

# The Wichtower

The WiccaUK Magazine

Issue 9 - Ostara 2004

£2

Review of "Progressive Witchcraft"  
by Janet Farrar and Gavin Bone

Sepher Yetzirah

Emerging from the Underworld:  
The Two-Spirit Way

Events guide & Pagan News

[www.wiccauk.com](http://www.wiccauk.com)



# Contents

The Witchtower  
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Cover Art - 'Isis'	1
Contact Information	2
Editorial	3
WiccaUK Roundup	3
Pagan News	4
Cover Artist	5
Sepher Yetzirah	6
Letters to the Editor	11
Emerging from the Underworld	12
A Newbie's Opinion	15
Ostara	16
Requiem	17
Moot Information	18
Book Review - The Old Stones of Elmet	19
Book Review - Progressive Witchcraft	20
Midsummer Masquerade	24

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All contributions are welcome - feature articles, short columns, advice sections, letters to the editor, events listings etc. Please include an SAE if you wish to have anything returned.

Issues are released every six weeks. At present, our deadline is 3 weeks before release date, which is 3 weeks after the previous issue - this deadline may be reduced in the future as the magazine expands, please submit contributions as far ahead of the deadline as possible.

Submission /Release Dates for 2004:  
Ostara (9)  
29th February/21st March

Beltaine (10)  
11th April/2 May

Midsummer (11)  
23rd May/13th June

Lammas (12)  
4th July/25th July

Mabon (13)  
15th August/5th September

Samhain (14)  
26th September/17th October

Yule (15)  
7th November/28th November

For advertising, please contact us or see  
<http://witchtower.wiccauk.com>

# Editorial

In April 2002 several people met in a pub in central London which signified the relaunch of WiccaUK as an organisation. It branded itself as 'Networking for Wiccans in the UK' and it aimed to bring people from all different backgrounds and faiths together via its online forums. Soon after meetings started taking place monthly in London and then around the rest of the UK. Over the past year WiccaUK has expanded further holding its first Ball back in August 2003 in London as well as the launch of its online e-zine 'The Witchtower'. In the future it is hoped that WiccaUK shall blossom further with the introduction of conferences and pagan markets.

The Witchtower started as an online e-zine back in April 2003 where it was decided that a magazine was needed to provide members and non-mebers alike a central place where they could share their thoughts, art and creative writing. Almost a year on and the magazine still holds true to this where we have many submissions on a whole variety of subjects by a whole range of different writers.

As well as the transformation of the magazine from online to paper form it has been revamped from the inside out too.

In this issue of the Witchtower the Sepher Yetzirah is explained very well by Marysia and Andy Cairns talks about homosexuality in paganism. As a response to Steve Wilsons article on Archaic Witchcraft last issue Fred Lamond wrote to The Witchtower debating some of the points raised by Steve. On top of this we have other articles from Vodex, Sam and Hedgewytch.

Our regular sections continue with Book reviews including 'Progressive Witchcraft' by Janet Farrar and Gavin Bone reviewed by Synesis as well as Pagan News and WiccaUK Moot information.

Welcome all to The Witchtower,

Marcus - sparks@wiccauk.com

# WiccaUK Roundup

January and February have proved to be incredibly popular months on site - at the end of February we've now reached 7,681 individual threads, 70,864 posts, and our member count is approaching 2,700! This is a fabulous achievement, especially when you consider that some 10% of members log in every day which is a pretty good statistic. The chat room is always buzzing too, and we have a new Online Events team (Sefirosu and Midnight) who'll be looking into arranging more online talks and other activities for members to get involved in.

The January moot in London was our biggest yet, with over 40 people showing up throughout the day. We're now privately booking a room in a pub rather than asking random strangers if they're with us which helped a lot! We're also proud to say we raised £70 for the Nine Ladies protest camp by raffling off a number of things including a copy of the Anthology, some magazines and some etchings donated by Shadowolf. Added to the £30 raised at our Manchester moot, thats £100 raised for the protest camp - well done to all involved!

Membership Packs for full members will be available very soon - probably around the time this magazine is issued, so keep an eye out for them! They'll be sent out along with your personal membership card which can be used at various events to get discounts etc - watch out for full members newsletters throughout the year with details on where and when it can be used. Pin Badges too will be out very soon! Yes, over a year of waiting, several companies screwing us around but now they're almost here. All Full Members will get one, as will everyone who sent in an order form last year. These will only be available as part of Full Membership subscriptions in future, and will be a great way to identify other Wukies at pagan events!

Casparian - casp@wiccauk.com

## Pagan News

### UK Amongst most Secular countries

A survey of people's religious beliefs in 10 countries suggests the UK is among the most secular nations in the world.

Ten thousand people were questioned in the poll by research company ICM for the BBC programme What The World Thinks Of God.

More than a quarter of Britons thought the world would be more peaceful with nobody believing in God, but very few people in other countries agreed.

The survey found the highest levels of belief in some of the world's poorer countries, but also in the world's richest, America.

The countries polled were the US, UK, Israel, India, South Korea, Indonesia, Nigeria, Russia, Mexico and Lebanon. The interviews were carried out in January 2004.

### Tina Turner to play Goddess Kali

Singer Tina Turner has been signed to play an Indian goddess in a mystic Hollywood movie directed by Ismail Merchant.

Turner, 63, a convert to Buddhism, has spent two weeks touring India "on a cultural recce" to familiarise herself with Indian culture ahead of filming for The Goddess.

She told reporters in Bombay she had been chosen for the movie - about the power of women - "because of my shakti (power) within. I'm special in that I've had a long run and I'm still here".

Turner, who is based in Zurich, grew up on a farm in Nut Bush, Tennessee, in the late 1940s. She once said she would perform until she turned 90.

### New Moon Home Party Service

New Moon Occult Shop, one of the Uks largest mail order suppliers of occult and ritual items have recently launched a Home Party service.

Judith Lewis will journey up to two hours from their base in Didcot to supply your theme party with free tarot and tea leaf readings at the Divination party, free incense samples at the Sticks, Wicks and Scents party, free spells at the Spellcrafting party, free crystal information at the Jewellery party and much more with the Gothic party, Pagan Stuff party, and the Here Be Dragons! Party.

Those living further than 2 hours travelling distance can be supplied with catalogues.

For more details, contact Judith through <http://www.newmoon.uk.com> or call 01235 819 744.



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E-mail [info@thewitcheshat.co.uk](mailto:info@thewitcheshat.co.uk).

## Cover Artwork

### 'Isis'

By Willow Arlenea

"Emerging from the ancient mysteries of Egypt the goddess Isis dances her magical powers. Ascending and descending flows of Kundalini serpent energy pulse through her body. Her feet flow over the earth while her spirit soars into the eye of Horus."

Based on her fascination with art, dance, nature, mysticism and psychology, the paintings of Willow Arlenea reflect an intensity, spirituality and love of indigenous cultures combined with brilliant tones and fluidity of movement.

Willow's paintings are as colorful and eclectic as her life journey. The fluidity and multidimensionality apparent in her work transports the viewer into more subtle realms of experience. Geometric patterns, flows of energy, luminescence, archetypal images and ethnic designs are combined to convey the transformational journey we all share.

Between earning a B.F.A. from Boise State University and a master's degree in Transpersonal Psychology from Naropa Institute, Willow's carer path took many twists and turns, from teaching in the public school system to watercolor painting to designing ethnic dance costumes to creating fiber wall hangings, wearable art clothing, masks and colorful collage jewelry, until her artistic exploration culminated with this stunning series of vibrant acrylic paintings with collage.

Using a dramatic palette of vivid crimson, deep amethyst, bold ruby, ultramarine blue and glittering gold, Willow successfully weaves together the influence of craft, sacred energies of nature and archetypal symbolism. When she is not in her studio painting, Willow continues to explore various healing and transformational methods.

More information about Willow and her art can be found at <http://www.designsbywillow.com>

## New Aeon Books

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# ספר ה יצירה

## Sepher Yetzirah The Book of Formation by Marysia

The Sepher Yetzirah, while not a true Qabalistic text, is extremely important to Qabalah. The first Qabalistic texts were written in the 12-13th centuries (eg The Zohar and Bahir), the Sepher Yetzirah is much older. It is said that the Sepher Yetzirah was written by Abraham, the first Jew. It is certainly likely that it was compiled between 100-600AD from the oral tradition of the Hebrew mystics. It was often stated that the text could be used to bring life to a golem, a creature made of earth, much as YHVH made Adam from the earth.

