

Meán Geimhri Birth

Tory Island – The fair, valiant and eloquent goddess Ethel Lu, daughter of the mean, cowering, despotic Formorian King Balor, gave birth to triplet sons just past the most deeply dark, dank and depressing hour of this long, bitter and fearful Midwinter's Night, because it was needful to the fulfillment of a Druid's prophecy that Balor would be killed by his own grandson made in a Time long, long, ever so long ago at a place far, far, so very far away.

Frightened, as he rightfully should have been, the dire, surly, and quarrelsome giant Balor had locked his daughters into a wretched tower on this bleak, barren and wind-swept Northern island off the Donegal coast that they might never know a man, nor even know of men. Alas, the lovely Ethel Lu, as thick-tongued Americans call her (because they cannot roll out her more lyrical, lovely and lilting Irish Gaelic name of Ethliu) had been betrothed from before birth to the comely, gallant and adept god Cian of the Tribe of Danu. Although married, Cian and Ethel Lu had never seen nor touched each other before the triple grandsons of Balor's birth.

Wretched, wicked and worried old Balor sent three of his henchwomen to murder the infants by throwing them into the whirlpool of chaos, despair and knowinglessness. Two of those beautiful, miraculous and magical babies were thus killed but one was spared by slipping from his swaddling cloths into the harbor where he was rescued by the White Witch Biróg, and returned to his father Cian, who gave him to be raised by his brother, the smith-god Gavida.

The charmed lad grew up to be the marvelous, many-talented, boy-hero god Lugh (pronounced Lu), a fierce, ferocious and fearless warrior whose sling is the Milky Way, and who in his left hand wields the magical, bloodthirsty, living spear named Areadbharand. Lugh fought beside his hound of "mightiest deeds, which was irresistible in hardness of combat, was better than wealth ever known, a ball of fire every night," as described by the poet Caoilte.

The sorcerer, craftsman, poet god Lugh became the champion of the Second Battle of Magh Tuireadh, where at the luminous, courageous and heroic Tribe of Danu finally defeated the fearsome, loathsome and awkward Formorians, and where Lugh does indeed kill his grandfather Balor, fulfilling, as always must be, the Druid's prophecy.

Lugh of course becomes the great, many-talented, and beneficent High King on Tara Hill. As god of poetry and music, smithing and all crafts, battle and the thunderbolt, he is best remembered for the gifts of farming and husbandry, the bringer of abundant harvests, and the keeper of the seasons.



No picture of Lugh's birth was found so we used a later supernaturally born god, who also escaped infanticide, and who too was born hopefully at the depth of Midwinter. High King means King of Kings.

Lughnasadh is the harvest festival started by Lugh and celebrated to this day about August 1st. It is anciently one of the great, holy, druidic celebrations at the Four Corners of the Sun's cycle. The month of August is called 'Lúnasa' for Lugh in Irish Gaelic.

'Meán Geimhri' is Irish Gaelic for Midwinter's Day and the depth of its spiritual ken into the Irish Celtic soul can be found at Newgrange, the monumental ceremonial complex that is older than the pyramids of Egypt. On Midwinter's Morn, and only then, the first rays of the reborn year's Sun reaches for about 16 minutes into the elsewhere dark, secret and mysterious depths of this ancient, timeless and sacred shrine.

The deeper meaning of this wee snip of our great bardic cycles of lore is a celebration of cherished Irish ideals: the joy of an abundant harvest, valor in battle, and a good tale well and poetically told. It is less about the putative lost Jewish Tribe of Dan's triumph over a race of mythical giants, another supernatural being born by supernatural means, or the darkest of evil characters practicing infanticide.

The mythologist Joseph Campbell, in The Masks of God wrote "... it is surely curious to consider that, although no scholar worth his mortarboard would be likely to eat the menu instead of the dinner, mistaking the printed word for its reference, elemental lapses of this sort are normal in works of learning treating of the ancient gods. ... through all time there have been men who thought their gods were supernatural 'celebrities' who might be met somewhere in person."

*** No human sacrifices!**

Is the Sun Setting on Sunset Beach?

