

Ancient Celtic Warriors

Preface:

In reality the religion we have labeled “Druid” has derived from the religion practiced by the ancient Celtic people. To understand the roots of the religion completely we need to learn about all ranks of people who worshiped this way in ancient times. Each class within the ancient Celtic world influenced as well as contributed to the religion.

This activity booklet should give you a solid background on the ancient Celtic warriors and the Celtic beliefs that were directly effected and derived from these respected people.

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

Enjoy.



TristA

Read the following story of a boy named Àed to find out how children grew to be warriors. Read aloud and talk about the things after the story for fun!

ÀED the Warrior

Àed lived near the foot of the hills and was liked very much by the kids and adults alike. He was well known around his area because he was sort of a champion at hurling. It was his favorite game and he spent a lot of time practicing it. He and his friends had a team that no one could beat.

Àed and his friends knew that it wouldn't be long before things would change for them. They were happy to move on, but were sure that they would miss the times when they would play and talk together. At their age they would soon be moving in with a new family.

In the ancient Celtic world a lot of kids, girls and boys alike, would go from their home and move into a new home. The new family would become their foster family and it is through them that they would be trained for their future. They would not lose contact with their original family because they would spend a lot of time with them after they moved. This would be a special time for the child, his family and his foster family and a great bond between all of them would begin.

Each child had their own 'dream' so to speak of what they wanted to learn and where they wanted to go. The tightest bunch of friends in the hurling team consisted of 4 boys, one being Àed. Of the group one boy wanted to train as a Druid, another boy and one of the girls wanted to be trained as craftsmen, and Àed had a dream of being a blacksmith.

A large feast was served the day the announcements on foster parenting placements came out. Àed watched as his friends were placed with different families and noticed that they didn't all get to do what they wanted. Àed waited patiently until it was his turn. He was chosen to live in a home of a blacksmith and he was so happy. He and his friends smiled at one another because most of them would pursue the career they wanted; this, thought Àed would be him too.

When arriving at the blacksmith's house he was greeted by the mother of the family who didn't look much different than his own mother. He was happy because he already felt at home. It was at dinner a few nights after arriving that things changed for him. During the dinner everyone talked about how good he was at hurling and he was told that most who are good at hurling are also good warriors. It was then that he realized he wasn't going to be a blacksmith, he was going to train as a warrior. The tone of the conversation changed and it was final, he would begin his training in the morning.

He did begin his training the next morning. At first he didn't like the training or the woman who he thought was like his mother who was training him. He continued

with his training as the moons came and went. It wasn't too long until he took pride in being a warrior. He had even went to work with the blacksmith a few days and realized that he didn't like the smoke and lacked the patience that it required.

In time Àed became one of the best warriors of his area, just like he was one of the best hurling players at one time. You could talk to him now, but, he is off fighting the Romans. I am sure he will be back with many trophies and stories to tell.

The End

Did you know...

Hurling is one of the oldest known games played and it is still being played today. We know the ancient Celtic people played it, however, we don't know if they were the one's who invented it.

In today's world kids are trained in regular education at a school. When done you chose your career and go to college or are trained by someone else while you work in the career. If you add up all the years you will go to school and to college and/or be trained in your chosen career field you will actually spend less years learning than a Druid learning the same skills in ancient Celtic times.

Think About it...

What do you think it would be like to not attend school and at a certain age or stage in your life be given to a completely different family to be taught regular education skills as well as your job?

Do you think this was a good idea or not?

Why do you think this about the idea?

Quick Fact:

Not all warriors were trained by women, however most were. Families with a lot of money had great male warriors train their children. The greatest warriors were those who had the fighting spirit and practiced for better skill; no matter who trained them!

The Art of Battle

Fighting was a way of life for the Celts of ancient times. Everyone learned how to fight. Kids would get their first taste of fighting when they were young from other family members. Women would learn to fight by their husbands, fathers and sometimes by their foster families. The warriors themselves would go through long and hard training.

