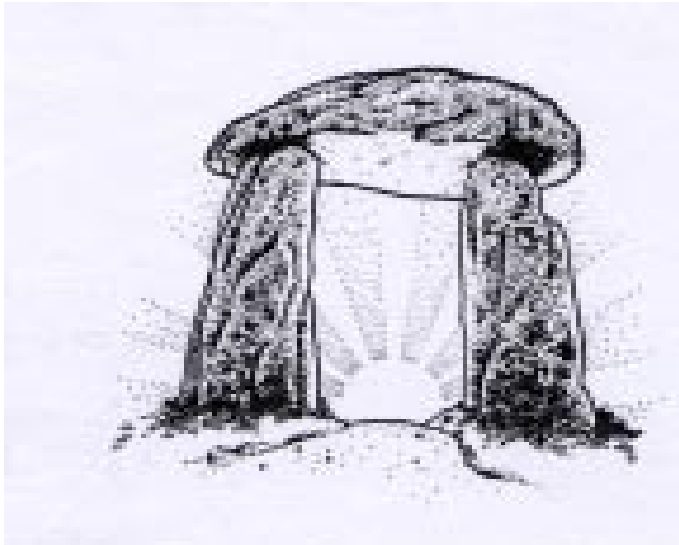


ALBAN HIEFIN



THE SUMMER SOLSTICE
CEREMONY OF
THE ORDER OF BARDS
OVATES & DRUIDS





ALBAN HEFIN THE SUMMER SOLSTICE

21/22 JUNE
NORTHERN HEMISPHERE
21/22 DECEMBER
SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

Let unity, harmony and beauty be your watchwords. May you abundantly share in the illumination. Be you ready to hear the voice of those crying out for wisdom. Listen at the portals - for the world is large and many are seeking. Open the gates for them, and portal after portal shall open unto you.
from the Order's traditional ceremony

The Summer Solstice is the time of maximum light for us - and it is known as the Festival of Joy. In a sense, it is the most extrovert of the eight celebrations - and as the countryside around us revels in colourful and fragrant splendour, we too celebrate the strength and power of the sun and the richness of the earth.

This time is known in the Druid tradition as that of Alban Hefin - 'The Light of Summer' or 'The Light of the Shore'. At Alban Hefin, the elevation of the new sun which was born at the time of Alban Arthan is completed. The Winter Solstice was an occasion for mourning the death of the old year and the lowering of all light. Then the sun-child the Mabon was born, and by Alban Eilir, the Spring Equinox, he had already disputed with darkness the rulership of the Earth's time. By now, at the Summer Solstice, he has definitely won and reduced darkness to but a few hours. He is now therefore the victor, and at his most potent. But here is embodied also the teaching of paradoxes - for in reaching his apogee, he has also sown the seed of his downfall - for, of course, from this point the year begins the descent towards the time of the shortest day again - Alban Arthan. As it is said in the Taoist tradition: 'When Yang peaks it shifts to Yin; when Yin peaks, it shifts to Yang.'

The traditional Alban Hefin ceremony of the Order is the most elaborate of the eight ceremonies, with three separate sections - the first being the Vigil Observance, the second the Dawn Ceremony, and the third the Noon Ceremony. These three rituals have been celebrated by the Order at Stonehenge, and at other ancient sites such as Hunsbury Circle in Northamptonshire and Parliament Hill in London's Highgate. The Vigil observance at Stonehenge has been held at an ancient mound to the south of the stone circle, and in Nuinn's time at Parliament Hill it was held by Boudicca's Tumulus - with participants proceeding to the tree-covered mound just before midnight, some bearing lanterns, to listen to an informal address by Nuinn, and to meditate for a while before returning from the assembly

to rest until the dawn. In more recent times, the Order has held its all-night Vigil at Glastonbury, with periods of silence and meditation interspersed with music, story-telling and discussion.

The second ritual of the traditional Alban Hefin celebration is the Dawn Ceremony, and for an explanation of this, we give here Nuinn's summary :

'After the Chief has spoken of meanings and memories, with meditation, at midnight by the Tumulus of Boudicca, before dawn, the Companions and Dionachs (assistants) proceed in file to a spot near the summit of Parliament Hill.

Here a posse is detached: four Companions and four Dionachs go and shape out a wide circle with the four Elements, leave a marker by each and return.

