden platters. Their chief food was pork from magic pigs given to them by Manannan, which could be cooked every night and which returned to life every morning.

At other times they roamed over the plains of the Otherworld in golden chariots pulled by the finest horses, or hunted the white stags of Otherworldly forests. In the lands of the Sidhe it was usually summer, and Sidhe boys played hurley on the green fields outside the duns of their foster fathers. No evil or blight ever came to the land of the Sidhe, unless it was the sorrow of lost love, or grief for the passing of the brief lives of mortals.

WILLFUL WEAPONS (CONTINUED)

Some of these Willful Weapons came into being naturally over time, as a result of the ambient magic of the Celtic world. (See "Willful Weapons" in *Pyramid* #14, July/August 1995, for more details about these weapons.) In a *Celtic Myth* campaign, many of these Weapons don't occur naturally, but are deliberately crafted by the Sidhe, especially by Govan, the smith of the Tuatha de Danaan. (See below.)

MAKING A WILLFUL WEAPON

To make a Willful Weapon in this way, the smith must be in a Wild Mana area (all Sidhe smiths are wild-mana Generators) and must have Armoury (weapon type)/TL2. The basic weapon can be any Celtic weapon or shield from the Weapon Tables on pp. B206-207 (with the exception of missile launchers), but it must be very fine quality, with a cost *50 times* the normal dollar cost of that type of weapon. This means that smiths probably need to be Very Wealthy or better (or have a Patron) to create a Willful Weapon.

For every power the smith wants to give to the Weapon, he must make an Armoury roll. On a success, the Weapon gains that power. On a critical success, the Weapon gains that power plus another of equal point cost, at the GM's discretion. On a failure, the Weapon gains a Lesser Gesa, of equal negative point cost to the power which was intended. This can be chosen by the player or the GM, or randomly. On a critical failure, the materials are ruined and the smith takes 2d of burn damage. The smith can add as many powers as he likes in this way, and can also intentionally add Lesser Gesas (p. M68). If he tries to add a Lesser Gesa, a failure gives a *different* gesa, not a power!

The smith can also give the Weapon skills, but only those he knows himself: the Weapon has the skill at the same level as the smith. A failure on an Armoury roll to add a skill means that the skill is not added.

It takes two hours for each Lesser Gesa, skill, or level of a power to be added, in addition to the normal time needed to craft the weapon, and all work must be completed in a single session. Each two-hour period of working on the Weapon costs 1d-2 Fatigue due to the hard physical labor involved; if the smith collapses from exhaustion before the work is finished, the entire job must be started over.

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MAKING A WILLFUL WEAPON (CONTINUED)

When the smith has finished making the Weapon, he must *breathe life* into it, most easily done by using the Bellows Breath advantage (see p. 75). He breathes a mighty breath on the finished Weapon, at which point all the powers, Gesas, and skills become active. If he fails to do this, the Willful Weapon remains nothing but a very fine normal weapon. Only the smith who made it can perform this breathing of life, and only at the end of the process of making it.

If the smith doesn't have Bellows Breath, he may still attempt to make such a Weapon, but at great cost to himself, since he has to put some of his own life force into it. To breathe life into the Weapon, he must make a Will roll. On a success, he has successfully breathed life into the Weapon, and has permanently lost one point of HT. If the smith fails his Will roll, he lacks the will to sacrifice life force, does not lose the HT, and the weapon does not become Willful. This may only be attempted once.

When a smith breathes life into the Weapon, he must decide what level of Will it will have. He must then make a Contest of Wills with the Weapon, in order to give it a Great Gesa (p. M68). If he wins, the Weapon gains the Great Gesa that the smith intended; if he fails, the Weapon gains a Great Gesa of its own. If the smith has given it Lesser Gesas, one may become a Great Gesa instead. Otherwise the Great Gesa is a twisted version of the intended Great Gesa.

If the smith is a PC, make the roll to give the weapon a Great Gesa in secret, so that he won't know for sure whether the Weapon has the desired Great Gesa.

WILLFUL NON-WEAPONS

Although less common, other magical objects in Celtic mythology exhibited some of the traits of Willful Weapons. As an example, the harp of the Dagda could fly through the air to his hand, striking and killing his enemies as it flew by. Magical objects of this sort should be created in the same manner as Willful Weapons, possibly with fewer combat powers but a greater complement of skills (including spells) as compensation.

The Sidhe gained access to this world through Sidhe mounds. When the Tuatha de Danaan of Eriu were beaten in battle by the Milesians, they retreated to these mounds. The Dagda gave each of the Tuatha a mound of his own to live in; it is assumed that a similar process took place in Prydain, but no record remains of this event.

Sidhe mounds looked like simple grassy hills to humans, and they were usually considered to be the burial mounds of ancient high kings. On certain nights (such as Samain) they appeared as they actually were – the great golden halls of Sidhe kings and warriors. To the Sidhe, they existed in both this world and the Otherworld at the same time, so an inhabitant could pass through the doors into either realm. A mortal invited into a Sidhe mound to feast could find himself in the Otherworld when he left: he could take years to find his way back to his home. This was not a spiteful act on the part of the Sidhe, but when it happened, they usually found it amusing.



CULTURE AND POLITICS

The culture of the Sidhe was very much the same as the culture of the Celts, but for the supreme skill with which the Sidhe did everything. They had more leisure time, and fewer worries, since old age was unknown, the weather was always pleasant, and food was easily available.

Sidhe craftsmen were supremely skilled. They took delight in their craftsmanship, and were very proud of what they made, although they often gave things away in a display of generosity. Their works were often magical as well as superbly well made. A mortal approaching a Sidhe craftsman with the intention of acquiring some of his work would do best not to ask for it directly.

Politics revolved around the rivalries of various Sidhe lords, much as it did in the real world. But the Sidhe also showed great interest in the doings of



mortals in this world, and often meddled in events, usually just for their own amusement. They often took an interest in specific individuals and helped them out of difficult situations. In return for this, they expected to be treated respectfully, and if they were not, they were likely to take revenge.

One of the favorite pastimes of the Sidhe was the seduction of humans. Many a man or woman was beguiled by a Sidhe coming to him or her in human form. This was the reason for the many people with Sidhe blood in their veins. A child of the Sidhe was often marked out for special attention by the Sidhe: the Sidhe parent took special care to see that no great harm came to him, while other Sidhe who were rivals of the parent tried to make things go wrong for the child. Cuchulain's father Lugh, always watched over his son. When Cuchulain was badly wounded by the numerous single combats he fought during the war with Connachta, Lugh took him to the Otherworld and healed him.

A Sidhe in the Otherworld took an unpredictable amount of time to bear a child. The Dadga's dalliance with Boann seemed to last a single day, yet nine months had passed and a child was born – Angus Og, “the young son” or “the son of a night.” On other occasions Sidhe women took longer than nine months to re-emerge from the Otherworld bearing newborn children. Aine was raped by the first Earl of Desmond on Samain of 1536 A.D. Not three seasons but three *years* passed before she emerged to give her newborn baby (the future third earl) up to human fostering with his half-brother, the second earl.



Sidhe Abilities

The Sidhe Blood advantage (see p. 79) is the prerequisite for a whole series of advantages not available to normal human PCs. Characters in 100-point campaigns can only have one or two of these Sidhe advantages. In campaigns with more powerful characters, several new advantages are available. For each level of Sidhe Blood purchased, a person can have a maximum of two Sidhe advantages (not including the Sidhe Blood advantage itself).

THE SPEAR FEAT

Dobhar the Fearless has heard of Cuchulain's famous Spear Feat, which involved throwing three spears at three targets, leaping on the first spear in mid-air, jumping from that to the second spear, then to the third, then to the ground to slay his opponent even as the three spears hit their targets. He decides to try to duplicate it.

Dobhar has the Full Coordination/1, Lightfoot, and Perfect Balance Sidhe advantages. He also has Fast-Draw-14 and Spear Throwing-17. The GM decides for playability that the spears take two rounds to reach the target 20 yards away.

In the first round Dobhar succeeds at Fast-Draw rolls and Spear Throwing rolls for each hand, sending two spears toward the targets. In the second round he succeeds at his Fast-Draw and Spear Throwing rolls and sends the third spear toward its target. As soon as it is on its way, he makes a DX roll to leap onto the spear, using Lightfoot and Perfect Balance to stay on it. He succeeds in two more DX rolls to jump to the second and first spears, then another DX roll to land in front of his enemies. He has no defense, but his enemies, who have failed a Fright Check on seeing this Feat, are stunned for five rounds. The spears thud into their intended targets. In the next round he draws his sword and kills his foe.

OTHER FEATS

Many Feats are mentioned in Celtic mythology, although not all are explained. Cuchulain learned the following Feats while training with Skya:

The Feat Of Ropes: Fighting on a tightrope. Requires the Perfect Balance advantage. An Acrobatics roll must be made each round to stay on the rope; all other physical rolls are at -2.

The Apple Feat: Juggling nine apples with never more than one in each hand at a time. A DX-10 roll is required.

Continued on next page . . .

OTHER FEATS (CONTINUED)

The Thunder Feat: No one knows quite what this Feat involved, but when Cuchulain did it he killed 309 men.

The Javelin Feat: Throwing a javelin and then running and catching it before it hits the ground. This requires the Heroic Running (or the Spurt of Speed) advantage and a DX-6 roll to catch the javelin.

The Feat of the Stunning Shot: The ability to down 2d birds with one slingstone. If the birds are flying in close formation, a good shot (Sling-8) makes them crash into one another, plummeting to the ground stunned.

The Breath Feat: Juggling apples just by blowing beneath them. Requires the Bellows Breath advantage and a DX-4 roll.

The Stroke of Precision: The ability to hit a particular body part in combat. Anyone can try to choose a specific hit location in combat (see p. B109), but if a warrior boasts about knowing this Feat he is honor-bound to always go for a difficult stroke.

The Ten-at-a-Blow Feat: Throwing a spear through multiple enemies. Requires Enhanced Strength, some lucky damage rolls (see *Massive Damage: "Blow-Through,"* p. B109, with excess damage carrying through to the next victim in line), and enemies lined up like dominoes.

There are also a number of Feats named but not described in the *Tain*, including: the Leap Over A Poisoned Stroke Feat, the Noble Chariot-Fighter's Crouch Feat, the Feat Of The Chariot Wheel Thrown On High, the Feat Of The Shield Rim, the Snapping Mouth And The Hero's Scream Feat, the Leaping A Chariot Over An Oak Tree Feat, and the Trussing A Warrior On The Points Of Spears Feat. GMs and players are free to make up rules to cover these Feats.

CHARACTER POINTS AND SIDHE BLOOD LEVELS

It is suggested that 100-point characters have no more than SB 1, but this is not a hard-and-fast rule; it depends upon the type of campaign. The table below shows recommended starting point costs for those with different levels of Sidhe Blood:

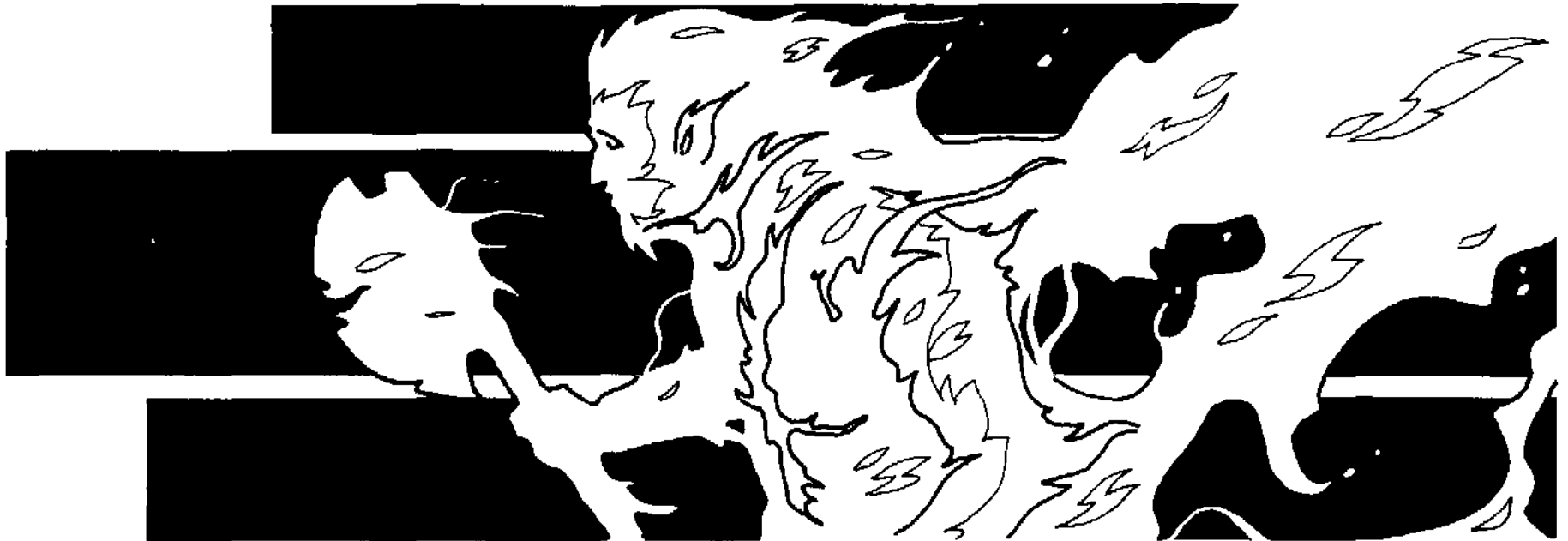
<i>Level of Sidhe Blood</i>	<i>Suggested Character Points</i>
SB 1 (¼ Sidhe)	100
SB 2 (½ Sidhe)	150
SB 3 (¾ Sidhe)	200
SB 4 (1 Sidhe)	250
SB 5 (Full Sidhe)	500 or more

In 100-point campaigns, most full Sidhe should be NPCs much more powerful than the PCs. Wise people steer clear of the Sidhe whenever possible, although the Sidhe are unlikely to leave them alone for long. In a 500-point campaign, all the protagonists can be Sidhe, who can meddle with ordinary humans at will.

Unique Feats

Often, a player wants to combine various Sidhe advantages to create a new heroic Feat never before seen. He should tell the GM exactly what he wants to attempt, then make the necessary rolls. The player should name this Feat, and the GM should write down exactly how it was done so that anyone else with the necessary advantages can attempt the same Feat. These Feats can be made up on the spur of the moment, or can be taught, provided that the person teaching and the person learning have the necessary advantages. (Cuchulain learned many from Skya; see sidebar, pp. 73-74.)

GMs should be flexible when deciding exactly what rolls the player needs to make, and allow for lapses in realism for the sake of a spectacular Feat; Celtic mythology wasn't renowned for its rationality! Enemies faced with new and spectacular Feats should make Fright Checks, with modifiers depending on how spectacular and seemingly impossible the Feat is. GMs should be generous with character points to those inventing new and mind-boggling Feats.





Sidhe Attributes

Axcept for ST, these are nothing more than high levels of normal *GURPS* attributes, bought at normal cost. Before the player goes wild spending points, he should remember that defaults are calculated from a *maximum* attribute of 20 – everything else is ignored.

Enhanced ST is a Sidhe advantage (see p. 76), and Sidhe characters with exceptional strength should purchase their ST using that advantage instead of the regular ST attribute.



Sidhe Advantages

These advantages are *only* available to those with at least one level of the Sidhe Blood advantage. Some require more than one level of Sidhe Blood; if so, this is noted. Sidhe advantages are magical abilities which require no training; if you have them, they work, with no need of a skill roll. They are assumed to be *switchable*: the person can turn them on and off at will, but the default condition (while sleeping, unconscious, etc.) is *on*.

Many of these advantages have extremely high point costs; only characters with high initial point costs are likely to have them. This in effect limits them to those with high levels of Sidhe Blood. Players and GMs who want an especially high-powered Sidhe campaign may want to look at *GURPS Supers* for more ideas.

Alternate Blows 75 points

In combat, alternate blows wound or heal you. The first attack that hits you does normal damage. The next hit, instead of doing damage, *heals* that amount of lost HT. The third blow damages you, the fourth heals you, etc. Players should keep track of whether they are in the damaging or the healing phase, as this advantage takes up where it left off at the end of the last combat.

Amphibious 10 points

You function as well in water as on dry land. You don't need the Swimming skill (p. B49); you automatically swim at your normal Move rate. You must still breathe, though! Take the Gills advantage (p. 76) if you want to breathe underwater.

This is a prerequisite for the Heroic Swimming advantage (see p. 77).

Bellows Breath 25 points

You can exhale a great blast of air, like a bellows, doing 1d hexes knockback damage up to a maximum range of 5 hexes. This advantage was one that Sidhe smiths often had; along with being helpful at the forge, it was the best way to breathe life into a Willful Weapon (see p. 72).

Catfall 10 points

You automatically subtract 5 yards from a fall (this is considered an automatic Acrobatic success; don't check again for it). A successful DX roll *halves* all damage taken from a fall.

Chameleon 7 points/level

You can blend into your surroundings. In any situation where being seen is a factor, you add +2 per level to your Stealth skill if you are perfectly motionless, or +1 if you are moving. This doesn't help you in the dark, or against someone who is listening rather than depending on sight! Unless you are naked, or have some form of magical clothing, your clothing remains normal, cutting your bonus to +1/level when stationary, with no bonus if you are moving.

Damage Resistance 3 points/level

This functions like the Toughness advantage (see p. B23), but can be purchased in as many levels as required. This DR protects against physical attacks and magical attacks with a physical element, such as a Fireball, but not against mental attacks.

Dark Vision see p. B235

You can see in absolute darkness and suffer no skill penalties, regardless of its cause.

Doesn't Sleep

20 points

You never have to sleep. You can ignore all fatigue losses from missed nights of sleep.

Enhanced ST

varies

Prerequisite: SB 3 (p. 79)

Regular *GURPS* ST is designed around a bell curve – an attribute of 20 represents the peak of human condition. When talking about Sidhe, this bell curve isn't appropriate, as there is no real limit as to how strong someone can be; the most powerful Sidhe were virtual gods.

Enhanced ST is *only* available to someone who has at least *three* levels of Sidhe Blood. If the GM doesn't enforce this rule, he has no complaint coming when rules lawyers gleefully point out that it is cheaper to buy ST 19 with Enhanced ST than to buy ST 18 with regular ST!

The cost of Enhanced ST is 60 for ST 15, plus 10 per point of ST from 16-23, then 5 per point of ST from 24-30, then ½ per point of ST from 31+.

Enhanced ST does *not* increase fatigue at the same rate. For every 5 points spent on Enhanced ST, add +1 to fatigue.

For the basic damage done for Strengths above 20, see the *Super-Strength* chart on p. B248, or p. S78.

GM note: This power encourages lots of Sidhe with unusually high ST. If this doesn't fit the campaign, raise the cost or eliminate it entirely!

Strength Cost Table

ST	Cost	ST	Cost
15	60	24	145
16	70	25	150
17	80	26	155
18	90	27	160
19	100	28	165
20	110	29	170
21	120	30	175
22	130	31+	+½ point per point
23	140		

Extra Fatigue

3/point

You can run farther and fight longer than others with the same ST, and you have more power available for magic spells. Extra fatigue goes into a separate pool that can be used to

power extra effort, magical spells, etc. This pool recharges at the same rate as normal fatigue, but only begins to regain points if regular fatigue (based on ST) has been completely cured first.

Extra Hit Points

5/point

You can take more damage than a normal human of your ST. Hit points are initially equal to HT, so a character with HT 14 could buy his hit point total up to 20 for 30 points. This would be written as HT 14/20. Any roll versus HT, Contests of HT, resistances, calculation of unconsciousness and survival rolls, and anything else involving HT would be made against his health of 14; only damage is subtracted from the 20.

Feth Fiada

35 points

Prerequisite: SB 5 (p. 79)

This is a form of invisibility which can only be taken by pure blooded Sidhe. It was a gift given to the Tuatha de Danaan by Manannan after they were forced to retreat into the hollow hills. This advantage is always switchable. When it is on, other Sidhe can see you, and mortals cannot; when it is off, mortals can see you, and other Sidhe cannot.

Full Coordination

50/additional attack

This is the ability to make more than one physical attack per turn, using each limb only once. So, for instance a person could take Full Coordination/1 and attack once each turn with each hand, with no penalty. Physical attacks are limited to punches, kicks, or weapon attacks, not magical attacks.

When someone with Full Coordination makes an All-Out Attack, he may take one type of bonus for each weapon he uses, but all bonuses must be the same. He could not, for instance, swing twice with one weapon while aiming carefully with another! If he chooses to increase the number of attacks, he gets 50% more attacks than normal, rounding down.

Gills

10 points

You have the ability to extract oxygen from water, allowing you to remain submerged indefinitely in normal water. If there is no oxygen to extract, you suffocate like any normal person.

You can still breathe normally out of water.



Hard to Kill

5 points/level

You are incredibly difficult to kill. Each level of this advantage confers a +1 on all HT rolls made for survival. If you miss your normal HT roll, but make it with your Hard to Kill bonus added in, you *appear* dead (a successful Diagnosis roll reveals signs of life), but you “come to” in the normal hour per point of negative HT.

Hawk Eyes

6 points/level

You can “zoom in” with your eyes, allowing you to outperform the most farsighted eagle! Each level doubles your magnification factor. The horizon is normally (on flat ground) three miles away – beyond that, the curvature of the Earth blocks your sight.

Heroic Climbing

3 points/level

Each level of Heroic Climbing adds 1 to your Move when climbing.



Heroic Running

20 points/level

Each level of Heroic Running doubles your Move *when you are running in a relatively straight line*. Your combat Move and Dodge are unaffected, but anyone targeting you with a missile subtracts a speed modifier from his skill roll *if you are running!* Figure turning radius as for Flight (p. B139); in many cases it's best to stop running for a turn, change directions, and start running again!

When used with Extra Fatigue, a character could, like Maeve's messenger MacRoth, “travel Eriu in a day.”

A limited version of this advantage, the Spurt of Speed, allows all the same effects, but for no longer than ½ HT rounds per day, at a cost of only 5 points/level.

Heroic Swimming

10 points/level

Prerequisite: Amphibious (p. 75)

Every level of Heroic Swimming doubles your swimming speed, just as Heroic Running increases your running speed.

Increased Speed

25 points/level

You can really move! Your Basic Speed increases by 1 for each level, which also raises your Move and Dodge.

Lightfooted

20 points

You can make your body and the equipment you are carrying effectively weightless, so that you can walk or stand on things that would not normally hold your weight. Equipment you are carrying becomes almost weightless with regard to the rest of the world; it still weighs just as much to you, and your Move isn't altered. You are not totally weightless, but have just enough weight to remain on the floor so that you can walk normally. You could use Lightfooted to walk on thin ice, or to climb in the branches of a tree which would not hold your normal weight. Falling from the tree however, you have the same effect as normal – don't expect to flutter down like an autumn leaf!

Monstrosity

30 + 5 points/-1

This advantage can only be taken by Fomor or those whose ancestors were Fomor. It is *switchable*. When you want to be, you are more hideous than hideous; you are so horrible-looking that viewers must make a Fright Check when they see you. Each level of Monstrosity bought gives an extra -1 to the Fright Check. Exactly what your monstrosity consists of is irrelevant – a description is sufficient. Fright Checks need not be made if people are expecting you to change.

Passive Defense

25 points/level up to 6

Due to a “sixth sense” about upcoming attacks, it is harder to hit you. Each level adds 1 to your PD, up to PD 6. This adds to the PD of any armor you are wearing.

Perfect Balance

15 points

You have no problem keeping your footing, no matter how narrow the walking surface, under normal conditions. You can walk on tightropes, ledges, tree limbs, or anything else without having to make a DX roll. If the surface is wet, slippery, or otherwise unstable, you get a +6 on all rolls to keep your feet. In combat you receive a +4 to your DX rolls to keep your feet or to avoid being knocked down. Perfect Balance adds +1 to your Acrobatics skill.

Recovery

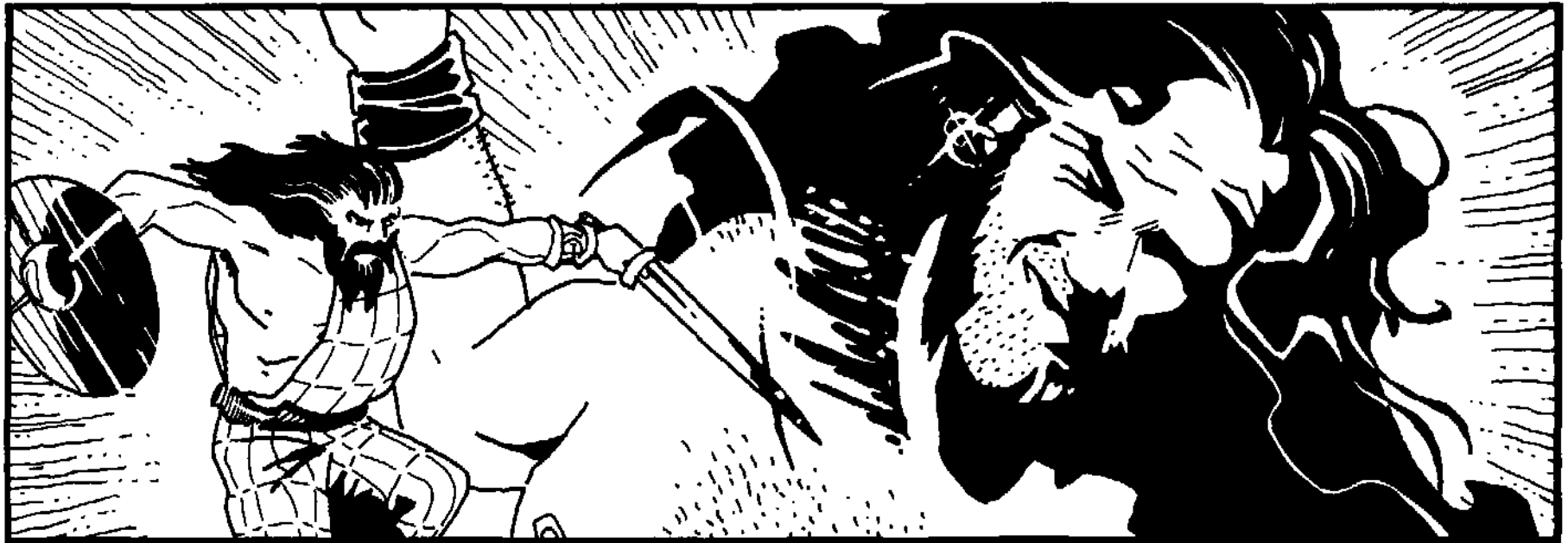
10 points

You recover from unconsciousness very quickly. Instead of staying unconscious for *hours*, your recovery time is measured in *minutes* (see p. B129). In any situation where unconsciousness is measured in minutes, you reawaken in *seconds*.

Reduced Sleep

10 points

Your body operates efficiently without much sleep. All fatigue costs from missed sleep (see sidebar, p. B134) accumulate weekly rather than daily – so one week without sleep costs you 5 fatigue rather than 35.



Regeneration 10/25/50/100 points

You recover from damage much more quickly than normal people. This does *not* allow you to regrow lost limbs (but see *Regrowth*, below). You automatically have the Rapid Healing advantage (p. B22) at no extra cost. The cost of this advantage depends on the speed of regeneration:

Slow Regeneration: You recover 1 HT every 12 hours. 10 points.

Regular Regeneration: You recover 1 HT (or hit point) per hour. 25 points.

Fast Regeneration: You recover from injury almost immediately, regaining 1 HT per minute. 50 points.

Instant Regeneration: You heal almost as quickly as you are damaged, at the rate of 1 HT per turn. 100 points.

Regrowth 40 points

You can regrow lost limbs! A lost finger, ear, or toe regrows in 1d weeks, a lost hand or foot in 1d+1 months, and a lost eye, arm, or leg in 2d+2 months.

Riastradh (Battle frenzy) varies

You must change from your normal human form to a Sidhe form before you can use any of your Sidhe powers. Your mundane form can be built on a maximum of 100 points (or whatever is normal for the campaign). All the advantages and skills that you possess in your mundane form are available in your transformed state as well. Earned character points can be spent to improve either your mundane or your Sidhe form. Your mundane form is indistinguishable from a normal human; your Sidhe form, however, has powers which your mundane self may not have. Your appearance may also be completely different; Cuchulain gained 2 levels of Monstrosity when he transformed and anyone seeing him change had to make a Fright Check.

