

# The Witchtower

Pagan Network Magazine

Ostara/Beltane 2009



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Ostara/Beltane 09

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## Editorial

Isn't it lovely to see spring again and to wake up in a morning when it's actually light enough to see what you are doing when getting dressed! I can't tell you the number of times I go off to work in mis-matched outfits during the winter months because I can't see the true colour of the outfit in the semi-darkness, I mean navy blue looks like black... doesn't it?!

The winter this year seems to have lasted so long. But now that spring is with us why not take a walk in the countryside and pick some dandelions to try out our dandelion recipes in the Enchanted Earth section, or our dock puddings in Stir the Cauldron.

Spring is also a good time to get out there and campaign. You can read all about pagan campaigns in the Walk Between World Section.

If campaigning isn't your thing then take a trip out to see all the wonderful pictish stones in Pitlochry. Beith-ann will tell you more about them in Pagan Postcards.

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*

Wicca is primarily a religion. It is the worship of the Old Gods and the attunement with nature through the eight festivals of the Wheel of the year. But what of the practical side of the Craft, the working of Sacred Magic? To put things in perspective, magic is very much a secondary function of the Craft. Any Coven worth its salt should put the worship of the Gods and spiritual development of the Coven members first. Nevertheless there are working evenings of the Coven or Esbats to give them their correct Craft name. These usually occur on or before the full moon of each month although special working meetings may be convened at any time in an emergency.

There are many different types of Magical working ranging from long and highly ritualised Golden Dawn style invocations of God forms to simple candle magic workings, all are valid and may work equally well as the complex ritual.

The point to keep in mind is that magic is a natural phenomenon not a supernatural phenomenon and as such it conforms to natural laws and therefore logically it has its natural limitations. Magic is not a miraculous panacea for every difficulty that life throws at you, despite what some books on the subject tell us. How on earth are we supposed to learn the lessons and gain experience of life if we "run to mummy" and reach for the spell book every time we have a problem to negotiate? This is a mistake that many operators make.

The spell is best likely to succeed when you have a realistic chance of achieving it by your own efforts to begin with. Let us remember that magic is an ally - it is not our servant. Anyone attempting to use magic as their slave is working to the Left Hand Path and will end up in deep trouble. For example, if you are caught red handed throwing a brick through a jeweller's window, you are going to prison, it is as simple as that. True, you could do a working for the judge to be lenient with you, but that would be all you could do. No amount of rituals could keep you out of court. These days do-it-yourself books of spells are easily available and although there are a few good ones, many contain much nonsense - the commonest mistake that they print is that belief is all you need to perform a successful spell.

Belief is certainly vital, after all there would be little point in attempting the spell if you had no faith in it. But it is a special kind of belief that matters, and much more important is personal effort on the part of the operator. I can believe that I can jump off a building and fly. It doesn't believe matter how strongly I believe it, as soon as I jump off the building I am sure to hit the pavement! Consider this equation:

POSITIVE THOUGHTS + POSITIVE ACTIONS + POSITIVE VISUALISATIONS = POSITIVE RESULTS

The problem with performing spells from a book is that they are somebody else's spells and although effective for the author they may not work so well for you. It is far better to compose your own spell or ritual especially considering what we have said earlier about making a personal effort. Just as a magical tool

## Spell Working

will have more power if it is hand crafted by the Magician, so a self composed spell is sure to be more effective for the same magical reasons.

You must also be very precise in the working of your spells. You must be clear beyond doubt as to what you are trying to accomplish. A London Wiccan I know petitioned for £500. He stepped out into the street and found a £500 monopoly note. Yet he got what he asked for! The lesson here is, for example you want a new car, visualise yourself in it and driving it. Work for the car direct, not for the money with which to purchase it. This brings us to another important point - visualisation. This, like belief and personal effort is essential to the successful magical working. Mental discipline is therefore very important. When I first joined the Craft, part of my early training in the First Degree involved a gruelling programme of some 60 exercises involving visualisation and concentration, and working with the four elements. Although tough, and not everyone can hack it, I have never regretted working through it and to this day I always pass them onto anyone that I teach the Craft to. The exercises provide an excellent primer to serious ritual work and I believe that no Wiccan however experienced could fail to benefit from the course. Mental discipline then, is of paramount importance.

The would-be spell worker should define their goals within a special framework of ethics. Traditionally Wicca teaches that whatever magical forces you transmit through your rituals will return threefold. Most serious Covens will not attempt psychic attack for this reason. The consequences for even attempting this kind of working can be dire indeed.

Similarly money and love spells are a dubious area. Rituals to win the pools or lottery are quite wrong in my view. The Wiccan Rede is "Eight words the Wiccan rede fulfil - an' it harm none do what you will". If you perform a spell to win the lottery you are basically working to give yourself an unfair advantage over everyone else who has bought a ticket. You are not physically harming them, but you are certainly harming them in another way. Such a working is therefore against Wiccan law.

Love spells are another grey area. I personally prefer to leave them alone although I acknowledge that they can be justified in some circumstances. Casting spells to win the love of the attractive girl in the office are a blatant attempt to interfere with the free will of another especially if the target is in a relationship that you are trying to break up. Such a spell is pure Left Hand Path and would in any case almost certainly fail.

So can money and love spells be justified at all? In some cases I would say yes. For instance, if a brother and sister were starving or the bailiffs were at their door, then I can't see that a working to improve their financial

situation by fair effort would be out of order.

Clearly a degree of discretion is called for when assessing rituals for financial gain. I feel that as long as one sticks to the maxim "need not greed" you will not go far wrong. As for love spells, I have no problems with a single person performing a spell to attract a new partner without naming a specific individual. Similarly if a Coven knew of two people who were attracted to one another but both were painfully shy, I think that few people would say the group were wrong to work a spell to bring them together.

On the subject of Covens, working spells with a group and as a solitary both have their pros and cons. Working with a group it is easier to raise the power and more of it, but the goal worked for is more or less at the discretion of the High Priestess. Furthermore only one member of the group needs to be a little tired or depressed or lose concentration for the whole working to be short circuited. Once again we can see the need for first class concentration and visualisation skills.

Working alone, it is harder to raise the power, but the lone worker is "the boss" as it were, and is in complete control of the ritual. He/she can work for whatever he/she wants; one is not bound by the rules and wishes of a particular Coven and he/she can work whenever is convenient for them, not specifically designated Coven nights. In twenty-six years as a Wiccan initiate, I have only been a Coven member for about five of those years. Personally I have a marked tendency to prefer working alone.

Just how do we know when a ritual has succeeded? This is a difficult question to answer. There is a sort of feeling, a gut feeling or flash of intuition which may tell you that petition has been answered, or some set of circumstances may bring it about that which are so remote or unlikely to have happened without unseen aid. This is the true religious miracle. Similarly when we perform a ritual that works only partially or not at all we often receive signs why it is inappropriate for the wish to be granted at that time. But before writing a ritual off as a failure, always remember that some spells may require several repetitions before any results are observed. In magic, persistence pays.

Magic can be found in virtually every religion there is. Christians pray to God or to Jesus for favours, Roman Catholics go one step further by petitioning saints for aid. Nichires Shoshu Buddhists chant a special formula to bring about changes on a material plane...etc. The Roman Catholic Mass seeks to unite the worshipper with God through the sacrament of communion. Is not union with God the true Great Work, the ultimate magic ritual? The working of magic is a true sacred and special gift/privilege of the Gods. Clearly care must be taken not to abuse it and to use the art ethically, and with respect. Just as the Gods have given us the gift of spell working, they can just as easily revoke it and take it away. They also have a knack of teaching those who abuse the Craft a sharp and unpleasant lesson if need be!

