

The Witchtower

Pagan Network Magazine

Ostara/Beltane 2008

**Paganism and Fascism
what's the story ?**

**Revealed...
How to find your
Animal Totem**

**Find out how Astrology relates to the
Wheel of the Year**

The Witchtower

Ostara/Beltane 08

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Email: witchtower@gmail.com

Staff Details

Co-Editor - Twilightgirl
Co-Editor - Andy Norfolk
Assistant Editor - Beith-ann
Reviews Editor - Julia Oakmoon

Contributors:

Andy Norfolk
Twilightgirl
Beith-ann
Stilly
Tricia Nymh
Darlene Ripka-Cartwright
Mark Lees

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Editorial

Welcome to our new look magazine! Not only do we have a new look but we are also running a series of exciting new articles from a regular story section, a beginners guide, a gardening section, academic areas plus many more.

We also have new staff to help run the magazine, so without further ado I'd like to introduce them. Helping run the magazine alongside myself, is Andy Norfolk as Co-Editor. His speciality sections on the magazine are Out of the Shadows and Walk Between Worlds, which cover our academic and environmental areas. We have Beith-ann who is our Assistant Editor, her speciality sections on the magazine are the Pagan Postcards section and Ancient Circle section where you'll learn all about astrology and Beith-ann's travels. We have Julia Oakmoon who is our Reviews Editor, ever the bookworm she'll be bringing you more reviews than your local library! As you can see we all come from very different backgrounds and have varying experiences, so between us we're sure to bring something of interest for everyone!

We also have several regular writers at the moment. Stilly will be getting his hands dirty in our gardening section, and Trisha from Ghostbusters UK will continue to bring us many more interesting stories and explanations about the paranormal world.

Don't forget that if you'd like to contribute an article to the magazine just drop us an email at the witchtower@gmail.com

Enjoy your reading!

Twilightgirl and the Editorial Team

So what is the poltergeist? Is it a noisy mischievous ghost as the mid 19th century German word implies? Is it a harbinger of doom trying to communicate with humans in our plane of existence? Could it be a soul in distress that needs to be moved to wherever we go after death, according to our belief system? Or even what remains of our corporal bodies when we no longer inhabit them? Or was F W Myers correct when he described it as 'a manifestation of persistent personal energy' - excessive energy produced by some people, not always teenagers, when in a troubled state of mind? If that were so then why

does it not happen to us all in times of great distress? So many questions that pass through the mind when confronted with the type of problem that existed with our next case.

Several years ago after a talk given locally to a group of interested folk, we were approached by two pleasant women who introduced themselves and then asked if they could tell us about some strange experiences that had occurred to a member of their family.

Tina was obviously not a local lass and explained that she was up in the area staying with her brother and his family. She had seen the notice about the talk on strange phenomena and had come along with her sister-in-law Babs, as they were both interested in the subject. They had enjoyed the talk and decided to ask us about some strange happenings at her other brother's house in a village in the New Forest. She went on to say that she and her family had been invited to visit her brother and stay for a while in his new house and investigate the beautiful area.

Her husband Frank and their two boys were also keen to go as the two families got on well together. Her brother Mick and his wife Sue and their two boys Ray and Darren were all of a similar age, and it would be enjoyable to have a break away from their rushed lives in London's East End. They looked forward to their holiday with eager anticipation and arrived at Mick and Sue's house in good time to have a quick look around. Although the house was new to Tina's brother and his family, it was actually a very old building.

The original house had been gutted and completely redesigned, making the present house much bigger and, of course, bringing it up to modern day standards. The designers had tried to keep some of the original characteristics which, as Tina was about to discover, may not have been such a good idea!

The weekend had been spent catching up with family gossip and taking a look at the local sights. On Monday morning Sue and Mick went off to work as usual, leaving their two boys and the others to enjoy a leisurely breakfast and a lazy day.

The family decided that a day exploring some of the walks in the Forest would be a good idea and, whilst the boys and Frank took a trip

Ghostbusters UK presents.... Flying Elephants

into the village to buy essentials like crisps and cans of Coca Cola, Tina made sandwiches and then cleared away the breakfast dishes from the dining room. As she did so she heard a strange scratching noise coming from down near one of the skirting boards. She stood very still and listened and the weird noise continued. On investigation she found that the noise was coming from behind the brickwork between the wall separating the kitchen from the dining room but, as she approached, it stopped so she moved away and continued to collect up the breakfast remains. The noise started again, even louder than before and then Tina heard a chinking sound as if something had fallen from one of the shelves in the dining room and went back to investigate. She thought she may have knocked something over as she had gathered up the dishes but was shocked to see that, in the middle of the table she had just cleared, were three small china elephants from a collection that her sister kept on a shelf close by.

Although she was puzzled, she picked them up and carefully replaced them on the shelf with the rest of the collection of small china animals. She continued to wash the dishes and put them away and then went upstairs to get herself ready for when her husband and the boys returned. There was such a clatter from the boys as they came back into the house with Frank, all shouting at once for her to hurry up and had she seen their football and could they take the bag of food she had prepared, that she forgot the incident as she was happily rushed out of the house by Frank before the boys tried to pack even more stuff to take in the already full boot of their big old car.

That evening after dinner, whilst the four boys were upstairs in the two bedrooms now shared with their cousins making a din with their music and Mick and Frank were out at the friendly local public house, Tina was sitting with her sister-in-law in the dining room. Remembering the incident of the morning Tina told Sue what had happened. Although Sue was interested she did not comment and Tina thought she looked strange and had gone very quiet. While they were talking, Tina noticed that her son's small hand-held electronic football game was sitting on the wooden surround of the gas fire. Sue suggested they make a coffee and a snack and went into the kitchen followed by a puzzled Tina. As they

busied themselves Tina heard a noise coming from the dining room again, only this time it was the small electronic game, its distinctive tune had started playing.

The women thought one of the boys had sneaked downstairs and was hiding in the dining room waiting for them to go so Tina rushed back in to catch them out! She returned very puzzled as the room was empty. Then once again they heard the tune playing, and this time both women returned to the

room. Again it was empty. This time they checked the game and found that it was in fact switched off. After this happened for the third time Tina decided to creep up to the boys' room to check that they were still there.

However, she says that she knows that it could not have been any of the boys because the route from the dining room to the upstairs bedrooms would have taken them right past her. But she checked anyway.

By this time Tina had become nervous and refused to go back into the dining room. Both women moved into the sitting room and the odd happenings of the day prompted a discussion about the paranormal. Sue began to tell Tina about other strange happenings in the house. They occurred mainly in the dining area and in the room of her eldest son, Ray, which was directly above.

Things were always being moved around in Ray's room and Tina was blamed for some of these as she liked a tidy house but knew that some of the strange movements were definitely nothing to do with her or any other member of the family as they usually occurred when both boys were at school and she and Mick were at work and the house was empty. Then some mornings when they came down they would find a picture had been taken down from the dining room wall and laid neatly on the coffee table - just as if someone were about to dust it. So far, every August Bank Holiday weekend without fail, the stained glass window that had been put into the serving hatch in the dining room would spring out of its frame into the room. Amazingly it was never broken and Mick would fix it back again.

Sue told Tina that the elephants from her collection of small animal ornaments would be found scattered about the house in the most obscure places. Strangely enough it was only the elephants; Sue said it was almost as if they had a ghost who did not like elephants and threw them about. One day Mick was in direct line of one of the flying elephants and stood dumbfounded as it sailed harmlessly past him. He said it was almost like a slow motion movie and he could not believe his eyes as the ornament landed harmlessly enough on the floor. Sue said, at the time, he looked as though he had seen a ghost but, whatever happened, so far no one had ever been hurt.

Whilst they were chatting they suddenly heard a loud crash - as if something had come through one of the windows in the dining room. Although considerably alarmed, both women ran together into the room, expecting to find a brick or other large object had been thrown through the window. What they saw was even stranger.

The rocking chair where Tina had been sitting earlier was rocking backwards and forwards. On the cushioned seat was the small electronic game that they had repeatedly heard playing earlier.

The two French windows had been flung wide open back against the house wall and they presumed that this must have caused the crash that they had heard. The women stood frozen to the spot, staring in shocked disbelief. Sue's eyes were wide and she could barely utter her thoughts as, because the door catch was faulty and they neither wanted an opportunist intruder into their house nor the children to hurt themselves, her husband had actually nailed the doors in question together, just as a temporary measure. Although the crash they had heard had been enough to awaken the dead and they expected to find every pane of glass in the room broken, to their increasing amazement, there was no damage whatsoever!

Having heard the crash above the din of their music the boys all rushed into the room asking what had happened. Not wanting to frighten them all, Sue said that the wind had caught the doors and banged them open. Ray said he thought that his father had nailed them up and Sue said, not to worry, he must have forgotten to do so, knowing that Mick had definitely done so as she had helped him to fix them tight shut. She was only saying to him that they must get them sorted out before his sister and her family came and Mick had not had time to do so.

They found an old length of rope and tied the doors together and Tina sent the boys back up to bed with the assurance that it would all be fixed in the morning. The two of them made cups of tea and sat chatting about the incident until the two men returned from their night out but, as they were both in a merry mood and the two women could not get much sense out of them, they all went to bed saying they would talk again in the morning.

The following day, after Sue and Tina had told the two men what had happened, they all sat and discussed what they should do. Mick and Frank went off to find some new door handles and fixings to put things right and make the doors safe and Tina and Sue decided they would try to find the full history of the house. Together they rummaged through the old documents and scrutinised old pictures of the original building that had once belonged to an undertaker. The old scullery had been extensively altered and modernised and was now the new kitchen. The present sitting room was in fact built on the site of the old funeral parlour where the undertaker would interview family and friends of the deceased.

The dining room was on the site of the old

chapel of rest where bodies had been prepared for burial and laid out for last goodbyes from grieving loved ones and the room above, Ray's bedroom, was the living quarters of the undertaker and his wife.

The incident was discussed and the photos and documents were inspected but, as none of the adults could come up with an explanation, everyone put it to the back of their minds and began to think maybe their imaginations could have been playing tricks on them. The old house had stood empty for several years and had fallen into disrepair before the builder had bought the house and the land and built the present dwelling. One old lady in the village had told Sue that the family that lived there had kept themselves to themselves and that they had lost their son, an only child with a serious illness, many years before. When the elderly undertaker had finally retired they had moved away from the area, she did not know where.

Tina and her family enjoyed the rest of their stay without further incidents but, after they had all returned home, Mick and Sue decided that they had had enough of the strange happenings. They sought the help of a local priest and had their house blessed.

Unfortunately, this only seemed to make matters worse and that August Bank Holiday the stained glass window flew out of the serving hatch with such force that, this time, some of the glass smashed. Mick refused to replace it again and, instead, he completely bricked up the area.

