

WITCHTOWER

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The Pagan Network Magazine

Wichtower

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Editorial

Yule is almost upon us and the shops are full of tempting delights to buy, not only for ourselves but for those we love. I don't think there is anything more heart warming than seeing the faces of those we love light up when they open the presents we have given them, whether it is something shop bought or something you have made yourself.

This year as little extra gifts to my family, I have collected several round smooth pebbles and have carved words into them such as Courage, Love, Trust and Hope, as this year has been particularly hard on myself and my family, and the feel of the words when a finger is rubbed over the pebble, serves to remind us of what we need the most in order to face the coming year.

And speaking of the coming year, we have held in our thoughts members who do not have a broadband connection and therefore have difficulty downloading the PDF version of the Witchtower magazine. So from this issue onwards full members will be able to find the full issue on an easy to read webpage.

Not only is this useful for members with a slow internet connection speed, but its also great if you want a quick read of the magazine whilst you are at work!

I hope you enjoy this issue and seasonal blessings to all our members from the Pagan Network Staff.

Blessed Be

Twilightgirl
Witchtower Editor

Cover Artist - Andy Norfolk

I've been telling people who ask politely that I'm a Pagan since 1970. I suppose I've been drawing Paganish art since then though I've done more recently.

These days I draw the design in outline, then scan it and tweak it on my computer. My drawings have found their way into various magazines and so have my articles. I've even been paid for a couple, but that's not what's important for me.



Solstice

Written by
Nell Grey

'You can't call a little baby Lucifer - you just can't.' Eve could feel her heart jumping about inside her chest like a March hare on speed. The small room seemed suddenly cold in spite of the log fire flinging out heat and orange light, which was then caught and thrown here and there by red paper garlands that made a tent of the ceiling. She was aware of the tiny candles flickering slightly on the tree, sparking the red tinsel and the gold ribbon on the parcels underneath, and the sense of unease that had been present ever since she'd stepped through the door of the cottage and seeing them sent a shiver through her. The baby in the basket on the table, oblivious to the tension, so close he could have reached out one tiny pink hand and touched it, made small seeking movements with his head, his mouth shaping itself in readiness for the breast. His eyes were closed.

Rosie drew aside the cover, lifted the baby from the basket and held him against her shoulder.

'Come and sit by the fire, Ma. You can hold him while I get you some mulled wine, then I'll explain - there's nothing sinister about the name at all.'

Eve sat down and received the warm little body into her arms, cupping his head with her left hand and settling him into the crook of her right elbow next to her breast. She'd forgotten how small a newborn baby was, how warm and heavy the precious head, how like silk the filaments of hair. She ran her palm over the fontanelle, feeling the pulse of blood below, and he nuzzled into her white blouse. The old instincts, so long subdued, welled up like thin blue breast milk. She'd listen to Rosie's explanation - after all she was well-practised at keeping quiet while her daughter attempted to enlighten her to New Age ideas - but whatever else she managed to fail at in however many years were left to her (and she had a long history of failing), for this child's sake she must not fail now.

Eve breathed in the tangy heat of cloves, cinnamon, orange zest and alcohol as Rosie stooped to set the glasses on the side table. Motherhood had rounded

her normally slim body into fulsome curves, accentuated rather than concealed by the loose layers of fabric that fell around her in a seemingly random selection of colours and patterns. The long dark hair that usually hung in twists around her shoulders had been tied back with a silk scarf. Funny, thought Eve, how she carried off all that old stuff of mine when she left - it must be in the genes. And how beautiful she is - it's as if she's grown into her skin and is happy in it at last after all those years of deprivation. Motherhood suits her. But Rosie had sat down next to Eve on the settee and was talking.

You see Ma, the Bible has been re-written so many times that we can't rely on its accuracy. To the ancient Greeks and Romans Lucifer was simply the name for the Morning Star - Venus, the bringer of light. If you look in the Old Testament the name Lucifer occurs only once - in the twelfth verse of the fourteenth chapter of the Book of Isaiah - let's see if I can get this right.

'How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! I think that's it.' Eve bit hard on her tongue as Rosie continued.

'But you see, Lucifer's a Latin name, and if you go back to the Hebrew texts it turns out that that part isn't about a fallen angel at all, but about a Babylonian king who persecuted the Children of Israel. His title translates as Day Star, Son of the Dawn - a sort of ancient Babylonian version of Louis the Fourteenth, the Sun King. The confusion arose because when scholars translated the texts into English for the King James Bible they used later versions instead of going back to the original Hebrew ones. St. Jerome may have been kind to lions, but he mistranslated Day Star, Son of the Dawn as Lucifer, the morning star, and somewhere along the line someone made it into a story about a fallen angel. Lucifer is nothing whatever to do with Satan, who in any case doesn't even exist in the Old Testament - the Jews think of him as purely a Christian demon!'



Rosie's eyes were shining, her face reflecting the fiery colours of the room. She reached out to stroke the baby's cheek with the back of an index finger. 'Lucifer, bringer of light... it's a beautiful name.'

How I love her, thought Eve. All those years of worry, her obsession with every scrap of food she put into her mouth, her infatuations with worthless boys, the searching, the experiments with drugs, then this fixation with myth and magic, the passion she pours into the things that interest her. And now there's the little one to worry about as well. She took a deep breath.

'You're right; it is a beautiful name when you know the meaning, but how many people do? It's forever associated with the devil, with evil. Look at him Rosie, look how innocent and helpless he is. He didn't ask to be brought into this world with its senseless cruelties - life is difficult enough without making him carry a hot iron for others to brand him with. At the very best they'll shorten it to Lucy. He'll either grow up an outcast or become a fighter like that boy in the song Johnny Cash used to sing - what was it called? A Boy named Sue? Rosie, please... please don't burden him with that.'

Eve had dragged her gaze from the baby's face to look directly into her daughter's eyes. All her resolve, her will, was concentrated in that look, and for less than a breath she thought she saw a flicker of doubt pass across Rosie's face. But the click of the latch broke the stillness in the room, a small rush of outside air entered with a tall dark-haired figure and the moment passed. Crow bent to kiss the top of Rosie's head and nodded to Eve. 'I've checked on the sheep but there'll be snow before the night's out - it's lucky you planned to stay the full week.'

'Yes. It's wonderful to see you both, and this little one - I can't seem to take my eyes off him.'

'Has Rosie told you what we're to call him?'

Eve studied Crow's face, pale skin tight against the planes and angles of the skull, his eyes, in daylight so dark that the pupils were invisible, reflecting a touch of orange light from the fire. How long would this relationship last? An image of the two of them within the pentacle of coloured ribbon, the priestess winding the silk cord around their wrists to join them together, came vividly to mind. A year and a day, that was all they'd pledged to one another at

their handfasting. Yet wasn't that more honest than promising a lifetime to one person and breaking that promise within a few short months as Richard had done? But she must return to more pressing concerns.

'Yes. We were talking about it when you came in. I'm worried that you haven't thought this through properly. You're fairly isolated out here and I know that most of your close friends share your beliefs, but he'll have to go to school one day and what then? This country may have a rich pagan history, but there's a fairly orthodox Christian tradition too, and the Welsh can be intolerant of outsiders. You're both too young to remember how they burned the weekend homes but - '

'It's still talked about here. It was a drastic measure but no one was ever hurt - and it could be argued that Meibion Glyndwr were justified. Outsiders were buying holiday cottages and pushing the prices up - young people couldn't afford to buy or even rent property in the places they'd lived in all their lives. Our situation is different. We live and work here, Rosie and me, the locals have accepted us... Look, Eve, don't let's argue. Think about the meaning of the name - that's all that really matters. We'll explain that to him when he's old enough, then he can tell others. It'll be all right - trust me - he's my son, I love him and I want him to grow in the light. I'd never do anything I thought might hurt him.'

Eve sighed. Crow's voice had been characteristically soft and low and even, yet his underlying resolve had made itself felt. Over the next few days she must tread carefully with Crow, feel her way with Rosie, try to make them see the world as it really was outside this beautiful valley. But the baby had opened his eyes and was looking up at her with the unfocused blue gaze of the newborn. The rosebud mouth opened and an odd little cry - like a baby animal rather than a human - entered the silence between words. Rosie was on her feet in a second.

'I'll have him Ma, it's time for his feed. I'll take him upstairs - he'll need changing.'

Suddenly Eve's arms felt emptier than she could remember. Crow crossed the room to place another log on the fire and turned to stand warming his back at the fireplace. Eve thought; this is the man my only child has chosen to father her child and I barely know him. I've never been alone with him before.

He seems quiet and gentle, yet what sort of man would want to name his son Lucifer? Is it worth chancing a direct appeal to common sense or do I run the risk of antagonising him?

But he was staring at her. The dry bark around the branch had caught immediately and flickering tongues of light escaped and leapt around him, throwing his shadow onto the rug. The special log, the Yule log, lay on the hearth awaiting the solstice, the shortest day, next to the remains of last year's log, which would be used to light it. Rosie's holly and ivy wheel hung above the mantelpiece behind his head - holly and ivy, masculine and feminine, placed together as a symbol of fertility at the dark time of the year. The precious sprig of mistletoe was hanging just inside the door. The little tree stood in the corner of the room, its dangerous candles winking at her. Symbols of Yule, ancient festival of fire, pagan every one, but at that moment the man himself, the wreath-halo making of him some travesty of a Celtic saint, or perhaps even the Holly King himself, seemed the most pagan and dangerous of them all. With a terrible sinking of the spirit the words insinuated themselves into her head. Lucifer, son of Lucifer.

He reached out an arm and Eve started almost from the cushion, but with a single click of the tall lamp by the fireplace the room was filled with light, the illusion broken. Crow was smiling and now his eyes seemed the deepest blue rather than black.

'Eve, Rosie and me, we've been talking, got something to put to you. Leave London, give up that poky flat and come and live with us, help us raise our son. It's not easy to make a living out here, but we just about manage, and Rosie has plans for dying the wool with plant extracts, spinning it herself and hand-knitting jumpers to sell at craft fairs and tourist centres. I don't have to tell you she's got a special gift for colour and pattern. With you to help with the little one she could start in the spring when we shear the sheep. I don't want an answer now - take your time, be sure of your decision. And you mustn't worry about the name - you really mustn't worry Eve, it'll be all right. Think of light, only light. He'll carry it with him always.

