

The Witchtower

Pagan Network Magazine

Summer Solstice/Lammas 2009



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In This Issue...

3 Earth, Air, Fire, Water

Explores Green Burials

4 Ancient Circle

A Shakespearian look at the planets

5 Out of the Shadows

Cochrane, the Faith of the Wise and the New Age

6 Walk Between Worlds

MPs and Socrates

7 Pagan Postcards

Grey Cairns of Camster and Stump Cross Caverns

8 Inner Sanctum

Meditation

9 Enchanted Earth

Stilly's Potting Shed

10 Stir the Cauldron

Bach Flower Remedies

12 By Candlelight

Beyond The Veil

15 Ancient Wisdoms

Exploring Animal Totems

16 Reviews

Walking An Ancient Path: Rebirthing Goddess on Planet Earth
Written in Wine: A Devotional Anthology for Dionysos

Editorial

How quickly Lammas has come around this year! But as you get older the days do seem to fly by, and before you know it you're well past retirement age! I know personally I have my funeral/burial all paid up and planned out. What about you? Have you ever fancied a green funeral but wasn't sure of what's involved? Take a read of Andy Norfolk's article all about green burials and see if its right for you. I know its right for me!

One sure way to ensure a long life is to reduce the stress around you, so kick back and read the article on meditation, and while you're at it, why not investigate Bach Flower Remedies in our Stir the Cauldron series. Another way to ensure a long life is to keep fit, so put on those walking boots and take yourself off on a day when the sun is still shining to one of the attractions from our Pagan Postcards.

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

Enjoy your reading!

Twilightgirl and the Editorial Team

I've recently done a funeral for someone I've known for many years and regrettably some time fairly soon I will be doing another for someone I've known even longer. Both have chosen to be cremated. Obviously everyone must make their own choice on this matter - I've always told my wife I'd like to be composted. But what is an appropriate form of funeral for a Pagan? Would a green burial be better in some ways and kinder to the environment and how much might it cost? Should we look at a prepayment scheme in order to not be a burden on the people we are leaving behind?

Cremation only became legal in the UK as the result of the decision by Dr William Price (1800-93), an early druid who was born at Rudry, near Caerphilly, to cremate his young son, whom he had named Jesus Christ. He was taken to court for doing so but following this case, cremations became legal and the Cremation Act was passed in 1902. A passage to the afterlife via fire appeals to many Pagans and is traditional in many other religions. About 70% of funerals in the UK are cremations and on the day create about 5 times the CO2 emissions of a green burial. You also might want to think about other things that come out of the crematorium chimney. A 2003 government report¹ said that by 2020 crematoria would emit between 11 and 31% of the UK mercury emissions to air. Since then DEFRA have said that crematoria must reduce emissions by 50% of 2003 levels by 2012. That still represents a lot of mercury emissions and mercury is very toxic and a nasty thing to put into the natural world. Like many of my generation I have mercury fillings in my teeth (I blame the NHS which paid dentists to do fillings and gave them an incentive to do more than might be necessary) so perhaps for me and others like me cremation is not an ethical choice. The choice of coffin can also be important.

An ordinary burial also has consequences. Bodies are normally drained of body fluids which end up going down the drains. Embalming only improves the visual appearance of the body, and prevents deterioration in the period leading up to the funeral, but cold storage works just as well. However best of all is simply to hold the funeral as soon as possible after death. The embalming process involves removing the body fluids and replacing them with about two gallons of a 2% solution of formaldehyde, often containing a pink dye. This could affect soil and soil organisms and even air quality. There is however a green alternative. AARDBalm is a natural, organic, biodegradable embalming fluid that is supposed to be safe for the environment. Its makers say that it "provides a better presentation of the deceased".

The coffin also matters. A coffin made from recycled materials has a smaller carbon footprint than a traditional hardwood coffin. Chipboard used in cheaper coffins is made using formaldehyde so could affect soil and air quality. There is now a range of green coffins made of cardboard, jute, wickerwork, bamboo and plain pine, as well as felt shrouds. Cardboard coffins can produce 91% less carbon monoxide and 100% less particulates



than a conventional chipboard coffin when cremated. You can also decorate a cardboard coffin in any way you like or get them preprinted with a range of designs.

Though it is used in other countries, such as Sweden, you cannot yet be freeze-dried and crumbled in the UK. Another lower energy, lower CO2 method that may be possible in the future is "resomation" which is dissolving the body in an alkaline solution producing just a fertiliser.

Natural burial is an old idea that has been rediscovered. Choosing a green burial can help promote the creation of new woodlands and meadows which will be maintained long into the future. By choosing how and where we are buried, each one of us can conserve, sustain, and protect the earth - the earth from which we came and to which we shall return - and that fits my Pagan ideals. This would mean a shallow burial in a hole dug by hand. A coffin buried deeply tends to result in the production of methane. The area it takes place in should not be kept neat and tidy by regular lawn mowing, a lot of woodland burials actually allow sheep to trim the grass naturally as well as fertilising the area with their droppings. Ideally you would be in a green coffin or shroud and not a traditional one. If you have a tree planted as well you can help reduce CO2 emissions in the long term.

The average cost of a cremation is is £1,954 and a burial, excluding the headstone, is £3,307. However costs can easily be much higher. In contrast, taking into account how much you decide to do for yourself (or how much your friends and family do for you) the cost can be between £200 to £2,000, but the average is about £700. A cardboard coffin is about £60 to £450, but willow coffins cost about £450 to £650. (See for example Natural Endings www.naturallengings.co.uk) Some funeral directors charge many times this for green coffins, so don't rely on them for the best price. You don't have to use a funeral director at all if you don't want to and you can pre-buy your coffin and store it flat packed in some cases for when the time comes.

You can be buried almost anywhere without needing special permission. The Environment

Agency says in its document 'Funeral practices, spreading ashes and caring for the environment':

- The site should be more than 30 metres from any spring or any running or standing water. It should also be more than 10 metres from any 'dry' ditch or field drain.

- The site should be at least 50 metres away from any well, borehole or spring that supplies water for any use. If you are not sure where these are, our local office will be able to advise you.

- When preparing the grave, make sure there is no standing water when it is first dug and that the grave is not dug in very sandy soil.

- There should be at least one metre of soil above and below the body after burial.

You don't need planning permission for a private burial (though you will if a lot of burials take place) and you don't need permission from anyone else except the landowner. However there are now well over 200 natural burial sites in the UK and it may be better to use one of them. Some allow you and your pet to be buried next to each other. One such place is Tarn Moor Memorial Woodland, near Skipton, North Yorkshire.

www.tarnmoor.co.uk/index.html Tarn Moor has 3 separate areas, one for humans, one for humans and their pets to be buried side by side and one area just for pets. You can find a full list at The Natural Death Centre web site www.naturaldeath.org.uk. The Life Rites web site, www.liferites.org, is a good source of general advice.

If you decide to do it yourself there are still a few formalities. The Natural Death Centre has a helpline at 0871 288 2098 and their "Natural Death Handbook is full of good advice. Life Rites also have some basic advice on their web site about this.

May the breezes of summer dance with you
and carry your spirit gently
May the warmth of the sun comfort you and
release your soul
May the gentle raindrops cleanse you, our
tears and love flow, bringing healing and
renewal
May the earth receive you and hold you close
in her warm and comforting embrace.

by Andy Norfolk

Sources of green coffins and shrouds
www.eco-coffin.co.uk
www.ecopod.co.uk
www.eco-coffins.com
www.wickerwillowcoffins.co.uk
www.bellacouche.com
naturalwovencoffins

¹ Mercury emissions from crematoria
Consultation on an assessment by the
Environment Agency's Local Authority Unit
published by Defra, Scottish Executive, Welsh Assembly Government 2003

Ancient Circle

So we come to our next part in the Shakespearian saga.

*.....And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with
a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eye-
brow. Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths and beard-
ed like the pard,
jealous in honour, sudden
and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble repu-
tation
Even in the cannon's
mouth.*

Just a word or two about the way I see the planets when it comes to partnerships. The Sun and Moon are a couple, two sides of the same coin and that is pretty obvious. Mercury is hermaphroditic, again pretty obvious. Venus and Mars are a couple too as are Jupiter and Saturn, which we will come to later on in the series. For the time being, let us concentrate on Venus and Mars.

