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ISSUE 13, SEPTEMBER 2013



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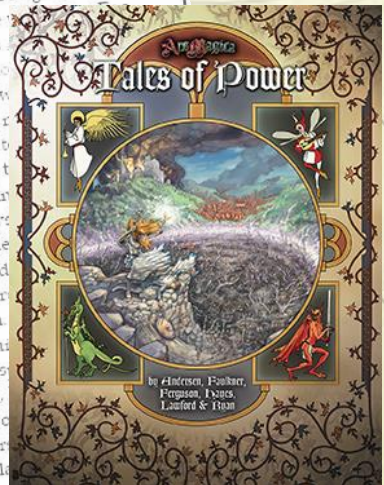
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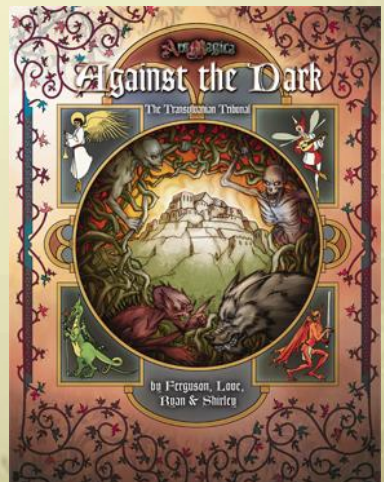
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Tweets from the foundation of the Order:

Diedne001: @OneTrueTremere So... Did you see I got my splat book after all?

OneTrueTremere: @Diedne001 Yeah, I saw.

Diedne001: @OneTrueTremere Pretty good, huh?

OneTrueTremere: @Diedne001 Well, I've still got a whole Tribunal

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UNDER THE ROSE

Welcome to this very special issue of **Sub Rosa**. It was just too tempting an association; having reached issue 13, why not tackle that elusive thirteenth House, House Diedne?

Before looking at what we are doing this issue, let's look at why.

The published line has a policy of keeping House Diedne as one of those areas that each troupe and each saga gets to define anew, ensuring that the what and why of the Schism War and the motives of the antagonists are entirely under the control of each troupe. The published line has very rarely wavered on this point, but as we'll see in this issue's *Storyguide's Handbook* there is a lot of information available.

For our part here at **Sub Rosa Towers**, we actually support that stance. **Ars Magica**, unlike other game systems, does not point the troupe in a given direction. Granted, each Tribunal book offers quite a different play style but the troupe is not told what to do with a given storyline or how to play it. The line is rich with story seeds scattered throughout each published book and that typifies a game that promotes starting points over defined paths.

However, as fans of the game, we love to soak up every last detail. We enjoy knowing stuff and we want to immerse ourselves in new content that expands upon our favored game world.

Just look at the reception that

the **Years of Conquest** Kickstarter project received from the **Ars Magica** community. While we were all intrigued at the prospect of a video game based upon the setting, rules, and mechanics of **Ars Magica**, including spontaneous magic and the ability to develop a covenant, the big-ticket items were undoubtedly the game's intention to detail the Schism War and House Diedne in canonical additions to the **Fifth Edition**; House Diedne was to have been fully detailed at last and by experienced line authors too.

The disappointment at the Kickstarter not achieving its funding target serves double purpose as it unfortunately removed any possibility for a canonical take on House Diedne.

But that's where **Sub Rosa** comes in. We are able to do what the published line is not in a position to do, which is why this issue is unashamedly dominated by House Diedne.

There has always been this idea that wouldn't it be cool to get a bunch of line authors together and see what they can each do with House Diedne, and that is exactly what we have done.

From Ben McFarland and James Parks, Matt Ryan and Tobias Wheeler, CJ Romer, Erik Dahl, and Christian Rosenkjaer Andersen we have five distinct, fully-playable approaches to House Diedne. They each take the base information that we know from the books and send

the House into a distinct direction. These are each really exciting projects in their own right and to see them side-by-side is a real thrill, both as fans of their work and of the game.

Quite by chance, first-time contributor Mark Baker submitted a *sixth* take on House Diedne in the form of the *Cult of Belenos*; a cult of diverse hedge wizards, and we're really pleased to be able to present it this issue.

Elsewhere, Gerald Wylie again delves into the **Ars Magica** canon in the new *Storyguide's Handbook* to unearth what has really been printed about the House and finds a surprising amount, including clear evidence on some of the most contentious parts of Diedne lore.

That process also brought to light the detailed House we might once have had. Naomi Rivkis was offered the chance to write a House Diedne book around the time of the 1994 *Houses of Hermes* book. That project never happened, but she brings us her story of the House we never had.

But this issue is a beast, so there's more. Timothy Ferguson gives us the Divisible Men, a hedge tradition culled from the development of *Against the Dark: The Transylvanian Tribunal*. Lachie Hayes presents a detailed set of Training Packages for Redcaps. And lastly, Chad Bowser, another first-time contributor to **Sub Rosa**, describes the sunken city of Kitez in the eastern expanses of Rus.

FROM THE LINE EDITOR

BY DAVID CHART

This issue of Sub Rosa is largely about the Diedne, providing several different takes on the House. This is possible because Fifth Edition, in particular, has been careful to avoid saying too much directly about the Diedne. The House is, of course, a very important part of the background of the game, so why have we chosen to leave the issue vague? The editors of Sub Rosa were kind enough to say that they agree with the policy, but I'd like to delve a little into the reasoning behind it.

Setting material exists to make it easier to run certain sorts of story, without actually defining the plot of the stories or the nature of the characters involved. Further, setting material should avoid making certain sorts of story impossible. This is the purpose of the published Diedne material, and makes it important that we do not say too much about them.

Why are the Diedne important? There are no obvious Diedne present in 1220. Even their covenants are nothing but ruins, and very little is known of their magic. On the other hand, the Schism War is a major event, arguably the major event, in the history of the Order. In 1220, it has just passed out of living memory, rather like the First World War today. The stories told by the victors, including the records of their fights over the spoils, are recorded, but the stories of the vanquished have been largely erased. Rumours persist, however, of survivors seeking revenge.

This background is the perfect setting for telling stories in which the player characters uncover the terrible truth about terrible events. The published background makes suggestions as to what those truths might be, without fixing the answers. Were the Tremere right about the Diedne practising human sacrifice? Did the Guernicus human sacrifice actually ensure the House's defeat? How much incidental score-settling happened under the cover of the Schism War? Were the Diedne sacrificed to save the Order?

The official background also contains details that can be included in these stories. For example, there are fallen Diedne covenants, with names and a bit of history, in most published Tribunals, and these are a good place to start investigating. The questions raised suggest what the player characters might find.

One reason, then, for not defining the Diedne is to let troupes create their own interpretation of the hints. This can often lead to great stories.

However, this cannot be the whole answer. We did, after all, produce a book describing House Flambeau, and the Normandy Tribunal, rather than letting troupes design their own versions based on vague and incomplete hints. Why the difference?

House Flambeau is inevitably a part of any saga in the official setting. Its magi are everywhere, blowing stuff up (honourably,

because these are Fifth Edition Flambeau). Even if the troupe is not that interested in the Flambeau, they have to deal with them, and providing a source book makes that job much easier. This is why we would have needed to produce an official take on the Diedne if the computer game, set at the time of the Schism War, had gone ahead: they would have been an unavoidable part of the setting.

This is not true for 1220. The Schism War was two centuries ago. There are no obvious Diedne around. This means that a sensible possible saga is one that completely ignores the Diedne.

Suppose that we did produce an official Diedne book. It would either make the truth about the Diedne world-shaking, or it would not. If it did, it would make it very hard to ignore the Diedne in a saga. Indeed, it would be hard not to make them the central element. If it did not, it would feel anti-climactic -- is this what all the fuss was about? And if we tried to be world-shaking and failed, that would just be embarrassing.

Better to leave open questions.

THE STORYGUIDE'S HANDBOOK: UNEARTHING THE THIRTEENTH HOUSE

House Diedne is an enigma. For some, House Diedne provides the ultimate nemesis for the Order, for others its fall represents the dangers of unchecked political power. For others still, the remnants of this lost House represent novel magical secrets yet to be unlocked.

There is a strong principle, certainly in **Ars Magica Fifth Edition**, that each troupe should be able to determine the truths and lies of House Diedne for themselves, that each saga should have its own unique House Diedne. But actually, possibly without meaning to, across multiple editions the line has published quite a lot of information on the House, enough to really build out a convincing and consistent House Diedne. We're going to unearth that information in order to give storyguides the ingredients they need to build their own House Diedne.

INTRODUCTION

Elsewhere in this special issue you can read a number of unique descriptions of House Diedne. The intent of those chapters is to provide a fully-playable approach to House Diedne that you can pick up and insert into your saga. Whichever you choose, that version becomes your House Diedne.

The intention behind this article is very different. While **Ars Magica Fifth Edition** has been

careful not to describe too much about House Diedne, we can learn a lot about the House by piecing together information published across all supplements for all editions. So consider this article an archaeological dig of sorts. We're going to be turning over long-forgotten pages in search of the foundations of House Diedne. We're going to look at where it first arose within the broader canon, how it was initially characterized and utilized, and how it developed through the hands of the line's many contributors.

WHAT ARE WE USING?

We can only look through what we have available. Fortunately, that covers pretty much everything officially published for **Ars Magica** across the five editions. We are not considering any unofficial sources, such as blogs, wiki sites, or fan magazines, however popular or prestigious they might be. So if it is a published book, then its part of our canon.

WHAT WE'RE NOT DOING

We're not going to provide an index to every mention of House Diedne found in each book. The value of that approach would be pretty limited. Instead, we're building an understanding based on the evidence that we find. Book and page references will be provided as we go, but they may not be exhaustive. That said, if

BY GERALD WYLIE

you find a reference that you suspect has passed us by and has a bearing on the information presented here, then we'd appreciate hearing about it.

We are also not providing a take on the House. This article makes no *a priori* assertions as to whether members of the House were pagan, conducted human sacrifice, or the state of their relationships with the other Houses. We also refrain from inventing characters, events, and Virtues & Flaws to describe the House, its organization, or its magic. Anything that we do assert is going to be based on the evidence presented in the canon.

WHAT IS HOUSE DIEDNE?

First mentioned in the old 1990 **Ars Magica Second Edition** scenario, *The Tempest*, House Diedne was once a member of the Order of Hermes before antipathy and violence, culminating in the Schism War, saw its destruction.

The Tempest is also the first time that we hear about this Schism War and there has never been a House Diedne without a Schism War. Various interpretations as to the cause and purpose, conclusion and effects, of the war, have been seen across the editions. In its first outing, the War is

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characterised as being a conflict between House Diedne's druidic tradition and the Mercurian tradition prevalent in other Houses, although House Tremere has been front and center as the prime aggressors since the Schism War was introduced.

The House has always been of druidic origin and its magi are specialists in spontaneous magic. They have also been typified as using "nature-oriented" magic, including a focus on the elemental forms, Animal, Herbam, and even Mentem.

Each edition agrees that at the start of play of a typical **Ars Magica** saga that House Diedne has been destroyed and no members of that House are considered to be alive. This means that the threat of their return, usually seeking vengeance as in their first appearance in *The Tempest*, is one of the staple plot lines of any saga.

A PUBLISHED HISTORY

I can find no mention of House Diedne before the scenario, *The Tempest*, written by Stewart Wieck and published in 1990. This is unsurprising as **Ars Magica First Edition** had no mention of Hermetic Houses and while the **Ars Magica Second Edition** rulebook had introduced Houses the idea was at an early stage. Tantalisingly, House Diedne seems to have been the result not of a definite decision by the line but possibly a something more ephemeral. The inside cover to *The Tempest* contains a box-out where the author thanks both Kelly Golden and Stephen Wieck. Of interest to us is the following:

Kelly's idea of a covenant built on the ground of a past great battle was the springing point for the entire

supplement...

It isn't clear whether that applies just to the scenario itself or also includes the start of House Diedne within **Ars Magica** but the influence is attributed in black and white.

Whatever the origins, this supplement also sets out a strong direction for the House that subsequent editions and numerous supplements have built on. The House is described as coming from Druidic origins and marks the founder out as female. It casts the magic used by the House quite strongly, given the development of the game at the time, and it introduces the Schism War and the opponents and political struggles on all sides in a way that is consistently developed across subsequent editions.

Regardless of Kelly Golden's involvement in creating House Diedne, the *Order of Hermes* supplement, written by Jonathan Tweet and also published in 1990 takes the story up a notch. We get a shortened treatment of the House in the same style as all the others, which omits any guidance on common Virtues/Flaws or the type of magic use. But it does something interesting that has stayed with the House. It starts to introduce some tangible lore.

The Author extends special thanks to:
Kelly Golden and Stephan Wieck for years of exciting roleplaying and for inspiring some of the events of this supplement. Kelly's idea of a covenant built on the ground of a past great battle was the springing point for the entire supplement and Steve's interesting characters helped shape many of the roleplaying encounters.

This is the first time that we see Llewellyn's curse written down. This is the brief passage of text attributed to Diedne's last primus, Llewellyn, carved into a stone at the last place that the remnants of the House were seen:

"We shall last as long as the wind blows hot on the backs of your necks, as long as the storms pound your tower walls, as long as the waves smash the sides of your ships, as long as the merciless sun looks down upon your abominations, sees your sins, and calls out for vengeance. We will return to haunt you."

This curse, this statement of intent, is influential in setting the tone for any magi associated with House Diedne introduced into the average saga.

Ars Magica Third Edition is the first core rulebook to include mention of House Diedne. The treatment is brief however and says nothing about the House itself. The Schism War is mentioned but is not named. It does state that before the House was disbanded, that all members were either killed or driven into hiding. So again, we have the basis for the threat hiding in the shadows; the wronged magi of House Diedne waiting to return.

The -2 Discredited Lineage



Flaw does mention association with House Diedne as being an appropriate reason for taking the Flaw, but there is no Diedne or Druid Magic Virtue to model that style of magic.

Houses of Hermes built upon the work done in *The Order of Hermes* for **Ars Magica Second Edition**, including Llewellyn's famous curse, carrying the House motto forward, and restating that the House symbol has been stricken from the records. The important thing is that the section does talk in a little more detail, without

providing mechanics, of the kind of magic that Diedne magi would be likely to use. And the whole piece is given a little more space to breathe, which raises the profile of the House from just a footnote in the Order's history.

Ars Magica Fourth Edition retains the Discredited Lineage (still a -2 Flaw) link with Diedne

and provides a description of the Schism War, but again there is nothing to help players model a Diedne magus, falling short even of the original treatment in *The Tempest*. It seems that the core rulebooks find little reason to discuss this part of the Order. This is rectified by the time we get to the *Wizards Grimoire: Revised Edition*, which reintroduces the Diedne Druidic Magic Virtue at a cost of +4. The effects, however, are the same as those originally presented in *The Tempest*.

Ars Magica Fifth Edition finally introduces the Diedne Magic Major Hermetic Virtue. We finally have at least the start of modelling House Diedne's magic in the modern game. We also learn that House Diedne came to dominate their ancestral pagan religion, a religion that Diedne herself was cast out from, something that we can read as an antagonistic bent, especially as we're told that they actively sought converts.

Unsurprisingly, the **Fifth Edition** supplements *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages* and *Houses of Hermes: Societates* provide a lot of information on the Schism War and as a result on House Diedne. We will look at a lot of that later in this article.

DIEDNE THE DRUID

The section title here may be prefiguring things a little, but the very earliest mentions of Diedne are as a druid or at least a wizard coming from a druidic background. In *The Tempest*, we are led to believe that Diedne was

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(Bonisagus), Naomi Rivkis (Bjornaer, Quaesitor)
House Diedne Revision: Naomi Rivkis
 Line Developer: Wade Racine
 Art Director: Daniel Celon

the leader of a druidic sect that Bonisagus and Trianoma approached.

However, by the time of *Houses of Hermes*, we learn that the actual leader of this druidic tradition turned down the opportunity to join the Order of Hermes and that Diedne herself was just a young follower. As written, it seems that Bonisagus had to give Diedne assurances as to her protection before she would agree to join his growing Order.

This is an interesting departure from the regular characterization of Diedne as strong and forthright. There is a vulnerability present in those few words and it is maybe worth asking whether this is a particularly female take on Diedne. Regardless, it is a characterization that survives into **Ars Magica Fifth Edition**:

[From] the traditions of the druids, brought by Diedne, a woman cast out from that religion, he learned to create magical effects spontaneously.

ArM5, page 9

That's an interesting nuance; Diedne having been cast out from her previous sect. It places her outside of the druids, seemingly at odds with them. While never fully explored in the published line, Naomi Rivkis, who revised House Diedne for the *Houses of Hermes* supplement provides the full story elsewhere in this issue.

HISTORY OF THE HOUSE

The Tempest tells us that the original druidic lineage that became House Diedne considered the Kymryc magicians of Wales

to be their ancestors. We have evidence, which we'll discuss later, that they carried their pagan religion forward into the Order, but this made them enemies both among their new colleagues and in the various hedge traditions that they left behind.

Though apparently not leader of her pagan sect, Diedne brought her own followers with her and House Diedne actually became one of the largest of those early Houses. Bonisagus integrated the ability to cast spontaneous magic from Diedne and her followers.

We are told that the antipathy that eventually sealed the end of the House started early and even Trianoma held her suspicions about the House. Others disliked the overtly pagan activities and House Diedne never enjoyed much trust within the Order.

Beyond the Order, House Diedne sought out hedge wizards and brought them into the House, apparently relying on the "join or die" mantra familiar to the Order's early days. When House Ex Miscellanea was created, these activities caused further conflict. The old rivalries with traditions like the Gruagachan of Scotland also carried forward into the House. This meant that when political pressure turned to violence ahead of the Schism War, House Diedne faced no shortage of enemies.

The end of House Diedne starts with the diabolic corruption of House Tylalus. In the aftermath of that crisis, House Guernicus investigated each House for further corruption. House Diedne was far from cooperative and the distrust fostered in the early days of the House came to a head. After years of conflict and violence that

threatened to pull the Order apart, House Tremere declared open war on House Diedne and the Order chose its sides. No House openly supported House Diedne, presenting unassailable odds.

With Diedne survivors either fleeing to distant lands or into the supernatural realms, the House was renounced. No survivors are currently known to exist and while the Order has many legends and theories as to where the survivors did end up, there has been no official confirmation. To all intents and purposes, House Diedne is no more.

THE HERMETIC HOUSE

We don't know a great deal about the House as a Hermetic organization. It seems similar enough to the other Houses in terms of structure, i.e. it was presided over by a Primus and there was both a motto and House symbol associated with it. Beyond that, the House is hard to define.

STRUCTURE

Motto: Beata Terra beata omnia eam servant (Blessed be Earth and all who serve her)

Symbol: This has been stricken from the records and so is unknown.

Primus: The last known primus was Llewellyn. He apparently escaped capture at the end of the Schism War and his current status is unknown. We also know that in 851, the primus was a magus called Obregon.

Domus Magna: Branugurix (791 – 1012). This was located

near Mount Dol, Brittany, in the Normandy Tribunal.

Ars Magica describes the current twelve Houses as being either True Lineages, Societates, or Mystery Cults. These describe how the magi within the House are mystically related. For instance, House Bonisagus is a True Lineage, with each member typically able to chart their magical lineage back to either Bonisagus or Trianoma. House Ex Miscellanea consists of multiple magical traditions or societies, each with their own originating lineage and their own style of magic. House Verditius accepts magi from other Houses, but only after they under rituals that bind their magic to the mysteries of the House.

House Diedne seems not to fit easily into that classification. The House was inherently secretive and guarded its magical knowledge closely. In those terms, it sounds like a Mystery Cult. But we have evidence that beyond the core druidic lineage, the House absorbed, sometimes through force, other magical lineages that might one day have joined House Ex Miscellanea, and so in those terms the House seems to be one of the Societates.

COVENANTS

We are going to look at a list of Diedne covenants and sites later on, but it's worth stating that seemingly most, if not all, Diedne covenants were single-House covenants. This fits with the secrecy that we know of the House.

We are also told that in 851 the House in the as-then Britannian Tribunal officially withdrew from Tribunal dealings. We learn, in *Ancient Magic*, page 135, that while this state of

affairs lasted around 20 years, the situation never improved across what was to become the Hibernian Tribunal.

KNOWN MAGI

Other than Llewellyn and Obregon, we do have references to a number of Diedne magi.

Obregon: Primus during the withdrawal of 851

Nuala: Slain by Hermanus of House Tremere

Caithlinn (Covenant of Oakdell): Engaged in Wizard War with Severus Maximus of House Flambeau in 1004

Pietro (Covenant of Oakdell): Engaged in Wizard War with Cirion of Tremere in 1004

Herrick: Survivor of the battle known as The Tempest. Principle antagonist of *The Tempest* scenario

ALLIES

From various sources we know that House Diedne had the following allies:

Giants: We are told in *The Lion & The Lilly* that, at least in Normandy, House Diedne had alliances with the giants of the Tribunal and even had a covenant where many of the covenfolk seemingly had giant blood.

Faeries: The faerie White Lady as presented in *Realms of Power: Faerie*, page 83, is an important Diedne ally. We are told:

The White Ladies are of particular interest to magi because they are steeped in Druid lore, [and some] supported House Diedne in the Schism.

It appears that that shared druidic interest made brought Diedne and the White Ladies together, but given the character

of these often powerful faeries, the House must have worked hard to maintain their support.

Magical Beasts: Controlled or otherwise, multiple sources tell us that House Diedne could call upon and/or command magical and enchanted beasts. There is a temptation to put this down to the druidic lineage, and that is how this was originally characterized in *The Tempest*.

House Merinita: Interestingly, we are told in *Houses of Hermes*, page 139 that Diedne and Merinita were friends before the founding of the Order. And we learn in *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, page 78 that some Merinitae fought alongside Diedne magi against their oppressors.

ENEMIES

The House has four great enemies:

Cult of Mercury: As per their origin presented in *The Tempest*, the druids of House Diedne clashed with the Mercurian tradition prevalent in the other Houses. While the game no longer characterizes all Houses so broadly, there are magi who identify strongly with that Mercurian heritage. However, the Neo-Mercurian cult within the Order (*The Mysteries: Revised Edition*, page 114) may carry also adopt the historical antipathy for House Diedne along with the trappings of the earlier cult.

Gruagachan: This rivalry goes back beyond the foundation of the Order of Hermes and these hedge wizards fought against the House during the Schism War.

House Ex Miscellanea: Joining the Schism War against House Diedne, Ex Miscellanea appeared to be paying their

enemy back for what must have been centuries of conflict, resentment, and antipathy, although this seems to have been driven by the individual lineages within Ex Miscellanea than by the House's leadership.

House Tremere: The last and greatest enemy, House Tremere saw something dangerous within House Diedne and decided to do something about it. It was an unrelenting persecution that was essentially unilateral until House Guernicus felt forced to renounce House Diedne and put the aggression on an official footing.

ACTIVITIES

We are not told much directly about the House's activities, but we can piece together a view.

House Diedne was apparently expansionist. We are told that Diedne was a common recipient for hedge wizards joining the Order. We have further evidence of this in the faerie-blooded Melusine tradition that actually left the House before the Schism War. They had not come from a druidic background, showing that the House was expanding outside of their core lineage.

We learn in *The Lion of the North* that the House was not afraid of using their political domination, enjoying a century of control across Scotland before the Schism War. However, while the House actively controlled Loch Leglean, the Diedne in other Tribunals, notably Hibernia, abandoned Tribunal politics and looked to their own business. This does imply that the House within each Tribunal might have been left to determine its own policies in this regard, perhaps further implying a decentralized leadership.

The House actively promoted

their pagan religion. We are not told whether this involved forced conversion of some kind or whether their paganism was inherently tied to their magic, perhaps through initiations or binding oaths.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE HOUSE

We are told pretty consistently that the House was strongest mainly in France, Spain, and the British Isles but had covenants as far away as Greece and Denmark.

A list of known covenants is provided below.

IMPORTANT DIEDNE SITES

MAGICAL SITES

Bryn Celli Ddu: is a magical site in Stonehenge and the last place that Llewellyn was seen. The site is a passage grave and barrow in south-east Anglesey in Wales that aligns with the Summer Solstice, perhaps



providing a hint as to how any regiones that may be present could be entered. A standing stone outside the barrow bears a serpentine engraving.

COVENANTS

For those interested in unearthing Diedne secrets, or even investigating whether magi of House Diedne are still alive, the published line does provide a number of fallen covenants to investigate.

IBERIA

We are told that some of House Diedne's most powerful covenants were in the Galicia region of north-west Iberia, though we do not have specific names or locations.

LOCH LEGLEAN

Three covenants are specifically mentioned as being in the Scottish lowlands:

Holy Oak (founded 817)

The Well of the Head (founded 834)

Druids' Dale (founded 956)

We are also told that House Diedne was very dominant in the Tribunal for the century leading up to the Schism War and that this dominance caused violent resentment within House Ex Miscellanea.

NORMANDY

Four covenants are known in Normandy, including the Domus Magna:

Branugurix (791 – 1012): Domus Magna of House Diedne situated near Mount Dol in Brittany

Baiocassium (851 – 1011):

Located in the forest near Bayeux

Kerguntuil (920 – 1007): Located on the Brittany Rose Coast

Caput Capra (981 – 1005): Located on the banks of the Loire near Fleury

THE RHINE

There is only one known Diedne covenant in the Rhine, but we are told that the Rowan Gild was formed by all the members of House Diedne within that Tribunal.

Oakdell (931-1008): Located in the Westerwald, near the Rhine Gorge

Waldherz (990-1010): Situated in the Black Forest. Had a number of Diedne members

STONEHENGE

We have a firm reference to a single Diedne covenant in Stonehenge, although there were very likely others.

The Nameless Covenant (817 - 1011): Before being incorporated as a covenant, this was an ancient druidic shrine on the island of Anglesey in Wales. No information is provided as to whether this was willingly ceded by the druids of the time, whether they had ceased to be a concern, or whether House Diedne took it by force. After the Schism War, its name, location, and history has been stricken from the Tribunal records.

THE MAGIC OF THE DRUIDS

While successive editions have fallen short of providing detailed explanations of the old druidic magic and how that translated

forward to House Diedne, we are given some clear guidance on where their gifts lay.

SPONTANEOUS MAGIC

Starting with *The Tempest*, we are told repeatedly that the druids of House Diedne excelled at spontaneous magic. The original Druidic Magic Virtue modelled it as follows:

When casting a spontaneous spell, all totals are divided by two whether the caster expends a fatigue level or not, reflecting the immediate nature of Druidic magic.

Not a huge bonus for a tradition so reliant on spontaneous magic. But by the **Fifth Edition** Diedne Magic Virtue, this has been improved.

When you expend fatigue on casting a spontaneous spell, the lowest applicable Art is doubled before the whole total is divided by two. You still roll a stress die, and may botch.

This seems to make spontaneous magic more able to cover a wider range of effects, but while spontaneous magic is highly flexible it is ultimately very weak when confronted with Parma Magica. If we take the **Ars Magica Fifth Edition** Fast Casting rules, then we can see how spontaneous magic can provide a very effective defense, but it just doesn't have the punch to breach magical defenses such as Parma Magica. We are told that Houses Flambeau and Tremere lost half their members each during the Schism War. Given their respective power, it is hard to see how that happened with spontaneous magic alone.

There are two possibilities of course. The first is that beyond the simple base Virtue that we are told about there are others that provide a deeper understanding

of spontaneous magic that help to increase the casting total. In the same way that the **Fifth Edition** Diedne Magic Virtue acts as a Magical Focus when expending fatigue during spontaneous casting, so there may be other routes to this. The Bone-Biting Certamen technique that allows the magus to resist fatigue or increase the power of their attack was reputed to have been brought to the Order by House Diedne (*Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, page 136) so this may be an indication of their powers. The other possibility is that they invested heavily, either in training or through Virtues/devices/spells in Penetration. Of the two however, we only have evidence that they knew techniques for increasing their casting totals.

DIFFICULTY WITH FORMULAIC MAGIC

The Druidic Magic Virtue in *The Tempest* actually provides a limiting factor to formulaic casting:

Formulaic spells can only be cast after the player has allocated enough experiences points to equal at least one-fifth the level of the desired spell.

This makes sense for the early members of House Diedne, those to whom Bonisagus' magic theory is still novel, but not so much for the House at the time of the Schism War. The **Fifth Edition** Diedne Magic Virtue does away with this restriction.

FAVORED ARTS

In addition to enhancing spontaneous casting, *The Tempest* (and *The Wizards Grimoire: Revised Edition* that came after) presented the Druidic Magic Virtue as providing:

+4 bonuses on Creo, Muto, and Rego Techniques

+2 bonuses on Animal and Herbam Forms

We have nothing else from a mechanics perspective although we have descriptions of storms summoned up by the Diedne, rains of fire, and of upheavals of the earth. A +4 bonus seems hardly likely to accommodate all those effects, so the favored Arts alone are not sufficient.

attacked by two Diedne magi accompanied by "several magical beasts". That's subtly different from magically-controlled.

While the favored Arts listed above provide some bonus to controlling animals, *The Tempest* gives us another clue:

they imprisoned a portion of the beast's essence in a physical object

That's interesting as we would normally judge such an effect to

MAGI OF HOUSE DIEDNE HAD THE
POWER TO CALL UPON AND/OR
COMMAND MAGICAL AND ENCHANTED
BEASTS

NATURE MAGIC

We are told that House Diedne made use of magically-controlled forests and elemental magic. They may have had access to mystery Virtues that supported these effects but the Ways of the Woods Virtue, available certainly since **Ars Magica Second Edition** (and possessed by Herrick, the druid antagonist in *The Tempest*) may be an appropriate way of modelling some of these specializations and the various flavors of Elemental Magic may work for the others.

MAGICAL BEASTS

The Order of Hermes, page 78, characterises the Diedne as using "hoards of magically-controlled animals", something repeated in *Houses of Hermes*. We also learn from *Legends of Hermes*, page 96 that the magus Hermanus was

either rely upon an enchanted device or on ritual magic, neither of which we associate with Diedne magic. So we have a hint of something more at play, something not catered for in any of the Virtues typically associated with the Diedne. However, this is explained:

The druids' ancestors [were able] to capture the essence of the animals and beasts they painted. This natural talent was developed into the basis of a beast control magic, but with the sinking of Cimbrinsula, the druids lost this innate ability to trap the essence of a creature. However, they are still able to use the beasts whose spirits have already [been] captured.

So the ability seems to have been lost before the druids joined the Order, which asks some tantalising questions:

- Where are these paintings now?
- Do any still live who know how to use them?
- What is needed in order to use them?
- What would it take to create new paintings capturing the essences of new beasts?

GROUP CASTING AND RITUALS

This is where things aren't so

clear. *The Tempest*, for story-led reasons, sets Druidic practice and Mercurian practice against each other in stark relief. Mercurian wizards excelled at communal casting and rituals, while the druids were more individualistic and relied upon spontaneous magic. This makes a lot of sense given the context as it heightens the sense of otherness with which we assume each tradition viewed the other.

We are told:

Druidic magi are unable to perform any sort of group ritual spell or combine their powers by means such as the MuVi Wizards' Communion spell.

This is taken from the Druidic Magic Virtue in *The Tempest*, page 14. As such, it is designed for magi schooled in Hermetic magic. But there's a potential problem. The same supplement describes one of the decisive acts of the battle that came to be known as *The Tempest*:

By calling forth all of the magical resources of their own bodies, they managed to create a tremendous storm and a thousand bolts of lightning crashed down simultaneously over the battlefield while a great wind swept everything away.

The Tempest, page 8

As written, it does seem that the Diedne were working together, that they coordinated their magic in order to create that storm. If the Wizards' Communion was denied to them then was there another way that the spell was coordinated? Could each subsequent magus build upon the spell cast by the previous? We're not told.

The Lion of the North supplement details the long-standing rivalry between Scotland's druids and their enemies the Gruagachan, describing how that rivalry persisted into the days of the Hermetic House Diedne and how that House then cast spells that reputedly stripped the Gruagachan of their magically-potent Pictish language.

members of House Diedne cast subtle spells that somehow made the



SUB ROSA

Picts forget their language

The Lion of the North, page 52

The wording is subtle enough that this could simply be another coordinated assault; members of the House having learned the same spell or having the same capability. But we are told that:

Magi of House Diedne held their ritual sites sacred to their religion.

Houses of Hermes: True Lineages, page 38

This could of course be the loose sense of the word ritual to connote their religious workings, but it suggests that they were able to work together in some fashion. Is this an indication that certain places gave them certain

enhanced abilities not normally possessed elsewhere?

The point seems to be moot. The Diedne Magic Virtue in **Ars Magica Fifth Edition** does away completely with the restriction on communal magic and Diedne magi are as able with Wizard's Communion as those in the next House. This is most likely for playability reasons - the Diedne Magic Virtue is designed for player characters and restricting key abilities like joining Wizards' Communion is a little harsh. But it could also be considered the watered-down remnants of Diedne practise rather than an accurate reflection.

VULNERABILITY TO THE DOMINION

If we look back at *The Tempest*,

page 9, we are told that:

Christianity was a force which the druids could not overcome and it pushed them completely out of their homelands.

And:

[They joined the] Order to gain both equal status with and protection from their Latin counterparts, as well as some aid in resisting the Dominion.

There are two possibilities as to why the Druidic ancestors had particular trouble coping with the Dominion; either their magic was aligned to a Realm that suffered more than Magic, or their cult possessed some common Flaw that reduced the power of their magic in the presence of the

SUB ROSA



Dominion.

If we look at the various realm interaction tables across all editions, they agree that both Faerie power and the Infernal suffer a greater penalty from the presence of the Dominion. Having power aligned with one of those realms would mean that druids and House Diedne would suffer more than other magi.

Ars Magica Second Edition did contain a Susceptibility to Divine Power Flaw (at -4 points, no less), so applying this to a Diedne character would double any penalty imposed from working magic in the Dominion, which would be in keeping with the broader description. However, Herrick, the returned Diedne magus central to *The Tempest*, does not have this.

Unfortunately, the game flavor is not borne out either by the game mechanics or the character statistics so the source of this difficulty must remain conjecture.

CLUES FROM THE GRUAGACHAN

There is one more clue that we can draw upon. *Hedge Magic: Revised Edition* described, on page 72, how

“some Picti priests practiced a form of magic similar to the magic practiced by the druids who would form House Diedne”

This is especially interesting as Gruagachan characters can take the Major Supernatural Virtue Cailleach Magic, which allows the caster of spontaneous magic to double their lowest applicable Art.

Could early Diedne magic have

HOW LONG DID THE WAR LAST?

Different editions represent the Schism War differently. If we look to *The Tempest*, we are told that the war lasted just two years and that the final engagement of the war lasted a month.

Houses of Hermes, for the **Fourth Edition**, has the conflict lasting six years, with a further month upon the renunciation of House Diedne.

The exiling of the Diedne Rowan Gild in the Rhine in 1004 is linked with the start of the hostilities and *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages* tells us that House Tremere declared war on the Diedne in

1010 and the Diedne were officially renounced in 1011. Branugurix did not fall until 1012 although *Heirs to Merlin* cites the destruction of the Nameless Covenant in 1011 as the last major engagement of the war.

The most definite dates seem to be in *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, which lists the Schism War as having lasted from 1003 to 1017, lasting several years after the fall of the Nameless Covenant and of Branugurix.

been similar to that of the Gruagachan? It seems plausible.

THE GREAT MYTHS

There are several matters that are typically considered true of the House, but actually seem a little more nuanced when viewed in light of the published material.

PAGANISM

Even as far back as *The Tempest*, we are told that the “druids resented the Romans, because their Empire had banned their religion and forbidden the practice of their traditions”. This does not sound like a magical society that has accepted and adapted to Christian practice.

The *Order of Hermes* supplement, which expands on the House, does not make the House’s paganism explicit, but it is the first time that we get the House motto: *Beata Terra beata omnia eam servant* (**Blessed be Earth and all who serve her**), which sounds awfully pagan. We also have Diedne’s magical tradition called “a sect”, which implies religion.

The **Third/Fourth Edition**

supplement *Houses of Hermes* takes these ideas forward again and we have “the last members of the Druidic tradition” referred to as “a sect” once more, and references to their “odd ways” and “odd traditions”. We also have references to their covenants frequently being single-House.

By the time we get to **Ars Magica Fifth Edition**, We are told explicitly in *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, page 9, that Diedne herself was pagan, and that Trianoma resented the clandestine meetings she held with Bonisagus. Was this a personal jealousy or misgivings over Diedne’s background and motives? Impossible to say, but this paganism clearly persisted and thrived within her House. We are told (*Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 10) that House Diedne “actively promoted a non-Christian religion”.

Looking at *Hedge Magic: Revised Edition* again, we also see a listing of some of the Pictish gods, which includes Gruagach and his female counterpart Cailleach, and this in the same section as the combined heritage of the druids and the gruagachan is explained.

So there appears to be no

myth here and, as far as multiple published editions are concerned, House Diedne was institutionally pagan.

HUMAN SACRIFICE

There is a single, but very important, reference to the wicker man pagan ritual:

The Tremere say that this was a simple matter of principle... but there was a deeper reason for their loathing of the Diedne wicker men.

Houses of Hermes: True Lineages, page 113

Why is this important? The wicker man is not part of Christian practice in any way, shape, or form. Instead, it is most commonly associated with Taranis, a thunder god.

That section in *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, page 113 has significant implications. The wicker man ritual historically involved human sacrifice. Most often, criminals or prisoners of some kind would be bound up inside a large wicker construction in the shape of a man. It would then be set alight, with fatal consequences to those inside.

Unless the druids of House Diedne had cleansed the ritual of its sacrificial component, then it is safe to assume, based on that published statement, that House Diedne was still involved in sacrificial rites that we can assume it carried forward from its druidic lineage.

Stepping outside the published line, the 10th century *Commenta Bernensia* refers to druidic human sacrifice to the gods Teutates, Esus, and Taranis. The gods received their sacrifices in different ways. Victims dedicated

to Teutates were apparently drowned, those dedicated to Esus were hanged, and those dedicated to Taranis were burned, which is consistent with the wicker man. Did the druids, or House Diedne after joining the Order, sacrifice in these manners? We're not told so anything beyond this is conjecture, but only one of those needs to be true to confirm this particular myth.

The same section in *Hedge Magic: Revised Edition* discussed above that lists Gruagach and Cailleach also lists **Toranos** the thunder god, so the link that joins Diedne with the druids, pagan practice, the Gruagachan, and sacrifice is now pretty tangible.

Given the reference and given that it was not couched in terms of the Tremere suspecting the House of using the wicker man, but instead presented as a statement of fact, there is no myth here; House Diedne practised human sacrifice.

DIABOLISM

Interestingly, the wicker man, in itself, does not make the ritual diabolic, which is another accusation levelled at the House. The *Houses of Hermes* supplement does not accuse House Diedne of diabolism. It does say that when the Quaesitores starting investigating all the Houses to uncover the extent of diabolic corruption that House Diedne refused to cooperate. That is not conclusive evidence.

Ars Magica Fourth Edition makes scant reference to House Diedne and when it does in discussing the Schism War, the worst crime that the House is accused of is being somewhat distant and "generally distrusted".

Into the **Fifth Edition**, we are told:

Some magi suspected House Diedne of atrocities such as diabolism or human sacrifice.

Houses of Hermes: Societates, page 10

Well, we know that House Diedne practiced human sacrifice, but we're no further forward in determining whether those rites were infernal or not. In the absence of any defining evidence, this myth must remain open.

THE ESCAPE TO EX MISCELLANEA

It is a common trope within numerous **Ars Magica** sagas; the secret lineage of Diedne magi hiding away in House Ex Miscellanea. But is there any evidence for this?

There is some evidence that casts doubt on this escape.

In *The Lion of the North*, page 119, we are told that:

Many Ex Miscellanea covenants joined in their destruction, paying them back for the Diedne dominance since the consolidation of Scotland.

There's little said before or after this across the published line until *Houses of Hermes: Societates*:

In fact, many of the founding traditions of [House ex Miscellanea] harbored a great deal of resentment for House Diedne due to antipathies which reached back to before the Founding of the Order.

Houses of Hermes: Societates, page 102

What this resentment was based on is not explained, but the same page also tells us that:

House Diedne was a common recipient of hedge wizards

There is common ground then between the two Houses and it is possible that the two Houses vied for that ground.

However, there is another aspect. We are told (*Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 109) that a lineage within House Diedne left the House and joined House Ex Miscellanea about twenty years before the Schism War. These magi all bore the blood of a water faerie called the Melusine. It is likely that this lineage was actually absorbed through Diedne's expansionist agenda and was not part of the initial druidic tradition.

So it seems, given that House Ex Miscellanea had members from a Gruagachan background (*Lion of the North*, page 88) and that there were long-standing rivalries with House Diedne, it was highly unlikely that members of House Diedne escaped the Schism War by secretly being shielded by House Ex Miscellanea. The example of the Melusine however demonstrates acceptance of those who turned their back on House Diedne.

So, given the evidence, the escape to Ex Miscellanea does indeed seem to be a myth.

But, according to *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, page 78, there are rumors that Primus Rhiannon of House Merinita invited a number of Diedne magi to join her House in order to escape destruction. So perhaps this myth has a kernel of truth, only we've been looking at the

wrong House.

CAUSE OF THE SCHISM WAR

There is no doubting that the war was the result of an unchecked escalation of hostilities, but unlike the Sundering or the scandal within House Tytalus, there is no definitive answer as to the rights and wrongs of the war.

However, if we accept *The Tempest*, we see that relations between the druids of Diedne and the Mercurian traditions of the other Houses were always difficult. Later books put House Tremere as the main political opposition but at least some of the reasons remained the same; the overtly pagan ways within House Diedne. That the House refused to cooperate with the widespread investigations following the corruption of House Tytalus only served to provide an excuse for House Tremere to persecute old disagreements and rivalries.

We are told that a senior figure in House Diedne openly insulted the Tremere Primus at a council of Primi, possibly even a Grand Tribunal, but while this may have increased tensions, it seems an unlikely cause for war.

House Guernicus played its part too. It was too weak to put a stop to the welling violence and so it capitulated to the aggressive Houses Tremere and Flambeau by renouncing House Diedne. While the violence had lasted many years before, this is truly the start of the Schism; a failure on behalf of House Guernicus to negotiate a peace.

