



The Wichtower

THE WICCAUK MEMBERS MAGAZINE

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© Christy Babrick

Inside this issue

Cover Art - Yule	1
Contents & contacts	2
Editorial & Cover Art	3
Moot Information	4
Yule	5
Poetry Corner	6
The Colour of Magick	10
Pagan Prison Ministry	12
An it Harm None	14
Bach Flower Remedies	16
A New Life	18
Full Moon Names	19
Paganism Twenty Years on	20
Ask Obsidiana	22
London Yule Party	24

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The Witchtower is produced every 6-8 weeks and is distributed free online and in selected shops.

The Witchtower is produced by unpaid volunteers and members of our website.

We welcome submissions from any source. Articles or essays, poetry, book reviews, practical advice on aspects of the Craft are all welcome.

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Editorial

Dear All,

Welcome to the Yule edition of the Witchtower. This is a special Yule edition of the Witchtower, as no doubt some of you have already guessed by the Yule type pictures!

It has been a busy month at WiccaUK. The beginning of the month started with a bang with the Manchester Ball which went down a treat. The beginning of December marks the highlight of WiccaUK's year with our Yule Party. The party will be held in the atmospheric arches of Old London Bridge where there will be entertainment in the forms of pagan DJ's, live bands, alternative therapies, other entertainment and many stalls selling a whole range of items. Further details of the ball can be found at the back of this magazine.

As I have already said it has been a busy

month at WiccaUK with member numbers flying past the 2000 mark as well as the addition of many new full members. Full members packs are almost ready and will be in the post very soon.

This issue of the magazine is cram packed with many interesting articles on a variety of subjects. Articles from Sethur, Aurora Morningstar, Lux Libris and Gwydion can be found as well as an interview with Carrie de Fey on the Pagan Prison Ministry. There is also the continuation of our series of sections by Twilight Girl and Obsidiana. Poetry corner has also been expanded this issue.

All the team at WiccaUK wish you a very Happy Yule!

BB

Sparks

Witchtower Artwork

Cover Artwork: 'Yule'

Other Artwork:

<http://elfwood.lysator.liu.se/loth/c/h/christy/christy.html>

"I've always enjoyed fantasy art, particularly fairytale and children's book illustration. My favorite fantasy artists are James Christensen, Leo and Diane Dillion, Brian Froud, and Alan Lee; these artists have all influenced my work. Mostly I work with watercolor, though I like to use ink, pastel and other medias, as well. "

Christy Babrick

Other artwork found in this issue has been contributed courtesy of Twilight Girl who has worked effortlessly to bring us the merry images of Yule to us.

Many thanks to the both of you.

WiccaUK Moot Information

Manchester Moot
29th November

London Moot
14th December

Bristol Moot
29th November

Leeds Moot
20th December

Cambridge Moot
29th November

London Moot
11th January 04

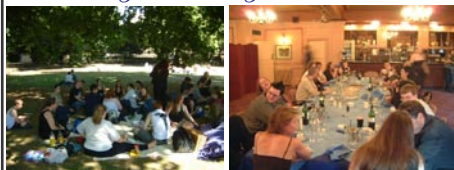
Pagan Federation National Conference
29th November

Crescent Academy Tarot Course
Starts 31 January 04

London Yule Party
7th December

Blackpool Weekend
12th-14th March 04

Organising a Moot



If you're thinking about running a local Moot or other event, let us know!

Email events@wiccauk.com with what you've decided so far, and we'll try to help as much as possible with the rest.

We'll mention it on the site and, if we have enough notice, mention it in newsletters, both our own and other people, and in this magazine.



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Yule

Yule, which comes from the Anglo Saxon 'Yula' meaning 'wheel' of the year, and is also known as the Winter Solstice, is the longest night of the year, at the darkest time of the year. In ancient times it was believed that the sun needed our help to return, so the people would light bonfires to show the sun the way back to earth. Lit candles in windows and the lights on our Yule trees are the left over symbols of those bonfires.

The main focus of Yule is the rebirth of the sun, as this is when the Goddess gives birth to the male child of promise and the God returns as the infant sun God. We celebrate this normally by either rising early to watch the sun rise or stay up all night to wait for the sun to return.

The gifts that we exchange originally were from trading what one had extra for what one lacked. The Yule tree has its roots in the Druid worship of the trees and the star at the top of the tree is our very own pentagram. Holly and ivy are seen as the male and female principles and were believed to bring good luck and fertility to men and women. Holly, berries, pine cones and acorns were all used to symbolise the God aspect, while the wreath symbolises the Goddess aspect. As a complete circle, the wreath symbolises the circle of life, the wheel of the year and the sacred cycles of the Goddess.

Most witches that are in covens will meet on this night to celebrate but even if you are a solitary try to have a bit of a celebratory gathering. Invite some friends over and even if they are not Pagan explain how the longest night is essentially a time of rebirth, because at sunrise the days will get longer as we head for spring. Exchange gifts of goodwill and drink plenty of mead and mulled wine.

Sam

A Yule ritual.

This was taken from Witch - A Magical Journey by Fiona Horne.

Set up your altar decorated with pinecones, rosemary sprigs and holly.

Light your altar candles and incense.

Cast your circle in your usual manner.

Invite the God and Goddess;

Great Mother tonight you give birth to the child of promise; tonight on the longest and darkest night we celebrate the fire of your womb - the fire of creation.

The sun God is born and everywhere rejoices.

Hail and welcome ever-returning King and Eternal Queen.

Feast and celebrate, sit up all night shearing plans for the coming year and toast the Dawn, welcoming the sun.

Release the circle.

A Yule incense.

2 tbsp. pine wood shavings

2 tbsp. frankincense

3 drops cedar oil

2 drops ginger oil.

The Circle

We caught a bus out of the city near dawn
and crossed the wet football fields into the park
after a night of reading and talking and no sleep;
thin psyches, sensitive eyes, amazed by simple things -
oaks and crocuses, birds, breath vapour in the morning air.

February sunlight on the sycamores and chestnuts;
flickering on the spinning edge of a boomerang
bought in a music shop, thrown in a ritual circle.
A dog grabbed it, chewed it up and ran out of sight
over the lip of the hill. The horizon's circle placed us
at the centre of a world that moved with us like an aura.