Venus and Mars are two very different characters but are, in my opinion, totally interdependent. Venus is in essence about how we relate and what we desire. She is about love, sharing and pleasure and the way we express ourselves through those mediums. Mars is about our survival instinct and how we achieve that, so he is about competition, lust, moving ourselves into the pole position. However I don't believe we can survive without interacting with others, especially when it comes to extending our bloodline, but we can't interact openly and honestly without discovering the Martian qualities in ourselves

*.....And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow.*

Venus - Planet of love and our hearts desire. The urge to merge..... we come to the idea that Piaget put forward, there is a point in the toddlers development where they start to recognise a gender identity in themselves. I remember my eldest child around the age of 2 asking who had got a willy and who hadn't, it did become embarrassing at times when he would walk up to relative strangers and ask the question outright.

This is when they are separating themselves from other people and not only seeing themselves as a separate entity

from the Mother, but also identifying themselves as part of a community, family, gender, age group etc. This is basically what the Venus energy implies because the child also needs to learn how to relate to others with this new information. They form firm friendships and make value judgements about others for the first time. They also play by interacting as opposed to the earlier parallel play.

This links into the later phase of pre/post pubescence when we all start to fall in love with someone, which is what Shakespeare is describing here. My first love was one of the servers at our local church, which encouraged me at the age of 13 to be confirmed into the Church of England and go to communion services. Alas my 'true love' never knew of my existence or at least never acknowledged it - beware what naïveté in love can get you into.

At this stage the young adult is discovering their sexuality and emotions and the old hormones are running riot. It is the first step in the courtship dance which eventually leads to pairing up and producing young. Overlapping this is the establishment of personal territory and the defence of it which is very Martian and moves us on to.....

*.....Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the
pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quar-
rel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth.*

Mars - Planet of War - or at least belligerence. The drive to survive. The energy of Mars is very much to do with the competitive spirit that drives evolution and has made us one of the most adaptable and destructive animals on the Earth. In Piaget's theory, there comes a point once the child enters school that not only do they start to form friendships, they also start to enter into competitive play. This has less to do with school sports day or prize giving and more to do with the development of human nature. The child starts to form alliances and defend those alliances, you can see it when groups of kids are formed and there are, for no apparent reason, them and us situations with other groups. This can have echoes from around the age of two (every parent knows about the terrible twos) but is most apparent in the early school years and it will carry on through most of the teenage years.

A Shakespearian look at the planets - in four parts

Received wisdom links Shakespeare's Mars/Soldier role, to the time when we are striking out into the world of work, marriage, children and responsibility. We all need to be striving, competitive (and this works with women as well as men, ever been to a Mums and Toddlers group - scary !!!) and eventually responsible for our own lives.

Looking at Venus and Mars together, you can't have one without the other. In order to love openly and unconditionally, one needs to have a good idea of being loveable, otherwise the idea of being in love becomes a matter on dependency as opposed to partnership - you need that Mars energy to discover yourself as a person of worth.

Mars, on the other hand, in work, family life and on the battlefield needs to know that he can't do it all by himself. He needs to be able to trust his partner, work colleagues and fellow soldiers, that when the chips are down they will support each other in the shared endeavour, even if they don't like each other, otherwise no one will survive, literally or metaphorically. Mars is also about the competitiveness of sports, but even then to excel, not only does one need the talent, you also need coaching and a whole support system. Teamwork goes without saying when it comes to team sports. Venus is needed if you want to survive in a Mars world.

I hope this sideways but interesting look at Astrology appeals to you and next time we look at Jupiter and Saturn

By
Beith-ann

Out Of The Shadows

In 1965 Robert Cochrane, whose real name was Roy Bowers, was in the public eye as a witch for three years until his death in 1966 on the eve of Summer Solstice as a result of having eaten deadly nightshade. He was flamboyant and charismatic and claimed to be a hereditary witch in a tradition called the Clan of Tubal Cain. He clearly was a very gifted leader of ritual and could sweep those with him up in the magic of the moment.

He seems to have taken a great dislike to Gardnerian Wicca, and indeed just about every other kind of occult group, and wrote a series of articles which appeared in the Pentagram, the magazine of the Witchcraft Research Association led by Doreen Valiente. They were uncompromising and provoked a lot of bitterness leading eventually to the demise of the Pentagram and also the WRA.

One of his articles published in August 1965 was called the "Faith of the Wise" and it is in part a bit of rant against what we might today call New Age beliefs. However these have not always been seen as bad. Doreen Valiente wrote in 1978 that her book "Witchcraft for Tomorrow" was written as a contribution to the Aquarian Age. In the preface to "Witchcraft, A Tradition Renewed", published in 1990, she wrote "Our fate is bound up with that of Mother Earth, whose children we are. Hence the emergence of what has come to be known as Green politics". This, in my opinion, is another indication of the oncoming of the Aquarian Age. It is the time when we must understand and use the past in order to build upon it for the future. The Old Religion must look forward also, and continue its evolution. If it does so it can play a vital role in the New Age. Indeed, paganism in various forms is already beginning to do this." Ironically this book was co-written with Evan John Jones, who like Valiente had worked with Cochrane, about a witchcraft tradition based on Cochrane's ideas. There is however I think a great deal of difference between the Aquarian Age as Valiente saw it and the current New Age movement with its obsession with individual improvement and the attainment of universal truth and some sort of blissed-out world - at any cost.

Cochrane was very dismissive of "simple, hearty peasants doing simple, hearty peasant-like things in devotion to a deity "Who is the sweetest woman, everyone loves her." He regarded "the Faith of the Wise" as being ultimately concerned with truth. Oh dear, did I just mention a search for truth? He also wrote that the Faith is one of the oldest of religions and went on to say "The Faith is a belief concerned with the inner nature of devotion, and finally with the nature of mysticism and mystical experience." Bear in mind that this is a man who has had great influence on traditional and hereditary witchcraft followers of which seem to like to say nowadays that what they do isn't religion and never has been.

He wrote that the Faith has an inner experience that is greater than the external world, with which I hope we would all agree. Ritual, he said, exists to contain (divine) forces and to give and formulate worship. Most interestingly he set out five proofs

Cochrane, the Faith of the Wise and the New Age

which he said were part of the disciplines of his kind of witchcraft.

(a) POETIC VISION, in which the participant has inward access to dream images and symbols. This is the result of the unconscious being stimulated by various means. Images are

taught as part of a tradition, and also exist (as Jung speculated) upon their own levels. They are, when interpreted properly, means by which a lesser part of truth may be understood.

(b) THE VISION OF MEMORY, in which the devotee not only remembers past existence but also, at times, a past perfection.

(c) MAGICAL VISION, in which the participant undertakes by inference part of a Triad of service, and therefore contacts certain levels.

(d) RELIGIOUS VISION, in which the worshipper is allowed admission to the True Godhead for a short time. This is a part of true initiation, and the results of devotion towards a mystical aim.

(e) MYSTICAL VISION, in which the servant enters into divine union with the Godhead. This state has no form, being a point where force alone is present.

Paganism is experiential and perhaps that is something it shares with the New Age, except that it is very clear that Cochrane understood about the balance of light and dark, which appears to be completely lacking from much New Age belief. Cochrane says that having joined with the forces involved in his five kinds of vision there can be no doubts about the nature of that experience. It seems to me that many aspects of Cochrane's views, and no doubt Valiente's, are at odds with the normal view that Pagans have of the New Age movement. There is the idea that a tradition has disciplines - and discipline isn't a concept that fits well with the New Age movement. As Cochrane wrote "the Faith is a complex philosophy, dealing finally with the nature of Truth, Experience and Devotion. It requires discipline and work; plus utter and complete devotion to the common aim. It can only be fulfilled by service, some labours taking many years to complete." This is not therefore something that you can learn from a couple of glossy books, or over a weekend - no matter how much you pay for the course!

By Andy Norfolk

Walk Between Worlds

I expect you may have noticed a few items in the news about MPs and their expenses recently. The story goes that they have all been shamelessly milking the parliamentary expenses system for every penny they can unjustly extract from it. Of course we all believe that the stories we read in the media or hear broadcast are entirely accurate, fair and objective. Well, funnily enough, I don't. I have never been a fan of trial by media, or by irate mobs of people who have probably believed without question whatever the media say, but have not taken the trouble, and may not have the intelligence, to find out any of the underlying truth. I hope you have realised that Pagans have all too often been on the wrong end of this sort of witch-hunt because the media haven't let the truth stand in the way of a good story.

