

# The Witchtower

Pagan Network Magazine

Yule 08 / Imbolc 09

**George  
Pickingill  
Summed up**

**Explore Orkney**

**Bake Your Own Stonehenge  
Gingerbread Monument**

# The Witchtower

Yule 08 / Imbolc 09

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## Editorial

Welcome to the Yule 08/Imbolc 09 edition!

We have another exciting year ahead of us with the magazine, with many other writers contributing to the magazine over the next four issues. But if there is something in particular you'd like to see an article on then don't forget to drop us a line, after all the magazine is for our members, so we'd love to hear your views and suggestions.

In this issue we have a delicious recipe in the form of a Stonehenge Gingerbread Monument. Andy Norfolk sums up the George Pickingill discussion that is taking place on the forums and Beith-ann ends her article series on Astrology and the Wheel of the Year.

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

Enjoy your reading!

*Twilightgirl and the Editorial Team*



# Ritual Pattern Time and Perception

Wiccans often describe the sequence of annual celebrations or sabbats as the Wheel of the Year. This imagery is very apt. It illustrates the cyclical nature of reality: what we celebrate now will come around again in due time. It also helps us see the sabbats as part of a greater whole. Each sabbat is a spoke on the great Wheel. As the Wheel turns, the seasons turn, and as the seasons come and go our lives progress through a repeating sequence of celebrations, times of work and times of rest.

We humans have a tendency to spiral our attention down to focus on the small details of our lives. There is great beauty in the smallest detail just as there is magnificence in the larger patterns. Unfortunately, focusing on the small details often results in losing sight of the larger pattern. We sometimes gain a skewed sense of proportion and importance from paying too much attention to the small details at the expense of keeping the larger picture in mind. Balance is important.

When you perform a ritual do you worry and fuss over every little detail? Do you feel your ritual is a failure if you stumble over a word or gesture or cue? Do you worry that your ritual tools are not quite perfect? Do you obsess over having just the right people in the right places at the right times for your rituals?

Relax!

Rituals are a dance: even if a specific step is missed, the overall feeling and pattern is more important. Rituals are a work of art: even if a particular brushstroke in one spot isn't quite right, the overall balance of colour, form, expression, and subject matter is more important. Rituals are a song: we might miss a note, but what is in our hearts and how much effort we put into the song, and whether we enjoy ourselves in the process, is much more important. Some things are only visible if you see the larger timeframe.

Try and see your rituals as a whole. What is the overall pattern of the ritual? Does it express the intent, the emotion, the central idea you have in your heart? How does the ritual fit in to a larger pattern of days, weeks, months, years, and even generations? Does the ritual help you feel more in tune with the Divine?

In "The Charge of the Goddess" the Great Lady tells us: "All acts of love and pleasure are My rituals." She doesn't say that rituals must be precise in order to please Her. She doesn't say that mistakes in wording, gesture, or sequence will disappoint Her. Her words leave it all very open for us to decide how we will express those acts of love and pleasure. She might actually like our mistakes in ritual if

we laugh at ourselves when they happen.

Perception is an amazing thing. We are blessed with an amazing flexibility in our senses and ability to process information. When we focus our attention we can become oblivious to the things that rage around us. For instance, when you are watching a good movie how often do you fail to notice the people who might be sitting around you, the traffic outside, what the weather is like, how your clothes feel on your body? When you get wrapped up in a good book isn't it amazing how time can just fly by?

We can stretch our senses the other way too and notice things that we often overlook if we just turn our awareness in the right direction. Can you hear things around you, like the ventilation system in the building where you are now? Do you hear traffic, people, birds or animals nearby? Can you hear the wind? Do your clothes make sounds as you shift and move?

As you focus your attention it's common for awareness of time to shift as well. Time can appear to stretch out or to compact itself so that an hour can seem like just a few minutes. During ritual it often happens that time just slips by unnoticed. Yet if we focus on the small details, worrying and obsessing about whether we did a gesture just right, time can crawl.

One way to balance out our perceptions to go into a ritual with a healthy outlook is to ground first. Grounding puts us in contact with our foundation, Mother Earth. It gives us a moment to calm down, smooth out our perhaps conflicting emotions, and find a still peace from which to flow into the dance that is ritual. You can't ground too much before a ritual (unless it puts you to sleep!) but it is possible to not ground enough before a ritual. When we go into a ritual without sufficient grounding we increase the risk of getting sidetracked by the details.

Slowing down, breathing deeply in a slow measured pace, and touching inner stillness if only for a moment is probably the most basic way to ground. Feel the Earth beneath you and know in your heart that She is there to hold you up. When you feel at ease you are ready to proceed.

Grounded perceptions help us to grasp the larger significance of our rituals. We can throw ourselves wholeheartedly into the performance of the ritual, mistakes and all, and see the end result of the ritual as just a closing bar in the song rather than mistaking results for the whole thing. Artists often describe their art as a process as much as a finished product. The creation of the product

is as important as the final product. They are both, process and product, part of the whole.

During my coven's recent Midsummer celebrations, as the sultry night embraced us at the end of the day we decided to dance on the lawn in honor of the faeries while holding sparklers and glow sticks. I brought my digital camera along and snapped some amazing photos using the low-light mode. While we were caught up in dancing around with our sparklers, waving them around in patterns both random and purposeful, the camera was able to capture some of the magick in slices of time that are not visible to the human eye. And as if to illustrate the time-awareness effect even more, we had to wait each time a picture was taken before we could see what it looked like on the camera's little screen. When making a purposeful design with a sparkler we had to just trust in the process and let the details take care of themselves. And the results were amazing.

Spiritual ritual is the same. We might not have the ability, right now, to see the larger picture. All we might have visible to us at the moment are the small details that drive us crazy because they seem so nit-picky. If we can trust in ourselves, in the Divine, and in the process of the ritual then we might find that the larger pattern does come together.

And that is when real magick touches our lives.

By Ben Gruagach  
WitchGrotto.com

# Ancient

We complete the cycle with Earth and the signs that take us through to Spring, Capricorn, Aquarius and Pisces.

## The Element of Earth

### Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn.

Earth is the second element in the Zodiac, through Taurus, and if Fire was the active element, then Earth stabilises. Now, consider Earth in its natural form and that is exactly what it is, form. It is the stuff we stand on, it can be cold and damp, hot and dry but always it has substance. In its most useful form it is the fecund, fertile earth which is used to grow food in and even though to look at a cold, brown patch of earth in winter after all the summer plants have died back, it looks dead, there is a lot going on under the ground, lots of life, lots of work to make the soil fertile again

It comes in several structures, rocks, minerals, sand, clay as well as soil in it's countless number of modes (peat, compost etc.) You can expand the description of earth to man-made stuff like bricks and concrete and Tarmac, anything that has structure and a solid form.

So, we can now re-interpret this to give us what an earthy person is like. The main keyword is PRACTICAL which can be expanded to include SOLID, RELIABLE, RESOLUTE and STUBBORN. The earthy personality is driven by the practicalities in life and their senses. Unlike fiery types who find their sense of identity in the approval of others, earth types find this in the acquisition of material goods. Again, this can be seen as greed, but as all earth signs know, you can't live on love and fresh air (no matter how water protests) so they aim for the basics. A roof, heat, food, drink, clothes and anything else is a bonus

It is of no surprise that the majority of millionaires in the world are Taureans and they also know how to spend their dosh! Material things give them status and security, and they are forever in fear of losing this security so, the more they have, the more they have to fall back on. However, there is no-one as good as an earth sign to keep body and soul together on a pittance. Although they aim to live in luxury, they can survive on the barest of essentials better than any other element and most other signs (except perhaps Pisces).

