Praise for *The Druid Isle*

Much of the beauty of this book is in Hopman's description of the Druid rituals and liturgies as the wheel of light turns from *Samhain*, through Brighid's day of *Imbolc*, to *Bealtaine* and then to *Lughnasadh* before again celebrating the return of Samhain. Also, the frequented Celtic sacred sites such as the hill of stone, and the places of the sacred fires, bring alive the ways of the Celts and their Druids of the time. Her use of ancient Irish words and their correct pronunciation added to the life of the book, pronunciation that I practiced while reading them. Such descriptions and the personal life and practices of Ellen Evert Hopman show that the Druid ways can survive after about 1700 years, the hope and prediction of the Priestess Ethne. This rekindling of the ways of the ancient people of the Earth provides us with continued and deep hope for the future.

~ Nicholas E. Brink, PhD, author of *Ecstatic Soul Retrieval, Power of Ecstatic Trance, Baldr's Magic,* and other volumes.

While Hopman's research and careful descriptions of Druid rituals, beliefs and philosophy will be invaluable to those seeking the Druid path, she has succeeded in writing alive, compelling novels that will keep any reader turning page after page, far into the night.

~ Patricia Lee Lewis, Founder of Patchwork Farm Writing & Yoga Retreats and author of the award-winning book of poems *A Kind of Yellow*

This daring sequel follows two intersecting stories of a young monk and a Druidess, one seeking to know his hidden origins, the other seeking to save her ancestral ways.

Their journeys during the tumultuous historical setting of a third-century Gaul, Britain and Ireland will provide you with a series of wisdom lessons and insight into the clash of two worldviews. *The Druid Isle* is a must-have for any serious Druidic library.

~ Michael Scharding, archivist of the Reformed Druids of North America and publisher of *The Druid Inquirer*

Ellen has done it again with a wonderful sequel. The book grabs you right from the start… One of the best features is the small bits of old lore from the Druids scattered throughout. I would definitely recommend this book for anyone's library!

~ Rev. Skip Ellison, Archdruid of *Ár nDraiocht Féin* (ADF) and author of *Ogham: The Secret Language of the Druids* and *The Solitary Druid: A Practitioner's Guide*

Also by Ellen Evert Hopman

Scottish Herbs and Fairy Lore *Pendraig Publishing*

Tree Medicine Tree Magic
Pendraig Publishing

A Druid's Herbal for the Sacred Earth Year
Inner Traditions/Destiny Books

A Druid's Herbal of Sacred Tree Medicine
Inner Traditions/Destiny Books

Being a Pagan –
Druids, Wiccans and Witches Today
Inner Traditions/Destiny Books

Walking the World in Wonder –
A Children's Herbal
Healing Arts Press

Secret Medicines from Your Garden
Healing Arts Press

The Secret Medicines of Your Kitchen
mPowr Publishing

The Real Witches of New England –
History, Lore & Modern Practice
Destiny Books

The Sacred Herbs of Samhain *Destiny Books*

The Sacred Herbs of Spring *Destiny Books*

A Legacy of Druids *Moon Books*

Priestess of the Forest – A Druid Journey
Oak Spirit Publishing

Priestess of the Fire Temple – A Druid's Tale
Oak Spirit Publishing

The Druid Isle

Sequel to
Priestess of the Forest: A Druid Journey



The Druid Trilogy

Book 1: *Priestess of the Forest*
Book 2: *The Druid Isle*
Book 3: *Priestess of the Fire Temple*



Ellen Evert Hopman

The Druid Isle

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Dedication



This book is dedicated to the memory of the Druids who once lived and taught on the island of Iona. Their magic and mystery is held in the rocks and sands of that holy place.

Acknowledgments



Many thanks to Janet (Rowan) Scott, to Sandy Barr, and to Stan Stanfield of the Findhorn Community in Scotland for refreshing my memory of a trip taken over twenty years ago. Thanks to Mairi MacArthur for leads to early monastic communities, to Robert Jones for aerial photos of Iona, to Professor Michael O'Connell, Paleo-environmental Research Unit, Department of Botany, National University of Ireland, for pollen studies that mention yew, to Donald Michael Craig, Donata Ahearn, Vyvyan Ogma Wyverne, and to Joyce Sweeny for help, advice and support. Maureen Buchanan Jones deserves collaborative credit for her contribution to this book and, as always, many thanks to Alexei Kondratiev for language assistance.