MPs and

Socrates

your seasons bring, O Nature. From you are all things, in you are all things, to you all things return." (Book iv.23) That

This is not to say that I think that all MPs have been unfairly fingered as dishonest. Some clearly have behaved in a way which is not considered honest and fair by most of us. How did this come about? Well, rather like the current financial crisis, I think we can lay the blame at Margaret Thatcher's door. She deregulated the financial markets, (oops!) and at a time when it wouldn't have been politically expedient to raise MPs' salaries she brought in the expenses system to top them up. MPs were encouraged to make up their earnings by claiming expenses so it isn't surprising that they did, especially in Thatcher's era when Lo! it was seen that Greed was Good. The MPs' expenses system was duplicitous from the start.

What has this to do with Pagans? Well It has had me thinking about morals and ethics, how we do them, and how different we may be from others, if at all.

The philosopher AC Grayling said recently on Radio 4 that Christianity got its ideas of ethics from ancient Greece. I think we Pagans did too. In fact there's not a whole lot of difference between the ethical views of a number of the world religions and indeed humanity generally. (Ooh - I do love a good generalisation!) A lot of Western ideas do come from ancient Greece, often by way of the Romans.

Socrates, c. 469 BCE-399 BCE, was a Greek philosopher whose work we only know via the teachings of his followers. He seems to have been a bit of a rebel. He was frequently at odds with the rest of the Athenians on matters of morality and politics. At one point he was put on trial for corrupting the minds of the youth of Athens but persuaded the jurors that they did not properly understand moral values. He said that instead of worrying about the welfare of their souls they were far too concerned with their families, careers and political responsibilities. Hmm!

The most influential of the schools of Greek philosophy was Stoicism which I see as a logical extension of many of Socrates' ideas. The Stoics believed quite a few things which most Pagans would probably agree with. All people are manifestations of the universal spirit (OK I know some of us are polytheistic, etc.) and Stoics said all men were equal and should be treated equally. Seneca wrote "Kindly remember that he whom you call your slave sprang from the same stock, is smiled upon by the same skies, and on equal terms with yourself breathes, lives, and dies." Perhaps everyone should all therefore be judged by the same standards of behaviour. Stoics incidentally saw the divine as being never fully transcendent but always also immanent - and that

should ring bells for all Pagans. They also thought one should avoid being driven by passions, such as greed, to develop one's highest humanity.

One of the more famous Stoics was Marcus Aurelius, April 26, 121CE - March 17, 180CE, the Roman emperor who you saw at the beginning of the film "Gladiator". He wrote a book called "Meditations" setting out his view of what was the right way to live according to Stoic principles. He wrote "Everything is right for me, which is right for you, O Universe. Nothing for me is too early or too late, which comes in due time for you. Everything is fruit to me which your seasons bring, O Nature. From you are all things, in you are all things, to you all things return." (Book iv.23) That

I think will also sound familiar in parts to Pagans.

Stoicism and its emphasis on free will, spiritual growth as a result of "right action", personal connection with a universal spirit, and of coursed brotherhood and equality, is I think the source that Grayling had in mind for "Christian" values, which are of course really universal human values.

Are we as Pagans ethical or moral? It is said that an ethical person knows when they do something bad that it is wrong; a moral person would not do it. Do we have any ethical codes? I suppose the obvious one for most of us may well be the Wiccan idea of "Do what ye will an ye harm none". This fits almost perfectly with Stoic ideas that one should take personal responsibility for one's actions. Of course the Rede, despite its challenging premise, has been widely adopted amongst those of us who simply call ourselves Pagan without identifying with any specific tradition. It's clear to me that the Northern Traditions with their strong emphasis on honourable behaviour encourage their followers to be moral. Druidry also has its ethical code with a strong emphasis on truth.

Where Pagans differ from other religious, or spiritual paths or philosophies is that we do not have sets of rules by which we must live but instead seek for a way to live that is right within our own framework of beliefs. It's about doing things right and not doing things according to the rules. Morality is never about following a set of rules, such as don't steal, or don't kill, that you have to learn, or at least it shouldn't be. Instead we should be following "virtue ethics" and although that is something still discussed by contemporary philosophers it has its roots in ancient Greece. Virtue ethics, which Stoics would recognise, stresses the importance of developing good habits of character, such as benevolence. Plato favoured four virtues: wisdom, courage, temperance and justice. Other important virtues are fortitude, generosity, self-respect, good temper, and sincerity. These are strikingly similar to the Nine Noble Virtues of the Northern Traditions.

Which brings us back to MPs. They may have been following the rules but those who really were milking the system must have known that they were doing something wrong. I have also as it happens been told by more than one person about a fairly prominent member of one of the more well-known Pagan organisations who has systematically lied about their expenses. Not all Pagans are moral - but Paganism, in all its forms, should help us to be so.

By Andy Norfolk

Grey Cairns of Camster

Pagan Postcards

On our trip back from the Orkneys, we decided to take some detours off the A9. We had the time, the inclination and a relatively large scale map which had a little symbol to show us where an ancient monument was. Sometimes there was even a name along with it! We had worked out the way back and not long into our journey we took a country road through the moor-land and some pine forest to the Grey Cairns of Camster which are situated some 5 miles south of Lybster.

The cairns are Neolithic and built, as many others in Scotland, by piling stones up.

It's a lovely area and we had the place practically to ourselves. If you are ever in the area they are well worth a visit.

By Beith-Ann

When we arrived the day was overcast yet warm, a little muggy but not uncomfortably so. There are two cairns situated on a peat bog. There are wooden walkways to get to them to protect the flora of the field and also because I understand it's a working peat field and farmers still collect the dry peat.

The larger of the two is long and has two chambers and a sort of stepped area to one end. The chambers are gated but accessible as long as you have a small enough bum to fit through the narrow passages. I didn't, but my companion did and he went into the larger of the two chambers. The roof had been opened and a thick glass panel put in for light so he found it interesting to see the dimensions of the chamber. It was big enough for him to stand up in.

The round chamber is slightly offset further to the left about 200 yards away. This is the more interesting of the two as when it was excavated two skeletons were found to be situated in the passage, at least one in a sitting position. Other finds, like bits of pottery and burnt and un-burnt bones, were also found.



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More information here <http://www.geo.ed.ac.uk/scotgaz/features/featurefirst10097.html>

STUMP CROSS CAVERNS

Feeling the need to connect with the earth mother after a particularly stressful time, my partner and I took a trip out to Stump Cross Caverns <http://www.stumpcrosscaverns.co.uk/> in North Yorkshire. The last time I had visited Stump Cross Caverns was many years ago when I was in Primary School, so I had only a little memory of what it was like and my partner had never visited the Caves before.

mother around me. Some of the stalactites and stalagmites in the caves are behind wire barriers in order to protect them, so you can't get too close to those, but there are a lot of others all over the caves that you can get up close with.

Overall exploring the caves took just over an hour and it was a peaceful experience, although I wouldn't recommend it if you have claustrophobia.

By Twilightgirl

We choose a day when the weather was fine, not wanting to risk heavy rain in case the caves were too wet to explore. Stump Cross Caverns is situated on the border of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, so once you arrive you have a wonderful view of the surrounding area, as Stump Cross Caverns entrance is situated atop a hill (make sure your car is able to get up the steep hills - our little Micra really struggled!) The entrance fee of £6.00 isn't bad either. Along with the Caves there is a gift shop (extremely over-priced and selling the usual "new age" type items and crystals). There is also a coffee shop and going around the Caverns, a toilet was a very welcome site - and they were clean!). There is also a theatre area where they run a 20-minute film explaining about Stump Cross Caverns. The Caverns are quite extensive, and although you can explore a wide area of what they call "the show caves" (approx 6km), there are also a lot of caves that are closed off because they are too dangerous to explore at this moment in time or they are under water. The caves were originally discovered by miners in 1860.



Remains of animals such as wolverines, bison, reindeer have all been found in the caves and can be seen in the visitors centre where they are on display. In some cases you can buy parts of them (i.e. a tooth or claw).