Tina was not the only member of her wider family to experience strange happenings at Mick and Sue's house. Her other brother, Terry, and his wife, Babs, stayed for a long weekend on their way to the south coast.

They slept in the double bed in Ray's room but Terry did not have a very good night. He was woken several times by something scratching on the door of the bedroom. After getting out of bed three times and finding no reason for the strange noise he finally fell into a restless sleep and woke in a sweat thinking that there was someone or something in the room. His wife put the incident down to a late cheese and pickle sandwich but the next night he fared no better. This time Terry woke Babs twice to ask her if she could hear anything and, as they lay awake talking quietly, their bedroom door suddenly opened with a force that knocked it back against one of their cases which gave them such a fright, that they both jumped out of bed in unison. Once again Terry could find no reason for what had happened. Babs was shaking and was glad they were moving on the next day. They both crept downstairs for a comforting cup of tea and a cigarette to calm their nerves before spending what was left of the night straining to hear anything but nothing else occurred.

When they came down for breakfast it was to find Sue making tea and toast for the rest of the family. She greeted them both with a smile and asked if they had been up in the night. When Terry said they had made themselves cups of tea she grinned and said she thought so and did they like the little elephants she

had as part of her collection. Her brother and his wife looked puzzled until Sue explained that she was the first up that morning, as usual, and had found three of them in a neat line, trunk to tail, on the kitchen table. Terry and Babs assured her that they had not been into the dining room where the collection was kept and had certainly not put them on the kitchen table.

Two years after these strange events terrible tragedy struck the family. Ray, who was 16 years old, was killed in a road accident. It was during the August Bank Holiday period and, after the horror of the disaster, Sue told Tina that was the last straw, they were going to sell the house and move away from the area.

But before they could do so, one day, whilst alone in the house, Sue said she felt the presence of her dead son Ray and somehow it seemed as if he were trying to tell her not to worry and that everything was now going to be all right. She said the feeling was so strong she expected to see him standing there beside her and she found it impossible to describe how she felt that with such certainty. She said that her husband had also felt his presence in the house and now they were not sure whether they wanted to move at all as their memories were there and they felt comfortable and happy once again.

Tina said, "We will never know if Ray did come back or, if he did, whether it made a difference. However, nothing bad has happened in the house since that time." Although Ray is terribly missed they are aware of his presence near them in the house and, in a sense, they are glad to feel that somehow he is not too far away. Tina said that she still feels strange when she visits the house but she says it's really quiet and calm there now and it's in such a beautiful area, an ideal place for two weeks holiday...

Comments

The two women who consulted us appeared sane and not given to embellishment. In fact, to the contrary, they were quite hesitant to tell their story as they thought we might judge them strange or mad but thought it was an opportunity not to be missed to hear what we thought and if there was anything they could have done to avert the tragedy. Sadly that is of course impossible to say for certain as nothing conclusive was ever established with the strange, sometimes repetitive activity within the house. In hindsight it is all too easy to think that this or that must have been some sort of warning of impending doom - but what could any of the occurrences have told us?

It could be said by some that Sue and Mick's house was haunted but nothing of a violent nature occurred. Was it haunted by the spirits/entities of some of the departed that had passed through the hands of the old undertaker before their son's terrible accident? Certainly some sort of poltergeist type activity seemed to have taken place on more than one occasion - flying elephants were seen by several of the more mortal occupants - and fixed doors were quite violently flung open - maybe to try to attract the attention of those in the house - if so why?

Glass was sprung out of the serving hatch window every year at August bank holiday - was this to warn the family of the impending tragedy?

So many questions need to be asked and, once again, definite answers are very illusive - could this be a case of, as FW Myers described it, 'a manifestation of persistent personal energy.' If so why?

It is always more interesting to find paranormal activity of some kind that is witnessed by more than one person, as this most certainly seems to have been. It seems, on the evidence available, fairly reasonable to assume that most, if not all, of the paranormal phenomena were some sort of attention gaining device. The question then is the attention gaining device of what or whom? Frequently, in similar cases, it is the former incumbent of the property who seems to be producing the activity. More and more it appears that, rather than an integrated whole, some isolated part of a personality is making its presence felt.

Communication with the shade of the departed, if it is possible, sometimes leads to some information concerning the life of the previous owner and also it often seems as if the 'ghostly' tenant believes that they are still alive and have every right to still be in residence.

Now if we accept this as even a slight possibility then, for the moment, we might reasonably be allowed to assume that, in the case of Sue and Mick, the old undertaker, with or without other spirits or other assorted entities who might have felt that they had a claim to the property, was sharing their house.

Within the history of some families it is reported that 'totem' figures or even animals appear as a warning of an unpleasant or even pleasant occurrence, but this was definitely not the case here.

After the death of their son Ray all the paranormal events stopped. At least all of the physically obvious ones stopped. Perhaps he was able to sort things out with some of the previous tenants!

Or could it be that the paranormal activity was being produced in an effort to warn the family of the impending tragedy? If so, then, although unsuccessful because it was too obscure to judge it a warning of some sort, after Ray's death there would be no further necessity for attempts at communication.

The house 'felt' happier; perhaps that in itself is some sort of psychical phenomenon and it is often reported that if a property has a 'resident' entity of some sort, it is not always unpleasant. We have met many people over the years that report a pleasant entity/presence in their homes or places of work, one which they even feel comfortable to have around, so it appears that not all presences are shades of the departed caught in a time warp that need to be moved on from the unknown to the unknown.

Unfortunately, truly verifiable entities seen by some 'sensitives' are extremely rare and most times we can only take the word of the 'sen-

sitive' that there is really a presence there who needs moving somewhere as, by the time these folk are usually called in, the owners of the residence are quite often in such a heightened state of mind, unfortunately fuelled very often by inexperienced well meaning friends who can quote other cases they have heard of from other friends or sadly some of the more popular television programs or other media, that they are happy to accept 'help' of any kind.

The poltergeist is sometimes treated in a rather cavalier manner as an interesting, unusual or even entertaining aspect of parapsychological research. It might be RSPK (Recurrent Spontaneous PsychoKinesis) and it might be due to the interposition of spirits of the dead. Whatever it is it is usually left at that because the phenomena are so difficult to examine. Nevertheless, investigation of these bizarre manifestations of energy is arguably one of the most important aspects of the whole field of parapsychology. It could also be considered that gravity, that mysterious force existing in and functioning through a complete vacuum, is equally strange. We may know the theories of gravity but do we fully understand them.

The poltergeist, as we have seen, is associated with the paranormal movement of objects and it forcefully reminds us of the action of PK-psychokinesis. Some people produce their own 'poltergeist' energy and there are some scientists, particularly in the Soviet Union, who consider it to be possible to actually collect and store this energy. Indeed they are said to feel that, through the study of psychokinetic forces, they may unlock the secrets of the life energies of the universe.

A thorough study of current parapsychological literature reveals more than a hint that we may be closer to the control of such energy than is generally believed. The Russian neuro-physiologist Dr Genady Sergeev has been reported as saying that it is possible to transfer energy from living bodies to inorganic matter.

It has been thought for some time that a powerful medium or sensitive can perceive an aura surrounding living systems, including their own. Some powerful physical mediums, such as the Russian Nelya Mikhailova, are capable of influencing and manipulating it in various ways. Russian researchers refer to this subtle field as the bioplasmic body and it seems that it is ideoplastic, that is it is capable of being influenced and altered by concentrated mental influence. The bioplasmic body may be akin to a form of electricity, bioelectricity, such as we see in certain marine animals and, possibly, this form of energy is responsible as the basis of psychokinetic movement - PK. It is also referred to as psychotronic energy.

So, unless you are prepared to undertake an extended series of time consuming investigations, which may or may not help those involved, it is often best to 'let sleeping dogs lie' and, in the case of Sue and Mick, that is just what we did as their house was reported quiet and the occupants comfortable and we all thought it unnecessary to stir up old feelings - unless of course anything untoward

happens in the future and they request our help.

So watch this space - our next fascinating case took place in a quiet old English Hotel in the Cotswolds.

By Tricia Nymh © 2007
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Ancient Circle

In each of this series of articles I am going to cover the essentials of each of the signs and the elements. The first sign of the Zodiac is Aries, a cardinal fire sign that is associated with initiation, new experience and energy. What better place to start!

In the following articles in this series I will be dealing with Water and the 3 signs from the Summer Solstice, Air and the signs from the Vernal Equinox and then finishing with the element of Earth and the signs from the Winter Solstice.

It is hoped that these articles will give people a sense of the basics and the inspiration for some to look further into this fascinating subject.

The Element of Fire

Aries, Leo, Sagittarius.

If you imagine fire in all its forms you will have some idea of the drives of the fire person

A candle, a log fire, a light bulb, an oven, a forest fire, the Sun and there are many more I am sure you can add to the list. Fire gives light and warmth but when out of control it can be ultimately destructive. Fire cleanses, it releases nutrients trapped within wood. This is what happens when we cook. See how just a little heat can release the juice from fruit. It is a catalyst for a lot of chemical changes. However, it needs fuel and it only really has one form, although this can come through a myriad of styles and cannot be confined or made to conform, unless it is in the form of electricity, which I consider a form of fire, its most useful and its most powerful and perhaps the most dangerous, simply because it is contained.

The main keyword we link with fire is ENERGY and we can expand on that with words like WARMTH, ACTION, LIGHT and ANGER. I am sure that you could add many more to this list too. You can see that we already have an idea of the fiery type

They are linked with the psychological type of FEELING. This means that the fire type acts on gut reactions and feeling, impulses and what the heart says. Rationalising their actions comes much later.

As fire needs fuel the fire signs need other people to approve of them. They use other people's perceptions as a barometer of their position in life. They need to be seen as effective and dynamic. Their position in regard to

others is important to them. They are not really bothered about money - only the status that it brings in others eyes. This sounds as if they are greedy or power mad. Not so! This is how they feel secure in the world - their position is important. This is why Aries are good at leading from the front. Leo are the bosses and Sagittarius make excellent teachers. This gives them all a position where others can look up to them and this gives them their sense of security.

Fire people can enlighten the world; through dispatching their knowledge, through their huge warmth and generosity and through their enthusiasm. Their actions can act as a catalyst. The energy produced by anger can make an awful lot of things change. Think of the "Poll tax riots", the Jarrow Marches and the Tollpuddle Martyrs. The anger generated set up the spark for change. However, this anger can be destructive if not contained and focused. It can get out of hand like a forest fire and, if it is too intensely focused, like the Sun through a lens.