Earth signs are the most in touch with their bodies, being the prominent material form of our existence. So, if they can't see it, smell it, touch it or EAT it then it doesn't exist, not in their experience anyway. They need to have solid proof of any theory and that theory needs to be effective in the "real" world. AND they always have an answer for every

# Circle

argument, even when it looks like you are going to get the better of an earth sign, they shout "PROVE IT" and stomp off.

The description "earthy" is exactly what an earth person is, down to earth, sensible, reliable, sensuous, raunchy and totally aware of physical pleasure. They are not the most competitive of elements and so they are not the worlds best sports people, however, get them on the dance floor and their athleticism shines through. The rhythm lives within them, they are aware of all the little nuances of their heartbeats, the cycles of their bodies, and no matter how ungainly they can appear in everyday life, music with a strong tribal beat seems to turn them into the equivalent of ballet dancers

Food is also another thing that brings out the best in the earth signs. They all have their different ways of dealing with it, but I suspect that there are very few earth children with eating disorders. This is because they are totally aware of the reality of food, and seldom feel guilty about indulging in it. Because they are so aware of their body, they have a healthy respect for food and are totally in tune with the body's needs. They instinctively know when it needs feeding, resting, exercise (in the form of dancing or sex) and will not deny themselves these needs. They also know when to stop.

Therefore, they seldom feel guilty about anything really, except maybe if they are not doing their duty as they see it or not sticking to their principles. They don't feel guilty about eating or drinking too much. ("It's my body and I'll do what I think fit thank you very much.") Or about having too much money, ("I've worked bloody hard for this, and it's mine") or about spending it (see above statements). They don't feel guilty about criticizing or carping because they are always harder about their own standards than anyone else's, not that this makes everyone else feel any better.

However, being so much in touch with their own worldly needs means that they neglect other needs. As Liz Greene says "...if you keep your eyes fairly close to the ground, you never get to see the sky". The earth signs can be so wrapped up with detail, so wrapped up in keeping the material things in life, that they may seldom get to experience the spiritual, seldom get to see the broader picture, seldom get to experience their real place in the universe and this is the real task for earthy gnomes, to find as substantial a truth in the intangible as they do in solid reality.

## The 'Winter' Signs

Living with the coldness and bleakness, within limitations and with the resources they have. These signs are the most RESOURCEFUL. The saying should not be "How many Summers have you lived?" but "How many WINTERS

# Astrology and the Wheel of the Year

## Capricorn

Element:- Earth.  
Quality:- Cardinal.  
Ruler:- Saturn.  
Keyword:- Pragmatic.

The personality of Capricorn is reflected in nature in an almost literal sense. The darkest and coldest part of the year comes out as stoicism and practicality. Living within limitations and with death. Not the passionate, almost sacrificial death and ancestor worship of the Scorpio time but the death of old age and wasting away. This is reflected in the figure of Saturn as both Father Time and the Grim Reaper.

To lighten things, the Roman Saturnalia was also held around this time, which was a time of pranks, tricks, getting drunk and changing roles and this highlights the dichotomy of the Capricorn personality. If I say that Spike Milligan, Kenny Everett and Rowan Atkinson are all Capricorns you will see what I mean. Comic genius all of them, but with a proclivity to look on the dark side, locking themselves away, being manic depressive or just plain miserable.

If you take the symbolism of the mountain goat as well as the time of year, it also gives you a good impression of the Capricorn personality, the survivor. Capricorn is patient, taking one step at a time, making sure of his foothold before he moves on, making sure of the foundations before taking the risk, sure of his rations before the winter sets in. They work hard and long, not for status and glory but to establish a foundation, to give them a cushion and to be respected for their resourcefulness.

Capricorn can survive on very little when it comes to resources, because he is so efficient, knowing what to use when and how to make the maximum use of supplies, and they are never in as bad a way as they like

to make out. There is a real need for them to live frugally in order to save resources, and when it comes to a real overkill, you can get the Scrooge-like character who lives alone, like a vagrant living from hand to mouth, but leaving a fortune to no-one when they die. I think they truly believe they can actually take it with them in those circumstances. They may not have a need to make oodles of money, but they are ambitious. They are ruthless, but out of need, not out of malice or cruelty, the type that wouldn't bat an eyelid in sacking a whole

By  
Beith-ann

# Ancient Circle

factory of workers to save the corporation. They also need to be in power, not for the status, but for the control. They need to have their hands on the reigns and prefer to be the power behind the throne as opposed to the figurehead. There are a lot of Capricorns in politics, but I'll bet you don't easily recognise them. They keep their heads down, do their jobs and work towards the seats of real power where there are only themselves and their God to answer to.

## Aquarius

Element:- Air.  
Quality:- Fixed.  
Ruler:-Uranus/Saturn.  
Keyword:- Society.

Although the Sun is getting stronger, this is the coldest and bleakest time of the year. The idea of co-operation is strong in the Aquarian personality and almost a religious fervour in making sure that everyone has fair shares. Within tribal groups and groups of animals, in order for most to survive, rations have to be shared out, others have to be taken into consideration. Like the state pension, you pay for others now so that others will pay for you when you need it.

There seems to be a dichotomy with the Aquarian personality. The dual rulers of Saturn and Uranus couldn't be more different and both actually apply in equal measure. The need to move on is tempered but the need to work within the framework that they have been given and this is also shown in the paradox of the fixed Air sign. They are idealistic without all the sentimental baggage that usually goes with it, so there is a tendency to want to work for the greater good at the expense of the individual, including themselves. They are the type that would go out in the rubber dinghies to stop the dumping of nuclear waste, without considering that they might be endangering the lives of themselves, their colleagues and the people whom they are opposing. It is rather like the other Saturn ruled sign, Capricorn, where the end justifies the means.

I love Liz Greene's description in her book 'Astrology for Lovers' "...His symbol is the Waterbearer. Notice carefully that the Waterbearer carries his jug to offer the water of life to humanity - but doesn't get his own hands wet". Aquarians just don't want to be emotionally bound and while he would work for and love the whole of the world, getting intimate with someone frightens him senseless. While the integrity of an Aquarian is faultless, and they are always fair, it is all very much to the book (that they have written) and doesn't allow a lot of leeway for soppy emotional jessies telling their sob stories.

Aquarians have the reputation of being eccentrics, but this is rather unfair. A lot of the Aquarians I know are very conventional in appearance and profession; however, when you scratch the surface you find that it is their views and outlook that tend to have an eccentric quality. Working to change the world from the inside is far more effective to them. What is the use of trying to persuade people to behave in a more humanitarian fashion if they are just looking at your weird get up. They will be laughing at you instead of listening to you.

I see the first beginnings of the Age of Aquarius in the Live Aid concerts. A pioneering venture that set the scene for a lot of other mammoth charity events, using the state of the art technology, the whole of the western world and shock tactics by a charismatic figurehead to galvanise the world into helping the starving in Ethiopia. Uranian if you like, When Bob Geldorf used the 'F' word when asking people nicely for money, my Mother flounced "He isn't going to get anything by using language like that" How wrong she was!

## Pisces

Element:- Water.  
Quality:- Mutable.  
Ruler:- Jupiter/Neptune.  
Keyword:- Karma.

The change over from winter to spring heralds a personality that is changing from one thing to the other. Look at nature, one minute it is warm and sunny, the next it is snowing. Nights can be mild or frosty. There is a melting of winter into spring, and the Pisces personality is as malleable. Even now most deaths and suicides happen during this time of year. In tribal times, food was very short, some of the older members of the group may have decided, in order to help the rest of the tribe, their time was over and there wasn't enough food to feed everyone so they would sacrifice themselves. Hence the principle of sacrifice in the Pisces nature.

There is a theory going around that as you go through the Zodiac the signs take on some of the characteristics of the previous signs, so Aries famous for its childlike qualities is considered the least complex and we move through to Pisces who don't know which way to turn without tripping over another aspect of themselves. The symbol is two fish, swimming in opposite directions but linked with a thread, confused or what?