The caves were made millions of years ago when oceans covered the Yorkshire Dales and they mainly consist of limestone. As water has entered the caves and eroded the limestone it has formed some wonderful stalactites and stalagmites.

When you first enter the caves, you have to wear a wonderful yellow hard hat (I had trouble finding an adult one to fit my head, so ended up opting for a child one!). My partner was very grateful for the hard hat as he is taller than I am so kept banging his head on the roof of the caves. If you are around 5ft in height you'll be fine and not have to bend down too much as you explore the caves. You then descend down many stairs into the bowels of the mother earth (what you don't realise is that you have to climb back up all these stairs once you have finished - they definitely need a "stop and rest place" on the way up, my legs were killing me and I was so out of breath!). There weren't many other visitors whilst we were there, so we had the caves pretty much to ourselves to explore. The caves were eerily quiet which was welcome. Whilst my partner went off clicking away on his camera taking photos, I was able to hang back and just lean against the cave walls and feel the strength of the earth



Inner Sanctum

The series for beginners!

Meditation - what do you think it is? Do you immediately imagine monks meditating in a temple or yoga practitioners sitting in the lotus position? Although meditation can be all these things, it is also more. Meditation is an altered state of consciousness that is achieved by using breath work and the imagination. Meditation helps your conscious mind connect with your higher consciousness. Meditation also gets easier with practice!

There are numerous benefits that can be gained from doing meditation, such as stress reduction, relaxation, ability to connect to knowledge through our higher selves, improved sleep and general overall improvement in health. Your mind will also be more alert with improved concentration and you will be able to deal with day-to-day problems more calmly and easily. Overall with regular meditation you should feel a lot happier and healthier.

In order to become "good" at meditation it requires the dedication to practice on a daily basis until you get the hang of it, after achieving this you can meditate as often as you like, however I would suggest you mediate at least 3 times a week. It doesn't have to take long, anywhere from 15 minutes to 40 minutes will do.

There are several different methods of meditation for you to choose from. I suggest giving each one a try and find what works best for you. If you prefer something that keeps you physically active, try yoga. You can pick up a book or dvd on yoga quite cheaply, although if you suffer with any medical conditions please check with your doctor before trying yoga. You may prefer less active methods, or what I like to call "couch potato" methods. You could try repeating a phrase over and over or hum to yourself in order to focus and clear your mind, or you could try gazing into an object such as a crystal ball, candle, or bowl of water. You're not trying to see anything, just focussing on quieting the mind. Another method is just focusing on the emptiness in your mind. I know you're thinking, "what, my mind is never empty, there is a constant chatter going on". That may be so, but there are a number of ways to quiet the mind. One way is to close your eyes and just let the thoughts or chatter that come into your mind drift in one ear and out the other. Don't focus or get involved with what the thoughts are saying, just watch the thought float away as your breath, eventually there will be calm. If you are feeling particularly wound up prior to mediating and finding it impossible to quiet your mind, get a pen and paper and write down every thought that comes into your mind. It doesn't have to make sense and even if you write the same thing over and over again it doesn't matter. Just keep doing it until your mind is quieter. This is also a good technique to do if you are having problems getting to sleep on a night.

Before starting meditation I like to start by clearing my lungs out of old air. To do this I breathe in normally through my nose, feeling the breath tickle at the back of my throat. Then exhale slowly through the mouth whilst making an SSSSSS sound. To me it kind of sounds like a kettle on the cooker slowly cooling down after it has boiled. Do this for a minute or so. Careful you don't get too lightheaded though!

You can also put on some background music to mediate with if it helps you drown out the sounds of daily activity in your home. Instrumentals are good for this, try to avoid music with vocals as they can be distracting. If you are not using the gazing method to mediate with you could try covering your eyes with a blindfold if the light is distracting.

Find somewhere comfortable to sit, this could be on the floor in a cross-legged position, or on a hard backed chair or sofa. You can also lie down, however if you are feeling tired you're more likely to drift off to sleep instead of mediate. My favourite place is on the floor, cross-legged, sitting on a cushion, otherwise my bottom goes to sleep. Although there are times when my legs have also gone to sleep and I've struggled to stand up afterwards!

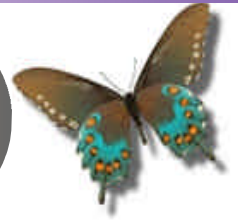
Once in position, allow your body to relax. You can do this by tensing and releasing each section of your body, or you can imagine a warm, golden light surrounding you and as you breathe in, the warm, golden light enters your body and expands and grows brighter, filling your body with warm light and relaxing every muscle it touches. If you are feeling particularly tense you can imagine the warm golden light pushing out all the tension through the pores of your skin where it disperses harmlessly. Now just relax and allow your mind to clear.

Once you've got the hang of mediating you can go on to have meditative journeys where you imagine a scene such as a beach, a cave or even under the ocean. Wherever you choose to go, it will be somewhere that calls to you and where you feel safe, relaxed and free. The point of these meditative journeys is to help you get in touch with your higher consciousness. Your higher consciousness may then present you with images or you may meet people who have information to pass on to you. You can ask your higher consciousness a question and wait to see what it presents you with or you can simply say a prayer. However, please don't accept what your higher consciousness tells you as fact, especially if it seems farfetched, always check it out in the real world as it could be your conscious mind wishful thinking.

It's quite a good idea to keep a meditation journal, recording how you felt and whether you went into your meditation with any intention and if so what was the outcome etc. If you want you can use your Book of Shadows to record this in or you can use a separate journal.

By Twilightgirl

MEDITATION



ENCHANTED EARTH

Stilly's Potting Shed

Hello there, been away for a bit, lovely holiday. Well haven't things grown while I have been away, thanks very much for doing the watering and mowing while I was away. Come in sit down, I brought you back a flagon of scrumpy as a thank you. No need to drink it all now, Blimey what would your missus say.

Anyway let's get down to brass tacks. Now we are coming into autumn we need to look at the soil again. Now the choice most people take is the rotavating route and although this seems like a good idea it can lead to some problems. If you have a clay based soil it can lead to panning, this is where a hard compact layer of soil stops the water from draining away creating a stagnant area where the seeds and plants will rot off. It also means that you will have to double dig the area to break up the pan and this can be no fun at all.

The other problem is that rotavating chops up perennial weeds spreading them across the area so instead of one bit of bind weed you now have 15 bits meaning more weeding and the possibility of having to use weed killer to get rid of it.

Now I am not against rotavating, if the plot is weed free (I wish) or you have a nice sandy/loamy soil then it is great, other areas where it is a benefit is getting soil additives in to the soil, things such as sharp sand. You use this to break up heavy clay soils; the amount required will depend on how heavy the soil is. Another is lime this again helps break up heavy soils through a process called flocculation and also raises the soil Ph so is ideal for brassicas and where club root is a problem. Also the digging in of manure and compost is beneficial.

But I admit that I like to do things the long way and hand dig both my plots, they have both been double dug and any extras that need digging in are done so by hand. It also keeps you fit and keeps you out the house longer as well.

Right - crops for the autumn and next spring, (forward planning) if you have a couple of potatoes you can plant these in a bin or container and put them in a green house and you can have new potatoes for Yule. There are also a number of hardy lettuces such as Arctic King that will give you greens over the winter as well. If you have a greenhouse then you can get away with growing a fast growing carrot such as Early Nantes 2, these are quite short sweet carrots that will grow happily in a deep container. You must remember to keep them well watered though. If you have spring cabbage that needs to be in now as do cauliflowers such as St George.

Things to be ordering include manure if you get it free (if you know some horsey people you should be OK). I use about 3 tonne on my 2 allotments I spread it to a thickness of about 2/3 inches across the beds. Alternatively if that is not an option you could try a green manure such as winter tares or mustard. Mustard is quick growing and can be dug into the soil in about 6 weeks, winter tares take a bit longer and can be dug in, in the Spring.

We must also think about the wildlife now (although the mice did decimate my peas this year so not too happy with them). Nest boxes for next year can go up; also I must clean out the hedgehog house and put in new bedding, she's done a wonder-

ful job eating the slugs and shails (think I've had a sip to much of that cider). An area for the ladybirds and lacewings will help keep the aphids and greenfly under control. All this helps you to keep the use of pesticides and other harmful chemicals away from your crops.