CONDUCT OF THE WAR

Houses of Hermes, page 138 describes the war as six years or so of violence back and forth with House Diedne hampering attempts by the Quaesitoris to formally investigate their activities. Only once House Tremere declared Wizard Ward against the entire House did the Quaesitores renounce House Diedne. *Houses of Hermes* then characterizes the resulting conflict as lasting just a month, at the end of which House Diedne was destroyed.

The extended conflict was typified by direct attacks on opposing covenants, on at least one occasion using a Hermes Portal to gain access to a Diedne stronghold. Clearly, the power of the Aegis of the Hearth was important in providing some protection against assault, but the danger of attack was still present.

The battles caused significant destruction to the local area and *The Tempest* tells us that "vast forests were burned, cities were completely razed, mountains were flattened and tremendous battles were waged across the country side". This is a war then that was not confined to covenants and the destruction to the adjoining lands is something that is often overlooked. In areas that used to support Diedne covenants, or those that were targeted by the Diedne, we can expect stories still to be told about the days when the wizards went to war.

Both sides called upon significant allies. The Diedne found allies in the faerie White Ladies, the magical Men of the Lake, giants, and any number of magical and magically controlled wild beasts. They also had the support of some Merinitae, though the House itself did not

side with the Diedne. Even before House Tremere prompted the Order to fall behind its persecution of the war, Houses Flambeau and Ex Miscellanea certainly joined the fight against the Diedne and they were able to draw upon the gruagachan hedge wizards at least in Loch Leglean.

The description of the damage caused by the war also implies that the forces had armies of a certain size that they could call upon. What these armies consisted of or how they were commanded is not clear, but House Diedne was noted for its interference in mundane Scottish affairs. It is possible that they reaped the benefits through support from mundane forces fighting at their side.

END OF THE WAR

The Tempest and *Houses of Hermes* both agree that there was a final confrontation over the course of a month that resulted in the fall of House Diedne. Other supplements describe further actions after this point, but this seems to have been the last significant engagement.

There was a wall, at the place where Llewellyn was last seen, which we assume to be the place where the final confrontation took place. Upon that wall, the following is carved:

"We shall last as long as the wind blows hot on the backs of your necks, as long as the storms pound your tower walls, as long as the waves smash the sides of your ships, as long as the merciless sun looks down upon your abominations, sees your sins, and calls out for vengeance. We will return to haunt you."

But the turn of the war is an interesting thing. House Diedne was seemingly strong enough to resist the combined attentions of Houses Tremere and Flambeau along with sundry other allies from across the Order. Those two Houses, we are told, lost roughly half their number each. How desperate then were they to agree to human sacrifice?

The Cure of Thoth ritual known to House Guernicus curses a target group with misfortune. As part of the ritual, a blood sacrifice must be made. A Diedne

diplomat was already imprisoned within Magvillus from the earlier failed peace talks and so this became the victim. The spilling of his blood cursed House Diedne and the war turned against them.

We are told that the ritual was cast in 1010, which seems to be mid-way through the war (and at least two years before various sources have the final major engagement). Given that the war is not considered to have ended until 1017, this does not seem to have been a particularly swift or decisive effect, if the ritual even



worked at all.

Much is often made of the abhorrent act of human sacrifice in this context, but this may be a little overplayed. House Diedne had, to Tremere disgust admittedly, been conducting the wicker man ritual for centuries and that was intrinsically linked to human sacrifice. And given the bloodshed and destruction the war had caused to that point, and the renunciation of House Diedne, there was little difference to be found between execution and sacrifice. The vow of secrecy amongst the perpetrators that followed sounds more like a measure to save blushes than any fundamental moral shame.

HOUSE DIEDNE AFTER THE FALL

We have already briefly discussed the Melusine magi within House Ex Miscellanea. They arguably have the most claim to be remnants of House Diedne, although they abandoned the House many years before the Schism War. In terms of true Diedne magi, we generally have little more than rumor to go on. However, *The Tempest* does tell us, explicitly and not through rumor, that some members of House Diedne chose to flee.

After two years of war, only the nucleus of House Diedne was left, the rest of its members either killed or fled to far distant lands.

The Tempest, page 8

The idea of the survivors fleeing is one that crops up again in *The Order of Hermes*, although these are couched in terms of legend and apply to the leaders of

the House at the final battle; either disappearing into the faerie lands or sailing the seas on ships crewed by skeletons. The later *Houses of Hermes* supplement again repeats those legends, building upon them and raising the idea of their ships visible among the stars.

There is agreement that the leaders of the House were never found. At least in those terms, there at least three types of Diedne still around; the Melusine lineage in Ex Miscellanea, those who fled the war, and the survivors of the final confrontation.

THE HOUSE IN 1220

It is a safe assumption that there is no House Diedne in 1220. It is over 200 years since the end of the Schism War and no magus known to be living remembers those days first-hand. By all known Hermetic magic, the same must be true of any Diedne survivors that either escaped the final confrontation or fled the war while it was in progress.

However, there may be some hedge wizards out in the wild perhaps who use an interpretation of druidic magic possibly even based on Hermetic principles. If those Diedne who fled the war did go into hiding, then they may still have passed their magical knowledge on to apprentices. Importantly for the Order, these pockets of Diedne heritage would most likely have retained knowledge of the Parma Magica.

Within the Order, there are magi who have the Diedne Magic Virtue, something that might mark them out as having a Diedne heritage or something similar to Diedne's early druidic gifts. Where are these most likely

to be? House Merinita is the obvious place to look, but if any Diedne were absorbed into House Merinita, they could potentially have left that House to join another. It is hard to see the advantage in that, when weighed against the risk of detection, but it is possible that any of the Societates now contain magi of a Diedne lineage.

The example of Herrick in *The Tempest* shows that some Diedne survivors may have found a way to sustain themselves for the last 200 years. They might have found some way to suspend their lives, or to wait out the time in Arcadia, or even step forward in time through the magic realm. However it happened, Herrick found a way and returned to the thirteenth century and so might others.

If they do, or if a Diedne lineage is discovered somewhere in the Order, then the Burning Acorn Vexilation of House Tremere will surely find them. This organization within the House is devoted to finding signs of a Diedne return and defeating it. Given that House Tremere is a House that likes to be prepared, there is little chance of them ever disbanding this group, but their duties tend now to consist of exploration rather than combating any threat posed by the Diedne.

WHAT IS STILL LEFT OPEN?

Given that there is much more information about House Diedne available than might otherwise have been suspected, there is still much open to interpretation by individual sagas, even assuming

that troupes do embrace all the published information

INFERNAL CORRUPTION

Pagan they may have been, but it is far from confirmed that they fell to Infernal corruption before, during, or even after the Schism War. Indeed, even those three phases in their existence make for very different reasons for trafficking with demons if that is a direction you want to take them.

The notion of vengeful survivors turning to diabolism and embracing the crimes they were wrongfully accused of is a very different story to a House that had turned against God while still within the Order.

JUSTIFICATION FOR WAR

Becoming Infernally corrupt before the Schism War certainly would be one justification for hostilities, but perhaps not the complete destruction of the House.

The specific drives and motivations of those involved in the declaration of war have not been fully explored. It would be true to say that beyond some key individuals, the cast of characters involved is far from defined and there is much play to be had in telling the story of the start of the war

SURVIVAL

It is a common trope within **Ars Magica** sagas to have the survival of at least some members of the House remain a distinct possibility. If you choose to confirm that possibility, there are many ways in which individuals from the Schism era may have survived.

Or survival could take on a less literal meaning. What happened to their books and devices? Are there still stories told of the brave Diedne amongst the descendants of their

supporters? Could their influence live on where the magi themselves do not?

THE NATURE OF ANY DESCENDANTS

Assuming that none lived far beyond the Schism War, they may still have descendants who have to live with the knowledge of what was taken from them and the threat to their own lives if the nature of their lineage is discovered.

Descendants of the allies of House Diedne too might have cause for fear. We know that giants, faeries, and all manner of beasts assisted the House. What became of them? What if these long-lived creatures are identified by someone within the Order?

There may be hedge wizards and even members of other traditions who come from a lineage of House Diedne magi. Should it matter to a member of a minor tradition that his magic has been shaped by one hounded out of the Order of Hermes?

And of course, there may be those originally unconnected with the House who seek a revival of their magic and even their practices. There may well be those within Houses Merinita and Bjornaer who seek magic with a greater connection to the old ways and to the land untouched by mankind. Could they revive the knowledge lost when House Diedne was destroyed?

It is even possible that magi from other Houses of Mystery Cults might see some hint of breakthrough or something of cultural importance that should be preserved before it is lost forever. These magi might seek a new House Diedne, or at least try to soften the enmity of the ages.

WHETHER THE HOUSE REMAINS A THREAT

Perhaps the most contentious question is whether the House remains a threat to the Order. Threat, however, is a subjective thing. While some might claim that *any* recognition of House Diedne in the modern Order is a danger to the fabric of the House, others might take a more pragmatic view. Such scholars might want to explore more about Diedne ways and magic to ensure that such events are never repeated or to discover what parts of the Diedne heritage can be salvaged and reappraised.

CONCLUSION

There is a lot of information about the House in one form or another scattered across over twenty years worth of books. We have a good idea of the origins of the House and a view on the type of magic used and potential weaknesses. We also have an understanding of the House as a cohesive force, something holding itself separate from the Order.

We do not have definitive answers on what realm their power was aligned with, although as Hermetic magi it must in part at least be magic. We also do not have a full understanding of their pagan practices, although there is certainly evidence that they clung to a pagan religion and carried out a form of the wicker man ritual. And if the wicker man ritual *was* conducted, there is an even chance that human sacrifice was part of that practice.

What is clear is that the House provides as fertile ground for **Ars Magica** stories as it ever has.

THE SLUMBERING LEGACY

House Diedne is alive; it was impossible to stand against the combined might of Tremere, Flambeau, and Guernicus, but it was also impossible for those houses to completely eliminate them. Pragmatists, the Diedne adopted their longevity rituals to outlast their foes. Even before the Schism War broke out, the Diedne were preparing to go into hiding; or rather, into hibernation from which the the House is now emerging.

HISTORY

Beginning in Antiquity and extending beyond the fall of the Western Empire, the history of House Diedne is embodied by a single word: "steadfast." No matter the challenges placed before them, the Diedne sought to endure anything or anyone who might threaten their ways.

THE TRADITION BEFORE DIEDNE

The druids in the British Isles never possessed the formal organization of the Gallic druids largely exterminated by Gaius Julius Caesar. Different centres of learning and study, such as the Isle of Mona (now called Anglesey) existed in Brittany, Normandy and Provence. Like the order, these schools and cities were dedicated to different functions or were famed for their schools for warriors, or song and poetry.

The Diedne, as they were known to the Hermetic Order, were an extended family of druids from Mur Ollavan, the city of learning.

However, after they took the Hermetic Oath, the Ingheaw Adangha, a group of Irish druidesses and sacred virgins from Kildare, joined their ranks.

Druidic prophecies foretold the birth of Christ and the coming of Patrick, which they saw as inevitable. Patrick and his disciples first restricted the druids' rites at the Synod of Drumceat, and slowly won

Population: 11 (At least twice that number "sleeping")

Domus Magna: none

Primus: none

Favored Tribunals: Hibernian, Normandy, Stonehenge (Wales)

Motto: *Chan ann leis a'chiad bhuille thuiteas a'chraobh.* (It is not with the first stroke that the tree falls.)

Symbol: none, previously a sprouting acorn, the triskelion is now used as a secret symbol for identification

the allegiance of the Irish. The druids performed rites and celebrations, but never revealed their mysteries and lore to the common folk and the gentle way of peace and communion offered by the Church eroded the position of the druids. When the Christian high king triumphed at the Battle of Moyraith (or Moira), the long autumn of the druids arrived with a harvest of blood.

A decline in the number of students coming to the schools, combined with some aggressive acts on the part of the Church and the High King's support of the

By JAMES PARKS
AND BEN MCFARLAND

Christians, reduced the druids to isolated families, each preserving a small portion of the druidic knowledge, in some ways mirroring the disruption of Mercurian lore in the collapsing Roman Empire. The barbarian invasions in England and Brittany nearly exterminated the druid communities weakened by the incursions of the Germans and Normans, but the survivors still exchanged communication and traveled back and forth.

During such a journey, Diedne met Trianoma.

SPRING: DIEDNE AND THE FOUNDING

Neither the most powerful nor most respected daughter in a large family of druids, Diedne was most restless and spent her time traveling to the remaining druids and their places of power.

Trianoma eagerly wanted to add the Celtic magi to the emerging Order of Hermes. Diedne remained coy, but hinted at the potential of many magi of different traditions in her homeland. Diedne's ability to cast magic without tools or laborious formulae in Latin was a potent incentive.

Diedne promised to consider Trianoma's offer and departed from Brittany. She returned to Ireland and her extended family gathered to discuss the Roman maga's offer.

Eventually, they did decide to join. The spreading influence of the

Christians was the deciding factor, but Trianoma had also demonstrated the power of the parma magica to Diedne. To protect their secrets of magic, the leaders declared Diedne should serve as their voice and to the foreign magi, appearing to lead the family. The embassy they sent to Durenmar included some of her brothers and sisters who used their abilities to mask Diedne's lack of power.

At Durenmar, Bonisagus taught the Hermetic theory to Diedne and her 'students' and in return, incorporated some of their own mystic insights into the greater body of lore. Most importantly, Bonisagus learned from Diedne how, by sacrificing some of the caster's own life, spontaneous effects could be cast

with more power. Previously, he could only perform the most simple of magics this way, but Diedne's insights showed Bonisagus how to empower his ability.

Trying to conceal Diedne's relative inexperience and status, the early members of House Diedne avoided the other Founders. When confronted or questioned on some point of etiquette or politics, she would have to retreat and confer with the other members of the embassy, which some of the early Hermetic magi viewed as a political tactic. It seemed impossible to get an immediate answer of out Diedne, and even when she did provide one, it was noncommittal and laden with qualifications. If the stronger personalities in the embassy couldn't

agree, Diedne could only equivocate.

SUMMER: FOUNDATION AND GROWTH OF THE HOUSE

The Hermetic Houses obviously did not consist only of the Founders and their apprentices. Many of the early members were friends and allies of the Founders before Trianoma had ever approached them, and others were persuaded to join through blandishments or threats.

Diedne had always been a diplomat, and to the other Hermetic magi she left the task of organizing her House and the Order to underlings while she wandered Europe and, infuriatingly to the more



militant Houses, had more success with pagan cults and sorcerers than they did. It rankled the Flambeau to arrive, intent on exterminating a coven of witches and seizing their mystic place of power, only to find that Diedne had passed through, inducted them into House Diedne, and taught them the Parma Magica. Such occasions might have passed if she had restricted herself to traditional Celtic lands and the few pockets of druidic worshippers, but Diedne would recruit Danes, Avars, Germans, and Lithuanians.

The other Houses never understood the key principle behind the Diedne recruitment. Where they offered other magi the chance to become Hermetic, the druids let them join the Order of Hermes and retain their own practices and rites.

AFTER DIEDNE

Diedne was last publicly seen at the Grand Tribunal of 784, and departed for the east, apparently searching for a remnant of the Celtic race in Galatia.

What seemed ominous and confusing to the other Houses was the lack of concern on the part of the Diedne for the disappearance of their Founder. The succession of the next Primus went so smoothly and without pause, the other Houses believed that some conspiracy to replace the Founder had succeeded. The Order only learned of the new Primus when Eithne stepped forward to announce Diedne's death.

FALL: THE MARCH TO WAR

By the 9th century, the well-established Tribunals fostered numerous spring covenants which sprang up and died before a glorious summer, and a solid core of covenants now formed the basis of each Tribunal and each order. The foreign wizards in Christendom had

either joined or died, except for Scandinavia and the British Isles.

The events in the Stonehenge Tribunal are well documented, but the military and political failure of House Flambeau stung. Damhanallaidh and his allies were able to hold off the entire Order and for a time almost threatened Normandy and France. The Hermetic magi understood just enough of both his magic and of the Diedne to realize the underlying similarity; the Spider and the Diedne both made allies of giants, were rumoured to practice some kind of reincarnation, and coached their secret language in Gaelic dialects.

And, the Flambeau asked, giving words to the suspicion on so many lips, how could an enemy grow so

potentially non-existent Order of Odin, the result of the Diedne's lack of participation was the same. The questions became louder; why had the Vikings stopped at Dublin? Why had they pressed so far into Gaul? It seemed suspicious. The Flambeau saw them as cowards, willing to enjoy the fruits of victory without sharing in the costs. The Tytalus saw them as conspirators, scheming to claim the western lands of Mythic Europe for themselves. The Tremere saw them as traitors, secretly aiding the enemy through their absence. This planted the seeds of resentment and anger, which flowered through the 10th century and grew, until the magi at the turn of the millennium internalized the hostility, making the antagonistic attitudes towards House



S CONCERNS REGARDING THE APOCALYPSE APPROACHED IN 1000, THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE ORDER WAS PRIMED TO EXPLODE INTO THE SCHISM WAR

powerful in the very heart of the Diedne's lands without their collusion?

When the Order expanded into Denmark, the Baltic, and crossed to Norway and Sweden, the militant magi found hostile wizards who previously had only encountered the Diedne and the Bjornaer. Once again, an enemy of the Order of Hermes was able to hold them off, and the Houses, embarrassed by their failures, grew more bitter and suspicious.

Then, in the mid-9th century, the Viking raids along the coasts of Gaul and England cemented the distrust of the Roman houses against the Diedne. The druids refused to participate in actions against these pagan marauders, retreating into the safety of the groves and regions. While scholars still debate whether this conflict flared against a

Diedne an accepted institutional paradigm.

As concerns regarding the Apocalypse approached in 1000, and fears regarding the Corruption of the Tytalus had barely faded, the social environment of the Order was primed to explode into the Schism War. Magi barely trusted their sodales, all that was necessary for bloodshed to begin, was an excuse. Rumor began to spread as House Diedne furiously labored to complete their preparations for survival. Stories of human sacrifice viewed through the warped lense of the uninitiated meant the mysteries of the druidic house were seen as Infernal. Combined with the recent betrayal at Fudarus, the cries for a purge became the shouts of war. The Schism War began.

WINTER: THE PROPHECIES AND THE WAR

Divination has always been part of the druidic tradition. Every seer in Ireland knew when Christ was born, and the coming of Saint Patrick, the Talcend; Saint Fiacc was a druid before he embraced Christ as one of Patrick's first converts, but he wasn't the last druid to convert. The Irish scholars could see the future and the inevitable conversion of Ireland to Christianity. Knowledge of this fate helped drive the Diedne to join the Order.

By the beginning of the 10th century, the Diedne with the gift of divination were seeing other visions; not simply war between wizards, already growing more common and more violent, but between whole Houses. Slowly they began to withdraw, because the Diedne couldn't decide what would cause such a war. The Flambeau and

corruption, but by the crushing response of the Order as a whole. If the masters and students of conflict remained unable to hold off the Quaesitoris and the hoplites, the druid scholars of trees, seasons, and the stars stood no chance at all. The arrival of so many Tremere and Flambeau into Normandy caused tension-filled conflicts and Certamen with the Diedne.

House Diedne never had a grand conclave and arrived at a decision, but those magi sufficiently advanced in the mysteries began to make their own plans to survive— not by fighting impossible odds, but by sleeping through the coming winter. Their mystery of “sleeping with the trees” allowed them a form of reincarnation after a period of roughly 250 years of dream-like union with a sacred oak tree. Completing the process, however, required another Diedne to ritually kill the one who would “hibernate.” Interrupted instances of this ritual did not help the House's

destroyed covenants. The remaining Diedne used Watching Wards to prepare lethal retributive strikes, and conjured or bewitched beasts to patrol boundaries. The potential cost to the crusading Houses would have been less if they had been willing to wait the Diedne to come out and fight, but pride and misunderstanding of House Diedne's motives demanded aggression. The destruction was intentionally increased to mask the disappearance of Diedne initiates who now slumbered in the roots of so many sacred groves.

When the shattered remnants of House Diedne last left Mythic Europe, they traveled via a regio network to a hidden and prepared location, where the last Primus committed them to sleep until the Awakening. This site was known only to him, but is suspected to stand on either one of the Hesperides, a regio on Sherkin Island south of Hibernia, or perhaps Skokholm Island, off the coast of Wales.

THE MAGIC OF THE DIEDNE HAS ITS SOURCE
IN THE STUDY OF THE NATURAL WORLD AND
THE GREAT CYCLE OF LIFE

Tremere had always been hostile, but the Diedne shared Brittany as peacefully with the Tytalus as possible, and those three Latin Houses were the most aggressive.

Subtly, the Diedne focused their attention on the Flambeau and Tremere, assuming the Tytalus would abstain from the conflict or be just as likely to come to the Diedne's defense.

Their divinatory rituals were unable to pierce the deceptions of the Infernal spreading around House Tytalus.

The Diedne were more surprised and panicked than anyone; not only by the revelation of the Tytalus'

reputation and stoked the flames of war.

Undaunted, the Diedne initiates spread the rituals and magic the Diedne would need to survive, but personal and family ties were often more important than power or skill. Some of the greatest Diedne were left to face the wrath of the Order, and some magi just barely able to master the mysteries were spared, while others volunteered as a rear guard.

The Diedne's reliance on defensive magic and wards made the battle for each covenant a siege and then a bloodbath, and as Latin magi hunted down their members and

NEW SPRING: HIDING AND REAWAKENING

Diedne mysteries were practiced by House Merinita, who gave shelter to the Diedne when they could and may have been given the knowledge as payment, or the Merinita might even have accepted Diedne apprentices into their ranks.

Almost two hundred years later, the sacred oaks are dying and the Diedne are being reborn, old spirits in young bodies, instinctively remembering the mysteries as though they were stories they had been told as children. For some, the rituals were not quite perfect, and a handful of Diedne magi have Awoken early, in 1190 and again in about 1220. The Diedne usually present themselves as Ex Miscellanea or Merinita from another Tribunal, but as magi gather together and the next Grand Tribunal nears, someone will inevitably ask

about one of these itinerant magi and their presence may be revealed. The reawakened Diedne are lost and each one is seeking for the others to agree a common strategy for confronting the Order or flight.

DIEDNE MAGI

The Diedne have a fatalistic view of life, tied to their study of nature and the passing of seasons. The druids certainly took part in the politics of the Celtic tribes as religious authorities and as family, but the druid families (including Diedne's) that joined the Order of Hermes were centred on art and study. They

survived when Christianity replaced the druidic culture by shunning politics altogether and maintaining a strong filial core tradition.

The Diedne accepted loss and the inevitable failure and death of all things. Other Houses, confronted with an enemy, would try to negotiate, barter, or fight, but the Diedne's common response was endurance. They embraced wards and would cast overlapping spells on their covenants and sanctum. While not passive, Diedne magi were more accepting of misfortune and fate.

However, the House followed a stringent family structure, where the head of the family controlled all

major decisions, and delegated authority only on certain matters. This position was not limited by gender. The family patriarch or matriarch decided when to retire, and who would succeed them as leader. In cases where the leader died prior to selecting an heir, leadership fell to the oldest surviving sibling, and then eldest child; in cases where there was contention, a group of three other family leaders would decide the next family leader. This leadership structure is represented in pre-Schism War play as the Oath of Fealty Flaw. While this tradition is still known to Awoken Diedne, and taught to their apprentices, it is not as strictly followed in 1220. The remaining Diedne recognize that flexibility and change are necessary for their continued survival. "We must bend so we do not break," is a common proverb.

PAGAN SORCEROUS

PRACTICE

The druids and the Diedne never saw the clear division between good and evil that Christianity or religions like Zoroastrianism did. Their view mirrored the balance between predators and prey, or the split between the Seelie and Unseelie Courts, where things had a benevolent or malicious nature, but that didn't place someone on an irreversible line or imply friendly or hostile behavior. The philosophies of the established religions seemed too artificial to the Diedne.

Their magic dealt with the natural world, its living things, and the secret places which exist within it. They found ways to better live with the cycle of life and death, sometimes finding ways to manipulate the cycle itself. A mystery cult which evolved out of an amalgam of Celtic practices, their mysteries focused on varieties of reincarnation, harnessing the power within living things, and the creation and utilization of regions. Stories of



human sacrifice grew out of these reincarnation and power-controlling rites. The Diedne's policy of political abstinence meant little was done to curb these rumors.

THE NEED FOR SECRECY

None of the family of Diedne had the gift of prophecy, but were on good relations with those who did. They had enough cryptic divinations to reveal the best and only true method for reintroduction to the Order would be a long, slow process. Those who became sleepers swore not to reveal their return, even to one other, until three hundred years had passed since the Schism War. When they awoke, the Diedne knew they must each train at least two apprentices before the reunion. They realized safety lie in forced ignorance, but survival would require a strong and vibrant population. Publicly revealing their existence before the Diedne numbered at least 100 seemed extremely foolhardy, and doing so without showing they had peacefully participated in Hermetic culture for some time seemed suicidal. Secrecy, therefore, is essential to ensure the House may grow and thrive in the shadow of the current Latin Houses.

CHARACTER CREATION

The Diedne of 1220 are one of two sorts. Those who have awoken from their Sleep, and those who have been trained by the first Awoken. Diedne of all sorts became sleepers, from freshly Gauntleted to House elders. Those wishing to play one of the Awoken face different challenges from those who have been trained by the Awoken, as they acclimate to the new culture surrounding them.

Those trained by the Awoken are faced with hard decisions during character creation—did their parents explain their legacy to them, and if so, how did they react? Those who embrace their Diedne past must operate in the shadows while

furthering the goals of the Awoken. Those who are abhorred by their involuntary induction into the most hated enemy the Order has known in 200 years must learn to keep their heritage hidden while avoiding the requests of their Housemates and concealing the truth about their training from the rest of the Order. Their story might be one of eventual acceptance, a return to the welcoming fold of the Diedne and their pursuit of both rebirth as a House and reintegration into the Order.

The Diedne were fond of epithets, such as “Hag of the Waters” or “the Bloody Hand.” Those apprenticed by the Awoken generally have names appropriate to the region and the 13th century, as the Awoken wish to blend into present-day Mythic Europe. Names common to the Awoken Diedne include:

MALES

Aibhne
Bacrach
Cadadius
Dubcomar
Fathan
Firchisus
Lagicnus Barchedius
Lochra
Lomderg
Luchadmoel
Mogruth
Munnu
Ono
Tages
Taulchan
Trosdan

DRUIDESSES

Ban Draoi
Eithne
Fotla

Gael Chossach (Cossa)
Gelvirea, “holy strength”
Gosvintha, “strong”
Hermangild, “mighty pledge”
Heva, “life”
Hilduara, “battle prudence”
Liuva, “love”
Matasvintha, “mother’s dawn”
Maeve
Milucradh
Muirisc
Radegona, “war council”
Riciberga, “ruling guard”

NEW ABILITY: HOUSE DIEDNE LORE (ARCANE)

This ability represents the (Organization) Lore of House Diedne, providing knowledge of the goals, history, legends, and structure of the House. It is used to recall lineages and sects within the House, but also details the theory, mystery cult rites, and secrets of the Diedne's Nature and Beast oriented magics. This Lore is primarily orally transmitted, as the Diedne are extremely cautious about who possesses it. However, it can be learned through self-discovery. When a magus spends a season initiating the Diedne mysteries detailed here, she gains experience in House Diedne Lore. Specialties: initiations, lineages, legends, sites, Clan Mysteries.

COMMON VIRTUES & FLAWS

Most Diedne characters will likely take flaws such as Cyclic Magic (negative), Deficient Technique (Perdo), Higher Purpose, Necessary Condition, Pagan, or Susceptible to the Divine. Masquerading as members of Ex Miscellanea, they often have Poor Reputations, and foster rumors they are nothing more than barely competent hedge magi.

However, Proud or Reckless Diedne might keep their old names, despite the dangers associated with them, claiming their birthrights as worth the risk. Those who have not yet adjusted to the current era might take Recently Awoken.

House Diedne magi take Diedne Magic as their House Virtue, with no alteration from the Virtue as described in the core rules. (**ArM5**, page 41) If you are playing a saga set before the Schism War, then all Diedne magi replace Dark Secret with Oath of Fealty, representing their allegiance to their House. Consider allowing Diedne magi to break the suggested guideline in the core rules on page 37 and take a second major Hermetic Virtue of Life-linked Spontaneous Magic, if they desire. Other common Virtues include Animal Ken, Cyclic Magic (positive), Inoffensive to Animals, Life Boost, Reserves of Ways of the Forest (Major), Well-Traveled, and Wilderness Sense.

NEW VIRTUES & FLAWS

The following Virtues are common primarily to members of House Diedne. They are generally unsuited to most other magi, but some might be fitting with your troupe's approval.

All Living Things (Major Virtue, Hermetic)

Animal, Corpus, Herbam; when you successfully study one of these Arts (that is, gain at least one experience points from study) you gain an additional experience point in each of the other two. This virtue does not modify experience spent during character creation.

Your nature magics are also more flexible than those other magi; there is no disadvantage to adding a requisite of one of the other Forms to an Animal, Corpus, or Herbam spell.

Hidden Lineage (Minor Flaw, Story)

Your master and his master before him were inducted into House Merinita. After two centuries, only a remnant of their mysteries remain. While you suspect there may be other Diedne within the Order, you do not know for certain. You may take House Diedne Lore as a skill. It requires instruction, research, or discovery to increase your House Diedne Lore and cannot be advanced as a result of practice. It may be increased as a result of adventure with troupe approval.

Knowledge of the Druids (Minor Virtue, Supernatural)

The druids studied the natural world as few others, and remains in the form of truths and folk wisdom. A magi knowledgeable in such lore can make a **Wilderness Sense + Perception** test against an Ease Factor of 9 to get a +3 bonus to a relevant spellcasting roll, such as a spontaneous spell involving the forms of Animal, Aquam, Aurum, Herbam, or Terram. Using this bonus adds a botch die to the relevant roll. One cannot use this ability prior to fast casting a spell, as it requires some deliberation.

Known in the Red Book (Major or Minor Flaw, Story)

Your sigil, or one very much like it, is noted in the Red Book of the Tremere, which records all sigils contemporary to the Schism War. Whether or not you are actually the owner of the documented sigil is up to you and the storyguide, but members of the Burning Acorn Vexillation memorize the sigils; both they and their allies still search for any Diedne who might resurface. Pre-Schism War Diedne who were created with the Flaw "Cabal Legacy" (See *The Mysteries: Revised Edition*, page 20) should convert that flaw to this one.

Recently Awoken (Minor Flaw, Personality)

You have only just emerged from

"sleeping with the trees," and have not acclimated to the current century. Your Living Language abilities are considered 2 less for the first two years of play, and you may not begin the saga with an Area Lore, Etiquette, or Organization Lore ability greater than 2. When interacting with others, a Folk Ken check against an Ease Factor of 6 indicates another character notices your unusual behavior and may react adversely. This odd behavior is noticeable until you have gained one rank in existing Area Lore, Etiquette, or Organization Lore abilities. If you have no experience in those abilities, then it persists until you have an Etiquette ability of 3. This flaw is also suitable to magi who have spent a substantial period in a time-dilated regio or an extraordinary Twilight.

MAGIC OF THE DIEDNE

The magic of the Diedne has its source in the study of the natural world; birds, fish, the sun and the wind, the turning of the seasons, and the great cycle of life. Even the druidic vision of the afterlife was a cycle of passing through one stage to another, rising and falling and sometimes returning to the mortal world.

The druids did not see death as a final fate, and did not see humanity as something separate from the beasts of the forest. Magic lies in all things, and can be found and better utilized by those who know where to look.

Initiating new Mystery Virtues within House Diedne requires either a script for self-initiation, or a script and a Mystagogue. To determine success or failure, the Mystagogue generates an Initiation Total:

Initiation Total: Presence + Diedne Lore + Script Bonus

There is no die roll; either the total is equal to or higher than the Ease Factor for the Initiation and it succeeds, or it is less than the Ease

Factor and it fails, wasting the attempt. For more details, see *The Mysteries: Revised Edition*, pages 13-18.

CORE HOUSE MYSTERIES

The reputation of House Diedne lies in their famed spontaneous magic, but that is only the most visible aspect of deeper mysteries. Their other secrets delve into the connection between nature and man, as well as methods to gather and utilize the magic available in the natural environment. These are only part of the greater body of druidic lore now lost. For ease of reference, the primary two virtues of the House are detailed below:

Diedne Magic (Hermetic, Major): Your magic lineage and traditions are from the druids and the vanquished former house of Diedne, making you especially skills with spontaneous magic. When you cast a spontaneous spell without expanding fatigue, you may choose to divide by

before rolling. This level may include a number of levels of penetration (see **ArM5**). For example you can choose to cast a level 10 affect at level 20 to give a penetration of 10 plus your penetration score.

Roll to cast a fatiguing spontaneous spell. If your result is higher than the level declared, you spend only one Fatigue level as usual. If your result is less than level you declared, you must expend one Fatigue level per five points (or fraction thereof) by which you missed the target level. If you run out of fatigue levels, you take a wound. The number of levels you need for the spell is treated as the amount by which a damage total exceeds your Soak, and you take a corresponding wound. You can kill yourself this way.

This may be used in conjunction with Diedne Magic. A maga with this feature may still cast spontaneous spells normally.

Bonisagus integrated these two

ordinarily gathered from the creature after its death. This adds an additional botch die to the casting for each pawn of vis generated this way.

Initiation of All Living Things

Ease Factor: 21 (Major Virtue known to the Mystagogue)

Script Bonus: +14

Script Details: The Initiate travels to a sacred Diedne grove at least a fortnight away, and on the sunrise of the Autumnal Equinox (+3 Time/location), undergoes a ritual meant to bind them closer to the natural world. The Initiate is tied with supple boughs taken from a Tree of Virtue (+3 Quest), coated with honey and then laid in an ant hill, which results in a Medium wound. (+2 Sympathetic bonus) At sunset, the Initiate is freed with a bone knife carved from a Beast of Virtue. (+3 Quest) This process grants the major Virtue All Living Things as well as the minor Flaw, Lesser Malediction, preventing the Initiate from binding a familiar. (+3 Minor Ordeal)

Initiation of Life-linked Spontaneous Magic

Ease Factor: 21 (Major Virtue known to the Mystagogue)

Script Bonus: +16

Script Details: The Initiate spends a season serving the Mystagogue. (+1 service) At the end of the season, the Mystagogue performs a ritual, symbolic sacrifice of the Initiate using a knife fashioned from both the heartwood from a Tree of Virtue and either the claw or fang from a Beast of Virtue (+6 2 Quests), who awakes able to use Life-linked Spontaneous Magic, but also with the major Flaw, Difficult Longevity Ritual. (+9 Major Ordeal)

Initiation of Forest Lore

Ease Factor: 15 (Minor Virtue known to the Mystagogue)

Script Bonus: +9

Script Details: The Initiate must travel to the "heart of the

THE MAGIC OF THE DIEDNE HAS ITS SOURCE IN THE STUDY OF THE NATURAL WORLD AND THE GREAT CYCLE OF LIFE

5 or by 2. If you choose to divide by 5, you need not roll a stress die, and cannot botch, just as normal. If you choose to divide by 2, you must roll a stress die, and may botch.

When you expend fatigue casting a spontaneous spell, the lowest applicable Art is doubled before the whole total is divided it by 2. You still roll a stress die, and may botch.

Life-Linked Spontaneous Magic (Hermetic, Major): You can do more with spontaneous magic than most magi at the cost of your own life energy. When you decide to use this ability in casting a spontaneous spell, you declare the level of a fact you wish to produce

mysteries into Hermetic Theory, resulting in their existence beyond and after House Diedne. However, they were almost universally limited to members of the House. The Diedne also commonly possessed the minor mystery of Forest Lore, a Supernatural ability seen in *Guardians of the Forest*, page 37, the major mystery of All Living Things (see the Virtue listed above), and another minor mystery of Magical Sacrifice.

Magical Sacrifice (Supernatural, Minor): You can sacrifice a Magic or Faerie creature as a part of ritual spellcasting. Doing so destroys the creature and renders 50% more vis (of the type embodied in the creature) than would be

forest” (or the presence of the Genius Loci) on the first day of spring (+3 Time/location), where they must find and tend a freshly sprouted sapling until the Summer solstice. (+3 Quest) Over this period, the Mystagogue must instruct the Initiate on how to “hear” the forest. (+3 Investment of time)

Initiation of Magical Sacrifice

Ease Factor: 15 (Minor Virtue known to the Mystagogue)

Script Bonus: +8

Script Details: After serving the mystagogue for a season (+1 service), the initiate must enter a regio which touches the Magic Realm and burn/consume/destroy a rook of vis (+1 sacrifice of material wealth) on the winter solstice (+3 Time/Location) in a ritual which results in the Initiate gaining the Temperance Flaw (+3 Minor Ordeal). (Or the Deficient Form Flaw, related to the vis sacrificed.)

MYSTERIES OF THE UNTAMED

Some Diedne mastered the ability to deal with magical beasts or even “sleep with the trees.” These mysteries detail their secrets.

Awakening the Beast of Virtue (Supernatural, Minor): The Diedne magus may transform a beast into a Beast of Virtue through a special Creo Animal ritual. This ritual has a base length of 1 hour and magnitude of 4th, plus 1 hour per magnitude over four. Transforming an animal into a beast of virtue requires three pawns of Animal, Creo, or Vim vis (in any combination) per point of Might granted to the creature. For every 5 points of Might (or fraction thereof) over 0, add 1 magnitude to the ritual.

The beast must remain present and unmoving for the duration of the ritual. For each hour of the ritual, the animal must make a Stamina check against an Ease Factor of 12 (+1 per

previous check), or die from the shock of the transformation. The ritual leader may provide the beast a +1 bonus per 2 levels of House Diedne Lore ability.

The resulting creature has no loyalties to the creator, but an arcane connection exists between the two for 1 month plus 1 month per 5 Might. Unless precautions are taken, it's very possible the animal will harbor some animosity for being put through the ritual.

For example, to create a Raven of Virtue with Might of 10, requires a CrAn30 ritual, 30 pawns of vis, and will take 3 hours to perform. If the ritual is led by a caster with House

Diedne Lore of 4, the bird must make Stamina checks against Ease Factor of 12, 13, and 14 in order to survive and become a Raven of Virtue. The beast gains a +2 bonus on these checks. It will have an arcane connection to the creator for 3 months.

Initiation of Awakening the Beast of Virtue

Ease Factor: 15 (Minor Virtue known to the Mystagogue)

Script Bonus: +12

Script Details: Must safely capture a pregnant forest animal of size -1 or greater and bring it to a sacred Diedne grove at least a fortnight's travel away, where it will



give birth (+3 special place, +3 Quest). During this time, the Mystagogue instructs the Initiate for a season regarding the creation of Beasts of Virtue, culminating in a ritual concluding with the Initiate gaining the Weird Magic Flaw. (+3 teaching, +3 Flaw)

For those with a Familiar, the Familiar and Initiate must travel to a distant Diedne grove on the Spring Solstice (+3 special place). There, the Mystagogue instructs the Initiate for a season regarding the creation of Beasts of Virtue, culminating in a ritual concluding with the Initiate gaining the Weird Magic Flaw. (+3 teaching, +3 Flaw) The bonds of the familiar are broken in this ritual, and it flees into the woods (+3 Sacrifice of value). It cannot be bound as a familiar for a year and a day. If it was a mundane animal, it may still be the subject of this mystery during that time.

Binding of Earth and Heaven (Major, Supernatural): Through a feat of equivalent Re(Mu)Me(An) magics, this Diedne ritual seems to skirt the Limit of Essential Nature by tying a human soul to a Beast of Virtue. In truth, though, what it accomplishes is the transfer of the soul from the human body to the Beast of Virtue's form, infusing that new form (which lacks a soul) with the existing soul.

This is a Re(Mu)Me(An)45 ritual (R:Touch, D: Mom, T:Ind) which transfers the touched individual's soul from their body to the Beast of Virtue's body. The beast must remain present and unmoving for the duration of the ritual, which must penetrate the creature's Might. Upon completion of the ritual, the target human must make a Stamina check against an Ease Factor of 12, or die from the shock of the transformation. For every three ranks of House Diedne Lore possessed by the caster, the target gains a +1 bonus to this transformation check. Unless kept alive by some other form of magic or

constant tending, the soul-less human body dies in (3+Sta) days. Those who willingly sacrifice their human form as part of the ritual gain a +3 bonus to the transformation check. Individuals with a Familiar at the time of transformation suffer a -9 to the check.

The resulting amalgam of creature and human soul is affected by Animal, Corpus, and Mentem magics which penetrate the creature's Might. If the animal body is killed while the human body still lives, the soul can attempt to rejoin it, requiring a Presence check against an Ease Factor of 12. Failure indicates death. Success means the two reunite, but the person must make an immediate Aging Roll, with a penalty equal to (1/1 per week of separation). This penalty does not apply to any resulting Crisis Rolls.

Initiation of Binding of Earth and Heaven

Ease Factor: 21 (Major Virtue known to the Mystagogue)

Script Bonus: +15

Script Details: While accompanied by the Mystagogue, the Initiate must hunt a Size 0 or greater Beast of Virtue, and capture it unharmed. (+3 Quest, +3 Investment of time) They must then commune with the animal, learning its history and acquiring its uncoerced forgiveness— either through Animal Ken or Mentem magics. (+3 Quest) Then, bound and wrapped in the skin of a different Beast of Virtue, the Initiate is thrown into a body of water. If the initiate escapes before drowning, the ritual is completed as the wrapped hide of the Beast of Virtue is ceremonially stripped from the Initiate by the Mystagogue. This reveals the mystery of Binding of Earth and Heaven to the Initiate, but inflicts the minor Flaws of Limited Magic Resistance for two of the three forms of Animal, Corpus, and Mentem. (+6 for a Medium ordeal inflicting two minor Flaws)

AN DHAIR MOHR, OR "SLEEPING WITH THE TREES" (MAJOR, SUPERNATURAL)

Trees were sacred to the druids. The Romans razed their groves in Gaul to eliminate their political opposition, but the more terrible consequence was the destruction of the sacred oaks binding them to the world.