There are five types of *riastradh*, each with its own point cost:

A) You can switch instantly from either form to the other (by saying a magic word, giving your war cry, etc.). This is a 15-point advantage, useful primarily because it allows a fantastically quick change of identity.

B) The transformation takes two seconds for each -1 point reduction of the 15-point standard cost, with a minimum cost

of 5 points. The transformation can take longer than 20 seconds, but the cost is not reduced below 5.

C) You can switch instantly from one form to another, but can only change to Sidhe form a limited number of times per day. The costs are as follows:

1 per day	9 points	5 or 6 per day	13 points
2 per day	10 points	7 or more per day	15 points
3 or 4 per day	12 points		

Each *hour* (or fraction thereof) that you are in Sidhe form constitutes one use.

D) The transformation isn't instant, *and* you have a limited number of transformations per day. Subtract 1 point from the cost in C) for every two seconds of the transformation, to a minimum cost of 5 points.

E) The transformation is any one of the above, with the added modifier that the actual change is frightening or awe-inspiring (the character becomes hideously ugly or astonishingly beautiful during the change). Anyone seeing the *riastradh* take place must make a Fright Check (which may be modified if the witness is familiar with the change). This costs an extra 10 points.

Salmon Leap 10 points/level

Each level of Salmon Leap doubles the distance and height you can leap. Additionally, if you fall a distance less than or equal to your maximum high jump (p. B88), you take no damage. This can be increased by 5 yards with a successful Acrobatics roll (p. B131).

Your Move during a Salmon Leap is equal to 20% of your maximum standing long jump, with a minimum of 10 yards. If your maximum jump is 75 yards, your Move is 15 in any jump.

You can jump at a foe in order to slam him; figure the slam at your maximum jump speed. You don't need to make a separate roll to jump accurately.

A Salmon Leap is normally fairly graceful but uncomplicated. If you wish to add spectacular tumbles and twists, make an Acrobatics roll; a failed roll won't matter, but a successful roll does wonders for your Reputation, and may even mentally stun the enemy!

Shadow Form

50 points

You can become a two-dimensional shadow. You slip along walls or floors at your normal Move; you cannot walk through three-dimensional space, but must slide along an object. You can slide through the smallest crack (as long as it is long enough for you to fit your shoulders through). You can defy gravity, creeping up walls and onto ceilings at half your normal Move. You may not carry normal items or affect them in any way.

Physical attacks do half damage to you in this form. Magical attacks do normal damage, except for light-based attacks, which do 50% extra damage. Mental attacks do normal damage. You can use any of your Sidhe abilities in this form but cannot perform any purely physical attacks or actions.

Shrinking

varies

You can decrease your size at will. Your minimum size depends on how many levels of Shrinking you purchase. Figure your size as normal, then each level of Shrinking halves it. E.g., $\frac{1}{2}$ normal at level 1, $\frac{1}{4}$ normal at level 2, $\frac{1}{8}$ normal at level 3, $\frac{1}{16}$ normal at level 4, $\frac{1}{32}$ at level 5, etc. Thus it would take an average (5'10") man 6 levels of Shrinking ($\frac{1}{64}$) to reduce his size to 1".

When you shrink you cannot carry any equipment and all your clothes fall off. However, there's nothing to stop you from carrying a set of special small clothes, armor, and weapons to use when shrunk.

Movement is reduced proportionately: punches and weapon attacks (using sized-down weapons) do proportionately less damage; magical attacks from a shrunken assailant are resisted at +1 per level of Shrinking that the attacker is using. DR and hit points (not HT!) are reduced proportionately as well.

Shrinking had many uses and was not uncommon among the Sidhe. An unusual and little-understood side effect of this ability was that it could become permanent after extensive use.



If you remain shrunk for more than 24 hours, you must make a Will roll (-1 for every level of Shrinking) to restore yourself to full size. If you fail, you remain permanently in your shrunken state. This has led to some Sidhe becoming quite small and, because of the loss of abilities suffered when shrunk, less powerful. Fears have been expressed that the whole Sidhe race may some day become tiny and unable to affect the affairs of humans except in small spiteful ways.

The cost of Shrinking depends on the number of levels bought. If a person begins play permanently shrunk, then Shrinking is a disadvantage for him, giving him the listed number of disadvantage points. If he buys normal Shrinking and only becomes permanently shrunk during play, he doesn't get a refund of the points spent on Shrinking, nor does he gain the disadvantage points.

Level	Cost	Permanent (Disadvantage)
1	20	-15
2	40	-20
3	60	-30
4	80	-40
5	100	-60
6	200	-80
7+	+100 per level	-100 (doesn't increase)

Sidhe Blood 10 points/level up to 5 levels

The blood of the Sidhe runs in your veins, giving you abilities which normal humans cannot have. At least 1 level of Sidhe Blood is required as a prerequisite for any other Sidhe advantage. Sidhe characters can have a maximum of two Sidhe advantages for each level of Sidhe Blood purchased.

Sidhe Blood is abbreviated "SB," and different levels as SB 1, SB 2, etc. The levels mean:

SB 1: $\frac{1}{16}$ Sidhe; one of your great-great-grandparents was a Sidhe.

SB 2: $\frac{1}{8}$ Sidhe; one of your great-grandparents was a Sidhe.

SB 3: $\frac{1}{4}$ Sidhe; one of your grandparents was a Sidhe.

SB 4: $\frac{1}{2}$ Sidhe; one of your parents was a Sidhe. At this level you may take the Wild Mana Generator advantage, if you wish.

SB 5: Sidhe. At this level you are a full Sidhe and must take all the racial advantages mentioned on p. 70.

Silence

5 points/level

You can move and breathe noiselessly, giving you +2 per level to your Stealth skill if you are perfectly motionless, or +1 if you are moving (even in armor). These bonuses help you only in the dark, or against someone who is listening rather than depending on sight.

Speak with Animals 15/12/10/8 points

This allows you to carry on a conversation with any land animal (including birds, reptiles, and insects). How much information you can gain from an animal depends on its IQ and reaction roll, and the GM. Add +2 to the reaction roll if you offer food while you talk. In general, insects and other small creatures won't convey much more than emotions such as hunger or fear,

while animals like chimpanzees or cats could have a reasonably intelligent discussion. It takes one minute to ask one question and get one answer, assuming the animal decides to speak to you. The GM may require a reaction roll.

This advantage costs less if the type of animal you can talk to is limited: it costs 12 points for one class (e.g., only mammals, only birds), 10 points for one family (e.g., the feline family), or 8 for one species (e.g., house cats only). This can be even lower for animals which rarely appear in the game, at the GM's discretion; "only aardvarks" in pre-Christian Eriu is a quirk, or even a delusion!

Speak with Fish 10/8/6/4 points

Just like Speak with Animals, but you can converse with aquatic creatures. This includes whales, dolphins, squid, frogs, lobsters, and other creatures that live in the water.

Speak with Plants 15 Points

This allows you to determine the most basic emotions of a plant. Large trees may have higher intelligence than the average ivy, at the GM's whim. A plant might know how recently it was watered, or walked on, or something else with direct relevance to its well-being, but would be unable to relate an overheard conversation. Normal plants always cooperate, within the limits of their ability. A plant or tree from the Otherworld is a different matter entirely . . .



Speak Underwater 8 points

You have the ability to make yourself understood, and to understand others, while underwater.

Spearman's Invulnerability 30 points

You believe that you are protected in battle, as long as you do not wear any clothing. Before you begin to fight, you must remove all clothing, although you may wear torcs and (small) arm-rings. As soon as the battle starts, you make a Will roll to see whether you believe in your own invulnerability. If you succeed, you gain PD 4 and DR 6 all over. Each time damage gets through your magical defense, you make another Will roll to see whether your belief remains strong enough; if you fail the roll, you lose your magical protection. You also make a Will roll after any Fright Check.

Toad Eyes 10 points

Your eyeballs are covered by a transparent lens. This allows you to see normally under water, and helps protect your eyes from sand, acid, and so on. Any time you are hit in the eyes with a gaseous or liquid attack, the lens provides your eyes, only, PD 2. DR 1. The lens also adds +3 to all HT rolls concerned with eye damage, and can be opened and closed just like an eyelid.

Unaging 15 points

You will never grow old. Your age is fixed at any point you choose and never changes. You do not have to make any Aging rolls. A person with this advantage cannot get any points by taking the Age disadvantage.

Voices on the Wind 10 points/level

The voices of others speaking come to you on the wind. You can "zoom in" on a particular person or area, and can filter out background noise from the desired sounds.

The first level allows you to hear conversations up to ¼ mile away, and each level after that doubles the distance you can hear (½ mile, 1 mile, 2 miles, 4 miles, etc.). It does not work if the weather is calm, and a normal Hearing roll is required if the person you are trying to listen to is whispering.

Walk on Air 20 points

Air, smoke, and other gases are like solid ground beneath your feet, allowing you to walk up and down "invisible stairs" at your normal Move. This won't work in a vacuum – there has to be *some* kind of air present. If you get knocked down or slip, you fall! You may attempt one DX roll per turn of falling: if you make any successful roll, you stop in thin air, unharmed; but if you hit the ground, you take full damage from the fall (see p. B130). There are no special encumbrance restrictions on carried equipment.

Walk on Liquid 15 points

You can walk on the surface of any liquid as if it were solid ground. This doesn't protect you from any damage that you would normally take from coming into contact with the stuff, though (so you can't walk across volcanic lava or boiling acid without taking damage). Your Move is normal, and there are no special limitations on encumbrance.

Wild Mana Generator 50 points

Prerequisite: SB 4 (p. 79)

You are the center of a wild-mana area with a radius of three hexes. You (and anyone else standing within the area) can cast any spell in only one second, and using only 1 energy point, whatever the normal point cost for that spell. All spell successes are critical successes, and all failures are critical failures. This advantage is not switchable, but is on all the time. (See *Wild Mana Areas in Practice*, p. 93.)

5 Magic





CAESAR'S VIEW OF THE DRUIDS

Diodorus wrote of the druids that "they are not a talkative people, and are fond of expressing themselves in enigmas." Julius Caesar spent a lot of time fighting the Celts of Britain and Gaul, and he came to know at least one druid, Diviacus. In the passage below one sees Caesar struggling with concepts he only partly understood, which have been translated into Latin and explained to him. But this is the clearest view of the druids we have, and the *only* description of them by a contemporary.

The word translated here as "gesas" is in Latin "religiones" which means something like superstitions, religious scruples, or taboos. The word translated here as "universe" ("mundi") may in this context mean "The Otherworld."

"The druids are concerned with affairs of the gods, the performance of sacrifices, public and private, and the understanding of gesas. A great number of young people come to them for instruction. They are held in high honor. It is the druids who decide almost all the disputes, public and private; and if any crime has been committed, or any murder done, or if there is any dispute about succession or boundaries, they decide it, determining awards and punishments. Any person or tribe who refuses to abide by their decision is excluded from sacrifice.

"Report says that they learn a great number of verses, and some persons remain in training for 20 years. And they think it wrong to commit these utterances to writing, although in other matters they make use of Greek letters. I believe that they have adopted this practice because they do not wish this knowledge to become common property, and because they do not wish those who accept their way of life to rely on writing and so neglect the cultivation of memory.

"The cardinal doctrine which they seek to teach is that souls do not die, but after death they pass to another; and they hold this belief to be a great incentive to bravery, once the fear of dying is abandoned. Besides this they have many disputations concerning the stars and their movement, the size of the universe and the place of this world within it, the affairs of the natural world, the strength and powers of the immortal gods. And this is what they teach to the young people."

— Julius Caesar

"Cuchulain passed one day near where the druid Cathbad was teaching certain of his pupils the art of divination and augury. One of them asked Cathbad for what kind of enterprise the day would be favorable; and Cathbad, having worked a spell of divination, said: 'The youth who should take up arms on this day would become of all men in Erin the most famous for great deeds, yet will his life be short and fleeting'."

— T.W. Rolleston

The Celtic world was steeped in magic. Even in a realistic campaign, or one without overt magic, any Celts will *believe* in the magical nature of the world. And chief among the believers in the mystical secrets of the Celtic world were the druids.



The Druids

HOW THE WORLD SAW THE DRUIDS

The word "druid" may have meant "knower of trees." Used loosely, it meant any member of the Druidic Order. Used technically, it referred to the highest rank of that order, and is capitalized here. The Druidic Order was found everywhere in Celtic life. No king's hall was without at least one druid, to prophesy, give judgments, and cast the occasional spell. Druids received a great deal of respect from everyone — in any company they had the right to speak first on any issue and were the equals of kings.

They lived simply, on hospitality, some living in one place while others roamed constantly. It was unusual for druids to settle down and rule kingdoms themselves, even when they were of the royal kin. Druids could be male or female, young or old, although the need for seven years of study before being initiated as a member of the order meant they couldn't be very young.

Every Celt agreed that druids were wise, and that they were hard to understand. Most non-druids didn't understand druids, and didn't care to; druids meddled with things best left alone, most thought.

Druids acted as priests, poets, diviners, teachers, judges, and wizards, all as part of their duties to the community. Druids did not have the monopoly on poetry, magic, judgment, or learning law. There were many members of the *filid*, or learned class (see p. 14), who were not members of the Druidic Order.

HOW THE DRUIDS SAW THE WORLD

What separated the druids from other learned men was "tree-knowledge," the method they used to learn.

One duty of every druid was to teach children the beginning of this method. Druids assessed all children in their communities and selected those who had an aptitude for tree-knowledge as recruits.

Tree-knowledge was firstly the knowledge of the Ogham alphabet, the naming and ordering of the trees. Secondly, it was a way of learning through riddles, a way in which the riddles were inseparable from the answers. One of the most characteristic peculiarities of druids was their inability to answer a straight



question with anything but a riddling and mysterious answer. The surviving druidic poems seem nonsensical, but they were constructed to be clues to be understood by someone with the right cast of mind. The ability to unriddle conundrums was what the druids sought in their pupils. Magical Aptitude was of secondary importance, for although magic was one of the branches of the tree, it was the tree itself that was important.

There was no druid school or college. The druids taught wherever they were, sometimes withdrawing for a while with promising pupils. They taught by disputation and by riddles, giving pupils the riddle or clue they needed to come to an answer. When the students had an answer, the druids helped them see how that answer led to the next riddle. Tree-knowledge was less a body of knowledge than a method of discovering knowledge by means of unriddling the mysterious.

Initiates began by learning the answers to mysteries that were already known, and by memorizing vast amounts of poetry and history (an important task in a culture with few written records). They moved on to composing poetry and to discovering new knowledge, bringing this knowledge back to other druids in the form of the questions that led them to the answers. Druids considered a piece of knowledge not just the specific facts but everything that the seeker thought in discovering it: all the blind alleys he considered and dismissed were part of the process of learning.

Druids saw the world, even things that would seem self-evident to anyone else, as something mysterious, knowable but inexplicable. They were great travelers, and in many ways they wove the Celtic world together, keeping the culture consistent and coherent everywhere.

Druids as Judges

Druids used their roundabout method when asked to judge cases, considering the rights and the wrongs of the case as a riddle and the judgment as the best answer. Druidic rulings were famed for their justice and impartiality. It was certain that a druid would not give a judgment that would win him favor, and even if the solution was unorthodox at least it wasn't biased.

The Druid's Ban

The druids could put someone, or some group of people, under their ban. This meant that they were cut off from community and forbidden access to religion. People under the *Glam Dicin*, or Druid's Ban, could be refused hospitality; their honor prices were forfeited, so they couldn't bring grievances to court or enter into binding contracts – the word *dicin* means "headless." In practice it was threatened only occasionally and applied only in extreme cases.



DRUIDS IN THE CAMPAIGN

No Celtic campaign can get far without coming across druids in one of their many roles. Druids can provide magical assistance, judge between heroes and their enemies, and foreshadow events. They should never be predictable and should always be peculiar.

Characters in the Druidic Order should never rise higher than Ollave – full Druids are so potentially powerful and so weird that they would unbalance any campaign. It should always be remembered that while Druids can do whatever they want to, what they want to do is puzzle out riddles. Most full Druids would rather spend their time thinking; they do not appreciate interruptions. If they must be interrupted, then they like to be presented with a puzzle, rather than a request for help. A clever Bard or even warrior could trick a Druid into doing what he wanted by presenting the request in the form of a puzzle, the answer to which was doing what the questioner wanted.

Initiates, Bards, and Ollaves are quite suitable as PCs. They often move from place to place, learning new things. They could also be interested in traveling companions to protect them on the way, or just to learn about different kinds of people. An Initiate in his last year before the Bard ordeal might be an especially good choice of character.

THE BARD ORDEAL

At sunset, a candidate for Bardhood was made to lie in a stone coffin filled with cold water with only his nose sticking out. Stones were put on his chest. Just before the lid was closed, he was given the subject, meter, and length for an original poem. When the lid was removed at dawn, survivors rose and performed their poems, accompanying themselves on a harp. The poem was judged on its own merits and on how much the initiate was believed to have learned from his Ordeal. Unsuccessful candidates were allowed to try again after another year of training.

In game terms, an initiate makes a HT roll every hour of the seven hours he remains in the coffin. On a failed roll he loses a hit point. If he succeeds in his HT rolls, he must also roll against IQ to avoid falling asleep. Anyone with fear of enclosed spaces, fear of the dark, or fear of drowning must make a Fright Check to get in the coffin at the beginning, and another at -4 half-way through the ordeal. If he falls asleep or unconscious then his survival is at the GM's discretion. He must also make a Poetry roll and a Musical Instrument roll (both at -2) to successfully compose the poem and its accompaniment. He must make a Bard roll to remember the poem and music, and another (at a penalty equal to any lost hit points) to successfully perform it while cold and wet.

THE OLLAVE ORDEAL

A Bard ready to become an Ollave had training in divination and religious mysteries, but until he had undergone his ordeal he wasn't considered worthy to act as a priest. Unlike the Bard ordeal this was a strictly religious affair, and there were no tests at the end of it. A bull was killed, and the candidate had to eat some of its flesh and drink some of its blood. Then he was sewn up in the skin of the bull and slept a night there. The gods sent him dreams in which he was tested, and if he was worthy he awoke knowing (but unable to explain) a religious truth. It was up to the candidate to say whether or not he had passed his ordeal. Thereafter, he was an Ollave, and could act as a priest.

Continued on next page . . .

On major feast days the presiding druid scanned the crowd and publicly expelled any people known to be under the Ban. Druids also gave the names of anyone banned from their communities to other druids, who remembered and passed on the lists. It was possible for someone who left a community under the Ban to live somewhere else for a time, but eventually his name would catch up with him. Some astute druids claimed to be able to tell if an individual was under the Ban just by looking at them. This wasn't magic but the person's guilt giving him away by his inability to meet the druid's eyes. Most Celts reacted at -3 to people under the Ban; this is a good basis for a Reputation disadvantage.



BARD, OLLAVE, DRUID

The three degrees of the Druidic Order were, from lowest to highest, Bard, Ollave, and Druid. Below them came initiates. Few people outside the Order realized that there were degrees: members were all simply considered druids by outsiders. What rank someone had attained was known or divulged only to other druids. There was a joke among initiates: "When you become hard to understand, they make you a Bard. When you become so hard to understand that only Druids can understand you, they make you an Ollave. And when you get to the point where nobody can understand you at all, they make you a Druid!"

Initiates

Initiates were people chosen for training but not yet members of the Order. Training lasted seven years, and culminated in the Bard ordeal. Initiates learned from different members of the Order and also traveled with them, seeing different parts of the world.

Bard

A Bard must have undergone a seven-year course of learning and one ordeal to become a member of the Order. Bards knew a lot of poetry and some magic. They taught children, and could choose to act as judges if asked. Bards (and all other members of the Order) were entitled to wear seven colors in their clothing and to shave the tops of their heads in the "Celtic tonsure": a broad swath back from the temples, allowing the sides to grow long.

Bards were considered capable of learning from the world. But they stood in need of occasional direction and secret teaching concerning divination, religious mysteries and magic from a mentor of higher rank, if they hoped to progress within the Order. Very few people, having undergone the ordeal to become Bards, were content to remain at that level.

Ollave

The second rank, Ollave (Ollamdh, "priest"), was as high as most aspirants cared to rise in the Order. An Ollave had studied for a total of 14 years, and had passed through two ordeals. Ollaves had studied religious mysteries and were expected to act as priests, standing between the community and the divine. They were entitled to act as diviners, interpreting omens and detecting gesas. If asked, an Ollave told people for what the day or the hour would be lucky – more a matter of using their knowledge to predict weather and the like than actual prophecy. They knew more magic than Bards, although this might only be theoretical knowledge. They knew unbelievable amounts of poetry.

Ollaves often chose to specialize in one area of knowledge: religion, judging, divination, teaching, or learning about nature. No matter what specialty an Ollave chose, he approached his study as a search for answers to puzzles; a judge was interested in "the puzzle of guilt or innocence," a doctor in "the puzzles of illness and injury," and a mage in "the arcane puzzle of magic."

Ollaves were not in training to become Druids, because they were considered to have absorbed all the general knowledge necessary. They might study for a while with a particular Druid who was extremely knowledgeable about a particular subject that interested them, but they didn't have mentors.

Druids

At the end of every seven years, all Ollaves and Druids gathered at some holy place where they presented their new discoveries in the form of poems. Ollaves judged especially wise and worthy at these conclaves rose (without an ordeal) to the rank of full Druid. The minimum length of time it took to become a Druid was 21 years, but most weren't granted the title until they were very old, and many died still at the rank of Ollave.

What druids wanted was knowledge, so striving to become a Bard or an Ollave was honorable; an honest thirst for more knowledge. It was considered reprehensible to *seek* to become a Druid; it should be an honor bestowed on an Ollave unexpectedly.

Druids didn't have more duties or responsibilities than Ollaves, but they were more respected within the Order. Outside the Order the qualification was not known, and respect increased with age, so a Druid in his forties might be respected less than an Ollave in his sixties. Only full Druids knew Mixed Tree spells.

THE OLLAVE ORDEAL (CONTINUED)

GMs may wish to run the dream sequence as a one-on-one adventure, or to write out what the candidate dreams and give it to the player. Candidates should be left in no doubt if the gods find them unworthy. Successful candidates make an Augury roll on waking to see if they understood the revelation found in their dreams. The GM should tell players of failed candidates that they are full of doubts as to their worthiness, but that the ordeal may be retaken after a year. If they choose to go ahead and proclaim themselves Ollaves against the will of the gods, then they gain a suitable 15-point gesa of the GM's choice.

YNYS MÔN

Ynys Môn was the holiest place in the Celtic world and a great place of pilgrimage for druids. There were a number of holy groves here, including one which held a complete circle of magic trees all over 100 years in age. The island was called both the heart and the mother of Prydain; it was said that if it should ever fall, then the heart would go out of the Celtic world.

Many druids came here to study and meditate, and some lived here permanently. Math maintained a hostel on Ynys Môn where visitors can live on his hospitality. Anyone was permitted to come to the island but the druids made sure that nobody harmed the groves.



GESA IDEAS

These are just indications; GMs and players are encouraged to think up their own, unique gesas.

Clothes

- 5 Must never remove boots
- 5 Must never remove helmet
- 5 Must keep head bare
- 10 Must keep feet bare

Strangers

- 10 Must not give name to strangers
- 10 Must ignore strangers until they touch him
- 10 Must insult strangers
- 15 Must attack strangers

Food

- 5 Must not eat pig
- 5 Must eat with door open
- 5 Must not drink alcohol alone
- 10 Must not eat when others are present
- 10 Must not eat alone
- 15 Must not drink anything alone

Death

(Note: these will not prevent injury.)

- +5 Can only be killed by a spear
- +5 Can only be killed on a rainy day
- +10 Can only be killed in the sunshine
(Point costs may be different in other climates.)
- +10 Can only be killed by a man in red armor
- +10 Cannot be killed by sharp metal
- +15 Cannot be killed by a man
- +15 Can only be killed with own sword while in bed with own wife
- +25 Can only be killed out of doors on a Tuesday by someone wearing red boots
- +30 Can only be killed halfway up a hill during a thunderstorm by a naked man bearing a 40-foot spear made of solid gold. (A GM who wants to worry a PC with this gesa should note that on any stormy day the person should often glimpse naked men who always turn out to be about to erect a maypole, or to have a gold-plated spear, or a bronze one!)



GESAS

The gesa (sometimes spelled geas, geis, or geasa) was one of the central ideas of Celtic life, not to be confused with the Geas spells in *GURPS Magic*.

Gesas were magical limitations or compulsions set by fate or powerful personalities – individual taboos. Possession of a gesa was a sign of being marked out by destiny, and was often what distinguished a hero from an ordinary person. A gesa was not like a vow, which could be broken at the expense of honor; death or disaster would inevitably follow the breaking of a gesa. They were not impossible to abide by, but they could make life difficult.

Most gesas were usually formulated as “Must” or “Must not,” ranging from the apparently harmless, “Must not eat swan,” to the dangerous, “Must not draw a sword without drawing blood.” Even the simplest gesa could cause unlimited trouble. Some create Odious Personal Habits (e.g., Must sleep with door open), while others are 40-point disadvantages in their own right (e.g., Must kill a man every day) Other gesas governed the conditions under which one could be killed.

The GM, and the enemies of the party, can use even the most harmless gesas against heroes, as in the story of Fergus Mac Roy. Fergus’ gesa was that he could never refuse a drink. He promised to escort Noisi and Deirdre safely to Connor but was waylaid and invited for a drink. He therefore had to let them go on alone. This led to their deaths and his exile.

SETTING A GESA

While many gesas were inborn, some were set on heroes by other Celts. Setting a gesa wasn’t like casting a spell, nor did it require Magical Aptitude. Every Celt had the ability to give gesas, but it wasn’t done lightly. Some



people gave *geas* in anger and, although they later were sorry, the *geas* couldn't be taken back. Still, *geas* placed by other people were more likely to have time limits or fulfillment conditions than those placed by fate.

Geas were set by telling the person concerned that a *gesa* was being placed on him. The victim had to be present, and had to be named or pointed at. *Geas* could be placed on children still in the womb, in which case the mother had to be present. Even unborn generations could receive *geas*, if the current generation were present. It was not possible to place a *gesa* on oneself.

In bestowing a *gesa* 1 point of HT was permanently lost by the giver, and this HT wasn't regained even if the *gesa* worked its term. If a PC sets a *gesa* on someone, the GM should not allow the point of HT to be bought back in the normal way: either the point-cost for regaining it should be doubled, or the GM should insist that permanent means permanent.

FULFILLING A GESA

Some *geas* were set for specific time periods: a year, 900 years, and so on. When the time was up these *geas* vanished. Others were set until a certain thing should come to pass: Until you enter the House of Finn, Until you see the moon rise from the Paps of Anu on Samain, or Until you bring the cauldron of the Dagda to Emain Macha (which could either be three separate *geas*, or three clauses of a long one). Other *geas* were very hard to fulfill, although sometimes the giver could be tricked into removing them (see sidebar, this page).

If the *gesa* is fulfilled, player characters should buy off the disadvantage in the normal way. By and large, people should not be allowed to remove *geas* unless they cleverly trap someone into doing it for them within play.

DEFYING A GESA

If someone defied a *gesa* then calamity followed. It wasn't always the death of the bearer, but it *was* something catastrophic, sometimes something that looked worse than death, arising as an obvious result of the *gesa*. Sometimes the only way forward was to break a *gesa*, and this was one of the central themes of Irish mythology. Circumstances could be arranged so that whether or not the *gesa* was broken, disaster would follow, and then the choice was very hard for the *gesa*'s bearer.

CIRCUMVENTING GESAS

Getting around a *gesa* was possible, and sometimes even essential. Many *geas* had loopholes, especially those set by people and not by fate. The most elaborate *geas* were sometimes the easiest to get around, as in the story of Dermot. He put a *gesa* on Grania that she must not come to him in the day or in the night, naked or clothed, walking or riding. She came to him at twilight with one foot on the back of a goat and one on the ground, half-dressed. Circumventing a *gesa* could be as simple as going the long way around to avoid meeting someone who was sure to offer you a drink you could not refuse.