With a serpentine motion, the Order moves in, stating the purpose of the ceremony at the place of entry, and the nature of the elements, as each is picked up by the companion responsible - each marker returning to the general procession, which slowly centres into a smaller circle. This is formed and positioned in the correct quarters, and upon a diamond of linen at the centre are placed the elements: earth as bread and salt, air as the rose, fire as the fire-bowl or smoking censer, and water in a large bowl.

Thus we symbolise the four elements being adopted into the self and their qualities being balanced and integrated within us, through the action of the snake of wisdom.

We induce the power of all sun-gods by saluting fatherhood in the sun, and in the dawn-tree or stone; we induce the power of all mother-goddesses in water and motherhood. With water, finally, we bless the land to fruitfulness, then with fire we consecrate it and ourselves to courage. We then apply to ourselves the three main aspects of deific power in the three sacred attributes, silently, as a sacred word from on high - intoning within the mantra given in the Bardic Grade (The Awen).

We then prepare for the rising of the sun - preparing both to receive the blessing and to give it out. The Trumpet Fanfare calls up and honours the sun. There may be music. The Chief explains the three aspects of Good, the Three and the Five. Druidic teaching is given out: the Words of Gold and the Words of Wisdom, the desirable objectives, the concepts of instruction and the essentials of discipleship. Finally, the Great Unity is proclaimed with the Druid oath. And then we are cleansed and energised by Water and by Fire as a circle. The Uniting Prayer of all Druids is chanted, the Celebration follows with dance or music, and then the blessing is pronounced.'

The ceremony completed, the elements are collected and the procession leaves the site, only to return just before noon, to enact the Noon Ceremony. As at Dawn, the participants gather outside the circle in preparation, before being allowed into the circle by the Sword-bearer who acts as Gatekeeper. Any visitors to the ceremony are then received into the circle. These visitors may include local dignitaries or representatives from various faiths. Nuinn says 'in a 'neutral' ceremony, not belonging to any denomination or religion, all can join in an acknowledgement of the power that has designed this yearly cycle of equinoxes and solstices for the solar system.' The Mabon is then received with his gift of vervain - one of the herbs used for healing the eyes - a fitting symbol for this time of highest light which connects us to maximum clarity of vision. The Lady is received, with her gifts, and the Awen is then formed - in both vision and sound, before the Presider is crowned with oak leaves. This symbolises the crowning of the Oak King, God of the Waxing Year, even though in his crowning he falls to his twin, the Holly King, God of the Waning Year, since from now on, the days will be shorter. In passing the crown to the other participants, the truth of our essential equality in Spirit is honoured, and in receiving it back again, the other truth of the reality of variation in abilities and accomplishments is respected too.

The Sacred Word is invoked again, followed by an honouring of our ancestors and of the chain of Druidic succession. A symbolic feast then grounds the experience: the qualities of fire and water are integrated into our being through drinking mead or wine, and the refined qualities of earth (in conjunction with the other three elements) are integrated through eating bread and salt. What is received is then given out - all are invited to share the feast. The ceremony is then closed in the familiar way, culminating with the prayer: 'May all beings receive eternal light.'

As you can imagine, these traditional ceremonies require considerable organisation, and members nowadays are more likely to celebrate in a simpler – though no less potent way.

May this coming time of the Solstice be a time of great joy for you!

THE LONGEST DAY

Falling midway between Beltaine and Lughnasadh is Alban Hefin, the Summer Solstice, marking the peak of the sun's influence on Earth. The spiral of the year has expanded to its widest point and now the hours of light are as long as they will ever be. After 21st or 22nd June, the sun's power will begin to wane and the days grow shorter. The sun has touched the northernmost point along the horizon and is about to embark upon the long journey back south, ending at Alban Arthan, the Winter Solstice, in mid-December. In the Southern Hemisphere, Alban Hefin falls on 21st or 22nd December, with the sun touching the southernmost point along the horizon.

This solstice time was an event of tremendous importance to the proto-Druids of the New Stone Age, who built a number of magnificent megaliths aligned to the sunrise on this day. In southwest England, an unbroken thread of tradition connects the 5,000-year-old temple of Stonehenge with ritual activities through the Bronze Age, the Iron Age, and into modern times. Today, of course, many modern druid orders, including OBOD, gather here to watch the first rays of the sun shine above the 'hele stone.' Another great stone temple to the Summer Solstice is at Callanish on the island of Lewis, in the Outer Hebrides. Here, four rows of stones lead into a circle from the four directions, forming a Celtic cross in the landscape, and the stones form an astronomical observatory aligned to the solstice sunrises and sunsets, as well as to the equinoxes. Callanish is so far north, the sky never actually darkens on a midsummer night. This is also the case at the mysteriously beautiful stone circle, the Ring of Brodgar, on Orkney, which was known for centuries by local people as the Temple of the Sun, aligned as it is to the midsummer sunrise.