By Peter Nash

# Ancient

I like to find astrological allusions in every area of life. For instance, while I was teaching astrology, I asked my students to find all the signs in the characters of their favourite soap opera - not from the birthdays, but from the way the characters behaved. One of my favourite looks at the planets is by linking them into Shakespeare's Seven Ages of Man (Another is listening to Gustav Holst's 'Planet Suite' - fabulously Astrological).

OK - since Shakespeare's time there have been some extra planets discovered and so there are more than seven but hopefully it will be explained as I go through this series of articles.

Whilst studying A level Psychology I was taken with Piaget's theory of cognitive development in children and, by the process of strange and scary connections my brain tends to make in the early hours of the morning after binge drinking, I linked it with Shakespeare and the first seven planets in the solar system. This is only a very brief overview and starting point of those scary connections - make of it what you will.

So to begin.....

All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances,  
And one man in his time plays many parts  
(As You Like It - Act II, Scene VII)

## Sun

Not strictly a planet, the Sun is a star, our star, the one our Earth orbits around. The Sun is such a powerful influence in our lives it is therefore one of the most difficult features of the chart to define simply because it is all encompassing, both in the sky and in the astrological chart.

The Sun is where we begin in the chart interpretation to gauge the essence of a person, what motivates them. Liz Green in her excellent but unfortunately titled book 'Astrology for Lovers' says words to the effect that we are all striving to become the best expression of our Sun sign that we possibly can. It is our life's work and it's only when we are blocked from becoming that, we express some of the worse aspect of our Sun sign. I tend to agree with her here. There isn't a Shakespearian age linked with the Sun, the Sun goes through our life like all the ages do.

# Circle

## Moon

At first the infant,  
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms

The Moon represents our emotions and the sign it is in is how we express that. It also represents our Mother figure and how we perceive her. Any parent will know that the infant is a mass of emotions, it is all they can express and there is a belief within psychology that the infant initially sees itself as part of the mother. The Moon in the chart shows our habits and all the things that we instinctively feel and the emotions we developed at our mother's breast. Did we have enough to eat, were we ignored too long, did we feel safe? All these feelings and perceptions we experience in our infancy have a marked effect on how we develop as an emotional human being. Astrologers look at the natal Moon to gain insight in to how the client perceived early childhood and thus how they instinctively express emotions

## Mercury

And then the whining school-boy, with his  
satchel  
And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
Unwillingly to school.

Mercury represents our communication skills and mental capacity, especially in primary learning situations. It also represents the first stirrings of individuation, of seeing ourselves as a separate and independent entity. This is so well expressed by the schoolchild. Once we have begun to see ourselves as separate from our mother then we start to learn. Learning up until school was usually through play but by the time we get to the 'Mercury' stage it needs to be more structured. Also things that we learn are different. Up until this stage it was refining developmental skills, walking and talking, whereas during the Mercury stage we are learning reading, writing and arithmetic. As an Astrologer, I would consider from the chart how the client would communicate and learn and maybe if somewhere in early childhood, they may have had experiences that affected this, either positively or negatively.

As we can see by looking at just the first 3 planets, on a very simple and basic level, there is so much more to discover about Astrology

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# A Shakespearian look at the planets - in four parts

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# Out Of The Shadows

This article has been prompted by recent discussions on the Pagan Network forum in which someone from outside of the United Kingdom claimed various things about racial origins and what they might mean. Do you feel Celtic? Does that make you feel superior? Well it shouldn't! The Celts are not quite what, or who, you might think and nor are the British.

People weren't present in Britain during the upper Palaeolithic - about 14,000 bc. They came back as the ice retreated at the end of the last glaciation and we know that people were here from at least 12,000 years ago because of C14 dating of skeletal remains. The Mesolithic is the period of transition from the last glaciation to the development of farming and pottery in the Neolithic. In the Mesolithic, from about 8,500 bc to 4,000 bc people were hunter-gatherers, collecting wild food from the land around them. It has been estimated that there may have been no more than about 24,400 people in Britain at that time, based on how much land it needs to support contemporary hunter-gatherer societies. So where did these people come from?

Geneticists, such as Professor Goldstein, studying the influence of the Vikings on Britain looked at the Y chromosome which passed from father to son. While there are some traces of Norwegian DNA, what has become clear as a result of further work by people such as Capelli, Sykes and Oppenheimer, is that about 75% of the population of Britain have very similar genetic origins. The remaining 25% are a mix of all sorts. During the last ice age there were human populations surviving in various places; on the Iberian peninsula, around modern day Kosovo and Macedonia and also to the north-east of the Black Sea. These population groups each had different Y chromosome groups. These haplogroups are labelled R1b, I and R1a respectively. We now know that the original people in Britain mostly came from the Iberian R1b haplogroup and that about three-quarters of us are their direct descendants. The same people also of course colonised Ireland. Our closest modern European relatives, if you study male DNA, turn out to be the Basques.

Professor Sykes has studied mitochondrial DNA passed down the female line. He has identified 36 women from whom almost everyone on earth is directly descended. Seven of these are the "clan-mothers" from whom Europeans are descended. One of these, who was born 20,000 years ago near the present day border between France and Spain close to Perpignan, has been nicknamed Helena, which is the Greek for light. Her offspring have spread out to occupy territory from the Alps to Russia and Norway, including the British Isles. This is another link to our origins in a small part of Europe where people managed to survive the last ice age.

What this means is that there was no mass Celtic invasion of Britain or Ireland. Because Britain and Ireland became islands early on we remained relatively isolated and kept our R1b genes. The term Celt is widely applied to Iron Age people in Northern and Central Europe who are said to have Celtic art and associated Celtic languages. The word Celt probably comes from a Greek word applied to people living in the area north of the Greek colony that is now Marseilles. No classical writer

ever called the people of the British Isles Celts. The people who lived here in the Iron Age and Roman period didn't call themselves Celts. The idea that there were "Celtic" languages only dates back to about 1700 and has a lot to do with the work of Edward Lhuys. In the 19th century archaeologists began to write about "Celtic" cultures in Central Europe and defined a La Tène style of Celtic art which it was supposed could be traced forward to early Christian manuscripts of Britain and Ireland. However, there is no evidence that a single Celtic people ever existed, or spread from Central Europe to Britain and Ireland. No Celts here then!

## The Rat Race

What happened according to all the evidence is that Celtic culture arrived here by a process of cultural contact and not invasion. Some people go further and suggest that the "Celtic" languages also arrived here by a similar method, however some linguists say that actually they were here long before the British adopted the new-fangled Celtic ways of doing things. According to one study about 73% of the population of Scotland and 83% of the population of Wales derives from this haplogroup, though more recent studies have higher figures of up to 90%, and the rest have a diverse genetic background. You could say that these people are Celts, but even in England 64%, or 70%, of the population come from the same ancestors. Incidentally the Anglo-Saxons haven't contributed that much to the overall population and there may have only been a small number of elite Anglo-Saxons who took over the rule of existing settled populations of indigenous Brits. The archaeological evidence shows continuity of settlement and farming

activity, so the idea that there was a mass Anglo-Saxon invasion is another idea that may have to be chucked in the bin. The idea that the people in Britain are of separate races turns out to be a myth. This also means that we are the much the same as the people who built monuments in the Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages and that differences in what was built and how those people lived were a matter of culture and choice and not the result of invasion or genetic changes.

However the whole notion of a Celtic people is a social construct. It seems that people wanted to imagine a somewhat fey and mythical otherness. This idea was developed particularly by writers such as William Butler Yeats, Lady Gregory, Lady Charlotte Guest, James MacPherson etc.