The GM should allow this sort of thing to a degree, but circumstances can be made as unlikely as necessary to invoke a *gesa* if this goes on too long. For example, going the long way around can backfire if the person to be avoided has gone that way, too.



LLEW LLAW GYFFES' GESAS

Gwydion fostered a child whom his sister Arianrhod bore in disgrace (see *The Fourth Branch*, p. 44). When Gwydion brought him to Arianrhod she was so angry that she set a *gesa* on the child that he would never have a name unless she gave him one. In disguise, Gwydion tricked her into mentioning the disguised boy by his side – she called him Llew Llaw Gyffes, “the blond with the clever hands,” and he had a name.

Arianrhod then set a *gesa* on the boy that he should never bear weapons until she set them in his hands. Again disguised, they came to her castle, setting an illusion outside so that it looked as if it were under attack. Arianrhod rushed for weapons and pressed them into everyone's hands, fulfilling another *gesa*.

Arianrhod set a final *gesa* on poor Llew, that he should never have a woman to be his wife. Gwydion and Math ap Mathonwy circumvented this *gesa* too, making Llew a wife out of flowers, so that she was not a proper woman.

Llew also had a “good” *gesa*; he could only be killed while standing over water under a thatched roof with no walls, one foot on a goat, during a religious service, with a spear that took a year to make. Such circumstances were unlikely to occur unless someone tricked him into showing her just how he could be killed so that she could help him avoid it in future . . .

Connla and Cuchulain

Cuchulain conceived a son with the warrior maiden Ayfa and then left her to marry Emer. He set *geas* on his unborn son that he should never give his name, never make way for a warrior, and never refuse a fight. Connla grew up, dutifully came to Emain Macha seeking his father, refused to say who he was, then couldn't refuse a fight. Cuchulain killed him.



MAGIC ITEMS IN THE CAMPAIGN

Many different kinds of magic items were available in the Celtic world. Most were unique, individual objects, each of which would be named and would have a fame of its own (such as Manannan's self-steering boat *Ocean-Sweeper* and his armor-proof sword *Answerer*). None were mass-produced or common.

Druid Wands (see p. 89) were pieces of wood with one spell bound into each. The spell was cast by striking someone or something with the wood.

Snakestones (see p. 90) were blue beads which cured snakebite and provided some protection against Otherworldly entities. These were extremely rare outside of Damnar.

Tathlums (see p. 91) were slingstones made of the brains of one's enemies. Tathlums varied in magical power; creating the most powerful required not only the brains of a mighty warrior, but a quest for a number of arcane materials.

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THE GOOD GESA

A "good" gesa was not the same as a "harmless" gesa. A good gesa was one which benefited the bearer, in particular if he could only be killed in a certain way. This meant that he was sure that he wouldn't die in any other way, although nothing prevented him from being badly injured if he were reckless. Good gesas were inborn and could neither be given nor changed.

This type of a gesa is an advantage, with a point-cost that varies depending on how specific the circumstances are. "Can only be killed out of doors" is a 5-point advantage since the outdoors was common. "Can only be killed on a doorstep" is a 10-point advantage. "Can only be killed by a door" is a 15-point advantage (and note the ambiguous use of the word "by"; the bearer will never know whether he'll die while *near* a door or whether the door itself will cause his death). "Can only be killed by a door while wearing green armor" is a 20-point advantage, since the armor is easily avoided. Truly unlikely deaths, such as Dermot's gesa, "Can only be killed by an earless green boar," can cost as much as 30 points. Death gesas are at the GM's discretion and may not be changed after character generation.

This advantage means that HT rolls to avoid death are all automatic successes – except in that special circumstance.

A death gesa can be viewed as a very specific kind of useless foreknowledge: this *is* how the person will die, and nothing he can do can change that. When a druid told Emperor Tiberius that he would die in Rome, the emperor set up house in Capri. He died in a little village called Rome.

An example of a zero-point gesa comes from Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*, that the bearer of the gesa would die on the 19th day of the month. This would give a character an unsafe day every month, and even then he might receive a death blow a day or two before, lingering in a coma until the fateful day. People with such gesas went to great lengths to keep them secret since there was nothing to prevent other people arranging for the gesas to be fulfilled once they were known.

THE BAD GESA

All gesas were bad, but some were so disadvantageous as to be virtually crippling, especially in combination, for example: "May not carry weapons" combined with "Must insult all warriors" or "Must seduce all highborn maidens."

Sometimes the harder people tried to prevent a gesa taking effect the more they actually worked toward it. Sleeping Beauty's parents tried to keep her away from all needles. Thus, the first time she saw one she was curious and pricked her finger, fulfilling the gesa, and falling asleep for 100 years.



GESAS IN THE CAMPAIGN

Gesas are a fascinating part of Celtic character creation, and can be used to direct adventures and give plot nudges the correct feel (e.g., NPCs can place temporary gesas on the heroes to make them undertake quests). Death gesas can also be a good way to end a campaign, as gesa after gesa must be broken before the end becomes inevitable.

Some people were ringed about with gesas to such an extent that they could hardly do anything. This would be inconvenient to say the least for a protagonist, but could be interesting for an NPC. Imagine being hired to guard someone who won't go out of doors when it rains, or cross a river when the sun shines, or eat if women are sitting down, and so on.

In the myths, some heroes were unaware of their gesas until some important magical personage informed them of the web fate had woven around them. The same should be true of PC gesas. While the player should choose the point value of his character's gesas, the GM may reserve the privilege of defining some or all of them. This is especially important in the case of death gesas, as it adds some suspense to an adventure when the players don't know the terms of any death gesas they may have, so any combination of strange events could spell the end for one of them. This makes the revelation of secret gesas a major event, and no GM would ever stoop as low as to have a confusion-loving Sidhe make a false death gesa revelation as a joke.



Magic Among The Celts

In the Celtic world a large proportion of people had the ability to cast spells but very few knew more than a handful. Most of those who did were druids who used their powers only rarely; in some stories there were very powerful druids who did almost nothing. Spells that are common in most fantasy worlds were almost unknown to the Celts, especially destructive combat magics, such as Fireball. There were other spells which were common here, and rare or difficult elsewhere, such as Invisibility and Celtic Shapeshifting.



MAGIC ITEMS IN THE CAMPAIGN (CONTINUED)

Willful Weapons (see sidebar, p. 70, and *Pyramid Magazine* #14, July/August 1995) were items that "came alive," either by design or due to the magical atmosphere of the Celtic world. They had great powers and conferred great benefits to their users, but were also dangerous; they had their own priorities which didn't always agree with those of their owners.

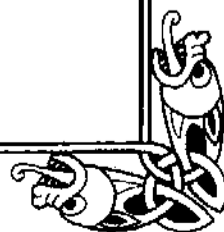
Cauldrons of Plenty were pots or jugs which were endlessly full of one specific food item, which, in the case of hot food, was always hot. They were therefore heavy and difficult to transport. They never overflowed and would *not* spill their contents, which had to be scooped and not poured out. The Dagda had a cauldron of this kind.

The most notable of unique Celtic magic items were the four treasures the Tuatha de Danaan brought with them from their lost home. These were a cauldron, a spear, a sword, and a stone. The cauldron, which had the power to resurrect slain warriors, was broken by Evnisien during Bran's invasion of Mumu (see p. 42). The spear, Luin, had a flaming head and had to be kept in a bucket of water when not in use. The Sword of Light was used by Lugh of the Long Hand. The Stone of Destiny (see p. 30) was used in the ceremonial consecration of high kings.

Druid Wands

An easy way of creating magic items was to make Druid Wands (see Enchant Druid Wand spell, p. 102). Druid Wands were fairly common in the Celtic world, and it was quite normal to find a warrior with one or two. Particularly common were Celtic Shapeshifting wands, which were often used by warriors wishing to hide from large numbers of enemies and so on. Celtic Shapeshifting wands could be made at half the normal cost if the caster specified during creation one single animal which the subject turned into when using it.

Many magic items were made with this method rather than with the normal Enchant spell. In the absence of Powerstones in the Celtic world, it was likely that only Sidhe mages made magic items using the Enchant spell.



SNAKESTONES

Snakestones were magic beads, the size and shape of pearls, made of a glassy blue paste. The Sidhe, who made them, traded them to humans in return for tin ingots. The stones were much sought after, though rarely found outside Damnar. They had a number of magical powers; the only one clearly understood was their ability to cure snakebite. They were believed to protect against Otherworldly persecution – many a fool-hardy Damnian tried to trick the Sidhe trusting only in the protection of the blue stone in his pocket.

To neutralize snakebite poison, soak the stone in water for 12 hours. Then drink the water; it cures snakebite (but no other poisons) in humans and animals. This water retains its potency for 24 hours. The stone is reusable.



MANA

Most of the Celtic world was a high-mana area (see *Mana*, p. B147, p. M6) with occasional wild-mana areas (see p. 93). This meant that anyone could cast spells if he knew them, and it would be quite normal to find a blacksmith with a few Fire spells, or a farmer with Heal Plant and Plant Growth. Eastern Prydain was a normal-mana area where magic only worked for those with Magical Aptitude.

MAGIC ITEMS AND ENCHANTMENT

Magic Items of all sorts were fairly common among the Celts (see sidebar, p. 88). They ranged from great items like the Cauldron which brought the dead to life, to golden cups that turned black if poison was placed in them. Making items, seeking them, rescuing them from thieves – no self-respecting Celtic adventuring party will go for long without coming across them. Most powerful magical objects were made by the Sidhe and originally owned by them, too.

There were *no* Powerstones in the Celtic world, so magic items needed to be powered by the user. This was no problem to a Sidhe but severely limited them in human hands. If the GM dislikes this then it is possible to make a selected item “just work,” for instance if the party finds something and tries it. The lack of Powerstones means that making magic items is also harder; humans need ceremonial magic, although full Sidhe have no trouble.

SHAPECHANGING

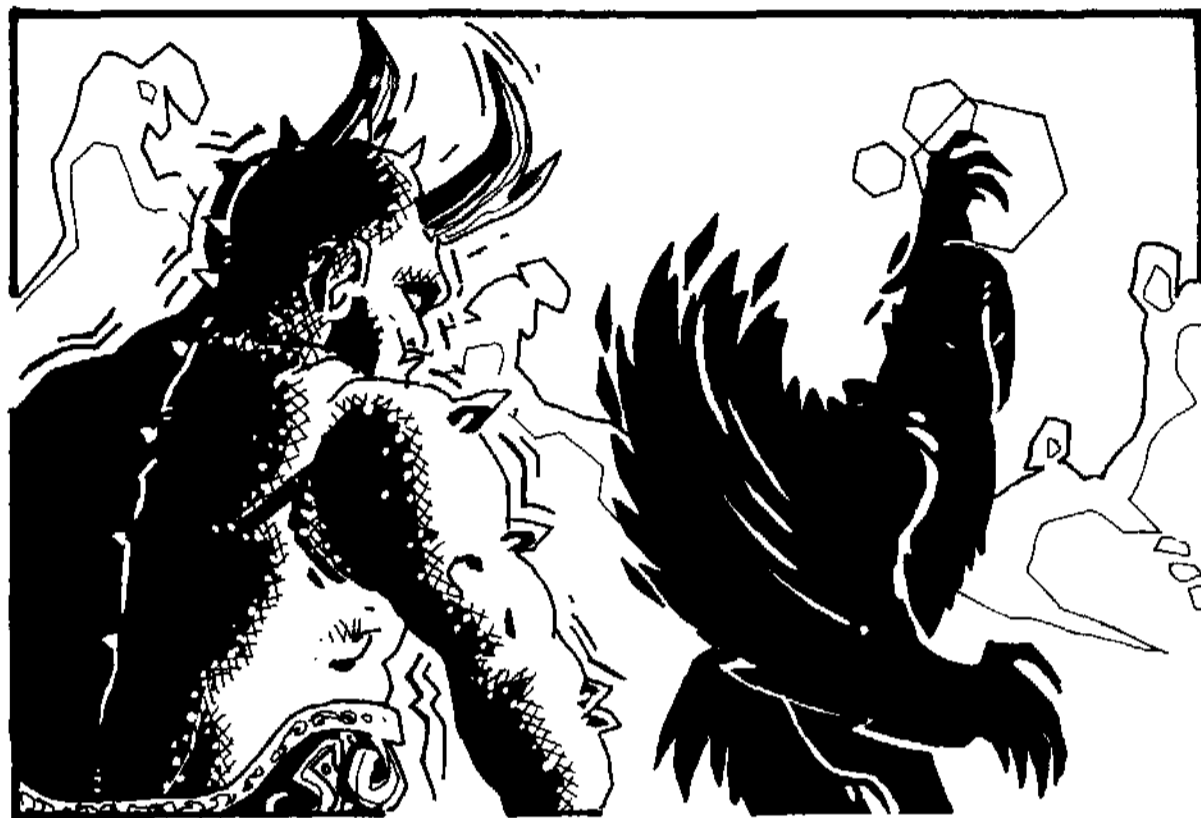
Shapechanging was so frequent a theme in Celtic mythology that it was nearly an everyday occurrence. Many times, turning someone into an animal was a form of punishment for a variety of misdeeds; it was also hoped that they would learn something from the experience. Animals were seen as having a special wisdom of their own, something that even the wisest people could benefit from. Shapechanging was used to facilitate this learning by allowing people (usually druids) to take the shape of an animal for a period of time.

Shapechanging also allowed magic-users to meet each other in shapeshifters' duels: a form of magical contest in which nobody got hurt (usually), but where prowess could be displayed and issues decided without resorting to direct violence.

Animal Children

If a transformed human had children while in animal form, her children would be very intelligent for animals, but unable to become human except through a Shapeshifting spell. Such animals had IQ two points above normal for that animal. Their IQs didn't change if they were turned into humans. Although they lost the advantages of the animal, they kept the reflexes, trying to wag lost tails when happy, for instance, or keeping a good sense of smell.

If the child was conceived when both parents were human and the transformation took place during the mother's pregnancy, the results would be very different. The unborn child would remain unchanged in the womb, and would be born human after a normal pregnancy. Oisín was born human to a deer mother – his earliest memories were of a sad-eyed deer taking care of him. Obviously, this would present difficulties to a mother shapechanged into a form much smaller than a human, but in a mythic campaign a certain license must be allowed.



The Shapeshifters' Duel

When two mages with shapeshifting magic fought, they frequently ended up changing shapes rapidly, trying to find one that the opponent couldn't counter (see sidebar, p. 45, for an example). It was a very effective form of combat, as the Great Shapeshifting spell could give the caster many extra abilities, and forcing a combatant to shift back to human (or Sidhe) form left him mentally stunned, which could prove decisive.

Shapeshifters' duels were tied up with the Celtic code of honor, as a form of single combat between magic-users, in much the same way that warriors physically fought for their honor. The druids (very few non-druids knew Great Shapeshifting) usually agreed that the duel was not to the death; rather, each tried to adopt a form that the other could not counter within three turns, at the end of which time, a referee awarded the victory. The use of Counterspell was commonplace during "informal" duels, but could be banned by agreement during formal contests – in which case the agreed referee had to be capable of identifying it.

Quick Shapeshifters' Duel Rules

The rules for Great Shapeshifting (see p. 103) are reasonably "realistic," but this can make them rather slow in play. For those who want a quicker, more "cinematic" system, here are alternate rules. Since shapeshifters' duels are a battle of wits between the contestants, under these rules they become a battle of wits between the players.

TATHLUMS

Tathlums, or "brain balls," were sling-stones made from the brains of dead enemies. These stones were said to have magical properties and could sometimes kill an enemy outright. The power of the tathlum was related to the power and honor of the enemy when alive, so tathlums were not made lightly.

There were two methods of making a tathlum. The first was to mix the brains of the dead enemy with lime and let it harden into normal sling-sized stones. These tathlums did normal sling-stone damage but could have a psychological effect on combat if their nature was proudly proclaimed.

The second way to make a tathlum was to mix the brains with various herbs and magical ingredients chosen both for mystical power and some connection with the specific person selected in advance as the target of the tathlum (e.g., the blood of fierce animals, water from obscure lakes, juice from the leaves of magical trees). The mix was packed back into the skull, and when it had dried the weapon was ready to be slung at the individual wished dead. This method would be known only to certain very wise Druids, and would not be common knowledge.

Such a magical tathlum can only be made in a high-mana area. The person crafting it must have personally killed the foe whose brains are being used. He must make a successful IQ-4 roll to mix the components correctly. The resulting tathlum does normal sling-stone damage, plus a bonus equal to 5% (rounded down) of the point value of the enemy whose brain was used (i.e., the brain of a 100-point character would make a tathlum which did 5 extra points of damage, while a 250-point character's brain would do 12 extra points).

The Status of the person killed to make the tathlum and the eventual victim must also be compared. If the brain's owner was of higher Status, the tathlum provides a +1 bonus to Sling skill for every level of difference with the victim. If the intended victim is more exalted than the supplier of the brain, then the tathlum gives a -1 penalty for every level of difference. In either case, the maximum difference in Status level is 3; it would be insulting to the honor of the deceased on both sides for a king to be killed by a tathlum created using a peasant's brain, or for a king's brain to be used to kill a peasant. A tathlum made with greater than a three-level difference between principals will have no effect at all.

The brains must be turned into a tathlum within two days of the death of the enemy; the tathlum itself must be used within a month of its creation. Obviously, tathlums will not be created trivially, but will only be made from major enemies to be used in time of great need.

ADVENTURE SEED: MAKING A TATHLUM

The heroes have a powerful enemy (possibly a Sidhe lord) whom they cannot kill in the normal way. They ask a Druid for help and he gives them the following advice. First, they must gather a number of rare ingredients: an apple from Tir Na n'Og, the bark of a rowan that grows on the shores of Ynys Skya, the blood of Ellen (a three-headed monster from the cave of Cruathan), the little finger of the king of the Dog-Heads, etc. Then they must kill a lesser Sidhe lord (probably one of the Druid's enemies). After that, they must visit a certain Sidhe mound in eastern Bregeda and mix the ingredients together on the night of Samhain. When this is done, they will have a weapon to use against their enemy, although they will still not be assured of success.

OTHER MAGIC SYSTEMS

Magic can be used entirely as in the *GURPS Basic Set* and *GURPS Magic*. If so, then the GM should bear in mind how the magic has been learned and try not to spoil the Celtic nature of the campaign with too many Fireballs and the like. If the GM adds a Celtic region into an existing campaign without restructuring the magic system, then the simplest fix is that any Celtic magicians encountered do not have battle magic, and are not called druids.

The mage with the highest Move begins. The player makes an IQ roll and states (within five seconds) what his character is turning into. The players take turns trying to think of something which counters the opponent's form. As long as both combatants keep making successful IQ rolls, and as long as both players keep thinking of something new, nothing happens. But if one fails an IQ roll, or the player cannot think of a countering form, his character becomes stuck in one form and the other magic-user can close with him and finish off the duel. At this point, the GM gives both contestants a modifier (positive or negative) based on what their final forms are, and both roll a Contest of IQ modified accordingly. The winner of the Contest wins the duel, and both sides turn back into their normal forms, rather out of breath.

The GM should be flexible with what forms he allows, but the duellists should stay within the Celtic world-view: apatosaurs or kangaroos should not be allowed.

GATES TO THE OTHERWORLD

The spells listed on pp. 96-105 include those for creating, finding, opening, and closing gates to the Otherworld. The main Gate spell Create Otherworld Gate differs considerably from the Create Gate spell in *GURPS Grimoire*. Gates to the Otherworld were rarely visible to the naked eye. They were often found in cave mouths, or in stretches of open countryside. A person passing through such a gate was unlikely to realize it at first, and it was only when he failed to spot the landmarks he'd expected that he discovered he had passed through a gate.

In a few instances, gates to the Otherworld *were* visible, usually when they led directly from one place to a totally dissimilar place. For instance, a door into a small wooden hut could lead to the vast hall of a Sidhe king. Anyone looking through the door could tell that the inside of the hut looked bigger than the outside. Anyone passing through was in a small "pocket" of the Otherworld. Stepping outside might take him back to this world, or – if the gate had closed while he was inside – lead him outside into the Otherworld.



Many gates had conditions on them, some of them specified by the caster, others created randomly by a poor casting (see p. 98). Some suitable "gesas" for gates are:

Only open to people on horseback.

Only open to male Sidhe.

Only open when the apple trees are in blossom.

Only open in one direction. (This is a common one.)

Only open to people without weapons.

Only open to naked people.

Only open to someone carrying a hawthorn twig.

Only open to someone who hasn't eaten for three days.

Only open to someone who is drunk.



Non-Druid Magic

Due to the magical nature of the Celtic world (a high-mana area) it was quite common for non-druids to know a few spells. Anyone who has spent at least ½ point to achieve Naturalist skill at 12 or above could know the Talisman spells for all the trees (although the vowel tree spells also require Magery to cast). It was also quite common for a few spells related to a family's profession to be handed down from one generation to the next. Non-druid PCs wishing to take a small number of spells must have a 10-point Unusual Background, and the player must be able to justify to the GM how he learned those spells. GMs may wish to limit the number of spells a non-druid may have.

It is possible for people to learn spells which they are unable to cast due to a lack of Magical Aptitude.

Example: Gwyn Cold Iron, a young blacksmith with Magery, learned Resist Fire and Essential Flame as an apprentice from a master who chanted them but found they did not help. Gwyn found that they *did* help him – fireproof tools could stay in the forge longer and didn't burn his hands, and metal heated in essential flame was tempered better than on days when the forge fire was unaided by magic. Gwyn became famous and his work was sought by everyone. His son, Gareth, wanted to learn smithing.



WILD-MANA AREAS IN PRACTICE

Wild-mana areas are places no more than six hexes across in which magic works in a special way. Every success within one is a critical success, every failure a critical failure. Actual rolled critical successes in a wild-mana area may cause a wonder (see p. 9) at the GM's discretion. Spells can be cast immediately for only one point, regardless of normal casting cost, and the point is regained at the beginning of the next round. Magic works for anyone who knows the spells in a wild-mana area, except those with Magic Resistance.

Luckily, wild-mana areas are usually few and far between. Full Sidhe have the Wild Mana Generator advantage and produce a wild-mana area centered on themselves at all times. This can not be turned off or turned down; it is there constantly, which makes Sidhe powerful and dangerous. Most parties encounter Sidhe only rarely – and sometimes in disguise, so that they may be well into a combat before they realize that those near the good-looking stranger are having more success than normal . . .

THE TREE TALISMANS

The 18 "magic" or Ogham trees each have a specific spell associated with them. Anyone, whether or not he knows the spell, can cast that one spell at a skill level of 12 as long as he has Naturalist skill at 12+ and uses it to craft the correctly-shaped talisman of that tree. The wood must be fresh, as there is a -1 penalty to the spellcasting roll for every day since the wood was cut. The shape and size of the talisman varies for each tree, and one cannot make a tree talisman unless he knows the correct shape, something that is not part of normal Naturalist lore; an Unusual Background is required to justify a non-druid's knowledge of such things.

Spells marked with an asterisk (*) are vowel tree spells, and require Magical Aptitude as well as Naturalist skill to cast. GMs afraid that all players will automatically give their characters Naturalist skill in order to get easy access to these spells might want to add Magery as a requirement for casting consonant tree talisman spells, as well as for vowel tree spells.

Continued on next page . . .

THE TREE TALISMANS (CONTINUED)

The 18 Basic Tree Spells

- Birch* – Simple Illusion – Bark.
Rowan – Magic Resistance – Berries.
Alder – Ignite Fire – Peeled twig.
Willow – Death Vision – Forked twig.
Ash – Flight – Broomstick length.
Hawthorn – Curse – Any part of tree.
Oak – Shape Earth – Acorn or twig.
Holly – Bless – Any part of tree.
Hazel – 1) Invisibility – 15-foot pole.
2) Seek Water – Forked rod.
3) Truthsayer – Nuts.
Vine – Tanglefoot – Four-foot length.
Ivy – Lend Language – Leaf.
Reed – Repair Arrow – Straight, unbroken reed.
Elder – Lend Health – Flowers, berries, or twig.
Silver Fir – Enchant* – Twig with bark intact.
Gorse – Avert* – Twig with flowers (-2 to cast if twig has no flowers).
Heather – Remove Curse* – Flower or straight (not twisted) twig.
Aspen – Shield* – Hefty branch.
Yew – Decay* – Berries or straight rod

Finding a Tree

All of the Ogham trees were fairly common in western Europe and could be found on a successful Naturalist roll. Bramble was so common that it could be found even on a failed roll! In wooded country all except gorse, heather, and reed can be found within 2d minutes. On cleared scrubland and hillside gorse, heather and rowan can be found within 2d minutes and everything else except reeds within 1d hours. Reeds can only be found near low-lying water. Alder doesn't grow where it is completely dry, and alder and willow are both found in half the time when searching near water.

Unfortunately, no matter how hard he tried, Gareth just couldn't get the same effects as his father. However, he repeated the spells diligently and passed them on to the next generation . . .

The GM may wish to make use of the Natural Spellcasting advantage (see p. 55) as a way for a non-druid to have a few spells. Another way for non-druids to learn magic was from the Sidhe, which again required an Unusual Background.

MAGIC AND THE SIDHE

The Sidhe, like humans, had their druids, and Sidhe druids had a very deep knowledge of magic. Ordinary Sidhe did not necessarily work magic; they *were* magic, a distinction of which mortal men were not always aware. Sidhe druids were like human druids but more powerful. Their long lives were an advantage, giving them time to learn whatever they wanted. Sidhe, however, were often capricious, so there were many Sidhe "dropouts" at lower levels of druidry – and even evil Sidhe druids – who would make *terrible* enemies for a party. Most Sidhe picked up *some* magic, at least the basic tree spells, and could teach it to mortals for a specific purpose.



Tree Magic

The druids organized their "colleges" of magic according to the Ogham alphabet, listing groups of spells under the appropriate tree/letter. The prerequisites for a spell all fell within its tree, except in the case of especially complicated spells which were listed as one or more consonants and a vowel together. The druids taught their spells only in these groupings.

Apart from the tree talisman spells (see sidebar, pp. 93-94) there was no direct connection between the actual tree and the spell list that went with it. The druids believed that all the magic trees had certain properties and controlled certain things, but the tree "colleges" were merely a mnemonic, something they needed to organize their spells for memorization.



SKILLS NOT SPELLS

Three Tree Lore skills encompassed druidic knowledge about the three different types of magic trees. It was possible to know Ogham and Tree Lore without actually knowing any spells, but it wasn't possible to be taught spells *within the druidic college system* without Tree Lore. A craftsman might know spells passed down from his father, but he wouldn't have any Tree spells from a druid unless he had Tree Lore. A Bard had to know Ogham (i.e., he had to have the Literacy (Ogham) advantage), and have Consonant Tree Lore. An Ollave had to have Vowel Tree Lore. A Druid had to have Mixed Tree Lore.

A druid's knowledge of Tree Lore also dictated the limit of his magical powers. Spells learned within the Druidic Order (i.e., exempting Talisman spells and those learned from other sources) could only be bought up to the level of the corresponding Tree Lore skill. If an Ollave had a Vowel Tree Lore of 14, he could not learn Animate Plant at level 15, for example, unless he first raised his Vowel Tree Lore skill to that level.

The Consonants

The consonants of the Ogham alphabet covered the easiest spells, which could be learned by initiates and Bards. The druids suggested that the trees be approached in Ogham (alphabetical) order: the symmetry and pattern of Ogham was easily observed (see the sidebar on this page) and was believed to make a mystical pattern. This was not necessary however, and Bards were free to neglect or learn any consonant spells they wished, as long as they had the necessary Consonant Tree Lore skill.

The Vowels

The vowels covered the more difficult, and potentially dangerous, areas of magic, and these spells could be learned by Bards and Ollaves. In addition each vowel tree governed one of the great days of the Celtic year. The spells were aspected so that they were cast at +1 on their own days.

Mixed Spells

Mixed spells, spells covered by two or more trees, were studied only by Druids. The prerequisite for being taught these spells was knowledge of at least six spells in the relevant consonant and at least two in the relevant vowel. Additionally, the character had to have put at least 1 point into Mixed Tree Lore. The very existence of these spells was a secret divulged only to full Druids. These spells were consequently cast only rarely in the Celtic world.


