

WITCHTOWER

The background of the entire page is a photograph of two lit yellow candles. The candles are positioned in the lower half of the frame, with their flames glowing brightly against the dark background. The candle on the left is taller and slightly more in focus than the one on the right. The overall mood is warm and mystical.

*Autumn Equinox
& Samhain 2006*

*Vol 3 Issue 1
£2.50*

*Learn all about
Moonshadow's Realm
in our new Featured
Shop Section*

*It's here, the final installment
of Diary of a Sacred Tree!*

*Plus poems, reviews, recipies and
all your other regular favourites*

The Pagan Network Magazine

Wichtower

Vol 3 Issue 1

Autumn Equinox/Samhain 2006

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WC1N 3XX

www.pagan-network.org

wichtower@gmail.com

Editor: Twilightgirl

Email:wichtower@gmail.com

Contributors:

Sophie Childs

Izzy

Yashiel

2stepfan2

Beith-ann & Candlesprite

Thea Faye

Rainbowleigh

Andy Norfolk

Nightshade

Wichtower Team:

Editor: Twilightgirl

Review Editor: Deadly Whispers

Reviewers: Beith-ann, Rhiannon, Milliefive and Julia Oakmoon

Proof Readers: Beo, Julia Oakmoon & Casidhe

Article Writers: Morgraine & Ravenous

Layout Editor: Twilightgirl

Subscriptions Manager: Casidhe

Distribution Manager: Jude

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Editorial

Samhain is my favourite time of year, when the last of the leaves are falling from the trees and winter's chill is starting to creep in. It's also the time of year when I get to lovingly choose a pumpkin to carve into a scary face. I think this is my favourite activity of Samhain, I feel such a connection to the earth when I'm carving my pumpkin, and even though I don't have any carving tools, apart from a kitchen knife, I don't think I do too bad a job! With the remaining pumpkin I enjoy making Pumpkin Raisin Muffins.

Speaking of pumpkins, we've decided to extend the competition deadline for this issue to the 15 January 2007. This means that the winners from this issue will have their photos in the Ostara/Beltane issue of the Witchtower.

Starting this issue we introduce a new series featuring shops taking part in the Pagan Network Full Members Discount Scheme. Moonshadows Realm is the chosen shop for this issue and we have an interesting interview with the shop owner as well as featuring several delightful items that can be purchased from her online shop, so stop by and take advantage of the discount you can get with your full membership card.

Twilightgirl
Wichtower Editor

Cover Artist

Melanie (aka Twilightgirl) is a woman of many creative talents. She is a digital artist who has seen her work published in magazines, calendars, cd covers and more recently as a series of stage backdrops for a band. She also enjoys expressing her creativity through graphic design, film production, writing and making/designing Pagan cards.

More of her work can be found at www.sensorychaos.co.uk

So Many Gods...

So Little Time...

by Sophie Childs

A common question on internet forums is “how do you find your god/dess?” A facetious answer might be “you don’t – they find you,” but, in reality, there are a few things that you can do to open up channels between you and Them Upstairs to help you start building a relationship with the Gods.

First of all, let me clarify a few things about my personal attitude towards the Gods. You do not need to involve them in the slightest if you choose to follow a magickal path. It is more than possible to practise magick or witchcraft without ever once calling upon a deity. Likewise, you do not need to have any knowledge, understanding or experience of magick, nor any intention to ever gain these to build a relationship with the Gods. Of course, many, if not most, neo-pagans do combine the two, but I feel that anyone new to paganism ought to be aware that this is not a pre-requisite. As such, a lot of the advice that is frequently given in response to a request for help in starting to work with the Gods I feel over complicates what can be a very simple, yet profound experience. You do not need to perform a guided meditation, for example. You most certainly do not need to cast circle before attempting to open up channels of communication, circle casting being something that is a relatively new invention and not something which formed a part of ye olde anciente(™) forms of worship and working. In fact, if you are feeling the need to find a deity to work with, I would argue that the process has already begun and someone is calling you, even if you can't quite make out the words yet.

My personal preference is to work within a specific pantheon, rather than mixing and matching individuals which I might find appealing but who may not be compatible. After all, as a general rule, any given pantheon will contain everything that you might possibly need from the Gods and if you are looking to develop a meaningful, long term relationship with them, keeping it simple and building upon that as your knowledge and awareness grows is more likely to yield significant results.



A good starting point is to look to your own heritage. Where is your family from? Do you have Greek, Italian, German or Celtic blood? Is there a pantheon which is culturally significant for you? Of course, many people with no Egyptian lineage work extremely successfully with Isis and Ra, for example, but if you really have no strong pull in any particular direction, looking to your own cultural identity might at least give you an indication of entities that you will be able to understand better than ones which are completely alien to your way of thinking. Again, personally speaking, I find it very difficult to believe in anything, so although I might find stories of Chinese or Indigenous American deities fascinating, not having any connection to those cultures, for me, working with their Gods would require faith and belief, and thus make them very difficult for me to build a connection with them that moves past that (which I believe ought to be the goal of anyone wishing to work with the Gods). It is not that I believe their Gods do not exist, it's just that they are not a living presence for me in the way the Gods that I work with are and moving towards that would require a lot of effort that I could be better placing elsewhere.

Having decided upon a particular pantheon, your next step might be to research the myths, legends and histories associated with it. Children's books are frequently a good starting point since they are easily read yet contain a deceptive amount of information about the Gods, their attributes and correspondences and personalities. Good, well researched history books are also invaluable for the insight they give into how any given deity and their pantheon fitted into the culture and daily living. If you combine these two, as well as reading the most faithful renditions you can find of original myths, such as the Mabinogian, it should not take you long before you find that there are one or two individuals who appeal to you and who you feel are worth while paying closer attention to. If you still do not feel that there is anyone that draws you in, look to

their associations and where you are in your life. Are you a parent? A musician? An academic? However you view and define yourself, there will be a god out there who is patron of those things which are important to you and if all else fails, this can be a good starting point. And of course, if you have done your research, you will know who is associated with what and have a good sense as to who might be most appropriate for you.

You may have noticed that I have not suggested any neo-pagan books as a source for finding 'your' God. This is because whilst there are some very good texts out there, they are overwhelmed by books that fall into the "it's what's in your heart" camp. Unfortunately, this does not work if you agree with my opinion (and you may not) that the Gods are real, they are tangible, they are individuals and as such, are who and what they are and to ignore that is to do so at your peril. Certainly, if you wish to call upon deities in your spellcrafting, unless you have a full understanding of their spheres of influence, you may find yourself getting some very unexpected results. When it comes to the Gods, you need to be extremely careful as to what you wish for. Unfortunately, at the moment, there are few deities who are well served when it comes to modern texts (although there are exceptions, such as Hekate, Athena and Artemis), so you are better off going as close to source as possible rather than reading an author who, no matter how well meaning, may have a fluffed up, dumbed down view of a god who, as well as their 'light' side has a corresponding darker one (and in all honesty, I cannot think of a single deity who does not manifest both so-called positive and negative aspects).

Having done all this work, you should be in a strong position to know who is calling you. Or are you? As I said at the start of this article, it is my opinion that it is the Gods who choose us, not the other way round. Beginning to work with them can be as simple or as complicated as you make it. Once you have a name to call upon, something as basic as lighting a candle before you go to bed, dedicating it to your chosen deity can begin opening up a channel between the two of you. Of course, if you choose, you can go the full on ritual route, write a guided meditation, cast circle, go meet the Gods on their own turf, but if you have been working hard, researching, focusing on the fact that you have made a conscious decision to deal with them, chances are, you'll find that someone comes knocking on your

door much earlier than you expect - and chances are it might not be who you thought it was likely to be.

Whatever happens and whoever you work with, one thing is certain – involving the Gods in your life definitely guarantees that you will live in interesting times.

Spicy Squash Soup

A thick and spicy soup made with butternut squash and potatoes.

INGREDIENTS:

3 lbs butternut squash, halved and seeded
2 tbs butter
1 onion, diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 cans of chicken broth
2 large potatoes, peeled and cubed
1/8 tsp cayenne pepper
1/8 tsp allspice
1/8 tsp nutmeg
1/8 tsp ginger
1/2 cup sherry wine
1 cup of cream

PREPARATION:

Preheat your oven to 375F. Add a little water to the bottom of a baking dish or cookie sheet and place squash halves face (cut side) down. Bake for 40 minutes or until the squash flesh is really soft. Let cool a little, then peel.

In a large pot, melt butter and saute onion and garlic until soft. Add the chicken broth and potatoes, then bring to a boil. Cook until the potatoes are getting soft (about 15-20 minutes).

Add the squash to the mix and mash until lumpy. Using a stick blender in the pot or move soup to a food processor, puree the mixture until smooth. Pour back into the pot, if you used a food processor.

Add seasonings, sherry and cream and stir through. Heat soup but don't let it boil. Once hot, time to serve.

Poetry Corner

Alban Elfed

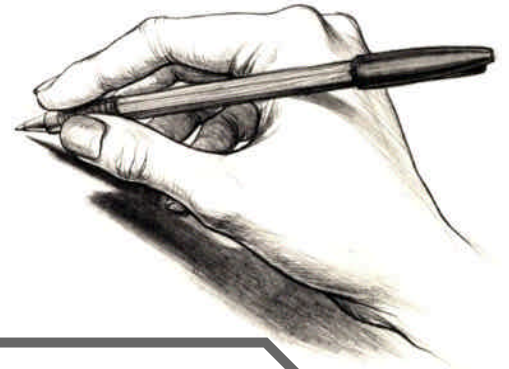
Wasps glittering in heraldic armour
Stagger drunkenly as we pay a thorny tithe
For the bloody sunshine stored
In the last oozing blackberries.

Hedges glow with the embers of summer
And leaves spiral rustling down
Into drifting reefs of not-yet earth

No swallows do make an Autumn
Their swan-song, written on wire staves,
Always unplayed.

The fragile equilibrium of equinox
Flickers and is past.

by Andy Norfolk



If you would like to submit a
poem or recipe please email to
the wichtower@gmail.com

The Empath

Within my soul i feel your pain,
Through weathers' fair or weather's rain,
Within my heart i know your way,
This is with me every day,
I see the hurt upon your face,
And dream for you another place,
I try all i can to ignore it,
But it consumes me bit by bit,
To sense your emotion with all that i be,
To vision with more than eyes can see,
To hear with more than my ears,
I listen and cry the deep dark tears,
To be restless and sleepless all at the same
time,
This is my way, this burden is mine,
But i take it and use it to help another,
You are my sister, you are my brother,
Connected are all that live in this world,
One way or another,our story will be told,
So light up with a smile-its getting me down,
The endless misery, please lose your frown,
Please just be peacefull, and happy too,
That is my want, my wish for you,
Rid of your anger,frustration and lies,
Oh please help me break these ties,
Trapped am i in this world of feeling,
To some it does sure seem appealing,
Let me tell you that its no joke,
It consumes you up making you choke,
So step backward, a step or two,
And take this from a different view,
No laughing matter is Empathy,
A wish, if i could-of it id be free.

by Nightshade

CALLS AND WHISPERS

Invisible I seem to be,
Upon the winds I speak to thee,
through vision and sound I whisper to you,
Ever the longing I have so true,
Sacred are those that ride the night,
Ever embracing the fair distant light,
Of all the memories
One last wish to know you're still there,
Always upon you my love shall be,
Now enter this world now, to be with me.

by Nightshade

LID OFF THE CAULDRON

A round up of all the news happening over at Pagan Network

RESHUFFLE

Following on from the change over of server and hosting companies, it was decided to give Pagan Network an overhaul to make the forums more clean and efficient. As you will see, several sections on the forums that were hardly ever posted in have either been merged or have been moved into other sections that were more suitable.

The main changes are:

The "Druidry" and "Asatru, Heathenry and Northern Traditions" forums have been merged with the "Other Pagan Traditions" forum.

The "Chaos Magic" forum has been merged with the "Other Magickal/Occult Traditions" forum

The "Member Interviews" forum has been moved and is now located underneath the "Witchtower" forum.

The "Announcements Discussion" and "Website Feedback" forums have been moved and are now located under "Pagan Network Feedback".

The "Solitary Witchcraft" and "Kitchen Witchcraft" subforums have been merged with the "Wicca and Witchcraft" forum.

The "Craft Work and Craft Tools" forum has been merged with "Spells, Rituals and Magic" forum.

The "Esotericism" category has been removed, and the forums contained within it redistributed amongst the other categories.

The "Demographics" forum has been renamed to "Esoteric Interests".

The "Rites of Passage" forum has been moved and is now located underneath "General Paganism Discussions".

The "Pagan Books" forum has been merged with the "Entertainment and Related Media" forum.

The "Natural World" forum and its subforums have been merged with the "Science" forum to form "Science and Nature".

The "Online Events" forum is now located underneath "Chit Chat".

EGM

The EGM took place on the 13 November in the Pagan Network Chat Room.

All full members were invited and voting took place online.

The following people were appointed.

Elizabeth Maddison (Cuvalwen) is the new Communications Manager.

Elise Brehaut (Deadly_Whispers) is the new Membership Manager.

Julia-Oakmoon has now been elected into the NON committee role of Volunteers Manager.

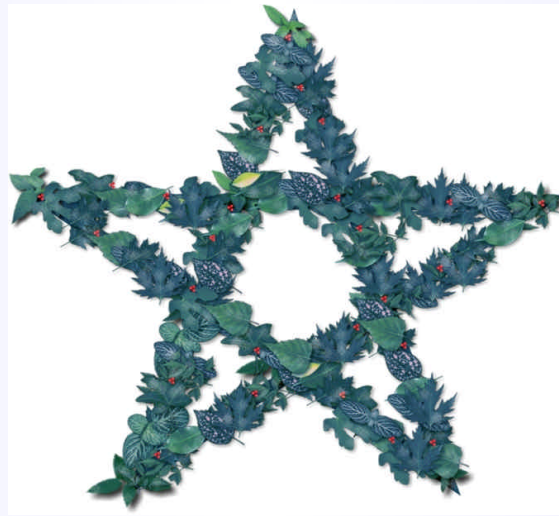
All newly appointed Managers seem to be settling into their new roles and we wish them well for the future.

LID OFF THE CAULDRON

A round up of all the news happening over at Pagan Network

NEW LOGO

The Committee are pleased to announce that the Pagan Network Graphics Department have come up with a new logo to replace the old Twiggy, which Pagan Network can no longer use due to copyright issues. The new logo comes in a range of seasonal outfits and the forum themes will match this. If you haven't noticed the logo yet, here it is unveiled in its winter splendour. We are currently looking for a name for the new logo, so far we have "leafy" or "wreath". Suggestions on a postcard!



PEBBLE

Pagan Network is also pleased to announce that Mrs Jacq Dobson is our new PEBBLE representative

She will be going to the PEBBLE meetings around the country, and she is available to answer members' questions and queries and put them forward to PEBBLE itself. Please put any questions that you may have in the PEBBLE forum

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES TEAM LEADER

Dave Raven (aka Ravenous) has been appointed as Team Leader of the Regional Representatives, so if you would like to become a Regional Representative please email/pm either him or Rainbowleigh.

BEYOND



GRAVE

Experience by Izzy

It was a dark and stormy night, well to be honest it wasn't, but that's how all the spooky experiences start in books...

My experience took place on a warm sunny day when I was 10 years old. I had been out playing with my friends at hide and seek and had come in to the kitchen to get myself a drink of water. As I was running the water I saw a dark shadowy figure out of the corner of my eye. I didn't think anything of it at the time and just put it down to a reflection from the window facing me.

