



WITCH



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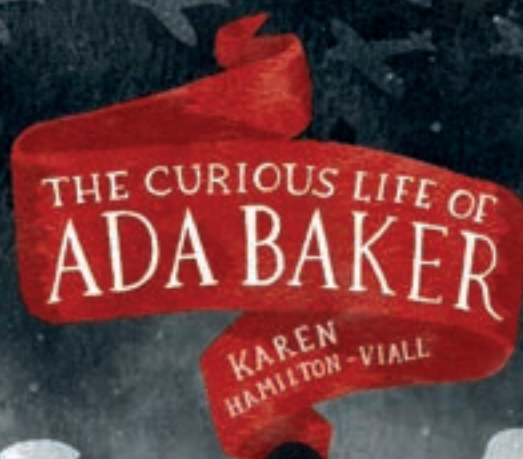


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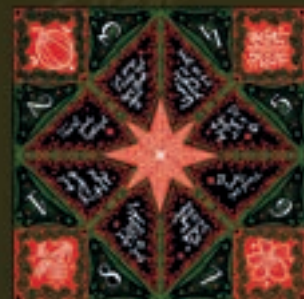
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HELLO!

MY NAME IS MAGDA AND I'M
A GRAPHIC DESIGNER,
ILLUSTRATOR AND LANDSCAPE
ARCHITECT WITCH FROM
POLAND. IN MY ART AND CRAFT
I AM INSPIRED BY NATURE,
WHEEL OF THE YEAR AND THE
SEASONS.



I LOVE GARDENING, TAKING CARE
OF MY HOUSEPLANTS, SPENDING
TIME IN NATURE AND LIVING MY
ACTIVE LIFE BY RUNNING,
HIKING IN THE MOUNTAINS, AND
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Ania Singh, illustrator from Krakow, has a diverse background in music, dance, art, and design. With a decade spent in India enriching her artistic perspective, she draws inspiration from folk stories, fairy-tales and all things magic.

Specializing in detailed digital and traditional techniques, her work blends the mystical with the whimsical.

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WITCH Magazine

Dearest Witches,

Welcome to issue 39!
Yule blessings to you and your dear ones.

I am so excited to take over as Editor of Witch Magazine. I have watched this publication grow over the years and been in awe of Bekki's ability to curate inspiring content and hold a safe space for witches from a myriad of paths and physical locations.

We have listened to our wonderful readers and are delighted to relaunch the magazine in both digital and print formats. Our digital copies remain free to read online and print copies are available to purchase and keep on your bookshelf.

Both myself and Bekki hope that you continue to find the magazine empowering, informative and supportive of your practice.

Helen JR Bruce - Editor

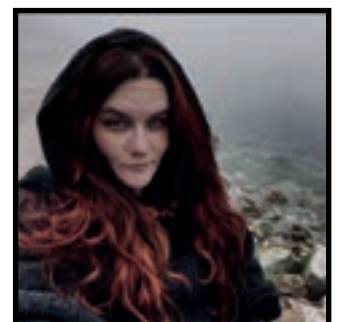
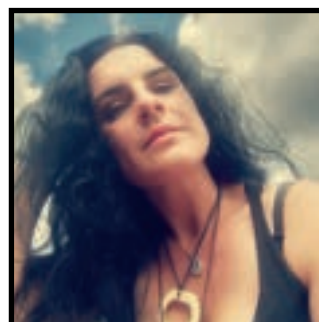
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Yule Faun by Ania Singh



WITCH

Let's Celebrate Together – Stevie Cole
Creating your own Yule Altar – Steffie de Vaan
Busy Witch – Tosh Locken
Christmas Spirits – Karen Hamilton-Viall
Grounding Chant – Gemma Warburton
Easy Peasy Homemade Yuletide Charm – The Old Crone
Connecting with the Christmas Witch – Jamie Pearce
Prosperity Candle Working – Redd
Death of the Shepherd King – Scott Irvine
Winter Solstice in Aotearoa New Zealand – Rachael Treymane
Winter Magick – Julie Aspinall
Wise Words from the Old Crone – The Old Crone
Spellworking with Snow – Vera Nadine
Black Ribbons – Emma Louise Foyster
Rescue Dog and Rosemary – Carrie Anderson
What We're Reading – Carrie Anderson & Bekki Milner



Cover Art: Haz John Taylor

Haz John is a Welsh artist living and working in Somerset. Her current main inspirations are nature, mythology and being absolutely riddled with anxiety. She can occasionally be found in a forest, but most often is lounging on the sofa with a cup of tea, drawing a forest.

Facebook/HazJohnArt

MEET OUR CONTRIBUTORS



Stevie Cole

Stevie is a genderfluid playwright, philosophy blogger, and Wiccan. He/she lives in Bristol, married to the writer, model, actress & witch Sandra Cole. Follow his/her LGBTQ+ philosophy blog, 'Venus Valley', at <https://vocal.media/authors/mx-stevie-or-stephen-cole>



Steffie de Vaan

Steffie de Vaan (she/her) is a Dutch intuitive witch. She loves cheap and easy witchcraft without cultural appropriation. Follow her on instagram as [muse_of_midnight](#).



Tosh Locken

I am a writer from Washington State, in the USA. I'm a practicing witch with experience in Tarot, spellwork, and, most recently, deity work.
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Karen Hamilton-Viall

Karen is a published author, whose love of ghosts developed after sharing her home with a poltergeist at 19 years old. Since then, she has encountered several more spirits and it has become a life-long obsession. The Curious Life of Ada Baker is her first published novel, and the character of Dennis is inspired by that poltergeist. Facebook/[KarensFantasyFiction](#)



Gemma Warburton

I am a creative fine artist, spiritual Wiccan eclectic witch, who specialises in custom made, blissfully bound bespoke headdresses & accessories. I sell crystal spell rings & vintage jewelry, and love anything relating to witchcraft. I have been practicing witchcraft my whole life. Etsy ~ [WiccanElements](#) Instagram ~ [@wiccan_elements](#)



The Old Crone

After almost 60 years reading cards, starting when I was a child, and showing others how to interpret them, I still enjoy reading for anyone who wishes it. I follow the wheel of the year and the phases of the moon, grow my own herbs and wand woods as well as following pagan ways and assisting others to find their own special spiritual pathway.
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Jamie Pearce

Parapsychologist, author, and lecturer Dr. Jamie Pearce has been involved in the paranormal for over 25 years. She has published five books so far in her Historic Haunts series, has investigated in 28 states, and 7 countries. She is also the host of her very own podcast Speaking of the Paranormal. Facebook/[AuthorJamiePearce](#)



Redd

Raised in a magickal home, Redd is a third generation practitioner of the Craft. She is a dedicant of Andraste - the East-Anglian Goddess of Victory, and a founding member of the Covey of the Sword & Serpent - an eclectic female-focused working group which draws from its members' respective experiences in Folk Magick, Red Thread and Sabbatic Craft. reddwytchartes@zohomail.eu



Scott Irvine

Scott Irvine is a Druid in a witches hat, a pagan who reveres Mother Earth and all life that resides on her. He sees the spiritual realm as real and as important as the material world.

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Rachael Treymane

Kia ora, I am Rachael Treymane, a seasoned magical practitioner with 29 years of exploration and education. As the esteemed leader of the Coven of the Sacred Stars, I guide and nurture a community bound by the shared reverence for the magical arts that acknowledge our connection with "as above, so below".

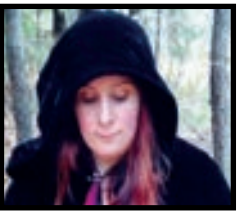
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Julie Aspinall

I have been a witch as long as I can remember. I am eclectic with a strong traditional witchcraft background. I founded the coven of Gaia and The festival for pagans and witches. My aim is to help people starting on their paths.

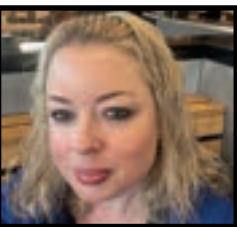
www.covenofgaia.co.uk



Vera Nadine

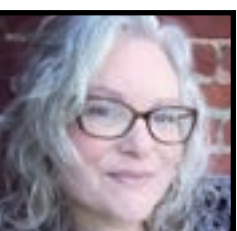
Vera Nadine is a writer, mama, energy healer and spirit channel living in the wilds of Nova Scotia, where she soaks up nature's magic, runs workshops and has morning chats with the moody ravens who share her mossy woodland plot.

Instagram: @vera.nadine



Emma Louise Foyster

Emma has poetry, flash fiction and short stories published. Emma won Wingless Dreamer's Bird Poetry Contest of 2022 and her short story entitled 'Virginia Creeper' was selected as a winning title by WriteFluence Singles Contest in 2021. Recently, she won Dipity Literary Magazine's 2024 Best of the Net Nominations for Fiction with her short story, 'The Voice of a Wildling'.



Carrie Anderson

Carrie is an Intuitive Consultant focusing on nature based practices. She created Green Wisdom Reiki, is a plant spirit consultant, diviner specializing in wax scrying, and an animal death doula. A deep respect for all of nature and earth guides all of her work. You can visit her at www.caresreiki.com for a list of offerings, readings, and to see her other writings.

The Holly King by Claire Valentine



As the ruler of the dark half of the year, the Holly King is named for the cheery evergreen tree whose bright green leaves and red berries are a welcome sight in the cold winter months. The Holly King stands guarding the family as they stand around a roaring fire, warming themselves.