We squinted when the sun would break the tree cover
and catch us talking about the four elements and the spirit;
about friends and past lives and drugs and spiced tea;
water spraying from a dog's wet fur, geese croaking
over the flat lake water, street lights flicking off on the waking roads.

Everything became concentrated in the ritual of the walk -
up the oak and beech slopes to the edge of the golf course,
along the river gully and past the tall, scarred tree,
around the edges of the lake; our conversation
fusing our experiences and memories with this reality:
the alchemy of the elements. Lake, sky, sun, mud, and us.

Once in a while, something notices how scattered we've become,
and decides to bring us together again: poetry, pub stories,
sharing sandwiches on a cold bench, kissing under a crumbling wall.
We collect what we can, and offer it to the other for blessing:
an oak twig, shaved and sanded for the altar; the names and shapes
of seeds and leaves; feelings summoned into the material world,
like the perfect oak, alive in space and time until the final storm.

©Dreamvirus

The Den of Lost Dreams

Part 1

My dreams are in the past
Shattered on the floor
Did I really think he could love me
Did I really want for so much more

His light was like a beacon
Calling across distant shores
Like a shadowed dream sequence
Where I'd laid down once before

The memories of his touch
Burned forever in my mind
Travelled Astral pleasures
A final kiss goodbye.

Part 2

Did I really think it would come true
The two of us, just me and you
How many years of my life did I waste
Longing for.....your touch.....your taste

You tempted me
With eyes so blue
Showed me places
that you only knew
How much longer can it go on
Dreaming worlds when you are gone
No one can ever replace you

No one ever will
My dreaming world is over
Now I see the truth in you (April 1998)

Melanie (aka Twilightgirl)
© Tangled Web Creations 1998-2003

Broken Foil behind the Wicked Glass

I stop time in its tracks.
The many ways you make it longer.
Turning the hourglass around.
Placing it neatly in your vision.
I reach for that Object.
Something for you to look at with affection.
Placing the beveled glass in front of you,
I ask you...
Do you like what you see?
Forcing your eyes to remain open,
I ask you..
More so do you see your self alone?
Or do you reflect an image with me?
Do you care to know what I think?
Or dare I say know?
What I know is true as I push the mirror further from your sight.
Breaking the glass.
Turning around,
shattering its beat.
I look at you directly.
The image you fear will always be what the mirage will show.
Your true hallucinations as you manifest that wetter water.
The image that's real is that your beauty is beyond anything you can see.
More than anything I've seen.
What more do you want to see?
If I crawled on the floor for you would you think of yourself that much higher?
On hands and feet for you do you know I look up to you?
Throwing the foil aside I beg you to step into your own light.
See yourself for what you truly are.
Consider yourself for it's what won my heart.
This tattered heart.
Its what I saw when are eyes did meet.
And your one with me forever.

© Orphen 2003

Crystal Image

The dream has no meaning, no currency, no sound,
why bother trying when only truth's to be found.
Build yourself up just to let yourself crash,
the future's not there...there was never a past.
One moment in glory, one drop of bliss,
what's not experienced...can never be missed.
In light extinguished,
through darkness embraced,
today's for a start...tomorrow not a trace.
A whisper, a wish, a prayer, a spell,
never to know...so never to tell.
Down a dark mirror,
through to the light,
Now what you thought of,
but the price of true sight.

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Poetry Corner

We are looking to make the poetry corner much larger in the near future and to start including other pieces of creative writing and art.

If you have a poem, picture or other type of creative writing that you wish to be shown in public in the Witchtower or you have further questions than please send an email along to us at the Witchtower magazine (witchtower@wiccauk.com).

The Colour of Magick

What is magick? My personal definition is “A wilful act to change your circumstances through focussed application of the Will.” Which could mean flicking the light switch to enlighten the circumstances of a gloomy room.

Sounds trivial? Depends on how you look upon it. If you think of magick as a very special ability which can only be wrought through highly structured ritual and with the most reverent of behaviour, I guess you'd frown at my description. Me, I think of magick as inherent to all of creation. It's a natural force which each and every one of us can access and work with. It's none of the hocus-pocus mystery people perceive it to be. It really can be as simply as switching on the light – a few hundred years back electricity was seen as magical, yet all that was involved was a lot of well-considered thought, a working knowledge of physics, and enquiring and adventurous mind and the resolve to do it. Exactly what is involved in SpellCraft.

In Magick there are four schools of thought that I am aware of. The Theurgic School works on the basis of opening yourself up to Divinity and asking it to help you bring about the desired result of your working. By opening yourself up to Divinity, you effectively become an instrument of the Divine. This school of magick is practised in many religions, although very few of them will see it as magick; rather call it prayer.

There is a subtle difference between the Theurgic magic of, say, Christianity and that of the Magickian: Christian prayer often involves asking God to bring about the fulfilment of one's desire, effectively making it an external affair without taking any responsibility for it. The Magickian asks for divine guidance, a little help to make him make the right choices, whilst all the while maintaining responsibility for the outcome.

The Thaumaturgic school works on the premise that the Magickian uses her own energy, or channels Earth or other energy through herself to bring about the result she requires.

Practitioners of Ceremonial Magick invoke deity and angels and work with energised

sigils, often spelling out the names of angels. Theirs is a practise of highly structured ritual proceedings, and an intense intellectual training in Magick. The Golden Dawn orders, Ordo Templis Orientalis, Rosicrucian Orders and Theosophical Society are representatives of this School of Magick.

Finally there is the practise of Chaos Magick, which aims to de-ritualise the practise of Magick, and is void of theory and beliefs. The Chaos Magickian will work with anything that is available to him to get the result he wants. He is unhindered by conceptions regarding good and evil, karma, rede and law of return. There is no focus, for his realm is Chaos.

Regardless of what School of Magick one works within, I believe there is one underlying principle that underpins all. I will attempt to explain this below, but first I'd like to propose a second definition of magick, taking a slightly different slant on it: “*Magick is the emanation into the physical realm of Will expressed on the astral realm.*”

In this definition we, Magickians, work on four levels: Conscious, Unconscious, Higher Self and Body.

We have a conscious desire that we wish to see effectuated. The Unconscious, picks up on it and relays it to our Higher Self, which resides in the astral realm. Our Higher Self then takes the actions necessary to bring about our desire in the astral realm, and sooner or later we'll notice its effects in the physical realm, through the senses of our Body.