Three things that constitute a poet:
knowledge that illumines,
teinm laeda, improvisation.

(Ancient Irish triad)

*extempore recitation, illumination of song

Glossary

Adorare (Latin) – to worship ah-do-RAH-reh

Albu (Old Irish) – Britain ALL-uh-buh

Ametis (Old Irish) – amethyst AH-me-tish

Ard-Ban-Drui (Old Irish) – Arch Druidess
AHRD-VAHN-DREE

Ard-Drui (Old Irish) – Arch Druid AHRD-DREE

Ard-Ri (Old Irish) – High King AHRD-REE

Ard-Rígain (Old Irish) – High Queen AHRD-REE-GAHN

Asherah (*Asherar-yam*) (*Astarte*) (Syrian) - Mother of the Gods, Lady of the Sea, wife of El AH-SHAIR-ah

Armorica (Old Irish) – Brittany ar-MOH-ree-kah

Auxilia (Latin) additional troops, extra soldiers
owk-SEE-lee-ah

Baal (Syrian) - the Canaanite Ruler God BAH-ahl

Ban-Fili (Old Irish) – a female sacred poet and diviner
BAHN-FILL-uh

Ban-Sídaige (Old Irish) – female fairy
BAHN-SHEE-thuh-hyuh

Beltaine (Old Irish) – May Day, the first day of summer
BYEL-tin-yuh

Bell Branch - a Druidic tool consisting of a branch with nine bells affixed to it. Depending on their rank, a Druid poet was entitled carry one made of bronze, silver, or gold.

Beirel (Old Irish) – beryl BER-el

Bíle (Old Irish) – the sacred tree of a tribe or a district.
BILL-uh

Bíle Samrata (Old Irish) – Sacred Tree of Summer BILL-uh Sow-ruh-thuh

Brehon (Old Irish) – a lawyer and judge of the Druid caste, one who has memorized the ancient Brehon Laws BREH-ON

Bríg (Old Irish) – energy BREEGH

Brighid (Old Irish) - the great triple Goddess of Smithcraft, Healing and Poetry, who was the Patroness of the Druids and Bards BREE-ghij

Caldarium (Latin) – hot bath kahl-DAH-ree-oom

Caledonia (Latin) – Scotland Kah-leh-DO-nee-ah

Cantlos (Gaulish) - (Sep/Oct) "song month" (harvest, from the Coligny Calendar) KAHN-tloss

Carnyx - a wind instrument of the Iron Age Celts, a bronze trumpet CAR-NIX

Carreg (Cornish) – rocks CAR EGG

Cave Canem (Latin) – beware of the dog KAH-weh KAH-nem

Centuria (Latin) – eighty men under a Centurion ken-TOO-ree-ah

Centurion (Latin) – Roman commanding officer who leads a Centuria ken-TOO-ree-ohn

Chons da! (Cornish) – Good luck! Chons dah

Cinad ó muir (Old Irish) – "judgment of the sea," where a criminal is placed in the ocean in a curach without any oars. If he survives, he becomes a person without status or protection on the shore upon which he lands. Kin-uth oh vwuir

Commus (Old Irish) – power KOH-muhs

Compline (English) – the night prayer, prayer at the end of the day

Corann (Old Irish) – crown KOR-un

The Characters

Aífe – a young woman in training to become a Druid AHY-FAH

Albinus – a Roman monk AL-BEE-NUHS

Amalgáid – A Drui from Innis nan Druidneach AH-vul-ghawth

Anna – grandmother of Aurelia

Brother Armel – a member of the Inissi Leuca community of Monks

Asbolos (Latin) – "soot"

Aude – Aurelia's aunt

Aurelia – a young woman from the mainland of Armorica

Báetán – a Drui from Innis nan Druidneach BWEE-dawn

Bébinn – A Ban-Drui from Innis nan Druidneach BEY-vin

Breaca – sister of Aurelia

Cadfan – grandfather of Aurelia KAHD-vahn

Cadla – king of In Medon, the central kingdom

Cathail – son of Clothru and Damán

Cináed – king of Iriardacht

Cuill – son of Clothru and Damán

Clothru – a female apprentice Druid KLOTH-ruh

Coemgen – the former Ard-Drui of The Island KWEEV-ghyen

Crimthann – Former High King of the Central Kingdom, In Medon, and of the Island KRIV-thun