[Facebook.com/ClaireValentineArt](https://www.facebook.com/ClaireValentineArt)





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Let's Celebrate Together

When I see decorations in the shops, hear that music over the speakers, I know a couple of things are coming: Christians talking about the true meaning of the season; and Pagans talking about the true meaning of the season. Let's have a look at where they're both right; where they're both wrong; and how we lovers of witchy tradition can give it a good positive look to our Christian families and friends, by making sure we know what we're talking about! Christmas is a perfect time to celebrate centuries of mixing traditions that made the season what it is today, and show how sensitive we can be to each other's traditions as we share this little patch of space and time.



As much as USA churchgoers might hate it, we say "happy holidays" because December, and the Solstice at the heart of it, is the home of holy days for a mixed bag of communities and cultures past and present. Celtic Druidic mistletoe rites, Roman Saturnalia and Sol Invictus, Scandinavian and Saxon Yule, the Catholic St. Nicholas' feast, have all made their mark on what Christmas is and why; and how we do Christmas leaves its own mark on other winter feasts of today's multicultural world like Jewish Hanukkah and African-American Kwanzaa.

Watching Sunlight come back into our lives through cold night, filling us

with happiness, hope, healing, thoughts of history, is an experience that pretty much every human who ever lived has shared or can share. But as much as we Pagan practitioners might feel the need to assert our beliefs as valid and valuable, by calling loudly that Christians "stole the season", the truth is today's styles of celebration have more to do with heretics sticking it to the church, rather than the other way around!

It's a fun story to trace the threads of, weaving their way through history – let's start with the Romans. Saturnalia celebrated the end of harvest season with carnival costumes, giving gifts, playing pranks, in Saturn's Temple. It began December 17th and could last all the way to the 23rd, depending who was Emperor and how hard they liked to party. Solstice Gods like Mithras and Sol Invictus came into play when authorities started using their ceremonies to strengthen the bonds that kept their followers together, but Christian communities were already growing by then. It's also the Romans who first wrote down the Celtic Druidic ritual of gathering mistletoe as a healing herb.

Records of Saxon and Scandinavian traditions are more messy, as various "Barbarian" or "Viking" customs were conflated by sources who didn't appreciate how multicultural their society was. But they were Pagan before they were Christian; so it's a safe guess their Yule practices, singing songs, telling tales, decorating homes with evergreen branches, leaving gifts of food and drink for visiting elves from the frosty north, were around before the first church appeared there, though we're not sure when either of those things first happened.

Meanwhile, early church communities were disparate but led by elders who tried to find ways to keep them together, like celebrating festivals at the same time. It was their practice, when deciding on a feast day to a significant figure, to say they left the world the same day they came into it, rather than choose between their birthday or death. Jesus was even more special, because the first event in his coming to Earth was the Angel's visit to Mary ("virgin" in Greek, or just "young girl" in Hebrew, versions of the prophecy). Counting the date of his death as Jewish Passover, as the Gospel says; counting Passover as near Spring Equinox or the nearest Full Moon, according to Hebrew tradition; counting nine months from there, for Mary's pregnancy; landed either in early December or early January, before settling in the middle. Today's church calendars have 6th December as St. Nicholas' Day, who brought gifts to poor families; and January 6th as Epiphany, the visit of the Wise Men or Three Kings – Asian Pagan astrologers woven into the Nativity.



Solstice celebrating was encouraged to continue alongside, when different cultures converted to the new religion, for easier transition; but eventually everyone was expected at the Catholic Christ Mass.

Fast forward a few centuries to the Reformation, when European countries started breaking from Catholic control

to assert their sovereignty, according to their understanding of the Bible – now they could actually read their own Bibles, thanks to the invention of the printing press.

One way of rebelling was reviving their traditional winter feasts, instead of formal Mass; for the especially daring, the church green was the perfect place to gather. There's an old Cornish saying, it's up to every man to decide what would annoy Catholics more – being Pagan, or Protestant!

Flash forward again to Victorian times, German and Greek traditions became part of ours thanks to intermarrying royal families. And the rest is history!

BUT... Let's make sure it's accurate history, when we talk about it with our Christian friends and families. The late 19th century was also a hotbed of spiritual research, from Aleister Crowley's world travels to Charlotte Guest's Mabinogion translation. So sometimes it takes time to make sure we're separating ancient from modern – it's easy to bring out the list of sky deities whose stories seem similar to Jesus, like Krishna or Horus, to sound wise and witchy. But a lot of the versions of those stories we have today, only go back as far as the modern wave of Pagan revival, without real archaeology backing them up. We do our ancestors a disservice if we misuse the stories so special to them.

There are already enough traditions ancient and modern, eastern and western, Christian and Pagan, preserved in the Happy Holidays season, for us all to honour the time in our own meaningful way. It's a mashup, not a competition!

Stevie Cole

Creating your own Yule Altar

Yule celebrates the Winter Solstice. It marks the beginning of winter and the return of the sun. The coldest season is still ahead of us, yet the longest night will soon be in the past. It's a delicate and liminal space, so little wonder that witches all over the world celebrate it.

When to Create a Yule Altar

The absolute best time is when you have time. No point in planning and designing a Yule altar if you never get around to putting it up because "the timing is off." If you have the luxury of choosing between before or after Yulenight, opt for after. That way you're not taking time away from Samhain. Ultimately, however, before Yule or after Yule—do whenever works for you. The second best time is on Yule night itself. Take some quiet time for yourself, after the rest of the house has gone to sleep, to set up your altar. Then read a book or drink a cup of tea sitting next to your new Sabbath altar.

Your Yule altar can stay up the entire winter, or until it's time to build an Imbolc altar.

How to Create a Yule Altar

Pick a spot, set down a cloth or tray if you want, and begin to build your altar. Pick things you love about Yule and winter.

Pine or fir branches. Few things invoke winter while smelling as amazing as pine or fir branches. I like to save a branch from last year's holiday wreath for this purpose, but you can probably find a

cut branch on the floor at a winter market. The branch doesn't "do" anything—it's just there to look and smell good, which is a higher purpose all to itself.

Pine cone full of wishes. Pick a good sized pine cone with nice open scales (placing it on the heater for an hour will help). Slip written wishes between the scales as they come to you. Stick to either things you wish more of ("I am worthy of love") –or– things you wish less of ("my ex needs to never call me again"), or you can draw a line straight across the pine cone and put one kind of wish to the left and the other to the right side. When the Yule season draws to a close, pour molten wax over the pine cone and wishes, let harden & burn to release your wishes to the powers that be.



Snow water. Collect snow in a bottle and let it melt, then place the snow water on your altar. You can also use it to create moon water. Pour the water back into the ground right before the winter ends, and thank the Spirit of Winter for keeping you company this time. Alternatively, keep it all year round and pour it out right after the start of next winter. This may remind the season how much fun snow can be, and prompt it to grant you more next year.



Holly and/or Mistletoe. Holly and mistletoe are both deeply spiritual plants. The prickly holly is a fiery and protective plant that brings luck to boot. Many fae find holly attractive, and some witchcraft traditions believe that bringing holly into the home serves as an invitation to the fair folk to take shelter during the winter—something to be mindful of if you're trying to steer clear of them. Mistletoe, famously sacred in many Druidic traditions, is equally protective and lucky. It's also a symbol of fertility, marriage, and romantic affection owing to the tradition of kissing under the mistletoe. If you feel called to either, your best bet is to approach the living plant and respectfully ask if you can take a sprig for your altar. Consider leaving a gift in return.

Cards. Tarot, oracle, and deity cards are a great addition to your Yule altar. The Six of Pentacles invokes the spirit of charity, while the Three of Cups represents celebration and community. Deity cards are a great way to honour a winter deity or spirit without incurring the cost of a statue—you can even print your own (just stick to free art & don't steal from artists). You can also buy a holiday card and use that. Add whichever cards resonate with you this season.

The sun. It's easy to get lost in winter's cold in December, but Yule also marks the return of the sun. Make sure to place a sun symbol on your altar. You can use the Sun tarot card, a dried slice of orange, a glass orb filled with summery things like dandelion, or come up with your own. Just make sure the sun has a place on your altar as a gentle reminder for winter to eventually make way for spring.



Your personal altar favourites.

What calls to YOU in an altar? Add candles, glitter, or dried berries. Anything that you associate with winter and that makes you happy. Try to keep your regular (working, deity, ancestor) altar from your Yule altar though, so you can continue your usual practice and take time to celebrate the season specifically.

Steffie de Vaan

Busy Witch

Around this time of year especially, I fantasize about being a fulltime witch back in the day. I picture living in a little home at the edge of the village, people coming to me for various herbs and cures. I provide everything from potions to poppets, and I'm friends with the local crows so I'm the first to know the juiciest gossip.

Alas, this is not the world I live in; instead, I live in a capitalist society demanding more and more money to support the most basic of needs. If you're anything like me, you're working multiple jobs to make ends meet, maybe shopping at a local discount store to find the best deals on food. Funds and time are both in short supply, and though you want to go hang out with Hecate at your local crossroads, dance naked with your coven under the full moon, and ride a broomstick with the devil himself, you're tired because you're working two jobs and fitting 80 hours worth of work a week into 40 hours so you can afford groceries. Not to mention that you have friends, family, and others to fit into your life. Where's a girl supposed to fit a proper sacrifice into a busy schedule like this?

Luckily, we witches have always been the adaptive sort. That means we know how to fit magic into the everyday – even when the everyday is packed with work and other things. Here are some ways I make my busy day a little more magical:

Pour yourself a cup of intention

This is an easy ritual that can be done alone, or around people. Heck, you can do this while you're on a Zoom call, or in the office, and no one will be the wiser about what you're doing. Here's how it's done:

SUPPLIES: Whatever you like to drink in the morning, and something to stir it with. **OPTIONAL:** something to stir in the drink.