It's true that Pisces can be all things to all people and they survive with the strength of the reed! I remember a phrase in 'I Claudius' where someone described Claudius as a reed, flowing and bending against the strength of the wind. It was all very well being a strong and steady tree, but if the wind got too strong it could be uprooted whereas a reed would survive even the strongest onslaught. It would bend but not break. Therefore, what can be seen as a weakness by everyone, even

# Astrology and the Wheel of the Year

Pisces themselves, can turn out to be the key to survival in a lot of cases

It can also be a pain in the arse for those having to deal with it because Pisces are notorious for changing their mind. What seems like lying is not actually. Pisces always say what they mean and mean what they say, at the time. It's just that they change their minds a lot and tend to let people down a bit.

I remember someone referring to Pisces as moral cowards, but I think that is a bit strong. They don't like conflict and will try to avoid it at all costs, but they do have great courage when they are certain about something. I remember being told about a Pisces who needed to get to work after the October gales some years ago, and a tree branch had fallen on his car over-night. Public transport was a mess so he went on his bike. That would have been fine, but there was still a very strong wind blowing large branches off the trees. When someone stated how dangerous that could have been he said "I didn't really think about it, I knew I had to get to work and this was the only way" Pisces never fails to surprise because just when you think they are chicken, they do the most courageous thing without thinking.

Pisces are the character actors of the zodiac, they can be what you want, when you want. They are usually film and TV actors because they are better in an intimate way than the other acting sign, Leo, who needs the whole of a theatre and an adoring audience nearby. Unlike Leo, Pisces seldom play themselves. They have a magical, mystical, intangible quality that gives charisma although they can be vague and wishy-washy needing the love of a good Earth sign to keep their feet on the ground. And romantic, there is a fantasy world that Pisces inhabits that no-one else can access and they escape there at every occasion.

Taking the fact that they are the last sign of the Zodiac wheel, there is a certain world-weariness that Pisces exudes at their darkest moments. A case of been there, done that and it's time to move on. They have a certain wisdom that comes with an old soul, although when feeling insecure they can become rather bigoted at times, trying to experience the certainty that is just out of their grasp. Rather like the time of the year, they have been through it all and survived. They are raring to move onwards and upwards, but the time is not quite there yet, Pisces spend their lives waiting just a little while longer for their dream.

By  
Beith-ann

# Out Of The Shadows

One of the longest running threads on the Pagan Network forums has been about George Pickingill. It started with a few questions.

- Did Pickingill start nine covens?*
- Was one of these the New Forest coven into which Gardner claimed he was initiated?*
- Was Pickingill a Satanist?*
- Are the 9 covens still in existence?*

This has resulted in 36 pages of discussion at the time of writing and much of this has been quite detailed.

- Later further questions were posed in an attempt to clarify the issues
- Was Pickingill a Cunning Man?*
- Did he have links to any covens, orders or magical groups?*
- Did he pass on any teachings?*

In the 1950s an author called Eric Maple researched witch traditions from the south-eastern quarter of Essex. Between 1960 and 1965 he published articles about this in the journal of the Folk-Lore Society. He mentioned George Pickingill, who was born in Hockley in Essex in 1816 and later lived in Canewdon and died in 1909. Pickingill was described as a farm labourer who charmed warts, cured other ailments and found lost property. He also ran a protection racket in which farmers paid him not to stop farm machinery and horses working. It was also said that he could fly through the air and could force local witches to come to their doors or dance for him in the churchyard. Maple, it seems, had spent some time talking to locals who could remember Pickingill, or who could at least remember stories about him. He was portrayed by Maple as a village magician, or what would now be called a cunning man. It is also clear from Maple's articles that his clients were all fairly local. However in 1962 Maple published a sensationalist book called "The Dark World of Witches". In this Maple exaggerated the reputation of his part of Essex as a centre of witchcraft and he reputation of George Pickingill. This book was unashamedly targeted at a popular market and it was after its publication that people began to take any notice of Pickingill. Despite the influence of this book subsequent authors have played down Pickingill's importance. For example, Owen Davies says that Pickingill who died in 1909 "was certainly one of the last practising cunning-folk in the country, but he was never a major regional figure".<sup>1</sup>

That answers one question; George Pickingill was a cunning man.

The chances are that Maple's articles and book would not have had much effect and that most people would have never have heard of Pickingill, or paid much attention to him. However a series of articles written by "Lugh" that first appeared from 1974 in the Wiccan magazine, and from 1977 in The Cauldron were to change that. "Lugh" is an Englishman, Bill Liddell, who emigrated to New Zealand in the early 1960s and subsequently moved to Australia. He claimed in the articles that he was a child of a witch family; an initiate into a hereditary Pagan witchcraft tradition and also an initiate into a separate witchcraft tradition influenced by George Pickingill. According to Bill, the elders of these two separate traditions wanted him to be their mouthpiece and pass on information about their ways and beliefs.

Over a period of many years Liddell wrote a series of quite extraordinary articles, which included a number of contradictions. At first his information was seized on eagerly by people such as Doreen Valiente as being a vindication of a wish to find proof of old roots for witchcraft, but as time went by more and more scepticism was expressed

about his articles, even by those who were initially enthusiastic about them. These articles made a variety of claims about George Pickingill, which included that he was a hereditary witch and had passed teachings on to the Order of the Golden Dawn and that he knew Aleister Crowley and Allan Bennett. Liddell's articles said that the Pickingill family were hereditary priests of the Pagan Old Religion from the 11th century, but also that none of the traditions about which he wrote came from ancient sources but derived from a new religion which first emerged in 15th century France. He wrote that authentic hereditary covens were lead by a Magister and that sexual initiation was mandatory, but later that this had died out by the 18th century. Later still he wrote that in true hereditary traditions witches passed down knowledge within their families and never joined covens.

Articles about George Pickingill described him as "England's most notorious witch", from a famous family of witches and that occultists of every sort came to consult him from all over not only England, but Europe and America. Liddell wrote that in Pickingill covens all the rites were conducted exclusively by women and that Pickingill founded nine covens over a period of 60 years. Further claims included that Pickingill introduced a "book of shadows" for each coven member, and that the rites were derived from a group founded by the magician Francis Barrett in 1816 and included many aspects of Wicca including ritual nudity, a dominant Goddess, the fivefold kiss, three degrees, drawing down the moon and the charge of the Goddess. Pickingill is said to have learnt more from the many cunning lodges of which he was a member and that they practised Satanism. A collection of the articles written by Bill Liddell was published by him, with commentary by Mike Howard (the editor of The Cauldron), in 1994 as "The Pickingill Papers".

So the original questions can only be the result of the influence of Bill Liddell's articles. Unfortunately there is no proof to back Liddell's claims, despite the efforts of people like Doreen Valiente, Leonora James, Ronald Hutton and Owen Davies to find some. It seems from the available evidence that George Pickingill was a fairly typical village cunning man. Whether he was anything more is very doubtful and will remain so unless some proof to the contrary turns up. So far the only source for claims that he was more than a village wise-man with a limited local reputation is what has been written by Bill Liddell.

The recent 36 pages of discussion on the Pagan Network forum have included a lot of claim and counter claim. Intriguingly Bill Liddell himself has joined in. He has hinted at having yet more information, but nothing specific seems to me to have come forward and indeed some of what he has had to say seems to muddy the waters even more than they are already. He has claimed that Crowley sent Gardner to Canewdon to find out about George Pickingill. This seems odd if Crowley already knew Pickingill. However he does say that, in the preface to "The Pickingill Papers", he made it clear that his articles came from "contributors (sic) with disparate opinions".