Later that day my mother called me home for my tea. Whilst we were having tea, I again kept seeing the dark shadowy figure out of the corner of my eye. I mentioned it to my mother, but she just said I'd been playing out in the sun too long.

That evening I was sitting at the dining room table rushing to do my homework for school the next day (you know how you always leave it till the very last minute on a Sunday night!), when I felt a pressure on my shoulder, like someone placing their hand on me. I turned around but there was no one there so I went back to my homework thinking I had imagined it. It was about half an hour later when I felt the pressure of a hand again on my shoulder. As I looked up ready to turn around again, I caught a reflection in the window across the dining room. It was of the dark shadowy figure that I had been seeing out of the corner of my eye all day. But this time the figure seemed more solid and I caught a glimpse of a nose. I quickly turned around but there was no one behind me and when I turned back to the window the shadowy figure and gone.

As you can imagine, I didn't want to stay in the dining room that night to finish my homework, so I decided to finish my home work during the break period the next day at school and I spent the rest of the evening in the company of my family and well away from the dining room/kitchen area.

I never saw the shadowy figure again after that night.

BEYOND



GRAVE

Experience by Anonymous

My mum and me moved into another house after she divorced from my dad. Whilst exploring my new surroundings, I found a rag doll hidden behind a radiator, it was rather dirty and tatty and the doll smelt smoky. So I just threw it into the corner of my new bedroom.

That night I heard a bloodcurdling scream, I looked out my window but I couldn't see anyone. I told my mum the next day, and she said I had imagined it.

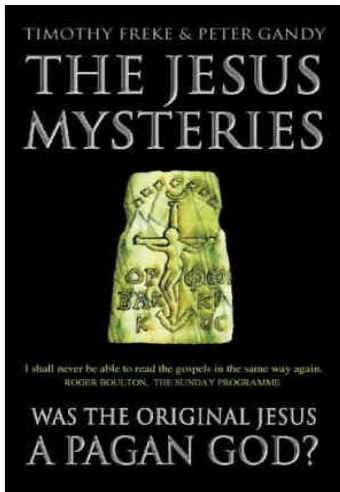
The following night the same thing happened with the scream, and again I couldn't see anyone outside. This time though the scream seemed louder, like it was in the house. I went to my bedroom door and looked down into the hallway.

I was frozen on the spot. There right in front of me was this young girl, she was thin and pale, with a mangled face! I screamed and she disappeared. My mum came rushing out of her bedroom then (which was right next to mine) and asked what I was screaming about. I said I had just seen a ghost but she didn't believe me.

I saw the ghost many times after that but didn't know who she was. It was only later when I was a little older that I found out that the rag doll belonged to a girl called Christina, who had been in a fire at the house and had died there whilst trying to rescue her doll, her face was burnt as she leaned over the fire to reach her doll. I threw the doll out later that day.

Have you had a spooky experience that you would like to share?
If so email the
witchtower@gmail.com

Book Reviews



The Jesus Mysteries: Was the "Original Jesus" a Pagan God?

By Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy

Thorsons/Harper Collins: Hammersmith, London 1999

An interesting book with an interesting premise, *The Jesus Mysteries* tries to reconstruct the truth about Christianity very much from a Gnostic point of view. Timothy Freke is Gnostic and Philosopher and Peter Gandy is an expert in classical civilisations and specialises in ancient Pagan Mystery religions, so they seem to know their onions.

It is based very heavily on the Nag Hamadi texts that have come to be known as the Gnostic Gospels. The *Jesus Mysteries* Thesis says that Jesus did not exist as an historical character, but was in fact the Jewish Mystics name for the Dying and Resurrecting Godman. They link the fact that many of the stories about Jesus that we have come to know and love, are repeated sometimes verbatim, in the stories of other godmen, like Osiris, Dionysus and Mithras

'At the heart of the Mysteries were myths concerning a dying and resurrecting godman, who was known by many different names. In Egypt he was Osiris, in Greece Dionysus, in Asia Minor, Attis, in Syria Adonis, in Italy Bacchus, in Persia, Mithras. Fundamentally all these godmen are the same mythical being.'

The Jesus Mysteries – p4

Freke and Gandy also suggest that what we know as stories about Jesus' life were actually parables that were told to the uninitiated and only when they became initiated were they told the Truth, the Mystery and were said to understand the deeper meaning of the stories.

I found this book truly illuminating, something that really resonated with me. It answered a lot of niggling questions that I have had since I was old

enough to think for myself and was being brought up as a Christian. I also found it well written and accessible.

There were a couple of things that did slightly irritate although they had no effect for me on the overall message. Freke's and Gandy's idea of Pagan is purely the pre-Christian religions of the Mediterranean and the Middle East, so don't expect them to be talking about Celtic Druids and Native American culture. I suppose this is to be expected because that's where their interest lies, but their Pagans are not the fun loving, hard drinking, kick ass Pagans that we all have come to recognise, admire or even join in with. They are the aesthetes, the philosopher like Plato and Socrates. Their Pagans are very much not of the World, a sort of cross between Christians and Buddhists.

The other, especially as I read it for the second time, is the whole 'evil Christian, good Gnostic' underlying sentiments. Again, it's understandable to a certain extent; however, substitute Witch for Gnostic and it's very reminiscent of the *Burning Times* self pitying.

That said, if those are the only two things I could find to moan about, it's doing well. As I said, this is an accessible scholarly book with a well researched hypothesis, enough 'Ooooh' factor to keep the attention and enough controversial, new (ish) material in it to make one think.

I liked it and I bought it, and I will definitely get the companion book 'Jesus and the Lost Goddess'

By Beith-ann

INTERVIEW WITH A

PAGAN

A series of interviews with members of the Pagan Network. Here, 2stepfan2 puts the questions to Beith-ann

PAGAN IDENTITY

PN: Name / username

Beith: Beith-ann/ Mary Clarke

PN: What age are you and where do you live?

Beith: 50, I live in Leicestershire.

PN: How would you describe your spiritual path?

Beith: Ahh that's a difficult one, I am a witch, trained in Gardnerian Wicca, practiced for a few years with a 'Primitive' group, but in the end I practice my own path. It is a matter of connecting to the here and now. That doesn't mean that I don't appreciate tradition and history and I am particularly drawn to the British/Celtic/Romano time, but that was then and this is now. I will say that my path is specifically British and particularly England, north of Hadrian's Wall.

PN: How did you get involved with this path? What's your history? How did your personal background influence this?

Beith: I sort of fell into it, I was teaching Astrology at night school and met someone in the same village that wanted to explore Paganism, but didn't know quite what to do. I was interested and we both looked into it together. It felt like coming home after looking into Spiritualism, Buddhism, and various 'New Age' stuff. My upbringing

was basically Christian, but I was always allowed to explore other spiritual paths.

PN: Have you always felt the same way about your spirituality, or have there been changes? If so, when and how?

Beith: As I said, I did explore a lot of things, but once I 'discovered' Paganism, the basic tenets of the path haven't changed, just developed into a very personal path.

PN: Have you ever been physically attacked or discriminated against because of being a pagan?

Beith: I was attacked in the local free newspaper for being an Astrologer. But I don't think I have been discriminated against because of my path. I have always been discerning about who knew about it because I started when my children were very young and not long afterwards the 'Satanic Ritual' scare was big news.

PN: Has anyone ever made assumptions about you (good or bad) because of being a pagan? What were they?

Beith: I have had some comments about 'You're not one of those Druids are you?' but again, people knew me before they knew my path and so I don't know whether they were making assumptions just based on that.

Others that I don't know have never said.

HOW PAGANISM FITS INTO YOUR LIFE

PN: What do you do for a living? Is there any conflict between your work life and your spirituality?

Beith: I used to work as an Astrologer and so that fitted in very well. However now I work as an administrator with all sorts of people of differing religious and ethnic backgrounds. I don't really feel any conflicts because I am what I am and my work is what I do. Those who know at work are accepting of my path, but it never really comes up day to day. I have little knowledge of what other peoples religious paths are so in effect it doesn't effect my working life.

PN: What are your hobbies and interests?

Beith: I have got into walking quite a lot at the moment, we have some wonderful scenery around Leicestershire and it's quite wonderful to explore it. I am also interested in history and geology as well as astrology/astronomy. I do the normal things, read and watch TV, listen to music. I am also a warden with the Rollright Trust, looking after the stones. Brilliant and a great privilege.

PN: What about your family and friends? Are they of similar spiritual paths to you, or are there differences?

Beith: Most of my family hold different beliefs to me, although my sister is in her first training coven at the moment. My sons wanted to be put down as Jedi Knight on the last census. Most of my dearest friends are on the Pagan scene or at least have some obvious spirituality that is similar

PN: How would you rate the importance of the following aspects of your life? (Use percentages, total equally 100%)

Time with family

Time with partner(s)

Time with friends

Spiritual time alone

Spiritual time with others

Your work, career, or time in education (if a student)

Hobbies and pastimes

Other (please describe)

Beith: I don't think I could parcel things up like that, but at the moment I am working quite closely with a spiritual partner and that takes a lot of my time up.

BELIEFS

PN: Do you believe in the existence of a deity? If so, have you ever had any divine experiences?

Beith: I do. I have divine experiences all the time, especially when I am out walking, although sometimes they might be seen as quite normal by a lot of people, the perceived closeness of a rainbow, seeing a jay on a path in front of me, that sort of thing. I don't really have a name that I use for Deity, but I usually equate it to that which connects us.

PN: Do you believe in the existence of spirits, human or non-human? Have you ever had any experiences of spirits?

Beith: Again, I do believe in spirits, my Grandmother was a spiritualist medium and we were exposed to that sort of thing a lot. There have been times when I have experienced movement in my peripheral vision, things moving of their own accord in a haunted house and quite a few unexplainable events. Nothing that scared me witless though.

PN: Do you believe in the existence of magic? As a believer, how would you explain it?

Beith: Magic is all around us; it's the energy stream that anyone can tap into which gives us inspiration and guidance. Trying to explain magic is trying to explain electricity. I know it exists, I have encountered it, but I'm blown if I can actually explain what it is exactly.

PN: Do you practice your spirituality alone, in a group, or both? Was this a deliberate decision or a necessity?

Beith: I join a group to celebrate the festivals with and I have a working partner, who I tend to do more ritualistic/magical stuff with. I also practice alone on occasions, I think everyone should even if they are in a group/coven. I am lucky enough to be able to choose the way I practice.

PN: If you've done both, which do you prefer?

Beith: Horses for courses, it depends what I have/want to do but I suppose in the long run, working with my partner would

be the first choice, but that's only because he's the right one to work with.

PN: Do you believe in the reality of curses? Would you ever do one? What types of spell would you include in your concept of a 'curse'?

Beith: Yes I do and Yes I would. I think that all spells have the potential to hurt or heal, it depends on the intent. I don't think I would ever do something out of sheer malice, well I haven't yet. I think to curse someone is to stop them doing something to harm either my self or a person I am close to and if that means putting them out of action in some way so be it. However I do think a lot of the time that just sending someone bad luck is a useless pursuit unless they know that the bad luck is a consequence of their actions against me and mine. The ultimate effect of a curse should be to stop someone doing something that you don't want them to and no more.

PN: Do you think the law of three-fold returns exists?

Beith: No, I have no evidence of that, but I do think bad magic and bad behaviour is its own punishment. I know of a person who was old enough and experienced enough to know better, did some magic to bind another person to them. It worked, but because it was a binding, the other person felt so trapped that the relationship was a disaster and in the end they left and were never heard of again.

ACTIVITIES

PN: What practices are regularly incorporated in your spiritual

life? (E.g. meditation, prayer, ritual, magic, visualisations, trance work)

Beith: I regularly meditate, but it's usually to commune with my personal deities. I use magic when necessary and the ritual and visualisations that it entails. A lot of my spiritual life is lived from day to day and incorporated into my everyday life. That is why I walk in nature regularly and talk to others of a like mind it keeps the connection fresh and new.

PN: What festivals, holy days, special occasions etc do you mark as part of your spirituality?

Beith: I note the cycles of the Moon and mark the all the festivals in one way or another, either with the Grove I go to or with my working partner. I have also been involved in handfastings and a baby naming

PN: Have you ever done magic to get something and did it work?

Beith: Yes and a lot of times in ways which I didn't expect. I remember asking for a car that didn't rot as soon as my husband looked at it and we were given a car where the body work was completely sound for ages, but it cost us quite a bit of money making it mechanically sound. I also have asked for a job, which didn't seem to work but eventually I got a job that I was much more suited to and it happened at exactly the right time. I have come to the conclusion that you do the magic and trust that it will come out right in one way or another. Magic always works, you just have to be aware exact-

ly what you ask for, so I am either very specific or just ask for the outcome and trust that them upstairs know what they are doing.

PN: Do you spend much time in nature, in the wild? Do you spend enough time out there?

Beith: As much time as I can, but not as much as I would like to, although I am a bit of a fair-weather pagan, I like my home comforts. I can only camp for a certain length of time before I am in need of a washing machine, a hot bath and a flush toilet. I walk a lot, but like to find a pub somewhere along the way and I drive to the place I want to walk around. I would like to be a more dedicated gardener. I am also a clumsy walker and if it's a bit slippy or hilly I find myself invariably connecting very firmly with the earth, so I am a bit wary of going hill walking or anywhere that I might need to be rescued from.

PN: Do you think paganism works better in the country than in the city? Why?

Beith: I find that I can be more connected in the country, but it doesn't mean that it can't be worked in the city. Paganism is more of an internal thing, a Pagan is who I am, and I can practice it anywhere that I am because I carry it with me. However, I do feel that a specific tradition is best if it is practiced in the country of its birth. I don't feel easy with the idea of practicing Irish Druidy in America or Native American tradition in Little Wallop. I feel you need to have the land around you to connect to the spirituality.

IDENTITY ON PAGAN NETWORK

PN: How long have you been a member?

Beith: About 18 months.

PN: Is this your main online hang-out? Where else do you go to regularly (especially pagan / Wicca / magic-related)?

Beith: Since I was made a mod, this is the main one, but there are several others that I visit from time to time.

PN: Do you like the style of discussions that happen at Pagan Network? Do you like the subject matter?

Beith: When I first joined it was still Wicca UK and after hanging out on a couple of MSN American sites, I found PN refreshingly intelligent. I do like the style of discussion, sometimes the subject matter doesn't grab me, but I suspect that's the same for everyone. I would think we all have our favourite forums that we immediately go for before anything else. What I do like is the variety and the fact that the site is moderated in a fair and intelligent way.

PN: Do you think it's always fresh or too repetitive?

Beith: Sometimes, as in all things, the activity on the site dies back a bit, but it doesn't take too long before a discussion attracts attention again. I think it's sad that some of the Pagan Path forums remain inactive for a fair while, I would like to see them take off again.

PN: What would you change about Pagan Network?

Beith: Nothing at the moment, as far as I'm concerned it's mainly going in the right direction.

CONTENTIOUS PAGAN NETWORK QUESTIONS

PN: How do you define the term Wiccan? How do you feel about the idea that Wiccans are people who have been initiated into a lineaged Wiccan coven?

Beith: I do believe that the only people who should be using the term Wiccan should be lineaged. However, I do understand that it's a label that we can no longer be precious about. I am more interested in the sincerity of the practitioners of a path, not their label.

PN: Is Wicca and paganism generally too fluffy?

Beith: Yes and no. If something is fluffy it isn't Paganism; to me it's New Ageism with a Pagan flavour. Asking if Paganism is fluffy is like asking if chocolate is a bit beefy in flavour, if it is chocolate, it won't taste of beef.

PN: How involved are you with the Pagan scene? What are your views on the Pagan community its strengths, weaknesses and any issues facing it?