The magus binds his spirit and his Gift to a sacred tree. Upon his death, his spirit merges with the tree and slumbers. While sleeping, the tree serving as the seed is imbued with a Magic Might score limited to the highest Technique and Form Combination. While the magi lives, he is linked to the tree and it serves as an Arcane Connection to him. The Magic Might of the tree serves for magical defense but doesn't prevent a mundane hazard, like fire. The Diedne usually cast wards and other protective spells around the tree or the whole forest, and some invented complex rituals allowing them more awareness of their vicinity while Sleeping.

The ritual to bind a magus' spirit to a tree takes a full day, from dawn to dusk and a number of pawns of vis equal to (the level of the local aura + (Final Might of the Tree/5)). It requires a Presence + House Diedne Lore roll against an Ease Factor of (3 * (Final Might of the Tree/5)).

The enchantment ends in two possible ways. First, a child born in the vicinity of the sacred tree will be touched by its magic, and the magus' spirit enters. This child has the Gift, Hermetic, and Supernatural Virtues and Flaws of the bound magus. Second, if the tree dies, the magus is reborn, but must make an immediate Aging Crisis roll. The new body is otherwise physically the same as the body the target had before dying; all Decrepitude points are eliminated but any previous Longevity Ritual is no

Destination	Ease Factor
Regio Level where the ley line connects	Destination level x 3
Going up or down a level in the regio	Current regio level x 3
Traveling a path without an arcane connection to the destination	((Number of days/5) x 3)
Entering the Magic Realm	(13 – current aura) x 3
Leaving the Magic Realm	(13 – destination aura) x 3

longer in effect.

Initiation of An Dhair Mohr

Ease Factor: 21 (Major Virtue known to the Mystagogue)

Script Bonus: +16

Script Details: In a ritual held within a sacred Diedne grove, the Initiate gives a token sacrifice of blood and undergoes a symbolic burial and rebirth from the loam—resulting in a Light Wound. (+1 Sympathetic Bonus) Upon completion of this ceremony, the Initiate learns the major Virtue of An Dhair Mohr, but gains the Flaw: Restriction: “Must carry a Token of Bound Tree or Blooded Grove to Cast.” (+9 Major Ordeal) Additionally, the Initiate’s Essential nature is entwined within the link to the grove and the bound tree, gaining the minor Flaw, Weak Enchanter (+3 Minor Ordeal). Finally, this connection between the Initiate and the grove or the bound tree also results in the minor Flaw, Limited Magic Resistance (Herbam). (+3 Minor Ordeal)

OF THE HIDDEN WAYS AND PLACES

Celtic myths are replete with stories of the tuath, underworlds, and journeys into lands beyond life and death and while these are often

confused with the Faerie lands, the druids and the Diedne possess a different mystery. Stories claimed they could create mantles or cloaks to hide them from mortal eyes. What they truly mastered is a magic similar to the Arcadian Travel mystery (*Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, page 92), except the Diedne could open paths and cross regio layers associated with the Magic Realm.

These paths often parallel faerie trods or ancient game trails, and some call them “ley lines.” Unlike Arcadian Travel, where the Merinita can seek out fantastic, never-before-seen locales in the Faerie Realm, the mystery of Hidden Ways and Places requires an arcane connection, either to the beginning or the end of a ley line, or to regio.

Ley lines connect regiones at their deepest levels, and these levels must match. The journey from one mundane location to another might require passing through several different regiones, but occasionally a regio network will allow for faster travel.

The Diedne could walk these paths without an arcane connection to a particular destination, but in those cases, they were limited to the regiones which connected to the regio where they entered. Even in these cases, it is possible to become lost in the Magic Realm.

Traveling using this mystery requires the following check:

Hidden Ways and Places Total:
stress die + Perception + Diedne Lore + Aura

Botches on this roll unwittingly lead the traveler into the Magic Realm. This check is made against the Ease Factors in the nearby table.

The following Abilities or Virtues may modify the total:

- Knowledge of the Druids
- Possessing an Arcane connection to the destination reduces the Ease Factor by 6

HIDDEN WAYS EXAMPLE

Maeve wishes to travel from the Massif Central in northern Narbonnais, to an old Diedne site in Gascony. This trip would ordinarily take her through dangerous lands near Toulouse over the course of fifteen days. However, the storyguide determines there is a direct ley line between the two sites, connected on either end by a 2-layer regio with an aura of 1.

She has an arcane connection to the starting point, but not the terminus.

By using the Hidden Way and Places mystery, she can make the trip with the following rolls:

- Entering the starting point at the second level of the region EF 0 (no roll needed because of the arcane connection)
- Traveling without an arcane connection to the terminus EF 9 ((15/5) x 3, round up)
- Leaving the terminus at the destination regio EF 6 (this requires a Hidden Ways and Places roll)

So Maeve will need to make a stress roll of Perception (-2) + Diedne Lore (7) + Aura (1) against both targets. Once she has the arcane connection at the ley line’s terminus, she won’t need to roll the check at all when making this trip. However, until she does,

- Magic Sensitivity
- Ways of the (Terrain)
- Wilderness Sense

A Diedne may take along a number of individuals equal to their Diedne Lore score, as long as the magus has an arcane connection to each of them. Actual time required to make journeys along a ley line seems to be roughly one tenth of the time necessary in the mundane world, but there are some paths, many of which pass through the Magic Realm, which are faster.

Initiation of Hidden Ways and Places

Ease Factor: 15 (Minor Virtue known to the Mystagogue)

Script Bonus: +10

Script Details: The Initiate must enter a regio and retrieve a vis-filled tree seed and bring it to a distant sacred Diedne Grove with a regio. (+3 Quest) The Initiate plants and nurtures the seed for a season, serving the grove. (+1). During this time, the Mystagogue also teaches the Initiate the methods for traveling Ley lines (+3) which culminates in the Initiate gaining the minor Flaw, Motion Sickness. (+3 Minor Flaw).

For more experienced Mystagogues, a version of this initiation exists which does not result in Motion Sickness.

INTRODUCING HOUSE DIEDNE

House Diedne, as presented here, is no great conspiracy or villain. They are a tradition which refused to change in the face of the Divine, in the face of the religious zeal surrounding it on every side. When their attempts to survive, coexist, and maintain their way of life inspired a part of the Order to declare war, they sought a way to endure and later return. These are stories about the Diedne attempting to re-enter Mythic Europe and the Order of Hermes.

Will the Order accept them, or do its members still cling to and dogmatically believe the propaganda of their forefathers?

For Diedne attempting to survive alone, after Awakening, life may not necessarily be harsh, but advancing one's Arts or instructing an apprentice will be difficult. New laboratories and Longevity Rituals must be established, and contemporary customs must be learned. The Awakened could reach out to their traditional allies in

Houses Jerbiton and Merinita and the Bjørnaer. Without the (unlikely) survival of a cache of books or vis, a House Diedne member will need to find and study just vis or else risk discovery through interaction with the rest of the Order. The first wave of apprentices from such isolated magi will likely suffer from the Weak Parens Flaw unless their parens is dedicated. If groups of Diedne Awaken together, their chances of an improved suitation greatly increase.

STORY SEED: UNWITTING GARDNER

Carrying out the wishes of his now dead pater, an eremite magus Ex Miscellanea seeks out and catalogs the Magical trees of the Tribunal—either the Loch Leglean, Normandy, Provencal, Rhine, or Stonehenge Tribunals. He has collected and fixed arcane connections, documented their strengths and locations, and visits them over the course of a season every three years now. While awkward with other people, his Reputation as an expert on Herbam is known within the Tribunal.

At a chance meeting with this magus, either while he asks for hospitality, on the road, or during tribunal, he speaks with the player characters, clearly distraught. It seems he came upon a particular trio of magic oak trees as they were being cut down by a group of woodcutters. These were the first ones shown to him by his pater and furious, he killed the peasants.

As he turned from the deed, he saw three people emerge from the freshly severed stumps. They greeted him with “Ave, sodale.” Panicking, he startled and fell, then began to cast again, but the people disappeared. He's not sure, but he thinks he heard one say “Diedne.” Was he trained by one of the Awoken? Has he been tending sleeping Diedne all this time? And if so, how will he react now? How will the magi react when they

realize this magus may have a map to every escaped Diedne in the Tribunal?

STORY SEED: RACING THE RED BOOK

In the Transylvanian Tribunal, the Tremere keep the Red Book, a record of all known Diedne sigils collected in the years following the Schism War. The unexpected arrival of a Transylvanian Redcap brings someone familiar with its contents to the covenant. The redcap observes the sigil of an awoken Diedne character and begins asking questions—either about the character or the character's pater. How will the Diedne handle the situation, and will the consequences come back to haunt the character later?

STORY SEED: THE AWAKENING'S MIDWIFE

In about 1250, the majority of the Diedne “sleeping with the trees” will awaken in their groves across England, Ireland, Normandy, Provence, Scotland, and Wales. One already Awoken Diedne wished to smooth the way for fellow members of his house, and trained the player character, his apprentice, in methods for identifying the groves of his fellow sleeping druids. As he died, he charge his filia with seeking out the remaining Sleepers and gathering them as they rejoined the world. However, did he give her the full story, or does she believe she is witnessing a magical breakthrough of Hermetic proportions?

MAEVE EX MISCELLANEA (SECRETLY OF HOUSE DIEDNE)

As presented, Maeve might be masquerading as an active eremite member of House Ex Miscellanea residing in the Massif Central of the Provencal Tribunal. She is seeking an apprentice, and may have just completed one of the player character's training, teaching the Parma that winter. She might ask her filius to stay one more season, assisting her with a Longevity Ritual, and offering to perform one for the filius when the time comes. She also tells the magus to never share their teachings with another member of the Order unless they offer the proper greeting (which requires Diedne Lore to recognize).

Characteristics: Int +2, Per -2, Pre +2, Com -1, Str -1, Sta +3, Dex +1, Qik 0

Size: 0

Age: 64 (52; Longevity Ritual Modifier total: 8; +8 Ritual, +0 Living Conditions; -6 Age Penalty)

Decrepitude: 0 (2)

Warping Score: 2 (11)

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: The Gift; Hermetic Magus; All Living Things*, An Dhair Mohr*, Binding of Heaven and Earth*, Diedne Magic, Of Hidden Ways and Paths*, Life-linked Spontaneous Magic; Awakening the Beast of Virtue*, Forest Lore, Magical Sacrifice*, Improved Characteristics, Knowledge of the Druids, Learn from Mistakes (Forest Lore), Skilled Parens, Tough, Well-Traveled; Dark Secret (House Diedne), Necessary Condition (Must be painted with woad), Pagan, Restriction (Must carry a Token of Bound Tree or Blooded Grove to Cast)*; Cyclic Magic (Winter), Hedge Wizard, Known in the Red Book, Lesser Malediction (Cannot bind Familiar)*, Limited Magic Resistance (Animal, Corpus, Herbam)*, Susceptible to the Divine, Temperance*, Weak Enchanter*, Weird Magic*; * indicates a Mystery-initiated Virtue or Flaw.

Personality Traits: Dedicated +3, Persistent +3, Tough +3

Reputations: Witch in the Woods 4 (Local), Capable Mystagogue 3 (11C Diedne), Hedge Wizard 3 (13C Hermetic), Reclusive 2 (13C Hermetic)

Combat:

Dodge: Init 0, n/a, Defense +4, n/a

Fist: Init 0, Attack +2, Defense +2, Damage -1

Soak: +6

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15) Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Abilities: Area Lore: Cumbria 3 (Vis Sites), Area Lore: Provence 3 (Vis Sites) Artes Liberales 1 (alphabets), Athletics 2 (hiking), Bargain 2 (setting prices), Brawl 2 (dodge), Charm 1 (authority figures), Code of Hermes 2 (Crimes), Concentration 2

(avoiding Twilight), Craft:Woodcarving 3 (details), Dead Language: Latin 4 (Hermetic Terms), Etiquette 1 (mannerisms), Folk Ken 2 (sensing moods), Forest Lore: Massif Central 3 (10; Finding Vis), Living Language: French 4 (Provencal) Living Language: Gaelic 5 (Welsh), Magic Theory 4 (12; vis use), Organization Lore: Diedne House Lore 7 (2; initiations), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes Lore 2 (Diedne Covenants), Parma Magica 3 (Vim), Penetration 2 (Vim), Philosophiae 2 (Ritual Casting), Swim 1 (lakes), Teaching 3 (single student) 366

Arts: Cr 14 (+1), In 5, Mu 5, Pe 6, Re 10 (+3); An 16 (+8), Aq 5, Au 5, Co 17, He 16 (+8), Ig 5, Im 5, Me 5, Te 5, Vi 10 (+4)

Twilight Scars: Animals of the same type all look the same to the maga. This animal is up to the storyguide, some suggestions include cats, crows, dogs, horses, or wolves.

Equipment: Robes, female peasant's clothing, quarterstaff, small fetishes and amulets.

Encumbrance: 0

Spells Known:

Agony of the Beast (PeAn 15/+22)

Panic of the Elephant's Mouse (ReAn 15/+26)

Chirurgeon's Healing Touch (CrCo 20/+31)

Purification of Festering Wounds (CrCo 20/+31)

Restoration of the Defiled Form (CrCo 25/+31)

Cheat the Reaper (CrCo 30/+31)

Claim the Dangling Foes (ReCo 20]/+27) (As per Lifting the Dangling Puppet, but with Group)

Vanishing Escape (ReCo 20/+27) (As Seven-League Stride, but destination must be within 500 paces)

Shriek of the Impending Shafts (InHe 15/+21)

Lord of the Trees (ReHe 25/+26)

Demon's Eternal Oblivion (PeVi 10/+16)

Aegis of the Hearth (ReVi 15/+20)

Vis: 9 pawns of Vim vis in amulets and fetishes.

Appearance: An older Scottish woman with salt-and-pepper hair in a bun, Maeve has a slight build and is quite wiry. She smiles warmly, but there's just a little too much zeal in her gaze for most people.

Casting Sigil: Animal tracks appear on the ground, moving away from her and growing larger (in size or number) with the spell's magnitude. There is the sound of the animal(s) moving away and the tracks remain, if the ground supports it.

Design Note: Maeve has two major Hermetic Virtues, despite the guideline on **ArM5**, page 37. Additionally, she has more Story Flaws than most characters should have, however her Flaws are thematically appropriate, and two are the result of her House. Any of the minor Flaws could be replaced with Reclusive, in

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(Continued from page 34)

which case increase the Reputation to 3 and give her the appropriate Personality Trait. The Forest Lore Virtue is detailed on page 37 of *Guardians of the Forest*; if you lack this book, consider Wilderness Sense from **ArM5**, page 50. Maeve is designed with 30xp per year to the age of 49, and then used Detailed Character Creation from 1205 to 1220 to simulate the lack of resources in her isolation. She had a Longevity Ritual bonus of +9 until 45, then created two rituals later, providing her current Longevity Ritual bonus. She was initiated in some Mysteries she cannot yet accomplish (Binding of Heaven and Earth) in order to preserve the knowledge beyond the Schism War.

Maeve entered her sleep with the trees at the age of 45, and Awoke in 1201 when lightning during a thunderstorm split her

tree in half. After spending four years acclimating to the new state of the world, creating a new laboratory, gathering vis and reestablishing her Longevity Ritual, she then took an apprentice from Wales and relocated to the Massif Central of Provence.

After establishing a small cottage near an abandoned and apparently forgotten Diedne sacred grove, she began teaching her young protégé. She attended the 1207 tribunal gathering long enough to register with the Praeco and Quaesitors, and told the Redcaps she hadn't yet established a sanctum. However, something about the Merinita Praeco frightened her, and she has not attended tribunal since.



REDCAP TRAINING PACKAGES

The Training Packages from Groggs are not only useful for creating standard grogs and companions but can be used for creating Hermetic magi, as detailed in Mark Shirley's recent article in **Sub Rosa Issue 11**, *Training Packages for Magi*. There is one common character type that is not well covered by these existing guidelines however – the unGifted Redcap companion.

This article provides suggestions on how to adapt the existing guidelines from Groggs for companion level Redcap player characters, and allows the rapid creation of storyguide characters or characters a few decades from apprenticeship.

A sample standard companion level character created using this method is also provided, together with variations reflecting the character just after completing their Gauntlet and at the time of their retirement from active messenger duties.

SUPPLEMENTS USED IN THIS ARTICLE

Apart from the **ArM5** core rulebook, the following article requires the Groggs supplement. The Mercere chapter of *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages* would be of great use as a background and the rules for Travel and Wondrous Items from *City & Guild* may also be necessary to help flesh out a Redcap character, but are not necessarily required.

PRE-APPRENTICESHIP

The first step is to choose an appropriate childhood for the Redcap from the ones listed in **ArM5**, page 31 or *Groggs*, page 66. All childhoods except Feral Childhood are likely to be appropriate, although Covenant Bred and Traveling Childhoods may be most applicable.

You may also decide to choose one or more standard packages to reflect life before apprenticeship. Unlike Gifted magi, Redcaps do not necessarily train their apprentices young – some Redcaps are recruited into the Order much later in life to foster their particular skills or after a period of working as grog level assistants or

By LACHIE HAYES

lesser covenfolk for Redcaps and Mercere magi.

The following core packages provide the basics for a life serving the Order of Hermes:



Packages	5-year	3-year	Notes
Option 1	4	0	Add 50 XP as per Well-Traveled Virtue
Option 2	4	1	Add 5 XP
Option 4	3	2	Add 35 XP
Option 4	2	4	Add 20 XP
Option 5	1	5	Add 50 XP as per Well-Traveled Virtue
Option 6	1	6	Add 5 XP
Option 7	0	6	Add 30 XP and 50 XP as per Well-Traveled Virtue

REDCAP GROUNDING

Either of these packages provide the basic education for an unGifted Redcap, providing rudimentary knowledge of the Order of Hermes (equivalent to Code of Hermes 1 and Order of Hermes Lore 1) plus the basic ability to read and write Latin 3.

Three Years: +5 Artes Liberales, +30 Latin, +5 Code of Hermes, +5 Organization Lore: Order of Hermes.

Five Years: +5 Artes Liberales, +30 Latin, +15 Code of Hermes, +5 Organization Lore: Order of Hermes, +15 Area Lore: Tribunal

MECHANICS OF A REDCAP APPRENTICESHIP

Although the content of a typical Redcap “apprenticeship” may vary considerably, the standard length of training is 15 years, the same as for Gifted Hermetic magi. The Redcap Major Virtue or Lone Redcap Minor Virtue (see *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 106) provide 300 XP to be spent on Abilities plus the effects of the Well-Traveled Virtue, which provides an additional 50 XP that can be spent on a selection of appropriate abilities (see above). As the gain per year equals an averages of 23 XP, this does not mesh well with the existing Training Package system presented in *Grogs* which assumes 15XP per year or the expanded system presented for magi in **Sub Rosa issue 11**, which factors in XP spent on Arts and learning formulaic spells.

The simplest way to account for this is to choose four 5-year packages from *Grogs* or a single 5-year package and five 3-year packages and then spend the additional 50 XP from the Well-Traveled Virtue on the appropriate Abilities. Several modified packages are provided below to aid in spending the additional XP gained from this Virtue.

Alternatively, consider that this period provides an equivalent of 23 years of experience, allocating 15 XP to each year similar to a mundane character such as a grog and then choosing packages accordingly.

The various options are reflected by the nearby table.

Although some extra unassigned XP is inevitable using this method and you must still be careful to assign at least 50 XP towards the Abilities indicated in the Well-Traveled Virtue, this technique is generally faster and more flexible. It also allows the Redcap to choose from the range of new and existing 3-year and 5-year training packages.

NEW TRAINING PACKAGES

The following packages may be appropriate for Redcaps with unusual backgrounds, but may require appropriate Virtues or Flaws to access the included Abilities. The Artist and Hermetic Politician Packages were first presented in **Sub Rosa issue 11**, *Training Packages for Magi* by Mark Shirley but have been reproduced here for convenience.

ARTIST

This package includes a small amount of experience in an Ability that permits the artist to source materials or find patrons. An Artistic Reputation increases like an Ability (see *Art & Academe*, Chapter 8), principally from the creation of works of art: one experience point is gained when the Aesthetic Quality of a piece of artwork is at least three times greater than the character’s current Reputation.

Three years: +30 Craft: (any) or Profession: (Performer); +5 Bargain or Charm; +10 experience points in Artistic Reputation

HEDGE WIZARD

(SUPERNATURAL AND ARCANE)

This package is appropriate for Redcaps with at least one Supernatural Ability associated with a separate Ability score such as Animal Ken, Dowsing, Enchanting (Ability), Magic Sensitivity, Premonitions, Second Sight, Sense Holiness and Unholiness, Wilderness Sense or another Supernatural Ability from later **ArM5** supplements provided they have the appropriate Supernatural Virtue. This package combines well with the Magician or modified Cultist packages from *Grogs* to represent a character with supernatural links to the Faerie Realm.

Three years: +30 Hedge Ability, +15 Concentration or Penetration

Five years: +50 Hedge Ability A, +15 Concentration or Penetration, +10 Magic Lore or Hedge Ability B

Together with the Cultist package from *Grogs*, this package may be useful when creating Infernalist Goliards of the Ordo Vagorum (see *Realms of Power: the Infernal*, page 139 for details of Infernalist Goliards and *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, pages 93-94 for details of the Goliard Societas).

HERMETIC POLITICIAN

Although clearly useful to magi, this package may be applicable to Redcaps.

Three Years: +15 Organization Lore: Order of Hermes; +5 Folk Ken or

Leadership; +15 Intrigue; +10 Area Lore: Tribunal or Code of Hermes

INITIATE

This package simulates the acquisition of Esoteric Mysteries through Initiation as for Hermetic magi, a process which is usually best handled during play. If the Initiation Script imposes an Ordeal Flaw as well as a Mystery Virtue, then this package is usually sufficient but the character may be required to spend more time meeting the specific requirements. This may work well combined with a modified form of the standard Cultist package from Grog.

Three Years: +20 Cultic Ability, +15 Organization Lore: Mystery Cult, initiation into a mystery (1 season)

For most Redcaps, the Mystery Cult is the Cult of Heroes detailed in *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 96, although some may belong to other Esoteric Mystery Cults that accept unGifted members as detailed in *The Mysteries: Revised Edition* such as the Knights of the Green Stone. The Cultic Ability varies by Mystery Cult – for the Cult of Heroes the Cultic Ability is usually Leadership.

LOREMASTER (ARCANE)

This package is useful for characters with knowledge of the supernatural Realms.

Three Years: +15 (Realm) Lore A, +15 (Realm) Lore B, +15 (Realm) Lore C

Five Years: +30 (Realm) Lore A, +30 (Realm) Lore B, +15 (Realm) Lore C

VIRTUES PROVIDING ADDITIONAL XP

Similar modified packages can readily be created for use with other Minor Virtues that grant additional XP such as Arcane Lore, Educated, Educated (Islamic), Privileged Upbringing, Vernacular Education and Warrior but are beyond the scope of this article.

Optional Rule: Very Well-Traveled Redcaps

Although the standard Redcap

MESSENGER (ACADEMIC OR NONE)

This package reflects experience undertaking the basic duties of an unGifted Redcap, providing further knowledge of the Order of Hermes and their local tribunal region.

Three Years: +20 (Area) Lore: Tribunal, +15 Latin or (Living) Language, +5 Code of Hermes, +5 Organization Lore: Order of Hermes +5.

Five Years: +30 (Area) Lore: Tribunal, +15 Latin or (Living) Language, +15 Code of Hermes, +15 Organization Lore: Order of Hermes.

SPECIALIST (ANY OR NONE)

This package allows the creation of characters with a single specialty in one chosen Ability. Note that a starting character may not have a score of greater than 5 (75 XP) unless they have an Affinity in that Ability or begin with an age of at least 30 years old.

Three Years: +45 Specialty Ability

Five Years: +75 Specialty Ability

TRAINING PACKAGES FOR THE WELL-TRAVELED VIRTUE

As noted above, all standard Redcaps and Lone Redcaps possess the benefits of the Well-Traveled Virtue and gain 50 XP to spend on Living Languages, (Area)

Virtues include the benefits of the Well-Traveled Virtue, choosing the Well-Traveled Virtue in addition may be appropriate for some character concepts. If approved by the Troupe, this option this combination then provides an additional 50 XP to spend on the listed Abilities. Effectively the Redcap can then choose 2 of the modified Training Packages detailed above.

Lore, and Bargain, Carouse, Charm, Etiquette, Folk Ken, or Guile. Instead of distributing these points as indicated above, a player may choose to take one of the modified three year packages detailed below. Each package focuses on one of the above Abilities and provides a useful shorthand means to spend the additional 50 XP and fulfill the requirements of this Virtue.

Each of these packages may also be used by non-Redcap characters with the Well-Traveled Virtue. The extra 5 XP remains has been assigned as the standard 3-year package spends only 45 XP, but these packages can be readily adjusted for use a standard 3-year package where noted for use later in Redcap creation or used while creating standard characters.

CHARMER (MODIFIED)

This package is the same non-career package as the one presented in Grog, except that the 5 XP in Intrigue and the extra 5 XP from the Well-Traveled Virtue are shifted to Folk Ken and Guile.

50 XP Package: +30 Charm, +10 Folk Ken, +10 Guile.

CONMAN (MODIFIED)

This package is the same career package as the one presented in Grog, except that the 15 XP in Intrigue has been added to Guile and the extra 5 XP from the Well-Traveled Virtue added to Charm.

50 XP Package: +20 Charm, +30 Guile

COURTIER (MODIFIED)

This package is the same career package as the one presented in Grog, except that the 15 XP in Intrigue and the extra 5 XP from the Well-Traveled Virtue are split equally between Charm and Folk Ken.

50 XP Package: +10 Charm, +30 Etiquette, +10 Folk Ken

GOSSIP (New)

Three Years: Charm +15, Folk Ken +30

50 XP Package: Charm +20, Folk Ken +30

Five Years: Carouse +5, Charm +15, Folk Ken +50, Intrigue +5

HAGGLER (New)

Three Years: Bargain +30, Charm +15

50 XP Package: Bargain +30, Charm +20

Five Years: Bargain +50, Charm +15, Folk Ken +5, Guile +5

HARLOT (MODIFIED)

This package is the same career package as the one presented in *Gmgs*, except that the 5 XP in (Organization) Lore and the extra 5 XP from the Well-Traveled Virtue are concentrated on Carouse or Etiquette.

50 XP Package: +20 Charm, +30 Carouse or Etiquette

LINGUIST (New)

This package focusing on Living Languages is useful for characters who must act as translators or merchants who deal with multiple customers that each speak different unrelated languages.

Three Years: +15 (Living) Language A, +15 (Living) Language B, +15 (Living) Language C

50 XP Package: +20 (Living) Language A, +15 (Living) Language B, +15 (Living) Language C

Five Years: +30 (Living) Language A, +30 (Living) Language B, +15 (Living) Language C

TOURIST (New)

Three Years: +30 (Area) Lore A, +15 (Area) Lore B

50 XP Package: +30 (Area) Lore A, +20 (Area) Lore B

Five Years: +30 (Area) Lore A, +30 (Area) Lore B, +15 (Area) Lore

TRAVELER (New)

Three Years: +15 (Area) Lore, +15 Folk Ken, +15 (Living) Language

50 XP Package: +20 (Area) Lore, +15 Folk Ken, +15 (Living) Language

Five Years: +30 (Area) Lore, +30 Folk Ken, +15 (Living) Language

WASTREL (MODIFIED)

This package is the same career package as the one presented in *Gmgs*, except that the 5 XP in Brawl and the extra 5 XP from the Well-Traveled Virtue have been added to Guile.

50 XP Package: +30 Carouse, +5 Folk Ken, +15 Guile

Five Years: +5 Brawl, +50 Carouse, +5 Folk Ken, +15 Guile

POST-APPRENTICESHIP

Choosing packages following apprenticeship should follow the usual five year / three year pattern outlined in *Gmgs*—



STREAMLINED DESIGN: REDCAP TRAINING TEMPLATES

The following templates of packages cover some of the basic Redcap archetypes as detailed in *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, Chapter 3: House Mercere and allow rapid creation of a 23 year old Redcap companion fresh out of their Gauntlet – examples of each will be presented in the Appendix following to allow rapid Redcap creation. More advanced characters can be created by choosing additional Training Packages and accounting for Aging and Warping as detailed above.

All these templates assume a free choice of Childhood, a three year Redcap Grounding Virtue prior to beginning apprenticeship, 50 XP spent on one of the modified packages suitable for the Well-Traveled Virtue and then use of Option 5 noted above (5 three year packages and a single 5 year package in their area of specialty). The Well-Traveled modified Training Package is given first (see above), followed by the five year package (denoted with an asterisk), and then the remaining 5 three year packages.

The Alpine template is an example Tribunal specific template appropriate for Redcaps trained in the Greater Alps Tribunal. Bloodcap, Goliard and Milvus are templates suitable for members of the respective Societates Merceris detailed in *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, Chapter 3: Mercere. Bloodcaps are usually custodian style Redcaps but fulfil slightly different roles to their mundane brethren. The Goliard template above is suited for Infernalist unGifted Mercere – uncorrupted members of the Ordo Vagorum may be better represented by either the Minstrel or Vagabond template. The Milvus template is designed to account for their skills as archivists and their reliance on traveling in animal shape using magic.

Alpine: Traveler; Linguist*; Archer or Scout, Athlete, Forager, Messenger, Rider.

Banker: Hagglar; Trader*; Loremaster, Scribe (twice), Trader (twice),

Bloodcap: Traveler, Sentry*; Brawler, Pikeman (twice), Scout (twice).

Custodian: Traveler, Sentry*; Brawler, Leader, Scout, Sentry, Woodsman.

Enforcer: Traveler, Soldier*; Archer or Pikeman, Athlete, Brawler (twice), Soldier

Goliard: Wastrel, Gossip*; Conman or Cultist, Harlot, Hedge Wizard or Specialist, Minstrel, Storyteller

Herald: Traveler, Messenger*; Athlete, Forager or Woodsman, Messenger, Rider or Animal Trainer, Tinker.

Merchant: Traveler, Hagglar*; Courtier or Conman, Rider, Sentry or Scribe, Trader (twice).

Mercenary: Traveler, Soldier*; Archer or Sentry, Brawler, Forager, Leader, Soldier

Milvus: Linguist, Messenger*; Brawler, Forager, Traveler, Messenger, Scribe.

Minstrel: Traveler, Minstrel*; Gossip, Hedge Wizard or Specialist, Linguist, Storyteller, Wastrel

Spy: Conman, Harlot*; Brawler, Courtier, Footpad, Linguist, Specialist

Vagabond: Tourist, Wastrel*; Conman or Footpad, Harlot, Linguist, Tinker, Sailor or Tumbler

for all Redcaps that deliver messages in the course of their normal duties but the Hermetic Politician and Artist Training Packages from *Training Packages for Magi* may be appropriate for Redcap characters with a compatible role.

AGING AND WARPING FOR REDCAPS

Although mundanes, Redcaps have access to a Longevity Ritual once they begin making Aging rolls unless they only have the Lone Redcap Minor Virtue. The basic Longevity Ritual created for a Redcap has a Lab Total of 50, which translates into a decreased benefit of -5 to the characters Aging Score as the Redcap is a mundane and not a magus.

Rules for Aging are given in *Grogs*, Chapter 5 but use the expanded Aging Chart presented in **Sub Rosa issue 11** to reflect the effects of a Longevity Ritual. Apparent Age increases by (10 – Aging Score) years each decade with a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 10 years, meaning that unless they are rewarded with a stronger Longevity Ritual in return for exceptional service, most Redcaps age 5 years for every decade of life.

Unlike their Gifted cousins Redcaps do not gain Warping from magical botches and do not experience Twilight. However, once they begin to use a Longevity Ritual they gain 1 warping Point per year for being under the influence of a constant mystical effect. Thus every three year package grant 3 Warping points and every five year package adds 5 Warping points.

TRAINING AN APPRENTICE

Redcaps often train several mundane apprentices, but unlike Hermetic magi there are no minimum Art scores required, merely an expectation that the senior Redcap will ensure the apprentice is capable of carrying out their duties independently. The standard Trainer packages listed in *Grogs* may be appropriate, particularly if the Redcap will be predominantly training his apprentice by himself.

unlike Gifted Hermetic magi, Redcaps are treated as companions thereafter in character creation and gain only 15 XP per

year to spend on Abilities.

The new Messenger package is suitable

Many older Redcaps travel with their apprentices, teaching them as they travel through Exposure. It is a common practice for retired Redcaps to help train the apprentices of younger Redcaps for up to 2 seasons per year.

RETIREMENT

Whether due to age, infirmity, Warping or choice, some Redcaps become unable to deliver messages for the Order and retire from active service. According to Andrew Smith's Ultimate Aging and Warping Simulation (see xxx), the median age for mundanes living under reasonable living conditions is around 60 years, but the use of a Level 50 Longevity Ritual may push this out to 80-90 years for Redcaps. Their "active" lifespan where they are capable of carrying out the physical duties of a messenger is likely to be shorter however.

Many older Redcaps still serve the House in other less physical ways: training young Redcaps, running inns, hospices and other establishments that serve as Mercer Houses, or applying their skills to the overall administration of the messenger service.

See the Retired Redcap Minor Virtue below for further details.

EXPULSION

Particularly wayward, significantly dangerous or just repeatedly troublesome Redcaps may rarely be cast out of the House to protect its reputation as reliable messengers. This is usually only after repeated attempts by the Tribunal's senior Redcap to rehabilitate the wayward rogue and follows a stern warning from the Primus of House Mercere to the offender to repent or be declared orbus.

NEW VIRTUES AND FLAWS

The following Virtues and Flaws are appropriate for Redcap characters. Several Virtues are modifications of the Linguist Minor Virtue that first appeared in *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 25.

The Retired Redcap Virtue is a modification of the Lone Redcap Virtue

TEMPLATES FOR RETIRED REDCAPS

The following 9-year templates are suitable for a retired Redcap (see below).

The first template suits a character that has retired to help run the administration of Harco or one of the other major covenants. The Innkeeper template is useful for a character that has elected to remain in service by running either a wayside inn or traveler's hospice, which may or may not also serve as the Tribunal's main Mercer House. The midwife template reflects training for a character skilled

detailed in the same Mercere chapter.

DIPLOMAT

Minor General Virtue

The character is extremely proficient in learning Abilities related to diplomacy and court life. All Study Totals for Charm, Etiquette, Folk Ken, Guile and Intrigue are increased by a quarter, as any experience points put into these Abilities at character generation.

NEGOTIATOR

Minor General Virtue

The character is extremely proficient in learning Abilities related to persuasion. All Study Totals for Bargain, Charm, Folk Ken, Guile and Leadership are increased by a quarter, as any experience points put into these Abilities at character generation.

RETIRED REDCAP

Minor Social Status Virtue

This character once trained and served as a Redcap, but no longer lives at a covenant nor serves House Mercere actively carrying messages or performing other official duties. He has handed back his symbol of office, his Redcap pin, and is no longer entitled to be active in the politics of the House or the Order as a whole, but is still considered a member of the Order of Hermes. The character thus does not receive magic items, having handed them back or passed them on to younger

in helping female Redcaps and the families of male Redcaps produce healthy future recruits for the House. The final template is used for Redcaps involved in training younger members of the House.

Archivist: Hermetic Politician, Loremaster, Scribe

Innkeeper: Local, Trader, Storyteller

Midwife: Apothecary, Cutter, Herbwife

Trainer: Linguist or Loremaster, Teacher x2

Redcaps on retirement, unless they also have the Magic Items Minor Virtue (see *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 106). This character still gains an additional 300 experience points for the fifteen years spent as an apprentice, and also receive the benefits of the Well-Traveled virtue.

Although this character received the benefits of a longevity potion when he turned 35, and received its benefits for one to two decades, making him appear 5 to 10 years younger its magic has failed and he has since resumed aging normally. The retired Redcap begins play at least 50 years old and has gained 15 Aging Points, starting with a minimum Decrepitude of 2. He has accumulated enough Aging points to force at least one Aging crisis and must subtract one from either Stamina or Quickness to reflect loss of his youthful vigor. To help reflect an injury or ailment that would force retirement from traveling, the character must also suffer the effects of a Minor General Flaw such as Arthritis, Disfigured, Lamé, Lingering Injury, Missing Ear, Missing Eye, Obese, Palsied Hands, Poor Eyesight, or Poor Hearing without gaining an additional Minor Virtue as compensation.

Although retired, the ex-Redcap must still devote two seasons each year working to maintain himself but this work is not necessarily directly for the Order. He may help run a Mercer House or work in a role such as an innkeeper that allows him to discreetly assist traveling Redcaps. This work pays enough for the character to live on, unless he takes the Poor flaw and must

work a third season as well. If the character has the Wealthy virtue, he can maintain his position with only a single season of effort each year.

TOURIST

Minor General Virtue

The character is extremely proficient in learning new (Area) Lores. All Study Totals for any (Area) Lore are increased by a quarter, as any experience points put into any (Area) Lore at character generation.

VARIANT REDCAPS

Not all Redcaps need be created as standard companions using the Redcap Major Social Status Virtue.

LONE REDCAPS

Lone Redcaps (See *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, page 106) operate more independently than normal Redcaps and are not associated with a particular covenant. They lack both the magical items usually granted to a Redcap and are not offered a Longevity Ritual when the begin to age, unlike Redcaps created using the usual Redcap Major Virtue.

Examples of Lone Redcaps include unGifted characters assigned roles other than carrying messages, the wayward Goliards and individuals adopted into the House to foster special aptitudes of value to House Mercere – suggested appropriate templates include Bloodcap, Goliard, Minstrel, Spy or Vagabond. As companions unsupported by their covenant, Lone Redcaps can purchase the Wealthy Virtue or suffer from the Poor Flaw but are otherwise created using the same process as above.

WEALTHY AND POOR REDCAPS

Redcaps created using the standard Redcap Major Virtue cannot purchase Wealthy Virtue or the Poor Flaw, but Lone Redcaps can. Per the Detailed Character Creation rules detailed in *ArM5*, pages 28-32, Wealthy characters have 20 XP per year

and Poor characters only 10 XP per year to spend in the time pre-apprenticeship or following apprenticeship.

This variation makes the use of training packages more difficult, although the 15 years of Redcap apprenticeship and spending the 50 XP from the Well-Traveled Virtue are unaffected. One way to model this is to assign a Childhood package as usual and then calculate the number of years pre and post apprenticeship. Multiplying this by either a factor of 20 or 10 and then dividing by 15 gives the equivalent number of years available to spend using the standard Training Package rules.

Years available for Training Packages = (years pre-apprenticeship + years post apprenticeship – 5 years) multiplied by Wealth Factor* / 15

*Wealth Factor is 10 for Poor or 20 for Wealthy

Any fractions are dropped and the remaining XP is left to be allocated as desired.

RETIRED REDCAPS

Like Lone Redcaps above, retired Redcaps are not usually associated with a particular covenant, although they may live at a Mercer House which may be considered a chapter of another larger covenant. Their degree of independence from their former roles and the time which they need to spend to support themselves vary once they are no longer in the active employ of the messenger service and they can purchase the Wealthy Virtue or suffer from the Poor Flaw.

A retired Redcap is initially created as above by choosing a Childhood, adding the Redcap Grounding and any pre-apprenticeship packages and then applying one of the suggested templates. Life following retirement provides the opportunity to learn different skills, reflected by an increased range of Training Packages that may be appropriate. Retired Redcaps that manage inns or setup hospices to service Redcaps and other travelers may find the post-apprenticeship Innkeeper template applicable.

See the new Retired Redcap Minor Virtue above for further details.

MYTHIC REDCAPS

Exceptional Redcaps can be created as Mythic Companions, either by taking the Blood of Heroes Special Virtue (see *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, pages 103-104) or by creating the character as another form of Mythic Companion using the Maestro Special Virtue (see *Art & Academe*, page 133-135) or another Mythic Companion Special Virtue. The 15 years of Redcap apprenticeship and spending the 50 XP from the Well-Traveled Virtue are unaffected, but if considered as a magus-level characters, the Mythic Redcap gains 30 XP per year post-apprenticeship. This effectively means they can pick 2 three-year or five-year packages for every allocated time period instead of only one package, similar to magi as detailed in the *Training Packages for Magi* article.

GIFTED MERCERE

All Gifted Merceres must spend at least on season every seven years carrying out the messenger duties of a Redcap, too short to be accounted for by a training package. Some however spend much more time on the road, often to either understand the needs of their unGifted brethren and to emulate the work of their revered Founder. Any of the above new Training Packages suitable for Redcaps may also be appropriate for a Mercere magus. Such traveling magi may likewise benefit from the modified packages intended for use with the Well-Traveled Virtue if they possess that Virtue.

DESIGN EXAMPLE:

CYMENA OF RORSCHACH

As an example, let's recreate an *ArM5* version of Cymena, the experienced Alpine Redcap from *ArM4 Sanctuary of Ice*, pages 76-77. As a native Alpine lass who grew up at Basel, she had an Athletic Childhood before commencing her Redcap Grounding with her great uncle, a retired Redcap living at the local Copper Rooster Inn. He also entertained her greatly with his

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tall-tales of his adventures, some of which has rubbed off on her, resulting in the benefits of a three year Storytelling package. At the age of 11 she began formal training with her mother and the other Redcaps of the Mercer House in Rorschach, starting with the Redcap Major Status Virtue and the benefits of the Well-Traveled Virtue as usual. Cymena has always had a knack for avoiding danger even as a child and begins with the Premonitions Minor Supernatural Virtue.

Her Redcap apprenticeship follows the usual course. Let's apply the Alpine template detailed above, choosing Archer instead of Scout. Thus at the age of 26, she has the following experience point allocation:

+15 Animal Handling, +50 (Area) Lore: Tribunal, +5 Artes Liberales, +45 Athletics, +15 Awareness, +20 Brawl, +30 Bows, +10 Code of Hermes, +15 Folk Ken, +15 Guile, +15 Hunt, +45 Latin,

+45 (Living) Language A, +30 (Living) Language B, +15 (Living) Language C, +30 Profession: Storyteller, +15 Survival, +75 Native Language, +10 Organization Lore: Order of Hermes, +5 Premonitions, +30 Profession: Storyteller, +35 Ride, +20 Swim.

