



SPECIAL
POINTS OF
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BELTANE 2008

Beltane

The Green Man is a mysterious, eerie figure depicted mainly in medieval European stonework, believed to represent an ancient vegetation deity. The Green man is nearly always depicted as a "foliate head," that is, a face made of leaves and vines. Sometimes, it appears as a human face peering out from leaves, other times with animal features.

The image of the Green man may have been adapted from Roman decorative stonework, or from Celtic interlace figures. Older versions bear a very close resemblance to Celtic and Norse interlace figures, and often combine plant and animal features. One of the oldest examples was discovered on an Irish obelisk that dates to the third century BCE. This may be the Derg Corra of Celtic myth, the man in the tree.

The "green man," is a pagan nature god from classical northern myth. In pagan belief, trees were held sacred and forest groves were perceived as the dwelling place of gods, goddesses, and a wide variety of nature spirits.

The "green man" symbol that has been found carved into wood and stone pagan temples and graves of medieval churches and cathedrals, and used as a Victorian architectural motif, can be found across an areas that stretch from Ireland in the west to Russia in the east. The name "green man"* dates back only to 1939, when folklorist Lady Raglan coined the term after making a connection between the architectural faces and the "Jack of the Green") tales of folklore.

Modern May Day celebrations were once part of pagan spring fertility rites with overtly sexual elements (the 'May pole representing the phallus), but the Christian Church was quick to squash any lewdness they perceived in the rituals. A deep animistic belief with a strong reverence for trees and the holiness of nature was embedded among the peoples in the far north of Europe and in the British Isles. These two areas were where the Christian priests of the Dark Ages (such as Devon's stern St. Boniface) particularly sought to eradicate the pagan beliefs and even cut down and burned sacred trees and entire groves and forests.

In Norse mythology, a giant ash tree called Yggdrasil held the universe together. Its three great roots linked Asgard (the realm of the gods), Rime-Thusar (the realm of the Frost Giants), and Niflheim (the realm of the dead) with the human world (Midgard). The Celtic tribes of Britain and Ireland asserted that each type of tree contained magical properties. Each letter in the Celtic "ogham"* alphabet stood for a tree and its magical associations and can be seen embedded in the mythology of the Celts; e.g. the "Battle of the Trees," "The Romance of Taliesin."**

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Vegetation imagery and deities echo within Northern myths and those from the Mediterranean. Dionysus is thought by many scholars to be a forerunner to the Green Man symbol. He was often depicted masked, crowned in vine and ivy leaves. As deity of the wilderness and wine, ecstasy, and sexual abandon, his presence mythically could drive whole communities mad, and women under his influence (the maenads) roamed ecstatically through the forest. The cult of Dionysus was one of the great Mystery religions, with rites that range from the intellectual and contemplative to those that were drunken and orgiastic. Dionysus is also associated with death and rebirth as a god of the underworld (Okeanos). He was born three times; first as the son of Persephone and Zeus (devoured as a child by Titans), second as the son of Semele of Thebes (who dies as a result of Hera's jealousy before the baby comes to term), and third, as the fetus from Semele's body born out of the thigh of Zeus.

Trees as sacred also plays an important part in Greek and Roman mythology with particular trees aligned symbolically with gods; Zeus-oak, Adonis-myrrh, Daphne-laurel, Artemis-forest groves. Further motifs between Greco-Roman and the Norse can be seen with the dryads, the nymphs who live in trees and die when the tree is cut down. In Northern Europe, the Faeries who inhabit the trees, take revenge on humans who destroy their habitats. In other stories, the faeries mourn after the destruction of their home and when they die, the beauty and magical soul of the land die with them. Other parallels exist with the tree trolls of Finland and Norway. In Sweden, the *svor skogsfru* (wood wives) are seductive and utterly beautiful from the front. From the back, these faerie women are made of bark and are hollow as logs. In Italy, the *silvane* (wood women) mate with *silvani* (wood men) to produce the *folleti*, the enchanting faeries of the land. In England, brownies and pixies make their homes in oak tree roots, and each kind of tree has its own faerie to tend it and enable its growth. Men made of bark seduce young maids in the fairy tales of eastern Europe. Some of the men are dangerous, while others make tender lovers. The forest of Broceliande (now known as Paimpont) in Brittany also possesses tales that range from the benevolent to the malign.

In romantic literature- the hero's quest, the movement from the known to the unknown, the test of faith- many of these same elements and symbols are integral to the story and have carried throughout the ages from the medieval era through to contemporary fantasy literature.