Above all we are meant to enjoy it, and if you can see 2 kestrels hovering above your plot just take 5 minutes to watch them in their majesty and hope they are eating the bloody mice that ate all your pea seeds this year, TWICE!! Oh the circle of life is complete.

Good Digging

Stilly

...And now something completely different!

Wiccan - "Ya know, if you cut someone's head off your going to get your head cut off three times!"

Celt - "Ya know...if I didn't cut the bastards head off our country would have been invaded three times!"

Wiccan - "That's not what I ment."

Celt - "Aye, want some more mead?"

Wiccan - "Nah, it gives me gas." "What I ment was you should love your enemy. Celebrate life and frolic!"

Celt - "Hu?"

Wiccan - "If you love them once you will get three times the love back!"

Celt - "I would love to kill them all."

Wiccan - "What you send out will come back to you three times. I'm talking about spells and magic."

Celt - "Tis a magical thing to see your foe fall before you. And I don't need spells. I have a sword you dote!"

Wiccan - "You're just a dumb brute."

Celt - "Saved your ass plenty of time though hu?"

Wiccan - "I still don't believe in war, fighting, and cursing people."

Celt - "That's because you don't drink mead and you've been castrated so you can't produce more ugly children."

Wiccan - "My children have nothing to do with this!"

Celt - "Aye...if your children weren't so ugly no one would want to put them out of their misery and take over our land."

Wiccan - "I hate it when you get drunk."

Celt - "And I hate you three times more than you hate me. Blame karma."

By Angel Snowden - 2007

Stir the Cauldron

Bach Flower Remedies

By Twilightgirl

Bach flower remedies have grown in popularity over the years. Being non-toxic in their action, it is impossible to overdose on them and if an incorrect remedy is taken, it simply has no effect. Bach flower remedies can be used by everyone, including babies and animals.

A brief history lesson

Dr Edward Bach began his medical career in 1906. In 1918 he worked in a hospital where homeopathy was an accepted treatment. Using homeopathic medicines prepared from his vaccines (made up from certain strains of bacteria found in the intestines) after having been inspired by D Samuel Hahnemann's theories (founder of classical homeopathy); Dr Bach began paying more attention to the patient's state of mind rather than their physical symptoms and assigned certain mind states to his medicines. He found that when he treated the personalities and feelings of his patients, their unhappiness and physical distress would be alleviated as the natural healing potential in their bodies was unblocked and allowed to work once more. However he was dissatisfied with his use of vaccines from bacteria and wanted to use something that was of a natural origin. This is where his search for flower remedies began. His first discovery was in 1929 on a visit to Wales; eventually he discovered 38 essences and 27 flowers plus rock water.

What are they for?

Bach flower remedies are used in the treatment of emotional imbalances, negative attitudes and character weakness, although if you suffer with severe emotional imbalances or physical illnesses they should be used in conjunction with other methods of treatment.

Dr Edward Bach wrote 'Disease of the body itself is nothing but the result of the disharmony between soul and mind. Remove the disharmony, and we regain harmony between soul and mind, and the body is once more perfect in all its parts.'

How do they work?

Bach flower remedies gently restore the balance between mind and body by casting out negative emotions, such as, fear, worry, hatred, jealousy and indecision

which interfere with the equilibrium of the being as a whole. The remedies allow peace and happiness to return to the sufferer so that the body is free to heal itself.

take it neat, 2 drops on your tongue at a time. Alternatively you can put 2 drops into a glass of water and sip slowly at intervals

Reactions to Bach flowers

Reactions when first taking Bach flower remedies vary from individual to individual. Some might experience an increased need for rest and sleep, perhaps accompanied with vivid dreams - a sign that things are moving on an emotional level. Others might feel more positive, more energetic, more stable emotionally, in fact, more content right from the start of the treatment or in the course of just a few weeks.

In rare cases there can initially be a worsening of the emotional or physical symptoms. If this happens, stop taking the remedy until this "healing" reaction

has disappeared. Experience has shown that this will take a few hours, or at worst a day or two. Subsequently, start taking the drops again, reducing the dosage slightly at first

How long should treatment last?

In serious acute conditions you will feel better relatively quickly, after perhaps a few hours or one or two days. You can stop taking the drops when you feel emotionally more settled or that you no longer need them. Normally the mixture is taken for three or four weeks, this represents approximately the contents of a 30ml treatment bottle. After this time, if you feel that the drops have been effective but that you still need them, you can repeat the mixture. Or you can compose a different mixture appropriate to your present condition.

It can sometimes take a few months before you regain your old equilibrium.

Choosing remedies for yourself

Begin by writing down the remedies that you feel you need from the descriptions of their properties, then start to prune the list down to approx 5 or less. By pruning down the list you will reach your innermost needs. It is common to prescribe between two and six remedies at a time. This prescription should be revised every three weeks in accordance with changes in the mental state.



How are the remedies made?

The remedies are made by the following two methods and have been made this way since Dr Bach first developed them.

The sun method involves floating flowerheads in a clear glass bowl filled with natural spring water. This is left in bright sunlight for three hours, then the flowerheads are removed and the energised water is mixed half and half with brandy.

The boiling method involves putting flowering twigs into a pan of spring water and boiling them for half an hour. The pan is then left to cool, the plant matter removed, and again the water is mixed half and half with brandy.

In both cases the resulting mix is the mother tincture, which is further diluted to make the stock bottles sold in the shops.

How are Bach flower remedies taken?

To make a treatment bottle, the standard dilution is 2 drops from each chosen bottle to a 30ml dropper medicine bottle three-quarters filled with spring water or mineral water. A 30ml treatment bottle will be enough for a 3-4 weeks' course. The standard dosage is 4 drops of the diluted remedy on the tongue three or four times daily. Shake the bottle each time before use to activate the remedy. If you are using a single remedy you could

REMEDIES

The most popular Bach flower remedy is the Rescue Remedy. It consist of five of the Bach remedies

- Star of Bethlehem (for shock and numbness), Rock Rose (for terror and panic), Impatiens (for great agitation, irritability and tension), Cherry Plum (for violent outbursts and hysteria), and Clematis (for the bemused, faraway sensation that often precedes a faint).

Agrimony

Imbalance - For those who hide their problems and inner selves behind a cheerful face, masking real feelings of unhappiness and unworthiness. They are the life and soul of a party. The person who needs this remedy finds it hard to deal with the darker, less pleasant parts of life and extreme emotions. They are reluctant to burden others and dread arguments, pursuing peace at all costs. This can lead to an inner anguish that is often masked by alcohol or drugs.

Outcome - The ability to laugh at life and to love ourselves as we are: to put aside the mask. It helps us to cope with the difficult parts of life by helping us to see them from a balanced perspective.

Aspen

Imbalance - For those who feel frightened, a sense of dread, and that "something awful" may happen. This may be extreme enough to affect appetite and sleep patterns.

Outcome - Reassurance that there is nothing to fear. It helps us to face the unknown with courage and trust.

Beech

Imbalance - For those who are over-critical and intolerant. They have their own way of doing things and do not understand that everyone has different strengths and experiences. They think "cannot" means "will not" and therefore become irritable and short-tempered with others. They may also feel unappreciated.

Outcome - Tolerance and understanding of others, the ability to see the good in

everyone and everything without judgement.

Centaury

Imbalance - For those who have an excessive need to please others and a willingness to serve. They are unable to say no and this leads to frustration, stress, and a loss of self-confidence and appreciation.

Outcome - A balanced recognition of your own needs, the ability to say no when appropriate.

Cerato

Imbalance - For those who lack trust in their own judgement. They are constantly seeking advice and approval from other people. They may appear silly and imitate others or become an ever changing "fashion victim".

Outcome - Helps us to listen to advice from within, restores confidence and strengthens our trust in ourselves to follow our path even if it runs contrary to the expectations of others.

Cherry Plum

Imbalance - For those who fear letting go or losing control: often accompanied by outbreaks of temper, also fear of harming themselves or others, suicidal thoughts or nervous breakdowns.

Outcome - The ability to cope with inner turmoil, trust and control of the mind and emotions.

Chestnut Bud

Imbalance - For those who fail to learn by experience and so repeat the same old mistakes.

Outcome - The ability to gain knowledge and wisdom from every experience, to break free from negative patterns of behaviour.