Like the Sun, fire types always consider that their rightful place is at the centre of the universe - and who are we mere mortals to argue with that? They tend to be the "luvvies" of the zodiac; nothing is in moderation. An Aries relative of mine was on a train and saw that there was an unattended case left in her compartment. She had also seen that some soldiers had got onto the train earlier, so in her mind the case wasn't unattended because its owner had gone to the loo. No! There was a bomb in it. She had the guard up and by the time the poor person had returned to their luggage their smalls were all over the place! Nothing by halves.

They seem to be pretty laid back but they are very aware of others opinions. Fire types need a lot of reassurance and the ones that act like drama queens or know-alls are the ones that feel so inadequate that they have to constantly reassure themselves.

Watch a fire sign and they are always in a performance of some sort, always on show, even if they don't think anyone is looking. Either a tragedy, or comedy, or soap opera, concert, however they are feeling at that particular moment. Watch fire sign actors; very few play anything but themselves in different situations. They are not the type who spend ages getting into character - they are already there. "All the world's a stage" was a phrase coined by an Aries Shakespeare specifically for the fire signs. Watch fire sign musicians always acting the star, always centre stage, or the most elevated position.

Fire signs don't worry about details. They are too busy creating the overall affect - they look at the woodland and not the trees. They don't worry how much money they have; only

Astrology and the Wheel of the Year

what to buy and if they haven't got enough - well they will have one day and then they will actually pay for it. Until then they have to have it and to hell with the dinner (until they get hungry).

Fire signs are prone to passion, to outbursts of energy and to egocentricity and temper tantrums. They are capable of immense love and hate. They are the warmest, funniest, angriest people and they are the easiest to love and to be irritated by. They cannot be tamed, like fire itself, and they have to be treated with respect. Like electricity, if you don't know what you are doing and abuse the fire signs you are liable to get a bit frazzled.

The 'Spring' Signs

As we go through the signs in each season there is another pattern that emerges. Each season starts with a Cardinal sign, which is the active, initiating quality and then the seasons are established with a fixed sign, which basically speaks for itself and then finally melts into the next season during a mutable sign, which is changeable and adaptable.

Aries

Element:- Fire.
Quality:- Cardinal.
Ruler:- Mars.
Keyword:- Pioneering.

The first of the spring signs and it falls during the height of that season. If you think about what happens in nature during the period of time that the sun is moving through ARIES then you should have a good idea of the qualities associated with this sign. The Cardinal/Fire sign is the most expressive of the Fire element.

The thing that we notice about the ARIES personality and season is the incredible energy. Aries leads from the front and the principle is ME FIRST. There is a childlike energy in the Aries personality that is reflected in nature. However, like the season, the personality needs to have something to stabilise it because unlimited growth causes trouble. The speed of a runaway horse is useless without some control.

During this time of the year everything is new and budding, the earth is beginning to warm up and the sap is rising.

By
Beith-ann

Ancient

Everything seems to have more energy, everything has woken up and new life is all around.

This is how the ARIES person behaves all the time. Have you ever attempted to make an ARIES sit still for longer than a minute or so? It's nigh on impossible. They are always having new ideas, wanting to go on to new things, giving birth to new projects.

Aries is the ideas person of the Zodiac but will only go so far to get things done.

They have the idea and it is up to others to do something about it. And this is exactly what this time of the year is all about. The sap rising, the promise of things to come, however, life is still a little tender and although there is little chance of frost, a cold snap may just damage new shoots. Any gardener knows to keep their most tender plants protected until late April. And just as easily the Aries enthusiasm can be cooled by a few negative words and so needs to be protected a bit.

Taurus

Element:- Earth.
Quality:- Fixed
Ruler:- Venus.
Keyword:- Stabilising.

TAURUS is the sign of stability, although it still has the force of the Bull behind it. Nature reflects the establishment of all this growth. The principle of TAURUS is I POSSESS which means that all the Aries energy is transformed into something that is of use. It is also a time where birds etc. are beginning to build nests, establishing bases and homes for the rest of the mating season. Again, Fixed/Earth means that Taurus is the sign most descriptive of Earth.

The earth is beginning to warm up and plant life is also beginning to establish itself. Growth during this time is gentle and stable without the urgency of the first rush of Aries. The buds have forced their way through now and it is just a matter of making sure that the nourishment that has lain dormant in the Earth for so long is used in the most effective way.

Being a fixed earth sign, Taurus doesn't like change much because they put so much effort into gaining a position within the status quo. They are the person who will take Aries ideas and make something out of them. They have the patience and the stamina to do so. Taurus also has the vision surprisingly enough. Taurus just needs the idea and the enthusiasm, someone convincing them that it is all going to be worth the effort and they

Circle

will see exactly how it all can be achieved and how beautiful it will all be.

For someone with such a stick-in-the-mud reputation (April showers are during the Sun's journey through Taurus) this Venus ruled sign is very at home with beauty. Taurus likes to have the senses stimulated, the wind in the hair, the smell of new mown grass, running through dewy meadows, the taste of a large Mississippi Mud Pie! In the same way that Nature is now able to take the time to appreciate, after all, that rising sap.

The inclusion of Beltane in Taurus expresses the sign's connection with fertility and rampant sex.

Gemini

Element:- Air.
Quality:- Mutable.
Ruler:- Mercury
Keyword:- Versatility.

GEMINI marks the change over from one season to the next. There is a meeting of the time of year, I have seen this time described as 'The Great Gateway to Summer. The principle of GEMINI is I COMMUNICATE - the exchange of information, both within nature and within the personality. Pairing off has taken place mating has begun so, in nature, fauna are communicating their readiness to mate and the May flowers are attracting their pollinators.

As with the two previous signs, the Mutability of the sign means that it is Air in its purest form. The freedom and changeability of Air, the fact that it is the element of communication is encompassed within the sign of Gemini the twins. Like all Mutable signs, this time indicates the change over of the seasons - no longer really spring but not quite summer yet. Thus, the indication of the duality of the Gemini sign.

There is courtship among the smaller animals and birds and the commitment to pairing off - for this year at least. We see the earliest butterflies and Gemini has a reputation for being a 'social butterfly'. Beautiful, light, attractive but almost unaware of our presence except if you try to catch them and tie them down. I don't think there is anything sadder than seeing butterflies pinned to a board and, in the same way, there is nothing sadder than a Gemini person being tied to one thing, job or person.

It isn't that they are unfaithful in the real sense of the word; they are not that emotionally intense. They need to experience lots of things and, like a butterfly, touch lots of bases in order to feel that they exist. Communication is their life-blood and Goddess help anyone who stops them com-

municating with anyone that they want to. They will punish in the only way they feel is effective and would affect them. They will 'send the villain to Coventry'.

I always see Gemini as a breath of fresh air but, like the summer breezes, they don't stay around for awfully long so you'd better make the most of them while they are there.

Next time I will deal with the element of Water and the Signs Cancer, Leo and Virgo

By
Beith-ann

Out Of The Shadows

It seems that rumours of a far right take-over of Paganism have been greatly exaggerated. It is not happening and for some very good reasons.

Fascism, according to Mussolini, who ought to have known, is a right wing collectivist ideology opposed to socialism, democracy and individualism. Under this ideology people have no value except as part of the "State". Fascism is a reaction to a paranoid view that society is in decline and that outsiders are humiliating its people.

Paganism

The Encarta encyclopaedia says that fascism has idealistic goals of seeking to improve a country by heightening a sense of national or ethnic identity, but that it rejects the idea of freedom and individual rights. The rise of fascism always results in the centralisation of control under a dictator, close state-control of society and the economy and violent suppression of dissent. The persecution that seems to be an integral part of fascism has resulted in millions of deaths and fascism is associated with right-wing fanaticism, racism, totalitarianism and violence.

So - does any of that sound like it fits into Paganism? No! Thought not! Pagans are renowned for being individualistic to extremes, to be anti-authority and hence difficult to organise. Pagans, from my close observations of over 30+ years, are a peaceful lot, though occasionally given to bitchy comments about each other. It would seem then that Pagans are going to be a pretty lousy prospect for conversion to some right wing cause - and yet people do occasionally try...

Fascism doesn't fit with most Pagans, but perhaps some are more susceptible to its influences than others. Any spiritual or religious beliefs system that holds equality as a principle and welcomes anyone to join isn't likely to fall prey to fascist tendencies. If you feel that your beliefs spring from the land where you live you are equally unlikely to be affected. However, if you have a set of beliefs that you think come from a particular people then beware, because they could be twisted to become racist.

This is perhaps why it is the Northern tradition and Heathenry that have had, and still have, some problems with white supremacist groups. Even in the Northern tradition the few attempts by the extreme right wing to infiltrate have generally been unsuccessful. In the UK, Odinshof and the Ring of Troth are well-respected large Odinist organisations that are definitely not fascist. However, there are also such tiny groups as Woden's Folk that are clearly at the extreme end of the right wing. Their web site is full of classic indicators of fascist ideology. They recently gate-crashed the protest about the stunt at the Long Man of Wilmington which is why you may know the name.

There are also some rarer attempts to subvert Celtic Reconstructionist Paganism and/or Druidry using race-based arguments. A recent attempt to claim the discovery and translation of a lost Irish text, Lebor Feasa Runda, was quickly spotted as a fraud and the person behind it was linked back to a well known neo-nazi web site. The story about the book did start with its supposedly being brought to Britain by Rudolph Hesse! However, Pagans with an interest in Celtic ways respect

the value of individuals and accept that proof of Celtic ancestry, whatever that may be, isn't an essential qualification for following this path.

Many people are now also well aware that all humans originated in Africa and that the people who now live in the UK are mostly the people who have always lived here. Genetic research has shown that the Celts didn't invade - the locals just adopted Celtic ways of doing things. Even the Anglo-Saxons didn't invade in large enough numbers to have much impact on the genetic basis of the population. Racist arguments become obvious as nonsense as soon as a bit of common-sense and awareness of genetics is applied.

Traditional witchcraft also has a small potential for some infiltration because of the value some place on "witch blood". However, it's quite clear that this isn't necessarily the same thing as a genetic bloodline, so the risk of infiltration by racists is small.

Fascism

To me the biggest problem with

Paganism is the same old one that has always been around. People do insist on trying to claim that they are something special because their branch of Paganism is older than anyone else's. I've checked out a few of these claims and haven't yet found any that stand up. Sometimes these attempts are so clumsy they are very funny. There is for example the case of the bright chappy who claimed to have found the most important document in the history of trad witchcraft which showed it really did date back to at the 16th century - except that it was a word for word copy of "Magician: The Lost Journals of the Magus Geoffrey Carlyle", co-authored by fantasy authors Robert Holdstock and Malcolm Edwards and published by Paper Tiger in 1982.

