

Beltane 2011 with Treibh na Tintean!

Preparation Time: 6-7:30pm)

Place: White tents in church back parking lot

[Music, flowers, scent, massage, meditation, body-painting, hair-braiding, etc.]

1. Gathering Time: 7:50 pm or so on May 14, 2011

Place: Near the front door of the church, then into the sanctuary:

Drummers begin quiet rhythm softly and the chant slowly grows: Sandy, then Denise, then Charlotte, Mike & Scott: others join in the chant as they gather at Point 1 (from whence 5ds will be later direct everyone into the sanctuary for introduction & meditation). Everyone is encouraged to drum, clap, shake rattles, dance, etc.]

Gathering Chant

ALL: *People are returning to the ancient ways . . .*

[The Goddess is our Mother and we celebrate . . .

Counterpoint: The Goddess Returns, the winter abates

The power of Love will always conquer hate!]

(from Edinburgh Samhain Festival)

[Starts outside; repeat for several minutes until all have gathered.]

NARR: *Beltane is about the passionate pursuit of one's beloved and culmination in sexual union: the combination of god and goddess energy resulting in fabulous new growth. This is true both in terms of literal sexual union as well as in the fiery union of God and Goddess in each of our hearts. It is the death of the old/winter serving to feed the abundant growth of the new/summer.*

In Celtic cultures, there were only two seasons: winter and summer, winter arriving with Samhain and Summer arriving with Beltane, representing death and life, respectively. Samhain is the beginning of our new year, and the seeming death and sure darkness of the season of winter represents the "eve" or preparation time for the light, hot, steamy season of summer. That season is almost here!!

Fires are essential to both Samhain and Beltane. Right now, the Winter fires lit at the beginning of the year at Samhain are still burning; our duty is to make the transition from that Winter fire, based on external, human technologies of fire, hearth & furnace to the natural fires of Summer heat, based on natural sources: both the outer warmth of the sun and inner heat of passion and soul fire.

Having tended and stoked both our hearths and inner fires all winter's preparation time, Now is the advent of the passionate expression of that fire in the outer world. All acts of love and pleasure are her rituals!

Now is time to enter the sanctuary for our Beltane meditation, centering and focusing on what is to come . . .

2. Meditation Time: Just after Gathering

Place: Inside, in the church sanctuary:

Mike: *It's been hot today, but it's finally cooling off as the sunsets. You decide to take a walk. The sun illuminates the dirt road into an endless ribbon. But appearances are deceiving. The road soon becomes a path. The path leads to the edge of a meadow of tall grasses. A dark granite standing stone, etched by water and time, stands in the clearing. Tiny flecks of quartz glisten in the setting sun. Captivated, you approach the stone.*

In an instant you are part of an invisible clan, at one with each seeking soul who has approached this portal. You realize this is a place of reverence. Energy sparks through your hands, up your arms and into your heart, and they begin to speak.

"Don't be afraid. The veil is thin, and we welcome you to celebrate this glorious night with us and the sidhe [shee]. Join us as we celebrate the Sun God in all his power."

You grow dizzy. Time shifts. Colors whirl around you. You find yourself in the midst of the meadow.

The sun is suddenly radiant again, powerful, yet your skin does not burn and your eyes adjust easily to the light. It is confident, erotic glow, the physical manifestation of confidence and joy.

You gasp as you realize the flecks in the rock have become tiny, perfect souls. You see familiar faces, faces you loved while they were physically present to you and love even more now that they have passed from that incarnation.

"Come, join us. Feast at the Sun God's table," you hear. You turn, and a wooden plank table groaning with fruits, breads, cheese, and ale—such wealth you can scarcely take it in. Kegs of mead rest alongside the table. Your hostess approaches, perfect in form, her silver gown glowing. She appears as young as a maiden yet carries the wisdom of age.