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Throughout Britain and Ireland, this moment of the triumph of the light, and yet also the beginning of its decline, was celebrated with great bonfires when the whole community gathered once again on the hilltops to celebrate life through feasting, dance, ritual and song, to rejoice in the sun at the height of its power – and perhaps also to pray that it not die too soon. In later years, these celebrations usually took place the night of June 23rd, which was called St. John's Eve, as the Christian Church dedicated the ancient pagan festival to Saint John the Baptist, the prophet born six months before Jesus.

In Cornwall and Wales, boys and girls, bedecked in garlands of flowers, went dancing and spinning around the great fires. Young men whirled flaming brands around their heads to form sun-wheels, balanced blazing barrels on top of poles or performed feats of daring such as jumping through the tall flames – perhaps to encourage the corn to leap up too. When the flames died down to glowing coals, dancers held hands and skipped through them, being careful not to break the chain, which would bring bad luck. The ashes from the fires were believed to have magical powers, and farmers carefully collected them to scatter around their fields or the animals' barns. The old bonfire customs lasted well into modern times, and still continue today in Cornwall, thanks to the efforts of the Old Cornwall Society in keeping the old ways alive. On St. John's Eve, every hill in Cornwall blazes like a beacon that can be seen for miles around, as they did in days of old, while in some towns chains of dancers spiral through the streets in the ancient serpentine dance.

On this night in County Limerick, Ireland, people processed up the hill of the faery queen Áine, whose name means 'Brightness,' and who was probably once a goddess of the sun. They set light to bunches of straw and hay called *cliars* that they waved among the fields and grazing cattle to ensure good crops and healthy beasts. When the great fire was lit at the top of the hill, Áine and her faery tribe came out to join in the revelry. On one such occasion in the 19th century, a number of girls had stayed late on the hill, watching the *cliars*, and joining in the games, when Áine suddenly appeared among them. She thanked them for the honour they had done her, but said she now wished them to go home, since her Otherworld friends wanted the hill to themselves. Some of the mortals then looked through her ring, and the hillside appeared to them swarming with the faery host, made visible by its magic powers.

The Summer Solstice was one of the three Spirit Nights of the year, the other two being Beltaine and Samhain. Faeries and ghosts were abroad, easily visible to those whose sensitivities made the veil between the worlds appear exceptionally thin. This was a good time to cull magical and healing herbs: fern seed gathered on midsummer's eve could make one invisible; elderberries warded off enchantment; stoncrop, vervain, and yarrow were hung in special places around the house for protection against the evil eye and death. Above all, this was the time for plucking St. John's wort, the golden, star-shaped flower that was first of all herbs to be gathered on St. John's Eve. Called the 'blessed plant' in Wales, it was renowned throughout the Celtic lands for bringing peace and prosperity to the house, health to the animals and a bountiful harvest. It was cast into the midsummer bonfires in Scotland, and placed over the doors of houses and farm buildings for its protective powers. For these magical plants were filled with the energy of the sun at its peak, now transformed into green blessings for the human realm.

For further information about this time, see *The Summer Solstice* by John Matthews Godsfield Press & Quest Books (USA) 2002.



LIVING THE WHEEL OF THE YEAR

The four points of the solstices and equinoxes provide celestial gateways through which influential blessings from the archangelic realm bathe the earth.

Michael Lindfield

An essential feature of Alban Hefin is the recognition that we are at the mid-point of the year - the shoreline, turning or balance point between the waxing powers of spring and early summer, and the waning powers of late summer and autumn. It is therefore an ideal time to work on the qualities of integration and balance. Notice how both the traditional Dawn and Noon ceremonies described, use the symbolism of moving the elements from the periphery of the circle to the centre, as in the Elemental Weaving rituals of the Bardic Grade. This reinforces the quality of this time - that all elements are brought to the centre - the mid-point, the culminating point.