There were many benefits to being a good warrior and everyone was aware of them. Before anyone could eat, the best warrior would get his choice piece of meat from the table; usually it was the biggest. Being a warrior meant you were high on the social ladder and with that came a lot of extras like money, prestige and honor.

Celts made great weapons for their warriors; some say they were the best in all the land. Skilled blacksmiths made wonderful armor and other things to protect them. The Celtic warrior trained hard and deep to master war skills. Even with all of these special things the Celtic warrior still needed more to win certain battles.

Ancient Celtic warriors played a game with their opponent that sometimes scared them more than the battle itself. The Celts had rumors floating around the land, and these rumors really scared the people that wanted to fight them. This was a great advantage to the Celts. Because of their bazaar tactics on the battlefield it was believed that the Celts were only afraid of the sky falling, which meant nothing in battle would scare them.

Fighting the Celts was nothing short of confusing because they would play mind games with their opponent. During battle the Celts would do wild and crazy things that would confuse the one's they were fighting with. They would come to the battle in bright clothing or wearing nothing at all which kept the fighting attention from the actual battle. Everyone would fight on ground so the Celts had a few chariots ride in the middle of the battle several times with a warrior striking blows while the fighters would be confused at what was going on. Celtic warriors would fight individual battles in the middle of a group fight causing the attention of those fighting from the battle to watch the action of the two fighters. One of the biggest battle distraction tools used by the Celts was the Celtic trumpets, which made a terrible noise, being played during most of the fighting.

When a battle was complete the Celtic opponents were in a state of shock and confusion. This feeling was spread throughout Europe and with each win the Celts became more feared. It didn't seem to matter if you knew all of the war tactics they would use because when you were actually in the battle seeing it, you would still become confused. The Celts' mind games were a great tactic for their battles.

Warrior's Diversion Tools

Diversion tools used by the ancient Celts were the actual things that aided in the mind games that they would play. Although they were quite simple and small in number without them they would not have been so successful.

Carnyx: The carnyx is a sort of trumpet that was used only during battles. The carnyx had a very long pipe that would go up to an animal head, usually a boar or horse, called a bell which pointed towards the battle. There were around 6 different notes that would come from it and they were never played to a tune.

The Celtic carnyx (war trumpet) was very loud and was used in the build up of the battle. It was designed to produce a prolonged scream intended to bring shivers to those they would soon battle the Celts. When the war trumpet was played the Celtic warriors would shout words of threat, sing battle songs, and make ritual displays of aggression in frenzy before battle.

Chariots: The early war chariots only carried two people (a warrior and a driver) and were pulled by two horses. Later chariots showed more decoration and were used to transport the warriors to and from the battle.

Most of the chariot was made of wicker and leather which have all disappeared now. There are a lot of art, metal and bronze remains, as well as pictures on coins used for us to better understand the Celtic war chariot.

The richly bronze and coral decorated leather harness and reins were a great distraction in themselves. The Yoke had a unique design used only by the Celts of the time. The wheels of the war chariot were made of ash, usually one piece, bent in the shape of a circle held together with a small u-joint. It is believed later the spokes and the wheel shape was made by one piece of wood shaped by hand with a thin piece of iron placed over it while hot so when it cooled off the wheel was all one light weight piece. The basket was made of weaved reed or leather.

The noise of the chariot itself would definitely confuse a serious warrior. The Celts would also use the chariot differently in battles to ensure confusion. Sometimes they would drive down the center of the battle with skilled warriors using a double bladed sword to scare those they were fighting. Another tactic they used was to take the war chariots around the outside with warriors throwing javelins into the crowd they soon would fight.

Freemen and the poor would sometimes be chosen to be charioteers but warriors were the only one's that would do the actual fighting during battle. When the battle wasn't going on the charioteer would sit on the sidelines or a close distance from the battle and wait for an order to return to battle or help make a quick run for a warrior or those who were injured.

