

Crows Feet Press



WITCH



Samhain



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WITCH Magazine

Dearest Witches,

Here we are, at issue 46.

I have been blessed to edit this magical magazine for a full year now, joining you all on a cycle through the seasons and celebrations we share on this beautiful earth. Now that this cycle is complete, it feels like the right time to hand the magazine fully back into Bekki's keeping. I'm really excited to see what she will curate for us all over the course of next year!

For Samhain, we have teamed up with Spooky Isles to bring you fascinating articles on the Silent Supper, Witches in Newcastle and Women of Witchcraft.

We also meet feminist, witchy clothing brand Spark, learn about the Hexerei and find out more about the magickal art of cord cutting. Ewan Cameron also talks us through normalising the Sabbats, and what that means for those seeking to follow a pagan structure in their year.

Helen JR Bruce - Editor

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Pauline Breen

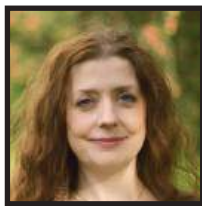
Pauline is a Priestess of Brigid. She lives in Ireland. She is the author of 3 books on Brigid that showcase her many faces.

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Raven Digitalis

Originally trained in Georgian Witchcraft, Raven has been an earth-based practitioner since 1999, a Priest since 2003, a Freemason since 2012, and an empath all of his life. He holds a degree in cultural anthropology from the University of Montana, co-operated a nonprofit Pagan Temple for 16 years, and is also a professional Tarot reader, editor, card-carrying magician, and animal rights advocate. www.ravendigitalis.com www.facebook.com/ravendigitalis www.instagram.com/ravendigitalis



Danu Forest

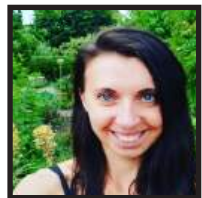
With thanks to Moon Books for permission for the extract of Danu's upcoming book, Cerridwen, Keeper of the Cauldron. Danu is a traditional Celtic wisewoman, living in the South West of England.

www.danuforest.co.uk



Iris Heurtaux

Iris Heurtaux is a French amateur artist who dabbles in poetry and first experienced magic through works of fiction before she decided she wanted to become acquainted with it in real life, and is still in the process of figuring it out. Meanwhile, she uses the resources that she finds as inspiration for her works.



Oak Canessa-Pollard

Oak is a professional Storyteller who is passionate about all things Folklore. Living in Sussex, she loves nothing more than roaming the South Downs seeing signs of magic. Running her folkloric witch Instagram is her favourite pastime, plus a ritual or three.

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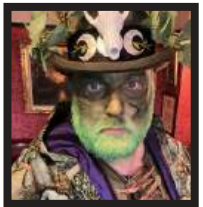
Lyssa Greywood

Lyssa Greywood is a queer writer living in Stoke-on-Trent. While they work as a games journalist, they are also working on a thesis exploring the performance of gender and sexuality in LARP at Manchester Metropolitan University. Alongside writing poetry and attending LARP events many miles away from their home, Lyssa enjoys playing cosy games and has been a practicing Pagan Witch for nearly 15 years. Their two cats, Apollo and Calypso, are steadfast companions throughout their journey to live forward.



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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Ewan Cameron

Ewan is one of the Greenmen of Glastonbury and has followed the Greenman since 2020. He is a retired Army Lieutenant Colonel, Director in the NHS, Morris Dancer with Wild Moon Morris and Pagan. Ewan has just started his Greenman journey and seeks to help preserve our pagan traditions in and around Somerset.
Wild Moon Morris Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/wildmoonmorris/>
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Fauna Raine

Fauna Raine is a professional reader & healer specializing in Tarot, Palmistry & Crystal Healing and offers private sittings, workshops and mentoring. Fauna also attends many Pagan and Holistic festivals and events throughout the year. You can find more of her work on Facebook at www.facebook.com/Faunaraine or contact her through email Fauaraine@gmail.com



Sammy Bass



Val Wilson



Gretchen E Swank



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



Melanie Webb

Melanie Webb is a writer and lover of all things nature-based and magical. She lives in the Wiltshire countryside with her wife, her black Lab, Winnie and her rabbit, Arthur.



Deborah Maudlin

I have had poetry in a number of magazines and wrote a poetry book called A Touch Of Pagan. I write posts for a local shop about paganism, healing etc.



Beverley White

I'm Beverley, I am a celtic and green witch, with over 20 years experience. I currently work for an eco friendly company that produce fair trade organic products and publish independent artists work for clothing and giftware. I am also writing a book on green witchcraft in the urban environment and will be producing a podcast very soon.



Jeff Turner

I am from a small village on the North East coast of England called Whitburn and I have recently retired which now affords plenty of time to indulge myself. Spending time outdoors and stepping off the concrete is a fundamental part of my wellbeing, Pagan beliefs and my connection to Gaia. I am an amateur naturalist and committed conservationist and am rarely seen without my binoculars constantly on the lookout for birds and wildlife.



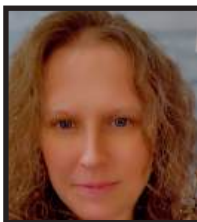
Richard C Hick

Rich is a successful business consultant working throughout engineering and manufacturing, a father and a veteran endurance athlete. Spiritually, he is wholly diverse and acceptant of truth wherever it may come, an eternal student, eclectic witch, freemason, and hermetic, drawing from a rich web of traditions to form his daily practice. He lives with his wife in beautiful and ancient Derbyshire, with his dogs, cats and rabbits.



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. theoldcrone5@gmail.com



Renae Craven

I am a pagan practitioner & priestess. I embrace and respect all ways.



Auset Gypsy

James Jacob Pierrri studied Ayurvedic Medicine, Anatomy & Physiology and Herbalism, graduating from The Florida College of Natural Health & Holistic Sciences and also studied Aromatherapy at The AVEDA Institute NYC. James holds national certification as massage therapist, Yoga instructor and Usui Reiki practitioner He is the author of the internationally published AusetGypsy Tarot & Book Set. www.asetgypsy.com



Ania Singh- Front cover art

Based in Krakow, Ania Singh is an illustrator focusing on the intricate digital and ink drawings. Her art explores folk stories, fairytales, and magical themes, blending dark elements with a touch of whimsy. Her illustrations have been showcased in solo and group exhibitions, as well as featured in books and magazines.



MAMAN BRIGITTE

The wheel turns and brings us all to the dark part of the year. At Samhain, darkness is entrusted upon us, and we have little choice but to give space for the shadows of the night to reign as we await fresh sprouts of life at Imbolc. Imbolc, is the Sabbat generally most associated with Brigid, the triple goddess of healing, poetry and smithcraft. However, at Samhain, during the long dark nights, Brigid reveals another side to her, that is not so well known, that of a dark goddess, Maman Brigitte.

All that we celebrate at Imbolc with Brigid; the returning light, the inner child, the excitement and mystery of new life is reversed at Samhain with Maman Brigitte. With Maman Brigitte we acknowledge our shadows and their effect in our lives, the wise alchemical mistress of the night and the presence of the deathly otherworld. Maman Brigitte literally means Mother Brigid. She is a deity of the Vodou Pantheon that was birthed in Haiti during the slave trade. She is the physical manifestation of Brigid of Ireland and Oya of Western Africa. Together, in their common roles as protectresses of their peoples caught up in slavery, they fused to become Maman Brigitte. Maman Brigitte, although a vodou deity, is arguably half-Irish.

During the slave trade that started with the Spanish occupation of Haiti, Western Africans were forcibly removed from their home in Yoruba, now modern-day Benin, Nigeria and Togo. Benin was quite advanced in art, textiles and warfare which attracted many visitors, including visitors from Ireland. Some Irish people may have been in Benin during that time and got caught up in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The Yoruba people were forcibly removed from their homeland in Western Africa to tend the booming plantations of Haiti. The Yoruba people similarly to the Irish Celtic people followed an oral spiritual tradition. They also venerated the mother goddess. They worshipped spirits and deities in their homeland that evolved to take on a new role for them now that they were an enslaved people in Haiti. Dissimilarly to Irish women at that time, Yoruba women were independent. They had their own money from trading at markets.

They served their communities as priestesses, healers, chiefs, negotiators and mediators. They were more vocal than Irish women. It is this feisty spirit that became quite synonymous with Maman Brigitte.

