**CELTIC KNOTS**

**(Possible Meanings)**

[**http://www.whats-your-sign.com/celtic-knots.html**](http://www.whats-your-sign.com/celtic-knots.html)

Celtic knots are perhaps the most notorious and recognizable artwork in Celtic history.

They started appearing in history after about 450 AD; the Celtic knots meaning is **sketchy at best**, because there is little written history documenting their purpose.

However, repetition of their appearance through history in conjunction with other various human interpretations give us insight, and allow us to infer some basic information relating to the Celtic knots meaning.

The Celtic knot symbol, is also referred to as the mystic knot, or the endless knot. The more esoteric or spiritual meaning of this symbol eludes to beginnings and endings. In viewing these beautiful knots, we cannot see a beginning or and end, and therefore we are reminded of the timeless nature of our spirit. This translation harkens to our most primal selves as we contemplate the infinite cycles of birth and rebirth in both physical and ethereal realms.

A less spiritual representation is also related to the knots endless nature. Due to it's infinite path, the Celtic knot can represent an uninterrupted life cycle. Some may use this symbol as a charm of sorts - warding against sickness or setbacks that might interfere with an otherwise calm and stable life. In this vein, these knots are used as emblems, which can be found in jewelry, clothing, or home décor. In ancient times, gifts adorned with mystic knots would be given with best wishes of longevity, or luck with new endeavors.

**The Celtic Trinity Knot**, or the [Triquetra](http://www.whats-your-sign.com/celtic-symbol-for-trinity.html), is one of the most common of the knot ilk. The term Triquetra comes from Latin, and it means "three-cornered." There are many schools of thought when discussing the Celtic trinity knot meaning.

All of the various interpretations agree on a culmination of thee parts.

For example, early Christian understanding views the symbols as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Whereas, a more pagan school of thought sees the trinity knot as the drawing of the three inherent feminine powers: Mother, Crone, and Maiden.

Still another understanding can be found in a more metaphysical arena where the three corners represent mind, body and spirit.

**Four-Cornered (Quaternary) Celtic Knots**

**Clarification:** Quaternary simply means "four" - in this case - four-cornered. So, when you see a Celtic knot that has a primary motif of four, then you're dealing with quaternary Celtic knot meanings, which are described below.

The following is my response the quaternary [Celtic knot meaning](http://www.whats-your-sign.com/celtic-knots.html), based on my research and help from a few Irish buddies (thanks Jim and Paul).

To preface, it's difficult to gather accurate information on Celtic knots or Celtic symbols and their meanings due to sketchy remnants of written.

According to George Bain, a 20th century Scottish Celtic art professor, Celtic knots that have a **closed path**, (no end or beginning), are considered to be a symbol of eternity, or represent the infinite. Those with **open paths** are said to signify a journey (both physical and otherwise).

Furthermore, knot work was performed as a means of **displaying heritage**. Just as plaids are an identification of clans in the Highlands, so too do certain knots identify certain Celtic families.

Now you can begin to see the difficulty in tracking down the true meaning of your specific knot. For every family there could be a unique knot to identify that bloodline...potentially leading to **countless different** heritage emblems.

Furthermore, tracking down the meaning of one Celtic knot design also depends on the artist. The ancient Celts were incredibly **prolific artists**...here again, there could be as many interpretations as there were Celtic artisans.

I can tell you that your Celtic knot is a quaternary design - meaning it has four distinct sections within the design.

Quaternary celtic knot meanings are upon the era, region, and artist of the design's inception (yes, more variables).

Here are a few meaning possibilites of your Quaternary knot design...

**Meanings for Four-Cornered (Quaternary) Celtic Knots**

Indication of the [four directions](http://www.symbolic-meanings.com/2008/01/02/symbolism-of-the-compass-meaning-of-the-four-directions/): North, South, East, West.

Indication of the [four seasons](http://www.tokenrock.com/read-Seasonal-Symbolism-733.html).

Indication of the four great [treasures of the Tuatha](http://www.whats-your-sign.com/celtic-symbols-tuatha-de-danann.html)

A more modern indication of the four Latin Gospels in the Book of Kells

Indication of the [four elements](http://www.whats-your-sign.com/nature-symbols.html): Earth, Fire, Water, Air

Indication of the four Celtic fire festivals: [Samhain](http://www.whats-your-sign.com/meaning-of-halloween-symbols.html), Beltane, Imbolc, Lughnasadh.

An emblem of Brigid, also known as the Queen of the Four Fires a she demonstrates her four-branched wisdom of hand, hearth, head and heart.

There are also insubstantial rumors that this design is a [four-leaf clover design - a symbol of good luck.](http://www.whats-your-sign.com/good-luck-symbol.html)

There are also legends that the four-cornered Celtic knot design was created as a symbol protection. In [Druidic philosophies](http://www.whats-your-sign.com/celtic-meaning-of-symbolic-trees.html), there were four major energies, or Gods, if you will governing a specific quandrant of the world...this four-cornered emblem was used to invoke these [powers for protection](http://www.symbolic-meanings.com/2007/08/31/celtic-symbols-for-protection/) (in the home, corporeal protection during battle, etc.).

