

What Is A  
Druid ?

# Preface:

Sometimes the simplest question that is asked or thought of is the one that never gets a complete answer.

This booklet will address the question “What is a Druid”. You will explore the different Druid paths as well as learn about some of the groups that are available for membership in each of them. There will be a few book suggestions for you to read as well.

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

## Druid and the dictionary:

Let's look at what the dictionary tells us a Druid is (write this on paper):

American Heritage Dictionary: A member of an order of priests in ancient Gaul and Britain who appear in Welsh and Irish legend as prophets and sorcerers.

Is this definition correct? Do some research to decide if you agree with it or not. Read each of the small sections in this booklet and then read the newest definition you have written. Tweak the definition to make it more accurate then go on to reading the next section.

## Pagan Base

In order to learn about what it means to be a Druid, it is important to understand a little about the people who make up the religion. Almost all Druids are Pagans which means; to have more than one god who can be male or female (god & goddess) and to become one with nature. Under the Pagan title are many religions (Druids, Wiccans, Witches, etc...) that can be found in many places in the world. There are even some that consider themselves only Pagan or certain religions that require you learn first how to be a Pagan before you learn the lore or material that is required by that religion. There are so many Pagans and Pagan based religions that in the book; *Being A Pagan*, Ellen Evert Hopman wrote:

“I am always amazed when someone tells me that they are a Pagan or a Druid or a Witch and that they cannot seem to find anyone in their area to worship with. In the last ten years, I have met with Pagans virtually everywhere I have traveled, from New England to California and from Ireland to Italy.”

The Druid religion consist of people who spend a lot of time connecting to and surrounding themselves with nature and gods and goddess'. This trait of druidry begins at the Pagan base. Being a Druid adds another connection level to the Pagan belief so you will find that although being a Druid means a lot of things, most generally its interior comes from its Pagan base.

## Druid Label Roots

It is very clear who the original druids were; a social class of the ancient Celts. The social class consisted of people with different jobs who represented the church and state. They were respected and it is even believed that they were free to pass from tribe to tribe without being affected by any tribal conflicts; this fact alone is amazing considering it is from a group of people who loved battle and conflict.

Not so clear, is how they were labeled druids. There has been much debate on this matter which is still going on. Because the ancient Celts kept no written record of anything we are not sure what they called themselves. The name druid was given to them by the later scholars that wrote about them. It is uncertain if the Greek word *Druidai* and *Druidae* or *druides* in Latin hold the origin of the word itself. There are a few other names that it could have been the source like *dryadae* and *dryads* in Latin, *druvis* from *druivids* in Gaulish, the Old Irish *druí* (plural *druid*). The actual origin of the word druid has not been determined as is true of so much of the history of the ancient world. This leaves the decision on each individual to decide through their own research.

## Today's Druid Types

druids – ancient celtic people belonging to a social class that was the authority on religious matters

Druidism – a Pagan religion followed today

Druid – a person who follows the religion of Druidism today (Druids is plural form)

Druidry – the actions and things that a person does who is in the Druid religion

## Categories of Druids

As with all religions of today there are different categories within them. In Druidism there are three major categories; Ancient, or Paleopagan, druids, Revival, or Mesopagan, Druids, and Modern, or Neopagan, Druids. Let's take a look at what these categories actually mean.

The Ancient Druids, also called Paleopagan druids, were the people who made up the social class that we talked about earlier. It is a common belief that they are the original members of the Druid religion. These people chose to pass on information and everything else by word of mouth so they left nothing in writing that we know of to give modern people an idea of exactly what they believed or the things they did.

The Revival Druids, also known as the Mesopagan Druids, are nature centered people who mostly follow the religion as it was interpreted by people in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This type of Druidism does not require a person to be a Pagan and it uses material from sources that most people feel are not scholarly; these two things are the main separation from modern Druids today.

The Modern Druids, or Neopagan Druids, are nature centered Pagans that follow more of a twentieth century view on what a Druid should be. There are a lot of people who try to understand the ancient practices by doing either their own or group research on the subject.

### Druid Groups

There are many different Druid groups today but most of them can trace roots back to only a few groups. As people learned more and came to their own conclusions they would start a new group with like-minded people. Although most groups fall into the main Druid categories there are some that make up their beliefs from a mixture of things found from all over. Currently these groups are small in number and members.

Each group has its own website and online discussions as well as local groups for members to join and practice together. There is training available for members locally or through a correspondence course and most offer mentors to help you along the way. Training defers according to the group, but most last from one to three years. Most groups require members to be eighteen to join, however, some allow you to join at sixteen with written consent from your parent or guardian.

If you decide to join a group, be sure to learn all about it and a few others at the same time. It is important that you find a group that is tailored to your beliefs. Be careful too, because there are some groups that aren't legitimate;

there is a checklist of how to tell if they are or not in *Bonewits's Essential Guide to Druidism* by Isaac Bonewits.

### The Solitary Druid

There are people that call themselves solitary Druids. These people do not attend local groves and groups to practice the Druid ways. Today some of these people have begun to join groups and there is a disagreement if they can be a part of a group and continue to stay solitary.

While most groups today encourage people to be more social when it comes to Druidism, they do allow solitaires to be a part of the group. There are many different views on this as well because the ancient druids were very social but in today's world local groups may not be in a person's area. There are many other things to back up both sides, however, these two seem to be the two most quoted sides of the debate.

### What Now

You have been given a very simple breakdown of what a Druid is. Use it as a step in your own path, whatever that may be. Then take the initiative to take the next step by talking to the Druids you know about their definition of a Druid. Continue to take more of those 'steps' as you do your own research into the religion.

Continue to change the definition you started with when reading this booklet to eventually come up with your own definition for Druid which, as you learn more, will change at least 5 and hopefully no more than 100 times.

# Bibliography:

*Being A Pagan*; Ellen Evert Hopman & Lawrence Bond

*Bonewits's Essential Guide to Druidism*; Isaac Bonewits

*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language 4<sup>th</sup> edition*;  
Houghton Mifflin Company

*The Druidry Handbook*; John Michael Greer

*The Druids*; Stuart Piggott