"Jack of the Green" is also associated with spring new growth as pageants ritually 'kill' Jack with wooden swords and then the crowd takes the leaves off Jack as souvenirs of luck, the resurrection of spring, etc. The re-enactments are associated with revival/resurrection of the tree spirit in a more youthful, potent, and vibrant form. The pageants are reminiscent of a time when a blending of the pagan and the Christian was common in order for conversion.

In Hastings, England, the Jack in the Green pageant is re-enacted each spring by a man in a towering eight-foot-tall costume of leaves, topped by a masked face and a crown made out of flowers. He moves through the town accompanied by men (Morris and clog dancers) whose hair, skin, and clothes are all green, and a young girl bearing flowers, dressed and painted entirely in black. As the dancers entertain the crowds, Jack, the trickster/fool figure, romps and chases the young maidens. When he reaches a mound in the woods below the local castle, the dancers take out their wooden swords and strike the leaf man dead. The ritual of reading a poem over the creature solemnly occurs, then the crowd cheers in as each person takes a leaf from the Jack for luck. In Bavaria the tree-spirit, *Pfingstl*, roams through rural villages wearing leaves of alder and hazelnut with a high pointed cap covered by flowers. Two boys with swords accompany him as he moves through the houses, knocking on doors and asking for presents but often getting thoroughly drenched by water instead. The ritual ends when the boys kill the green man. In Picardy, a member of the "Compagnons du Loup Vert" dresses in a green wolf skin and foliage and enters the church carrying a candle and garlands of flowers. He waits until the Gloria is sung, then walks to the altar to stand through the mass. At its end, the entire congregation rushes up to strip the green wolf of his leaves, bearing them away for luck.

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*The name "green man" is still controversial: "...the legitimacy of the connection still remains controversial, with little real evidence to settle the question one way or the other. Earliest known examples of the foliate head (as it was known prior to Lady Raglan) date back to classical Rome -- yet it was not until this pagan symbol was adopted by the Christian church that the form fully developed and proliferated across Europe. No known writings exist that explain what the foliate head represented in earlier religions, or why precisely it became incorporated into Christian architecture, but most folklorists conjecture that the foliate head symbolized mythic rebirth and regeneration, and thus became linked to Christian iconography of resurrection. (The Tree of Life, a virtually universal symbol of life, death and regeneration, was adapted to Christian symbolism in a similar manner) (Terry Windling, Tales of the Mythic Forest).

**see Robert Graves, The White Goddess, for detail regarding the symbolism of the Celtic alphabet.

<http://www.cotcg.com/Crystal%20Grove%20Web/Beltane.htm>

The History Of The Horned One

Paintings discovered in the Caverne des Trois Freres at Ariège, France provides evidence of the first views of the Horned One. Depicted as a stag standing upright on hind legs with the upper body of a man, the figure is celebrating what appears to be a hunt and wooing a woman.

From some of the earliest myths come the union between the fertile Goddess and the triumphant phallus hunter, the Horned God. The more successful the tribal hunter in providing for his people, the greater his stature became. The more likely he would be the one chosen to impregnate the "Mother" of the tribe. Often seen as the High Priestess or at least a tribal woman who was touched by the goddess because of her prowess at becoming pregnant and extending the life of the tribe. Something that was needed during the days of ancient man, as life spans were short and death by illness or disease was common.

Many legends describe fertility celebrations occurring at the spring gathering and again in late fall. Each of these coinciding with a spring hunt to bring food to the tribe after a cold desolate winter. And in the fall to provide meat for the tribe during the winter months. The most successful hunter won the prize of sleeping with the "Goddess", most often before the Tribe watching. Something that is seen as repugnant today, in ancient times, it was a spiritual event and is revitalized in what we see as the Great Rite of today.

During these rituals, the Hunter would appear dressed or cloaked in the skin of his kill with the horns of the stag resting victoriously upon his head. Some legends describe the blood of the beast engulfing both the Horned Hunter and the Goddess, believing the life taken from the animal is transferred to the womb of the fertile Mother, thus providing life.

To the Celts as Cernunnos, the Horned God was more than just a fertile being. He is found throughout the Celtic lands and folklore as the guardian of the portal leading to the Otherworld. The name Cernunnos is known only through damaged carvings found at Notre Dame. In these carvings, a deity with short horns carries the incomplete inscription 'ERNUNNO'. In his earliest of days he was probably the fertility god to the Gauls. But as time progressed and his legends grew, he became associated with wealth and prosperity. He was such an important deity to the pagan Celts, that his image and prowess became a major target for the early Christian church. It is his image that is believed to have been adopted for their mythos of the Devil 'deus falsus' or the false god. His status as the god of Hell would coincide with the view of the pagan Celts as the guardian of the Otherworld.