**Celtic Five Fold Symbol Meaning** 

This page is devoted to the Celtic Meanings within the Five Fold Symbol (symbol shown at top. The **center green circle represents the *fifth element***.)

Celtic meanings surrounding the five-fold motif are fascinating and their significance far-reaching. Specifically, I'm completely **enchanted by the fifth element**, and how it's translated by the ancient Celtic mind.

I *love* the **idea of integration** in the five-fold symbols. The idea is **not** exclusively Celtic. Indeed, almost every culture having the spiritual capacity to observe their world and the universe in which it spins, has five prime symbolic themes.

The *first* four themes are timeless, honored cornerstones of life found in countless cultures (including Celtic) and they are fairly straightforward. They deal with classic structures. For example:

**Celtic Symbol Meanings: Four Aspects**

Four elements: Fire, Earth, Air, Water

Four directions: South, North, East, West

Four seasons: Summer, Winter, Spring, Fall

But what about the **fifth element**?

Our spiritually sagacious forebears pressed their minds ***out* of the rigid confinement of the "four-sided" box**. They grasped the concept of a more expansive essence unifying the common four elements. That's where the fifth element makes its appearance in esoteric thought.

The table of correspondences below explores the Celtic meanings and associations of four, and how **these are joined together by a fifth element**. Together, all five designations create a balanced, **unified power** that, conceivably, can be tapped by the human mind.

Tapping into the five-fold balance, who knows what kind of awareness can be gained? Druids hinted at an **all-encompassing illumination** when the five aspects of nature were balanced within human understanding.

Celtic meanings behind the five fold concept could fill a book. The following correspondences are standard, and found throughout Celtic legend, lore, poetry and history. Here are just a few Celtic meanings associated with the five fold symbol.

**Five-Fold Symbol: Celtic Meanings**

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| **Five Fold Celtic Meanings and Associations** |
| http://www.whats-your-sign.com/images/FiveFold-Small.jpg | **Direction** | **Element** | **Season** | **Ruling** | **Tenet** | **Station** | **Child of Danu1** | **Gift of Danu2** | **Ritual** | **Cup of Truth3** |
| **One** | East | Air | Spring | Home, Wealth | Vitality in Life | Farmers | Nuada | Sword | Mobilizing | Personal truth, Subjective meaning |
| **Two** | South | Fire | Summer | Creativity, Art | Clarity in Light | Bards | Lugh | Spear | Transform | Universal truth, Inherent meaning |
| **Three** | West | Water | Fall | Learning, Chronicling | Growth in Love | Druids | Dagda | Cauldron | Purifying | Absolute truth, Love conceived |
| **Four** | North | Earth | Winter | Vindication, Honor | Order in Law | Soldiers | Fal | Stone | Stabilizing | Objective truth, Physical reality |
| **Five** | Center | Aether | Transit | Ascension, Spirituality | Balance in All | Nobility | Danu | Cord | Transcend | The elixir of forgiveness, the cup of *whole* knowledge |

Explanation of superscript marks:

**1)** [The Danu](http://www.whats-your-sign.com/celtic-goddess-danu.html) columns are mythological references to the history of Ireland as observed in the Book of Invasions. The [children of the goddess Danu are the Tuatha De Danann](http://www.whats-your-sign.com/celtic-goddess-danu.html), a high-minded noble race with the **blood of magic and divinity running through their veins**.

**2)** Part of that magic is the tools each of them kept in their possession. These tools were also symbols of their forte and expertise. These are what I refer to as "gifts of Danu" in the table above.

**3)** The Celtic Cup of Truth is mentioned in Celtic mythology and repeated in their historical storytelling. We see it first referenced in lore as the magic cup belonging to Manannan Mac Lir who passed it on to Cormac Mac Airt. Legends of the cup vary, including one in which the cup detects truth from lies in the one drinking from the cup. There are also references to the cup being the holy grail in Arthurian supposition.

I included the Cup of Truth in the five-fold Celtic meanings because I appreciated the symbolism of the chalice and the act of consuming the elixir of perspective offered. The *point* here is *choice*.

A note about directions: To my western mind, I wanted to attribute the cardinal directions to the four "cross" circles, **like a compass**. That's not the way of the Celt. They were an enhanced, agricultural people who moved in a cyclical rhythm with the the ebb and flow of the cycles of time. It makes sense the uppermost (number "one") circle in our five-fold symbol has an Eastern assignment, as this indicates rising of the sun in their hemisphere. If you walk through the circles from the perspective of the sun, all the other positions make sense. The Celtic time wheel diagram (below) might bring clarity too.

While on the subject of perspective, the Celtic five-fold symbol can be used as an awareness-broadening [mandala.](http://www.whats-your-sign.com/Celtic-symbol-mandala.html) You can **easily fall into the interconnecting circles and find a depth in meaning** that otherwise could be overlooked in a superficial glance. For instance, as I dove into the symbol, I discovered the segments of the Celtic year nestled in the center (fifth element) circle. I made this diagram to illustrate:

