**Order of Paladins**

**Encampment Ritual:**

Unlike the Circle casting, which is meant to put up a temporary sacred space to do ritual in, the Encampment ritual is intended to create a longer term or permanent living or working space. This Encampment ritual links together two ancient customs.

The first custom is the tradition of First Foot in the Celtic countries. Throughout the British Isles and in many parts of Europe, there is a house blessing custom by this name. The first person to enter a house on New Years morning is referred to as the First Foot. In many versions of this custom, the First Foot usually is not a resident of the house, the householders relying on the visit of a chance caller. However, if no one is expected, a member of the household goes out and comes back in to carry out this function. In some traditions the First Foot is an appointed ceremonial person who makes the rounds of the neighborhood. In some parts of England this custom was practiced at Christmas, rather than New Years.

This person has many names elsewhere in Europe and is called other things elsewhere in the British Isles. For example, in Yorkshire this person is sometimes called the “Lucky Bird” and on the Isle of Man the Quualtagh. The First Foot is thought to influence the fortunes of the householders throughout the coming year. The gifts the First Foot brings are significant, as is his or her character and appearance. In these local traditions, the First Foot should be vigorous, fair, healthy and good looking and should not wear black or be lame. In some areas, like England, the First Foot is always a male, but one can find examples elsewhere, such as Scotland, in which the First Foot is always female. On the Isle of Man the Quualtagh can be either sex.

Typically the First Foot comes in through the front door as soon as possible after midnight has struck. In some traditions the First Foot immediately greets all inside as he or she enters. In others, they don’t speak until they have laid a peat on the hearth fire. This focus on the hearth is central to most versions of this tradition. The First Foot carries gifts of food, fuel and money as tokens of prosperity. Typically this consists of a piece of bread, a piece of coal, peat or firewood, a coin and some salt. In many traditions the First Foot also carries a bunch of evergreens as a promise of the permanence of life and sometimes mistletoe. Often the evergreen is left on the mantle above the hearth. Some Scottish traditions have the First Foot enter bearing a bottle of whiskey or a punch called Het Pint, which is made of spirits, beer, sugar and eggs. In some Scottish fishing villages the First Foot enters bearing red herring, a promise of good fishing to come. In some rural areas the First Foot comes in bearing a sheaf of wheat for a good harvest.

The First Foot visits every room in the house, and then goes out the back door. Some customs don’t require the householders to give the First Foot a gift. Others consider a gift to the First Foot essential. Nothing can be taken out until these gifts have been brought in and no one must go out until he has arrived.

The other tradition incorporated into our Encampment ritual comes from the Knights Templar. The Templars called their gatherings Encampments or Commanderies. This is where the name for the ritual that follows comes from.

**Encampment Ritual**:

If you are doing this for yourself, you can act as the First Foot for this ritual. If it is a group of people doing this, then a person in the group can be appointed to act as First Foot. The First Foot can be someone of either gender. The house, office or campsite that you are going to do this ritual for should be neat and tidy, if occupied, or clean and empty if you’ve just arrived to take possession of the space.

The First Foot should enter the space through the front door, main entrance, principal gateway or principal pathway. The First Foot should carry a small piece of bread, some sort of fuel (such as small piece of wood, kindling, coal, etc), a piece of evergreen (such as holly, cedar, fir, etc.), some salt and a coin. The First Foot should take this to the hearth or fire pit (if there is one) or, if there is no hearth, to the kitchen. If you are doing this for an office that doesn’t have a hearth or meal preparation area, you can take the offerings to the desk that you work at. Place these offerings on the hearth, beside the firepit, beside the stove in the kitchen or on the work desk.

