

A HISTORY AND VISION STATEMENT FOR CÉILE DÉ GROUPS

When I first found the Céili Dé¹ there was no Caim², no workshops and neither as far as I know had there been a Céile Dé Muinntir anywhere for many years; probably centuries. There was only the Order itself. The only way one could deeply learn the tradition was to commit to full profession to the Order. To my knowledge I am, with the encouragement and blessing of my Anam Chara³, the first person to re-institute the ancient three-fold structure of levels of commitment. This account is intended to be at once a vision statement, describing my impulse and reasons for taking this Tradition into the world, plus a little about how I came to realise this path was My Way Home, and also something about what we can expect when we first enter into the Tradition and how it can change our lives.

It is my hope that, after reading this, you will begin to get a heart-sense of whether or not the Céile Dé tradition is the kind of path you may want to walk, moving naturally through time towards whatever form of commitment feels right for you. There is no “higher or lower”; no “better or worse” with any of these forms. What is highest and best is what truly works for you. But, wherever the Céile Dé path may eventually take you, it begins here, by entering the Caim...

Since Céile Dé Groups began, the brief statement that has always accompanied my invitation to group membership has been this:-

"Whilst newcomers are welcome, continuing attendance will be for those who are willing and able to commit to the practices and teachings of the tradition."

That statement has been, in a sense, the “nut-shell” version of the vision I am sharing with you here...

I first found the Céile Dé Tradition just over twenty years ago. At that point I had already been a dedicated follower of a Celtic Spiritual path (a Gaelic Pagan Druidical tradition) for about ten years.

When I studied neo-Pagan Druidry, it became clear to me that there was little or no concept within that community of certain things that were rapidly emerging for me as vitally-needed

¹ Plural of Céile Dé.

² There are three forms of commitment within the Céile Dé tradition. Céile Dé groups are also referred to as The “Caim”, a Gaelic term which means the “encompassing”. This refers to the idea that the Caim and Muinntir both surround and support the Order who, in turn, facilitates a Vehicle for the Inner Life. The next type of commitment before the Order is that of the Muinntir, which means “community”... or literally, “People of the Land”. See the FAQs page on our website for more details about levels of commitment within the Céile Dé Tradition.

³ Lit “Soul Friend”. A teacher to someone who is following the tradition at the level of either Muinntir or Order.

features of my spiritual path. I further felt that this lack was also evident (in my opinion) in most other religions I had encountered, mainstream or otherwise, as they were generally practiced. This included the so called “New Age” which, as I experienced it, was by and large replacing one set of identifications which effectively keep us asleep, with another albeit more fashionable or “alternative” set of identifications. In short, it seemed there was no Spiritual Path that contained all of the facets I hungered for. Even though I didn’t always know in those days exactly *what* I hungered for, I was in keen relationship to It by Its lack...

It was not until I discovered the Céile Dé tradition that I found everything I longed for in one place. This crucial mix includes :-

- ⊕ A clear sense of the process of Inner Transformation.
- ⊕ Tools to help facilitate that inner growth.
- ⊕ A potential for service to the Whole (if only by one’s own inner change initiating an inevitable a knock-on effect).
- ⊕ A path that offers regular spiritual practices that serve objectives beyond consolation, escapism, feel-good factor or an alternative social life.
- ⊕ A path that stresses the gradual incarnation of Spiritual realisation through regular dedication to the practices taught; growing understanding of the subtle manifestations of the Dark and palpable embodiment of the insights gained – enough to keep me living outside of my comfort (unconscious/habitual self) zone!
- ⊕ A closely-knit spiritual community that values qualities such as :-
 - Maturity
 - Freedom for unnecessary dogma
 - Discipline
 - Quality of being (presence)
 - *Gràdach ghoire*⁴ and the consequent safe harbour for the soul
- ⊕ A recognition that such *Gràdach ghoire* must be born not from the adoption of a set of ideas and behaviours but is, in its authentic manifestation, the natural child of *Metanoia* – the Awakening of the Heart.
- ⊕ A tradition that has inherited the Pagan respect for the Earth and the body and has not adopted the church’s denigration of the same.
- ⊕ A tradition that is built upon the foundation of Christ’s teachings of the transformative power of God-as-Love and does not throw the Divine Child out with the dogmatic bathwater.

In formerly small and latterly full-time ways, I have been teaching the Céile Dé tradition since the early 1990s. At Samhain 2003, I began a six-month retreat to prepare myself inwardly and give myself fully to serving the transmission of the tradition to others.