The question many of you may be asking at this point is why should you care? The western occult world has a long tradition of Qabalistic research, with familiar names such as Eliphas Levi and Aleister Crowley being very interested in Qabalah and the related study of Gematria (the numerical meaning of words). For instance the twenty-two major trumps of the tarot have been associated with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the Tree of Life. The traditions from which Wicca developed, such as the Golden Dawn and OTO, had strong Qabalistic influences in their philosophies and the system of correspondences we use to build spells is also related to the correspondance system of the Sepher Yetzirah. The Sepher Yetzirah describes the creation of the Universe via the 10 Sephiroth (emanations) and 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet which make up the Tree of Life. The path of creation down the Tree of Life is often known as the lightening flash, by travelling back up the Tree of Life we can reunite ourself with the divine.

Six versions of the Hebrew text were collected and printed in 1680. The oldest known version of the text is that by Egyptian born Saadia ben Joseph, written in 932AD. Despite its age this is one of the lesser used versions of the text, the version of this I have was translated into French in 1891 by M. Lambert and then into English in 1985. This is the longest text and appears very different from the other

versions on the surface. However rearranging the verses shows that most of the material is the same, just reordered and repeated. Saadia also translated the Bible from Hebrew into Arabic. Commonly used in occult circles is the Long version as translated by Wm. Wynn Westcott in 1887. This is the version available on <http://www.sacred-texts.com/>. The version most popular among Jewish scholars is the Gra version as translated by Aryeh Kaplan. A fourth version is the Short version by Jewish scholar G. Scholem. The different versions of the book vary from 1300 to 2500 words in up to eight chapters.

**Chapter One** – the first chapter is 12 verses in the Long version, 14 in the Gra and 4 in the Saadia. In all versions the first section is virtually identical.

In/With thirty-two mystical/wonderous/mysterious Paths of Wisdom (Chokmah) engraved/did Yah, Jehovah Tzabaoth (Lord of Hosts), Elohi (God/Gods) of Israel, Elohim ChIIM (Living God), King of AyVLM (world/forever/universe), El Shaddai (Almighty God), RChVM (merciful/compassionate) and vChNVN (gracious), DM (blood) vNSHe (exalted), ShvKN (dwelling in) AyD (eternity), QDVSh (apart/holy) ShMv (name), MRvM (high/in heaven) vQDVSh (and apart/holy), HVE (he/she/it) vBRE (created) his AyVLMV (world/universe) in three sepharim (books) - bSPR (text/writing), vSPR (number), vSPVR (words/communication). Ten Sefirot of nothingness and 22 foundation letters: three mothers, seven doubles and twelve simples.

In most versions the first chapter tells of the covenant made with Abraham (circumcision sealing it) and elaborates on the ten Sephiroth. The ten Sephiroth are reckoned similarly in chapter four of the Saadia version. Sephirah means emanation.

Ten Sephiroth ... without end (SVP).  
Unfathomable/mysterious depth/abyss

(AyMQ) of beginning (RayShITh), depth of end (AChRITh), depth of good (TVB), depth of evil (RAY), depth of height (RVM), depth of beneath (ThChTh), depth of east (MZRCh), depth of west (MAYRB), depth of north (TzPVN), depth of south (DRVm).

One: Spirit/breath of the living God (RVCh ALHIM ChIIM).  
Blessed (BRVK) and more than blessed the name of the living God (AL ChI) of the world/universe/forever (AyVLMIM). The voice (QVL) of breath/spirit (vRVCh) and words/speech (vDBVR), this is the holy breath/spirit (RVCh hQVDSh).

Ruach (RVCh) means wind, breath, mind or spirit. It comes from a root word meaning to smell/odour. In occult terms it usually refers to the conscious mind. In the Saadia version the second sephirah is used to create the four directions and winds (east, west, north and south) of Heaven.

Two: Breath from breath or air from spirit (RVCh M RVCh).  
He engraved/decreed (ChQQ) and divided (vChTzB) twenty-two foundation letters of the alphabet (AVThIVTh ISVD). Three mothers (AMVTh), seven doubles, twelve simples from out of (MHN) one breath (vRVCh).

Three: Water (MIM) from breath/spirit (mRVCh).  
He engraved and divided with his thumb (BHN) the letters of the alphabet, from formless wasteland (ThHV) and void (BHV) came mud (RPSH) and clay (TITH). He engraved them like a kind of garden (AyRVGH), he hewed them like a kind of wall (ChVMH), he SIBBM (covered?) them like a kind of MAYZ-IBH.

Four: Fire from water (ASH mMIM).  
He engraved and hewed the chair (KSA) of glory/honour (KBVD). The Seraphim (ShRPM), Ophanim (AVPNIM) and the holy living angels (vChIVTh hQVDSh vMLAKI) serve (ShRTh). From/with these three he founded (YSD) his dwelling (MAYVNV) as it is said "He makes his angels/messengers (MLAKIN) of winds/spirits (RVChVTh), his servants (MSHrThIN) wrapped in fire."

The numbers five through ten are sealed (ChThM) with permutations of the letters Yod (I/Y/J), Heh (H) and Vav (V/U). These are all simple letters and represent the Father (Yod),  
Issue 9 - Ostara

the Mother (Heh) and the Son (Vav). These letters form the Tetragrammaton, the name of God, YHVH, often pronounced as Jehovah. There is some argument over what order the letters should be in, although five is always YHV. Below is the Gra version.

Five: sealed (ChThM) above and turned (vPNH) upward and sealed it with YHV.  
Six: sealed below and turned downward and sealed it with HYV.  
Seven: sealed east and turned straight ahead and sealed it with VYH.  
Eight: sealed west and turned backward and sealed it with VHY.  
Nine: sealed south and turned to the right and sealed it with YVH.  
Ten: sealed north and turned to the left and sealed it with HVY.  
In summary the ten Sephiroth are 1: Spirit, 2: Air, 3: Water, 4: Fire, 5: above, 6: below, 7: east, 8: west, 9: south and 10: north.

Some other more modern correspondances and names for the Sephiroth are shown above.

The image to the right shows the most common modern layout illustrating the Sephiroth and paths on the Tree of Life.  
The primordial Torah (the first five books of the old testament) is associated with 4: Chesed, known also as Grace and the right hand of God. The written Torah with 6: Tifareth and the oral Torah or the Torah as interpreted in this world with 10: Malkuth.

In the Tarot the four Aces are associated with 1: Kether, the four Kings/Knights with 2: Chokmah and also the Y of YHVH, the four Queens and the first H of YHVH with 3: Binah, the four Knights/Princes and the V of YHVH with 6: Tifareth, the four Pages/Princesses and the final H of YHVH with 10: Malkuth. Thus Binah is the first female principle and is also known as the womb to which we return, Binah is the Great Mother and the Celestial Queen. Malkuth is also female and often associated with the Shekinah (the presence/face of God as seen on Earth and/or the female aspect of God) or Sophia. Malkuth is said to sit upon the throne of Binah.

**Chapter Two** of the Sepher Yetzirah tells how the twenty two letters of the Hebrew alphabet were taken and organised on a sphere and paired one with the other to form something out of nothing. An interesting way to medi-

	NAME	COLOUR	PLANET	ARCHANGEL	SCENT
1	Kether (Crown)	white		Metatron	Ambergris
2	Chokmah (Wisdom)	grey	Zodiac	Ratziel	Musk
3	Binah (Understanding)	black	Saturn	Tzaphkiel	Myrrh
4	Chesed (Mercy/Grace)	blue	Jupiter	Tzadkiel	Cedar
5	Geburah (Severity)	red	Mars	Khamael	Tobacco
6	Tifareth (Beauty)	yellow	Sun	Michael	Frankincense
7	Netzach (Victory)	green	Venus	Haniel	Rose
8	Hod (Splendour)	orange	Mercury	Raphael	Storax
9	Yesod (Foundation)	purple	Moon	Gabriel	Jasmine
10	Malakuth (Kingdom)	brown	Earth	Sandalphon	Dittany

tate on the letters of the Hebrew alphabet is to pair them with each other and consider what the joint meaning might be. For instance Aleph (meaning Ox) and Bet (meaning enclosure/house) could be the primal energy enclosed in the body. AB means father in Hebrew, BA means to enter. Chapter two tells also how two great pillars were carved out of the air. If you are familiar with tarot you will know that in the High Priestess card there are two pillars, one black and one white. These are Boaz and Jachin, the two pillars in the temple of Solomon. The tree of life also has one black and one white pillar, the pillar of severity and the pillar of mercy.

