

Facts on Symbols

Celtic & Druid

Preface:

The Druids and ancient Celts are represented by many symbols in today's world. The true facts behind them are either not known or shared a lot of the time. This workbook is an attempt to bring truths to all Druid children.

The workbook is designed to be a self-directed one, however, if you have younger children they may need help with reading and/or some of the tasks outlined.

As with all religious work you may want to skim things and make corrections and/or page deletions where desired to fit your 'exact' belief within the Druidry realm.

Enjoy.



TristA

Put a check mark in front of the things that you have heard are connected with ancient times. Make the checkmark into an "X" if you think they are really not connected to the ancient Celts or Druids. When done complete the workbook and then come back and see if you were right.

_____ Stonehenge (a group of big stones in a circle)

_____ Celtic Knot (line maze in a design or shape)

_____ Spiral (coiled line in the shape of a circle)

_____ Tree of Life (tree where roots & branches are 1)

_____ Greenman (man's face made of leaves)

_____ Triskele (3 spirals connected in a triangle form)

_____ Celtic Cross (cross with circle around center)

_____ Awen (3 lines with each outside line leaning in)

_____ Sigil (circle of leaves with two sticks in middle)

_____ Ogham or Ogham (diagonal lines with slashes)

STONEHENGE

Stonehenge is located in Britain and is one of the largest stone circles ever made. It is said that the ancient Druids used Stonehenge as a place of worship. The model that you made looks just like the real one except in Britain there are some other scattered rocks and knocked over stones lying on the ground.

There are really many stone circles spread all over Europe. These stone circles are very old and date back to one thousand years before the Egyptian pyramids. There is a lot of evidence that they were used for ceremonies and even sacrifices (which all people did during that time).

The stone circle that we call Stonehenge does show evidence that during the time the Druids were around it was used. There is no definite proof that it was the Druids that actually used it.

The rocks that make up Stonehenge have been moved around many times. There is no real way of telling how the stones were arranged the first time it was built.

It is said that a man named John Toland held a meeting in 1717 to form a Druid group called Ancient Druid Order. The same man wrote a book nine years later called "History of the Druids". In his book he described Druids as not being real or good. In the same book he started the rumor that the Druids had built Stonehenge for sacrifices. This rumor seemed to stick with the people.

Today people connect Stonehenge with something created by and for Druids. The true Druids know that this isn't true.

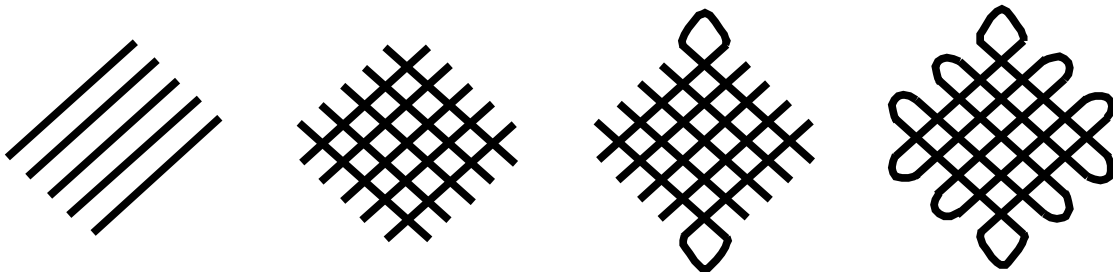
Draw a really cool and complicated design for our next topic. It is easy if you follow the directions exactly as they are shown here. When you are done guess what you drew then check to see if you were right by looking at the next page.

Needed:

Thick Light Colored Marker Paper Dark Colored Pen

Follow step-by-step directions below:

Thick Marker directions (to be done first):



Dark pen directions

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | <p>Trace the marker as close as you can to its original line. It is easier if you start from the top loop and then work from right to left (as shown in the diagram to the right). To make the pattern look more of a weave you can not trace the through line the first time a line touches it, but do draw through the next line your line touches. If you alternate the weave pattern the knot will look more complicated and correct.</p> | |
|--|---|--|

You can make totally different patterns by adding circles in the middle and/or animal heads where there is no way to connect the grid. Make some using different colors for another neat way for them to look.