Beith: I am no longer involved in the way I used to be, I used to run a moot, and a coven with others and I used to teach, but I don't do any of those things any longer. To me the strength of the Pagan community is its acceptance of individuals. There is a definite move with Pagan people to accept people for who they are. The weakness falls down when it comes to infighting between certain members of differing pagan paths. I also think that it is a hot spot for complete publicity seeking, egocentric pillocks, but the community usually recognise them anyway.

PN: Does British Traditional Witchcraft represent a real surviving ancient form of witchcraft pre-existing Gardnerian Wicca?

Beith: I don't think anything does. I don't know an awful lot about BTW even with the never

ending thread about it, but I think that anything these days can only be a reconstruction. I don't think anything can trace a line back before the end of the 19th century.

AND FINALLY...

PN: Are there any other things about your path that you would like to share?

Beith: I think basically my path is based on time and space. I practice in the place and at the time I practice and that's how I connect.

Donate A Book Scheme

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

If so the Witchtower would be happy to receive it to review. It doesn't matter if it's an old or new book, or whether its Pagan fiction or non fiction.

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 for review, and you will get your name mentioned in the magazine.

If you do have any books you wish to donate please email the wichtower@gmail.com to let us know what you wish to send so we can keep an eye out for it. All books should be sent to BM Wiccauk, London, WC1N 3XX, unless you are attending a moot where one of our reviewers are and then you could just hand the book over. Our current book reviewers are Deadly_whispers, Beith-ann, Rhiannon, Milliefive and Julia Oakmoon

WORD SEARCH

K A X A B L K C P W G D A D G
M E N O H P E S R E P O R I C
Q O G E O S E L S L B H T G A
E L R J H L U O U O U R E I P
Z T U R E T N N D N G N M R O
B F I B I N A E E E A A I B S
S I Y D U G M Z R V P I S Q I
I C N N O E A E Q M R R G V R
G V R A T R S N X Z V A F P I
P E B E N H H S I S E M E N S
C M R U K N E P H E C A T E T
F S N I E L A X A S E R E C S
V A G C E R R I D W E N O W A
D A P N I S I S V M G E F H B
L J E O Y N U D V H O Y N E E

APHRODITE

ATHENA

CERES

CYBELE

ERESHKIGAL

ISIS

NEMESIS

SELENE

ARIANRHOD

BAST

CERNUNNOS

DANU

HECATE

LUNA

OSIRIS

VENUS

ARTEMIS

BRIGID

CERRIDWEN

DEMETER

INANNA

MORRIGAN

PERSEPHONE

Want to have your 15 minutes of fame?
Then write for the Witchtower magazine.

We are always looking out for new writers/artists/poets. Even if you're not too sure whether you would be a good writer, you can always send in your article/poem/story/artwork/review to witchtower@gmail.com and we'll take a look at it for you. So, come on, take that first big step, who knows you might even surprise yourself, give it ago!

*Make your mark
on the
world....*



Write for the Witchtower

How to Contribute

1. First decide on what you want to write about. If you are not sure whether the subject has been covered before you can email Twilightgirl to check or look at our list of previously published articles on the website.
2. Email us at witchtower@gmail.com to tell us that you intend to write an article and what it will be about. That way we can keep checking in with you on your progress, as we like to look after our writers/artists/poets. Also don't forget to give us an estimated date when your article is expected to be finished. Although please don't worry if you don't finish the article by the estimated date. We all have lives outside of Pagan Network and we are very understanding of this.
3. Let the Muse flow.....Write your article/create your artwork/pen that poem!
4. Email your finished masterpiece to witchtower@gmail.com. We will acknowledge receipt of your work and will also inform you of any changes that need to be done or what issue your masterpiece will be published in. Should we decide that your work is not suitable for publication we will also let you know. But don't let that put you off... practice makes perfect!

Now the Techy bit

LENGTH GUIDELINE

Anywhere between 1/4 side of A4 to 3 sides of A4.

Ideal length is 1 side of A4.

If your article is too long, consider breaking up into two articles.

Artwork should be 300dpi

FORMAT PREFERENCES

(in descending order of preference)

Microsoft Word (any version)

RTF file

Plain text file

Body of email

HTML file

Typed manuscript

How to Advertise in the Witchtower

With the Witchtower magazine being downloaded by hundreds of our members on each occasion, what better way is there to advertise any items for sale, your shop, course, magazine, or website?

We have recently reviewed our advertising rates and plan on opening a classified section shortly in addition to our normal standard adverts. So if you would like to take advantage of our great advertising rates please contact Melanie (aka Twilightgirl) at the witchtower@gmail.com to discuss your needs.

The discounted rates shown below are for shops who decide to join the Full Members Discount Scheme.

Standard Advert Size

	Standard Rate	Discounted Rate
6cm x 4cm text box	£5.00	£2.50
Half page	£15.00	£7.50
Full page	£25.00	£12.50
Inside Back Cover	£30.00	£15.00
Back Cover (full colour)	£60.00	£30.00

Classified Adverts

To advertise in the following sections:

Sales & Swaps, Moots or Websites you can do so for a maximum of 30 words/numbers. The cost of this is £1.00 per issue. You can pay in advance for one years worth of advertising (4 issues) for £4.00

Shops, Courses or Magazines you can do so for a maximum of 50 words/numbers. The cost of this advert per issue is £2.00 plus 10p per word after the maximum 50.

Please note that Pagan Network does not accept responsibility for advertisers. Please use your own judgement and if in doubt contact the advertiser first before handing over any money. Pagan Network can also not accept responsibility for the content of websites.

Pagan Network Full Members Discount Scheme

One of the advantages of becoming a Full Member of Pagan Network is that your membership card entitles you to discounts at shops taking part in our Discount Scheme.

If you run a shop (on or offline) and would like to take part in the scheme please contact Rainbowleigh, our Shop Liaison Officer to discuss further details on 0116 2852383

Below is a list of shops currently taking part. Further details can be found in the Full Members forum.

Black Cats and Broomsticks (online shop only)
Halcyon Daze - Wales
Madeline Rose - Leicester
Opal Moon - Glasgow
The Gem Tree - Leicester
The Magik Thread - Nottingham
The Witch Path (online shop only)
Solstice Designs (online shop only)

Moonshadows Realm (online shop only)
Hippypottermouse - Leeds
New Aeon Books - Manchester
Pentacle Magazine (online only)
The Heathern Peddler (online shop only)
The Thrifty Pagan (USA)
Witchcraft Ltd - Glastonbury

VACANCIES

We are looking for volunteers in the areas listed below. If you are interested please pm Julia Oakmoon

Server/Web Team

(This position will require further testing of knowledge/skills before appointment can take place)

Duties

Ensures the smooth running of the organisation's web presence and server.

Acts as an advisor to the Committee regarding issues relevant to the running, management and development of the web presence and server.

Installs software to keep the website running.

Maintains in-house programs.

Performs regular server maintenance.

Acts as first point of contact for technical queries and issues regarding organisation's online presence.

Acts as liaison between the organisation and server hosting.

Graphics Department

Pagan Network has its own graphics department headed up by Twilightgirl and Illarane in order for members to have one central area to contact.

We are currently looking for several volunteers who already have experience in graphic design to join the graphics dept. The work involves designing and printing convention tickets, business cards, banners, logos, adverts, flyers, leaflets etc.

If you are interested in volunteering for the graphics department please pm Twilightgirl detailing your experience.

Writers for the News/Media & PR Team

Duties

Draft and issue press statements once approved by the committee.

Produce a number of Pagan Network leaflets about Paganism and other subjects, these may be written by the committee/team leaders/teams.

Write articles about the organisation, such as reviews of events etc.

Regional Representatives

Duties

To be the public face of PN and understand the responsibility of being the public face of PN.

Have local knowledge of the area they cover and become acquainted with their local community.

Set in motion and run moots/events where needed and meet and greet members who wish to attend.

To liaise with other pagan groups where possible

To attend other pagan events where possible as the PN representative. Can also run a stall or leave flyers with permission.

To assist other RR's in their roles

To liaise with their local shops, with a view to leaving flyer's/cards (if any want to take part in the 10% scheme all details to be passed to Rainbowleigh).

Encouraging members to sign up for full membership by promoting the benefits of membership.

To keep members informed if a problem with the web site (downtime etc) happens.

To keep members details (with their permission to put them in touch with others in their area)

If wanted and needed a RR would also be able to sit on their local interfaith council.

Also with our backing they would be able to approach their local government (council) with a view to holding rites/rituals/ picnics on parkland. If the council permits it.

All details of the above need to be passed to the RR supervisor so that the committee can manage insurance etc (if over 30 people attend)

To try and help the pagan community in general by being the public face of a large pagan organisation.

VACANCIES

We are looking for volunteers in the areas listed below. If you are interested please pm Julia Oakmoon

Advertising Officer for the Witchtower

Duties

Deal with all queries regarding advertising and have knowledge of the current rates of advertising in the Witchtower.

Accept suitable adverts for the magazine once approved by the editor, ensuring that these are in the preferred layout and pass details onto the layout editor.

Ensure that invoices are sent out in a timely manner and liaise with the Treasurer over whether payment has been received. If payment has not been received, chase.

Promote and encourage advertising in the magazine to outside agencies/organisations.

Hold accurate records of all advertisers, including contact details, dates adverts published and whether payments received.

To work as a team, providing support/additional help to other team members when required.

Suggest new ideas for improving the magazine.

Advertisers for the Joint News, Media & PR Team

Duties

Look at ways of moving Pagan Network up the search engines, along with searching out new ways to promote/advertise Pagan Network.

Actively promote/advertise Pagan Network by issuing promotional materials at moots/events/shops as well as online.

Regular Article Writers for the Witchtower

Duties

Provide ideas for general topics for articles.

Write articles - at least one per issue.

Search out articles/artwork, contacting the authors for permission to publish the article/artwork. Ensure no copyright issues involved.

Track down copyright free graphics.

Prepare and carry out your own work timetable to meet production schedules issued by the Editor.

To work as a team, providing support/additional help to other team members when required.

Suggest new ideas for improving the magazine.

Research Officers for the Witchtower

Duties

Provide up to date information for submission to the magazine on Pagan Network Moots and Meetings.

Search out articles/artwork, contacting the authors for permission to publish the article/artwork. Ensure no copyright issues involved.

Track down copyright free graphics.

Prepare and carry out your own work timetable to meet production schedules issued by the Editor.

Seek out interesting information on what is going on and happening in the Pagan Community.

To work as a team, providing support/additional help to other team members when required.

Suggest new ideas for improving the magazine.

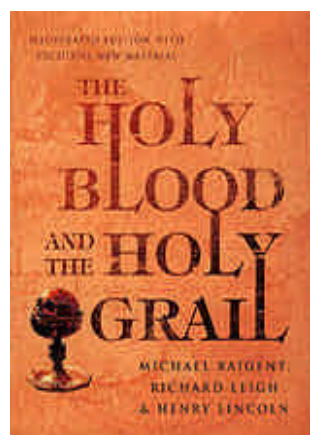
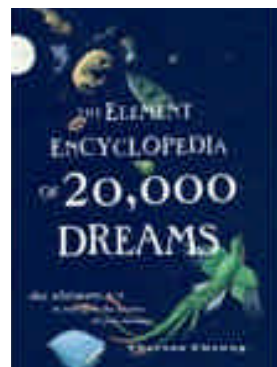
If you haven't heard about it, we've been running a BUY AT scheme for several years now. Its a perfect way to buy all you need and help support Pagan Network at the same time, as anything you buy through the shops on the scheme raises funds for Pagan Network. There are a whole variety of high street shops taking part that you can buy from. Amazon is one of our favourites, so much so that below you will find a selection of books from Amazon to wet your appetite! So take a look over at <http://buy.at/pagannetwork>

BUY AT WITH AMAZON

The Element Encyclopedia of 20,000 Dreams: The Ultimate A-Z to Interpret the Secrets of Your Dreams by Theresa Cheung £13.20

Synopsis

Unlock the secrets of your dreamlife with the latest in the hugely popular series of "Element Encyclopedias". This is the most comprehensive A-Z reference book on dream interpretation you'll ever find. Have you ever wondered what your dreams are trying to tell you? Sixth in the series of "Element Encyclopedias", this is the definitive guide to dream interpretation. Packed with fascinating information, "The Element Encyclopedia of 20,000 Dreams" is an extensive collection of the symbols that appear in your dreams and how to interpret what they mean for you. Dreams are universal and every culture throughout history has tried to unlock the secrets of the unconscious mind through the interpretation of dreams. Understanding the unique meanings of dream symbols can help in the way you experience your waking everyday lives and even foretell the future. Divided into easy-to-follow A-Z themed sections, from Animals, Conflict and Foreign Countries, to Monsters, Sex and Weather, this book holds compelling definitions of thousands of dream symbols that can also be found in the quick-reference Dream Directory at the back of the book. Find out about the variety of dream types - such as cathartic, lucid and precognitive dreams - plus dreams in history and folklore. Discover different traditions of dream interpretation and dream theorists - for example, analytical psychologist Carl Jung thought that cats in dreams represent the secretive side of a person's nature, and they can also denote a desire for sex or a warning of hidden dangers. Whatever your dream symbol or experience, you'll find an amazing treasure trove of interpretations here in "The Element Encyclopedia of 20,000 Dreams".



The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail (Paperback)

by Richard Leigh, Michael Baigent, Henry Lincoln £5.39

Synopsis

A nineteenth century French priest discovers something in his mountain village at the foot of The Pyrenees, which enables him to amass and spend a fortune of millions of pounds. The tale seems to begin with buried treasure and then turns into an unprecedented historical detective story - a modern Grail quest leading back through cryptically coded parchments, secret societies, the Knights Templar, the Cathar heretics of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and a dynasty of obscure French kings deposed more than 1,300 years ago. The author's conclusions are persuasive: at the core is not material riches, but a secret - a secret of explosive and controversial proportions, which radiates out from the little Pyrenees village all the way to contemporary politics and the entire edifice of the Christian faith. It involves nothing less than...the Holy Grail.

BUY AT WITH AMAZON



Supernatural: Meetings with the Ancient Teachers of Mankind by Graham Hancock £7.19

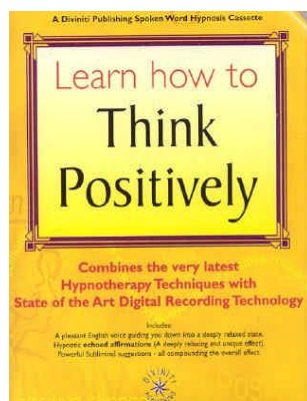
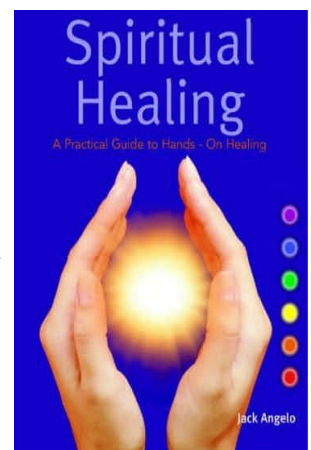
Synopsis

"Supernatural: of or relating to things that cannot be explained according to natural laws." Less than 50,000 years ago mankind had no art, no religion, no sophisticated symbolism, no innovative thinking. Then, in a dramatic and electrifying change, described by scientists as "the greatest riddle in human history", all the skills and qualities that we value most highly in ourselves appeared already fully formed, as though bestowed on us by hidden powers. In "Supernatural", Graham Hancock sets out to investigate this mysterious "before-and-after moment" and to discover the truth about the influences that gave birth to the modern human mind. His quest takes him on a journey of adventure and detection from the stunningly beautiful painted caves of prehistoric France, Spain and Italy to remote rock shelters in the mountains of South Africa where he finds a treasure trove of extraordinary Stone Age art. He uncovers clues that lead him to travel to the depths of the Amazon rainforest to drink the powerful plant hallucinogen Ayahuasca with Indian shamans, whose paintings contain images of "supernatural beings" identical to the animal-human hybrids depicted in prehistoric caves and rock shelters. And hallucinogens such as mescaline, also produce visionary encounters with exactly the same beings. Scientists at the cutting edge of consciousness research have begun to consider the possibility that such hallucinations may be real perceptions of other "dimensions". Could the "supernaturals" first depicted in the painted caves and rock shelters be the ancient teachers of mankind? Could it be that human evolution is not just the "blind", "meaningless" process that Darwin identified, but something else, more purposive and intelligent, that we have barely even begun to understand?