Steeds: The Celts used their horses in many ways, but especially for battle. They took a lot of pride and spent a lot of time on training and caring for their battle horses. Battle steeds had many jobs, each with its own form of dedication for the warrior and work for the horse.

The Celtic steed had to be trained to handle loud sounds, so they would not be spooked by the sound of battle. These sounds included the Carnyx, singing and chanting, wheels of the chariot, and all other war related noises. They also had to be used to the Celtic way of riding bareback and the control they demanded which was for their horse to turn on a dime no matter what the terrain was.

In earlier forms of battle horses were used to pull the war chariots and then sit on the sidelines quietly waiting to be of use again. In later forms of war the Celtic warrior would ride them bareback while fighting which they were well known to be very skilled at. Other times the horses would be trained to stand still or be bound by a thin rope hooked around their neck while their owner fought on foot. Often times special horses would be ridden by the Chief as they rode to the front lines of a fight to throw a few blows himself while the horse stood patiently until time to dart off the battlefield.

Training Battle Horses

Many warriors and horse trainers spent more time working with their horses than they did with their own families.

Warrior's Armor

Armor is made up of things to protect the warrior during battle. Take a look at what archeologists have found and learn a little about them.

Shields: Shields were in the shape of a large rectangle, oval or hexagon and covered most of the body. They were made of wood and covered in leather. There was a piece of metal that operated like a spine (some going diagonal, some horizontal and even some in the shape of circle) for support and on the other side in the same spot was a handle for ease when holding and carrying. This piece of metal was called a boss and even though it started as two pieces later blacksmiths learned to make it into one piece. Shields that were used in battle were not decorated very much, but bronze shields were made for display and show. The show shields were decorated as fancy as their jewelry was made, with animals, designs and even colors.

Draw what you would make your shield look like if you could choose it (you can make it for fighting or for display).

Front	Back

Can You Imagine

The shields that they carried would be fairly heavy because of the metal holding it together. Can you imagine having the weight of the shield to carry as well as two or three heavy swords or javelins that were thrown at you during battle which stuck into the wooden shield? The warriors of ancient times must have been very strong!

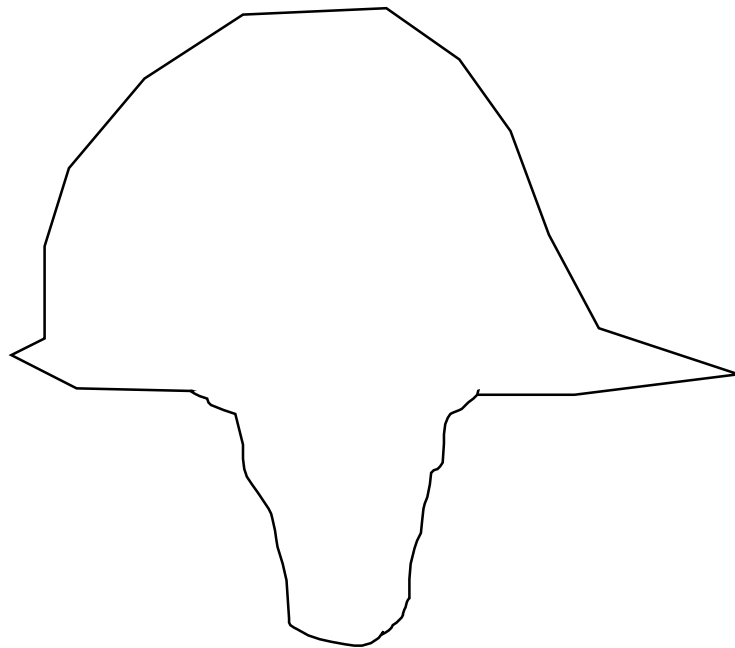
Helmets: Although there are many helmets found by archeologists it is believed that most were used for ceremonies and decoration. These helmets were way too decorated and bulky for warriors to use on the battlefield.