By Druid Tim, Bar Reviewer

Orange County's picturesque, bucolic, "island" community of Sunset Beach is being sacrificed like an innocent virgin by the penny-pinching, Formorian-like County Supervisors to the wiles of the pleasant but crowded metropolis of Huntington Beach.

Sunset Beach is a charming little anachronism of a beach village with a volunteer Fire Department, an annual Art Festival, and a house that looks like the wooden water tower it replaced. It is only about a mile along and almost entirely nestled between Pacific Coast Highway and the restless waves of the Pacific Ocean. A marvelous little park called the Greenbelt runs the length of the town with virtually every house in town on it. This is a legacy bequeathed by the defunct Pacific-Electric Railroad and its legendary proprietor, California's own robber-baron, Henry E. Huntington.

The Greenbelt has just about the only Free parking left at any beach in an urban area.

Sunset Beach has somehow managed to resist the kind of crass, over-developed, tacky commercialism too often obscene in wealth-addicted, anti-common folk beaches. Although there is a Jack-in-the-Box and a 7-11, most of the businesses are smallish, local, and a bit charming. Woody's Diner recalls the '50's, while Mother's Bar harkens to a B-movie from then.

For a town of only about 1,250 there are too many bars and liquor stores (plus a medical marijuana dispensary), but they are all so terribly cute, in their own, various, leprechaunish ways.

One stands out. *Thursdays* was a gay, biker bar that shuttered its doors after it was used as a body dump by one of California's numerous mass-murderers. It was reborn as an AA meeting place, and gives tiny Sunset Beach the paradoxical distinction of having, at times, more alcoholics in town than residents, and most of the sober to boot!

The County has always provided sheriffs and other services to the hamlet, but the Supervisors decided to save a few bucks by forcing Huntington Beach to take up those tasks because Sunset Beach was an "island" of unincorporated county. This gives HB the right to annex the place, but the locals get no right to vote on it! (How Republican of them!, we editorially note.)

The only way they can keep their quaint autonomy, unique Volunteer Fire Department, and Free parking along the Greenbelt is by incorporating as a city. This is a daunting task for such a wee whisp of a place. They need to raise a hundred or more thousand dollar\$, among other hurdles. For more information or to contribute go to <http://sunsetbeachca.org>.



THURSDAYS was once a place to get drunk. Now it is a place to get sober. At the water tower house you can get high, and at Woody's Diner you cure the munchies.



Ironically, Huntington Beach changed its name from Ocean Beach to cajole old Henry E. to extend the Pacific-Electric to their beautiful, little, then Sunset Beach-like town. It was that very wonderful, nostalgically-remembered, urban railroad, from the sorely missed era when Los Angeles had the best intraurban railroads in country, that made Sunset Beach possible in the first place, and it is that Pacific-Electric right-of-way that makes it so special now.

For more on Huntington and his cronies Crocker, Mark Hopkins and Stanford **THE AMERICAN DRUID MONITOR** recommends California's own, home-grown, muck-rucker novel *The Octopus* by Frank Norris.



Stick an acorn in your ear.

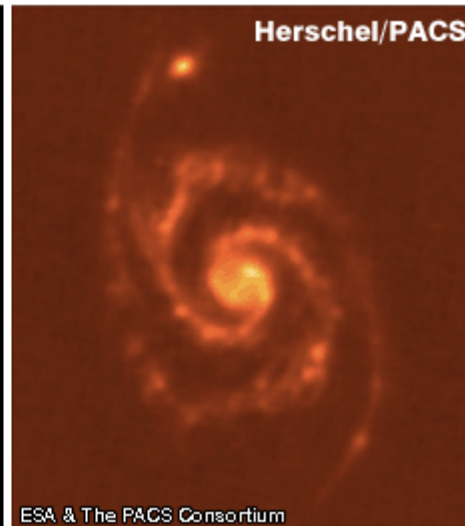
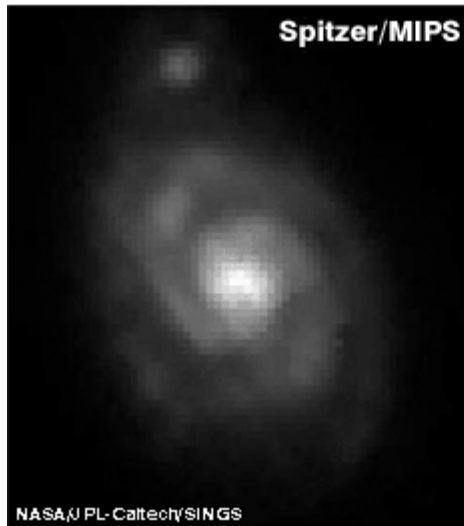
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*** No human sacrifices!**