Watching the sunrise, or meditating on the balancing and centring quality of the sun on the day of the Solstice, opening yourself to the blessings of the archangelic realm, is an excellent way to observe this special time. Holding an all-night vigil, too, as a once-yearly 'sleep-fast' can be a valuable experience too. Begin at midnight, and light candles, meditate, listen to music and read inspiring texts. If possible stay awake through the night, for it is the shortest night of the year, and you will not have long to wait. The Vigil will give you time to review your past year, and to look forward to the year that lies ahead, and can act as a cleansing time which allows your body the chance to adjust its 'inner clock', just as fasting can help your body adjust and correct its digestive processes and related clock. If you feel you will not benefit from this Vigil, however, do not perform it. Or simply meditate for a short while at midnight. The important thing is that you celebrate this Time of Joy in a way that feels absolutely right for you.

If you're not planning a ceremony as such, or in addition to your celebration, here are some suggestions for things you can do to acknowledge and attune to the energy of the time

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ASSOCIATIONS TO ALBAN HEFIN INTEGRATION, MANIFESTATION, EXTROVERSION, FIRE, RED, VERVAIN, ST.JOHN'S WORT

Get out in the sun.

Do something you have always wanted to do but have not dared.

Sit in a shadow. Ride on the top deck of a bus (better still a plane). Harvest your garlic.

Dance or movement meditation: dance in the sun, offering it the different sides and parts of your body. As you offer up head, shoulders, arms, legs, etc., let that part lead your movements for a time.

Thaw out and melt away all tensions. Dance!



ALBAN HEFIN SOLO CEREMONY

Prepare and light a central candle – you may also wish to have a fire - with four further candles around it, unlit, and a candle or small fire, also unlit, in each Quarter. Have your spiritual journal or a notebook and pen in the centre. If possible, do this ceremony out of doors – in actual daylight. The ideal time is midday.

THE OPENING

Enter your circle from the West. On entering, pause for several breaths, consciously leaving your daily concerns aside, allowing yourself to relax. Feel the earth beneath you and the sky above you, feel yourself grounded and centred. Sitting if necessary, perform the Light Body exercise. If you wish, you can now visualise your Sacred Grove. This is a good time to chant a few AWENS to ‘warm up’ your voice. It also helps you to feel connected, centred and relaxed.

Move sunwise to the East, pause and make a salutation, such as

○ Spirit/Great Spirit/God(s)/Goddess(es) (choose a term you feel comfortable with) , I ask for your blessings on this my ceremony of Alban Hefin (pause, then turn to face inward). ○ Spirit of this circle, Spirit of this place, I ask for your blessings, guidance and inspiration on this my ceremony .

Then complete the circuit and stand again in the West, facing inwards. Take a few moments to meditate on peace, and to feel peace within you. It may help to find an image that you associate with peace, which you can then use to help you awaken the feeling within yourself. Some examples are a quiet lake; a sphere of soft light; or a particular colour. If you are not very visual, you could try imagining a piece of music, or a musical note or chord, or simply the sound of the word ‘peace’ as you say it to yourself. Notice also how your body feels: let yourself breathe peace. If you like, you could say the Druid Prayer for Peace

*Deep within the still centre of my being, may I find peace.
Silently within the quiet of the grove, may I share peace.
Gently within the greater circle of humankind,
May I radiate peace.*

*Then walk to the North, face outward, and say
May there be peace in the North.*

As you do, imagine peace flowing out to the North – picture it as it flows through your neighbours’ homes and gardens, out across roads and forests, across towns and cities, all the way across the Earth.

Then turn and cross the circle to the South (skirting round the central fire or candle if you have one) and repeat. Then to the West, then across again to the East. Then step toward the centre and turn around in a full circle, saying

May there be peace throughout the whole world.

Now return to the West, facing centre, and, if you choose, say the Druid's Prayer:

Grant, O Spirit/Great Spirit/God(s)/Goddess(es), thy protection,
and in protection, strength,
and in strength, understanding,
and in understanding, knowledge,
and in knowledge, the knowledge of justice,
and in the knowledge of justice, the love of it,
and in the love of it, the love of all existences,
and in the love of all existences,
the love of Spirit/Great Spirit/God(s)/Goddess(es) and all goodness.

Chant more AWENS.

Then, moving around to start at the East, cast your circle as taught in Gwers Seven, trying to visualise it clearly as you do so. Perhaps you can hear it, or feel it, as well as see it. Notice that the circle creates a container: feel yourself to be contained. When you have completed the circle and are again standing in the East, face in to the centre and say:

This is sacred time. This is sacred space. I am fully present, here and now.