Daire – a prince, son of the former High King Crimthann DAR-yuh

Martinus – a traveling Monk mar-TEE-nooss

Melor – Aurelia's father MELL-or

Meraud – the ancient wise woman of the people of Dor Dama

Merryn – son of Hammitt

Abbott Mihael – Abbott of the Armorican monastery at Inissi Leuca

Nárbflaith – queen of In Medon and wife of Cadla NAWR-uv-lath

Nuin – a Drui living in the Nemed of the Ard-Ri Nin

Rochad – High King of Torcrad ROKH-uth

Ruadh – red, wild, fierce one, former member of the Fian, now partner of Ethne ROO-uth

Ruadhán – son of Ethne and Ruadh ROO-uth-awn

Sadwrn – Aurelia's uncle SAH-doorn

Steren – daughter of Hammitt STAIR-en

Tanaide - son of Cadla, king of In Medon THAN-ih-thuh

Tannin – a Syrian slave tah-NEEN

Brother Teilo - a boy novice from Inissi Leuca, from a family of fisher folk TILE-o

Brother Trillo – a member of the Inissi Leuca community, caretaker of boys

Ugar – A Syrian slave oo-gahr

Weluela – mother of Aurelia

Preface

I am a wave on the windy sea
Over land and sea, I am the wind
I am the eagle on the cliff
I am the stone within the mountain
I am the salmon in the forest pool
I am the strength of the boar in rut
I am the tines of the mountain stag
I am the bravery of the wild bull
I am the flower in bloom
I am the seed within the flower
I am the grain that feeds the people.

I am a word of magic
I am the strength within the strong
I am the silence within the secret
I am the knowledge within the knower
I am the enchanted point of a battle spear
I am the radiant sun of light
I am the stars in the cauldron of sky
I am the ages of the moon.

My word brings the world into being;
I grow the shady wood
I release the cleansing waterfall
I hold the pool of the lake
I raise the lofty green meadow
I am the well in the hill
That nourishes the people
I am the people,
I am the past
I am the future
I am the sacred land
I am the sea and the sky…

~ Based on a poem by the Bard Amairgen Glúingeal ~

Prologue

It had rained for an entire moon-tide and the small stream was spilling its banks, the reedy shore laid flat by the weight of constant downpours. But at last the sun was shining. The children rushed out of doors as soon as breakfast was over, pulled equally by the warm sunlight and the exciting prospect of puddles.

Ethne carried wooden bowls and cups from the morning meal in a large willow basket, to clean them in the surging waters. As she plucked rushes for scouring, she reflected on what she and Ruadh had created together in the wilderness. She was older now, and crouching on the muddy bank to clean cups and dishes was becoming hard on her knees, but she still enjoyed seeing to the details of daily life in the Forest School. Her every waking moment was spent in passing on and preserving the ancient teachings, as much for the benefit of future generations as to honor those who had gone before. The Druid might no longer hold the status they once did, but at least Ethne could be sure she was doing everything in her power to preserve the ancient ways. She was satisfied that her life was fulfilling its purpose.

When the dishes were scrubbed, rinsed and stacked neatly in the basket to dry, Ethne clapped her hands to get the children's attention:

"Who wants to take a walk and look for a "*day sign*?"

"We do!" came the chorused answer from stained, muddy faces.

Walking out in search of a day sign was a favorite activity of the youngest students because once they saw something significant: a raven, a deer, a pool, a rainbow, or any other natural feature that called attention to itself, Ethne would weave them a story.

On this day they trooped towards a small river that wound its way through the forest. The rains had left it murky and swollen and it was hard to calculate the depth of the waters.

"Let's sit by the river bank and see what creature or object calls our attention," Ethne said.

The children arranged themselves around her like a tribe of goslings nestling against their mother and, Druid-trained, kept their silence. Ethne had taught them that to experience nature directly is the quickest and surest way to discover *Truth*, for nature cares not what a person's station in life might be, nor for wealth and possessions. Nature cares little if one is pauper or king, male or female. Nature just *is* and until you can see something reflected in nature it simply isn't *true*.