Janet: *"Welcome, friend. I am Danu. Please, fill your cup and plate, and nourish your body and soul."*

You shyly accept a wooden horn filled with mead, light and sweet and sparkling. It fills you with effervescent lightness and joy. You accept a wooden platter and fill it with fruit, bread and cheese.

As you eat, you look around you and become "one." The souls you love laugh, dance and talk. You gaze in amazement at the community united in celebration. Dryads, spirits of the trees, some young and smooth with silver, glowing hair and others with lush greenery surrounding wise, gnarled faces, circle rhythmically.

Nymphs, delicate and almost transparent, dance in their flowing way. Fairies whirl and circle so quickly you see only trails of glowing color. Elves dance on light, lively feet. Dwarves hop and hobble, released from their mines deep in the earth to celebrate the sun.

You sit on the cool meadow grass and refresh yourself with food and drink. After a while you join the dance. You move tentatively, hesitantly, for the first few minutes. Then something breaks free inside you. You laugh and whirl, your energy soaring and your soul at one with the Goddess.

Midnight approaches. The music slows to a gentle, lyrical melody; then a hush falls. You look up. A gnarled, ancient oak bears a face you have not seen before. It is gentle yet strong, full of wisdom, ancient, yet full of power. The face speaks, and the celebrants fall reverent.

Joe: *“I am Jack O’ The Green, John Barleycorn, the Green Man, the Ancient One. I am the one who connects you in the Universe’s timeless web. You have shared my power, my essence, my fertility, not just physical joys but the fertility of creation, of new life, of new strength, of joy and healing. You celebrated my birth at Yule; now you celebrate the peak of my power.*

“However, the wheel must turn again. This night sows the seeds of the coming harvest. As you harvest herbs tonight, their seeds fall to their resting places deep in the Earth. I must do the same. Tonight I wish to give you my greatest gift, that of being able to treasure and value all parts of the circle, waxing moon and waning moon, joy and pain, birth and death.

No pain is forever and no joy is forever. Simply BE in each moment, aware of my presence, of the Goddess’ presence, accepting our power and joy in good times and our comfort and strength in bad. Realize, too that “good” and “bad” are labels with only passing meaning.

Everything is a part of life’s circle; everything has meaning and nothing happens by “chance.”

Mike: *The Green man smiles and lifts his arms in blessing. Your heart swells with love and joy. “So simple, yet so few grasp this,” you think, and resolve to share the God’s message with those you love—and act on it.*

Sadness tinges the joy as you move with the crowd toward the standing stone. Time and place shift and colors whirl again. You find yourself in the clearing. The moon, pregnant and glowing, has risen on the horizon. You look up, smile and whisper your thanks. After a few more moments, you walk away at peace . . . and refreshed.

[Everyone is directed back out of the front door of the church to assemble to process to the Circle for the invocation & circle casting; the circle will be cast in fire and later expanded to include the whole of the property.]

3. Invocation **Time:** Sunset = 8:04 pm on May 14, 2011

Place: The Circle; the fire in a single firepit is put out.

NARR: *We begin in the darkness of Winter. All lights and fires have been put out. Take a moment to reflect, in the dark, on the steadily growing light & life begun at Imbolc, balanced at Ostara, and ready to spring into fullness with the coming abundant growth of summer. May the spirits of the five directions guide us and guard us in this rite!*

[Each direction leads their quarter of the circle (people to the dir's LEFT) as the candle is lit and the quarter is inscribed in fire (kerosene-treated hemp rope)!]

EAST: *Feathered winds come dance with me*
(Sandy) *Lift me from the ground.*
Join my waltz, my spirit, freed
As we're upward bound.

SOUTH: *Tongues of flame come jump with me*
(Denise) *Ye purifying fires,*
Join my joy, my playful glee
As we move yet higher.

WEST: *Tears from seas, come sing with me*
(Mike) *Roll from out the caves,*
Join my verse, my body cleansed
In your healing waves.

NORTH: *Mother Earth come laugh with me*
(Charlotte) *Set aside your toils,*
Join my chant of forests green
Secure me in rich soil.