Later he says that in effect he just wrote what he was told to write. He has also written that his Elders "were alarmed at Gardner's attempt to found a Mystery tradition, and wanted it known that Wicca bore no relationship to the Old style witchcraft". This is also odd because although this is the tone of the earliest articles it is directly contradicted by the mention of features of old style witchcraft by Liddell in articles dating from after 1984 which include many recognisable parts of Wiccan ritual and practise. Bill's book's full title is The Pickingill Papers: the Origin of the Gardnerian Craft". This con-

# GEORGE PICKINGILL



tinual contradiction between information provided at different times is a feature of all the Pickingill information from Bill Liddell. Now it could be that this is the result of others telling him what to say, but are they really still doing so?

I don't know if the person who started the thread feels he has had answers to his questions. The thread has run on for so long, and has got into so many incidental snarls and tangles, that I've found it hard to keep track of it. My feeling is that there is no evidence to support the assertions that Pickingill started 9 covens, so there is no proof that that one was the New Forest coven, or that any survive. There is no evidence for the existence of "cunning lodges". There is no proof Pickingill was a Satanist - he was after all given a Christian burial. There is no real evidence that he had any links with any magical organisations, or that he had contact with members of them. He might have passed on his cunning-man knowledge to his sons but they don't seem to have ever practised as cunning men. I think that most of those contributing to the

thread have a fairly sceptical view of the claims by Bill Liddell about George Pickingill, but I suspect that like me they would be pleased if some real evidence could be produced to prove any of them.

By Andy Norfolk

I. Owen Davies, Popular Magic, 2007, p193

**Recommended reading**

- "Popular Magic: Cunning Folk in English History", Owen Davies, 2003
- "The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles", Ronald Hutton, 1991
- "The Triumph of the Moon", Ronald Hutton, 1999
- "The Pickingill Papers: The Origin of the Gardnerian Craft", Bill Liddell, 1994, Capall Bann

# Ancient Wisdoms

## WEASEL

Those with Weasel as a totem are able to fathom what is really going on and are good at keeping secrets. You will see what is beneath the surface of a situation and quickly assess everything. Because of this skill you are usually able to get out of tight fixes when they occur. Although Weasel has vast amounts of energy, you may find yourself a bit of a loner. Many people may dismiss you at first glance but once they see you in action with your intelligence and ingenuity they soon change their minds. With Weasel as a totem if anyone gets on the wrong side of you they will know about it as those with Weasel by their side know how to hit where it hurts and some of their verbal arguments can be most hurtful and damaging.

Weasels tend to live on a mainly carnivorous diet, so you may need to watch that your own diet stays healthy and balanced instead of eating lots of meat.

## Animal Totems

## TIGER

If you find Tiger walking besides you be prepared for changes and new adventures. Although the tiger can be a fierce and loyal spirit when protecting its family or territory, tiger can also be a solitary spirit, liking its own space. Being a free spirit full of energy and enthusiasm you will love to travel and seek out adventures and experiences. Tiger symbolizes courage and strength and you may find some people are intimidated by your intensity.

Those with Tiger as a totem may find they have a gift for psychometry. You may find that you are able to express great control but may also find yourself being over sensitive and emotional to comments and situations. Learn to take a deep breath and slow down. Think carefully about the situation or options before rushing into any decisions based on your emotions. Tigers tend to jump in and take what they want regardless of the consequences.

Tigers love to swim and you may find yourself drawn to water where you can relax and feel at peace. You may also be very sensual and enjoy physical touch such as massage.

Tigers tend to hunt nocturnally so you may feel an affinity with the night and moon. You may have a particular strong intuition and excellent sense of timing. You may feel most alive during the evenings.

## HAWK

Hawks are visionaries and messengers. If Hawk has become your totem you may hear and see visions and messages that are being sent your way by the Universe and you will easily be able to interpret what the messages are saying. People who have Hawk as a totem may also feel that they must pass these messages onto other people, even if the message isn't welcome by others, and this in turn can create problems. Those with Hawk as their totem need to learn how to present their message in the best possible way for all and not to force the issue.

When life seems to be getting you down, Hawk reminds you to soar high in the sky where you can gain a greater perspective and understanding of life and free your mind or any limiting thoughts and beliefs.

Hawk helps you to see clearly. Hawks are associated with the sun, and can also bring solar energy into your life.

Hawks have keen eyesight and if Hawk is your totem you will be able to see through people clearly, which may make people wary and mistrustful of you.

by Twilightgirl



# Walk Between Worlds

Paganism in Britain, according to some who know about these things, is a recent reinterpretation of what the beliefs of the pre-Christian people of these islands may have been, with a large dollop of invention, wishful thinking and imagination. That's not necessarily a bad thing - all that positive creativity is probably one of the most important factors in making British Paganism the vibrant and energetic, if occasionally rather odd, thing it is today. People who have thought about these things and who have read some of Ronald Hutton's books, or at least heard about them, may also be a bit coy about claiming an unbroken Pagan tradition back to - well - before the year dot! There is after all no evidence that stands up to a bit of reasonably intelligent scrutiny that contemporary Paganism goes back very far at all. However Pagans do say that they draw inspiration from the pre-Christian religions of the world and in Britain this means whatever our ancestors were up to before about the 6th century. In particular prehistoric monuments from the Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages are important to many Pagans. Not surprisingly what our ancestors did is important to us, though we may not have a clear idea of what that was. Recent genetic research shows that most of us are directly related to the ancient peoples of these islands. For many Pagans our ancestors themselves are of great importance and are part of their lives and practises. Ancestors are asked for guidance, or just "company", in rituals and everyday life.

In 2006 Paul Davies, reburial officer for the Council of British Druid Orders, asked English Heritage and the National Trust to rebury prehistoric human remains from the Avebury area presently in the Alexander Keiller Museum.

Both EH and NT are seeking responses to a consultation exercise about this request, which should be made by 31st January 2009. As they point out this request raises a great many issues. In doing so they are following the advice in "Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums" published by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport in 2005, Part 3 of which deals with claims for the return of remains. [http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference\\_library/publications/3720.aspx](http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/publications/3720.aspx)

The publication of this guidance seems to have been prompted by a request from Australia for the return of Aboriginal remains and Part 3 begins with a quotation: "The express recognition that the concerns of various ethnic groups, as well as those of sci-

ence, are legitimate and to be respected will permit acceptable agreements to be reached and honoured". (From the Vermilion Accord, World Archaeological Congress, 1989) The guidance recognises that requests can be made for religious or spiritual reasons and may include a desire to lay ancestors to rest on ancestral land. EH and NT have written a draft report and this and supporting documents can be found at [www.thenational-trust.org.uk/remains](http://www.thenational-trust.org.uk/remains).

The guidance says that certain things must be considered when requests for the return of remains are made.

## Dem Bones



### The status of those making the request and continuity with the remains

The draft report points out that CoBDO represent some, but not all, Pagan groups. Its members claim genetic relationship with the remains, but make no claim for continuity of belief, customs or language with the human remains. EH and NT comment that there is no evidence that members of CoBDO have any closer relationship with the human remains than most of the population of Western Europe.

This comment could be considered as rather unnecessary when the guidance says that "Archaeological and historical study has shown that it is very difficult to demonstrate clear genealogical, cultural or ethnic continuity far into the past, although there are exceptions to this. For these reasons it is considered that claims are unlikely to be successful for any remains over 300 years old, and are unlikely to be considered for remains over 500 years old". In other words it is most unlikely that CoBDO will succeed in relation to this aspect of the guidance.

### The cultural, spiritual and religious significance of the remains

The report recognises that CoBDO believes that the reburial of the remains is necessary to redress hurt to their ancestors and to the Druid community. However EH and NT say that although they respect this belief, they are also aware of the cultural and spiritual significance of the remains to others as well and their contribution to appreciation and understanding of the past. I'd like to know who these people are! For whom other than the Pagan community do these remains have spiritual significance?