THE CELTIC KNOT

Celtic knot work was created by the Celts, however it was after the Christians took over most of the Celtic world that the Celtic artist and scribes made their biggest advancements in their artwork. They were well known at that time for their great work. They had a very special way of drawing and designing things which made the world take notice of them.

There were many steps shown by the art that they made that led to the Celtic knot that is so commonly connected with them today. These steps are found in all kind of artwork. Plait work which resembled weaving was the step right before the birth of the Celtic knot. The Celtic plait work art was special because it wasn't just a design, it was similar to being carved because you could feel where the overlapping was.

At first the Celtic knot work showed up in artwork like the bottom of chalices (glasses), on bells and jewelry. Later the scribes started using the same pattern that the artists were and this added a different version of the Celtic knot which can be found on the Celtic cross and in texts that the Celts were asked to do for Christian monks.

Connect the two dots using only circular motions being sure to follow the two rules below:

1. Start at the center dot and go around the dot, then continue around that line, and continue.
2. The circle should get larger as you go away from the beginning dot.
3. The lines should never cross and when your pen or pencil touches the dot closest to this writing stop.



Turn to the next page to see if your design resembles the symbol.



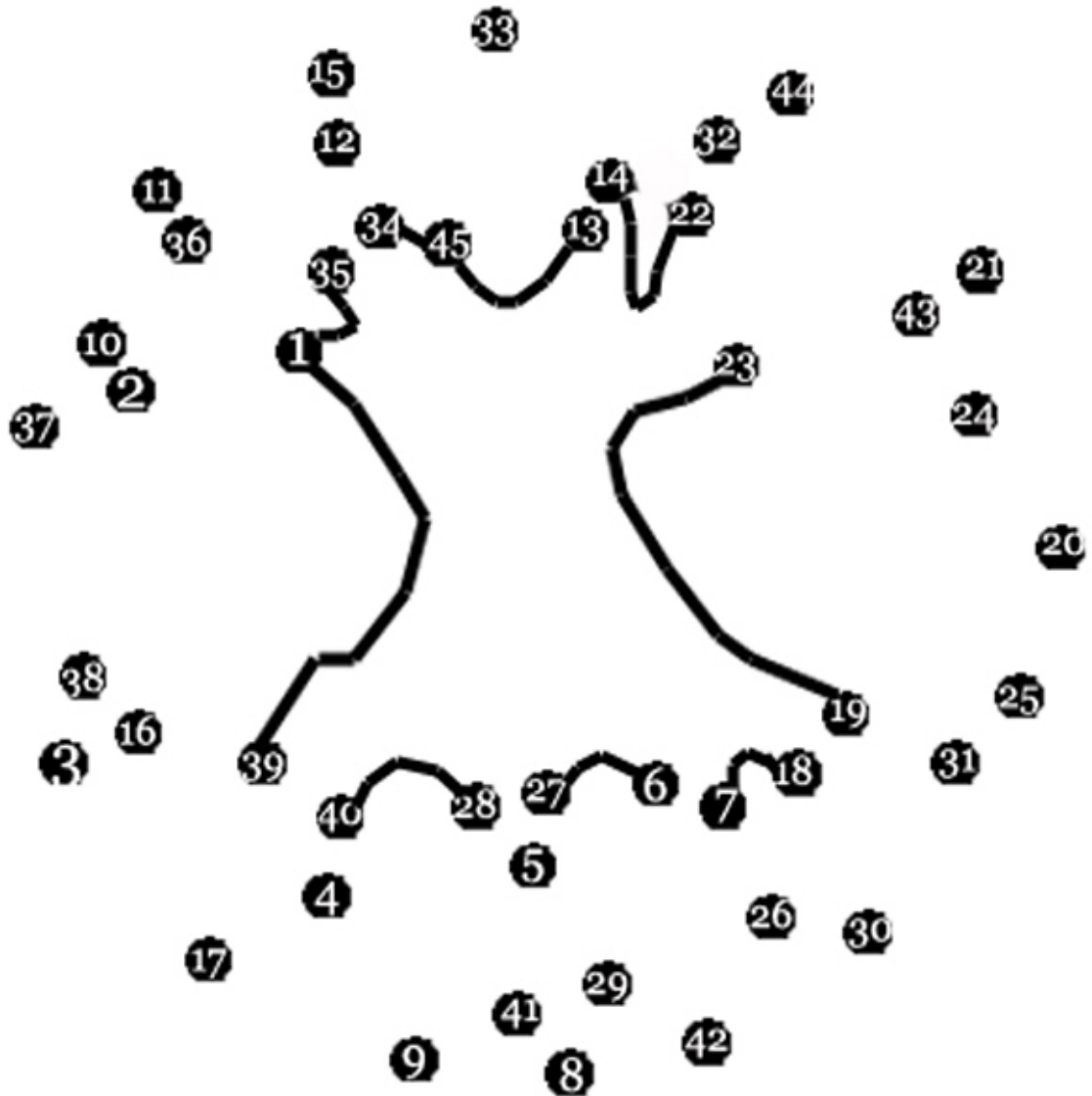
THE SPIRAL



During what is known as the Bronze Age spirals could be found in a lot of Celtic art. It seems to have been wide spread throughout Egypt, Scandinavia and a few other places before this time. The Celts adopted the spiral as an important image in their artwork and on other things that surrounded them. It is believed that they painted spirals and forms of them on their skin especially during fighting. When the Christians and Celtic people combined, the first pieces of artwork that was made by the Celts contained spirals. They didn't do it very long before it was replaced by other designs.