SPIRIT: *Earth and Air, Fire and Sea*
(Scott) *I call you all, come dance with me!*
Grant me now a sacred space
While working magic in this place.

(from A Victorian Grimoire by Trish Telesco <http://celticmystic.com/Beltane.htm>)

NARR: *The Neid Fire is now be lit from "scratch" by the old Horned God, who rules over the dark of Winter. Let the sacred circle be scribed by this new fire that heralds the new growth in the world and in our hearts. Now is the time to encourage the new light and to fend off the last of Winter. But for summer to truly come, the Goddess must return. Processants, light your torches from the Neid fire with hope of more light and fire and pleasure to come.*

This is a time when the veil is at its thinnest. We can call to the Goddess and chant her back from the depths of the earth, where she has been trapped for half the year, bringing the fallow time of the year, bringing the dark. With our help, the Goddess is giving birth to herself . . . and it applies to each of us, as we seek to fan the fire of summer in our souls. The white warriors of the Goddess begin . . .

Calling the Goddess

Time: 8:15 or so (10-15 min?)

Place: At the Circle [Form a circle; the Guardians

begin:]

Goddess Meditation

White Warriors S: *Breathe deeply. It is dark; but the summer's light is coming.*
 D: *Welcome the warmth as it stirs you deep within.*
 S: *The thought of winter is followed by the action of summer*
 D: *Be aware of the wildflowers, the plants and the sunlight*
 S: *as it glimmers through the leafy green canopy above.*
 D: *Take another deep breath and go deeper into your mind's eye.*
 S: *Do you see a tiny flicker of golden light that catches your attention?*
 D: *Do you hear a sound like the sigh of a waking sleeper?*
 S: *Perhaps you hear the rustle of Her movement through the woods.*
 D: *All these things signal the presence of the Goddess,*
the Queen of the May.
 S: *She soon will arrive in our world, to dwell within each of us well!*
 D: *We chant together to raise power,*
to hasten that arrival and bring summer into our lives.

(after Eustacia Blackstar, Circle of the Sun Ft. Lauderdale C.U.U.P.S., meditation from a Beltane Ritual and Handfasting, 1999 at <http://moonpathcuups.org/rituals/belt00.htm>, also <http://www.moonshadows-realm.co.uk/columns/wwr-apr05-02.htm>)

Goddess Litany

Sean: *Friends that in the circle stand, heart to heart and hand to hand,*
Bringing Beltane to the land.

All: ***Let the sleeper awake!***

Denise: *Let the flames of Beltane burn, may the Old Ones now return.*
May we of their magick learn.

All: ***Let the sleeper awake!***

Mike: *Let the streams and fields be pure, Earth and sky be clean once more,*
Love and laughter long endure!

All: ***Let the sleeper awake!***

Scott: *Forests spreading, peace returning, Where the Pagan fires are burning,*
Now the inner light discerning.

All: ***Let the sleeper awake!***

Sean: *May the Lady's touch again, Rest upon the barren plain,*
With the sunshine and the rain!

All: ***Let the sleeper awake!***

Denise: *Beltane magick here we sing, chant the rune and dance the ring,*
Joy and blessing shall it bring,

All: ***Let the sleeper awake!***

(Doreen Valiente, The White Goddess Pagan Portal, *Beltane Chant*, Spring Rite from 1971
http://www.thewhitegoddess.co.uk/book_of_shadows/invocations/beltane_chants.asp)

Goddess Chant (repeat until “release” is called):

White Warriors lead women: *The Goddess is alive and magick is afoot . . .*

Blue Guards lead men:

*We all come from the Goddess,
and to US she shall return
In her summer splendor, rising through the earth to us!*

[The Goddess emerges from the foliage to stand under the sky once again. White warriors (Scott & Denise) and Blue Guards (Mike and Sean) attend the birth of the queen & form up to bow to & salute Her. She moves around the circle as She speaks.]