Suddenly the silence was broken by a bright flash and a slap of water and then by rings of ripples edging towards shore. A moment later there was a second flash and another arc of silver against the sunlight.

"It's the salmon!" the children shrieked.

"The Salmon of Wisdom," Ethne corrected, smiling. "See how they leap with ease between the worlds?"

She knew that after a long rain the appearance of sun would bring out the flies and midges and that the salmon would emerge, leaping for their breakfast. It was the perfect opportunity for a teaching tale.

"Deep beneath the ocean there is a sacred well that is the source of all wisdom. It is known as The Well of Segais. Around it grow nine magical hazel trees that bear purple nuts. There are five magical salmon that live in that well, and as you know, Salmon is the oldest creature on the face of the Earth, the first to be created and thus the closest to the Source of life.

Every time a purple hazel nut falls into the well, one of the five salmon leaps to catch it and every time they swallow a nut they grow a spot, by now those salmon must be covered with many spots because those fish are *very* old."

"Why do they keep eating those nuts?" asked Cathail.

"Because they want to be wise." Ethne answered.

"We Druid are just like those salmon. The hazel nuts represent knowledge and each time a salmon swallows a nut she becomes wiser. We too seek the sweetness that is hidden within the hard shell of learning and when we have developed our wisdom and perfected our five senses, we learn to do as the salmon do and find our way back to the Source, to the waters of our birth."

"I like to *eat* the salmon," said Gaine Óg.

"Yes, so do I. Maybe if we ask nicely Ruadh and Damán will build a weir and catch a few for our supper," Ethne answered, picking herself up from the damp grass to lead her charges back to the settlement, hidden deep in the forest.

PART ONE

The Isle of Light

1

Lucius, Teilo and Justan had discussed for months how to escape the island by boat and make it to the mainland for the big *Giamonios* festival. Blond haired, blue eyed Lucius was the natural leader of the pack which was nicknamed "the triumverate" by the older Brothers. Genial and daring, he was the one who most often slid into the kitchens at night to pilfer bread, cheese and honey for the boys in the dormitory. Sometimes he even managed to smuggle out a whole goat-skin of *vinum* which the boys then passed around in their secret gathering place behind a thicket of trees.

The Monks suspected that the boys were responsible for the sudden shortfalls in the kitchen stores but declined to make a fuss, thinking a silent tongue a virtue. When there was no longer enough bread and cheese to go around, Abbott Mihael would simply declare a day of fasting, a subtle but effective punishment for the boys.

Lucius excelled at his studies and had already memorized whole Biblical chapters, to the delight of Abbott Mihael.

Teilo had dark brown curls and a faintly sprouting moustache of which he was inordinately proud. He sprang from one of the fisher families from across the bay and had intimate knowledge of the rocks, shoals and sandbars between Inissi Leuca and the mainland. Where Lucius was quick and bright, Teilo was strong and could be counted on to lift a body high into a tree or over a wall to pilfer apples and grapes.

Abbott Mihael despaired of the boy ever perfecting his reading or his letters.

Justan, youngest of the three, idolized both Lucian and Teilo, and followed their every command. With dark blond hair and moss-green eyes, he was self-effacing and quiet, shy and gentle as a deer. He rarely spoke unless addressed first.

Like Lucius, Justan had been placed at the monastery as an infant when his father died and his mother could no longer afford to keep him. He felt to the depths of his soul that his mother must have found him unlovable, else why would she have given him up so easily? When he spoke up in the schola it was usually to bring up a philosophical point upon which he had ruminated for days.

Unlike Lucius, Justan lacked self-confidence, and while he also lacked the physical vigor of Teilo, he did have quick and dexterous fingers. The Abbott Mihael thought he might make a fine scribe one day and even suspected genius in the boy, but despaired how to pry it out of him.

After Vespers the three engaged in one last game with a wool-filled leather ball until Brother Trillo was ordered by the Abbott to shepherd the boys into the dormitory: "*Omnes ergo in unum positi compleant*!" (Since everyone is gathered let them say compline, the last prayer of the day) he directed in Latin. He was always seeking ways to further their erudition.