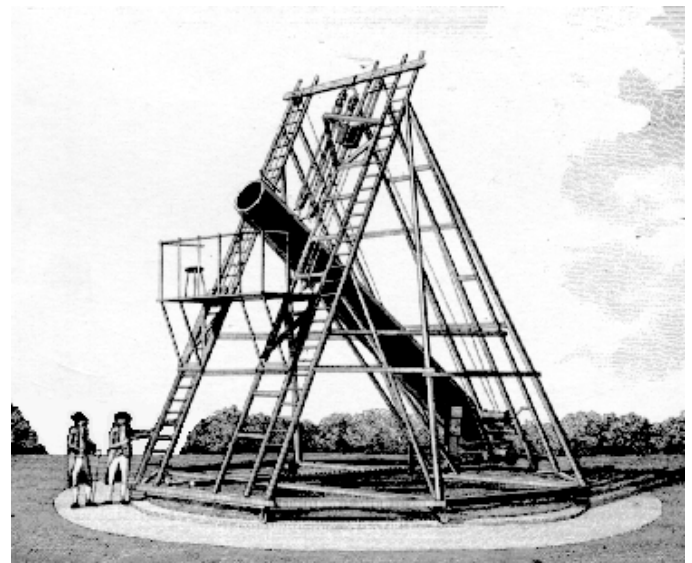
Herschel Takes Focus Off Hubble



Outer Space – Things are looking up in the hot field of infrared astronomy as the European Space Agency's new Herschel Space Telescope saw First Light on December 14th. Herschel's mirror is about 1½ times Hubble's, and unlike that NASA effort, it was in focus the first try.

Observing in the near infrared gives us the ability to see through dust clouds in Space, something that cannot be done from Earth because of the atmosphere. The above pictures are of the spiral galaxy M51 (The Whirlpool), and compare images from Herschel to Spitzer, NASA's infrared effort.

William (born Wilhelm) Herschel, the person, was the 18th Century AD German astronomer, who became English for money. He is the one who discovered the planet Uranus, an astronomical source of scatological jokes. At the right is Herschel's telescope, not the Herschel Telescope.



This new space telescope cost over a Billion Euros. The one above was not in the Euro Zone.

Winter Solstice

At Dawn – This morning the Sun rose at the farthest point North on the Horizon that it ever rises. This is how Irish farmer folk, or at least their Druids, have known Midwinter's Day had come since the Stone Age. Tomorrow the Sunrises start their slow, Six month long, march to the South; but for Today the Sunrise sits still at its Boreal limit. The word 'solstice' is from Latin for 'sun stills.'

Kelts anciently counted this as the beginning of a New Year, viewing the old, weakening Sun as having died and been reborn with a new vigor. Romans marked their new year at the Spring Equinox, or equal nights, that being easier to determine at their lower latitude. Egyptian started the year with the annual flooding of the Nile, which came astronomically with the return of the Dog Star, Sirius, to the Evening Sky.

Pastoral folk, like the Hebrews, had a hard time watching the Sunrise from the same spot every morning, so they were stuck using a far less accurate Lunar calendar. When the Roman Empire and the Christian Church merged, and they wanted to make a break with their pagan past, they oddly picked Keltic pagans' dates for both the New Year and God's birth.

Modern Sky watchers would probably describe this as the Earth's axis of rotation reaching its maximum inclination to the Ecliptic, the plane of circulation about the Sun. It will occur at about 10 AM PST.

Also coming up in the Sky is a partial Lunar eclipse on December 31st, about 11 AM; the Quadrantid meteor show on January 3rd; and Mercury reaches its greatest Western elongation (25°) on the Evening of January 26th.

The Moon passes 6° North of Uranus on December 23rd. There just has to be a joke in there somewhere.

*** No human sacrifices!**