Simon James in his book "The Atlantic Celts" discusses the whole idea of ethnicity. He points out that it is a cultural construct and that individual people may have no ethnic identity. He goes on to discuss ethnic identity and says ethnic identities

- are more about perceived difference from others, than about similarities
- may be multiple
- may be more important to some than to others
- are rarely homogeneous
- are not defined by apparent cultural similarity
- are rarely sharply bounded
- are fluid and only expressed at times depending on the situation.

# Out Of The Shadows

He also says that symbols of ethnicity aren't fixed, and that ethnic groups commonly seek legitimacy by claiming deep historic roots, which may be fiction. (Now have a look at what happens if you put "Pagan" in place of "ethnic" in that discussion of identity.)

Nowadays the term "Celtic" is used to describe people who live in places like Scotland, Ireland, Wales and Cornwall and the languages they use. Does it make any difference to the usefulness of that label that we now know that genetically there is very little difference between the majority of the people who live in the British Isles? Whatever we may think about our ethnic origins, if our great granny lived in Britain, the chances are good that we are fundamentally the same genetically as the first people who arrived here thousands of years ago. Should this affect Pagan views of whether their path is "Celtic", Anglo-Saxon, or traditional witchcraft? These paths are often not as distinct as their followers might choose to believe and that is because they are a part of a chosen ethnic identity and do not arise from a difference of bloodline. This new genetic information makes racism look even more stupid and irrelevant than it did before. Ultimately of course we are all Africans because that is where humans first evolved.

The other thing is that we are probably all more closely inter-related than most of us realise. Think about it this way. A gen-

eration is roughly 25 years. You have two parents. They each have two parents, so you have four grandparents. They each had two parents, so you have eight great grandparents. If you follow this back for each generation double the number of your ancestors. If you assume that people took up Celtic fashions in Britain in about 600 BCE, say 2600 years ago to be tidy, which gives you 104 generations. This means that the total number of ancestors that you have working back to that date is 2104.

That means that you must have had 20,282,409,603,651,670,423,947,251,286,016 ancestors! The small problem is that that is considerably more than all the people that have ever lived on earth - so we must all be related to each other many times over!

Next time someone asks if you work with the ancestors you could ask which one. If someone asks if you are a Celt, you might have to say no, but you can say that some of the 20,282,409,603,651,670,423,947,251,286,016 of your ancestors in 600 BCE were amongst the first people in Britain to adopt Celtic ways of doing things, even though the population of Britain was probably only about 3 million at the time.

Welcome to my family all of you!

By Andy Norfolk

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# Walk Between Worlds

Well we do, don't we? Campaign that is? I know I do and have done for many years. I have to confess that it isn't always with my Pagan colours nailed to the mast - no skull and crossed athames flying. Have I got this wrong? Well, no, I don't think so.

I took part in my first campaigns at the end off the 1960s . It seemed like a good idea at the time and one round about 1970 I think was about supermarkets over-packaging their goods and the threat this posed to the environment. Some things don't seem to have changed much. Except that they have. Now a lot of the things that wide-eyed idealists campaigned about 30 or 40 years ago are an accepted part of everyday concerns for most people. The problem is that though they may say they are concerned they may not actually do anything.

Sometimes it takes the work of just a few people to raise the profile of an issue and make it news, so that the public also take notice. That after all is what campaigning is all about. Of course it helps to get the message right. I was in London when one large march was happening and heard someone ask a bystander what it was about - the answer they got was "gay whales against toothpaste!" The message really hadn't got through despite the large numbers involved.

There are occasions when it is necessary to be seen to be campaigning Pagans - when the issues at stake are Pagan issues. I suppose a current case is the effort by some to make the reburial of pre-Christian remains an issue. This campaign would probably be less effective without those involved saying that they are Pagans and that this is a matter relevant to their Pagan beliefs.

There are however many other causes where Paganism isn't the main issue, though Pagan beliefs probably motivate many of the campaigners and protesters. I'm thinking here of campaigns such as King Arthur's current protest at Stonehenge. Although he refers to Stonehenge as a temple most of what he has to say is about how ordinary people to whom the site was left are not being given the access they deserve to a properly cared for monument. He's been picketing there for many months now, and throughout that very cold weather. In July 2008 Arthur gave English Heritage a Notice to Quit at a consultation meeting. His position is that they have wasted £37 million on consultations, but still seem unable or unwilling to do what they said they would; improve the roads, take down the fencing and return the stones to the landscape and give greater access to the public. Arthur says "take up thy fence and walk English Heretics!" On this occasion it's better to campaign for all people rather than just Pagans - the desired end result may be much easier to achieve that way. What Arthur has said about how EH have behaved can be backed up with lots of information, though no doubt EH would interpret some of it differently from how Arthur sees it. .

Other protests like those at construction sites where trees are going to be affected are also obviously of great interest to many Pagans, but the issues - and wildlife - at stake aren't exclusively Pagan matters.

The battle to protect Titnore Woods near Worthing is a campaign of this kind.

What is important in campaigning? Well I think the truth is very important - so sometimes is that way that truth is presented. The developers will say how wonderful what they are proposing will be for local people - and in many case they will be right - though perhaps only up to a point. Those opposing them can and should find the weak parts of their arguments and show where they have stretched a point, or told outright lies, about what they are proposing. That's a classic campaigning technique and can be very successful.

However it does the campaigners no good if their own claims can be shown to be exaggerated or plain wrong and this can seriously undermine, or destroy, a campaign. So - back to Titnore Woods. The campaigners have at some times made it sound as though a woodland would be completely cleared and replaced with houses. It sounds dramatic and it gets attention, but it's not quite like that. In fact housing would be set in fields around which most woodland, hedgerows and hedgerow trees would be kept. However the access road to the site crosses a part of Garden Wood and also South Lodge Rue, a strip of woodland, at right angles. These are both woodlands of ancient origin, but are not in particularly good condition and this has reduced their ecological value. It was also originally proposed to put a roundabout at the junction of the access road with Titnore Lane and straighten the lane which would have resulted in the loss of many old trees. So although the houses would not be built where woodland is now, some ancient woodland would be affected by having a road driven through it. Guess what - you can't just make new ancient woodland and there's very little of it on the south coast. The most recent development proposal has omitted the roundabout and 200 fewer mature trees would be cut down. So -perhaps a bit of exaggeration helped. Unfortunately the two woodlands I've mentioned would still be damaged.

There's another campaign which may have caught your attention. It is being claimed that Codex Alimentarius is about to prevent people using, or even having, some kinds of natural remedies. Perhaps this should bother Pagans and perhaps some of you are up in arms and signing lots of petitions already? The Codex Alimentarius Commission was set up in 1963 by the Food and Agriculture Organisation and World Health Organisation, both parts of the UN, under the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme. The main purposes of this Programme are protecting health of the consumers and ensuring fair trade practices in the food trade, and promoting coordination of all food standards work undertaken by international governmental and non-governmental organizations. It's already set some 300 standards for food of various kinds. The Guidelines for Vitamin and Mineral Food Supplements were adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission in July 2005, and the sky hasn't fallen yet. What's more there is no imminent implementation of any new Codex Alimentarius guidelines.

## PAGANS CAMPAIGN

# Walk Between Worlds

Oh dear! This is one case where the internet seems to have run away with the truth. What is true is that the European Union's Food Supplements Directive will take effect on December 31, 2009., but this is nothing to do with Codex. Even though this directive will come into effect no maximum levels have been set for vitamins and minerals in supplements and no date has been set for the adoption of legislation to implement such levels. Does this matter to Pagans? I suppose it might if we were manufacturing food supplements, but I can't see how it's going have much impact on most of us. Those of us who sell food supplements - and there can't be many - may find that their supplies have to change. I don't think it will affect most traditional herbal medicines - and if you think back there was a huge fuss in 2005 about this very issue and ways were found round it - with the help of none other than Tony Blair. There is a Pagan supplier on line which says that its large range of herbs and spices are only sold for botanical interests or as collectors' items and are not intended for human consumption. The chances are good that they will carry on supplying such curiosities. Of course you could also always grow your own magical herbs.