In their shared experience of enslavement, the Irish and the Yoruba people came into close contact. If Irish people had not got caught up in the abductions in Benin, there were other reasons for an Irish presence in Haiti. The Irish poor were sent as indentured servants to the Caribbean. Ireland also sent food, most notably meat, herrings and butter to feed the slaves in the Atlantic Economy. It is highly probable that many Irish travelled to the West Indies on board these ships and had cause to get caught up in the business of slave plantations or voluntarily stay to work alongside the slaveowners on the plantations. In Europe some prisoners of war were sent to places like the Caribbean against their will. Others went to the Caribbean as part of armies or navies. Irish soldiers and sailors fought for France and England on the Caribbean. Priests from Brittany were present in Haiti before its independence in 1804. It goes without saying that Catholic priests would have worshipped Saint Brigid.

Irish people could openly practice their Catholic faith, as Haiti was Catholic under Spanish rule. But this was not the case for the Yoruba people. They had to find away to remain safe and yet remain true to their spirits. Because of this, they had to find a way to camouflage their spirits. Under the cloak of Brigid, they found shelter. To colonising ears, they heard loud devotion to Brigitte, Brigid.

Maman Brigitte embodies both Brigid and Oya. It is from Brigid that we see a maternal, caring presence of Maman Brigitte to her devotees. It is from Oya, that we see the feisty, vocal and tenacious strength of the female character. From both combined, we find a unique dark mother goddess that we call Maman Brigitte.

In 1804 Haiti became the first black republic to be born from a successful slave revolt. Part of that success can be attributed to Maman Brigitte who featured in the practice of Vodou that ended slavery.

In the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution more than 10,000 Haitian immigrants went to New Orleans, Louisiana. When they arrived, they joined an existing African diaspora who were predominantly from Senegal. Unlike in Haiti, Voodoo in America couldn't flourish. In America there was a stricter social system and there was a higher white to black ratio.

Haitian immigrants arrived in Louisiana with Maman Brigitte in their spiritual practice. Here, her cult would grow as Haitians came into contact with significant numbers of Irish immigrants who possibly compounded the Brigid aspect of Maman Brigitte. Three significant waves of Irish immigrants came steadily across the Atlantic Ocean to Louisiana.

What's interesting is the common experience shared by women from Haiti and Ireland in New Orleans. Women did much better for themselves here than they did in their homelands, but the reverse was true for the men. With the agricultural scene out of the way and with the elevated societal position they had experienced under the reign of the Catholic church, they crumbled. Many took to the drink and either died from alcoholism or deserted their wives. The women on the other hand, fared better working in marketplaces or as domestics.

Maman Brigitte is a fascinating spirit that seems to represent the opposite to what Brigid represents in Ireland. In Ireland she is associated with the returning light. She presides over lost souls in life as both goddess and saint and takes them under her mantle. Maman Brigitte, conversely, is associated with death. She presides over lost souls, but in the deathly realm. She gathers up those who wander aimlessly between worlds and gives them a place of belonging. The home of Maman Brigitte is in the cemetery where it is said she keeps guard and protects graves of the deceased. She is associated with the Screech owl who calls out into the dead of the night to alert her to wrongdoings.

There are also many similarities between Brigid of Ireland and Maman Brigitte. The goddess Brigid and Maman Brigitte are served by priestesses and priests. Both have been blended with Catholicism. The goddess Brigid and Maman Brigitte have a partner. Bres is the partner of the Celtic goddess, Baron Samedi is the partner of Maman Brigitte. Both are blended versions of themselves. It is my opinion that Saint Brigid comes from the goddess Brigid and I believe Maman Brigitte to have come from the collective Brigid of Ireland (goddess and Saint). Both Brigid and Maman Brigitte are linked to fire; Brigid as goddess of fire, her fire tended to by her priestesses, her fire tended to by her nuns and Brigitte with her fire peppers and rum. Both represent death and rebirth even if one is

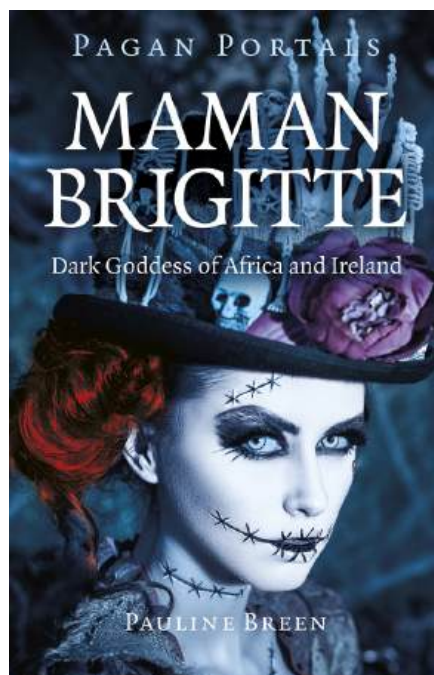
more dominant in one than the other. Maman Brigitte represents death that is inevitable if there is to be a rebirth, and Brigid is the rebirth after death. Brigid was the original keener in Ireland with the death of her son Ruadan. She was also a psychopomp in Celtic mythology, meaning she overshadowed departed souls to the Otherworld. Brigid represents new life at Imbolc. Maman Brigitte also symbolised new life through their experiences of displacement in Haiti and emigration in New Orleans.

Both the goddess and Maman Brigitte are venerated at Samhain. Finally, communication is linked to both. Brigid as goddess of poetry is linked to all things oratory and is the muse of poets, storytellers, philosophers and for those working with the written and spoken word. Conversely, Maman Brigitte is frequently depicted as having her mouth sealed shut. This can possibly symbolise the repressed feminine voice in Haiti and Ireland in a misogynistic culture pertinent to both at the time of her origins. Lillith Dorsey interprets it as a loving presence where no words are necessary which is a fitting depiction of a mother goddess.

Maman Brigitte may be found on the other side of the world, in a very different culture to our own but she still bears a striking resemblance to our own mother goddess Brigid. No better time than at Samhain to acknowledge the darker, lesser known side of Brigid, through Maman Brigitte.

Pauline Breen

Pauline Breen is the author of 'This is Brigid- Goddess & Saint of Ireland' (Self-published). She is the author of 'Maman Brigitte' by Moon Books which is out November 26th 2024 and 'Brigantia' by Moon Books which is out July 27th 2025.





Poppets for Banishing Magick

Welcome, Autumn! We love you so! The signs of the time are making themselves aware with every falling leaf, every wilting plant, every rush of chill. In the Northern Hemisphere, the archetypal Holly King – he who rules the Underworld and the cold months from Midsummer to Midwinter – is making himself more and more known with every passing day. Our Lord requires personal sacrifice; it's the nature of the season. A highly successful way to sacrifice one's inner torments and hindrances is to construct a poppet.

Poppets are dolls that either represent a person or are amalgam figures of certain energetic forces.

The most common example of a poppet is a Vodou doll. While common thought may have us believe that poppets are exclusively used for harm, these magickal representations can be utilized in an occult or spiritual sense for any intention under the sun. In the past, magickal friends and I have constructed poppets for healing, for mending conflict, for attracting abundance, for breaking ties, and even worry dolls to help ease the mind.

Poppets constructed for magick focused on banishing are perfect for the Autumnal Equinox and Samhain. The season is shifting into its death cycle. More specifically, a poppet focused on your own harmful qualities, as well as anything unwanted in your life and needs to go away, is perfect magick for

this time of year because it's the solar waning tide. Think about any personal hindrances or blockages surrounding health, happiness, finances, emotions, social relations, and so on. You'll want to put representations of these hindrances into your poppet for banishing and laying to rest.

Working with poppets is a type of sympathetic magick: a "this represents this" intentional operation. The dolls are the most powerful when you sew and construct them entirely on your own. Try cutting out two equal-sized cloth figures from an old piece of clothing or fresh black fabric. Stitch the pieces together (they don't have to be pretty) and leave the "head" open so you can stuff it with items to burn or bury — just make sure everything is eco-friendly.

The most obvious thing to put in these poppets are fallen leaves, as to directly attune to with the "releasing" energy of the seasonal shift.

I prefer to stuff the little arms and legs with these. The body of the poppet can include anything that represents that which you seek to banish, including written petitions and declarations. You should also include clippings your hair and fingernails, as well as a drop of blood (menstrual or finger-pricked), which will successfully bind the doll to the darker aspects of yourself that you're seeking to leave behind.

