

House of Danu Retreat 2008 Report

Contributed by Gorsedd Master
Monday, 07 July 2008
Last Updated Monday, 30 March 2009

On the weekend of July 4-6, 2008, an historic retreat was held at Camp Double Bear in the Redwoods of the Santa Cruz Mountains to solidify and define the alliance that is the House of Danu. Here is who came:

Manannan Mac Lir:

Jehanah Wedgwood
Stefen Bruchard
Gabriel Rocha - photographer
Barbara Bolts
Buddy - Guard Dragon

Llwyn Swynedig:

Jennifer Brodeur
Brian Sciaroni
Grove of the Oak:
LaRayna Flud
David Schueller
Raven Flud - video
April Gentry

Taliesin:

James L. Bianchi
Evelie Delfino Sâles Posch

WHAT WE DID We spent Friday eating, drinking and getting to know each other. This gathering of the groves was unprecedented and many of us were meeting for the first time. On Saturday, after bonding over a serious breakfast, we opened with a ritual, making sacred the events of the weekend. After sharing our feelings with the group, and each describing the worst thing we have ever done (good ice breaker), we focused on our Visioning meeting where we acted to define ourselves: DEFINING DRUIDRY AND DRUID CULTURE - We discussed and revised the proposed descriptions in the website by resolving these issues: WHO IS THE HOUSE OF DANU? - The House of Danu is open to anyone who wants to experience OBOD culture. Membership in OBOD is not required. The Council of 7 will consist of California OBOD grove/seed group leaders, or their designees. WHERE IS THE HOUSE OF DANU? - There are no geographical restrictions. Anyone can register with the House of Danu. The website will be an act of OBOD Druid Culture as it exists in California. It shall be governed by California OBOD groves and seed groups. WHAT IS THE HOUSE OF DANU? - The House of Danu is an alliance of California OBOD groves and seed groups. Registration with the House of Danu entitles OBOD members to first priority registration for the Gorsedd celebrating the Festival of Lughnasadh. Thereafter, other druid orders can register to attend, followed by the pan pagan community. However, the Gorsedd itself will be an OBOD event with OBOD customs. The House will not seek grove recognition, but will refer anyone interested to the OBOD groves and seed groups nearest to them. We spent much of Saturday night in the hot tub after more bonding over food. We then focused on Dream spinning as Barbara Bolts wrote down our thoughts for the Gorsedd. This is what she wrote on the easel pad: OUR VISION FOR THE GORSEDD (THESE ARE THE IDEAS THE BARBARA WROTE ON THE EASEL PAD) Enter as if entering Avalon. After registration, where they get their temporary House of Danu tattoo, and name tag in ogham, they go through a physical portal that transports them to another realm.

Pageantry

Opening meals with Druid Vow in Gaelic and English.

Eisteddfod

Bardic Contests

Open mic

Dancing (belly dance, tribal dance, Celtic dance, circle dance)

Stage performance by our workshop instructors

Drumming circles

Gathering around the fire for story tellers and troubadours

Tattoo fashion show

Ritual clothing fashion show

Silent auction of our arts

Market Place for our OBOD artisans, and others

Divination and oracles

Traveling minstrels

Guerilla theatre

Storytelling

Dance Macabre

Poetry

Ancestral work
 Create a labyrinth
 Theme: California OBOD culture
 Games (physical)
 Healing circles
 (Massage, Reiki, breath, mediation, movement)
 Making a DVD of event for people to purchase
 Daily slideshow during dinner.
 Assign a theme for artwork to be shown and judged at event
 Having groves do theme camps
 (e.g. Grove of the Oak Celtic village, Taliesin Pavilion)
 Kids and druid parenting
 Initiations by those of the Druid grade
 Midnight movie
 Festival of Lughnasadh: the Ritual

Proposed Workshops:
 California herbs
 Mask making
 Ritual music
 Ritual make-up
 Oils
 Ritual tool making
 Creating groves and seed groups
 Drum making
 Sustainable living
 Knowing the land
 Making jewelry
 Ritual garments
 Talismans
 Ogham
 Creating good ritual
 Animal/Toem/Fearie Magic

Communication and leadership
 This, of course, was way too much to do in 4 days so we set these guidelines. Many of the workshop ideas can be addressed on our website. The focus of the Gorsedd is participation, not mere spectatorship, where everyone does something and leaves with something. We focus on hands-on workshops that prepare people for the ritual of Lughnasadh (making props, learning dance, learning chants, learning processional and ritual drumming, music, assigning people to directions and have them prepare the drama, make-up and things to wear, banners to carry, etc.) We considered having workshops for children, but concluded that it is better that these hands-on workshops be suitable for all ages. We then left this to the committee. Then we focused on the website: OUR VISION FOR THE WEBSITE People liked the look and feel of the OBOD website: simple on its face, but increasing in complexity and detail as one dives through the windows. The mix of ancient imagery was nice, but ours must do so in a California style, whatever that is. This is what came from the easel pad: How to live sustainably

Ecological consciousness
 Connecting to the spirits of the land in California
 Identifying California sacred spaces that we can use for ritual
 Connect people to the groves nearest to them.
 Organizing windows into Bard, Ovate, Druid categories (open to all)
 Book lists
 Ritual clothing
 Magik
 Healing
 Message forum for Council and committee
 Bios and member lists
 Calendar
 Tattoo Gallery
 Links to OBOD groves
 Finding your ancestors
 Gorsedd Registration
 Scrolling navigations
 Graphics
 Cooking with indigenous California food in season
 Links that relate directly to our culture
 Ritual script bank
 Storytelling resources
 California bird/animal/insect sounds and what they mean
 Tracking: reading the impressions in the earth

Promote our artists with links to their music

Learning our ritual music

Poetry

How to create teaching stories with local imagery and tools

Experiencing how to live in the season
People would need to volunteer to be responsible for furnishing Wil with up-to-date information in each of the windows created, but the webmaster controls how it is done.
Legal Structure - We initially decided to become a program of Grove of the Oak since it was established as a religious non-profit corporation to get a bank account and PayPal setup. However, we since registered as an Unincorporated Association, and have decided to proceed as our own non-profit religious corporation in California that will enable us to ordain priests and priestesses to preside over marriages.

GORSEDD PLANNING
Our meetings on Sunday focused just on the event:
VENUE – We saw a slideshow of Pema Osel Ling and attach a map of the venue, and a chart showing the fixed lodgings. We agree to a guarantee of 100 participants, but can go up to 300. Our goal is 250. We plan on having 8 meals from Friday dinner through Monday breakfast. No onsite cooking is allowed by participants. Though it is a Buddhist facility, there are no restrictions on alcohol or meat eating. We just aren't allowed to kill anything.
DEPOSIT – Our contract with Pema Osel Ling requires a \$500.00 deposit to secure the dates of July 31 through August 3, 2009 that was advanced by James L. Bianchi. By July 15, 2008, they want a 25% deposit based on a guarantee of 100 adults. Everyone pledged to reach out to their groves for pre-registration. If by March of 2009, we are not convinced we can break even, then we can cancel the contract, losing the deposit we previously paid. That's it, but I don't think we will have trouble making our minimum, given the reasonable cost as compared to other accommodations and events.
Committees were formed, a timeline was established, and we scheduled a follow-up retreat for June of 2009. Everyone had a good time and no one threw-up.

James L. Bianchi

Gorsedd Master