The Goddess SPEAKS:

I am here, Summer is here!

I am the Gracious Goddess, Who gives the gift of joy unto the hearts of men and women. Upon Earth I give knowledge of the Spirit Eternal and beyond death I give peace, freedom and reunion with those who have gone before.

Nor do I demand sacrifice, for behold, I am the Mother of all things living and My love is poured out upon the Earth.

Hear ye the words of the Star Goddess, She in the dust of Whose feet are the hosts of heaven, Whose body encircles the Universe...

I am the beauty of the green Earth, and the white Moon among the stars, and the Mysteries of the waters, and the desire in the hearts of humans.

(from Charge of the Goddess—traditional)

I am like a wild mare, the tide, the forces of the moon, the storm, the elements!

I am all around you yet in you always!

I am uncontrollable, yet if you let go I exalt you to places of pure bliss, of ecstasy, places where the mind shuts down and your soul merges with divinity.

There is only light, the awakening of the senses, the primal dance of bodies.

Ecstatic prayer, body worship, celebrating love.

Dancing wildly on the mountain peaks, in the valleys, in the glades!

Invoke me with your arms open wide, my winds caressing you, teasing you,

Going through you and all around you.

I am here! Summer is here!

*(after Tiziana Stupia, *The Goddess Pages: A Journal of Goddess Spirituality in the 21st Century* 16:Spring 201, Salome re-awakens: Beltane at the Temple of Venus in Sicily at http://www.goddess-pages.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=346)*

NARR: *Born with the Goddess is the Red energy of chaos in the form of the Red Beasties. They are here, now but they cannot stay—their exuberance carries them away, for they have nothing to guide them but their desire!*

These lusty newborn spirits are the personification of the creative energy of sex, reproductive energy, growth and summer; they have energy to be suggestive and outrageous but have no guidance or restraint. They are the Lords & Ladies of Misrule . . . but TRULY we need their energy to bring on the summer and the massive growth of the season. But let us now greet the Goddess Herself—the Queen of the May!

Greeting the Goddess

Blues: *Ye ladies and gentlemen, give out a cheer
For She-that-creates-all has come to us here,
The one to our hearts, whose love is so dear;
The Goddess is back with us—Summer is here!*

All: [Cheering]

Reds: *But Her energy's more than her form can contain,
We're her excess of passions: free--without rein!!*
(after *Song for the Green Man*, by John Litzenberg--aka Greybeard Dances--
<http://www.radicaldruid.com/>)

[Reds act out this energy scandalously and then hustle away into the woods to get to drums & be mischievous . . . The Horned God processes with the new-born Goddess toward point 4. He spends most of the time trying to touch her, get close to her, impress her, but knows it will be lethal. He WANTS her but he CANNOT touch her . . . or he will DIE.]

NARR: The Old Horned God looks upon the newly-risen Goddess with admiration—and not a little lust! Her essence, her energy is so strong, so fresh, so ancient. Yet he knows he is Lord of the Winter and cannot even touch the Goddess who brings the energy of summer's growth. Her energy will overwhelm his waning form; if he so much as touches her, he will surely die . . . Yet her attraction is powerfully infectious and his desire is, by nature, continuous. He follows her; he escorts her—the hunt is on and the dance has begun! The procession resumes!

4. *Calling the God*

Time: 8:30 or so (about 10-20 min after point 3 is done).

Place: Circle in grass near NW corner of back parking lot.

NARR: *The Horned God—the prickly old Horned God whose season is Winter--is driven wild by the Goddess, but driven like a moth to the flame of the her Summer energy.*

[He grabs her shoulder, turns Her to Him; He embraces Her. Just as He is about to kiss Her, He dies of Her touch. The Goddess' White warriors tend to the fallen king, and "dismember His horned God Body to fertilize the Earth. With the help of the Goddess, they ritually transform him into the adolescent Green Man. Stages = shock, anger, acceptance, mourning, rededication, dismembering the "body" of the old God and helping raise the new Green Man—with appropriate wand/baton motions for each stage.]