In the end campaigns are going to be most effective if those mounting them know the right things in advance. You need to know all about whatever it is that is proposed and preferably more than those who are proposing it. If you base your campaign on completely false or obviously silly claims it won't be very effective. Depending on who you are trying to convince your Pagan views may be irrelevant, or even a disadvantage.

BUT - do go and make a fuss about things that matter to you. Too few people do and the more who stand up for what matters to them the more likely it is that people will think twice before coming up with some stupid and damaging idea.

By Andy Norfolk

## Nature

Outside my office window I watch the indifferent workers ripping out the trees, making way for progress. During the summer, the days are silent. The air cracks as the trees are felled, and I cringe listening to them groan. They exhale sharply, whistling as they crash to the ground. They lie on the earth toppled, some in two pieces, and some with their roots in the air looking like squid's tentacles waving in salt water. My heart breaks a little every time I look at these old kings and queens that have been tossed aside like a child's outgrown toy. Who will love them now?

They will no longer provide shelter for reading students, or a breathtaking view for those of us stuck in our offices until 5. A large building will stand in their homestead, and I wonder what will become of them? Will they be used as timber, or simply chopped into firewood? Where will their spirits go? Laugh if you want, but I believe in dryads. Where will these delicate beings go once their physical bodies have been savagely cut down?

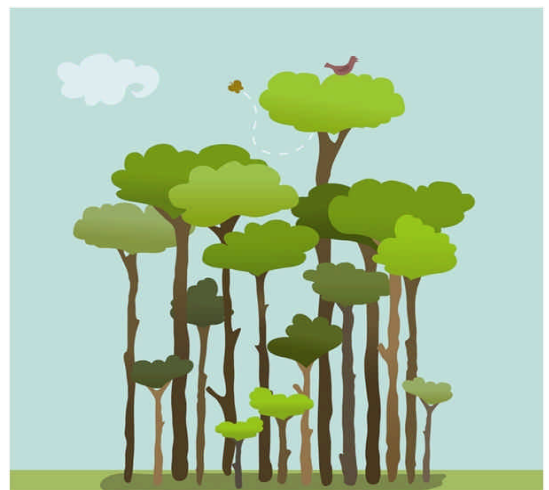
Last night I slept, and last night I dreamed. I dreamt I slept in the graveyard of these trees. I lay among their branches and let their leaves caress me. I wept over their wounded bark, letting my tears fall into the gashes. Somehow, I believed that my tears would heal them, but they were still, quiet.

The murdered trees weigh on my heart, and I wonder what it would be like to be cut down like that, for someone to take a saw or an axe to your torso, indifferent to your cries, your pleas. What it would be like for them to revel in the sound of the axe against your bone, the spurt of the sap that drenches them in blood red. For what are we but trees, that grow and stretch our arms to the sky and have lofty dreams and ideas? What would it be like to have your parts sent through a grinder and fashioned into a classy dining room table? Your fingers made into toothpicks? Your bones ground into dust and used to line the stable of a horse?

Oh dryad. Allow me to wipe the sweat from your brow, take your arms down, kiss you, and lay you in the ground for your final repose. I will let the salt water trickle from my eye over your grave, and perhaps you may sprout anew.

by Kristi Stevens

<http://gatheringofwordskmd.blogspot.com/>





Pictish Paradise

# Pagan Postcards

We broke our journey back from the Orkneys by stopping a couple of nights in Pitlochry with the sole intention of visiting as many of the Pictish symbol stones in the area as possible. We arrived at the B&B in late July just as the clouds were gathering for an evening of heavy rain.

The next morning was a typical summer morning, wet and humid with the threat of more rain. After the beautiful weather in the Orkneys a couple of days before, we were a bit despondent to say the least - it was Lughnasadh! We decided that the better part of valour was to find somewhere in the warm and dry so our first stop on the tour of the symbol stones was the Meigle Museum

<http://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/meigle/meiglestones/>  
& <http://www.rampantscotland.com/visit/blvisitmeigle.htm>

The museum is in the old school house in the village of Meigle and houses one of the largest collections of symbol stones gathered together in one place, most of which were originally found in the Meigle Church yard. If you are interested in learning more about the symbol stones, this is a good place to start. The guide there was friendly and informative and you could take time to study all the carvings on the 30 odd stones in the warm and dry.



The day was clearing up slowly when we left so we revisited a couple of stones at Eassi and Glamis, the second of which was in the Manse front garden near the church so there we were, plodding around on the grass of what ostensibly was the Vicarage.

Then onto the town of Brechin for a 'wee dram' and a bite to eat. We also visited the Cathedral that had a small collection of stones and a lovely Irish style Round Tower attached.

The highlight of the day was the Aberlemno stones not far from Brechin and by the time we got there the Sun was burning back the clouds and we could see blue sky appearing. <http://www.rampantscotland.com/visit/blvisitaberlemno.htm> Aberlemno is famous for its Pictish symbol stones; there is a very ornate stone in the church yard and three stones lining the roadside opposite the post office. This was our second visit because the previous time someone left their camera in the drawer at the B&B and a disposable camera had to be purchased. Better pictures were needed but well any excuse.....

The Sun had shown itself and the day was getting quite warm, so late afternoon next to the oldest stone of the three on the 1st of August by a wheat field, we had a small but meaningful ceremony to welcome the Harvest and give thanks for our safe journey so far

© Beith-Ann



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[www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=5943531917](http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=5943531917)

# Inner Sanctum

*The series for beginners!*

The Wheel of the Year has no end or beginning. It contains 8 Sabbats which run throughout the seasons of the year. The Wheel of the Year is split into two halves representing summer and winter. Some traditions hold that the split takes place at Samhain and Beltane, where as other traditions hold that the split takes place at Yule and Litha.

The Wheel of the Year is composed of four minor Sabbats and four major Sabbats. The word Sabbats comes from the Greek sabatu, which means "to rest". The four minor Sabbats fall at Solstices and Equinoxes. Solstices are the two points when the sun is closest to the earth and highest in the sky (summer solstice) and when it is further away and lowest (winter solstice). The Equinoxes are the days when the hours of dark and light are equal.

The major Sabbats are known as cross-quarter days and fall between the Solstices and Equinoxes.

The 8 Sabbats are listed below

Samhain 31st October

Yule (winter solstice) falls on or around the 21st December

Imbolc 2nd February

Ostara (spring equinox) falls on or around 21st March

Beltane 1st May

Litha (summer solstice) falls on or around 21st June

Lammas 1st August

Mabon (autumn equinox) falls on or around 21st September.

It's not essential to celebrate every Sabbat and when you do celebrate them you can go all out with elaborate ceremonies and rituals, or you can do something small and simple. You can celebrate alone or with a large group. It's down to you, there is no right or wrong way. The Sabbat is a time where you can take time out from the daily routine to observe nature and feel your connection to the world around you.

## Samhain (pronounced sow' en)

Samhain is also known as Halloween or All Hallows Eve. It is the Celtic New Year and a time when we honour the lives of those who have gone before us and say goodbye to loved ones who have passed on during the last year. It is at this time of year when people seek to communicate with the deceased. Many people will leave a candle lit in their window and place a plate of food or glass of wine outside for passing spirits. Samhain is also a

time for reflecting upon all that has taken place over the last year. A time for making plans for the coming year, and a time for recognising any faults and bad habits that we have and banishing these within us. Symbolically killing off the parts of us we do not want to carry forward into the coming year and nurturing the parts we want to develop more.