As Herne the Hunter, the British version of the Horned God; he is seen as the leader of the Wild Hunt. As an antlered giant, he is rumored to still survive and live in the forests of Windsor Great Park. His longevity is owed to the cult of Cernunnos, who have also linked his generosity to provide for the tribe to the legend of Robin Hood. Some suggest that Herne was the father to Robin of Loxley; which is probably

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more an association since Herne is a much older figure in legend and myth. In this ability to provide for the tribe as the great Hunter of the wood, he is forever linked to the Horned God.

As the Greek deity of pastures, flocks and herds, Pan was half man and half goat. With the legs and horns and beard of a goat. He is the offspring of Hermes, but his mothers lineage is in question. Either he is the result of Hermes and Dryope daughter of King Dropys, who's flocks he tended. Or Hermes and Penelope. His cult is centered around Arcadia where he is reported to haunt the woodlands, hills and mountains. Sleeping at noon and then dancing through the woods as he played the panpipes, which he is credited with inventing. He is the lusty leader of the satyrs (woodland deities), and continually chases the nymphs (the beautiful nature goddesses). During rituals, his essence is invoked to for fertility of the flocks or for an abundant hunt. Associating him with the legends of the Horned God.

As Osiris the Egyptian god of the lower world, he is seen as the judge of the dead. Linking him to the concept of Cernunnos as the guardian of the gate to the Other World. He is the brother of Isis, but he is also her husband. Isis as the goddess of fertility her status as the Mother is propagated by the services provided her by Osiris. Once again linking his image with that of the Horned One.

As the Green Man he is the God of the woodlands and vegetation. He is also known as 'Green Jack', 'Jack in the Green' and 'Green George'. He represents the spirits of the trees, plants and foliage who has many powers over nature that promote growth. He has the power to make it rain and foster the livestock with lush meadows. As Green George he has been represented as a young man cloaked head to foot in greenery. In early depictions, the green vegetation emphasized his phallic symbol of fertility as he lead processions through tribal lands. As the Green Man he shares his woodland home with the forest fairies often called "Greenies" or "Greencoaties".

What today we call Nature Sprites. The Green Man is depicted as a horned man peering out from a mask of foliage, connecting him to the image of Horned God.

The Ballad Of John Barleycorn

There was three men come out of the West
 Their fortunes for to try
 And these three men made a solemn vow
 John Barleycorn must die.
 They ploughed, they sowed, they harrowed him in
 Throwing clods all on his head
 And these three men made a solemn vow
 John barleycorn was Dead.

They've left him in the ground for a very long time
 Till the rains from heaven did fall
 Then little Sir John's sprung up his head
 And so amazed them all
 They've left him in the ground till the Midsummer
 Till he's grown both pale and wan
 Then little Sir John's grown a long, long beard
 And so become a man.

They hire'd men with their scythes so sharp
 To cut him off at the knee.
 They've bound him and tied him around the waist
 Serving him most barb'rously.

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Beltane Recipes

Red Hot Scallops

Ingredients...

12-16 scallops, washed
 4 tbsps red curry paste
 2 tbsps vegetable oil
 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
 2 red chillies, seeded & finely sliced
 2 tbsps fish sauce
 1 tbsp caster sugar
 1 large handful fresh basil

Instructions...

1. Mix the scallops and curry paste in a bowl and leave to marinate for at least 15 minutes.
2. Heat the oil in a wok and stir fry the garlic until golden. Add the scallops and curry paste and the chillies and stir fry for 2 mins.
3. Add the fish sauce and sugar and cook for 1 minute more. Check the seasonings. When the scallops are tender and have just whitened (about 1 minute more) stir in most of the basil and remove from the heat.
4. Serve on a bed of stir fried bok choy garnished with the remaining basil and accompanied by a bowl of plain boiled rice.

Passionfruit Champagne Cocktail

1 cup chilled passion fruit blend nectar
 1/2 teaspoon Angostura bitters
 1 cup chilled champagne or other sparkling white wine
 4 fresh raspberries or small strawberries
 1 orange slice, cut in half

Divide nectar and bitters between 2 chilled champagne flutes. Add champagne. Drop 2 berries into each drink. Garnish with orange.
 2 Servings; Can be doubled

Chicken with Figs

One 3 to 3 1/2 pound chicken, cut into pieces
 12 ounces Greek-style dried figs, soaked and drained
 1 cup dry white wine
 1/4 cup honey
 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon ground coriander
 1/2 teaspoon salt
 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Preheat oven to 375° F. Arrange chicken pieces in large deep roasting pan. In medium bowl, combine figs and remaining ingredients, stirring to dissolve honey. Pour mixture over chicken. Bake chicken about 1 hour, or until tender and browned, turning once and basting occasionally with pan juices.

Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Baked Honey Meringue

4 egg whites
 2 cups honey
 1/2 tsp. cinnamon

Preheat oven to 225° F. Beat all ingredients together until stiff peaks form. Shape into desired form. Bake on parchment paper for 1 hour or longer, depending on size. Do not remove from oven at once, but turn off the oven, open the door, and leave for at least 5 minutes. Cool gradually, away from draft.



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They hire'd men with their sharp pitch-forks
 To prick him to the heart
 But the drover he served him worse than that
 For he's bound him to the cart.

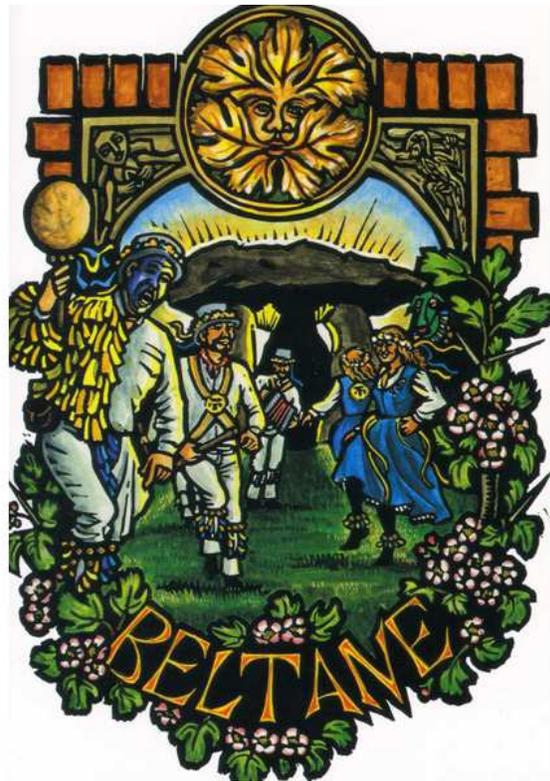
They've rolled him around and around the field
 Till they came unto a barn
 And there they made a solemn mow
 Of Little Sir John Barleycorn
 They've hire'd men with their crab-tree sticks
 To strip him skin from bone
 But the miller, he served him worse than that,
 For he's ground him between two stones.

Here's Little sir John in the nut-brown bowl
 And brandy in the glass
 But Little Sir John in the nut-brown bowl's
 Proved the stronger man at last
 For the hunts man he can't hunt the fox
 Nor so loudly blow his horn
 And the tinker, he can't mend Kettles or pots
 Without a little of Sir John Barleycorn.

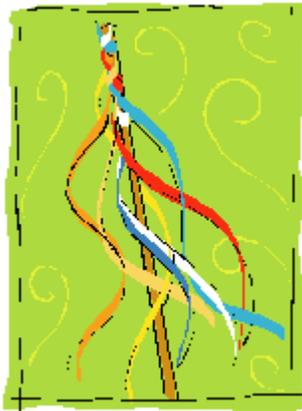
beltane

green
 spilt out into the meadows
 running into every being
 filling us up with spirit
 tumbling
 the pulsing red life of the earth
 in the smoke of the firecircle
 i saw my demons scatter to the skies
 dissolving into the midnight air
 there is nothing but the sun
 the moon
 in perfect equilibrium
 unreal yet grounded
 alone in body, full in spirit
 love

Written by Lady Lissar



Beltane images and pictures



What books have you read, that you would suggest for the rest of us to read?

Beltane-Springtime Rituals Lore and Celebration - by Raven Grimassi

Initiation At Beltane by Laurel, Tamarin

Once Upon a Beltane Eve by Selene Silverwind

An Ordinary Girl - A Magical Child by W. Lyon Martin

Sacred Myths: Stories of World Religions by Marilyn McFarlane

Sacred Paths for Modern Men by Dagonet Dewr

Newsletter Submission Due Dates

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Beltane Issue—April 2nd
Midsummer Issue—May 20th
Lammas Issue—July 2nd
Mabon Issue—August 21st
Samhain Issue—October 2nd
Yule Issue—November 21st

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