There are endless creative ways you can symbolically stuff your poppet. Be specific in your intentions, knowing that the banishing doll is for your personal growth and for the betterment of those around you as a result. To give the reader a handful of ideas, please allow me to give examples of various items I have used to stuff my personal banishing poppets:

Hair, blood, fingernail and toenail clippings (to connect the poppet to oneself), herbs used for banishing (like poplar, nettles, chili peppers, black pepper, garlic, valerian, clove, belladonna, mandrake, etc.), matches (for the sulfur, which is used for exorcising evil), black salt and black sand, snakeskin, dead bugs and fragments of animal bones (death energy), dust from a windowsill or corner of the house, fallen plant detritus, photographs or handwriting of those whose influence I need to release, deer ticks (to represent energy leeches, astral or otherwise), snotty and teary tissues used after crying, a penny (for being feeling broke or brassic), pages of symbols and sigils, and so on.

You may also choose to create a number of poppets for different issues or ailments, be they for yourself or other people (however, it is wise to gain the permission of another before doing banishing work on their behalf).



If you are working with a Coven or multiple practitioners, each member may create individual banishing poppets to be burned in a group bonfire, such as on Samhain, or you may choose to create one enormous “group poppet” to rid the group itself of unwanted energies as a whole.

Because Autumnal banishing poppets are rooted in creativity and a deep desire to purge oneself of the unwanted, practitioners should feel free to experiment, get artistic, and take to the sky – or, the flame, as it were. Scry in those burning embers (pyromancy),

mind the fire, and smile alongside the Holly King as that which you banish is licked and transformed!

If you choose to bury your poppet instead, try holding a mini funeral, giving respect for the purpose these energies served in your life, and declare why it's time to fully let them go.

However you choose to rid yourself of the poppet and its energies, be sure to follow up by filling yourself up with light-based energy as the days progress, particularly following Yule, and especially during the waxing moon. The Winter Solstice is the time to embrace divine light, allowing the antithesis of the poppet's energy to fill us with renewal, healing, and direction. Happy casting!

Raven Digitalis

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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.

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Cerridwen Keeper of the Cauldron

Many of us will have heard of the Welsh goddess Cerridwen, especially as a goddess of witches, potions and the initiation of the visionary Welsh bard Taliesin. But what is lesser known is her fascinating history. By taking a look at what remains of the source materials we have about her in Medieval Welsh literature we may find she has roots going back far further than we would ever have guessed. Once she was far wilder, and more dangerous, a goddess not of bards and witches, but overseeing the journey into death and beyond.

The tale of Cerridwen is tightly bound up with that of the magical Welsh bard Taliesin, who was both a mythical figure and at some point, an actual historical poet as well. In their tale, a boy known as Gwion is charged by the enchantress Cerridwen, who lives beside Bala Lake in North Wales, to assist her in a spell. She gathers herbs and other ingredients to make a special brew for her son who is known as Morfran 'great crow' and Afagddu 'utter darkness'. Morfran is so ugly he has no place in the world, but with this brew, Cerridwen intends to give him the gift of Awen- divine inspiration. With the Awen he will become all knowing and all wise and have the gift of magic.

Cerridwen charges the boy Gwion to watch over the fire and the great cauldron where this potion is being brewed for a year and a day. However, just

as the potion becomes ready, it boils over and burns Gwion, with three drops landing on his thumb. Gwion sucks his burnt thumb and this dispenses the magic of the Awen and the knowledge of all things to Gwion instead of Morfran, and Cerridwen is enraged! She chases him and the two become a hare and a greyhound, creatures of earth, before transforming into a fish and an otter, creatures of the water, and finally a bird and a hawk, creatures of the air, competing the initiations of the Celtic triplicity of earth sea and sky. Finally, Gwion becomes a seed which is eaten by Cerridwen in the form of a hen, and she grows pregnant with him. In time she births him and he is a beautiful baby yet still and enlightened magical soul fully aware and a powerful magician. Cerridwen names him Taliesin, 'radiant brow' as the light of the Awen radiates from him.

In this tale we find traces of a far earlier pattern, of initiations into the three elements of earth sea and sky but also from the Cauldron itself, which has a vast and ancient history in Celtic lore generally as well as in Welsh lore. The Cauldron appears in many tales, and versions of it can be used to feed an infinite amount of people, or return warriors from the dead. A precursor to later stories about the Holy Grail, the cauldron is a symbol of the womb but also of the grave, and an entrance point to the Otherworld.

In the tale of Cerridwen and Taliesin we find the last trace perhaps of a much older story. By the time of the historical Taliesin, the Awen was reduced to a name for poetic inspiration, but was still remembered as something that could help bards utter prophecy and cast magical spells. At this time also in Welsh culture there were the Awenyddion, who would go into ecstatic trances and used the Awen for prophecy and to speak with the voice of the spirits, but these were amongst the ordinary folk, not the courts of the lords and ladies like the bards. By then Christianity had swept across the land and many of the old divinatory and visionary techniques of the pre-Christian beliefs had been wiped out. But clues remained and can still be unpicked today about Cerridwen's true nature.

An important detail is found in the meaning of her name. The name Cerridwen is so old that scholars in the field can disagree and only approximate what it means, but it has to do with shaking and shivering (from the old Welsh Cryd) or is enflamed in some way (from Crait) or to be 'believed' in- someone who speaks true (from Cred) - and 'ben' or 'wen', meaning woman.





I like to think of it as meaning a woman who is shaking and inflamed who speaks the truth- perhaps flushed and trembling from the effects of her visionary brew high on the mountainside, as she utters prophecy and initiates seekers into the mysteries of the spirit world.

Invoking Cerridwen candle prayer

One way to explore all this is to invoke Cerridwen yourself, and explore what she has to teach you. The following is an extract from my latest book, 'Cerridwen Keeper of the Cauldron', (out Nov 24) which can get you started or to deepen what you already do.

Take a pillar candle, and see that you have a safe dedicated place where you can light it regularly until it is burned down and you replace it. You may like to anoint your candle with scented oil or herbs. I like to make my own oil with mugwort steeped for a month in olive oil to call and strengthen my inner vision. I use this to anoint my Cerridwen candle, perhaps placing a circle of dried mugwort and flowers around the candles base in a circle- not because this is ancient practice, but because I like to make her an offering in this way. Sometimes the flowers will be dried rose petals, or lavender, sometimes oak leaves or mistletoe, hazelnuts or whatever I feel drawn to use at the time.

Whenever I do a specific working spell, inner journey or prayer to Cerridwen, I light the candle with a fresh match, and invoke her assistance. Try these words or use you own as you feel:

‘Cerridwen, keeper of the cauldron of
inspiration, I call to you for your guidance
and power
Bless my work here.’

I also like to use a section from one of Taliesin's poems, one called Angar Kyfundawt- commonly known as 'The hostile confederacy' which feels very fitting as an invocation, to call in her Awen...

‘Yr Awen a Ganaf, Or Dwfn y Dygaf’
(‘I sing of the Awen, I bring it from the
deep...’)

I chant and sing this nine times, three for land, three for sea, three for sky, as a simple charm to raise my power and my own Awen for the work. You could chant or say this in Welsh or in English if you prefer, although I encourage you to try it in Welsh, perhaps alternating even which language you use until it feels natural to you.

Spend some time gazing into the flame and enter into a gentle, meditative space, letting yourself reach out to Cerridwen seeking communion and inner vision. Let yourself just be quiet with her for a while and see what comes to you. Pay attention to how you feel in your body and any ideas or symbols which may flash into your mind.

After a while, thank Cerridwen for her assistance, and either proceed with one of the exercises listed later in this book, or continue on with your own magic or creative endeavour.

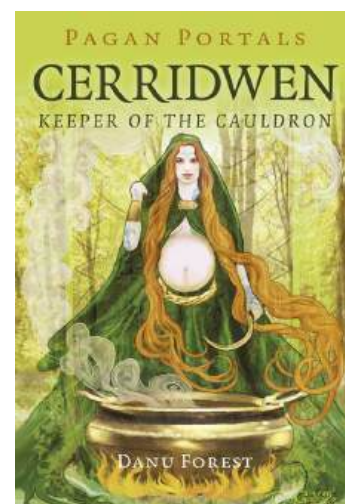
When you are ready, bid her farewell with respect and reverence, using your own words, and snuff out the candle, before closing any sacred space or circle you may have created.