Next, take up your sword or wand. Go to the east end of your house, office or campsite. Raise your sword or athame and invoke the east:

*“Hail! Guardians of the East*

*Of the Land of Falias*

*Elementals of Air.*

*Sylphs of the dawn sky.*

*Spirits of windy mornings in spring.*

*Yours is the Sword of Protection*

*The razor edged blade defends the hearth*

*I do summon stir and call ye up.*

*That you may protect and bless this (house, place, office).*

*Let this hearth be productive in the name of Brigid.*

*By the sword of Nuada Argetlamh!*

*My Law is to will*

*Breathe of me deeply*

*Biodh Se!”*

Return to the center, put down the sword or athame, and take up your staff or wand. Go to the south end of your house, office or campsite. Raise your staff or wand and invoke the south:

*“Hail! Guardians of the South!*

*Of the Land of Gorias*

*Elementals of Fire.*

*Salamanders of the midday sun.*

*Spirits of golden summer afternoons.*

*Yours is the Staff of Fertility*

*The staff that plants the seed*

*I do summon, stir and call ye up,*

*That you may protect and bless this (house, place, office).*

*Let us play music and share knowledge in the name of Grian.*

*By the spear of Lugh Lamfhada!*

*My law is to dream.*

*Live of me fully*

*Biodh Se!”*

Return to the center. Put down your staff or wand. Take up your cauldron or grail chalice and go to the west end of your house, office or campsite. Raise your cauldron or chalice and invoke the west:

*“Hail! Guardians of the West!*

*The Land of Murias*

*Elementals of Water.*

*Undines of the sunset waters.*

*Spirits of misty autumn evenings.*

*Yours is the Grail of Passion*

*The cornucopia that is always full.*

*I do summon, stir and call ye up,*

*That ye may protect and bless this (house, place, office).*

*Let us teach and judge fairly in the name of Boann.*

*By the undry cauldron of the Dagdha Eochaid!*

*My Law is to dare*

*Drink of me freely*

*Biodh Se!”*

Return to the center. Put down your cauldron or grail. Take up your shield or stone. Go to the north end of your house, office or campsite. Raise your shield or stone and invoke the north:

*“Hail! Guardians of the North!*

*The Land of Finias*

*Elementals of Earth.*

*Gnomes of the midnight mountains.*

*Spirits of silent Winter nights.*

*Yours is the Stone of Foundation,*

*The footing that holds the structure firm.*

*I do summon, stir and call ye up,*

*That ye may witness, protect and bless this (house, place, office).*

*Grant us strength and confidence in the name of the Mor-Rhioghain.*

*By the stone of Lia Fail and the anvil of Goibhniu!*

*My Law is silence*

*Listen to me in stillness*

*Biodh Se!*

Return to the hearth or kitchen or desk at the center and put down the cauldron or grail. Here we use a blessing adapted from two ancient blessings from the *Carmina Gadelica*: The Homestead and Blessing of the House. Basically I combined and "Paganized" them, removing any Christian references which had crept in. Stand in front of the First Foot offerings and invoke the center:

*“Hail! Guardians of Meath! The Center.*

*Spirits of the Wheel of the Seasons.*

*Aes Sidhe of the Timeless Astral.*

*Dreams of the eternal Summerland.*

*Yours is the power of Spirit.*

*The mind which wields the elemental powers as one.*

*I do summon, stir and call ye up,*

*That ye may bring this (house, office, camp site) unity, stability and balance.*

*Grant us healing and peace in the name of Danu.*

*By the eloquence of Ogma.*

*My law is unity.*

*Know of me always.*

*So mote it be!”*

Next recite the following blessing for this space:

*“Bless my (homestead, office, etc, whatever is appropriate),*

*Both crest and frame,*

*Both stone and beam,*

*Both clay and wattle,*

*Both summit and foundation,*

*Both window and timber,*

*Both foot and head,*

*Both man and woman,*

*Both young and old,*

*Both maiden and youth:*

*Plenty of food,*

*Plenty of drink,*

*Plenty of beds,*

*Much of riches,*

*Much of mirth,*

*Many of people,*

*Much of long life,*

*Be ever there*

*Both warrior and poet,*

*Both young and mature*

*Bless my homestead,*

*Bless all within*

*Bless my kindred*

*Bless my substance*

*Bless my words*

*Bless my converse*

*Bless my errand*

*Bless my journey*

*Ward me from distress*

*Ward me from misfortune*

*Shield me from harm*

*Fill me with joy”*

If necessary, this is a good time now to do any magick required to “flush” negativity out and “over write” negative energy imprints in the space that you are blessing. This is similar to a banishing for a haunting. Once this is done, you can use whatever technique works best for you to raise a ward around the house. This is also a good time to put up wards around the space, if required. I list techniques in my book *Magickal Self Defense*.