Pour your chosen beverage into your chosen cup/mug/etc.

Stir with the intention of release – For some, release is stirred best as counter-clockwise, others prefer clockwise. Do whatever resonates best with you – what's important is the intention behind the stirring, not the direction.

Stir in the opposite direction to welcome the good things the universe has for you.

Once you've finished stirring, use your stirring stick/spoon/straw to gently and lightly tap the side of your cup/mug to complete the ritual.

Combining cleansing and protection magic with your morning ablutions

While in the shower, envision the water cleansing you of any negative energy. Water is a powerful element, and a great way to release anything that won't serve you for the day.

While putting on lotion, moisturizer, soap (etc.) you have an opportunity to draw a protective symbol on yourself. You can draw it on your skin with the intention of protection, leave it to set in a little bit, and then envision that protection being absorbed as you blend in the soap/lotion/etc. Some ideas for protective symbols include:

Pentagram or Pentacle – The Pentagram and Pentacle have each been used for millennia for protective purposes.

A cross – Many find the symbol of the cross protective due to a Christian background. If you find it protective, this is a completely okay symbol to use. Also, according to *The Women's Encyclopedia of Myth and Secrets* (Walker, 1996), the symbol of the cross was sacred to Aphrodite – a fitting symbol and deity for glamour magic (among a lot of other things).

Name Invocation – Some like to use the names of saints and deities for protective purposes. Remember to only use names of those you align with, and, that you focus your intention on the protective purposes.



Grounding

I am a mess of ADD and caffeine, so grounding is of the utmost importance during my day. Usually not just at the beginning of the day, but sometimes during the day as well so I can re-center myself and prevent overwhelm. It doesn't take long, and is – just like most things in our craft – customizable so it feels right for you. I'll share my method of grounding:

Place feet on the ground and feel supported. This can be done inside, or outside, seated or standing. The most important thing is feeling a physical connection to the ground beneath you.

Focus on the energy gathered at your core. This can look different for everyone. I tend to think of my energy as looking like a long red ribbon. For you, it might look something else – that is completely okay. Picture your energy moving so that it flows from your core, down your legs, through your feet, and into the ground.

Picture your energy still connected to your core as it stretches into the earth beneath you. Notice the worms, roots, and rocks you pass until you reach the earth's energetic core. For me, this energetic core looks like a silvery pool of light. Sometimes, I picture deities I work with there waiting for me, sometimes, I am alone. This is a safe place, a meditative place, and you can breathe and stay here for as long as you want to stay.

After you've taken at least a breath in this place, ask for grounding energy from the earth.

Picture the earth's energy wrapping around yours. It feels like a hug as it swirls back up along the trail your energy left through the earth and reaches your feet. Feel it swirl up your legs and around your body and know that you are protected, loved, and grounded by the earth.

Take a deep breath and then release it – you're grounded and ready for the day!

The use of candles/candle warmers/ battery operated candles

Offering a light can be a great way to honor any deities and/or entities you work with. If you work from home, you have the freedom to burn candles if you want and utilize any scents you wish for whatever your workings might be. But, if you are busy in and out, or if you work outside the home, a battery-operated candle might be a safer option. The use is the same – light (turn on) with the intention you want, and put it where you want it for, you're your magical

use. Does it have the same burning fun as a candle? Maybe not, but it's a lot safer – and, if you work in an office, it's generally going to be more acceptable.

Give yourself permission to rest

In the world of #witchtok and other social media magical practitioners, it can seem like everyone is fitting magic into their day, except for you. Especially when so many of them have the aesthetics down, and, they make it look easy. That is what social media is for – we have to remind ourselves that a lot of times it can be performative. That's okay – it doesn't make their practices any less legitimate. It does mean that we must maintain proper perspective, and remember that we don't have to do magic the way everyone on various social medias do. In fact, sometimes it's best to just rest. Wanna do a spell but you're just too tired? Rest. Close your eyes, connect to your inner self, and tell yourself to rest, however that looks to you. Working magic when your energy is low isn't a good idea anyway, so, get some rest. Your cauldron will still be there when you wake up.

Here's the deal, babes: you're still a witch, even if it's been a little while since you've done a spell. You're busy, and that's okay. Sometimes, just offering a little greeting to your deities, burning a candle, or, just adding grounding moments during your day can help strengthen you for your practice. And don't worry, you'll get back to making sacrifices according to the phases of the moon soon enough.

Sources:

Walker, B. G. (1996, January 1). Women's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets. Book Sales. http://books.google.ie/books?id=DoNBMQAACAAJ&dq=The+-Women%27s+Encyclopedia+of+Myths+and+Secrets&hl=&cd=1&source=gbs_api

Tosh Locken

Christmas Spirits

On Christmas day, many years ago, I was telling my mum about my custom of lighting candles for the dearly departed, when a tiny whirlwind spun around my head. "What's the matter?" she enquired. I didn't want to spook her, so I kept quiet. But I found myself wondering if it had been a cherished loved one, letting me know that they were still there. If that was the case, why had they chosen this date and time to visit?

A friend of mine, who worked at a well-known castle said that Easter, August and Christmas were favourite times for ghostly activity. It's often said that Yuletide is a popular time for ghostly goings on, but why might that be?

Christmas is a time of high emotions, when we think about our lost loved ones and all that they meant to us. Perhaps they are thinking of us too and pierce through the veil to comfort us.

There is a long tradition of ghost stories being told at Christmas, stretching as far back as the 16th century, but it was particularly common in Victorian times. Imagine a frosty Christmas night, 150 years ago, when your only entertainment was your friends and family. You're sitting around a cosy fire, watching the dancing flames. Outside, a bone-chilling wind is gently moaning, and after a glass of punch, the spooky tales start to flow like wine from a bottle. The great grandfathers of ghostly Christmas stories are Charles Dickens and MR James. Many are familiar with A Christmas Carol. It was first published on 19 December 1843 and was reprinted 13 times over the next year. Dickens was responsible for popularising the tradition of ghostly tales. The most prolific writer of ghost tales though, was the author MR James. In the early twentieth century he published a number of spooky tales, designed to be read on Christmas Eve. In the 1970s, many of these were produced as television film shorts under the billing, A Ghost Story for Christmas.

Perhaps it was these Christmas tales that inspired the stories of annual ghostly visitations from woeful spectres that return every Christmas to haunt the site of some former tragedy. According to The Paranormal Database, Roos Hall in Suffolk sees the return every Christmas Eve of a phantom coach drawn by headless coachmen and headless horses. Every December 25th, at the Prospect Inn, in Exeter, Devon, the ghost of a little girl clutching a rag doll is said to appear. Even the famous still haunt their former homes: Every 19 December, the ghost of Emily Bronte is said to appear in the grounds of the Parsonage at Haworth, Yorkshire, where she used to live. Sometimes these hauntings are said to mark the date of a disaster, other times, the reason is unknown.

I recently had another spooky festive encounter at a 17th century stately home. In my day job, I work in historic buildings, but this year was the first time I have worked in one in December. All day, we had been talking to small children about their Christmas wishes and at the end of the day, we switched off all the electric candles and prepared to leave, when the door to the great hall swung open on its own. We checked, but no living person was there. It was a heavy old wood-panelled door, so was unlikely to have blown open in the wind. All day, it had stayed firmly shut. The former billiard room that we were in, is said to have the apparition of a dog that runs through it, although the ghost is not tied to Christmas, as far as I am aware. I don't know what made the door open, but in my mind, I like to imagine that perhaps the former occupants of the house had come to gather and listen to our Christmas tales, just as they may have done, many years ago.

Karen Hamilton-Viall

Grounding Chant

Here I stand,
A witch in the woods,
Your roots are reeling me in.
Ever so longing
To feel your embrace,
Grounding me
Deep within.

Repairing and cleansing,
From my soles to my crown,
Emotions so sombre and dim.

Rejuvenate my soul,
I am birthed once more
I feel more connected
Than ever before
Thank you mother Gaia
For replenishing my light
I am grounded,
I am safe,
Every day and night.

And so it is

Gemma Warburton

Easy Peasy Homemade Yuletide Charm

These make lovely, Yuletide gifts for your friends and family, and are quick and easy to make using simple and cheap items, even left over bits from the crafting box.

You will need:

One wooden spoon or wooden spatula

Cabochons, small crystals for decoration or anything festive.

Some lengths of festive coloured ribbon, if required, such as red, green or gold or all three.

Strong glue such as Bostik or a glue gun

A pipe cleaner

Cut the pipe cleaner to make a 10cm length and fold in half. Glue to the back the handle, at the top with the spoon bowl at the bottom, or if using a spatula, glue the pipe cleaner at the top of the handle with the wider end at the bottom. Make sure you will be able to hang the spoon/spatula, up.

Handy tip- I usually wait for the pipe cleaner hook to dry well before I decorate the other side. If you are using ribbons, tie them around the neck of the spoon/spatula either together or individually. Some spatulas don't have a neck but the ribbons can be glued in place.

You can decorate the spoon or spatula any way you like and glue on pretty cabochons, tiny crystals, buttons or anything festive.

I have made these for quite a few years for different times of year. I also decorate spoons for weddings, sometimes decorating the spoons as a bride and groom. I have not yet had the opportunity to make a groom and groom or a bride and bride, but I live in hope!

On my more witchy spoons and spatulas I sometimes write words such as POTIONS and SPELLS, on the handle with a permanent pen such as a sharpie.