Now, if you have learnt how to do this, bless and consecrate your circle with Water and Fire, then stand at the East. (Leave out this stage if you have not yet learned how to do this). Then turn to face outwards, and raise one or both hands in salutation and say:

With the blessing of the hawk of dawn soaring in the clear pure air, I call upon the powers of the East.

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See the clear blue sky above and ahead of you and feel the blessing of the dawn and of the hawk, and sense power flowing into your circle from this direction. Then turn and walk sunwise to the South, and facing outwards say

With the blessing of the great stag in the heat of the chase, and the inner fire of the sun, I call upon the powers of the South.

See warm southern lands before you in the noon-day sun – sense the blessing of the stag and feel power flowing into your circle from this direction. Then walk sunwise to the West, and facing outwards say

With the blessing of the salmon of wisdom who dwells within the sacred waters of the pool, I call upon the powers of the West.

See the sun setting over the sea or a lake – sense the blessing of the salmon, and feel power flowing into your circle from this direction. Then walk sunwise to the North, and facing outwards say

With the blessing of the great bear of the starry heavens and the deep and fruitful earth, I call upon the powers of the North.

Gaze into a clear night sky – see the stars shining in the darkness, sense the blessings of the bear, and the Great Bear, and feel power flowing into your circle from this direction.

Then turn to face into the circle, and move your attention to the earth beneath you. Sense the energy of the earth flowing up into you, and the energy of the sky flowing down into you – meeting in the centre of your Being. Feeling connected to both Earth and Sky, say

May the harmony of my life and of this circle be complete.

THE RITE

Stand in the centre holding the central lit candle and facing West. Visualise the open Gateway of the West, notice what it's like, what colour/material/shape/size it is. Look out through it and see a landscape in the autumn. Step toward it and say what you're seeing and feeling in these words or your own:

It is the autumn of the year. The sun descends from the heights of day; all things of earth are ripening and gathering in. My heart is filled with love; the chalice overflows with bright blessings.

Light the candle/fire there and say

I light the Fire of Autumn, the Light of the Water: Alban Elfed.

Then, still holding the central candle, turn to the centre and carry the flame to the corresponding candle at the centre, and light it, saying

I call upon the fires of Water. I call upon the goddess of the boiling spring, the waters that scald and the waters that heal. May this circle be instilled with the element of Water!

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Then turn sunwise to the North. Visualise the open Gateway of the Quarter, notice what it's like, what colour/material/shape/size it is. Look out through it and see a landscape in Winter. Step toward it and say what you're seeing and feeling in these words or your own:

It is the winter of the year. The sun sleeps through the midnight of darkness; all the life of Earth is at rest. My actions turn inward to contemplation, the peace of the fallow time is upon me.

Light the candle there and say

I light the Fire of Winter, the Light of the Arctic, the Light of Arthur: Alban Arthan.

Then turn to the centre and carry the flame to the corresponding candle at the centre, and light it, saying

I call upon the fires of Earth, I call upon the earth's own glowing heart, on peaks that burn and stones that flow. May this circle be imbued with the element of Earth!

Then turn sunwise to the East. Visualise the open Gateway of the Quarter, notice what it's like, what colour/material/shape/size it is. Look out through it and see a landscape in the Spring. Step toward it and say what you're seeing and feeling in these words or your own:

It is the springtime of the year. The sun is rising from the abodes of night, new life shows forth in every form on Earth. My mind is filled with clarity, the bright sword of dawn sings in the clear sky.

Light the candle there and say,

I light the Fire of Spring, the Light of the Earth: Alban Eilir.

Then turn to the centre and carry the flame to the corresponding candle at the centre, and light it, saying

I call upon the fires of Air, I call upon the power of lightning, lancing toward the heart of the Oak. May this circle be inspired with the element of Air!

Then move sunwiseto the South and visualise the Gateway. Notice what it's like, what colour/material/shape/size it is. Look out through it and see a landscape in the Summer. Step toward it and say what you're seeing and feeling in these words or your own:

It is the summer of the year. The sun stands at the peak of day, all the life of Earth is in its flowering. My spirit is filled with ardent purpose, to celebrate the glory of Life, of Light, of Love. The time of joy is here.

Light the candle there and say,

I light the Fire of Summer, the Light of the Shore: Alban Hefin.

10 *Then turn to the centre and carry the flame to the corresponding candle at the centre, and light it, saying*

I call upon the highest Fire; I call upon the fires of the Sun. I call upon the fierce eye of light and the dancing flame of passion. May this circle be inflamed with the element of Fire!