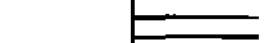
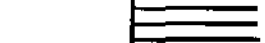
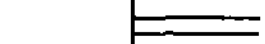

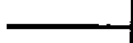
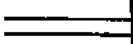








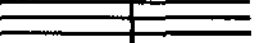
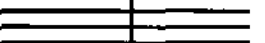

Spells From Other Sources

Many of the spells on the following pages are found in *GURPS Magic*, but are mentioned here because they are characteristic of the Celtic setting. Some others are from *GURPS Grimoire*, presented here in versions specific to the *Celtic Myth* setting. Spells not listed below should be considered alien to the Celtic world; they *might* be found among foreigners, but won't be known to druids or other Celtic spellcasters.

OGHAM

Celts used the Ogham alphabet, in which the letters were formed by horizontal or diagonal strokes across a vertical line. This is an excellent code alphabet for passing secret messages when the nose or thigh forms the vertical and fingers the horizontal. All Bards had to have knowledge of Ogham, and many educated warriors also learned it. In this alphabet the letters were given tree names (which they still bear in modern Irish), and the trees were identified with the letters.

The Ogham Alphabet

Beth		B
Luis		L
Fearn		F
Saille		S
Nion		N
Uath		H
Duir		D
Tinne		T
Coll		C
Muin		M
Gort		G
Pethboc		P
Ruis		R
Ailm		A
Onn		O
Ur		U
Eadha		E
Idho		I

Consonant Tree Spells

Below are listed the spells of the consonant trees. As well as the prerequisites listed in the table on pp. 106-112, the caster must have the Consonant Tree Lore skill, unless he is using the spells marked with an asterisk (*), which are Talisman spells and can be cast by anyone with Naturalist skill and the correct piece of tree (see sidebar, p. 93). Spells with no listed prerequisites still require Consonant Tree Lore.



Mixed Spells

Spells that require the use of more than one type of tree or plant are listed in the Spell Tables (pp. 106-112).

BIRCH (B – BETH)

Talisman Spell:
Item:

Simple Illusion*
Bark

Beth was the first letter of the Ogham alphabet, and Birch was the tree of beginnings. It controlled love spells, illusions, and simple creation spells, and was useful for driving away evil spirits.

Bundles of birch twigs were used by druids for beating the boundaries of an area for ritual cleansing. Birch leaves are small and rounded, intensely green in early spring and gold in autumn.

The following are Birch spells:

Clean, Complex Illusion, Create Food, Create Plant, Exorcism, Great Voice, Hideaway, Illusion Disguise, Illusion Shell, Knots, Odor, Perfect Illusion, Phantom Flame, Rejoin, Repair, Restore, Sharpen, Silence, Simple Illusion*, Sound, Stench, Stiffen, Voices.

Celtic Shapeshifting

Regular

Lets the caster change into the form of any one of the following animals: deer, salmon, swan, boar, or wolf. Any other animal must be known to the caster, and requires a successful Naturalist-4 roll before casting the spell. There aren't separate versions of the spell for each animal species; the caster merely chooses the animal to change into at the time of casting. The caster becomes a large member of the species. Clothing, jewelry, and armor vanish when the beast form is taken, and reappear when the human form is resumed (magical jewelry cannot be detected while "vanished"). Backpacks, carried items, etc., simply fall to the ground.

The caster retains his own intelligence, but gains all the physical attributes of the new form. This means that no spells can be cast unless the wearer knows them so well that they can be performed without gestures! Note that Fatigue is *not* increased for spellcasting purposes.

The subject remains in animal form until he chooses to resume his normal form, or is forced to by Exorcism, Counterspell, Remove Curse, or similar spells.

For each day that the caster remains in animal form, a roll against IQ must be made: a failed roll means that the caster loses a point of IQ, continuing until the normal IQ of that beast is reached! Should the caster's IQ drop to 7, he is trapped in beast form unless the spell is removed by Remove Curse. Lost IQ is regained when human form is reassumed.

This spell replaces Shapeshifting and Permanent Shapeshifting found in *GURPS Magic* and *GURPS Grimoire*. This version is much more powerful than those spells, and should probably be disallowed in non-Celtic campaigns. Alternatively, the GM may rule that it only works in high-mana areas or above.

Duration: Indefinite (could be permanent).

Cost: 3.

ROWAN (L – LUIS)

Talisman Spell:

**Magic Resistance
Berries**

Item:

Rowan, or mountain ash, was the tree of magical protection. Its berries were a charm against ill-meant magic and also gave protection from lightning. Rowan wood was used for divination and metal divining, and it also compelled ghosts and demons.

Rowan bears its characteristic bright red berries from late summer through late autumn. It has white blossoms in springtime. Rowan trees can grow anywhere, and are frequently found in unlikely crevices on the sides of mountains.

The following are Rowan spells:

Banish, Conceal Magic, Hide Thoughts, Magic Resistance*, Scryguard, Scrywall, Seek Earth, Spell Shield, Summon Shade, Summon Spirit.

Reanimate Head Special; Resisted by IQ

This spell enables a caster to animate a recently-deceased head and to repossess it with the spirit of its dead owner. If the spirit wants to be reunited with the head, then it makes no resistance roll. The spell is cast at -1 for every day the head has been dead. This spell can only be cast once on any one head! The head will have all *mental* skills and advantages it had in life.

Duration: This depends on the amount by which the caster makes his skill roll:

0-2:	1 minute	9-10:	1 month
3-4:	1 hour	11-12:	1 year
5-6:	1 day	13+:	Indefinite
7-8:	1 week		

Cost: 30 to cast. Cannot be maintained.

Time to Cast: 1 hour.

Prerequisites: 3 Rowan spells.

ALDER (F – FEARN)

Talisman Spell:

**Ignite Fire
Peeled Twig**

Item:

Alder was the tree of fire; it burned more hotly than any other tree. It was proof against water, and was said to control the wind. It was therefore considered the power of fire to free earth from water. It was an oracular tree, and produced three dyes (red, brown, and green), and was thus the patron tree of color-dyeing. It was also connected with resurrection.

Alder has black fissured bark, and broad, unpointed, dull green leaves. It won't grow where the soil is completely dry.

The following are Alder spells:

Colors, Continual Light, Cook, Distill, Divination: Pyromancy, Dye, Ferment, Heat, Ignite Fire*, Light, Light Jet, Melt Ice, Shape Fire, Whirlwind, Windstorm.

WILLOW (S – SAILLE)

Talisman Spell:

**Death Vision
Forked Twig**

Item:

Willow was associated with the feminine aspect, death, the moon, and female spellcasters. It was the patron tree of all water spells that were *favorable* to water, rather than controlling it.

Willow trees love watery environments and frequently grow hanging out over lakes and streams.

The following are Willow spells:

Cold, Death Vision*, Freeze, Purify Water, Sense Spirit.

ASH (N – NION)

Talisman Spell:

**Flight
Broomstick Length**

Item:

Ash took control over water, and covered spells where water was dominated, rather than loved. It was also the tree from which broomsticks were made, and other flight spells were grouped here.

Ash grows in woodland groups in upland areas.

The following are Ash spells:

Apportation, Breathe Water, Flight*, Levitation, Lighten Burden, Manipulate, Poltergeist, Shape Water, Slow Fall, Swim, Umbrella, Undo.



HAWTHORN (H – UATH)

Talisman Spell:

Item:

Hawthorn was the tree of bad luck and of cleansing. Curse spells were grouped under Hawthorn.

Hawthorn bears white, sweet-smelling blossoms in spring, red berries in autumn, and has sharp thorns all year. It was considered very bad luck – amounting to breaking a gesa – to bring hawthorn blossoms indoors.

The following are Hawthorn spells:

Avoid, Blur, Clumsiness, Curse*, Darkness, Fatigue, Glue, Hide, Itch, Nightmare, Pain, Paralyze Limb, Sickness, Spasm, Strike Blind, Strike Deaf, Strike Dumb, Stun, Total Paralysis, Wither Limb, Wither Plant.

Curse

Any Part of Tree

OAK (D – DUIR)

Talisman Spell:

Item:

Large areas of central Prydain were covered by oak forests, and it was also found growing, singly and in groups, in other places. Oak's roots were said to stretch as far below the earth as its branches stretched above it. For this reason the tree controlled spells of both earth and air. "Duir" also meant "Door," and spells of moving between worlds were Oak spells.

The following are Oak spells:

Earth to Air, Earth to Stone, Purify Air, Shape Air, Shape Earth*, Shape Stone, Stone to Earth, Walk Through Earth.

Shape Earth

Acorn or Twig

Control Otherworld Gate

see p. G49; **Regular Resisted by the gate**

Opens or closes an *existing* gate to the Otherworld. Anyone or anything that fits the gate's conditions may pass through the gate in either direction while it is open. Closing a gate does not destroy it. The gate reverts to its normal state once the spell expires.

Duration: Indefinite.

Cost: 10 cast, 2 to maintain.

Time: 10 to 15 seconds.

Prerequisite: Create Otherworld Gate.

Create Otherworld Gate

see p. G49; **Area**

Creates a permanent magical portal leading to the Otherworld. As all places in the Otherworld can be seen as equally near to any place in this world, there is no distance penalty. If the caster knows of a particular place in the Otherworld he wishes to visit, he may simply think of it when casting the spell to direct the gate there. If not, the gate opens at a "random" point in the Otherworld chosen by the GM, although it never opens on a hostile environment (e.g., under water or inside a volcano) unless the caster has the ability to survive in that environment.

The caster must specify whether the gate is always open, always closed, or open and closed when certain conditions are met (e.g., opens at midnight on Samain, or opens only for men with red hair). However, the caster's wishes only take effect if his spell roll succeeds by 5 or more. Otherwise the opening conditions are twisted (e.g., opens at noon on Samain or midnight on Beltain, or opens only for men with red beards or women with red hair). The nearer the spell is to failure, the



more perverse the GM should be. This means, of course, that the GM must make the roll so that the player does not know the conditions on the gate. These can only be discovered by use of the Scry Otherworld Gate spell. If a gate is created with no conditions specified, it is always open unless closed by Control Otherworld Gate.

The gate always has a time displacement component which is unknown to the caster. The GM should roll 3d secretly on the following table:

3	+10 × 3d years	11	+3d days
4-6	+3d years	12-14	+3d months
7-8	+3d months	15-17	+3d years
9	+3d days	18	+10 × 3d years
10	No displacement		

Anyone passing through the gate travels forward in time this amount. This is unlikely to be noticed while in the Otherworld, but could become important after returning to this world. The GM should feel free to fudge this result to suit the campaign.

Most gates to the Otherworld are 1 hex across and 2 hexes high, and are often tied to particular places: a doorway, a cave entrance, the space between two standing stones. Still, it is possible to make a whole area a gate, in which case the land on each side of the gate tends to be similar, and it is impossible to tell that a transition from this world to the Otherworld has occurred. A gate could, for instance, be cast on an area of dense forest: someone passing through the area would have no idea that he had passed into the Otherworld until he left the forest, or failed to find an expected landmark.

Duration: Permanent.

Cost: 30.

Time to Cast: 30 seconds.

Prerequisites: 5 Oak spells.

Divination: Augury *see p. M55, G59*
Information

Augury is divination by watching birds in flight. A roll must always be made. The information that can be gathered from Augury is: presentiment of disasters (but not their nature), and if a day will be favorable or unfavorable for the caster or for a specified other).

Cost: 10.

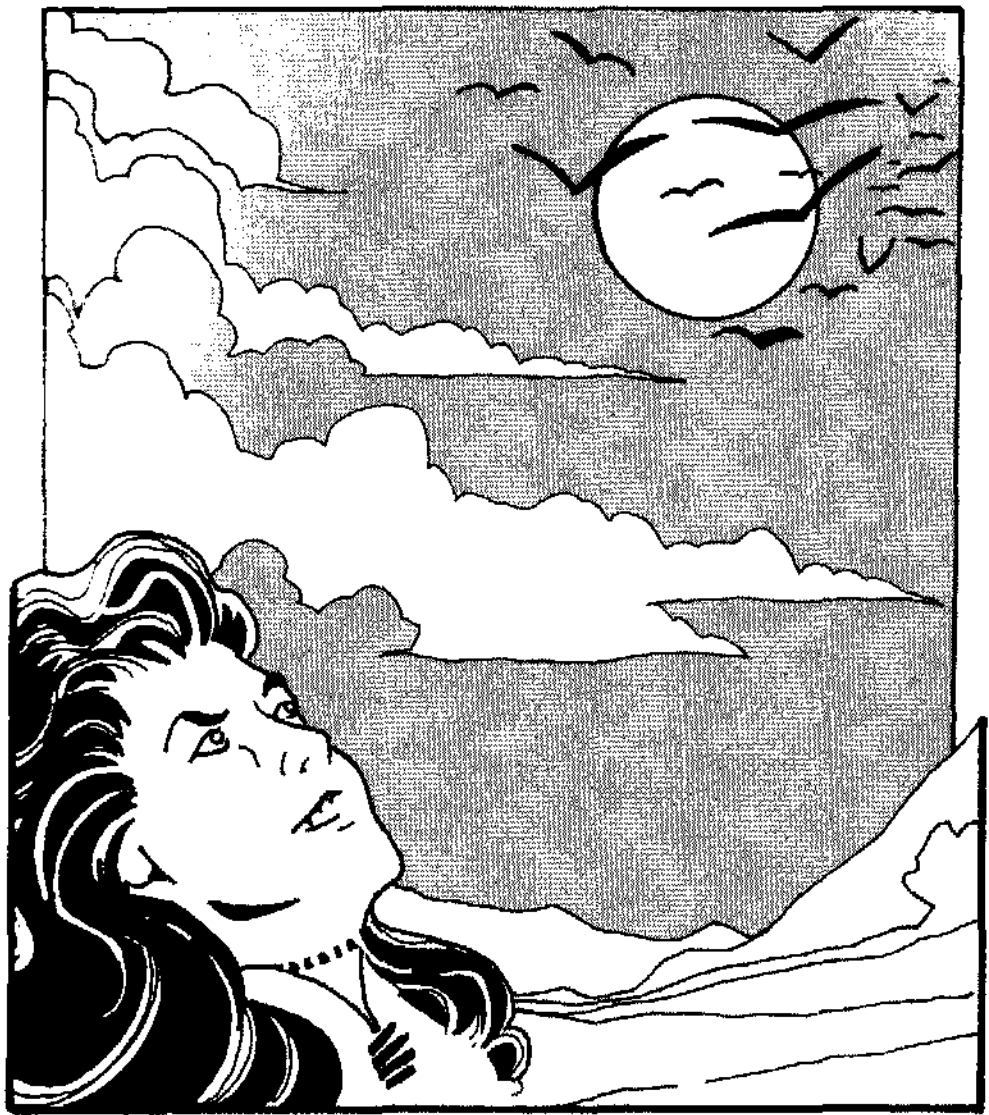
Prerequisites: IQ 13 and 4 Oak spells.

HOLLY (T – TINNE)

Talisman Spell: *Bless*
Item: *Any Part of Tree*

Holly was the tree of good luck and blessings, and all blessing spells were grouped under it. Holly was also the tree of weather prediction, because hard winters could be predicted by examining the number of its berries.

Holly trees vary in size from very tall trees to mere bushes. It bears round red berries in winter. Holly leaves are dark



green and prickly to about eight feet off the ground; leaves from higher up are not as sharp.

The following are Holly spells:

Alertness, Bless*, Bless Plants, Bravery, Climbing, Dexterity, Divination: Nimbomancy (divination by watching the shape of clouds), Great Haste, Haste, Keen Ears, Keen Eyes, Keen Nose, Might, Monk's Banquet, No-Smell, Predict Weather, Purify Food, Quick March, Rear Vision, Resist Pain, Vigor, Wisdom.

HAZEL (C – COLL)

Talisman Spells:

Invisibility

Seek Water

Truthsayer

Item: 15-Foot Pole

Item: Forked Rod

Item: Nuts

Hazel was the tree of wisdom and knowledge and governed all information-seeking spells. It had more talisman spells than any other tree and was considered the most magical of all trees because it grew on Sidhe mounds and was plentiful in the Otherworld.

Hazel's leaves are broad and toothed. Hazelnuts grow in clusters of two or three nuts above the leaves, and are very good to eat.

The following are Hazel spells:

Alarm, Analyze Magic, Ancient History, Aura, Beast Seeker, Beast Speech, Borrow Language, Borrow Skill, Dark Vision, Detect Magic, Earth Vision, Far-Hearing, Find Direction, Find Weakness, Glass Wall, Hawk Vision, History, Ice Vision, Identify Plant, Identify Spell, Infravision, Invisibility, Know Illusion, Mage Sense, Mage Sight,

Measurement, Night Vision, Pathfinder, Plant Sense, See Secrets, Seek Food, Seek Plant, Seek Water*, Seeker, Sense Danger, Sense Emotion, Sense Foes, Sense Life, Sound Vision, Tell Time, Test Food, Trace, Truthsayer*, Water Vision.

Detect Gesa *Information; Resisted by IQ*

This spell allows the caster to know the nature of any gesas by which the subject is bound. The subject can cooperate if he so desires, unless he has a gesa preventing him . . .

Casting this spell does not cost the caster a point of HT, as he isn't setting a gesa on the subject but detecting those already present, even if previously unknown to the bearer.

Cost: 8.

Time to Cast: 1 hour.

Prerequisites: Identify Spell and 8 Hazel spells.

Invisibility* *see p. M58; Regular*

The Celts actually believed that a man would remain invisible as long as he simply carried a 15-foot hazel pole. GMs should require the casting of this spell, as well.

Scry Otherworld Gate *see p. G49; Regular*

Cast on an open gate to the Otherworld, this spell allows images, sounds, and smells to come through it from the other side, just as if one were peering through an open window. No corresponding "window" opens at the gate's other end. This spell can also be used to detect the conditions on a gate: when it will open, who is allowed through, and so on.

If the gate leads into an area protected by Scrywall, the Scrywall gets to resist the Scry Otherworld Gate.

Duration: 1 minute.

Cost: 4 to cast; 4 to maintain.

Time to Cast: 10 seconds.

Prerequisite: Analyze Magic.

Seek Otherworld Gate *see p. G49; Information*

Tells the caster the direction and approximate distance of the nearest gate to the Otherworld. Any known gates may be excluded if the caster specifically mentions them before beginning.

Modifiers: Long-distance modifiers (p. B151 or M10), -2 if the gate is currently closed, -5 if seeking a gate's arrival point, -10 if seeking a gate leading to a specific destination. Note that the gate itself may be Scryguarded or under a Conceal Magic spell.

Because of the inconstant nature of the links between the mortal world and the Otherworld, there is always a chance that the caster will not be able to detect any gates, no matter how successful his spell roll. How often this occurs is left to the GM to decide, based on how eager he is to have the PCs find such a gate.

Cost: 3.

Time to Cast: 10 seconds.

Prerequisite: Pathfinder.



VINE/BRAMBLE (M - MUIN)

Talisman Spell: *Tanglefoot*
Item: *Four-Foot Length*

Vine (grapevine) was the "tree" of intoxication and joy, and also of control and madness. Since vines only grew in climatically-favored parts of southern Prydain, bramble (blackberry) was used as an alternative in the north and west of Prydain and in Eriu, with the same effect.

The following are Vine spells:

Beast Link, Beast-Soothe, Beast Summoning, Berserker, Bird Control, Charm, Compel Truth, Control Illusion, Daze, Dispel Illusion, Drunkenness, Emotion Control, Fear, Fish Control, Foolishness, Forgetfulness, Hinder, Independence, Insect Control, Loyalty, Madness, Mammal Control, Mass Daze, Mass Sleep, Master, Mental Stun, Panic, Persuasion, Rider, Rooted Feet, Roundabout, Sleep, Tanglefoot*, Terror.

Enthrall

see p. G75; Special;
Resisted by IQ

The caster tells a fascinating tale and anyone within earshot who knows the language and pays attention falls under the spell, resisting with IQ. For every minute the subject listens to the caster, an hour of real time elapses. Anyone who resists perceives the caster and his victims as paralyzed, although prolonged examination reveals that they are moving *very* slowly. Any subject who is shaken gets an extra resistance roll for every turn that he's disturbed. A victim who is attacked automatically breaks free.

This spell can never be cast at a higher level than the caster's Bard skill.

Duration: 1 hour (real time).

Cost: 3 to cast, 3 to maintain.

Time to Cast: 3 seconds.

Prerequisites: Daze and 2 Vine.

Fascinate

see p. G75;
Regular or Blocking; Resisted by IQ

Glib Tongue

see p. G75;
Regular; Resisted by IQ

The caster is mystically able to make anything he says be what the subject wants to hear. What the caster says, even total gibberish, finds hearty agreement. However, the caster has no idea what the target *thinks* he's saying . . . GMs may give up to +3 on reaction rolls depending on how cleverly the PC role-plays this.

Duration: 5 minutes.

Cost: 2 to cast, 1 to maintain.

Prerequisite: Fascinate.

IVY (G - GORT)

Talisman Spell:

Item:

Lend Language
Leaf

Ivy was the "tree" of mind skills and language.

Ivy is an evergreen creeper usually found growing around large trees. Its leaves are very dark green, five-pointed near the bottom of the plant, and rounded near the top.

The following are Ivy spells:

Divination: Haruspication, Lend Language*, Lend Skill.

REED (P - PETHBOC)

Talisman Spell:

Item:

Repair Arrow
Straight, Unbroken Reed

Reed was the "tree" (it's actually a grass) of mending.

Reeds are usually found growing at the edge of slow-moving rivers and in boggy places. Its stem and leaves are purplish-brown or green and very tough. It grows in clumps or "beds" and the roots knot together, binding the soil and preventing erosion.

The following are the Reed spells:

Repair Arrow*, Shatterproof.

Cornucopia see p. M45; Enchantment

In addition to ammunition pouches, this spell can be cast on food bags, drink bottles, etc. to provide a seemingly endless stream of any one consumable item. Food produced in this way is nutritious if eaten immediately; if left outside of the container for more than a minute, it vanishes. This spell was common in the Celtic world.

Cost: Energy equal to 100 times the \$ value of item being produced.





SILVER FIR (Ā - ĀILM)

Special Day:

Imbolc

Talisman Spell:

Enchant

Item:

Twig with Bark Intact

The Silver Fir was the "birth" tree, covering enchantment and creation. Silver Fir mixed spells covered creation and the special area of the consonant; for example, Silver Fir with Alder (fire) includes the most powerful fire creation spells.

Silver fir is an evergreen tree, the tallest tree in Prydain. It can grow to a height of 180 feet.

The following are Silver Fir spells:

Animate Plant, Delay, Enchant*, Limit, Link, Name, Password, Water to Wine. There are also some "combination" spells using Silver Fir (see pp. 106-112).

Create Person

Regular

This spell allows the caster to create a new person from the magical flowers listed below. The person has free will and is a 50-point adult with his own advantages and disadvantages (chosen by the caster) but he must be taught all skills, including basics such as speech. The created person has an apparent age of 18 and a normal life expectancy from that point.

Cost: 300.

Time to Cast: 12 hours.

Requirements: Fresh-picked flowers of oak, broom, and meadowsweet.

Prerequisites: Shape Plant and 2 spells each of all trees.

ELDER (R - RUIS)

Talisman Spell:

Lend Health

Item:

Flowers, Berries, or Twig

Elder was the tree of healing and control over illness. Its flowers and berries were used to make healing teas and wines.

Elder grows as a bush or a tall tree. In spring, elders are covered with white clumps of flowers which look almost like cauliflowers. In autumn these become bunches of tiny dark red or black berries. Elders grow in most soils and like abundant rain.

The following are Elder spells:

Awaken, Heal Plant, Lend Health*, Lend Strength, Minor Healing, Peaceful Sleep.



Vowel Spells

The vowel spells require Vowel Tree Lore, and the mixed spells require Mixed Tree Lore. These spells also require Magical Aptitude, so many Bards and Ollaves know some of these spells theoretically but are unable to get them to work. This is perceived as a failure of attention to or comprehension of these notoriously difficult spells, not as an innate lack in the caster.

The Talisman spells for vowel and mixed tree spells do not require Vowel Tree Lore or Mixed Tree Lore to cast, but *do* require Magical Aptitude, Naturalist skill, and the correct item to be cast by non-druids.

Enchant Druid Wand

Enchantment

This spell allows druids and Sidhe to create magic items at a much lower cost than normal magic items. In order to make a Druid Wand, the caster must know the spell which is to be put in the wand. He must then personally obtain a twig of the correct tree for that spell, and enchant it within 24 hours of taking it from the living tree. He must cast Enchant Druid Wand, *and also the spell which he wants in the wand*. Failure of either of these spell rolls means that the twig becomes useless for further attempts. If both rolls are successful, the twig can then be used by anyone in a high-mana area or anyone with Magery in a normal-mana area; Druid Wands do not work at all in low-mana areas.

The wand has a number of "charges" equal to *half* the number of points put into it by the mage making the wand, and this is the number of times the wand works. When all the charges are spent, the wand becomes simply a dead twig.

In order to use the wand, the user must concentrate for one round, then roll against the Druid Wand's Power of 10 to cast the spell. The user of the wand suffers Fatigue and/or loss of HT equal to the energy cost of the spell he is casting.

The spell a Druid Wand contains can only be discovered by Detect Magic or Analyze Magic. The latter also reveals how many charges are left. Only one spell can be incorporated in any particular wand, and a twig that has been enchanted with this spell can no longer be used to cast its Talisman spell.



The \$ cost of a Druid Wand is usually equal to five times the point cost to make it, although particularly rare spells could cost up to 50 times the \$ cost.

Cost to Cast: Twice the number of charges put into the wand, plus the cost of the spell which is to be incorporated into it.

Time to Cast: 1 hour.

Prerequisites: Enchant and the spell to be incorporated into the wand.

Great Shapeshifting

Special

Allows the caster to perform multiple, fast, repeated changes of shape, gaining powers appropriate for the new form – thus, among many other things, allowing one to fight a shapeshifters' duel (see p. 91). The caster can change shape at will throughout the duration of the spell, taking just one turn to make the change and expending no extra energy. If the caster changes back to his natural form at any time, the spell terminates. Returning to his normal form also leaves the magician mentally stunned (see p. B127) for at least one turn.

The spell is immensely flexible, limited only by the shapes the user might reasonably imagine and what the GM is prepared to accept. The caster may even shift to a form with multiple parts, a plausible "collective shape," only one part of which holds his soul; the other parts may then be destroyed or lost without injuring him. For example, a spellcaster might turn into a swarm of bees – one of which "is" the caster – and then have each bee fly off in a different direction, thus frustrating his enemies. The caster retains normal hit points, injuries, and Fatigue at all times.

Clothing, jewelry, and armor vanish when the spell is cast, and reappear when it stops (magical jewelry cannot be detected while "vanished"). Items that the mage was carrying, including backpacks, etc., simply fall to the ground.

The caster can even turn into a normally inanimate object, such as a fire, a cloud, or a grain of wheat. However, he only has the *abilities* of that object if he has the necessary spells; otherwise (for instance) he *looks like* a fire, but is incapable of burning anything. It is possible to learn spells "linked" to Great Shapeshifting. A linked spell can *only* be cast while the magic-user is shapeshifted into an appropriate form, but the caster has a +5 to base skill rolls with it.

Claws, teeth, and other cutting or impaling attacks are possible. If stats for the creature are not readily available, the GM can assume that the form has an appropriate thrust-1 cutting or thrust-3 impaling attack. Suitable forms may also trample opponents (see p. B142).

The form adopted by the caster can also have different attributes, DR, PD, Move, Swimming skill, Sense rolls, or base damage from his human form. The difference between the animal's ability values and the mage's original ones cannot total more than twice his effective skill with the spell, and he cannot take a form with completely unreasonable ability levels. The GM may require that some things (including defenses) be *decreased*, as appropriate.

Example: Connor the Druid, with skill 25 in Great Shapeshifting, contemplates turning into a gray whale. However, the GM rules that a whale must have *at least* ST 400, and Connor starts with a ST of 9, giving him a maximum increased ST of 59. He thinks about turning into a salmon instead – after all, he has Breathe Water linked to Great Shapeshifting, and he'll be able to raise his Move to a salmon's natural 10 with no trouble. The GM says OK, but rules that a salmon is a fragile thing, and cannot have the increased DR which Connor gets from his Toughness advantage.