These spirals found everywhere are connected with the Celts and have meaning as most all the Celtic images left behind do. There are conflicting ideas as to what spirals in the ancient Celtic world meant. Some believe that it shows a never ending cycle since a lot of them are found on or near gravesites. It is also believed that they show female and male energy from the sun and moon which surrounds us because a lot of time they are used to fill in empty spaces. The last argument of its meaning is that it shows the circling of the soul which will always return to the center which is truth.

Connect the dots and see if you can guess what the finish product is. Check your answer by looking on the next page.



Never run through another dot, simply curve the line around them.

THE TREE OF LIFE

Many different religions had their own version of the ‘tree of life’. The Celts version of the tree of life wasn’t actually a tree, or type of tree, even though some believed it to be a willow or oak, it represented everything to them. Take a look at the chart below to better understand some of the things it is thought that the tree of life represented:

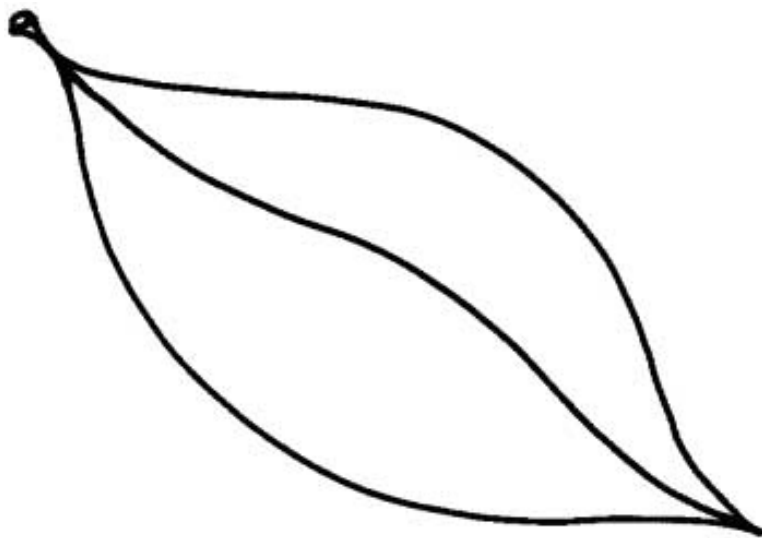
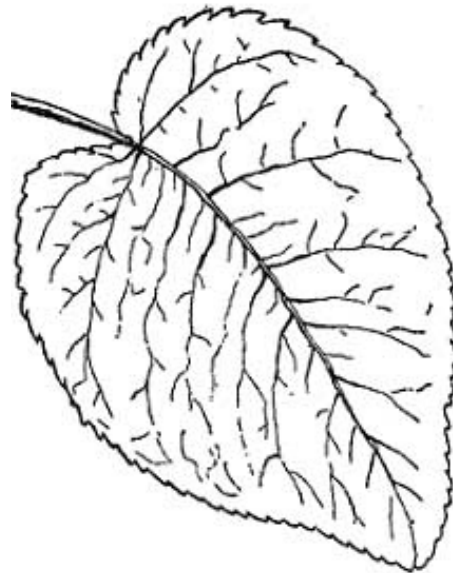
| Branches | Trunk | Roots |
|--|--|--|
| <i>The heavens (stars, sun, moon, sky, etc...)</i> | <i>Life on Earth with nature as a center or guide (people would be found here too)</i> | <i>The otherworld where the ancestors and gods lived</i> |
| All of these things were connected to show that it took all to make life and the world function. | | |

The seasons of the year would represent life being born, living, dieing, and the afterlife, then back to being born again.