Divination is popular at this time of year as many of us want to see into the future and what it holds for us. At this time of year many people choose to decorate their altar with photographs of ancestors or loved ones who have passed on. A harvest feast is popular at this time of year involving pump-

kins, casseroles containing root vegetables, potato dishes, nuts and fruits, especially apples, puddings and breads.

## Yule - Winter Solstice

Yule, also known as the winter solstice, is the rebirth of the Sun and an important turning point as it marks the shortest day. During the days before Yule you may notice that the days are particularly dark and still. After Yule we look forward to lighter days and the promise of hope. Yule is a time when we hang up the lights, decorate the tree and burn a Yule log, as well as give presents and have a pretty joyous time. Story telling is also a good activity at this time of year. The Yule log plays an important role in the celebrations, a piece of the oak log from the previous year is used to ignite the new log and the log is left to burn for a period of time (usually 12 hours) before being extinguished. If the log burns itself out it is considered a bad omen. The ashes from the log can be used to make protective, healing or fertility spells.

## Imbolc (pronounced im' bolc)

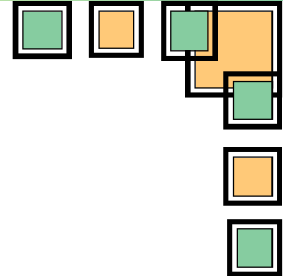
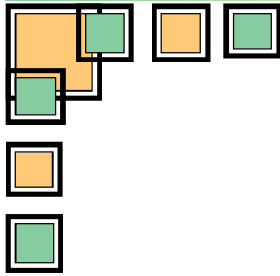
Imbolc is the beginning of Spring and we celebrate the awakening of the land and the growing power of the sun. Imbolc is a festival of light and fertility. We have been held in winter's sleep for so long, and now as the days lengthen we feel inspiration and anticipation at the rebirth as spring unfolds before us. This is a good time to clear things out and purify the home and yourself in readiness for the new season. Foods that are popular at this time are dairy and spicy foods.

## Ostara (pronounced os tar' a) Spring Equinox

Ostara celebrates the balance between dark and light. It is a time when day and light are equal. Fertility and regeneration features at this festival so it is a time for activities such as sowing seeds, whether physically planting seeds or planting the seeds of ideas and projects with your mind, for them to come to fruition at a later date. Eggs are a popular food at this time because of their relationship with fertility. Often eggs are painted. Honey, is another popular food along with hot cross buns.

# THE WHEEL OF THE YEAR

# Inner Sanctum



## Beltane

Beltane is the most important Sabbat after Samhain. It is the start of summer and is another fertility celebration. This Sabbat is mainly about enjoying life, unity and our sexual natures. Pagan weddings are frequently held on or around Beltane for this reason. Maypoles are decorated at this time of year and are seen as representing the phallus. Everything around us is green and healthy. This is a good time to be creative and bring any projects to fruition. It is also a good time to reconnect with those we love and rediscover each other.

## Litha / Summer Solstice

Litha is the longest day of the year. The sun will start to wane a little more each day from now on until Yule. We therefore consider Litha a holiday of transition. It is a time for rejoicing and celebration as the days are still hot, but it is also a time of introspection, a time of making sure plans are still on track and correcting negative aspects of our lives in readiness for the darker days. Litha is the traditional time for gathering magical and medicinal plants and herbs that you want to dry and store for winter.



## Lammas

Lammas is the start of Autumn. It is a time when we celebrate all we have sown over the year that has so far come to fruition. Bread is a popular food at this time of year along with other foods that contain grains. Lammas is also time of preparing ourselves for the upcoming winter. We see the crops being harvested, seeds stored in preparation for next year's crops, fruits and berries are ripening and the days are growing shorter, all these are reminders that we are moving towards winter. As well as looking at what has come to fruition in your life, it is also time to look at what hasn't and to sacrifice this so that you can plant something new in its place.

## Mabon / Autumn Equinox

Mabon is when day and night are equal and balanced. It is a time to look back over all you have done and give thanks to yourself and others who have helped you along the journey. It is a time to be introspective, tie up loose ends and start winding down for a rest.

By Twilightgirl

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Do you have a Pagan book you no longer want (or were given by that well meaning relative!)?

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Unfortunately we are unable to buy the book from you or pay the postage cost, but we would be happy to mention that you donated the book to The Witchtower Magazine for review, and you will get your name mentioned in the magazine, along with a PDF copy of the magazine that your book appears in!

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# ENCHANTED EARTH



## Stilly's Potting Shed

Hello. Come in and sit down. Please don't look so surprised, didn't you know that Hedgehogs could talk?! No? Well, I never, I thought everyone one knew. Well, let me introduce myself. I'm Mrs Quillson. I'm sorry but Stilly not around at the moment, he's taking a wee break so he left me in charge.

Mmmm.. lets see what we have in this warm, comfy box over here for you? Oh, yes, we have some lovely receipes for Dandelions. I'm quite partial to those myself. So here you go dear. You go and collect the dandelions for these receipes and remember to wash them well, you never know what is around these parts!

### Dandelion Recipes

The vernal equinox is the perfect time to utilize spring's first flowers - the humble dandelion. Here are two recipes to indulge in this healthful and magickal herb.

The first rule of thumb when foraging for anything wild is to take the utmost care to ensure that the plant is free from pesticides and chemicals. As dandelions are considered an evil scourge by those who know no better, steps are often taken early on to eradicate them via weed-killers. Harvest dandelions only from those areas that you know to be free from any chemical toxicity.

As well, the milk contained within the stem is very bitter, so be sure when picking the flowers to snip them above the stem. Rinse the flowers thoroughly before using in any recipe.



Mrs Quillson's view point

When to Gather Dandelions Opinions vary, but mid to late afternoon is best, as is collecting on sunny days when possible, which produces a drier, fluffier flower. Pick only blooms in their golden yellow prime - small buds will make the end result more bitter. Eschew the dried, fluffy white heads. Remember - the entire plant can be used for other medicinal tinctures and teas.

### Dandelion-Saffron Wine

Nothing is better in the stark grey of winter than a glass of golden dandelion wine to stave off the midwinter blues and evoke the spirit of spring. Dandelion wine is a delicate white wine with very little body on its own - the addition of golden raisins and saffron help to round out the flavours. Saffron adds a beautiful golden hue and is a natural anti-depressant - something well appreciated in the months of gloom.

- 2 quarts prepared dandelion flowers
- 2 lbs 9 oz granulated sugar
- 3 oranges
- 1 lemon
- 1 gallon spring water
- 5 stems of saffron
- yeast and nutrient

Prepare the flower heads by removing all of the green material so that only the petal portion is left. Boil the water and pour over the flowers in a ceramic crock and cover with cloth. Let this steep for two days. Pour the mixture back into a pot and bring to another boil. Add the peel from the oranges and lemon removing all pith and boil for 10 minutes. Strain through cheesecloth into a crock over the sugar, stirring well to dissolve. When cool, add the juice of the oranges, the yeast and yeast nutrient. Pour into secondary fermentation vessel, fit fermentation trap, and allow to ferment. Rack and bottle when the wine has cleared.

Age for at least five to six months. Drink in winter.

### Organic Fried Dandelion Blossoms

- 1 cage-free egg
- 1 cup soymilk
- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp pepper
- dash paprika
- Dandelion heads
- Olive oil for frying

Heat oil in a cast iron skillet. Beat together the egg and milk. Add in the flour, salt, pepper and paprika until you have a nice batter. The batter should be about the consistency of pancake batter - neither too thick or thin. Dip each flower head into the batter until coated and then carefully lower into the oil. Fry on each side about 1-2 minutes until brown.