Spiritual Healing: A Practical Guide to Hands-on Healing by Jack Angelo £9.89

Synopsis

This text examines the beauty of the human energy field and the flow of subtle energies during healing and life experiences. It introduces the history of healing, through a clear account of the energetic processes involved to instruction and explanation of a comprehensive method of healing. The text also allows the reader to discover the holistic nature of spiritual healing. A number of exercises are offered to enable the reader to awaken their healing powers and include: how to sense etheric around others; sensing hand energies; energizing working and living spaces; locating the chakras; sensing the energy of animals and plants; protection of the healer; the energy field of pregnancy; working with the terminally ill; and distance healing.



Learn How to Think Positively (Audio CD) by Glenn Harrold £11.95

Synopsis

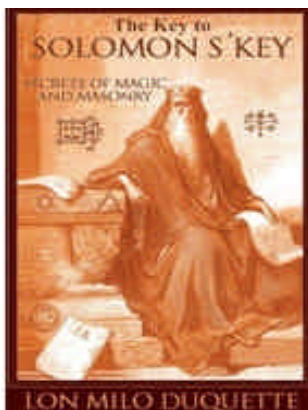
Side A will guide you into a deeply relaxed state of mind and body where you can learn, under hypnosis, how to cultivate the habit of positive thinking and see the positive in every situation. Side B will help you create a more positive future by using the full power of your imagination.

BUY AT WITH AMAZON

Ghosts: Spooky Stories and Eerie Encounters from the National Trust by Sian Evans £13.24

Synopsis

National Trust houses are bursting with ghost stories. The spirits of former owners, staff, even pets haunt their former homes and walk hand-in-hand with those living there today. Simply walking into an historic house can be enough to make you shudder, such is the intensity of the sense of the past. The figure of Elizabeth, Duchess of Lauderdale wanders solemnly through Ham House in Surrey, sometimes haunting the Chapel, sometimes accompanied by the ghost of her beloved spaniel, while Anne Boleyn is reputed to drive up to Blicking Hall in Norfolk in a coach driven by a headless horseman, and carrying her own head in her lap. The ruins of Corfe Castle in Dorset, Dunstanburgh Castle in Northumberland and Rievaulx Terrace and Temples in Yorkshire are similarly alive with ghoulish tales. This is a very special ghost book. Sian Evans has interviewed the people who work and live in the buildings today and gathered together information on sightings of ghosts that only they could provide, while her research into past ghost stories brings alive the characters of previous owners. Tracing the origins of the myths and legends that have grown up around mysterious old places, and comparing them with the very contemporary accounts of those people who actually spend their waking - and sometimes sleeping - hours there yields some surprising results. Most people love a ghost story, even if they claim not to believe in the supernatural. But for many staff, volunteers and tenants of the National Trust, the job is sometimes a matter of balancing the normal with the paranormal.



Key to Solomon's Key: Secrets of Magic and Masonry by Lon Milo DuQuette £7.06

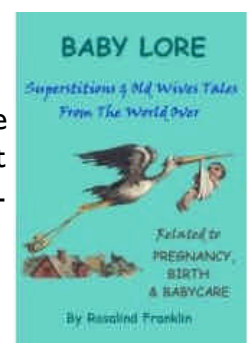
Synopsis

Sketching out a fascinating network of historic figures, cults, and Christendom, this book by an occult studies expert and respected authority on magic and sorcery takes western spiritual traditions seriously - but examines them with common sense and self-effacing humour. Working backward from the Freemasons to one of their original orders, the 14th-century Knights Templar, the account considers sorcery, heresy, and intrigues; explores the legend that the Knights possessed a powerful secret dangerous to the Church of Rome; and finds an essential clue to the order's practices in their connection to the biblical Solomon, king of Israel in the 10th century BC.

Baby Lore: Superstitions and Old Wives Tales from the World Over Related to Pregnancy, Birth and Babycare by Rosalind Franklin £8.99

Synopsis

A collection of hundreds of superstitions and old wives tales from every corner of the world related to every aspect of pregnancy, birth and babycare. This covers every aspect of baby folklore; from beliefs on determining baby's sex at conception, to beliefs on easing baby's teething pains.



Classifieds

Shops

Black Cats and Broomsticks

(online only)

18 Berry Edge Road, Consett, County Durham, DH8 5DS

<http://www.blackcatsandbroomsticks.co.uk/>

Halcyon Daze

55 Wellfield Road, Roath, Cardiff, CF24

3PA Tel: 02920 454432

<http://www.halcyon-daze.biz/>

Halcyon Daze (The little shop of calm)

1 Westgate, Cowbridge, Vale of Glamorgan

Tel: 01446 771166

Hippypottermouse

The Corn Exchange, Call Lane, Leeds, LS1 7BR

<http://www.hippypottermouse.co.uk/>

Madeline Rose

121 Kirby Road, Leicester, LE3 6BE

Tel: 0116 2536320

Moonshadows Realm (online only)

<http://www.moonshadows-realm.co.uk/>

New Aeon Books

95 Oldham Street, Manchester, M4 14W

Tel: 0161 839 9293

<http://www.newaeonbooks.co.uk/>

Opal Moon

De Courceys Arcade/Cresswell Lane,

Glasgow, Lanarkshire, G12 8AA

Tel: 0141 3386010

Pentacle Magazine

<http://www.pentaclemagazine.org>

The Gem Tree

Ground Floor, Indoor Market, Leicester, LE1 5HG

(They are open Tuesday to Saturday 9-5)

<http://www.thegemtree.com/>

The Heathen Peddler

<http://www.heathenpeddler.co.uk/>

The Magik Thread

29 High Road, Nottingham, NG9 4AF

Tel: 0115 9490673 or 0115 9394777

<http://www.themagikthread.co.uk/>

The Thrifty Pagan (USA)

Green Street, Fairhaven, MA02719, United States

<http://www.shop.thethrifypagan.com/>

The Witch Path (online only)

<http://www.thewitchpath.shop.co.uk/>

Witchcraft Ltd

10 Benedict street, Glastonbury, BA6 9EX

<http://www.witchcraftshop.co.uk/>

Solstice Designs (online only)

<http://www.solsticedesigns.co.uk/>

CRAFTING - PAST & PRESENT

Our ancestors didn't have shops where they could go and buy whatever their latest needs were, be it an incense holder or wand. Instead they crafted their tools of magic with their own hands, ensuring a stronger connection to their tools. So in this series we plan to show you how to craft your own tools from the past and present.

A Moon Mobile

The quickest way to make a moon mobile is to buy a metal or plastic coated embroidery hoop or cross stitch frame from your local craft/sewing store. They come in various sizes and are inexpensive. The next step is to cover the hoop/frame. You can do this by either wrapping tin foil around the hoop or painting it silver (make sure the paint covers metal or plastic). If you really want to jazz it up you can cover it in silver holographic wrapping paper!

Next fasten 3 equal lengths of silver thread around the hoop, ensuring they are evenly spaced. This will support your mobile from wherever you choose to hang it. Tie the three pieces of thread together at the top to form a loop so you can hang the mobile up.



Now comes the fun bit, choosing what to hang on your moon mobile. Obviously your first choice will be to represent the different phases of the moon. This can be done by simply cutting out the shapes on card and either painting or covering the card shapes.

Remember to pierce a hole near the top and fasten some thread through so you can hang them onto to the frame of the mobile. The waxing and waning moon shapes can be placed at 90 degrees to the full moon, and a black disc could be used to represent the dark moon.

With Yule almost upon us, the shops hold many delightful items that you can dress your moon mobile with. My favourites are the string garlands that have small round mirror disks on them. I like to weave them loosely around the entire hoop letting them dangle so they catch the light; the tinsel star shape garlands also look good when wound around the hoop. You can also pick up some glittered pentagram shapes (otherwise known as Christmas tree decorations). Crystals that are sold for jewellery making look pretty when hung up too and they come already pierced for you to attach your thread.

Just about anything associated with the moon can be hung on your mobile, if your not one for the shiny, sparkly items (I'm sure I was a magpie at one time!) then you could cut out photos of night animals such as owls, and paste them on to card and hang them up, you could even have a wolf howling at the moon or a witch flying across the sky. So experiment and let your imagination roam.

If you would like to submit your own crafting instructions/photos please email them to the wichtower@gmail.com



Regional Representatives

Pagan Network has a number of Regional Representatives based around the country who organise moots and events for members as well as liaising with other groups. If you are interested in becoming a regional representative please see our vacancies section for more information.

CURRENT REPRESENTATIVES

Rainbowleigh
Jacq
Rhiannon
Europa
Jude
Mousedemon
Sleepingdragon
Belladonna silver
Joolz
Ravenous
Snellous
New Aeon
Donyea
Deadly_Whispers
Andy Norfolk
Julia Oakmoon

AREA COVERED

East Midlands/ Leicestershire
East Midlands/Derbyshire
West Midlands/Birmingham
Wales and at the moment NI
Wales
London
Devon
Scotland
North yorkshire
West Yorkshire
South Yorkshire
Manchester
Lancashire
Channel Islands
Cornwall
Bristol, Somerset,, Gloucestershire & Dorset

FEATURED SHOP

Each issue we will be featuring one of the shops taking part in the Full Members Shop Discount Scheme, this issue we are featuring Moonshadow's Realm.

Moonshadow's Realm

www.moonshadows-realm.co.uk

Visit the website of Moonshadow's Realm and you get more than just a shop, there is a whole community! You can visit the forums and chat with people, download themes and wallpapers for your computer, visit Cauldron Corner, where a wealth of information awaits you on a variety of subjects, there's even a kids zone!

Moonshadow's Realm accepts the following types of payment in their online shop: Cheques, Cash, Online Banking and Paypal. Delivery time is between 3 to 5 working days. Although Moonshadow's Realm is an online shop only, they do provide an address and contact details should you wish to discuss your order with them.

So, what is there in the online shop to tempt you? Here are a few things that caught my eye!

Green Man Tealight Holder £3.45

This delightful tealight candleholder is of the Green Man and has lots of details such as



mushrooms on his head and a tiny snail, as well as roots and leaves that make up the structure of his face. His eyes are glass spheres that help to reflect the light and give this Green Man an ethereal look.

The holder measure 100mm x 85mm and each comes complete with a tealight candle.



Essence Of Autumn, Large Pillar Candle £6.95

These wonderful, aromatic pillar candles are multi scented and are a mix of layers, each layer has a different fragrance, in combinations of bayberry,

vanilla nut, wild lavender, gingerbread, mum's apple pie and blueberry.

A superb quality candle standing 225mm high x 65mm diameter, with a burn time of 30 hours plus approx. Each candle has a suede effect tie with a label making them ideal for gift giving.

Witch In A Cauldron Money Box

£4.95

This cheeky little witch money box is made from resin and come in 2 designs.

On the base of the money box is a rubber bung covering the opening where its contents can be removed. Each witch money box comes individually boxed and measures approximately 140mm high.



Rainbow Moon Goddess Shoulder Bag £4.25

Beautiful black velvet bag ideal for carrying your purse and small items. The bag has a zip fastening to provide extra security and has a long black cord shoulder strap. Decorated with a neon embroidered moon goddess in the centre.



The bag measures 180mm high x 150mm wide.

Rainbowleigh interviewed Moonshadow's Realm on behalf of Pagan Network to find out more!

PN: How long have you been running Moonshadow's Realm and how many staff do you employ?

MR: Moonshadow's has been running for just over 4 years now and it's just me and Pyewacket the cat.

PN: What inspired you to start this kind of shop?

MR: I got tired of being ripped off and overcharged for basic magical items!

PN: How did you decide on the name for your shop?

MR: Long story but it involved the moon and a dream.

PN: What do you feel attracts people to your shop or website?

MR: Fast, friendly service and great items at affordable prices.

PN: What do you consider are your best selling items?

MR: Herbs, candles, crystals, oils and the Moonshadows Realm range of kits and products.

PN: Do you have a mailing list where people can sign up to be informed of new products and special offers?

MR: Yes, customers can sign up to the newsletter when they create an account with us.

PN: What made you decide to take part in the Pagan Network Discount Scheme?

MR: If you read the About Us page on Moonshadow's Realm, you'll see that joining the PNDS is a logical extension of Moonshadows policy.

PN: Why should people chose to shop with you?

MR: Because we offer value for money and great service.

PN: Do you see your shop expanding and if so in what direction?

MR: It's more evolving than expanding. We've been quietly growing over the years and will continue to do so.

PN: If you don't mind answering this question, what religious beliefs do you have?

MR: Pagan

PN: Is there anything else you would like to say?

MR: Moonshadow's Realm isn't just a shop, it's a growing community, we have information pages inside our Cauldron Corner on various subjects such as Sabbats and Herbs, we also have columns written by forum members, there's Crystal Cavern and Twisted Willow's - Confessions Of A Try Hard Pagan. As well as our forum, which is used by our customers and people both Pagan and non-pagan. The community side is the aspect of Moonshadow's that I'm most proud of, I prefer to think of customers as real people with real lives just like me, not purses!



The Cost of Wicca

by Thea Faye

A frequent complaint on internet forums is that those new to wicca would love to properly pursue the path, but it is simply too expensive to acquire all the tools. This throws up a number of interesting issues; not least of which is exactly how much does it cost to be wiccan?

Assuming that someone's introduction to wicca has come via reading, the below list should give an indication of why the cost might seem so prohibitive to any aspiring wic-let.

1x A Witch's Bible by Stewart and Janet Farrar	£10
1x Uncle Bucky's Big Blue Book	£10
1x True Magick by Amber K	£5
1x Wicca: A Year and a Day by Timothy Roderick	£10
At least 2 Silver Ravenwolf books	£20
1x Enchanted: Titania's Book of White Magic	£15

So your basic reading list to start with will set you back £70 (I will come back to the subject of chosen reading matter later). Having read these books, however, it will soon become apparent that there are a number of must-have tools that you need before you can really call yourself wiccan. Obviously, you'll want to buy only the best and most beautiful goods from genuine pagan suppliers (hey, let's support our fellow brothers and sisters of the Craft and not give any money to the Man), of which the internet has a seemingly limitless number, and a rough guide to the requisite items and their cost might read as follows:

2x knives (one black handled, one white handled)	£150
1x pentacle	£10
1x incense holder	£20
9x incense blends (8 for sabbats and 1 for general)	£45
Assorted coloured candles	£20
Min. 5 candlesticks (4 quarters + altar)	£50
1x chalice	£25
2x bowls (1 for salt, 1 for water)	£15
1x embroidered altar cloth	£25
1x wand	£50
1x bell	£15
1x drum	£15
1x Farmers Almanac	£10
1x Moon phase poster for ease of reference	£10
1x BoS with pentacle decoration on cover	£25
1x beautiful, fitted robe	£75
1x large pentacle necklace/wiccan degree symbol	£15

Which comes to a staggering £575 on top of the £70 you've already shelled out for books!!! And this does not include the price of spell ingredients, of which you'll want to build up a good supply. No wonder that there is a misconception proliferating that being wiccan is an expensive business.