Now, this process is an everyday process, which underlines my belief that Magick is a natural, everyday thing. It is well-known under the names “Positive Affirmation”, or “Positive Thinking”, but it works equally well with negative thinking. It is the power of Will, expressed through thought.

Example. When I was younger, I believed I was fat and ugly and no one would ever love me. I was lonely, a victim of bullying, and didn't know how to behave in any social situation. No surprise then I ended up with someone, a troubled soul himself, who said he loved me

but abused me instead. And I put up with it, because I was afraid of loneliness and believed no one else could ever love me.

Circumstances changed; I broke free of that self-imposed prison and made a new start. Now I am happy and secure, and know I am loved and respected. That positive outlook has a direct influence on my surroundings: people just accept me as I am as they no longer meet my negative projections about myself before they get to know me.

We can achieve most things by a change in our attitude towards ourselves, which in turn lifts the projections we cast on others. Sometimes, however, something more powerful is called for, and this is where positive affirmation becomes Magick.

Example. My parents were trapped in a self-imposed downward spiral of negativity, and were so filled to the brim with negativity, that they simply were unable to accept anything positive. I crafted a ritual for them aimed at syphoning off some of the negativity to allow them to take in positive energies.

Ritual magick takes more than just the thought; it needs symbols for the Magickian to focus her mind and Will. All statuary, candles, oils, colours and cards serve as a powerful magnifying glass to focus the diffuse light that falls through it into one ultra-focussed beam. There is nothing inherently magickal about the tools and symbols; the magick is in the intention.

Through the archetypal imagery of the tarot, my own applied knowledge of psychology and the dynamics of my family relationship, my parents opened up, and took in what I was saying. We ritually banished all those things we most needed to get rid off, and since then our lives have improved 100%. My parents have moved into a new house where they are much happier, my father's depression appears to be alleviated and my mother has now received a treatment for the pain which seems to work.

“Now hang on”, I hear you say, “I thought you said theurgic magick worked through opening up to the Divine and becoming its instrument ... how does that fit in with this process you describe?”

I was expecting that question, and the answer lies in my view on Divinity.

One of the most fabled artefacts of hermetic history, the Emerald Tablet, states:

“*True, without error, certain and most true: that which is above is as that which is below, and that which is below is as that which is above, to perform the miracles of the One Thing.*”

And as all things were from One, by the meditation of One, so from this One Thing come all things by adaptation.”

Or, as it is popularly known nowadays: “As above, so below”. ‘Above’ refers to the macrocosmos, the Universe and the Divine Force that created it; ‘below’ is the world, the individual and the Divine Force that resides in it.

I believe, with Hermes Trimegistus, the assumed author of the Emerald Tablet, that there is no difference. Universe and man are One; the man is in the Universe, likewise is the Universe in the man. Similarly, man is Divine like the Divine is man.

In slightly less cryptical terms: I believe our True Self represents the God/dess within, and our True Will the Will of the Divine. Any Act then, in accordance with our True Will, is an Act in accordance with the Divine Plan.

By calling upon Divinity to aide me in my working, I call upon my Self to bring about that which I desire. Likewise, by calling upon my True Will and True Self, I call upon Divinity to bring about that which I desire. I can go through highly structured ritual, drawing sigils and calling upon angels, yet I do so through my True Self. I can draw from everywhere and nowhere, without order and focus, yet I do so through my True Self.

In the end, all Magick leads back to that: True Will and True Self. The challenge then, for every man and woman is, to know the True Will and unveil the True Self.

21 September 2003

© Cora Burke

Pagan Prison Ministry

I was at a moot the first time I heard of the Pagan Prison Ministry, the Regional Coordinator was asking if anybody would like to volunteer. I was attracted to the idea only my confidence let me down; I decided that I didn't know enough and that I would find it difficult to do rituals in a prison environment and anyway, what did I know about the prison system? I heard others discussing the role and coming to the same conclusion and no one from the area volunteered.

At the time I was involved with the protest movement and devoted my energy to that. It kept me busy for a couple of years, and then, after a particularly harrowing eviction, I decided that I had done enough active protesting and turned my attention to protesters who were in prison. I started up a prisoner support group within the Loyal Arthurian Warband, an activist Druid Order. Soon I was receiving letters from prisoners who felt they were being unfairly treated or simply wanted someone to write to who understood their beliefs. During this time I found that working with prisons and prisoners was less daunting than I had first imagined. A while later, the Pagan Federation asked if I would like to manage the Prison Ministry. It complimented the work I was already doing, so I agreed.

People have asked, "Why visit, when some prisoners have committed very unpleasant crimes?" I discussed this with a prisoner who said, "Yes, being in prison we have broken the law, and I well understand how that creates conflict with Pagan beliefs, but does that mean that we are thrown away, discarded, ignored? Even with ECHR [European Convention of Human Rights] and other legal protections we inside face prejudices and ridicule that can threaten the course of our lives, and through us, the lives of our family and friends". A few prisoners have broken the law for political reasons, animal rights for example, but they are the exception. I feel that anyone, no matter what their past, has a right to the services of a Priest/ess of their chosen religion and if a prisoner wishes reform, then supporting their religious beliefs is one important step in that process.

A Visiting Minister's role is to visit prisoners who may be on remand or convicted. Prisoners have many requirements; some simply want to discuss Paganism and find out their rights, others want to learn about Paganism (over half of the prisoners that I meet have come to Paganism in prison). Some want to participate in a ritual with fellow Pagans, this is not always easy in a prison environment, they are usually refused permission to use the multi-faith room without a Minister present and because there is no mixing between wings, often there may be several prisoners in the same prison who are oblivious to the existence of the other Pagan prisoners. Others may want to come to terms with their past, having deep concerns about it. A prison Minister also acts as a go-between linking inmates and the establishment, ensuring that the prisoners receive their rights, mediating in disputes and demands, then, if appropriate, agreeing a compromise that suits both parties. A Minister may be requested to make a report out for the parole board, a procedure that would be explained by the prison, if needed.

Unfortunately, there are times when despite the best will and efforts, that an agreement with the prison cannot be reached by the Minister or by myself; in those circumstances I can refer the matter to the Home Office, who I have always found very supportive.