A blessing on your magic and may the gift of Awen be yours!

Danu Forest

With thanks to Moon Books for permission for the extract of Danu's upcoming book, Cerridwen, Keeper of the Cauldron.

Illustrations - Dan Goodfellow.



A Beginner's Rambling

“This year, I am listening to India Rakusen’s podcast The Witch again. It is packed with precious information and thoughts, and it resounds a lot. It brings me closer to that strange path I have been leaning towards. I just discovered Witch Magazine and my inspiration suddenly flows back in me like a spring after a drought has receded. Unfortunately time flies and I get so busy, finishing any submission in time feels like trying to fill the Danaids’ sieve.

As I see October’s torrent flow by I think a lot of the way I want to pay homage to my beloved ones. Listening to India’s inquiries awaken a feeling of recognition. Somehow, my desire to bond with the departed ones in this time of life plays into that resonance.

I am lingering at the threshold, meditating on a shadow that was cast upon us since infancy, a sort of intergenerational haunting that was laid on my siblings and I, a dark feminine silhouette with an innate incline for the destruction of others. Without sharing our experiences at the time, the three of us were terrorised. We had nightmares where the threat always came from an insidious witchy figure. So very early on, there was also the attempt at escaping that figure, or subverting it. We read so many stories back then.

It felt lucky that our generation saw a sudden leap in alternate representations of witchcraft. Those were more reassuring and attractive, and most of all, we started being able to identify to those new images. Now we could dream of becoming the witch instead of waking up terrified at night because we knew we weren’t safe. My desire to enter the witch’s circle is embedded in an ambivalent heritage. Between a curse passed down from my mother’s side of the family, in the shape a death wish, and our mum’s gift of fuelling our imaginations with wonder and fantastical stories.

There is also the uplifting power of the word. I found that literature could summon long gone voices that run through you and transform you, lending you new forces and revealing clearer truths that always had

lurked under the surface of your intuition. Poetry has a magic to it that goes beyond the very words it uses or the seemingly pedestrian form of the printed object. It reaches the mind, the soul, the heart and the subconscious in a single shot! It allows for the past the present and the future to intertwine as we read.

At the moment I am in no place comfortable enough to initiate anything close to a proper ritual. In the small gaps of free time and intimacy I manage to steel away, I reflect. My aspirations are in a state of restrained eagerness and puzzled miscarried expectations. Looking to my ancestors and the lives that spilled into my own (for better or worse) provides much needed anchorage. At the very least I can nourish the feelings I have for them.

Reaching Samhain in a very strange place is an enriching experience too. Here as well the end of the harvesting season and the dwindling warmth of the days is synonymous with paying our respects to the spirits that surround us and the ancestors we are grateful for. Magic is everywhere and echoes in its bewildering variations across peoples whose traditions spring from a foreign soil. A dialogue bursts between times, emotions, places, and different states of tension. This marks the opening of the clasp through which we can embrace what once was and what is, simultaneously.

As I reach conclusion I would like to add a thought. If this is a time when past and present meet, and if this is a time to manifest our love and gratefulness, there may be space for us in this precious moment, to address our past selves and thank them. For all they overcame and built for us, I hope they can hear our voices through the veil, and feel our hard earned courage, and be imbued with the warmth of the better days to come.”

Iris Heurtaux



A DOSE OF FOLKLORE

WITH OAK CANESSA-POLLARD



SPIDERS

At this time of Samhain, as our minds turn inwards, to ourselves and our hearths, we celebrate the darkness of the shadows and the creatures of shadows. Our ancestors were doing the same, casting their eyes at their supplies to get them through the approaching winter, and the illnesses it brought.

Perhaps then, it is not surprising that we find an unsettling marriage of cures and creatures of the shadows. I speak, of course, of spiders. Popular Halloween figures, these eight legged figures of fear were used for centuries as nothing other than a cure for our ailments.

Spiders were predominantly used live, rolled gently in butter “without bruising the creature”, and swallowed whole. This was one of many spider-involving cures against malaria that used to ravage the British Isles in the days before proper irrigation systems. Another involved rolling the spider into a mass and bandaging it with linen to your forehead, while those opposed to swallowing the poor animal wore it live around their neck in a bag.

The prevalence of this folk medicine is based on the symptoms of malaria being shivery, as if a spider was running over you, so the real spider was thought to draw out the symptoms. It is also possible that as spiders catch flies, and malaria was spread by mosquitos, there was thinking that the spider also held the power to destroy the illness.

An even more popular use of spiders though, still used well into the 1800s and early 1900, was their cobwebs. Cobwebs, the gothic symbol brought out in all the shops this time of year have a long history of staunching bleeding. Thought to catch the blood escaping from the wound, spider webs would be carried in the pockets of many a labourer and soldier, to combat any injuries they may have inflicted upon them!

In mythology and folklore of Europe and Britain, spiders are seen as weavers of fate, which may link to the use of their webs in staunching bleeding. In fact, in many stories, spiders are defenders of leaders, where their webs provide protection and evidence of undisturbed safety.

So let us remember, as images and notions of the creatures of the shadows litter our high streets at this deliciously dark time of year, that spiders were, for many more centuries, our animals of aid.

Oak Canessa-Pollard

introducing SPARK

The Spark community is one for anyone who believes in the radical notion that everyone should be treated equally. We wanted to put our money where our loud feminist mouths are, creating apparel and accessories that scream feminism + equality while maintaining quality + sustainability.

We are proud to be a female-founded, female-run business. All with a love of all things witchy as you can probably tell...Having worked in gross masculine-dominated environments before, we wanted to form a wondrous team that was kind, genuine and full of people we actually love being around.



Ethical shopping is important to our community. We promise to manufacture ethical products with humane and fair work practices - absolutely no sweatshops or child labour, ever. We also promise to work sustainably and to keep finding more ways to do so. Whether it's our zero-waste policy, using vegan dyes, or opting for biodegradable packaging, we're all about not being a dick to the planet.

We want to make a difference, and for us, it's about much more than fashion. From the start we wanted Spark to be a force of good, and we are proud to work with the inspiring people at Bloody Good period, a charity that fights for menstrual equality. Every purchase made includes a donation to Bloody Good Period.

We aim to be all inclusive! Hand on our heart, we promise to fight for equality for EVERYONE - no exceptions.



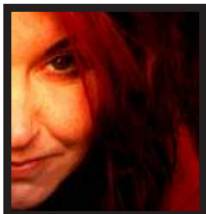
To get some frequently asked questions out of the way: Yes, we love our trans community. Yes, cis men are welcome to wear our stuff too. And no, you're never too old for a slogan tee.

Gather your coven because at Spark, it's always time to haunt the patriarchy. Nothing scares them more than a woman who knows her power (and equal rights, obv's). So, our very own designers have curated an entire collection of witchy, feminist designs to scare the evil, patriarchal spirits away. Ranging from our absolute, all-time bestseller They Can't Burn Us All and the generational fight of We're The Granddaughters of the Witches Your Tried to Burn through our favourite Coven themed designs to a variety of gorgeous cats because every witch deserves a faithful familiar. Our Feminist Myths collection is also a particularly good match for the irreverence of our witches.



Sign up for the Spark newsletter on their website to be in with the chance of winning a FREE T-SHIRT!

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Zoe Oakley

I have always had a passion for being creative, using a colourful and defined approach for self-expression. I work in a variety of styles often incorporating other-worldly archetypes and the life force of the deva world into my work and honor the joy of manifesting the spirits of nature and the primordial roots of life.
<https://oakenspiritart.com/> www.facebook.com/Zoe.Oakley.Oakenspirit/

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Spooky Isles TAKEOVER

Halloween is often seen as the time when the veil between worlds is at its thinnest, giving many a rare chance to glimpse what lies beyond. For those who live in tune with magic, spirits, and old traditions, it's a moment when the wider world briefly turns its gaze towards theirs. For most of the year, discussions about the supernatural, ancient ways, and the unseen stay within niche circles and folklore enthusiasts. But during Halloween, the mainstream joins in, even if only for a short while.

We see newspaper articles on haunted houses, lists of the most 'cursed' properties, and retailers cashing in with "spooky" discounts on all sorts of non-related products.