What's that? I hear you say. Mis-conception? But surely that list is comprehensive and, for the most part, essential for anyone wishing to pursue a wiccan path?

That's right. Misconception. There is an awful lot of absolute nonsense out there about Wicca that is accepted as fact by the uninitiated. Yet the simple reality is that Wicca is an initiatory mystery tradition. This is not the place to debate the necessity of initiation to be Wiccan, nor is it the right time to compare the merits of solitary work vs. being in a coven. However, I humbly posit that if you do wish to follow a path modelled along Wiccan lines, you owe both yourself and the tradition respect enough to find out what it really entails. As such, it is not worth wasting money on any book which is not written by someone with direct, personal experience of that path, so take off your reading list anything by a "British Traditional Wiccan" (no such thing) or anyone who openly states that they are not initiated. Look for texts by Gardner, the founder of Gardnerian Wicca, or those who worked with him or Sanders (from whom we have Alexandrian), such as Doreen Valiente. Bear in mind that, since Wicca is an oath bound tradition, you will not find everything laid on a plate and will need to exercise discernment and judgment as to whether everything discussed is truly representative of what occurs within covens, nevertheless, this will give you a much better idea of what the actual cost of being Wiccan is.

So how much will buying good books cost you? The simple truth is, as much or as little as you like. Your local library is obliged to source any book you require, but you might be surprised by what sits on the shelf in the religion and spirituality section. Try before you buy. You will soon see for yourself which authors you will refer back to and which you will seriously regret having paid anything to in royalties. Certainly I've found that the number of texts I refer to frequently is a rather small number, but I have a fair few on my shelves that I have only read once – and, in some cases, not even finished because they were so dire (hint: casting circle does not involve surrounding yourself with a ring of candles or drawing a ring of salt about you). Having decided which books you feel are worthy, again, look

around – you may well find that you can obtain good quality second hand volumes on eBay or from reputable second hand suppliers.

Already we have been able to cut the cost of being Wiccan from £70 to what is, effectively nothing. So what about the tools? Surely you must need some tools? "Need" is a moot point – all you need to meditate is a quiet space, for example. Nevertheless, it is helpful to build up your Craft equipment as you become more adept in your understandings and practices. To this end, it is worth looking away from specifically pagan-oriented shops and thinking outside the box, since, just as when planning a wedding, the same

service will cost you at least twice as much from someone running a bridal shop, it is not unheard of for pagan suppliers to add a premium to their goods when you can buy the same elsewhere for a fraction of the price. Take your wand, for example. You can buy beautiful, handcrafted wands which truly are a work of art and spend as much on them as you like. Or you can bite the bullet and make your own. Contrary to popular belief, you do not have to be particularly talented at woodwork to do this. The techniques for gathering the wood and making your wand are well documented elsewhere and a simple, oiled wand, taken from a tree that was willing to help you, that you have put your energy into, will cost you nothing but time and effort and will grant you much better results than something which looks prettier but has no soul. Again, we have slashed the price of being Wiccan to essentially zero.

Of course, it is necessary to spend some money on tools – the athame, for example. However, there is nothing wrong with going to your local kitchenware shop for this – and whilst you're there, you can pick up a nice large goblet which can serve as your chalice, again slashing the cost. Car boot sales, junk and antique shops, eBay, all of these can be veritable treasure troves for the aspiring Wiccan. Making your own as much as you can is always the better option, saving money being the least benefit to doing this. The simple truth is, you



will get better results from something you have put your blood, sweat and tears into. Looking nice is the least consideration when it comes to the Craft. And if you really cannot stomach the concept of making your own because you simply are not a practical person, consider some form of skill swap – my kitchen shop-bought athame has a handle crafted for me by a very dear friend and whilst the material cost might have been low, it is a tool that has served me very well over the years. You may well find that you have some very talented friends and contacts who are willing to help you out through the barter system. You might also find that as you travel a magical path, the most surprising people give you extremely useful gifts (I have a beautiful set of bowls which are used in ritual which were a present from my former employers!).

Realistically, you can put together the basic essentials for under £100 in total. But personally, I do not feel that this reflects the true cost of being Wiccan, because, whether you choose to seek out a coven or not, the real cost is in time, effort and simple hard work. The learning never stops. A spiritual path should not cost you excessive amounts to follow and, indeed, in my opinion, the more you are charged, the less spiritual it really is. No coven should charge you a fee, although contributions of incense, food, drink, etc., may be required and are perfectly reasonable. But far greater than any financial concern is the simple fact that if you choose to work with the Gods, you will certainly live in interesting times. The real cost will be surprising and unique to the individual. Yet the rewards are worth it, if you are genuinely willing to suffer to learn. Being Wiccan is not something you buy from an online supplier. It is a path you walk every moment of your life. So, if you are considering becoming Wiccan, you need to ask yourself – is that a price you are willing to pay?

Sweet and Spicy Pumpkin Seeds

Ingredients

Pumpkin seeds
Salt
5 tablespoons - Sugar
¼ teaspoon - Salt
¼ teaspoon - Ground cumin
¼ teaspoon - Ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon - Ground ginger
Pinch - Cayenne pepper
1-¼ tablespoons - Peanut oil

Preparation

When you are cleaning your pumpkin before carving the design, save the seeds in a bowl. Do not wash your seeds prior to roasting. Washing can remove some of the flavour.

Remove the seeds from the strings and place a single layer on a baking sheet. Try and make an even layer, the less they lay on each other, the better they can bake.

Add salt to taste and bake at 250 degrees until dry, stirring occasionally. Bake for about 15 to 30 minutes or until the start to turn a very light gold.

In a medium bowl combine 3 tablespoons of the sugar and the salt, cumin, cinnamon, ginger, and cayenne.

Heat peanut oil in a large nonstick skillet over high heat. Add pumpkin seeds (after they are baked) and 2 tablespoons sugar. Cook until sugar melts and the pumpkin seeds begin to caramelize, about 45 to 60 seconds.

Transfer pumpkin seeds to bowl with spices and stir well to coat. Let cool.

You can store the seeds in an airtight container for up to 1 week.

COMPETITION TIME

Each issue we will be running a photography competition related to the Sabbat that the magazine is issued.

So, how does it work? To enter the competition you need to select a title from the list below and take a photograph of what that title means to you or a photograph that best represents the title.

There will be three winners, one winner will be chosen per title.

All winning photographs from this competition will be shown in the Yule issue.

To submit your photograph email it to the wichtower@gmail.com along with the title you have chosen so we know which category to judge you under. Photographs can be any size as we can always resize them for the issue. Photographs must also be your own (no stealing them off the internet!).

Judges will be Twilightgirl and Deadly Whispers (and no, sending us chocolates will not sway our judgement!)

This competition is open to all Full Members and Subscribers of the Wichtower.

The closing date for this current competition is the 15 January 2007.

So choose your title and get those cameras clicking!

Autumn Equinox/Samhain Issue (Choose from the following titles)

- 1. Guided by the Jack-O-Lantern**
- 2. Beyond the Grave**
- 3. Autumn Colours**

The three prizes for this issues competition will be the Pentagram shown - stone colour may vary (made from fine pewter, nickel free)



DIARY OF A SACRED TREE - PART 4

Written by Beith-ann & Candlesprite

As we have discovered over the past few seasons the Oak tree had been standing in the middle of ancient woodland for many centuries. No-one was quite sure for how many centuries but one particular tree expert had estimated around 1000 years, give or take one hundred. For the past few centuries the Oak had lived a fairly peaceful existence – well, that was true until this past year when a mediaeval rubbish tip was discovered and local amateur archaeologists, who had a Diploma in Time Team Addiction, pronounced the findings to be the residence of a lost Celtic King. Of course this was all hog-wash but it did not stop various pagans, druids, witches and just about anyone else from treating the Oak Tree as a focus for their rituals and dodgy doings. Most of the time the Oak was amused, bemused or downright disgusted with some of the events that had happened over the past year. What nobody even realised was the Oak was much wiser than mere Humans could ever imagine. The tree also knew something that neither the archaeologists nor the various other groups had even considered, as will be revealed later in this last episode of the Diary of a Sacred Tree!

Samhain

I can feel something big is about to happen tonight. I can feel it in my roots and on the tips of my branches. There has been an air of expectancy in the light westerly breezes over the past few days and for once I'm very excited. I'm quite thankful for those breezes for other reasons, too. Firstly, I was able to shake some more of my acorns, which have been weighing down my branches more than usual this autumn. More acorns usually means more squirrels and more squirrels make me more nervous and irritable. Now, the squirrels are quite content to forage amongst my roots without pestering me too much. Secondly, the breeze was finally able to relieve me of the awful stink of smoke which had been hanging around for over a week. The smoke was the result of some more of those weird humans who occasionally visit me, in between the ribbon-hangers and gemstone givers, and use me for their perverted practices. Well, perverted to me as I see no sense in why they do some of those things.

This particular time there was a small group of five. One of them, obviously the leader, was carry-

ing a small bag and a drum and had an odd voice which sounded vaguely like a mole. He also had some rather bright feathers hanging from his belt from no bird I've ever seen before in this part of the world. Mole Man spoke to the others for a short while and then asked one of the group, a woman, to stand up against me and pretend to go to sleep. Mole Man then picked up his drum (why does there always have to be a drum?) and started to hop up and down, beating the drum and chanting something less musically than a crow can sing! The connection with the crow was further implicated when, after he had stopped chanting, he pulled out of his bag a crow's wing and a tight bundle of herbs, which he then set fire



to. The stench from the herbs has got to be the worst I've ever smelled. It was even worse than when that squirrel was struck by lightning during a particular bad storm this summer. If you've ever seen and smelled a squirrel running around with its tail aflame you'll know what I mean! Anyway, this was much, much worse. There was even a family of squirrels choking deep in a hollow of my trunk, especially the one with no tail and suffering from post-lightning distress syndrome! Mole Man then did this funny dance around both the woman and me, wafting the herb smoke and stench with the crow's wing for some time and then stopped and asked the woman how she felt. Once she had stopped choking she managed to smile and say something intelligible, which made the man shrug his shoulders and then offer to do the same for everyone else. Strangely enough the others declined and began to leave without saying thank-you (to me or Mole Man) and made their way past the Visitor's Centre (without even buying a gift plastic oak leaf). The man despondently packed away his wing, picked up his drum and walked away leaving the stinking herb bundle behind for everyone to enjoy! Thankfully, over a week later, the stench has now gone and I think the only thing that found the whole event enthralling was a mole that was passing by at the time!

One of those Unicorn-Fiddler Druids paid me a

visit on his own the next day and left shortly afterwards doing a silly dance and shouting 'eureka'! Apparently what he had seen was some mistletoe hanging from one of my branches and it was like he had hit the jackpot in the 'I'm so out of touch with reality' competition! You know, I knew that thrush, who hangs out around these parts, was a bit of a sad, lonely sort. I now recall he had disappeared 3 years ago westwards and came back with a smile on his beak. What he also brought back with him from his exploits with foreign thrushes was a parasite which can germinate and sometimes grow upon Oak trees. No wonder there are no female thrushes around here that trust him! Not surprisingly, the Fiddler didn't buy a gift plastic leaf either. Tight git!

Those plastic oak leaves, sold at the Visitor's Centre, are rubbish! They look nothing like oak leaves, and yet all of the smaller people seem to be buying them when they come to visit. The annoying thing is most of them are left behind beneath me, amongst my real leaves, which have just started to fall. Mind you, there was a particularly slender woman, as pale as a silver birch, who sat down beside me yesterday and picked up a leaf from the ground and began to 'meditate' with it for an hour. I really don't know what revelation she expected but if she had meditated properly she would have seen 'Made in Taiwan' written upon the back of the leaf!

The breeze has all but died away now as I await what is about to happen, whatever that may be, and as the sun sinks beyond the western horizon and the stars overhead begin to slowly appear so also does a light mist from the stream which flows through the woodland. Already I can hear the first stirrings of owls and other creatures of the night. The first sign that people are approaching is the small yellow lanterns beyond the (now repaired) bridge over the stream. Like before, the Coven of the Rainbow Fartarses have arrived first, this time dressed all in black robes with fluorescent skeletons painted on their backs, with the exception of one woman who was pretending to be a butterfly by wearing green wings. Each of the Coven had small knives tucked in their belts. True to form, the Grove of the Unicorn Fiddlers arrived hot on their heels. These were carrying candles, which kept going out, and also robed all in black but with sprigs

of mistletoe painted on their backs. Each one of them was carrying a small sickle tucked in the belts.

As both groups aligned themselves facing each other on opposite sides of me, a third group arrived. Now, I had never seen these guys before and each one of them tried to look very serious in pure white robes, carrying little books in their hands and with small wooden crosses tucked in their belts. I'm not sure if they were supposed to be weapons or not but they certainly freaked out both the Fiddlers and Fartarses, who were whispering something about 'Born-Again Christians'. Now, this comment seemed strange to me because didn't they know that everyone was born again in some form or another?

The Born-Agains could not decide where to stand so they split into two smaller groups in between the Fiddlers and Fartarses. Not knowing how to proceed now that a third element had arrived the Coven and Druid leaders called a meeting and decided that they should join forces (for once) and build a small fire with some wood that both groups had brought with them. The wood was laid and another meeting had to be called to determine who was to light it. About half an hour later, after much subdued argument, it was decided the Druids would light the fire but only because the Druid leader was the only one who had thought to bring along a box of matches! No sooner was the fire lit than the head Born-Again started to jump up and down, waving his little book and wooden cross, and shouting obscenities at anyone who would listen.

By this time the small fire was struggling desperately to stay lit and yet another meeting was called to decide who should have possession of the box of matches. After another half an hour of discussion it was decided the head of the Coven should do the honours. This time the fire blazed well and this time all of the Born-Agains started jumping up and down waving books and crosses. I'm really not certain what happened next, but like many times before both the Unicorn Fiddlers and the Rainbow Fartarses seemed to be fighting over who had ancient rights to perform rituals around me. A few knives and sickles were drawn, much to the amusement of the Born-Agains, who were spoiling for a fight anyway, and then the woman dressed as a but-



terfly grabbed the wooden cross from the Born-Again leader and then threw it in the fire. To her amazement the fire blazed higher and then in between the Fiddlers and Fartarses yelling at each other the Butterfly Woman grabbed the wooden crosses from all the other Born-Agains and threw them into the fire, too. As you can expect what happened next was a three-way fist fight full of insults and lots of bloody noses. It didn't really help that the mist had thickened with the smoke from the fire by this time, (what were those crosses made of?) so no-one could see who they were thumping – even people from their own groups!

While this was all happening yet another group was approaching and crossing over the bridge. This time it was the local police force all kitted out with riot shields and truncheons and who apparently had been tipped off that 'something big was going down at the Old Oak at Samhain' and after the last time were making sure they were prepared. As they crossed over the bridge they lined themselves up as menacingly as possible and began marching towards the fighting.

Now, if I may digress briefly and refer back to that old mediaeval dump, what everyone had failed to realise was that all of that rubbish must have come from somewhere and no-one had ever taken the time to find out where. What they had failed to miss, just on the edge of the woodland, was a wide but shallow mound. If anyone had taken the time to actually ask me I could have told them it was a burial mound where a local chieftain and his warriors had been interred after a great battle when I was just a young sapling. Every Samhain since the battle one of the ghosts of the warriors would poke his head out of the mound and see what was happening, look around for a while and then disappear again with a bored look on his face. It just so happened that exactly as the Fiddlers, Fartarses, Born-Agains and Police were just coming together in all-out free-for-all battle that a warrior poked his head out of the Mound and decided this year was not going to be boring. With a blood-curdling cry the Warrior called to his Chieftain and brothers-in-arms and with swords, spears and shields raised they ran into the Woodland promising revenge on the descendants of the invaders of their Land.