Choosing High German as her native language and picking Italian, Occitan and Romand as her other languages this results in the following Abilities at the end of her apprenticeship:

Animal Handling 2, Artes Liberales 1, Athletics 3 (15), Awareness 2, Brawl 2 (5), Bows 3, Code of Hermes 1 (5), Folk Ken 2, Greater Alps Tribunal Lore 4, Guile 2, High German 5, Hunt 2, Italian 3 (15), Latin 3 (15), Occitan 3, Profession: Storyteller 3, Romand 2, Survival 2, Order of Hermes Lore 1, Premonitions 1, Profession: Storyteller 3, Ride 3 (5), Swim 2 (5).

Adjusting some of the leftover XP

around and spreading them across various Abilities expected of Alpine Redcaps provides the example statistics for Cymena at the time of her Gauntlet. Although not particularly experienced, this starting version of Cymena can defend herself, survive in the Alpine wilderness and carry out her messenger duties across the scattered communities of the region.

Cymena has 22 years of experience remaining however, equivalent to 7 three-year packages and 15 XP or 4 five-year packages and 30 discretionary XP.

Choosing the first option using three year packages, we may pick the new packages *Hedge Wizard* and *Loremaster*, then add *Cutter*, *Pikeman*, *Tinker* and *Woodsman*. This results in the following additional XP:

+10 Athletics, +5 Awareness, +30 Area Lore, +15 Concentration or Penetration, +40 Chirurgery, +15 Craft, +5 Folk Ken, +30 Great Weapon, +30 Hunt, +30 Hedge Ability, +15 (Realm)



CYMENA THE REDCAP, AT THE TIME OF HER GAUNTLET

This younger version of Cymena is much less experienced than the next version, although suitable as a starting character. She has been cursed with infertility, a condition that allows her to carouse without fear of becoming pregnant but at the same time marks her as less worthy in the eyes of her progeny-valuing peers as she ages. She still has 6 points of Virtues and Flaws that can be further customized. As a starting Redcap just out of their Gauntlet, she has only the standard 50 levels of magic items to choose from at this stage – her Redcap Pin and the golden lickstone and has yet to slay the dragonette that later forms the hide for her walking boots.

By renaming this template and making some minor modifications of her Virtues and Flaws, this character could also represent any beginning Alpine Redcap, perhaps even an older version of Cymena's apprentice.

Characteristics: Int +1, Per +2, Pre 0, Com 0, Str 0, Sta +2, Dex 0, Qik 0

Size: -1

Age: 26 (26)

Decrepitude: 0 (0)

Warping Score: 0 (0)

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Redcap; Premonitions; Craving for Travel*, Humble, Lesser Malediction (Infertile), Small Frame. * detailed in Grog, page 78.

Personality Traits: Brave +3, Cautious +3

Combat:

Dodge: Init +0, Attack n/a, Defense +2, Damage n/a

Fist: Init +0, Attack +3, Defense +3, Damage +0

Alpenstock: Init +2, Attack +6, Defense +6, Damage +2

Soak: +1

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Abilities: Animal Handling 2 (equines), Artes Liberales 1 (messages), Athletics 3 (hiking), Awareness 2 (dangers of the road), Brawl 2 (fists), Bows 3 (hunting), Carouse 1 (avoiding intoxication), Charm 1 (covenfolk), Chirurgery 1 (midwifery), Code of Hermes 1 (Redcaps), Faerie Lore 1 (avoidance), Folk Ken 2 (peasants), Greater Alps Tribunal Lore 4 (trails), Great Weapon 2 (alpenstock), Guile 2 (disguise), High German 5 (Swiss), Hunt 2 (cattle stealing), Infernal Lore 1 (wards against demons), Italian 3 (peasants), Latin 3 (Hermetic Usage), Magic Lore 1 (dangerous locations), Occitan 3 (peasants), Order of Hermes Lore 1 (personalities), Premonitions 2 (natural hazards), Profession: Boatman 2 (rough rivers), Profession: Storyteller 2 (anecdotes), Ride 3 (mules), Romand 2 (peasants), Survival 2 (alpine environment), Swim 2 (cold water).

Equipment: alpenstock (quarterstaff), enchanted Redcap pin

Encumbrance: 0 (0)

Appearance: A small woman wrapped in furs and carrying a large iron shod staff with an end-spike. She proudly wears a traditional Redcap pellus of faded red wool surmounted by a copper triangle pin.

Lore A, +15 (Realm) Lore B, +15 (Realm) Lore C, +15 Stealth, +30 Survival.

Cymena's Hedge Ability is Premonitions and as she does not require Penetration for this Ability, the extra 15 XP can be reassigned to boost her Premonitions total. We will choose Faerie, Magic and Infernal for her (Realm) Lore to reflect her knowledge of local Alpine folklore regarding the supernatural. This leaves 15 XP unassigned for the most recent year and she now has the following Abilities:

Animal Handling 2, Artes Liberales 1, Athletics 4 (5), Awareness 2 (5), Brawl 2 (5), Bows 3, Chirurgery 4, Code of Hermes 1 (5), Craft 2, Greater Alps Tribunal Lore 5

(5), Folk Ken 2 (5), Great Weapon 3, Guile 2, High German 5 (Swiss), Faerie Lore 2, Hunt 3 (15), Infernal Lore 2, Italian 3 (15), Latin 3 (15), Magic Lore 2, Occitan 3, Order of Hermes Lore 1, Premonitions 4, Profession: Storyteller 3, Ride 3 (5), Romand 2, Stealth 2, Survival 3 (15), Swim 2 (5).

To further build on the Alpine theme, let's pick the alpenstock (quarterstaff) as her Great Weapon specialty, Swiss as her native dialect and build her focus on interacting with the peasantry through appropriate specialty choices.

Reassigning some of the leftover experience points to increase Latin and Survival to 4 leaves 75 XP which can be

used to increase her cores in Bargain, Carouse, and Charm. By adjusting some of the other Abilities downwards and assigning the remaining specialties, we come to the final version presented at the end of this article!

The later version of Cymena around the time of her retirement has been created by using the *Midwife* template (the *Apothecary*, *Cutter* and *Herbwife* 3-year packages) together with the *Hedge Wizard*, *Initiate* and *Trainer* (x2) 3-year packages. This results in the following additional XP:

+15 (Area) Lore, +80 Chirurgery, +15 Concentration or Penetration, +20 Cultic Ability, +15 Folk Ken, +10, +30 Hedge Ability, Leadership, +10 (Living) Language,

CYMENA OF RORSCHACH, AN EXPERIENCED ALPINE REDCAP

Unless otherwise noted below, this 1220 version has the same statistics as the first version presented above. This more mature version of Cymena is balanced for use as a starting character, albeit a very experienced one and still has 6 points of Virtues and Flaws that can be further customized. She is an example of an experienced Alpine Redcap, able to survive the snows of the mountains through her wits and physical skills even without the help of the few magic items she has been entrusted with.

As this version of Cymena is 22 years post the end of her apprenticeship she has up to 74 levels of Magic Items available, chosen preferentially from the items listed below.

Age: 48 (41)

Decrepitude: 1 (1)

Warping Score: 2 (7)

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Redcap; Premonitions; Craving for Travel*, Humble, Lesser Malediction (Infertile), Small Frame. * detailed in Grogs, page 78.

Flaws gained from Warping: Visions

Personality Traits: Brave +3, Cautious +3

Combat:

Dodge: Init +0, Attack n/a, Defense +2, Damage n/a

Fist: Init +0, Attack +3, Defense +3, Damage +0

Alpenstock: Init +2, Attack +7, Defense +7, Damage +2

Short Bow: Init -1, Attack +7, Defense +4, Damage +6

Soak: +1

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Abilities: Animal Handling 2 (equines), Artes Liberales 1 (messages), Athletics 4 (hiking), Awareness 2 (dangers of the road), Bargain 3 (supplies), Brawl 2 (fists), Bows 3 (hunting), Carouse 2 (avoiding intoxication), Charm 2 (covenfolk), Chirurgery 3 (midwifery), Code of Hermes 1 (Redcaps), Craft: Leather-working 2 (repairs), Folk Ken 2 (peasants), Greater Alps Tribunal Lore 5 (trails), Great Weapon 3 (alpenstock), Guile 2 (disguise), High German 5 (Swiss), Faerie Lore 2 (avoidance), Hunt 3 (cattle stealing), Infernal Lore 2 (wards against demons), Italian 3 (peasants), Latin 4 (Hermetic usage), Magic Lore 2 (dangerous locations), Occitan 3 (peasants), Order of Hermes Lore 2 (personalities), Premonitions 5 (natural hazards), Profession: Boatman 2 (rough rivers), Profession: Storyteller 3 (anecdotes), Ride 3 (mule), Romand 2 (peasants), Stealth 2 (alpine wilderness), Survival 4 (alpine environment), Swim 2 (cold water).

Equipment: alpenstock, short bow, gold lickstone, enchanted Redcap pin, boots of dragonette hide

Encumbrance: 0 (1)

Appearance: A small woman wrapped in furs and carrying a large iron shod staff with an end-spike. She proudly wears a traditional Redcap pellus of faded red wool surmounted by a copper triangle pin.

+40 Profession: Apothecary, +60 Teaching, +15 Organization Lore: Folk Witches.

Two seasons have been lost initiating the Folk Witch Major Virtue Healing and the Herbalism Minor Virtue (equivalent to 10 XP each) as she assumes settles into her role as a healer and midwife. This allows her to increase her Chirurgery to 6, Folk Ken to 3, and her score in Romand to 3. She also learns Folk Witch Magic Theory 2, Healing 3, Herbalism 3, Leadership 3 and Teaching 4. The bonus XP in Concentration or Penetration is moved to Magic Lore, increasing it to a score of 3 and making it easier for her to enrich Items of Virtue.

CYMENA THE ELDER, AROUND THE TIME OF HER RETIREMENT

Unless otherwise noted below, this version has the same statistics as the version presented above but there have been significant changes to account for the failure of her Longevity Ritual and the effects of Aging. Following an accident while teaching her second apprentice the skills of hunting, Cymena became greatly weakened by a night spent buried under an avalanche. She suffered a major Aging Crisis in the process and thereby ruined her Longevity Ritual. Due to her ordeal under the snow she now suffers from the Enfeebled Major Flaw, but the confidence gained by surviving has allowed her to lose the Humble Flaw.

As she was no capable of active service following her accident, Cymena swore to never hunt or harm another again (Noncombatant Flaw). She has by now accumulated 3 Aging points in both Stamina and Quickness, making her much frailer and slower than in her prime. To remain useful to her House and her fellow Redcaps, she chose to be initiated into the remnants of a rarefied Folk Witch tradition found within the ranks of Alpine Redcaps. She has thereby learnt both the Healing and Herbalism as Mystery Virtues. Although she can only brew potions (reflected by the Rarefied Tradition Flaw) when supplied with sufficient amounts of vis, she complements her minor hedge wizardry skills with a proficiency with herbs and traditional lore granted by her Herbalism Ability.

Cymena no longer travels beyond Rorschach, so she has handed back her staff and Redcap pin in return for enchantments that allow her to move her crippled body around more easily. These help her in her new roles as both midwife and teacher to the next generation. As her Lesser Malediction is now irrelevant, this has been removed - she has managed to work hard as midwife assisting the births of other Redcaps and their wives, which acts as an in-game explanation why she has not developed a negative reputation due to her lack of offspring.

Characteristics: Int +1, Per +2, Pre 0, Com 0, Str 0, Sta +1, Dex 0, Qik -1

Age: 69 (53)

Decrepitude: 2 (3)

Warping Score: 3 (12)

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Retired Redcap; Healing*; Premonitions, Reserves of Strength, Herbalism**; Enfeebled, Rarefied Tradition*; Small Frame. This older version of Cymena has only a further 3 Virtue and Flaw points available to be assigned but has accumulated several additional Flaws.

Flaws Gained from Warping: Susceptible to the Divine, Visions.

Flaw Gained on Retirement: Noncombatant (see above)

* as the Folk Witch Virtue or Flaw, see Hedge Magic: Revised Edition, pages 36-43.

** substitutes for Medicine, see Art & Academe page 55 for further details.

Personality Traits: Brave +3, Cautious +3

Combat:

Dodge: Init +0, Attack n/a, Defense +2, Damage n/a

Soak: +1

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Abilities: Animal Handling 2 (equines), Artes Liberales 1 (messages), Athletics 4 (hiking), Awareness 2 (dangers of the road), Bargain 3 (supplies), Brawl 2 (fists), Bows 3 (hunting), Carouse 2 (avoiding intoxication), Charm 2 (covenfolk), Chirurgery 6 (midwifery), Code of Hermes 1 (Redcaps), Craft: Leather-working 2 (repairs), Folk Ken 3 (peasants), Folk Witch Magic Theory 2 (potions), Greater Alps Tribunal Lore 5 (trails), Great Weapon 3 (alpenstock), Guile 2 (disguise), Healing 3 (midwifery), Herbalism 3 (diagnosis), High German 5 (Swiss), Faerie Lore 2 (avoidance), Hunt 3 (cattle stealing), Infernal Lore 2 (wards against demons), Italian 3 (peasants), Latin 4 (Hermetic usage), Leadership 2 (inspiration), Magic Lore 3 (dangerous locations), Occitan 3 (peasants), Order of Hermes Lore 2 (personalities), Premonitions 5 (natural hazards), Profession: Apothecary 4 (gathering herbs), Profession: Boatman 2 (rough rivers), Profession: Storyteller 3 (anecdotes), Ride 3 (mule), Romand 3 (peasants), Stealth 2 (alpine wilderness), Survival 4 (alpine environment), Swim 2 (cold water), Teaching 4 (Redcaps)

Equipment: non-magical Redcap pin, enchanted boots of dragonette hide, midwifery equipment

Encumbrance: 0 (1)

Appearance: A small woman of bent frame who breathes with difficulty and moves unassisted with notable pain. She wears a heavily creased apron of a midwife or village matron.

CYMENA'S EQUIPMENT

Cymena's equipment is typical of an Alpine Redcap, although she does not have access to all these items until later in her career. Her lickstone is unusual in that it has been enchanted with a variant power (see below).

REDCAP PIN

This invested copper item has two instilled effects, the first mimics Eyes of the Cat (**ArM5** page 131, MuCo(An) 5, Base 5, 1/day) when the pin is tapped with two fingers, the second power keeps the wearer comfortably warm despite the prevailing weather when the pin is rubbed in a circular motion.

WARM THESE COLD BONES

CrIg 5, R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Ind Pen 0, 2/day

This effect warms the wearer to a comfortable temperature.

(Base 2, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +1 2/day)

GOLDEN LICKSTONE

Most common amongst Redcaps of the Greater Alps, this small flat piece of curved metal has been made to magically and invisibly adhere to the wearer's palate using minor Mutantum magic (combined effects equivalent to 15 spell levels). Similar lickstones, due to their property of being readily concealed from casual view, are favored by Redcaps who require a spell to ensure an emergency escape. Since taking up residence at the site of the abandoned Alpine covenant of Tarragon vale, her lickstone has been re-enchanted with Seven League Stride (see **ArM5**, page 135) rather than the usual Leap of Homecoming spell favored by most Redcaps. The item's escape power is activated by curling her tongue to touch her palate while making a forceful clicking noise through her teeth.

(ReCo 40, Base 30, +1 Touch, +5 24/day)

CYMENA'S ALPENSTOCK

Originally non-magical, this oak walking stick over 6 feet tall is an invaluable aid to Cymena in her Alpine travels. Shod with a blunt iron spike or ferrule to improve grip it can be used as a quarterstaff to ward off wolves, bandits or other mountain hazards. The leather lanyard helps her retain the staff if she is caught in an avalanche or knocked off balance. Over time, Cymena has her staff opened as a invested item by the artificers of House Mercere and sequentially enchanted with the following effects:

FROM HIKING TO HUNTING

MuHe(An) 10, R: Per, D: Conc, T: Ind; Pen 0, 2/day

This effect transforms Cymena's alpenstock into a

serviceable short bow. Reshaping the staff successfully into a bow with magic requires an Intelligence + Finesse roll, as noted on page 77 of **ArM5**. An Ease Factor of 6 is sufficient to make a staff of mediocre, but serviceable, workmanship. The staff maintains Concentration, allowing Cymena to use it to hunt for long periods up to twice a day, leaving one use for unexpected combat if needed. The effect is triggered silently by standing with feet apart holding the staff as if it were a bow with the left hand in the middle of the shaft and then moving the right hand as if drawing back an imaginary bowstring.

(Base 3, +1 Conc, +2 3/day, +5 item maintains concentration)

A SHELTER FOR THE NIGHT

MuAn 15, R: Per, D: Sun, T: Ind Pen +0, 1/day

By planting her staff firmly in the ground or snow and muttering a phrase in Romansch, Cymena can cause the leather lanyard of her staff to expand into a small leather tent of conical shape, capable of protecting herself and one companion from the elements. The alpenstock becomes the central pole of the shelter.

(Base 5, +2 Sun, +0 1/day)

BOOTS OF DRAGONETTE HIDE

Crafted from a the skin of a lesser Alpine drake she defeated in her youth, Cymena's dragonette hide boots are initially non-magical but of Superior quality, granting a +2 to all rolls involving hiking.

Later in her career, after her accident with the avalanche, she has them enchanted to help her levitate about. This prevents her exhausting herself during teaching but is insufficient for delivering messages.

EASE MY OLD BONES FROM HERE TO THERE

ReCo 20 R: Touch, D: Conc, T: Ind; Pen 0, 24/day

Lifts the wearer if a person of Size +1 or less through the air slowly. Cymena uses this item to move up or down as fast as smoke rises or horizontally as fast as a slow walk, but a heavier person would move more slowly and fall more quickly.

(Base 5, +1 Voice, +1 Conc, +5 24/day)

THE WATCHERS IN DIANA'S SPHERE

A LETTER TO THE ORDER CONCERNING THE HISTORY AND STATE OF HOUSE DIEDNE

I am Tillitus, member in good standing of the covenant Semita Errabunda, son of House Bonisagus, and humble Seeker of the Order of Hermes. Charged by the Quaesitors Alannus, Caelia, and Spes, I have investigated the current state of House Diedne, in part because various rumors circulate throughout the tribunals that the House Most Vile is again active, but primarily as compensation for my conviction of the crime of meddling with faeries while attending the autumnal orgies of the White Lady of Winter Chill.

My investigations centered on artifacts and letters found in the recently excavated bowels of Branugurix, past domus magna of House Diedne, and in the sanctum of Davidus of Map, recently accused of practicing forbidden Diedne magic and subsequently burned at the stake in Paris last spring. After reading his personal journals, I deem that he was certainly guilty and deserving of his fate.

By transcribing a series of found missives and personal letters, I begin with the history of House, followed by a deposition of its members' organization, and culminating with the current state and health of House Diedne, which is vigorous.

THE FOUNDER

Found among the personal writings of the druid Blaez, this entry clearly recounts his impression of several founders. "D" is naturally enough Diedne. "T" can easily be read as Trianoma, and "B" as her more famous partner Bonisagus. I am reasonably confident that "G" is Guorna the Fetid rather than Guernicus, since the text later mentions G's habit of baring "her pock-marked breasts to the assembly" (passage omitted from this collection). "C" is presumed to be another drysida, although it could also reference Blaez's Christian wife. Dumnonia is the southwestern peninsula of the Stonehenge Tribunal. Blaez uses the word "drysidae" to mean druids within his tribal group, and the word "dewiniaid" (singular "dewin") to mean other wizards, both other Celtic wizards and all foreign wizards.

D took me along to meet T, because I'd met her before when C and I were slaughtering pigs for last year's *Calan Awst* festival. It would have been easier if D had wanted to meet then, when T had left Armorica to visit Dumnonia, instead of us leaving home and heading to Lingones to visit her. D needed a translator, pure and simple, and having a Christian wife for ten years meant my Latin was good enough to ask directions from any Roman, or Christian, we might run into. Romans being long gone, I worried more about the Cross-bearers than the sword-wielders.

My encounter with T had been inconsequential. She came during

BY TOBIAS WHEELER AND
MATT RYAN

the slaughter and asked for me specifically. I stayed in the yard and watched her walk across the pig shit and blood, holding up her velvet skirt to avoid the muck that had already ruined her leather shoes. She asked for my help and I told her I didn't remove ugly curses. She said that her partner B had developed a shield to protect him from other wizard's magic spells, which he would share with me if I bowed to him and joined his tribe, and I picked up a handful of offal and threw it at her. "Shield that." Even my slaves laughed. It was ludicrous to think that anyone would leave their tribe and their training to join with some foreign greybeard.

Which was exactly what D intended to do. I asked if she was first going to try to kill him, to see how powerful this magic shield was, and she said no. Instead, she'd try to kill the pupil, so for a month we stalked T as she roamed the old Sequani and Helvetii lands. As much as I disliked T's airs and haughtiness, I grant that she was dogged in her duties. We watched her court G and ultimately gain compliance after a large monetary exchange. We watched many dewiniaid refuse her, which pleased me. After another month of following T, we struck. I summoned gales and wind strikes,

both powerful enough to uproot trees, and when those failed to hurt the dewin I called down lightning bolts from the sky. Those too failed. D used her most powerful spells, including the rarely-cast and unquestionably lethal “Ocular Bane of Balor”, but besides devastating the surrounding countryside and inadvertently slaying a dozen geese who happened to be flying overhead, nothing happened. T remained standing, unruffled by our enchanting exertions.

We waited for her riposte but none came. Besides her protective shield did she possess a sorcerer’s battery of magical assaults? If so she displayed none. D approached her, standing face to face, and still T held back any attack.

“You see my magical shield is powerful. Your spells, though impressive, proved impotent. Join B and learn his secrets,” the dewin said.

As swift as an adder, D pulled her dagger from its belted scabbard and placed the razor edge to T’s throat, the movement happened faster than T could respond with more than a gasp.

“Sure,” said D. “Happy to join up.” She sheathed her dagger and spread her arm to the north. “After you, dear.” And without further ado we two followed her to B’s camp.

Was I surprised that B built his camp in the middle of the haunted forest? Of course not. His temporary home was the least of my worries, and truly a no more disturbing, unsettling, and stomach-churning individual exists upon Anu’s green earth. T explained that she was searching far and wide for worthy dewiniaid to join



B's new tribe. She didn't mention that those chosen also needed to be female, for if that wasn't the case it certainly seemed so, and I didn't know if I was meeting B's colleagues or his harem. That most of the women were as equally repulsive as the swarthy Roman made my second conclusion imminently more likely; foul fowls flock together.

After general introductions D had a private interview with B and I with G, a truly gruesome dewin. I had unfortunately eaten lunch before our meeting, and my sole memory is the difficulty required in retaining my meal in my stomach and not disgorging its half-digested contents upon G's shoes. An effort that I rewarded post-interview with ample and frequent libations. Subsequently, the remainder of the proceedings is lost to my memory, and I only recall that D was granted membership into B's coven and I accepted as her servant. Posh. Naturally when I awoke and discovered that my drysida subordinate had been awarded a higher honor than myself – despite said honor being delivered by a man so loathsome that Domnu wouldn't let him enter the hall of the dead – I immediately left in a huff.

Blaez left the Black Forest and returned to Dumnonia, never participating in the burgeoning Order of Hermes. His journal infrequently mentions Diedne in the years after, but never more than a mention and never did he again speak with her. Blaez's journal ends during the years of the Secession, and it is thought provoking to imagine that he died while resisting Diedne's withdrawal from the ranks of the drysidae. There is no evidence to prove this romantic notion.

THE EARLY YEARS

The following text, written by an unnamed magus, was discovered during an excavation near Mt. Dol in Brittany. It recounts the early years of House Diedne. Considering its abrupt beginning and ending, the text is almost certainly a portion of a larger work, the rest of which remains missing. No fire or water damage was discernible on the pages at hand, allowing us to rule out these explanations. However, there are many oily stains on them that still smell strongly of smoked ham. I propose that these stains resulted in the isolation of the unearthed sheets, for recopying. My highly effective Vim-based investigatory spells determined that the persistence of the appetizing porcine odor is likely a result of a Creo Animal enchantment that was instilled to preserve the pages. Additional spells of great precision, that I developed, identified the exact pig from which the grease originated; it was raised in northwest Wales and was slaughtered in the year 973 AD. An illuminating Intellego Herbam spell, that I cast spontaneously by the way, revealed that the oak gall in the ink dates from the same year. Thus we have definitive dating of the writing, and a suggestion of where the writing took place. Considering this time (before the Schism War), this place (in the heart of the Diedne-dominated Stonehenge Tribunal), and the text's contents, the words below may be in the hand of some sort of leader of The Fallen House. My sleuthy deductions also determined that the writer is male. But beyond these facts, there is obviously insufficient information to glean further insight into his identity. Regardless, we are fortunate that there was a messy individual who caused the sequestration of these sheets from the undiscovered others. We are also fortunate that I possess the superlative degree of skill that is necessary to unearth, study, and analyze such texts.

...were exciting times to be magi of this House. Our honed minds were full of wondrous ideas

for new research. Resources were plenty, allowing us to put our ideas to the test. And through our endeavors, we achieved greatness. But after this period of marvels, as before, we faced strife and struggle. Two trials for the House: one that we overcame, and one that has not yet ended.

The first trial occurred in the first three decades after the Founding. I was not born until near its end, but was told what happened as an apprentice. Throughout Britain, Armorica, and Galicia, the vestiges of druidic society proved a fertile ground for the growth of the House. After joining the Order, the Founder made use of her strong ties with the druids to quickly recruit new members of diverse magical traditions, at the annual Cyfarfod. Not as many druids gathered for this meeting as in the days of legend, when each tribe was its own nation. Since those days, waves of invaders have eroded their numbers. First came the Romans, with their Priests of Mercury. Then came the Angles and Saxons, with their Scinnlæcan and Egesgríman, and the Picts with their Gruagachan. And finally came the Christian priests who did much to dispel the web of superstitions that the druids had woven, to keep themselves in power. The crippling blow was struck in 602 AD, when the heroes of Strathclyde and Gododdin stoutly faced an Angle horde occupying Catraeth. To battle its magical contingent, the druids assembled en masse. The magical and mundane conflicts played out in respective planes, conjoined by a regio boundary. At times, the mundane battle spilled into the magical plane and vice versa. In the end, the Angles slew all but

one: Aneirin the bard, who would eulogize the fallen. And so, after weathering half a millennium of conflict, the back of druidic society was finally broken. The handful that remained withdrew from mundane affairs and looked solely to their own, to rebuild. Some even fled Britain, to follow those that had already migrated to Armorica or Galicia. Over the next fifteen decades, silently and steadily, the druids mended and multiplied.

Thus, in the early years of the House, many druids were in a position to foster its development. The Founder's goal of establishing a united society of Gifted natives to usher in a magical resurgence in the west resonated with many. Even those who wouldn't join the House still offered resources for building covenants and Gifted children for apprenticeship. Unfortunately, this atmosphere of goodwill between the House and druidic society would soon sour. The core of the old and mighty druids refused to join. Their reasons were manifold: disinterest, skepticism, pride, general cantankerousness. Regardless, the upstart House provided them a reason to band together. They saw how the House grew and gained power, and they felt that their own power was threatened. Meanwhile, the members of the House developed a disdain for the backwoods druids who refused to join. They belittled their devotion to outdated superstitions, such as the ridiculous refusal to write and the brutish practice of sacrifice. I remember one elder magus who, even after all he'd been through - losing an arm and both legs in a magical duel with a druid - maintained that the druids who didn't join the House were

mundane pretenders that ran around killing animals with dull knives and uttering vague, useless "prophecies". Ask them anything about the Arts, and all you'd get was a baffled, slack-jawed stare. This opinion was far from the truth, of course. In fact, the druids who did not join were quite powerful, as many magi found out, to their misery or death.

shivered among the menhirs until early morning, when we saw the magi in the distance. The druids lined us up, knives - sharp ones - at our throats. As the magi neared the circle of stones, I saw my mother among them, walking tall with no outward signs of capitulation or doubt. One of them shouted, "How do we know that these are indeed our children?"



HE WAR BETWEEN THE HOUSE AND THE DRUIDS SPILLED BEYOND THE GIFTED AND CLAIMED THE LIVES OF MANY MUNDANES.

In response to the appropriation of magical resources by the burgeoning House, the druids set deadly traps and ambushes. Magi of the House retaliated, seeking out the responsible individuals and scorching all traces of them from the living world. After several such exchanges, war broke out. I still call it a war, even though there were only one hundred individuals or so that were directly involved, because of the magnitude of the destruction that resulted. As always, the Gift tends to intensify both the good and the bad in this world.

The war between the House and the druids spilled beyond the Gifted and claimed the lives of many mundanes. Toward its end, the druids abducted the children of several prominent members of the House. I was among them. We were to serve as leverage, so that the druids could extort an unconditional surrender. Late one night, they bound us and brought us to Stonehenge. We waited and

Will you allow us to approach to confirm their identities?" The druids caucused and arrived at a decision. "You may approach, but only one of you." My mother stepped forth, without waiting for word from the others. She came close, looking me in the eyes the entire time. She leaned down and with a delicate touch, tilted my chin away from the knife. "Hold still," she said, and then softly, "Be brave." In the span of three breaths, the knives melted away without heat. She then spoke a spell quickly, and the druids nearest us were ripped away, mashed against standing stones and held there. Quick to react, several druids began incantations, hopping on one foot, with one eye closed and holding one hand in the air. The results of these incantations - flames, hail, flying rocks and wooden spikes - hurled toward us. At this point I wet my pants. But once the attacks hit us they simply dissipated in a blue shimmer. Each of us was unharmed, for my mother had extended her Parma to all the

children. I didn't see what happened during the rest of the fight, because a dome of solid rock rose from the ground and enveloped us, for protection. I'm sure it saved us children some grisly sights.

We soon discovered that the abduction was the druids' final gambit. With the deaths of the architects of the scheme, the druids sued for peace. After the war, the more vainglorious members of the House gave it a grandiose title: The Secession. According to them, the House was now the greatest of the Order, having overcome such fearsome users of powerful magic and severed all remaining ties and dependence on the society of druids. I was simply happy to be

back with mother and away from those smelly old men. Following the last battle of The Secession, the formerly nomadic Founder of the House established our domus magna.

The period that followed was comparatively peaceful. The House continued to grow, reaching $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ the size of the entire Order. To better manage the now-unwieldy House, the Founder initiated a division of its constituent covenants into three Branches. These Branches formed naturally according to the three major linguistic roots of the Magi of the House, and it is the names of these linguistic roots that we use to name the Branches: covenants in Strathclyde, Wales, Dumnonia and Armorica formed

the Brythonic Branch. Covenants in Dal Riata, the Isle of Man, and Ireland formed the Goidelic Branch. Covenants in Galicia formed the Continental Branch. If you, dear reader, are not a native of these far western lands, then you may wonder why covenants in Armorica, a region on the Continent, were not grouped with those in Galicia, in the Continental Branch. Allow me to explain: as the Saxons, Angles and Jutes invaded further west into Britain, waves of Brythonic people fled to Armorica and to Galicia. Proximity with Dumnonia preserved the Brythonic identity of those in Armorica. But far-flung Galicia slowly assumed its own identity, both linguistically and culturally. This new identity was tainted to the extent of



SUB ROSA

differentiation from the Brythonic, first by the pre-inhabitant Suevi, then by the conquering Visigoths, and most recently by the Kingdom of Asturias. Perhaps my choice of the word "tainted" is unfair. I certainly do not use it in the sense of the taint that afflicted House Tylalus. After all, the Founder welcomed them into the House as sisters and brothers. But those who are even just slightly less accepting of "otherness" would surely wonder whether these outside influences contributed to the troublesome actions that this Branch has taken. I shall defer this topic until later, for others must come first.

Returning now to the structure of the House that the Founder instituted, each Branch is headed by one magus or maga. This Head is chosen from among the magi of a Branch, by casting votes. Once a Head is chosen, the appointment lasts until death, so they must be selected wisely. Or deposed covertly. The Heads are not positions of pure power and directorship, as we view the Primi of the other Houses. Instead, they are responsible for three primary tasks: (1) organizing support for the covenants in their Branch. This support consists mostly of magical and mundane resources for applications such as general subsistence, research efforts, and martial actions. (2) Arranging and presiding over the annual gathering of the Branches. (3) Representing their Branch at Tribunals and any other political and diplomatic meetings with external parties. Thus, while not positions of absolute power, it is possible for a Head to encourage efforts in a particular direction by, for example, emphasizing one form of support over others or

through negotiation with the members of their Branch. Collectively, these three Heads are called the Trunk of the House. The First Trunk consisted of the Founder, First Head of the Brythonic Branch, magus Murdach Skinner of the Isle of Man, First Head of the Goidelic Branch, and a maga known simply as La Bruxa, First Head of the Continental Branch.

The First Trunk administered the House for the 28 years that saw the war with Damhan Allaidh, the joining of House Ex Miscellanea, the continuing loss of land to the Anglo-Saxon, the beginning of Norse raids on our lands, and finally, the death of the Founder. At this time, I was but eight years past my Gauntlet. Despite my lack of years, I was chosen by my fellow magi to succeed the Founder as Head of the Brythonic Branch. I attribute my selection entirely to the fact that I am the son of my mother, of course, and to the wish of many magi in the Branch to honor and preserve her legacy. In return, I have striven to be worthy of their trust, to govern in her image, and in general, to do as she would have done.

I leave it to those in the future to weigh the successes against the failures of my attempt. But I can state with confidence that the first five decades were glorious, from the perspective of a magus, for we entered the period to which I alluded earlier, the period I have dubbed The Golden Era of Hermetic Research. I suppose I should count myself among the more vainglorious members of the House. This Era was brought about largely through collaboration. Together with Head

Murdach and Head La Bruxa, I first politicked for and then organized research projects that involved magi from multiple covenants within the House. The goals of this collaboration were to fulfill the vision of the Founder for a magical resurgence in the west, and to solidify the position of the House within the Order. What I mean by the latter is that we wanted to stick it to the Latin Houses, by overcoming the Limits of Hermetic Magic before they did.

The collaborations were soon fruitful. The spirit of unity and cooperation quickly carried us to many minor breakthroughs in a variety of areas of magic - too many to list exhaustively. The heady thrill of initial successes sparked a hunger for larger projects that would accomplish even more, and so collaborations were extended outside of the House to include magi of Houses Bonisagus, Merinita, Bjornaer, and even Criamon. But the major breakthroughs to the Limits remained elusive, until we uncovered a link to the past.

A group of magi had been investigating the Clachan Chalanais on Eileann Leodhas. First, the magi purged the stones of a strong faerie aura that had been cultivated by a troupe of trows. With the faerie aura gone, the stones could be studied more closely. It then took almost a decade to discover an astounding fact: the ancients had arranged the stones in a pattern. This pattern was aligned with the progression of the moon and could predict the time and place of its rising and setting and the occurrence of lunar eclipses. Inspired by this discovery, the magi attempted to

use the stones as a tool with which to establish a magical conduit between the earth and the moon. After numerous failed experiments - so many that they could easily fill a book of equal length to this work - they broke the Limit of the Lunar Sphere: a grog was transported to the moon and back, using an arcane connection to confirm his location. Elated with the news of this fantastic result, my first reaction was to tell the rest of the House. But then, to my eventual regret, my thoughts turned to doubt and I reconsidered. What were the implications of this new, powerful magic? What if the wrong people learned to exploit it? Would it imbalance the Order too much? With these questions in my mind, I waited and took steps to suppress the spread of the news. As is inevitable for the noteworthy and spectacular, these steps eventually failed. My actions were interpreted by those in the other Branches as an attempt to secret away this new power for myself and for my Branch. I argued the need for caution and consideration, but my words were dismissed as further obfuscation of sinister motives. At roughly this same time, the Norse began attacking covenants in earnest - several were sacked. As luck would have it, most of them were of the Goidelic and Continental Branches, though the Brythonic covenants in Armorica also suffered greatly. Blame for the disproportionate losses was heaped at my feet: "If only you'd shared the Lunar Magic with us, we could have saved our sisters and brothers." I could make no argument against that claim. I rue this turn of events still, feeling at the same time responsible and ill-

served by my fellow Heads and the other magi of the House. And so, amidst an atmosphere of accusation and anger, the Branches grew apart and withdrew, ceasing communication both with each other and with the rest of Order. The Trunk splintered and in the place of unity and collaboration we now had secrets and sabotage (which I now think come more naturally to our peoples, than do the former). Thus, the Golden Era of Hermetic Research came to an end.

What followed, and has lasted now for six decades, is not a pleasure to describe. Each Branch pursued its own agenda. Our brothers and sisters became our enemies. Instead of conducting research, most covenants diverted the majority of their efforts to antagonistic acts. In-fighting ran rampant, in the fashion that is endemic to our peoples, with covenants of one Branch raiding the cattle and vis of covenants in the other two Branches. Ironically, this environment of subcutaneous strife within the House led to further breakthroughs in Hermetic magic, one by each of the other two Branches. The Goidelic Branch, inspired by a strong belief in the transmigration of the soul, developed a means of peering into past lives. Using these glimpses, they were able to relearn the skills and powers that they knew before.

The Continental Branch, extending the work of an abandoned collaboration with House Criamon, found a method by which to alter the true nature of an individual so as to either bestow or remove the Gift - a truly frightening prospect if used with abandon, as is their aim. The troublesome actions of which I

made mention earlier, and that the Continental Branch is actively pursuing today, are to make the Gift available to mundanes who can pay them enough and to strip it from the Gifted who oppose them. Informants tell me that their ultimate goal is to introduce enough chaos into the magical landscape of Europe to unseat the Order. Already their influence is felt within the House - cults have sprung up, with one of the new powers, including Lunar Magic unfortunately, as their culminating mystery. I doubt not that the members of these cults will misuse their powers. Fear, kindled by aggression and by uncertainty, stoked by extremists and by fanatics - fear is burning this House down. And there is again talk of secession...

The text ends here, with the intriguing indication of a secessionist movement within The House Most Vile. Was the secession to be of one Branch from the others? Or of the entire House from the Order? Did the secessionist movement spark the Schism War? Did rumors of the evil intents of the so called Continental Branch, with its unnatural ability to destroy the Gift, reach the other Houses, prompting the pre-emptive extermination of The House of Great Wickedness? The answers to these penetrating queries are clearly not revealed by the above text, even to those with insight as great as mine. Fortunately, in my neverending quest to serve the Order and humanity as a whole, my search for additional sources of information has ended triumphantly, and I shall graciously share their answers forthwith.

THE SCHISM WAR

This next letter was found during the examination of Davidus of Map's sanctum at Schola Pythagoranic, a Jerbiton dominated covenant located in

the Stonehenge Tribunal. While the magus was imprisoned, charged with being a covert Diedne magus, several investigators, myself included, thoroughly searched the magus' private suites and laboratory. Wedged between the pages of a copy of Blutus of Criamon's "Treaties on Creo Magic and the Construction of Rabbit Hutches", I found the following missive, an excerpt of a longer work written by Nyfain, the youngest apprentice of Llewellyn, last primus of House Diedne. I can only guess if this letter was written to Davidus of Map or not, although it was one of the prosecutor's key pieces of evidence in convicting the magus.

According to record, Primus Llewellyn trained three apprentices, all of whom passed their gauntlet and became magi. The first, Ulric the Boar, died during the siege of Fudarus in 1004. The second, Sloan, slipped into a premature Final Twilight at his sanctum in Yves in 967, well before the Schism War began. Nyfain was Llewellyn's last apprentice, and undertook several espionage missions during the conflict. Her letter is especially damning to the few named Houses; as of this writing charges have not been filed against those Houses.

Notes: Apparently, at the time of the conflict the Diedne faction used the term, "The Rebellion" to refer to the war. I do not know when "The Schism War" terminology entered the Order's history books, but it must be a later development, as none of the documents found during the war use the phrase. Turtouald was the head of the Brythonic Branch of the House. Llewellyn was the head of the Goidelic Branch. At the time, the leader of the Continental Branch was a maga named Geneva.

I was not in council when the Trunk made the final decision, and did not hear of Turtouald's scheme until my return from Sicily. I had been sent to collect

the promised barge laden with war-wands and fire-lances, but the Verditii of Verdi lost their nerve at the contact point and refused to honor the bargain, thinking that their extraction from the agreement would absolve their long participation as collaborators. They, like many, thought the war was nearly over, and that we had failed in our attempt to take control of the Order. Our other allies had fled as well: House Bjornaer scurrying to their foul-smelling warrens, House Bonisagus disappearing to their basements, House Criamon hiding in their caves, and House Jerbiton slipping into the crowd and effectively disappearing in plain sight (damn gentle gift). Only noble House Merinita continued to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with us in the shield wall.

As you know, the Rebellion was not twelve against one, although I'm sure your apologists and panegyrists have rewritten history to suit their needs. In the beginning we were five: Bjornaer, Criamon, Jerbiton, Merinita, and Diedne. Each House had its own reasons for joining the Coalition, as we sometimes called it. Bjornaer and Merinita were in it from the start and were fully aware of our plans to overthrow the tyranny of the faux democracy the Order pretended to follow and install a hierarchical model of government, led by we three Houses. House Jerbiton joined in the third year of the conflict after our initial successes, and primarily funneled vis to our war effort without ever actually taking the battlefield. House Criamon joined us because of religious reasons and then did nothing once we accepted them within our ranks. Let me emphasize that the Rebellion was

never about religion. We didn't care who the Roman Houses worshiped, and truth be told they didn't care that we worshiped our gods. House Bjornaer worshiped their ancestors, and the Order at large paid it no mind.

Houses Verditius and Mercere never joined the Coalition, but both worked for it. House Mercere sowed the seeds of subterfuge with false messages, until one of their missive pouches exploded at their domus magna and killed their prima. After that they followed the Bonisagus-Guernicus-Tremere party line. House Verditius sold us weapons but, as I mentioned, that changed in Sicily. The primus' refusal to sell me weapons annoyed me, and I reacted by later raiding the House Founder's tomb and absconding with the five fabled rings of power. I thought the rings would please Llewellyn, but when he told me the news I forgot about them and never gave him the rings.

The decision was made at Branugurix, as was the announcement of the Final Strike. Runes of Annihilation had been hidden in every domus magna of our enemy Houses, thanks to Mercere collaborators who continued to aid us despite their House's abandonment of our cause. The Runes merely awaited intonation to wreak untold havoc. This I knew, and I had anticipated remaining at Branugurix when the Runes rendered our enemies powerless. Llewellyn told me himself that the plan had changed, and that Turtouald would ignite the runes after every House member had retreated to Diana's Sphere. Note – I think here Nyfain is referring to the moon – Tillitus. I was aghast at the thought of

fleeing just as we stood on the brink of victory.