In 2004, I began to teach introductory workshops, always clearly voicing my willingness to return and offer the tradition as a Path to anyone who was able to commit in a dedicated way after tasting the tradition for a while. To become a part of a Céile Dé community has always meant to dare to become close to each other, to commit to meeting regularly, to fully assimilate the teachings, do the practices together and share essential experiences in an environment that is safe for the emerging Soul and yet compassionately challenging to the False Self. Since the inception of such groups, the Céile Dé community has been growing

⁴ The Celtic Christian equivalent of the Buddhist *Metta* – or “Loving Kindness”

steadily both outwardly and inwardly; initially in Scotland, but latterly also in other parts of Europe and in the USA. Today, many close and wonderful soul friendships have formed right across the Caim and a real sense of dedicated eldership now lives at its core, as many of the people who came to those early introductory workshops are now truly coming into their own as mature practitioners of the tradition. But, as in all spiritual paths, the journey from 'there' to 'here' is mixed, but always interesting.....

When people first come to the Céile Dé – or indeed any tradition - they inevitably carry with them their own set of illusions, born out of their family culture and their adopted culture(s). We *all*, to varying degrees, bring that baggage with us when we visit the Termon⁵ for teachings. It is the true work of any spiritual tradition worth its salt to gradually and sometimes painfully bring each of us to an awareness of just how much excess baggage we are carrying and invite each of us to have the courage to lay it down. Anyone who wishes to be a part of the Céile Dé community must be willing to come with this aim alive within his or her heart. It is inevitable that a certain strain will sometimes be experienced within any community as we trip up over each other's lost baggage! The aim during these times is *Gràdach ghoire*. Occasional sleep-born behaviour must surely be forgivable if the sleeper shows willing most of the time to keep awake⁶. We all fall over at times; the trick is not to stay lying down.

It takes real discernment to sense the difference between the inner struggle with the False Self that real growth necessitates and when a certain path is just not right for you. There will naturally be struggles as you walk the Céile Dé path; but it may become clear to some group members, if they have not felt at home for some time and that dis-ease is discerned to be more than just the inevitable challenge needed to grow inwardly, that it may be time to find another path better suited to their needs and temperament. Whatever way we take, it will hopefully one day begin to reveal to us the difference between what we want and what we need. But nothing will have been lost in the time anyone spends with the Céile Dé Tradition; even if we only walk the Way together for a short while, if the time ever comes to take another route towards the Source, we will have benefited from our journey together.

Those of us who stay do so because we know we have come home. Like many in our Caim today, I know that this is *my Path*... and my heart is alive, full and singing every day with that knowledge. I feel truly called to do this work. I feel confident in the Truth of that calling because I fought it hard for years and it would not let me go, even when I tried very hard to escape! As soon as I gave myself fully to serving this tradition, the numinous visions, the incredible synchronicities as well as the faith-sustained stumblings and the severely testing times have become a matter of course... Perhaps that *is* the "Life more abundant". I have earned every one of my grey hairs and however much of a Soul that has grown within me. The adventure never stops and is not for the faint or the *feint* hearted, so be certain that you want to taste it for a while ...and then, if it feels right... consciously say "Yes".

I walk... through God and towards God because it is the most unknown and yet the most intimate experience and invitation to my own authenticity there can be... I choose the Céile Dé path on that adventure because it sings the song of the land through which I travel and it

⁵ Old Irish – A Céile Dé monastery. Part of the discipline of the group is to view the arrival at any gathering as a crossing over into the "Termon space", where all of the above listed values prevail.

⁶ "Could you not keep awake with me for one hour?" – Matthew 26:40

does so with the voice of the ancestors - the Saints - who echo in my very marrow... I invite others to walk the talk along with me because, like most Human Beings, when I marvel at a great beauty, I want to say to my dear soul-friends, "oh... *look..!*" and when I look into their eyes I want, without exception, to see the Christ shining there.

Most simply put; my intention in forming Céile Dé Groups has always been to invite others who feel drawn to these same riches to join me. I hope this sharing of my vision for Céile Dé Groups, my aim as a teacher and my experiences as a walker along this Way have been of help to you. Most of all, I hope that it has given some voice to your own inner hunger. If all of the above speaks to your heart you may be in the right place. I hope you are. I hope you too will find your home here.

Immanaire
(May it be for Good)
Fionntulach

