

## **Woodland Bard Session 11<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

### **Opening Invocation:**

I invoke the land of Ireland, surging is the mighty sea,  
Mighty is the upland full of meadows, full of meadows is the rainy wood,  
Rainy is the river full of waterfalls, full of waterfalls is the spreading lake,  
Spreading is the spring of multitudes, a multitude of people is the assembly,  
The assembly of the King of Tara, Tara is a tower of tribes,  
The tribes of the sun of Mil.  
Warriors of ships, of vessels, Ireland is a mighty vessel,  
Flourishing is Eber Donn, a very wise incantation, of the very wise wives of Bres,  
Outcry of the wives of Buaighe, Ireland is a vast woman,  
Eremon smote her, Ir and Eber entreated her.  
I invoke the land of Ireland.

### **Chant:**

Eriu, Banba, Fodla, I invoke the land of Erin,  
Fruitful be her seas, perpetually green her forest,  
I feel her in my bones, I feel her in my blood.

### **Invocation of The Sacred Hallows**

**This tale is the battle of Maige Tuired and the birth of Bres, son of Elatha and his reign.**

A taking of Ireland, a strength that was not weak, the Tuatha De Danann took it: the name of the leader which they had, it was lucky, was Bethach, noble son of Iardaines.  
The seven other chieftains thereafter, with splendour, with combat, they were powerful against their firm conflict, the seven lofty great sons of Ethliu.  
Dagda, Dian Cecht, Credne the wright, Luichne the carpenter, who was an enduring plunderer, Nuada who was the silver-handed, Lugh mac Cein, Goibninn the smith.

### **Chant:**

Take me to the old ones, take me to the hidden ones  
Take me to the Sidhe, the guardians of the land.  
Dagda, Dian Cecht, Credne, Luichne, Nuada, Lugh, Goibninn.

## **The Boyhood Deeds of Fionn MacCuail**

*I have found the well between the seven hazels  
And drunk thereof.*

*I have climbed the tower where the two cranes  
Keep watch  
Beneath and above.*

*I have travelled with wind, with wind blown  
Leaves, with water,  
And wave-torn light.*

*I have snared the salmon in the pool of knowledge,  
And the swan in flight.*

## **'Achievement' by Ella Young**

### **Finding your Soul Shrine – Coich anam**

In our meditation we entered a hollowed out ash tree as a place of healing and rejuvenation to connect with the three women of power from the Fenian cycle and plant medicine.

We used this chant:

Bodhmall, Luachair, Muirne, knit my soul together.

Bodhmall, Luachair, Muirne, make me whole.

Gather all the forest herbs and wisdom of the trees,

May nature bind me as one and make me complete.

I called to our plant allies:

Medicine of Selfheal, generosity of Clover, triumph of Nettle, tenderness of Avens, nurturing of Strawberry, connection of Dandelion, replenishment of Plantain, tenacity of Yarrow, stability of Celandine, wisdom of Vervain, fearlessness of Burdock, energy of Agrimony, nobility of Meadowsweet, vitality of Ramsons, perseverance of Willowherb, soothing of Ground ivy, movement of Cleavers, gentleness of Chickweed, protection of Teasel and beauty of Scabious.

Connecting with a plant and its insect ally (sometimes a bird or reptile) is a wonderful way to bring healing provided you do not bring the insect back but connect with it in the subtle realms. The insect belongs with the plant not you!

Your plant will have certain qualities that can help you that are not necessarily to do with any herbal medicine associations that it may have. Functions of plants in the subtle realms may be completely different to their physical function. You can connect with many plant allies but only by focusing on one at a time forming a quality relationship rather than collecting for the sake of it. Remember plant allies are not part of your soul make-up in the same way as your animal ally. Although collectively they may hold much power, they do not have the power individually that your animal has in protecting and revitalising you etc...

### **ASH- TREE OF INITIATION**

The warrior is depicted as courageous, fearless and ready for all eventualities, prepared to put his duty first in order to protect the sovereignty above his own personal desires; to lay aside his own morals for a bigger cause than himself. Is this noble acquisition an excuse for the endless blood let of war in order to gain power? Is the age- old concept of a male warrior outdated and irrelevant in more educated times? Why are so many deep myths exploring this archetype that seems so prevalent and destructive in society?