The days were growing longer and it was becoming ever harder to corral them into their beds.

After Brother Trillo heard their bedtime prayers, blew out the candle and left, the boys scrabbled under their straw mattresses and dug out the tunics and pants they had secreted away over time. They couldn't be seen in town wearing their brown wool scholar's robes, so Teilo's sister Gwen had given him a piece of clothing each time he went home for a visit. Teilo shared these with his friends. They had also done small favors for the Monks and visitors to the island and over many months

with more or less than seven unusual. I would hope that this novel has done more than entertain. I hope that it also inspires you to seek even more information.

I would like to end this with the ancient word of greeting and parting that is still used in India today: Namaste! (That which is of the gods in me recognizes and acknowledges that which is of the gods in you.)

Today, there is group of people that identifies Amrita with female sexual ejaculation. This is a new definition and does not equate with the traditional concept. That doesn't make it wrong, just different.



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Endnotes

1 Based on the poem "*Acallam na Senórach*" (*The Colloquy of the Ancients*) a late twelfth century monastic compilation that includes traditional Celtic rules of behavior in which Finn gives advice on how to behave as a gentleman.

2 This song is loosely based on a poem about the coming of the Sons of Míl to Ireland by the Bard Amairgen Glúingeal as given in a translation by R.A.S. Macalister (ed.) in *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, V, 110-113. In the Hindu *Bhagavad-Gita* (Song of God), Sri Krishna sings a similar lay: "I am the radiant sun…I am the moon…I am Meru of the mountain peaks…"

3 No, they are not the basis of the acupuncture points. Those are based on the crossings of three energy paths and the points are called *marmas*.

Appendix 1

Christian Prayers

Prayer to Saint Michael the Archangel

Sancte Michael Archangele,
defende nos in proelio, contra nequitiam
et insidias diaboli esto praesidium

Saint Michael the Archangel,
defend us in battle;
be our defense against the wickedness
and snares of the devil.

Prayer for Protection

Exaudi nos, Domine sancte,
Pater omnipotens, aeterne Deus,
et mittere digneris sanctum Angelum tuum de coelis,
qui custodiat, foveat,
protegat, visitet atque defendat omnes habitants
in hoc habitaculo.

Hear us, O holy Lord,
almighty Father, everlasting God,
and vouchsafe to send Thy holy Angel from heaven,
to guard, cherish, protect, visit and defend all that are
assembled in this place.

Appendix 2

Further Reading

For a report on pollen studies that track the sudden disappearance of Yew in the early Christian period, see:
Molloy, K. and O'Connell, M. 2007. Fresh insights into long-term environmental change on the Aran Islands based on palaeo-ecological investigations of lake sediments from Inis Oírr. *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society,* 59**,** 1-17

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Kelly, Fergus, *Audacht Morainn*, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, Dublin, 1976

For background on the ritual use of intoxicating drinks from the La Téne to the Viking Age, see: Enright, Michael J., *The Lady with a Mead Cup,* Four Courts Press, Dublin, 1996

The Chakras

Information on the chakra systems is in part from class notes to Sri Yantra workshops given by Donald Michael Kraig and from *Introduction to the Chakras,* a class for The Grey School of Wizardry, by Donata Ahern, MSW www.greyschool.com as well as a lifetime of my own experience with various gurus and spiritual teachers.

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For information on Druids, Druid Orders and Druid Training:

Tribe of the Oak (*Tuatha na Dara*) www.tribeoftheoak.com

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Ellen Evert Hopman has been a teacher of herbalism since 1983 and is a professional member of the American Herbalists Guild. She is the author of a number of books on Celtic history, Herbalism and lore. A Druidic initiate since 1984, she is the Arch Druid of Tribe of the Oak www.tribeoftheoak.com, a founding member and former Co-Chief of The Order of the White Oak (Ord Na Darach Gile), a Bard of the Gorsedd of Caer Abiri, an ArchDruidess of the Druid Clan of Dana, and was Vice President of the Henge of Keltria for nine years. She is a member of the Grey Council of Mages and Sages and taught at the Grey School of Wizardry for several years. Hopman lives in New England. Find her books and blog at www.elleneverthopman.com.