Wait for all the glue to dry well before you hang your Yuletide charm up.

Take your spoon/spatula charm and hang it up in your kitchen in a suitable safe place. Not over heat and for goodness sake I'd avoid using it for cooking!

For extra effect you can place your charm under a new moon for positive energy and say this chant to charge your charm with positive vibes.

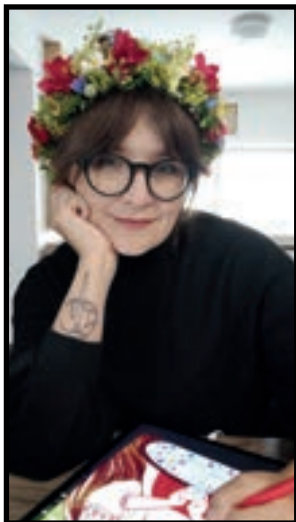
Yuletide blessings cheer your wall
Bring peace and love to one and all
Solstice wishes to your friends
Love and light shall never end.

Blessed be.

The Old Crone



Saint Lucia



Sanja Kolenko is a Croatian illustrator with a preference for Slavic mythology and folklore. Her specific style is a unique combination of traditional mythological motives and a fresh, modern outlook on digital illustration. So far, she has worked on a wide variety of projects ranging from promotional pamphlets all the way to traditional book publications.

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Sanja Kolenko

CONNECTING WITH THE CHRISTMAS WITCH

The holiday season can unfortunately be a difficult time to try to bring people together. Long before the deeper political schisms, differences in faith and practice often separated those with more so called “traditional beliefs” from those who disagreed. Followers of “new age” or Wiccan philosophies or even those who considered themselves a witch (as I do), were excluded from many of the celebrations of the season. Fortunately, there are ways to help connect us, one of my favorite is the story of La Befana, the “Christmas Witch”.



Origins of La Befana

Her origins may be linked to Hecate, the Roman goddess Sabine (good witch and protector of children) or the goddess Strina or Strenua. If the latter is true, her tradition is tied to the still popular Strenua witching groups of Sicily. That would also suggest connections to the ideas of purification, well being (emotionally and spiritually), and of course to new life. She is a strand that connects many to a tapestry woven with the aspects of the Mother, reverence, magic and power. Some witches believe the days leading up to her appearance and to the Epiphany are meant to be spent in meditation, contemplation, and deep spell work.

Regardless of her actual origins, La Befana is a very important person in Italian Folklore. Her name is believed by some to be derived

from the Festival of the Epiphany (January 6th); perhaps even a mispronunciation of the event itself. She is depicted in holiday markets and festivals all over Italy and in some regions is more common and popular than Babbo Natale (Santa Claus). She has been called “the mother of every child in Italy”. She is considered by some to represent a bond between the worlds of the holiday season.

Story of the Christmas Witch

In an area of Italy there lived a woman named La Befana. La Befana was said to be an elderly woman or crone. To some she was reclusive, to others wise, mystical and magical, a witch or witch-like woman (strega). She lived alone and took pride in her home, constantly cleaning and sweeping. So much so in fact, that she was thought to have the most pleasant home and she was considered the best housekeeper and host.

Befana was in her cottage sweeping the floor when she glanced out of her window and saw a bright light in the sky. She paused to behold it. The light was a very bright star in the sky that lit up the entire night.

At the same time a group of wise men were following the star on the advice of the royal astrologers. They were seeking a humble stable in Bethlehem where their prophecies foretold of the birth of a holy child. They were intent on bringing gifts to honor the babe, but they had strayed from the path and gotten lost. They knocked on the door of Befana’s home. They inquired about directions to Bethlehem and the possibility of resting for the night. She graciously welcomed them and their entourage to stay. La Befana proved to be an exceptional hostess, with delicious food and comfortable accommodations despite her fairly modest means.

The magi were so impressed that they asked her to come with them the following day. She politely declined and after their departure continued cleaning her home as was her fashion. Long into her cleaning and well after they'd left, she had second thoughts. She sensed there was something special about the appearance of the star that the magi were following and the foretold birth. She thought that she should have gone with them to pay her respects to the newborn. She gathered gifts including food and trinkets and set out on her broom to find the magi and ultimately, she hoped, the child. She never found the holy child, but her search is part of the story and the lore. She continues looking for him to this day, going from house to house in Italy on her broom on Epiphany Eve (January 5th). She is often said to wear a black shawl and carry a pack, bag or hamper full of treats and small delights.



Visits by La Befana

La Befana typically enters through the chimney and thus is covered in soot. She is depicted as smiling while carrying a basket heaped with her treats. Families in Italy leave food and drink for her on Epiphany eve just as they do for Santa Claus (although it's usually a glass of wine and food rather than milk and cookies). Like Saint Nick, she also doesn't wish to be seen performing her deliveries. If Befana notices that someone has seen her, they will receive a playful thump on the shoulder from her broomstick.

To the good children who have gone to bed on the eve of the feast (January 5th), La

Befana leaves nuts, figs, fruit, candies ("car-bone") and toys or gifts. These treats left in the hopes she will eventually deliver them to the child she was seeking and to recognize good aspects that can be found in all little ones just as in the holy child. Most of these prizes are placed in stockings hung by the hearth.

Naughty children on this holiday originally received a "lump of coal". Today most children may find "coal" among their treats (typically rock candy dyed black). La Befana leaves the piece of coal even to the good children as she believes even they are occasionally bad during the year.

At the end of her visits, grateful to her hosts, and in keeping with her cleaning habits, she typically sweeps clean the home she's visited. This practice symbolizes sweeping clean the problems and troubles of the previous year, as well as cleaning out the old just as the New Year is dawning. La Befana's visit and the end of the Feast of the Epiphany mark the end of the holiday season in Italy.

Whether it's the desire to sweep away old worries and concerns, or welcome the hope and possibility of the year yet to come, the Christmas Witch story connects with many people on many levels and many faiths, not just in Italy. It also provides proof that "good witches" can be found in places other than Oz. Hopefully this tale can connect everyone during the holidays regardless of the divides we encounter. Happy Holidays.

Jamie Pearce

Prosperity Candle Working For the Rebirth of the Sun

I believe you get as much out of spellcraft as you put in. So I've utilised a variety of interwoven elements which work for me, including: numerology; sacred geometry; colour vibration; oils, herbes, and gemstones; power raising with bioenergy, breath, and solar invocation; and programming via word and visualisation.

As such I would suggest getting your materials and working space ready the night before. It may seem a little complex, but as I like to say about the Craft "There are no rules, only rules of thumb." So feel free to adapt as wanted.

Day: Solstice morning, or a following Sunday

Time: Sunrise, or early morning

Direction: East facing (in a safe location)

Items

- Paper and pen/s
- Bell (optional)
- Athame or blade (optional)
- Items to cleanse with (see below)
- Slate plate (or square of paper with a large circle marked on it)
- Yellow chalk (or felt pen, if using paper)
- Straight edge / ruler
- Ten cleansed yellow, gold or green tumble-stones (e.g.: citrine, iron pyrite or green jade)
- Orange or yellow dinner candle (cleansed)
- Candle holder
- Awl, or darning needle (to inscribe candle)
- Pestle and mortar

Herbal candle coating ingredients, e.g.:

Dried bay leaf

Dried marigold petals

Cinnamon bark

Kitchen roll

Teacup, or shot glass

Stirring rod, or swizzle stick (to blend oils)

Viscous base oil (such as olive)

Pure essential oil/s, e.g.:

Frankincense

Orange

Lemongrass

Matches or lighter



Working

1. To prepare, begin by writing a charm on a piece of paper in large lettering. Place it in view of your working. (After the working, you can also put it up in your bedroom or kitchen where you will see it upon rising each morning.)

Treasure Vault Opens
Gold Flows Down
Divine Resources
To My World Now

2. Now mark a ten* pointed star, or decagram, on your slate with chalk (or on paper with pen). Start by dotting ten equally spaced points around the outer edge of the circle, then add in the lines using the straight edge. Mark the astrological symbol for Sol in the middle (a circle with a dot in the centre).

3. Ring bell, or announce that your working is begun by clapping three times. Then state your intention clearly and simply in your own words.

4. Follow by cleansing yourself and your space with whatever method you typically use. I usually asperge (sprinkle) with salt water, and then cense (smoke) with a home-made bundle of rosemary. But you could use bells, a stick of frankincense, or imagine a great gust of wind, etc. If you wish to cast circle, do so at this point.

5. Take ten slow deep belly breaths. Then welcome in the power of the reborn Sun by gazing in the direction where it will be rising, and prayerfully reaching out with your heart. Seek the blessings of Sol in your working. 'Pay it forward' by thanking Sol for the gift of prosperity this year. Speak as though your prayers have already been answered.

Great Sol, generous provider of light and life
I thank you for your abundant goodness
And for the welcome gift of financial prosperity

May all who seek your warmth and kindness
Be blessed with your benevolence this new year
Ayea**, Ayea, Ayea!



6. Now take up your candle and awl, and inscribe your name, birthdate, and sun-sign around the bottom. Then holding the bottom of the candle in your left hand, slowly inscribe a clockwise spiral up along its length with your right. As you do so imagine wealth coming your way. Envision yourself doing all the things you wish or need to do with these fresh financial resources: easily paying bills, shopping or booking a holiday with no worries, etc. See these images in bright bold colours. Smile, and conjure strong inner feelings of joy, peace and fulfilment.

7. Next take your tumble-stones in your left hand, and put your right hand over them. Continue to visualise, projecting your intention into them. Then place one tumble-stone upon each point of your star to amplify your working.