Anyone who shifts to a form with senses beyond the human gains those senses, but at -5 to all rolls to use them, although a raised Sense roll can compensate for that.

Conversely, a person who changes into something which normally has no senses at all does not lose his senses altogether, but is at -5 to all Sense rolls while in that form.





The mage can cast other spells while shapeshifted, but only those where the changed form is capable of meeting the casting requirement. Since many forms can neither gesture nor speak, this means that spells with a roll of 21 or better are the best bet.

Example Connor links Flight and Rain to Great Shapeshifting, and they are thus easy to bring up to skill better than 21. Being able to fly, he can turn into a swan; he can also turn into a rain cloud and rain on people. He also has Light-18 and Fear-19, which require a gesture *or* a word to cast; he can only use these by turning into, say, a parrot, which can talk. But unless he was well-traveled, he would be unlikely ever to have seen a parrot, and thus would be unable to change into one.

Duration: 1 minute.

Cost: 8 to cast; 4 to maintain.

Time to Cast: 5 seconds.

Prerequisites: Enchant and Celtic Shapeshifting.

Celtic Shapeshift Others Special Resisted by IQ

As Celtic Shapeshifting (p. 96), but usable on others. The subject *cannot* end the spell; only the caster, or a Remove Curse spell, can do that. The caster may specify the sex of the animal, which can differ from that of the subject.

This spell can also be used to turn animals into humans. An animal turned into a human is a 25-point character, with 10 in all stats, and skills, advantages, and disadvantages related to his animal nature (e.g., a deer would have Running, Combat Paralysis, and Alertness), chosen by the GM and not necessarily known to the PC who cast the spell. The animal is able to speak the same language as the caster, but has to learn other skills, as a child would. On first being turned into a human, the animal must make a Fright Check at -4 against its new IQ. The new human also makes a reaction roll to the caster, and is unlikely to be grateful for its new condition.

This spell replaces Shapeshift Others from *GURPS Magic*, and is much more powerful. The same care should be taken with this as is taken with Celtic Shapeshifting.

Duration: Indefinite (could be permanent).

Cost: 8.

Prerequisites: Magery and Celtic Shapeshifting.

Great Hallucination see p. G76; Regular Resisted by IQ

Duration: 1 minute.

Cost: 6 to cast; 3 to maintain.

Time to cast: 4 seconds.

Prerequisite: Magery 2.

GORSE (O – ONN)

Special Day:

Beltain

Talisman Spell:

Avert

Item:

Twig with Flowers

Gorse was the most powerful tree of magic and protection against magic. Its combination spells emphasized the nature of the consonant tree. Avert did not require Magical Aptitude if used as a Talisman spell, but did for all other uses. If Avert is cast using a twig without flowers, the caster is at -2 to his skill.

Gorse is a prickly low bush which grows on hillsides. It bears small, bright yellow flowers from March to June.

The following are Gorse spells:

Magelock, Mystic Mist, Reflex, Remove Enchantment, Suspend Enchantment, Ward. There are also some "combination" spells using Gorse (see pp. 106-112).

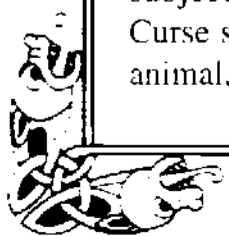
Avert* **Blocking; Resisted by subject spell**

Cast *immediately* after a spell is thrown at the subject, this spell can prevent magical attack. It works only against a single attack; if the attacking spell affects several people, Avert only protects the caster.

The caster may use Avert against *any* spell, but only if he knows that a spell is being cast on him. He must announce that he is using Avert *before* the opposed spell's subject tries a resistance roll. Avert does not work against missile spells, although it does work against the curse element of Curse-Missile.

Cost: The same as the attacking spell.

Prerequisite: Magery.



Dispel Magic

see p. M62; Area
Resisted by subject spells

This is a very dangerous spell as it is not usually possible to know how many layers of magic might be dispelled by its use. This spell will not dispel gesas or any sort of permanent magic, such as wonders and gates to the Otherworld. If it is used in the Otherworld, its effects may, at the GM's discretion, include the expulsion of the caster from that world back to mundane reality.

Prerequisites: Counterspell and 10 Rowan spells.

HEATHER (U - URA)

Special Day: Lughnasa

Talisman Spell: Remove Curse

Items: Flower or Straight (not twisted)
Twig

Heather was another "tree" of blessing and of personal control. Its combination spells were inclined to be powerful but favorable enhancements of the consonant tree. A sprig of heather was also purported to give protection against curses directed at the bearer, but it is the GM's option whether this supposition is real.

Heather is an evergreen flower rather than a true tree. It is ground covering, and varies in height from 3 to 30 inches. It has pale purple bell-shaped blossoms from June to September.

The following are Heather spells:

Delayed Message. There are also some "combination" spells using heather (see pp. 106-112).

Remove Curse* see p. M63
Regular; Resisted by subject spell

Remove Curse doesn't remove gesas under any circumstances. It can only be attempted once on any hex or other ill-wish. Most Sidhe druids have skills high enough that any curses they set can only be removed by a critical success in addition to a sprig of heather.

Prerequisite: Magery.

ASPEN (E - EADHA)

Special Day:

Talisman Spell:

Item:

Samain
Shield

A Hefty Branch

Aspen was the tree from which shields were made, and it symbolized physical protection. All its spells and combination spells were concerned with protection in some way.

Aspen is a type of poplar which grew in dense thickets. It has long, flattened leaf-stalks and the leaves quiver in the slightest breeze.

The following are Aspen spells:

Armor, Deflect, Forest Warning, Fortify, Hide Path, Iron Arm, Nightingale, Shield*, Tangle Growth, Watchdog. There are also some "combination" spells using Aspen (see pp. 106-112).

YEW (I - IDHO)

Special Day:

Talisman Spell:

Items:

Samain Eve
Decay

Berries or a Straight Rod

Yew was the tree of death. It controlled all weapon and death spells, as well as decay and preservation spells. Idho was the last letter of the Ogham alphabet, and Yew spells were the most difficult for which to find a tutor.

Yew is an evergreen, with dark green drooping branches of needles. Its berries and its dark brown bark are poisonous. Animals will not touch needles or bark of a growing yew, although they can be poisoned by clippings.

The following are Yew spells:

Accuracy, Dancing Weapon, Decay*, Disintegrate, Loyal Sword, Poison Food, Preserve Food, Puissance, Quick-Draw, Ruin, Shatter, Weaken. There are also some "combination" spells using Yew (see pp. 106-112).





SPELL TABLES

This section can be copied and used for reference, especially when creating Celtic characters.

Under *page*, the first entry is the spell's location in *GURPS Celtic Myth*, the second is the location (if any) in *GURPS Magic, Second Edition*.

Spells with no *Magic* reference are presented in full here.

Under *spell name*, a "T" following the name indicates that the spell is a Talisman spell, and can be cast by without the appropriate Tree Lore.

An asterisk (*) after the name indicates a spell that is Mental/Very Hard; all others are Mental/Hard.

Under *class*, an "R" indicates that the spell can be resisted; the entry after the dash shows what resists the spell.

Under *prerequisites*, Magery is abbreviated M and Magery 2 is M2. The prerequisites for many spells have been changed for this setting.

A "#" sign means that there are exceptions to the amount given – see the appropriate page number.

A "–" indicates that the column does not apply.

Page	Spell Name	Class	Tree(s)	Time to Cast	Duration	Energy	Prerequisites
105/M44	Accuracy	Enchantment	Yew	–	Perm.	varies	M
102/M70	Air-Golem	Regular	Silver Fir+Oak	10 sec.	1 hr.	4/2	Create Air
98/M34	Air Jet	Regular	Yew+Oak+Silver Fir	1 sec.	1 sec.	1 to 3#	Create Air
99/M53	Alarm	Regular	Hazel	1 sec.	1 week	1#	Tell Time
99/M69	Alertness	Regular	Holly	1 sec.	10 min.	varies	Any 2 of Keen Eyes/Ears/Nose
99/M55	Analyze Magic	Inform./R-spell	Hazel	1 hr.	Instant	8	Identify Spell
99/M54	Ancient History	Information	Hazel	min.=cost	Instant	varies	History
102/M76	Animate Plant	Regular	Silver Fir	5 sec.	1 min.	varies	Enchant, 2 Silver Fir
97/M69	Appontation	Reg./R-IQ	Ash	1 sec.	1 min.	varies	Flight
105/M76	Armor	Regular	Aspen	1 sec.	1 min.	varies	Fortify
99/M53	Aura	Information	Hazel	1 sec.	Instant	3	Detect Magic
104	Avert/T	Block/R-Spell	Gorse	1 sec.	Instant	varies	M
98/M67	Avoid	Area	Hawthorn	1 min.	1 hour	3/3	Hide, Curse, 3 Hawthorn
102/M49	Awaken	Area	Elder	1 sec.	Instant	1	Lend Health
97/M75	Banish	Spec./R-ST+IQ	Rowan	5 sec.	Instant	Special	5 Rowan
100/M49	Banquet	Regular	Silver Fir+Vine	1 sec.	1 day	2 per meal	Enchant, Foolishness
100/M23	Beast Link	Regular	Vine	5 sec.	Special	3	Beast Summoning
99/M23	Beast Seeker	Information	Hazel	1 sec.	Instant	3#	4 Hazel
100/M23	Beast-Soother	Regular	Vine	1 sec.	Perm.#	1 to 3	–
99/M25	Beast Speech	Regular	Hazel	1 sec.	1 min.	4/2	Beast Seeker
100/M23	Beast Summoning	Regular	Vine	1 sec.	1 min.	3/2#	Beast-Soother
100/M65	Berserker	Reg./R-IQ	Vine	4 sec.	10 min.#	3/2	Drunkennes
100/M24	Bird Control	Reg./R-IQ	Vine	1 sec.	1 min.	4/2	Beast-Soother
99/M62	Bless/T	Regular	Holly	min.=cost	special	special	–
99/M75	Bless Plants	Area	Holly	5 min.	1 crop/season	1#	Bless
98/M58	Blur	Regular	Hawthorn	2 sec.	1 min.	1 to 5	Darkness
105/M34	Body of Air	Reg./R-HT	Aspen+Oak	5 sec.	1 min.	4/1	Earth to Air, Fortify
105/M32	Body of Stone	Reg./R-HT	Aspen+Oak	5 sec.	1 min.	10/hex#	Stone to Earth, Fortify
105/M40	Body of Water	Reg./R-HT	Aspen+Willow	5 sec.	1 min.	5/hex#	Purify Water, Fortify
99/M30	Borrow Language	Regular	Hazel	3 sec.	1 min.	3/1	–
99/M30	Borrow Skill	Regular	Hazel	3 sec.	1 min.	4/3	5 Hazel
99/M65	Bravery	Area/R-IQ-1	Holly	1 sec.	1 hr.#	2#	Alertness
105/M38	Breathe Fire*	Regular	Yew+Alder+Silver Fir	2 sec.	1 sec.	1 to 4	Flame Jet
97/M35	Breathe Water	Regular	Ash	1 sec.	1 min.	4/2	Shape Water



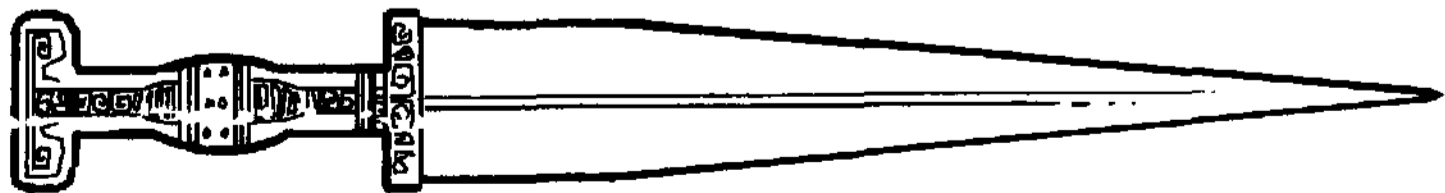


Page	Spell Name	Class	Tree(s)	Time to Cast	Duration	Energy	Prerequisites
96	Celtic Shapeshifting	Regular	Birch	1 sec.	Perm.#	3	-
104	Celtic Shapeshift Others	Reg./R-IQ	Silver Fir+Birch	1 sec.	Perm.#	8	M, Celtic Shapeshifting
100/M68	Charm	Reg./R-IQ	Vine	3 sec.	1 min.	6/3	Loyalty
96/M60	Clean	Area	Birch	1 sec.	Perm.	2	Restore
99/M36	Climbing	Regular	Holly	1 sec.	1 min.	1 to 3/s	-
102/M37	Clouds	Area	Silver Fir+Oak	10 sec.	10 min.	1/20/s	Enchant, 6 Oak
98/M26	Clumsiness	Reg./R-IQ	Hawthorn	1 sec.	1 min.	varies	Spasm
97/M37	Cold	Regular	Willow	1 min.	1 min.	3/hex#	-
97/M57	Colors	Regular	Alder	1 sec.	1 min.	2/1#	Light
100/M28	Compel Truth	Inform./R-IQ	Vine	1 sec.	5 min.	4/2	Forgetfulness
96/M51	Complex Illusion	Area	Birch	1 sec.	1 min.	2/1	Sound, Simple Illusion
97/M61	Conceal Magic	Regular	Rowan	3 sec.	10 hrs.	1 to 5/s#	5 Rowan
97/M57	Continual Light	Regular	Alder	1 sec.	varies	varies	Light
100/M52	Control Illusion	Reg./R-Spell	Vine	2 sec.	Perm.	1/hex#	5 Vine
98	Control Otherworld Gate	Reg./R-Gate	Oak	10 sec.	1 min.	6/3	Create Otherworld Gate
97/M48	Cook	Regular	Alder	5 sec.	Instant	1 per meal	Heat
101/M45	Cornucopia	Enchantment	Reed	-	Perm.	100 x \$ value#	-
104/M61	Counterspell	Reg./R-Spell	Gorse+Rowan	5 sec.	Instant	varies	M, 2 Gorse, 5 Rowan including Conceal Magic
102/M34	Create Air	Area	Silver Fir+Oak	1 sec.	5 sec#	1	Enchant, Purify Air
102/M32	Create Earth	Regular	Silver Fir+Oak	1 sec.	Perm.	4/hex#	Enchant, Earth to Stone
102/M36	Create Fire	Area	Silver Fir+Alder	1 sec.	1 min.	2/1	Enchant, 5 Alder
96/M48	Create Food	Regular	Birch	30 sec.	Perm.	3/meal#	Create Plant
98	Create Otherworld Gate*	Area	Oak	30 sec.	Perm.	30	5 Oak
102	Create Person	Regular	Silver Fir	12 hours	Perm.	300	Shape Plant, 2 from each Tree
96/M66	Create Plant	Area	Birch	sec.=cost	Perm.	varies	3 Birch
102/M39	Create Water	Regular	Silver Fir+Willow	1 sec.	Perm.	2/gal.	Enchant, Purify Water
105/M50	Cure Disease	Regular	Yew+Elder	10 min.#	Instant	4#	Minor Healing, Decay
98/M63	Curse/T	Regular	Hawthorn	varies	Special	varies	-
105/M27	Curse-Missile	Missile	Yew+Hawthorn	1 sec.+other spell#	varies	2	M, spell being used in missile
105/M45	Dancing Weapon	Enchantment	Yew	-	Perm.	1,000/lb.#	Quick-Draw
98/M58	Darkness	Area	Hawthorn	1 sec.	1 min.	2/1	Curse, 3 Hawthorn
99/M58	Dark Vision	Regular	Hazel	1 sec.	1 min.	5/2	Night Vision or Infravision
100/M66	Daze	Reg./R-HT	Vine	2 sec.	1 min.	3/2	Foolishness
105/M27	Deathtouch	Regular	Yew+Willow	1 sec.	Instant	1 to 3	Death Vision, Disintegrate
97/M72	Death Vision/T	Regular	Willow	3 sec.	1 sec.	2	-
105/M48	Decay/T	Regular	Yew	1 sec.	Perm.	1/meal	M
105/M46	Deflect	Enchantment	Aspen	-	Perm.	varies	M
105/M39	Dehydrate	Reg./R-HT	Yew+Aspen+Alder	2 sec.	Perm.	1 to 3#	Destroy Water
102/M63	Delay	Regular	Silver Fir	10 sec.	2 hrs.	3/3	Enchant, 15 spells
105/M79	Delayed Message	Area	Heather	4 sec.	Indef.#	3#	M
105/M35	Destroy Air	Area	Aspen+Alder	1 sec.	Instant	2	Create Air
105/M39	Destroy Water	Area	Aspen+Alder	1 sec.	Perm.	3	M, Melt Ice
99	Detect Gesa	Inform./R-IQ	Hazel	1 hour	Instant	8	Identify Spell, 8 Hazel
99/M53	Detect Magic	Regular	Hazel	5 sec.	Instant	2	-
99/M26	Dexterity	Regular	Holly	1 sec.	1 min.	2 per DX+/s	Alertness
105/M59	Disintegrate	Regular	Yew	1 sec.	Perm.	1 to 4#	Shatter, Ruin, 2 from each Tree
100/M52	Dispel Illusion	Reg./R-Spell	Vine	1 sec.	Instant	1/hex	Control Illusion
104/M62	Dispel Magic	Area/R-Spell	Gorse+Rowan	sec.=cost	Perm.	3	Counterspell, 10 Rowan
97/M49	Distill	Regular	Alder	10 sec.	Perm.	1/quart	Ferment
98/M55	Divination: Augury	Information	Oak	1 hr.#	Instant	10	IQ 13, 4 Oak
101/M55	Divination: Haruspication	Information	Ivy	1 hr.#	Instant	10	-
99/M55	Divination: Nimbomancy	Information	Holly	1 hr.#	Instant	10	IQ 13, 2 Holly
97/M55	Divination: Pyromancy	Information	Alder	1 hr.#	Instant	10	Ignite Fire, 3 Alder
100/M66	Drunkenness	Reg./R-IQ	Vine	2 sec.	1 min.	varies	-
97/M60	Dye	Regular	Alder	3 sec.	2d days	varies	Light
105/M33	Earthquake	Area	Yew+Oak+Silver Fir	30 sec.	1 min.	2/2	Disintegrate, Create Earth





Page	Spell Name	Class	Tree(s)	Time to Cast	Duration	Energy	Prerequisites
98/M32	Earth to Air	Regular	Oak	2 sec.	Perm.	8/hex#	Shape Earth, Shape Air
98/M32	Earth to Stone	Regular	Oak	1 sec.	Perm.	5/hex#	Shape Earth
99/M32	Earth Vision	Regular	Hazel	1 sec.	30 sec.	2/10 yds.#	5 Hazel
100/M68	Emotion Control	Area/R-IQ	Vine	1 sec.	1 hour	2#	Loyalty
102/M42	Enchant/T	Enchantment	Silver Fir	varies	Perm.	varies	M
102	Enchant Druid Wand	Enchantment	Silver Fir	varies	varies	1 hour	Enchant, spell to be incorporated in wand
100	Entrail	Spec./R-IQ	Vine	3 sec.	1 hour	3/3	Daze + 2 Vine
105/M32	Entombment	Reg./R-HT	Aspen+Oak	3 sec.	Perm.	10#	Body of Stone
102/M38	Essential Flame	Area	Silver Fir+Alder	3 sec.	1 min.	3/2#	Create Fire
102/M39	Essential Water	Regular	Silver Fir+Willow	1 sec.	Perm.	3/gal.	Create Water
105/M72	Ethereal Body	Regular	Aspen+Ivy+Oak	30 sec.	10 sec.	8/4	Body of Air
96/M30	Exorcism	Reg./R-spell	Birch	10 sec.	Instant	10	3 Birch
105/M38	Explosive Fireball	Missile	Yew+Alder+Silver Fir	1 to 3 sec.	Instant	2 to 6#	Fireball
105/M37	Extinguish Fire	Regular	Yew+Willow	1 sec.	Perm.	3/hex	Decay, Purify Water
99/M79	Far-Hearing	Information	Hazel	3 sec.	1 min.	4/2	Not deaf, Keen Ears, 2 Hazel
100	Fascinate	Reg. or Block./R-IQ	Vine	1 sec.	Indef.	4/0	Daze
98/M27	Fatigue	Reg./R-HT	Hawthorn	1 sec.	1 min.	1 per ST-/h	-
100/M65	Fear	Area/R-IQ	Vine	1 sec.	10 min.#	1#	Drunkennes
97/M48	Ferment	Regular	Alder	10 sec.	1 hour	1 per pint or loaf	Heat
99/M53	Find Direction	Information	Hazel	1 sec.	Instant	2	-
99/M59	Find Weakness	Information	Hazel	2 sec.	Instant	1#	6 Hazel
105/M37	Fireball	Missile	Yew+Alder+Silver Fir	1 to 3 sec.	Instant	1 to 3#	Create Fire
105/M37	Fireproof	Area	Aspen+Alder	5 min.	1 day	3#	M, Ignite Fire
100/M24	Fish Control	Reg./R-IQ	Vine	1 sec.	1 min.	3/2	Beast-Soother
105/M38	Flame Jet	Regular	Yew+Alder+Silver Fir	1 sec.	1 sec.	1-3/s#	Fireball
105/M38	Flaming Missile	Regular	Yew+Alder+Silver Fir	3 sec.	1 min.	4/2#	Flaming Weapon
105/M38	Flaming Weapon	Regular	Yew+Alder+Silver Fir	2 sec.	1 min.	4/1	Fireball
102/M57	Flash	Regular	Silver Fir+Alder	2 sec.	Instant	4	Continual Light, Create Fire
105/M32	Flesh to Stone	Reg./R-HT	Yew+Oak+Silver Fir	2 sec.	Perm.	10/hex#	Earth to Stone, Enchant
97/M71	Flight/T	Regular	Ash	2 sec.	1 min.	5/3	-
102/M40	Fog	Area	Silver Fir+Oak	1 sec.	1 min.	2/1	Clouds
100/M66	Foolishness	Reg./R-IQ	Vine	1 sec.	1 min.	1 per IQ-/h	Drunkennes
105/M78	Force Dome	Area	Aspen+Silver Fir	1 sec.	10 min.	3/2	Enchant, Shield
105/M76	Forest Warning	Area	Aspen	1 sec.	10 hrs.	1/2#s	M
100/M66	Forgetfulness	Reg./R-IQ or skill	Vine	10 sec.	1 hour	3/3	Foolishness, 5 Vine
105/M46	Fortify	Enchantment	Aspen	-	Perm.	varies	Shield
97/M41	Freeze	Regular	Willow	10 sec.	varies	6/hex#	Cold
102/M41	Frost	Area	Silver Fir+Willow+Oak	1 sec.	varies	1	Rain, Freeze
105/M42	Frostbite	Reg./R-HT	Yew+Willow	3 sec.	Perm.	1 to 3#	Decay, Freeze
105/M30	Gift of Letters	Regular	Heather+Hazel	1 sec.	1 min.	4/2	Gift of Tongues
105/M30	Gift of Tongues	Regular	Heather+Hazel	1 sec.	1 min.	4/2	M, Borrow Language
99/M55	Glass Wall	Regular	Hazel	1 sec.	1 min.	4/2	10 Hazel
100	Glib Tongue	Reg./R-IQ	Vine	1 sec.	5 min.	2/1	Fascinate
98/M69	Glue	Area	Hawthorn	1 sec.	10 min.	3/3	Curse
102	Great Hallucination	Reg./R-IQ	Silver Fir+Hazel	4 sec.	1 min.	6/3	M2
99/M69	Great Haste	Regular	Holly	3 sec.	10 sec.	5#	Haste, Bless, 6 Holly
102	Great Shapeshifting	Special	Silver Fir	5 sec.	1 min.	8/4	Enchant, Celtic Shapeshifting
96/M78	Great Voice	Regular	Birch	2 sec.	1 min.	3/1	Voices, 3 Birch
105/M62	Great Ward	Block./R-Spell	Gorse+Rowan	-	Instant	1 per subject#	5 Rowan, 2 Gorse including Ward



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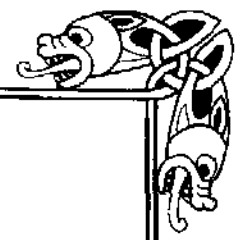
Page	Spell Name	Class	Tree(s)	Time to Cast	Duration	Energy	Prerequisites
102/M42	Hail	Area	Silver Fir+Willow+Oak	1 sec.	1 min.	1/5/s#	Snow
99/M69	Haste	Regular	Holly	2 sec.	1 min.	2/1#	-
105/M71	Hawk Flight	Regular	Heather+Ash	3 sec.	1 min.	8/4	M, Levitation
99/M58	Hawk Vision	Regular	Hazel	2 sec.	1 min.	4/2	Keen Eyes
102/M75	Heal Plant	Area	Elder	1 min.	Perm.	3#	Lend Health
97/M37	Heat	Regular	Alder	1 min.	1 min.	3/hex#	Shape Fire, 1 Alder
102/M43	Hex	Enchantment	Silver Fir+Hawthorn	-	Perm.	200	Enchant, Curse, 5 Hawthorn
98/M58	Hide	Regular	Hawthorn	5 sec.	1 hour	1 to 5/s	Blur
105/M76	Hide Path	Regular	Aspen	1 sec.	1 min.	2/1	Tangle Growth
97/M29	Hide Thoughts	Regular	Rowan	1 sec.	10 min.	3/1	-
96/M44	Hideaway	Enchantment	Birch	-	Perm.	50#	2 Birch
100/M27	Hinder	Regular	Vine	1 sec.	1 min.	1 to 4/s	Tanglefoot
99/M34	History	Information	Hazel	sec.=cost	Instant	varies	Trace
102/M79	Hush	Reg./R-IQ	Silver Fir+Vine	2 sec.	10 sec.#	2/1	Enchant, 6 Vine
105/M41	Ice Dagger	Missile	Yew+Willow+Silver Fir	1 to 3 sec.	Instant	1 to 3#	Ice Sphere
105/M41	Ice Stick	Area	Yew+Willow+Silver Fir	2 sec.#	varies	3	Enchant, Freeze
105/M41	Ice Sphere	Missile	Yew+Willow+Silver Fir	1 to 3 sec.	Instant	1 to 3#	Enchant, Freeze
99/M41	Ice Vision	Regular	Hazel	1 sec.	30 sec.	2/10 yds.#	Water Vision
105/M40	Icy Weapon	Regular	Yew+Willow+Silver Fir	3 sec.	1 min.	3/1	Enchant, Freeze
99/M75	Identify Plant	Information	Hazel	1 sec.	Instant	2	Seek Plant
99/M55	Identify Spell	Information	Hazel	1 sec.	Instant	2	Detect Magic
97/M36	Ignite Fire/T	Regular	Alder	1 sec.	1 sec.	1 to 4#	-
96/M52	Illusion Disguise	Regular	Birch	1 sec.	varies	3	Simple Illusion
96/M51	Illusion Shell	Regular	Birch	1 sec.	1 min.	2/hex#	Simple Illusion
100/M53	Independence	Area	Vine	varies	varies	2	Control Illusion
99/M58	Infravision	Regular	Hazel	1 sec.	1 min.	3/1	Keen Eyes
100/M24	Insect Control	Reg./R-IQ	Vine	1 sec.	1 min.	3/2	Beast-Soother
105/M51	Instant Regeneration	Regular	Heather+Elder+Silver Fir	Special	Perm.	80#	Enchant, Regeneration, 4 from each Tree
99/M58	Invisibility/T	Regular	Hazel	3 sec.	1 min.	5/3	-
102/M79	Invisible Wizard Ear	Regular	Silver Fir+Hazel	4 sec.	1 min.	5/3	Wizard Ear, Invisibility
102/M54	Invisible Wizard Eye	Regular	Silver Fir+Hazel	4 sec.	1 min.	5/3	Wizard Eye, Invisibility
105/M77	Iron Arm	Blocking	Aspen	-	Instant	1	Fortify, DX 12+
98/M25	Itch	Reg./R-HT	Hawthorn	1 sec.	Scratch#	2	-
99/M69	Keen Ears	Regular	Holly	1 sec.	30 min.	1 per +/h#	Bless
99/M69	Keen Eyes	Regular	Holly	1 sec.	30 min.	1 per +/h#	Bless
99/M69	Keen Nose	Regular	Holly	1 sec.	30 min.	1 per +/h#	Bless
96/M60	Knots	Regular	Birch	3 sec.	Indef.#	2#	Stiffen
99/M53	Know Illusion	Information	Hazel	1 sec.	Instant	2	5 Hazel
102/M49	Lend Health/T	Regular	Elder	1 sec.	1 hour	1 per HT loaned	-
101/M30	Lend Language/T	Regular	Ivy	3 sec.	1 min.	3/1	-
101/M30	Lend Skill	Regular	Ivy	3 sec.	1 min.	3/2	-
102/M49	Lend Strength	Regular	Elder	1 sec.	Perm.	varies	Lend Health
97/M70	Levitation	Reg./R-IQ	Ash	2 sec.	1 min.	1/80 lbs./h#	Apportation
97/M57	Light	Regular	Alder	1 sec.	1 min.	1/1	-
97/M57	Light Jet	Regular	Alder	1 sec.	1 min.	2/1	Continual Light
97/M69	Lighten Burden	Regular	Ash	3 sec.	10 min.	3 or 5/h#	Apportation
102/M36	Lightning	Missile	Silver Fir+Alder+Oak	1 to 3 sec.	Instant	1 to 3#	Rain, Flash
102/M46	Limit	Enchantment	Silver Fir	-	Perm.	200	Enchant
102/M64	Link	Area	Silver Fir	4 hrs.	Indef.#	8	Delay
105/M45	Loyal Sword	Enchantment	Yew	-	Perm.	750/lb.#	Quick-Draw
100/M68	Loyalty	Reg./R-IQ	Vine	2 sec.	1 hour	2/2#	Persuasion, 10 Vine
100/M67	Madness	Reg./R-IQ-2	Vine	2 sec.	1 min.	4/2	Forgetfulness
104/M77	Magelock	Regular	Gorse	4 sec.	6 hrs.	3/2	M
99/M55	Mage Sense	Information	Hazel	1 sec.	1 min.	3/2	Detect Magic
99/M54	Mage Sight	Regular	Hazel	1 sec.	1 min.	3/2	Detect Magic
102/M79	Mage-Stealth	Regular	Silver Fir+Hazel+Vine	3 sec.	1 min.	3/2	Hush
97/M61	Magic Resistance/T	Reg./R-IQ+M	Rowan	3 sec.	1 min.	1 to 5/s	-
105/M50	Major Healing	Regular	Heather+Elder	1 sec.	Perm.	1 to 4#	M, Minor Healing