Llewellyn said that new intelligence indicated that our Guernicus enemies were planning to kill our House leaders using ancient, unholy necromantic rituals. I said we should strike first. He said no. I was angry but capitulated, and helped organize the rapid transfer of members, staff, and resources to the moon. The Translocation Chambers worked very well and the process was simple if tedious. Within a month our camp was well situated with supplies and defenses, the moon-centaurs had been pacified, and several branch leaders were in residence when the Order launched its attack.

I heard of the calamity later,

from Llewellyn as he bled to death in my arms. House Guernicus had summoned and commanded a group of razor-teeth demons to slay key leaders in our House. Many of those leaders were already on the moon, but those that remained died. Llewellyn slew the demon that attacked him, but was mortally wounded in the effort. As the demons attacked, squads of Tremere magi raided key covenants in the Normandy and Provencal Tribunals. Luckily, due to the efficiency of the Translocation Chambers, most of those covenants were empty. Unfortunately, the Keys of Intonation, necessary to trigger the Runes of Annihilation, were lost during Llewellyn's battle with his demon, dropped during the fight in the primus' sanctum within

Branugurix's hidden regio. I took my dying pater with me to the moon, destroying the Translocation Chamber as I left. He is buried here, at Lleuad Sylfaen, vertically, archmagus staff in hand and facing earth, as if he is ready to defend us in death from our enemies.

As far as I know, our secret collaborator was still at work within House Bonisagus, and last I knew she had risen quite far in the ranks of the . . .

The text ends here. As a member of House Bonisagus, I find it difficult to believe that a saboteur would reside in our House. Perhaps Nyfain confused our House with another, if such a secret collaborator ever existed in the first place. A second thought is that she is



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purposefully lying to her colleague, although I can't ascertain a motive as to why she would do that.

HOUSE DIEDNE TODAY

Based on the presented texts and my own thorough, well-reasoned ruminations, we may draw certain conclusions:

1) The members of House Diedne were not all illiterate Hedge Magi, nor did they rely necessarily on infernal sources of power. Instead, they were powerful masters of the Hermetic Arts, able to overcome several of their limits.

2) House Diedne is not extinct, many of its members having escaped to the Moon toward the end of the Schism War.

3) The Lunar Diedne are likely rebuilding their strength, using their powers to ensure that each child born on the Moon is Gifted, thus swelling their numbers. They are also probably recruiting ferocious lunar denizens for their purposes.

4) There are members of the House Most Wicked among us, sent back to Earth to infiltrate our ranks and to find the Keys of Intonation that will be used to trigger the Runes of Annihilation, as they previously planned.

5) It is likely that the Keys of Intonation have been found already.

6) An overwhelming Diedne attack is imminent.

By now, the House Most Vile knows of my astute, revealing investigations, and will soon attempt to silence me and eradicate my work. Even as I write this, under a full moon as it happens, I feel their magic beating down on me from the glowing disk above. Already, I notice subtle tendrils of their power penetrating my mind: a ringing fills my ears, even through my Parma Magica. They have without doubt learned to harness the power of the Moon over one's sanity, over lycanthropy, and over the tides. I have measured the highest swell of the waves

carefully each day for the past month and it is rising, my sodales, the oceans are rising!

Fellow members of the Order: I implore you! We must make urgent preparations against the looming assault of the Moon Magi!

HOUSE DIEDNE POWERS

We break from Tillitus' narrative to include mechanics of the mentioned Diedne powers, for players who want to incorporate such magic in their sagas.

During its halcyon days of the 9th century, House Diedne researchers discovered three new magical powers, which they kept secret within their lineage. The Goidelic Branch discovered a way for its members to remember information from former lives. The Brythonic Branch developed a method for magic to affect the lunar sphere. The Continental Branch invented a way to affect a person's Gift with magic, including destroying it and instilling it.

AFFECTING THE GIFT

The Continental branch of House Diedne spent years investigating the link between a person and their Gift. Practicing on Gifted volunteers, two Diedne magi in Braga, in the province of Galicia, found the solution and invented a new base effect for Vim magic to target an individual's Gift. By undergoing an initiation ritual, the initiate gains the Major Mystery Virtue: Gift Touch, allowing access to a new base effect. Once the Mystery Virtue is known, a magus can create spells that destroy, change, detect, or imbue the Gift.

The Vim base effect for affecting an individual's Gift is level 25. Because the Gift is so intrinsically linked to an individual, spells that affect the Gift need a Corpus requisite to function properly. This

Corpus requisite does not add magnitudes to the spell's final level.

BESTOW THE GIFT

CrVi(Co) 30

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Ind, Ritual

This spell gives the targeted individual the Gift, including all the accompanying magical possibilities and social headaches.

(base 25, +1 Touch)

SNUFF OUT THE GIFTS?

SPARK

PeVi(Co) 35

R: Voice, D: Mom, T: Ind

This spell removes an individual's Gift. It has no effect on other Supernatural Abilities the target may possess. It must penetrate the individual's Magic Resistance to work.

(base 25, +2 Voice)

THE LUNAR SPHERE

Before their Galician comrades found a way to affect the Gift, Diedne magi in the Brythonic Branch invented a new spell range which extends magic to the innermost of the celestial spheres, the lunar sphere. This range effectively breaks the Lesser Limit of the Lunar Sphere, one of the several limits that obstruct Hermetic magic. Access to Range: Lunar Sphere is gained through the Major Mystery Virtue: Moon Magic, available only through Diedne initiation. The Lunar Sphere is the equivalent level as Range: Arcane Connection.

Diedne magi never developed many spells to affect the moon before the Schism War, despite being able to target it. Its size is a problem; it is too big move from its orbit, so the usefulness of Terram spells is limited. However, since the moon seems about as large as a human head, from earth, Imaginem spells easily affect it. During the Schism War, House

Diedne invented spells to change the moon's color, which they used as a secret code to communicate to the House. On each full moon the communicator would change the moon's color according to a series of patterns, each pattern code for a different manoeuvre, directive, or stratagem.

RED GREEN BLUE MOON

MuIm 10

R: Lunar, D: Conc, T: Ind

This spell changes the color of the moon, from its basic silvery color to any color the caster wishes. The caster may change the color for as long as the spell lasts.

(base 1, +4 Lunar, +1 Conc)

The more beneficial spells covered the House's retreat during the final months of the Schism War.

LUNAR LEAP

ReCo 35

R: Per, D: Mom, T: Ind

This spell instantly transports a person from earth to a desired spot on the moon. While the Range: Lunar isn't included in the spell, knowledge of the Range lets the caster leap as far as the moon.

(base 35)

REMEMBERING PAST

LIVES

An intrinsic part of the ancient druid religion was reincarnation. Julius Caesar famously wrote that the Celts believed, "that souls do not become extinct, but pass after death from one body to another." The Greek Diordus wrote that the druids believed "that the souls of men are immortal, and that after a definite number of years they live a second life when the soul passes to another body." House Diedne retained this believe, and researchers from the

Goidelic branch invented a Major Mystery Virtue that allows a magus to "remember" details from past lives – abilities and spells – which he can use in his present incarnation.

Those initiated into the inner Diedne mystery gain the Supernatural Virtue: Past Lives, which grants the Supernatural Ability: Past Lives at a score of 1. Characters with this Supernatural Ability can remember information from former lives, which they can use to bolster their current knowledge or skill in an area of expertise, or gain access to a new skill or knowledge. A player makes an **Intelligence + Past Lives + stress die** roll against a variable Ease Factor, depending on the desired outcome.

If the roll is successful, the character gains the remembered knowledge. An Ability score is increased by 1, plus another +1 increase for every 3 full points over the Ease Factor the roll was. For example, if the roll was 12, the character gains 3 points in the desired Ability (1 for success, another 2 for being 6 points over the Ease Factor).

An Art is increased by 1 if the roll is successful, plus another +1 increase for every additional point over the Ease Factor the roll was.

To remember spells of greater than 1st magnitude, add +3 to the Ease Factor for each additional magnitude. For example, the Ease Factor to remember a fourth magnitude spell (level 20) is 15.

The remembered information lasts until the character goes to sleep, at which point all remembered information is forgotten again.

Unlike other Supernatural Abilities, Past Lives can only be increased through Practice, Teaching, and Adventure experience points. No Diedne magus would ever write on the subject, and teaching is only between initiated Diedne magi.

Past Lives is only available to pagan characters, those who truly believe in the druid pantheon of gods

Ease Factor	Outcome
6	Increase a known Ability (one the character posses a score in)
6	Increase a known Art
6	Remember a previously unknown formulaic spell of the 1st magnitude
9	Gain a score of 1 in an unknown Ability
9	Gain a score of 1 in an unknown Art
12	Remember a new Minor Virtue
15	Remember a new Major Virtue

and their creed. Any participation in Christian, Jewish, Muslim, or other Divine religions bars the character from having this ability. Those who have Past Lives lose the ability if they ever willingly participate in any non-druidic holy rite. Supernatural Abilities or powers derived from the Divine Realm also conflict with this Supernatural Ability.

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THE DIVISIBLE MEN

Divisibility is an unusual style of folk magic found in Slavic areas. Its practitioners can remove parts of their bodies, send them on missions, and then reattach them once their tasks are complete. It is believed, by Hermetic magi, to be a distant descendant of the great shamanic magics practiced before the coming of the Romans. Divisibleness is a technique, rather than a set of beliefs, and so divisible magicians can be found in many mystical traditions and mundane professions. Nightwalkers (see *Hedge Magic*) who are also divisible men may send their parts to places while insubstantial.

Divisible men do not have an Ability score, and do not make dice rolls when performing their magic. Division and reconnection always occur successfully, unless a story event intervenes. Dice rolls may be necessary for the missions which body parts are sent to perform. A body part attempting to remain unobserved uses the Stealth score of the magician. Hands gain a +3 bonus, due to their small size. Eyes and ears have a +6 bonus, because they can perform their tasks while immobile, and from unexpected vantages.

NEW VIRTUES FOR DIVISIBLE MEN

All divisible men have the Restore Severed Body Parts Virtue, and at least one of the others, sometimes more. These Virtues are gained through Ordeals and story events, although the precise nature of these initiations varies between practitioners. The removal of legs, arms, hands, eyes, and ears are mentioned often in local folklore, and

hearts more rarely. Some wizards may be able to detach other, even more disgusting, pieces of themselves.

RESTORE SEVERED BODY PARTS

Major, Supernatural

This Major Virtue allows a character who has lost a body part to reattach it, simply by pressing it into the correct place. The character must be conscious and able to concentrate. In some traditions, the character is only able to reattach a lost body part if able to perform a simple ritual, like saying a prayer or drinking strong

BY TIMOTHY FERGUSON

alcohol. Players should select a ritual that suits their character's backgrounds or interests. Wounded characters may use this ability to heal themselves, through a process of literal reassembly.

This power only reattaches severed parts: it does not cure bruises, surface abrasions, blood loss, crushed bones or many of the other maladies characters may encounter in combat. A character can however, speed his healing by aggravating his injuries in some cases. A character with a broken



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bone in his arm, for example, may have his arm severed so that he can replace it, thereby healing the bone. This process is very painful, which prevents most divisible men cutting themselves to heal minor injuries.

REMOVING THE HAND

Minor, Supernatural

This Virtue allows a Divisible man to sever his hand without killing it. The hand retains life and purpose sufficient to perform missions. It can scurry on its fingers in a fatigueless and swift way, carry objects that the magician could carry with one hand were it still attached, and write messages, if the magician is literate. The magician is aware of which direction his hand is, but must concentrate to gain sensory impressions from the hand. The hand is able to wield tools and small weapons, as if the magician were still attached.

The removal of the hand requires a sharp blade and a Minor wound. This wound remains open, but does not bleed or deteriorate, until the hand is reattached.

REMOVING THE EYE

Minor, Supernatural

This Virtue allows a divisible man to remove his eye without killing it. The eye retains life and purpose enough to perform missions. It can roll in a swift and non-fatiguing way and, provided the magician concentrates, he can see all that the eye sees. The removal of the eye requires a Minor wound and sharp fingernails. This wound remains open, but does not bleed or deteriorate, until the eye is replaced.

REMOVING THE EAR

Minor, Supernatural

This Virtue allows a divisible man to slice off his outer ear without killing it. The ear retains life and

PLOT HOOK: PARASITIC HEART

There is no human magician who can remove his heart, then place it into the bodies of a series of young victims, thereby gaining immortality. There are cosmological reasons why this approach cannot work. The Tremere are the most sure of this of any House, because they are aware that Guorna the Fetid was designing something similar before the Founders killed her. Stories, however, persist, and evidence has recently been found indicating that such a magician is active in a Transylvanian city.

Faeries don't care how realistic a story is, only how people react to it. A

group of them now wear human bodies and, after they have aged too much to be amusing, discard them by ripping out their hearts and forcing them into the chests of murder victims. The faerie then lives on, as if they were the younger person. These faeries have a power which steals the memories of their victims, but the information they get is incomplete, or their desire to seize life by the throat causes them to disregard its instructions. This personality change is perhaps the best guide for those seeking the creatures pretending to be divisible men.

purpose enough to perform missions. It can slide in a fatigueless and disgusting way and, provided the magician concentrates, he can hear everything it hears.

The removal of the ear requires a sharp blade and a Minor wound. This wound remains open, but does not bleed or deteriorate, until the hand is reattached.

SEAMLESS REMOVAL AND REASSEMBLY

Minor, Supernatural

This Minor Virtue allows a divisible man to remove and reassemble his body parts without suffering the wounds described in the following Virtues. He can simply tug off body parts and press them back in place. Magi with this Virtue may assemble collections of body parts which operate together.

REMOVING THE HEART

Minor, Supernatural

This Virtue is known to very few masters of this style of magic. It apparently allows the sorcerer to raise the dead. The magician removes his heart, which is a painless process requiring a simple act of will and a Major wound, then smears his heart's blood on a recently deceased person.

This causes the magician no harm obvious to observers, and the dead person immediately revives. The magician then slides his heart back into his chest, and the hole through which it was pulled heals perfectly.

Tremere magi have only seen this magic performed eight times, and on seven of those occasions the revived child was killed by faeries. This may simply be a painful way to force faeries to return changelings. Other faerie curses are also vulnerable to the warm heart's blood of a Divisible man. It acts as a Focus Power, level 50, on countering the effects of faerie magic (see *Realms of Power : Faerie* for notes on faerie powers). This may indicate that the heart itself is a symbiotic faerie, gained during Ordeal.

Magicians with this particular skill are so rare, and so unwilling to allow themselves to be experimented upon, that the limits of their powers are unclear. Folklore contains references to magi with this power who could hide their hearts, distant from their bodies, to stave off death from injuries, but the Tremere have never confirmed these magicians to exist. Characters who can hide their hearts to become immortal need an additional Virtue to those described here.

DÍEDNE THE THEURGE

By ERIK DAHL

This account tells of a version of Díedne the Founder who channeled her magic through a supernatural being, as a theurge or perhaps an avatar of magic. It is written from the perspective of an anonymous scholar writing a book about the lost House, who perhaps obviously has sympathies with them, but who makes no attempt to hide what they were from the light of later events. As servants of mystic powers, it is quite possible that they would do anything for their gods, including breaking their Oaths. — E.D.

HISTORY

In the last days of the Roman Empire, there were two major magical organizations in Mythic Europe: the Order of Mercury, and the Druids, the spiritual leaders of the Celtic peoples. Both groups consisted of Gifted men and occasionally Gifted women who performed ceremonial magic, and because each organization had a common religion they were both able to gather for their rituals without being too hindered by the social stigma of the power to practice magic. Contact between the two groups was sporadic and extremely limited; the priests of the Order were generally confined within their temples in cities under Roman control, mystically connected by the roads between them, while the Druids were incredibly secretive and lived in the wild places outside of civilization, gathering at times of magical significance and in the presence of powerful supernatural beings.

Population: 252 magi in 997

Domus Magna: Branugurix, in the Normandy Tribunal, near Mount Dol. The covenant included a raised temple made of red stones open to the sky, with sloping, stepped sides like a pyramid. It reportedly suffered terrible damage from several brutal raids in the mid-800s and had to be rebuilt twice, but even the stones were completely obliterated with everything else at the end of the Schism War.

Primus: none

Motto: When Deniela lived, her words were reputedly “*We will never die.*” However, after her death when the Irish Druids joined the house in the early 800s its motto was changed to “*Beata Terra beata omnia eam servant,*” or “Blessed be the Earth and all who serve her.” Llewellyn, the last primus, left a stone marker at Branugurix that ended with “We will return to haunt you,” and some magi believe this indicates a return at the end to their first principles, or perhaps that they never truly changed.

Symbol: A sun wheel, a circle containing four intersecting lines within it. The design is sometimes stylized to look like a compass rose, as the sun with four points and an X behind it, or as a cross with bent arms (a swastika). Deniela the Founder also placed a winged snake superimposed over this image, but this was removed after her death, probably by the Irish members of her House, and perhaps partly because the snake looked very similar to the staff symbol Pralix chose for the new House Ex Miscellanea. When they were excised from the records of the Order, all traces of this symbol were covered over and carved out.

As the Empire broke down and collapsed on itself, the network between temples and priests began to crumble, and soon the Order fell with it, for there were no longer any temple servants or scholars to facilitate communication between the wizards. The Druids, conversely, existing as they did on the frontiers of Rome’s reach, flourished once these borders began to contract. For most of the early medieval period the Druids were a dominant force in all of the Celtic lands. However, since their gatherings and ceremonies were organized around the veneration of supernatural patrons, regional groups began to take on different characteristics, and by the 700s they had begun to resemble many separate magical traditions with their own regional powers and practices. Perhaps an initiate of two congregations could recognize the similarities, but there was rarely any such traffic between them; priests avoided other priests, and unGifted followers remained solely among their own.

THE FOUNDER

Legend has it that Díedne the Founder was born Deniela at the beginning of the eighth century, to parents who adhered to the Old Faith and lived somewhere in Northern Brittany. It is clear from early accounts of her that she was blessed with the Gentle Gift, and beginning at an early

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age she studied with the eldest and most celebrated wizard of the area, participating in and eventually even leading their sacred rites on several occasions. But traditionally at that time women did not serve in the higher echelons of the magical practitioners, and when her mentor died suddenly in approximately 720, his successor (some accounts say his name was "Oedo") discouraged her further participation and suggested she marry instead. She refused his proposal and reputedly claimed that there was no husband worthy of her anywhere in the kingdom. Furious, he had her seized and sent across the channel, a slave intended as a gift to members of a rival group in Cornwall.

There are no surviving accounts to explain the intervening time, but in 722 Deniela apparently led the Cornish forces to victory against the Anglo-Saxons of Wessex in

the Battle of Hehil. This apparently brought her great fame and respect from the small group of wizards that lived in the area, and as thanks they granted her many gifts, including her freedom, her own Gifted servant named Petrock, and later passage to Ireland where she received an introduction to the leaders of the local tradition at the great Óenach Tlachtga, the Samhain Fair. There she somehow also earned the high esteem of Domnall Midi, chief of Clann Cholmáin and King of Uisnech. It is at this time that accounts begin to occasionally refer to her as "Díedne."

The Irish elders allowed Deniela to learn from them, as long as she remained merely a humble student, but they did not accord her any special favor or position in their hierarchy, and Deniela violently broke with them in 739, surprisingly to join Domnall's household. He soon

after became High King of Ireland, and gossip of the time calls her his mistress, but according to House Díedne scholars she was in fact his chief advisor for all of his reign. With her assistance, he decisively won every battle in which he engaged, and forged a stable, peaceful country. However, for the first time in the medieval period, the High King no longer relied upon the Druid leaders for guidance, and their resentment was bitter. When he finally died in 763, Deniela was forced to flee the country with her two children and her apprentice.

Where she went then is uncertain, but many of her followers believed she traveled to Northern Iberia, where she made contact with another group of Celtic tradition wizards in Galicia near what would later become the covenant of Duresca. She is also thought to have forged an alliance with a Gifted nobleman



named Maugris, who lived in Aquitaine and was quite famous for his position at Charlemagne's court.

Eventually, Deniela made her way back to France, where she challenged and defeated the elderly Oedo and the other wizards in his congregation in magical combat, a legendary duel that began on the next night of the full moon and lasted until the following full moon. After these two months all of the wizards of the region had either surrendered to Díedne and converted to her leadership or had been killed.

In 767, the elderly Deniela had become the leader of a great number of (mostly) loyal followers in Neustria, had friendly contacts with other wizards of her tradition in Cornwall, Aquitaine, and Iberia, and was also known to have befriended Merinita the Founder, who apparently knew where she lived. From Merinita, Deniela learned about Trianoma and Bonisagus, and the great meeting they had proposed that summer, where they had promised to teach the greatest wizards of the age a secret that would allow them to found a great Order of magic. Deniela reputedly angered Merinita with comments comparing their relative worthiness of inclusion in such a venture, and they parted with some animosity.

Yet Deniela, knowing about the gathering in the Black Forest, could not resist the jealous urgings of her heart, and made her way there uninvited. She later described herself watching and listening invisibly from the edge of the clearing as the various factions bickered and lauded themselves, and when the time came for the leaders of each group to come forward, she haughtily revealed herself,

declaring that she was the greatest of all of them, and that while she would not join their Order, they could perhaps join hers — if they convinced her they were worthy.

This caused great uproar among the more contentious Founders — especially Tremere, whose complicated maneuverings and surprising break with Tytalus had been upstaged by this unknown challenger. Guernicus accused her of spying on them, and Verditius took great offense at his worthiness being questioned. Spells were cast at Deniela, who spontaneously avoided them, and before anyone could be seriously injured Trianoma diffused the hostilities by explaining that while none of them knew Deniela, and even though they had already met with and been refused by her predecessor Oedo, she and Bonisagus would meet with Deniela privately as they had done with the others, to see if an accord might be reached between them. The gathering was interrupted for two days, but by the end Díedne agreed to help found the Order, with the promise of her own House and her own followers to lead.

Deniela remained in the Rhine for many years afterward, teaching Bonisagus what she knew and contributing greatly to the development of his Magic Theory. She then passed on her knowledge to her many followers, and partially raised another apprentice before she died in 791. Bonisagus completed the boy's training, and he took the Hermetic name Notatus — he is still remembered as the inventor of the *Aegis of the Hearth* spell, but all of his associations with his original mater were excised after the Schism War. Her body was taken to Branugurix by her daughter Eileen and allegedly

buried there at the newly incorporated covenant (though no bones were found when the site was cleared in 1012).

There is a persistent legend that Deniela lived on after death, or was reborn into a new body there at her home covenant. Because so much of the magic of House Diedne is based on the veneration of supernatural beings, it could simply be that the Founder's memory was remembered, but it must be said that many of her followers spoke of learning from her directly, and of serving her as if she had personally instructed them to do so. These legends are extremely difficult to substantiate, however, since her followers rarely wrote anything down and were extremely secretive about what they believed or did in their secret rites.

THE SPREAD OF THE HOUSE

The integration of Hermetic magic with Druidic rites spread extremely quickly, and even in the Founder's lifetime various groups of newly-gauntleted Diedne magi began to establish covenants throughout Western Europe. There were important houses created or incorporated into the Order up the entire coast of France and Iberia from Galicia to Denmark, and two other prominent covenants were founded in Wessex and Lyon. For most of the years after the Founding the number of House Diedne magi outnumbered the magi in other Houses by at least ten to one. Of course it is unlikely that any of them practiced Hermetic magic, but they all learned the *Parma Magica* and swore the Oath, and over time their magical practices began to slowly adapt.

It is not known whether there were any attempts to reconcile with Irish Druids and bring them into the Order before the Founder died, but in 799 an accord was tentatively reached between Diedne's son Tanick and a new High Priest Emrys, wherein the covenant of Uisneach and its more than fifty Irish magi joined House Diedne alongside the Frankish members of their tradition. By 817 there was additional expansion of the House into Wales, Scotland, Iberia, and the Rhine, and the population of the House nearly doubled again. It is clear that during this period there was a great deal of envy and resentment among the other magi of the Order for how quickly House Diedne was able to find, recruit, and adopt Gifted followers. The practice of all new magi being reviewed by a Quaesitor instead of the primus of the House is believed to originate in this distrust.

Though they were by far the most numerous House in the region, few if any Diedne magi participated in the war against Damhan-Allidh, which they were said to view as Pralix's attempt to block the further expansion of their House into Britain. At Tribunal, the elderly Guernicus went so far as to accuse the primus of House Diedne, Petrachus, of breaking his Oath, specifically the clause that "the enemies of the Order are my enemies." But despite reasoned arguments that if that part of the Code was not enforced it was a pointless promise, and the general bias against House Diedne, the Chief Quaesitor and Founder could not convince a majority of the other magi that not going to war was a punishable offense, and the assembled magi allowed that as long as the magi of House Diedne did not give aid

to Damhan-Allidh or his allies, they could not be called oathbreakers.

If indeed they did not wish to make war upon The Spider and his forces, the same cannot be said for the reverse. Even after the loss of their leader, the Order of Odin seemed determined to challenge the Diedne, often ignoring other easier targets to attack the former Druids wherever they could be found. Scholars of the House have often puzzled over how the rune wizards were able to land raiding parties and make their way directly to the hidden sites of Diedne magi, as if they knew exactly where they were. Though no charges were brought to Tribunal, many Diedne whispered and nurtured fears that Pralix's Ordo Miscellany had been formed not to fight the forces of Damhan-Allidh, but rather to aim them at a different target.

For most of the ninth century, the Diedne had to fight off the rune wizards and their invading forces at every turn. The population of the House dwindled as first the covenants of the Irish magi were sought out and devastated, then the strongholds in northern and southern France, and then finally even Diedne covenants miles and miles from the sea, as the invaders pursued them inland across the base of the Pyrenees Mountains, all the way to the Mediterranean. By the beginning of the eleventh century, House Diedne had dwindled from leading three-quarters of the population of the Order of Hermes to less than a fifth.

THE SCHISM WAR

When a magus of House Tremere living in the Hibernian Tribunal accused a magus of House Diedne of practicing

human sacrifice in 1002, it is said it was initially because the Diedne magus refused to disclose the origins of a certain pawn of vis that had come into the possession of the Tremere magus. The Diedne magus also refused to fight certamen over the matter, arguing that supplying such information would deprive him of his magical power, and was thus against the Code. The Tremere magus accused him of human sacrifice and dealing with devils, as well as not respecting certamen, and promised to take the issue to Tribunal.

The matter would have simply smouldered except that on the next night of the full moon three members of the Diedne magus's covenant declared Wizard's War upon the Tremere magus, and two hours later all seven Tremere magi in the Hibernian and its surrounding Tribunals immediately joined the war on behalf of the four Diedne magi. Before the day was over, magi of five other Diedne covenants had also declared Wizard's War against the seven Tremere magi. Three days after that, the Tremere Exarch obtained the support of his entire House to declare Wizard's War against all of House Diedne (ignoring the somewhat dubious legality of doing so after the full moon had already technically passed).

Whether or not the Diedne magi were in fact practicing diabolism, when this crisis was brought to the primi of the other Houses the issue soon became about the Latin traditions versus the non-Latin traditions. Hastily convened meetings between everyone but the representatives of House Diedne decided that for the good of the Order, the Diedne must be purged from its system. United representatives of the Order struck as soon as they could muster, though they could

not prevent word of their decision from reaching their enemies.

As soon as the primus Llewellyn learned what had happened, he knew there was no more hope for them in the lands of men, and left Branugurix with all of his remaining followers to weather the siege alone. It is said they took a flying ship to Wales and then from there to Ireland, where he gathered up as many of their kin as they could find and together set sail for the lands beyond the sunset, where they believed their legendary ancestors lived in a timeless land without night. When the armies of the Order finally fought their way into the inner sanctum of the covenant, they found only a marker that warned the invaders that Díedne's vengeance would one day come for them.

Those few magi with specialized knowledge about the various realms, especially the Magic Realm, may have since stumbled across evidence that suggests the primus and his fellow refugees escaped to another plane of existence, a new world in the distant land of the constantly setting sun. The images of the feathered serpent, the stepped pyramid, and the sun calendar still resonate among the microcosms and vestiges that make up the realm of pure magic, suggesting that their craft eventually reached its destination, and that they lived on — or were perhaps reborn — in this faraway place to teach their magic and religion to others.

In the south, the remaining Diedne magi decided there could be no escape, and so elected to bravely fight to the death. While their opposing forces were divided by sieges against the Diedne covenants, members of the House staged a daring attack

on Val-Negra in the Iberian Tribunal, one of the oldest Roman covenants in all of Mythic Europe, and laid waste to its defenses. From there via Mercere Portal they gained access to Harco, Durenmar, and many other places of great value to the Order. At each location they placed traps, summoned powerful beasts and other supernatural beings, and wrought terrifying destruction, the like of which had never been seen before. Legends say that in the Rhine, many of the great trees uprooted themselves and leapt crashing down upon the walls of Durenmar, battering them to pieces. Occasionally, even in 1220, deep pits will still suddenly open in the fields outside of Magvillus and swallow hapless unfortunates completely. It is said that in the forests of Gascony, all the wild animals have been trained to recognize the symbol of House Tremere, and will pursue and rend apart any magus who dares display it.

Some say that the spirit of Díedne herself fought beside these brave magi, a glowing woman dressed in white robes who cursed like a sailor and constantly healed her followers when they fell. If this is so, however, none of the survivors of other Houses mention her.

Many places are claimed to be the site of the last stand of the Diedne, especially the domus magna Branugurix, and though it was emptied early on in the war the remnants of the Diedne army came back to it in the final year to ambush their assailants. The various groups of rebel magi were believed to have eventually converged on a fortified island off of the western coast of Ireland, called Dun Aengus, but once its defenses were finally penetrated, it is said that no Diedne magi were found. There were no trophies to be had

(though too many magi claimed to possess Llewellyn's head in later years), and little glory or honor for the victors.

Perhaps born of a guilty conscience, many of the Quaesitors of House Guernicus made it their mission to eradicate all record of House Diedne from the history of the Order, and mercilessly harassed any magi who subsequently expressed interest in them or their magic. Even a mere twenty years later, just a suspicion of sympathy with the magi of the House was enough to get a magus Marched, his possessions seized and his name blackened. By the thirteenth century, two hundred years after the war, no trace of them remains in Mythic Europe, and no one dares to wonder aloud what secrets they possessed or great achievements they may have made. The House has been truly and thoroughly murdered.

CULTURE

House Diedne was a societas, a collection of magi with a common purpose, organized around their ancient religious ceremonies and beliefs. This was the purpose of the House, to spread their religion, and like other societates, anyone could join, so long as they converted to the faith. Unlike a Mystery Cult, they did not have to initiate the special magic of the House, though it may be assumed that anyone who joined after serving apprenticeship in another House would have done so, to better serve and follow the strictures of their faith.

In much the same structure as the Druids who made up the foundation of the House, the Diedne met in regional congregations called groves, which were usually formed

around a covenant. Each covenant typically worshipped a different pantheon of deities, and the leader of the covenant served as their High Priest, sometimes called the hierophant. Another important role at a covenant was called a bard, one who facilitated communication between the magi of the grove and their communities, and with the magi of other groves. Most bards were unGifted companions, trained to ignore the harsh effects of The Gift.

Originally few Diedne covenants were a single building — groves began as inclusive of all the Druids in the entire region, each living in their own house and village. They established specific places for the magi to meet, often in actual groves of trees, for ceremonial gatherings at the turning of the seasons. Even though the inventor of the Aegis of the Hearth was technically of Díedne's lineage, Diedne covenants were very slow to

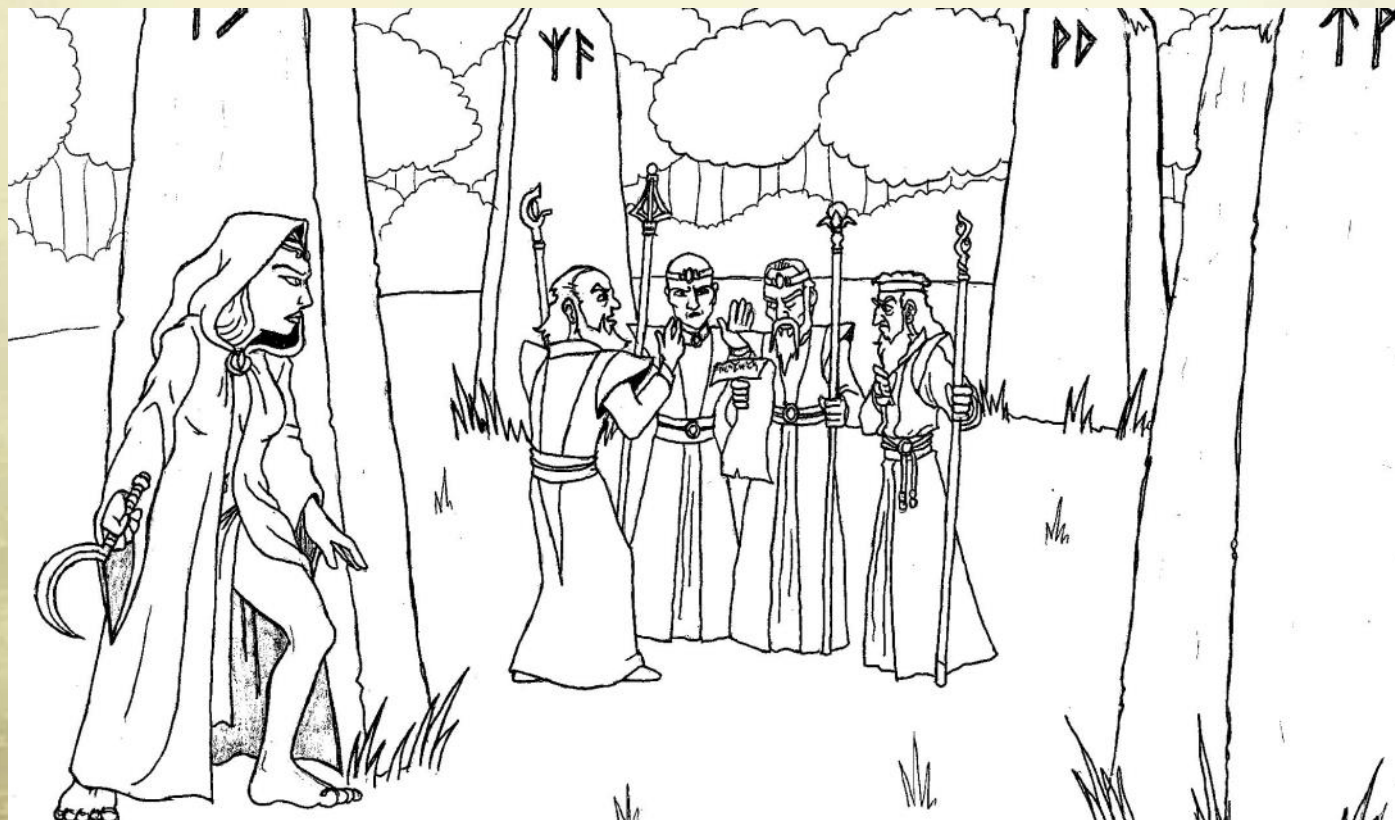
adopt the ritual, since it didn't match their model. But as the House became more withdrawn from the others, it became necessary for them to band together for protection, and they began to build secluded lodges, often underground, with many decoy entrances and blind passages. Often Diedne would alternate between living at the covenant and living outside of it, to not lose touch with their communities completely.

Diedne almost never joined other covenants. If anyone did, it was thought to be because he had broken with his congregation, and seen as a sign that the magus wished to form his own grove. Diedne were generally suspicious that close associations with non-Diedne magi would lead to their brethren confiding their House secrets, and so these independents were watched carefully for signs of betrayal.

Unusually, most members of

Diedne covenants did not attend Tribunals, instead sending only a single representative to speak for all of them and vote on their behalf, often the hierophant. This was even the case at Grand Tribunal, where it was common for the primus and delegates of the House to be the only Diedne in attendance. This led to the members of other covenants and even the other primi treating the House as one entity as well. Their representatives did not generally engage in politicking or the exchanging of votes, and in fact would almost always vote nay on any issue, even when there was overwhelming evidence of guilt. In the rare cases when it was a matter important to them, they simply relied on the sheer number of sigils they brought to carry the motion, though as attrition thinned their ranks this strategy became less and less effective.

Deniela the Founder reputedly had a fondness for cats, and was said to have bound a feral



speckled calico as her familiar. Other members of her House followed suit, and in later years many of the Frankish Diedne covenants were said to be filled with feral cats, many of which

to punish them. The Diedne also believed that ceremonially dedicating a person to a patron before that person comes of age causes The Gift to manifest, and presumably had evidence to

only, and it is part of why they were so secretive in general. It is true that over the years some scraps of information made their way out of the House, always fueling paranoia and mistrust among other magi, but for the most part they were lost in the many rumors and fanciful speculation that surrounds any sort of mystery or religion. Perhaps one reason they responded so quickly to the Schism War is that they had always been prepared for it to happen, once the truth about their House came out.



HE PRIMUS AND HIS FELLOW REFUGEES ESCAPED TO A NEW WORLD IN THE DISTANT LAND OF THE CONSTANTLY SETTING SUN.

were magical. After the Schism War, widespread superstition led to the belief that these cats were possessed of evil spirits, and especially in Normandy and the Rhine these special animals were hunted down and nearly exterminated.

BELIEFS

All members of House Diedne were brought up to believe that when great heroes die, their spirits are reborn, sometimes as other magi, and sometimes as powerful supernatural beings, essentially gods to be reverently respected and selflessly served. The wishes of these patrons, as they were often called, were paramount to the magi of Diedne, for the ability to work magic was seen as a gift from them. Indeed, these patrons could (and did) revoke The Gift from their followers when they were displeased, so this was no spurious correlation.

Diedne magi believed that the The Gift is endowed to every magus by one of these patrons, but that other magi do not know this and that most of them have never offended their patron to such an extent that it has seen fit

justify this idea. This is another reason that magi from other Houses were often suspicious of the Diedne, as they never seemed to have significant difficulty finding Gifted children to train into their House.

Adherents of the faith who did not have The Gift were seen as flawed, less worthy than magi, presumably having offended their patron — but they could still be put to good use, like many companions of the Order. In particular, they would carry messages between Diedne and their communities. These messages were always delivered orally, for Diedne magi hated writing anything down. They did not and could not trust Redcaps with this sort of information, fearing perhaps rightfully that they could expect no respect for their privacy even if it was against the law to pry into their affairs. Once one accuses someone of obtaining secrets, they believed, the secrets must become public to prove they had been stolen, and this was an unacceptable risk.

To be safe, House Diedne leaders tried to keep the entire concept of patrons from the rest of the Order. This was treated as a tenet of their faith, for believers

As a cover story, the House began to describe itself as devoted to nature and the earth, tending to trees and animals and all growing things. This was seen as tamer than serving spirits, which were often conflated with demons in the popular imagination. This led to a split in House philosophy, however, as a group of Hibernian Diedne in the late 800s began teaching that the earth was a sort of demiurge spirit, a mother figure to whom all of their spiritual patrons also owed allegiance of a sort. By this reckoning, it became acceptable among certain sects to judge the wishes of their patrons as also answerable to a higher power, and to defy one's patron to seek out a better one.

While many Diedne patrons did not approve of the Dominion, and directed their followers to shun and avoid it, the mild schism in House philosophy led to some Diedne becoming pious followers of the Divine, worshipping God the Father even while they faithfully served the Mother Nature, and seeking out new patrons who would allow them the full expression of their faith. These pious Diedne were generally opposed to the widespread practice of human sacrifice in their House, and some

believe that this divide between Hibernian Diedne led to even more blatant — almost retaliatory — uses of that ceremony, such as the famous wicker man burning of 984, to the point that non-Diedne began to hear of the practice and take note.

When Díedne the Founder died, she was buried at Branugurix, and the legend persists that after twenty years she was reborn as a spirit of wild nature and magic, which the primus and others of her covenant immediately took as their patron. For nearly all of the House's history in Mythic Europe, so the story goes, Díedne continued to lead her followers directly, instructing them in magic and ensuring that her House prospered and grew in power and influence. When the last of them were forced to flee Mythic Europe, some believe that she could not go with them, and so remains behind as a powerful spirit of vengeance, haunting the places where the Diedne once had power and desperately seeking new followers to help her punish those who wronged her and reclaim what she lost.

MAGIC

The magic of House Diedne is divided into two parts. Firstly, Druidic Magic tells how the early magic of the Druids worked, and explains how to simulate the supernatural rites that they performed before they joined the Order. Secondly, Diedne Magic expands upon these rules with the methods that Díedne the Founder developed to integrate her magic with Hermetic Theory, which many of her followers learned and improved over the years until their destruction, and which their survivors may still practice and could continue to practice in their New World for many, many years

to come.

DRUIDIC MAGIC

The early magic of the druids required them to possess one of five Supernatural Abilities, which corresponded to the Hermetic Techniques, and relied upon their entreating of supernatural beings, their patrons. Their magic was worked in semi-religious ceremonies called rites, wherein they performed a ritualized activity associated with their patron that allowed them to channel some of their patron's power into a magical effect. These rites could be performed alone and spontaneously, but were more effective as part of a ceremony.

The five Druidic Supernatural Abilities and their corresponding Techniques were:

<i>Aimsiú</i>	Divination (Intellego)
<i>Athrú</i>	Transformation (Muto)
<i>Chruthú</i>	Creation (Creo)
<i>Dhíothú</i>	Destruction (Perdo)
<i>Rialú</i>	Regulation (Rego)

Of these Techniques, none of them were found together by the time of Díedne the Founder. Outside of France, *Dhíothú* (Perdo) was no longer known or taught, where it had replaced *Aimsiú* (Intellego) as part of the Druid tradition. In England and Wales, *Rialú* (Rego) was given greater focus, but was only rarely practiced elsewhere, and had nearly been forgotten in Europe. Deniela was initiated into *Athrú* (Muto), *Chruthú* (Creo), and *Dhíothú* (Perdo) as an apprentice, and later learned *Aimsiú* (Intellego) and *Rialú* (Rego) during her time in Ireland. She eventually mastered all five Abilities over the course of her life. She also taught them to

Bonisagus, who was able to integrate them almost directly into Hermetic Theory.