Yet for those who live these traditions daily, Halloween is much more than a commercial trend. It's a deep celebration of connection, magic, and ancient wisdom rooted in these lands. In the UK and Ireland, Samhain marks the end of the harvest and the start of a new cycle. It is the time when the spirits of the departed are honoured and the boundary between worlds blur. While Halloween is often seen as playful and Americanised, there's a growing recognition of its deeper, older roots.

During the past 13 years at Spooky Isles, we've met many who see Samhain as a sacred time, not a show for cameras or a seasonal novelty. These traditions run deep, connected by a thread stretching into our shared past. The witches and cunning folk of old weren't just dabbling in superstition. They were herbalists, healers and keepers of ancient lore, respected for their wisdom and practical knowledge.

Modern science often echoes these old practices. Take willow bark, used by witches to ease pain long before scientists discovered its active ingredient, salicin, now known as aspirin. This hints at how much old-world wisdom still holds secrets we've yet to uncover.

For many, Samhain is not just about the thinning veil; it's a time to honour ancestors, connect with spirits, and embrace darkness as part of life. It's a living tradition, as real and sacred as any religious ceremony. Some may dismiss witchcraft as superstition, but it's often due to a lack of understanding.

Folk practitioners work with plants, stones, and elements not just because of belief, but because of deep knowledge. They listen to the land and honour its cycles, gaining insights often overlooked by others.

Consider how radio waves once seemed like magic. What we now accept as science would have baffled people centuries ago. There's beauty in this parallel - what may seem mystical today could be common knowledge tomorrow. As science uncovers more mysteries, we might find that the wisdom of witches isn't fanciful but grounded in understanding. Halloween offers a brief moment when the wider world acknowledges the magic and mystery you live with all year long.

Whether through costumes or lighting a candle for the departed, it's a step towards opening minds and hearts to the unseen.

This Halloween, we at Spooky Isles celebrate you. We honour your knowledge, your dedication, and your connection to the old ways. It's not just about spooky stories; it's about embracing a deeper understanding of magic and the world. May this Samhain be a time of reflection, connection, and perhaps a bit of mischief. And may the wisdom of the past continue to guide us as the seasons turn.

David Saunderson

Unlock the Mysteries of Britain & Ireland with Spooky Isles!

For 13 years, Spooky Isles has been your ultimate destination for all things eerie and unexplained. From haunted castles and ghostly legends to the rich history of fairies, witches and folklore, we delve into the spine-chilling tales that make Britain and Ireland so enchantingly creepy.

Ready to wear your love for all things spooky? Visit the Spooky Isles Shop at shop.spookyisles.com and discover our exclusive collection of T-shirts inspired by classic horror, supernatural stories, and dark legends. Show off your passion for the wicked with designs you won't find anywhere else!

Join us at www.spookyisles.com for a thrilling adventure through Britain and Ireland's haunted heritage. Whether you're attending a ghost walk, exploring an ancient ruin, or cosying up for a horror film marathon, don't forget to grab a Spooky Isles T-shirt to wear on your next spine-tingling adventure!



The Silent Supper

Spooky
Isles



October has arrived.

The trees are now presenting bare, bony branches, the pavement is littered with warm red and orange leaves, the air has a crisp, cool bite, and carved pumpkins are beginning to appear on doorsteps and in darkened windows. Although some of us will be reminiscing about the memories of Spring and Summer, the rest of us eagerly await the spookiest day of the year - Halloween.

As many of us prepare for trick-or-treaters or decorating for a Halloween bash, others will prepare to participate in the less theatrical side of this wonderfully ghoulish holiday...

Halloween is synonymous with ghosts, spirits, and communicating with the dead - many people will have toyed around with a Ouija board at one time or another, or even joined in on a ghost hunt, which harkens back to an ancient Celtic celebration originally known as "Samhain". It was believed that during this time the barrier between the living and the dead was at its most fragile, meaning all manner of ghosts and ghouls could crossover into our realm; hence why we carve scary faces into large gourds; an attempt to deter these otherworldly creatures - but what if you wanted to connect with them?

A Silent Supper is a ritual whereby you prepare and host a silent dinner party to remember ancestors or family members who have passed away. The concept of a Silent Supper is exactly what it sounds like - a sup-

per conducted in silence. Silence is a way to pay our respects to the dead; we've all probably participated in a moment or minute of silence in honour of those who have passed, which is why this supper is executed in silence - it isn't just a way to reconnect with the dead, but to show our respect and love for them. Whether you have someone specific in mind you would like to host for, or even if you would like to host to see who might join you, you can host your own Silent Supper in 6 easy steps:



Set a Date

Traditionally Silent Suppers are held on Halloween night, but you can always choose an alternative date.

Choose a Setting

It is always best to choose a quiet space with the least chance of disturbances, such as your living room, dining room, or garden - or for the braver among us, you could even choose a graveyard. Set up your table or blanket (if you've chosen outdoors) with plates, glasses and candles, and set a place for each guest you wish to invite. When it comes to attire, it is common to dress in all black - usually something fancier than your everyday clothes.

Invite Your Chosen Spirits

Your Silent Supper can be held for any spirits you wish to join you, you can do this by verbally asking them to join you, or by placing a piece of paper with their name at one of the table settings. You can also invite other (living) family members or friends to join you.

The Preparation

The meal itself should be kept simple, such as root vegetables or stews, or a meal that holds significance to the spirits you have invited; for drinks, wine, mead or water are the usual choices. Items that are connected with, or are a portrayal of the spirits you've welcomed, can be set at the table.

The Silent Supper

Serve your meal, but serve the spirits first before any other guest. Start your meal, and do so in silence. Think of the spirits you have invited to join you and any fond memories you may have of them - remember to stay silent for the duration of the meal.

Closing the Ritual

There are a few ways in which you can do this, depending on your preferred method, you can close your supper by everyone getting up and leaving the table one by one (if you have multiple guests), you can exit the room backwards if you would prefer not to turn your back on the table, and letting the candles burn out. An alternative is for each guest, or yourself (if hosting alone) to extinguish each candle one at a time before leaving the room.

Once your Silent Supper has ended, it is not uncommon for your guests to reconvene and explore any thoughts or feelings they may have experienced during the supper, and it gives everyone present the chance to talk about their loved ones and decompress any emotions they may be experiencing.

If you are going to host or participate in a Silent Supper this Halloween, may it bring you peace, love and comfort.

Rachael Elizabeth



Witches in Newcastle

Our paranormal delve into the witches, and wizards, of Newcastle-upon-Tyne begins at the oldest building to be found here, a structure dating back almost 1000 years, which gave the city its name, the Castle Garth. Construction on the 'New Castle' began in 1080, when Robert Curthose, eldest son of William the Conqueror, founded a castle here in what was then known as Monkchester. It was a motte-and-bailey type construction on the site of the cemetery, the building of which disturbing hundreds of graves below the foundations. The fortified castle was enclosed within a clay rampart, topped with a wooden palisade, and surrounded by an external ditch.

Between 1168 and 1178, King Henry I ordered that the castle was rebuilt in stone at a cost of £1,144 5s 6d. A rectangular stone keep was built, and a triangular stone bailey was built to replace the existing wooden one. During the construction William 'the Lion' of Scotland led an invasion but was captured and held in the castle. Evidence of this interruption is present to this very day, with a fifteen-step staircase coming to an abrupt stop against a wall on the second floor of the castle's keep.

By the beginning of the 17th century the castle had become the county gaol, but the conditions for prisoners held at the Castle Keep were horrendous, especially as it had been neglected for over two hundred years with the walls crumbling, and the roof no longer there. In the winter months prisoners could be living in six inches of ice cold rain water. Due to being overcrowded, petty thieves, often children, would be thrown into cells with murderers. The thieves often would lose their lives within that cell at the hands of the convicted killers. There was no segregation, women, men, and children being placed in cells together. Disease was rife, due to the conditions that prisoners lived in; amongst rats and human waste. The number of people who died of illness while being held at the Castle Keep runs into the hundreds.

Things got worse in 1620 when part of the curtain wall collapsed. However, in 1638 an unlikely saviour, in the form of inevitable war, saw the castle partially rebuilt and strengthened. In 1640 the Scots invaded Newcastle and won. They occupied the town for a year, only leaving after the English government paid them £300,000 to do so.

The Civil War once again saw Royalist Newcastle

under heavy attack from the Parliamentary Scots in 1644. The Castle was defended bravely but ultimately fell. For the second time in a decade the town was under the rule of the Scots.