The guidance says that "Where claims are made it would be expected, but not essential, for the claimant group to show that human remains and their treatment have a cultural, religious or spiritual significance to their community." However it also says that it is expected that requests for the return of human remains are most likely to be successful where there is strong continuous cultural, spiritual or religious significance of particular human remains to the group making the request. Of course CoBDO haven't claimed such a strong continuous significance.

### The scientific, educational and historic value of the remains

EH and NT believe that the remains are an important part of the archaeological record and provide understanding of our shared past which is of great interest to many people. There is no doubt that these remains are a part of the archaeological record. I do however wonder how much understanding of the past is provided by any remains that are not on public display. I do not think by the way that public display is appropriate.

EH and NT have suggested three options reburial in a way which makes the remains unavailable for further examination reburial in a way which ensures that the remains are available for further examination retention in the museum in a way which shows respect for CoBDOs beliefs (e.g. by providing access for ceremonies) where reasonably practicable.

To my way of thinking only option one would be what CoBDO appear to be asking for. The second is just a different way of storing the remains. The third of course begs the question of how the beliefs of Pagans who are not CoBDO members might also be respected.

I think there is a difference between honour-



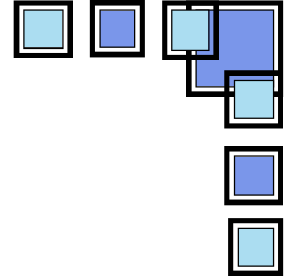
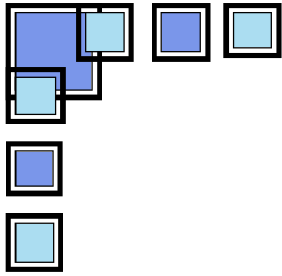
ing the ancestors and honouring bits of ancestors. It seems to me that a body is just a tool that we use for a while. As someone who believes in reincarnation I think one question that is relevant is which body, if any, should one honour. I don't think a body is the same as the spirit of a person. If a body were to be regarded as the same as a person, which bits would be important? Surely if one were to go down the road of directly identifying a body with a person's spirit then this would make organ donation difficult if not impossible and I think that would be wrong. Once they die the thing that made them a person is gone. In any case it isn't necessary to have a body or bits of it to relate to an ancestor - and indeed

COBDO and others have been relating to ancestral spirits of those excavated at Avebury and elsewhere with no difficulty for a long time. I reckon there is a difference between honouring ancestors and honouring the bodies of the ancestors. Human remains should be treated with respect, but actually studying them to find out about the person that they were and how they loved may be just as respectful, if not more so, than simply reburying the remains. However it seems to me that we should also be taking into account the wishes of those who buried these remain in the first place. It cannot possibly be true that they expected them to be dug up and studied, and it is unlikely that they would have

wanted this to happen. There is also the matter of how and where such remains could be buried and how you would prevent them from being dug up again by others. It's being suggested by some that most of the human remains could be reburied but some parts kept back for further study. So, which bits, and how much do you need to have left to rebury?

If you have strong views let RH and NT know.

By Andy Norfolk



# Inner Sanctum

The series for beginners!

## Visualization

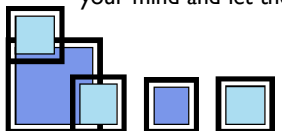
Visualization is the process of focusing your concentration on an image of what you want and seeing it as already having manifested in your mind. By truly believing the image is real, your mind is unable to tell the difference between real or imaginary, especially when the image is coupled with emotions. Not only can visualization be used in magic or spiritual matters, but it can be used in every day life to help achieve your dreams and goals or for help in fighting illnesses such as cancer (see *Getting Well Again* by Stephanie Matthews and O. Carl Simonton, 1980)

You might be asking yourself how does visualization work? The universe is made up of pure energy. Everything we see in physical form exists as vibrating energy; even emotions and sound are vibrating energy. All this energy vibrates at different rates, so some things we can see and others we can't due to the different vibrational rates. So when you begin to visualize an image in your mind, you are sending out energy which vibrates. This energy goes out into the universe and comes back to you multiplied.

To visualize successfully you need to first relax, be clear and passionate about what you want and, more importantly, practice lots!

Relaxation - If you have your own relaxation techniques then feel free to use those. Otherwise, find a quiet space where you won't be disturbed. Begin with some deep breaths and release the tension from your body by either tensing and relaxing each muscle in turn or by imagining a warm golden light shining down from above and slowly travelling through your body releasing any tension or stress. When it reaches your feet

imagine it harmlessly flowing into the ground and dispersing. Now allow your mind to become a blank screen. Just let any thoughts drift through your mind and let them go.



Be clear with your intention - You need to know that your desire is what you really want and not just a whim. To start with you need to really see the image in your mind, feel the image as if it already existed. For example you want some chocolate. Imagine how the chocolate will look, what kind of wrapper it is in, what colour, texture. What flavour is the chocolate. How does it feel in your hands, imagine unwrapping the chocolate, feel your anticipation as you unwrap it, then imagine breaking off a piece, feel it starting to melt in your fingers as you move it to your mouth. Imagine the texture, the flavour, the smell, as the chocolate starts to melt in your mouth and the pleasure you take from this.

If you have trouble seeing the image, try playing it as though you were watching it on a movie screen. Imagine yourself sat at the cinema, the lights go down, the curtain draws back and you see yourself breaking open the chocolate and savouring every mouthful. Now imagine yourself walking up to the screen and becoming that person, feel the emotion. Use all your senses.

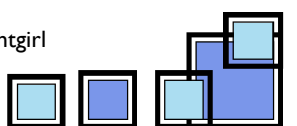
If you don't feel passionate about what it is you are visualizing you will find it harder to sustain the image and the emotion, especially if what you are wanting is just a whim. You need to ask yourself what you really truly want.

### Guidelines for Visualization:

- Define your goal.
- Be really clear that this is what you want.
- Check that no harm will result from your visualization.
- Sit alone in a quiet place where you are not disturbed.
- Relax your body.
- Breathe deeply several times ensuring that all tension has left your body and you feel calm
- Visualize the object or situation that you desire.
- See in your mind a clear and detailed mental image of what you desire.
- Use in your imagination all the five senses, such as sight, hearing, touch, etc.
- Put feelings and emotions into what you are doing.
- Practice at least twice a day, about 10 minutes each time.
- Persevere in your action until you succeed.
- Always stay positive.
- Keep an open mind with no expectations, so that when the opportunity to materialize your desire arises, you will recognize it and take advantage of it.

You need to visualize several times a day, just for a few minutes. Keep the image and the emotion positive and fresh, but don't add any expectations to it. Let whatever it is you are visualizing come to you in a way the universe wants to present it to you. So going back to our chocolate example, don't visualize yourself going and buying the chocolate and handing over your money. Just enjoy the chocolate and then the universe can present you with the chocolate in a number of ways, i.e. someone buying you some chocolate!

By Twilightgirl



## Orkney

# Pagan Postcards

When we got on the ferry from Scrabster the Sun was just beginning to come out. It was the end of July and we had planned to spend just one day there. We had a lot to fit in that day. We had driven up the east coast of Scotland for most of the day before in rain with a grey sky and high winds so we thought that the trip would be a bit rough.

It took 90 minutes to cross and although it was quite breezy the Sun stayed out and it became very warm. About an hour into the journey we passed the Old Man of Hoy, a quite magnificent rock stack which is better in real life than on the pictures that I had seen. This was our welcome to the Islands of Orkney.

We disembarked at Stromness, a small fishing port with little passage like streets, where even the roads were paved instead of tarmacked, and made our way to Scara Brae, the first stop on our sight seeing tour.

Skara Brae is the best preserved group of stone age houses in Europe, uncovered by a winter storm in 1850.

"This revealed the outline of a number of stone buildings. The discovery intrigued the local laird, William Watt of Skail, so he embarked on an excavation of the site.