And that I think is a good place to end. Carry on being cantankerously individualistic, remember not to get taken in by arguments that there is some pure race destined to rule despite being oppressed. Don't believe those claims that someone is miraculously the only one who has the original old time religion. If something sounds too good to be true it probably is and any claims to have the undiluted true version of Paganism, especially if only the chosen can apply, should be treated with derision. Laugh at the silly sods - it's all they deserve.

By Andy Norfolk

Walk Between Worlds

**G
A
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A**

Gaia, Gaea or Ge was the ancient Greek earth goddess and mother of the Titans.

I have just heard on the news that our Government has decided to give the go ahead for a new generation (pun intended) of nuclear power stations. I feel that this is a mistake. OK - I'm probably biased; I've belonged to Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth for many years and been involved in environmental campaigns since the late 1960s.

OR

In January 1972 the Ecologist magazine was full of "A Blueprint for Survival"; a primer for a post industrial society. It said "The principal defect of the industrial way of life with its ethos of

GAEA?

expansion is that it is not sustainable. Its termination within the lifetime of someone born today is inevitable, unless it continues to be sustained for a while longer by an entrenched minority at the cost of imposing great suffering on the rest of mankind. We can be certain, however, that sooner or later it will end (only the precise time and circumstances are in doubt) and that it will do so in one of two ways: either against our will, in a succession of famines, epidemics, social crises and wars; or because we want it to - because we wish to create a society which will not impose hardship and cruelty upon our children - in a succession of thoughtful, humane and measured changes." At this time there was talk of spaceship earth and the stupidity with which we, its passengers, were unplugging essential life-support systems, wrecking our chances of survival.

Regrettably we seem to be on the brink of the first outcome with climate change bringing about even more disasters than would otherwise have occurred and wars over oil, water and other resources becoming more likely in the future.

Where does nuclear power fit into this? Well recently James Lovelock, a scientist who proposed the Gaia theory in the 1960s, has said that he thinks nuclear power may be necessary to help us reduce carbon emissions and control climate change.

Gaia, according to Lovelock, was a complex self-sustaining entity made up of the Earth's biosphere, atmosphere, oceans and soil. Initially he said not only that living things were modifying the conditions on Earth to make it more hospitable. He went further and said that "the quest for Gaia is an attempt to find the largest living creature on Earth." Since those early days he's back-pedalled hard and now no longer speaks in this way.

In the 1970s in California Tim Zell was living and writing about Paganism. He wrote "Theogenesis" about the birth of the

Goddess. In this he began to develop ideas about the interconnectedness of all life as an essential part of Paganism. From here he suggested that we are all part of the Goddess Gaea, the living entity that is the entire biosphere. That should sound familiar.

The point is of course that, while Lovelock originally did conceive of the planet as acting like a living self-sustaining being, Tim Zell (now Oberon Zell-Ravenheart) put forward a theory that this self-sustaining being of which we are all part is the primeval earth goddess.

Perhaps the more technological attitude taken by Lovelock explains his willingness to change his mind about nuclear power and declare that it is now useful despite all the drawbacks; it is expensive, dirty and potentially dangerous! This seems like a step back to the idea of Spaceship Earth - perhaps we do have the technology to fix it - perhaps though we are only just beginning to understand the difference between the air conditioning system and the waste disposal unit? The planet will be treated with a great deal more respect by people like us, who see it as sacred and as a Goddess, than by those for whom it is merely a large machine capable of being altered to suit human convenience.

By Andy Norfolk



The Rollright Stones

The Rollrights are one of my very favourite ancient monuments and I have, in the past and hopefully will in the future, had the privilege of being a volunteer warden there. When I started this article I couldn't decide what to write because there is so much I would like to say about this magical place, so, I thought, start at the beginning and see where it takes me

The Rollrights are a complex of ancient monuments situated on the Warwickshire/Oxfordshire border near a village called Long Compton on a limestone ridge just north of Chipping Norton. It is said to be the third most important stone circle in England.

The main monuments are the Stone Circle, an outlying Standing Stone and a burial chamber of a Neolithic long barrow. The age of the complex spans some 1500 - 2000 years with the burial chamber being dated at 3000 years BCE and

Pagan Postcards

the standing stone dated at around 1500 BCE. There are other places of interest in the complex including an Anglo Saxon cemetery and evidence of a Neolithic Village on the land between the Stones and Long Compton. There was even a decommissioned cold war bunker in the King Stone field and it is hoped that, in the future, it will be reopened.

The Whispering Knights

The Knights are a small group of five upright stones that were the burial chamber some 400 yards away from the actual Stone Circle. They got their name because of the conspiratorial way in which they lean inwards towards each other as if they are plotting against their king. In the past, getting to the monument was a bit of an adventure because one had to walk along the adjacent road, which can be very busy, for about 150 yards, and then along the edge of the field. Nowadays, since the improve-

ments, a path has been laid on the inside of the hedgerow, suitable for wheelchairs but in keeping with the surroundings, so it is easy to wander along to see them. This is the oldest of the monuments which is thought to have been constructed over 5000 years ago.

The Kings Men

Really the Rollright Stone Website says it best
<http://www.rollrightstones.co.uk/history3.shtml>

The King's Men form a perfect circle 104 feet (38 Druid's Cubits or megalithic yards) across and stand on a prehistoric trackway at the edge of a ridge. The hill falls steeply away to the north towards the village of Long Compton which, in days gone by (and maybe even today), was a stronghold of witches.

At present there are 77 stones of heavily weathered local oolitic limestone, which were poetically "described by William Stukeley as being "corroded like worm eaten wood, by the harsh Jaws of Time", which made "a very noble, rustic, sight and strike an odd terror upon the spectators and admiration at the design of 'em".

Aubrey Burl has, in a more down to earth way, called the Rollrights "seventy-seven stones, stumps and lumps of leprous limestone". (1) This number seems to have altered considerably over the years - drawings from the tail-end of the 19th century, just before the Stones were scheduled under the 1882 Ancient Monuments Protection Act along with Stonehenge and Avebury, show about 25 stones in the Circle. "In the year 1882 the proprietor of Little Rollright replaced all the fallen stones in their original foundations." (2)

The Rollright Stone Circle is the southerly cousin of the Cumbrian circles such as Swinside and Long Meg and her Daughters in the English Lake District. Family traits

include similar size, shape, close-set stones (it is believed that there were originally some 105 stones standing shoulder to shoulder), astronomically-aligned entrance and a pair of outlying portals where the gates were hung to stop the sheep from straying into the road.

Bibliography 1. Aubrey Burl "The Stone Circles of the British Isles" 1976 2. Anon. 1884

The Stone Circle is said to be dated from about 2000 - 2500 years BCE and, along with the idea of it being an enclosure of some sort, there is also a theory that they marked out a place of witness as opposed to a place of worship. Rather like a parish centre where petitions could be heard, marriages held and trading of all sorts went on. It is said that there have been axe heads found that were made of stone from the South of England and not from the area of the Rollrights. The circle was thought to be part of a trading route that that included other Cumbrian circles, stretching down the spine of Britain.

There are all sorts of legends attached to the stone circle, one is that you cannot

count the number of stones in the circle. Try it. It's actually true because as one goes around it is difficult to make out exactly what one is counting, is it one stone or two, is it the top of a buried stone or something else?

The King Stone

This monolith stands 50 yards away from the Stone Circle itself, across the road in a different county (Warwickshire). Its purpose and age are unclear, although it is believed to be of middle Bronze Age origin. Some sources suggest that it might be an outlier to the Stone Circle. The strange shape (likened to a seal balancing a ball on its nose) of this standing stone has less to do with the weathering effects of Nature than with the destructive habit of 19th century drovers who chipped off small pieces to act as lucky charms and keep the Devil at bay. Thankfully this superstitious vandalism no longer goes on.' <http://www.rollrightstones.co.uk/history3.shtml>



Here is the main story from the Stones as to how they got their names - again courtesy of the Rollright Stones Website

Turned to Stone

Many Stone Circles and standing stones in the British Isles are said to be the stony images of impious revellers petrified by the hand of either God or the Devil for wickedly dancing and fiddling (or picking turnips) on the Sabbath. These legends may have originated at a time when Christianity was struggling to win over (or frighten) the hearts and minds of the largely pagan populace, or they could date from the righteous maelstrom created by the Puritans.

The Rollright stone story is different and was first referred to in print by Camden in 1586, since when the tale has become considerably more elaborate.

A King with ambitions to conquer all of England had got as far as the Rollrights when up popped a witch. According to

some accounts she was Mother Shipton of Shipton-under-Wychwood (c.1488-1551). She challenged the King with these words -

"Seven long strides shalt thou take And if Long Compton thou canst see, King of England thou shalt be."

Off went the King, shouting -

"Stick, stock, stone As King of England I shall be known."

On his seventh stride the ground rose up before him in a long mound, sometimes known as the Arch-Druid's barrow. The witch laughed and declared -

"As Long Compton thou canst not see King of England thou shalt not be. Rise up stick and stand still stone For King of England thou shalt be none; Thou and thy men hoar stones shall be And I myself an eldern tree."

And so it was that the King became the

King Stone, his men the King's Men Stone Circle and his treacherous and conniving knights the Whispering Knights, although some say that the knights were actually at prayer.

Tradition has it that one day the spell will be broken. The King and his men will return to life and continue with their conquest of England. (Unless they meet another witch).

What the unfortunate King had done to incur the wrath of Mother Shipton is not known. Even less clear is why the witch should have turned herself into an elder tree - maybe she was keeping an eye on the victims of her magic. The witch-elder is said to be in a hedge between the King Stone and the Stone Circle and if cut when in blossom it will bleed. Once upon a time people would gather round the King Stone on Midsummer's Eve - when the elder was cut the King would move his head!

I have been to many Ancient sites, some smaller and more intimate, some far more magnificent, impressive, well known or in breathtaking countryside, but this is my favourite site. Working there as I have done, it has given me the chance to experience the space in all moods and temperaments and see how the atmosphere does change, sometimes for no apparent reason. The Stones can be vibrantly welcoming but if they don't want you there, for whatever reason, you just don't get there. A lady of my acquaintance was never very happy when she went to visit, only going along because her friends were

going to be there. She didn't really like the Rollrights and they didn't really like her, because no matter how hard she tried to get there, she was always at least an hour late. She could never find what is a very obvious and well signposted road first time. She always missed the turning and invariably ended up in the nearest pub asking for directions, no matter how many times she had been before.

It is a magical place at all times of the year, it loves company but can be surprisingly intimate at certain times of the day or year.

I would encourage anyone who hasn't been to make the trip there, not just at festivals or weekends, or at the height of the summer. When it's cold and dreary, when it is drizzling with rain, frosty or snowy, at twilight or dawn, when no one else is around these are times when the place has a magic all of its own.