Eve woke to the baby's wail and thin snow falling past the window. She lay still, aware of an underlying murmur of conversation and the creak of floorboards. Rosie or Crow must be walking the little

one up and down the room. At least they could share that duty - she'd had to walk alone with her imagination, her fears for the small bundle of life that had been entrusted to her. Through the stone wall that separated her bedroom from Crow and Rosie's, the cry began to take on a note of anger or desperation. Driving her old car up the long rough track from the road, her first sight of the little grey cottage, settled on the hillside just above the valley like a rocky outcrop, had seemed so peaceful. Now the interior crackled with negative energy. Eve slipped her feet from under the duvet and reached for her dressing gown, glancing at the luminous clock on the bedside table. Three am on the shortest day.

Eve crept down the narrow stairs and through the small sitting room, dark now that the candles had been snuffed and the embers in the grate had died, unlatched the door and stepped out into the night. By the light of a gibbous moon, barely visible through a tiny gap in the clouds, she could see that the thin snow had thickened and was beginning to settle. Large soft flakes fell slowly on her hair and shoulders, and she raised her face to catch them. The touch on her skin in the instant before they melted seemed like the magical touch of Mother Nature herself, washing her clean of the struggles of the past, if not of the present. Moments passed uncounted as images of a younger Eve unwound like a time-damaged film through her head.

'Eve, what are doing out here? You'll catch your death...'

She turned to look at Crow. Inside the cottage the baby still cried, less it seemed in anger now than in desolation.

'The little one woke me. Is he all right?'

'I wanted to ask you but you weren't in your room. He's had a feed and been winded but won't settle.



He's been restless for hours, we've both tried to calm him - Rosie's exhausted - she needs to sleep, and I have to check the sheep again in an hour. Would you...?'

'Of course, I'd be glad to.'

She'd stirred the fire, found an ember in the grate, added the remains of last year's Yule log and used a taper to relight the candles on the tree before Crow came down the stairs with the little one. Now the cottage was silent except for the odd hiccough from the child at her shoulder. He'd quietened almost as soon as they'd drawn close to the tree and the little flames moving slightly in the currents of air in the warming room. Crow had returned to bed. The snow was still falling. Eve remembered a story she'd heard about a hill farmer who'd gone to look for his sheep after a night such as this one and found them buried underneath a snowdrift. He'd dug down with his bare hands to find them all alive and well, the heat of their bodies having formed a space like an igloo under the snow. Crow was right, it could be a hard life out here. His words came back to her.

You mustn't worry Eve. Think of light, only light. He'll carry it with him always.

The certainty had come to her with his words, as if it had been part of them and that, say what she would, she'd never change his mind. Yet something in his expression had convinced her that there was no evil in him. He really did believe that the name Lucifer was a gift of light that his son, her grandson, would carry with him throughout his life. She had failed yet again, but perhaps there was one more thing she could do.

Twenty five years ago she'd made a promise to Richard, given up the friends and teachers who seemed more like family, a way of living that had touched some old and forgotten chord of her being. She'd kept that promise ever since, grown out of those ways. Yet Richard's promises had been little more than cracks her dreams had fallen into; she and Rosie hadn't even heard from him since he left - she owed him nothing. Perhaps she could still remember enough to make a difference.

Eve reached out and broke a thin branch from the

pine tree, bending it back and forth, taking care not to disturb the little candles. The hiccoughs had stopped, the baby seemed to be asleep, yet she kept him there, his head on her shoulder, loving the warmth, the weight, the soft new smell of him. Then she pushed the two small chairs to the side of the room with her foot to release a space on the floor, and swept the air with the branch, visualizing the flames of a cleansing fire leaping and swirling through the air. She set a candle at each of the four corners, calling on the elements to protect the sacred space, and somehow the old words came back, falling from her tongue like quicksilver as she walked the boundary of her circle, scattering a little salt from the pot on the table, a few drops of water from the glass jug, using the taper to carry a flame.

Afterwards, she remembered only the flickering candles, the beauty of the words that had come from somewhere so deep inside they seemed given rather than any invention of her own. She'd asked for strength for the little one, strength to remain untouched by cruel words or deeds, strength to grow into the name - for after all, he was a bringer of light, born so near the solstice, the turn of the year when the days grow slowly longer. And if her ritual was flawed, if those years had dulled her memory - well, the Lord and Lady knew it had come from her heart. There would be time to perfect it as he grew.

Lucifer, bringer of light. Already the name seemed to have changed subtly.

Eve made a soft depression in the cushion and placed the baby on the settee, pulling the blanket over one wayward little hand. Then she pinched out the candles on the tree and stirred the fire, adding a branch from the fire basket. After breakfast the Yule log could join what was left of it, but until then the little one was hers to dream over.



LID OFF THE CAULDRON

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

We are sorry to announce the resignation of several staff members from Pagan Network.

Hedgeflower has resigned from the News Team

Janika has resigned as a Moderator and Regional Representative

Illarane has resigned from the Technical Services Team, the Regional Representative Team and the Graphics Team

Pagan Network would like to wish them all the best for the future.

Feast of Fools

Pagan Network's Feast of Fools - 6th January 2007

Pagan Network shall be hosting a Feast of Fools on Saturday the 6th of January at the Knights Templar pub in Chancery Lane, London.

The Feast of Fools is traditionally an anarchic, topsy-turvy festival of tricks and costumes, so the theme here is not so much 'dress to impress' as 'dress to surprise!' Just don't get yourselves arrested, please!

We hope to have a small market stall area for people to browse and buy from, and also we will have tarot and palm readers for at least some of the evening. There will be games and competitions- all in keeping with the spirit of the day!

We will also have a small film crew from www.esoterice.co.uk

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

BEYOND THE GRAVE

A stylized illustration of a graveyard. In the foreground, there is a green patch of grass with several tombstones. One is a simple cross, another is a rounded rectangular stone with some illegible markings, and a third is a smaller, simpler stone. The background is a solid blue shape representing the sky.

By Sarah Rooke (Morgraine)

Here are a few real ghost stories, that have actually happened to me or been witnessed by my family. Just as a short intro, my father's side of the family are mainly Spiritualist mediums and healers, so you could say I suppose that psychism runs in the family. My great uncle was Jack Webber, and my grandmother was Winnifrid Rooke, both well known mediums.

First of all, I remember when I was young; my mum maintained there was a poltergeist in the house. Several times it attacked her. Once it pushed her across the conservatory we had then, and another time it threw a whole tray of food and drink that my mum was holding up into the air. Another time, when my mum was on the landing a bottle of shampoo squirted its contents in mid air, in broad daylight, into her face. My mum seemed to think that this was the house's previous owner, come back to haunt the place. The house was built during the 1920's, so who knows.

When the house was modernised in the early 1980's, this seemed to fade out over time. However, after my dad's death in 2001, my mum has often felt someone sitting on the bed or a hand near her face as she sleeps. Apparitions of the two cats and dog we had appear regularly on the stairs, one can sometimes catch a glimpse of them through the railings

As for myself, I have had many ghostly experiences, too many to recount here, however I will describe some of them.

I have seen on many occasions a moving shadow or misty figure by the stairs where I currently live. I remember someone telling me that the house was haunted because a young girl was murdered here. I do not know if that is true, however the house is Victorian and has a basement.

I have also experienced a cat jumping onto the bed

at my aunts several years ago in Devon, my mum says that my Nan once owned a cat way back, so was it this nocturnal feline?

The building where I used to work in the naval base in Portsmouth was said to be haunted. There was the story relayed to me by the cleaner called Lena of what happened before I worked here. The building used to be a place for the young naval officers in the early 1800's. A young man had apparently hung himself in the conference room where the alcove was, and there was something there. Lena witnessed a pencil roll off a perfectly level table and another lady refused to enter the room. Eventually they got the padre in as the atmosphere was so bad, and after this it felt lifted.

In the basement to the same building, there was a strange atmosphere as well. During the Napoleonic wars, the place had been used to house prisoners of war and many had died of malnutrition. Myself and another lady refused to go down there on our own as it was creepy. There was an arch that had a grille here and I was always convinced someone or something was watching me as I walked past.

Whilst I was working temporarily in the Old Naval Academy, I looked up and saw a dark shadow disappear. I felt like someone was watching me, however I didn't feel frightened by this, more fascinated and I think it was some authoritative figure from the early 1800's who was keeping an eye on what I was doing.

Anyway, I hope that you have found this brief resume interesting. I expect many people will have their own theories as to what has been experienced here. Personally I wouldn't mind a group of like minded individuals going on a vigil somewhere to do a bit of ghost hunting at some point.

However, for now as they say on Most Haunted, Sleep tight!

Poetry Corner

Moon at Sunrise

The Moon at Sunrise
See the sparkle in your eyes
Next to the red sky of the dawn
Perhaps a new love is born
Tonight my love
Let us repeat what happened
This early morn

Sunrise, I can see a thousand glittering stars
Where the clouds are breaking up, as if in a storm on Mars
See the winds gathering by the sea
Onto a lost island, far away from me

The dawn is breaking, and the moon is making
Her last appearance for the night
Disappearing soon, but visible into the twilight

Far across the seas and mountains
Over the valleys and mythical fountains
When shall I see you again?
In the sun or in the rain?
Or in some distant land not too far?

Sarah Rooke, 1986



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

25 LESSONS IN LIFE

by Nightshade

When we are born, we are born in innocence,
We learn to love one another through trust.
We learn to accept each other,
And have the choice of faith,
We have the serenity to forgive, and should surrender to it,
Anger is forgiven, as is guilt and also shame,
Learn us not to live in denial, but have hope and courage through prayer,
Live your life fully, each day, with courage and humour,
Always must we remember ones boundaries,
And be we ever honest with oneself,
And with complete compassion, help those in need through grief and fear,
Have gratitude towards those whom have helped you,
Only will one then succeed to find wisdom through the divine.

INTERVIEW WITH A

A series of interviews with members of the Pagan Network. Here, Telesillawitch puts the questions to MouseDemon

PAGAN IDENTITY

PN: Name and username

MD: Michelle Ward and username MouseDemon

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

MD: 32, and I live in Cheshunt, Hertfordshire, which is just spitting distance away from London.

PN: How would you describe your spiritual path?