NARR: *There is just too much energy of newness, abundance, and growth for the Winter King to take at once. This essential energy for Summer has come into him, but this energy now lies dormant. The King is dead . . .*

Blue Guards: *As we assisted the Goddess up through the earth,
we must now help the God back from death to express his new
energy with the Earth chant.*

Earth Chant [Slowly 3x, to bring forth Green Man/ from the Old Horned God]

ALL: ***Breath of the stone is strange to me
I know it lives as I can't see
Force of the earth is strong and free
Sustenance and beauty be***

***Born of the stars and sprung from the ground
Mother, Goddess all around
Wheel must turn as the seasons show
What lies dead shall surely grow!***

(from Bulb Planting Earth Chant by Eileen, at <http://celticmystic.com/Beltane.htm>)

ALL (3x): ***Long live the king!***

Green Man: *Come, people of the Tribe, let it be so,
For I am among thee, and maketh things grow!*
(from the Green Man of Clun, Shropshire, England at

http://www.bbc.co.uk/shropshire/content/articles/2007/03/23/ent_clun_green_man_fest_2007_feature.shtml

[Some of the things he maketh grow are the Red Beasties! They pop up to greet one of their own—the leader of the Wild Hunt—the Green Man, and to "admire" the form and energy of the Goddess Herself . . .]

Greeting the Green Man

Red Beasties: *Ye ladies and gentlemen, give out a cheer
For He that is born again year after year,
Bringing the wildness of life ever near;
Yes, the Green Man is buying the beer.*

*So dance and be merry, and drink ye your fill,
and let not tomorrow give pause to think ill,*

White Warriors: *But trust in the Goddess and live for Her will,
for the Green Man has just paid the bill!*
(from *Song for the Green Man* by John Litzenberg--aka Greybeard Dances--
<http://www.radicaldruid.com/>)

The God SPEAKS:

*I am the radiant King of the Heavens, flooding the Earth with warmth and
encouraging the hidden seed of creation to burst forth into manifestation.
I lift My shining spear to light the lives of all beings and daily pour forth My gold upon
the Earth, putting to flight the powers of darkness.*

*I am the master of the beasts, wild and free. I run with the swift stag and soar as a
sacred falcon against the shimmering sky. The ancient woods and wild places
emanate My power and the birds of the air sing of My sanctity.*

*I am also the harvest, offering up My grain and fruit beneath the sickle of time so that
all may be nourished.*

For without planting there can be no harvest; without winter, no spring.

*Worship Me as the thousand-named Sun of creation, the Spirit of the horned stag in
the wild, the endless harvest. See in the yearly cycle of festivals
My birth, death and rebirth- and know that such is the destiny of all creation.*

*I am the spark of life, the radiant Sun, the giver of peace and rest and
I send My rays of blessings to warm the hearts and strengthen the minds of all.*

NARR: *The now-risen Green Man is the leader of the Lords and Ladies of Misrule—
they of the Wild Hunt. This is the beginning of the ordering of chaos. BUT . . . he
cannot simply ride off with the hunt yet. He is powerfully DRAWN to the May Queen &
follows along with her, charmed, entranced & titillated. He exudes no small charm of
his own, and He is eager to flirt with her, to pursue her, to exalt in her presence and
bestow the pleasure of his charms upon her as his offering to the Goddess. The
Green Man may go where the Lord of Winter cannot pass. The May King escorts his
Queen on her way to the bonfire that is the final sign of the onset of summer.*

5. Fending Off Misrule Time: 8:45 or so--about 10-20 min after point 4 is done)
Place: Partway to the Circle (Labyrinth area).

[Reds let themselves be known to the procession & block its way to the Circler. They taunt & tease the Queen's party, fence and grapple with the blue guards and white warriors to test their strength.]