Chicory

Imbalance - For those who are possessive of people and things, demanding sympathy, love and affection; often using emotional blackmail. They can be fussy, nagging and manipulative. Prone to hypochondria

as a way to gain attention and love.

Outcome - Inner security and wisdom, respecting the freedom and individuality of others, selfless love given freely.

Crab Apple

Imbalance - For those who feel "unclean", self-disgust, anxious, obsessed with imperfection, may be sexually repressed and have a distaste of bodily functions. May suffer with an eating disorder. Obsessive thoughts and behaviours.

Outcome - The wisdom to see things in their proper perspective, self respect, freedom from obsessive thoughts and behaviours, acceptance of the physical body.

Elm

Imbalance - For those who suffer despondency as a result of feeling overwhelmed by responsibility, a tendency to overwork, a sense of isolation through having to rely on their own resources.

Outcome - Strength to balance responsibilities with the practical needs of everyday life. Self-confidence and inner security that the tasks will be completed.

Gentian

Imbalance - For those who are easily discouraged. When everything is going well they are happy but they can easily be disheartened and slip back into a negative outlook. Doubt and lack of faith are important elements.

Outcome - Helps put disappointments and setback into perspective. Provides strength and inspiration to try again

Gorse

Imbalance - For those who suffer strong feelings of hopelessness and despair. They may seek help in order to please others but underneath feel that nothing more can be done for them.

Outcome - Gives courage to try and rebuilds renewed hope.

Continues next issue..

Did you know that Pagan Network has....

A
My Space Account?
www.myspace.com/pagannetwork

A
Live Journal Account?
http://community.live-journal.com/pagan_network/

A
FaceBook Account?
www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=5943531917



By Candlelight

Stories gathered from all corners of the land

Beyond the Veil

A cool breeze blew as the young girl made her way down the dark path, humming quietly to herself. It was close to midnight, the only light shining from the quarter moon and the twinkling stars in the black sky overhead. She looked from the black velvet expanse to the shifting, glittering fields surrounding her. Dancing faeries, her mother had always told her were what made them sparkle, but that was before she had passed away over a year earlier.

Stopping at the unexpected thought of her mother, her white silk dress swayed around her small legs and a tear slid down her milky, pale cheek. Hurriedly, she brushed it away and pushed on, trying desperately to leave the painful memory behind as she walked. Her bare feet padding softly on the dirt walkway leading through the tall grass and sweet smelling wildflowers. Sweat rolled down her back from the intense heat which took over the air between each refreshing breeze. This particular night seemed to remain almost as hot as the day that preceded it, but she didn't notice as the object of her desire loomed into view as she crested a small hill.

In a few short minutes she would reach her destination at last. Picking up the pace as she went, she gradually closed the distance. As she got closer memories of the times she had come here with her mother flooded into her mind from the depths where she had buried them. She saw her mother chasing her through a sea of brightly colored wildflowers, then came visions of moonlit nights where her and her mother traveled the two hours from their cottage nestled in the foothills surrounding the snowcapped mountains, to come to the very place where she would soon stand. Her mother had made magick there as her daughter of five sat nearby, watching in awe. Tears came in a rush as the pictures flew to the front of her mind, despite her efforts to force them back and be strong. She had been so beautiful, she thought, wiping away the unwanted stream slipping down her face. 'I miss you so much', she whispered to the night, as she slowed to a stop at the foot of the stairs leading up into the white marble depths of her mother's altar house.

As she ascended the steps slowly into the shadows, her eyes locked on the black marble altar resting in the center of the twelve by twelve space. Two unused white altar candles still sat on either side

of the silver pentagram engraved in the middle of the altar table. She approached it, unable to clear the vision of her mother standing before it in her pristine white robes, arms held out to her sides, hands palm up, chanting quietly. She knew in a moment she would be standing in her mother's place, reciting the same chants her mother had once said, chants she had taught her just months before she and the baby inside her died. This is so hard, the girl thought. She knelt down on the cold, marble floor and slid her fingers into what, to the untrained eye, appeared to be grooves from wear. She pulled up the marble plate that only she and her mother knew of, and began lifting out the appropriate supplies for the ritual she was about to perform. She drew out a small, caste iron cauldron, her mother's handcrafted athame, and a drawstring handbag that held smaller bags of herbs and powders then slide the plate back in place and sat back on her heels. She put the bag of herbal ingredients inside the cauldron, picked it up and stood, then bent back down and wrapped her hand around the dark wooden handle of the athame. Confident that she now had everything she would need for the successful working of the spell she closed the distance to the altar and set everything down.

She took the bag out of the shadowy hallow of the inside of the cauldron and set it aside, then moved the cauldron to rest over the silvery pentagram shining in what moonlight reached under the roof of the altar house. Turning back to the drawstring bag, she pulled the top open and emptied the assortment of baggies onto the dark surface. Unable to see much more than a jumble of dark shapes scattered before her she waved her hand over the two white tapers and the wicks flamed to life with a warm, golden glow. In the flickering light she moved several bags aside as she picked out the ones she would need, one at a time. A bag of crushed rose petals for psychic power, marjoram for protection and ginger for power and success. Putting the rest of the herbs and powders back in the drawstring bag and set it on the floor at her feet. She opened the back of crushed rose petals and took some out with a small scoop, putting it into the belly of the cauldron, then she added a scoop of marjoram and ginger to it and mixed it together with the tip of her fingertips. After she was satisfied the herbs were

well blended, she bent down and picked up the drawstring bag. She slid the satchels of herbs she had just used back in, then lowered the handbag back to the floor and nudged it under the altar table with her foot as she straightened.

The world around her seemed to have gone completely still, she could no longer hear the calls of the night creatures or feel the breeze that just minutes ago had brushed gently against her slick skin. For a minute she paused, wondering if maybe she should just go home, then shook her head, expelling the thought. Reaching a slightly shaking hand forward, she pulled a draw hidden in the black surface of the altar, it made a loud, rough scrapping sound as stone was drug over stone. When she had opened it a couple of inches she began rummaging around the dark interior, until her hand fell upon the objects she was seeking. She lifted out a container of wrapped charcoal blocks and a cup of powdered incense for astral projection. After setting them in front of her, she slid her hand back into the draw and felt around one last time for the one item she still needed. When she found it, she laid the sensor on the altar between the charcoal and incense and slid the drawer shut, listening to the sound it made echo through the altar house.

She unwrapped a block of charcoal, laid it in the bottom of the sensor and lit it. When the embers glowed red-orange she poured in a little of the incense. With a deep breath she took in the subtle scent and turned to the herb mixture she had just made. She added a small branch of apple wood in the bottom of the cauldron and lit it with another wave of her hand. Her head was getting light with the smoke wafting through the house and into her lungs. Carefully, she picked the athame up off the cold surface of the altar and unsheathed it, lifting it above her head with her right hand, as she laid the sheath to rest next to the warm cauldron with her left.

Pointing the blade's tip to the West, she said in a strong, determined voice, 'Hail to the Guardians of the Watch Towers of the West. Powers of water and intuition, I call thee to aid me in this rite.' As she finished she rotated smoothly on her heel to face the north. In her mind she could see the protective blue flame of the circle jump into life as she reached the next cardinal point.

'Hail to the Guardians of the Watch Towers of the North. Powers of mother and earth, I call thee to aid me in this rite.' Beyond the edges of the roof of the house rain started to fall gently to the ground, then out of the sky a lightning bolt shot down and struck an ancient tree standing just feet away from the house. The ground beneath her feet shuddered as it hit the ground, spraying water and small splinters of wood in every direction. Taking no notice of the branches of green leaves lying at her feet, she continued on, moving the dull blade to point to the east, the blue flames following the path it made around her.

'Hail to the Guardians of the Watch Towers of the East. Powers of air and invention, I call thee to aid me in this rite.' The words died off as a heavy wind whipped through the open space, blowing her long, black hair around her face.

Turning one last time, she stood to face the south, watching the eerie flames dance before her unfocused eyes. 'Hail to the Guardians of the Watch Towers of the South. Powers of fire and feeling, I call thee to aid me in this rite.'

Almost there, she thought as she brought the athame up to point at the sky above her head where the point of the power cone she was invoking laid. One more line and the circle would be cast, she closed her eyes and began the last of the incantation.