Page	Spell Name	Class	Tree(s)	Time to Cast	Duration	Energy	Prerequisites
100/M24	Mammal Control	Reg./R-IQ	Vine	1 sec.	1 min.	5/3	Beast-Soother
97/M70	Manipulate	Regular	Ash	3 sec.	1 min.	4/3#	-
100/M66	Mass Daze	Area/R-HT	Vine	sec.=cost	Instant	2/1#	Daze, 5 Vine
100/M67	Mass Sleep	Area/R-HT	Vine	sec.=cost	Instant	3#	Sleep, 5 Vine
100/M23	Master	Reg./Block/R-IQ	Vine	1 sec.	Indef.	2	Beast-Soother
99/M54	Measurement	Area/Inform.	Hazel	1 sec.	Instant	1#	-
97/M41	Melt Ice	Area	Alder	10 sec.	Perm.#	1#	Heat
100/M66	Mental Stun	Reg./R-IQ	Vine	1 sec.	Instant	2	Daze
99/M26	Might	Regular	Holly	1 sec.	1 min.	2 per ST+/-s	Vigor
105/M67	Mindlessness	Reg./R-IQ	Yew+Vine	5 sec.	1 min.	8/4	M, Forgetfulness
102/M50	Minor Healing	Regular	Elder	1 sec.	Perm.	1 to 3#	Lend Strength
105/M77	Missile Shield	Regular	Aspen+Reed	1 sec.	1 min.	5/2	Shield
99/M49	Monk's Banquet	Regular	Holly	1 sec.	1 day	6	Resist Pain
104/M77	Mystic Mist	Area	Gorse	5 min.	10 hrs.	1/1	Avert, 2 Gorse
102/M46	Name	Enchantment	Silver Fir	-	Perm.	200 or 400#	Enchant
105/M50	Neutralize Poison	Regular	Yew+Elder	30 sec.	Perm.	5#	Poison Food, Sterilize
105/M77	Nightingale	Area	Aspen	1 sec.	10 hrs.	1/2/s#	M
98/M67	Nightmare	Reg./R-IQ	Hawthorn	1 min.	1 hour	6	10 Hawthorn
99/M58	Night Vision	Regular	Hazel	1 sec.	1 min.	3/1	Keen Eyes
99/M34	No-Smell	Regular	Holly	1 sec.	1 hr.	2#	Bless
96/M35	Odor	Area	Birch	1 sec.	1 hr.#	1	1 Birch
98/M26	Pain	Reg./R-HT	Hawthorn	2 sec.	1 sec.	2	Spasm
100/M65	Panic	Area/R-IQ	Vine	1 sec.	1 min.	4/2	Fear
98/M27	Paralyze Limb	Reg./R-HT	Hawthorn	1 sec.	1 min.	3#	Pain, 6 Hawthorn
102/M46	Password	Enchantment	Silver Fir	-	Perm.	400#	Enchant
99/M54	Pathfinder	Information	Hazel	10 sec.	Instant	4#	Seeker
102/M67	Peaceful Sleep	Reg./R-Spec.	Elder	30 sec.	8 hrs.	4	Awaken
96/M51	Perfect Illusion	Area	Birch	1 sec.	1 min.	3/h#	Complex Illusion
104/M66	Perm. Forgetfulness	Reg./R-IQ or skill	Gorse+Vine	1 hour	Perm.	15	M, 2 Gorse, 5 Vine including Forgetfulness, IQ 13+
105/M67	Perm. Madness	Reg./R-IQ-2	Yew+Vine	10 min.	Perm.	20	M, Madness
100/M29	Persuasion	Reg./R-IQ	Vine	1 sec.	1 min.	2 x bonus#	Compel Truth
105/M74	Pestilence	Regular	Yew+Hawthorn	30 sec.	Perm.	6	Sickness
96/M38	Phantom Flame	Area	Birch	1 sec.	1 min.	1/1	Simple Illusion
102/M75	Plant Growth	Area	Silver Fir+Vine	10 sec.	1 min.	3/2	Reshape
99/M76	Plant Sense	Reg./R-Hide Path	Hazel	1 sec.	1 min.	3/2	6 Hazel
105/M48	Poison Food	Regular	Yew	1 sec.	Perm.	3 per meal	Decay
97/M70	Poltergeist	Missile/R-HT	Ash	1 sec.	Instant	1 or 2#	Apportation
99/M35	Predict Weather	Information	Holly	5 sec.	Instant	varies	4 Holly
105/M48	Preserve Food	Regular	Yew	1 sec.	1 week	Special	Decay
105/M44	Puissance	Enchantment	Yew	-	Perm.	varies	Accuracy
98/M34	Purify Air	Area	Oak	1 sec.	Instant	1	-
99/M48	Purify Food	Regular	Holly	1 sec.	Perm.	1 per lb.	Bless
97/M39	Purify Water	Special	Willow	5-10 sec./gal.#	Perm.	1/gal.	-
105/M44	Quick Draw	Enchantment	Yew	-	Perm.	300/lb.#	M
99/M69	Quick March	Regular	Holly	1 min.	1 day's march	4#	Haste, 3 Holly

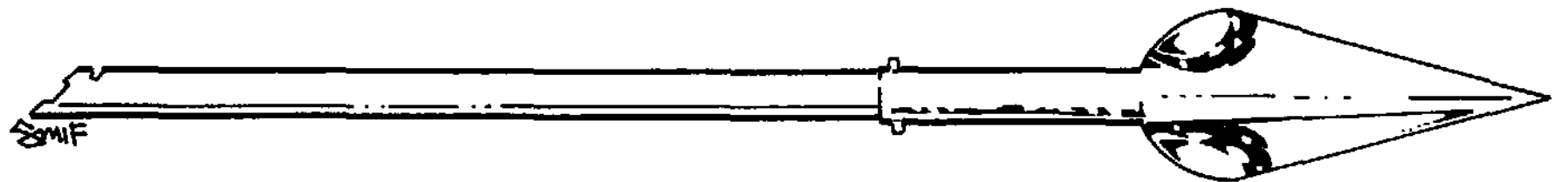


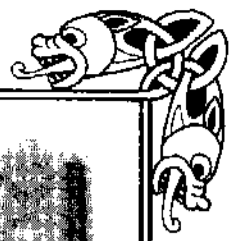


Page	Spell Name	Class	Tree(s)	Time to Cast	Duration	Energy	Prerequisites
102/M35	Rain	Area	Silver Fir+Oak	1 min.	1 hr.	1/10/s	Clouds
97	Reanimate Head	Spec./R-IQ	Rowan	1 hour	varies	30	3 Rowan
99/M69	Rear Vision	Regular	Holly	1 sec.	1 min.	3/1	Alertness
104/M62	Reflect	Block/R-Spell	Gorse+Rowan	—	Instant	4 or 6#	5 Rowan, 2 Gorse including Avert
104/M64	Reflex	Special	Gorse	10 sec.	1 hour	varies	Avert
105/M51	Regeneration	Regular	Heather+Elder	Special#	Perm.	20#	Major Healing
96/M60	Rejoin	Regular	Birch	4 sec./10 lbs.	10 min.	1 per 10 lbs./h	Restore, 4 Birch
105/M63	Remove Curse/T	Reg./R-spell	Heather	1 hour	Instant	20	M
104/M43	Remove Enchantment	Enchantment	Gorse	varies	Perm.	100#	Avert, 1 Gorse
96/M60	Repair	Regular	Birch	1 sec./lb.	Perm.	3/10 lbs.	Rejoin, 6 Birch
101/M60	Repair Arrow/T	Regular	Reed	4 sec./arrow	Perm.	2/arrow	—
102/M54	Reshape	Regular	Silver Fir+Vine	10 sec.	1 min.	6/3	Shape Plant
105/M37	Resist Cold	Regular	Aspen+Alder	1 sec.	1 min.	2/hex#	M, Heat
105/M37	Resist Fire	Regular	Aspen+Willow	1 sec.	1 min.	2/hex#	Freeze, Fortify
99/M28	Resist Pain	Regular	Holly	1 sec.	1 min.	4/2	3 Holly
96/M59	Restore	Regular	Birch	3 sec.	10 min.	2 per hex/h	Simple Illusion
105/M51	Resurrection	Regular	Heather+Elder+Silver Fir+Ivy	2 hrs.	Perm.	300#	Instant Regeneration
105/M77	Reverse Missiles	Regular	Aspen+Reed	1 sec.	1 min.	7/3	Missile Shield
100/M24	Rider	Regular	Vine	1 sec.	5 min.	2/1	2 animal control
100/M27	Rooted Feet	Reg./R-ST	Vine	1 sec.	1 min.#	3	Hinder
100/M27	Roundabout	Reg./R-HT	Vine	1 sec.	Instant	3	Tanglefoot
105/M59	Ruin	Regular	Yew	5 sec./lb.	1 min#	2 per lb./s	Weaken
105/M31	Sand Jet	Regular	Yew+Oak+Silver Fir	1 sec.	1 sec.	1 to 3/s	Stone Missile
99	Scry Otherworld Gate	Regular	Hazel	10 sec.	1 min.	4/4	Analyze Magic
97/M61	Scryguard	Regular	Rowan	5 sec.	10 hrs.	3/1#	—
97/M61	Scrywall	Area	Rowan	sec.=cost	10 hrs.	3/2	Scryguard
104/M58	See Invisible	Regular	Gorse+Hazel	1 sec.	1 min.	4/2	M, 2 Gorse, 5 Rowan including Invisibility
99/M54	See Secrets	Regular	Hazel	5 sec.	1 min.	5/2	Seeker, Aura
97/M31	Seek Earth	Information	Rowan	10 sec.	Instant	3	—
99/M48	Seek Food	Information	Hazel	1 sec.	Instant	2	—
99	Seek Otherworld Gate	Information	Hazel	10 sec.	Instant	3	Pathfinder
99/M75	Seek Plant	Information	Hazel	1 sec.	Instant	2	—
99/M39	Seek Water/T	Information	Hazel	1 sec.	Instant	2	—
99/M54	Seeker	Information	Hazel	1 sec.	Instant	3#	Seek Water, 4 Hazel
99/M76	Sense Danger	Information	Hazel	1 sec.	Instant	3	Sense Foes
99/M28	Sense Emotion	Regular	Hazel	1 sec.	Instant	2	—
99/M28	Sense Foes	Inform./Area	Hazel	1 sec.	Instant	1 (min. 2)#	Sense Emotion
99/M28	Sense Life	Inform./Area	Hazel	1 sec.	Instant	1/2 (min. 1)#	—
97/M72	Sense Spirit	Inform./Area	Willow	1 sec.	Instant	1/2	Death Vision
98/M34	Shape Air	Regular	Oak	1 sec.	1 min.	1 to 10#	Purify Air
102/M58	Shape Darkness	Area	Silver Fir+Hawthorn	1 sec.	1 min.	2/2#	Enchant, Darkness
98/M31	Shape Earth/T	Regular	Oak	1 sec.	1 min.	2/hex/1/hex	—
97/M37	Shape Fire	Area	Alder	1 sec.	1 min.	2/1	Ignite Fire
102/M75	Shape Plant	Regular	Silver Fir+Vine	10 sec.	1 min.	3/1#	Enchant, 6 Vine
98/M31	Shape Stone	Regular	Oak	1 sec.	1 min.	4/hex/2/hex#	Stone to Earth
97/M39	Shape Water	Regular	Ash	2 sec.	1 min.	1/1#	3 Ash
96/M60	Sharpen	Regular	Birch	4 sec.	1 min.	Special	Repair
105/M59	Shatter	Regular	Yew	1 sec.	Instant	1 to 3#	Weaken
101/M60	Shatterproof	Regular	Reed	1 sec.	1 hour	3/3	—
105/M76	Shield/T	Regular	Aspen	1 sec.	1 min.	varies	M
98/M66	Sickness	Reg./R-HT	Hawthorn	4 sec.	1 min.	3/3	Pain
96/M78	Silence	Area	Birch	1 sec.	1 min.	2/1	Sound
96/M51	Simple Illusion/T	Area	Birch	1 sec.	1 min.	1/h	—
100/M66	Sleep	Reg./R-HT	Vine	3 sec.	Instant	4	Daze
97/M69	Slow Fall	Regular	Ash	1 sec.	1 min.	1 per 50 lbs./h	Apportation
102/M42	Snow	Area	Silver Fir+Willow+Oak	1 sec.	1 hour	1/15#	Clouds, Frost
105/M41	Snow Shoes	Regular	Aspen+Vine	2 sec.	1 min.	2/1	M, Tanglefoot
96/M78	Sound	Regular	Birch	1 sec.	varies	varies	—
105/M78	Sound Jet	Regular	Yew+Birch	1 sec.	1 sec.	1 to 4#/s	M, Great Voice
99/M79	Sound Vision	Regular	Hazel	1 sec.	1 min.	5/2	Keen Ears



Page	Spell Name	Class	Tree(s)	Time to Cast	Duration	Energy	Prerequisites
98/M25	Spasm	Reg./R-HT	Hawthorn	1 sec.	A moment	2	Itch
97/M61	Spell Shield	Area	Rowan	1 sec.	1 min.	3/2	Magic Resistance, Scryguard
105/M74	Steal Health	Regular	Yew+Hawthorn	1 min./3 HT-#	Perm.	-	Steal Strength
105/M73	Steal Strength	Regular	Yew+Hawthorn	1 min./3 ST-#	Perm.	-	Decay, Pain
96/M35	Stench	Area	Birch	1 sec.	5 min.	1#	Odor
105/M50	Sterilize	Area	Yew+Elder	varies	Instant	3/hex#	Decay, Lend Health
96/M60	Stiffen	Reg./R-Spec.	Birch	2 sec./lb.	10 min.	1 per lb./h#	Rejoin
105/M32	Stone Missile	Missile	Yew+Oak+Silver Fir	1/energy pt.	Instant	1 to 3#	Create Earth
98/M32	Stone to Earth	Regular	Oak	1 sec.	Perm.	10/hex#	Earth to Stone
105/M32	Stone to Flesh	Regular	Heather+Oak	5 sec.	Perm.	10/hex#	Stone to Earth, Remove Curse
98/M26	Strike Blind	Reg./R-HT	Hawthorn	1 sec.	10 sec.	4/2	Spasm
98/M26	Strike Deaf	Reg./R-HT	Hawthorn	1 sec.	10 sec.	3/1	Spasm
98/M26	Strike Dumb	Reg./R-HT	Hawthorn	1 sec.	10 sec.	3/1	Spasm
98/M26	Stun	Reg./R-HT	Hawthorn	1 sec.	Instant	2	Pain
97/M72	Summon Shade	Inform./R-IQ	Rowan	10 min.#	1 min.	50/20	Summon Spirit
97/M72	Summon Spirit	Inform./R-IQ	Rowan	5 min.	1 min.	20/10#	2 Rowan
104/M43	Suspend Enchantment	Enchantment	Gorse	1 sec.	1 hour	25#	Avert, 1 Gorse
105/M50	Suspended Animation	Reg./R-HT	Aspen+Elder	30 sec.	Indef.#	6	M, Peaceful Sleep, Minor Healing
97/M70	Swim	Regular	Ash	3 sec.	1 min.	6/3	Shape Water, Levitation
105/M76	Tangle Growth	Area	Aspen	2 sec.	1 min.	1 or 2/h	Forest Warning
100/M27	Tanglefoot/T	Reg./R-DX	Vine	1 sec.	Instant	2	-
99/M53	Tell Time	Information	Hazel	1 sec.	Instant	1	-
100/M65	Terror	Area/R-IQ	Vine	1 sec.	Instant	4	Fear
99/M48	Test Food	Information	Hazel	1 sec.	Instant	1 to 3#	-
102/M78	Thunderclap	Regular	Silver Fir+Oak	1 sec.	Instant	2	Clouds
98/M27	Total Paralysis	Reg./R-HT	Hawthorn	1 sec.	1 min.	5#	Paralyze Limb
99/M54	Trace	Regular	Hazel	1 min.	1 hr.#	3/1	Seeker
99/M28	Truthsayer	Inform./R-IQ	Hazel	1 sec.	Instant	2	Sense Emotion
97/M40	Umbrella	Regular	Ash	2 sec.	10 min.	1/1	Shape Water
97/M70	Undo	Reg./R-Spec.	Ash	1 sec.	Instant	3 or 6#	Manipulate
105/M78	Utter Dome	Area	Aspen+Silver Fir+Gorse	1 sec.	1 min.	6/4	Force Dome, Ward
99/M26	Vigor	Regular	Holly	1 sec.	1 min.	2 per HT+/s#	Bless
96/M78	Voices	Regular	Birch	1 sec.	1 min.	3/2	Sound
105/M35	Walk on Air	Regular	Heather+Oak	1 sec.	1 min.	3/2	M, Shape Air
102/M40	Walk on Water	Regular	Silver Fir+Ash	4 sec.	1 min.	3/2	Enchant, Shape Water
98/M31	Walk Through Earth	Regular	Oak	1 sec.	1 sec.	4/3#	Shape Stone
104/M62	Ward/T	Block/R-spell	Gorse	-	Instant	2 or 3#	Avert
105/M77	Watchdog	Area	Aspen	10 sec.	10 hrs.	1/1	Nightingale
105/M40	Water Jet	Regular	Yew+Ash	1 sec.	1 sec.	1 to 3#	M, Shape Water
102/M49	Water to Wine	Regular	Silver Fir	10 sec.	Perm.	4 per gal.#	Create Water, 2 Silver Fir
99/M40	Water Vision	Information	Hazel	1 sec.	30 sec.	1/1#	Seek Water
105/M59	Weaken	Regular	Yew	5 sec.	Perm.	2	Decay
105/M78	Weather Dome	Area	Aspen+Holly	1 sec.	10 hrs.	3/2	Fortify, Predict Weather
97/M35	Whirlwind	Area	Alder	Instant#	1 min.#	4/2	Windstorm
97/M35	Windstorm	Area	Alder	Instant#	1 min.#	2/1	6 Alder
105/M72	Winged Knife	Missile	Yew+Reed	1 sec.	Instant	1 per lb.#	Dancing Weapon, Repair Arrow
99/M68	Wisdom	Regular	Holly	1 sec.	1 min.	varies	Alertness, 3 Holly
98/M27	Wither Limb	Reg./R-HT	Hawthorn	1 sec.	Perm.	5	Paralyze Limb
98/M76	Wither Plant	Area/R-HT	Hawthorn	10 sec.	Perm.	2	Curse
102/M79	Wizard Ear	Regular	Silver Fir+Hazel	2 sec.	1 min.	4/3	Enchant, 8 Hazel
102/M54	Wizard Eye	Regular	Silver Fir+Hazel	2 sec.	1 min.	4/2	Enchant, 8 Haze





6 Campaigns



STYLE: REALISTIC VS. MYTHIC

GURPS is a relatively realistic system, particularly in regard to combat. Holding to the rules in a *Celtic Myth* campaign will get characters killed very quickly, especially with all those sharp pointy spears around and no one wearing armor! Such realistic combat is most suitable for a campaign in the Cuchulain style, where fighting is bloody, wounds are very serious, and death is common. A Sidhe Patron who can pop out of the Other-world and heal badly injured party members would be useful, and the Hard to Kill advantage is a must for warriors.

Or the campaign could follow the rules of Celtic myth, using the **GURPS** rules only as guidelines. This should be a Cinematic campaign (see sidebar, p. B183) and combat should use the Basic Combat system.

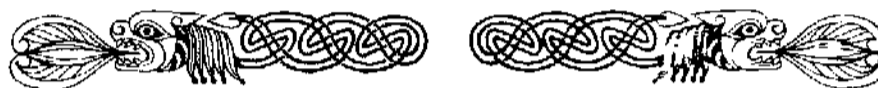
The important thing to remember in this sort of campaign is that if a player has an idea which fits the Celtic spirit, but would be difficult within the **GURPS** framework, cheat! Ignore the rule, fudge the die roll, but make it work. If someone (in the middle of a fight with the king's men) decides to kill the king by throwing a magical apple at his head, don't spend time working out range and target modifiers; let him hit on a simple skill roll and kill the king outright. It happened in Celtic stories all the time!

This type of campaign requires that the players trust the GM, and is not at all suitable for "rules lawyers." But if it's fun, if the players are sufficiently familiar with the genre to come up with good Celtic nonsense, by all means let them do what they want. **GURPS** was written with the laws of physics in mind – the ancient Celts hadn't heard of the laws of physics, and would have thought them dull if they had.

*"Men went to Catraeth, ready for battle;
Clear green mead was their feast, bitter was the after-taste.
Three hundred under arms and giving battle –
And after exultation there was silence."*

– from *The Goddodin*, the oldest extant piece of literature from Britain, Aneirin, 6th century A.D.

The Celtic genre lends itself well to long campaigns. Many Celtic stories consist of a series of linked adventures, such as the stories of Cuchulain or of Finn and the Fianna. The thing to bear in mind when running a Celtic campaign is that it should have a definite ending, and that the ending may well be tragic. The long story of Cuchulain ended with his death due to the plotting of Maeve. Most of the Fianna died in the battle of Gabhra when civil war broke out in Ireland: those left grew old lamenting the ways of the world after St. Patrick and Christianity came to Ireland.



Starting a Campaign

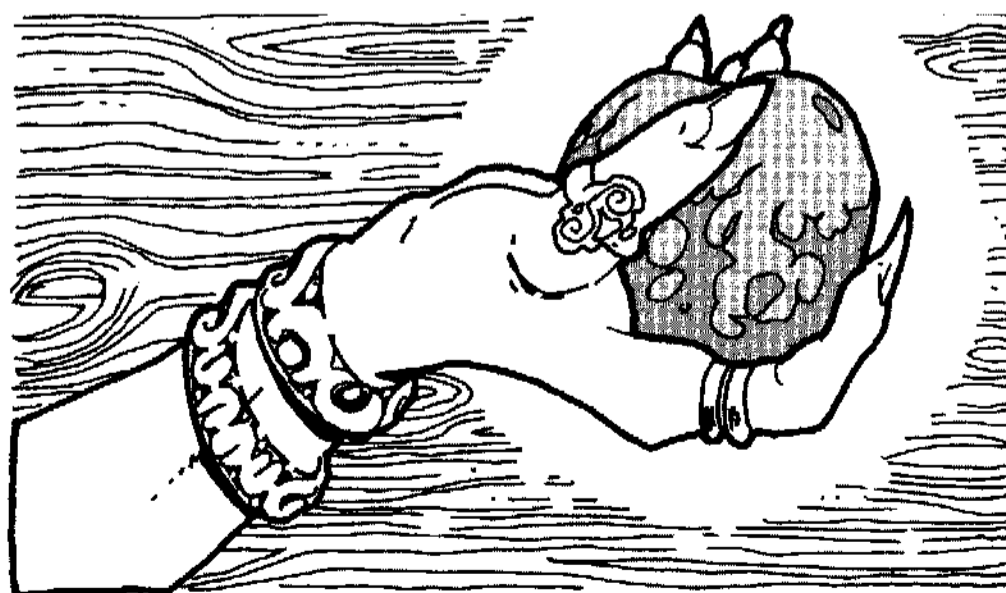
Most series in the myths began with the heroic childhood and training of the central hero. This *might* be an interesting way to start a campaign, but presents difficulties unless all the characters are being fostered in the same king's hall and therefore grow up together. An easier method is to allow the players to make up their PCs' childhoods and get them together at some later date.

The old "you all met in a pub" scenario is not really suitable for a Celtic campaign – PCs should have some genuine reason for adventuring together. Their goals should be similar. They *can* be chance-met companions, but even so they should have a good reason for remaining together. One reason might be that they all have strange gesas upon them and are traveling together to Royal Tara, where the high king's Druid will be able to explain the gesas and possibly come up with ways to fulfill them. This would allow for a very disparate group and lots of adventures before the finale at Tara.

The PCs could all be members of the same clan or dun brought together to face some outside threat (an invasion of Fomor, cattle raids by a nearby tribe, strange happenings at a local Sidhe mound, etc.). In this case, the GM should

give the players some idea of what sort of settlement they are from, where it is, and what sort of people are likely to live there. Is it a small dun with a population of 40, or a massive hill-fort with hundreds in it?

Another possibility for a group of adventurers is that they might be a group of foster-brothers (see p. 17) who have sworn to right some wrong or perform some quest, or just to see the world before they settle down. This works very well if there is a central hero in the party (see p. 116).



Types of Campaign

There are many types of campaign which could be run, but two are prominent in the Celtic tradition. One is the local campaign, where the heroes are the king's champions; they defend the king's hall, make raids against enemy duns, deal with local politics, and so on. The other is the quest, where they travel all over the Celtic world, in and out of the Otherworld, over sea and under hill, every morning a new wonder, every night under the stars.

THE KING'S CHAMPIONS

The archetype of this campaign type is the *Tain*. In this story, Cuchulain and his comrades defended Ulster against the machinations and raids of their enemy Queen Maeve of Connachta. All the action took place within a 50-mile radius, usually closer. At the beginning, there was a war between Connachta and Ulaid over a bull. Later, after the war was lost by Connachta, Maeve tried to get her revenge on Cuchulain by sending against him all the men whose kin he had slain. Their leader was Lewy Mac Cu Roi, whose nickname was "the dark druid." The tale ended with the death of Cuchulain as he defended his homeland against sorcerous enemies.