Many Pagans in prison are reluctant to admit their path, as sometimes a prisoner who declares their beliefs can be branded "immature", "driven by fantasy", "delusional" or worse, this is kept on file and can lose years of remission. Part of the role of a Minister can be to help educate the prison staff to understand Paganism.

Often Ministers worry that they may not be able to help inmates following a different path to their own, a basic knowledge of the major Pagan paths is very useful but if more teaching is required than a minister can give, then an appropriate correspondence course can be considered. Security staff should check any teaching materials taken in, a video might have to be viewed by the Gov-

ernor, and unless a locker is offered by the Chaplaincy, all items must be taken away and never left with a prisoner without permission.

A Minister's visit is not like a normal visit, the prison requires security clearance and the visit takes place on a one to one or group basis. Normally visits take place in the multi-faith room but any suitable room may be used. However, like normal visits, a Minister may also be searched. A guard or Chaplain will be close by and there is usually a panic button in the room. In one prison that I know of open air rituals are now being allowed.

Ritual, when required, has to be kept simple out of necessity; most visits are an hour long, leaving probably only twenty minutes for the rite. It is best to take in the minimum ritual equipment, which should all be agreed by security in advance and certain items such as swords and athames are banned in all prisons. It often happens that there will be members of different paths, with differing levels of experience present. A ritual for a festival could include calling the quarters, then everyone reading or reciting a relevant piece of poetry, song or prose of their choice, blessing some water or fruit juice in a chalice and then closing the quarters.

It helps if a minister is a good listener, they shouldn't be gullible or too easily shocked either. They should be able to keep confidences and it is essential to deal with the authorities in a calm, sensible and pleasant manner and a sense of humour is invaluable!

Prisons refund travelling expenses and offer a Minister £11 an hour whilst visiting a prisoner, although most do not claim a wage as prison Chaplains have a very restricted budget but this is entirely down to the individual.

The Prison Chaplain contacts me at the Pagan Federation when a VM is needed and I find the nearest suitable Minister available. This doesn't mean that a Minister has to belong to the PF, Ministers and prisoners are treated alike regardless of their membership status.

Around ten letters every week come into the office from America. US prisoners are even more isolated than British prisoners as they have no

right to a Visiting Minister and there is virtually no support available for them. Some British prisoners have no Visiting Minister either, sometimes because I can't supply one in their area or because they simply don't feel ready to meet someone in person, in these cases there are writing ministers available but the demand is so great I can't always keep up with it. The Writing Ministry is just as important as the Visiting Ministry and only need take up a couple of hours a month. A Ministers address should never be given to a prisoner, if a PO Box is required then post can be sent via the Prison Ministry.

By law every Pagan prisoner in the UK is entitled to a visit from a VM. There are around 140 prisons and Young Offenders Institutions in England and Wales and, at present, less than 40 Pagan Visiting Ministers; large areas such as Yorkshire, Lancashire, Kent, Coventry and Surrey have no ministers at all, so please, if you think you can help, either by becoming a Writing Minister or a Visiting Minister or if you would like more information please contact me, Carrie, PO Box 270, ALDERSHOT, GU11 3WZ or email carrie@prisonministry.org.uk

I thought I'd end with a word firstly from Mark and then from Paul who has been in prison since he was eighteen; he became Pagan when he was twenty-one, fifteen years ago:

Mark: "It may seem strange to be asking someone to act as a minister for a belief that is not dogmatic but it is just a title that helps others access to other like minded individuals"

Paul: "With out a VM, inmates can be left in isolation, with no physical means of practicing their chosen faith, cut off from any sense of community. Remember, we can't go out into the countryside and re-affirm our lives within the Goddess and God – we are in brick, concrete and steel bars. Whilst of necessity many Pagans inside adhere to a solitary path, communication and a meeting of others is a priceless gift. In most prisons that gift can only be given by a Visiting Minister".

Thank you to Paul and Mark and all the other inmates who have helped me compile this article.

Carrie de Fey

An it Harm None

PERHAPS the most common thread on Pagan and Wiccan message boards and the like is how far the Wiccan Rede “An it harm none, do what you will” should be taken.

Some see it as a guideline, others as an unalterable law. So I thought I’d put my few penceworth in. To start off with, let’s put the Rede into context. Even better, three contexts!

CONTEXT 1: THE QUESTION

The main reason that the Rede is so often questioned is that it is perhaps the single thing that Wicca has that resembles a general rule of morality. Other laws of Wicca found in the Book of Shadows only refer to behaviour towards other Wiccans. Of course, the Book of Shadows refers to these people as witches rather than Wiccans, but that’s another article.

When multi-faith groups begin to learn of Wicca, it is the Rede that is quoted to them. Why?

Well, for a start an awful lot of religions, especially the wishy-washy sort that turn up at multi-faith gatherings, cite their religion’s morality as its justification.

Christianity may have made mistakes, they say, such as the pogroms and the inquisition, but there’s a moral code which cements our society together and stops everything turning to chaos. That’s the excuse used in the supposedly secular USA for having the Ten Commandments on some courthouses. But that avoids the central question: is the religion actually true? Is there a heaven and hell, did Jesus die for our sins or is Mahomet the seal of the prophets? Since Wiccans would say NO to both, why are we trying to justify ourselves? Hmm.

CONTEXT 2: THE ORIGIN

Just in case there is anyone out there who still thinks that the Book of Shadows and everything within it is hundreds of years old, let’s be clear. The Rede was devised by Gerald Gardner, but as with almost everything else he did in Wicca, he devised it from whole cloth. In this case, the Rede seems at first to be influenced by Aleister Crowley’s “Do What Thou Wilt shall be the Whole of The Law, Love is the Law, Love under Will”. However, there are precedents.

Gardner may have been unaware of St Augustine’s “Love, and do what you will”. Maybe not.

What does seem clear is that the Rede is a permissive statement. It does not say what you can do, it says what you can’t (cause harm) and then allows everything else. To a certain extent many religions do this, and religions “of a Book” can get in trouble for this. Many a fundie has searched in the Bible for anything amounting to a proscription of marijuana, for example.

But Wicca is either a Pagan religion or a religion “of a Book”. So what should we read into the Rede? Given that the BoS is what Gardner thought a witches handbook should look like, I think some answers become clearer.