Druid rites could spontaneously duplicate nearly any non-Ritual effect of what would later become Hermetic magic. The Ability had to correspond to the Hermetic Technique, and the Form of the effect must have either matched the Form of the Druid's patron, or else the Druid must have spent a number of pawns of vis associated with the appropriate Form equal to the magnitude of the intended effect.

Druids had access to all of the basic Ranges, Durations, and Targets that Bonisagus incorporated into Hermetic Theory (except for the Magical Sense Targets Taste, Touch, Smell, Hearing, and Vision, but including Ring and Circle), though as with Hermetic magic, Year and Boundary could not be used spontaneously, and the Druids were unable to use the Arcane Connection range with these spontaneous spells.

To perform a rite, the Druid had to ceremonially call upon her patron, focusing its power through her will upon the effect she wished to produce. This was most easily done with words and gestures, and like with Hermetic magic the Druid suffered a -15 penalty to her casting total when she did not use them. This did not cost the Druid any fatigue, but if she chose to devote some of her own physical energy to the spell and take a fatigue level, she could double her score in the associated Ability.

The level of the effect produced was equal to the Druid's **Stamina + Supernatural Ability Score + the aura bonus or penalty for a magical effect + a stress die**. This also cost her patron one point of Might for

each magnitude of the effect; if it did not have enough Might, the magnitude of the effect was limited by the amount that the patron could spend. Additionally, a patron could not enable spontaneous effects of greater level than its Might Score.

Druid Casting Total:

Stamina + Ability + aura + stress die

Each pawn of vis appropriate to the patron's Form or the Technique corresponding to the rite's Ability spent on a spontaneous effect added 2 to the Casting Total. If the desired effect was not of a Form associated with the patron, the Druid also must have spent one pawn of vis associated with that Form for each magnitude of the effect, in addition to the Might Points spent by the patron. This extra vis did not add any bonus to the Casting Total.

For penetrating Magic Resistance, Druids used the following formula: (their patron's Might Score – the level of the effect) + the Druid's Penetration Bonus from the Penetration Ability, multiplied for possessing an Arcane Connection to the target.

Druid Penetration Total:

(patron's Might Score – Spell Level) + Penetration Bonus

If the Druid botched her spell, she gained a Warping Point of the same realm as her patron for each 0 on the botch dice, and she suffered the standard negative effects associated with her patron's realm as her Warping Score increased (Minor Flaws at 1 and 3, a Minor Virtue at 5, and Major Flaws at each subsequent level).

Druids could also perform ceremonial rites of greater power,

Type of Sacrifice	Vis/Might
Nonliving, special (a well-crafted item, an object of special significance)	2
Animal (a bull, a lamb, a group of animals equaling at least Size –1)	4
Animal, special (a black sheep, a bull with unique markings)	6
Human (these were usually criminals, or the sick or elderly)	8
Human, special (a virgin, a seventh son, a Gifted child)	10

including Ritual-level effects. These special Druid Rituals could: invoke any inherent powers possessed by their patron without costing the patron permanent Might; or could produce effects of Momentary duration that were natural and lasting (such as permanent healing spells); or use Range: Arcane Connection, Duration: Year, or Target: Boundary; or exceed the effect level otherwise allowed by the patron's Might Score. Druid Rituals took one hour per magnitude of the effect to cast, cost one pawn of appropriate vis per magnitude of the effect, and required the patron to spend one Might Point per magnitude of the effect. If this cost more Might Points than the patron could spend, its permanent Might Score was lowered by one for each point over. As with other rites, by spending a long-term Fatigue level, the Druid could double her score in the Ability used when performing a Druid Ritual if she chose.

Druids who had the same patron could collaborate on a Druid Ritual, so long as one of them had a Leadership score

equal to (the number of participants – 1). Each Druid added her Stamina + Ability to the Casting Total, and the leader made the stress roll and spent the necessary vis. If the spell botched, all of the participants suffered the consequences, but the spell had to target them all as a group to affect anyone but the leader with its effects. If the leader fatigued herself to double her Ability score, all of the participants also suffered the loss of long-term fatigue, but only the leader's Ability score was doubled in the final total.

Druids could also incorporate offerings and sacrifices into their Druid Rituals, at the request of their patrons, though by the medieval period many of them found this act distasteful and corrupt. Doing so reduced the amount of vis the Druid was required to spend on the rite, and also reduced the number of Might Points that the patron had to spend by the same amount. The type of sacrifice, and the number of pawns of vis and Might Points it replaced is shown on the nearby table.

A single Druid Ritual could only benefit from one sacrifice,

NEW CREO VIM GUIDELINES

Besides the standard guidelines that were fully integrated into Hermetic magic, Druids also had several additional spell guidelines based on having patrons and enabling their spontaneous magic that Bonisagus also included into his Magic Theory. Since the Schism War, these guidelines have obviously fallen into disuse, and magi who cast spells based upon them are certain to be suspected of having ties to House Diedne.

While the Form for all of these guidelines is Vim, all Druids could cast them through their patrons using their Druid Rituals without having to spend extra vis of the associated form.

Magi who cast them as Hermetic spells must include Form requisites for effects outside of Vim.

General: Imbue an item within range with your patron's magical power, producing a number of pawns of vis of the appropriate Form equivalent to (the base magnitude of this effect + 1). This vis can only be used to boost your spontaneous magic or as part of a Druid Ritual involving your patron, and was seen as the patron giving up a part of itself to a faithful follower. (Ritual)

Duplicate the effects of any spell from a specified Technique and Form of up to (this effect's base level / 2). You may cast this spontaneous spell once any time before the duration of this effect ends, though the casting still takes the normal amount of time and you cannot fast-cast it. (Ritual)

Restore (2 x this effect's base magnitude) of your patron's Might Points via the mystical connection between the two of you (Range: Personal, Duration: Momentary, Target: Individual). Note that when cast as part of a Druid Ritual this still costs the patron Might Points, though they then may be immediately restored by this effect. (Ritual)

Dedicate yourself to a patron within range of this effect, with Might Score equal to (this effect's base level + 5). By increasing the Target to Group you can also dedicate others as part of this ceremony, and if the effect's Duration is greater than Momentary, for as long as it lasts you cannot subsequently lose this connection. (Ritual)

no matter how many were included in the ceremony.

Not all Druids had The Gift, as many of them were born with Virtues that gave them one or more of the Supernatural Abilities associated with the tradition. Those who had The Gift could learn these Abilities, of course, and if they could find a teacher all five were Favored Abilities of their tradition (meaning that they did not have to subtract other Supernatural Ability scores from their study totals when learning them, and did not subtract their scores in them from their study totals when learning other Supernatural Abilities). When taken as Virtues, each Ability counted as a Major Supernatural Virtue associated with the realm of the Druid's patron.

A patron had a mystical connection to its follower through which it could locate the Druid and gain a general sense of her health and state of mind by

concentrating. Also through this connection it could revoke its follower's power at any time. Until the Druid appeased the patron, or could dedicate herself

as Hell, the Magic Realm, Arcadia or Purgatory, her connection to her patron and her ability to work magic was similarly interrupted until she performed the



DRUIDS COULD ALSO INCORPORATE OFFERINGS AND SACRIFICES INTO THEIR DRUID RITUALS AT THE REQUEST OF THEIR PATRONS

to another patron in a special ritual that required a season of preparation and a number of pawns of vis equal to the magnitude of the new patron's Might Score, she could not cast any rites or participate in any Druid Rituals. Furthermore, if the Druid ever found herself in another realm of existence, such

rededication ceremony.

Most of their patrons were believed to be gods and goddesses associated with nature or the earth, usually magical but occasionally faerie, and others were the spirits of great heroes of ancient times, often thought to be reborn into the body of the Druid that channeled them. Some were

indeed demons, often faeries who had become corrupt. There were also legends of Druids who followed divine patrons, often in the form of divine beasts like unicorns or angelic spirits, but historically the Druids were much more often at odds with the Dominion, and such patrons would have been extremely rare.

Gentle Gift.

NEW AND MODIFIED VIRTUES AND FLAWS

CONDITIONAL GIFT

Major, Hermetic Flaw

who may then reinstate his ability to work magic.

Because of this weakness after Twilight and the aroused suspicions of other magi, this Flaw is seen as an important secret of the House, one that they must never reveal to outsiders.

DIEDNE MAGIC

Major, Hermetic Virtue

When casting spontaneous spells, you do not have to spend a Fatigue level, so your non-fatiguing total is divided by 2 instead of by 5. You may still choose to divide by 5; if you do, you do not roll the die and thus cannot botch.

Gaining this Virtue links the magus to a patron, usually the same as his master's, though the student may not be aware of this. Unlike with the traditional Druid magic, the patron need not do anything to power the magus's spontaneous spells, and does not influence the nature of his magic in any way. The patron does gain a permanent arcane connection from itself to the magus that is not reciprocal, through which it can locate the magus and sense his general state of mind at will.

Diedne Magi with this Virtue may perform Druid Rituals, substituting their scores in the five Hermetic Techniques for the five Druidic Abilities. Like with other Druidic magic, this costs the magus's patron Might Points, and you calculate Penetration for these Rituals based on the patron's Might Score. These special Rituals may also incorporate a sacrifice, and may involve multiple magi. If the leading magus has Druidic Legacy, he may accept the loss of a Long-Term Fatigue level to double his score in the appropriate Art.

Before the Schism War, the

DIEDNE MAGI ARE GENERALLY SEEN AS MORE LOYAL TO THEIR HOUSE THAN TO THE ORDER, AND ESPECIALLY SELFISH WHEN IT COMES TO GIVING ASSISTANCE TO OTHER, NON-DRUIDIC MAGI.

DIEDNE MAGIC

Once the magic of the Druids had been integrated into Hermetic Theory, new apprentices began to learn the Hermetic way of practicing their magic, though this was a much slower process in House Diedne as most of them already knew how to work Druidic magic and had deeply rooted methods of passing this knowledge to other followers.

The House Virtues and Flaws for Diedne, gained during apprenticeship and kept separate from the points they received to purchase other Virtues and Flaws, were Druidic Legacy, Diedne Magic, and Conditional Gift. All magi who began as members of the House before their disgrace took this Flaw and both Virtues during character creation. Even though they began with Diedne Magic, which is a Major Hermetic Virtue, they could still have another Major Hermetic Virtue. Life-Linked Spontaneous Magic was especially common in the Diedne lineages, as was the

The magus's patron sustains his Gift, and through its connection to him may also revoke his ability to work magic at any time. Thus, the magus must faithfully serve his patron, or suffer the consequences. (This Flaw assumes that the patron will regularly meddle in the affairs of the magus, to about the same degree as a Minor Story Flaw.)

When a magus with this Flaw undergoes Twilight or travels to another plane of existence (such as Purgatory, Hell, Arcadia, or the Magic Realm), he loses all connection to his patron while he is away, and is unable to cast spontaneous spells or engage in certamen until he rededicates himself in a ceremony that takes a season of preparation to perform and costs one pawn of vis of the same form as that of his patron for every magnitude of its Might Score. (Casting a Ritual spell using the new Creo Vim guideline outlined above is also sufficient.) Using this same ceremony, a magus whose patron has revoked his Gift can dedicate himself to a different patron if he so desires,

association with House Diedne's secret magical practices represented by this Virtue carried with it a slightly poor reputation and an expectation of favors from others in the House, similar to the effects of the Cabal Legacy Flaw; afterward it became a Dark Secret. Diedne magi are generally seen as more loyal to their House than to the Order, and especially selfish when it comes to giving assistance to other, non-Druidic magi. This is partly due to the way their magic is often combined with their pagan faith, and also because of their devoted relationships with their patrons.

DRUIDIC LEGACY

Minor, Hermetic Virtue

When casting non-fatiguing spontaneous spells, if you take a Fatigue level, you may double your lowest Art. This bonus does not stack with Minor or Major Magical Focus; for magi with both Virtues, the Art only doubles once.

After the Schism War, when it became a Dark Secret to practice the magic of House Diedne, the effects of this Virtue became part of the Diedne Magic Virtue. Outside of Mythic Europe,

however, where the Diedne endure and prosper in exile, they remain two separate Virtues, though they are almost always found together.

DIEDNE VARIATIONS

Some followers of House Diedne had the Deficient Technique Flaw, where the corresponding Druidic Techniques were not as well taught to those who later joined the Order. For example, Deficient Technique (Perdo) or Deficient Technique (Intellego) were especially common in the Hibernian Tribunal. Poor Formulaic Magic was also a common Hermetic Flaw, because of their traditional focus on spontaneous magic.

Diedne magi sometimes possessed one of these Major Flaws instead of the Conditional Gift, though such magi were very rare and generally kept their differences secret from their fellows to avoid courting their distrust.

UnGifted hedge wizards occasionally appeared with powers related to the Druidic tradition. As suggested above, they had one or more of the five

Techniques as Major Supernatural Virtues, and could thus participate in Druidic ceremonies and rites, though like the original Druids their spontaneous casting totals were much less significant than those of their Hermetic counterparts, being Abilities rather than Arts.

In order to simulate Diedne magi who escaped the destruction of their House by fleeing to a new world, the standard Virtues and Flaws are still very appropriate, though their patrons might look very different from those they had before they left Mythic Europe. Perhaps Llewellyn, upon his death, was reborn in this land as a deity of birds and the sun, and in that form led his people to a prosperous city and a mighty empire, his priests protected against the fierce creatures of the jungle and deserts by the mighty Parma Magica, until centuries later when members of the Order were also able to make the journey to the New World, and perhaps finally finish what they had started.



FROM THE JOURNAL OF VULCANIS ARGENS

Being the journal of Vulcanis Argens of House Verditius, discovered during the Vernal Inquisition after the fall of Donum Chanuti. Let its secrets inform the Order:

Extract from the journal of Vulcanis Argens:

Tribunal is upon us once again. It does not seem seven years ago that we last made preparations to visit Blackthorn, but so much has happened; the spirit in Sherwood, my new workshop, the granting of Aurifex' vis sources to me, the noble visitor who caused so much trouble, the tax collector, and the faeries we encountered. And then there is the growing mystery surrounding Aurifex what with these hidden notes I have been finding and, worryingly, the infernal vis secreted inside one of his laboratory texts.

Though I feel I should press on with my commission, having learned enough I think on Auram, I am looking to the Tribunal as a chance to meet others of my House face to face once more. Though my knowledge of the arts has improved, I am aware that my renown and standing within my House has not. It is something I must change.

We expect Semitae to arrive tomorrow.

Extract from the journal of Vulcanis Argens:

Blackthorn is as welcoming as ever. Either the place is cursed by some infernal trickster hoping to foster ill-will between covenants or the servants need whipping.

Extract from the journal of Vulcanis Argens:

The Tribunal was convened and, in scenes reminiscent of years past, was adjourned pending the arrival of Cad Gadu. None from that covenant had appeared and there seemed to be some concern around this. While I certainly recognise the contribution of the House and the symbolic nature of Cad Gadu itself (sitting as it does at the site of the final battle with Damhan-Allaidh), I am not concerned that the ex Miscellanea have not arrived. They will come as they will.

But, we find ourselves volunteered once more to attend to Tribunal business. Valeria, our esteemed Quaesitor, chose to conduct further business at Blackthorn so it fell to Benedic, Bellatorius, and myself to investigate.

As much as we know this evening is that the Redcap sent to Cad Gadu received harsh welcome from those who now occupy the island on which Cad Gadu stands. It seems that mundanes have taken the island. We'll know more when we reach the lake.

But we are not alone, nor are we unaided. The Magae Lumen of Schola Pythagoranis and Vanasalus of



Semitae have chosen to accompany us, something I detect Bellatorius is pleased about. I do not know which he has his eye upon but both seem youthful and comely. But importantly, we were invited to take enchanted items from Blackthorn's studio to aid us.

This place is as a reliquary to the devout. All manner of devices sat on pedestals, hung from the walls, or filled shelves. Many of them were accompanied by well-scribed notes explaining their history and purpose and maker. Others had more functional numbers which we were told related to a great index of devices held in the library. Others still seemed to occupy pride of place but no record existed of their maker or their magic; they were displayed simply for their beauty and for the scent of magic that very clearly gave off. To have spent a year or four years with access to that room; the secrets I could have learned... But it was not to be.

I persuaded the custodians to release to me three items. The first is a key, small and ordinary, that unlocks any lock it is touched to. The second is a great lens that sits in a socket that attaches over the eye. The description promises that the path through any regio boundary within sight will be revealed. The final item I took was a small wooden charm, clearly of Verditius design though no name appeared, in the form of a boat.

Extract from the journal of Vulcanis Argens:

Tostig has returned from the island. Using a device to translate the barren language of the Welsh into English, he persuaded the mundane guards to grant him audience. He explained that we were waiting off the island and wanted to make sure the safety of our colleagues. It seemed that the kinsmen of the magus Gwrhryr had taken control of the island in the lake as it had somehow been left vacant. We know that the

covenant is built within a number of regions, perhaps some magical incident has collapsed one or more of these? Regardless, they would not allow us onto the island. It may not be politic to use force so tonight we will use stealth.

Extract from the journal of Vulcanis Argens:

Morning has just broken over Cad Gadu and I write this by candlelight in the simple lodgings of Cad Gadu's steward having failed to convince the magi of Cad Gadu to attend Tribunal and having lost the two magae that accompanied us and having also lost some respect for Benedic.

We rowed to the island under cover of night, the boat having been created from the Blackthorn charm. Magic then lifted us up past the cliffs and onto the mundane level of the covenant, a simple place with but a few stone cottages and other ruins. The pillars with their white path through them were the way up the regiones, so our redcap guide had told us. It was only with the help of the lens that we were able to find the boundary marked out by the pillars and path and cross up into the covenant proper.

We were quick in waking the covenfolk and we were soon told that a great storm had struck the pillars in their regio some months ago. Since that night, the paths between the regiones had been broken and the magi seemed trapped on their level above with no way of travel between any of the three known levels.

We set to work at once. The pillars at Cad Gadu are great white stone constructions, not of a single piece of stone but made of blocks so closely fitted and of such craftsmanship that any join is almost impossible to see. Inscriptions spiral down the full length of the pillars. The carved lettering is apparently Welsh but here and there I can see various symbols and runes that I would suspect only a

Verditius would understand. The librarian later found us a volume on the history of the pillars and it confirmed that they were the work of more than one magus. But the whiteness of the stone was marred by cracking and charring, bearing out the story of the storm and the lightning strike.

We realised that some of the magic might still be working within the pillars but supposed that each pair was unable to sense when that magic should be triggered. This then was where Benedic's talent came into its own. He cast a spell to join the two pillars, a line forming a border that detected the presence of someone crossing it. By sympathy, this knowledge was transmitted to the pillars and their magic called enough to open the connection between regiones.

For all our knowledge, neither Bellatorius nor myself could have done such a thing, at least, not without time and resources. But the task was not without difficulty. For a moment, Benedic disappeared. We thought perhaps he had tripped the line and sent himself into another level of the regio. But, when he reappeared, he admitted that he had made a miscalculation with his spontaneous casting. He was wary afterwards of doing the same.

But we did form a stable connection to the upper regio. We bolstered it with ropes threaded through from one side to the other and all of us made our way through, including Lumen and Vanasalus, followed by the grogs. However, Lumen and Vanasalus never arrived. The magic in the pillars was fractured, as were the pillars on that higher level. We later learned that the storm was strongest at this level and these pillars bore the brunt of the lightning.

We resolved to find the magae later once we had made contact with the magi of Cad Gadu. Those magi at least were easily found, but not so

easily reached.

I admit I did not stay long enough in that level to learn their names (except one we already knew about called Gwrhyr) for their attitude offended me. We had travelled far, risked danger in coming to their island, had lost two of our companions, and yet still gratitude was in short measure. They would not so much as accompany us to the lower level and be seen by their loyal and worried covenfolk. Neither would they send representation to the Tribunal. And neither still would they grant me their sigils as proof of their safety (though I freely admit, proof of their safety was least on my mind by this point).

In this time, the covenfolk were re-supplying their masters with food and water and taking instruction from them. I resolved to leave. But we could not go without Lumen and Vanasalus. And so this is where Benedic failed.

A little over an hour ago, the night was nearly done, so Benedic made preparations for ceremony, just as he had done before, in order to recast the border spell between the pillars. Again he made a terrible hash of it and disappeared once more leaving Bellatorius and I to work out from his simple scruffy scratchings in the soil what kind of spell the simpleton had been seeking. I thought of all manner of effects that, given a workshop and a season I could have put in place, but nothing that could be done in a day's work. And then he reappeared, none the worse for wear and unharmed by the event. Let me remind you that by this time, the border to the upper level had now closed with the rising of the sun. Let me also remind you that two women were lost somewhere in a myriad of regions.

The man refused to cast another spell. Refused! Oh, we tried jest. We tried understanding. We tried shame, and blackmail, and bribery, and an appeal to what was left of his good nature, his good name, and his good



sense of self-preservation. None prevailed.

If the two women were thankless magi of Cad Gadu, or pointless peasants then I may have agreed. But these were magae of the Order. What's more, they were members of covenants friendly with Donum Chanuti. To desert them would have been to have caused a conflict between us and their covenants. And I would not give Junius excuse to hold Verditius knowledge back from me by leaving one of his sodales here. But the one man who had the power to fetch them back refused. Even the offer of vis to aid his casting was rejected on the basis that he could make no use of it on account of his flawed Gift (a fact I record here for future use).

We agreed to sleep on a solution, and I think Bellatorius and I thought

perhaps a day to think on it might bring Benedic to his senses. Whatever, I will not leave this island without the women.

I fear I shall not sleep tonight, so great is my irritation.

Extract from the journal of Vulcanis Argens:

I still ache grievously from my exertions, and my nose is still given to bleeding at inopportune moments. Looking over my last entry I am reminded how frustrated I was with Benedic and it was this frustration that led me to a rash casting.

Unable to sleep in comfort I had woken in the mid afternoon and had lain until dark working out how I might recall the magae. Even before I set about marking my first circle or

chanting my first structure, I had rehearsed the spell in my mind. I remember now pushing thoughts of the oncoming pain to the back of my mind.

With words rougher than I would have liked, once darkness fell I gave Benedic the boat-charm and ordered him to return to our camp off the lake shore and bring me back a cloak or some such as he had seen each of the magae wearing on our journey. As he did so, I had Bellatorius melt down some silver coins I had about me and from the molten metal I fashioned a representation of Lumen. I ritually named it and set it aside.

The pillars were integral to the casting. I based my ceremony around them and stood within the intersection between two great circles I had drawn around each. Bellatorius stood to my side as I knew I would

need to tether to the effect to him when I was done.

Soon enough, all was in place. I do not know how long the spell took, but it was long enough that a crowd gathered about. As I reached my last chant, I felt the power welling behind my eyes. I pushed with all my might and felt the uncomfortable wetness on my face and tasted the blood in my mouth. I remember my hands burning with green fire (though I think this was hallucination as none other seemed to remember it) and I remember the heat as the vis burned away and I called to Lumen to follow the pull of magic.

Just before I collapsed, I passed the spell to Bellatorius, as my power allows. He was prepared, and he concentrated on my foreign magic and he guided Lumen and Vanasalus back to us. I was not conscious to see

them step through the boundary.

Exhausted and wracked with pain and injury as I was, someone tended to me. I barely remember the journey back to the shore and I spent the trip back to Blackthorn in my coach. I am told that Vanasalus sat with me but I do not remember.

Healing was fetched once we reached Blackthorn and I admit that despite my aches and pains I am enjoying the pride of bringing back Lumen and Vanasalus, though I wish it had not been necessary. If nothing else, perhaps my efforts might shame Benedic into action the next time a hard task might face him.

Then again, I might also be declared Praeco, so similar are the chances.



THE CULT OF BELENOS

This article is designed to give a history to House Diedne, to outline where it came from and what it turned into, why it was stamped out by the Order and details a number of magical powers that House Diedne may have had. The article attempts to build upon the hints in the canon books that mention the Diedne, but is of course strictly non-

canon.

I have not attempted to link House Diedne to any unified single tradition of Celtic wizardry for two reasons. The first is that it is difficult to believe that a unified gifted tradition numbered in the hundreds prior to the Order of Hermes, due to the effects of the Gift. The second is that it allows House Diedne to be

BY MARK BAKER

quite different from one region to another, as the various magi would identify with different tribes and gods – and making their magical powers different.

ASSUMPTIONS

Historical evidence of exactly what Druids or Celtic polytheism involved is extremely scant, and what evidence is available is often from Roman sources, which have a tendency to present their version of the truth. This means the following ideas on ancient Celtic practices are almost purely speculative, and mainly designed for making games interesting. Some of the facets of House Diedne are based on pagan worship, which reflects not at all on the modern traditions. While the following article is not canon, it attempts to give genuine reasons why the Order of Hermes would stamp out this house.

THE HISTORY OF HOUSE DIEDNE

In 400 AD, the remnants of the Celtic way of life were dying. The Roman invasions had spelled doom for their way of life, and unless something was done they would soon die out. The only thing that these disparate traditions shared was that they worshipped the traditional gods of the Celts. The few remaining druids, who were for the most part ungifted, gathered together



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to discuss what they could do to save their peoples. They resolved to gather to them all of the wizards from Celtic traditions, and by the mid 5th century had organised a great meeting of the dozens of gifted and ungifted who identified as Celtic in their magical practice.

Remarkably, of the dozens of magic workers who met together at Beltane in the (later called) West Lotharingian Tribunal, the Gruagachan had sent a majority of Gifted members. The Gift caused much suspicion and the Gruagachan were not included in the meetings, and left in anger. But the remainder of the wizards swore to the Oath of Belenos, to not attack any other member and to give aid if requested.

This loose alliance only met a handful of times and achieved little over the next few hundred years – and the exercise would have been entirely useless except for the magical abilities of the druids and bards, which could somewhat overcome the problems of the Gift. Their capacity for communication allowed several of these groups to actively assist each other against the Christians and had some limited success in isolated areas. This had no long term success, but created an apparent golden age for later Celtic wizards that was more myth than reality.

By 700 AD this grouping of Celtic magi had survived, though barely. These last remaining believers in the old gods had retreated to the forests and caves, where they practiced their arts and took what apprentices they could - one of which was the sorceress Diedne.

THE COMING OF DIEDNE

Diedne was a brilliant, attractive and magically talented sorceress who was able to study

under the tutelage of many different masters, something normally impossible for her tradition. While Diedne never learned to read or write, and after she finished her unusual apprenticeship she spent years communing with the ancient gods in her religious places. When she emerged, she had combined many of the abilities she had learned into a full hedge tradition, and was able to open the gift of new apprentices so they each had many supernatural powers.

Diedne then began to use her network of animals and spirits to communicate with the different masters and wizards she had met, often citing the Oath of Belenos to allow her to speak. She claimed that she had a new way, a way that might give them the power to thrive in this new world. Interested, the remainder of the Celtic wizards, numbering in the dozens, began to approach Diedne one by one and re-swore the Oath of Belenos. While unable to change the magic of the experienced gifted wizards, the younger ones, or those who had not been taught their basic magics, Diedne's new found hedge arts were a powerful addition to the Celtic wizards.

DIEDNE AND TRIANOMA

It was during this time that Trianoma, hearing of a powerful, unaging and oddly communicative sorceress eventually tracked Diedne to her home deep in a magical forest in Gascony. Diedne was wary of any Greco-Roman wizards, and having had to defend her life against them. (Including storied attempts by the greatest destructive wizards of the age, Tytalus and Flambeau) Diedne attempted to bind Trianoma with magically created thorns in a surprise attack, but found her magics practically

useless against the Parma Magica. Defeated, she retreated into the woods. Trianoma made camp outside of Diedne's holy places, and Diedne observed the foreign maga make observances to the magical spirits that supplied Diedne's own power.

Eventually Diedne returned to human form and approached Trianoma, and the two began to converse. While not interested in helping a coalition of Christian magi, Diedne agreed to come to meet Bonisagus because of the utility of the Parma, and how it could help her own group of Celtic wizards. Diedne feared that without the Parma, the lifespan of Celtic wizardry would be only a few score years.

When Diedne met Bonisagus, she found him a wise and patient man. Finding Bonisagus already knew much of how to control forest creatures and the forest itself, but was unable to do so without preparing lengthy scripts and memorization, Diedne taught Bonisagus something she found entirely normal for magic; the intuitive ability to vary it dependent on need. The two argued deeply about the nature of magic, as Diedne did not believe 'Hermetic', or magic unrelated to the spirits or gods could even work. Eventually, Diedne found herself in a close friendship with Bonisagus despite all their differences. When Bonisagus was able to master spontaneous magic without calling on the spirits, Diedne found herself in a theological quandary that plagued her soon to be formed house until its destruction.

After Diedne learned the Parma Magica, she took it back to her homelands and brought all of her teachers and students together again, teaching them the Parma Magica. Finding the Gift no longer affecting them, the

wizards praised Diedne for her foresight — and gave her the leadership of the new house, though she was far from the oldest. Finding the Parma Magica unable to be learned by those without the Gift, however, Diedne then made a choice for her new house; while all Gifted Magi must swear the Code of Hermes, the Oath of Belenos was still in effect.

Learning Hermetic magic fully was difficult, and only the youngest of the Diedne were able to truly learn it, even from Bonisagus. Fearing that their own traditions, mysteries and powers would die out in favor of this powerful and utilitarian new magic, Diedne and the house leadership began a process of organising their multitude of disparate mysteries. To maintain

their traditions, the house began to form large Diedne-only covenants which focused on different mysteries — mysteries that were unknown to other members of House Diedne, and a culture that promoted communication and trust amongst Magi that had sworn the Oath of Belenos.

THE PAGAN HOUSE

It being illegal to worship any God other than the Christian God in the mundane world, the house maintained its secrecy as much as it could, not wanting to provoke its Christian colleagues. But its practitioners were often pious pagans if not priests and priestesses and leaders of their faith. They began to convert the local mundane populations to worship the Celtic pantheons,

sometimes in less than subtle ways. Concerned at the expansionist religious overtones of the House, as well as its size, and suspicious of the secret magics it held back, the other houses began to enquire into the nature of this House even as the first generation of magi died out or disappeared.

Rumours began amongst the other houses of House Diedne planning to convert the Tribunals to its own brand of paganism, as well as darker rumours around infernalism and human sacrifice. The Diedne leadership saw only Christians and Romans doing what they had always done; attempting to crush their ancient ways and beliefs and grew arrogant in the size and power their House controlled. The leaders of House Diedne chose to



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use its size as political leverage blocking all investigations against it and refused to allow investigations or even come to the negotiation table.

This did nothing to quell the Order's growing suspicions, and when the first wizards began raiding Diedne covenants in the search for more conclusive proof, House Diedne quickly came to the conclusion that they had always feared; their ways were under attack again. The Christians and the Romans were coming, but this time they had the power to stop it. They made the choice not to leave The Order, but to unify against the attacks against them, and to prove they could not be easily conquered.

BELIEFS

While beliefs are relatively unimportant to the Order of Hermes as a whole, House Diedne is defined by its beliefs. While the traditional Celtic tribes each would have had a tribal god or group of gods, each worshipped in their own way, House Diedne was formed after the Celtic tribes had begun to die out, so some of their practice may be of their own devising or been made from whole cloth in the hundreds of years since the tribes ceased identifying themselves as such. House Diedne sees itself as the religious leadership of the Pagan mundanes who live with or near them, and their magical gifts as blessings from the gods that indicate their readiness to be in these positions.

A traditional member of House Diedne is a Gifted or Ungifted magus who believes in, worships, and venerates the Celtic gods and spirits of the wild, and sees themselves as a worshipper first and magus

second. Magi of House Diedne view all things through their religious worldview. While not necessarily fanatics, inherently they believe in their gods, venerate the spirits of the land, and reject that association with the Divine is necessary prerequisite for worship. The Diedne, through their interaction with the Order of Hermes, found their gods were 'fairies' and their spirits were 'magical', and their magic was not necessarily fuelled by their cultic beliefs in the gods – which was an often argued theological debate that never reached a conclusion.

Members of House Diedne may or may not be priests of their religion, but House Diedne characters often take the Pagan story flaw. They may hold a single Celtic god with particular significance given the country of their birth or residence or may worship all equally.

Members of this house regularly worship shrines, give offerings, and commune with natural spirits. They often live with their mundane worshippers, and act as religious guides or protectors. Essentially, assume a Diedne covenant also functions as a parish, with the most experienced or senior Diedne (Gifted or Ungifted) acting as a religious authority for all, magical and mundane people in whichever area it controls. The Diedne do not deliberately remove themselves from the mundane population unless they are Gifted, where they are treated as touched by the gods – both dangerous and blessed.

Prior to the Order the Celtic wizards would function as advisors to Celtic chieftains on spiritual and mundane matters. After forming as House Diedne, the Gifted and unGifted magicians would combine the role

of religious authority and chieftain, at least for their covenants.

TENETS OF FAITH

The gods require veneration to be persuaded to act: To gain the attention of the gods, sacrifices are often thrown into pits, bogs, or burned. The gods are usually watching, may be in any form, and should be given respect. If the proper respect is shown, the gods may grant many boons. The gods often communicate in dreams, or by sending faerie or magic animals to guide their worshippers. The gods are not omnipotent or omnipresent, but are usually powerful supernatural creatures.

REINCARNATION

If a man acts in accordance with the gods of his tribe, his soul will be re-incarnated again in another body after a number of years.

ASTRONOMY

The practice of astronomy is important to the Celts, and the stars, the movement of the Moon, and of the Sun were significant parts of the Celtic religious life for telling when and where to engage in certain actions, such as warfare or hunting, or for later Hermetic laboratory work.

ANIMISM

Many rivers, water sources, trees and stones contain spirits, some of which may be benevolent or malevolent. These spirits were not worshipped like the gods, but may have been venerated as important parts of the tribe. Healing springs were especially well respected and were places where offerings of jewels or coins were made.

HEAD-HUNTING

The Celts collected the heads of their enemies, and often displayed them proudly. They were also said to then have the power and knowledge of those whose head was collected.

HUMAN SACRIFICE

The issue of human sacrifice is worth mentioning. It could be assumed that human sacrifice was likely a part of venerating the gods, or required in requesting their aid. Given that while the Celts most likely did practice it, it was a relatively rare occurrence and could be assumed to only be done for particularly needful circumstances such as long droughts or threats to the entire village. It's also likely the sacrifices were the old, the sick, or the deformed. It is possible in some situations the sacrifices may have been willing victims.

All of these tenets were important to greater or lesser extents dependent on the different gods being worshipped. Given that the precursors to the Diedne were heavily involved in religion, it is likely that their mysteries and magic involved these articles of faith in some way.

MAGIC OF THE DIEDNE

Prior to the foundation of the House, the magic of the Celts would have been inherently related to their religious or cultural practice of the Celts. This would have involved dealing with, gaining use of, and appeasing spirits and gods, as well as magical music or magical craftsmanship. After the foundation of the house Members of House Diedne would often have a Supernatural ability unique to their Diedne covenant, and

would often pursue mysteries depending on the covenant they were attached to.

DIEDNE COVENANTS

Diedne Covenants were usually Diedne only covenants, and other wizards were often not allowed to visit. Each covenant would usually be located in a magical aura close to a place of religious worship, and usually involve places near each of the elements. Most covenants would be named similar to the tribal areas they are in, and involve gods native to those tribes – either actually walking around, or in statue form.

The Diedne were heavily interested in expanding their numbers and often took multiple apprentices; in fact to gain access

to higher mysteries it was often required to have completed the apprenticeship of a new Diedne.

SAMPLE SUPERNATURAL ABILITIES

THE BARDS TONGUE

(Major Virtue, Supernatural)

The character gains the Supernatural Ability of The Bards Tongue at 1.

This is a supernatural ability possessed by the Bards. This ability requires speech of at least a few sentences to take effect, and can be used as a part of normal speech – but makes the speaker seem rhythmic and poetic, and it is necessary for the listeners to share a language.



SUB ROSA

Only one effect of Bards Tongue can be useful at any one time. To have an effect, the targets must be able to listen and make out the words of the Bard.

Botches involve cursing themselves or those they wish to bless, or infuriating people they wish to get on with.

Ease Factor 3: Give +1/-1 to the next social interaction roll.

Ease Factor 6: Give +2/-2 to the next social interaction roll.

Give +1/-1 to one target's (not self) next roll, chosen when this ability is used

Ease Factor 9: Give +3/-3 to the next social interaction roll.

Give +2/-2 to the target's next roll, chosen when this ability is used.

Give 10 targets +1/-1 to their next roll, chosen when this ability is used.

Ease Factor 12: Give +4/-4 to the next social interaction roll

Give +3/-3 to an Ability roll, chosen when ability is used

Give 100 Targets +1/-1 to their next roll, chosen when this ability is used

THE SEERS EYE

(Major Virtue, Supernatural)

The character gains the Supernatural Ability of The Seers Eye at 1.

This ability involves watching the movement of birds, throwing a collection of bones or sacrificing an animal whilst in a magical trance to divine the will of the gods. The wizard must then relay this information through speech to the leader or group of leaders of the group affected. The Seer must know of the groups, but does not require any further knowledge of them to have an effect. The prophecies

provide a bonus, which does not need to be rolled by the leader it is prophesied for, but by one in his command.

If the wizard is killed, the magic remains in effect if it has already been relayed but obviously the wizard can not make any further predictions. It takes fifteen minutes per every 3 levels of Ease Factor to use this magical ability. If the trance is disturbed, it must be begun again with a fresh animal or new set of birds.

The Seers Eye must be used for an upcoming conflict or event the Seer is also aware of, or could make an educated guess to expect. Botches usually curse the diviner or have the opposite effect than intended. The Seer must pick a day within the next month and an individual to be able to have an effect, and penetrate Magic Resistance as normal. The individual must be described accurately or named, and must be the leader of his band if the bonus is to apply against the entire band.

Example: Donell the Seer looks into the intestines of a chicken and foretells that Sean, the leader of the local warband he is allied to, will be successful in today's battle against Domnhall. He tells Sean this. When Sean acts as leader of his group when fighting, but it is the Vanguard, Patrick, who gets to add the bonus of +1 to every roll in today's Battle against Domnhall. The bonus would not apply if there was no battle, nor if there was a truce or negotiation.

Ease Factor 9: Minor favour of the gods: The leader or leaders the prophecy is relayed to gain a +1 to an action chosen by the Seer, and continues to apply until the action is successful or not.

Minor disfavor: The leader or leaders the prophecy is relayed to

gain a -1 to an action chosen by the Seer, and continues to apply until the action is successful or not.

Ease Factor 12: The Gods Watch: The target of the Seers Eye may gain a minor virtue or flaw chosen by the Seer.

Ease Factor 15: Favored by the Gods: The leader or leaders the prophecy is relayed to gain a +2 to an action chosen by the Seer, and continues to apply until the action is successful or not.

Disliked by the Gods: A single group of any size may be penalized by -2 to an action chosen by the Seer, and continues to apply until the action is successful or not.

Ease Factor 18: The Gods Applaud: The target may gain a major virtue or Flaw.

If an animal is sacrificed, it provides the following bonus to the roll:

Chicken, Dog or Cat:	+0
Sheep:	+1
Young Bull:	+2
Human:	+3

NEW ABILITIES

Diedne Ceremony (Major Mystery)

This Ability works exactly the same as the Ceremony ability in *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, with the following changes. Diedne Ceremony can assist the spells of any spontaneous magic or Goetic Art. Unlike the Ceremony Ability, Diedne Ceremony requires all members to have the Ceremony Ability, and requires a leader. The leader is always the member with the highest Diedne Cult Lore.

The Sacrifice chart from *Realms of Power: The Infernal* also

assists with spontaneous or Goetic Arts. The Diedne Ceremony ability is linked to Magic, but detects as Infernal.

MYSTERIES IN HOUSE DIEDNE

The Mysteries of House Diedne often involve teaching Supernatural abilities to its magi, such as the ones above or from the Core Rulebook, such as Second Sight or Enchanting Music. The Diedne would also initiate the Diedne Ceremony ability without requiring any path to be followed.

Three examples of Diedne Mysteries follow. This list is not exhaustive. They all work off the Diedne Cult Lore ability.

PATH OF ROWAN

The path of Rowan was a relatively common one amongst the Diedne, and its practitioners often blamed for the appearance of infernalism due to the tainted nature of the Goetic Arts. Traditionally this path is one of the more religious, and uses its powers to summon and bargain with powerful nature spirits for different reasons. Some of the eldest of this path practiced Binding, a by-product of the dark wizards who survived to live in House Diedne.

The Seed: The first initiation would teach Minor Potent Magic (Spirits or Gods), and often take the Pious flaw as an ordeal.

The Bud: The second initiation would teach Second Sight.

The Flower: This initiation grants the Goetic Art of Summoning (Magic or Faerie)

The Decay: This initiation granted the Binding Goetic Art,

usually suffering the Tainted with Evil flaw.

PATH OF MISTLETOE

The path of Mistletoe relished in the magical power of nature, rather than the spirits themselves.

The Seed: This initiation teaches the supernatural ability Animal Ken, usually gaining the Pagan flaw.

The Bud: This initiation would teach Major Potent Magic (Forests).

The Flower: This initiation would teach Forest Lore.

PATH OF TONGUES

The path of Speaking Tongues focused on gaining power over the dead through the medium of collecting the heads of enemies.

The Seed: This initiation gives the ability of Second Sight, usually with the Pagan flaw.

The Bud: This initiation gives the Major Potent Magic of Heads

The Flower: This initiation gives the Hermetic Binding mystery

BUT WERE THEY EVIL?

The members of House Diedne were a collection of unrepentant pagans possessing mysterious and strange abilities. They were also the largest of all of the houses, rarely involved themselves with other Hermetic wizards in friendly and understanding ways, and had plans for how their religion would spread over Europe.

Whether they *were* evil is up to your saga. Some of the Diedne summoned spirits with magic that could be detected as evil or Infernal. Some of the Diedne

collected the human heads of their enemies and bound spells of protection and necromancy into the heads before placing them on poles near their homes, or even carried them on their belts. Some of the Diedne practiced ritual sacrifice of their own members to protect their knowledge in their next reincarnated life. What is clear is that the Diedne valued their secrecy and the history of their traditions, and protected their housemates right to secrecy. To more militant houses who took Roman propaganda to heart, they were a legion of pagan barbarians and infernalists, and needed to be destroyed before they destroyed or corrupted The Order and all of Christendom.