Reds' Chant: *We are the spirits of Misrule--Summer's here, its time to play!
Stop, and dance and play the fool--Drink and drum your time
away!*

*Passion NOW, we bide no rule--Our season's on, it is our day!
We WANT IT ALL, WE WANT IT NOW!
We'll ride the hunt for the Queen of the May!*

B & W Chant: *May the Fair May Queen, be to you unseen,
Lords and Ladies of Misrule!
She looks alone to the Man of Green!
Do not disrupt her newborn rule!*

*May your drumming cease and your foreheads crease,
May your hot blood now start to cool!
With Goddess to guide and God beside her,
Begone! Or--worship Her fair jewel!*

NARR: *The Goddess' warriors and guardians confront the Red Beasties in battle formation: order prevails because Misrule cannot challenge the deep truth of nature's order and balance. The forces of Chaos scatter—for now. The procession is triumphant, but reluctant—something is missing: passion without direction provides the needed energy for growth. The passion of Misrule lacks the organizing principle of the united God & Goddess. BUT-- overprotection brings no balance; too much order can stifle the creative freedom necessary for balance growth. Segregation of the Wild Energies is NOT the answer. . .*

6. Union of the God & Goddess Time: 9:00 or so
Place: At the Circle

[Procession assembles in the circle to salute the coming of warmth and the warming, creative energy of the union of God & Goddess. Red Beastie Drummers pound away in earnest—the time is now! The Reds stage a leering, taunting, breathtakingly NAUGHTY assault on the processional group—the Lords & Ladies of Misrule begin to scatter the party to divide & conquer. Fire Spinning & drumming are part of this.

The White Warriors and the Blue guards begin to battle the reds, forming a protective circle around the Green Man and May Queen. As leader of the Wild Hunt, the Green Man is torn between joining his Reds to TAKE the May Queen and standing by her—he pauses: is he the May King or the Leader of the Wild Hunt? Taking advantage of his

distraction, the May Queen begins to seduce the Green Man to move his attention away from battle.

The Whites/Blues follow the Queen's lead & begin to seduce the Reds, turning the touch of battle and pain into the touch of union and pleasure. Blues/Whites absorb Red passion, while Reds show restraint and reverence for the Goddess /God. All gather in the circle to celebrate the power of love and creative sexual energy over the power of conflict & hate.

A KISS is passed clockwise, starting with air (EAST).]

ALL: ***Mother goddess, Queen of the night and of the Earth;
O Father God, King of the day and of the forest,
we celebrate Your union as Nature rejoices in a riotous
blaze of colour and life.
Accept my gift, Mother Goddess
and Father God, in honour of Your union.***

Union of God & Goddess (Athame & cup . . .!)

ALL: ***From Your mating shall spring forth life anew;
a profusion of living creatures shall cover the lands,
and the winds will blow pure and sweet.
Ancient Ones, we celebrate with You!***
(from Beltane Ritual, <http://magickwyrd.spaces.live.com>)

NARR: ***NOW summer WILL come!!***

ALL (3x): *Welcome Summer!*

[The Green Man & May Queen light the Beltane bonfire, and . . .]

A Toast!

Reds, Whites, Blues: ***A toast to this company, to one and all:
Your health in this summer, and on until fall,
And listen to Nature's unhesitant call,
For the Green Man and May Queen believe in you all.***

*So what will you have, for to drink or to eat?
We've all nature's bounty, her fruit and her meat!*

*So hither ye ladies, and gentlemen too,
and sing out the merriment all the night through,
And make ye a friend from a stranger or two ;)
for the Green Man is counting on you.*

*Yes, give him your blessing and energy bright,
Believe in the wonders of love and of light;
There's much that can happen, and most of it right,
For the Green Man is King here tonight!* (by John Litzenberg--aka
Greybeard Dances--<http://www.radicaldruid.com/>)

May the Goddess bless us all!

All: ***So Mote it be!*** [Wild cheering!]

Thanking Directions, God & Goddess

SPIRIT: *Earth and Air, Fire and Sea*
(Scott) *We are glad that you could be*
In sacred space with us tonight
Dance away if you must, or stay if it's right!