נ ד ש

**Chapter Three** describes the three mother letters which are always balanced with Aleph in the middle and form the elements, the seasons and the body (NPSH). On one side is the hand (KP) of right (ZKVTh), on the other the hand of guilt (ChVBH) and the tongue (LSHVN) of decree/balance between them. Interestingly AMSh means truth and ASHM means guilty. All things in the world sprang from the three

mother letters - the three elements (air, fire and water) divided into the male/active and female/passive. Aleph is air, Mem is water and Shin is fire.



AMSh in the Universe: the heavens (ShMIM) were made (BRA) from fire (ASh), the earth (ARTz) from water (MIM), air from breath/spirit (AVIR mRVCh) values (MKRIAy) between them.  
AMSh in the Year (bShNH): heat (ChVM) made from fire (ASh), cold (QVR) made from water (MIM) and the rainy season (vRVIH) from spirit (mRVCh) values between them.

AMSh in the Body (NPSH): male (ZKR) and female (NQBH), head (RASH) and belly (BTN) and body/back (GVIH). The head was made from fire (ASh) and the belly was made from water (MIM) and the body/back from breath/spirit (RVCh) which values between them.

Nephesh (NPSH) comes from a root which means to take breath/be refreshed. In Genesis it refers to both man and animal and the best translation might be "that which breathes" but could refer to the soul and/or body. In occult terms it often refers to the animal soul or unconscious desires. It is always specified in the Sepher Yetzirah that he made the male and female NPSH at the same time.

	B	G	D	K	P	R	T
Golden Dawn	Life	Peace	Wisdom	Wealth	Beauty	Fruit	Dominion
Gra Kaplan	Wisdom	Wealth	Seed	Life	Dom	Peace	Grace
Long Wescott	Wisdom	Health	Fertility	Life	Power	Peace	Beauty
Short Scholem	Life	Peace	Wisdom	Wealth	Grace	Seed	Dominance
Saadia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

	B	G	D	K	P	R	T
Golden Dawn	Mercury	Moon	Venus	Jupiter	Mars	Sun	Saturn
Gra Kaplan	Moon	Mars	Sun	Venus	Mercury	Saturn	Jupiter
Long Wescott	Moon	Mars	Sun	Venus	Mercury	Saturn	Jupiter
Short Scholem	Saturn	Jupiter	Mars	Sun	Venus	Mercury	Moon
Saadia	Saturn	Jupiter	Mars	Sun	Venus	Mercury	Moon

	B	G	D	K	P	R	T
Golden Dawn	4th	2nd	6th	5th	3rd	1st	7th
Gra Kaplan	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	Sabbath
Long Wescott	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
Short Scholem	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Saadia	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri

	B	G	D	K	P	R	T
Golden Dawn	r eye	r ear	r nose	l eye	l ear	l nose	mouth
Gra Kaplan	r eye	r ear	r nose	l eye	l ear	l nose	mouth
Long Wescott	r eye	r ear	r nose	l eye	l ear	l nose	mouth
Short Scholem	r eye	l eye	r ear	l ear	r nose	l nose	mouth
Saadia	mouth	r eye	l eye	r nose	l nose	r ear	l ear

ב ג ד כ פ ר ת

**Chapter Four** (Ch5 in Saadia) concerns the double letters which are Bet (B/V), Gimel (G), Dalet (D), Kaf (K), Peh (P/F), Resh (R) and Tav (Th). Each has two pronunciations, soft and hard. They represents the seven planets (ShBThAI, TzDQ, MADIM, ChMH, NVGH, KVKB and LBNH), the days of the week, the openings in the head and the qualities Life, Peace, Wisdom, Wealth, Beauty/Grace, Fruitfulness/Seed and Dominion and their opposites (Death, Strife/War, Folly, Poverty, Ugliness, Sterility/Desolation, Subjugation/Slavery). However which letter corresponds to which thing is greatly contested and varies from version to version. The tables below give the correspondances for the Golden Dawn, Gra, Long, Short and Saadia versions.

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**Chapter Five** (Ch6 in Saadia) concerns the twelve simple or elemental letters which are Heh (H), Vav (V/U), Zain (Z), Cheth (Ch), Teth (T), Yod (Y/I/J), Lamed (L), Nun (N), Samech (S), Ayin (A/E/O), Tzaddi (Tz) and Qoph

(Q). They were used to create the twelve constellations, the months of the year and the organs of the body. They correspond to sight, hearing, smell, speech, taste, coition/sexual love, action/work, motion, anger, laughter/mirth, thought/imagination, and sleep and to the directions or boundaries North-east, South-east, the East above, the East below, the North above, the North below, the South-west, the North-west, the West above, the West below, the South above, and the South below. The situation is not as confused as with the double letters, the constellations are TLH (lamb), ShVR (bull), ThAVMIM (twins), SRTN (crab), ARIH (lion), BThVLH (virgin), MAZNIM (scales), AyQRB (scorpion), QShTh (archer), GDI (young male goat), DLI (water bucket) and DGIM (fish plural). The months are NISN (Mar-Apr), AIIR (Apr-May), SIVN (May-Jun), ThMVZ (Jun-Jul), AB (Jul-Aug), ALVL (Aug-Sep), ThShRI (Sep-Oct), ChShVN (Oct-Nov), KSLV (Nov-Dec), TBTh (Dec-Jan), ShBT (Jan-Feb) and ADR (Feb-Mar). The Short and Saadia versions do not specify which behaviour belongs to which letter.

H	Const.	Month	Behav.	Saadia	Short	Long and Gra
V	Aries	Nissan	speech	liver	r hand	right foot
Z	Taurus	Iyar	thought	gallbladder	l hand	right kidney
Ch	Gemini	Sivan	motion	spleen	r foot	left foot
T	Cancer	Tamuz	sight	intestine	l foot	right hand
Y	Leo	Av	hearing	r.kidney	r kidney	left kidney
L	Virgo	Elul	action	l.kidney	l kidney	left hand
N	Libra	Tishri	coition	intestine	liver gallbladder (MRH)	
S	Scorpio	Cheshvan	smell	stomach	spleen	intestine
Ay	Sagit	Kislev	sleep	r.hand	gallbladder	stomach (QBH)
Tz	Capricorn	Tevet	anger	l.hand	intestine	liver
Q	Aquarius	Shevat	taste	r.foot	stomach	gullet/QvRQBN
	Pisces	Adar	mirth	l.foot	QvRQBN	spleen

**Chapter Six** is the final chapter of all but the Saadia version which has eight chapters. Here we have the line PQDN bThLI vGLGL vLB which translates as "Watched over by Tali and the Wheel and the heart/mind/will/ understanding of man." What Tali means is much argued, it certainly seems to be a dragon or serpent of some sort and associated with the Universe as the Wheel represents the year level and the Heart represents the Nephesh or body level.

Tali in the Universe is like an enthroned king. The Wheel in the Year is like a provincial king. The Heart in the Nephesh is like a warrior king.

It also talks about the importance of opposition and balance.

This one opposite this one, made Elohim. Good (TVB) opposite evil (RAY). Evil opposite good. Good with good, evil with evil. Good tested with evil, evil tested with good. Goodness kept for the good and evilness kept for the evil.

The letters are also positioned in opposition and balance. The three Mothers are one accusing, one advocating and one deciding between them. The seven Doubles are three opposite three with one deciding between them. The twelve Simples are split into threes, "Twelve stand in war: Three love, three hate, three give life and three kill." In hierarchy, "One on three, three on seven, seven on twelve, And all are bound, one to another."

Chapter six then repeats the statement that God made a covenant with Abraham, "He made with him a covenant between the ten fingers of his hands - this is the covenant of the tongue, and between the ten toes of his feet - this is the covenant of circumcision, And He bound the 22 letters of the Torah to his tongue and He revealed to him His mystery. He drew them in water, He flamed them with fire, He agitated them with Breath, He burned them with the seven [planets], He directed them with the twelve constellations."