8. Place your herbes in the pestle and mortar and grind them to a rough powder while circling clockwise. Continue to visualise as you do so. Then place a piece of kitchen roll on your altar, and scatter the herbal powder over it.

9. Blend your anointing oil together, adding a several drops of essential oils into about half a tablespoon of base oil. Inwardly reaffirm your connection to the sun, then pour a little of the oil mixture into your palms. Now begin to vigorously rub your hands together. Envision building ball of golden energy in them as you do so. Draw in the power of Sol on the in-breath, and project it out again into your hands on the out-breath.



10. When you feel intensely energised and have come to a 'peak', grasp the candle in both hands and 'push' the ball of energy into it, while reciting your charm over the candle. Use the exhalation and breath of your words to enchant and enliven the candle.

11. Now 'seal' the spell into your candle by rolling it over the herbal coating powder. Place the candle in its holder at the centre of your slate. Finally thank the spirits of the candle, oils, gemstones, and herbes for their good work in bringing you what you desire. Name and praise them for their abilities, speak with warmth as though to friends.

12. Take up your blade, or the first two fingers of your dominant hand, and envision cutting a kind of energetic umbilical cord between your body and the candle***.

13. Light the candle wick with a flourish while repeating your chant one last time. Ring the bell, or clap three times to close. And allow the candle to burn down in a safe place. Withdraw your circle if you have cast one. Then ground in your usual way - going outside and facing the rising sun, feet bare on the cold earth is nice. Know with confidence that 'It Is Done', and have a Merry Solstice!

Redd

* Ten is used here as an alternative for the number one ($10 = 1 + 0 = 1$), which is the numerological digit associated to the Sun.

** Ayea, is a phonetic spelling of the Greek word meaning Holy.

*** To prevent the candle-work to continuing to draw energy from your body while burning.

Death of the Shepherd King

The winter represents the transformation from light into dark with the winter solstice representing the longest night when the Queen of Death is at her most powerful and at the same time, most vulnerable. The spirit of nature is dead, characterized by the Sumerian Shepherd God Dumuzi several thousand years ago in the desert marshes of the world's first empire. Winter began when the Goddess of Love and War, Queen of Heaven and Earth, Inanna journeyed to the underworld to wrestle control of the land of the Dead, known as Kur, from her older sister Ereshkigal.



It was this descent that was the inspiration behind the dance of the seven veils when a thirteen-year-old Jewish princess called Salome was asked to perform for her nefarious stepfather, King Herod. The King of Judea enticed his stepdaughter to dance for him in return for anything she wished. Salome demanded the head of John the Baptist – Matthew 14:3–12 and Mark 6:17–29. The seven veils are said to represent dreams, reasons, passion, bliss, courage, compassion and knowledge.

By peeling away each veil until she is naked, Salome is enacting Inanna removing a piece of attire at each of the seven gates that separated the worlds of the living and dead, arriving into Hell naked to confront her sister. The Dark Queen and seven Anunnaki judges turned their gaze towards the un-

wanted guest, a stare of death, extinguishing Inanna's eternal light, killing her on the spot and hung her corpse on a meat hook in the kitchen.

Learning of his niece's death, the wizard Enki created two golems from dirt under his fingernails. The golems restored Inanna's life with the food and water of life but before she can leave, Inanna had to agree to keep the balance of existence by providing a replacement. Two demons escort the Goddess of Love to the surface who get frustrated at several victims that are passed on the way to Inanna's city, Erech where she found her husband Dumuzi, instead of mourning his loss was having a party, flirting with beautiful women and having a whale of a time. His life was over, struggling and screaming for forgiveness as the demons dragged him back to Hell.

With the fertility God gone from the surface, the Earth began to sleep, the land began to wither and nature stopped producing the fruits needed for life to exist. The Sun God Utu had to step in to save the life of the planet, transforming Dumuzi into a snake so he could escape up through the ground and restore order to the land. Inanna was not impressed but accepted it because it was the wish of the Sun God but never let her husband forget the errors of his ways.



After 1,000 years of ruling Mesopotamia, Sumer was conquered by the Akkadians who established Babylon as its capital city. Inanna became Ishtar under a new Semitic tongue and a new updated version of the descent into Hell emerged. The Goddess of Love was out of her mind with grief when the love of her life Tammuz was snatched away from her by the cold reach of death and made plans to get him back. Like her predecessor, Ishtar had to obey the laws of entry into the underworld by removing a piece of attire at each of the seven gates to Kur, arriving through the final gate naked to confront Ereshkigal.



After threatening to unleash the dead onto the world above, Ishtar was let in only to have the spark that gave her life extinguished and placed alongside the corpse of Tammuz. With them both absent from the world of the living, nature became infertile to the point of starvation for all life on Earth. This time, Lord Enki used a eunuch to descend and free the pair. Both were released to return to the surface where nature was restored and a catastrophe averted. To keep the balance of life and death, Tammuz was ordered to stay with Ereshkigal for the autumn and winter and with Ishtar for the spring and summer. The desert societies were instructed to honour Ishtar and Tammuz with offerings and sacrifices at the last harvest to ensure the continued fertility of the Earth that could only be guaranteed by the generosity of their worshippers.

When the Greeks rose to power in Europe 1,000 years later, Ishtar became Aphrodite and Tammuz, the very handsome Adonis. Adonis ignored Aphrodite's warning not to attend the autumn hunt in the forest where he was fatally gored by a boar's tusk, sending him to the realm of Hades. A distraught Goddess of Love vowed to search for him in the shadowy underworld realm leaving the world above without love. Without love, the world turned dark and cold and began to turn barren and die. To save the situation, Zeus decreed that Adonis would spend each spring with Aphrodite on the surface and return to the underworld each autumn when his work was done.

Our final resurrection story is an updated Greek version that most witches would have heard of because it includes the dark Goddess Hecate, the myth of Demeter and Persephone. It all began when Zeus, without consulting his sister Demeter, the Goddess of vegetation, agreed to Hades marrying their beautiful daughter Persephone. Out with her maids, Persephone was abducted by Hades and took to his underground realm to marry. When Demeter learnt she was missing the fertility Goddess went in search for her daughter and in her absence, nature withered and stopped bearing fruit. On her travels, Demeter came across Hecate who informed her of Persephone's abduction and took her to see Helios, the Sun God who revealed the arranged marriage to Hades. Demeter was furious so Zeus was obliged to reach a compromise with her that Persephone would spend one-half of the year with her husband and the other half from spring to autumn with her mother.

Scott Irvine

WINTER SOLSTICE IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

In the southern hemisphere, around the 22nd of June in Aotearoa New Zealand heralds the enchanting embrace of winter and the celebration of the Winter Solstice. This time-honoured event brings families and friends together, creating a tapestry of traditions that honour the season and the indigenous Māori New Year, Matariki.

Ngā Mata o te Ariki Tāwhirimātea ('The eyes of the god Tāwhirimātea') or Matariki, also known as the Pleiades star cluster, holds profound cultural significance in Aotearoa New Zealand, marking the beginning of the indigenous Māori New Year. Derived from the Māori language, Matariki translates to "eyes of god" or "little eyes," encapsulating the notion of celestial watchfulness.

As a cluster of stars, Matariki reappears in the pre-dawn sky in late June or early July, signalling the start of winter in the southern hemisphere. Its appearance is not only a celestial event but a cultural and spiritual one, prompting communities to come together in celebration. Matariki is revered for its role in guiding navigators across the vast Pacific Ocean and is symbolically associated with renewal, reflection, and the planting of new seeds for the year ahead. The appearance of Matariki brings communities closer, fostering a sense of unity, gratitude, and connection to both the heavens above and the land below.

As the Winter Solstice approaches, Pagan households across Aotearoa New Zealand come alive with the anticipation of festive gatherings. Families and friends eagerly prepare for a feast that will not only satiate their appetites but also nourish the bonds of togetherness. The air is filled with the aroma of hearty, seasonal dishes that grace the tables, showcasing the rich culinary heritage of our people and land.

Adding a touch of festive magic, some Pagan families engage in the tradition of putting up and decorating a Yule tree.

Adorned with ornaments, lights, and symbols of the season, the Yule tree becomes a focal point for gatherings and a source of joy for all who gather around it. The festive decorations serve as a visual representation of the collective spirit that defines the Winter Solstice celebration.



The rhythmic beat of drums resonates through the night air, creating a lively and spirited atmosphere. Drumming circles form, uniting participants in a shared experience that mirrors the heartbeat of the community. Bonfires blaze, casting a warm glow over the revellers and symbolizing the triumph of light over darkness. The crackling flames add an elemental touch to the celebration, invoking a sense of unity with the natural world.

Gift-giving takes center stage during the Winter Solstice, becoming a heartfelt expression of generosity and community spirit. Thoughtfully chosen presents are exchanged, carrying with them wishes for prosperity, health, and happiness in the coming year. The act of giving reinforces the bonds between individuals and fosters a sense of shared abundance.

Nature, too, plays a significant role in the festivities, with the flowering of indigenous plants such as whauwhaupaku, kohekohe, and puriri. The burst of colour amidst the winter landscape serves as a poignant reminder of nature's resilience and the promise of renewal. These vibrant blooms become a symbol of hope and life during the solstice.

Candles are lit, casting a soft and comforting glow over the gatherings. As the longest night of the year unfolds, the candlelight becomes a beacon of warmth and reflection. Pagan families take a moment to give thanks for the blessings of the past year, expressing gratitude for the light and love that surrounds them.