Standing in the centre, raise your arms up to the sky and say this or another salutation to the Sun, such as that from the Tor Ceremony (see the Appendix of The Book of Ritual). In the following the word 'gods' denotes divine beings of all genders – please use other terms if you prefer.

The eye of the great gods!
The eye of the gods of glory!
The eye of the queen of hosts!
The eye of the king of the living!
Light pouring upon me, at each time and season!
Light pouring upon me, gently and generously!
Glory to thee, thou glorious sun!
Glory to thee, thou sun, face of the gods of Life!

Visualise and feel a ray of brilliant, warm, golden light pouring down onto, into and over you. Spend some time in meditation on the Sun. Sit if necessary. When you're ready, stand and say

May the light of the inner sun shine on my path. May the sun that is the source of all Life bless me and my family, my people and my land. Let light flow forth from this place and time to every radiant, hoping heart, and to all the lands and peoples of the Earth, her lakes, rivers and seas, her mountains and her caves; her deserts and her forests. May all beings on Earth be strengthened by this light. PAUSE I give thanks to the sun for its blessings of Light and of Life.

Sit and record your experiences of the ritual in your journal or notebook then enact

THE CLOSING

Stand at the East facing the centre, and say

It is the hour of recall. As the fire/light dies down, may it be relit in my heart. May my memory hold what the eye and ear have gained. *Now extinguish the central candle. Alternatively you can say:* As the radiance of this ceremony fades let it remain as a light in my heart. May my memory hold what the eye and ear have gained.

Chant CASCADING AWENS. Then say

May the spirits of the Four Directions be thanked for their blessings.

Walk sunwise to the North, face outwards and with raised hand/s in salutation say

In the name of the great bear of the starry heavens and of the element of earth, I thank the powers of the North.

Then Walk counter-sunwise to the West, face outwards and with raised hand/s in salutation say

In the name of the salmon of wisdom and the element of water I thank the powers of the West.

Then Walk counter-sunwise to the South, face outwards and with raised hand/s in salutation say

In the name of the great stag and of the element of fire, I thank the powers of the South.

Then Walk counter-sunwise to the East, face outwards and with raised hand/s in salutation say

In the name of the hawk of dawn and of the element air, I thank the powers of the East.

Turn to face the centre again, and pause to feel that the energies of each direction have ceased to flow into the circle. Then say

May the harmony of the land be complete.

Then uncast the circle counter-sunwise, return to the East and say

May the blessings of the Goddess/God/Spirit/Great Spirit be always with me. I declare this ceremony of Alban Hefin is closed in the apparent world. May its inspiration continue within my being.

Then make whatever closing salutations you wish to the East, and exit sunwise.



ALBAN HIEFIN GROUP CEREMONY

THE VIGIL OBSERVANCE

If a vigil is to be undertaken, the following can be adapted to the circumstances. The vigil would normally begin at midnight and continue until dawn. Rather than using the full Opening, begin with the Call to Spirit, and Peace to the Quarters, and if wished The Druid's Prayer. You may prefer not to cast a circle, since participants can then come and go as they wish.

Then Call upon the blessings and powers of each quarter. Then all sit.

East: We are seated among the blessings of the powers, now and at all times. Let us feel these blessings within the depths of our being (*Pause for meditation*). The Elements are invoked, yet one remains: Spirit, the centre of our being, as the Sun is the centre of our Worlds, as the Fire is the centre of our Sacred Circle. As the Sun watches us and feeds us, so shall we watch and feed our Sacred Fire and keep vigil until dawn in honour of the Sun.

At least one person should remain in the circle at all times during the Vigil. Periods of silence for meditation can be alternated with story-telling, poetry reading or music.

THE CEREMONY

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Traditionally takes place at noon.

ADDITIONAL ROLES - Oak bearer, Sword bearer, Ecstatics 1 and 2, Sun worshipper.

PREPARE: *You will need a crown made of Oak (or other strong green tree), and a sword. If you don't have a sword, use something else, such as a dagger or a staff, and adapt the words accordingly. It is helpful for the Oak and Sword bearers to practice a little in advance....*

THE OPENING

Each person enters from the West and circles sunwise to salute the East before taking their place in the circle.

HERALD : By the power of star and stone,
By the power of the land within and without,
By all that is Fair and Free,
We welcome you to this rite of Alban Hefin,
In the grove/seed group/family/etc. of...