CONTEXT 3: THE WORRY

The final piece of context needs to be why people worry about it in their own conduct? I believe this is simple. We have largely been brought up in religions that promise dire consequences for those who transgress its laws, be it hell or purgatory.

The only thing like it

in Wicca is the law of threefold return, which has been demonstrated to have been introduced to Wicca as a joke (by Austin Osman Spare). But a lot of Wiccans still believe that there really ought to be some sort of punishment. This means that they have to obey the Rede lest dire, threefold consequences hit them. Are they right? Er, no, basically.

FIRST THOUGHT

What does Rede actually mean. Basically, it means advice. Ethelred the Unready was, as used to be taught in schools until the government decided that British history began in 1066, Ethel the Ill-advised (Un-rede-y). It is not a commandment, it is not a law, it is advice. It was not beyond the wit of Gardner to have written “eight words the witches law fulfil” instead of “rede”, but he didn’t. So it is advice.

SECOND THOUGHT

Now, a lot of questions about the rede have to do with magic. Note that the rede doesn’t actually mention magic, it could and, I believe, should be taken for all things. But people agonise “well, if I do a spell to get a job by passing a particular interview, someone else will fail and I will have harmed them”. Very true, and totally irrelevant.

Wicca is not supposed to be for wusses with a philosophy degree, it is supposed to be the religion of an oppressed and barely literate peasantry. It says “an it harm none”, not “an it mildly inconvenience someone for a couple of weeks not”. Suppose you heal someone on death’s door, and they go on to harm people? Well, it says “an it harm none”, not “an it could not under any circumstances harm anyone whatsoever even if the witch knows about the butterfly effect, the quantum nature of causality, and has the imagination of someone reared on a diet of Twilight Zones where every bloody magical act backfires”.

Of course, Wicca isn’t really the religion of an oppressed peasantry, but in the context of what Gardner pretended it was, it seems clear to me that An it Harm None, Do What You Will basically means “have a good time, but no hitting people over the head with a bloody great big stick, literally or magically”.

FINAL THOUGHT

Well, I was going to point out that the only reason that many witches I have met don’t kill people with curses is that their magic is crap, The Rede then is “An it show your disciples none that thou canst not curse for toffee....” but there is that nagging problem of the fact, and fact it is, that GG made it up. Then we can as well, can’t we?

Well, no. As I often point out, Wiccan is a modern word based, inaccurately, on an ancient culture. Rather like Wicca itself, really. Wican was a poetic term, but it was a verb, corresponding to “Witching”. Wicca was a witch, male.

So if we want to be Wiccans, we follow the Rede or we are violating copyright (metaphorically speaking). Otherwise we are just witches, which is fine for me. But I have seen the Rede extended. It is used to justify various personal moral choices, such as Veganism. Fair enough, until some twit starts telling you that this means that you can’t be a Wiccan unless you’re a Vegan. It happens. What do you say then?

You say this:

“It would harm someone to report them to the authorities, which the BoS says you should never do to another witch anyway. OK? Good. Now, you have harmed my feelings, and if you truly believe in the law of threefold return, any negative action will return to you threefold.” Then hit them over the head with a bloody great big stick.

Steve Wilson

Bach Flower Remedies by Twilight Girl

Part 3

Impatiens

Imbalance – For those who are impatient and irritable, they desire to work alone, have high ideals and finds faults in others. They suffer from nervous tension or indigestion due to overworking at such a swift pace.

Outcome – Restores acceptance of the natural pace of life, rather than fighting against it. Provides patience and tolerance, especially towards the shortcomings of others.

Larch

Imbalance – For those who lack confidence in themselves and fear failure. They feel that they are not as capable as those around them. Feelings of total uselessness can lead to unhappiness, despair and isolation.

Outcome – Strengthens confidence and helps us appreciate our real worth and value our personal contribution to the planet.

Mimulus

Imbalance – For those who's fears can be identified such as flying, thunderstorms and phobias. Also for shy, timid people who tend to avoid social occasions and large crowds of people.

Outcome – Liberation from fear and help in understanding how to balance everyday life and grow beyond the limits set by fear. Quiet courage and confidence to respond in appropriate ways.

Mustard

Imbalance – For those who suffer fluctuating cycles of depression, usually without apparent cause. This remedy is also useful for PMS and SAD.

Outcome – Helps gain inner serenity, the ability to transmute melancholia into joy and peace.

Oak

Imbalance – For those who struggle on, never giving up, driving themselves relentlessly.

They can be obstinate and unless they rest will exhaust themselves and break down.

Outcome – Provides balanced strength and the ability to accept personal limits and therefore knowing when to surrender.

Olive

Imbalance – For those suffering from exhaustion, physical and mental tiredness after some effort or struggle, such as childbirth or physical illness or prolonged stress.

Outcome – Helps restore vitality by aiding relaxation, and provides a more balanced outlook on life.

Pine

Imbalance – For those who blame themselves for the wrong doing of others, who carry undue guilt and self reproach.

Outcome – Helps us to understand that “responsibly” is the ability to respond. If we respond honestly and freely there is no need for blame and we can move on.

Red Chestnut

Imbalance – For those with fear and excessive concern for the welfare of others, always imagining the worst, extremely disturbed by reports of war, famine or other disasters.

Outcome – Encourages calm and rationality.

Rock Rose

Imbalance – For those who experience feelings of helplessness, terror and blind panic.

Outcome – Provides courage and inner stability when facing great challenges.

Rock Water

Imbalance – For those who are narrow minded and very strict with themselves to the point of self denial. They are perfectionists with exaggerated ideals.

Outcome – Encourages flexibility in reaching

ing goals, helps stay in touch with the emotional aspects of the self. Being able to relax and have fun.

Scleranthus

Imbalance – For those who are unable to decide, who are confused, hesitant, wavering between two possibilities. May suffer mood swings, lacks concentration,

Outcome – Brings harmony, stability and balance, allowing us to act decisively.

Star of Bethlehem

Imbalance – For those suffering from shock and its physical and emotional effects.

Outcome – Neutralizes the effects of shock, so that the body and mind can again find equilibrium and comfort.

Sweet Chestnut

Imbalance – For those suffering anguish so great that it seems unbearable.

