

Woodland Bard Session 14th May 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 Buaigine, 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.

The Lore of the Hollow Hills

'There was a wondrous King of the Tuatha Dé in Ireland named Eochaid Ollathair. Another of his names was the Dagdha for he used to make miracles for them and to apportion storms and fruits. Great was his power even over the sons of Mil even after they had seized the land. For the Tuatha Dé blighted the grain and milk of the sons of Mil until they made a treaty with the Dagdha. Thereafter they preserved their grsin and milk for them. Great too was his power when he was King in the beginning and it was he who divided the sidhe among the Fir Dé :

*Lugh mac Cein in Sdh Rodraban
Midir in Bri Leith
Bodb Derg in Slieve Bodb
Ler in Sidh Fionnachaidh
Elcmar in Sid in Broga*

Dagdha himself in Uisneath that is a wondrous land. There are three trees perpetually bearing fruit and an ever-living pig on the hoof and a cooked pig and a vessel with excellent liqueur and all of this never grows less.

Behold the Sidh before your eyes it is manifest to you that it is a King's mansion, which was built by the firm Dagdha, it was a wonder, a court, an admirable hill.

Furthermore the noble monarch, almighty Manannan, came to council and advice the Tuatha Dé. Their dwellings in the hills and plains Eire became mansions in the manner of the people's of the fair-sided land of promise and fair Emain Ablach. He gifted to the Tuatha Dé the Feth Fiadha, the feast of Goibniu and Manannan's swine; that is the princes could not be seen through the Feth Fiadha, the monarchs escaped age and decay by the feast of Goibniu and Manannan's swine could be killed by the nobles but come alive again. The nobles conceded to Manannan that when they had possession of their dwellings he should be over every wedding of the house and the feast of every Lord so that his statute and due and law were over every mansion.

Manannan said to Aengus : 'I am chief of your kings, senior of your hosts, shining light of your battalions, Lord of your champions. I am your tutor in valour, in feats of arms, in magic. I am foster son to the Dagdha.'

The above extract from Irish lore tells us of the partition of the hollow hills after the sons of Mil came to Ireland, a race that we are told are the ancestors of the Gaels and therefore the first people to enter Ireland that are of our own human race. This important lore recognises that there are other races of beings other than human that we share the Earth with and to protect our grain and milk and indeed the natural balance of the Earth, Sea and Sky we should honour and acknowledge them.

WILLOW- TREE OF POETS.

As the Willow stands an indomitable presence shining with silver leaves she embodies a feminine strength flowing with the waters of life. As she produces her golden catkins and attracts bees and supports more invertebrates than any other tree except Oak its not hard to see why our ancestors would have looked to her as both noble and a muse for the poets.

Willow seems to take us into the creative world of the poet who in ancient times was the remembrancer of the tribe who travelled into the inner landscape. Willow seems to be an ideal tree to connect with the unseen world, the people of the hollow hills.

Ecology of Willow

Our largest Willows are the white and crack Willow that can reach 80ft in height. The Willow species, rather like the Whitebeams, consists of an array of specialist species some of which only grow in Scotland or in Northern areas of England.

The four main tree species are:

- 1/ Crack Willow (*S.fragilis*)
- 2/ White Willow (*S.alba*)
- 3/ Bay Willow (*S.pentandra*)
- 4/ Almond Willow (*S.triandra*)

The fourteen small tree/shrub species are:

- 1/ Sallow, Goat Willow (*S.caprea*)
- 2/ Grey Willow (*S.cinerea*)
- 3/ Purple Willow (*S.purpurea*)
- 4/ Common Osier (*S.viminalis*)
- 5/ Eared Willow (*S.aurita*)
- 6/ Tea-leaved Willow (*S.phylicifolia*)
- 7/ Dark-leaved Willow (*S.myrsinifolia*)
- 8/ Creeping Willow (*S.repens*)
- 9/ Downy Willow (*S.lapponum*)
- 10/ Woolly Willow (*S.lanata*)
- 11/ Whortle-leaved Willow (*S.myrsinites*)
- 12/ Mountain Willow (*S.arbuscula*)
- 13/ Net-leaved Willow (*S.reticulata*)
- 14/ Dwarf Willow (*S.herbacea*)

Willow wood is light and tough and has been used for rafters and floors and a certain white Willow species for cricket bats. The stems/branches are strong and very flexible making them ideal for weaving baskets, hats and making coracles.

Willow as already mentioned provides early nectar for many species and is actually in the top three trees which support the most invertebrates, the other two being Oak and Birch. Many species of caterpillars and insects will feed upon its leaves which will in turn attract birds and provide nesting sites.

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