The Jews are the descendants of Abraham's great-grandson Judah, Abraham was born in Ur in Mesopotamia and travelled to Israel with his family, his son Isaac was born thanks to a miracle from God (Abraham's wife Sarah was previously barren). You may be familiar with his grand-son Jacob from the musical Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat, Joseph was one of the sons of Jacob. Joseph's brother Judah was the ancestor of all the Jews.

In summary the Sepher Yetzirah is a creation myth telling how Elohim made the Universe through ten sephiroth (emanations) and the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. We use its concept of correspondances to construct spells and can use the Tree of Life and the Hebrew alphabet as a meditative tool.

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<http://www.keyway.ca/htm2002/tribeistr.htm>

## Letters to the Editor

Feedback on the content of any past issue is welcomed, please address letters to: Witchtower, BM WiccaUK, London, WC1N 3XX or email to [witchtower@wiccauk.com](mailto:witchtower@wiccauk.com).

Dear Editor,

In his interesting article introducing "Archaic Witchcraft" the author disclaims any intention of denigrating other traditions after he has done just that. Among the things Archaic Witchcraft would NOT do, he lists: "Nudity, Binding, Scourging, Great Rite and other rituals for group bonding among repressed and leering generations that are SO last century."

That says more about the author's own repressions and inhibitions than about Wiccan practice. The methods he mentions are not primarily for group bonding than about ego-transcendence into an altered state of consciousness. Take ritual nudity: it involves stripping oneself of all the personae behind which we hide our true selves. Clothes create personae: be it the Businessman persona of a dark suit, white shirt and dark tie, or the Magician persona of a ritual robe.

Only in complete nudity do we show ourselves as Nature has made us, a gesture of trust in our fellow coven members which may lead to sharing with them also are deepest joys and sorrows. Incidentally for ego-transcendence and communion with Nature nudity doesn't necessarily have to be in a consecrated Wiccan circle: naked sunbathing and swimming in the summer can have the same effect.

If the members of Archaic Witchcraft want to be effective witches and spellcasters they should not rule any methods out a priori, but try out any that are not abusive of others and see whether they work.

Blessed Be!

Fred Lamond

## Errand of Madness

So.

There was this lady, rich Morgaine,  
 Ghostly beauty, lyric dame,  
 Locked my eyes up in a box,  
 And chirruped through her silky locks.  
 She took the box and left me lonely,  
 Drifted off 'cross beaches stony.  
 Though I waited on the shore,  
 I heard her footsteps nevermore.

Then I met the Queen of Gypsies,  
 Drinking gin and feeling tipsy,  
 Took my hand and led me back,  
 And gave me eyes from Ratty Black.  
 We talked a bit and danced a little,  
 Turned a jig and cast a riddle.  
 Yet among the cloth and heather,  
 She lay with some other fella.

Next to river went and spied,  
 A Princess on the other side,  
 We paced our paths as long it wended,  
 Wondering where the river ended.  
 Tired of walking, my reflection,  
 Swam away in her direction.  
 Leaving me they stayed together,  
 Cold as lace and hot like leather.

Powdered dusk drove me to moorland,  
 Where I settled dull and dormant,  
 Sipping rain to be restored,  
 'Til Scara's Mistress came with sword.  
 Armour rusted up with tears,  
 She sang a song across our years.  
 Whilst on that hill we both were humbled,  
 In the valley, shadows tumbled.

Yet, all hollow come the morning,  
 Some strange other land was forming,  
 Over rock and rusty meadow,  
 Met no wife or witch or widow.  
 In the icy wind I listened,  
 Shut my eyes to be rechristened.  
 Stronger, swifter, solitary,  
 Autumn made my territory.

By  
 Andrew Wheeler



# Emerging from the Underworld: The Two-Spirit Way by Andy Cairns

The history of pagan traditions appears, thankfully, as an area of increasing interest for modern pagans. As we have crept slowly out of our imperial heritage the omissions, mistakes and fabrications of previous historians, archaeologists and anthropologists have faced replacement with expanded and better quality information. One area alluded to in modern writings, but rarely explored, centers around the position and roles of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people in the pagan traditions of the past - positions and roles that appear curiously absent from modern pagan traditions.

It seems that a wide variety of cultures, across time and geography, held LGBT people in high regard, with a special place in the spiritual side of life. More than 155 of the North American tribes had documented cases of the berdaches, or two-spirits - while most people have one spirit at birth whose gender corresponds to that of the person's body, some people have two spirits, one of each gender. These individuals did not fit into traditional male/female gender roles but rather into a unique gender role of their own. Their characteristic behaviour included sexual relationships with the 'same' or both sexes and could also include cross-dressing. These gender and sexuality differences had their basis, people considered, in supernatural intervention - a sanction which made these integral to the two-spirits' ritual and spiritual lives. The heritage of the two-spirit tradition has remained strong into the present day, to the extent that Native American LGBT people adopted 'two-spirit' as their preferred label in 1993. Identified cases of gender variant roles have come, also, from the Ancient World. The Greco-Roman 'Galli' - priests of Cybele, the Sumerian priests of Inanna, those of Ishtar in Akkad, and the 'Hijra' of contemporary India and Pakistan. Accounts of gender variant shamans, priests and priestesses also occur across SE Asia and elsewhere throughout the world. Roscoe, in his essays, states that "all these roles share the traits of devotion to a goddess, gender transgression and homosexuality".

These stories of the histories of LGBT people find, for whatever reason, little expression in contemporary discussions of paganism, particularly outside the LGBT pagan community. This forms an experience of great loss, I feel, for queer people today, who may feel drawn to pagan paths but do not have relevant role models presented to them. Perhaps, in modern paganism, the presence of straight people has become more pronounced leaving less need for roles set aside for LGBT people. Perhaps the current PC attitude of treating all people the same has lulled us into the belief that queer people do not need different treatment. We do. We need equal but different treatment.

Davies' and Neal's book, 'Pink Therapy', suggests that the lack of visibility of LGBT people in mainstream culture, in conjunction with widespread homophobia add to the damage of heterosexism, does immense psychic damage, leaving people with severely depleted self images and levels of self esteem. Queer people need affirmations - from stories, from ourselves and from members of society at large to cultivate a sense that we don't have to live on the fringes of our own society but have important and valuable roles to play.

One of the most poignant stories I have read concerned a young native American man whose increasing sense of his true sexuality forced him to leave seminary training, where the teaching of homosexuality as sin and the separation of 'divine' from 'not divine' became incongruent with the feelings of his

own self. Returning home he soon found the medicine men of his tribe - still drawn by the need to work towards the role of holy man. As his relationship with one medicine man grew he felt safe enough to reveal to his teacher that he was gay. In reply his mentor told him simply, "Many of us called to the Great Spirit are given this gift." It seems so rare to hear non-straight sexuality described as a gift; descriptions instead tend to follow the myths, stereotypes, misinformation and misunderstanding that surrounds us in our society.

My personal feeling, although I admit I base this purely on intuition having no awareness of any research or statistics to support it, suggests an overrepresentation of queer people among modern pagan traditions, i.e. more than the 10% assumed of the general population. But some parts of modern paganism provide considerable obstacles to LGBT people's integration of their sexual and gender identities with their spiritual ones. Time and again we seem to run full force into the concept of polarities, inherited from Gerald Gardner and those who followed. To put it clearly, the understandings of polarity currently presented in most pagan writings simply do not work for queer people. Aurelon, in her article "The Love that Dares to Speak its Name" quotes Gardner's ideas of the use of polarity to raise power through ritual in a way similar to the production of electricity through positive and negative terminals. "To form this battery of wills, male and female intelligences are needed in couples." Coming from Gardner this has puzzled me as I have heard, from Adam Hillhouse's work, the euphemistic suggestion that he and Aleister Crowley -who openly revealed his bisexuality - "enjoyed each others company". Does, this present his statement in the light of a closeted gay/bisexual man, or did he simply use careful wording to distinguish the temperament and sexuality of people's "intelligences" - or spirits - from the gender of the body which they inhabit?