'High Lady, Mother of all, I ask you here to aid me in this rite. Guide me in this, please-' She broke off and opened her eyes, seeing the inside of the power cone close over her head, though she couldn't really see it. The feeling of being nowhere at all took over her, but she would not let there be any distraction from the task she had set. She lowered herself to the cold, hard floor, crossed her legs and closed her eyes again.

Silently, she counted her way down from ten, picturing each number in bold black, before letting it fade into the next. When she reached zero, she watched as the center transformed, becoming a window onto a beautiful meadow surrounded by lush, green forest. She stepped forward and brought her hand to rest on the latch; shaking with anticipation she lifted the little metal hook and pushed the window out. It made a wide arch and she listened as it made a gentle thud on the outside. She peered around at the world beyond, taking in the array of brightly colored flowers, the vibrant green of the surrounding forest. This place was alive; the birds here chased each other playfully, singing as they zipped through the clear blue sky, a doe and her fawn grazed by the forest's edge. She could here a babbling brook that she knew twisted through the meadow's high grasses and into the trees somewhere off ahead. Everywhere on earth should hold this serene beauty, she thought to herself, but instead we destroy it.

She stepped over the window ledge and into the tall grass, letting it tickle her legs as she took a few steps away from the window. When she turned around to

look at the window it was gone, though something inside her told her it was still there. Unconcerned, she turned back to the meadow and walked toward the sound of the stream. She wanted to see her mother desperately, to know that she was doing well, but first she wanted to enjoy this piece of paradise. As she walked she tried to think of what she would say when she saw her mother, and then started to worry if she would be able to even find her in this strange place. When she came to the gently rolling water of the stream she lowered herself to the ground, flattening the grass beneath her. She picked a large pink flower with petals like velvet and looked at it for a long time, her thoughts wandering. What would it have been like if her mother were still alive? Would they still run and play in the field under the bright summer sun, would she still braid her hair at night, telling her how beautiful she was or just talking to her about whatever she wanted?

'Of course I would, you know we always had so much fun doing those things together,' came a gentle voice from behind her making her jump. 'Sorry, I didn't mean to frighten you.' 'It's okay, I didn't hear you,' she said jumping up and spinning around to wrap her arms around her mother's slender neck. 'I've missed you so much.'

'I know, I know, I've missed you too, sweetie.' Her mother gave her a last squeeze then pulled away. Keeping her hands on her shoulders she held her at arms length as she looked at her. 'You look beautiful, Alaana, like a princess,' she beamed at her daughters smiling face. She looked just like her mother, with the same oval face and pale skin, the dark hair and icy blue eyes. Her nose and mouth were her father's, only adding to her beauty. She knew that her little girl would soon grow into a stunning young woman.

'You like the dress?' she asked shyly, 'I made it myself.' She stood tall and held her head up to her mother.

Smiling her mother shook her head. 'I love it, you did a wonderful job. You also did an excellent job in using what I taught you, you have the gift.'

'You really think so? I wanted to see you so much, I wanted to bring Daddy, but he hasn't been getting much sleep with working so much lately and I didn't want to wake him. I couldn't wait, everything was right tonight and I don't think I could've stood another day. I know I shouldn't have, you told me that I shouldn't do this, but I just had to please don't be mad at me...'

'Shhhh,' she cooed, laying a finger over her lips to quiet her. 'I'm not mad at you, it takes great strength to perform that spell successfully and I'm very proud of you. I'm happy to see you, but you can't stay long and you must promise me that you won't come again unless it's extremely important. Promise?'

'I promise. Do I have to leave now?'

'Soon, but not yet. I want to spend some time with my little girl. You've grown so much since we were last

together. You're thirteen now, aren't you?' she asked feigning uncertainty. Alaana laughed and nodded.

They sat by the stream for an hour talking; catching up on the lives each of them led in their different worlds. Occasionally, a comfortable silence would fall and her mother would sit at her back braiding her hair while she listened to the sounds of nature drifting around the meadow from every direction. Feeling the gentle warmth of her mother's breath on the back of her neck as hands moved deftly through her long hair, she dreaded its ending, knowing that time was running short.

Soon her mother reached the end, tying off the end of the braid with a thin, flexible vine. Alaana turned and looked into her mother's intense blue eyes and knew it was time. She didn't want to have to leave her mother and realized that that was the reason her mother had told her not to come, she had understood how much it would hurt her to have to lose her again.

With a deep breath she stood, her mother taking her hand as she too rose to her feet. 'I'm sorry, Alaana, I know this is hard, but you must return to your world. Just as I no longer belong in yours, you cannot belong here. Even I will not be here long; soon my life will start again. I wish only for you to understand that no matter where I am, I love you and want you to be happy. Do not spend your life grieving for me, you must know that I'm happy and so must you be. You have to go on with life. I ask you only one favor before you leave, help your father to move on with his life too, our love was true and so we will be together always. Can you do this one thing for me?'

'I will do my very best to help him and show him happiness is still out there. I love you, Mom. I will never forget you, but I have to go now or I will never leave.' She started to turn in the direction she knew the window to lie in, then turned back. She threw her arms around her mother's neck and kissed her cheek over and over as tears ran down her cheeks. They mixed with her mother's as they both held tight to each other and cried.

Finally, slowly, they pulled apart and she turned once more. This time she didn't look back, she started to jog and before long broke into a run, needing the distance. She knew if she didn't get away now and back to the world of the living she would never return and so she put everything she had into running toward the invisible window at the edge of the meadow.

When she reached the spot where she came in she was surprised to see the circular window, wide and waiting for her. Without thinking or turning back she jumped through and pulled the window shut and slid the latch back into place. Looking out the window at the picture perfect scene, she stepped back, letting the big, bold zero come into full view. Slowly, she let her mind relax and allowed the zero to fade and mold itself into a

one, counting forward until she reached ten. When the ten faded from view, the screen behind her eyes went black and all she saw was the back of her eyelids, as her consciousness filtered back in. Almost unwillingly she opened her eyes and took in her surroundings. She was sitting back on the floor of the altar house. One of the altar candles had blown out in the wind, and the incense had burned down to nothing but ashes. She stretched her legs and arms, letting the kinks out of her muscles, and then she stood slowly, moving to the altar to clear the supplies before opening the circle. She picked up the cauldron and poured the ashes from the incense and powder she had used in, mixing with the herbs. Opening the draw with a scrap she laid the sensor, charcoal, and incense carefully in its dark depths. She snuffed out the candle then picked up the cauldron and leaned down wrapping her hand around the top of the drawstring bag she had left sitting at the foot of the altar. Looking around, she walked to the hidden cubby in the floor and knelt down, laying the cauldron and bag next to her before carefully pulling the slat of marble away. She lowered the bag into the empty spot where it had been since her mother last used it and then moved the marble lid back over it.

Once more she stood, leaving the cauldron resting on the floor she walked back to the altar and took up the athame, raising it in her right hand to face the West. 'Guardians of the Watch Towers of the West, I thank you for your aid. Blessed be.' She turned and said again, 'Guardians of the Watch Towers of the South, I thank you for your aid. Blessed be.' As she moved, the blue light that she had brought up at the beginning of the spell died away as the point of the athame passed. She swiveled to face the east and continued, 'Guardians of the Watch Towers of the East, I thank you for your aid. Blessed be.' With a final movement she brought the point of the blade to the north. 'Guardians of the Watch Towers of the North, I thank you for your aid. Blessed be.' She slid the blade back to the

west, vanishing the last of the blue flame and then swung the athame up to the sky. 'My Lady, I thank you for your guidance and aid in my magickal workings on this night. Blessed be. Let this circle be open, but never broken, as I will it, so mote it be.'

She made her way back to the cauldron and picked it up from the floor, then carried it and the athame with her as she walked down the cold, stone steps to the dirt pathway below. Before moving down the path, she walked to the side into the tall grass and knelt down. Digging her fingers into the ground, she began digging a hole in the cold soil. When she felt that the hole was large enough, she took the cauldron and poured its contents into the hole, then returned it to sit at her side, while she covered up her offering with the dirt she had removed to make the hole.