Beith - ann

BELTANE 2007 CELEBRATION

There's something about Beltane that awakens the senses to all possibilities and infuses the soul with a natural optimism for the renewed life that surrounds us everywhere we turn. I love Beltane, and rituals at this time of the year are always special. In 2007 I attended a ritual by ORG, the Open Ritual Group run by Lancashire based Shared Earth, which I enjoyed immensely.

ORG holds a ritual at every sabbat and a great deal of effort is taken to make each one unique. The Beltane ritual of 2007 was no exception, held at the local beauty spot of Brock Bottom. Only a few miles from Preston close to the famous Bleasdale Circle, Brock Bottom is a wooded valley overshadowed by the rugged beauty of the Pennine hills. At Beltane this fertile oasis amidst the desolate moors reveals to the world its crowning glory as a sea of bluebells carpets the entire valley floor. In my opinion this made the journey worthwhile even before the ritual began. The beauty of this special place took my breath away as I drove into the small public car park.

Once everyone had arrived it was only a few minutes walk to the glade where the ritual was to be held. Here the trees formed a natural circle with a grass area in between with a solitary birch in the centre. A little gnarled, with twisted branches, the tree certainly had character and in its shadow we called for the Old Ones to be with us. As I gazed around at the trees that formed our circle, with the bluebell carpet covering the floor, it was clear to me that instead of calling the Lord and Lady into our temple we had the honour and privilege of being welcomed into theirs. This feeling touched me deeply, reminding me of what drew me to this wonderful path in the first place.

Unfortunately it's all too easy in this country of inclement weather and, it has to be said, laziness to meet indoors for every ritual but one thing this ritual showed me was that with a little imagination combined with a little effort something truly memorable can be achieved. This was a case in point, first we were given a yellow ribbon and one by one we walked around the tree tying them on asking for a gift for ourselves. Then we were each given a pink a gift for a friend and, thirdly, a green ribbon, a gift for the World. After a few minutes quiet contemplation, with the ribbons gently fluttering in the breeze, we retired to the riverbank for a picnic in the sunshine. It still surprises me from time to time that the simplest rituals can often have the deepest, longest lasting effect, reinforcing within my soul the pagan spirit.

As sun began to set, the glorious May afternoon turned into evening. We drummed and chanted as children swam in the river while some people just enjoyed the camaraderie. After all Beltane is about friendship, companionship and love and here I felt a true sense of community, the pagan community.

ORG holds rituals at each of the sabbats. They are free and open to anybody. You can get more information on ORG or Shared Earth on the website <http://www.shared-earth.org.uk/>

By Mark Lees

Inner Sanctum

The series for beginners!

A Book of Shadows, more commonly known as BOS, is a journal where you keep a record of your magical path or journey. It's a bit like a diary and if you want you can write in it every day, like you would a diary, but record your magical thoughts, feelings and actions.

There is a lot of controversy over whether you should buy an expensive, ornately made Book of Shadows, or whether you should just opt for a loose leaf notebook or ring binder, both of which can be decorated to look beautiful if that is what you like and at half the cost too!

There is even more controversy over whether you should keep a computerised Book of Shadows. As many people feel that your Book of Shadows should be handwritten and something you can physically hold in your hands and that through writing out the information in your Book of Shadows you are transferring magical energy.

Although in the end it's down to personal preference. We do after all, live in a technological world and if you prefer to store your Book of Shadows on your computer hard drive, or even online as a webpage, there is nothing to stop you. Although there is a certain joy that can be had from turning the pages of knowledge that you have written over the years.

I personally use both options. I store rituals and spells in my computerised Book of Shadows, simply because I find it easier to edit, especially if it's a long piece of work and I want to keep it clear and neat without mistakes being crossed out all over the place. I also don't just have the one Book of Shadows in physical form, but several that I use for recording various things. For example, I have one Book of Shadows that I record Visions and Dreams in. This Book of Shadows has dreams that I feel have some significance recorded in it, or drawings of things I have seen in my dreams or visions, such as a head dress, cloak of feathers or a piece of jewellery.

I have another Book of Shadows that I use for recording my animal totems in, with details of when they first appeared and any other information about them. This Book of Shadows also contains photos of my totems. I also have a Book of Shadows for recording any Tarot readings that I do and then I have a general Book of Shadows where I record useful information, such as any chants, affirmations, the moral code that I choose to live by, what different moon phases mean to me, short pieces about

each of the Sabbats, information about the Gods/Goddesses I work with and anything else I feel I want to keep a record of.

You could of course fit everything into one big Book of Shadows, but I find it easier to have separate ones so I can stay organised!

If you want to keep the contents of your Book of Shadows secret you can write it using a magical alphabet but, to be honest, unless you have the time to teach yourself the alphabet so you can write and read it without having to refer to notes and charts, it's easier to write it in your own language.

If you belong to a coven you may find that your coven has just one Book of Shadows and you may need to copy information from that into your own Book of Shadows, or you may all use just the one Book of Shadows with your High Priest or Priestess being responsible for it. You may store

additional information in your Book of Shadows about your coven, such as its laws or rules, a history of its tradition, information about your initiation, etc.

In some traditions your Book of Shadows may be passed down, in other traditions it is burned when you die. Whatever happens to your Book of Shadows after your death, whilst you are living your magical journey, your Book of Shadows should be treated with respect, whether it is stored on the computer or in paper form. It is after all a part of you and your recorded journey.

By Twilightgirl

BOOK OF SHADOWS



Nature's Pharmacy

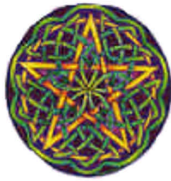


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About Nature's Pharmacy

Founded in 1996 by Master Herbalist Melanie Cardwell, Nature's Pharmacy is based in Clavering near Saffron Walden (UK) and has an extensive Online Herbal Pharmacy and Shop. With over 12 years experience in the Health Care, Natural Healing and Herbal Medicine market it is an established business offering Organic Herbal Remedies, Organic Super Foods, Natural Handmade Beauty Products, Hand Blended Incenses and made-to-order Magical Potions to customers throughout the UK. Natures Pharmacy is a member of The Association of Master Herbalists and the European Herbal Practitioners Alliance.

Primarily trained in Herbal Medicine, Melanie is also qualified in Iridology (Iris Analysis), Reiki Healing and Attunements, Thermo-Auricular Therapy (Hopi Ear Candles), Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), Crystal Therapy (Chakra Balancing) and Massage. Melanie's aim is to empower her clients to reclaim their own ability to heal themselves. Her unique Personal Lifestyle Analysis Program is recommended and she offers a complete individually tailored programme with guidance and natural remedies to bring about transformation and harmony on all levels.

Her belief in transformation can create vision, guidance and awareness, made possible by the realization of One's own potential. Her approach to healing the body is holistic and influenced by several cultures and traditions, as well as her knowledge and intuition. As a Reiki Master Teacher, additional to treatments, Melanie offers training and attunements to the Reiki Ray, for those interested. They can then use this energy to treat themselves and others.

A Druid and Solitary Witch, Melanie runs workshops on 'Celebrating the Sacred Earth Year' and 'Kitchen Pharmacy', both in the UK and abroad. She is currently writing a book and an Herbal Correspondence Course 'Herb Craft', which should be available later in 2008. She lives in the Essex countryside with her teenage daughter and their dog.

Melanie holds regular clinics at The Cave Shop Wellness Centre in Royston, The Garden of Eden at the Lord Butler Leisure Centre and at The Healing Clinic in Freedom Hall, both in Saffron Walden, and at Serenity Healing Clinic in Clavering. For further information visit the website at www.naturespharmacy.org.uk or email us direct at: sales@naturespharmacy.org.uk.



ENCHANTED EARTH



Stilly's Potting Shed

Hello. Come in and sit down - kettle's on. Bit nippy outside but we have plenty to do at this time of year. What, do you ask? Well let's see.

If you have a light soil now is the time to dig it over, incorporate some well rotted manure or compost to help with moisture retention and to also provide extra nutrients for the coming growing season. If you have a heavy soil you should have dug this in the autumn but digging now will not do any harm. Remember to remove all perennial weeds as these will come back with a vengeance if you don't. If you leave the smallest bit of them they will grow back as a new plant.

Hopefully you have started chitting your potatoes. This is putting the seed potatoes in a light cool place such as a windowsill, conservatory or greenhouse to sprout. Old egg trays are ideal for this but make sure you have the rose end uppermost (the end with the most eyes). This just gives them a kick-start before planting.

First Earlies need planting around Easter Weekend with Second Earlies and Main crop 2 and 4 weeks apart respectively. If in doubt check the planting instructions on the label, make sure you protect the new sprouts from frost when they appear and, when they are about 9" tall, earth them up.

Broad Beans and peas can also be planted now. Varieties such as Aquadulcia Claudia for broad beans and Feltham First for peas will give an early crop. Both these will take a few degrees of frost so should be OK. These can be sown in succession for a continuous crop although the varieties may need changing to prolong the cropping period.

Now is the time to prepare your bean trench ready for your runner beans. Dig a trench about 2 foot wide by about 1 foot deep and fill it with garden waste and compostable material (this will provide the beans with food and also help retain water) cover over with soil as you go and leave for a few weeks.

First sowings of Carrot, Beetroot, Radish and Lettuce can all be sown now but remember to cover if a frost threatens. Ideal varieties for sowing in troughs or large pots are Early Nantes for carrots, Detroit for Beetroot, Scarlet Globe for Radishes and any variety of lettuce (I prefer the cut and come again varieties though)

The following can be started in pots ready for planting out later: Tomatoes, Cucumbers, Peppers, Chillies, Courgettes and Brassicas. I like to start my Brassicas (Brussels, Cabbages, Caulis, etc) in pots and



there are 2 reasons for this; one it protects the seedlings from pigeons and slugs and two it also helps to prevent club root. I have also found that by sow-

ing in pots the germination rate seems to be a lot higher. If you can, use bio-degradable pots as the less you disturb the roots the better your plants will be.

Onion sets will also need planting now as will shallots and some garlic. Ensure you purchase a garlic that is suitable for spring planting as not all varieties are.

Sowing Sweet peas now is also a good idea so they are ready to plant out in April and, with regular picking, these will last throughout the summer. Calendulas can also be started off in pots and will be ready for planting in April.

You can force your rhubarb - this will give you a sweeter earlier crop and is always worth doing. You can use an old dustbin or any lightproof container that can be secured to the ground. Fill the container with some loose straw and anchor over the rhubarb crown. Once you have picked the forced stems do not pick from that crown for the rest of the year as it will damage the crown and future crops will be diminished.