MD: I lean more towards the Celtic and Roman pantheons, but I consider my path to be rather eclectic in design. I tend to just get on with things and live and let live in my attitude towards other peoples' beliefs because what is right for me isn't necessarily what is right for anyone else. I am having a little bit of a "moment" (for want of a better word) as I am thinking rather heavily about what I consider to be the nature of the Gods and what they are to me.

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

MD: I got involved with this path because nothing else made sense to me. I was brought up in a fairly secular household, my mother being vaguely Methodist and my father being an agnostic leaning towards atheist. The only church I went to was with my grandparents and I enjoyed it, I just didn't

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really believe in anything they were saying even then. At Primary school we had a teacher who would read us Greek myths and legends at story-time. My dad became interested in AD&D in the 1980's, and I used to be fascinated by his books on the Gods and Goddesses of different pantheons. By the time I was a teenager I was into anything a bit weird. My favourite book was Arthur C Clarke's World Of Strange Powers. I was into Tarot, and ghosts and faeries and UFOs and generally was a bit of an odd-bod! At this time, for some strange reason I also became involved in a Fundamental Christian group for teenagers. Most of my friends were going, and they invited me, so I went for a few months. What I learnt there was extremely useful, that peer pressure is a great tool for getting people to do things. That conformity is an easy trap to fall into. That cults start off as being very friendly, but when you question them, funnily enough they aren't anymore. After a few months I decided that enough was enough, and stopped going, and I even had the Leaders come round to speak to me about why I had stopped going. Fortunately I had/have a very supportive mother who wouldn't let them brow beat me into going back. Some years later the group folded after the leaders were investigated for their behaviour.

PN: Your encounter with the Fundies sounds pretty scary, but also really educative. Has it made you more careful with other religious groups and have you ever noticed similar patterns in any branch of Paganism?

MD: It has made me very careful with ALL religious groups. I am a bit of a non-conformist and I loathe being told what to do unless there is a good reason for it. It has made me very hesitant about joining covens as even within the last 5 years I got my fingers burnt. Fortunately because of my experiences as a teenager, I recognised things I didn't like or agree with, so I pulled away. I don't have a lot of experience with the many variations of Paganism. TBH, it isn't really something that comes up that often. I probably have many friends of many different flavours but I don't know what they do, and it isn't any of my business to ask.

Within Paganism, there is what I would call more instances of the Cult Of Personality. It is very easy to set yourself up as some kind of guru type, and act like the big I AM, then in all honesty, you are just a good blagger. There is a problem for Newbies starting out, because often these are the people that you first encounter, and sometimes they are perhaps not as honest as they should be. That said, there are genuine and helpful people out there, who deserve our respect for what they do for the pagan world.

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

MD: As I previously mentioned, at the moment I am going through an interesting time with my spirituality. I am not quite sure what it all means, but hopefully I will work it out in the end. My main issue is seeing the Gods with personality. My cynical/logical brain sees this as a human construct, as the Godhead is too much for our fragile tiny minds to comprehend. That doesn't mean I think any less of the people that do believe that way, some of my closest friends have very intimate and personal relationships with their Gods that they consider as real as their relationships with me. I have had "god-speak" in my head, but I am contemplating what that actually means to me.

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

MD: Nope. Never. I hope I never will.

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

MD: When some of my work colleagues found out I was a witch, some of them were a little concerned. While they didn't come to me, they did ask one of my friends what it actually meant. And I often get asked, you mean a White Witch, don't you? Most of the people that know me thought I was a bit odd before they knew about the paganism, so there was no real change there. I get more stick from being a geeky scifi nerd.

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?

MD: I am a Learning Adviser in an FE college. The only real conflict that work has on my spirituality is the time it takes up, and the constant stress it causes. (Yes, I am job hunting!)

PN: What are your hobbies and interests?

MD: I enjoy reading, cooking, not doing anything at all (a rare thing indeed!), and recently I have taken over the editorship of the PN's magazine Witchtower. When I have the time, energy and inclination I can be a bit of a social bunny and like nothing better than arranging going out, parties and things like that with friends.

PN: How did you snag PN editorship and what do you enjoy most about it? Have you any interesting or amusing stories to tell so far?

MD: How did I snag PN editorship? LOL! I just asked if I could volunteer! Seriously, people. If there is a role on PN that you want to do, just go for it. We need more volunteers!!

The most amusing and rather embarrassing thing that has happened actually occurred over this weekend at the Convention. I was sitting at the reception, selling entry tickets and sold one of the Yule editions. My husband (bless his cotton socks!) turned around and said. "The editor of the magazine is sitting right there, do you want her autograph?" I laughed, saying "yeah, right, don't be silly", but they wanted it!! It was all very

tongue in cheek, but made me laugh, and blush!! (Guys, if you are reading this, I can't see that it will ever be worth more because of my scribble, but it made my day!)

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

MD: I have quite an eclectic mix within my friends and family. My mum's side of the family are a mixture of Methodists and Humanists, while my dad's are mostly agnostic/atheists. My husband's family are Fundie Christians, and my husband is now Pagan too. (His parents don't know) My friends are a complete mishmash of beliefs. I have some die hard Wiccans, Trads, Heathens, Witches, Fluffs, Christians, non-religious, all types really. My friends are my friends because I like them, not because of their spirituality.

BELIEFS

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

MD: I am coming to the conclusion that I don't believe in a Deity in the form of a Divine human archetype. I know that there are people (some of my best friends in fact) that say that they experience their Gods as walking, talking, Divine beings. I don't. I tend to think of things as energy, with many different layers of energy, of which we exist. Gods, angels and the like may be different forms of that energy, I don't know. But just telling me I am wrong because that's not how you experience it tends to get right up my nose.

PN: Do you believe in the existence of "spirits" human or non-

human? Have you ever had any experiences of "spirit"?

MD: I do, even if that doesn't necessarily follow what I just said. I just feel that we anthropomorphize things we don't understand. A spirit of a tree isn't going to look like a pretty girl dressed in a leafy dress. If it does, then personally I think that is what is expected to be seen. We create our own reality. (And I know that people will probably pick holes with that comment, but I know what I mean I think!)

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

MD: I do believe in magic. I consider it to be a way of tapping into the energy of the universe, and manipulating it in ways that can alter our reality.

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

MD: At the moment, I am solitary, but I have worked with others.

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

MD: Actually I think that both have their positives and negatives. Working alone can be quite liberating, but also lonely and slow. Group work can be dynamic, but you will always have to deal with other people's emotions, attitudes and commitments.

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'?

MD: Yes, I do believe in curses, and if the situation ever arose (And I hope to the Gods it never does), I would curse someone. Curses are an interesting concept as most people see them as making someone's life more miserable and causing them pain and grief. Whereas a close friend of mine has the view to curse someone with fertility, prosperity and good luck. Think about it, they aren't going to be bothering you anymore. They will be too busy. My curse would depend entirely on what I was cursing for. And I would take the consequences if there were any.

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

MD: Ummm, nope. Cause and effect maybe, what goes around, comes around, but not the 3-fold law.

ACTIVITIES

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

MD: I meditate, do visualisations, and spell work. But not as regularly as I would like.

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

MD: I acknowledge most of them. Even if it is only with a nod and a thought. I know not all of the Sabbats have actual historical credibility, but in our modern and frenetic world, they have a place to make us stop and pause for a while.

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

MD: Yup, and yup!

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

MD: I don't spend as much as I would like. And considering I live almost directly opposite a National County Park with real Roman relics found by Time Team, (Woooo!) I am really embarrassed at being so slack.

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

MD: I only think that it may work better in our heads. We feel more pagany, a bit dangerous and wild. There is no reason why you can't work just as well in the city IMHO. That said, a concrete jungle is not the healthiest place to be, so the countryside wins my vote.

IDENTITY ON PAGAN NETWORK

PN: How long have you been a member?

Since about 2002! That's quite a while. I will admit though, I did lurk for some time before I actually got really active. Mainly as I forgot that I was a member of the site. I have been a Full Member for just over a year now I think.

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

MD: This is pretty much my main hangout. There are other places that I go to and enjoy, but I have actually met quite a few of the people on this site in Real Life, and as I am a moderator as well, I tend to be on everyday.

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

MD: I do like the style of discussion on PN for the most part. Occasionally dummies get thrown out of the prams, but that happens in all walks of life, why do we expect pagans to be any different? I do enjoy the variety of subjects that come up as well. I also have an unusual method of dealing with posts that I don't like. I don't take any notice of them unless I have to! I don't take things too personally, and I don't assume that I KNOW people because I talk to them on a website.

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

MD: I think it is the nature of such a place to have repetition. Yes, if you have been on the site for a while, it does get tedious to read the same subject threads come up again, but then on the other hand, someone may have something new and insightful to say, so we can't deny them that opportunity. Using the search facilities is quite longwinded, and you don't always find exactly what you are looking for.

I think though, for the most part, PN is quite fresh. There are themes and opinions that come up, but as long as something new is said, then I don't have a problem with them.

PN: What would you change about Pagan Network?

MD: Oooooooooo, where do I start?

In all seriousness, there isn't a lot I would change. I would like to see

more interaction between different areas of the country and it would be good to see the next PN Conference somewhere other than London. I love London and it is very convenient for me, but I can appreciate that it isn't for other folks all over the country.

We are all members of Pagan Network for a reason. I would like people to become more active in supporting PN. It would be nice if we could establish the equivalent of the PF's Regional Coordinators and have a more formal part to play in the way Paganism is represented in this country.

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?

MD: Someone who is Wiccan is someone who has been initiated into a Gardnerian or Alexandrian Coven. That's it in a nutshell AS FAR AS I AM CONCERNED. I think someone can experience Wicca (wicca) as a solitary witch, and use the imagery and techniques that have been published about Wicca, but until they are initiated into a Coven, they aren't Wiccan.

What concerns me more is the underlying impression that I often get, that Wicca is the best and only way to go. Why can't people just be Witches, who take inspiration from the Wiccan movement? What's wrong with being just a Bog Standard Witch (or Pagan)?

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

MD: I don't think so. There is a lot of fluff around, but I think that is often because learning about Wicca, Witchcraft, Paganism in all its forms is a work in progress, and it is often the fluffier side of things that appeals to people in the beginning. But as they move along, their views change and often the fluffiness disappears.

The thing is I do like Fluffy. It is very comforting. I am just too much of a miserable realist to embrace it. I tended to find when I was trying to be fluffy, that I would investigate certain things that the actual truth behind them was not in the least bit fluffy. Unicorns are not fluffy, faeries are not fluffy, and dolphins are not fluffy. Do the research, it is all there!

