



Heroes, Gods
and Monsters of

Celtic Mythology



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HEROES, GODS
AND MONSTERS OF



Celtic
Mythology



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HEROES, GODS
AND MONSTERS OF

Celtic Mythology



BY

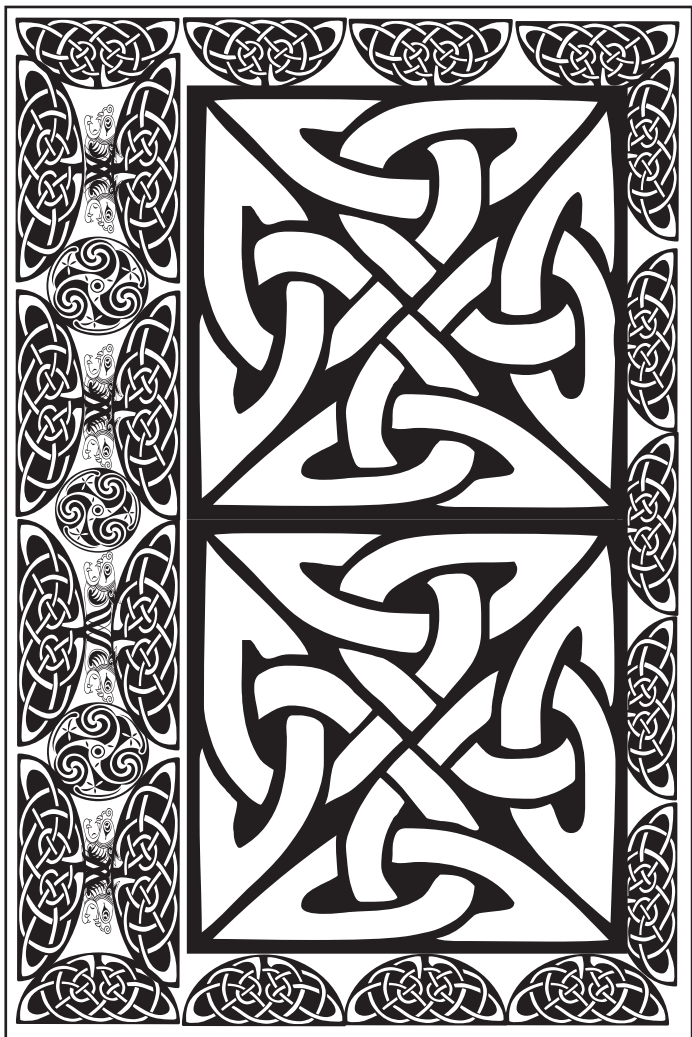
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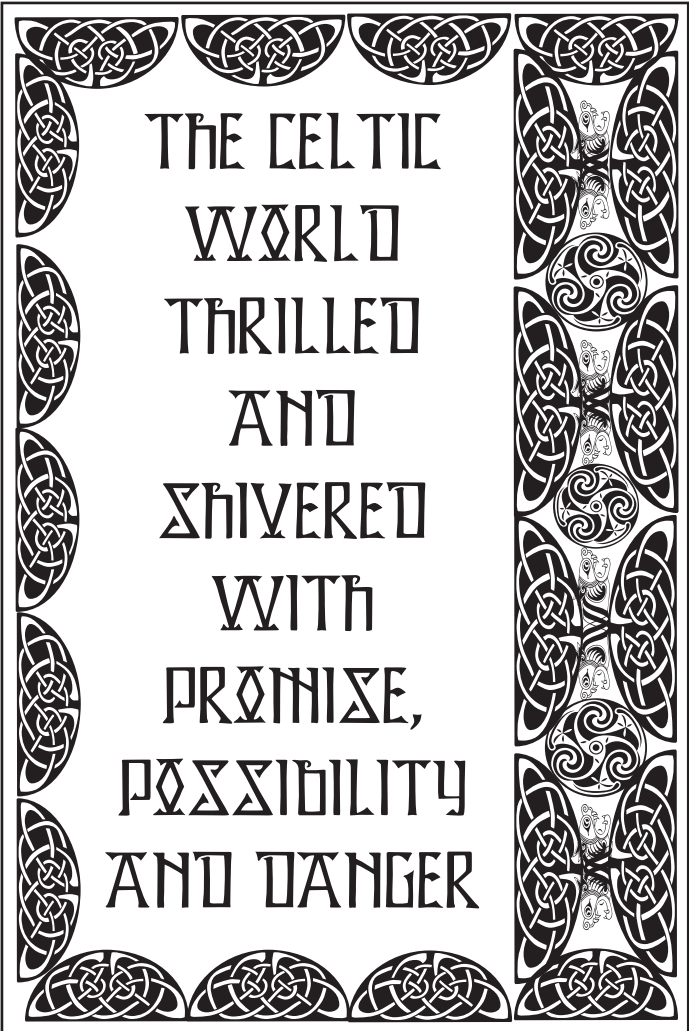
ILLUSTRATED BY