Later writers do not appear to have recognized this possibility. Janet and Stewart Farrar, in "A Witches' Bible" Part 2, although having had gay members of their coven, suggest the unease they would feel in an exclusively gay coven. They go on to suggest that gay coven members achieved acceptance

only if "they have been prepared and able to assume the role of their actual gender while in the Wiccan context. The discussion pretty much ends there as they feel. as "utterly heterosexual" people, unequipped to comment or explore further.

This sentiment has provided a much used reason for straight therapists and counselors to avoid working with LGBT clients in preference to referral to self help groups and LGB Switchboards. Although such groups do valuable work, members of these groups rarely have training to the level of professionals. So beyond an understanding of LGBT experiences they often find themselves genuinely unequipped to help people tackle other serious life issues which affect them. 'Pink Therapy' suggests that, as an estimated 10% of clients will likely have an LGBT orientation, professionals have a responsibility to do their own research, to explore their attitudes to sexuality - that of others and especially their own - and to research the experience of queer people in our society and the areas where this impacts on their general field of work. Not to do so seems like something of a cop-out and does a disservice to themselves and to their clients.

I feel the same should apply to those of us who take on the roles of teacher, guide or priest in pagan paths. We take on a responsibility to guide people in entering the Mystery and finding their own spiritual path. People entering a pagan path should have the opportunity to focus their attention on this work: their guides would act in an unfair way if they expected their charge to explain on top of this the many issues of LGBT life. LGBT people may have differences, but this should not preclude any open-minded straight person from developing a good understanding if they are willing to put in some work themselves. Doing so should reveal, at least, the insensitivity of expecting queer people to assume the role of their 'actual gender'. In spiritual guidance, as in therapeutic guidance, I feel we have a right to expect our teachers to prepare themselves to undertake this task, or at least to honestly let us know if they feel they cannot do so at that stage of their development.

Most people would readily agree that pagan paths, on the whole, prove extremely

accepting of the uniqueness of each individual and I would not, for a minute, accuse paganism of homophobia. But I do feel it may contain an underlying heterosexism, as does the rest of our society. This involves the conscious or unconscious assumption of heterosexuality as more acceptable than, more valuable than or superior to other sexualities. Without thinking about it we assume people's heterosexuality and build our worldviews, expectations, rituals and roles around this assumption. This causes two problems - the presence of 'out' LGBT people throws such worldviews into disarray, and for closeted queer people it creates an artificial separation which may encourage them to further conceal or deny their true nature to the detriment of us all. Three options arise from this conflict: To deny or distort our perception of what doesn't fit (e.g. gay people cannot form a battery of wills unless they put their sexuality aside), to ignore it (e.g. we don't have gay people in our group), or to readjust our outlook to better fit the new reality we now face. I believe paganism needs to take this third option.

Queer sexuality makes many people uncomfortable, and it should. Our inherent capacity to challenge the generally accepted worldview provides one of our most valuable gifts to society. Camille Paglia speaks often in support of the periodic eruption of paganism into mainstream culture, although often in terms that may offend many queer people and many pagans. She asserts in her essay 'Rebel Love: Homosexuality' that "in nature procreation is the single relentless rule. Our sexual bodies were designed for reproduction", but goes on to state that "we have not only the right but the obligation to defy nature's tyranny . . . We have absolute claim to our bodies and may do with them as we see fit. To develop and expand our sensory responses is a pagan strategy, reverent in its own way toward nature." Perhaps this illuminates the root of queer people's traditional high status in pagan roles. In standing against the norm, against what nature intended for our bodies, we set ourselves on an equal footing with Nature herself.

In a shamanic sense, we do not choose queer sexuality and spirituality but find

ourselves drawn to it. All queer people, at some stage of their development, embark on a quest of mythic proportions - a descent into the underworld of our own sexuality. There we face demons and monsters of astounding ferocity which take our identity of assumed heterosexuality and mercilessly rip it apart - a true shamanic death. Tragically, many people do not survive this, to which the suicide statistics of gay people pay testament. But those who do pull through find themselves reborn, emerging into a world radically transformed by their own new outlook. Perhaps 'coming out of the closet' should have a new name, 'emerging from the Underworld'. But in this action, standing as equals with the Universe, defiant but still reverent and harmonious, we can again take the role of the bridge between the everyday world and the spiritual realities of the Universe that the pagan priests and priestesses of the past once held.

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## A Newbie's Opinion by Vodex

When I had my kitchen ceiling replaced by two builders the other week I had the privilege of witnessing the apprentice system. Used by craftsmen (and Jedi) since the dawn of time, we have the master, who organises the job, has considerable experience and is clearly 'in charge', and the apprentice, who does the donkey work, learns from the master and is often a bit dozy. After some years of this, the master lays a fatherly hand on the apprentice's shoulder and says he has taught him everything he needs to know, and is now a master himself.

What's my point, eh? Well, this is sort-of how our various crafts are taught (although with 'initiates', more levels and the power of groupwork), and originated historically the same way. But the apprentice system has its problems - nothing is formalised, and the apprentice only knows whatever stuff he happens to pick up from the master. Not good when you want your kitchen to stay up. So these days, to learn a trade, you have schools, universities, certificates, etc.

I feel such a transition is being forced upon neopaganism due to its massive growth & modernisation - but it's not suitable. Yes, butchers, bakers and candlestick makers benefit from standardised training, but that's

for a job, not a craft. Our endeavours contain a large element of individualism and self-discovery that would not go down well in Safeway's bakery, but modern society portrays the process of learning anything as basically needing to 'go on a course'.

So on the one hand, we have courses, books, etc, from which people tend to come away knowing only a part of the infinite whole, and on the other, chinese-whisper messes largely inspired by, yes, watching too much Buffy The Vampire Slayer. I'm not sure which is worse - the latter may be Fluff City, but the former is more subtle and has the potential for deeper damage (I may just be a dozy apprentice, but even I'm aware the 'Wicca has been practised, secretly, for millennia' stuff should be taken with a generous helping of salt).

Perhaps what is really needed is not interaction with the media, but with the community - and find a master to show them how to mix a bucket of Artex.

# Treadwell's

## Curious Books and Curios

34 Tavistock Street, Covent Garden. 0207 240 8906. Mon-Sun 12-7

Books! Second-hand and rare books on magic, paganism, witchcraft, occult, history, culture, belief, comparative religion. Academic and popular titles. Comfy sofa for browsers; amazing interior decor. Knowledgeable staff. Books bought. Incenses, stones, ritual masks, candles. We also have events! Literary evenings, Wicca discussions, tarot classes, lectures. Rooms for hire. Notice board. [www.treadwells-london.com](http://www.treadwells-london.com).

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# Ostara by Sam

Also known as Eostre, Vernal Equinox and Spring Equinox. Ostara occurs at the Spring Equinox (March 20th/21st) or when the sun enters the astrological sign of Aries. This sabbat welcomes spring and is a time of balance, to be rid of that which we no longer need and to take on the new. In some mythologies this is when Persephone returns from Hades.

This sabbat is sacred to Eostre, Anglo-Saxon Goddess of spring, also known as Ostre. Sacred to her is eggs and white rabbits. All pastel colours are sacred to Eostre, but her main colour is blue! She is the Goddess of the East and of sunrise and dawn. She is the Maiden aspect of the Triple Goddess. This day marks the triumph of daylight over darkness, after Ostara, there is more day than night.

The Goddess as Maiden instructs the young God of his burgeoning powers as new life springs from the Earth. Again in the myth, fertility is recognised and celebrated and what was set in motion during Imbolc gains momentum. At this time the Maiden and the young God become innocently aware of each other. 'Their eyes meet across the dance floor', but they will not dance together until Beltane.

Ostara is a time of celebration of new life on the Earth and its preferable to do a ritual outside in the daytime. Decorate your altar with a green cloth, candles, daffodils and bowls of edible seeds. Have eggs and colouring pens and have fun decorating eggs.

## Things to do.

Colour eggs - why decorate eggs I hear you ask? Our ancestors not only used colour to symbolise what they wanted to be 'born' but also signs, runes and different geometric designs. If you want to see a very old tradition still in practice today, research on the Ukrainian art form of making a 'Pysanky'. These eggs have highly stylised decorations of geometric and other designs, and are also quite beautiful. To decorate your own eggs, here are some signs and what they mean;

O - cycle of life and rebirth

+ - Union of the God and Goddess or the

union of matter and spirit

s - Triple Goddess

o - The Earth

Eight pointed star - the sun

Wavy lines - water

£ - Money

© - Love

Smiley face - happiness.