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?

MD: I am not as involved with the Pagan scene as I would like, but I have become increasingly involved over the past few years. Family responsibilities mean that I am not the pentacle clad hippy/rock chick that lurks behind my bespectacled Librarian persona. That said though, I am a moderator on PN, I edit their magazine Witchtower and may be the Communication Officer soon. (Depends on the voting!)

My views on the Pagan scene vary depending on my mood. I will put my hand up and admit that on occasions I think it is full of crap; too many egos vying for position and credibility. Its strengths are that there are some fantastic people out there doing a great job with whatever it is that they are doing. Unfortunately that also

leads to one of its greatest weaknesses. The Pagan scene still seems to attract more than its quota of self-styled guru wannabes who manipulate people, and generally do not show Paganism in the best light to the rest of the world.

Due to the current climate of religious hysteria, it would be nice to think that Pagans were squeaky clean, but because we are actually only human, there are liars, cheats and frauds who think they can behave however they want to. Unfortunately, IMO, often they can. No one wants to be seen as the whistleblower, or it is a case of one person's word against another, so nothing ever gets seen to be done about these people. It would be nice if we could deal with these situations appropriately.

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

MD: Nope.

Since this interview Michelle was voted into the position of Communications Officer and since then has gone on to become Chair of Pagan Network. Liz (Cuvalwen) was voted into the Communications Officer position when vacated by Michelle and Melanie (Twilightgirl) took over as Editor of the Witchtower Magazine

Chestnut, Apple and Onion Pie

Ingredients

Pastry:

350g/12oz flour

1 ½tsp salt

180g/6oz cold butter

1 free-range egg yolk, lightly beaten

(or if your lazy like me, premade frozen pastry!)

Filling:

30ml/2tbsp olive oil

350g/12oz onion, chopped

450g/1lb eating apples (Cox's are best), peeled and cored

285-325g/10-11oz cooked, peeled chestnuts (or you can use tinned chestnuts if you don't have time to cook and peel them)

1tsp chopped fresh thyme or ½tsp dried

1tsp chopped fresh sage or ½tsp dried

3 free-range eggs

salt & freshly ground pepper

milk for glazing

Preparation

Put the flour and salt in a bowl and mix in the butter until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs. Mix in the egg yolk and 5-6 tablespoons of cold water. Working quickly, bring the mixture together until it forms a smooth dough. Wrap in plastic film and chill in the refrigerator for 30 minutes before use.

Preheat the oven to Gas Mark 6. Heat the oil in a saute pan over a moderate heat and cook the onion until golden brown.

Chop the apples into small pieces (about 6mm) and mix these with the onions in a large bowl.

Cut the prepared chestnuts into quarters and add them to the bowl together with the herbs. Mix thoroughly and season well.

Beat two of the eggs and add these to the bowl and mix in well.

Roll out two-thirds of the pastry and use it to line the bottom of a non-stick, loose-bottomed, 9in flan tin. Fill with the chestnut mix, carefully smoothing it into a nice mound shape.

Roll out the rest of the pastry to make a lid. Place on top of the pie, sealing the edges with a little water.

Beat the remaining egg with a little milk and use some of this to glaze the top of the pie.

Bake for 40-50 minutes or until golden brown

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

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/>

The Lunar Standstill at Callanish

Written by Beith-ann

Every 18 ½ years the Moon reaches her major standstill on the horizon. She is at the lowest point that she can be at the summer solstice and this can be seen over a number of months. 2006 is the year that this happens and the effect can be seen at the full moons from March until September. The full Moon then appears bigger and brighter and is especially low down on the horizon.

The event is particularly spectacular the further north that you go and I had heard some 18 months previously that it is especially good at the Callanish Stone Circle on the Isle of Lewis. Now, it so happened that a good friend of mine had not long moved to Lewis and my little brain went into overdrive as I worked on the options. I rang my friend and grovelled suitably so that she would be willing to put me and possibly a friend up for a few days so I could be there to witness this.

In the Outer Hebrides there is a range of hills called by various names; Sleeping Beauty Mountain, The Old Woman of the Moor and Mother Earth, who looks like a woman laying down and this can be seen from most of the western side of the Island. At the Lunar Standstill at Callanish the Moon moves across the horizon and as she rises above Sleeping Beauty someone standing on the hillock at the southern end of the Callanish Circle will be shadowed

against the moon and look as if they were being reborn.

I had variously heard that the best time to go and see this was March, June or September, but as my working partner's birthday was the day after the full moon in April we plumped for 13th of that month as it seemed rather appropriate. So I had my travelling companion and someone to share the petrol costs with, somewhere that I could stay and all of us had the same spiritual outlook. I felt very privileged that the people I would be sharing this with were my closest spiritual friends; my working partner of 2 years and the lady that I started on the path with over 15 years ago. It would be special.

We arrived on Lewis after a long, wet journey through the magnificent scenery of the Highlands and by ferry on the evening before the Full Moon. The rain on Lewis can be horizontal and this is exactly what welcomed our arrival - but we still hoped it would be clear the following evening. After a delightful time of welcome, catching up and good food and company we made our weary way to bed.

Next morning dawned grey and rainy but we still lived in hope and discussed what the four of us would do. We decided that it would be important to look at Callanish during the daylight to get some pictures and sort of 'reccy'

the place and see what would be happening where. There were also other places of interest to visit; a Norse Mill, an ancient Brock, the Truisheal Standing Stone and a rather nice hostelry for lunch.

Although whilst at Callanish we looked and looked we couldn't quite make out what all the fuss was about and what would happen where, so we decided the best thing was to leave it to fate and just see what happened. At least the Sun had decided to come out.

It stayed out for most of the day until we got back to the house where there was sunshine and showers and some rather magnificent rainbows. Still we were optimistic that 'her Ladyship' would pay us a suitable visit that night and got ready. My partner and I decided to get into our ritual garb, with Jane my friend infinitely more sensibly deciding on waterproofs and wellies. Jane's husband is not a Pagan and decided to leave us to it, preferring the warmth of the open fire that was burning nicely. So the three of us in various modes of attire made our way up to Callanish just as the Sun had set and the Moon was still hiding behind a cloud. We did think that there would be a few people there but as it happened we were the only ones. We had the circle all to ourselves.

Callanish comprises of around 7 circles in the area. The main one where we were consists of a circle

made of very tall, narrow stones with a cyst at the centre. This was filled with water when we were there. There are also 4 avenues of stones at the 4 directions, the longest one being double and slightly offset to the north east. The stone that they were taken from was a wonderful, colourful, local sedimentary rock called Lewisian gneiss.

As we arrived and started getting our stuff out of the car the Moon began to peep through the clouds and by the time we got to the circle she was there, shining from the East and truly magnificent. It was true that she was brighter and bigger than I had ever seen her and she reflected beautifully off the Loch nearby and upon the water in the cairn inside the circle.

For a while none of us wanted to enter the circle fully and just walked around the edge for a while feeling a change in the site from earlier in the day. There was something more intimate, more enclosing than before and although it was blowing a gale, the atmosphere seemed rather still, like it was waiting for something. Still no one else arrived. We looked behind us to the west and noticed some black clouds coming over. The Moon stayed visible for about another 5 minutes before the clouds started to cover her and then the wind started to blow and very quickly got up to speed as it bought the rain with it.

The rain was cold and I'm sure there was sleet in it. I could feel it stinging my face and hands. I could smell the iciness in the air and the wind whipped around my cloak blowing the hood over my head. Luckily it was all coming from

behind so we could get behind some of the stones to shelter. I watched the others standing with their backs to the stones to keep dry, waiting for the moon to reap-



pear, but I suddenly felt that I didn't want to do that. I wanted to feel the raw elemental energy as fully as I could without getting hypothermia. I did consider taking my cloak off and for a minute perhaps the rest of my clothes, but if I didn't freeze in the meantime I would have had a lot of fun trying to catch them when I wanted to put them back on. (Yes! I know! Excuses! However, I still say that our ancestors had more sense than to dance around naked in weather like that).

My cloak is heavy wool and would keep the most stinging parts of the rain off of me so I stepped forward and let the wind blow the cloak where it would. It wrapped around me naturally and I stood and allowed myself to feel the full force of the gale and rain. For me, standing with my eyes shut, feeling and seeing the energy around me, lifting me and carrying me to another place and time, was the single most magical moment of the journey - to that point. I could feel other beings around me. I could hear them in the wind and see them in my minds eye and for someone as cynical as I am

believe me it was both scary and inspiring at the same time. I caught glimpses of what may have happened in the distant past. There was even a split second when I thought I experienced a time before the circle was built for just a fleeting moment.

The wind began to drop and I came back and grounded myself. The rain steadied and I looked around me to see what had been happening in the meantime. Nothing had changed except things were a bit damper, but there seemed to be a glow about the place; a radiance that I hadn't seen there before (or anywhere for that matter) and it seemed to linger for the rest of our visit. We had decided on a very simple ritual and although things feel a bit blurred still I think it was at this point that we decided it was time to mark the occasion. We had bought a libation, a little wine and some sweet bread to share with each other and the ancestors. The small drinking horn was filled and each one of us held it and said something that was in our hearts and minds, something simple and personal. Again it might have been the moment but it seemed to me that as each of us took the horn to bless the contents it glowed even though there was no visible moonlight at the time.

We shared the wine and the bread and thanked the spirits of the place and decided to continue our vigil for a while. Each of us took time for personal meditation as we waited for the Moon to reappear from behind her cloud. We stood by the largest stone taking turns to walk around the outside of the circle and feel the change in atmosphere as we did.

Whilst standing still watching the sky I noticed the shadows of the stones in front of me and realised that they looked just like tall, cloaked figures standing sentinel and watching the sky just like we were. I turned to look and practically every one gave the same impression as if we were welcomed in the circle and protected. We had been given permission to join in the vigil that these stones have been involved in for the past 3500 years or more and it was a private audience.

We watched as the Moon slowly began to emerge from behind the cloud and suddenly, in the twinkle of an eye, so as not to be left out a shooting star appeared seconds before the Moon started to show just to add an extra touch of magic. We stood for a long time just watching. This time she was a little higher, but not much. This time she was brighter and the air was crisp and clean. All too soon the clouds rolled in behind us and the wind began to whip up again. The Moon was covered and the rain began to fall.