The Scots had left by 1649, but a new terror gripped the city, witches. This wasn't unique to the area, as the entire country had suddenly become suspicious and paranoid, and was united in demanding that witches must be found, and dealt with accordingly. In Newcastle, the puritan Corporation enlisted the help of a Scottish witch-finder, the identity of this witch-finder appears to be lost to time. Some accounts say it may have been the infamous John Kincaid, but it seems we may never know.

A bell ringer walked through the streets calling for anyone who was suspected of being a witch be brought to the town hall to be judged by the witch-finder. Thomas Oliver wrote in his *A New Picture of Newcastle-upon-Tyne of 1831*:

1649 – The Magistrates of Newcastle sent to Scotland for a man who pretended to discover who were witches: on his arrival the bellman went through the town, crying "all persons who would bring in any complaint against any woman for a witch, they should be sent for and tried by the person appointed." Thirty women were brought into the town-hall, stripped there, and had pins thrust into their bodies, and most of them condemned for witches!

For if these poor women did not bleed when pricked that was deemed proof that they must be witches. It's suspected that to earn even more money these witch-finders used a retractable pin, to ensure that they didn't bleed, so he could make more money for every innocent woman he sent to be executed. Of the 30 women brought before him, he declared 27 women as witches, each one earning him 20 shillings.





The accused were imprisoned in the old Newgate Prison (where the Gate leisure complex stands today) and the Castle Keep awaiting their fate. The women, and a man who had been found guilty of being a wizard, who were held in the castle were imprisoned in what is known today as the Garrison Room, shackled to the walls. The rings used to chain these prisoners can still be seen on the central pillar in the room.

Half of them were eventually freed, including one woman who was considered “too pretty” to be a witch. On August 21, 1650, the remaining 14 women and one man were publicly executed on gallows erected on Newcastle’s Town Moor. On the same day, nine men found guilty of cattle rustling, were also hanged.

This event was the largest recorded mass execution for witchcraft in English history, with the last one occurring in 1727.

The bodies of the 15 executed individuals are believed to be buried in unmarked graves in the graveyard of St. Andrew’s Church on Newgate Street.

Of course, it’s almost certain none of these unfortunate souls were guilty of anything, and the witch-finders were soon found out as the connen they were, and were themselves sought out by the law.

Regarding the witch-finder who operated in Newcastle, Thomas Oliver continues by writing:

The witch-finder went from Newcastle to Northumberland, when [magistrate] Henry Ogle, Esq. laid hold of him and required bond to answer at the sessions, he escaped into Scotland, where he was apprehended, cast into prison, and condemned; when on the scaffold he confessed that he had been the death of 220 women in England and Scotland, for the gain of 20 shillings each! The Town Moor, where these 15 innocents were hung, appears to be stained by the event.

The Town Moor is a large area of common land in Newcastle upon Tyne. It covers an area of almost 150 acres of land stretching from the city centre and Spital Tongues in the south up to Gosforth to the north, Kenton to the west, and Jesmond to the east. Every June locals flock to the Town Moor to visit ‘The Hoppings’, the largest travelling funfair in Europe. Despite the fun and laughter that are experienced annually during those two weeks in the summer, the Town Moor, as you already know, has a dark history of death and anguish.

In the early 14th century, the Town Moor was chosen as the location for Newcastle’s gallows. Hangings drew huge crowds from miles around and were treated as great family entertainment. Drink would flow and the onlookers were baying for blood by the time the condemned criminal had the noose placed around their neck. The crowd would reach fever pitch as the felon dangled by the neck until dead.

Many hundreds of men and women were executed right here, including those so-called witches, and it seems that many of them may have not left this place. For there is a long history of ghost sightings, often coming from dog walkers and joggers who frequent the moorland. Witnesses describe seeing dark shadows moving swiftly before dispersing. Screams have also been heard coming over the Town Moor, carried on the wind.

Rob Kirkup



WOMEN OF WITCHCRAFT OR WOMEN OF POWER- IRELAND'S ACCUSED

Ireland has been the setting for some of the most interesting witch trials of all time. Long before the wide sweeping witch hunts of Europe, Ireland was already placing individuals on trial for witchcraft, with more to follow over the coming centuries. Were they women of witchcraft or women of power?

Fear and Accusations

Religion was a big player in the whipping up of fear and damnation for women who didn't fit the male dominated narrative and the subsequent Papal declarations. Before this time, healing women and 'witches' were deemed acceptable to society and revered within their community.

Women who did not conform to societal norms, were healers, ran businesses or had knowledge, were often the subject of accusations. During political unrest or powerplay, a woman would be accused of witchcraft to detract from volatile events or to gain political standing. The same was true for communities looking for answers in times of crisis such as plague, famine or economic hardship.

As time and attitudes have evolved towards gender, the definition of a witch is no longer clear cut. Rewind to mediaeval Ireland and a different story unfolds. Three women from different places in society, locations, and times, all accused of witchcraft.

Alice Kyteler - 14th Century Kilkenny

In 1324, middle-class Alice Kyteler became the first person to be accused of witchcraft in Ireland. An innkeeper, and moneylender, she learned her business skills from her wealthy merchant father.

Alice saw marriage as a business arrangement, her standing in the community strengthened with a husband at her side, albeit four times. Each spouse died under strange circumstances, adding fuel to the fire of local conspiracy theories. It wasn't all bad news for Alice, as each time, her wealth grew substantially.

Alice opened Kyteler's Inn, a meeting place for local businessmen who all vied for the attention of the be-

witching landlady, showering her with gifts. With her staff of luscious women eager to please, the premises were by far the busiest in Kilkenny.

Local suspicion reached its peak when Alice's stepchildren convinced the Bishop of Ossory to charge her with using poison, witchcraft, heresy, blasphemy, and sacrifices to the demons who aided her success.

Alice was well connected and evaded arrest for quite some time. Finally, Alice was imprisoned and awaited trial along with her maid, Petronella de Meath and her firstborn son William.

Before Alice was brought before the judge, Petronella was tortured for evidence against her mistress. She confessed to practising witchcraft, was found guilty and burned at the stake.

William was found guilty of perjury, extortion, and heresy. Being male, he received a more lenient sentence – attend three masses a day for a year and feed the poor.

Call it magic, call it canny use of resources, but In 1325, Alice inexplicably escaped. She was tried in absentia and found guilty of witchcraft. Alice Kyteler remained at large and was never heard from again.



**Spooky
Isles**

Florence Newton - 17th Century Youghal, County Cork

Florence Newton was at the centre of another sensational Irish witch trial in 1661. She stood accused of bewitching Mary Langdon, the maid of a prominent figure in the town of Youghal.

The judge was told that Florence, falling on hard times, had called to the house during the winter of 1660 begging for food. The maid refused and a furious Florence left, muttering beneath her breath.

Florence met the maid in the street and allegedly grabbed her and gave her a bizarre, spiteful kiss. Following this interaction, the court was told, Mary became violently ill. She suffered seizures and visions and the house of her master became subject to poltergeist activity.

When Newton was nearby the illness seemingly worsened, as Mary began vomiting needles and nails. Mary also claimed that Florence would appear in visions, tormenting her further.

Newton was also accused of causing the death of her jailer through the use of sorcery. The man's widow accused Florence of kissing her husband on the hand shortly before he dropped dead.

The trial of the Witch of Youghal was so important, that the Irish Attorney General oversaw proceedings - from here the story ends abruptly. It is assumed Florence was found guilty and executed, however despite well-kept records for much of the trial, the verdict papers vanished without trace.

Biddy Early - 18th Century Rural County Clare

Biddy Early was born in 1778 in rural County Clare. Ellen Early taught her daughter herbal cures until both parents died when Biddy was just sixteen. Left in poverty, Biddy was forced to enter the workhouse.

Due to her stoic disposition, Biddy was deemed strange by locals who believed she conversed with fairies and could control them at will. Biddy was already making a name for herself as a healer. She also opened a successful shebeen, where the locals would drink illicit alcohol and play cards.

She was also an advocate for human rights, quashing evictions and landlord abuse via whatever means at her disposal. This made her popular with the lay com-

munity and an enemy of the Church and the lawmen. Biddy also had four husbands. Her first died from alcohol consumption and she married her stepson John, who also died from alcohol abuse. Her third wedding was at age 70, and at 71 she married a man half her age in exchange for a cure.



Biddy's healing powers centred around a mysterious blue bottle, allegedly a gift from the fairies. Only true believers in her power would receive help from the wisewoman.