The Winter Solstice invites contemplation, and some engage in divinations and readings to gain insights into the future. These quiet moments of introspection provide an opportunity to reflect on the passage of time, set intentions for the coming year, and connect with the deeper rhythms of life.

Telling stories takes on a special significance during the solstice celebration. The story tellers of our Pagan communities share tales of cultural wisdom and history, weaving a narrative that binds people together. Our other members of the community absorb these stories, learning about their heritage and fostering a sense of identity to

each other and the natural environment.

Singing becomes the crescendo of the Winter Solstice celebration, with voices harmonizing beneath the star-studded sky. Music becomes a powerful medium for expressing joy and gratitude, creating an atmosphere of unity and shared experience. The melodies linger in the crisp winter air, leaving an indelible imprint on the hearts of those gathered.

The Winter Solstice is not merely a celestial event; it is a celebration of life, community, and cultural heritage. Through feasting, decorating Yule trees, drumming, gift-giving, embracing nature, lighting candles, expressing gratitude, and engaging in rituals of reflection, we come together to weave a rich tapestry of traditions that illuminate the longest night of the year with warmth and connection.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, the celebration of the winter solstice has evolved into a unique and culturally resonant event, blending elements from its northern hemisphere descendants with newly found traditions. Originally inspired by practices imported from European settlers, the adaptation of the winter solstice celebration has become a harmonious fusion that reflects the nation's diverse heritage. Embracing the southern hemisphere's distinct seasons, the festivities have adapted to the southern winter, offering a chance for reflection, renewal, and connection with the land. The winter solstice celebration in Aotearoa New Zealand stands as a testament to our country's ability to weave together threads of its heritage, creating a vibrant tapestry that resonates with both the old and the new.

Rachael Treymane

Hidden In by
Monique
Bouman



My work consists of many colours, textile materials, botanical plants and seaweeds. All combined into many layered artworks. My work is analogue and digital, I am an intuitive and visual person who lives and works in the Netherlands. You are welcome to visit my Instagram and Facebook to view my art and get in touch with me.

kieksartworld@outlook.com Instagram: KieksartWorld Facebook: Kiek's Art-World

Winter Magick

Winter is a wonderful time for witches to embrace their magical practices. Here are some ways you can infuse the season with a touch of winter magic:

Snow Magick

Snow is a symbol of purity and transformation. You can harness its energy by collecting fresh snow and using it for spells or rituals related to cleansing, healing, or new beginnings. Snow can also be used in divination practices, such as scrying or reading snowflakes. Snow can be a versatile and enchanting tool for magical practices. Here are a few ways you can incorporate snow into your magical workings.

Cleansing and Purification: Snow is often associated with purity and can be used to cleanse and purify your energy or sacred space. You can collect fresh snow and sprinkle it around your home or ritual area to remove any negative or stagnant energies.

Healing and Renewal: Snow can symbolize the transformative power of winter and can be used in healing rituals or spells. You can create a snow-infused bath or use melted snowwater in potions or elixirs to promote healing and rejuvenation.

Divination: Snowflakes are unique and intricate in their patterns, making them an ideal medium for divination. You can use a magnifying glass to examine individual snowflakes and interpret their shapes and symbols for insights or messages.

Intention Setting: Snow can serve as a powerful medium for setting intentions or casting spells. You can write your desires or wishes on a piece of paper and place it in the snow, allowing the energy of the snow to amplify and manifest your intentions.

Snow Sigils: You can create snow sigils by drawing symbols or letters in the snow with your finger. Charge these sigils with your intention and let the snowfall cover and activate them, allowing the energy to work its magic.

Winter Elemental Connections: Snow is closely associated with the element of water, and you can use it to connect with water elementals or spirits. Offerings or prayers made with snow can help establish a connection with these beings and seek their assistance or guidance. Enjoy the beauty and transformative power of snow in your magical practices!



Ice Magick

Ice can be a potent tool for spellwork. You can create ice sigils, freeze intentions or visualizations, or even use ice cubes in your divination rituals. The element of ice represents stillness, clarity, and transformation. Ice magic in witchcraft is a fascinating and powerful practice that harnesses the energy and symbolism of ice. Here are some ways you can incorporate ice magic into your witchcraft practices.

Healing and Calming: Ice can be used to soothe and heal. You can create ice packs or ice cubes infused with healing herbs or essential oils to provide relief for physical ailments or to calm emotional distress. Use these icy tools in rituals, meditations, or even in spell jars.

Elemental Connections: Ice is connected to the element of water. You can work with ice to enhance your connection with water elementals or spirits. Place ice cubes on your altar or in a sacred space to invite their presence and seek their guidance or assistance.

Emotional Release: Ice can symbolize frozen emotions or stagnant energy. Use ice in rituals or spells to release and let go of negative emotions or patterns. Write down what you wish to release on a piece of paper, place it in a bowl of water, and freeze it. As the ice melts, visualize the release of those emotions or patterns.

Protection and Boundaries: Ice can create a barrier or shield. You can use ice magic to create energetic boundaries or protection spells. Visualize a wall of ice surrounding you or your space, keeping negative energies or influences at bay. You can also freeze protective herbs or crystals in ice cubes and place them in your home or carry them with you for added protection.

Divination and Scrying: Ice can be a powerful tool for divination. You can use a smooth, flat piece of ice as a scrying tool, gazing into its reflective surface to seek insights or receive messages. The shifting patterns and shapes in the ice can help unlock your intuition and reveal hidden knowledge.

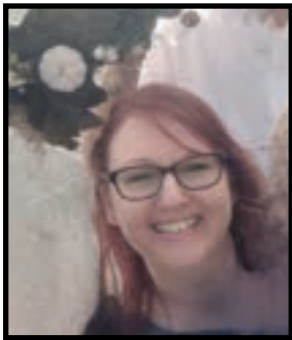
Remember, when working with ice magic, be mindful of the cold and its effects on your body. Always work in a safe and controlled environment, and consider using visualizations or symbolic representations of ice if physical ice is not readily available. Enjoy exploring the unique and transformative energy of ice in your witchcraft practices!

Winter Dreamwork: The longer nights of winter provide an ideal opportunity for deepening your dreamwork. Keep a dream journal and pay attention to the messages and symbols that come through your dreams. You can also use dream pillows filled with herbs associated with insight and intuition to enhance your dream experiences.

Feel free to explore, experiment, and adapt these ideas to suit your own practice. Enjoy the enchanting beauty of the season and let the winter magic guide you on your witchy journey.

Julie Aspinall

Frosty Night by Annie Jones



I've been a follower of the Pagan path for many years. I love the seasons and try to live my life in tune with them. Part of this is done through my artwork, where I aim to capture the magic and the energies of the Sabbats and the seasons.

Frosty Night – Watercolour and ink.
Solstice Ritual – Oil on stretched canvas
anniej.5@outlook.com

Solstice Ritual by Annie Jones



Wise Words from the Old Crone

The Winter Solstice is a time when the wheel turns towards the light once more. From this day onwards, the days really do begin to get longer, lighter and warmer. That is not to say there are no storms ahead, that will always be, but we can use our inner strength to overcome these trip hazards.

Yule time is a magical celebration and has been honoured by our ancestors for millennia. A time of power, hope and protection. A great time for a simple spell of action, a spell for courage, confidence and optimism.

Some people feel only the negative, We have all heard them, the moaners and conspiracy theorists. They are the fearful ones, the unfulfilled, the often unhappy ones. We have all been there at some point and may well be again. This spell can help.

This Midwinter spell can actually be repeated and performed at any time of year easily, because all you need to do is to adjust the wording and if you are using any, possibly the ingredients, to suit the season, but it is now that I hope it will be the most potent. It can be performed inside or outside, day or night, as a solitary or in company, and at any moon phase. Remember a spell is an adventure, an experience, a way to communicate to the Universe, a method of asking for assistance to help forward your hopes and wishes and calm your worries and concerns.

You don't need to make this spell a huge ritual, a complicated ceremony, a traditional practice, a sacrificial rite. Your spell does not have to be a complicated thing in fact I find the simpler the better. You don't even need any tools or herbs, candles or incense. You just need to employ your wholeness, your soul.

Now having said all that, I find I can't do a spell without some kind of flame be it burning a spell/affirmation, a fire pit, a chimenea or just a candle, that's just me, I like something on which to focus my concentration. All you need is to find a time and a place where you can be away from noise, interruptions and disturbance.

Sit or stand quietly, and breathe deeply for a few moments. I find it helps to close my eyes. Consider your hopes, your wishes, your dreams and even your anxieties and qualms. Let these emotions come to the fore, embrace them all. Make a mental list and repeat them in your head, silently, even, if you feel brave, state them out loud.

It is OK to dwell on all of them, even the negative emotions you feel because you are accepting them and welcoming that acceptance. Remember, we all have positive and negative emotions. It just depends on you which you want to bring to the fore and which you want to suppress.

When you feel the time is right, open your eyes and breathe as normal. Offer up your thank, gratitude and appreciation of all the Universe has helped you with over the past year.

Your Winter Solstice Spell is complete. Blessed Be

The Old Crone

Spellworking with Snow

Since it is becoming winter and many people are thinking about snow, or the lack thereof, I thought that I would put together a short primer on Snow Magic for all of you. I know that there are both lovers and haters of the cold white flakes, and most of us react to its presence based on what is going on in our life at the time, so I've included spells for bringing a little snow to your neighbourhood if you feel the lack of it and, conversely, sending the snow a bit farther away if it threatens to ruin an upcoming event. I've also outlined one version of how to use snow for banishing unwanted energy or personal behaviours that you no longer wish to continue.