We took this as the signal to leave. We could have stayed there longer. After all it looked as if it would clear again but the feel of the circle had changed yet again. Each one of us felt that our private audience was over and for the first time that evening I began to feel really cold.

We didn't see the astronomical effect that we had travelled all that

way to see but it didn't matter. What all three of us had encountered was something unique in our lifetimes, something special, a magic that could have only been



felt at that time in that place and with these people. It has been something so profound for me that I have had to write it down. As I have said before I am a cynic so something really

special has to happen to move me in this way - and it did. It was a moment that I will never forget and a journey that will stay with me for this life and possibly the lifetimes to come and I thank the Old Ones for allowing me the experience.

Beith-ann © April 2006

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.

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 Ostara/Beltane 07 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 5 March 2007.

So choose your title and get those cameras clicking!

Yule/Imbolc Issue (Choose from the following titles)

- 1. Gather round the Fire**
- 2. Jack Frost's Frozen Fingers**
- 3. Twinkle Twinkle Little Star**

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



If you haven't heard about it, we've been running a BUY AT scheme for several years now. It's 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!

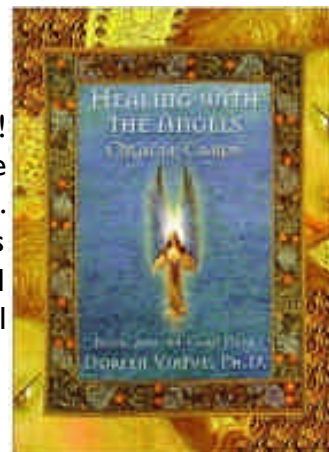
So take a look over at <http://buy.at/pagannetwork>

BUY AT WITH AMAZON

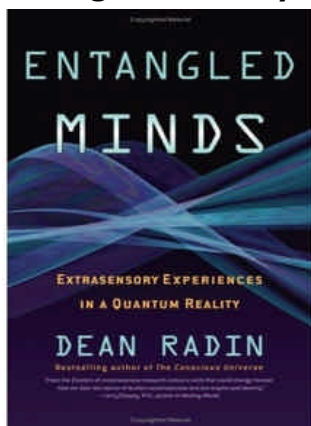
Healing with the Angels Oracle Cards by Doreen Virtue £8.15

Synopsis

Your guardian angels have messages that can help you heal every area of your life! This set of 44 oracle cards will help you communicate with your angels; and receive angelic answers and guidance about your love life, career, health, family, and more. With the help of the enclosed guidebook, you'll learn how to give angel readings for yourself and your loved ones. Each card features a beautiful angel image and message. There are no negative cards in this deck, since the angels always counsel us from a place of love.



Entangled Minds by Dean Radin £7.19



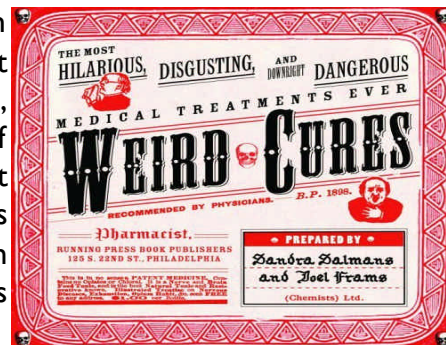
Synopsis

A fascinating, yet-unexplained scientific phenomenon shows that individual objects in the universe are not quite as separate as they seem. Once two objects interact, they remain connected in space and time in what Einstein called 'spooky action at a distance.' Could the same interaction explain psychic occurrences? Psychic researcher Dean Radin argues that human minds are likely interconnected or entangled in the same way, and this interconnected fabric of reality is the key to those puzzling yet profoundly meaningful experiences called psychic phenomena. ENTANGLED MINDS shows how science has rigorously demonstrated genuine psychic effects and why these phenomena are the next frontier in understanding who and what we are.

Weird Cures: The Most Hilarious, Disgusting and Downright Dangerous Medical Treatments Ever by Joel Fram (Author), Sandra Salmans (Author) £4.99

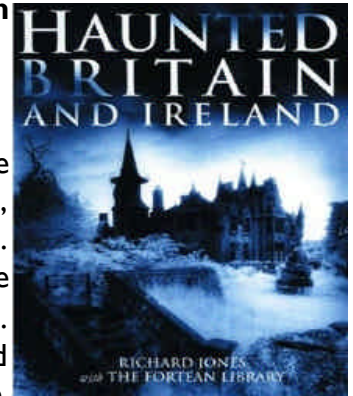
Synopsis

Through the ages, hilarious, horrifying and preposterous cures have been foisted upon the gullible in their quest for good health. This fun look at medical history is a compendium of some of the most bizarre treatments, which will fascinate and astonish you. Many of the cures are beyond belief - for example: Mercury, now known to be highly toxic, was once thought to draw poison from the body, and was even administered for routine ills like constipation and toothaches; and Strappado, a technique in which patients are strapped to ladders and dropped from significant heights, was used to correct spinal misalignments. It is now considered torture.



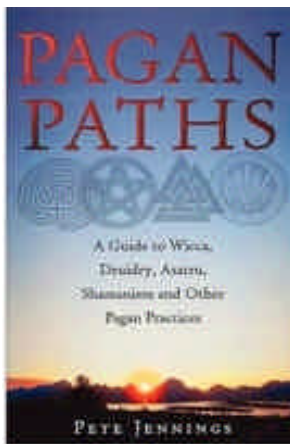
BUY AT WITH AMAZON

Haunted Britain and Ireland by Richard Jones (Author), The Fortean Library (Author) £8.83



Synopsis

The British Isles are arguably amongst the most spectrally populous parts of the world - this guide is aimed at anyone interested in the ranks of dismembered, decapitated spectres that inhabit the countries' stately homes and blasted heaths. Region by region, ghost-seeker Richard Jones reveals, explains and delights in the tales of the tortured phantoms eager to restage their dark and turbulent pasts. The cast of characters ranges from ghostly legionaries that tramp the long-buried streets of Roman York to the malevolent fairy lights of Derbyshire's Longendale, from the shade of Ladford's murderous vicar to the grief-stricken white lady who may or may not have attended pop singer Madonna's wedding at Skibo Castle. The book is illustrated throughout and features extracts from original documents.



Pagan Paths: A Guide to Wicca, Druidry, Asatru, Shamanism and Other Pagan Practices by Pete Jennings (Author) £6.59

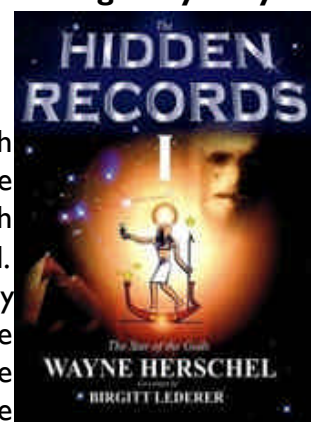
Synopsis

Paganism is a collection of spiritual paths that have their roots in the ancient religions of the world. Thousands of Pagans today share a love of Nature and a reverence of the Divine, but how they express their beliefs differs according to the path they follow. This ground-breaking guide to Paganism explains - the main issues involved in setting out on the Pagan path - the beliefs and practices of Wicca, Hedgewitch traditions, Druidry, Shamanism, Asatru, Mystery Groups, Eclectic Paganism and some foreign traditions - the Pagan approach to magic - the significance of sacred sites - how to be a practical Pagan - celebrations and organisations - the growing role of Paganism in today's world - Eco-Paganism and Cyber Paganism

The Hidden Records: Ancient pyramid star maps decode the secret of human origins by Wayne Herschel (Author) £13.26

Synopsis

Deciphering a whole array of arcane lost knowledge 'hidden' from humanity through time, The hidden records exposes another monumental Da Vinci secret! Wayne Herschel (a new author in the field of archaeo-astronomy) derives his breakthrough conclusions from what could be the real story behind the legend of the Holy Grail. Prior to any of today's acclaimed books on the Da Vinci code, Herschel was already researching the geometry of the human form from a 'codex' based on the recurrence of the same 'sacred' geometry in most ancient civilisations. It is found at Stonehenge and Giza, and in a place not of this world. The new findings could potentially be the ultimate archaeological find a record of the genesis of humanity. The codex intricately replicates a 'sacred' area in the heavens, isolating one specific star. Was this the star of the flesh and blood 'gods' who came from above? Against all the odds, it is a nearby Sun-like star and it can be confirmed scientifically. This 300-page full colour glossy book cryptically presents the most compelling evidence ever of the sequence of events that overwhelmingly prove that we have never been alone in the universe.



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 Witchcraft Ltd

They have several wonderful variations on the Green Man and tree spirit plaques.

Witchcraft Ltd

www.witchcraftshop.co.uk

Witchcraft Ltd can be found in the heart of Glastonbury, not only can you shop online via their website www.witchcraftshop.co.uk but you can also visit the shop. Both shop and website take all major credit and debit cards and the website has the additional payment option of paypal. All postage when buying online is calculated when going through the checkout. Witchcraft Ltd will also post worldwide. Most items that are in stock are dispatched within 72 hours, if there is a delay Witchcraft Ltd will inform you.

Witchcraft Ltd has a wide range of items for sale on their website, and many items are made in their own workshops. I really like the idea that they sell Athame kits, so you can make your own if you wish to, or you can buy them ready made in either metal or slate. Below are several other items that caught my eye.

Blessed be - hardwood plaque £16.00

Approx 7" long with a double pentagram (other symbols possible - enquire) for a unique welcoming plaque or for guarding over your shrine or sacred space



Pentagram Potbellies



Size 6.5"/155MM

£56.95

PRICE INCLUDES P&P



ACER
slate-base resin
6" approx
£27.00



QUERCUS
slate-base resin
6" approx
£27.00

FAERYWOODS BLANK CARDS - 6 PACK

6 inch by 9 inch large format cards in plastic sleeve with envelope. Left Blank for your message.

These are quality paper, exquisite faery scenes.

There are over 30 designs, a selection of 6 different ones will be chosen for you. £8.75



Rainbowleigh asked Trevor of Witchcraft Ltd to tell us a bit about himself and the business he runs.

Rain: How long have you been running Witchcraft, how many staff do you employ and what inspired you to start this kind of shop?