Other jobs that need doing are making sure that you keep feeding the birds and also put up nesting material as this will help our feathered friends when it comes to making a home in your garden. Check your power tools are working and have been serviced. Also check the handles of any tools that have been left over winter for damage and rot. Ensure that the greenhouse is clean and there are no broken panes of glass or damaged structures.



Well that should keep you busy for a while. If you are passing, drop in, the kettle's always on and I'm never too busy for a chat.

Quick Recipe's for your feathered friends

Easy Bird Cake

Ingredients: peanuts, raisins, seeds and cheese, 85 g fat, left in a warm place for one hour before use

Instructions: Mix together the ingredients. To hang the mixture up, carefully make a hole in a yoghurt pot. Make a knot in a length of string and thread the other end through the hole. Pack the cake mixture into the pot and leave in the fridge to set for one hour before hanging outside.

Pastry Pine Cones

Ingredients: 140 g flour, 30 g margarine, 40 g lard, one tablespoon water, a handful of raisins, a large open pine cone

Instructions: Mix the flour, margarine, lard and raisins. Then add the water to make a dough. Press the mixture into cracks in the open pine cone, and hang outside.

Suet Log

Ingredients: a broken branch, peanuts, raisins, suet, bird cake, pastry, acorns, etc.

Instructions: Find a broken branch and drill in it holes of different sizes. Then hammer a hook into the top of the branch so that it can be hung up. Fill the holes with some or all of the ingredients

Stir the Cauldron

This is a gooey treat with absolutely no spiritual reason except that chocolate is good for the soul.

I have no measurements because I make this by 'feel'

Gooey Chocolate Nests

Ingredients

Mars Bars (as many as you like)
Milk or cream
Shredded Wheat
Sugar coated mini eggs

Paper cake cases
Decorative Chicks (if you are good at crafts, you could make them out of marzipan)

Method

Melt the Mars bars in a saucepan with a little milk or cream to loosen the mixture - it would be about a tablespoon per bar. Don't let it boil or get too hot, you just want it melting and the consistency that would thickly coat the back of a spoon

Crush up the Shredded wheat (full size ones are more effective than bite size, and you can use any number of different breakfast cereals for a different effect if you wish). You need enough to make a dry-ish mixture whilst keeping the finished article 'gooey' Mix it in with the melted Mars Bars until it is all coated and holding together.

Place spoonfuls of the mixture into paper cases, leaving a hollow in the middle and chill. Once the 'nests' are set, place 3 or so mini eggs in them and decorate with the chicks.

You can have a lovely time experimenting with this process, try different chocolate bars, adding nuts, seed or dried fruits to the cereal/chocolate mixture, even mini or chopped up marshmallows. You can also change the decoration to coincide with other seasonal festivals. It always used to be a winner when my children were small.

By Beith-ann

Hot Cross Buns

Traditional spiced, sticky glazed fruit buns with pastry crosses. Served as a classic Easter treat, the buns can also be enjoyed at any time of year.

Ingredients

For the ferment starter:

1 large egg, beaten
215ml/7½fl oz warm water
15g/½oz fresh yeast
1 tsp sugar
55g/2oz strong white flour

For the dough:

450g/1lb strong white flour
1 tsp salt
2 tsp ground mixed spice
85g/3oz butter cut into cubes
85g/3oz sugar
1 lemon, grated, zest only
170g/6oz mixed dried fruit
2 tbsp plain flour
oil, for greasing
1 tbsp golden syrup, gently heated, for glazing

Method

1. Prepare the ferment starter for the dough by combining the beaten egg with enough warm water to give approximately 290ml/½ pint of liquid. Whisk in the yeast, sugar and flour, cover and put in a warm place for 30 minutes.
2. Make the buns: sieve the flour, salt and spice into a large mixing bowl and rub in the butter. Make a well in the centre and put the sugar and lemon zest in the well. Pour on the ferment starter.
3. Gradually draw in the flour and mix vigorously, then knead to a smooth, elastic dough.
4. Carefully work in the mixed dried fruit. Shape the dough into a ball, put it in a warm, greased bowl, cover with a clean tea towel and leave to rise in a warm place for 1 hour.
5. Turn out the dough and knead to knock out any air bubbles and give an even texture. Shape it into a ball again, put back into the bowl, cover and put back to rise for another 30 minutes.
6. Turn out the dough again and divide into 12 even pieces. Shape them into buns and leave to rest for a few minutes on the work surface covered with the tea towel.
7. Place the buns on a lightly greased baking sheet. Slightly flatten each bun and then cut into quarters, cutting almost all the way through the dough so that, as each bun rises, it has a well-marked cross on it.
8. Grease a large polythene bag and place the tray with the buns in it and tie the end.

Put in a warm place and leave to rise for 40 minutes.

9. Meanwhile, heat the oven to 240C/475F/Gas 8. Make a paste for the crosses on the buns with the plain flour and 2 tbsp cold water. Mix until it is soft enough to pipe through a nozzle.
10. Remove the polythene bag and pipe a cross on each bun. Bake the buns for 8 -12 minutes or until risen and golden. Brush the buns with hot golden syrup as soon as they are ready. Cool on a wire rack.

Some say that the 'English' version has lemon icing crosses and it is the 'Scottish' version of the buns which had this paste or pastry cross, but that seems to be mainly from American sources.

Although seen as a Christian tradition, the Hot Cross Bun has very Pagan symbolism, the bun being seen as the year separated into the 4 seasons and used in many pre-Christian rituals. When Christianity arrived they tried to ban them, but to no avail. However, during Elizabethan times, a law was passed that Hot Cross Buns should only be sold and eaten during proper religious ceremonies such as Christmas, Easter or funerals. I was always annoyed when Sainsburys started selling Hot Cross Buns just after Christmas but it seems that the tradition is to eat them for all festivals and special occasions. Just the excuse I need

Sources: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/food>,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hot_cross_bun



By Candlelight

Stories gathered from all corners of the land

The Little Witch - A Story for Beginners

Once upon a time, maybe last week or so, a little witch went to a beautiful place. It could have been a beach by the ocean, a ledge by the mountains, a park in the city or any place where there was a decent view of some natural beauty.

The little witch found a bench and sat down, carefully avoiding the latest deposits of chewing gum and graffiti, and went into a light alpha state. There, she let go of the never-ending stresses of the day: family concerns, work issues, how to pay the bills, etc. She let go of all her spiritual worries and doubts. She gave over everything to the Goddess and the God and felt Their peace. After she tried to telepathically say hello to a nearby bird, who in reply pooped the undigested remains of a candy bar and flew away, the duly humbled little witch relaxed and took in the beautiful scenery in front of her and around her, letting things happen as they must.

As she thus relaxed, the sounds of a nearby conversation invaded her consciousness. It was an excited, energetic conversation and it went something like this:

"I'm gonna cast that spell!"

"Oh kewl!"

"That'll be fun!"

Annoyed but curious, the little witch perked up her ears and listened to more of the conversation. As she looked at them, she saw that they were three girls (though it could have just as easily been boys or other new or inexperienced people). The conversation continued.

"Like, I'm just so glad to do this stuff. I always *knew* I was a Witch!" the first girl said.

"You always *were* a Witch," the second girl said imperiously. "Didn't you read that part about reincarnation?"

"Well, that's what I meant," the first one replied.

"Hey guys," the third girl said, "you like said what I was thinking! It's our psychic bond. We're sisters in the Craft!"

Restraining the urge to regurgitate her last meal, the little witch forgot her manners and openly stared at the group as it continued its conversation.

"I'm gonna work on my *powers*" the third girl continued. "The *new moon* is coming up, and that's supposed to be a good time for working magic!"

"That's stupid!" the first girl said.

"It's not *stupid*" the second one said, helpfully. "It's just that, the *new moon* is for banishing stuff, like *bad energy*. You can't ask for powers then."

"Well," said the third girl, studiously ignoring that response, "I wanna get my powers soon, and I don't wanna wait a whole month!"

The first girl merely shrugged, and the second girl fiddled with her brand-new, ancient Tarot deck.

At this, the little witch didn't quite keep from chuckling, which the group heard.

"Hey, lady, what are you laughing at?" the first girl asked.

"Yeah, you'd better watch out; we've got *powers*" the third girl mischievously giggled.

The second girl looked up from her deck. Then, with a look that was half taunting and half knowing, she said, "We're Witches."

And the little witch simply replied, "You are? How nice. So am I."

The group was stunned. After all, the little witch struck them as ordinary, maybe even diminutive. Her looks were normal, as were her clothes and jewellery. All in all, she looked like a regular person, someone who could be described, contemptuously by some, as "one of the little people."

She did not seem at all to be powerful, beautiful or important. Still, she had said she was a Witch! Maybe she was in disguise, using a kind of glamour to keep others from seeing her power or her beauty. As the thought simultaneously crossed the girls' minds, they became excited. Then, their expressions changed, as if they had found a wonderful surprise. The girls showed expressions of joy and started plying the little witch with questions.

"So, you're like a *real* Witch?" the third girl asked.

"Yes," Little Witch replied.

"Have you been doing it long?" the second girl asked.

"Long enough," said Little Witch.

"Oh wow, so like maybe you could answer some questions," said the first girl. "We're, like, new to this. But, we just *know* we're witches, and we, like, totally believe in it."

"I'll do my best," said Little Witch with a smile.

The girls thought a moment. One of them asked, "So, can you fly?"

Little Witch laughed and said, "Only in an airplane, and that's when the flight hasn't been overbooked."

The girls were a little startled, but only for a moment. "Can you, like, move things with your mind? You know, like maybe when you're really angry at something?"

Little Witch momentarily thought back to her last grocery shopping expedition, when she had foolishly chosen the "express" lane and learned anew the virtue of patience. "No," Little Witch said, "I can only move things with my hands or with machines and sometimes with luck."

Not put off, the third girl asked with a nervous giggle, "Well, can you stop time?"

I wish, the Little Witch thought. "No, I can't

stop time, though certain hair products help slow it down a little..." the Little Witch added with a chuckle.

"But, you've got, like, powers, right?" the third girl continued.

Little Witch sighed and said, "The only *powers* I have are from developing my talents and skills. And I do that through hard work, determination, and patience."

"Aren't you even psychic?" the first girl asked.

Little Witch smiled to herself as she recalled the last time she totally missed something obvious. "I'm about as psychic as anyone else," said Little Witch. "I may have worked on it more than most folks. But, I don't have anything special. I get intuitions. Sometimes I can sense what others are feeling or that they're worried about something, but that could be just as much from reading body language and context than anything psychic."

"Sometimes I get a dream that comes true or a flash of what might be. And there are some deeper things I can, with effort, perceive. But, that's about it. If I were really psychic, I'd be rich from the lottery or the stock market!"