With snow, keep in mind that you really can have too much of a good thing and that you should always be careful what you wish for. Onwards now with a little sprinkling of snow magic...

Feeling like you could use a day off of school or just something pretty to look at out the window while you cling to your warm hearth? Try invoking some regional snows.



Bringing Down the Snow

Ingredients: an ice cube and a sharpish knife

Begin with the ice cube in your less dominant hand and the knife in your dominant hand. Shave the knife across the top of the ice cube so that you get a bunch of flakes (like trying to scrape butter off of a stick that is still too hard to spread on toast.)

Now that you have the hang of it, begin in the east (element of air for most) and work, scraping those icy, snowy flakes to the ground around you, in a clockwise circle until you reach the point of manifestation in the north and then complete the circle.

While doing this action say (out loud or to yourself):

“I make manifest the snows of winter, a bright white powder, decorating the world with its insulating beauty, bringing joy to my world. I invoke the snows upon the mantle of the Earth goddess, a blanket upon her, though white and cool, resulting in less than six inches (one foot, two feet.) May these snows come down here at my locale within the next twelve (twenty-four, thirty-six) hours.” (Now fill your hand with ice shards and toss them before you three times, saying....) “I invoke thee, the snows of heaven, once, twice, thrice.”

And now believing in your heart that it will truly be so, say: “This is my will, so mote it be.” Repeat the phrase three times and know that it is done.

Been waiting ages to attend that concert you've bought tickets for, but the weather man says he's placing his bets on a snowmagedon that day? Put your will into action and send those squalls 50 or 100 miles to the east.

Warding Off Impending Snows

(This is the most difficult snow magic to effect, as you against the whole of nature is never an easy win.)

Ingredients: mirror, ice cube, pot of boiling water, peppermint or cinnamon oil

Get the water boiling on the stove. While it is at a rolling boil do the following:

With your less dominant hand, hold a small mirror (no bigger than 9×12) slightly tilted over the far side of the pot so that in its reflection you will catch a view of anything you put into the pot. **DO NOT BURN YOURSELF ON THE STEAM.**

Grab the ice cube in your dominant hand, notice the feeling of the cold air rising off of the ice cube and the hot air rising off of the pot.

Say aloud, with strength of will: "The cold snows shall stay away from here in this time or in this place, for the steamy hot winds of the atmosphere shall render them weak and they shall dissipate before arrival. They are cast away into the other realm before they may ever take hold, and we are released from the clutching grasp of winter's snows for these next few days in the here and now."



While saying this be certain to place the ice cube, gently, into the pot as you are saying the part about being cast away. You must catch the image of this in the mirror as you say your magical words. Know as you do this that the cool air of the ice cube is becoming one with the hot steam of the boiling water and is taking on its warmth.

Turn off the burner. Take the mirror and, with your chosen oil upon your fingertips, draw a banishing pentagram on the surface of the mirror. Here it is not how much oil you use but how much intent you put into the drawing. You should say as you draw it: "I banish from my home and my region this impending snow storm, that it may pass around us and be swept off by warmer air. Thus as I say it, we shall be without snow in the coming days here in this time and this place."

When you have finished the pentagram and its surrounding circle, touch your finger to the center of it with the oil and say: "Snow be gone from my sight, you shall not upon my sills alight, thus I complete my magic rite. It is done, so mote it be."

Know that it is done. Place the mirror facing outward in a prominent window, preferably in the direction from which the storm was meant to arrive. Leave it for up to 7-10 days. Always clean and smudge it when finished using the spell.

If you find the snow not returning when it should, release this spell by cleaning the mirror and drawing an invoking pentagram to winter weather and counter with the spell listed above.

Something in your lifestyle, mindset or circumstances getting you down and you feel like it is high time to finally be rid of it? Wish there was a simple spellworking that could be done with those dreadful piles of the cold, white stuff outside? Let's melt that muck away with a little intention and good old-fashioned waiting.

Using Snow for Banishing Unwanted Things

Ingredients: sticky snow, basic sculpting talent, sunlight or higher temperatures, patience

Think hard on the life attribute or habit that you wish to banish. NEVER BANISH PEOPLE. Write some basic words that clearly state your intent. Avoid using words such as no and not (ie. I will not drink alcohol) as the universe can sometimes ignore negatives and thus give you an opposite result. (Instead say: I banish forever from my life the urge to drink alcohol.) For this example spell we will use "bad luck" as our attribute to banish.

Go outside and in the firm, sticky snow form a shape that resembles this unwanted attribute in some way, for bad luck you could make an "X" or "Hex" mark, or perhaps a "B" for bad luck. (For alcohol you could shape a beer bottle or wine glass.) If it is a BIG problem you can make your shape bigger, like a snowman, if it is a smaller problem make it small like the size of a pie plate or a pizza.

As you sculpt the offending image think of the problem that you wish to be rid of. Think of how it affects you in your daily life.

When you are finished sculpting, place your hands (bare hands work best) on the image and begin breathing deeply, drawing in energy from the world around you and imagining the problem leaving your life effortlessly just as this snow will melt away.

Keep this knowledge of your problem melting in your mind and place banishing energy into the sculpture while saying (aloud or to yourself): "This negative attribute, so troubling and unwanted, is placed in these pure snows and thus cleansed from my life. Solid now it may be, though as the snows melt I declare this (state the attribute here ie. bad luck, alcoholism etc...) will soften and wash gently away into the flow of Mother Earth and never return to my life again. Sun bleach its existence from my life and the lives of my loved ones. Heat release it from form and purify me. By the power of the tides and rains, by the powers of the Sun and Moon. I say it is released. This is my will, so mote it be." (say this last line 3 times) Say also: "It is done! Blessed Be."

Be patient and in the coming days feel this attribute slowly being released from your life, from your mind and from your heart. Know that as the snow melts it WILL take away that which you have entrusted to it and when that snow is gone be sure to do another spell, such as a simple candle spell, to replace the void in your life with a positive attribute instead.

Note that you can use this same approach by just taking a squirt bottle of water, or other liquid, and writing an attribute/behaviour into a snow pile or embankment and waiting for the spring thaws to wash it away.

(You may, of course, speed the process by pouring boiling water on the snow to have it gone and done. But, I urge you to trust in the power of your magic and the natural cycles of nature.)

There are so many more simple and magical ways to use winter and its weather for enhancing the quality and enjoyment of our lives. I hope that you will all develop an appreciation for the possibilities and design some winter-time magic for yourselves, from a place of balance and integrity.

Now, where did I put that jar of bat-shaped cocoa marshmallows again?

Vera Nadine



Hello! My name is Magda and I'm a graphic designer/illustrator/landscape architect Witch from Poland. In my art and craft I am inspired by nature, Wheel of The Year and the Seasons. I love gardening, taking care of my houseplants, spending time in nature, and living my active life by running, hiking in the mountains, and performing multiple sport activities so I can take care of my physical health as well as mental health.

[Instagram.com/the.wildest.journal](https://www.instagram.com/the.wildest.journal) www.behance.net/thewildestjournal



Black Ribbons

Black ribbons
lead me to you,
encircling my hands;
weaving memories;
snagging on life events
as stumbling blocks
in life's dense forestry.

I search for your voice
but discern only silence
mute nuances of you
are swishes of leaves
comforting balm on cold days
medicinal tinctures
in the hands of the sick.

Your tenacity
lines edges of me,
embroidering swaying skirts
whilst I dance
bohemian hinterlands
bearing feral fringes
with a wild, streak-like glee.

I'm an animal mourner,
teethed and clawed.

Seeking further plains,
tassels dangle from branches;
reaching up, I eye you
in twisted, obsidian knots
aiming to work free
from natural nooses,
locating easy breathing holes.

Yet Fate has come.

I note her dressed
in sombre, funereal black
spinning a silvery coin
in stretched timelessness;
its sides glimmer in moonlight.

She has been patiently powerful:
a goddess donning a charcoal suit
comes to claim you today.

Twittering of birds
hunting for blackberries,
laces nostalgia
whilst I remember you
amidst childhood detritus;
building photo blocks
enshrined by your touch;
each enlightened by your presence.
An aura glows from inside
the gilded frame,
a golden placenta
linked back to you.

Flee, sweetest angel
find your soulmate
in darkly rich tapestry;
he awaits you
stitched into lining
like a cocooned cloud,
nestled into heaven.

I know you are there,
re-found in his celestial hold.

He has you now.
Perpetually.
Two favoured playmates
perform silly jigs;
retell old jokes,
waltzing on starlit plains
as you did as younger lovers.

No longer performing,
I hold tight to clapping grief,
letting it dissipate to black ribbons:
my woe resounds in coal rivulets
lost within new, brightening days.

Emma Louise Foyster

Rescue Dog and Rosemary

an excerpt from 'Wild Green Memories'

On Saturday, my husband and I drove to a farmer's market down where I grew up. It's a bit of a distance but the produce is grown on the farm. I always drive when we head to the Southern End. As soon as we leave the city behind, it's like my shoulders relax, my jaw unclenches and I can breathe deeply. Growing up I never felt like I belonged in the rural community but now that I am middle aged, I find myself making random reasons that I need to travel those backroads.

Before I can enter the market, the open space portion of the store is filled with the pinks, reds, and purples of annual flowers. Then the green heady scents of herbs entices me. I picked up a small Rosemary plant and placed it in my cart.

Tomatoes, apricots, squash, candy onions, baby spinach, potatoes and lettuces all go in beside the rosemary. At the counter, we add a few croissants, whoopie pies and some drinks.