Ash is the tree of warriors associated strongly with the Vikings, the Aescling (Men of the Ash) as well as the tree of Celtic warriors in the old Irish texts. As with all tree lore it is borne out first in its practical use as a weapon from the primitive spear and bow, through to the cavalry lance and even the mosquito aeroplane of World War One. Its wood is light and flexible yet inherently strong capable of bearing more weight than any other British timber.

The tree like the warrior lives a short time (compared to other forest trees of its stature) and its properties speak of progress and speed in the above uses named, as well as in the structure of the early car which most definitely has changed society drastically. Movement, progress, change, the constant human restlessness is captured in the spirit of this tree, but where does the power of the warrior, this outward pouring of constant progress originate?

*'How oft a summer shower have started me  
To seek for shelter in an old tree:  
Old huge ash- dotterel wasted to a shell,  
Whose vigorous heads still grew and flourished well,  
Where ten might sit upon the battered floor  
And still look round discovering room for more... '*

**John Clare**

In the depths of an aged hollow tree we find the source of our power, a strength flowing from feminine qualities of stillness, patience and perseverance. I sense in the centre of the Ash and in all of us is that still, creative force that flows from the ability to yield and to give unconditionally. As mentioned before using the terms male and female need not be gender related but qualities, we all possess.

In Celtic lore as we look at the archetypes and the function of the warrior we are drawn first into the female power. The original hunters of indigenous tribes across the world served the women first by providing them with the best meat to nurture the new life born from their wombs. The earth is often depicted as a female spirit – the 'Juno' or in Greek lore 'Gaia'. The sovereignty of the land and whom the warrior first serves is therefore the female spirit from where all creation is born.

The maturity of the male spirit is therefore dependant on its acknowledgement of its female origins. In Celtic lore the training of both warrior and poet is often conducted by the mature women.

However, it is then essential the youth once mature finds his own way and severs the ties with the mature women in order to find her in himself. In Earth spirituality we first have to accept and work with our deep desires, our need for power and ambition in order to eventually transcend them.

The deliberate severance of our innate pull to the darker regions of our psyche to form a higher nobility before maturity, such as that which is encouraged in more modern religion leads to a repressed state that will eventually be acted out. However, being shown a safe place to be held without judgement, a foundation that accepts us truly as we are enables true nobility to arise as naturally as a new spring. This foundation will remain with us throughout our lives, refreshing us in more harsh times. A judgemental foundation based on fear and sin will simply create a conflict in harsh times and make the suffering all the worse for it.

The harsh rites of passage in indigenous tribes are only possible therefore if the child has been held and loved by a nurturing mother. This pulling away from the nurturing mother is also essential so a foundation can be established in the individual.

However, it is also true to state some individuals will not feel the need for such rites of passage and their challenges will be of a different nature, this is those born of the Poet's tree and choose a life of solitude and deep listening expressing themselves through less physical means.

In a sensitive society therefore the female/male warrior and the male/female poet will be acknowledged and nurtured. I use the term 'poet' to capture the essence of those of a more reflective and creative nature.

The outward signs of Ash are overtly apparent in today's society and with the boon of social media the more male qualities of 'doing' and 'being seen' are dominating our society. However true reflection and nurture is in the aged- hollowed out tree unseen by the outside world.

The young warrior or poet therefore is trained by the mature female and inspired by the mature man. They painstakingly leave the nest, chose the right of passage suitable for them, be it in solitude or in achievement, and then finally mature themselves to continue the cycle.

If we life in a society that continually worships the stage of youth, the stage of initiation and the rights of passage through doing, we lose the mature stage and no longer have the role models to enable us to live in peace with a firm foundation.

Ash is the tree that checks peace, gives us the strength to move on and to work with change. However, if we deny its feminine strength in the depths of its being, do not drink from the sacred well and find the cave of solitude within we are constantly restless and without foundation losing that beauty that stays with us in harsher times.

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