In this type of campaign, a relatively small number of NPCs become familiar to the characters, and should therefore be worked out in great detail. The king is probably one of the most important, together with his druid, and other members of his entourage and family. The protagonists will probably be the king's champions, living and feasting in the king's hall; they may have homes, wives, and children in outlying duns, but they rarely visit them. There is much friendly rivalry between the warriors ("How many heads did *you* collect today?") and the heroes constantly try to outdo each other in feats of daring, but faced with an outside threat, they all pull together. One or more of the heroes may be forced to betray the king or his companions by his enemies' clever manipulation of his gesas, making for much tragic roleplaying. The heroic exploits of the warriors become part of the mythology of the dun, being sung by the king's Bard and blown out of all proportion with each retelling.

Such a campaign may end with the death of the PCs in battle, fighting against overwhelming odds; the players should be made to feel that their characters died in such a fashion so that their deeds would be remembered long after their deaths. A campaign of this sort works much better with a grand and definite end than it does with the PCs having their last moment of glory and having nothing to look forward to but a slow decline into old age and senility, muttering in their cups over past triumphs. To ease the players' feeling of loss, a new campaign can be started featuring the children of the heroes. Along with having their own adventures, the GM should remember to make frequent reference, through songs, stories, and the memories of the long-lived acquaintances, to the deceased (including Sidhe), to maintain the connection between the two generations and spur the players and characters on to greater glories.



THE AIR OF MYSTERY: NEVER EXPLAIN

Creating and sustaining the atmosphere of a mysterious and magical world where anything can happen is a most important thing in any *Celtic Myth* campaign. The game mechanics mustn't interfere with this atmosphere. Try to encourage a real sense of awe at the mysterious workings of the world. Develop the atmosphere with wonders and portents, and by making sure the players never know what to expect. Don't be restricted by the spell list when making up wonders and magic items – just describe what happens.

This was a world with large amounts of magic, and a high likelihood that improvised magic would work. The magic *must* appear to the players as something strange and unpredictable, not as something familiar that they can count on. There is less combat magic than in other settings because, to the Celts, it would be cheating. Nor should the PCs have spells to control the nature of time, or to pass in and out of the Otherworld at will – although GMs might want NPCs under their own control to have these spells, to help the protagonists out on occasion.

Read some of the stories to the players – the *Sons of Tureen* on p. 119 for example – so that they can get the feel of the world, but never explain how things work. This is a world where the GM represents the forces behind the world and these forces cannot and should not be questioned. Even in a full-blown *Celtic Supers* campaign there should be forces too powerful and mysterious for the heroes to understand.

If characters become too powerful encourage the players to make them more mysterious and less human, to take a step nearer to being gods. It can be effective to leave extremely powerful heroes for a while and play with more ordinary people who consider the other group to be gods.

HEROES IN THE CAMPAIGN

If all the players agree, perhaps one of the PCs could deliberately be designed with more character points (say, 250 instead of 150) and the whole campaign could revolve around this hero and his band of "sidekicks." Many Celtic stories were constructed on this basis; the hero was always first into any situation, but he wouldn't survive without his faithful companions to save him from overwhelming odds, give him good advice, heal his wounds, and so on. Finn is one good example of this; other members of his band included Conan the Bald, Oscar, Diarmuid (who later ran off with Finn's betrothed and had adventures of his own), and at a later stage Finn's own son Oisín. They were subsidiary to the main hero, but all have their own stories and adventures.

Another example is Cuchulain and his charioteer Laeg. Two players may wish to play such a pair: a strong, heroic warrior, who's always getting wounded, and his small, wiry sidekick who's always there with a word of good advice and some healing herbs.

While the hero is the focus of this sort of campaign, occasional adventures should spotlight the companions. The hero can still take a leading role in these scenarios, but the reason for the adventure should be something springing from the life of one of the sidekicks. Moreover, care should be taken to ensure that each companion has something that the hero lacks: poetry, charioteering, magic, or missile skills, an interesting gesa, or even just common sense.

With such an imbalance of character points, it is important that the players all know what's going on and be prepared to sacrifice their own character's advancement to the advancement of the hero and the development of a truly heroic plot. Then, when the campaign is over, while only one person can claim, "I was Fergus the Doomed!" the others can just as proudly say "I fought beside Fergus the Doomed at his last battle!"

The Fianna

The Fianna were groups of warriors who swore to sever all ties with their clans and kings, and to defend Eriu against foreign invaders. In return they received tribute from all the kings of Eriu. While some Fiannas were raised to combat a specific menace, disbanding immediately thereafter, in tales they could be multi-generational affairs. The most famous of these warrior bands was that of Finn Mac Cool.

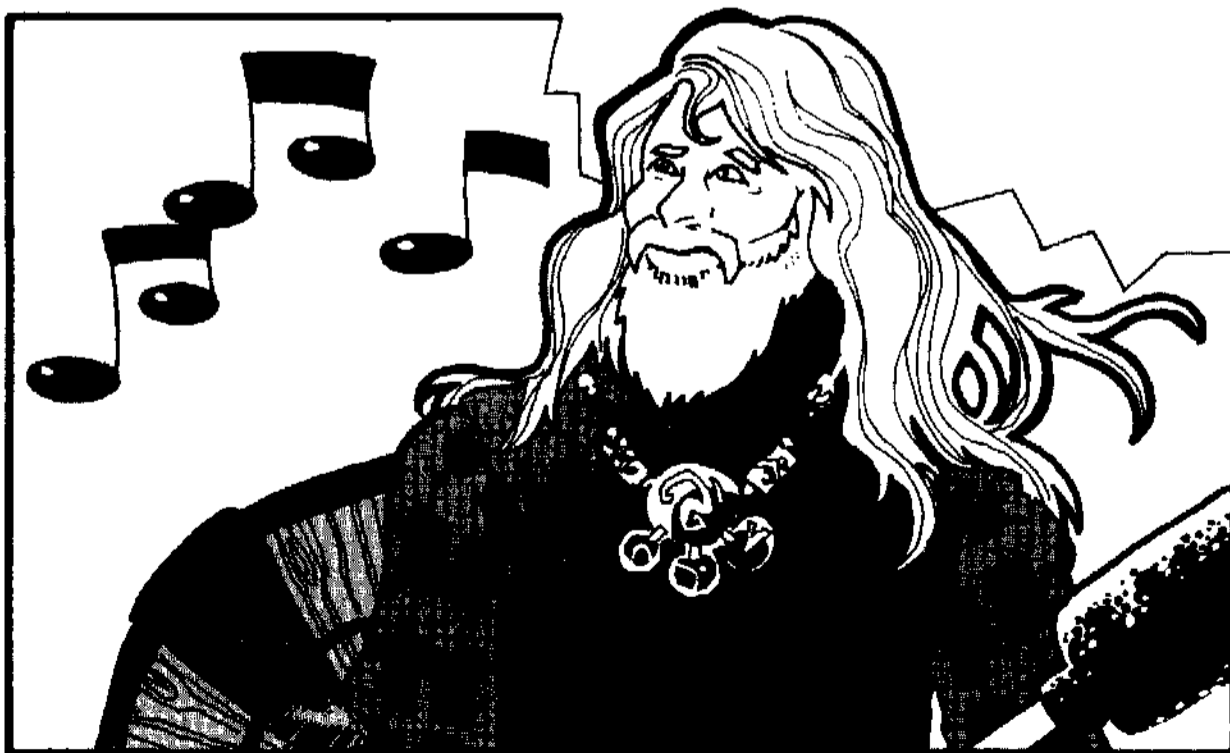
A campaign might begin with a group of people enlisting with a Fianna, passing all the tests (see below), and swearing the oath of the Fianna (see p. 53). The group might start with a more experienced NPC leader (perhaps even Finn himself) or one of the warriors may be designed to be the leader (see sidebar, this page).

A Fianna campaign covers a wide area of country, venturing all over Eriu and beyond. The Fianna were constantly passing through Sidhe mounds into the Otherworld and back again, interacting with Sidhe, helping them at one time, fighting them at another. They constantly came across wonders and delighted in them; if a white doe with red ears bounded across their path, they naturally followed it, not sparing a thought for the amount of trouble they got into the last time they did such a thing. The days went by in hunting and wandering about the woods and plains, the nights in feasting by a fire beneath the stars. A campaign containing a Fianna is adventure for the sake of adventure, with no rhyme or reason.

Historically, it all ended in tragedy, as so many Celtic stories did. Civil war broke out and all but a few Fianna died fighting their own kin when High King Cairbre decided to rid himself of these troublesome independent warriors.

Joining a Fianna

The tests for someone wanting to join a Fianna were many and difficult. Any member of a Fianna had to be a truly exceptional person. He had to be learned in poetry and able to compose verse of his own. The test for this was a simple one: the candidate was given a subject, usually a nature subject such as "Maytime" or "The Blackbird," and was asked to compose a quick verse (a successful Poetry roll is sufficient).





After that he was buried to his waist in earth and given a shield and a hazel stick to defend himself against nine warriors throwing a single spear each at him. He had to make nine successful Shield or Dodge rolls or be wounded – the spears weren't intended to kill, but even a single scratch was enough to deny admittance to the Fianna.

If he passed this test, his long hair was intricately braided and he had to run through trees with nine people chasing him, trying to avoid being overtaken, having his braids disturbed, or breaking any twigs underfoot. (The candidate must succeed in a Running roll, three DX rolls and a Stealth roll to pass this test.)

After this he had to show that he was able to leap over a stick as high as his head, and run at full speed under one level with his knee (Acrobatics or DX-6), and he had to be able while running to draw a thorn from his foot without slowing down (DX and HT rolls are necessary for this feat).



QUESTING

The most wide-ranging campaign type of all is the quest, of which the archetypal example is the story of the Sons of Tureen (see p. 119). A quest could easily begin as a "king's champions" campaign, but soon turn into a search for something or someone. The quest covers many lands, both in this world and the Otherworld, and involves claiming rare magic items from powerful kings and outwitting wily druids. In some ways, this is the most similar to a traditional fantasy roleplaying game.

Often in such quests, the searchers do not want to be on the quest at all, but have a *gesa* on them to complete it or face certain doom. Sometimes certain doom comes whether they complete the quest or not. Remember to keep the adventure fast-moving, and to make every new incident sufficiently different from the last so that it doesn't degenerate into a series of predictable combat scenes. And always reward clever roleplaying within the Celtic genre.

MAGIC IN THE CAMPAIGN

One of the most difficult things to game properly is Celtic magic. Even using the Druidic magic system presented here (p. 82), many magical effects common in Celtic myth aren't reproducible with the *GURPS* magic system. Players need to have a fairly clear idea of what their magic-users are capable of, so spell lists are probably necessary, but if the Celtic world is played with a lot of wild-mana areas, the chances are high that spectacular results are going to be common. And when Sidhe are around, and critical successes happen all the time, the possibilities for creative improvisation of spell effects is very large indeed.

GMs should remember that they need not be restrained by the rules when creating magical effects. If the scenario calls for a tree in leaf on one side and burning on the other, he needn't spend hours trying to figure out which spells it has on it. As long as he has a reasonable idea of how his magical effects interact with those spells the PCs have, he should allow his imagination free rein.

For instance, if a Sidhe has the *gesa* "Can only be harmed by an apple from the land of Tir na n'Og," no amount of spell-casting is ever going to kill this person. Wounds heal immediately; if his head is chopped off it immediately flies back to his shoulders; destructive spells do no damage. To all intents and purposes he is indestructible, and his opponents should soon realize that there is no killing him. But it's well known that in Celtic mythology *everyone* has a weakness, and if the ill-wishers discover what it is . . .

TIN MINERS

Tin was mined in Damnar. This tin used for bronze-making, was exported via Gaul to the wider world. Tin miners had a way of life all their own, and knew spells of purification and smelting which they never revealed to outsiders. They were held in high esteem by the kings and warriors, who tolerated no insult to them.

The tin miners can be handled in a number of ways. They can be dangerous and touchy part-Sidhe, who hold a magical knowledge of how to purify tin. Or they can be little dark aboriginals, remnants of the Bronze Age, who remember ancestral knowledge of tin-working. In either case, they are well-treated by their aristocratic overlords, and tinsmiths sit down to dinner with the king's warriors.

Continued on next page . . .



TIN MINERS (CONTINUED)

A tin miner with an urge to see the world would be an interesting PC for a *Celtic Myth* adventure. His skills and knowledge would be valuable everywhere, but his status would change according to how people in different regions viewed miners. An NPC tin-smith who acquired a snakestone and a Sidhe enemy in the same trade could lead a party into a whole series of adventures.

THE DARK CAMPAIGN

It is possible to make some regions of the world "dark" – dominated by evil twisted forces from the Otherworld. It is easy to exaggerate the bad side of things. Begin by making the forests murky and tangled, and have the party lose their way often. Then have any dun they come to neglected, the king suspicious and jealous of the party, the warriors spiteful and mean. Have human sacrifice at the festivals, possibly with one of the party as an intended victim. Magic should be aspected to reflect this dark nature, with Bramble and Hawthorn at +1 and Elder and Rowan at -1. Where the Otherworld overlaps this world, strange writhing shapes can be seen. Sometimes malevolent creatures cross the boundary and carry off children. Sidhe either care nothing for humanity or are up to some dark project of their own. Suitable areas to use are those which are mysterious and little-known, such as Ystrad Yw, Damnar, and parts of Alba.

It might be possible to cure the affected region by some great good magic at Beltain, or by bringing some great curative item there. On the other hand, it might be a permanent warping.

The Fomor make good villains for a "dark" campaign. The travelers could visit a dun on the coast of Alba that is in league with the Fomor of the offshore islands. Most of the population are half-Fomor, but the hideous nature of the Fomor should not be immediately visible. Instead, the GM should say that the dun includes a number of apparently deformed or crippled people, and the truth should only be revealed to the PCs a bit at a time. The plans of the Fomor could include conquering the whole country, or putting their own candidate on the throne.

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THEMES AND PROPHECIES

There are certain mythological themes and oft-repeated details which fit particularly well into games. And some prophecies in the stories were never fulfilled, and would provide good gaming opportunities.

Revenge

Something the adventurers did has seriously upset someone, who is determined to get revenge. Alternatively, the heroes are out to avenge themselves on someone who has somehow upset them.

Atonement

In lieu of revenge a compensation can be agreed to which involves a lot of difficulty on the part of the protagonists. (See *The Sons of Tureen*, p. 119.)

Betrayal

Some act of betrayal splits a warband and close friends end up on different sides of a war. These include someone stealing a woman destined for the king (Deirdre, Grania), or the king wronging someone. It is very hard for the champions to fight against each other when they used to fight side by side. Cuchulain and Ferdiad are the classic example of this, but the same holds true for Finn and Diarmuid, even though Diarmuid betrayed Finn personally.

Fast Horses

Someone is riding ahead of you on a horse. However hard you try you cannot catch up, even though your horse is galloping and his appears to be walking. This was a frequent motif.

Ath Liag Finn

This was a ford in Eriu into which Finn cast a stone attached to a thin gold chain which had been given him by the Tuatha de Danaan. The prophecy was that the stone would be rediscovered on a Sunday morning *exactly* seven years before the end of the world. This is ideal for a limited-duration mythic campaign, but also quite viable for a Celtic campaign in a variety of recent time periods.

Omens

Foreshadow coming events with omens, and have strange things happen which in hindsight may be seen to have been omens. Weirdness Magnet is the perfect disadvantage for a Celtic campaign – no wonder some druids went mad trying to understand how the world worked.



THE SONS OF TUREEN

As with many other stories of this sort, this classic Irish quest is basically a treasure hunt, with each magical object serving the heroes well in the next stage of the quest. The quest's potential as a roleplaying scenario is obvious.

The Death of Kian

Tureen's sons Brian (the hero), Iuchar, and Iucharba (his sidekicks) killed Kian, Lugh of the Long Hand's father, due to a blood feud between the two clans. Attempting to hide from the brothers, Kian changed into a pig, but was still found and mortally wounded. He begged to be allowed to return to human form before he died and Brian, not wanting to be known for killing a pig, allowed it. But the *lóg-n-enech* for killing a pig was low; for killing a man it was much higher (see p. 20).

The earth where Kian was killed told Lugh what had happened to his father. Lugh made the brothers agree to undertake a quest to atone for the murder. He described the test in simple terms: they were to obtain three apples, the skin of a pig, a spear, a chariot with two horses, seven swine, a hound, a cooking spit, and finally to give three shouts on a hill. After they agreed to this, he explained *exactly* what he wanted from them. The things he asked them to get were all magical objects which he needed for the coming war against the Fomor.

The three apples grew in the Garden of the Sun; anyone who ate one would be cured of all pain. The pigskin healed every wound and sickness when laid upon the sufferer, and any water poured into it turned into the best red wine; it was in Greece. The spear was in Persia; its head burned with flame so hot that when not in use it had to be kept in a bucket of water, so as not to burn the house down. The horse and chariot belonged to Dobar, king of Siogar, and could run on the sea as well as on land. The seven swine belonged to King Asnal of the Golden Pillars, and could be killed and eaten every night and yet found whole the next day. Every beast in the world fell down in fright at the sight of the hound; she belonged to the king of the Cold Country. The cooking spit belonged to the women of the Isle of Caer of the Fair Hair. And the three shouts had to be made on the hill of Miochaoin in the north of Lochlann (Norway), although Miochaoin and his sons had a *gesa* upon them not to allow anyone to shout on that hill, besides being great friends of Kian, Lugh's father.

In the words of Lady Augusta Gregory: *There was silence and darkness on the sons of Tureen when they heard that. And they went to where their father was, and told him the fine that had been put upon them. "It is bad news, that is," said Tureen . . .*

The Garden of the Sun

Tureen told them that Manannan's magic boat (which Lugh had at that moment) would make the quest easier. But they knew that Lugh would not lend it, because it was not his to lend. So they asked to borrow Manannan's magic horse (which Lugh also had). Lugh refused, and they then asked for the boat; Lugh was forced to give it, since he had a *gesa* on him not to refuse a second request. Brian and companions sailed away, needing only to tell the boat where to take them.

When Brian and his brothers got to the Garden of the Sun ("in the east of the World"), Brian asked his companions how they thought they should get the apples. They suggested rushing in and killing everyone – their answer to most

THE DARK CAMPAIGN (CONTINUED)

The Fomor

The Fomor, the nearest thing to evil monsters in Celtic myth, can be used to inject horror into a *Celtic Myth* game. They always traveled in a cold fog, bringing snow, sleet, hail, and freezing winds at any time of year. This was followed by strange hootings and wailings in the fog; then terrifying shapes, half-seen, fell upon the hapless heroes. The Fomor should be used sparingly for the maximum of mysterious terror, and can come as a great surprise to those who have begun to think the Celtic world is all fun, feasting, and fighting.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

Ulaid

Eating A Mouse Includes The Tail. Visitors to Connor's court were greeted warmly and invited in to enjoy its splendors. A little friendly testing of strength may well take place, but woe betide anyone boasting too much . . .

Indisposed. A party with one or more female champions will be in great demand in the early days of an invasion when all the men in the country would be suffering the Pangs of Macha.

Connachta

Queen Of Connachta. Maeve was a great manipulator. Any group of travelers to Rath Cruachan was welcomed and feasted, but Maeve tried to get what she could out of them. She could attempt to seduce any attractive strong warrior, who she would then use as leverage to get his comrades to do what she wanted.

Cooler Heads. When the Ulaid exiles were in Connachta, they clashed several times with the Connachta champions. Strangers (especially a party containing a member of the Druidic Order) arriving at this time may be asked to judge between the two sides, embroiling everyone in a complicated resolution of an honor problem. At this time Maeve was too occupied with Fergus Mac Roy to bother seducing others.

Deheubarth

The wilds of Gwent-is-Coed and Ystrad Yw were perfect places for adventuring: little-known, full of magic and very Celtic.

Maiden In Distress. A party going quietly along wooded slopes hears the cries of a maiden being carried off. After rescuing her, they learn that the abduction is the latest round in a feud that goes back for generations of petty slights. Both sides ask the party's druid for a judgment.

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ADVENTURE SEEDS (CONTINUED)

Gwynedd

Math ap Mathonwy. The wisest of wise men and king of Gwynedd, Math ap Mathonwy was a tremendously old Sidhe Druid who knew more than anyone else in Prydain. He knew the answers to problems nobody else could answer, and a journey to consult Math could be the basis for an entire campaign.

Eastern Prydain

Dinas Lludd. Dinas Lludd was the nearest thing to a "proper" town in Prydain, and is ideal for running "country cousin" adventures in which traditional Celtic warriors have to deal with sophisticated innovations such as money and plumbing.

It is worth remembering that Bran's head was later dug up by King Arthur, thereby permitting the Saxon invasion. At any time a powerful king can try to dig up or seize the head of Bran, which was buried to protect Prydain from plague and invasions.

Coridan. A king of Coridan orders some rebellious members of his warband to venture into the heart of the forest of Lascoed and bring back proof of their visit. This is a good way to change timeframes.

CROSS-GENRE CELTIC PLAY

Many other *GURPS* worldbooks make passing mention of the Celts, and many others present genres or settings with which *GURPS Celtic Myth* could easily be combined.

GURPS Fantasy

Yrth contains Celtic tribes living in the Nomad Lands, in a state of constant warfare with both Vikings and giants. It would be reasonable to consider these Celts as mixed Christian and pagan, the pagans convinced that Yrth is the Otherworld and that elves are Sidhe. Druids would still use their magic system, but refuse to teach it except to initiates. Christians would cling to Celtic Christianity with square crosses, druidic tonsures, and a different date for Easter. This could lead to occasional conflict with priests and missionaries who are occasionally sent to "convert" them. Celts in the Nomad Lands came to Yrth at a mixture of times and from various places. The language they speak is mostly Q-Celtic with a sprinkling of P-Celtic (see p. 123).

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such problems. Brian suggested a more subtle approach. Using his Druid Wand, he changed himself and his brothers into hawks. They flew into the Garden of the Sun, stole the apples, and flew away. The king of the Garden of the Sun turned his three daughters into ospreys who chased the hawks, firing bolts of lightning at them. The sons of Tureen turned into swans, went down to the sea, and escaped back to the boat.



Greece and Beyond

In Greece, Brian suggested that they disguise themselves as poets to get into the king's hall. Although none of them knew any poems, all went well until they were asked to perform. Brian recited a dreadful poem which the king didn't understand. Brian explained that it meant that as a reward for the poem he wanted the magic pigskin, and if he didn't get it he'd kill the king. The king refused, but said he would fill the pigskin with gold three times and give them the gold. Brian agreed, but as soon as the skin was brought out, he grabbed it, killed the king, and the brothers fought their way out of the hall.

The trick worked so well that they decided to try it again in Persia. Once more, the king refused; Brian threw a magical apple at the king, knocking his brains out, and they hacked their way to the magic spear and out again.

After that, the sons of Tureen changed tactics. They disguised themselves as mercenaries, and took service with the king of Siogar, in the hope of stealing the chariot and horses. But after six weeks, they still hadn't even seen it, so they went to the king and said that they were leaving his service, since he did not trust them enough to show them his magic chariot and horses. The king agreed to show them, and as soon as the chariot galloped past, Brian leapt aboard, dashed the charioteer against the nearest rock, threw the magical spear at the king and killed him, and all three brothers galloped off over the sea.

In the kingdom of Easal of the Golden Pillars, to their surprise, they found Easal waiting on the beach for them, looking worried. He had no wish to be their next victim. They explained that they came for his magic pigs, and after a short meeting with his advisors, the king agreed to give them up, to prevent more bloodshed. He also volunteered to come with them to the king of the Cold Country (who was his son-in-law) to persuade him to give up his magic hound.

The brothers could not believe their luck! They sailed to the Cold Country, and Easal explained the story, but his son-in-law refused to give up his hound.

There followed a battle, during which Brian captured the king of the Cold Country with great difficulty. When the other warriors saw this, they gave up the magic hound in return for the king's life.

The Death of the Sons of Tureen

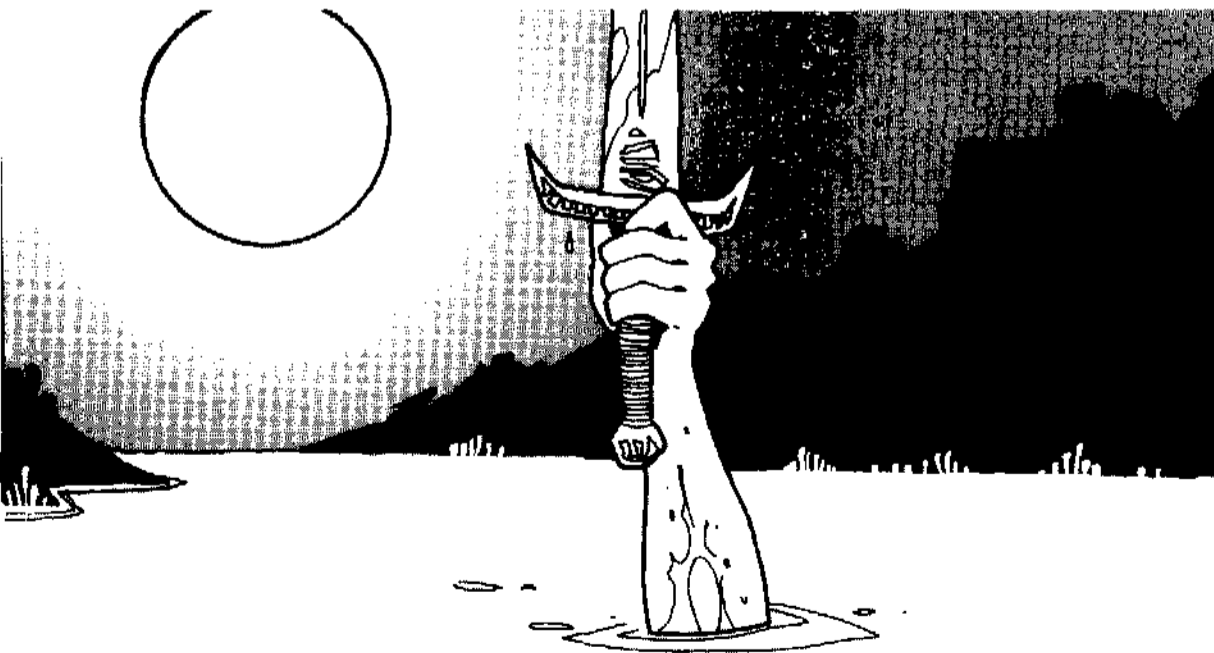
At this point, Lugh cheated. He decided that he needed the items they already had, so he cast a long-range spell on them which made them long to see the shores of Eriu, and made them forget the rest of the quest. They returned home, gave the objects to Lugh, returned the boat of Manannan, and asked whether they were forgiven. Lugh then reminded them of the rest of their quest and they went home to their father's house in despair.

The following day, they set out in a normal boat, searching for the Isle of Caer of the Fair Hair. For three months they searched without finding word of it. In the end, Brian put on his water-skin and dived into the sea to look for it. Eventually, Brian found the Isle with 150 women spinning and the cooking spit in the middle of them. Brian walked among them and picked up the spit. The women laughed and said that even if he had had his brothers with him, he could not have wrested the spit from them if they had decided to stop him. But since he was so brave, they gave it to him.

He rejoined his two brothers in the boat. They set sail for the hill of Miochaoin. When they got there, Brian challenged Miochaoin to single combat. Brian killed Miochaoin, whose three sons came out to fight the brothers. Each put a spear through one of the brothers, but the brothers did the same to them, and killed them. Brian and his brothers were dying, but managed to shout three times before getting back in their boat and returning to their father's house.

Brian gave the spit to Tureen and asked him to deliver it to Lugh. He also suggested that Tureen try to borrow the magic pigskin to heal them. Their father did this, but Lugh refused to lend the pigskin. Brian himself, wounded though he was, dragged himself to Lugh's dun and asked. Again, Lugh refused, no matter what riches Brian offered him.

Brian returned to his father's house, lay down between his brothers, and all three died at the same moment. Tureen grieved over his three beautiful sons, each of whom had in him the makings of a king of Eriu; all the strength went out of him, and he died. He was buried together with his sons in a single grave.



CROSS-GENRE CELTIC PLAY (CONTINUED)

GURPS Imperial Rome

The Celts lived on the borders of the Roman Empire, and battled against the Romans until they were absorbed. Games can be run from either side of this conflict. It is also possible to have a mixed party of Celts and Romans heading off into the wilderness beyond the Rhine – or being pulled into another world. See Harry Turtledove's *The Legion of Videssos* and Katharine Kerr's *Deverry* series for examples.