HYPOTHESIS ONE: THE DIEDNE REALLY WERE EVIL

The Diedne were not evil originally, but turned to creatures they didn't understand to assist them prior to the Schism War beginning in earnest. Not originally a warlike house, the Diedne turned to the gods of war and strife to help them. Thinking that their gods were assisting them, the Diedne leadership were fooled by a collection of powerful False Gods who granted them infernal powers and masked the magics the Diedne were using. The Diedne assumed their newfound powers were gifts from their merciful gods, and their spells were unable to detect their own magics were tainted. The Diedne were strong enough with these powers that not only the Order, but the fate of Mythic Europe was at stake. The Guernicus then completed their ritual, and the Diedne began to be defeated.

HYPOTHESIS TWO: THE DIEDNE REALLY WEREN'T EVIL

Barring one or two bad seeds, the Diedne as a group were not corrupted by the Infernal. Seeing themselves as the innocent victims of Christian and Roman persecution, their house unified like it had never done before and used their abilities to war upon the Order as a form of pagan Crusade, as much as such a thing is possible. Their numbers and connections with the ancient spirits of the earth as well as the

subtle magics of their forbears combined to allow them several early crushing victories against the Latin houses who drastically overestimated their own superiority. Always suing for peace within the Tribunals, they were systematically politically and militarily blocked by the other houses and found themselves with little recourse other than war. Finally, their house was cast from the Order and they were defeated.

DIEDNE IN YOUR SAGA

The leaders of house Diedne

escaped the Schism war, as did a number of apprentices. What this means is a few options in terms of your saga.

REINCARNATION

The Diedne believed in reincarnation, in terms of the migration of souls from one body to the next after death. The Diedne leadership may well have a mystery that allows the memory, skills and magical power to move from one body to another after death. After two hundred years the Diedne begin to return, starting with a number of oddly wise, gifted children who begin to congregate near to the covenant and claim to be members of Ex Miscellanea. These are no children but a collection of embittered magical veterans. They may have odd views of the surviving houses that no longer reflect reality, and have hostile views of the player characters.

This could be an aggressive scenario, with the returned angry Diedne willing to get their revenge on the order. A more subtle approach could be the Diedne being willing to reintegrate with the order, or a combination of the two. What would be important is how the magi in your saga deal with the initial gathering of the Diedne.

DIEDNE NOVUS

The Diedne were not universally reviled by all magi, and a number of houses took on the living apprentices of the Diedne that their outermost mystery survives within other houses. A magus who is interested in his history could begin gathering recruits with this mystery, for two ends – to explore the lost mysteries of his house and to explore the claims made against his house – and



prove them wrong before revealing the New Diedne, a proud Hermetic house.

THE LOST COVENANT

The Diedne may still have hidden, long lost covenants that require exploring. Adventurers must bypass the human heads enchanted with spells of protection and furious spirits.

Perhaps a long lost ghost or familiar spirit can reveal some of the history of the Diedne, or even the rare written evidence of their magic.

WHY WERE THE RECORDS EXPUNGED?

House Guernicus expunged almost all record of the Diedne other than the orders for

destruction. The question remains; if the Diedne were as evil as claimed, why did House Guernicus bother to destroy the records so thoroughly? What is it that House Guernicus didn't want their successors to find, and that so many wizards took with them into Final Twilight? Was it that they wished to destroy the Diedne so thoroughly that the Houses in future would never

JERVANDOS EX MISCELLANEA

Characteristics: Int + 2, Per 0, Pre 2, Com 0, Str 0, Sta 1, Dex 0, Qik 0

Size: 0

Age: 25

Decrepitude: 0

Warping: 0 (0)

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: The Gift, Hermetic Magus; Diedne Magic, Ways of the Forest; The Bards Tongue, Cyclic Magic (Positive in Spring and Autumn), Inoffensive to Animals, Minor Magical Focus (Wood), Social Contacts (Worshippers of Belenos), Study Bonus; Driven (Increase the power of the Worshippers of Belenos), Plagued by Supernatural Entity (Belenos), Study Requirement; Cyclic Magic (Negative in Summer and Winter), Hedge Wizard, Susceptibility to Divine, Vow (Oath of Belenos)

Personality Traits: Driven (Increase the power of the Worshippers of Belenos) + 6, Pleasant + 1, Careful + 2

Reputations: Hedge Wizard 3

Combat:

Dodge: Init +0, Attack n/a, Defense +0, Damage n/a

Soak: +1

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Abilities: Athletics (Running) 1, Artes Liberales (Ceremonial Magic) 2, Charm (Magi) 2, Code of Hermes (Diedne) 1, Folk Ken (Magi) 3 (45), Guile (Avoiding Suspicion) 3 (45), Native Language (Langue d'Oc) 5, Etiquette (Order of Hermes) 2, Latin (Hermetic Usage) 4, Magic Lore (Forest Spirits) 2, Magic Theory (Herbam) 3, Parma Magica (Intellego) 1, Penetration (Herbam) 1, Stealth (Hiding Places) 1, The Bards Tongue (First Impressions) 3

Arts: Cr 6, In 1, Mu 0, Re 4, Pe 0, An 6, Aq 0, Au 0, Co 0, He 6, Ig 0, Im 0, Me 0, Te 0, Vi 1

Spells Known: (With Cyclic Magic and Ways of the Forest, an additional +6 can be added to the spell total.)

Bridge of Wood (CrHe 20) + 19

Wall of Living Wood (CrHe 25) + 19

Transformation of the Thorny Staff (MuHe 10) + 7

Piercing Shaft of Wood (MuHe 10) + 7

Strike of the Angered Branch (ReHe 15) + 15

Tangle of Wood and Thorns (ReHe 15) + 15

Lord of the Trees (ReHe 25) + 15

Appearance: Jervandos is a tall, thin man with an energetic stride. He can never seem to decide on whether to grow his beard out or not, but has a large and luxurious moustache. He wears fairly simple woodsman's clothes most of the time, with belt knife and walking staff. For formal Hermetic occasions he wears a robe with sandals, and for formal Worshipper occasions he wears the white robe with staff and sickle. He can and does ride when he needs to, though he prefers to walk.

Equipment: Staff, knife, sickle, clothing.

Notes: Jervandos is the most recently Gauntleted magus in the cult. He has yet to gain any mysteries and is looking to join a spring covenant that is preferably deep in the forest. Jervandos is always polite and understanding, but appears to always be a little busy to get into deep conversations, though he is apologetic about it. He has three unGifted magi who come with him, and there are more in the area if he needs them.

Jervandos doesn't lie about his origins, but uses carefully crafted half truths; he is from an ancient order of Celtic wizards inducted into Ex Miscellanea around two hundred years ago who have ties to unGifted magi – but the Order always comes first.

Over the next few years Jervandos intends to settle in a covenant, favouring a group of other young magi such as himself. He avoids spending too much time with very old members of the Order, and appears for the most part to be a lab rat much like any Bonisagus.

Jervandos adventures or studies Arts in Summer and Winter, and often looks to invent spells during Spring and Autumn. Jervandos is quietly Pagan, and does not attempt to convert anyone for many years.

Jervandos expects his cult to initiate him in its mystery within the next seven years.

wish to suffer the fate of the Diedne... or was there something even darker afoot?

HOUSE DIEDNE IN 1220 - THE CULT OF BELENOS

Membership:

- 15 Gifted magi, scattered between Provencal, Stonehenge, Hibernia and Loch Leglean.
- 50 Ungifted hedge wizards.

House Diedne ceased to exist as a political entity as of the Schism war. But this did not mean it did not survive. A small number of newly trained Diedne were hidden away with a group of apprentices in far flung regionnes, assisted by Magi of many different houses. They have since kept a low profile, masquerading as members of Ex Miscellanea and drawing little attention to themselves. But in 1220, the last of those who persecuted them has disappeared and the time is right for them to begin to resurface.

The magi no longer refer to themselves as Diedne, though they are aware of their heritage. They instead refer to themselves as the Worshippers of Belenos.

These magi follow the worship of their Diedne forbears and do much as the ancient House Diedne did. But the Worshippers have chosen to welcome other magi amongst them and meet regularly – but almost never form unified house covenants, choosing instead to form multi-house covenants like the rest of the Order.

The one thing that these Worshippers still do is work closely with unGifted hedge wizards and continue to swear the

Oath of Belenos with all that this entails. For the most part they are still ignored by the majority of the order despite their open following of House Diedne's path, as the records from the period have been destroyed and none alive remember well enough of the time to draw comparisons.

Despite the distance, the Worshippers are closely united and fiercely protect any of their members for any reason. They are not aggressive but study the magic of war and deception as much as their ancient mysteries. The Worshippers gather each Beltane in their respective tribunals to re-affirm their Oath, swap stories, and freely give away the magical knowledge they have created (and copied) to their compatriots.

The worshippers' goals are not quite so unified, though their aims are often linked. Some wish to rediscover their ancient magics, some wish to find evidence their House was unfairly or illegally punished, and some even suspect their house was fairly punished and feel the need to rebuild trust. All involve seeking information that is highly suspect and usually raises the interest of hostile parties. As such, the Worshippers usually act slowly, through intermediaries, and with great caution.

Unlike House Diedne, which grew exponentially due to its stance on taking apprentices, the Worshippers are cautious with too much growth of their Gifted members. They know that too much interest will spell their doom, and so keep their numbers limited and their involvement with other Hermetic wizards polite and open. The Worshippers have rediscovered the Path of Rowan, but the other paths have yet to be found.

The Worshippers regularly

pass on their knowledge to unGifted hedge wizards, often recruiting likely candidates and having them swear the Oath of Belenos. These unGifted magi are the ones who do the majority of the work, and see the Worshippers themselves as repositories of ancient and lost magics. The Gifted Worshippers have clear leadership of this cult, with the unGifted being close, but lesser allies. Each Worshipper likely has two or three unGifted magi as agents.

THE OATH OF BELENOS

I swear to do no harm to those who share the Ancient faith. I shall aid my brethren where I can, and do my utmost to bring back the magic and beliefs of my ancestors. If I harm another, or work with those who destroy the faith, let me be burned as an offering to the gods.

SAMPLE COMMON VIRTUES

Diedne Magic

The Bards Tongue

The Seers Eye

Entrancement

Enchanting Music

Ways of the Forest

Social Contacts (Worshippers of Belenos)

SAMPLE COMMON FLAWS

Pagan

Pious

Close Family Ties

Poor Formulaic Magic

Tainted with Evil



HOUSE DIEDNE: A CHTHONIC PATH TO CORRUPTION?

Far from public perception, House Diedne is not extinct in 1220. Following the decisive battle of the Schism War many survivors swallowed their pride and withdrew rather than fight to the death in futile attempts to defend their House.

The focus of this article is to present House Diedne as they were at their height of power, prior to the Schism War. Notes are also included for the two centuries since then in order to integrate magi of House Diedne into *Ars Magica's* standard 1220 setting.

HISTORY

The history of Diedne was one of not merely a lone founder who upon adapting to the Hermetic tradition needed to train or recruit to see her House grow. Diedne already had a large number of followers who she rapidly integrated into the new magical theory. This fueled their already expansionist agenda and bolstered their ranks and it was no coincidence that this house became the Order's most numerous.

THE TRADITION BEFORE DIEDNE

The old druidic tradition predating Diedne's conversion to Hermetic magic was benign and peaceful, dealing with the fertility and prosperity of the common people and advising the ruling class. The mutual distrust caused by the Gift prevented any large and cohesive organization but their magic was very similar to what the Order of Hermes later saw House Diedne practice, with a focus on natural elements, living plants and

beasts.

The enmity with the Gruagachan is lost in time but goes back to the very early days of the druids. Little is recorded about these events, but early speculations by Trianoma suggested that Diedne had been manipulated by her druidic elders to leave of her own free will. In hindsight the druids evidently sought to rid their own ranks of a potentially dangerous and

Population: Unknown

Domus Magna: Bryn Celli Ddu, in Stonehenge Tribunal

Primus: Lwellyn, later known as "the Accursed"

Favored Tribunals: Normandy, Stonehenge, Iberia, Loch Leglean, Provence and Hibernia

Motto: *Beata Terra beata omnia eam servant* (Blessed be Earth and all who serve her)

Symbol: Celtic five-fold

corruptible druid, to avoid a later schism. Her liberal attitudes towards sacrifice was a decisive factor in their rejection. Human sacrifice had previously been practiced by the druids but by Diedne's time was no longer found socially acceptable. Otherwise the major difference was Diedne's focus on the spirits inhabiting the physical elements rather than affecting the elements directly. They had not counted on the level of support she garnered from the young generation, and the resulting thinning of their ranks started the decline of their druidic tradition. With the continued pressure

BY CHRISTIAN ROSENKJAER ANDERSEN

of the Christian Church the druidic tradition fragmented and over time degenerated into pale shadows of their former power.

THE FOUNDER DIEDNE

Diedne was a young druid who disagreed with her master – the unofficial leader of all druids – on many aspects of their tradition. She represented a fair deal of young and like-minded druids, a generation demanding change. She lacked the assertive nature to challenge the old druids in power, and she became more prone to taking risks to prove herself and grow in power. Eventually this forced her to part ways with her tradition, she and her associates spent years on a long journey across the regions dominated by druids to recruit more followers. Eventually Diedne herself met with Trianoma and Bonisagus and immediately took to their ways and ambitions of an order of wizards. She and her followers settled in what was later known as Branugurix in Normandy Tribunal.

FOUNDATION AND GROWTH OF THE HOUSE

Bonisagus was very keen on including Diedne in his Order of Hermes, and adamant that her strong and flexible powers were integrated into Hermetic theory, what later became known as spontaneous casting. As an outcast of her own tradition, with both a cadre of followers expecting her to lead, and the age old enemies of the

SUB ROSA

Gruagachan, Diedne was also highly motivated to join the fledgling Order of Hermes if only for the protection it offered. The long, secret meetings between the two were mainly spent in investigating whether Diedne's magic posed an unacceptable risk. Bonisagus eventually judged it safe and Diedne was welcomed into the still-growing Order. Trianoma for one always had her suspicions about Diedne due to this secrecy, suspicions she shared with several others – even entire factions of Houses – over time.

Diedne and her followers entered as a mystery cult, to ensure the protection of their practices, however

the expansion that was to come had elements of a societates as well.

From their very first encounter Diedne slighted Tremere by mistaking him for a mere apprentice of another, more powerful wizard. In the decades to come the order grew and House Diedne grew more rapidly than any other House, due to the followers Diedne brought along as well as their aggressive, expansionist policy. Tremere was always dismayed by Diedne's blatant paganism, the dark history of human sacrifice never openly denied, and in general the secrecy of the cult's practices. As the Mercurian cults of Houses Flambeau

and Guernicus flourished Tremere's suspicious affected these magi as well.

Diedne's inner circle of trusted lieutenants set off to druidic dominated areas with their younger foot soldiers and apprentices to found covenants in one massive exodus from Branugurix. Armed with Parma Magica and the knowledge of the druids' organization, and more importantly their recruitment procedures, the Diedne recruited massively among the Gifted and thus robbed the Druids of future apprentices. Their early success also resulted in defection from the Druidic ranks to convert to hermetic magic. The "join or die" policy was ruthless and many unrelated hedge traditions were forcefully assimilated or be mercilessly wiped out.

Many of the first locations for covenants were strategically chosen for their proximity to powerful magic regions, several of which were connected in a network. This phenomenon was somewhat comparable to the famous Hermes Portals, and the rivalry between the Druidic and the Mercurian traditions led a group of industrious Diedne magi to research this further. They worked decade upon decade to link up with as many Diedne covenants as possible, with great success. Originally intended to put the arrogant Mercurians in their place this endeavor was instead kept secret. A choice made by the increasingly paranoid leadership of the House. While far from all covenants had a regio connected to the network on site, each of the areas now known as Stonehenge, Hibernia, Loch Leglean, Normandy, Provencal, and Iberia had at least two such places.

ORGANIZATION

The organization of the house was divided into self governing regions led by a Chieftain, with each of the Tribunals as known in 1220 divided into two or more such areas. Each Chieftain was voted on by his inner



circle of strongest Warriors by showing he was more powerful and ambitious than his rival candidates. Diedne set herself above this hierarchy as spiritual leader. The Chieftains met every three years in Branugurix to decide who was the more powerful region, and this High Chieftain in practice decided on House policy. Not that there was much difference of opinion, the house presented a cohesive and secretive front so outsiders saw then as force to be reckoned with. In reality almost half the individual Diedne followed the strong leadership out of fear or convenience rather than any deep loyalty. It was the powerful inner circle who during the first few decades spearheaded a change of magical focus for the house, a fact not evident to any outside the House.

As spiritual leader, Diedne delved into the world of spirits to strengthen her house's magical powers, and combined with their worship of pagan deities she turned them away from simple airy spirits of elements and flora to focus on primordial spirits of the earth itself, and on to the chthonic deities of the underworld. The opposition later claimed this was where she sold her soul to the Dark Lord himself. Although Chthonic magic is dark, sinister, and bears a taint of the Infernal and most definitively on the path towards darkness and possible corruption, this is simply not true.

Her strongest and most ambitious followers, namely her Chieftains and their trusted sodales followed suit and cowed the rest of the house into submission. Outwardly, and for most daily situations, there was little change from the original practices. However the traditions of human sacrifice were revived, used in utmost secrecy for powerful and important rituals only. House Diedne was always one of the more fierce enemies of demons and diabolists and fought such abominations ceaselessly in their domains of control. However,

because of their almost paranoid secrecy the Order at large never knew this. The rewards reaped were vast amounts of Vis Sordida which although powerful also affected the users with sinful Personality Traits, posed a risk when used, and furthered the suspicions heaped upon the house. The sinful traits fostered even more secrecy, paranoia, and aggressive non-compliance with outsiders asking or demanding investigations of suspicious events. And so the spiral to the open and devastating conflict known as the Schism War began.

AFTER DIEDNE

Diedne's final project before her death in 842 AD was to dabble in the Goetic Arts to further her skills at summoning spirits. As she worked on experimental Initiation Scripts she lost control and let loose a dark spirit. Alone and pushed to her breaking point she decided she was personally further down the unwanted path to darkness than she had ever intended and refused to let her House make the same mistakes. Gritting her teeth, she made a final attempt to banish her enemy and succeeded although both her mind and body were broken. When her closest Chieftains finally found her she made them swear to turn away from the darkness.

Saddened by her demise her Chieftains elected Obregon as new Primus and bore the house forward again. Her death left not a power vacuum but a clear stagnation in their development of power, which truthfully had been way too fast and left them ripe for corruption. The general consensus among the newly elected Primus and the Chieftains was to heed her warnings and not succumb to temptation and darkness. Although to outsiders the use of Chthonic magic and the rarely used human sacrifices were more than enough to taint them with evil.

THE MARCH TO WAR

With the 11th century barely into infancy the escalating rift between the still growing numbers of aggressively recruiting and assimilating Diedne and the Mercurian traditions together with House Tremere culminated. No single event – not even a small one – can be said to have sparked all out war. Over a number of years the growing pressure on the Quaesitores by the opposition to conduct thorough investigations for Diabolism was refused by House Diedne with no room for compromise. What the leaders of Flambeau and Tremere actually knew never came out, but they clearly expected widespread demon worship. The Diedne knew their chthonic magic made them without a doubt tainted, and suspected any pagan worship was deemed evil by the Christian magi. They counted on their numbers and known power to be a deterrent, hoped for sympathizers, and were willing to secede and form their own order.

The Quaesitores were too weak to withstand the pressure from Houses Flambeau and Tremere and failed in finding a long term solution. With the massive declarations of war against the Diedne as a whole the Quaesitores had no choice but to follow suit and take opportunity of the situation to investigate with impunity while the others fought. House Diedne was renounced and all out war was a reality.

The Quaesitores' first discoveries showed signs of dark, tainted powers and they immediately decided their choice of sides was right – just as the Diedne suspected they would. However, even as they found more details and eventually realized the Diedne in fact were not true diabolists, merely chthonic sorcerers, they yet again failed in their sworn duties believing they could not stop the war.

Even though Diedne was a House with numbers surpassing the rest of

the Houses together the war was terrible and indecisive. As not all the other Houses joined the war not all Diedne participated wholeheartedly. Many of the newly assimilated traditions, and those who did not see eye to eye with the dark, spiritual ways introduced by Diedne the Founder, withdrew from the offensive. Most were mercilessly and indifferently killed by either side of the conflict, only the Melusine survived. At first the sheer numbers and power of the Diedne was overwhelming for the combined Flambeau and Tremere forces,

who had no choice but to follow suit. Primus at the time, Lwellyn was one of the most dedicated Chieftains and the first to accept with gratitude this solution. He would rather back down from a losing fight, go underground, and live to fight another day. Along with a few choice Inner Circle magi and as many of the less combat inclined members he could save he withdrew to the regio at Bryn Celli Ddu. In a coordinated effort small groups withdrew simultaneously at the few covenants still remaining, where their access to the regio was still intact, among others Branugurix.

parted ways to infiltrate other Houses in secret, while the most fanatic members stubbornly fought until the end. The Diedne in hiding took it upon themselves to train new members, expand their numbers, and plan for their ultimate revenge.

The covenants and important sites of the vanquished Diedne were plundered, much to the amusement of hidden Diedne observers this caused strife and infighting among the so-called victors. As knowledge of their tradition and history was purged from the Order most artifacts and books found were destroyed. This is the explanation as to why so little remains in 1220 however; as the retreat to hiding was prepared, the cooler heads managed to bring along much of the House's knowledge and resources.



S SPIRITUAL LEADER, DIEDNE DELVED INTO THE WORLD OF SPIRITS TO STRENGTHEN HER HOUSE'S MAGICAL POWERS

outnumbered because not all Houses answered the call to war.

Although House Diedne was not as organized as Tremere they fought tooth and nail, led by their Chieftains and the House's inner circle of Warriors, using any means at hand. Well-prepared to the point of paranoia, most covenants had stockpiles of vis and resources ready to be used. The forces of nature, magical beasts, and spirits were adeptly used weapons by the Diedne. Their ability to quickly and flexibly cast magical defenses turned many battles in their favor. The power and dedication of the inner circle of Diedne – the Chieftains and Warriors – was the reason the Order could not easily vanquish the House. But in reality it was the more peaceful members who should be credited with saving the tradition; As they did not believe war was ever a solution their own leaders prepared in secret tactics of retreat and hiding. Once defeat seemed inevitable they presented their plans to the Chieftains

Sufficient numbers of Diedne stayed behind and fought to the end to hide the retreat, some were too fanatically involved to back down, while others valiantly sacrificed themselves for the greater good of the House.

AFTER THE WAR

After years of bitter fighting the remaining Order of Hermes declared victory and the extinction of the renegade house. However this was the truth only as the Quaesitores, Flambeau, Tremere, and other participating factions knew and believed it. The renounced House did in fact survive, and are plotting their return as Lwellyn's last recorded words promised.

Key members in all Tribunals where Diedne was well-represented, all deeply initiated into their most secretive powers, went into hiding in their network of regiones. They took their most promising youngsters and apprentices along to continue their line. The few remaining Diedne

A HOUSE IN HIDING

Lwellyn himself took great risks in summoning, binding, and negotiating with an immensely powerful spirit. As he attained safety, secrecy, and sustenance for his followers he went into hibernation with the spirit as to be there for the end. His Chieftains were left to continue the House and wake Lwellyn up when the time came, the orders relegated orally through the generations. For reasons of safety the remaining Diedne split into segregated groups – just as they originally were organized in small groups led by a Chieftain – and only the inner core knows the ways to contact the others.

In every generation one or more spies and infiltrators are hand-picked and purposefully trained to venture to the Order incognito and bring back facts important for the grand plan. They know of the few remaining infiltrators who stayed with the Order at the end of the Schism, the lineages of these have been painstakingly recorded since then. Any magus in 1220 with the Dark Secret of knowing Diedne Magic is under observation,

and gauged whether he is a potential ally to recruit to the cause or a deserter they need to destroy.

HOUSE DIEDNE IN 1220

At least one chapter of hidden Diedne exist in each of the Tribunals which they populated most densely before the Schism. Entrances to the regiones are close to or within their former covenants or other sites of power, Branugurix and Bryn Celli Ddu to name a few. From the shadows, they prepare by training many new magi, recruiting sympathizers, stockpiling vis, binding spirits to help in a coming conflict, and raising a veritable army of mundane warriors.

Following the period of hiding deep in regiones, concealed from any

but the most determined searchers the Diedne begun toward the end of the 12th century to send out more infiltrators. These magi were trained intensely in secrecy, intrigue, and spycraft and most often pose as much younger magi to seem less powerful. Their tasks included training new generations of magi among the Order but still teaching the old ways in secret, as well as recruiting anyone with loyalties to a reformed Order.

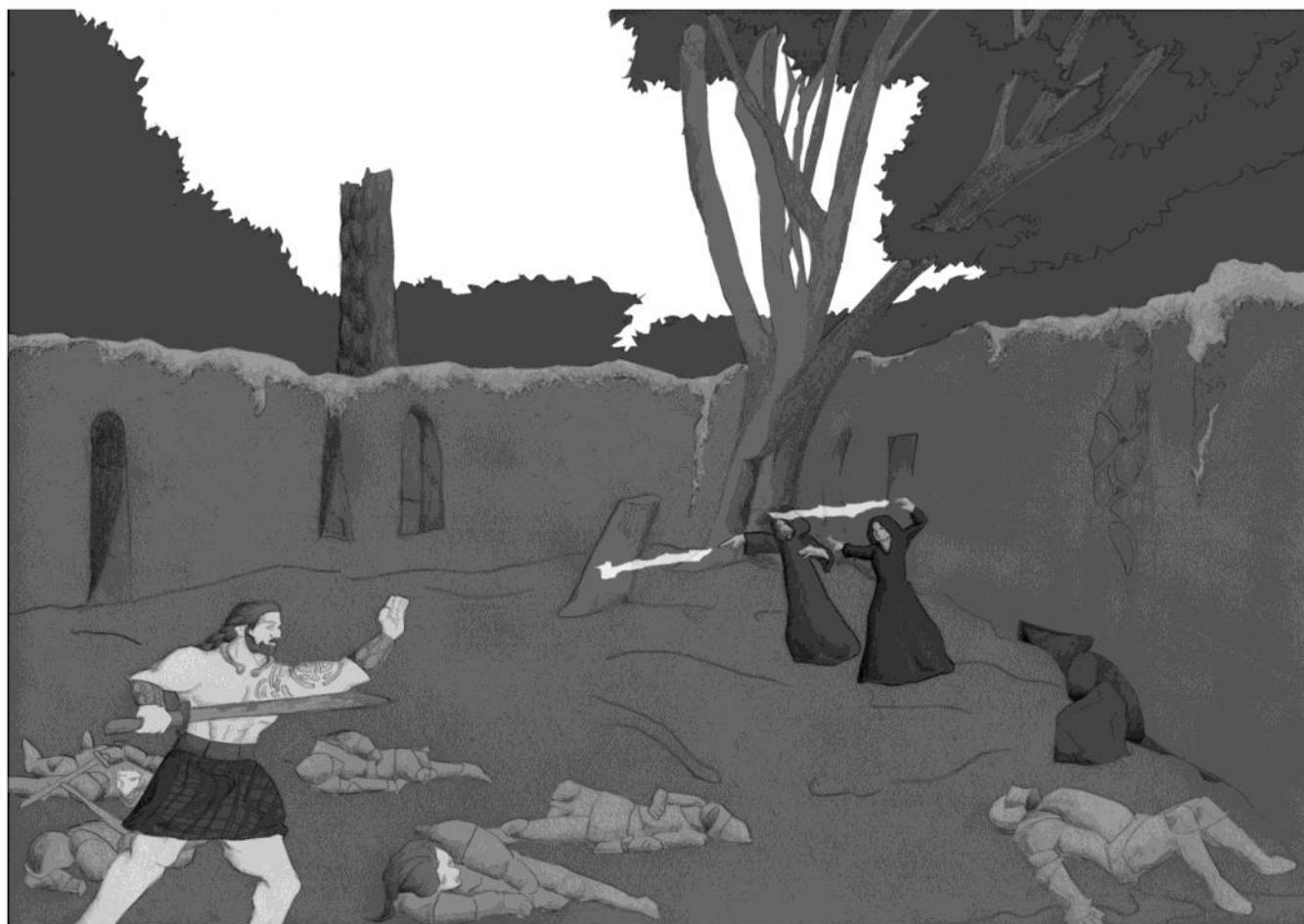
If these infiltrators cannot recruit someone, they might instead use their influence to sow discord between their former enemies who allied during the Schism. Any political issue or personal strife they can fuel is pursued, a few examples include:

- House Flambeau's Neo-Mercurians and their Mithraic Cult don't always see eye to eye, the Diedne intend to take

advantage of this.

- Also their former enemy of House ex Miscellanea has been fragmented and divided as to not form a united front against them, many have even been recruited as loyalists. Some of the surviving Diedne kept their origins secret and in 1220 are represented in subordinate groups in Houses who stayed neutral and uninvolved during the Schism. This includes Bjornaer and also the nature-oriented "true lineage" of Merinita.

These can either work from within their house to keep neutrality or even incite to loyalty. In the case of Merinita they may even advocate splitting the house to segregate the original, nature faction from Quendalon's faerie line.



SUB ROSA

DIEDNE MAGI

The Diedne magus post-Schism has a mind set on secrecy and revenge; nothing less than breaking the mighty Houses will suffice. Total destruction is not desirable, the Diedne's base instincts require a vanquished enemy to admit defeat. The desire for revenge and a return to their rightful place has over the centuries degenerated into wanting to rule the rest of the Order. Oddly enough, there is little detail known about how the future Order of Hermes is to be, but plenty of plans and countermeasures to create chaos and sow discord as a prelude to the return.

DIEDNE'S MAGICAL PRACTICE

The basis of House Diedne's magic is purely Hermetic coupled with Chthonic powers. Their worship of pagan Celtic and Gaulish gods of the underworld was integrated in their magic. The gods Taranis and Toutatis were highly popular. In the early years, Diedne the Founder dabbled in integrating Goetic Summoning along the lines of Hermetic Sorcery.

As this led to her death this path was abandoned in respect of her sacrifices. The taint of Chthonic Magic and the effects heavy use of Infernal Vis Sordida had on many would surely have led to this path once again, if the House had not been so rapidly involved in a destructive war. Left to their own devices, or given time during a prolonged cold war with the antagonistic Houses in stead, this would have been the case.

As they were most well-known for their impressive feats of spontaneous magic many of their enemies erroneously assumed they had difficulties with formulaic magic. This is not so, however, and many Diedne preferred to focus on but a few choice spells and spend more time improving Arts in order to improvise on the fly rather than spend too much

time in labs. This concentration caused spell mastery to become very popular. Given time and opportunity to prepare, the ceremonial casting mastery was used to great effect. Their most powerful spells were often cast in large ceremonies, using Wizard's Communion, and occasionally sacrificing beasts or men to further boost the power (see later). House Diedne are no more and no less known for the creation of enchanted devices, however Talismans were always popular especially due to attunements granting bonus for the Arts.

House Diedne is treated as a Mystery Cult but shares many similarities to a Societas, because of their still-active recruitment process. The Inner Circle is mostly comprised of magi tracing their lineage through parens back to the Diedne who escaped destruction at the end of the Schism War. The outer ranks are new recruits from various sympathetic hedge traditions, or Hermetic descendants of these magi. However there is no stigma against the new blood, anyone strong enough to enter the Inner Circle is welcome and believed to strengthen rather than dilute the Diedne.

THE NEED FOR SECRECY

House Diedne in 1220 ihas vital need for the utmost secrecy. Most of the members hide in remote places or inside regiones. Those few who venture out among the Order's members need to take even more drastic measures, and have painstakingly developed secret identities complete with an assumed lineage which delicately contain names and places recognizable to other magi.

CHARACTER CREATION

The first Initiation is that of Diedne Magic (**ArM5**, page 41), accompanied by the Ability Organization Lore: Diedne, starting at

a score of 1. A Diedne magus in hiding substitutes Dark Secret with Pagan (*Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, page 109), infiltrators in the Order retain Dark Secret.

Like House ex Miscellanea their House Virtue consists of several elements, balanced to the value of a single Minor Virtue. So, in addition to Diedne Magic the initiate must take a Major Hermetic Flaw from the Ordeal, and also choose a Minor Virtue of any type to represent their sub-tradition or personal knack. Commonly found Virtues are listed later.

House Benefits:

Diedne Magic (Major Hermetic Virtue)*

Choice of Major Hermetic Flaw

Choice of Minor Virtue, any type

*) Includes Major Story Flaw of Dark Secret, or alternatively Pagan

COMMON VIRTUES & FLAWS

The Druidic background of a Diedne magus is a wide term with a few common factors: Their magic is closely attuned to elements of natural, plants, and beasts both physically and spiritually. The Inner Circle has great combat prowess and have often initiated one or more Major Hermetic Virtues.

Commonly seen Virtues, from a selection of **Ars Magica Fifth Edition** supplements, include: Affinities and Puissant Arts, Alluring to Magic Beings, Animal Ken, Binding the Gift, Cyclic Magic, Deft Form, Faerie Blood, Fast Caster, Great Talisman, Inoffensive to Animals, Inoffensive to Magic Beings, Magic Blood, Mastered Spells, Method Caster, Minor Magical Focus (nature related subject), Second Sight, Shapeshifter, Skinchanger, Spell Improvisation, Spirit Familiar, and Unbound Tongue.

Commonly seen Flaws underline

the Diedne tradition's pagan background and dark connections to Chthonic Magic: Susceptible to the Divine, and Corrupted Abilities, Corrupted Arts, Corrupted Spells, or False Powers. Many of the sinful Personality Flaws are also appropriate, as are ones relating to the extreme dedication they have to the house and the enmity towards the rest of the Order. Dutybound or Vow symbolizes the ties to the house as well, and these are often seen as Ordeals to initiations.

NEW VIRTUES & FLAWS

Diedne Sacrifice (*Minor, Supernatural*)

Diedne magic can be fuelled by the sacrifice of the life of a significant being, yielding an impressive bonus to Casting Score.

Only animals of exceptional quality or with a Magic Might score can be sacrificed for effect, granting a bonus to Casting Score of +5 for a Size 0 creature, or the magnitude of Might whichever is more, with a further +/-1 modifier per change in size category.

Human sacrifice is worth twice the bonus mentioned. The method of sacrifice varies depending on geography and which pagan deity the casters invoke, but hanging, drowning, or burning in a wicker man ritual are among the most frequently used.

It requires a method similar to ceremonial casting regarding time consumption, and may be used with Spontaneous, Formulaic, or Ritual Casting. One magus casts the spell, a number of participating magi per +5 of the bonus received is necessary for the ritual sacrifice. Only one magus needs to have this Virtue, and he alone performs the actual sacrifice, this need not necessarily be the caster. This sacrifice is compatible with Ceremonial Mastery if the caster knows this.

This controversial Virtue seems to

confirm the case made by Houses Flambeau, Tremere, and Guernicus. However there is no evidence of this being infernal of nature, nor of it ever having been performed between the time of the Order's founding and the start of the Schism War.

DIEDNE MAGIC CAN BE FUELLED BY THE SACRIFICE OF THE LIFE OF A SIGNIFICANT BEING

MAGIC OF THE DIEDNE

Magi of Diedne are highly skilled in manipulating natural and elemental matter, hence the forms Animal, Aquam, Auram, Herbam, Ignem, and Terram are popular. A great number of practitioners steer towards spiritual magic of these types instead, choosing to manipulate the Airy Spirits of Flora, Fauna, and Elements. A further step towards the dark and sinister path, which may have been what started the whole animosity towards the druidic house, is the use of Vim for more efficient and specialized dealings with spirits, ghosts, genii loci, and daimons.

As Mystery Cults go, Diedne is absolutely the most secret one – since the continued existence has been withheld from the Order since the end of the Schism – but one of the more casual regarding the sequence and selection of mysteries initiated, following no set pattern.

Most of the commonly found virtues mentioned earlier are available as Outer Mysteries. Once an initiate reaches a score of 3 in Organization Lore: Diedne the Inner Mysteries become available for members, even while they are apprentices. Among the more aggressive Diedne it is popular to initiate Chthonic Magic – a Supernatural as well as Hermetic

Major Virtue. Normally magi are limited to one single Major Hermetic Virtue, but initiation of mysteries can surpass this. An initiate may also sacrifice a Minor Magical Focus to upgrade to a major version.

As such a character is highly unbalanced compared to a normal, starting magus it is not recommended for a starting character to do this, even if raising Organization Lore: Diedne to 3 or more. However doing this in play can be done – subject to the troupe's acceptance, as it requires the participation in stories for the Quests needed, and most importantly takes time away from other studies and projects.

Allowing a starting magus to have initiated a Minor Virtue during apprenticeship does not risk the same unbalancing effect. Such a character is recommended to raise his Organization Lore: Diedne above the starting score. Otherwise these individuals are better left as NPC magi to use as enemies or recruiters for loyalists in a Diedne Returned saga.

In either case a Diedne magus having Initiated more than one Inner Mystery is powerful verging on the legendary, and is deeply ingrained in the Inner Circle – if not as ruling body then as front line warleader. Such a magus is heavily laden with Flaws regarding duty and fanaticism, as well as potentially corrupted by the dark and sinister powers they delve into.

OUTER MYSTERIES

Any of the commonly found Minor Virtues, mentioned earlier are appropriate.

INNER MYSTERIES

Chthonic Magic (*Major, Supernatural, Hermetic*)

Elemental Magic (*Major, Hermetic*)

Major Magical Focus (*Major, Hermetic*). Requires the initiate first possesses a Minor Focus, which is sacrificed as an Ordeal

Life-Linked Spontaneous

Magic (*Major, Hermetic*)

INTRODUCING HOUSE DIEDNE

Any use of House Diedne in play is going to require major secrecy or result in an escalating war. Not many magi are actively looking for Diedne survivors in 1220, but House Tremere has a Vexillation devoted to this. Once discovered the Order is quick to mobilize many Tremere and Flambeau for war while others try to revive the old alliances. The Quaesitores continue the old political

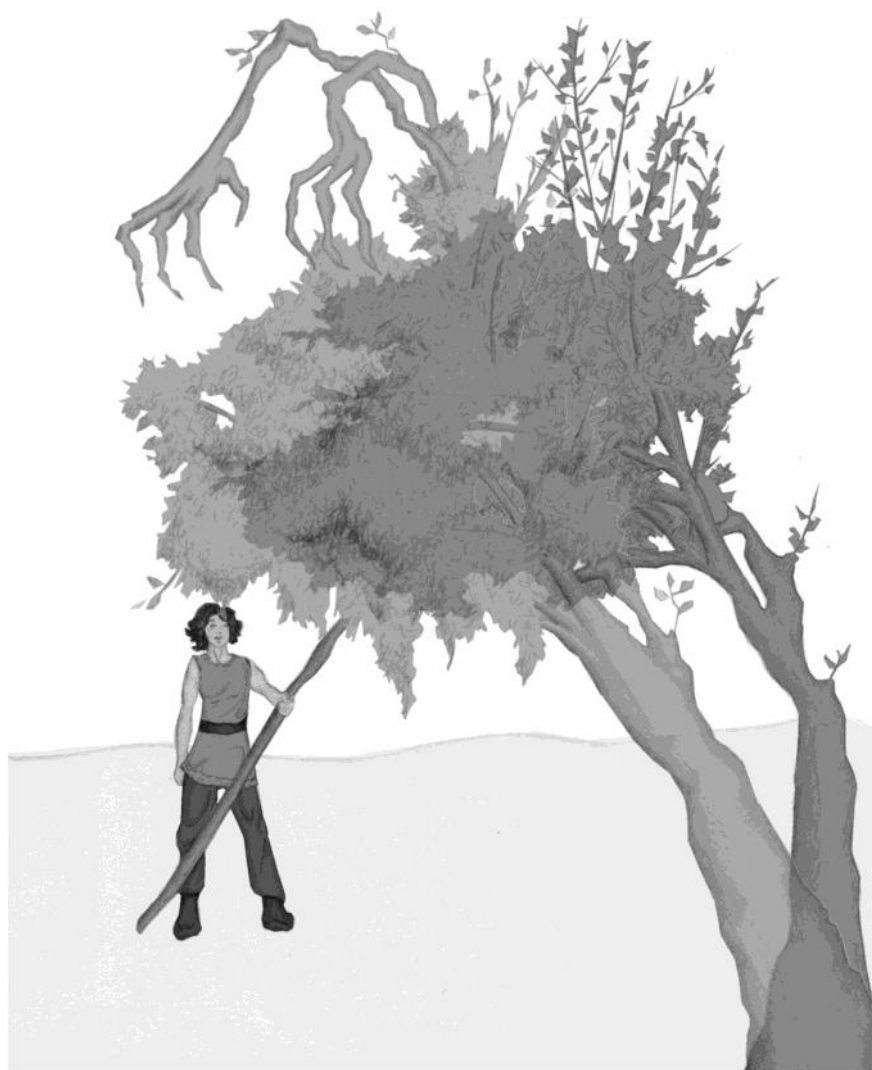
stance of irreconcilable enmity towards the Diedne, because doing otherwise would question their former convictions. Whether or not younger Transitionalists have the courage and power to disagree is up to the storyguide running a saga with the return of House Diedne. In any case there are a number of ways an **Ars Magica** saga can utilize House Diedne:

HIDDEN PREPARATIONS FOR WAR

In this seed the player characters are all Diedne in hiding, and this is perhaps the type of game most contrary to **Ars Magica** as it is most well known. The magi are isolated from both mundane society and the Order of Hermes, but it could be a stepping stone to some of the other types of sags mentioned later. The player magi could be tasked with settling a previously unclaimed regio on the network at a ruin of one of the pre-Schism covenants. This has many similarities with a typical Spring saga, with the exception that the rest of the Order is enemies they must hide from. To prevent total isolationism their objective could be to scout and spy from hiding, and to contact and turn likely allies. In addition they can be tasked with raising a mundane army.