WEST: We have come from East and West, North and South to be here together today. *(All join hands)*

DRUID 2: Let us take three breaths
Together with the Earth beneath us....
Together with the Sky above us....
Together with the Sea around us...

NORTH: With the blessings of Earth, Sea and Sky may our ceremony begin! *(All release hands)*

DRUID 1: *(Saluting East and facing outwards)* O Spirit/Great Spirit/God(s)/Goddess(es) *(Choose a term you feel comfortable with)* we greet you and honour you, and ask for your blessings! *(face inwards)* O Spirit of this place, O Spirit of this circle, we ask for your blessings, your guidance, and your inspiration on this our ceremony.

DRUID 2: Let us begin by giving peace to the quarters, for without peace can no work be.

14 *(Moving to salute each direction in turn, crossing the centre of the circle, then returning to place in the West)*

May there be Peace in the North.
May there be Peace in the South.
May there be Peace in the West.
May there be Peace in the East.

ALL: May there be peace throughout the whole world.

DRUID 1: Let us join in this prayer that unites all Druids:

ALL: Grant, O Spirit/Great Spirit/God(s)/Goddess(es), thy protection, and in protection, strength,

and in strength, understanding,
and in understanding, knowledge,
and in knowledge, the knowledge of justice,
and in the knowledge of justice, the love of it,
and in the love of it, the love of all existences,
and in the love of all existences,
the love of Spirit/Great Spirit/God(s)/Goddess(es) and all goodness.

ALL: 3 AWENS

DRUID 1: Let all disturbing thoughts be laid aside. (*Casts circle sunwise, while Druid 2 says*)

DRUID 2: The circle of our horizon – of our lives and lands, of time and of the year, of seasons and of goodness, of birth and of growing, of dying and of rebirth....
The circle can either be cast with a wand, staff, sword or forefinger, or in the following way - particularly if children are present - SOUTH: Let us mark out this circle with symbols of the season. (*Children/adults sprinkle confetti or seeds, flowers, petals or leaves in circle sunwise around participants while Druid 2 speaks as above*).

DRUID 2: As this circle is cast, the enchantment of the apparent world subsides. We stand together in the eye of the sun/by the light of the stars, here and now, between past and future. The earth below us, the heavens above us, and the circle/stones/trees/sea around us. This is sacred time. This is sacred space.

DRUID 1: Now let us consecrate this circle with Water and with Fire.

WEST or WATER BEARER: May our circle be purified and blessed with the Element of Water. (*moves sunwise with water*)

SOUTH or FIRE BEARER: May our circle be purified and blessed with the Element of Fire. (*moves sunwise with candle/incense*)

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DRUID 1: We gather as equals, in our physical form here upon the earth. Each presence is a blessing, and with every breath we take, we breathe light and life into this circle.

DRUID 2: Let the four directions be honoured, and let the gateways of the Quarters be opened, that power and radiance might enter our circle for the good of all beings.

EAST (*turning and facing outwards*): With the blessing of the hawk of dawn soaring in the clear pure air, we call upon the powers of the East.

SOUTH (*turning and facing outwards*): With the blessing of the great stag in the heat of the chase, and the inner fire of the sun, we call upon the powers of the South.

WEST (*turning and facing outwards*): With the blessing of the salmon of wisdom who dwells within the sacred waters of the pool, we call upon the powers of the West.

NORTH (*turning and facing outwards*): With the blessing of the great bear of the starry heavens and the deep and fruitful earth, we call upon the powers of the North.

All four then turn to face into the circle.

ALL: May the harmony of our circle be complete.

THE RITE

EAST: We are gathered at this Place of Light, in the eye of the sun, to celebrate the Summer Solstice.

SOUTH: I proclaim the festival of Alban Hefin: the Light of the Shore – at this time of the Solstice.

WEST: The greatest of all the feasts of fire, beloved of the Faerie folk.

NORTH: The time of triumph of the green of the land.

SOUTH: I proclaim the time of highest light.

16 **NORTH:** Let this circle be blessed by the four elemental fires.

EAST: I call upon the fires of Air, I call upon the power of lightning, lancing towards the heart of the Oak. May this circle be inspired with the element of Air!

WEST: I call upon the fires of Water. I call upon the Goddess of the boiling spring, the waters that scald and the waters that heal. May this circle be instilled with the element of Water!