Coincide the symbol with a colour, for example, an egg for love would have a heart on it and would be painted pink or red.

Start seeds growing indoors and decorate flowerpots.

Foods for this Sabbat include eggs (of course) and hot cross buns which have the solar wheel represented on them in the form of the cross.

## Ostara incense

Grind together 1 tsp. of benzoin, 1 tsp. of dragon's blood, 2 tsp. of sage and 1 tsp. of mint. Mix well and burn on a charcoal disc in a fireproof dish.

## Ostara ritual

Cast the circle and then call upon the God;

Great son and God who flourishes in the loving eye of the Goddess, who blooms in his power as the Earth smiles at his feet: Fill me with your wonder and desire;

Ignite me in passion and eternal optimism. As on this day I celebrate the life that pours forth in your presence.

Eat a handful of the seeds on your altar and scatter some as a libation. Lie down on the grass and feel life coursing through you; feel your body awoken to the regenerative powers around you and within your body and spirit. When you are ready release the circle and go for a walk in the countryside.

# Requiem by Hedgewytch

What is it like to lose a beloved friend? The anguish, the sorrow ... the guilt. What turn of phrase can describe the emotions which course through one like a river? How can something as simple as a word encapsulate the feeling that one has been hit by a veritable tsunami of distress. Grief. We are left gasping in its wake, fighting to regain our balance.

Words – hollow, empty, two-dimensional. Even with a language as rich as ours, grief is indescribable.

It is a little over a month now since her departure, and yet the pain is as fresh as it ever was. I hear her in the hallway, I see her out of the corner of my eye. A novelist once wrote "For echo is the soul of the voice exciting itself in hollow places." What I hear now are echoes of a life.

What remains?

How does one sum up a life – through the accomplishments? The milestones? The failures? Or through the memory of happy times? Moments that would be meaningless to others, but which make you smile. Recollections which can bring a smile to one's face, or a tear to the eye.

Precious thoughts.

I miss her beyond belief. I didn't think that it would hurt quite this much. I didn't think that it could. "It was for the best" - an easy thing to say but quite, quite empty. What reassurance is it to be told that? None. Such a phrase doesn't erase the doubt and guilt which plague me, it's not worth the breath it takes to say.

I miss her.

Unappreciated whilst she was here, I am inconsolable in her absence. Unconditional love is what she gave, and through her I learned the meaning of it. If only I had learned to give it. Now, of course, it's too late.

She was my dog. Our dog. Mine in name, my father's in nature. She adored him. My

loss is nothing compared to his. Even my mother wept – she who cares nothing for animals. Over the course of thirteen years she became an integral part of our family. The house is incomplete without her. Everyday routines have become empty, every action provokes a memory of how it used to be.

I am slowly learning to appreciate these memories, as painful as they are - although I still cannot think of her without tears welling up unbidden from some inexhaustible source. I am still angry with myself for making the decision, and part of me is angry that I waited so long – did she suffer unnecessarily? While that confusion remains I cannot put aside my bitterness and doubts, but in time I think I will. I think that I will eventually be able to look at it impartially and say "yes, that was right" – or not, as the case may be – the important thing is that I accept my decision and not blame myself. Time is allegedly a great healer – I just wish it would get a move on.

Despite my conflict of emotions, despite my desolation, I have learned one thing – that her life was precious. As is all life. The important thing is not what her life was, but that she had one at all. Considering her start in life – we rescued her from a dog's home – that might not have been the case. That she came to be with us and brought over a decade of happiness and contentment. How many people can claim to bring even an hour of peace to someone's life? That an animal could do so amazes me. Happiness is an uncommon gift – how many ever get to bestow it?

All this fuss over one small dog.

Am I a fool to grieve so over a pet? I don't think so. Anything which touches your life deserves recognition – not least a loving, faithful companion.

A friend.

Emma. 26th February 2001

[A devoted companion for 13 years, Lucky was put to sleep on 10th January 2001]

# WiccaUK Moot Information

For up to date information of all events from WiccaUK please visit <http://events.wiccauk.com>

## London

2nd Saturday of each month, 2pm-late  
New venue coming soon.  
Please visit <http://events.wiccauk.com> for up to date news on the new venue.  
Contact: [casp@wiccauk.com](mailto:casp@wiccauk.com), 0845 456 1870

## Cambridge/East Anglia

Held every over month. Time and venue varies.  
See the forums for latest details or call 0845 456 1870

## Brighton Moot

First moot coming soon!  
Venue currently being decided on the forums.  
Call 0845 456 1870 for up to date details.

## Manchester

Last Saturday of each month from 2pm  
New Aeon Books, 95 Oldham Street, Manchester  
A talk held at New Aeon for a couple of hours, followed by a visit to a nearby pub. No fees.  
Contact: [amber-k@wiccauk.com](mailto:amber-k@wiccauk.com), 07745739010.

## Scotland

Glasgow - April 10th  
Edinburgh - April 24th  
Contact [arual@wiccauk.com](mailto:arual@wiccauk.com) or call 0845 456 1870.

## Bristol

First Sunday of the month. 2pm-evening  
The Engineers Arms, St John's Lane, Bedminster  
Purely social moot. No talks. No entrance fee.  
Email: [bristol@wiccauk.com](mailto:bristol@wiccauk.com)

## Yorkshire

Leeds - First Saturday of each month.  
12.30pm-evening.  
The Hogshead, 157 - 158 Lower Briggate, Leeds. Map  
York - Third Saturday of each month.  
Contact [leeds@wiccauk.com](mailto:leeds@wiccauk.com) or call 0845 456 1870 for venue details.

## Thornborough Camp

1st - 2nd May  
A weekend camp to raise awareness and magickal protection for the Thornborough Henges which are under threat. See the forums for details of camp site and travel details.

## Thinking of Starting a moot?

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

Email [events@wiccauk.com](mailto: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. We will also list it in this magazine.

## Already Run a Moot?

If you already run a moot and wish to advertise it in here please email us at [events@wiccauk.com](mailto:events@wiccauk.com).



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# Book Review

## 'The Old Stones of Elmet' by Paul Bennett

The subtitle says 'A total guide to the archaeology, folklore & geomancy of the ritual stone sites in an old Yorkshire kingdom'. In the words of the advert 'It does exactly what it says on the tin'!

It's a revised and updated version of his earlier booklet about the circles, stones and legendary rocks of West Yorkshire, though in this new edition he's expanded the geographical scope by using the larger ancient region of Elmet. The extent of this Celtic kingdom covered an area bounded by the towns of Knaresborough in the north to Pontefract in the south, Ilkley in the west to York in the east. It's an approximate definition and the

author sneaks in Calderdale as the western extreme.

The book is well-researched, drawing on a vast array of sources, both recent and antiquarian. There is an extensive gazetteer of detailed and fascinating entries for individual sites and stones, making it easy to locate a particular place. Preceding this are a couple of thought provoking chapters discussing earth mysteries, the shamanic interpretations of folklore and the ways in which we experience sacred sites.

The only fault I can find with the book is the poor quality of the photographs. Surely the publishers would have realised that a few well-chosen, clear images would serve to enhance the text and increase sales? Still, that would push the price even higher and it's only a minor niggle.

The attraction of the volume for me lies in the way many different strands of enquiry are woven into a

coherent and holistic approach, in an attempt to capture and convey the nature of each place. It's not a dry textbook of archaeological sites, it's not a survey of alignments, it's not a chronicle of the area's history or a compendium of folklore. It's all of these and more. From the inspiring little circles of the Yorkshire moorland via the eerie outcrops of haunted gritstone, to the lost and forgotten menhirs that are now just mere memories, all are recorded and presented with Paul Bennett's engaging enthusiasm.