NORTH: *Mother Earth we thank you too*
(Charlotte) *For all that's green and dark and deep,*
For root and rock and silence through
The sanctifying Winter's sleep.

WEST: *Seas & tears released our fears*
(Mike) *and cleansed us through and through,*
Now it's time to have some beers
To celebrate the summer new!

SOUTH: *Tongues of flame we'll jump with you.*
(Denise) *Your purifying light*
Will burn in us the summer through
and warm us day and night.

EAST : *Feathered winds we thank you now*
(Sandy) *for dance and freedom's sound.*
Our waltz begun, we must now bow,
Connecting to the ground.

(after *A Victorian Grimoire* by Trish Telesco <http://celticmystic.com/Beltane.htm>)

ALL: ***Lord and Lady, May Queen and King--united though apart***
Guide us in the dance love--that singular joyful art

Summer's here and we extend our grateful thanks to you
For showing us that love IS life. May we all make that true!

The circle is open, yet unbroken—as the energy of summer infuses itself
into all of the world and into the very core of our being!

Merry meet, and merry part, and merry meet again!

Ecstatic Celebration of Summer!

[Drums go wild, then come back to a more measured beat as the belly dancers come out to demonstrate their skills and to lead the community in dance around the circle.

Aaaand . . . the **PARTY begins:** Dancing, drumming, drinking (BYOB?), etc.:)
ecstatic celebration of the arrival of summer!!!! :o

Need WHOOSH for bonfire as signal of kickoff for the drums . . .]

Bestiary of Main Characters from the Edinburgh Beltane Fire Festival

1. May Queen

We know that our forefathers very generally kept the beginning of May as a great festival, and it is still regarded as the trysting time of witches, i.e. once of wise-women and fays.

The May Queen is also known as The Maiden, goddess of spring, flower bride, queen of the faeries, lady of the flowers. The May Queen is the stillness around which everything revolves. She embodies purity, strength and the potential for growth. She is the personification of the energy of the earth.

She was once Maid Marian in the medieval Robin Hood plays and May Games – she is the young village girl, crowned with blossom, attended by children with garlands and white dresses. Folklorists have identified her with Flora, the Roman goddess of fruits and flowers whose festival, the Floralia, was on April 28th or Maia, Roman ‘Goddess of Springtime, of Growth and Increase’ whose very name may be the root of ‘May’.

At Samhuinn and Imbolc, the May Queen is replaced with a wintery figure – the crone, or Cailleach – a blue-faced hag who brings winter storms and bad weather to the lands. She is associated with the protection of wells and watery places, and is found in different guises through Northern Europe.

2. Blue Men

The blue paint alludes to the woad used by Celtic warriors, but the Blue Man himself has come to act as the elder rather than the warrior archetype in Edinburgh’s Beltane Fire Festival.

The Blue Man’s role is both practical and spiritual. Queens come and go, the King is killed and reborn each year, but the Blue Man is constant. He keeps the collected wisdom of the Court, the knowledge of the ritual, and maintains the order required by nature.

He leads the Court through a spiritual landscape primed with pitfalls to see the summer safely brought about with the death – and subsequent rebirth – of the Green Man.

Those who play the part of blue men carry out a similar role in real life during the run up to the events. They visit each of the performance groups in turn to explain the rituals and the narrative of the performance. They offer support and guidance to both organisers and performers alike and encourage all involved to focus on the task ahead.

3. Green Man

The May Queen’s male Consort is sometimes simply called the May King. He is known by many names. Some call him Jack-in-the-Green, Robin Hood or the woodland faery Puck – Robin Goodfellow. In France he was called Father May, in Russia he was the Little Leaf Man. He may be called Green George, Wild Man or Wodewose.

In all these places and in all these times he was dressed in leaves, in ivy, evergreens and flowers – he was entirely hidden from view – a living spirit of the spring vegetation.