Outcome – Helps bring out hidden reserves, opens boundaries and expands limits. Provides hope and strength to grow

Vervain

Imbalance – For those who are strong willed and rarely change their views. They will be self-driven and overworked resulting in strain and stress related illnesses.

Outcome – Brings calm and space for reflection. It relieves stress and helps bring the personal will into harmony with the world.

Vine

Imbalance – For those with a domineering and inflexible personality who forces their will upon others, a striving for power, ruthlessly ambitious and lacking sympathy for others.

Outcome – Brings tolerance for the individuality of others. Provides the ability to guide rather than dominate.

Walnut

Imbalance – For those who have great difficulty in adjusting to changes of any nature, including the milestones of life.

Outcome – Provides the courage to follow

their own path and destiny, the ability to move with the tides of change.

Water Violet

Imbalance – For those who are reserved and self contained. This can be seen as aloofness and pride. They become isolated but they feel special in their isolation which can distort their sense of belonging and self-worth.

Outcome – Gives the confidence to share the strengths and weaknesses, the up and downs. Allows acknowledgement of the inner self.

White Chestnut

Imbalance – For those who suffer from constant mental chatter, persistent thoughts and worries.

Outcome – Helps to switch off unwanted thoughts so that it is possible to find peace and mental clarity.

Wild Oat

Imbalance – For those who are uncertain and frustrated in their current activities. Who want to do something meaningful with their lives but are unable to find the right direction so drift aimlessly.

Outcome – Helps us listen to our calling, find our true vocation and gives strength of character to act on this.

Wild Rose

Imbalance – For those who have become resigned to all that happens, for the fatalist. Passively gliding through life without motivation or expectation.

Outcome – Provides a feeling of revitalisation, a renewed interest in life.

Willow

Imbalance – For those who are bitter and resentful, constantly dwelling on the unfairness of life. They will be grumpy and irritable.

Outcome – Helps us to see that we create our own reality. It encourages a more positive and mature attitude.

The New Life

On Wiccan Initiation

'From Me all things proceed....' [The Charge of the Goddess.]

The following article was written for the benefit of new initiates of a Gardnerian-Alexandrian coven. I hope that it will be of interest, and of use, to others interested in Wicca. *Gwydion*.

To initiate is to commence; and so it is with Wiccan initiation. It is the start of a person's membership of the priesthood of the Old Religion.

The Wiccan Old Religion is, of course, not so old in its form, but it is perhaps one of the oldest in concept; certainly, since it is the religion of the Great Mother, in personally-applicable anthropomorphic terms, there can be no older: we come from the Great Mother, and to Her now return to live in Her way.

The title given to the newly initiated Wiccan is 'witch and neophyte priest/ess'. By 'witch' we of course mean 'Wiccan' and all which that entails; by 'priest/ess' we mean just that – a person who will deal directly with the Goddess and Her son and lover, the Horned One. At this stage, the initiate is a neophyte (the word is Greek, and means 'newly planted'); there is much to learn, even for those who have done a great deal of reading prior to initiation. But, even so, a neophyte will quite quickly grasp matters which are not normally considered by the non-initiate. Accordingly, the neophyte will find that they are, perhaps more swiftly than they would have imagined, in a position of contributing far more to life than hitherto, whether this be in their work or simply as they go about their ordinary lives.

It is all growth; but growth sometimes necessitates the pruning of dead wood. Often too, then, the initiate will find that aspects of their previous way of life change; this may be sudden or it may occur gradually. But there is no doubt that every initiate of some years' standing who glances back to the months following initiation will find something that has been discarded by the Goddess on their behalf. This does not always occasion suffering; but when it does, it is wise to recall the words of the initiation rite, 'to suffer is to learn', and that there is no occasion from which a lesson or experience resulting in actual spiritual growth cannot be had.

Learning forms, then, the major part of the first degree. Initially, there is the copying out of the Book of Shadows; even if, for ritual purposes, this may later be typed and printed, it is well to preserve the tradition of hand-writing, for in this we can pay attention to the work, and begin to learn the overall pattern of Wicca. If this task is treated as an active meditation, the initiate will be well rewarded.

The Book of Shadows is, in effect, a spiritual working manual – the skeleton upon which the flesh of our practise and faith is to be built. It would be very odd indeed if the initiate found that no questions arose, and it is often the case that questions stream forth in the early stages of initiation. This is proper – it allows us to learn, teaches us (over a period) to phrase our questions well if we would have a useable answer, and teaches us a measure of humility in spiritual matters. But it should be borne in mind that, excepting in matters of fact, the answers provided by the initiator are derived from experience; it is for each person to test these ideas; and, so long as no factually correct principle is breached or discarded, to develop their own ideas.

In terms of more general practical work, the new initiate should cultivate the following:

- daily invocations/prayers
- a spiritual/magickal diary
- meditation and contemplation

Of these, the latter is often perceived as being the most difficult; yet each has its challenges.

Daily invocations and prayers put one in the habit of regarding the Goddess as the focus of life. This is beneficial in ways that are, or soon will become, apparent. Maintaining a spiritual diary is a good starting point for development. Honesty must, from the first, be rigorously maintained; if you fear that another may read it, then learn to use a runic or other magical script, rather than abandoning the attempt. As for meditation and contemplation, your initiator will guide you towards the practice(s) most appropriate for you.

In traditional magick, there are four principles: to Know, to Will, to Dare, and to Keep Silent. Without knowledge, true Will cannot be attained; without Will, no individual may have the courage to push beyond the reaches of the illusion of consensus reality; and without Daring, no one can reach the stage where silence, rather than conversation, best expresses the truth of things. These are long-term goals; but it is well to keep them in mind, for upon each step rests the next. Constructing a firm foundation of learning will enable knowledge. It is this task that the neophyte is now urged to perform to the best of their ability.

Gwydion Neagaton Zehuti

High Priest, CORAM.

Traditional full Moon Names

By Sam

Long before there were clocks and calendars people looked to the skies in order to tell not only the time, but also to know which month it was. Mankind depended on the sun, moon and stars as markers for the time, season and year.

Many cultures named the full moon itself as a marker and events likely to occur would become the name of the full moon of that month. Because of this, word of mouth would teach the coming generations what they needed to know in order to survive and prosper.

This month's full moon is the Harvest Moon (also known as the corn moon, barley moon, grain moon, fruit moon and wine moon) and in September grains and other crops are harvested and kept for the coming winter months. Plan a ritual of thanksgiving for all that the God and Goddess have given you.