Finished with all the details of the ritual, she picked up the cauldron and placed the athame in it. After making her way back onto the path, she walked on. Home, she thought, and smiled. It was the first time she had smiled since she had lost her mother. She knew now that she could finally let go her mother was safe and she was happy. She knew what she needed to know in order to move on. Tears welled up in her eyes, her mother's eyes, but these were not tears of pain, they were tears of freedom. You're safe, she thought, I no longer have anything to fear, or any reason to be worried. She smiled again. 'I love you', she whispered to the night, and as she walked she could've sworn she had heard a voice whisper back, 'I love you too', and shook her head, then looked to the sky, wondering.

By Kahlan

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Ancient Wisdoms

THE FOX

Foxes live underground, and because of this they are associated as being guides to the underworld. Being mainly nocturnal in their habits, you may find that if fox is your totem you feel more alive in the evening/night. Foxes mainly live off rabbits, rats and mice, although you will often see foxes in the cities scavenging in bins and backyards. Foxes are very adaptable to different environments; they need to be in order to survive. If fox is your totem you will find that you adapt easily to changes going on around you. Nothing is likely to faze you for very long. Foxes have long been associated with witches and shape shifting.

for plastic surgery that seems so popular in this day and age. Just look inside yourself for the answers. Swan also reminds us that there is strength and knowledge in silence. Swans are often seen as a bridge between our world and the spiritual world. Those with swan as a totem may often have intuitive abilities or see the future through divination or dreams. Swan also reminds us that even when the world around us seems ugly, innocence, wonder and beauty can still be found. Swans mate for life, they also live an exceptionally long life, so you will prefer relationships that last a lifetime.

Animal Totems

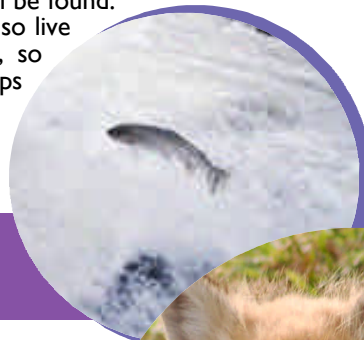
Often when we think of the fox, we think of them as being sly, wily and crafty. This can be an advantage if fox is your totem as it means you will be aware if someone is trying to lie to you. In this situation, trust your own judgement and inner wisdom. Your intuition will never let you down nor will your ability to observe what is really going on. You may have the ability to charm others into doing what you want (you sweet talker!). You may also enjoy stirring up trouble, not always for the fun of it, but in order to help others learn from the experience. Foxes are known to be intelligent and quick witted. One of fox's best gifts is that of camouflage or the ability to go around unnoticed. Using this gift, you will be able to slip out of unpleasant situations before you are noticed. It will almost be like you are invisible, as you will be able to blend into the background so well, sit back and observe what is going on around you.

THE SALMON

The salmon teaches us that through perseverance, stamina and willpower you can overcome any obstacles that get in your way. Even when others are telling you that you need to "go with the flow" salmon reminds you that if it is something you really want then swim against the current with a single mindedness and take a leap of faith into the unknown. You never know what you might discover! Salmon is associated with wells and healing. By returning to your spiritual home you can gain much from tapping into ancestral knowledge. As water is associated with emotions, salmon helps teach you how to balance and use your emotions, insight and creativity to further develop yourself. Salmon isn't one to sit around and wallow in indecision. They are always on the move, totally focused on their goal. So if you find yourself not knowing what direction to take, make a decision, even if it's not the perfect decision at the time, by making a decision you are taking a step in to the unknown, which although it may be scary, is better than wallowing in indecision while the world passes you by.

THE SWAN

Swans, graceful and beautiful they may look, but they can also be aggressive in nature. With Swan as a totem you may find that people often mistake you as a quiet, demure person, until they rile you and then they get to see your aggressive side. You may find yourself overwhelmed at times by others' emotions and you yourself may be emotionally sensitive. Swans teach us about our inner beauty and loving ourselves as we are. They also remind us that we can change who we are and transform from the ugly duckling into a beautiful swan without the need



by Twilightgirl

Reviews

ByLupa

<http://paganbookreviews.com/>

Walking An Ancient Path: Rebirthing Goddess on Planet Earth by Karen Tate O Books, 2008 394 pages

Much has been written in recent decades about Goddess spirituality. Some of it has been horrific, full of historical claptrap and stereotypes about both/all sexes. Others have been creations of beauty, allowing for Goddess spirituality to be its own entity without trying to prove or disprove others. This is definitely one of the latter texts; while I personally do not agree with every single thing the book offers, overall I find it to be a valuable addition to texts on this subject.

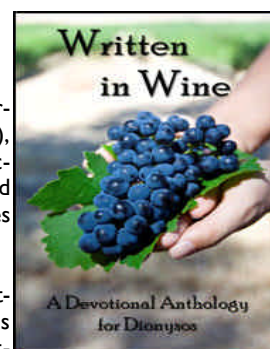
A large portion of the material throughout the book is dedicated to Tate's anecdotes of her experiences. She is able to make pilgrimages that most of us wouldn't be able to afford, going to all sorts of places around the world where the Divine Feminine has been revered throughout history. Lest you think that this makes the text inaccessible, think again: not only does she make these far-away places seem real and relevant to those who remain at home, but she also brings forth some home-grown examples of living Goddess spirituality. The anecdotes show her absolute wonder and reverence for the Divine Feminine, and it's quite clear what is most sacred to her.



I also really enjoyed how Tate divides the book up by the five modern elements-Spirit, Earth, Air, Fire and Water. Each section includes information and practices that resemble these elements, as well as discussing goddesses who are related to them. Sometimes the order of the individual subsections seems a little random, and chapters don't always segue well from one to the next. Still, the book taken as a whole is a delightful journey through many possible modern manifestations of Goddess spirituality. I would definitely recommend this book for anyone interested in, or currently practicing, Goddess spirituality. There are numerous ideas for honouring the Divine Feminine, all wrapped up in the passion and joy of a talented author.

Written in Wine: A Devotional Anthology for Dionysos by Sannion, et. al. (eds) plus individual contributors Bibliotheca Alexandrina, 2008 214 pages

Dionysos is one of those deities that I'm surprised I haven't had more direct interaction with. I think, perhaps, it's because I'm a modern-day teetotaler (with the rare exception of small amounts for ritual use), and like so many people I've primarily associated Dionysus with drinking and wine. However, this particular collection has given me a much deeper and broader perspective on who Dionysos was and is, and while I haven't had any urge to devote myself to him, I'll certainly be keeping an eye out for him in places where he's likely to be found.



While the god certainly likes his wine, he is also a deity of passion and sexuality; of wilderness; of ecstatic and terrifying rites of passage; and of liberty. The wonderful variety of prose, poetry, and plays in this anthology attest to this multitude of roles. While it was all enjoyable-there wasn't a boring or poorly-written piece in the collection-here are a few of my favourites:

-The Mystery of Meilikhios and Bakkhios by Sannion: This, of all the "This is what Dionysos is about", is one of my favourite guides to the nature of the god. It shows, concisely but thoroughly, the dual nature of Dionysos, and why there are sometimes seemingly conflicting stories about him. (Sannion's The Paths to Dionysos is an excellent companion to this.)

-Black Leopard by Rebecca Buchanan: I love modern fiction that integrates ancient deities, and this story is a particular gem. Leopards-sacred to Dionysos-feature prominently in this heart-warming, creative tale.

-Dionysus Sees Her by Allyson Szabo: There are several pieces in the collection that touch on Dionysos' wife, Ariadne, but this poem really touched me. It focuses on the moment the god found Ariadne abandoned by the sea, and illustrates how deeply he loves. Absolutely beautiful.

-Lesser-Known Dionysian Festivals by John H. Wells: This one caught my eye simply because the author collects together details about a few dozen ancient festivals sacred to the god. It could be incredibly useful to those wanting to do regular devotionals to him, and it also shows the great variety in the ways that he was (and still is) honoured.

There are so many more pieces I could highlight; as I said, they're all good. The greatest strength of this book is its diversity, not only because different authors approach different aspects of Dionysos, but also because there is that wide variety of voices in several different written forms. This is an excellent text for anyone wanting to understand this particular deity on a deeper level; it's also a good model for those wanting to do devotional work to a particular deity, but who aren't sure how that creative work may manifest. It's a fitting tribute to a god who is most often relegated only to the wine bottle, but who deserves much more attention, and is more present in this world, than that.