Trevor: Witchcraft as a shop began trading in 2002, so the name was already established when we took over in 2003. We immediately made it a Limited Company to put the whole business on a more professional footing. We could see the potential of the business but it needed serious investment. I had in any case reached the end of my IT career - so a move was necessary, and the offer came at the right time. It also fitted in with changes going on in my personal and spiritual life at the time.

I am Trevor Jones, Managing Director, and my partner (in life AND business) - Liz Williams joined the Board in 2005, bringing a welter of clothing and esoteric expertise with her. We now employ up to 5 staff part-time, and run the back office ourselves.

Rain: What do you feel attracts people to your shop or website and what do you consider your best selling items?

Trevor: We sell individual hand-made Pagan goods and that is what draws our clientele. People shop with us because we walk the talk, and we promote UK Pagan art, rather than relying on foreign imports. Our best sellers are the Beth Read Lace and velvet dresses, but we have a full range of less expensive clothing too - and never enough time to get it all on the website! We also sell hundreds of Green Men plaques, and many hand-made wooden items - our own personal favourites being our rune sets and totem animal plaques which we make ourselves. We also make our own range of incenses, candles, magical oils and literally dozens of other items for the shop.

On the website we draw customers from other areas too, as we are now one of the largest herb suppliers in the country. We have a range of high quality essential oils, and many specialist items in the herbal range. We are increasingly selling Chinese medicinal herbs, and we are both learning herbal medicine, to understand our product range better, and so that we might practice eventually - but the qualification is at degree level so it will take 5 years.

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

Trevor: We have never used a mailout to date - although with our new ordering system we will be doing that shortly. We do not print a catalogue for ecological and cost reasons - with our high proportion of one-off goods any printed catalogue would be out of date as soon as it hit the press.

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

Trevor: The Discount scheme was explained in detail and we felt that we could afford the offer, so we decided to go for it.

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

Trevor: We had a major expansion this year when we took over the Pixie Tailor and effectively merged the two shops. What we would like to do sooner rather than later, is to get into Glastonbury High Street (we are currently just off the main strip), AND retain the clothes shop, but separate it out again. That would entail more staff, but the increased turnover would cover that. We are also looking at ways of increasing our Internet sales and potentially going wholesale in 2007 if we can ever get a website started!

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

Trevor: Druids call me Witch; witches call me druid! I walk an eclectic path, having worked in Ritual Magic, Kabbalah, and several streams of Wiccan, but I currently work as a hedgewitch and a healer. I am currently a member of OBOD, as is Liz, and we celebrate the wheel of the year with a local Grove, but we work with anyone who invites us. We have officiated at several hand-fastings this year and look forward to more in the future.

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

Trevor: Our latest project is a Pagan Internet Radio show - which will start in December - we will let members know when that starts. That will occupy what little spare time the shop leaves us - but the business and spiritual potential is enormous.

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 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

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.

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.

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.

All Volunteers are required to sign the Pagan Network Volunteer Agreement and will be subject to a 3 month probationary period.

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

The Beltane Spring Fayre Group

In Association With the Leicester Pagan Alliance

Are pleased to announce their third Spring Fayre for 2007, funded by the Community Development Foundation(CDF). The CDF is supported by the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Home Office.

The Fayre will be held on Saturday March 17th 2007, from 11am to 6pm, at Moat Community College, Maidstone Rd, Leicester, near the city centre. It will be a free multicultural and multifaith event hosted by the Beltane Spring Fayre Group.

A showcase for local talent in music, singing, dancing, and poetry, the festival will also offer children's entertainment and activities such as a bouncy castle, ball pond, and climbing wall. Face painters and henna painters will be there. A creche is available for short sessions for younger children.

Workshops and talks on various spiritualities will offer a chance to understand our neighbours' beliefs. Druidry, Wicca, Celtic and Native American Indian lore will be amongst those illustrated. Interfaith and other faith groups have been invited to take part.

There will be demonstrations of complementary healing arts, a new age market, many local voluntary group stalls, with Neighbourhood Housing and the emergency services bringing displays and advice concerning safety and security for all.

Vegetarian refreshments will be available.

More information can be found at <http://www.beltanefayre.org/>

Lemony Leeks & Sprouts

INGREDIENTS

300g trimmed leeks, finely sliced
200ml light vegetable stock
200g trimmed Brussels sprouts
2 tbsp fresh lemon juice
Seasoning to taste

PREPARATION

Place the leeks in a large saucepan and add the stock and bring to the boil, cover and simmer on a low heat for 5 minutes before adding the sprouts.

Stir, replace the cover and simmer again for 4-5 minutes until starting to soften. Drain then season and stir in the lemon juice, just before serving.



Vegetable Loaf

INGREDIENTS

1½tsp butter/margarine
10oz/300g canned, unsweetened chestnut purée
1 large potato, cooked and mashed
2 free-range eggs, lightly beaten
½tsp pepper
½tsp dried basil

5oz/150g fresh breadcrumbs
1 onion, finely chopped
1 small turnip
½tsp salt
½tsp dried sage

PREPARATION

Preheat the oven to Gas Mark 4 and lightly grease a 1lb / ½kg loaf tin with the butter or margarine. Combine all the ingredients in a bowl and beat them together.

Spoon the mixture into the loaf tin. Place in the oven and bake for 50 minutes to 1 hour until brown and firm.

Remove from oven and turn the loaf gently out onto the plate.

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

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 witchtower@gmail.com

Xmas - Have you been a good girl or boy?

Xmas, a time of year when so much is wasted, be it food, paper, trees and even unwanted presents. This year try to be aware of the potential waste and take steps to recycle items.

Do you really need to send all those Xmas cards? Wouldn't an E card serve the same purpose, instead of wasting the card, envelope and postage. If you really must send cards use ones made from recycled materials and don't forget to recycle them again either by making the cards into gift tags for next year or by taking your cards (during the January 2007 period) to either a WH Smith's Newsagents or a Tesco Supermarket, who will be collecting cards to be recycled on behalf of the Woodland Trust.

Try and encourage your workplace to not send cards to each other, but to donate the money that would have been spent on cards to a worthwhile cause, such as buying a chicken for a Third World Country. World Vision (www.greatgifts.org) have lots of items in varying price brackets from £7 for a blanket through to £91 for a herd of goats!

And for those people in your life who have everything, why not adopt an animal for them? Places like www.lastminute.com and www.wwf.org.uk have several animals that can be adopted from polar bears, penguins, otters and snow leopards. Magazine subscriptions or membership to an organisation (such as Pagan Network) can make great gifts too.

If you want to help other charities then www.thealternativechristmaslist.co.uk/ serves lots of charities such as Help the Aged, PDSA, Terrace Higgins Trust, World Land Trust and Breast Cancer Care to name a few.

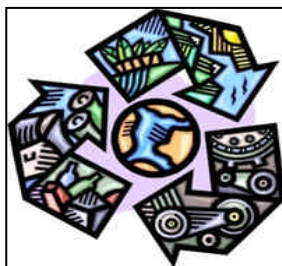
When buying food and drink, try to avoid

buying items which have unnecessary packaging, especially if the packaging isn't recyclable locally. Also don't buy drinks (soft or alcoholic) in small bottles. Buy them in a large container as this results in less waste, and if you are throwing a party avoid using paper plates, cups and serviettes. Remember to reuse carrier bags too!

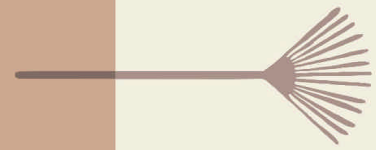
Although Xmas lights can look wonderful and really bring a room (or outdoors) to life, please remember that leaving the lights on for long periods of time when no one is around to appreciate the beauty of them uses up unnecessary electricity. So if you must have Xmas lights, try to limit the amount of time you have them switched on in order to save using up so much electricity, especially if you go a bit wild decorating the outside of your home! Personally, I think a few scented candles around the room can create a very cosy Xmas atmosphere, but remember not to leave them unattended!

If you have to have a real fir tree then consider buying a Christmas Tree for life from www.tree2mydoor.com and watch your little tree grow from year to year.

If you have decided to go for the traditional fir tree, when it comes time to recycle your tree a quick search on the internet will bring up lots of places that will either take your Christmas tree away for you to recycle or will give you a list of places where you can take your Christmas tree.



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 wichtower@gmail.com



FOXGLOVE

Foxglove is a highly poisonous and toxic plant if misused so care should be taken. In 1785 Dr William Withering discovered that Digitalin, which is extracted from the plant, could be used to treat heart disease. But please don't try this yourself; leave it to the professionals who know what they are doing.

Foxglove is said to improve the strength of plants that it is planted near to and it encourages resistance to pests and diseases.

As to be expected with such an odd looking plant, there is a huge amount of folklore relating to the foxglove and many of the names given to the foxglove reflect this such as Fairy Cap, Witches Thimbles and Goblin Gloves.

It was believed that fairies wore foxgloves as hats and gloves and that they also gave foxes foxglove flowers to wear on their paws to help them approach their prey more silently. They also taught the foxes how to ring the foxglove bells in order to warn their brothers and sisters of approaching hunters.

It is said that if you see the stem of a foxglove leaning over, it was believed that fairy folk were nearby, and that you should never harm the foxglove or the fairies will come after you! Foxgloves have also been used in working magic and for protection and witches supposedly used foxglove in ointments to make them fly.

Roman mythology says that upon Juno hearing that her husband Jupiter gave birth to Minerva from his thigh, Juno was distraught and wanted to bring forth a child too on her own, so she visited Flora the Goddess of fields, crops and flowers and asked for her help. Flora told Juno that there was a way she could bring forth a child on her own but she must never tell her husband of it. Flora then placed a foxglove blossom on her thumb and touched Junos stomach and breast. Instantly Juno conceived and gave birth to Mars.



INTERVIEW WITH A

PAGAN IDENTITY

PN: Name / username:

YB: Yvonne Aburrow (Yewtree)

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

YB: 37. Bristol.

PN: How would you describe your spiritual path?

YB: Polytheist Wiccan - lover of landscape, nature and wild things

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

YB: I realised I was a Pagan aged 17, when I realised that it was an apt "umbrella term" to cover all my various views about the nature of deity, humanity's relationship to the cosmos, and the sacredness of pleasure. At that time I thought I was the only one, until I joined a re-enactment society and started meeting other Pagans there. I had always been interested in witchcraft, as a result of reading a book by Cynthia Harnett. My interest in Paganism, apart from being based in my interest in nature and the landscape, stemmed from reading "Puck of Pook's Hill" by Rudyard Kipling. Eventually, after leaving university, I met a suitable Gardnerian Wiccan group and was initiated. I was lucky enough to find a coven who were also interested in our connection to the land and local deities and spirits. My current coven also have a similar spirituality, and we

PAGAN

work in a very egalitarian way.