There were many other ways the Tree of Life was looked at and considered to represent. It is believed that after the Christians took over the Celtic world the branches and roots were intertwined and combined to make the vision of the ‘Tree of Life’ that is now considered to be actual Celtic. The Celtic scribes may have been the one’s to draw the tree that you drew on the last page, but it was for the Christians and they attached their own beliefs as to what it meant; which is an eternal life with the heavens, hell, and the world of today (this seems a little like the actual Celtic meanings doesn’t it?).

In today’s world it seems that the Celtic drawings of the Tree of Life prepared by the scribes for the Christian monks is the image used to represent the meaning of the ancient Celts’ Tree of Life.

Draw eyes and a mouth on a white paper plate. Draw or cut out (using the templates below) numerous leaves of different kinds and shapes. Color the leaves different shades of green for a more realistic look. Place them on the paper plate until you only see the eyes and mouth. You can arrange and change them all you want. When you have a design that you like glue it to the plate.



THE GREEN MAN

The image we know as the green man has gone by many other names such as Jack of the Green and Robin o' the Woods. The image is a representation of a god of the old religion. He has taken on many forms with the last one being made of leaves and foliage; this is how we know him now and what you made with the paper plate.

Although The Green Man is a representation of life and fertility from the ancient pagan religions many other religions and groups use the image for their cause. The Christians have also adopted his image to stand for the regenerative force of Christ. Some ecological groups also use his image as a representation of preserving and protecting nature.

The pagans of today, for the most part, still think of him as they did in the ancient times but also as a constant reminder and image of the never ending effort to save nature.

Take 3 pencils or pens and make the shape of a triangle in the blank part of this paper. In each corner start a spiral that can be as fancy or plain as you want. Draw the spirals until they meet in the middle by running into each other or as part of the design. When done pick up the pens and see if you can guess what you just made then turn to the next page to see if you were right.

Triskele

The triskele is a connection of three spirals using forms similar to a 'C' or an 'S'. The triskele has taken many forms with differences in how it is created to how it is shaded in. Everyone seems to agree that even though they are drawn differently they are still the same form and labeled triskele's. The Celts used them on many different art forms from the La Tène period all the way into the medieval Christian manuscripts.

There is some debate as to what they meant, as there is with a lot of the symbols of the ancient Celtic times. It is said that the meaning takes on the three fold version of the meaning of the spiral. It is said by someone, who has done much study into a form of this symbol, that the item or thing it is connected with has been blessed by the Druids and is safe for you.

Although it is a fact that this symbol meant a lot because of its abundance of use in ancient times no one has proven without a doubt its meaning. It is safe to say it was connected to the ancient Celts and was very special to them. Maybe in the future the answer to this mystery will be revealed.

Draw a cross with a longer bottom in pencil. When done draw a wide outline of your cross without crossing any lines with pen. Make a small outline on the outside of that cross with a pen. Erase the pencil section of your cross. Now you will draw a design in the wide cross space using spirals, Celtic knots, and animal designs. When you are done trace the bottom of a glass or circular item with pencil that circles the middle section of your cross. Lastly take a pen and trace only the part that doesn't go into your cross picture and erase the rest of the circle. Guess what you have drawn then turn to the next page to see if you are right.



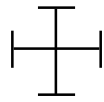
Celtic Cross



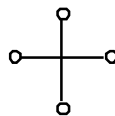
There were many crosses that represented different things in the world before the symbol was adopted by the Christians. These crosses were used all over the world. Here are a few of those crosses:



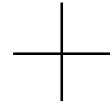
Egypt



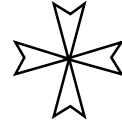
Mesopotamia



Assyria



Greece



Maltese

The Ancient cross symbols were connected to nature and/or the god or goddess' that were worshiped by the people who drew them.