By 1868, after the remains of four ancient houses had been unearthed, work at Skerrabra was abandoned. The settlement remained undisturbed until 1925, when another storm damaged some of the previously-excavated structures.

A sea-wall was built to preserve these remains, but during the construction work more ancient structures were discovered"

<http://www.orkneyjar.com/history/skarabrae/>

This was not a disappointment and was situated right on the coast, the view was magnificent and it was a real treat for the beginning of our discovery of some of the sites on the Island.



"Standing at a maximum height of six metres (around 19 feet), the sheer scale of the megaliths that make up the Stones o' Stenness, make the monument visible for miles around.



The Standing Stones o' Stenness were originally laid out in an ellipse. Although it is commonly written that the monument was once made up of 12 megaliths, excavations in the 1970s suggest that the ring was never "completed", with at least one - possibly two - of the 12 stones never erected.

Radio-carbon dates from the excavation show that the site dates from at least 3100BC, making the Standing Stones complex one of the earliest stone circles in Britain"

<http://www.orkneyjar.com/history/standing-stones/>

A nice little stop and interesting to see. Along the path by the side of the site there was a surprising discovery, Barnhouse Reconstructed Neolithic Village which was an addition to our list of places to visit

"On an area measuring 80m x 60m, are the reconstructed remains of a Neolithic settlement, similar to the better preserved Skara Brae.

The site was severely damaged by ploughing: only the bases of the houses have survived, but the excavated remains have been reconstructed. In the houses, there are central kerbed hearths, bed alcoves and stone dressers."

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/pat-n-mal/1089310865/>

We also planned to go to the Burial mound called Maeshowe, so we had to book as the only way we could enter it was to go with a guided tour. The lady at the visitors centre at Skara Brae was very obliging by booking us on the tour from there.

Our next stop was to be the Ring of Brodgar, somewhere I had wanted to visit for years. However, on the way we stopped at the Standing Stones of Stenness because they are on the same road.

On to the main reason that I wanted to go to Orkney, The Ring of Brodgar which was not a disappointment. On the day that we went there was some archaeology happening around it, so it was an added extra to speak briefly to some of the workers there who answered my questions.

"The stone ring was built in a true circle, 104 metres wide. Although it is thought to have originally contained 60 megaliths, this figure is not based on archaeological evidence. Today, only 27 stones remain.

In contrast to the giant megaliths that make up the Standing Stones o' Stenness, the Brodgar stones are much smaller, varying in height from 2.1 metres (7 feet) to a maximum of 4.7 metres (15ft 3in).

With a diameter of 103.6 metres (340 ft), the Brodgar ring is the third largest stone circle in the British Isles. Covering an area of 8,435 square metres (90,790 square feet), it is beaten only by the outer ring of stones at Avebury and the Greater Ring at Stanton Drew in England. Incidentally, the Brodgar ring is exactly the same size as Avebury's two inner rings."

<http://www.orkneyjar.com/history/brodgar/>



copyright of Richard M Carr

Sadly our final stop had to be Maeshowe in order to be back in time to catch the ferry in time. There is so much more to see and we were sad that we didn't have time to get to the Brock of Gurness, however, like all the sites we had visited that day, Maes Howe didn't disappoint. After literally crawling along the 30 foot passage we came out into a cairn which was covered in what only could be described as Viking graffiti. It was interesting, if slightly limiting to have the guide with us. She was very knowledgeable and able to point out some of the more interesting scribbles of the Vikings and others who had taken shelter in the place from time to time.

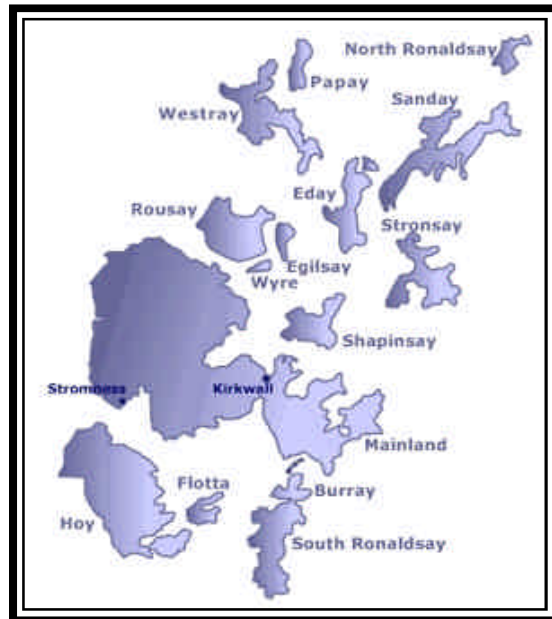
"Thought to date from around 2700BC, Maeshowe is one of the monuments that make up the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site."

<http://www.orkneyjar.com/history/maeshowe/index.html>

The weather was still windy but the Sun had blessed us all day to make our trip to Orkney truly memorable. We made our way back to the ferry but had time for a brief stop and the viewing point at Yesnaby. We left the Islands vowing to come back and had an even better view of the Old Man of Hoy on our return journey as the Sun, still shining, was in a better position to view it.

I would recommend the trip there. It was a long journey which we broke up into 3 parts, but it was well worth the 1500 mile round trip in the car. Of course you can fly there if you wish. One day was not enough, there are so many interesting sites straddling the rich and varied history of the Islands.

Beithann  
All photographs by courtesy and copyright of Richard M Carr



# 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 Magazine 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 Magazine for review, and you will get your name mentioned in the magazine, along with a PDF copy of the magazine that your book appears in!

If you do have any books you wish to donate please email us at the [wichtower@gmail.com](mailto:wichtower@gmail.com) to let us know and we'll tell you where to post it.

Don't forget you can always submit your own reviews for publication too!





# ENCHANTED EARTH

## Stilly's Potting Shed

Well hello, come sit down and pull up a bag of compost it's been a funny old winter so far no frosts to speak of and I am still cutting the grass well into December.

Well now Yule is out the way and the days are starting to draw out we can start planning the layout of the beds for the coming year. Below is the layout for my 2 allotments. I use a mixture of large beds for slow growing and maturing crops and the smaller beds for crops that need a lot of attention or are fast growing.

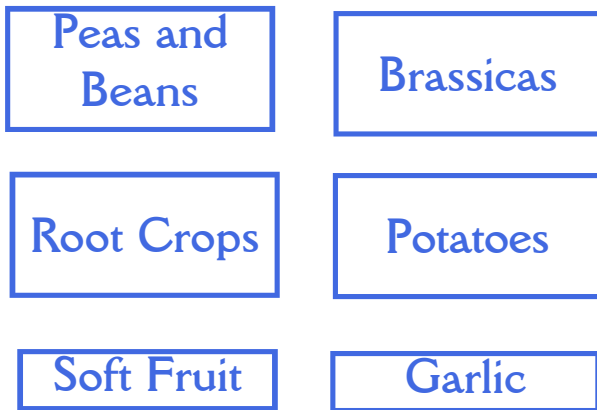


Figure 1

The size of the large beds is approx 10' by 10', this allows me to grow a large number of rows tightly packed of long maturing crops (parsnips, potatoes, long carrots). All the beds are either manured in the autumn or have a green manure such as mustard grown on it.

Green Manure is a crop than can be used for the improvement of the soil and by adding nutrients to it when they decay, crops such as red clover, mustard, winter tares, field beans and phalecia can all be used. Generally they are grown and dug into the soil before they come into flower. These are especially useful if you cannot get animal manure or you are uncertain of the manures origins.

Mustard has the advantage of deterring Eelworm these can cause damage to potatoes and other root crops, you have to be careful, as it is a brassica and can encourage club root. I always lime the brassica bed as this helps prevent club root and this is normally done in January so as to enable the lime to dissolve into the soil. Also brassicas enjoy a firm soil so once the lime has been dug in the bed can be left to settle until planting time.