INFILTRATORS

In this seed the player characters are all Diedne infiltrators somehow, one or more generations before them infiltrated the ranks of a covenant and groomed future descendants to take over. Alternatively the player magi can be unaware of this and find this great secret during the game, although it is recommended that the storyguide is certain his players will enjoy this. Either way the infiltrator Diedne must keep their secrets and spy on the Order from within its ranks, paving the way for a future return of their House.



DISCOVERING TRAITORS

For a story where player characters are not Diedne but from the Order of Hermes as we know it, they instead discover a Diedne infiltrator and in time unravel the conspiracy to reveal even more and prevent disaster. However this fact is not lightly taken as they must be certain before they announce to the Order at large that the renounced house is back. Because they do not know who else might be infiltrators of won over to Diedne's side. Even then the rest of the Order may be too conservative to accept this fact or so paranoid as to believe this is a Diedne ruse made by the very infiltrators themselves. In the end this type of story is likely to turn into Total War, as mentioned later.

WAR IS STARTING

This sees the player magi caught up in the very first skirmish of a House Diedne returned to wage war to the bitter end. While attending an important but local House meeting, a summit of several covenants, or even Tribunal the well-prepared Diedne lay siege to the site and contain the magi. It could be a massive army of spirits and magical beasts, or even somehow pushing the local aura into forming a regio in which they are captured. The isolated group has little chance in contacting the rest of the Order for aid before they are decimated.

The return of Diedne also raised further issues:

- Perhaps the player magi are actually sympathetic to their cause if evidence of their innocence is revealed. The magi captured may be descendants of the Quaesitores and other magi who knew at the time of the Schism that the Diedne were innocent, and these secrets have been passed down through generations of fili.
- Perhaps the existence of

traitors in the Order who side with the Diedne are suspected. Player magi who escape the siege, or are caught on the outside, can rush to their sodales and ask for aid. If traitors exist this is another conspiracy game, otherwise a political game can start in order to gather support.

TOTAL WAR

Either following the War is Starting seed found earlier, or as a surprising and extreme return of Diedne full scale war can break out as a coordinated mass attack of Diedne simultaneously strike at key locations in the Order's domain.

Depending on how willing the storyguide is to sacrifice vital parts of the Order's old allies from the Schism, the first wave of attacks can decimate many strongholds of Flambeau, Tremere, and Guernicus. This leaves the Order in chaos as they struggle to form a resistance against the attackers.

As the Diedne return in shocking numbers, many of which are allies recruited from among the Order's magi, a long and devastating war – possibly even a losing one – follows. Player magi can form resistance cells in areas already taken by the enemy, prepare defenses against an upcoming assault, or lead attacks themselves.

POLITICAL RIVALS

This seed takes place a number of years after the return of Diedne, perhaps the aftermath of a Total War as described earlier. The order has achieved an uneasy truce with Diedne, or perhaps a stalemate is the result of the front shifting to a natural barrier. Mythic Europe is divided between the Order of Hermes and House Diedne forming a rival organization. Most likely Diedne holds the tribunals where they originated from, but the division need not be as literal as a continuous

frontline as many places most densely settled by mundanes are best left alone. This Cold War analogy of a saga plotline can run nicely with alternating stories of political intrigue during negotiations and deadly espionage missions to win over resources or allies or deny the enemy these boons, with the constant risk of rekindling the conflict.

EXAMPLE CHARACTERS

Two character examples are given below:

Siobhan is a young Irish Diedne just past Gauntlet and appropriate as a starting player character. She was reared and trained in hiding by the secretive Diedne preparing for war, and represents a fairly 'innocent' Diedne with no dark connotations.

Caturix is an older Breton Diedne, representing one of the dedicated warriors from the inner circle as well as an infiltrator living among the Order posing as a magus ex Miscellanea. He is unbalanced as a starting player character because of his multiple initiations of Inner Mysteries; he has 3 Major Hermetic Virtues and several extra Minor ones as well. This has been at the cost of many Ordeals; infernal and tainted Flaws mostly. His use should be as a deterrent or a powerful foe for player characters to want to avoid. Once exposed he could 'Worf' a known powerful Hoplite to make a point.

SIOBHAN OF DIEDNE

Characteristics: Int +1, Per +1, Pre +1, Com +2, Str -1, Sta +1, Dex 0, Qik +1

Size: 0

Age: 27 (27)

Decrepitude: 0

Warping Score: 0 (0)

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: The Gift; Hermetic Magus; Diedne Magic*, Way of the Forest, Affinity with Vim, Alluring to Magic Beings†, Cyclic Magic (when moon is up), Inoffensive to Magic Beings‡, Life Boost, Magical Blood: Spirit‡, Minor Magical Focus (Airy spirits)*, Puissant Vim; Deficient Perdo, Difficult Longevity Ritual, Dutybound (major), Restriction (cannot cast inside structure), Carefree (minor), Dark Secret (Diedne)*

* House Virtue/Flaw

† Inoffensive means affected beings are not bothered by the Gift. Alluring means social interaction is at +3, and requires the character to be Inoffensive or Gently Gifted

‡ Magic Blood Spirit grants Second Sight with a starting score of 1.

Personality Traits: Dutybound to Diedne +6, Carefree +3, Tidy -2, Pious -3

Reputations: n/a

Combat:

Dodge: Init +1, Attack n/a, Defense +1, Damage n/a

Soak: +1

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Abilities: Area Lore: Leinster 3 (spirits), Artes Liberales 1 (ceremonial magic), Charm 5 (spirits), Irish 5 (Leinster), Latin 4 (Hermetic usage), Organization Lore: Diedne 1 (plans for war), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 1 (history), Parma Magica 1 (Ignem), Penetration 2 (Vim), Philosophiae 1 (ceremonial magic), Second Sight 3 (spirits), Survival 2 (forest)

Arts: Cr 0, In 5, Mu 3, Pe 0, Re 9; An 0, Aq 0, Au 0, Co 0, He 3, Ig 0, Im 0, Me 0, Te 6, Vi 9+2

Twilight Scars: n/a

Equipment: Travel clothing, sturdy walking stick, small tent, bedroll, waterskin, pack with provisions

Encumbrance: 0 (0)

Spells Known:

Eyes of the Cat (MuCo(An) 5/+3)

Coils of the Entangling Plants (ReHe 20/+14)

The Crystal Dart (Mu(Re)Te 10/+11) Mastery 2 Multiple casting, Penetration

The Earth's Carbuncle (Re(Mu)Te 15/+9)

Hands of the Grasping Earth (ReTe 15/+9)

Coercing the Airy Spirit of Magic (ReVi 15/+33F) Mastery 2 Multiple casting, Penetration

Minute of the Spirit Tunnel (ReVi 20/+33F) Mastery 2 Magic resistance, Penetration

Summoning the Airy Spirit of Magic (ReVi 20/+32F) Mastery 1 Penetration

F Includes Focus

Appearance: An attractive young woman, with dark hair, brown eyes, and tanned skin which freckles on the nose, often smiling. She wears a practical yet becoming gown in earth tones.

Siobhan was found at a young age among forest dwelling people, and taken in by her Diedne mater to prepare for apprenticeship. Her innate knack to attracting spirits and convincing them to help has been given all possible attention during her years of training. Her special connection with spirits allows her to use Charm to convince rather than Leadership to intimidate spirits to do her bidding. Although she has been preparing for battle most of her life she still has a positive outlook on things and is not burdened by dark thoughts of revenge and the bloodshed to come.

NEW SPELLS:

Minute of the Spirit Tunnel ReVi Gen. This is an alternate version of Opening the Intangible Tunnel using Diameter Duration, but specifically limited to only allow the use of spirit spells. This is a result of experimentation during the invention of it and carries with it no advantages other than being covered by Siobhan's focus.

CATURIX EX MISCELLANEA

Characteristics: Int +2, Per +2, Pre +1, Com +3, Str -2, Sta +2, Dex -2, Qik +2

Size: 0

Age: 50 (50), Longevity Ritual (+10) since age 35 made by a specialist inside the House

Decrepitude: 0

Warping Score: 5 (1)

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: The Gift; Hermetic Magus; The Blatant Gift*, Chthonic Magic†, Diedne Magic*, Major Magical Focus (physical destruction)‡, Affinity with Corpus, Affinity with Guile, Affinity with Perdo, Cautious with Guile, Fast caster*, Improved Characteristics x2, Puissant Corpus†, Puissant Guile†, Puissant Perdo†, Spell Improvisation†; Deficient Muto, Driven: Avenge Diedne (major), False Power†,‡ (The Gift), Proud (major), Corrupt Ability (Penetration)†,!!, Corrupted Spell†,∞ (Evisceration of the Thousand Knives), Dark Secret (Diedne)*, Hedge Wizard

* House Virtue/Flaw

† Results of Initiations. A Minor Focus was sacrificed as part of the Ordeal to gain the Major Focus

‡ False Power means Caturix' (Blatant) Gift is associated with the Infernal Realm, and appears so under scrutiny of Divine or infernal powers

!! The Penetration Ability was taught by a demon. Any selfish or sinful use receives +3 and if it succeeds with this margin 5 exp is gained. The reverse is true for neutral or selfless use.

∞ The spell Evisceration of the Thousand Knives was taught by a demon. Any selfish or sinful use receives +3 and if it succeeds with this margin 5 exp is gained for spell mastery. The reverse is true for neutral or selfless use.

Personality Traits: Driven to avenge Diedne +6, Proud +6, Merciful -3, Honest -3

Reputations: Hedge Wizard (Hermetic) 3

Combat:

Dodge: Init +2, Attack n/a, Defense +2, Damage n/a

Soak: +2

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Abilities: Area Lore: Bretagne 4 (covenants), Artes Liberales 1 (ceremonial magic), Awareness 4 (noticing observers), Breton 5 (common), Cocentration 5 (spells), Finesse 5 (Terram), Guile 6+2 (long term deception), Infernal Lore 2 (dark powers), Intrigue 2 (plotting), Latin 4 (Hermetic usage), Organization Lore: Diedne 3 (initiation),

Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 1 (lineages), Parma Magica 5 (Mentem), Penetration 5 (Corpus), Survival 3 (forest)

Arts: Cr 10, In 0, Mu 0, Pe 15+3, Re 5; An 5, Aq 5, Au 0, Co 12+3, He 5, Ig 5, Im 0, Me 4, Te 5, Vi 2

Twilight Scars: Smell of musty earth and rotting plants, sound of buzzing flies

Equipment: Leather clothing, bronze torc, 25 pawns of Perdo vis Sordida (demon fangs)

Spells Known:

The Wound that Weeps (PeCo15/+53F) Mastery 3 Multiple casting, Penetration, Magic resistance

Invocation of Weariness (PeCo20/+53F) Mastery 3 Multiple casting, Penetration, Magic resistance

Evisceration of a Thousand Knives (PeCo20/+51F) Mastery 1 Penetration

The Great Rot (PeHe25/+30F)

Quench the Raging Conflagration (PeIg20/+30F)

Wall of Protecting Stone (CrTe 25/+17)

Pit of the Gaping Stone (PeTe 25/+30F)

Demon's Eternal Oblivion (PeVi 5/+25) Mastery 3 Penetration, Multiple casting, Apotropaic mastery

F Includes Focus

Appearance: Caturix normally keeps to his cover looking like a clumsy, weakling of a filthy hedge wizard. His short, blonde hair is wild, his green eyes often red and veiny. Once his cover is no longer needed he dons the garb of a Celtic warrior of old but without weapons.

Since the end of the Schism an unbroken lineage of Inner Circle magi have infiltrated the Order. Care has been taken to decidedly not seem like an unbroken line, and instead infiltrators occasionally retreat from the eyes of the tribunal only to return in guise or send a filius. These returning Diedne have carefully constructed backstories to appear as insignificant wandering ex Miscellanea. This focus on the lineages of magi also enables Caturix to spot potential descendants of lost Diedne or sympathizers of old, of which the House's 'recruiters' are sent to. The plan is also to carefully select the most dangerous potential enemies and get rid of them before the war is started.

NEW SPELLS:

Pit of Gaping Stone PeTe 25. This is merely a higher magnitude of Pit of Gaping Earth in order to affect rock as well.

THE HOUSE WE NEVER HAD

The 1994 *Houses of Hermes* supplement saw the first taste of what could have been the very first official sourcebook on House Diedne. The author of that short introduction to the House tells us the story of how she became involved in that book and what could have been for House Diedne.

I first heard about **Ars Magica** when I became friends with Beth Bartley (now Cregan) and Steven Schwartz. This was in about 1991; we were all in college at the University of Chicago, and the two of them had been playing **Ars Magica** together for a few months already. I knew Beth vaguely, and one day I ran into her at the computer center. She was waiting for Steven, and they were intending to go back to Beth's room and play. Beth and I got to talking while she waited, and she learned that I hadn't eaten in some time — I was short of money that week — so she promptly insisted on dragging me back to her dorm room with her and feeding me. So, when Steven turned up, we all went back to Beth's room and she gave me something out of the little refrigerator she kept in there, and they started playing while I ate.

The game was a revelation to me. I had once played **D&D**, when I was eleven years old and in fifth grade; I remembered a painfully confusing process made up of keeping detailed maps and calculating numbers against each other to see if you'd killed the monster or been killed. I had therefore not pursued anything to do with roleplaying throughout high school or college to that point, even though I *had* continually played make-believe during those years — just the

way kids do; no books or rules, just free-flowing imagination. The way Beth and Steven played **Ars Magica** was far more like my make-believe games than it was like the one official “roleplaying game” I'd ever seen before, and I was hooked from that first meeting. I became an immediate part of the troupe, although I was too shy at first to make a character for the **Ars Magica** game. Beth and Steven

BY NAOMI RIVKIS

would make the story run best, not on the roll of the dice, except when character was going against character. And nobody ever got killed unless their own player *wanted* them to (this happened fairly frequently; we were a bit over-fond of killing off our own people in dramatic ways).

FOR THE NEXT SIX OR EIGHT MONTHS, WE PLAYED THE LONG STORY ARC OF HOUSE DIEDNE'S QUEST FOR READMISSION

decided to start me off easy, and began a *Teenagers From Outer Space* game alongside the **Ars Magica** game, so that I could begin my roleplaying in a game where it was impossible to “get it wrong,” as I was worried about.

But *TFOS* didn't satisfy me for long. I watched the others play AM, and it was so much deeper and more nuanced than the *TFOS* game, and I could feel myself coming up with ideas for it as I watched them. I wanted to be part of *that* game, not just *a* game. I learned more about their playing style, too, and it reassured me... they played troupe-style, with no one regular GM; everyone played their own characters, and whoever had an idea for the next part of the story ran that adventure, then passed the reins to the next person when they were done and someone else had an idea. Decisions tended to be made based on what

So I made up a couple of characters and began to play with them. And that didn't satisfy me either. I was bursting with ideas for adventures to run, and within a week of starting to play, I began my first. It centered on Steven's House Merinita character (a half-faerie Scottish wild man named Jemmie). I wanted to play with his loyalties, so I made Merinita show up again — his own Founder!! First he had to figure out who she was, since she appeared in disguise; then when she was cornered and questioned, she acknowledged her identity and asked her followers to support House Diedne's readmission to the Order.

I'd originally meant this as a standalone adventure, centered around Merinita and Jemmie. But obviously, it couldn't stay that way for long — a request like that had massive ripples throughout the whole Order. Everyone had an opinion on

it, and opinions were wildly varied, and in conflict with each other. So, for the next six or eight months, we played the long story arc of House Diedne's quest for readmission. Eventually, when it came time to play the Grand Tribunal at which the issue was going to be debated and resolved, we all gathered at my off-campus apartment for the entire weekend — went there on Friday as soon as we were done with classes, made a large grocery run beforehand, and holed up there until Monday morning, playing out the Grand Tribunal virtually live-action, in real-time. All the speeches (mostly prewritten, by the player who played that character), all the back-room negotiating and deals, all the points of order; it was probably the single most intense piece of roleplaying I ever did.

We were never out of character except when asleep, for nearly three full days; only *which* character we were in varied, since we all had more than one person at that Grand Tribunal, and we had to keep track of them all. It was everything I find best and most exciting in roleplaying... focused and passionate and detailed, so that by the time the vote was taken and House Diedne was accepted back by a narrow margin, we hardly knew how to feel. Some of our characters

were bathed in triumph, some were furious, most were worried about how this would work out and whether there would be another war.

I remembered that feeling vividly through the following years. I wanted

how to go about asking to do a supplement. He said to write to Wizards of The Coast, who had just acquired the game at that time. So I did. At about the same time, I'd picked up from a mailing list the opportunity to roll up a couple of the example characters being used for the *Houses of Hermes* book, so they knew my name very slightly at Wizards of The Coast. I asked them if they would be interested in a House Diedne supplement. They said maybe, and asked if I wanted to write the House Diedne section for *Houses of Hermes*, stressing that they couldn't pay me for it, but it would give me a chance both to show them how I could write, and to slant the segment my own way, so that if later they *did* offer me a chance to write the supplement, I wouldn't need to bend it to what was already there, or risk a conflict of canon. I jumped at the chance, and put as much of my own backstory as I dared into that segment.

There were virtually no constraints I was given for what I could put into it. I was told not to include anything that clearly indicated one way or the other whether the House was still alive; they wanted each troupe to be able to decide that for themselves. So I didn't, but that was really the

only specific rule I was given, except for a length limit. I knew the structure they were using for each of the Houses, because I was given a sample; so I mostly followed that structure, but wasn't told to.

I did very little research, for a few

COMING SOON...

"If you strike at a king, you had better kill him."

The wizards of House Tremere know that proverb too well. They had spent two centuries watching their backs, after failing to kill off the last remaining members of the only House they had ever feared. Now their worst nightmares have come true: House Diedne is back. But are they really out for blood? If not, what do they want? How strong are they? What kind of preparations have they made in two hundred years of isolation? And is there any way to stop them?

"We will return to haunt you."

The members — wizards and non-magical family alike — of House Diedne know that saying even better. Their king Llewellyn had left it, magically inscribed on the ruined wall of their home, the castle Southwind; a challenge to the Order which had first begged them to join, and then, a few generations later, turned on them and destroyed them.

Now Llewellyn is dying... and the challenge has yet to be fulfilled. It's time for them to return to Europe; to throw off their masks and face their old enemies down as their leader promised. It won't be easy, but nothing this tightly knit family has done in its history — a history which predates the Order of Hermes altogether — ever has been.

Coming soon, as it was planned for the House Diedne book which was commissioned by Wizards of the Coast but never released: the story of House Diedne, past and present. What secrets about the House's mysterious origin were destroyed in the ruins of Southwind Castle? What was the truth about the Schism War, its origins, and the tactics which allowed the 80 members of House Diedne to hold off all of Tremere, Tytalus and Flambeau for seven weeks before retreating into a portal of a kind nobody in the Order had ever seen before? Where did they go, and what have they become in the two centuries of rebuilding? And what are their intentions toward the Order which all but destroyed them, now that they have returned?

to let other people be a part of it, and I really wanted a few of the characters and the backstory I'd written about House Diedne to live, beyond just my own troupe. When I happened to meet someone who wrote occasionally for the game, I asked

reasons. I already knew a decent amount about the Druids, but I wasn't making Diedne's original background Druidic. She joined the Druids later, because she'd been raised with a pagan worldview and they were the pagans available in France at the time she was turned loose on the world. They were also a community, and she was feeling bereft of community, but since her original community was mysterious and not really connected to anything known in the real world, I didn't have to make it conform to anything I'd need to research. It was one man, the wizard who kidnapped them as

they went afterward. I knew the story of the founding of the Order, and what part Diedne and Leonara (who was entirely my own invention, as were the other three of the five little girls who grew up at Castle Southwind with Leonara and Diedne under that strange magician's tutelage) played in it. I knew *so* much about the early Order, and it felt like canon to me already. I wanted the chance to make it so.

I went so far as to write up most of the proposal they'd asked me for, which they said was the next step in getting to do the book. Jonathan Tweet sounded fairly enthusiastic

Merinita (which connection was alluded to in earlier canonical work, but never fully explained, so I was free to produce the explanation myself). I wanted to use her, but there was no way Leonara could exist *anywhere* and not be the leader; she's just that type of person. Meantime, I don't know why, but I always felt Diedne was too soft to be a leader. It may be the gentle, wispy-sounding syllables in her name, but I couldn't imagine her as anything but shy and anxious... and of course, if she was, that also explained why her followers developed a habit of secrecy and withdrawal. It made them look like they had something to hide, but they were actually pretty much just installing as House policy the habits they learned from their Founder's natural style of living. That helped to set up the tragedy of the outlaw House — that they were grossly misunderstood, but their fatal flaw was the combination of pride and habitual secrecy which made it impossible for them to effectively teach people to better understand them. They contributed to their own downfall, but not in the ways their enemies believed. They were just shy, proud, and touchy as all hell, and the result was that they were easy to distrust, and had a very difficult time reaching out to try and teach people to overcome that distrust. Add in a complete hothead in charge of the house at the wrong time — not Llewellyn, however much the modern Order might think so; his wife Diana. Llewellyn was the sane one of the pair of them, though he lost it when she died in the war, which was what led to those famous last words before he abandoned Castle Southwind and took the last few survivors into the portal to Somewhere Very Far Away.

We hope to bring Naomi's full write-up of House Diedne to you in a future issue of **Sub Rosa**.

I WENT SO FAR AS TO WRITE UP MOST OF THE PROPOSAL THEY'D ASKED ME FOR, WHICH THEY SAID WAS THE NEXT STEP IN GETTING TO DO THE BOOK

children and raised them and trained them; and I could make *him* anything I wanted him to be.

The hardest thing to do was to limit myself to the word limit I was given. I had six months' worth of roleplayed information about the House and its background; six months of thinking about it *every day*, for hours on end; playing it, talking it, thinking it, writing it for myself and my own troupe. I had about six books' worth by that time, and although most of them were present-day stuff, meaning I couldn't use it because of the constraint about not making clear whether Diedne was out there anymore or not (hence the whole thing about them actually asking for readmission had to stay out), the backstory alone was enough to cover more than a book. And so many detailed characters and storylines in it. I knew the entire story of the Schism War, from how it began to what ended it and where

about the project, though I never knew him well enough to be able to tell if that was just politeness. But my writing ability had stalled out, and while I could do summaries all day of what I wanted to write, I couldn't actually produce those all-important first two chapters they needed to be able to tell if I really had a handle on what it took to turn my ideas into a book. In truth, at least at that moment, I didn't. So I dropped out of the project, and the proposal got packed away among my writing files. I think it probably ended up lost, somewhere in several interstate moves.

About Diedne being a junior member rather than the leader of her group, I did that for a few reasons. First of all, the character of Leonara jumped up and bit me. I knew instantly, the moment I thought of her, what she was like, what her strengths and weaknesses were, both as a magician and as a person, and how she connected Diedne to

THE LOST CITY OF KITEZH

The Novgorod Tribunal holds sway over vast tracts of Rus wilderness and some of the most mysterious and magical places in Mythic Europe are within or near its borders. The sunken city of Kitezh, where the church bells still ring and the faithful still walk the plazas, is one of the most mysterious.

Kitezh is located on the banks of Lake Svetloyar, placing it outside the boundaries of the Novgorod Tribunal, at least as drawn on the old maps. The city, like most Rus settlements is built of wood. Even the massive cathedral on the town square is built of ornately carved wood. Since the city lacks any walls or defensive structures belligerent types might consider Kitezh to

be ripe for the taking, but they will find little in wealth or power to be gained.

This article has been written with versatility in mind, allowing the storyguide to craft Kitezh to the needs of his saga. The dates in the article are based on the legend as it appears in Russian folklore but feel free to modify the dates to suit your story's need.

HISTORY AND FATE

The history of Kitezh is a brief one. It was founded by Yuri II, Grand Prince of Vladimir Suzdal, in the first decade of the 13th century on one of the most beautiful

BY CHAD BOWSER

spots he had ever seen. The city grew quickly and attracted a pious religious community. By 1238, the same year its founder was killed at the Battle of the Sit River, the last major battle of the Mongol Invasion, the city was gone — sunk beneath the waves of Lake Svetloyar.

After the Battle of Sit River in March 1238, where the great Rus army led by Yuri II was summarily trounced by the Mongols, the invaders broke up into smaller forces and spread across the countryside. As soldiers moved from city to city, the great Mongol leader Batu Khan



SUB ROSA

heard about the undefended city of Kitezh and moved his army against it. A tortured Russian prisoner gave up the location of Kitezh and the secret path needed to reach it. As the Mongol army encircled the town, trapping the populace between the horsemen and the lake, they were shocked to see the people of Kitezh gathering in the town square praying instead of taking up arms to defend their city.

LOST BENEATH THE LAKE

Unable to pass up a golden opportunity, the attackers charged. As they crossed the intervening ground, the prayers from Kitezh grew louder and the previously hard ground the attackers were racing across grew soggy. Within a matter of moments, geysers of water exploded from the earth. The surprised army halted their advance; then withdrew to drier ground. As the Mongols watched in horror, the rising water enveloped the city. Within moments the helmet-shaped dome of the great cathedral was the last thing to succumb to the watery depths. A point of debate exists between the Mongols. Did

they hear the people of Kitezh praying to the Christian God or another deity, one named Mokosha?

It has been left to the storyguide to decide whether it was Divine intervention or Faerie coming to protect one of its own that delivered Kitezh below the waves. If Kitezh was a bastion of Orthodoxy, then St. Basil's Cathedral stands as its center of worship. If Kitezh was a secret pagan holdout, however; the cathedral was actually a temple to the pagan gods, notably Mokosha.

USING KITEZH

There are several ways Kitezh can be used in your chronicle; it all depends on when you want your troupe to visit the city. There are three distinct phases to Kitezh's history; *before* it sinks, *during* the sinking, or *after* it sinks.

BEFORE THE SINKING

During the first phase, which is any time from the city's founding to March

A TIMELINE OF KITEZH

This is the timeline for Kitezh should events follow the legend. Once the characters become involved, it could change dramatically.

1205: Kitezh founded by Yuri II

1220: Traditional starting time of most sagas

March 1228: Yuri II flees to Kitezh following his defeat at the Battle of Sit River

March or April 1228: Mongols surround Kitezh and the city sinks

1238, Kitezh is a normal settlement. For a few hours in March 1238, Kitezh is an explosion of activity as water rushes and the city is pulled to the bottom of the lake. Any time after the city's sinking; the city is a place of mystery. To the faithful of the Eastern Orthodox Church, it's a miracle. A shining example of God's will. If those in the Occident even knew about Kitezh, it might be a miracle or perhaps the work of something more infernal.

If Kitezh is actually pagan in your saga, it's possible the locals view the transformation as transport to the Faerie realm and they now reside within the embrace of the bosom of Mokosha.

To many people, though, it's a mystery. One that curious Magi might want to explore.

Prior to the arrival of the Mongols, Kitezh is a bustling, if small city renowned for its piety. In this phase, magi might visit to study or gain vis, especially since the city is situated outside the boundaries of the Novgorod tribunal and therefore they won't necessarily be viewed as potential invaders. It is also a suitable location to mount expeditions further east or meet with travelers from distant lands. During this time, visiting Kitezh is little different from visiting other Rus cities.

DURING THE SIEGE

During the brief Mongol siege and as the city sinks, however, the types of adventures changes dramatically. This would be a time of action and adventure.

THE FANTASTICAL CREATURES OF KITEZH

Several creatures of Russian folklore are mentioned throughout this article. Here's brief summaries of them.

CHUDO-YUDO

A massive octopus-like sea creature that lives in a great frozen lake in the Faerie Realm, Chudo-Yudo occasionally appears in a lake in the mundane world to wreak havoc and destruction. Chudo-Yudo returns to his frozen abode when driven off by heroes or placated with bloody sacrifices.

MOKOSHA

Also known as Mat Syra Zemlya, is an incarnation of motherly love. Affectionately known as moist mother earth, she has dominion over water and the family. Normally a caring, giving deity, she becomes fiercely protective of her "children" if they are in danger.

STRUKIS, THE PIKE KING

King of the Pikes, this two to three meter long, silvery, talking fish originally lived in the lands of the Poles. However, the spread of Christianity has driven him further and further east over the course of several centuries and he has become resentful and embittered by the experience. He is able to effortlessly pass between the realms. It is rumored that he will grant wishes if suitably impressed with the behavior of the wisher.

VODYANOI

A pallid, bloated roughly human creature with a disturbingly frog-like head, vodyanoi are clever and malicious. They take great delight in drowning humans, preferably by tricking the human into downing himself. They are able to take on a human guise, but there is always some clue to their nature, such as soaking wet clothes or a pocket full of river stones.

DECIPHERING THE CODE

Determining that the proper number of times to cross the lake is 27 can be challenging. Here are some ideas that could serve as quick fixes or inspiration for entire adventures.

- ◆ Perhaps the correct Mentem or Imaginem spell can deduce the correct process, or at least convince somebody, or something, to reveal it.
- ◆ A character with (Area: Rus) Lore or Faerie Lore might be able to determine the proper ritual, or at least determine who to ask.
- ◆ The old crone in the dark woods might ask a favor. Just don't look askance at the chicken legs

under her hut. The favor she asks might be more than any Magi is willing to give.

- ◆ There are stories that say defeating a vodyanoi in a riddle contest will force him to reveal one water related mystery. A Magi should really ask himself if the vodyanoi can be trusted to play by the rules of the contest.
- ◆ Strukis the Pike King, driven ever eastward by the growth of Christianity might be willing to tell the secret, if the characters are willing to help him defeat Chudo-Yudo the sea monster, or are willing to blaspheme their faith.

existence too much. If they did, sticky question such as, where does the food come from, might start to rear their ugly heads. The people consider themselves blessed and chosen, either by the Christian God or Mokosha and have accepted their lot in life. That's not to say, though, that they aren't excited by the arrival of outsiders, especially outsiders who behave themselves.

GETTING TO KITEZH

When Kitezh is an ordinary settlement, getting to Kitezh is as simple as travelling there. However, it lies to east of the Novgorod Tribunal, so the distance ensures it's not a simple trip for most Western Magi.

Standing on the shore of Lake Svetloyar and using a spell such as Clear Sight of the Naiad allows a Magi to see Kitezh on the lake bottom. People walk around, going about their business, birds flit from tree to tree, for all intents and purposes, Kitezh appears as a normal city.

Perfect for companions, but Magi might find themselves out of their element. Not only will the characters have to slip out of the city if they do not want to join it beneath the water, but they will also have to avoid the Mongol troops circling the city.

and light is dappled. It's possible for characters to even meet an agent of the divine. The most common visitor would be a Russian saint, given their widespread veneration.

AFTER THE SINKING

Once Kitezh sinks and the Mongols leave, the city becomes a Regio, entry might be difficult, but the scope of adventure is nearly limitless. From above the waves, the city is discernible on clear days when the water's still. Divers and strong swimmers, however, cannot reach it. The spire of the dome on St. Basil's Church is always tantalizingly just out of grasp.

THE DIVINE KITEZH

Inside the Divine Regio Kitezh is like it was on the surface. Everything that was dry on the surface is dry and everything that was wet is wet. Trees, cobblestones, dogs, everything appear in stark contrast, to the mundane world, a result of the power at play. No shadows are cast and everything appears pure. There is flowing water in the plaza fountain, a steam feeds water into the city, and it rains. Looking up, it's possible to see the water just above the top of the spire

FAERIE KITEZH

Inside the Faerie Regio Kitezh, things are a little wilder. The streets meander in circles and buildings lean against each other for support as they loom overhead. There will be an air of excitement and otherworldliness as outsiders wander the streets. Looking up, the sky is overcast as clouds roil and churn only to have sunlight suddenly break through basking the city its glow. A Faerie market is a regular occurrence where all manner of good from mundane supplies to magic beans to human souls are bought and sold. Characters would do well to make sure they, or an integral part of themselves, don't end up on the auction block.

The residents of Kitezh appear as paragons of their virtues if the city is Orthodox. Residents, even the animals, will be ferociously majestic or meekly innocent. If Kitezh is pagan, the residents will wear their emotions on their sleeves. They'll laugh louder, cry easier, and fight harder. For the most part, the residents are happy with the lives. They do not question their

AURAS

Prior to the Mongol invasion, Kitezh was recognized, at least within the lands of Kiev and Novgorod, to be pious. At this time, it has a Dominion of 5, centered on the Cathedral and its attendant plaza. The Dominion slowly weakens as it nears the edge of the city, becoming a Dominion 2 at the outskirts. The city's residents will have Divine virtues and flaws as a result. If the city is Faerie, the auras are the same value, just Faerie in nature as are the virtues and flaws.

After the city sinks beneath the waves as the result of a miracle, it becomes either a level 5 terrestrial Divine Regio or Faerie Regio. Crossing into the Regio requires either a guide from Kitezh or following the proper path. So far, no one has become lost on the lake and entered Kitezh. That doesn't mean it can't happen or that there aren't other pathways to the sunken city.

In the case of Kitezh, there are two proper paths. The first is rowing across the lake three-ninths times (27), a sacred number to the Russians, in succession. On

the completion of the 27th crossing the traveler must still succeed at the Regio roll. But, if successful, he appears in the fountain in the plaza of Kitezh. Interestingly, even though the numerology is pagan in origin, it still works for accessing Divine Kitezh.

The second is wandering what's known as the Path of Batu, the secret route once taken by Batu Khan's army through the forest. The route is fraught with danger. Several Mongol soldiers failed to escape the

remains in the temple.

The breeze that flows over the fountain contains one pawn of Aquam vis. It is only harvestable immediately over the fountain.

STORY SEEDS

Here are some story seeds designed to draw Magi and companions to Kitezh. They're broken up into three types, pre-sinking, post-sinking and either.

SEVERAL MONGOL SOLDIERS FAILED TO ESCAPE THE RUSHING FLOOD WATERS AND DROWNED. UNABLE TO ENTER KITEZH, THEY WANDER THE DARK, FOREBODING FOREST...

rushing flood waters and drowned. Unable to enter Kitezh, they wander the dark, foreboding forest, believing themselves to be the rear guard for Batu Khan's force. If the ghosts can be dealt with, either by violence, magic, or negotiation, the characters will emerge from the woods at the outskirts of the city. Merely avoiding the ghosts leaves the characters wandering the woods.

SOURCES OF VIS

The tears of a child can produce Aquam or Muto vis, if the child is crying in joy. The child will produce, at most, two pawns of vis a year.

The peak of the spire on top of the cathedral, if Kitezh is Orthodox, can produce three pawns of Intellego or Vim vis per year by scraping off small gold flakes. Getting to the top can prove difficult since the city is very protective of its cathedral.

If Kitezh is pagan, the statue of Mokosha in the temple can produce three pawns of Regio or Corpus vis per year. The statue must be doused in water from outside Kitezh, which means it must be brought in from the magi. The collected water will produce the vis as long as it

PRE-SINKING

- ◆ A character receives a startling vision of a city being attacked by the Mongols and being flooded. In the vision, it appears that none of the city's residents can escape from the attackers or the rising waters. One of the residents cries out for Kitezh to be saved. If the character investigates his vision, he learns that Kitezh is a city in the Russian lands and the Mongols haven't invaded yet. If the characters act quickly, perhaps the city can be saved, if it wants to be.
- ◆ A particularly pious Magi or companion hears of the holy city of Kitezh and the wonders to be had within its Dominion. They travel to the city only to find the Mongol army days away. Can the covenant help the city put on a strong defense? What do they do when none of the denizens are willing to take up arms, but the city is surrounded?
- ◆ A friend of the covenant is travelling through Russia on important business and is in Kitezh when the Mongol army starts its invasion of the region. He knows

it's only a matter of time before the invaders set their eyes on Kitezh and begs his Magi friends to come to his, and the town's aid.

POST-SINKING

- ◆ Malenki Pyotr is a young resident of Kitezh. One day he suddenly appears in the courtyard of a covenant, soaking wet. When first found, he starts crying in joy. The boy's speech is unintelligible to anyone who doesn't speak Russian. The boy's tears contain a very small amount of Aquam vis. Within a matter of days, a few things become apparent. The boy begins to speak the covenant's language, he never dries out, but he's starting to fade. He explains that if he doesn't get home soon, he'll disappear forever. He walked into the woods outside his city, Kitezh, and found himself in the covenant's fountain.
- ◆ Rumors begin circulating of a Faerie town in Rus territory. The town has markets selling all kinds of wondrous items and even has raw vis to be claimed. There's only one problem, it's underwater.

EITHER

- ◆ An ally of the covenant has disappeared. One day a faerie messenger, or a sopping wet person with a faintly divine aura, arrives at the covenant bearing a letter. The missing ally has run afoul of a powerful force and is hiding in Kitezh. But, he can't keep the secret all to himself and has to invite his friends to visit and partake in the glories.
- ◆ A scholar claims to have found the true Atlantis, and it's in Russia. The riches, magic, and history are there for the taking. If the Magi can be the first to reach it.

BUILDING YOUR OWN

UNDERWATER CITY

While the story of Kitezh is fascinating and makes a great adventuring locale, Russia east of the Novgorod tribunal would be a long trek for most Magi and companions. This can be addressed in several ways.

One of the easiest is to just move Kitezh to where you need it to be. Need it in the Rhone? Move it there. Alternatively, Kitezh as a Regio could potentially be accessed from other places across Europe. Perhaps a lake in Scotland or a cave in Iceland connects to the cathedral in Kitezh. Regio Sight and Ease Factor would still need to be factored in if accessing Kitezh this way.

Or, you could just make up your sunken city. There are several questions to consider.

- The first is, why did it sink? Was it punished or rewarded for some action the citizens committed? Did it sink for natural reasons? Or was it horrible laboratory accident in a nearby covenant gone awry?
- A follow up question is, who sank it? Answering these questions can help set the backstory for the city and determine the proper auras and Regio, if needed.
- Then, work out the values for the auras and Regio. While it's tempting to make everything 10, just to show how awe-inspiring the area is, that can make life tough for Magi and companions to reach the city or operate within.

Now that you have a rough idea of why it sank, think about what it sank into. Sure, Kitezh sank into a lake. But how would Kitezh be different if it sank into a fast running river, the mountain side, or even the air. With Divine, Infernal, and Faerie involvement in the world, a city can sink into almost anything. Sure, it might be tough to pull off, but whoever said miracles are easy?

How do the people feel about their situation? Are they content to stay there or do they want out? Is there something

keeping them confined? Do they even know what happened? In the case of a Divine origin to the sinking as a reward for pious behavior, perhaps most people are content to stay. However, if the city is punished, regardless of the source the people might not want to stay. Maybe there are angelic or demonic guards posted to keep people in line.

Now, why do people want to get to the city? Is it to visit lost loved ones? Take advantage of raw vis sources? Maybe they want to hide from someone? See what's under the next stone, or lake? Whatever the reason, many of the ideas will come from your players and the stories they've woven with their characters so far. Take a cue from that.

Finally, how do outsiders get to the city? The Regio rules make this pretty clear. They either need a guide, find the secret path, or get lost. Decide which ones make the most sense for your city. It could be one, two, or all three.



SUB ROSA

MAPPA MUNDI

Surely we've said all we can say about House Diedne by this point, haven't we? Well, possibly... but that still leaves the entirety of the internet to search through. Let's take a look at a couple of examples.

House Diedne: Third Edition

The article by Mark Hall, posted on the venerable Durenmar site (<http://www.durenmar.de/articles/diedne.html>) is a third-edition take on the House that adopts a similar structure to that used in the contemporary Houses of Hermes supplement.

The article presents two opposing views of the House; one describing them as infernally-corrupted and the other principally victims of their own secrecy.

Descended from Gaulish refugees, the Gaelic Diedne herself is presented as a junior in the wider druidic society, one who saw a future with Bonisagus where her elders did not.

This pagan House clung to the magical practices and influences of its past. The infernal magi hid behind these practices, while the uncorrupted magi attempted to downplay their religion in the face of the Roman Houses. The common theme across them also extends to their secrecy and the implied recalcitrance under the scrutiny of outsiders.

One point that seems appropriate for **Third Edition** and less-so now is the idea of House Ex Miscellanea providing support and cover for members of House Diedne. It is an indication of how the setting has added subtle complexities over time.

There were just five Diedne

survivors of the Schism War and enticingly, the famous Llewellyn is characterized as one of the infernal magi and it said that he petitioned Satan for sanctuary in hell. That's a great image and a very interesting plot line.

Information on the mentality of magi with a Diedne lineage is also provided, which really boils down to "don't be discovered". There is also a lot of resentment towards many of the other Houses, although the infernal magi seem intent on finding new weaknesses among their targets.

One element that is hard to move into **Fifth Edition** is the view that the old Druidic places of magic had a Divine aura. Earlier editions perhaps had a little more flexibility to play with auras, but Fifth has a very defined cosmology and this realm alignment may be hard to reconcile.

All told though, it's an interesting take on the House and worth a look if only for Llewellyn's fate.

A Little History

Possibly the most impressive work on House Diedne can be found at <http://housediedne.wordpress.com>. This is a collaboration between Matt Ryan and Tobias Wheeler running, so far, from February 2012 to June 2012. Those few months though have produced something rich and rewarding.

The style and content of the site's articles varies and includes an entry from the journal of Guernicus, the founder in which his misgivings concerning the young Diedne are made very clear. Other articles concern the distribution of the Celtic tribes, Diedne character creation, new

Virtues, and commentaries on Diedne the woman, including an interesting detail concerning her name.

Beyond Ars Magica

Let's not forget also that House Diedne is not just of interest to players of **Ars Magica**. Our game shares some blood with the World of Darkness games, specifically through the Order of Hermes and House Tremere. At least since 1994 and right up to the present, players of the different Vampire and Mage incarnations have been writing and asking about House Diedne. This article over at <http://vampirerpg.free.fr/Bloodlines/AvengersDiedne.html> introduces Vampire descendants of House Diedne. Their motivation? As ever, it is revenge upon House Tremere.

And the White Wolf *Mage: The Ascension* forums still see the occasional post looking for more information on House Diedne (<http://forums.white-wolf.com/default.aspx?g=posts&t=73353>).

One Final Footnote

At the time of writing, *The Contested Isle: The Hibernian Tribunal* has yet to be released. However, the table of contents has been published: http://www.atlas-games.com/pdf_storage/HiberniaContents.pdf. It highlights two tantalizing mentions of Diedne, one a story seed (*Three Diedne Bodies*) and one seemingly partnering *Diedne and Pralix*. What could they mean...? You might need to invest in *The Contested Isle* to find out...



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Jérôme Darmont

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