Eoin Cooney

SALARIYA

BRIGHTON MIX



The image features a decorative border with intricate Celtic knotwork. The top and bottom edges are adorned with repeating semi-circular knot motifs. The left and right sides are framed by vertical bands of knotwork, interspersed with stylized, vertically-oriented faces that resemble ancient Celtic or Norse art. The central text is set within this ornate frame.

THE CELTIC
WORLD
THRILLED
AND
SHIVERED
WITH
PROMISE,
POSSIBILITY
AND DANGER



The page is framed by a complex border of Celtic knotwork. The top and bottom edges feature repeating semi-circular knot motifs. The left and right sides are decorated with vertical bands of interlocking knotwork, interspersed with circular medallions containing stylized faces or symbols. The central text is set within a white rectangular area.

INTRODUCTION

Magic Kingdoms



Prepare to enter
a land full of
adventure, magic
and mystery.

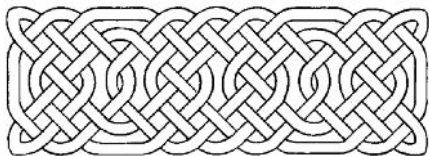
The Celtic world was an enchanted place, where gods fought demons and monsters, birds and animals talked to humans, and men and women travelled through time or visited magic kingdoms. Every rock and tree and river was alive with



its own good, or evil, spirit. Nothing was what it seemed to be; the gods, and human heroes, loved trickery and disguises. The Celtic world thrilled and shivered with promise, possibility, love – and danger.

This book contains a collection of Celtic myths and legends from Ireland, Wales, Scotland, England, the Isle of Man, and Brittany in north-western France. Like traditional stories from other lands, they have all been told countless times before in many different ways. They have also inspired great music and paintings, provided plots for writers and film-makers, and been turned into fantasy re-enactments, comic books, and computer games.

Try retelling your favourite story from this book in your own words, or use it to help you make your own magic creation!





Who were the Celts?

The Celts lived in northern Europe from around 800 BC to AD 400. They belonged to many different tribes and nations, but they all spoke closely related languages and shared a similar way of life. They believed in the same family of gods and nature-spirits, honoured brave, reckless heroes, and followed proud warrior kings and queens who claimed religious and magical powers.

Most Celtic families made a living as farmers. They were free and independent but owed loyalty to their clan chief and high king. There were also Celtic traders and craft-workers living in fortress towns, and thousands of Celtic slaves.

Celtic kings and chiefs were rich enough to ride fine horses and chariots, and wear weapons and jewellery decorated with swirling, magical designs. They had druids (priests) to say prayers and make sacrifices,





linking everyday Celtic life with the dreamy, dangerous Otherworld of gods and spirits. They paid bards (poets and music-makers) to sing the praises of heroes and record each tribe's history, myths and legends.