The term 'Harvest Moon' is applied to September's full moon because it is said that in ancient times when harvesting was done by hand, and as the days grew shorter, farmers were able to work in to the night in the brightness of the Goddess's light.

The Harvest Moon is no ordinary moon though - it behaves in a special way. Throughout the year the moon generally rises about 50 minutes later each day, but near the Autumn Equinox the day-to-day difference is only 30 minutes.

Paganism Twenty Years on

A personal reflection.... By Luxlibris

I was born in 1967, the year that saw changes in the law that meant that women who had abortions no longer ran the risk of going to prison, gay sex was decriminalised and the voting age fell from 21 to 18.

One of my earliest memories is from the age of eight, when I asked my dear departed granny for a copy of a witch's spell book for Christmas. She didn't oblige me, but there began an interest, and sometimes a fascination, which has endured in a greater or lesser way over the course of almost three decades of my life. This article aims to capture some of the many changes which have occurred in the "pagan movement" over the course of the last twenty years, from the time when I first had some involvement, to now, when I have made something of a return.

The first thing that is striking is the way we use words. In the early 1980s I can't remember anyone using the word "eclectic" to reflect their interests or practice. Today almost everyone I meet seems to use it, with greater or lesser tones of apology in their voice. If someone described themselves as "Wiccan" you knew that it meant that they followed a tradition of witchcraft derived and reasonably close to the teachings of Gerald Gardner, the Sanders or the Farrars. Today if someone describes themselves thus it could still mean that they are a follower of one of the founders, but it could also mean that they see themselves as a Buffy figure, they have read a book by Silver Ravenwolf, or they are a worshiper of the Sacred Potato of County Mayo.

The word "pagan" itself has changed. In the 80s many people involved in the movement would have referred to themselves as "neo-pagan", and would generally have seen themselves as having some religious-type faith, loosely based around nature worship, or a celebration of the seasons. The neo-pagans contrasted somewhat with the ritual magicians: those who used the Kabbalah, ritual magic, and post-

Golden Dawn magical systems. The modern day eclecticism means that this is no longer the case and today's witch can scurry from her circle, and rush off to a lodge meeting of "The Sacred Order of the Pink Garter" and from there pop over to the local stone circle to join her Druid friends for a solstice celebration. Today the name "pagan" is used by many people with a broad belief that "there is something else out there" more than we can perceive.

And what about witches? In the 80s I mostly thought of witches as practising in covens, although some authors such as Doreen Valiente had recognised the growing interest and had started to write material for solitary practitioners, most of the literature available described witchcraft as a religion which involved magic and was practised by groups. Today a whole range of different types of witchery have been created over the course of the last two decades. We now have hedgewitches, kitchenwitches, and we're surely soon to have bedroomwitches (interested applicants please apply to me for details of the arduous initiation process!), and perhaps most people who describe themselves as "witch" today would "do their stuff" whatever that may be, alone.

Raymond Buckland created Saex Wicca in 1974 and since then elements of the original Wiccan system have been grafted onto traditions as diverse as Irish fairy lore, north American Indian beliefs and aboriginal faith. Whilst Wicca originally had its roots in the UK and loosely Celtic myth and folklore, we now have established methods of taking beliefs from any culture, either real or imagined (how long before we have a "H P Lovecraft Wicca", or a "Lord of the Rings Wicca"?) and sticking them into a pattern to create a wholly new system.

What does all this diversity mean? I think it means three things. The first is that because what comes under the pagan umbrella is so much broader than it was, many more people will find shelter under it – and as one of my contentions is that, despite often being solitaires when it comes to religious or magical

practice – pagans are at heart sociable souls, this is a good thing. The second is that there are many more systems to choose from and work with and this gives interested people more choice. The third is that the very fact that there is so much choice: so many systems, so many books to read, so many choices (tarot or runes? Which deck? Make my own runes or buy off the shelf? Crystal healing or aromatherapy? Etc, etc), means that it's possible to have a passing interest in dozens of different aspects of the movement and not really practice anything at all.

One of the consequences of the diversity and the fact that so many people now identify as pagans, is that we have official recognition of sorts. This was very different from the case in the 1980s, when describing yourself as a pagan would be greeted by a mixture of suspicion, hostility, incomprehension and sometimes a glimmer of interest. Wicca is recognised as a faith by the US military, there are registered "Wiccan Churches" there, the BBC website lists paganism as one of the main faiths of Britain, and in December 2003, new human rights legislation means that we can "come out" as pagans without fear of persecution in the workplace. The world is a changing!

The whole concept of belief has changed dramatically as well. In the 80s I remember reading books which were fairly dogmatic. They said things like "this is what witches believe...". Today, whilst there are still books like that, most people expect to construct their own path. Our natural eclecticism means that we will take from the old dogmatic style books, but we will ignore the parts which don't fit with those beliefs which we regard as more important, and we will graft on other things which work for us. We have reached a point in history where we can choose our beliefs according to how beautiful or appealing we find them, rather than having to either believe what our parents have told us to believe, or to blindly follow the teachings of a single book. We have more control over our destiny, but we also have the greater burden of seeking our path.

Another big change over the last twenty years is that pagans are now legitimate fodder for academic study: we have conferences held

about us and our diverse beliefs at major British universities and there are scholarly tomes dedicated to us. Adler has written at length about witchcraft in the US and Luhrmann about witchcraft in the UK. One of the consequences of this has been painful for the movement: that is the debunking of our invented history. In the early 80s, some scholars and most witches would have said that Wicca was the survival of pre-Christian faith which was primarily based on the worship of a Mother Goddess, that adherents were burnt to death during the 16th and 17th centuries and that Gerald Gardner had been initiated into a coven after the second world war and had brought the existence of the ancient cult of witchcraft into the open after centuries of oppression.

Whilst some academic pagans (notable Vivienne Crowley) still adhere to this mythical history, mainstream scholarship has comprehensively debunked it. Amongst mainstream pagan authors, many still cling to the mythic history, although Starhawk, one of the developers of witchcraft in the US, whilst originally believing the mythic history when she wrote her first book in 1979, had grudgingly conceded it was myth when she wrote in 1999. Hutton's masterly work has revealed pretty much all of the "secret history of witchcraft" as without foundation. What is interesting about the last twenty years is that whereas in the 1980s people needed to believe that they were taking part in an ancient faith, today perhaps because witchcraft and the broader pagan movement is in such a state of flux, people are happy in their knowledge that their beliefs are as old as the last book they read.