Can you imagine the looks on everyone's faces as they saw a small army of ghostly warriors come screaming at them out of the mist? I laughed so hard that my roots positively tingled and every last remaining acorn (and even a few bemused squirrels) fell from my branches and onto the heads of the daft buggers. Everyone was in a panic with faces full of fear. Butterfly Woman had somehow managed to fly onto the top of the Visitor's Centre and then had to fly off again as it had caught fire. The Fartarses lived up to their name and bolted leaving a smell behind. The Fiddlers lost all sense of purpose and promised the Born-Agains they would change their ways before also bolting. The Born-Agains tried to leave with dignity but gave up after 2 seconds and bolted in the same direction as the Fartarses, which was a mistake due to the smell. As for the Police – well, they lined up for one final assault but then decided that truncheons were no match for warriors in full chain mail and brandishing sharp swords and spears, dropped everything and ran towards the bridge, which incidentally collapsed as the last policeman ran over it. The Warriors, not wanting to be robbed of a good fight, gave chase and the last I saw of them they were disappearing into the mist after the Unicorn Fiddlers.



Epilogue

The Battle of the Big Oak, as that Samhain Night became known as, was big news for a few weeks and then became old news. The Council decided it was not in their best interests to build another Visitor's Centre, the archaeologists realised the error of their ways, and the farmer who had originally owned the woodland was as pleased as punch to be offered back the land at a knock-down price and for a huge profit on what he had sold it for. Members of the warring bands of Druids and Witches who were not in police custody, along with all the other weird visitors, gave the Oak a wide birth afterwards, saying it was cursed, and they found some other poor unsuspecting tree in another woodland to pick on.

The Oak Tree still did have a few occasional visitors but none of them stayed for very long and never did anything weird. The Oak did get to know two regular visitors quite well, whom he remembered from earlier that year. One was the man in green, who would quite often quietly sit and write against his great trunk or collect owl feathers, and

the other was a female who would sometimes accompany him.

It was on one such occasion that he heard the man in green speak for the very first time to his female companion, "You know, I bet this old oak could tell a tale or two if it could speak." "Oh yes! he has many tales and very good they are too" she retorted. The man looked at her slightly askance "I thought you could hear him too, you spend enough time around here with a daft look on your face" She pulled a notebook out of her bag, "Look" she said "I have been making notes, you can read them if you like" A few moments later a breeze appeared and rattled the dry leaves which still hung upon the tree's branches. The female laughed and said "Listen, I do believe he's talking to you." The man also laughed. The female smiled "I'll leave you for a little while and you can catch up later". Alone, he sat down against the great trunk and pondered. With closed eyes and deep in thought he listened to the hypnotic sound of the wind in the tree's branches and before long fell into a sleep, dreaming of an ancient voice. When he awoke, seemingly only minutes later, the man in green picked up his pen and paper and started to write slowly, precisely and almost compulsively the first line, which read "The Diary of a Sacred Tree".

The End

Frog Eye Salad (Fruit Salad)

INGREDIENTS

Egg Mixture
1 cup - Sugar
2 teaspoons - Flour
½ teaspoon - Salt
1 ¾ cups - Pineapple juice
2 - Eggs (beaten)
1 tablespoon - Lemon juice
Pasta
3 quarts - Water
2 teaspoons - Salt
1 teaspoon - Cooking oil
1 package - Pasta
Fruit and Topping
3 cans - Mandarin oranges, drained
2 cans - Crushed pineapple, drained
12 ounces - Cool Whip

PREPARATION

Combine sugar, flour, and ½-teaspoon salt. Gradually stir in pineapple juice and eggs. Cook over moderate heat, stirring until thickened. Add lemon juice. Cool mixture to room temperature.

Bring water, 2 teaspoons salt, and oil to boil. Add pasta and cook at a rolling boil until pasta is done. For a colour variation, add red (or green) food coloring to pasta as it cooks. Drain and rinse with water, drain again and cool to room temperature.

Combine egg mixture and pasta. Mix lightly but thoroughly. Refrigerate overnight in an airtight container.

The following day, add remaining ingredients in a large plastic bowl with a lid. Mix lightly, but thoroughly. Chill.

Salad may be refrigerated as long as a week in airtight container.

You can also add a package of marshmallows as a final touch.

INTERVIEW WITH A

PAGAN

A series of interviews with members of the Pagan Network. Here, 2stepfan2 puts the questions to Yashiel

PAGAN IDENTITY

PN: username

CORA: Cora / Yashiel

PN: What age are you and where do you live?

CORA: 35 – Hampshire, UK

PN: How would you describe your spiritual path?

CORA: Mine and mine alone – it's unique to me. Where I am right now is a blend of all paths I have walked before – each and every one of them still carries a voice in it and influences me. I'll leave it up to your readers to decide whether it qualifies as Paganism.

I'm in the final stages of joining a Co-Masonic Lodge and am finding that the past 6-8 months leading up to this moment have been a slow amalgamation of my Protestant childhood, my Catholic adult years, my Wiccan years and my brief brush with Traditional Witchcraft. All of that, and everything I've ever done, have led me here – "I was led from behind" to cite a line most Wiccan initiates will be familiar with.

PN: How did you get involved with this path? What's your "history"? How did your personal background influence this?

CORA: I have asked myself this question many a time before I took the first tentative step on this path. I think of it as the natural next step from Wicca. Wicca, as you may know, was founded by a Co-Mason, Gerald

Gardner. I was initiated into a Wiccan tradition on 25 March 2003, but gradually came to feel those leading the group were in it for the power, and were singularly unable to answer any truly deep questions. When they pushed me to do Second Degree while I knew that I was in no way ready for that, I asked them why they felt I was ready for it, and their answer was "The answer to all your questions lies within". Yeah, but I wasn't asking for my answers, was I? I was asking for theirs.

Long story short – I left the Coven Xmas 2004, had a brief and grievous encounter with fraudulent Traditional Witchcraft and subsequently entered into a long, dark period without any belief in anything divine whatsoever.

Twice now I had put my faith in frauds, and twice now they had crumbled before me, I will not put up with any bullshit and I will question until I get answers. I challenge everything, most of all myself.

Following those experiences I went on a tour of logic. And that, in the end, led me straight into the arms of Co-Masonry. I stripped Wicca as I knew it of all the fluffy crap until I was left with the one thing that made it tick for me: the psychological component, the urge for self-improvement. This I then followed straight to its source, and that's where I am right now: knocking at the door of Co-Masonry. Bizarrely enough, I am now at the

stage where pure logic dictates there MUST be a Supreme Being from whom all we know emanates. One look at the world outside and I am awestruck by the perfection of how it all fits together. There is Design to it. Who or what drew up the Design? Inert matter does not come to life of its own accord – it needs a stimulus. Who or what was that stimulus?

More and more I come to understand that to deny the Divine is to deny the Self!

PN: This Co-Masonry thing is so interesting for those who wouldn't have the first clue as to where to start, how did you find your potential Lodge?

CORA: I ran a search on the Internet and found a forum (www.thefreemason.com) that had a section for female and co-masonry. I posted in that section saying I was interested and could they point me in the right direction. The Mod immediately provided details, and I went straight

for Le Droit Humain. Female only masonry didn't appeal to me as I would not want to go on a spiritual journey that would per default exclude my husband. The other Co-masonic order ... I guess their website put me off. It didn't feel right. LDH did. I contacted the Order, got some info and a telephone chat was arranged. I spoke at length with a gentleman who later turned out to be the Grand Commander of the Order (had I known it I would never have been able to

speaking so openly; I would've been busier being impressed *LOL*) who pretty soon had an idea of where I might fit. He suggested two Lodges and said he'd ask their Masters to get in touch.

Patrick and I subsequently attended a St John's Ceremony which is open to the public, got talking with the members and hit it off straightaway. We were proposed and seconded as members that same day and now we're just about a month away from hearing whether we'll be allowed to join :-)

PN: I know this about Freemasonry and have assumed Co-Masonry is similar, but please correct me if I'm wrong... Earlier you mentioned the word 'fraud' several times; what about the fact that Masonic ritual claims origins from the building of King Solomon's Temple, but can only be 'proven' from 1717?

CORA: Actually, that question is a fallacy in its own right. United Grand Lodge of England was established in 1717 and as far as I know it denies all pre-existing forms of Freemasonry - if I'm wrong I'm sure there are brethren out there who will correct me.

Just like in Wicca there is a lot of speculation but very little proof. It's about as easy to prove F r e e m a s o n r y ' s Templar/Solomonic descendancy as it is to prove Gerald Gardner was indeed initiated into a genuine surviving ancient tradition!

Having said that, there are documents predating the formation of UGLE referring to, for example, the initiation of Christopher Wren. I guess the fact of the matter is that we'll never know, and that each of us will have to decide for themselves what to believe.

Masonic ritual does incorporate references to King Solomon and

many other concepts known through Judeo-Christianity, but as far as I know it doesn't actually claim descendancy; it is merely based in those times and myths.

PN: Have you always felt the same way about your spirituality, or have there been changes? If so, when, and how?

CORA: I have always been a deeply spiritual being, both as a Christian and a Pagan. I have also always been very individualistic in that, and very much against the grain. I do not follow, I explore. I find my own connections, my own meaning, and I will not be told by anyone what to believe, how to live my life and what, who or how to worship. I do not worship - I will not bend my knee to anything or anyone.

Yes - I'm a stubborn piece of work.

Regardless of what my beliefs may have been at any given time, I have always felt a deep connection with something beyond the reach and understanding of the human mind. As a child that was God, as a Wiccan that was the Goddess, as a human being that is something far beyond name or image, something ineffable and unfathomable, it just IS and requires no description. If you wanted me to put that in a framework the nearest thing would probably be the Ayn Soph Aur of the Qabalah - the Limitless Light.

That perhaps is the most profound change that I have undergone in terms of spirituality - I no longer have the need to describe It, much less name or visualise It. I simply accept It and make an effort to go with Its flow, but being human I like to think I know better every now and then.

PN: Have you ever been physically attacked or discriminated against because of being a pagan?

CORA: I'll never be able to

prove it, but I have a serious suspicion that my redundancy was sped up dramatically on account of my Pagan beliefs. My then employer had offered me redundancy but had given me 3 months in which to find another job, but funnily enough after a blazing row with my ex-HPS who subsequently posted my personal details on the web (Wiccan Rede anyone?) he was tipped off about my LiveJournal (now defunct) which detailed my Pagan life. Having found out he called me into his office and bade me farewell there and then. Being a legal mind I wilfully answered to his request to write a letter to formalise matters - obviously detailing his previous and accept offer of 3 months pay - and that day I walked out of my London job and began a new life.

PN: That is appalling behaviour (from the HPS as well as the employer). Do you think you would have moved away from Wicca even if it hadn't happened?

CORA: Actually this happened shortly after I left. I don't know to what degree those events are related, and I suppose I need to re-iterate here that I will never be able to prove it was the HPS. Either way, eventually I would have moved on - I am too much of a freethinker to be able to accept and work to dogma. Dogma is an affront to human intelligence.

PN: Has anyone ever made assumptions about you (good or bad) because of being a pagan? What were they?

CORA: I think most people who are not aware of what Paganism is about do have such assumptions. After all Paganism is not always portrayed in the best of ways, and let's face it: whenever Pagans volunteer to represent Paganism on TV, they make us all look like a right bunch of loons.

The flipside of the coin, of course, is people assuming that

you won't defend yourself because of the Wiccan Rede. Yeah, right. Tell that to one who is frequently nicknamed the "Valkyrie".

Talking of Pagans on TV, I had that exact same thought the other day after the 'Real Witch Project' appeared on Channel 4. But there must be some Pagan representatives in the media who are not, in fact, total loons...

Oh, I'm sure there are, but part of the problem is that the media aren't interested in portraying the every day down-to-earth grassroots Pagan - it doesn't make good television!

HOW PAGANISM FITS INTO YOUR LIFE

PN: What do you do for a living? Is there any conflict between your work life and your spirituality?

CORA: My job title is "Lead Contracts & Compliance Co-ordinator" which means virtually nothing unless you know I work in recruitment and am responsible for producing the company's contracts and guarding it from all legal and financial risks. I'm also the company's specialist of issues of Immigration and Nationality.

I don't find any conflicts between my work and my spirituality, mainly because I work with very honest and honourable people who take pride in their work and strive for absolute equality and morally impeccable behaviour.

PN: What are your hobbies and interests?

CORA: Believe it or not, but the first thing that came to mind was Maths! I've recently taken up an OU Certificate course in Mathematics just to prove to myself I can do it - I'm facing my Nemesis. That's Paganism for you: digging in deep and facing your inner demons.

One thing that's becoming more of a profession than a hobby now is writing. I am currently co-authoring a novel with my husband, and we're having great fun writing it. We actually went to visit our prime sets (Rosslyn Chapel and the Temple Church in London) which gives just that much more authenticity to what you're writing.

I also like to make new friends and have deep and meaningful discussions with them. I have a deep and lasting fascination with religion and psychology and love talking about those.

PN: What about your family and friends? Are they of similar spiritual paths to you, or are there differences?

CORA: My husband is in the same boat as me at the moment: we're both waiting to hear about our request for admission to the Lodge. Nevertheless, we approach spirituality - and life in general - from very different angles, which makes for very interesting discussions. Many of my friends do share that same open mind which I think is a prerequisite for dealing with matters of the spirit, and even though we all walk different paths, we do find a lot of common ground as well.

I come from a Christian background but thankfully my parents are both open minded and allowed me to find my own way.

PN: How would you rate the importance of the following aspects of your life? (Use percentages, total equally 100%)

- Time with family - 15
- Time with partner(s) - 25
- Time with friends - 10
- Spiritual time alone - 15
- Spiritual time with others - 10
- Your work, career, or time in education (if a student) - 15
- Hobbies and pastimes - 10

BELIEFS

PN: Do you believe in the existence of a 'deity'? If so, have you ever had any divine experiences?

CORA: I believe in the Universe, in humanity and the inseparable union of life - meaning that everything is connected. I believe something is at the origin of all that is, but I cannot begin to, nor do I care to, describe it. I believe the concept of 'deity' is man made - an attempt to relate to that which is at the origin on human and antropomorphic terms. That is not to devalue or ridicule these beliefs - it just means that I see the belief in a deity as having a relationship with one particular emanation of the Universal Light which pervades and binds us all. It is at our Foundation and is what we aspire to, and it is the very stuff we're made of.

As above, so below - we are all gods.

PN: Do you believe in the existence of 'spirits' - human or non-human? Have you ever had any experiences of 'spirit'?

CORA: I see the human condition as existing of three distinct components: body, spirit and soul - the corpus, spiritus, animus of the ancient alchemists. Compare it to a man driving a car. The car is the body, the driver the soul - the spirit is the safety belt - that which keeps the body safely connected to the car.

The spirit is the energy pattern which links our essence, our soul, into our earthly vessel, the body. Energy takes a long time to dissipate - so even without its body or its soul I can see it as entirely possible that the spirit, although ever weakening, would linger.

As a matter of fact that is the premise Patrick and I are writing our novel from, but obviously I shouldn't say too much about that. I think I have had experi-

ences of such residual energy patterns, but I am logical and down-to-earth enough to consider it was just my mind going in hyper-drive – I'll probably never know.

PN: Do you believe in the existence of magic? As a believer, how would you explain it?