"*Can* you predict the lottery?" the first girl asked excitedly.

"No," replied Little Witch with annoyance.

"But you, like, practice magic, right?" asked the second girl. "You make things happen."

The Little Witch smiled and said, "Yes, I do practice magic. But when it works, which doesn't always happen, it's pretty unspectacular. It helps things work out. It doesn't make stuff materialize out of thin air. It's not like the special effects you see on TV or in the movies. It's another way for natural laws to operate; it's *not* a way to break or get around natural laws."

"Can you make someone like you?" impatiently asked the third girl.

The Little Witch frowned. The *love spell* issue, yet again. She replied, "I can't *make* anyone do anything. People have their own free will. Do as you truly will, so long as it doesn't harm anyone. That means respecting other people, and that means respecting their free will too. If you don't, you end up *hurting* other people as well as yourself. As for whether people like me, I try to simply be myself and, like I said, I try to respect other people and their free will. After that, people can like me or not, as they choose."

The girls were quiet for a moment. They didn't expect to meet a Witch, but they assumed a Witch had "powers" and that her magic would look like special effects and that a Witch could command or control others. What Little Witch had said didn't sound like what a Witch was and they said so.

"So, like, what good are you? You sound like anybody else." The first girl was becoming confused.

"Exactly," replied Little Witch. "I *am* just like anybody else. I have a job; I have a family, and I spend most of my day trying to take care of those things."

The second girl joined in: "But, can you change things? I mean, like, can you make things happen?"

The Little Witch smiled. "Girls, a Witch isn't someone who makes things happen, like making things appear out of thin air. A Witch is someone who helps things happen, naturally, in special ways."

The Little Witch paused and continued. "If you want to *know* how things physically happen in the world, in Nature, study science. The word "science" means knowledge, and it's the knowledge of Nature's physical laws and how Nature physically works. And if you want to *make things happen,* study technology: engineering, chemistry, physics, computers, that kind of stuff."

"Science and technology are about Nature's physical laws and the ways that people can use those to cause physical changes. In fact, science and its physical applications, technology, are the most consistently effective ways that human beings have devised to understand and cause physical changes."

"After all, the TV, the microwave oven, modern medicine and pretty much everything we use in daily life came through patient, dedicated study of Nature's physical laws (science) and trying to use that knowledge to make physical changes (technology). Those things *didn't* come from waving a magic wand; they came from science and technology."

Little Witch continued, "Just remember that people don't *change* Nature, and they can't *conquer* Nature either. People and the world around us *are* Nature, or, more accurately, parts of Nature. Remember that we are part of Nature, and therefore remember to take care of Nature, and then science and technology can be wonderful."

"Besides, there's good money to be made in science and technology, especially in computers, and there are not nearly enough women in those fields. So, by studying - really hard - science and math and technology, you could learn how to "make things happen" and make money too!"

The girls were really confused now. They expected to hear about magic and spells and instead they heard - from a Witch! - about science and technology and *stuff*! Before the girls could protest, Little Witch went on:

"Now, if you want to learn how to change the world by changing people let me give you a piece of advice. Learn how to change *yourself* first. That doesn't mean doing whatever the heck you feel like or not thinking about other people. Quite the opposite is true: we define ourselves most often by how we deal with the world and the people in it."

"The point is, you *can't* change someone else. We can influence others, but we can only ever truly change ourselves. But here's the mysterious part: We can change ourselves only by going outside of ourselves - through other people or through the world or inter-iorly through our deepest selves. Either way, we can discover the interconnection of all people and all reality."

"Some know this as "God"; many Witches call It "the Goddess and the God." Others have other Names for It, but perhaps the best name is simply "Love." That love, the love that connects and transforms all and that *is* All, is the only thing that can really "change the world."

The girls were silent and confused, *really* confused. But Little Witch continued:

"Aside from changing yourself, there are other things you can do. Lawyers help people work in compliance with the law, which is one of the most powerful ways the world's people give themselves order. Business is a way for people to create and collect and distribute wealth. Trades and skills allow people to transform the physical world into useful things, anything from farmers growing food to machinists making things to musicians making music!"

"All the worlds' work can be a way to change, for better or for worse, in big ways or in small ways, the world."

All the girls were impatient by now, especially the second girl. She asked, "What are you talking about? That isn't Witchcraft!"

And Little Witch replied, "Perhaps. But what I was talking about are transformations, and transformations *are* the stuff of Witchcraft."

"Look, just because there are magical and spiritual transformations doesn't mean we can ignore the physical transformations. A Witch is in tune with *all* transformations, though some perhaps more than others." (Here Little Witch thought, but did not say, that many Witches focus on spiritual and magical transformations but, like everyone else, Witches are occupied with the realities of physical transformations, which constitute most of daily life, too.) Little Witch continued, "The key is the harmony of transformations, all of them, in ways that are most beneficial for Nature. You have to know about all transformations, especially the physical ones, to live well."

One of the girls was annoyed and said, "You use big words, like 'transformations.' Why can't you just talk normally?"

And Little Witch smiled and said, "I use 'big words' to have a 'bigger mind.' Try it yourself."

The girls were silent for a moment by the quick exchange. Mostly, they were silent and confused by Little Witch's "normal" talk - like from their parents! - and nothing about spells and powers.

This did not suit the girls, not at all. The first girl asked, "So what makes you a Witch? I mean, I could hear that stuff you said anywhere, even from my parents!"

The third girl chimed in, "Yeah, what makes you a Witch if don't have powers?"

And the second girl, in a moment of real perception, simply asked, "So, what *is* a Witch?"

Little Witch paused, framing her answer. And here is what she said:

"A Witch is, first of all, a person like any other. We eat, we sleep, we poop (well, when the body cooperates), we breathe. We have families. We work to make a living. We live in houses or apartments or other places, not in fairy castles or in the clouds. We're real, regular people."

"But, a Witch is different from other people too. A Witch can work alone, a solitaire, or work with a group of Witches, a coven, but she is always "other."

"That's not just because she is always studying, either out of books or directly from Nature or through prayer and meditation. It's because she sees and is united to the world in a way that most others aren't."

"A Witch sees that everything is interconnected, that causes have effects everywhere. She sees the regular world and she "sees" (she is aware of) the unseen (invisible) parts of the world too. She also sees and knows that, on a certain level, everything is One. And she knows how all of this, taken together, is the source of great power."

"That great power expresses itself in everything and it acts in all the forms we see and more. But the power is itself just an expression of something bigger, something vaster, and something in everything and beyond everything and the source and ending of everything too. Some people call this "God" and others call It by other Names. ("For Truth is One and the sages call It by different Names," as one holy book, the Rig Veda, puts it.) But the Witch sees this Truth primarily through Nature."

"That includes people and animals and plants and herbs and rocks and things we can't see with our physical eyes too, like spirits and other "worlds." And the Witch works with Nature to help things and events in Nature to unfold.

"That's magic, and it's not Hollywood style special effects. It's real, but it usually works by making something more likely to happen than otherwise was the case. Witches know that we are, in a very intimate way, one with Nature. And, united with Nature and for the benefit of all Nature, we work with Nature."

Since the girls were listening to her, Little Witch kept going:

"You should also see that Witches are *not* Satanists, and we don't do things like sacrifice children or animals, and we don't try to do harm, like by manipulating people or cursing them. Those things are wrong. Also, we know that everything is interconnected; if we use the power of the interconnectedness of Nature to harm, it will only harm ourselves."

The girls were still quiet, so Little Witch figured - what the hey? - and continued.

"So, if you want to be liked or popular, be true to yourselves and be respectful of others and the popularity will come on its own."

"If you want to be special or mysterious, know that you already are. Then, spend some time discovering that, by mediation within and by good actions to others. You don't need bizarre clothes or secret codes; you just need to truly pursue love. And you can do that by being good to yourself and, especially, by being good to others for the sake of goodness itself, even when it is hard or when there is no apparent benefit."

"And, if you want love, don't look for a slave to your desires; don't try to control another. Instead, attract love by giving proper love and respect to yourself and to others. Like attracts like, and with a reasonable amount of activity and experience, you will attract the love of others who are likewise loving. In fact, you probably already are."

"If you want to control nature, know that you cannot. We are merely aspects of Nature, and we must comply with Nature's laws. However, we can learn Nature's laws and we can choose to use that knowledge to direct how Nature works. The most consistent way

of doing this physically is science and technology. Learning and applying these will produce physical results, including, probably, getting a good income; so, study math, science and computers and study hard!

"Magic is also a way of understanding and working with Nature's laws. Thus, it can be a complement for science and technology, and you can certainly practice both. But, when magic works it doesn't usually show up as special effects. Instead, it usually merely helps to make something more likely to happen, in a *natural* way. This works because of the power that is in all of Nature and its interconnectedness; it's *not* because of *powers*."

"A Witch is someone who understands and lives all of that and more. A Witch is someone who is religiously, mystically and magically united with everything, in everything and as everything, especially as Nature. Whether the Witch marks the changing seasons of Nature, meditates, or works magic, the Witch is ultimately doing these and more: the Witch works with the *all* of Nature in a very intimate and total way."

The Little Witch stopped.

The girls were silent as they took in all she had told them. They began to realize that Witchcraft is more than mysterious clothes or TV shows or movies or "powers".

The girls began to see too that Witchcraft is not a substitute for real life, like studying useful skills really hard to make a living or developing a likable personality and stable relationships. Instead, they got a glimpse that real Witchcraft is a religion and magic and something more... something much more, something connected to Nature in ways that we can see and in ways that we can scarcely comprehend.

Mostly, they saw, perhaps for the first time, that Witches are real, normal people who are "other" because of their union (on all levels) to what can be called Nature or "God" or "The Goddess and the God" or a hundred other Names. This was really different from what the girls had thought about Witchcraft and they would be thinking over what they had heard for a long, long time.

Finally, the second girl asked, 'OK, what do we do next if we want to become Witches, I mean *real* Witches?'

The Little Witch pursed her lips and replied,

"First, if you are minors, you must obey your parents or guardians about how they want to bring you up religiously. You don't have to believe their religion, but you do have to do what they say."

"Aw," one of the girls said, "my folks would kill me if they knew I was into this stuff. They would never let me study Witchcraft."

"If that's how your parents are," replied the Little Witch, "then while you are a minor, you will not study Witchcraft. It is a parent's right to raise their children in the religion of their choice, and it's a child's duty to obey their parents in this regard. "Honour your father and mother" isn't just a Jewish or Christian commandment."

"Next, develop into a healthy person. Don't do drugs, don't drink and drive, etc. Eat right, sleep right, do all that good stuff. Just as important, learn how to love: respect yourself, respect others, and try to do good for the sake of doing good and not just for what you

might get out of it."