There were things on top of the helmets; some actually found by archeologists had animals and there were some old writings that told of horns curved to the middle on top of hats.

Were there really Celtic Helmets?

Many of the helmets found are very similar to helmets in other cultures from the same time period. There is proof of the ancient Celts sometimes using weapons and other things they have acquired to fight with. It is a question as to if they even made these helmets or got them from past battles.

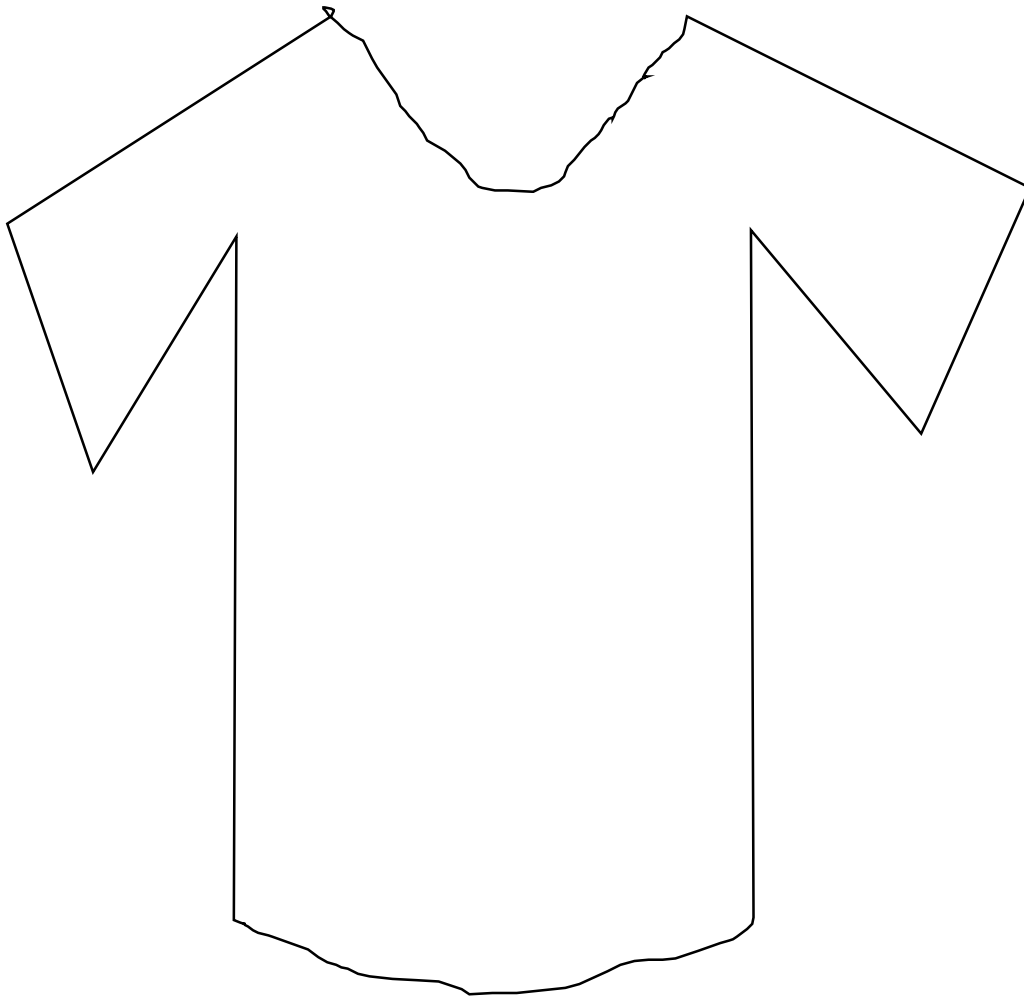
Decorate the helmet below.