Doctors and priests in disguise would infiltrate, trying to discover the root of her power, only to be chased away. Biddy publicly denounced the Catholic Church and was charged with witchcraft in 1865, which was very unusual this late on.

Fear took hold of those who had agreed to testify against Biddy so she was acquitted. She was forced to repent on her deathbed to receive the Last Rites and at her funeral, a gathering of priests asked the community to pray for the soul of Biddy Early.

Biddy's magic blue bottle was not to be seen after she died. Locals believed the fairies reclaimed it.

There have been several other high profile witch trials in Ireland with very similar paths to accusation. It is clear that all these women were skilled, manipulative and resourceful, but could they really have been witches - or simply women of power?

Ann Massey McElroy

How To Perform A Cord Cutting Ritual

Cord Cutting is a ritual or ceremony performed when you want to disconnect from an attachment that you have to another person. The attachment can be in any state – be it new, deep, or faded – but the idea is that you don't want this person in your life anymore.

Cord Cutting rituals are often quite personal. You could want to disconnect from a friend who isn't who you thought they were, or dispel the last echoes of an ex from your life. You could have issues with a family member or even just an acquaintance.



Before Your Ritual

Understand that a Cord Cutting ritual is quite strong Magic, though the effects may not always be as cut and dry as you'd like. Cutting someone's ties to you doesn't mean you'll never hear about them from others, but it should greatly lessen how much sway those connections have over you. You won't react as strongly to hearing about the person in question, and this ritual may even help you begin down a path of healing if you're struggling to move on.

This ritual should be reserved for attachments that are harmful to you, rather than an annoyance. If you are struggling mentally, physically, or spiritually because of the person you want to cut ties with, this is the right ritual for you.

Completing a Cord Cutting ritual will sever the immediate spiritual ties that someone has to you. You open your mind to that link one final time – just to see it, not to interact with it – and cut it in a way that feels right to you. This mental and spiritual action can be accompanied by a physical or metaphysical action to make the ritual stronger, and that is where the Cord Cutting ritual comes in.

I personally prefer to use candles and string for my own Cord Cutting rituals because fire acts as a cleanser. The other well-known method for Cord cutting involves the act of cutting a physical string, and there is

also the visualisation method that I touched on earlier. You will find instructions for all three versions of the Cord Cutting rituals below, and I invite you to follow whichever ritual most resonates with you.

Method One: Visualising the Cord

Equipment:

- White Candle (Optional)

I am a huge advocate of Candle Magic, so though I will suggest lighting a single candle at the start of this ritual, it's not wholly necessary. Candles can help start and end rituals in a way that feels more symbolic, so if you have a tealight lying around, just one is perfect for this ritual.

When you are ready, find a calm and comfortable place to sit where you won't be interrupted. You will need to slip into a deep meditative state for this ritual, so feel free to use white noise or relaxing instrumental music to help you settle.

Once you feel that you have connected with your spiritual self – it might be hard to open your eyes, or you may feel like the world around you has faded – start to visualise the person that you want to disconnect from. Names have power, so I would advise listing all of the names that you know this person goes by – their full name, nicknames, and if they use it as a name often, yes, even their online handle. Picture their face alongside their names and start to visualise the link between you.

The appearance of the “cord” between you could be a rope, a ribbon, or even a simple piece of string. What it looks like varies. It could be something neutral or something that represents the relationship you currently have with this person. Is it fraying? Are there pieces missing? It's up to you.

You may find that the cord is tied to your body. It could be wrapped around one of your fingers, or it may be connected to one of your Chakra points. Connections are completely individual, so I cannot tell you what your cord looks like or where it connects, but I can help you sever it.

Take a moment to say goodbye to the connection. No matter how your relationship with this person has deteriorated, make peace with the memory of them and ready yourself to let them go.

Then, reach out, and break the connection. You can do this by pulling the cord off of your own metaphysical body; reaching out with your hands and tearing it off of yourself. You can also visualise something sharp cutting the cord between you, or even having your preferred element cleanse the connection. Fire can burn it, Water can wash it away, Air can slice it, and Earth can see it crumble to pieces.

Once the cord is cut, visualise the person and their names fading from your mind until you see nothing but the background of the scene you've created in your mind.

Count back from 10 and take deep, cleansing breaths. When you get to one, open your eyes. If you did light a candle at the start of this ritual, this is the point when you need to blow the candle out to signal the end of the ceremony.

Method Two: Cutting a String

Equipment:

- A Length of String/Twine/Cord or similar
- Scissors/Athame/Knife or similar
- A Photo of the person you want to cut ties with (Optional) OR
- Paper and a Pen (Optional)
- White Candle (Optional)

To prepare for a Cord Cutting ritual using Method Two, you will need either a photo of the person you want to cut ties with or a small piece of paper that lists the names that they are known by. Do this in advance of the ceremony so that you don't bring any negative energy into your ritual space.

Once you're ready, light your candle if you're using one to signal the start and end of your ritual. Then, roll up the piece of paper or the photo and tie the cord around it.

Close your eyes. Think about the person you're cutting ties with, hold their image in your mind, and say goodbye to their memory. Take as much time as you need to process this part of the ritual, and feel free to focus on any prominent memories that you want to as you say your farewells.

Take a breath. As you breathe in, feel yourself pulling in the energy from the world around you. As you breathe out, visualise the image of the person in your mind fading away.

You may wish to speak your wishes aloud to give them more power. Your words are your own, but if you find yourself struggling to grasp some, try this:

“I thank the memories I have of [their name] for the experiences we shared, but it is within my power and it is my desire to let them go,
I, [your preferred name], sever my ties with [their name],
may they think no more of me,
may their name no longer affect me,
may my spirit and theirs divide.
On this [day/night], may my intent be heard.
So mote it be.”

Open your eyes and pick up your scissors. Place the cord-tied photo or paper between the blades and close them. When the photo or paper has been cut in two, place everything left in your hands down, take another cleansing breath in, and blow out the candle. If you're not using a candle, simply place everything down, lower your hands, and take another breath. This will end the ritual, and you can clear away the equipment used.

Method Three: Using Candles and String

Equipment:

- A Length of String/Twine/Cord or similar
- Two Spell Candles of your chosen colour
- Candle Holders
- A Bowl of Water for Emergencies
- A Photo of the person you want to cut ties with (Optional) OR
- Paper and a Pen (Optional)

Note: Please complete this ritual outdoors to avoid any fire hazards. Have a bowl of water ready nearby just in case, and avoid using fire near grass, wood, or other flammable materials.

Method Three requires some knowledge of Candle Magic and Colour Magic. You can use the list below as a quick reference guide for candles colours and Colour Magic:

- White candles are for purity, balance, and peace. They are neutral candles that can be used for all types of Magic.
- Yellow candles are for intellect, memory, and hope. Light yellow candles when you're performing rituals of the mind.
- Red candles are for passion, courage, and strength. Embrace the power given by red candles.
- Green candles are for growth, prosperity, and nature. Green candles can be used for healing.
- Blue candles are for travelling, creativity, and communication. Blue is considered a calming colour.
- Black candles are for protection, transformation, and binding. Use black candles to push back against any negativity in your life.
- Purple candles are for spirituality, wisdom, and to reveal hidden truths. Purple should be used when you want to connect as deeply as possible.



There are other colours of candles available, of course, but these ones will cover most of your needs. The candle colours you use should reflect the relationship you currently have with the individual you're cutting ties with, or they should reflect how you want to move forward after the ceremony. When in doubt, go with white candles for their neutrality or black candles for their protection.

Spell Candles are the best type to use for this kind of ritual because you need the length of the candle to tie each end of the cord to.

Tealights can be used in a pinch, but you cannot tie the cord around them safely. If you only have a tealight, use just one and place the photo or piece of paper directly into the flame instead of waiting for the ends of the cord to burn down. You should still tie a cord around the photo/paper, but keep the length short to avoid any fire hazards.

To prepare for this ritual, write the names that the person you're cutting ties with uses or is known by on a small piece of paper and roll it up – or roll up their photo if you're using that instead.

Tie the cord around the rolled-up paper/photo, leaving enough length on both sides to tie the cord around the candles. You will need candle holders and should complete this ritual outside of your home because you will be lighting two candles and setting the cord alight. I will also recommend that you set up a bowl of water that you can use if the fire becomes too large or uncontrollable. You can either throw the water directly onto the candles and cord or toss your equipment into the bowl. Don't use a plastic bowl.