‘The Green Man’, is a name coined by Lady Raglan in 1939. She referred to the mediaeval images, carved in stone or wood, usually found in churches. A face with foliage sprouting from his mouth, nose and ears or a face composed entirely of leaves.

At Samhuinn the Green Man is seen is the character of the ‘Horned god’ or ‘Holly Lord’ who rules over winter.

At Beltane the Green Man begins in a dormant and inactive state in the form of the old Horned God, until he ‘dies’ when he touches the May Queen. Her Handmaidens tear his garments from him and he is ‘reborn’ as the young Green Man with a wild exhilarating dance that celebrates his youth and the new summer.

4. White Women/Warriors

The procession is led by the May Queen and her entourage: four Handmaidens (north, south, east and west) and a cohort of White Warrior Women. The Handmaidens and White Women protect the May Queen and attend to her later in the evening in her otherworldly bower. They are the order and discipline to the red mens’ chaos and misrule.

A white woman encompasses many aspects of a warrior. An army of strength and protection to surround and ensure the safety of the court at Beltane. Each white woman is a part of a well-oiled machine, sure and steadfast in her role, each a heartbeat, part of the rhythm of the ritual.

By the time the year reaches it's end at Samhuinn, the white women have shed their stoic, rigid front. After a summer of being wooed by red men, they have aged to reflect the Hag aspect of the goddess, the Cailleach. They appear dressed in shawls and bonnets, they sing a lament to mourn the passing of summer, but also as an affirmation of the year to come when they will once more be reborn with the strength to play their part in securing the cycle of the seasons.

5. Processionals (We don't have these in Triebh na Tintean. . . the Beastie Drummers must do this year—so no drum battle for us)

From the first strike of stick on skin at the beginning of the procession, to the final frenzy at the Bonfire, the Processional Drummers of Beltane define the ritual space itself. Even those who cannot see the action are moved to pulse of the massed drummers.

Drumming is one of the oldest known methods of obtaining trance states, altering consciousness to allow a glimpse of the divine, and so it is at Beltane – holding thousands entranced as the magical procession makes its way around the hill. Their rhythm represents the passing of time, the cycle of seasons and the underlying pulse of life itself.

The processional drummers also take the guise of the masked winter court drummers at Samhuinn, their thunder echoes around the walls of the Old Town announcing the arrival of the dark days. The summer revellers run in terror as the host approaches to claim the year as their own. They engage in a battle of noise with the summer court musicians as the winter and summer kings do battle with fireballs and broadswords.

6. Red Men

The Red Men are the Lords and Ladies of Misrule. Beltane is their night of mischief – the World Turn'd Upside Down – the one night of the year where fools become kings. The Red Men represent the archetypes of the mischief makers, Pan-like figures who live for the moment without a care in the world or any inhibitions to censor them.

Our charming friends have this single night each year to make merry, tempt, seduce, carry out acts of foolishness and wantonness and inspire the revelers to cast aside their thoughts of the next day and abandon themselves to the excesses of the night.

At Samhuinn, having endured a summer of debauchery and merry making, the red men appear with deformations, walking sticks, blindness and clumsiness. Their 'ageing' is in step with that of the other court characters. Their whole lives are squeezed into just a year in our own world.

The red men are often, wrongly, interpreted as being demons or devils. Far from being this they are a personification of the need in all of us to let loose and go wild just once in our lives. Their very reason for existence is simply to 'throw a spanner in the works', to divert the path of fate. But despite their best efforts, these random agents are always thwarted, often with comical results.

Red Beastie Drummers

The Red Beastie Drummers (or just The Beasties) are the musical breath of the Red Men. With their strong, flowing, earthy rhythms they amplify the Red spirit of playful chaos and seduction to the whole Hill. The Red Beastie drummer prefers organic drums such as djembes, surdus, dharbukas and shakers, contrasting and complementing the snares, toms and kick drums of the more orderly and serious Processional Drummers.