SOUTH: I call upon the fires of the Sun. I call upon the fierce eye of light and the dancing flame of passion. May this circle be inflamed with the element of Fire!

NORTH: I call upon the fires of Earth, I call upon the earth's own glowing heart, on peaks that burn and stones that flow. May this circle be imbued with the element of Earth!

ALL: May the harmony of our circle and of our lands be complete.

WEST: We are met here at this time of the longest day of the year to celebrate the zenith of the Sun. We come together to honour a great mystery – that every zenith contains its nadir, as every nadir its zenith. We come together to celebrate the power of light, and warmth and Summer.

EAST: The sun which has warmed and lighted us through the Wheel of the Year seems to stand still for several days. This is the time of Great Light.

HERALD: (*here you might like to compose your own salutation to the Sun*)

Greeting to you, Sun of the seasons
As you travel the skies on high,
With your strong step on the wing of the heights.
You are the happy mother of the stars.
You sink down in the perilous ocean
Without harm and without hurt
You rise up on the quiet wave
Like a young queen in flower.

from the Carmina Gadelica

WEST: May the Ancient Wisdom of our Druid heritage, that deep source of Eternal Truth, held within our lands and our people, be warmed by the Inner Light of the Sun, whose power on this day we acknowledge. Let us together, united by a bond of love, radiate peace and harmony into the world; sending healing to this Earth, our Home, our Mother, for the sake of our children and all Life.

If desired, this section can be included which offers any participant the opportunity to step forward into the centre of the circle to partake of the magic of the time and place or to ask that their companions bear witness as they make or reaffirm a vow, announce a life change or a new name, call for inspiration, etc.

DRUID 1: Now let those step forward, one at a time, who would stand at the centre of this sacred place, in the eye of the sun, and within the circle of their companions.

When all who wish have done so...

OAK BEARER (*steps to centre*): At this crown of the year, at the centre of this ancient land, I hail the King of the Trees.

(*Lifts up Oak Crown*) I praise the glory of the Oak, the lover of the lightning, the giver of shade at burning noon. At this time of your greatest strength I unite your life with this circle, so marking the zenith of the year.

SWORD BEARER (*steps to centre*): At this time of highest light, (*raising sword hilt upward*) I raise this blade that was born in fire as a bridge between heaven and earth.

Oak bearer lowers crown onto sword hilt and they walk together sunwise around the circle displaying the crowned sword, then return to their places.

The Ecstatics step to centre

ECSTATIC 1: The eye of the great gods

ECSTATIC 2: The eye of the gods of glory

ECSTATIC 1: The eye of the queen of hosts

ECSTATIC 2: The eye of the king of the living

ECSTATIC 1: Light pouring upon us, at each time and season

ECSTATIC 2: Light pouring upon us, gently and generously

ECSTATIC 1: Glory to thee, thou glorious sun!

ECSTATIC 2: Glory to thee, thou sun, face of the gods of Life!

(freely adapted from the Carmina Gadelica)

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SUN WORSHIPPER: May our reawakened vision know the true beauty and passion that is life.

DRUID 2: On this day of greatest light we stand in celebration. May the Sun that is the inspirer shine within our hearts. Let us sing to the triumphant sun the Sacred word. May our voices be heard in the heavens.

ALL: cascading Awens

DRUID 2: May the power of this moment inspire us, here at the rebirth of the light. May our lives and our hearts be filled with joy.

THE CLOSING

DRUID 2: It is the hour of recall. As the fire/light dies down let it be relit in our hearts. May our memories hold what the eye and ear have gained.

All hold hands.

ALL: (*3 times, pausing between each*)
We swear, by peace and love to stand,
Heart to heart and hand in hand.
Mark, O spirit, and hear us now,
Confirming this, our sacred vow.

DRUID 1: May the spirits of the Four Directions be thanked for their blessings.

NORTH: In the name of the great bear of the starry heavens and of the element of earth, we thank the powers of the North.

WEST: In the name of the salmon of wisdom and the element of water we thank the powers of the West.

SOUTH: In the name of the great stag and of the element of fire, we thank the powers of the South.

EAST: In the name of the hawk of dawn and of the element air, we thank the powers of the East.

All Turn to face the centre again.

ALL: May the harmony of the land be complete.

Circle is uncast counter-sunwise.

DRUID 1: May the blessings of the Goddess/God/Spirit/Great Spirit be always with us. I declare this ceremony of Alban Hefin is closed in the apparent world. May its inspiration continue within our beings.



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