Chain-Mail: Chain-mail is like a shirt made of iron that would not allow swords and javelins to hit a person's skin. There is evidence of mail (short for chain mail) it is believed that only a few warriors were able to afford to buy them. The mail was made by a skilled blacksmith who would make individual loops of iron and link them together. To make a mail it took a long time, much skill and lots of iron which made mail very expensive to buy.

Use small circle pasta and glue to make the shirt below into mail. Notice how long it takes and how careful you need to be to make sure all of the circles touch one another. This is nothing compared to the time it took in ancient days.

| Chain-Mail Shirt |
| The average chain-mail shirt would weigh |
| around 20 pounds |



Warrior's Weapons

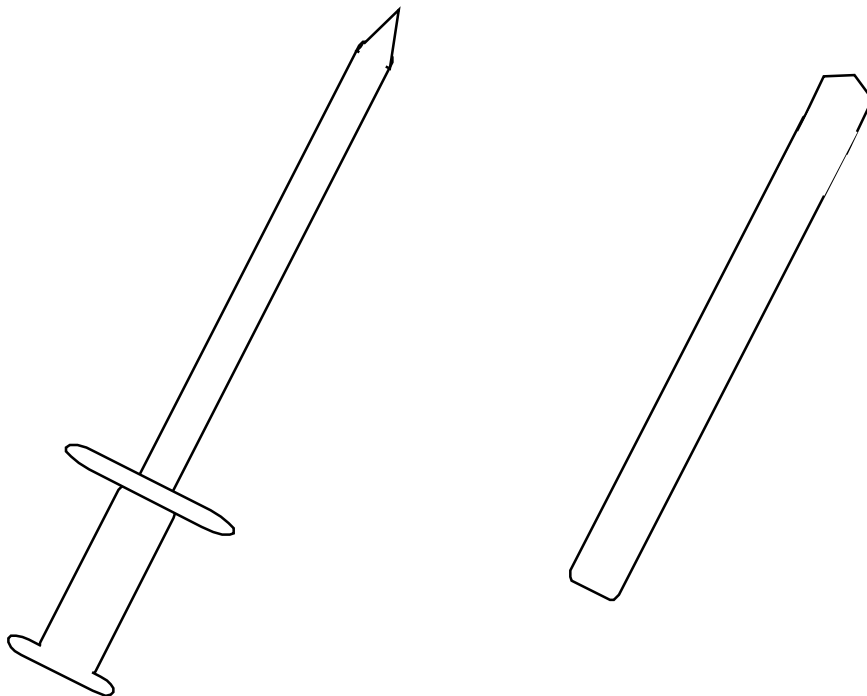
Swords: The Celt used his sword very skillfully in battle. In a small area the sword would be of no use because it was so long that it would be hard to handle without room to do so. When a warrior would swing his sword he would put his whole body into it delivering a strong and powerful blow.

The Celtic sword differed according to when it was used. In the La Tené period the swords were about 2.5 feet and the blade was thicker and pointed which was better for slashing and cutting. Later in history the swords were a couple of inches shorter with a thinner and rounded blade more suitable for slashing. Most of these swords were only sharp on one side since it was more expensive to have a double bladed sword made.

There is some evidence that the swords were very individualized implying that a warrior's sword was designed by him. Other than the length of the blade there are tons of differences in the ancient Celtic sword. The handle of the Celtic sword had a symbol or personal emblem of the warrior on them. There aren't that many sword handles found today because they were made of wood which has deteriorated.

The scabbard that held the Celtic sword when he wasn't using it, usually tied around his waist. Scabbards were made of metal, wood or a combination of the two. Scabbards showed off the great art work of the ancient Celts. Although the designs differed there was always an elaborate design at the bottom and top of the scabbard.

Design your idea of a great ancient Celtic sword and scabbard below.