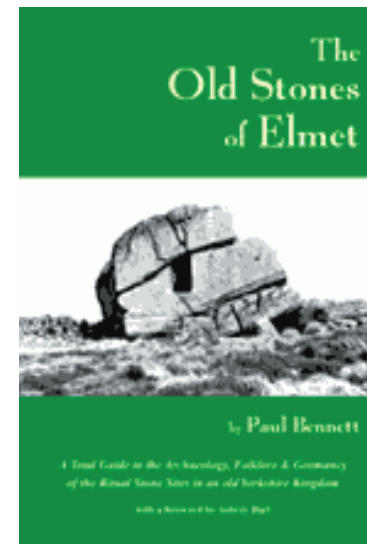
In places humorous and irreverent, the prose is obviously

the musings and ideas of a man with no precious 'reputation' to prevent him from discussing more exotic theories. Or from pondering the relevance of the sacred sites he describes to our modern-day (missing?) spirituality. It's written with a passionate appreciation of the region's megalithic heritage and a love of the northern landscape that makes me want to stick the book in my backpack and go spend time out there. Now.

Get your copy - and get your walking boots on.

Review by David Raven

The Old Stones of Elmet by Paul Bennett.  
Foreword by Aubrey Burl.  
272 pages, paperback. £13.95.  
Capall Bann Publishing 2001.  
ISBN 1861631340



# Book Review

## 'Progressive Witchcraft' by Janet Farrar & Gavin

Janet Farrar and Gavin Bone are, on the back cover of this book, referred to as the acknowledged world experts on Witchcraft. All I can say to this is that if this book is the product of the greatest minds in the field today, then modern Witchcraft is in a sorry state indeed. This book is loaded with inaccuracies, poor research and self-aggrandisement. While this is, perhaps, an accurate reflection of the Wiccan subculture at this moment in time, one would hope that a book that deems itself "progressive" and that has been billed as the greatest advance in the craft for fifty years would contain some relevant, new or accurate information. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

Farrar (who is inaccurately deemed the sole author of The Witches' Bible on the cover) and Bone open the book by acknowledging that the title of the book is rather misleading – that there is a stream of thought in Wicca that has been referred to for many years as "Progressive Witchcraft", and has been a dynamic and revivifying influence in modern pagan esotericism. Instead of choosing to clearly delineate their own ideas from those who have already used this term, they have chosen to muddy the waters by choosing a misleading title – the training program of the Progressive Witchcraft Foundation has already been published in *Magick Without Peers* by Ariadne Rainbird and David Rankine. Interestingly, Farrar and Bone claim that they only found out about this current of thought while researching this book, a statement which is highly dubious – Progressive Witchcraft was a widely known movement throughout the late 80's and 90's, particularly in Wales and Southern England. I also note they give the publication date of *Magick Without Peers* as 2002, whereas it was in fact published in 1997, ante-dating this book by 7 years. This is simply sloppy authorship.

More significantly, much of the first chapter is taken up with claims regarding "hereditary witches" – ie the existence of witchcraft traditions

handed down through families that have nothing to do with Wicca and existed long before Gardner's eventual synthesis of Wicca. Unfortunately, there is not one scrap of evidence for any form of systematic witchcraft prior to Gardner, and as much as the two authors would like to appeal to them, I'm afraid that the seriousness of the claim is such that it merits substantial evidential basis – if you want to talk about hereditary witchcraft in print, let's see some evidence.

I also note that Alex Sanders' role in the survival and growth of Wicca is substantially down-played in the early chapters of the book. I find this utterly reprehensible. Whatever one's opinion of Sanders, it is impossible to deny that it is purely through his relentless drive, mass initiations and media appearances that Wicca has survived and been made as popular as it is today. To deny that role is fundamentally dishonest, yet Farrar and Bone seem to gloss over Sanders' role very quickly indeed. It is also interesting to note, from other places in the book, that Ms Farrar evidently no longer considers the oaths she took as an initiate to be at all binding.

The first few chapters of the book are taken up by a re-statement of well-known Wiccan history. There is almost nothing here that is new, beyond a few quotations from some private correspondence. I do not see the point of these chapters, they are effectively a re-statement of well-known facts that would be more at home in a 'Wicca 101' book, and this book is expressly supposed to be 'advanced'. Frankly, the reader could find a less biased and more comprehensive history in Hutton's *Triumph of the Moon*.

I note with some interest that the authors seem to be somewhat confused over what Wicca actually is. At one point they state that Wicca and Witchcraft are the same thing, because they are ultimately derived from the same root. Very well then, one may also make the argument that 'divinity' and 'devil' mean the same thing, since they also are derived from the same root – their

argument clearly has no merit. The authors also praise the spread of non-initiatory eclectic 'Wicca' throughout the USA, praising it as forward-looking and modern. In fact, the merger of 'Wicca' with the New Age movement has led to an anaemic religion which refuses to engage with reality, utterly devoid of critical and intellectual thinking, which serves as a psychological crutch for those unable to face life without a rich fantasy world around them. While we can see why this might appeal to the authors, we can only say that this is the dilution and degradation of a genuine modern mystery tradition.

And this, of course, is the confusing point – because the authors also refer to Wicca as a mystery tradition. This is a mystery tradition based on initiatory ritual and mysteries which are shared in group ritual in accordance with tradition. How can this be done in a non-initiatory environment, whose ritual is so far removed from the original as to be virtually unrecognisable? It appears the authors are confused as to what they mean when they speak about 'Wicca'. And these are supposed to be the leaders of our community!

It is sad - but unsurprising – to note the authors' reluctance to admit to the influence of Aleister Crowley on various parts of Wicca. They attempt to reduce Crowley's influence to a "parallel" with the Wiccan Rede. Perhaps all the years living in the wilds of Ireland has added the authors' minds, but Crowley's Law of Thelema was the source of the Rede. Crowley's writings were the source for the very formula of the Great rite, the structure of the circle-casting, as well as the famous invocation drawn from his Hymn to Tyche. They also attempt to down-play the clear influence of the three-fold Thelemic grade structure on Wicca's three degrees, preferring to derive them from a Masonic context, whereas the subject matter of the initiations has virtually nothing to do with Masonry, and are thematically much closer to the three Thelemic grades. It is depressing that those who claim to be our leaders are irrationally afraid of acknowledging our heritage.

In a similar vein, their understanding of the Qabalah – which they continually denigrate – is absolutely abysmal. Notable features include Kether, the first emanation, being formed of the union of Chokmah and Binah (which is interesting, considering that Chokmah and Binah are emanated from Kether), as well as Qabalah being used as a demonstration of duotheism and polytheism. The authors imply that the sephiroth below the abyss somehow represent polytheistic ideas. This will come as a great surprise to the creators of the Qabalah, who are no doubt

rotating in their graves at a terrifying speed, as they were all monotheist Jews, and went to great lengths to stress the unity of deity. If the authors were remotely familiar with the Qabalah, they would be aware that the phrase *sephiroth belimah* clearly indicates the preceding unity of Ain Soph. One can only recommend that the authors purchase a copy of Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* and familiarise themselves with the Qabalah – and the excuse cannot be made that the westernised interpretation of the Qabalah is not the same as the Jewish one, because nowhere has it been used as justifying polytheism – as it is a system designed to unify transcendent and immanent perceptions of deity.

Throughout the book, the authors, when it comes to explaining a magical concept, resort to the psychologisation of magic – that is, portraying magic as an advanced form of psychotherapy designed to bring about a Jungian process of individuation. While the authors are welcome to form their own ideas about whether the deities are Jungian archetypes or parts of their subconscious, this employment of magic as a process of psychology is frankly absurd and out of place. Magic is not psychotherapy.

The authors decry ritual magic and the entire western tradition throughout the book, contending that Wicca needs to "return" to a "shamanic" form of magical and spiritual work. The authors whine that ritual magic is "shrouded in symbolism" – one cannot quite see what the objection is here. Magic operates by the use of living symbols, representing tangible realities. If the authors are afraid of symbolism, one can only suggest they have a long way to go. More importantly, they ignore the fact that Wicca is firmly rooted in the Western magical tradition – the tradition that extends from Iamblichus to Crowley and to us today. Wicca is, however much it participants sometimes hate to hear it, a tradition of ritual magic – there is nothing remotely shamanic about it. The use of the pentagram, the invocation of deities, the creation of sacred space, the very texts themselves ("I exorcise thee, O creature of Water...") are all part of the great Western tradition. To ignore this rich heritage, the authors isolate themselves from further sources of illumination. As they are proposing a return to ancient forms of spirituality, I think we ought to obey – and look at what we find! Iamblichus, Proclus, Plotinus, Julianus, all pagan philosophers and magicians, whose magical tradition continues to grow throughout the years with the addition of the Christianised Qabalah in the renaissance and the work of Dee and the authors of the Solomonic grimoires, culminating in the ritual magic traditions of this century. It is all rooted in the classical notions of Iamblichan theurgy – perhaps



the authors need to hit the history books.