Drain on paper towels and salt to taste.

© Lisbeth Cheever-Gessaman (Mar 21, 2008)

# Stir the Cauldron

Imagine how it feels to have got through a long cold snowy winter - Oh yes, so we have! No - imagine how it feels to have got through a long cold snowy winter living in a round-house about 2000 years ago, or even a miner's terrace about 150 years ago. There were no supermarkets and the food you got was what you grew yourself or could find growing wild and had stored for use through the cold months. By Spring you would probably have been a tad short on vitamins in your diet. For this reason in many parts of

Britain it was traditional to make a Spring pudding out of wild plants as a sort of tonic; something to put a bit of zing back into your body. In the north of England bistort, *Polygonum bistorta* was the essential ingredient. It does grow over most of Britain, though it's absent from some places and its stronghold is the north Pennines. It's known by a lot of different names such as "Easter Ledges", "Pudding Dock" and "Pudding Grass" which should tell you that it's been eaten in a Spring pudding for a very long time.

You are just about in time to make some for yourself, if you can find some bistort, but don't worry you can leave it out. I can hear cries of heresy from the Calder valley where they hold the World Championship Dock Pudding Contest. Despite what they claim the pudding was eaten in many other places. I should warn you that it's reputed to be a bitter and cleansing herb; it certainly contains more tannin than most of us are used to eating these days. Don't try using ordinary dock - that really is bitter!

There are various recipes for this pudding and there are some regional variations.

- 2 lb fresh, pudding dock leaves (*Polygonum bistorta*)
- 2 large onions, or 2 large bunches of spring onions
- ½ lb nettles
- A handful of oatmeal
- A knob of butter
- Salt and pepper to taste

Wash and clean the bistort leaves and nettles and remove any stalks.

Chop the onions and fry all the vegetable in butter until tender.

Add the oatmeal and cook for about 20 minutes, stirring to prevent the mixture from sticking. After that you can eat it or store it for later.

An old Lake District recipe uses 1 lb of bistort and nettle tops, with 1 large onion. It also adds 4 oz of pearl barley one egg.

In this version you chop the greens and onion and sprinkle the pearl barley in with them and boil them in a muslin bag for 2 hours. (That should see off any vitamins I'd think)

Then you beat the cooked greens with the egg, a large knob of butter and season the mixture before making it into cakes and frying them.

A better version comes from Westmorland. Gather a pound or so of bistort, nettle tops, dandelion leaves, lady's mantle and whatever other edible greens you find.

Wash them and boil them for 10 minutes (that's more like it), then strain and chop them up.

## Dock Pudding

Mix them with one raw egg and one hard boiled egg chopped small, season with salt and pepper and add a knob of butter.

Put this mix back in the pan and heat through then transfer to a pudding bowl to set.

## to put a Spring

I can manage this quite well without the bistort... I'd add some of the other things that were traditionally used for Spring pudding instead, such as ramsons, red leg, sorrel, and perhaps some

blackcurrant and gooseberry leaves.

You can also wash and chop the leaves, season them, add half a cup of barley and the same of oatmeal cover it with water and leave it to soak over night before baking it in an oven for about 90 minutes, adding a beaten egg a few minutes before the baking is complete and returning it to the oven before serving.

This is surely food to put you in touch with the tides of nature - and get you out into the countryside getting it all over you while you look for the ingredients - proper Pagan food!

By Andy Norfolk



# By Candlelight

Stories gathered from all corners of the land

## The Dead God Dreaming

"It is your time."

The whisper seemed to come from everywhere in the dim quiet haven of the tomb. The stones were ancient, and sometimes they spoke to me, but never in so human a voice. I rose from the empty altar in the empty room. The Dead God's victories were painted in blacks and grays on the walls, stretching away into darkness, and in the lamplight the figures seemed to move, to breathe, to die new deaths.

The Tomb of the Dead God had been my home for days, perhaps weeks, longer than any bride before me who had been told to attend him. It was time, and past time, that the God should send for me.

At the end of the room, in the narrow doorway, stood a priestess of the Burning God. She came a precise three steps closer, knelt and pressed her cheek to the floor. Her oiled black curls spilled like snakes, and the rich smell of living skin seemed exotic and somehow disturbing in this place of the dead.

"Now?" I asked. I was afraid, in spite of my faith, and perhaps it showed. The Burning God's priestess sat back on her heels. She had painted her eyelids orange for the sunrise, her lips gold for midday. A crimson sunset wandered over her bared breasts, and her skirt glittered with gold threads. She was day, and I night; I wore gray skirts, black on my eyes and lips, gray powder on my skin. I was a corpse that had not yet ceased to breathe, and yet I was the more beautiful, and she knew it. Only the most beautiful were called to the Dead God's bed.

"It is time," she repeated. "The priests await you with gifts."

Gifts. Captives, proud and angry, bursting with life. It was no wonder there was a flash of insolence and jealousy in her eyes; the captives should have been given to the Burning God, and were his by right, but the Dead God had precedence over all, even her lord.

And so, because I belonged to him, did I.

I retrieved my belongings from the altar. The black-feathered cloak had been my mother's gift, and as I settled it around my shoulders it fluttered restlessly, impatient to be gone. Beneath the cloak lay the stone dagger I had been given on the morning I had been chosen, the Bride's knife, my strength and my gift. I carried it in my right hand and nodded to the Burning God priestess; she turned and led me out.

Narrow, twisting hallways, reaching for dusty silver light. My black-feather cloak whispered, and the damp smells of stone and mold grew faint, replaced by the tang of metal, dust and dung, the smells of Burning God and man, a half-forgotten life I'd left behind. The silver glow became brass, hurtfully bright even

through closed eyes, and as the first heat of day hugged my shoulders I paused and slowly, slowly opened my eyes on the world.

The Burning God priestess glittered as she waited, arms folded, gaze steady. Beyond her, clay houses shouldered each other on the amber dusty street, and the walls bloomed with painted signs and pictures, some comical, some reverent. On Harin the clayworker's house, a blue dog with fierce red teeth snapped at a fleeing robber who clutched gold in one hand. Next door, not to be outdone, old Atawa the goldworker had painted a majestic, fiery bird, beak clenched around what was clearly a blue puppy. The two men had played out their feuds on their walls all the days of my life, and it was strange to realize that it would go on without me. When I went to the God, new paintings would be done, some of them of the ash-gray woman in the embrace of her pale lover.

It was a disquieting, unwelcome thought, and it tasted strangely of loss.

I did not realize, until we had past several houses, how quiet it was. In the distance, a wheeled cart creaked, and I saw a procession of silent figures following. When I looked again, the cart dragged on alone except for the hunched, shadowy man pulling it, and the wagon's bed was filled with bodies, stacked one on the other, arms and legs stiff as broken sticks.

"This way," the priestess said. I nodded and followed her past quiet houses with closed doors. Most of the doors were marked with the bright red symbol of Burning God. There are sickness in the town. Much sickness.

At the end of the street the temple of the Burning God climbed the sky -- soft gold steps, rich red stone, a glittering throng of priests and priestesses to welcome me. I ignored my guide's attempt to walk faster. The sun felt warm and heavy on my skin, as I imagined the God's hands would feel as I went to his bed. A few minutes in the sun, remembering. My feather cloak whispered secrets as we walked.

At the foot of the steps, my priestess stood aside. I set my bare foot on the first step, and the priest who waited there scattered ashes in my path. They felt gritty and harsh, and the gray haze tasted of death.

I should have counted the steps, to be reverent, but I couldn't think of numbers, couldn't think of anything but this last taste of sun and wind, the vivid colors of the town spread out below, the glitters of Burning God's priests. It was so beautiful. I had never expected that.

