



# PAGAN IRELAND

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GRIANSTAD AN T-SAMHRAIDH

Cats in Irish  
Tradition

Slavic Traditions  
in the Celtic Isles

The Interview:  
Dr Jenny Butler

The Power  
of Stone



# The Power of Stone

Christine D. Moriarty

**The Ogham stone in Ballycrovane, County Cork is said to be the tallest standing stone in the world. The towering height of over 17 feet with the writing from over two thousand years ago, has gotten into my bones, my energy and spirit.**

Standing on the stone, immersed in energy coming deep from the earth, I am stirred to a tantalizing new place within me. Some people head to Ireland for the Guinness factory tour. Some head there for the Blarney – the Stone and the *craic*. Others to find their roots. I, on the other hand, am here on a completely different tour.

After over a dozen trips to Ireland staying with my aunts and uncles, never touring the Guinness factory and steering clear of the Blarney Stone, I am enthralled to learn and experience more of the land and its stony past, its Pagan past. This trip is deeply spiritual while connecting to nature and ourselves – a soul tour complete with shaman guide. She knows where the hidden Celtic places reside and shares stories with the power of the seanachis of old, with the voice and facial features enhancing every story.

Stones and trees always draw me in at home in the United States, but today, today is different. My heart is touched as I immerse myself into the Ogham stone in Cork. Seeing the writings along the side, from thousands of years ago, touching the stone, I feel its power and deep lineage.

This magical place I would have never found on my own without Amantha's guidance. Yet, I was led with ease through a gate into a farmer's field and up the hill to the location where there is a presence of something deeper.

I can see beyond the hill to the water in the bay. The mountains all around. The sea far off in the distance. The people of this land knew they had a communication spot. And more than a millennium later they are communicating with us. A group of women, blest to be on this pilgrimage.

I am in Ireland this time to experience unfamiliar places from County Sligo to Trim to Meath and old places in a new way. The Celtic Goddess Pilgrimage was land centered, grounded. Despite being the world according to spirit, the earthiness and solidness of the teachers was a powerful exposure to the Pagan side of Ireland. Journeying together for ten days bonded the group of eight women with our treasured guide and fabulous mini-bus driver, Rose.

The weather for the most part cooperated – low-lying clouds and grey skies peaking over the water - giving the presence of the mystical terrain. On the minibus, my solitary seat at the front on the bus reflects my experience overall: personal, quiet, and internal.

This land has been always the land of my father and all four of my grandparents - the land I imagined about and asked questions about and explored in my dreams and through pictures and Kodak slides in the seventies... until I set foot on the land at the age of 15. Then the reaction was visceral. I belonged here.

At the time and through the years that draw was always family. First, my host of aunts, uncles, and cousins. Later, my sister and her family who resided here. The connection deepened. I loved the old homestead and the beach of my

forebears. More importantly, I felt at home.

Now, I knew it was not the people alone. Connecting with the land and the neolithic sites was beyond powerful for me. I was touched deeply. Something stirred in me as I explored the stone circles. I learned more about the way of the early people. And I heard stories of the goddesses who were now becoming my guides.

The experience of breathing in the air was rich. And the expertise of the guide is beyond compare. Trapsing through farmers' fields to stone circles where deep work was done. Surrounded by the beauty of the landscape and a range of colour interspersed from purple sea aster to the yellow of the buttercups. I was experiencing Celtic Paganism and the energy of the place. Time with the standing stones and in stone circles, we were overseen by rams and herds of ewes. Their interest overtook our intrusion and became part of the connection with nature.

During my countless trips to Ireland, I have hiked and biked, found ruins, settled in for tea on many occasions, and sat on boats in the pouring rain. I thought I knew Dingle Peninsula, yet, Reask I never even knew existed. Sitting under Mt Brandon, this place of repose and ruins had the power to restore an exhausted group after a day of touring and ceremonies. Here in Ballyferriter where tourists explore the "Star Wars" sites, an oval walled archaeology site of stone crosses and huts is situated.

Was it the result of the left-over monastery energy? No, even we neophytes could feel it was deeper than that. This mystical and powerful energy is beyond a manmade church. This seems

to honour a deity greater than recent times. And discovering the settlement dates from circa 470CE makes it settled shortly after St Patrick is said to have died. Its power is intense, much like so many of the sites we visit but this one being in my father's neighborhood, so to speak, resonates profoundly. The spontaneous outbreak of song and dance honouring the goddess before we board the bus, confirms the influence.

I have been here before... following the decades with the changes in Ireland. First with my Dad as tour guide, I had been to the "stations," the Catholic Mass stations. Now, I learn like so much of Catholic Irish ways, that tradition was adapted from the Celtic Pagan tradition. The circling of wells and spiritual strength drawn from them has come down a long lineage of Pagan worshipers. And rounds about the well were the same. The interconnections bring a smile to my face and my soul.

The feeling is not so much overwhelming but encompassing, leaving me with a deep sense of inner peace. And processing on many levels. Our ancestors knew so many deeper truths and practiced them every day. The connection to the land and seasons and even the weather, striking a personal chord. So deeply do I encompass this experience, that I bring it home with me and embody it three thousand miles away.

The land. Yes, the land I am connected to - so deeply I feel in Ireland, even more profoundly after connecting with the goddess and Celtic locations. Pagans honoured rocks and stability and nature. My heart sings as their blood flows through my veins. **Christine D. Moriarty**