In their section on the notion of deity in Wicca, they employ the twin notions of the Triple Goddess and Horned God, reducing all deities to this essential pattern. How is this remotely 'progressive'? Surely, in light of the fact that modern Wiccans recognise that most deities do not fit this pattern and can only be approached on their own terms instead of through the filters of Triple Goddess and Horned God, this is in fact retrogressive! This is a serious blow to the intellectual credibility of Wicca.

I note that when talking about coven working and the function of group working, and the experiences inherent therein, they have an appropriate opportunity to introduce the scarcely-addressed concept of egregore. Instead the authors opt for a psychological approach, talking about the function of the group mind and gestalt therapy. One is forced, yet again, to ask what this has to do with magic? Why do the authors fear to address concepts that are well-rooted in magical tradition, instead bringing in extraneous and unnecessary pseudo-scientific explanation (anyone remotely well-read in Jungian theory will be in for quite an interesting read in these pages!).

In their chapter on training - aside from the romantic re-writing of history to refer to the 'village witch', a concept as ahistorical and non-factual as possible - as the authors contend that Sanders added all the Qabalistic and ritual magical elements to Wicca. This is demonstrably false. While the overtly Qabalistic and angelic symbolism derives from Sanders, one might suggest that the authors examine the sigils for each grade in light of the Tree of Life. It goes without saying that the ritual structure of Wicca is derived from GD-style ritual magic.

The authors seem to suggest that the sole outcome of a ritual is a psychological feel-good factor, and this ought to be facilitated by ritual that is spontaneous. They overtly reject the idea of structured ritual, preferring to allow ritual to come from the heart. One cannot help but see this as using spontaneity as an excuse for poor ritual technique. Structured ritual leaves room for spontaneity, as anyone experienced in it will confirm - however, it also maintains clear goals

- the ritual needs to be effective beyond making the participants feel good about themselves. The key in doing this is structure, concentration and self-discipline. That is how a truly effective ritual works.

Perhaps the most unsubstantiated statement ever to fall from the pens of these authors is contained in the section on training. The authors reject the use of the Qabalah because it is 'air-based' whereas witchcraft is apparently 'earth-based'. Now, perhaps in my years of Qabalistic training I missed something out, because it seems perfectly clear to me that the Qabalah includes all four elements. Perhaps the authors mean that it is too 'intellectual' (a statement which, perhaps, says more about the authors than the Qabalah). This is just not true. The inability of the authors to render the Qabalah a living and effectual tool on their part is not a reflection on the Qabalah, which is the underpinning of modern ritual work. In fact, the Qabalah is not earth-phobic, as even a cursory reading of the works of modern Hermetic Qabalists would show. Furthermore, I reject the idea that witchcraft can simply be boiled down to an earth-based practice, which sets up a spurious

division between Wicca and its roots in the rest of the Western Tradition (which is apparently monotheistic, earth-phobic and patriarchal - one hopes that the authors will find a way to inform Samuel and Moina Mathers about this - Mathers, the founder of the Golden Dawn, was deeply interested in the Celtic deities, and Moina was a priestess of Isis. These interests were widely reflected in many members of the Order.)

The attack on Qabalah continues as the authors state that the Qabalah "mimics the cosmologies of earlier peoples", a statement utterly unfounded in reality, as a reading of Scholem and Idel will show - Qabalah is a legitimate development of Neo-Platonic ideas in a Jewish context. They excel themselves in making the utterly meaningless statement that one "cannot use it [the Qabalah] to explain the levels of other worlds or access them". I presume the authors ignore the fact that the system of the Qabalah was being used to explain and explore the "other worlds" long before they even learned to write - and that the concept of "pathworking" is explicitly a Qabalistic technique which has been acquired by the pagan community from ritual magicians and Qabalists. Ah well, who would let facts get in the way of a good argument!

In discussing the importance of the number 7, the authors suggest that there are only 7 planetary correspondences. One would hope that a book on Progressive Witchcraft would explore the new energies of planets such as Uranus, Neptune and Pluto. Furthermore, the basic level of inaccuracy in the book is illustrated by their discussion of the seven-rayed star. They call it the Star of Ishtar - this is utterly incorrect. The Star of Ishtar is always shown with eight rays, not seven. How can someone who is apparently the summit of the learning and wisdom of the craft make such an elementary mistake? This is basic factual research that would have taken less than a minute to verify - it is a sign of poor authorship and imprecision.

The authors attribute the idea that one should not "mix systems" to the old ritual magic traditions. This is demonstrably false - certainly, we maintain that incompatible systems should not be mixed, and one must be aware of the cultural context of an esoteric practice, but the entire premise of the Golden Dawn was as a synthesis of different esoteric approaches, and Fortune continued in her attempted synthesis of Theosophy with mystical Christianity. Incoherent synthesis, however, is dreadful, and modern eclecticism is frequently a case of cultural piracy and misunderstanding of foreign systems. Again, one also has to add that incorporating energy work and visualisation of the centres in magical ritual is hardly new. I would also like to highlight that the Golden Dawn-derived Middle Pillar does not proceed from Malkuth upwards, as the authors suggest, but from Kether downwards. Yet again, another simple factual error.

Perhaps the part of the book that has caused the most "excitement" is the suggestion by the authors that "Drawing Down the Moon" should involve actual possession of the priestess by the deity invoked. One really has to ask *quoi de neuf*? There is nothing remotely new about the idea, and has always been the general idea behind Drawing Down. This is all utterly basic, and hardly "groundbreaking". Something about this chapter does worry me, though - it is suggested that the priestess should always give herself over utterly and retain no memory of the experience. This is a gross simplification. The question of memory varies from priestess to priestess, indeed, from experience to experience - the same is true over the degree of consciousness the priestess retains. All one can really say to this chapter is that they have managed to state the obvious about Wicca - it is not progressive, nor is it revolutionary. All one can really congratulate the authors on is that they've finally managed to cop on to the point of Drawing Down the Moon.

The final chapter, on ritual technique is nothing new. Again, I cannot help but feel the book is being cynically marketed as an 'advanced' book when it hardly qualifies as a 101 book. What is remotely progressive or revolutionary about the invoking or banishing pentagrams of earth, or the method of calling the quarters? This chapter could only possibly be of use to someone who has never come across Wiccan magical technique before. That hardly qualifies as 'Progressive'. This is, frankly, a poor showing.

Before concluding, let's look briefly at the correspondences - which make utterly no sense. The correspondences of the Chakras to the planets and the elements doesn't make any sense in either the Western or the Indian system of attribution. Moon as the throat chakra? I believe that egregious example of incoherent meddling with the correspondences gives you an accurate idea of how utterly incoherent the tables are (and note that they do not highlight that they have reversed and generally randomised the attributions).

The other appendix, on deities, is positively painful. To pick two examples at random - Lucifer is translated as "of the moon and sun". This is incorrect. Lucifer (from "lux ferre") is the Latin equivalent of Phosphoros/Eosphoros, the morning star. This would make him, if anything, Venusian in nature. The entry on Hecate neglects to mention her important position in the theurgy of the Chaldean oracles and her association with the morning and evening star.

This book is symptomatic of what is wrong with the pagan community - from the publication of books which are nothing but re-hashes of previously stated information, to the pseudo-authority of those who have written a popular book. We cannot accept the idea that this book, filled as it is with inaccuracies and egoistic sermonising, represents the height of achievement among modern pagan witchcraft. We repudiate the notion that these authors are respected teachers - this book is worthless, from every perspective, aesthetic, intellectual and magical.

I would conclude by wishing that the pagan populace would recognise that this book has little or no value, but I don't doubt the power of an important name and the stifling pagan orthodoxy will influence opinion to such a degree that the book will be acclaimed far and wide. The Wiccan community needs to develop a sense of discrimination if it is to regain its status as a serious religious and magical movement. The first step on this road would be consigning this book to the dustbin, where it belongs.



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