CORA: Life is magic; it's the stuff existence is made of. As such, I don't believe magic is anything special, nor that it is the prerogative of occultists to wield it. As a matter of fact I think 'magic' as per the common New Age Fluffy definition is vastly overrated and often a big load of nonsense.

Crowley was onto something when he defined magic as "the science and art of causing change to occur in conformity with the will" and deliberately included acts of a mundane nature in this definition.

Magic is not something to make you feel better than others, or to make you seem special and oh so powerful, it merely means you have looked inside yourself and have faced your demons; that you have taken control of your life and destiny.

PN: Now who of those Buffy-wannabes can say that, eh?

CORA: Do you practice your spirituality alone, in a group, or both? Was this a deliberate decision or a necessity?

Gut response was going to be 'both', but then I realised the question is a complete no-brainer.

You do not 'practice' spirituality – you LIVE it, every second of your life, with every breath you take and every word you speak. It becomes so much part of who you are that it pervades you and your life to the profoundest levels and you really could not possibly tell where you end and it

begins. In terms of my Path, which I assume your question was referring to – it would again be both. Freemasonry is an initiatory tradition and much of its instruction takes place in Lodge, but as a very important Masonic Q&A (similar to the initiatory questions in Wicca) has it: "Q: Where were you first made a Freemason? A: In my heart".

The one cannot be without the other – I couldn't possibly make that choice. Even when I'm out on my own I am still part of my tradition, and more importantly, of the great brotherhood of man. Everything I do affects everything around me. I cannot possibly see that in isolation.

PN: Do you believe in the reality of curses? Would you ever do one? What types of spell would you include in your concept of a 'curse'?

CORA: Curses are based in the wilful and ruthless application of fear on the human psyche. They fit Crowley's definition of magic to a T: "the science and art of causing change to occur in conformity with the will".

If you know a little about the human psyche it is ****-easy to make someone think they're cursed – what they don't understand (and you, as the person cursing them, hopefully do understand) is that it is their own beliefs and actions that is affecting them, not anything you would've done. You merely planted the seed of fear and doubt – they nourished and grew it.

Magic, really, is psychology, used in ways that lie outside its normal applications.

PN: I'm pretty sure that's a Weatherwaxian philosophy (as in Granny Weatherwax from Terry Pratchett's *Weird Sisters*). Speaking of this and your forthcoming book, have any authors in

particular influenced your spirituality?

CORA: yeah, now that I re-read it I suppose you're right - it's the headology thing, isn't it? Well, let's face it: Terry is pretty switched on when it comes to grassroots paganism and the rise of Queen Fluff.

I think, funnily enough, James Barclay (author of the *Raven Chronicles*) has influenced my spirituality. Statements like "Mana will always take the way of the least resistance" and "One Mana, one mage" find deep resonance within me - and he just gets the whole magic thing (intent not colour) absolutely spot-on. I asked him about it once, about his deep innate understanding of magic, but he said it was all made up... Clive Barker (the master of dark fantasy - come to think of it he is probably responsible for cultivating my dark streak*G*) has had an influence, too - not just in the magical atmosphere of his earlier books, but perhaps more importantly in the sociological concepts in his later books. There's a lot of emphasis of self-responsibility in those later books.

PN: Do you think the law of three-fold returns exists?

CORA: Don't be daft – sorry, nothing personal. I believe in cause and effect, not in Divine Reward or Divine Retribution. And where on earth does that threefold rubbish come from?

Everything we do, say or think - or sometimes the things we don't do or say - affects the world around us. A single smile can make the world a better place – never forget that.

ACTIVITIES

PN: What practices are regularly incorporated in your spiritual life? (E.g. meditation, prayer, ritual, magic, visualisations, trance

work...)

CORA: I'm guessing you're expecting this answer ... Life is my spiritual life. Everything I do is part of my spiritual life. In terms of things that are specifically spiritual I would say reflection is my chief means of exploring spirituality, along with meditation, visualisation and healing.

PN: What festivals, holy days, special occasions etc do you mark as part of your spirituality?

CORA: Samhain has always been special to me and always will be; same for Beltaine. Freemasonry – perhaps surprisingly – marks the Summer and Winter Solstices as St John's Days. Having witnessed this Summer's St John's Ceremony I was surprised to find how many similarities there were between this highly ritualistic system and grassroots Paganism!

PN: Have you ever done magic to get something and did it work?

CORA: Yes. My first magical working was a banishing ritual for my parents in which they willingly participated. I knew exactly what it was I wanted, but wasn't prepared at all for the way in which it worked – it was meant to affect them, but I myself was affected – in a very positive way – as well. Sometimes when we work magic, we aren't fully aware of the implications. It worked a treat, alright; life turned around for all of us from that point onward.

Now me being my logical me I would say that wasn't down to anything mysterious – it was just down to the intentional creation of a comfortable atmosphere in which certain things that needed to be said were said – and the fact that it was done between loved ones gave all of us that bit of positive energy to pick up the fight again.

PN: Do you spend much time in nature, in the wild? Do you spend enough time out there?

CORA: Not nearly enough! I'm a city dweller and due to my work and study I do spend a lot of the time indoors. This is why our favourite holiday destinations are rough, wild places like Northern Ireland and Scotland.

PN: Do you think paganism works better in the country than in the city? Why?

CORA: No, I think that's a fallacy. No matter how much crap we build on it, the Earth is still beneath our feet and the Sky over our heads, and although the city air may be polluted and it's raining acid, they're still there. We are part of Nature, so it is with us always.

IDENTITY ON PAGAN NETWORK

PN: How long have you been a member?

CORA: Going on 2 years now, seems longer!

PN: Is this your main online hang-out? Where else do you go to regularly (especially pagan / Wicca / magic-related)?

CORA: I have little time for 'hanging out' online, and what little time I do have tends to go to speaking with friends and exchanging thoughts on some masonic forums. Pagan Network is one of two Pagan forums where I stick my head around the corner now and then, the other being An Fianna.

CONTENTIOUS PAGAN NETWORK QUESTIONS

PN: How do you define the term "Wiccan"? How do you feel about the idea that "Wiccans" are people who have been initiated into a lineaged Wiccan coven?

CORA: I would like to answer that by referring to the the Masonic Q&A sequence I mentioned in my answer to Q15: "Q: Where were you first made a Mason? A: In my Heart".

The same applies to Wicca. If the true desire for spiritual growth and En-Light-enment is not born first in the heart, then no amount of reading, learning, practising, ritual and initiation will change that.

Intent comes first – then comes form. (I could go on a Qabalistic ramble about the emanations of the Divine here, but I'll leave that for some other time;-))

Having said that you can read all you want and risk all you want in mucking about with silly spell books, but it does not compare to the genuine article of an initiation ritual conducted by a pair of experienced HP/S.

Initiation, though, is a one-to-one between you and your Self (or the Divine, if that's what you like to call it) and I believe life is full of initiatory experiences.

The fact of the matter (as I see it) is that lineage and coven-based initiation are traditions aimed primarily at controlling the flow of knowledge that is passed on; a safeguard to ensure not only that the secrets remain intact and are passed on correctly, but also (and nowadays perhaps more importantly) to ensure the continuation of the tradition itself. After all, if anyone can do this Wicca-stuff by just plucking a book from the book shelf, than what need is there for HP/S?

If asked to define "Wiccan" (as you have just done), I would say that for me a Wiccan is one who has trained with and has been initiated into the craft by an experienced HP/S, although not necessarily into a Coven. Lineage is not something I am overly concerned about.

PN: Is Wicca and paganism generally too "fluffy"?

CORA: Proper lineaged Wicca is anything but fluffy, but as the

keepers of the system gradually lost control over its proliferation, it has become an 'anything goes' phenomenon that really has very little to do with its beginnings. Paganism covers such a vast array of beliefs and practises that I cannot possibly pass the 'fluffy' judgement on that.

PN: How involved are you with the Pagan 'scene'? What are your views on the Pagan community – its strengths, weaknesses and any issues facing it?

I'm not very involved with the Pagan scene at all, at the moment – too much bickering and too many absolute fakes on the scene. And that's not touching upon the vast amounts of nutcases who think Paganism is a substitute for psychotherapy.

The 'anything goes' attitude gets on my nerves – the 'accepting each other's paths' in the extreme, i.e. accepting any and all rubbish on the basis that 'science is just not able to prove what we know yet'.

Open-mindedness is great, but it doesn't hurt to stay in touch with reality. A sense of balance wouldn't go amiss either.

Just because someone believes they are protected by the Goddess doesn't mean anyone else – a mugger, for example – believes that, too. Belief doesn't stop violence and anger being hurled at you. Nor does visualising a bubble of light around you, for that matter. It's like thinking nothing can happen to you because you're a good driver – but what about the millions of other drivers out there?

I am very much a down-to-earth, logical minded person, but at the same time I like to keep an open mind in the knowledge that we've only just begun to scratch the surface of the mysteries of the Universe. That is Balance – a

firm belief in science on the one hand which is tempered by the knowledge that science does not hold all the answers – yet.

Too often Paganism is out of Balance – it emphasises just that knowledge that science does not hold all the answers yet, and uses it as the chief argument in favour of all these weird and wonderful experiences. "Science can't disprove it, therefore it is".

For a way of life that professes to seek Balance, that seems an odd position to take, and it is one of the reasons I have stepped out of the Pagan scene and gone my own way.

PN: Does British Traditional Witchcraft represent a real surviving ancient form of witchcraft pre-existing Gardnerian Wicca?

CORA: Show me the proof and I'll let you know.

PN: Thank you, and good luck with everything!

UPDATE:

Since this interview took place, Cora has now been accepted into a Co-Masonic Lodge; and has just been passed to the Second Degree very recently.

Subscriptions Options for Web Members

All full members receive access to a PDF version of the Witchtower Magazine on its release date as part of their membership (and a printed version once funding has been secured in the future). However, web members can only access the free PDF version of the magazine after a significant time period has passed, and by this time a lot of the information in the magazine is out of date...

So, if you would like to receive a PDF version of the magazine on its day of release, without having to become a full member, you can subscribe to the magazine. An added benefit of subscribing is that all subscribers and full members are allowed to enter the competition too, but web members are not allowed.

The cost of subscription for the PDF version of the magazine is either £1 per PDF issue or £4 for one years worth of PDF issues as released. When funding is available for the printed issue, subscribers can pay £2.00 an issue or £8 a year. Otherwise the magazine (when printed) can be bought at anytime for £2.50 if you don't subscribe.

If you would like to subscribe to the magazine please email the wichtower@gmail.com and we will provide you with payment information.

It's Your World



In this series we will be looking at ways to help the environment, along with making you aware of worthwhile causes to support. If you know of any causes that need supporting, or you would like to contribute an article to this series please email the wichtower@gmail.com

Have you got worms?!

Products like egg boxes and shredded paper can be thrown on the compost heap, as well as all the usual fruit and veg peelings. But you can even go one step further by investing in a wormery.



If you've never tried composting before and wonder what all the fuss is about, take a look at this beginners

guide from www.wigglywiggles.co.uk (they even have an adorable desktop wormery, imagine that on your desk at work!)

What is composting?

Composting is the natural process that turns organic waste from the kitchen, home and garden into a valuable fertiliser that will really benefit your garden. Composting returns anything that has lived and died back into the earth; producing the material which plays an essential role in maintaining a healthy soil. Although composting occurs naturally in the garden, adding extra compost to your garden by recycling your kitchen and garden waste can improve the structure of the soil and help feed the life in the soil.

Why should I compost?

Compost, as all gardeners know, brings fertility to the earth it improves structure, holds water yet improves drainage, breaks up clays yet binds sands; it is one of the essential building blocks of good soil. Some 60% of all household waste is organic and can be recycled. If you just 'throw away' this waste you are adding to the millions of tonnes per year that is simply left to rot in landfill. As this waste decomposes its potential value is lost forever, whilst pollutants escape into the air and seep into the water.

What should I compost?

Anything that has lived and died can be composted, including kitchen

waste such as vegetable peelings and leftover food scraps; garden waste such as prunings and lawn clippings; even dust from your vacuum and packaging waste such as cardboard eggboxes and the centres from your toilet and kitchen rolls!

Where should I compost?

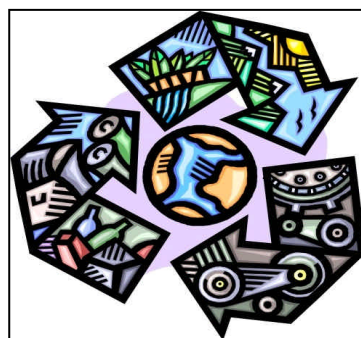
Different places for different wastes... one of our efficient wormeries (like a Can-O-Worms) by the kitchen door will take care of the household waste while a conventional compost heap in the garden will handle the garden waste. Our wormeries use the power of worms to accelerate the composting process, but garden heaps can also be enriched with composting worms to turbo charge their performance.

Why should I compost with Worms?

Worms create compost quickly: they are the fastest natural composters by far. The fact that they eat up to half their own body weight in waste everyday makes them very efficient at clearing waste. They also reduce the volume of your waste: something like 8-10 bins of waste will probably be reduced to 1 bin of compost. Having eaten the waste they leave behind a top quality compost called worm-casts. Worm-casts are known as 'Black Gold' by experienced gardeners, they comprise a rich, dark material which is friable and pleasant to handle. As a further benefit the worms will also produce many litres of a fertilising liquid which, if you're using a wormery, can be collected from the tap. When diluted 1:10 with water this can be used as a general purpose plant feed. Worms also stop smells, they work on the micro-organisms which cause odours.

Are the worms used to compost waste safe?

Yes. All our worms are from British native species. They are safe, hygienic and completely natural and don't mind sharing with your other garden worms!



CULTIVATE THE MAGIC



In this series we will be telling you about the folklore of plants, showing you how to create Pagan themed gardens, along with lots of other helpful hints and tips on gardening in a Pagan way! If you would like to contribute to this series please email the witchtower@gmail.com



Buttercup

It was believed at one time that the golden yellow colour of butter came from cows eating buttercups. However, we all know better than that. But many of us in our childhood have done the “buttercup test” by holding a buttercup under the chin to see if the colour is reflected, and if so it means we like butter.

The Irish used to rub buttercups onto cows udders on May Day to try and encourage milk production and in the 1800’s fishermen used to pour buttercup tea on the ground to bring worms to the surface.

Beggars used to rub buttercup juice onto the skin in order to cause the skin to blister so they could attract more sympathy from the public. Also should cows be unfortunately enough to eat buttercups, it will cause blistering of the mouth and intestinal tract. Superstition says that by holding a buttercup flower against your neck on the night of a full moon it will cause insanity, hence the folk name “crazyweed” The flowers of the buttercup track the daily movement of the sun in the sky.

Daisy

Daisies are sacred to St John and are associated with the planet Venus. They have been used in love spells and divination for centuries, and everyone knows that by counting the petals of a daisy whilst saying “he/she loves me, he/she loves me not, you will find out whether someone loves you.

Another way that daisies have been used in foretelling love and marriage, is that if you close your eyes and pull a handful of grass, and count the number of daisies within the handful it tells you how many years you will have to wait to be married.

If you dream of daisies during the spring time it is considered good luck but bad luck if you dream of daisies during the winter.

Daisies have been used in herbal medicines too, they were used to treat cuts and bruises, and to help ease whooping cough and stomach upsets daisy tea was given. In the Middle Ages the daisy was often used to treat battle wounds; bandages containing crushed daisies were thought to give relief from pain and aid healing.

Daisies are considered to be weeds but the young leaves, flowerbuds and petals can be added to salads

Daisies are popular during Midsummer festivities as part of the decorations and when creating Daisy chains you should always have their ends joined when finished as they represent the sun, the earth, and the circle of life. It was once believed that dressing a child in a daisy chain would protect them from being stolen by the fairies.