At the top of the temple, I passed into the dark stone room of the Dead God.

The light within was silver, reflecting from polished sheets near the altar. I spread my arms in a rustle of feathers and bowed to the empty altar, the darkness behind that I knew was inhabited by the God. As I rose, I saw the captives -- pale men, like bled corpses, their hair brown or gold, the colors of Burning God. They wore thick layers of leather and cloth, and stank of dead meat and fear. Evil strangers, these men. One of them shouted at me in a strange slurring language, his eyes bright with fear. One of them was sick, his eyes vague and gray, his skin erupted in red circles.

The knife felt cold as shadow in my hand, then hot as I slashed it across the first captive's throat. The priests held him over the basin and caught his blood, and when he was drained they carried his corpse away, to be divided into pieces for Burning God.

Four more throats. It seemed dreamlike to me, as I breathed in the thick incense and the smell of their blood; I felt exalted and moved by their sacrifice, so much so that I wept in gratitude. By the death of such base creatures, my people would live. Must live.

And in the midst of the dream, the Dead God came.

He whispered from the shadows, pale, his eyes were black and empty. His hair as dark as midnight. He bared his teeth, and his eyes took on a hunting cat's glow. I waited, silent, as he bent to the bowl, lapping with a neat, strange grace at the offering. The dead captives were taken out, and the priests closed the doors with hollow booms.

I was alone with Death.

"I am your bride," I said, the only words ever spoken in this place, in the intoxication of death. "I was yours on the day I was born. I am your life."

Anxious, aching, restless fear, like a woman waiting on a marriage bed. I knelt and put the knife to my palms, slashing deep. Blood welled in the bowl of my hands.

His lips teased my skin, feather-soft. His hands lifted me up and pressed my back to the cold black stone of the wall. His eyes were beautiful and strange, his mouth wet with my life. I leaned forward to lick at his lips, and his mouth closed around mine, sealing us together. When his teeth tore into my throat it was agony for an instant, like the bright flash of the sun, like the tearing of virginity, and then we were one, falling, falling, drowning together in the sweet red tide.

All too quickly, he stepped away, eyes still cat-bright, my blood swirling and blushing under his skin.

"Lord?" I asked uncertainly, and my knees suddenly felt weak, my head stuffed with darkness. I reached out without meaning to, and

his hands caught me, held me upright. His skin was cool and soft. "Am I not pleasing?"

He turned away from me, pacing, flowing into the shadows and out again, the bowl of red between us. The smell of blood was chokingly strong. I read agitation in his steps and feared I had done something wrong, something terrible.

"Lord?" I said again. He paused, eyes gleaming green in the shadow, and lunged forward. His hand dipped into the bowl and came up red and dripping, blood cradled in his palm. He held it out to me.

Did he want me to drink? No, I thought. I looked down at the blood and watched it slowly wind in ribbons down the pallor of his arm, splash on thirsty dark stone.

And then, suddenly, I saw the faces in the blood. The faces of my mother, my sisters, my brother. Slain and rotten, slashed with terrible wounds. My youngest sister's boy crawled weakly in the dust, weeping, his face swollen and black with hideous sickness. I cried out, caught at the Dead God's wrist.

The city, dying. Blood in the streets, on the clay houses. The dead everywhere, the sick feeble and dying.

A city of the dead. And in the midst of them, helpless, stood the Dead God, staring at the destruction of his people.

I flung myself back from the vision, back to the cool support of the wall. He let the blood trickle away through his fingers, watching me.

"Must it be?" I whispered. "Is there nothing to be done?"

He dipped his hand again in the bowl. Held it out to me. Clearly, this time, to drink.

I knew, from the light in his eyes, that I was drinking in Death.

But I drank, the taste copper-bright on my tongue, heavy and choking in my throat. I swallowed mouthfuls until I could swallow no more, until tears ran hot down my cheeks.

The Dead God sat in the shadows, watching me. I understood there was no leaving this place. I was the Dead God's bride, and my life was his.

When I woke, later, I felt the first sickening flush of fever.

I woke to feverish whispers, and realized that I lay in the embrace of the sun, wrong, so wrong, I should be lying with my lover now, lying cold and still, but my skin was hot and my head ached and I felt a terrible scorching thirst and weakness. Someone dribbled water into my mouth and I drank deeply, gratefully, and looked up into the face of the Burning God priestess who had brought me to my bridal bed.

Her face was streaked with tears, her glittering face paint smeared and awry. She looked lost as a child.

"He is dead," she mourned. They had all taken it up, the keening, devastated cry. "The Dead God is dead."

The tainted blood had killed him. My gift, spilled by my knife, had brought him death, black rotting pustules on his flesh, his beauty ruined. I could not even weep, so great was my despair. I had no God to take me in his arms, to soothe my passing. I was alone.

The Burning God priestesses keened and tore at the body of the Dead God, carrying away bits and pieces. The bits and scraps of flesh would be kept as sacred relics, boxed and displayed in the houses of worshippers. They offered his heart to me, and I ate it hun-

grily, savoring the cold tough muscle and the copper snap of blood. I fell asleep again, his blood on my hands and on my lips, and dreamed of gray shadows and bright suns, and a city of the dead in which I walked like a whisper, unheard.

"The Dead God is coming," the stones whispered to me. I woke in agony, my body on fire, my throat bloated and thick. My eyes had learned the dark again, and when I raised my head I saw my skin shimmering with blood, drops forcing themselves from my skin like a net of fine jewels. The altar was slick with it, my clothes sodden, my hair wet.

The Burning God priestess sat on the floor, golden skirts spread around her like the God's disk, and watched me. When she saw that I moved, she came forward and bathed my skin with cool water, rising away the blood and wiping me clean with a coarsely woven rag. I tried to drink but the water sickened me. She returned to her vigil, waiting.

My skin began to sweat blood again, slow patient drops that ran down my arms, over my chest, my face. I wept and the tears were blood.

My God was dead. There was no end to the pain.

On the third waking, I saw that the Burning God priestess had put away her golden skirt and dressed in gray. Her fine oiled hair was matted with ash, and her face stark with pale dust. She danced me a funeral dance, silent except for the whisper of her feet and the rustle of her skirts. The breezes of her movements felt cold on my bleeding skin.

I struggled for breath.

Choked.

My body labored, failed, and died.

Her skirts swirled to a halt, and she lowered her arms to cover her face. She came to the altar and reached out to close my eyes.

Her hand was so close. I reached for it, pulled it to my lips, tore at the skin until my mouth was filled with a river of blood, and the ecstasy of hunger closed my ears to her cries until her body's stream faded to a trickle, and she crumpled, a heap of dust and ashes, at the foot of the altar. I lifted her up to look into her face.

She stared at me with brilliant, sun-drenched eyes, and whispered, "I am your bride. I have waited for you, for the salvation of the people. You are the Dead God."

I kissed her and took the rest of her life into me, weeping with the pain of it.

It was full night when I descended from the Temple, counting steps reverently this time, and walked the silent streets. No lights burned in the houses, but I heard the beat of their hearts. They were hushed in mourning for the Dead God, in terror that death knew no master and no law.

I went to the first house marked with the Burning God's sign and entered. Inside, a feverish woman wept her agony. I cut my finger and let fall a single ruby drop into her open mouth. She swallowed and coughed, and I traced the sign of the Dead God on her forehead in broad strokes of my blood. Her husband was dead. I opened his veins and drank – I could not save him, but I could take this last silent offering. The children slept soundly, only the youngest fevered. Her I gave another precious drop, letting her suckle on the wound like a teat until the sickness was cleansed from her.