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

YB: I was originally brought up as a Christian (in the Plymouth Brethren, something I have in common with Aleister Crowley) but fortunately my parents left that organisation when I was 9. Around the age of 14 I had a bout of Christianity, but recovered from that when I realised that my Christian friends disapproved of gay people - my best friend was (still is) gay, and he is one of the most spiritual and kind and wonderful people I have ever met, so I could not understand how Christianity could be against him, and decided it was a choice between Christianity and my friend. I chose my friend. So that was the first major change in my spirituality. I became an atheist for a while, looked into various paths (Hinduism, Buddhism etc) but decided I wanted a path that celebrated the joys of sexuality and physical existence - so Paganism seemed the obvious choice. Since then I have travelled along the path of Paganism in much the same direction, and have always been polytheist, believed in nature spirits and many gods and goddesses, and felt attracted to nature and the landscape.

A series of interviews with members of the Pagan Network. Here, Telesillawitch puts the questions to Yewtree

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

YB: Physically attacked: No. Discriminated against: Yes.

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

YB: Yes, someone assumed I was a bad person, but subsequently realised otherwise.

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?

YB: I'm a Web Developer. I'm out of the broom closet at work, and as I work for a University and am very keen on equal opportunities and diversity, and ensuring my websites are accessible, I feel this fits in well with my Pagan path.

PN: What are your hobbies and interests?

YB: Hobbies: Walking, reading, writing poetry, books, and articles, blogging, posting on mailing lists and the Pagan Network forums, going to films (sometimes theatre and opera), eating, cooking.

Interests: history, archaeology, anthropology, science fiction, folklore, mythology, Wicca (of course), folktales, storytelling, folk magic, botany.

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

YB: Family are Christian to varying degrees, but very tolerant. Friends: some Pagan, some other religions, some atheist, some agnostic.

BELIEFS

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

YB: I believe in many gods and goddesses. I have encountered some of them and have a particular relationship with a few from different pantheons, whom I consider to be my "household gods".

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

YB: Yes

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

YB: Yes, I believe in magic. I think it is something to do with the fact (now confirmed by quantum physics, string theory, etc.) that everything in the universe is connected to (perhaps even next to) everything else, and that the universe is permeated with consciousness.

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

YB: I do both and like both of them equally. I like the group work for the resonance and com-

panionship of the group, and the fact that it makes you look at issues you might otherwise not look at, and individual work for the opportunity to do whatever you feel like.

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

YB: Well, sort of, but not in the popular sense - not as an actual property of the universe. The source of the idea is from the 2nd degree, where people are told to return good threefold. That's it, and it is specific to the Wiccan 2nd degree.

ACTIVITIES

PN: What practices are regularly incorporated in your spiritual life?

YB: Ritual, magic, visualisations, energy work.

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

YB: The eight festivals of the wheel of the year. Plough Monday. Anything else we feel like at the time.

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

YB: Yes and yes.

PN: Do you spend much time in nature, in the wild? Do you spend enough time out there? Also, do you think paganism works better in the country than in the city? Why?

YB: I spend a lot of time in the wild, but probably not enough. I go a bit crazy if I don't get to see lots of trees at least once a week. I also really love the sea. As to

whether paganism works better in the country or not, see my article, "I'm the Urban Pagan, Baby".

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

YB: Yes it is. I also visit Britpoly (a Yahoo group for British polytheists) and Hexengefluester (a Yahoo group for German Pagans).

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?

YB: I think we need a new term to indicate initiated Wiccans (e.g. "initiated Wiccans"), as the term is now widely understood to include non-initiates. Actually that's fine.

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

YB: Some people are a bit fluffy but I think the trend is generally moving away from that towards a deeper engagement with reality on all levels.

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?

YB: Some Pagans can be too consumerist, self-centred, and think it's all about rebelling against authority for the its own sake. I think we need to address this.

PN: Does British Traditional Witchcraft represent a real sur-

viving ancient form of witchcraft pre-existing Gardnerian Wicca?

YB: It can't be proved either way. I suspect there were isolated pockets of witchiness, but nothing that amounted to a full-blown tradition.

AND FINALLY...

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

YB: The source of my religion is my feeling for the Earth and the landscape, but mythology gives it form. Then I can express it through Ritual. Magic is part of my practice. For me, religion is a connection with other people who have a similar spirituality. Magic is a practice whereby one can come nearer to gods and goddesses.

I am a polytheist, that is, I believe that deities are individuals in the same way as humans and other people. They can interact and even be interpermeable with us and with each other, and with the underlying patterns of energy or wyrd; they are not merely aspects of some great nebulous divine unity, rather they are distinct identities. I am also an animist, that is, I believe that everything has spirit, and that spirit is interpermeable with matter. I am neither a holist nor a rationalist, preferring a middle way, where diversity, multiplicity and incompleteness are welcomed.

Milk & Honey Rice Pudding

INGREDIENTS

3 eggs beaten gently
1c milk
½ c sweetened condensed milk
1/3 c honey
1 tsp vanilla
1 c cooked rice
Equal Parts Sweetened Condensed Milk and Honey
Cinnamon (optional)



PREPARATION

In a mixing bowl combine eggs, milk, condensed milk, honey and vanilla.

Beat gently by hand until honey is dissolved.

Stir in rice.

Pour into a 1.5 quart baking dish.

Place the baking dish into a larger baking dish and put 1 inch of hot water into the outer dish.

Bake for 45-60 minutes or until a knife inserted into the center comes out clean.

Remove immediately from the hot water bath. Set aside while you make the sauce.

In a glass bowl mix equal parts condensed milk and honey.

Heat in the microwave in 10 second intervals and stir until well mixed.

Stir in cinnamon to taste.

Drizzle over individual servings of warm pudding.



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.

CHAROITE

Hardness: 6

Occurrence: Russia

Appearance: Mottled, swirled and veined. Usually tumbled.

Charoite is known to help with nightmares and fears. It brings fears to the surface and helps you deal with them. Charoite provides perspective on your fears, and aids you with the courage to overcome fear patterns and helps with any change needed. If you are experiencing fear sit and meditate with Charoite, or sleep with it under your pillow to help overcome the nightmares.

Charoite is a good stone to carry with you if you are feeling stressed. It can also help you overcome compulsions and obsessions.

Charoite is a useful stone for cleansing the aura as it transmutes negativity and reenergises the body.



PREHNITE

Hardness: 6

Occurrence: South Africa

Appearance: Translucent to transparent, usually either green, clear or yellow in colour

Can aid in remembering dreams and is a useful tool for use during astral travel, visualisations or meditations. Prehnite can act as a psychic amplifier allowing you to tune into your inner knowing more easily.

This stone is said to bring harmony into the home and is useful at helping you let go of possessions you no longer need.

Prehnite can be used to reduce high blood pressure and control hypertension. It is also helpful in healing kidneys, bladder, chest and lungs.



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 Emperor



The Emperor stands as the protector and provider. He can represent yourself or male figures in your life.

The Emperor represents success, confidence, action and energy. Someone who is secure and in control of their life. The Emperor also shows a sense of responsibility, commitment and loyalty. When the Emperor appears it tells us to embody these qualities.

The Emperor is a leader who has proved himself worthy. He leads others but also listens to others, making him thoughtful and sensitive. He is the protector of the vulnerable and offers support when needed. The Emperor can also have a competitive edge and rises to meet the challenge. The Emperor is known for his logical thinking, he rarely lets emotions sway his judgement.

The Emperor can also represent someone who is immature, bossy and unable to cope with responsibility or the decisions in life. Others may see him as weak, petty and untrustworthy.

Images taken from the The Tarot of a Moon Garden

The Hierophant

The Hierophant represents spiritual learning and human development. He is someone who has experienced life and now comes to share his experience and wisdom. The Hierophant holds the keys to transformation. The Hierophant's qualities are kindness, goodness and forgiveness.

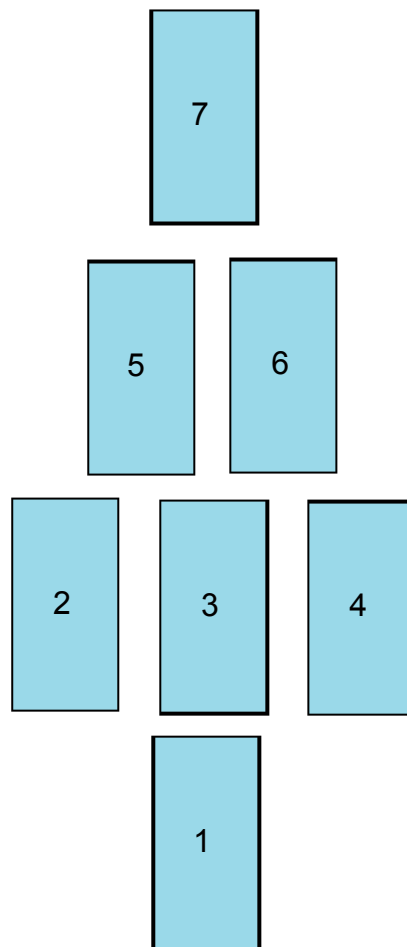
The Hierophant stands for spiritual matters and often will appear in some form as a spiritual mentor or advisor, be this as a physical person or group, or symbolic of the lessons you need to learn. The Hierophant represents traditional structured learning/paths and conforming to the rules.

The Hierophant can also represent someone who lacks conviction and feels stifled by others who want them to conform or live up to others expectations. They may be experiencing a crisis of faith, confusion or rebelling against society, or they may be wearing blinkers, only seeing the path they want to see and refusing to believe others may have the answers.



Tarot Spread - The Fir Tree

Yule/Christmas is a time of year when families usually get together to celebrate, tensions can run high as not everyone sees eye to eye, so the Fir Tree spread shows you the best way to interact with families and friends over the seasonal period.