'Being Celtic' meant taking part in this rich civilisation. The Celts were not an ethnic group, but rather peoples with a shared lifestyle. They were descended from the first farmers in northern Europe, who began planting crops and rearing animals around 4000 BC. New DNA evidence links some Celts to hunters and gatherers who arrived in northern Europe at the end of the last Ice Age, over 10,000 years ago.

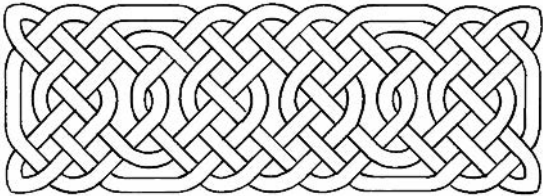
Celtic civilisation developed slowly from around 1500 BC, when craft-workers learned how to make armour and helmets from bronze (a mixture of copper and tin, which were traded long-distance by prehistoric peoples).





By around 800 BC, their descendants had found out how to make weapons and tools from harder, stronger iron. They also built heavy, horse-drawn wagons, buried their leaders with splendid treasures, and created their first art in a typically Celtic style.

Celtic peoples were most powerful from around 500 BC. By then, they were making better weapons and finer metalwork, and building fast, light chariots for warriors to ride into battle. After around 200 BC, Celtic lands were attacked by Roman armies and German tribes. By AD 100 the Celts had almost all been defeated. But Celtic culture survived in remote parts of Europe, such as Ireland and Brittany, for another 1,000 years.





CELTIC LANDS

This map shows where the stories in this book first originated.

1. *Fintan the Salmon* - p. 28
2. *Cu Chulainn: Ulster's Hero* - p. 42
3. *The Adventures of Fionn Mac Cumhaill* - p. 64
4. *Bran and Branwen* - p. 86
5. *Lludd and Llevelys* - p. 108
6. *Etain the Beautiful* - p. 124
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8. *Houarn and Bellab* - p. 136
9. *Blodeuwedd: Woman of Flowers* - p. 142
10. *The Voyage of Bran, Son of Febal* - p. 150
11. *Katell Gollet: Dancing Kate* - p. 160
12. *Maug Moulach: Hairy Maggie* - p. 165
13. *The Old Woman Who Drowned a Valley* - p. 166
14. *The Green Children* - p. 169
15. *The Glashtin* - p. 172





Timeline of Celtic peoples

c. 10,000–8000 BC

Hunter-gatherers move into northern Europe at the end of the last Ice age.

c. 4000 BC

First farmers in northern Europe.

c. 3000–1000 BC

Farming kings and communities build huge stone circles and tombs.

c. 1500–800 BC

Bronze Age – skilled craft-workers make bronze armour and weapons.

c. 800–500 BC

Hallstatt Era – first clearly Celtic culture: rich kings and queens, iron weapons, jewellery, international trade.

c. 500–200 BC

La Tène era – peak of Celtic power. Warriors drive fast chariots; Celts attack rich neighbouring lands; many fine crafts.





c. 200–AD 100

Celtic lands invaded and almost completely conquered by Roman and German tribes.

c. AD 500–1000

Most Celts become Christians, but artists working for the Church preserve and continue Celtic traditions. Writers in Celtic lands collect and preserve old Celtic myths and legends.





How do we know?

Celtic peoples did not read and write or keep written records. But we know about their lives, ideas and beliefs from three very different sources.

Buried treasures

The Celts believed in life after death, so they buried men, women and children with goods that they might need for their new life in the Otherworld. The graves of rich people tell us the most, but even poor graves can be revealing. Rich kings and queens were laid to rest with their weapons, jewellery, horses, chariots, and drinking cups, ready for fighting and feasting. Many were also buried with huge cauldrons – for mixing wine, and for magic or religious rituals.

Poor peoples' graves hold few treasures, but important information. For example, children were sometimes buried with shoes several sizes too big; this tells us that their parents must have expected them to go on growing in the Otherworld. Some old women, who were