GURPS Vikings

Vikings and Celts clashed painfully, with the Vikings winning all battles but the last. The most valuable and interesting Celtic Viking adventures are those arising from the clash of cultures. The Norse kings in their towns had no idea of what the Celtic idea of kingship entailed. A party including some Vikings and some Celts who had to travel or work together for some reason would encounter difficulties in perception. An interesting series of adventures might arise if a Viking or group of Vikings offended a Sidhe, who would set them some task which involved seeking out some Celts and learning the Celtic way of life.

GMs will find valuable ideas in R.A. MacAvoy's *The Book of Kells*, a magical time-travel novel, and Dorothy Dunnett's *King Hereafter*, a historical novel set in Alba at the time of Macbeth, in which Macbeth finds himself torn between his Norse and Gaelic inheritances.

GURPS Camelot

The earliest incarnations of the Arthurian legends overlap the last era of Celtic myth, and any versions of Arthur in *GURPS Camelot* can be dovetailed with a *GURPS Celtic Myth* campaign.

The Historical Arthur is the best match in culture, religion, and technology level, with the era best played as a degenerated post-golden age, long after the time of heroes has passed.

Both the Mythic and Cinematic Arthurs are on a heroic scale comparable to the Celtic myths. Arthur's Britain is a Celtic nation, and his people still follow Celtic traditions. Many themes and characters in the Arthurian cycle (the Lady of the Lake, Taliesin, and others) evolved from or are Celtic originals (see p. 43).

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CROSS-GENRE CELTIC PLAY (CONTINUED)

However, the technology, religious orientation, and French influences of these settings make them practically alien to true Celts. Many characters and details (such as Lancelot, Galahad, and the romance of Tristan and Iseult) were added to the stories by French romancers, and are out of place in a strictly Celtic setting. Still, if the heroes can weather the culture shock, they may find themselves at home among equals.

GURPS Horror

It is very easy to change Sidhe and the Otherworld to make the dark darker and the bright brighter. This is how they changed in the Middle Ages as they became folk tales. A GM can run a Celtic game with very evil adversaries (see p. 118). Other possibilities include malevolent Sidhe who become permanent foes, rather than losing interest in the heroes. A 19th- or 20th-century **Horror** game can involve awakening old Celtic forces.

The Fomor should be played up in any **Horror** game.

GURPS Supers

The Tuatha de Daanan may be played as Celtic supers, and many super abilities have been borrowed for their use. In a conventional **Supers** or **Wild Cards** campaign, a Celtic ace might emerge with Salmon Leap and *riastradh*. GMs should also see **GURPS Aces Abroad** for a Celtic **Wild Cards** adventure set partly in modern-day Northern Ireland.

GURPS Space

Celtic planets are a distinct possibility. In a universe where Earth-like planets are plentiful and minority interests are heard, a stellar system could contain New Eriu, New Alba, and Cymru Newydd, where all three cultures try to go back to their roots. This would be an opportunity to include what everyone *thinks* the Celts are about – bagpipes, kilts, stone circles, mystic crystals and human sacrifices – as revivalists mix and match. A “Galactic Roman Empire” might find Celts in space ships challenging it on the frontiers.

Other ways of using Celts in **Space** include introducing the Tuatha de Danaan as spacemen who landed their flying ships in central Mumu. They were said to have brought the Four Gifts: agriculture, writing, iron-working, and medicine. The four cities of the Tuatha (Finias, Murias, Gorias, and Falias) would be four planets, or possibly the four continents of the lost planet Vulcan/Atlantis.

Timeline

This timeline covers significant events of pagan Celtic history from the first arrivals in Prydain and Eriu to the Christianization of the region. For ease of identification, mythical events are in italics. Remember that accurate chronology should only be a concern in a historical **Celtic Myth** campaign; in a fantasy setting, travel between interesting time periods is as common as travel between interesting places.

- 3000: *Cesar and Fintan arrive in Eriu but die in the Biblical Flood.*
- 2800: *Partholan and his people invade Eriu from a fairy island to the west, and introduce agriculture. They perish of plague.*
- 2600: *Nemed, a kinsman of Partholan, and his people invade Eriu.*
- 2500: *Firbolg invasion of Eriu.*
- 2400: *Tuatha de Danaan invasion of Eriu.*
- 2392: *First Battle of Moytura.*
- 2100: *Second Battle of Moytura.*
- 1000: *Milesian invasion of Eriu.*
- 450: Celts conquer Britain and Ireland.
- 100: *Connor becomes king of Ulaid.*
- 81: *Events of the Tain.*
- 73: *Death of Cuchulain at age 27.*
- 72: *Bran's invasion of Mumu. Bran's head buried at Dinas Lludd.*
- 58: Julius Caesar invades Celtic Gaul.
- 55: *War between Gwynedd and Dyfed. Death of Pryderi.*
- 55 and -54: *Caesar's attacks on Britain.*
- 41: *The Druids drive Caligula mad.*
- 41: Caligula assembles a massive force to invade Britain. When the legions and boats are assembled on the coast of Gaul he changes his mind and tells the troops to collect sea shells in their helmets. Nevertheless, he celebrates a Triumph over Britain and another over Neptune, of which the shells are the booty.
- 43: Claudius conquers Britain with forces under the control of Aulus Plautius. Eleven kings immediately join him.
- 60: King of the Iceni bequeaths part of his lands to Nero in hopes of protecting his wife, Boedicea (Budicca, Boudog), and his daughters. All the land is taken, the daughters are raped, and Boedicea is whipped.

61: Boedicea stirs up a revolt against the Romans in Britain. Druids massacred at Ynys Môn. Defeat of Boedicea followed by her suicide.

70: Brigantes defeated and absorbed into the Empire. Romanization of Britain begins.

122: Construction begins on Hadrian's Wall, cutting off Roman Britain from Alba.

196: Clodius Albinus, governor of Britain, withdraws troops from Hadrian's Wall and it is overrun.

254 to 277: *Cormac Mac Art high king of Ireland.*

269: *Finn Mac Cool, Cormac's champion.*

380 to 388: Emperor Macsen Wlegig (Magnus Maximus) dreams of a beautiful girl, Elen, in a fortress called Caer Seint. He travels to Britain and discovers and marries the girl. In his absence the Romans revolt against him, and he leaves Britain to reconquer Rome. He dies in battle at the moment of his triumph.

382: Roman commander Magnus Maximus (Macsen Wledig) wins a victory over the Picts (of Alba).

383-388: Magnus Maximus revolts against Rome, proclaims himself Emperor, and is killed fighting in Gaul.

407-410: Roman legions withdrawn from Britain, although many individuals remain. Many believe that this is only temporary and that the Romans will return.

432: St. Patrick comes to Ireland.

446: Britons appeal in vain to Rome for help against Pictish attacks.

485: Battle of Mearcrededburna (Seaford); the Saxons gain control of most of southeastern Britain.

495 to 537: *Traditional reign of King Arthur in which he defeats the Saxons and restores a purely Celtic (although partially Christian) kingdom in Britain, before dying at Camlann. Arthur's historical reign, if any, could be as much as half a century earlier. See GURPS Camelot for details.*

600: The Cursing of Royal Tara – no more high kings ruled from this site.

Glossary

Celtic Languages

There are two main Celtic language families, Goedelic (Q-Celtic) and Brythonic (P-Celtic). Goedelic languages are spoken in Ireland, Scotland, and on the Isle of Man, and Brythonic elsewhere in Britain and in Brittany. Gaulish, spoken over most of Europe before the Roman conquest, was also a Brythonic language. They can be distinguished by the use of P and Q and by Gw and F (e.g., Brythonic Gwynn and Goedelic Finn: both mean fair-haired).

In the stories nobody had any problem understanding anyone else. In reality Welsh and Irish Gaelic are very different, with no default to each other.

Most Irish spellings in the text are either reasonably phonetic or familiar to give people unfamiliar with the names at least a chance at the pronunciations. Below, the names are listed both as spelled in the text and in their most common variants. Genuine Gaelic pronunciation should only be attempted after at least 21 years of study!

Welsh pronunciation is phonetic, but with differences from English. *C* is always pronounced as *k*. *G* is always hard as in *gate* (never as *j*). *F* is *v*. *ff* is *f*. *R* is always rolled; *rh* is aspirated *hr*. *Ch* is a throaty sound as in German *Bach* or Scottish *loch*. *Dd* is a soft *th* as in *these*, not as in *thin*. *Ll* is a unique sound, *kl* or *hl* is close. If you don't know it never say *l*. *W* is a vowel pronounced *oo*. Vowels are mostly as in English, with the following exceptions. *U* is *i* as in *in*. *Y* is a vowel pronounced variously *ee*, *i* (as in *in*), or *uh*. As a word (meaning "the") it is always pronounced *uh* - *Ynys y Bwl* is pronounced *Uhniss uh Bool*. *Oe* is pronounced *oy*; *Coed* is *Coyd*, not *co-ed*.

The High Speech

Celts had a reputation for a very flowery style of speech, which can be encouraged in a campaign. This is far more important and fun than putting on

an accent, which would not be noticeable in the original language. Introductions between two heroes with impressive lineages could be a test of endurance and memory as each attempted to tell his entire life story (and that of his ancestors) in an unending stream of heroic feats and improbable events. Useful things to bear in mind are: description at all costs, massive exaggeration, and use of elaborate simile piled upon simile.

One of the great things about this style is that one can say absolutely nothing and take a long time doing it, thus confounding questions: "*And never a word did she speak, no, she was as silent as a babe in arms asleep who listens to her mother's heartbeat and does not wake; as silent as the grass on a windless day, a day of calm before the great winds that shake the trees and lift the roofs of duns and poor men's huts alike. No, she spoke not a word, and we know nothing of the matter.*" While GMs insisting on doing this in other settings might be lynched, in a *Celtic Myth* campaign, this can be great and acceptable fun.

Adna: Chief poet of Ulaid until his death.

Alba: Scotland.

Amairgen: Conall's father, a poet, satirist, and druid.

Angus Og: Another son of the Dadga, called Og, "The Young," because his mother bore him after what seemed only a single night.

Anluan Mac Maga: Cet's brother, killed by Conall Cearnach just before the Feast of Mac Da Tho's Pig.

Ardan and Ainly Mac Usli: Noisi's brothers; good fighters.

Arianrhod: Daughter of a Sidhe,

Bard: The first level of the Druidic Order, requiring a minimum of seven years of study.

Beann Mac Connor: A son of Connor with ambitions toward the kingship.

Beltain: The first of May; Great Festival. (Beltine, Bealtin)

Bérna na filied: Secret language of poets.

Bran ap Llyr: High king of Prydain, a giant, killed on an expedition to Mumu to avenge an insult to his sister, Branwen. His head was buried at Dinas Lludd.

Brehons: Judges.

Bricriu "of the Poisoned Tongue": Delighted in causing trouble.

Brythonic: P-Celtic language group.

Cael: A great warrior and poet.

Cailte: Last surviving member of the Fianna, also spoke of St. Patrick..

Cairell Mac Finn: Killed by Goll Mac Morna.

Caswallon ap Beli: High king of Prydain (in this form in the *Mabinogion*, he appears in Roman sources as Cassioveallanus).

Cathbad: A very powerful Druid, father of Connor.

Conary Mor, Conaire Mor: A high king of Eriu with many strange gesas.

Conan Mac Morna: Known as Conan the Bald, he was a coward with a bitter tongue.

Conchonbar: See Connor.

Connachta, Connaght: One of the four *cuiga* of Eriu.

Conall Cearnach: "Conall of the Victories." Second only to Cuchulain as a champion.

Connla: Son of Cuchulain.

Connor Mac Nessa: King of Ulaid in the Red Branch period.


Creidne: The greatest woman warrior of the Fianna.

Crimmal: Finn Mac Cool's uncle.

Cuchulain: The Hound of Ulster, greatest champion of Ulaid and hero of the *Tain*. (Pronounced *Cuh-HOO-lan*.)

Cuiga: Country; one of the kingdoms making up Eriu.

The Dagda: "The Good God," the Dagda was surpassingly good at everything, and was a druid of great abilities. He had a magic cauldron which was capable of feeding any number of people. He also had a



magic harp, a Willful Weapon, which could move and sing on its own.

Dannar: Cornwall.

De Danaan: See *Tuatha de Danaan*.

Dermot, Diarmuid: Member of Finn's Fianna who stole away Grania, Finn's intended bride.

Druid: Loosely, any member of the Druidic Order. Specifically a Druid, the highest of the three orders, requiring a minimum of 21 years of study.

Duns: Forts.

Eriu, Erin: Ireland.

Ferdiad: Cuchulain's best friend, killed by him in single combat.

Fergus Mac Roy: Ex-king of Ulaid. Had a gesa never to refuse hospitality.

Fianna: War band, group of heroes sworn to defend Eriu against her enemies.

Filid: Class of learned men; includes judges and druids.

Finn Mac Cool, Fionn Mac Cumhal: Greatest leader of the Fianna of Eriu.

Fomor: A race similar to the Sidhe in power but hideously deformed and almost all evil. They ruled Eriu in early times but were driven to some small islands between Eriu and Alba after their defeat at the Second Battle of Moytura.

Gae Bolga: Belly spear. Cuchulain's great Willful Weapon.

Gesa, geas: Taboo, limitation set by destiny.

Glam Dicin: Druid Ban, sets a criminal outside society.

Goedelic: Q-Celtic language group.

Goll Mac Morna: The killer of Finn's father Cool and leader of the Fianna while Finn was a child.

Govan: The smith of the Tuatha de Danaan, an unsurpassed craftsman.

Grania (Grainne): Finn's intended bride.

Gwydion: Son of Don and Beli, druid, hero of the Fourth Branch of the *Mabinogion*, foster-father of LleuLlaw Gyffes

Hiraeth: A mood of longing, pleasant nostalgia, memories of what is lost beyond regaining. Welsh.

Imbolc: February 1; Great Festival.

Kilt: Tartan skirt worn by men of the highlands of Scotland since the 18th century A.D.

Laeg Mac Riagabur: Cuchulain's charioteer.

Leary Buadach or Leary Mac Ugaine: "Leary the Triumphant." Third champion of Ulaid.

Lagin, Leinster: One of the four *cuiga* of Eriu.

Llew Llaw Gyffes: Son of Arianrhod; married a woman made of flowers.

Lòg-n-enech: "Honor price," compensation for a wrong.

Lugh of the Long (or Skillful) Hand: One of the greatest warriors of the de Danaan; later a sun god for the Celts. Father of Cuchulain.

Lughnasa: August 1; Great Festival.

Mabinogion, the Four Branches of the: Name given to the Welsh stories mentioning Pryderi.

MacRoth: Maeve's steward and messenger.

Maeve, Medb: Queen of Connachta in the Red Branch period.

Manannan Mac Llyr, Mac Lir: Very powerful person who makes his home in Inish Manannan half way between Alba and Eriu. Eventually god of the sea.

Manawydan Mac Llyr: Brythonic version of the name of Manannan.

Math ap Mathonwy: Very powerful druid and ruler of Gwynedd.

Miach Mac Dioncet: A Tuathan druid, like his father a specialist in healing.

Morrigan, The: Sidhe or goddess who loved war and could turn herself into a raven.

Moytura: A plain in central Eriu. The First Battle of Moytura was fought between the Tuatha de Danaan and the Firbolg; the Second was the decisive victory of the Danaans over the Fomor.

Mughain Mong Eochaid: Queen of Ulaid, Connor's wife.

Mumu, Munster: One of the four *cuiga* of Eriu.

Nessa: Fergus' wife, mother of Connor by Cathbad the druid.

Noisi Mac Usli, Naoise: A great fighter and a very beautiful man.

Nuada of the Silver Arm: King of the de Danaans until he lost his arm at the First Battle of Moytura, fighting the Firbolg.

Ogma: Ogma was a son of the Dadga who possessed great gifts of eloquence. He invented the Ogham

alphabet and the way of ordering the tree magic.

Oisín: Son of Finn, who traveled to the Otherworld and returned to meet St. Patrick.

Ollave, Ollamdh: The second level of the Druidic Order, requiring a minimum of 14 years of study. (The Latin translation *Ovate* is, oddly enough, used by some modern neo-pagans.)

Oscar Mac Oisín: Son of Oisín and Evy, Oscar was the mightiest warrior among the Fianna, a berserker with *riastradh*.

P-Celtic: The family of Celtic languages that includes Welsh, Breton, Gaulish, and Cornish. (Brythonic).

Prydain: Mainland Britain, "The Island of the Mighty."

Pryderi ap Pwyll: King of Dyfed.

Pwyll: King of Dyfed, head of Annwn. (Pronounced *Poo-eehl*)

Q-Celtic: The family of Celtic languages that includes Irish and Scottish Gaelic and Manx. (Goedelic)

Rhiannon: A Sidhe associated with horses and wife of Pwyll.

Riastradh: Battle frenzy, or the distortion that accompanies it. (Pronounced *ri-astra*.)

Saltuf Mac Roy: Cuchulain's mortal father.

Samain, Samhain: October 31st/ November 1st: Great Festival.

Sencha: A highly-regarded druid and judge.

Sidhe: The race of super-powerful Celtic "elves" also known as Tuatha de Danaan. Sidhe literally meant "mound-dwellers" and was applied to them after the Tuatha de Danaan moved to the Otherworld. (Pronounced *shee*.)

Tain Bo Cuailgne: "The Cattle Raid of Cooley," the tale of Queen Maeve's attempt to steal a valuable bull and of Cuchulain's heroic defense.

Tara, Teamhair: The dwelling of the high king and the most important dun in Eriu.

Tathlums: "Brain balls," magical sling stones made from human (or Sidhe!) brains.

Tuatha de Danaan: See *Sidhe*.

Ulaid, Ulster: One of the four *cuiga* of Eriu.

Bibliography

The following are books we've found very useful and which might be worth seeking out for more information in particular areas. In addition to the date of first publication, the publisher and most recent date of U.S. publication are listed where available.

SOURCES FOR MYTHOLOGY

Irish mythology is usually divided into four "cycles":

The Mythological Cycle: stories of the Tuatha de Danaan.

The Ulster Cycle: stories of King Connor and his court, especially Cuchulain.

The Fenian Cycle: stories of Finn and the Fianna.

The Historical Cycle: stories of various kings said to have reigned between the 3rd century B.C. and the 8th century A.D., which fall outside the scope of *GURPS Celtic Myth*.

Much of the above, especially the stories of the Mythological Cycle, are found in a collection called *The Book of Invasions*, last translated into English in 1902 and long out of print. Those without access to academic facilities must rely on retellings of these stories. Luckily, there is a good modern translation of most of the Ulster Cycle:

Kinsella, Thomas (trans.): *The Tain* (Oxford University Press, 1970)

The Welsh tales are readily available in many editions, the most readable of which is:

Jones, Gwyn and Jones, Thomas (trans.): *The Mabinogion* (J.M. Dent & Sons, 1949, rev. 1989). The version of the *Mabinogion* translated by Patrick Ford (University of California Press, 1977) has been recommended by others.

Other useful sources include:

Bromwich, Rachel (ed.): *Trioedd Ynys Prydain (The Welsh Triads)* (University of Wales Press, 1978)

Gantz, Jeffrey: *Early Irish Myths and Sagas* (Penguin, 1981)

Strange and interesting Welsh poetry (good for bards and druids) can be found in:

Pennar, Meirion: *The Black Book of Carmarthen and Taliesin Poems* (Llanerch Press, 1989)

RETELLINGS OF THE TALES

There are *lots* of retellings, some good, some bad. Here are some that we found useful, either because the original source was unavailable or because these were pleasantly readable.

Dillon, Myles: *Early Irish Literature* (University of Chicago Press, 1948). Summaries and discussion. Very readable.

Fitzpatrick, Jim: *The Book of Conquests* (Paper Tiger, 1978) and its sequel *The Silver Arm* (Paper Tiger, 1991). Beautifully illustrated retellings of the Mythological Cycle. Details of armor, etc., are not always accurate but these give a better immediate feel for the heroic nature of the Tuatha than any number of scholarly works.

Gregory, Lady Augusta: *Gods and Fighting Men* (first pub. 1904, pub. Maclean Hunter, 1976). A reasonable retelling of the Mythological Cycle and the Fenian Cycle. She has also done a retelling of the Ulster Cycle, *Cuchullain of Murthemne* (1902).

Rolleston, T.W.: *Myths of the Celtic Race* (first pub. 1913?, reissued under the title *Celtic* in Senate's Myths and Legends series, 1994, and in the U.S. as *Celtic Myths and Legends*, Dover, 1990). Excellent retellings of Irish and Welsh stories, but ignore the somewhat dotty theories on Celtic religion.

Squire, Charles: *Celtic Myth and Legend* (first pub. 1905?, pub. Grammercy Books, 1994). Reasonable retellings, but ignore the "facts" about the Celts.

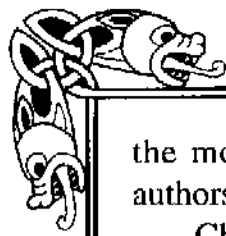
Delaney, Frank: *The Celts* (Little, Brown, 1989, rev. Sterling, 1991).

The Enchanted World series by Time-Life Books contains many good retellings of Celtic tales, with excellent illustrations which can be used by GMs. The volumes *Legends of Valor* (1984) and *Spells and Bindings* (1985) in particular contain a lot of Celtic material.

FACTUAL INFORMATION ON THE CELTS

There are many books about the Celts; it seems that hardly a week goes by without a new coffee-table book about them being published. Many are inaccurate and should be avoided (particularly the "New Age" mystic genre). Below are some of





the more respectable books. Any relevant books by these authors can also be considered recommended.

Chadwick, Nora: *The Celts* (Pelican, 1970). Good for post-Roman Celts.

Ellis, Peter Beresford: *A Dictionary of Irish Mythology* (ABC-Mythology, 1989, Oxford University Press, 1991); *A Dictionary of Celtic Mythology* (Constable, 1992, ABC-Clio, 1992). The first is an excellent Who's Who of Irish mythology. The second is rather hastily put together and far less reliable (the Welsh material in particular contains errors), but generally useful.

Fitzgibbon, Constantine: *The Irish in Ireland* (W.W. Norton, 1983). A good readable survey of Irish history from the megalith builders to the present.

Graves, Robert: *The White Goddess* (Faber, 1948, Octagon Books, 1972). Not strictly a factual book, but full of interesting speculations, and the source for this book's magic system. Graves looked at druidic riddles and tried to unravel them – a valiant effort even when he was wrong.

Lynch, Michael: *Scotland: A New History* (Century, 1991). From earliest times to the present.

Morris, Jan: *The Matter of Wales* (Oxford University Press, 1984). An excellently readable anecdotal Welsh history and description of contemporary Wales.

Piggott, Stuart: *The Druids* (Thames and Hudson, 1968, Praeger, 1975). A good summing-up of the evidence on the druids (there isn't much!) but rather a drudgery to read.

Ross, Ann: *Everyday Life of the Pagan Celts* (B.T. Batsford, 1970, Barnes & Noble Books, 1986).

Ross, Ann: *Pagan Celtic Britain* (Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1967).

Webster, Graham: *The British Celts and their Gods under Rome* (Batsford, 1986; U.S. title *Celtic Religion in Roman Britain*, Barnes & Noble Books, 1987). Scholarly evaluation of all the archaeological and epigraphic evidence for Celtic religion; a good updating of the information in Ross.

MODERN FICTION

The list of modern fiction dealing with the Celts is almost endless. Below are some which are likely to inspire GMs. Some are "novelizations" of the old stories, others just incorporate Celtic themes and atmosphere.

Broxon, Mildred Downey: *Too Long a Sacrifice* (Dell, 1981). Ancient Celts emerge from the Otherworld into modern Belfast.

Chant, Joy: *The High Kings* (Bantam, 1983).

Cherryh, C.J.: *The Dreamstone* (Daw, 1983), *The Tree of Swords and Jewels* (Daw, 1983), and *Faery in Shadow* (Ballantine, 1993). Doom-laden Celtic fantasy.

Cooper, Susan: *The Dark is Rising* series, (Puffin, 1968-1980). Magical adventures in modern Britain, with a distinctly Celtic flavor.

de Camp, L. Sprague and Pratt, Fletcher: *The Green Magician* (Galaxy Publishing Corporation, 1954). The fifth (and weakest) of the Harold Shea *Incomplete Enchanter* stories, Shea finds himself caught up in the feud between

Cuchulain and Queen Maeve. Available in *The Complete Compleat Enchanter* (Baen Books, 1989).

Duane, Diane: *A Wizard Abroad* (Corgi, 1994). Wizards in modern Ireland and Celtic mythology.

Garner, Alan: *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* (Collins, 1966, Ballantine, 1981) and *The Moon of Gomrath* (Collins, 1967, Ballantine, 1981). Celtic and Saxon magic in modern Britain.

Garner, Alan: *The Owl Service* (Collins, 1967, Dell, 1992). The Fourth Branch of the *Mabinogion* replayed in modern Wales.

James, John: *Not for All the Gold in Ireland* (Cassell, 1968). Themes from the *Mabinogion* and the *Tain* in a story set in 1st-century A.D. Britain and Ireland. Very funny.

Kay, Guy Gavriel: *The Summer Tree* and sequels (Berkley, 1986-1992). Epic fantasy with Celtic and Norse themes. Very evocative.

Kerr, Katherine: *Daggerspell* (Ballantine, 1987) and sequels. A world where the Celts have fled from the Romans to another world, where their culture has developed for 1,000 years free of outside influences. Fascinating.

Llewelyn, Morgan: *On Raven's Wing*. (U.S. title *The Red Branch*) (Morrow, 1989). The *Tain* novelized. Llewelyn has written a number of Celtic novels and novels of Irish history – apart from *The Druids*, they are all well researched and readable.

MacAvoy, R.A.: *The Book of Kells* (Bantam, 1985). Excellent novel of Viking Ireland, bursting with roleplaying ideas.

MacDonald, Ian: *King of Morning, Queen of Day* (Bantam, 1991). Celtic archetypes emerge in Victorian, 1950s and modern Dublin.

May, Julian: *The Many-Colored Land* (Houghton Mifflin, 1981) and sequels. The Tuatha de Danaan as psionic aliens in Pliocene Europe. Interesting basis for cross-over campaigns (including *Psionics*, *Ice Age*, *Ultra Tech*, and *Time Travel*).

Mills, Pat & Bisley, Simon: *Slaine* Celtic graphic novels, very atmospheric and well researched.

Moorcock, Michael: *The Corum* (Ace, 1987) series (particularly the second trilogy). Uses many Celtic themes and has a particularly sinister version of the Fomor.

Sutcliffe, Rosemary: *The High Deeds of Finn mac Cool* (Dutton, 1967) and *The Hound of Ulster* (Dutton, 1963).

Walton, Evangeline: *Prince of Annwn*, *The Children of Llyr*, *The Song of Rhiannon*, and *The Island of the Mighty* (Ballantine, 1971-1975). Novelizations of the Four Branches of the *Mabinogion*.

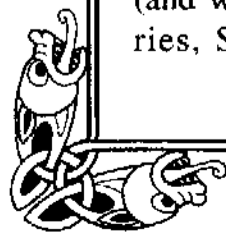
MUSIC

Especially in recent years, music with a Celtic influence has been increasingly popular.

Horslips: *The Tain* and *The Book of Invasions*. Both are terrifically atmospheric and thoroughly recommended for Celtic atmosphere. *The Tain* is also a good retelling of the story.

Stivell, Alan: *The Renaissance of the Celtic Harp*.

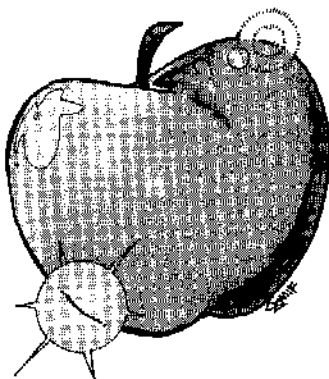
Many other recordings of traditional Irish and Welsh harp music are available.



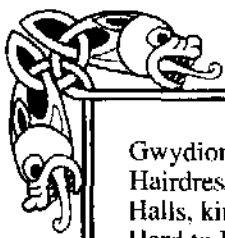
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