My second allotment is laid out as in fig 2, this allows me to use these beds for fast maturing crops such as lettuce, radish and for crops that need a lot of attention such as fennel, onions and celeriac. I use broad beans in this rotation to help with the nitrogen fixing and soil fertility. Again these are manured or have green manure grown on them when they are free of crops. The fallow plot is normally double dug well manured and limed. My rhubarb bed contains 7 plants which enables me to force a new plant every year, by forcing rhubarb you can have crumble up to 6 weeks earlier than normal (Mmmm, crumble).

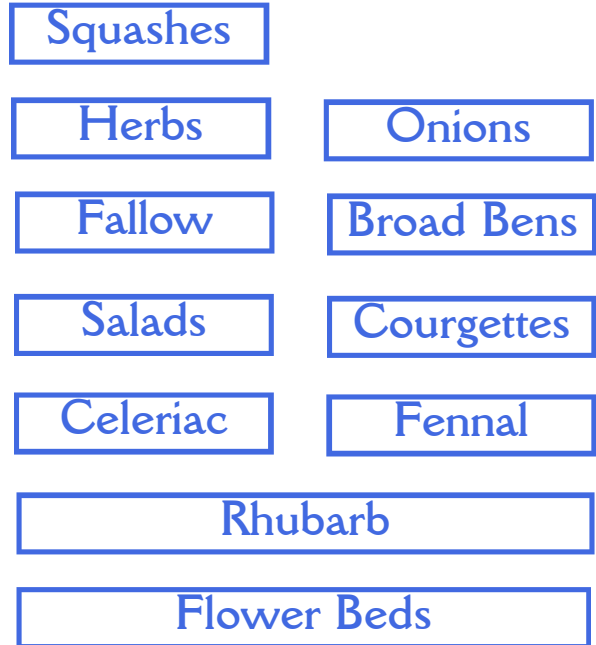


Figure 2

The flowerbed has a variety of flowers to attract bees, hoverflies, and other beneficial insects. I normally grow Calendula, Sunflowers, Nasturtiums, Chrysanthus and Dahlias.

Now on to planting, this time of year you can start thinking about potting up Broad Beans, peas, Garlic and can also plant spring Sweet peas if you did not start them in October.

Broad Beans can be started in 3" pots in a good peat free compost, they will be ready for planting out in late March. For the Peas I tend to start mine off in 3ft lengths of guttering. If you can't afford to do that then you can use old toilet roll middles, plant 2-3 seeds per roll and again these will be ready for planting out middle to late March. There are a couple of reasons for doing this one is it prevents the mice from nicking them and the other is it stops the seeds rotting off if it gets too wet.

Garlic can be brought on in pots as well but make sure you have a spring planting variety such as Wight Cristo otherwise the bulbs may not mature in time. Lettuces such as Tom Thumb can also be started off now and can be matured in a container or planted out into a bed if you wish.

As with all plants started off indoors they will all need hardening off gradually before planting out and always keep an eye on the weather as a sharp frost will kill any un-hardened plants.

Don't forget to keep feeding the birds as food will be incredibly scarce and if it has been cold where you are some fresh water won't go amiss either.

Good Growing and Fair Winds

Stilly

# Stir the Cauldron

## A Stonehenge Gingerbread House Recreating an Edible Megalithic Monument to Mark the Winter Solstice

This recipe is a fun variant of the traditional gingerbread house created around the holidays and like the original, if this one falls apart, it's still acceptable!

A time-honored tradition during the holiday season is to construct a gingerbread house. Pagans looking to add a bit of flair for the Yuletide season that reflects their beliefs may find this recipe to be a unique treat that can also be incorporated into their Solstice festivities. What better way than to have their own Stonehenge at home.

### Cookie Dough

#### Ingredients:

1-1/2 cups softened margarine (3 sticks)  
 1-1/2 cups sugar  
 1-12oz. bottle light or dark molasses  
 1-1/2 tablespoons of vinegar  
 2 beaten eggs  
 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract  
 4 cups of flour  
 1-1/2 teaspoons of salt  
 2 teaspoons of baking soda  
 2 teaspoons of cinnamon  
 2 teaspoons of powdered ginger

#### Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. Using a spoon, mix the butter, sugar, molasses vinegar, eggs and vanilla together until smooth. Then add the remaining ingredients. The dough should be pliable, though somewhat sticky; if not, add a half cup of flour at a time.
3. Grease rolling pin well, then roll out the dough on floured, waxed paper to about a 1/8" thick.
4. Reserving half of the dough, use a butter knife and cut out the rectangles about 1" x 2-1/2". Go by eye, and not by a cookie cutter, so the stones have character, just as Nature helped to hone in on the originals.
5. For the base, roll out the reserved dough onto a cookie sheet, preferably cutting into the shape of a circle, baking one large, solid cookie.
6. Bake the cookies on a greased, aluminum foil-covered cookie sheet for 10-12 minutes. Of course, just like baking any cookies, it is always best to go by smell and look, since every oven heats a bit differently.
7. Be sure to allow them to cool on a flat surface for at least two hours, ensuring the stones do not curl or twist and the base does not break when moving.

### Sweetened Flour-Based Paste

#### Ingredients:

1 cup flour  
 1/4 cup sugar  
 1/8 cup of milk  
 1 teaspoon of cinnamon  
 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract

#### Directions:

Stir all ingredients well, making sure there are no lumps from the flour. The paste should be reminiscent of paste at school; thick and very sticky. If not, add more flour.

### Icing

#### Ingredients:

1/2 cup sugar (confectioner's sugar works best)  
 1/8 cup of flour  
 1/8 cup of milk  
 a hint of vanilla extract

#### Directions:

Stir all ingredients together, watching out for the slightest hint of flour. Add a tiny bit more flour for thicker icing.

### Forming the Henge

1. Using the paste, glue the stones together, two vertically on either side and one on top.
2. Make each three-piece group separately on waxed paper until dried, then carefully align them into the familiar stance. The best part about creating this variant of a gingerbread house is imperfections and even collapses are acceptable, so if any should fall, it is still perfect.
3. Coat icing over the tops of all of the stones, as well as on the base, in order to have the appearance of ice and snow for the Winter Solstice.
4. Of course, gum drops, jelly beans and other candies can be used as rocks, stones, paths and more.



Note: The same directions can be used for the celebration of the Summer Solstice by adding green food coloring to the icing in order to incorporate the appearance of grass and moss.



# By Candlelight

Stories gathered from all corners of the land

## Den Paganism Series Crossroads by Angel Snowden

*"Curiosity made humans courageous. Knowing that they must die, unable to believe that something so dear and vibrant as the soul could vanish into nothingness, they searched the worlds that lay beyond the boundaries of fleshly strength, straining for glimpses of the sunless lands that served as the last of human homes. Those lands partook of eternity; in them existed the giants of creation and the old gods who had defeated the giants, and the countless generations of thronging humanity who had walked the earth in the centuries after the gods had vanished. In those lands, one might learn the secrets of future and past, for the dead, viewing all eternity, had foreknowledge as well as memory; in those lands, one might again see dear companions who had gone to dust fathers and mothers and lovers."*

*(Fabled Lands - "Realms of Eternal Night")*

One of the greatest details of life and spiritual growth is the sense of adventure. The mystery of not knowing what is going to happen next or what your eyes will behold when your feet take you just over the horizon. It could be said that our complete journey is our own personal collection of the adventures we have had in our lifetime, with all the trials and victories to close one story only to introduce another. With each tale in our book of life we grow stronger and we know that the next tale to be written will somehow always outdo the former.