I moved slowly from house to house all the long night, healing the sick, draining the dying and the dead. As the Burning God's time came, I found a beautiful young boy, almost a man, and made the mark of the Bride on his chest, so that he would be my salvation and my legacy, when the time came for Death to die.

I went among the soldiers and gave them drink from my veins, waking fire, gifting them my own strength and bloodthirst. It would not prevent them from meeting the gaze of Burning God if our enemies came in daylight, but it would allow them to destroy our enemies, from now until even the Gods died.

As the sun blushed the sky, I ascended the golden steps to the Temple and found the bed prepared for the Dead God, and slept. I dreamed of a city of blood and beauty, hidden from the sight of evil pale men. I dreamed of an unbroken legacy of the Dead God and Brides, and I knew that I dreamed true.

I was the Dead God, and I dreamed our victory.

By Rachel Caine

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# Ancient Wisdoms

## THE FLAMINGO

Flamingo, that great pink bird, what in the world does it mean if you have a Flamingo as a totem? Well, let me tell you that the bright pink colouring of a Flamingo comes from the food it eats which contains carotene. Without this the flamingo would have boring white feathers. But because of the ability to change colour, those with Flamingo as a totem are said to be able to appear as they are not. They can slip in and out of situations unnoticed if they choose to. This is very useful as those with Flamingo as a totem hate loud, chaotic situations and will often wish to disappear into the background. They may also have the ability to shapeshift.

Their minds are agile and constantly searching for new information that will benefit them and their community. Community plays a big part in those with Ram/Sheep as a totem. They seek comfort in large groups and will like to be seen as the warrior of the group and come to their defence should someone attack.

## THE HEDGEHOG

Those with Hedgehog as a totem have the ability to defend themselves against



# Animal Totems

Flamingo will also help you get in touch with your emotions, if you are bottling things up, Flamingo helps you release the emotions and come into balance again. Flamingo can also help you learn how to discard the things you no longer need or benefit from. Being able to see things clearly, Flamingos are often said to bring psychic powers as a totem, however if you do learn to develop psychic powers remember not to rely on them solely!

Those with Flamingo as a totem will prefer to live surrounded by groups of people and friends. They rarely like to be alone, as they feel safe and secure within a group environment. Flirtatious they may also be, but they are also loyal to their partners.

## THE RAM/SHEEP

If the Ram/Sheep has appeared as your totem, it's time to assert yourself in new areas and have confidence in your abilities to do whatever is necessary. The Ram/Sheep reminds you that opportunities are everywhere and that if you trust in your abilities you will land on your feet. You have strength and perseverance to go all the way. Ram/sheep may also be asking you to stay balanced as you leap and climb up the ladder of life, especially if any of the situations are precarious, but have courage and stay balanced. Ram/Sheep may also be there to ask you whether you are actually acting on your ideas or just talking about them.

Those with Ram/Sheep as a totem also have a curious and active imagination.

negativity. They are able to put up protective defences that discourage people, although this can also lead to them shielding themselves off from others and becoming far too serious. Normally those with Hedgehog as a totem are good-natured with a sense of curiosity and child like wonder at the world, but woe be tide anyone who annoys them. They are capable of giving such a tongue-lashing and aim to hit where it hurts the most with someone. Once you've tangled with someone with hedgehog as a totem, you'll certainly not want to do it again in a hurry.



If Hedgehog has wandered into your life it may also be asking you if you are holding on to hurtful things people have said and done to you in the past. If so its time to release this hurt. Take back your enjoyment of life, stop being so serious and leave the past behind. Hedgehog is also associated with the wisdom of female elders, so if you are having difficulty call upon your female ancestors for help.

by Twilightgirl



# Reviews

ByLupa  
http://paganbookreviews.com/

## The Shamanic Drum: A Guide to Sacred Drumming by Michael Drake

Talking Drum Publications, 1991

If you're not a fan of core shamanism, you probably won't like this book. It's heavily based on material from Harner's *The Way of the Shaman* and derivative works. I tried to keep in mind that when it was written back in 1991, there wasn't nearly as much practical information on neoshamanism as there is now, and most of it was core shamanism. There is a revised edition as of 2002, which has more material; however, as I have not read that edition yet. So be aware that this review is for the original edition.

That being said, I have some things I like about this book, and some things I'm not so crazy about.

### Likes

Drake definitely knows his drums. His information on drum care is spot-on. This bit of practical information is quite valuable if this is your first book on drumming.

He also has obviously done practical work; this is a book based on experience, not just a bit of theorizing and making things up to fill the pages. If the things I dislike below don't particularly bother you, you may find this to be an excellent text to work from, as it covers everything from the cosmology of the drum, to different drumming rites and practices you can engage in.

Endnotes! There are Endnotes! Which means you can see where Drake got some of his third-party information. While he doesn't provide endnotes for every bit of information that didn't come from his head, what is there gives you a decent idea of his source material.

There's a good deal of environmentally-friendly information in this book, so it's not all about the humans. It's a healthy reminder of the good things this material can be used for, and I applaud it.

### Dislikes

The book treats journeying as though it were safe: "Remember that nothing can harm you on your journeys without your permission" (p. 42)

Chakras are mixed in, without the explanation that they are specifically from Hinduism, not any shamanic culture (this is very common in New Age writings, unfortunately). The same goes for other New Age concepts that are mixed in with the material.

Native American cultures are given the "noble savage" treatment: "We are drawn to Native American teachings because they are so pure and harmonious...When your heartbeat is one with the Earth's, you may begin to look, feel and act much like traditional Native Americans, for they too resonate with her" (p. 77) There are also several generalizations about "shamanic cultures" throughout the book that are not particularly universal, and some of which have a very Western approach.

My biases being what they are, I do admit that as a concise guide to core shamanic drumming, this one's pretty good. I'm split about 50-50 on my likes and dislikes. Again, I haven't seen the newer edition, so you may want to give that one a try; some of the issues above may or may not have been addressed (for example, the new edition has an appendix on the American Indian Religious Freedom Act). On the other hand, if the new book is just an expansion of the same general material, you may want to keep this review in mind. If I get hold of the new edition, I'll give it a separate review.

## Drumming at the Edge of Magic: A Journey into the Spirit of Percussion by Mickey Hart with Jay Stevens

Marper Collins, 1990

I have a bit of a history with this book. I first bought a copy and read it over half a decade ago, then for some inexplicable reason decided to sell it. Now that I've been doing more drumming, I got the urge to read it again, so I managed to track down a copy. What absolutely amazes me is how much of the book I remember, even having read it so long ago. It must have struck me deeply back then, and it's understandable why.

This isn't just a story about the history of the drum. Nor is it only a story about Mickey Hart, drummer for the Grateful Dead. It's a combination of those, and more. We learn about where drums came from, and we surmise about what the effects of those early percussionists must have been. We see where this instrument captivated Hart from an early age, and wonder at the amazing creations that resulted. We explore the altered states of consciousness the drum evokes, with Joseph Campbell, Alla Rakha, and the Siberian shamans as our guides. From blues and jazz to African talking drums and the bullroarers found worldwide, we are introduced to percussionists of all stripes, spots and plaids.

Between Hart and Stevens, the writing is phenomenal. Rather than following a strictly linear progression, it snakes like Hart's *Anaconda* of index cards through pages upon pages of storytelling and factoids. However, it all meshes well together, rather than coming across as stilted or confused. It's nonlinear, and it works beautifully. There's just the right mix of personal testimonial, anecdotes, and hard facts.

Anyone who drums, dances, or otherwise is involved with music; anyone who works with altered states of consciousness, whether in shamanic practice or otherwise; anyone who wants to see what makes a rock and roll drummer tick; and anyone who wants a damned good story that's all true, needs to read this book.