My final observation is that there is now something which we can call a "Pagan community". My experience of contact with other seekers in the 80s was mainly by correspondence. At the tender age of 16, after spending about four or so years reading about Kabbalah and ritual magic and a spot of witchcraft, I approached an "esoteric school", and after I proved myself reasonably sane, well-read and genuinely interested (and getting signed permission from my dear mother to say that she approved of my studying with the school), I began a correspondence course in magic. It was exciting and exhilarating to

actually share thoughts with people with the same interests (and a special privilege to do so with a very eminent author on the Western Magical Tradition who also suffused her letters with hearty commonsense!). But almost everything I did, was done alone. And now we have the internet..... We can log onto the net and within a few minutes we can chat with someone on the other side of the world about our pagan beliefs. We can look up the venue for our nearest meeting and email the organiser to ask if we are welcome. We can complete an online training course and even be "initiated" into a coven by email. Most major towns and cities have open moots for interested people to go and perhaps meet people with similar interests – as well as very different ones. We now have a pagan community.

In conclusion, there are many things which have changed about "paganism" over the last two decades and there are many things which will continue changing over the next two decades. I wonder that they may be.....?

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Ask Obsidiana

Hi all,
Well iv'e been sat thinking about a few topics this article and felt I needed to make use of my precious space to give you some advice that you can really use.

With that in mind I tried to think of a common problem that lots of people face at some point in their lives. And what is it that most of our thoughts and obsessions turn to? MONEY or more to the point the worry and strain when there isn't enough to go round.

Its a common fact that all of us at some point in life will suffer a distinct change in fortune or commitments will simply get on top of us. The good news is that you really don't have to suffer endlessly if things do change dramatically even though it is one of life's biggest strains next to divorce. So what are the facts - well the facts are that one in four people are over burdened by debt. The average amount of credit card debt alone in the U.K. is 2000.00.

As a witch, the advice I can give is all related to shiny pennies and burning green candles etc. etc. but if you want some tangible advice on debt read the following tips.

Are you being realistic about your debts?

If your not sure how much debt you are in or just cant face thinking about it then a tangible way of working out exactly what problems you have is to draw up a financial statement. Work out how much is coming in, how much you need for essential bills and how much you are left with. If your monthly debt repayments work out to more than what you have left, now is the time to seek outside help.

Is the interest crippling you?

Have you thought about ringing one of your credit card companies to see if you can transfer a balance? It often means paying no or little interest for a period of six months or so which may be all you need to start reducing some of the balances

Seek outside help if necessary

If you are in a hole and sinking fast then there is free advice and help available via the Citizens Advice bureau and The Consumer Credit Counselling Service (numbers available via phone book and the net). They can often help to renegotiate payments to your creditors meaning you are able to resolve the problem. It will take longer to pay back of course but it also means that interest and charges are often frozen

FAQS

What will happen if I don't pay?

There is a well known phrase by Socrates which goes something like "I was telling myself all kinds of awful things, and the trouble is, I believe me!"

Often we worry so much much about debts piling up that we can often go through a transition similar to grieving. We feel shock and numbness and then go through a phase of trying to ignore the debt hoping it will go away. This can often trigger depressive feelings and it is small wonder we avoid creditors.

The fact is if you don't pay the charges will mount up, the debt will be sold to an agency who will usually make arrangements to stop interest and accept a reduced payment - so isn't it better to make similar arrangements with the credit company first?

At worst the debt will be sent to a small claims court (dependant on amounts) and the judge will ask you how much you can afford. If this offer is realistic the judge will accept it. If it isn't a county court judge-

ment will be issued and yes you'll have bad credit and in the worse case they can send the bailiffs in, however with national debt spiralling out of control the government is having to look at ways to insist credit companies don't allow it to get out of hand.

Will I lose my house?

Highly unlikely unless one of your creditors makes you bankrupt, but there has to be a substantial debt owed for this to happen and if you prove you cannot pay from the start, creditors will normally accept reasonable offers.

Will I be Black Listed?

There is no such thing , yes your credit rating will be damaged but there are now companies who specialise in lending to people who have had problems in the past and it is possible to rebuild your credit rating over a period of a couple of years

So the morale here folks? Don't suffer and worry in silence - get yourself some help now before things get out of hand and you will be able to find the solution very quickly. Failing that here's my favourite money spell.....

Take a green candle and carve into the body of the candle using your athame "my exact need is.....(enter amount of money required) and burn under a waxing moon (fresh beginnings) at the same time infuse fresh mint leaves into a tea and drop in five shiny pennies.Drink the infusion State intent and also why you deserve to be freed from your debts. On completion lay the five pennies in your porch and leave them there. A word of warning though you will also need to sacrifice your spending habits for this to work! There is no point wishing for help from the problem if you continue to whittle money away after the help has arrived.

Good Luck and BB to you all xxxxxxxx

London Yule Party

Sunday 7th December 2003
7pm - Late

Wicked Night Club, Tooley Street, SE1
(Under London Bridge)

Tickets: £15 / £10 for Full Members

After the fantastic success of our Lammas Ball in London and the Samhuinn Ball in Manchester, we're doing it again!

We have two rooms in a fantastic huge nightclub just two minutes walk from London Bridge mainline and underground stations. One room will feature a live band and a DJ, the other will be for socialising and the buffet! We'll have a number of available too, including Indian head massages and tarot readings.

There's no strict dress code but we'd love to see you in your best Witchy or Gothic gear!

Ordering Tickets

You can order tickets by cheque - please make it payable to "WiccaUK". Write your name and address on the back, plus the number of tickets you want (mention if any are Full Members rate) and post this to:

Yule Party, BM WiccaUK, LONDON, W1N 3XX

We also accept payments by PayPal and NoChex. We'll have a shopping card added here shortly, but until then, you can pay to the account "casp@wiccauk.com".

Tickets can also be bought from,
Treadwells, 34 Tavistock Street, Covent Garden, London
New Aeon Books, 95 Oldham Street, Manchester