While people come and go along the way our age-old travel companions: trial and error, instinct and passion, never leave our side. They are always there looking in all the directions our vision can't see, to offer us glimmers and warnings of things that lie just beyond the corner of our eye. In this, we sometimes learn without realizing it. And it is only when we come to a crossroad that the lessons of the last path give us insight on which way to turn. But, at the crossroad, there is often the sentinel of fear who has for us yet another riddle that must be answered before we pass. If we answer incorrectly the lesson we were meant to learn is still somewhere behind us. So we are forced to go back and look again less fear overtake us and we are not allowed to travel anywhere at all. Then we join the poor lost souls in the rusty cages hanging at the corner of the crossroads, as the crows look on, with laughter in their eyes, at the hindrances of the minds of men.

It's much more complicated for the witch who has achieved a level of understanding of where the boundaries of death

begin to blur and the memories of one life begin to seep into another. The more we recall from the past the more we place on our fragile mortal minds. For while witches are similar to everyone else, in almost every aspect, on our spiritual page so much more is written. In a little time we find ourselves becoming more and more complicated. Our thoughts and dreams become more complex and, in doing so, they also become more vivid. We often spend a great deal of time attempting to see these new details and find some sort of understanding or wisdom in them. But in the end we are all forged by the same experiences and as a mortal there is only so much one can experience before we simply run out of time. So we look to others, some like-minded, who have had different experiences to our own and these are the ones we see as teachers and mentors. Some are simply good friends with many stories to share. We listen to their experiences and we learn second handedly but at least we are still learning.

The core of our journey is not of the body and where we might travel but of the spirit and what we might come to understand. And the journey of the spirit is often through a pathless forest, the trees thick and the shadows deep. Our instincts often tell us to stay away from the shadows because something inside us whispers of those dark secret places and the dangers that might lie within them. When we listen to those whispers we shy away, completely forgetting the rule of nature that teaches us that where there is fear there is power. The power comes from understanding and conquering our fears. That is when we become wise as well as stronger and from those dark places that still hold mystery comes new light and new growth. However, sometimes the knowledge does not come easy.

Recently I was led to a very dark place. A twisted forest where the only emotions invoked are those of fear, pain, emptiness and a pure soulless evil that would make the most warm and loving person cold and heartless. In this place there are shapeless nightmares that claw at your soul and do everything they can to rip it to shreds. Here formless nightmare scream in the night in tones that make your blood run cold. For here, even the pale light of the spirit is too bright to go unnoticed. Here, those souls still warmed by life and blood are unwelcome guests who are bid to not eat of the food, nor touch any item, nor feel any hand. Here, the living walk alone in the cold dark with

only the torments of purgatory to guide their way. Here, there are powers that turn dreams into nightmares, love into hate, and the will to live into the passion of letting go. In this land every step feels like your last. All of your drive and willpower leaves you for brighter places. And the very air is a lead weight that constantly pulls you to the ground.

In passing the forest I came to a black tower held in a forever night by a sky that had never been pinholed by stars or moon. Until my eyes learned to adjust the tower looked like little more than a black outline on the blank sky and I could scarcely make out its form. This tower has no oaken door, no stone walls, no foundation. It's nothing more than a shadow in the night. My only hint that I am inside the tower is that I can no longer see the pitch-black silhouette of the forest around the tower against the sky.

The black tower is home to wraiths and tattered spirits of those left behind in a breath of forgetting. Souls that were once touched so gingerly with either love or hate are locked away in this tower, forever singing the songs of all of our misdeeds and regrets. But upon entry the songs stopped as they looked on with knowing eyes and after a hollow pause they said, "Welcome."

Then they fell silent as their eyes looked to the walls where the tapestries of life were penned out by unseen hands in vivid color. Should it hold true that a picture is worth a thousand words then the nightmares that I allowed to enter into the mortal realm from the essence of my life are many and long. Picture tales of many battles, curses and pain. Of bloodshed and heartbreak. Such a collection of misdeeds and mortal sins would be a humbling thought to anyone who still has life's blood in their veins. And the thought of one day being trapped in this tower like so many others who had gone before made me feel very small.

A lesser wraith then came and led me to a winding staircase that led up to the top of the tower. The steps were so ethereal that while climbing them I could see all the way back down to the base of the structure, as if each step was only in existence long enough for my solid form to pass. The spiral seemed to go on for an eternity before the steps finally ended in what appeared to be the only completely solid room in the tower that was dimly lit by four sputtering torches mounted on the walls. Here at the top of the spire the walls were rough and cold to the touch. The floor was thick and appeared wet and the air



smelled stale and dusty. A waist high pedestal at the center of the room was covered in some form of dead vine that grew from somewhere beneath the floor. The vine seemed as if it would crumble at the slightest touch and at the same time seemed to anchor the metallic stand to the floor so that it could never be moved.

The top of the pedestal was a thick metal disk that had been tarnished black with only hints of silver appearing in jagged lines here and there. The rim of the disk was covered in some form of complex runic script and I was never given any hint as to what it might have read.

My ghostly guide remained silent but lifted her hand just enough to point my attention towards the pedestal. As I approached the centre of the room the rough-cut stones that made the floor seemed to shift into different positions as if the rocks themselves couldn't find comfort in their final resting place. The closer I came to the centerpiece of this dismal place the more I noticed a pale blue light coming from the disk. And once upon it the light came to form in that of a rosebud that had been chiseled and cut from a fist sized sapphire. On the surface of each petal, played out the happiest times and places of my entire life. And in watching the scenes unfold my eyes filled with tears with the realisation that in all the darkness and negativity that was displayed below there was still a lot of light in my life. I saw my grandfather sitting with me under the old maple tree on the back street of the village where he lived as we "watched the cars go by" even though we were lucky to see one

a day. I saw my mother handing me a large bowl that still held a bit of cake batter in the bottom. I saw my brother come home from the hospital only a day old. My mother had wrapped him in a pink blanket to trick me into thinking I had yet another sister. I saw my first love smile at me for the first time. I saw my high school buddy leading a happy life with a wife and kids of his own. And I saw my own daughter laughing and playing without a care in the world.

I saw all of these things in this one enchanted rose and I longed so deeply to reach out and hold the glassy bud close to me. Somewhere in the shadows my hand moved on instinct to do just that and instantly the sapphire rose swirled with an inky black stain and almost instantly turned black, showing me nothing at all. The dead vine that was doing its best to choke the life from the metallic pedestal creaked and cracked as it let go of its grip and slowly pulled itself back into the stone floor as the now black rose lifted up just above its tarnished stand, hovered for a moment, and slowly floated towards me as if it were being carried by something that could not possibly exist, even here. A detail I only realised in hindsight when I pondered over the feeling of an overwhelming presence in the room as the rose came to me and found another resting place in my hand. But when it touched my flesh it vanished in a puff of black smoke.

I looked to the wraith who had led me here and I saw a deep sadness in her eyes just before she lowered her head and began to make her way back down the long staircase.

Still, somewhere in the shadows of that room something remained. Watching me with cold, dark eyes and projecting a power and understanding that I could not possibly contemplate. I knew that even if I searched every shadow for the ghostly form I would never actually see him because there were no mirrors in which to gaze. Instead I looked to the torch that hung on the wall ahead of me. The flames strained and struggled to remain and dance as flames do. But the inevitable happened as it steadily sputtered out leaving me once again in the deep black.

It was then I felt a pressure covering my entire back as if something was pressing closer and closer to me. It was soft and cool but warmed quickly to my touch. Unseen hands wrapped a warm cloak around me and I began to get a feeling of safety and peace. It was moments later before I realized that the torches had not stopped burning but that I had closed my eyes. When I opened them I found myself lying in bed looking up at the shadow broken ceiling with slivers of dawn's light spilling in through the window and I knew that it was only a dream. Yet the memory of what I saw in the dismal place haunts me even now, as I walk on this journey with the belief that a good life might protect me from an evil one. But now I know to never forget the graves that I have left behind... the bitter graves.

Angel Snowden

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