Spears: Spears were made from carefully designed spear heads attached to pieces of wood of different sizes. There were as many different lengths of spears as there were uses for them. Spears ranged from 12” to 8’ in length. Smaller spears would be used for small area’s for easier control and longer spears could be used for throwing at enemies over longer distances similar to a javelin. Each tip or butt of the spear was specially designed to take into consideration aerodynamics, terrain and situation.

Try your skill at designing your own spear by using aluminum foil (or other substance of your choice) as a butt (handle) and a straight stick (found on the ground). Form the butt in different ways until you find a design that will work best as a javelin. As you try different designs you will learn a lot about how hard the artesians and blacksmiths worked years ago.

Can You Imagine...

Can you imagine being a artesian or blacksmith and making many spears of different size and style for different warriors?

The Soul & the Head

It is written in many books that the Celts were headhunters. Although there is proof that a form of headhunting was practiced it wasn't only a Celtic practice nor was it done all throughout Celtic history.

The ancient Celts believed that the seat of the soul was in the head so when they did battle they were careful to take care of the souls of those they defeated. They would keep the souls close to their homes which they felt was a sign of good luck. It was a common belief among the Celts that souls of this world would become the overseers of the feast in the Otherworld.

There were many magical powers in the soul and it is believed that it could communicate with you, talk to you, entertain you and watch over you. It was important to make connections with the soul to aid in a better life in the Otherworld. The souls of the powerful or very skilled would be present in places of worship. It is said that warriors would not eat without souls accompanying him. Souls were very present in everyday life of the Ancient Celtic peoples.

There are great stories mostly from the Ulster Cycle of Celtic mythology that talk about the souls and the heads like: Branwen in the Mabingion, The Blessed Raven, and even in the Tain.

The Look of a Warrior

Celtic Warriors were tall, as were most Celtic people of the time. It is said that 6 ft was nothing unusual.

Most Celtic warriors were male, although there is some evidence that women may have fought when necessary.

A warrior would slick back his hair with lime so it would not fall into his face while fighting. Some would have it standing straight up on their head.

Plaid, Tie Dye, and multicolor patterns were popular during the time. Shirts, called Tunics, would go down to the knees. Pants were loose and would be tied in two or three places on the leg to keep them from getting in the way of fighting. They would wear cloaks secured with a brooch in the middle of one of their shoulders to battles, but it is believed that they would take them off before fighting so they wouldn't get in their way while fighting.

A torc (form of necklace) was worn by warriors as a sign of their profession as well as their personal social status. All torc's were worn around the neck during battle and during peaceful times alike. They were made of iron (sometimes twisted) and decorated with jewels, precious stones and glass and came in many thickness'. The torc was similar to a necklace; however, it didn't have a clasp because it would have a space of about an inch between the two ends which would expand to make it easy to come off and on.

– Final Project –

Make a picture or small statue of a Celtic warrior to place in a special place, hang near, or place on your alter.

Picture

Draw the warrior in any scene that you want to on thick paper. Feel free to add color with crayons, colored pencils, paints, or pens. For a more exciting picture glue items from around the house to make up parts of your picture (similar to the chain-mail project) and/or make some scenery of items taken to war or a battle field.

Small Statue

You can make it with salt dough, let it harden and even paint it. Make it as realistic as you can because you know a lot about the ancient Celtic warrior!

Salt Dough Recipe

1/2 cup of salt
1 cup of flour
1 teaspoon of alum
1 tablespoon of cooking oil
1 cup of very hot water
food coloring of various colors or paint

Mix together the salt, the flour, and the alum while they are still dry. Add the cooking oil to the hot water. Pour the oil/water mixture over the dry ingredients a little at a time and stir. When the whole thing is crumbly with large crumbs, stop stirring and start kneading it. (Kneading means squishing and squeezing it between your hands.) Be careful not to burn your hands, however. Add a little more of the water/oil mixture until the salt dough feels right for what you want to make with it.

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