TRADING CARDS

Each issue we will bring you two Trading Cards containing information on various crystals and gemstones. These Trading Cards can be cut out and glued into your Book Of Shadows should you wish to do so.

SUGILITE

Hardness: 6 - 6.5

Occurrence: Japan and South Africa.

Appearance: Opaque, lightly banded, mainly tumbled.

Known as a heart stone Sugilite is a natural facilitator of physical and emotional healing. It also dispels negativity and anger and lessens the effects of shock and disappointment. Sugilite can enhance healing abilities and strengthen psychic ability and channelling.

It is associated with the third eye and crown chakras and helps open the heart chakra to unconditional love.

Sugilite is an excellent pain reliever, especially for dispelling a headaches, lay it on your brow and visualize the headache being drained out.



AVENTURINE

Hardness: 6.5

Occurrence: Italy, Brazil, China, India, Russia, Tibet

Appearance: Opaque, speckled with shiny particles. Comes in many colors, the ones most commonly found are green, blue and peach.

Aventurine is a grounding stone, bringing into balance male and female energies. It can calm a troubled mind or spirit bringing inner peace as well as strengthening the organs of the body and releasing emotional stress. Aventurine can promote a positive outlook. It also helps to align the physical, emotional and auric bodies.

Aventurine can also benefit the brain, aiding mental clarity and intellect as well as the imagination and creativity.

The green version of Aventurine can be used in prosperity related matters and is considered a stone of good luck. Green Aventurine is also a stone of friendship and protection.



ANCIENT WISDOMS

In this series we will be looking at Tarot Card meanings as well as showing you various spreads. The card meanings in this series are from my own interpretations that I have learned over the years. Every tarot deck provides you with general meanings related to the tarot cards, but I mainly use my intuition first and foremost in connection with the meaning of cards from various books.

The High Priestess

The High Priestess represents our intuitive faculties. She stands guard at the gates to the unconscious and provides a bridge to the higher consciousness. She connects us to our dreams and psychic powers. She brings wisdom or an interest in knowledge and learning. She also represents the lunar cycles and female mysteries.

The High Priestess represents a natural affinity with the forces of nature. She is usually shown with a lunar crescent to remind all that she is connected to the mysteries and forces of life. She allows us to see the innermost secrets of life and teaches us through our dreams and the subconscious.

The High Priestess reminds us that by using our intuition we can see what is actually happening with a situation, rather than see what we want to believe is there. By learning to listen to our intuition we can gather information about situations and uncover secrets in life therefore becoming self reliant. This brings courage and strength and allows for growth within ourselves. Learning to be self reliant and trusting your intuition brings independence too, as you no longer have to rely on others for their thoughts and opinions.

The High Priestess can also represent dormant talents and wisdom or a waste or misuse of skills and knowledge. She can also represent a lack of understanding, ignorance or emotional instability and impaired judgement.



Images taken from the The Tarot of a Moon Garden

The Empress

The Empress represents creation or birth, be this a pregnancy, birth of a child or the creation of a new project or situation.

The Empress stands for love, beauty, loyalty and strength. She is generally associated with the home, marriage and motherhood.

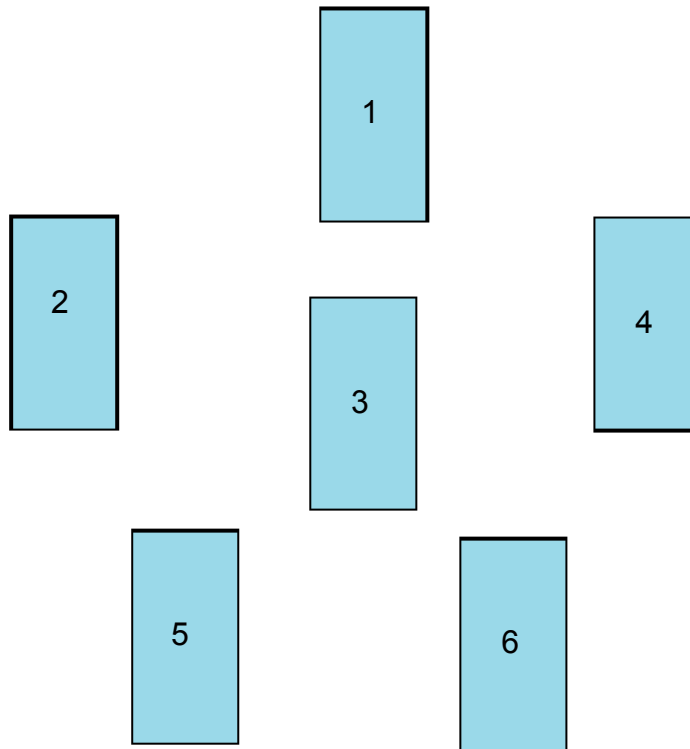
The Empress reminds us of the inner feminine strength that we all have and how we can use this by renewing and nurturing all around us. The Empress has the courage to defend those around her using wisdom and strength of will. The Empress also shows how to live with unconditional love, acceptance and compassion, even if you are male, the Empress reminds you of your feminine nature.



The Empress can represent abundance in life. She can also warn against using emotional blackmail or of being over protective, this could be yourself or a female figure close to you.

Tarot Spread

This tarot spread can be used to find out whether you are in the career you really want and how you can improve that career if it is the right one.



1. Is this career what I really want?

2. What can I do next to improve my career?

3. What things are there in my career that I cannot change?

4. Who will aid me with my career?

5. What is in my past that is affecting my current career?

6. What steps should I take towards the future?



A Short Course in Tree Lore

By Steve Wilson

Continuing our series on Tree Lore

ROWAN THE MOUNTAIN ASH

Rowan – Luis for the letter L – is the second Ogham tree, drawn as two lines at right angles to the staff. There is no specific rune for Rowan, although some of the qualities of the Anglo-Saxon rune Aesc (“a” as in “hat”) seem relevant, but the ordinary Ash is a separate Ogham character and Aesc will be dealt with later. Of course, unlike Ogham, only some of the runes relate to trees.



If the Birch is a particularly appropriate tree for Druids and Bards, the Rowan is definitely one for Witches. As the old saying goes: *‘Rowan tree and red thread - have the witches all in dread’*

It must be understood that this saying is referring to evil magic, and belief in the power of Rowan to ward off evil survived into modern times. On May eve Rowan crosses used to be worn in the UK and were sometimes fastened to cattle (or their barns) for protection against evildoers (a literal translation of the Latin word often translated as Witch). Magical items of Rowan had to be made without a metal knife to work properly and red thread or ribbon can be used to either bind bits of Rowan together or to tie a charm to something else.

‘Rowan’ is a fascinating tree name, it is connected to the old Norse word ‘Runa’ - meaning a charm – specifically with being able to ward off the effects of the ‘evil eye’. ‘Runa’ was the Sanskrit word for ‘magi-

cian’. ‘Run-stafas’ were staves cut from the Rowan tree and inscribed with runes for magical reasons although Beech (which is not an Ogham or Runic tree) was used for smaller runic tablets and “lots”. The smooth bark of the Rowan is ideal for this purpose.

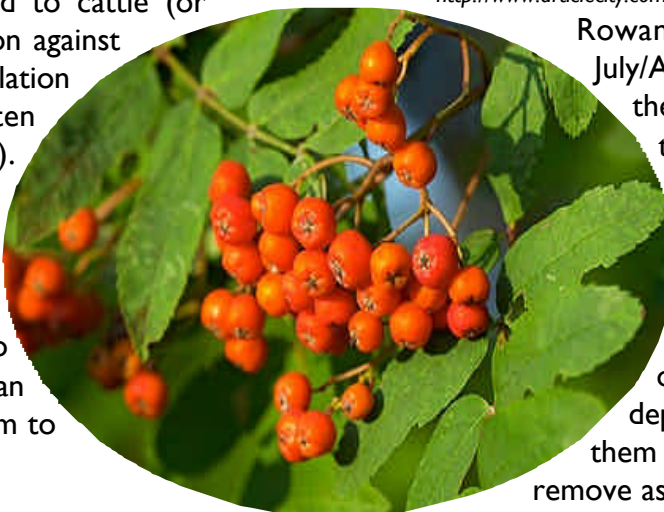
The Rowan was a Holy tree to the Welsh, many churchyards in Wales still include the tree and I have found a churchyard planted almost entirely with Rowan in Kent, in the village called – wait for it – Ash! The berries, the easiest way to identify Mountain Ash (the common Ash has “keys” like half of a sycamore “helicopter”) were much used for brewing and flavouring drinks such as mead, ale, perry and cider. The fresh juice is mildly laxative and good for soothing inflamed mucous membranes. In herbal medicine the juice forms the basis of a gargle for sore throats and in the 19th century it was used to treat scurvy since, like much of the Rose family, the berries are high in vitamin C.

FOOD AND DRINK

(from an online article free for reprint by Simon Mitchell at

http://www.articlecity.com/articles/food_and_drink/article_219.shtml)

Rowan berries are around from July/August through to November in the UK and may even stay on a tree until January if the thrushes don’t eat them. They are at their best for Rowan Jelly when they have attained full colour but are not yet mushy. They contain varying amounts of tartaric, citric and malic acid dependent on their ripeness. Cut them from the stalks in clusters and remove as much stem as possible before cooking. When made into a jelly the fruit becomes quite astringent and the tart taste makes a good ‘digestif’ accompaniment to meats such as venison, cold game or fowl.



Take about 3 pounds of Rowan berries and two pounds of juicy apples. Peel and core the apples, slice them and place them to simmer in 2 pints of water for 10 minutes, while you are washing and sorting the berries. Add the berries and simmer to a pulp. Use a potato masher to help this process if you like. Let the mixture cool a bit and then strain it through a jelly bag, leaving it to drip overnight.

Warm about 2 pounds of sugar and stir in the liquid mixture and heat to a simmer. I must admit to adding some pectin at this point as I have a problem with runny jams. You can do this and leave the apples out for a clear jelly. Add a knob of butter and stir to a rolling boil for a few minutes and put it into sterilised jars and seal. It is a most unusual taste but the thing that delights me most about this jelly is the fantastic colour.

ROWAN WOOD

Rowan produces strong, flexible, yellow-grey wood, which was once widely used for making tool handles, small carved objects, plough-pins, pegs for tethering animals, cartwheels, poles, hoops for barrels, churning staves, equipment for watermills, even rough basketwork if Willow wasn't available. It provided planks and beams, but generally doesn't grow large enough to produce many. It was sometimes used to make longbows, instead of the Yew and common Ash, but this seems to have been when they weren't available and it is not ideal. But it grows quickly, making for excellent coppices and it is still used to make charcoal. All parts of the tree were used for tanning hides and for dyeing cloth black since it is high in tannin. As firewood, Rowan burns hot and slow.

DEITY

Based both on the first-letter and its properties Lugh seems the most likely God corresponding to the Rowan. As a magician, chief warrior and king of the Gods there are clear similarities with Woden/Wotan/Othinn (commonly mis-named Odin). Woden's sacred tree, though, is the common Ash. Lugh is the deity of Lughnasad – the month of August, marked with fire-festivals on August 1st, but this festival is noted as being particularly sacred to the Goddess Maeve, who was Goddess of the Fir Bolg, remembered in the Book of Invasions as the people forced to build the great fairy mounds of Ireland.

MAGICAL USES

Rowan wood was used as protection from lightning. Druids are said to have made fires of rowan wood before battles. They spoke incantations over them in order to invite the fair folk to take part in the fight. All of the above indicates that Rowan is associated with magical protection. There is also a clear link with the concept of resilience. Rowan was used for a great variety of magical purposes including wands, magical spears and talismans inscribed with runes, but this it has in common with the ordinary Ash, and I will deal with those associations later. However, a wand of Rowan with the Ogham character inscribed, with a red thread around it, is good for spells of protection. There is no need to strip the bark.

HOW TO SPOT A ROWAN

The Rowan is a deciduous tree and it can be hard to spot in winter. Its bark is not as distinctive as the Silver Birch. When the leaves are out Rowan does indeed look like Ash, but it is the red berries that give it away. As Simon Mitchell's article mentions, these may still be on the tree.

PUBLICATION DATES 2007 FOR FULL MEMBERS & SUBSCRIBERS

Ostara/Beltane issue to be published (PDF) - 15 March

Summer Solstice/Lammas issue to be published (PDF) - 15 June

Autumn Equinox/Samhain issue to be published (PDF) - 15 Sept

Yule/Imbolc issue to be published (PDF) - 15 Dec

JOIN AS A FULL MEMBER AND SUPPORT YOUR ORGANISATION

Pagan Network is a non-profit organisation, run by committee and financed by our members. Profits from membership and the sale of our magazine along with other merchandise help us fulfil our aims of promoting acceptance of Paganism as a belief system within the UK and providing a safe and secure networking platform for those who practise those beliefs.

BENEFITS OF FULL MEMBERSHIP

Becoming a Full Member of Pagan Network not only helps support the organisation financially, but you also get the following benefits:

- A copy of our Pagan Network Directory, with details of local moots, events, groups and shops around the country
- Personal Membership Card (in a choice of designs) which gets you reduced entry to Pagan Network events and discounts from an ever growing list of shops
- A Pagan Network keyring
- An annual subscription to Witchtower magazine PDF version
- Access to restricted areas of the Pagan Network website
- A chance to have a say in the running of Pagan Network

Full Members are given full voting rights at our Annual General Meeting, where issues can be raised and discussed with other members and the management committee. Members can also stand for election to the committee. You can also suggest what kind of work you'd like Pagan Network to become involved with, and nominate projects, organisations or events for us to support.

Pagan Network is truly a membership based organisation, and if you want to help shape the future of it, please become a full member today!

COSTS

- £20 Single Working Adult
 - £10 Child (under 18) (Form must be signed by parent)
 - £15 Unemployed/Student
 - £30 Couples (2 adults)
 - £40 Families (2 adults plus 2 children)
- Membership can be paid either by paypal or by cheque.

JOINING

There are two ways to become a Full Member, you can download the Application Form that can be found on the main index page of Pagan Network (www.pagan-network.org) under the membership section or alternatively you can fill in the opposite page and post to BM WiccaUK, London, WC1N 3XX

Full Membership Application Form - Membership runs for 1 year

Your Details

Your Name	
Address	
PN Username	
Email Address	
Date of Birth	

Membership Information

Do you authorise your details to be sent to groups or events organisers	
Do you wish to receive The Witchtower?	
How did you hear about Pagan Network?	
Membership No. for Renewal, if applicable	

Membership Choices

Which membership card do you wish to received? see www.pagan-network.org under the membership section.	
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Type of Membership Required

£20	Single Working Adult (1 card, 1 pack) Optional -printed copies of Witchtower
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£40	Families (2 adults plus 2 children) (2 cards (one for each parent) and 1 pack) Optional - printed copies of the Witchtower
£30	Couples (2 cards, 1 pack) Optional - printed copies of the Witchtower
£15	Unemployed/Student (You must provide proof of your unemployment status or proof of being a student, along with details of how long you expect to be a student) (1 card, 1 pack) Optional - printed copies of the Witchtower
Organisations - currently under review, please enquire via the Membership Manager	

I wish to pay for membership by:	Cheque - (post cheques to BM Wiccuk, London, WC1N 3XX)	Paypal - make payments to "andromeda@pagan-network.org"
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Data is held confidentially for the duration of your membership
 I declare that, to the best of my knowledge, the above mentioned information is correct and wish to commence membership of Pagan Network

Signature..... Date.....
 Must be signed by a parent or guardian if aged 16 or 17