"Third: Study! study, study, and study some more. Obviously, you have to hit the books and learn something that will let you support yourself when you are grown up; for example, science and technology (and computers)."

But, honestly judge your talents (and find out what they are by trying lots of things), and see how you can use those to make a living. Maybe your strengths lie in law, business, in a trade, in the arts, in the humanities, in service, etc. There are lots of opportunities, but none are available unless you work for them ... even if you cast a spell."

"Study Nature, too: the natural sciences, the human sciences (like history, anthropology, psychology, sociology, religion, the arts, etc.). Study Nature directly, too. Get outside and start to experience Nature. Learn about herbs and trees and the weather and the stars. Finally, learn how to learn and how to love learning, for as your knowledge grows so too can your wonder."

"If, after doing this (and when you are old enough), you still feel an attraction to the Craft, there are plenty of resources available. There are many excellent books, and there are many materials online. You may discover that the Craft is not for you; that's wonderful! Find the way that the Divine has created you to follow. And, if you decide that the Craft *is* for you, the Goddess and the God will direct your steps."

The girls just sat there.

The third girl, the one who wanted powers, was impatient and not at all entertained; she announced that she needed to get going and made her way home, ultimately to watch some new fantasy on the TV.

The first girl, the one who had "known" she a Witch, realized that she wasn't one. She didn't understand everything she had just heard, but she did understand at least two things: Little Witch had spoken truly and what she had previously thought about Witchcraft was totally wrong. She also wasn't too sure if she liked what she had heard: it didn't sound fun or exciting and, truth be told, it kind of scared her. So, she mumbled some thanks to Little Witch for her time and left.

The second girl, though, the one who had gone from knowing everything to understanding that she knew very little indeed, stayed behind. She didn't say much and Little Witch eyed her quizzically.

The second girl tried to say something about the weather, then how weird everything went and then apologized and started to sound really silly. She said all of a sudden, "You know everything, don't you!"

Little Witch honestly replied, "No. In fact, the more I learn the more I realise my ignorance." Little Witch smiled and understood the girl; in fact, Little Witch was remembering when she first was made conscious of what real Witchcraft might be.

The girl looked up at Little Witch - who now seemed very big and not at all "little" - and Little Witch answered her unspoken question:

"In time, perhaps, in time."

by Darlene Ripka-Cartwright

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Ancient Wisdoms

When most people think of animal totems their initial thoughts are that they are something to do with Native American Indians and Shamanism. However, animal totems (or animal spirit guides/power animals as they are also known) can be found in any belief system. You don't have to be a Native American Indian or a Shaman to have an animal totem or totems.

Our ancestors respected and worshipped nature and the animals. They understood and honoured the nature of animal spirits and showed this through the wearing of animal masks and the mimicking of animals around their ritual fires, as well as painting animals on the walls of their caves. Throughout the centuries if you look at any culture such as the Aztecs, Celts or Norse traditions, you will find

would be following you just in case of trouble but otherwise they wouldn't interfere. Sometimes the vision quest would involve walking for days or sitting inside a circle of stones (or medicine wheel) and tuning into the spirit world. During your vision quest you would wait for animal totems to appear, either in nature or through visions or dreams. If you feel that the only way to meet your animal totems is through undertaking a vision quest, I recommend the book *Vision Quest* by Denise Lynn, which has several variations and ideas for vision quests.

However, in modern times where it's not always safe to go on a vision quest

goodbye. Then slowly return from your meditation.

If your animal totem doesn't appear, don't worry too much, your totem didn't feel that it was the right time to appear to you. But keep your eyes open as your totem may present itself to you over the following days by repeatedly showing up in your environment, even when you switch on the television or open a book/magazine.

Remember to record all your thoughts and experiences in your Book of Shadows.

If you were unable to sense the presence of your animal totem before, you will find that the more you enter into meditation to meet with your animal totem, the easier it will become to sense the presence of your animal totem by your side during your conscious state. A great deal of comfort can be gained from knowing your animal totem is with you always.



The first animal we are going to honour in this issue is The Lizard.

THE LIZARD

Lizards love to bask in the sun and are therefore associated with solar energy. However, you'd be forgiven if you thought that the Lizard's love of soaking up the sun would mean that this is a lazy totem to have in your life. Whilst Lizard is dozing under the warmth of the sun, he is teaching you all about trance states and how to shift your consciousness. Lizard also helps to show you how to slow down if your life is running at a hectic pace. Lizard may appear asleep but he is well aware of what is going on around him as Lizards have acute hearing and sharp eyes. They also sense vibrations; even the subtlest movement can be picked up. Lizard reminds you to use and trust your intuition or psychic powers. Lizard is the master of divination. Lizards use their tail for balance but, should they be in danger and need to escape, they have the ability to lose their tail in order to make a quick get away. However, their tail does regenerate again. This reminds you that you are able to let go of things in life, to escape, especially if you are feeling trapped. Once you are feeling free you can go on to regenerate areas of your life and become balanced again.

by Twilightgirl

Animal Totems

symbols of animals they revered in their lives and spirituality.

It is possible to have several animal totems throughout your life. Some will come into your life for just a short period of time in order to guide, protect or teach you something. Other animal totems can last a lifetime. It is possible to have a number of totems at any one time.

Sometimes animal totems make their appearance in very obvious ways, for example it is believed that if you are attacked by an animal that the animal has marked you and it is now your totem. Other times you can undertake a journey, often called a Vision Quest, in which to meet your animal totems. Another way to find your animal totems is to look at which animals you have always been drawn to, or you will find yourself dreaming a lot about particular animal(s) or you will sense the presence of an animal(s) around you trying to communicate in some way. Our animal totems always choose us; we don't choose which animals we would like.

When you discover what your animal totems are it's a good idea to read all you can about them, discover how they live, how they relate to other animals, do they prefer to hunt in packs or are they solitary or domestic animals. It's a good idea to have photos, pictures or figurines of your animal totem close by, reminding you that you never walk alone.

The shamanic way to meet your animal totem is to go on a vision quest. A vision quest involves removing yourself from society for 3 to 4 days and finding some place where you won't be disturbed by people. Traditionally you went without food and water throughout this period. Usually a friend or tribe member

and if you haven't met your animal totem through sensing its presence or through finding yourself drawn to particular animals, you can meet your animal totem in other ways such as meditation, visualisation and ritual or through dreaming.

In order to meet your animal totems through meditation, settle yourself into a relaxed state by whatever means you normally do this. Go into your meditation with an open mind; don't expect a particular animal to appear as this will lead to disappointment. In your mind find yourself outside in nature, this can be anywhere you find the most peaceful, be it a field of wild flowers, an ocean, a mountain top or cave. It has to be somewhere you feel the most comfortable and relaxed. As you sit there in your peaceful surroundings, listening to the sounds around you, close your eyes and ask your animal totem to come forward and let itself be known to you. If you feel the need, explain why you feel ready to meet your animal totem. Then have patience. Use all your senses to feel your totem animals approach. Can you smell them, hear them... when you sense your animal totem is close to you, open your eyes and see who has come forward. Thank your animal totem for showing him/herself to you. You can then proceed to ask your animal totem what name he/she would like you to call it. A good way to find out what your animal totem is bringing to your life is to ask what lessons you have to learn from them. Don't ever make demands of your animal totem. You can continue having a conversation with your animal totem. Once you are ready to leave, thank your animal totem for the gifts and protection that they are bringing into your life. You can even hug your animal totem at this point as you say

Reviews

By Julia Oakmoon

Kitty in the Midnight Hour by Carrie Vaughan

(ISBN 0-446-61641-9)

Published by Warner Books

Carrie Vaughan is an American fantasy writer who lives in Colorado. She has her own website at <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/CLVaughn/home.htm>. She has written many short stories for various fantasy magazines and this is the first of four Kitty novels so far

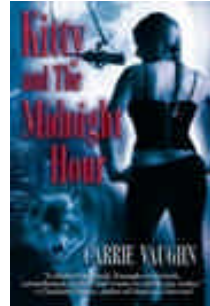
This is the sort of book that you pick up for that long rail/air journey or night shift. It looks like a typical trashy novel with a picture of an attractive young female on the cover. Nothing wrong with that, I do the occasional long journey and night shifts are not the time for anything that's going to make your brain ache or send you to sleep. I like trash

The story is Kitty's. She's a werewolf and host of a late night radio phone-in show which attracts its fair share of wacky callers, some of whom are actually fellow werewolves, vampires and other assorted creatures of the night

As well as her job as a DJ Kitty is a member of a pack of werewolves. I liked the description of her pack. The leader and his mate, her best friend, the bad werewolf who was responsible for her own transformation from ordinary girl to werewolf with super strength and healing powers. She is currently the youngest werewolf in the pack and the bottom of the pecking order but she revels in the security of her pack and the feeling of being protected, of waking up after a long night of werewolfing in a big pile of warm bodies. I often wake up surrounded by spaniels - in my bed, not in the woods - and it's very nice and safe so I could identify with this

The plot unravels with Kitty's problems within the pack. The local vampires with whom the werewolves have a live and let live agreement, as long as no-one upsets the applectart. We have a werewolf hunter with whom she develops an uneasy friendship. A sceptical but fairly open minded police officer, and, of course, a rogue werewolf. Eventually, of course, Kitty is outed and has to come clean about her monthly, nocturnal activities. The vampires are not happy that she's drawing attention to the fact that werewolves and vampires actually exist and the rivalries within her pack culminate in death and her exclusion from the group resulting in a profound loneliness which we can all probably relate to

In all I enjoyed this book much more than I expected to and I looked forward to reading the next one.



Kitty Goes to Washington by Carrie Vaughan

(ISBN 0-446-61642-7)

Published by Warner Books

In this book Kitty is a lonely werewolf on the road having been excluded from her pack and her home town. She travels from city to city broadcasting her late night phone-in radio show from a different place every week until she gets a call from her lawyer telling her that she's been summoned to Washington to give evidence at a Senate hearing on behalf of supernatural folk

Once in Washington she's forced under the wing of the local vampire mistress and makes a new set of friends and enemies including a were-jaguar (I suppose there's no law to say that if you can have werewolves you can't have other were-animals), a bible thumping senator who wants to expose her as a monster, a nefarious reporter and a particularly nasty fairy

Although her voice is well known Kitty has been careful to keep her face out of the public eye, but everything changes in Washington where she is revealed in the worst possible way - transforming on TV

I enjoyed this book as much as the last one. It's funny and sexy and a must for those times when you just want to read without having to think too hard but just for the joy of seeing the words on the page and knowing that you're in for a bit of a romp