1. Root - This is where you currently stand now and how you feel about the coming situation

2. Branches ready to fall - (Ancestors) - Advice your ancestors send you from beyond the grave

3. Elder Branches (grandparent/s) - Advice on how to deal with your grandparent/s

4. Mature Branches (parent/s) - Advice on how to deal with your parent/s

5. Side Branches (friends) - Advice on how to deal with your friends

6. New Branches (siblings) - Advice on how to deal with your siblings

7. Star - Your guiding card over the season

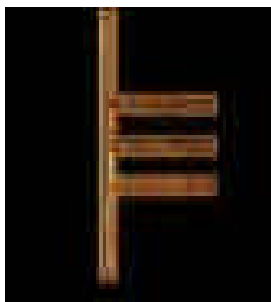
Note - if you don't have grandparents/parents/siblings you can substitute these positions to represent other relatives.

A Short Course in Tree Lore

Continuing our series on Tree Lore by Steve Wilson

ALDER

Alder – Fearn in Gaelic for the letter F – is the third Ogham tree, drawn as three lines at right angles to the staff.



There is no specific rune for Rowan although genetically it is part of the same family as Birch - Berkana – Norse - or Beorc – Anglo Saxon. Alder is still the word for “Age” in Norwegian,

and it does take a full 30 years to mature.

However, it is a very contradictory tree with much superstition around it, and as a tree of contradictions it is much associated with Witchcraft.

Alder is a broad-leaf tree – and yet it produces cones like a conifer. Its timber doesn't rot when wet yet does rot when dry. It is a broadleaf tree and yet it produces cones. Instead of taking nitrogen from the soil, it takes it from the air and gives it to the soil. Above all, Alder is a tree and yet bleeds like a man. Alder sap is thus symbolic for blood.

MYTH

In the story of Deirdre in Irish myth, she and her lover Naoise hid in Alder groves to escape the wrath of her betrothed, King Conchobar. Apparently the Irish consider it unlucky to pass an Alder.

The Irish also say that the first man was made from Alder, while the Eddas say the same about the first woman!

In Welsh myth the warriors of Bran stained their faces red with Alder-sap.

The Alder is sometimes known as King of the Waters, while Willow is its Queen.

USES

The flowers produced a green dye used in clothing – but since green was often associated with the Fair Folk, this might also explain why it was sometimes considered unlucky.

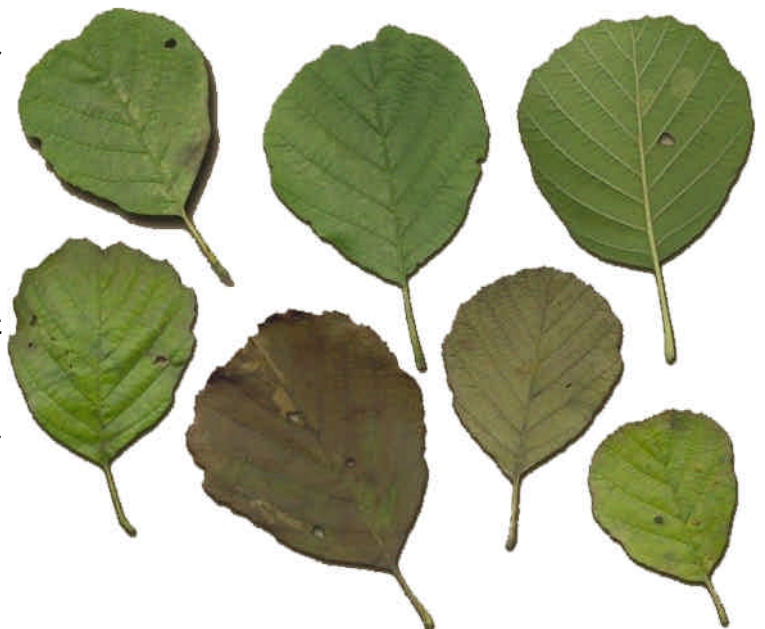
Piles made of Alder were often used to support bridges because of its resistance to rot in wet conditions.

Knotted Alder wood was used to make clogs and buckets, and cabinet makers like it as well.

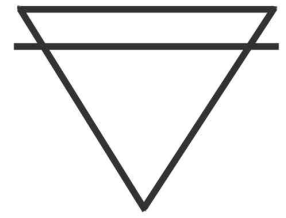
MAGICAL USES

Alder sap (like Elderberry juice) can be used to symbolise blood. Since sap rises in spring but elderberries ripen in autumn, you have a seasonal supply.

There is a European tradition that wands made from Alder should only come from branches that have fallen to the ground, presumably because the “bleeding” of the tree when cut was seen as a sign that the power was waning.



In this series we will be looking at the Elements, here Julia Wren (Wildfyre) tells us all about the Earth element.



A Brief Exploration of Earth

Earth is perhaps the element most easily grasped for its tangibility is prevalent and engaging. Just clutch a handful of garden soil or compost in your hand and feel the buzzing potential of it. Any gardener who works with the seasons in sowing and harvesting appreciates the abundance that a relationship with earth can bring. Children delight in planting seeds and observing the processes that soil can catalyse. New schemes offer gardening as therapy for those coming out of drug rehab or dealing with mental health issues. Increasingly now our culture has begun to understand the nourishment that working the land offers.

Our primary relationship with earth is clear; it is our stability and it feeds us. It is unsurprising then that many talk of the earth as a mother. The very physicality of our existence is found in our inextricable relationship with earth. It is that sacred alchemy of growth



and decay that gifts to us the creation, maintenance and renewal of our body's cells. The immense power of regeneration is odorously potent in no other than the humble compost bin; a shrine to the dark gods of decay and to the fruitful qualities of fertility gods.

But we don't need to be gardeners, farmers or even composters to experience the earth and to find the value of its energy in our lives. We can experience it in a multitude of ways.

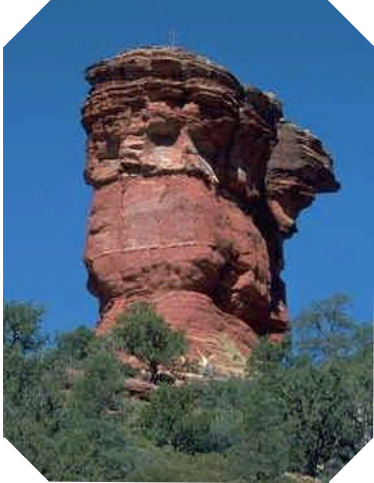
In the cities the underground network of trains and tunnels, whilst dirty, balmy and somber, belong to the earth. Our journeys to and fro carry us down long subterranean passages. The dim yellow glow of the train lights move through the cavities in the pitch black earth. The energy seems slow and numb in such deep and earthy places. The same qualities abound in mines, caves, cellars, or in old burial chambers of Neolithic long barrows. If you have ever been caving or hidden deep in an old cavern or chamber, one notices that away from the movement of trees or cars, time seems

to move at a slower pace and there ensues an acute awareness of every mortal breath. Is it any wonder that cavernous places have been utilised for thousands of years by monks, mystics and ascetics? The spiritual qualities attributed to them are more than numerous. It may also

be that these places can gift us with an alternative paradigm of the world. Surrounded by ages of rock, they may allow us to conceive of the world in terms of deep geological time. This is where the rush and bustle of humanity falls away and is utterly lost in the slow, muted pulse of stone - where one beat might last ten thousand years or even a millennium. In time so vast it's almost timeless, we explore the mysteries of earth; principally, that of death, but also that of identity. In burial of course, the earth is where we are interred: 'Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust', runs the Christian phrase of prayer with a very Pagan sentiment. Beyond the familiar tree meditations, our understanding of earth can be enhanced by trance journeys in which we experience the sensations of burial, or journey to tap into geological narratives; recognising something extraordinarily immense in terms of both our spatial and temporal perception of it. There are many opportunities for deep transformational work through earth.

In some cultural paradigms par-

allels may be drawn between qualities of the earth, and the condition of the body. To briefly use a couple of ethnographic examples, the human life cycle in traditional Madagascar is said to be characterised as a process of 'hardening' in which the progression towards an individual's death gradually



transforms his soft, moist flesh into hard, dry stone. As such, rocks and hard woods are linked with the stability and wisdom of older members of the society whose increasing immobility links them further into their relationship with the earth. The deceased ancestors are seen as the driest and most immobile of all! In Australian aborigine dreamtime myths, notable geological features of the landscape are meaningfully understood as the resting place of certain beings and ancestral spirits. It is not a leap to recall folk-legends here in Britain in which people are transformed into stones and megaliths take on human-like characteristics, adopting the ability to walk, dance, and drink. All these point to a fundamental relationship with earth that goes beyond the arbitrary.

The animist finds an abundance of spirits and deities inhabiting rocks and stone crops, caves, boulders and tunnels where one can communicate with the spirit inhabitants and respectfully share

in their landscape. It is interesting to think that even our city underground stations may harbour a plethora of earthy, chthonic ghosts. Our more familiar physical companions are also honoured in earth; earthworms, beetles, ants, millipedes, and all the other slithering and scuttling creatures who pour from beneath rocks when disturbed. Here also, we are reminded of the precious biological systems in the soils where symbiotic relationships create and maintain the essential and foundational web work of all further existence.

The soil and stone of our landscape reflects the ancestral permanence of all the spirits and ancestors who continue to work with us. It is in the earth that we find our feet, our heritage and our sense of belonging. On the shortest day, may we give thanks to darkness of the earth that is the very cauldron of all potential.'

EARTH CORRESPONDENCES

Season	Winter
Direction	North
Astrological Signs	Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn
Colours	Brown, Green, Blue, Yellow
Chakra	Root
Archangel	Uriel
Tools	Disk, Pentacle, Hammer, Stones, Clay, Salt, Shield, Wheel, Roots, Drum, Bow and animal fur/pelts
Sense	Smell
Magical Associations	Fertility, eco-magick, prosperity, wealth, healing, centering, grounding, magick for the home and animals.
Stones	Amazonite, Cat's eye, Emerald, Geodes, Jade, Jet, Malachite, Peridot, Turquoise
Herbs & Plants	Alfalfa, Barley, Cotton, Horsetail, Mugwort, Vetivert, Patchouly, Pine.
Sacred Trees	Ash, Elm, Hawthorn

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.

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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

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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		
£10	Child (under 18) (Form must be signed by parent) (1 card, 1 pack) Optional - printed copies of the Witchtower		
£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:	<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Cheque - (post cheques to BM Wiccuk, London, WC1N 3XX)</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Paypal - make payments to "andromeda@pagan-network.org"</td> </tr> </table>	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