Today's cross that represents the Christian religion as a whole was in the process of being widely accepted and used throughout the lands that had been converted to the religion during the time of the Celts. When they took over the Celtic lands the Christian religion was mixed with some beliefs of the Celtic religion. The Celtic cross became a mixture of the Christian cross with the added circle which was a representation of the sun. It is believed that the first depiction of the Celtic cross was drawn by a Celt working for a Christian monk in an attempt to keep alive the Celtic faith even though the land was officially Christian.

Tape a pencil to a window facing to the North or South in your home. Hold the paper in front of the pencil. On a sunny day document the rays of the sun on the paper 3 times (when it comes up, midday, and before it sets). When done try and figure out what you drew then check your answer on the next page.



Awen



The awen symbol is well known by the neo-pagans as a druid representation, however, it isn't really used much by them. The symbol was non-existent in ancient times and as far as we know not connected with the Celts. A meso-pagan man named Iolo Mangwyg claimed it was used by the ancient Celts, however, no one else has been able to find a solid base as to the truth in the statement.

The awen is a symbol that has been adopted by the meso-pagan druids as the main symbol of their beliefs. Some say the lines are to show the sun's rays of light, others say that the three lines show the shadow of the sun from the upright rocks during the solstices and the equinoxes. The dots above the lines of light are said to represent the positions of the sun when it is rising and setting. There is also another version that is used by some with one dot representing the Supreme Being above the lights.

Take a glass and put two pencils or pens across the rim side by side with some space between them (the pens or pencils should be longer than the rim). When done look down and see the image made by the rim of the glass and your pen or pencils. Next look around (in or out side) and find at least 4 other ways to make this same symbol. Write or draw the ways in the boxes below. When done guess what symbol you have made then check your answer on the next page.

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| | |

Sigil

The sigil is represented most often with a wreath of leaves crossed with sticks or wood from a tree. It seems to be the only symbol that is shared by both meso-pagans and neo-pagans the same. This symbol is also accepted by authors and many other scholars as the symbol for Druidism.

The symbol itself is a creation of David Fisher the founder of a meso-pagan group called Reformed Druids of North America. It isn't known for sure how he came about the symbol although he has been known to say it was inspired by a symbol from the Masons (another group of people who have nothing to do with religion).

This symbol was not introduced until around 1963, so it is considered modern. There is a lot of different idea's to its meaning and seems to differ as much as a persons views. Most everyone seems to think the symbol contains a connection with nature. No matter what it means this modern creation has become a very powerful symbol and most definitely represents the Druid religion.

Ogam or Ogham

Inscriptions like you saw on the last page are similar to those found on around 300 upright rocks, spread throughout Ireland, Isle of Man, Wales, and parts of Scotland. Some believe there were actually more inscriptions written but on wood made into a book by connecting them with a rod on one end which didn't survive time for us to see. There is no way to find the actual date the inscriptions were put on the rocks, but it is believed that it was between 400 BC and 700 BC. It seems that the rocks with the markings on them were used as grave or property markers.

Most people believe that this was an actual alphabet that the Celtic people used. Everyone seems to agree on 20 different symbols although some believe five more were added to the list later. Each symbol stands for a letter the twenty, agreed upon, letters were shown to you on the page before this one.

There are several stories as to how the alphabet was developed; however, the most common one is of a god named Oghma who, during the Ulster period of Celtic Mythology, made the alphabet in sticks. The meaning of the letters, according to Erynn Rowan, is that each letter had it's own meaning. Robert Graves thinks that each letter represents a tree (this idea is the one most used).

Ogam is used for divination (telling the future) in today's world just like in Irish sagas of the past. They are used alone or during ceremonies according to what the user wants to use them for. Each letter is given a meaning and people use them to find answers to questions or to tell the future. There are actually over 120 versions of Ogam based on the lines you saw on the last page including animal images each with their own meaning.

Try the list of things again, only this time tell someone about each of the symbols

Stonehenge

Celtic Knot

Spiral

Tree of Life

Greenman

Triskele

Celtic Cross

Awen

Sigil

Ogham or Ogham

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