Back at home, I placed the rosemary on the porch so it could soak up the sun. I might create an herb garden alongside my mint patch but that has yet to be decided.

Later, the next day, my old rescue dog and I sit on the porch. It's the anniversary of her adoption. She's been with us for four years. Her life before us was filled with neglect and cruelty as stated on the intake form from humane law enforcement. She had spent her first nine years, chained, outside with no access to shelter. As she falls asleep beside me, I pick up the rosemary and study the leaves.

Beyond the noticeable aromatic scent is the idea that this plant reminds me of the ocean. Swirly lacy green slippery plants surfacing and making their way to the beach. The rosemary clusters together all in one section like the fronds of seaweed that have been interlaced and pushed together by the rhythmic motion of water.

The underside of the leaves are a pale green almost white. The vein of the leaf is perfectly straight down the middle creating two symmetrical sides. The venules create a criss cross pattern that seems to replicate the patterning of lizard scales. Frosted lizard scales like snowflakes that have crystallized on an old window pane.

As I begin petting my dog I also begin petting the leaves of the rosemary. I start from the bottom, touching the soil and slowly caress upwards in a way that tickles my hand. The oils of the plant release and erupt over my hands.

My dog twitches her nose then moves her one ear. She pushes up her head and begins sniffing in all directions. She then glances at the plant in my hand, looks at me and I gently bring it to her nose. She takes in a small huff of a breath then chuffs out an exhale. Her next few breaths are taken while her nose is surrounded by the rosemary plant. She sniffs and stares intently at a place and space that I can not see. At once she appears ancient and omniscient. She's the holder of collected stories of her wild kin. The rosemary stirred a memory, a recollection of a past that she can hear when the wind carries the distant call. She pauses and seems to collect her thoughts as though she will later draw upon this scent and this moment. The rosemary has opened up to my old rescue dog. This plants story, or perhaps message, is for her and I am the honored witness to a form of language without words, or sounds.

Carrie Anderson

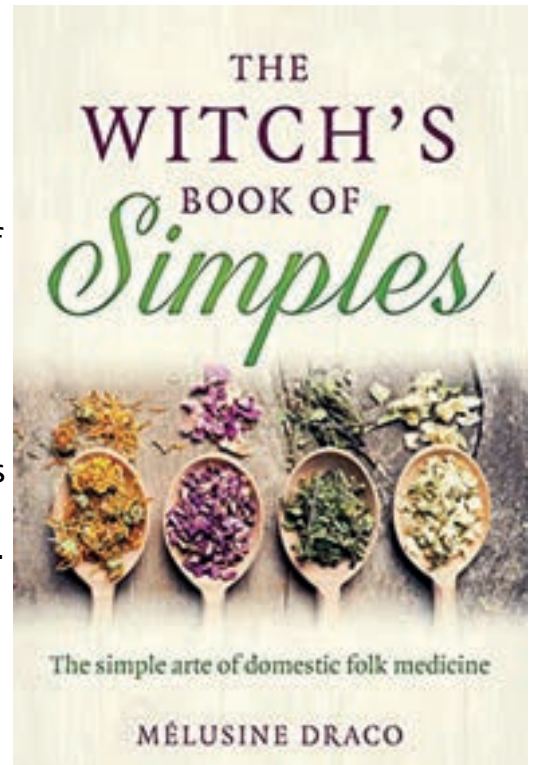
What We're Reading

The Witch's Book of Simples by Melusine Draco

A simple is a herbal home remedy made from one herb (plant matter). Melusine Draco introduces the history of simples by extensively using excerpts and quotes from historical documents, books, and receipts.

The opening of the book uses this wonderful description of a simple:

A Simple is a philtre derived from a single herb and was an important element among the natural resources of the parish-pump witch, wise-women and cunning-folk. Simples are common kitchen 'stuff' that has been handed down through generations of country people in the form of family cures for everyday ailments. Or as William Fernie wrote in his *Herbal Simples* (1897)



A Witch's Book of Simples begins by covering the historical use of simples. Draco then moves into how the reader can set up their own herb garden (indoor or outdoor). The next chapter discusses how to prepare, store and the different methods of creating simples.

The bulk of the book contains a thorough and detailed description of each herb. The entry for each herb begins with the scientific name and then the common name. Historical and anecdotal information is given before a brief overview of how to use the herb as a simple. The magical use of the herb is reviewed along with any superstitions or folklores. Finally, Melusine Draco ends each herb by connecting it to her own personal anecdotes. There is a brief chapter listing common ailments and the corresponding simple.

Included in the Witch's Book of Simples is an extensive list of recommended reading, again, all historical texts.

There's a handful of herbs that are primarily used when making simples, quite literally making this one of the simpler methods of creating herbal concoctions. If you are interested in traditional witchcraft or cunning magic, or if you're a kitchen witch looking to expand your herbal knowledge then this book is geared towards you.

Reviewed by Carrie Anderson

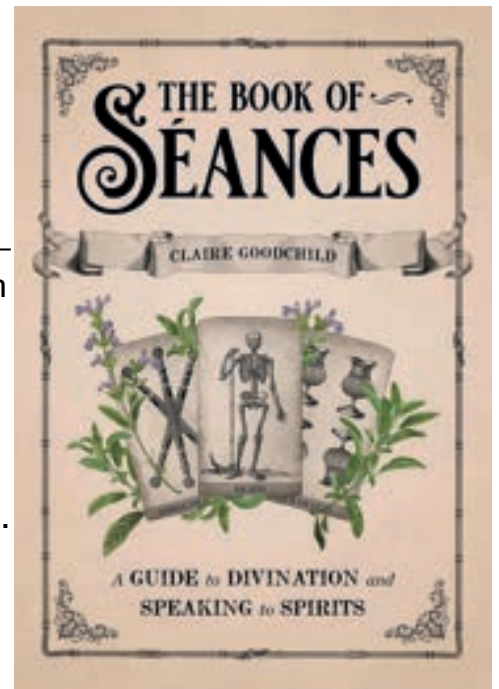
The Book of Seances: A Guide to Divination and Speaking to Spirits by Claire Goodchild

An absolutely gorgeously designed book. Peppered throughout with collage like images that are reminiscent of Victorian floriography and anatomical drawings.

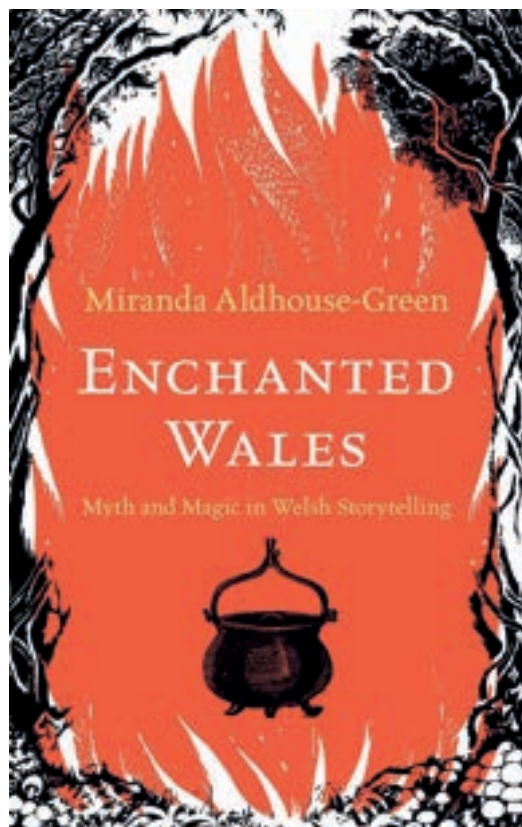
Claire Goodchild doesn't immediately dive into the different forms of divination one can use in order to speak to spirits. Instead, she slowly introduces the reader to Spiritualism, death and afterlife, the Fox sisters and divination as a whole.

The bulk of the book details a variety of ways to bridge the veil and engage with the spirit world. The thoroughness of how one can divine with each method, like dice, bibliomancy, automatic writing and spirit boards, turns this from a mere "how-to" book into what could be considered a veritable textbook. If I were to teach a course on speaking to spirits then this would be the book I would recommend.

The sections of methods for divination give an overview of the process, the paranormal story and history, how to practice, helpful tips and two full pages of record keeping of your practice. I borrowed this book from my local library but it is definitely one that I would want in my own permanent home library.



Reviewed by Carrie Anderson



Enchanted Wales: Myth and Magic in Welsh Storytelling

Deep dive in to Welsh Mythology – this beautiful little book takes us on an exploration of the Mabinogion and its connections to religion and folklore. If you're interests lie in the mysterious valleys and hills of Wales, in the ever spinning wheel of storytelling, or mining through the mists of mythology in general, this is a wonderful resource to aid your studies or to dip in to its various chapters.

With beautiful illustrations throughout, this delightfully tactile hardback edition is a lovely book to add to any mythology collection.

Published by Calon Books
www.uwp.co.uk/calon RRP £18.99

Reviewed by Bekki Milner

The Divine Moon Moot

Based in Great Barr near Birmingham

We're a friendly bunch of Pagan folk who gather to celebrate all of the Sabbats in a beautiful woodland setting. We also host pub moots and try to run at least one trip out a year

Check out our Facebook page "COA Divine Moon Moot" for our events or email anniej.5@outlook.com for more information



Claire Valentine
ARTIST

A bronze sculpture of a figure with antlers, standing in a dark, forest-like setting with a tree and a bird. The figure is the central focus, with a dark, shadowy figure in the background holding a lantern. The overall mood is mystical and dark.

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scenescapes and sculptures
to transform your mind
from the mundane to the
magical

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