Once you've tied the cord around the photo/paper and each end around one of the candles, set the candles in their holders. Be sure that the cord around the candles isn't too close to the wick or the cord will burn before you've had a chance to complete your side of the ritual. Light the candles. Close your eyes.

Visualise the person you've written the names of on the paper or who appears in the photo. Bring them to the forefront of your mind, and hold them there. Say your farewells to this person, the memories of them that affect you, and the ties that bind them to you. If you wish to speak, the same verse from Method Two also works here.

Once you are ready, open your eyes, and wait for the candles to burn down enough to catch the cord alight. Stay focused on the photo/paper as it burns, and keep taking cleansing breaths as you watch. If, for any reason, the photo/paper has not caught fire from the cord, you can use a match or lighter to manually set it on fire.

Once the photo/paper has turned to ash, take another cleansing breath, and blow the candles out. Clear your ritual area of any equipment and debris when you're ready to move.

Remember that intent is the heart of all of your actions as a Witch, and that your belief and desires can go a long way towards helping you reach your goals. Your Magic is your own responsibility, and I wish you well in your journey.

Blessed be.

Lyssa Greywood



INTO THE DARKNESS

In Celtic tradition, Samhain is the start of the 'Dark-half of the Year', the opposite point on the wheel of the year to Beltain when the beginning of the summer months is celebrated. Samhain heralds in the winter cold and darkness. The dark side of the seasonal calendar is an important aspect of Celtic philosophy because without sleep, there can be no awakening, without death, there is no rebirth. We are born from darkness, arriving into this world from the comfort of the womb, through the birth canal into the harsh realities of life. The Celtic day begins at dusk reflecting the passage of night into day and a reawakening of earthly consciousness.

To help me understand the dark side, the realm associated with monsters and demons, as it was just down the road and put on by one of my publishers (Veneficia Publications), I attended the Pandaemonium symposium 2024 over the weekend of the Autumn Equinox.

What did I learn?

To understand the light it is necessary to know the dark and its relation to the light. Firstly, always test your spirits because there are many deceivers out to cause chaos and suffering for the hell of it. There are no differences between what we call angels and demons, both are born from the same source. Freedom fighter

or terrorist, transformer or destroyer, it all depends on our personal perspective of our own circumstances. The Left Hand Path (LHP) strives to live the life we deserve where Lucifer, Satan, the Devil etc. destroys, transforms and renews helping us to grow and evolve. It is a satanic spirituality. The Devil gives freedom from the constraints of God. We live in a world where Heaven and the Gods are seen as pure and clean, humanity is dirty and earthy and the dead are the truly living.

Here are some of the main 'demons' in the darkness, the monsters under our bed, the evil lurking in the shadows.

Magdalena de le Cruz was a 15th/16th Century Spanish Franciscan nun who sold her soul to the Devil to become a living saint. On her deathbed, she confessed her ability to perform miracles and predict successful prophesies was through divine possession of a demon called Balbon whom she had communed with since the age of twelve.

Aradia, the 'Queen of the Witches' was a Goddess from the book 'Gospel of the Witches' printed in 1899. She was portrayed as a messiah sent to Earth in order to teach the oppressed how to perform witchcraft against the Catholic Church and the upper classes. She has been associated with the 'She Devil', Lilith.

As most of us know, Lilith has been portrayed as a 'Lady of the Night', a baby killer and seducer of men, a 'Dark Goddess', a temptress and sexual deviant. She was born from the confusion in the Bible stating in the first chapter of Genesis that man and woman were created equal on the sixth day of creation. Yet in the very next chapter, God saw Adam was lonely so created a female companion from his rib called Eve who was to be subordinate to him.



So what happened to the woman born on Friday's creation?

Lilith fled paradise to find herself, to know her place within God's creation, to become the 'sacred feminine' for many women (and men) today. She is a thorn in Christian dogma and does not fit into the patriarchal teachings of the Church. A King will always outrank his Queen, a husband will outrank his wife and a boy will outrank a girl. The Church is scared of Lilith upsetting the unbalance so is cursed in the same way as the serpent and Lucifer.

Lucifer sits at the left hand of God in Heaven with Christ at God's right. It can be seen as the first instant of left and right wing division, two opposing forces from a single source.

Lucifer was resurrected into modern thought in the 17th/18th and early 19th Centuries by three 'shoulders of giants, on which our poets of today stand'. First, John Milton (1608-74), with his epic poem 'Paradise Lost', where Lucifer boasts it was 'Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven'. The anti-hero is portrayed as a fallen angel called Satan as God's adversary, a defiant rebel with a cause. Satan was a great leader who sympathised with his supporters with bold words and sentiments. Milton's Lucifer struggled to overcome his own doubts and weaknesses making him appear sensitive with a seductive and alluring character.

Following in his footsteps a century later, William Blake (1757-1827), bought Lucifer onto the stage as a Greek hero called Urizen. Blake gave the Devil a voice of reason and authority.

'Thou wast perfect till iniquity was found in thee'. There was no doubt Blake admired the enemy of God and enemy of Catholicism, walking a tight path where the church was concerned. I found it interesting that Blake was involved in anti-Catholic riots in London, 1780, looting and burning Catholic temples in foreign embassies.

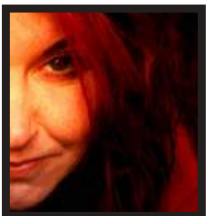
Thirdly, the Gothic writer, Percy Shelly (1792-1822), an atheist and a fully signed up Luciferian member, hanging about in graveyards and practicing the dark arts with human skulls in the woods on a full Moons. Both Blake and Shelly were connected to the Romanticism movement who had sympathy with the fallen angel. Any reaction against Christian imperialism, the subjection of the people and especially the persecution of women led folk towards Satan and the Left Hand Path.

In his work, 'The Devil's Walk' (1812), Shelly wrote a satirical attack on the establishment where Satan, as Beelzebub, met key government ministers after the food riots in Devon where he was living at the time. 'Thus it is God who is evil and Satan who is good'.

Luciferian tradition have been obscured and stripped of its importance since the 1940's with the growth of 'mysticism' after the horrors of two world wars. First, Aleister Crowley (1875-1947), the Beast, became the face of Lucifer, a very dark sorcerer driven by his massive ego and later, the black magician, Anton Lavey (1930-97), founder of the Church of Satan, preaching whiskey, debauchery and misogyny. Then came Hollywood and Hammer Horror films.

On a lighter note to finish, I found the talks on Dark Botanicals and Name your Poison fascinating. The recipe to poison your partner/rival, for health and safety reasons will not be repeated here. It is interesting to learn that all the ingredients for the recipe can be found in many witches gardens and cupboards today. What I learnt was do not upset a witch.

Scott Irvine



Zoe Oakley - Morrigan

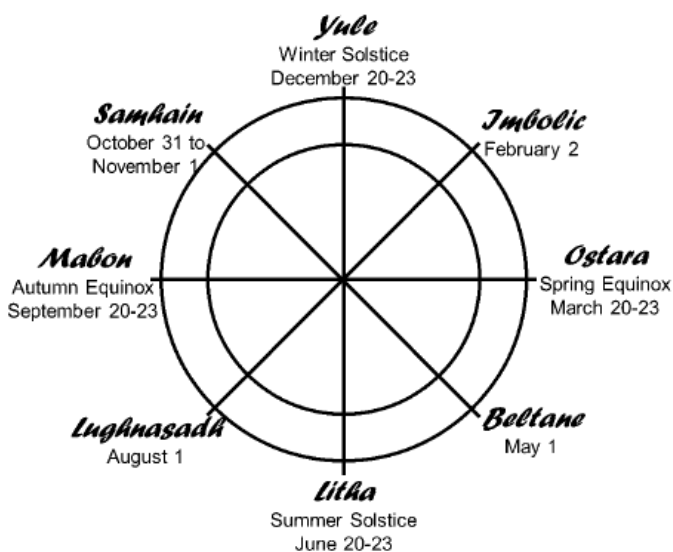
I have always had a passion for being creative, using a colourful and defined approach for self-expression. I work in a variety of styles often incorporating otherworldly archetypes and the life force of the deva world into my work and honor the joy of manifesting the spirits of nature and the primordial roots of life.

<https://oakenspiritart.com/> www.facebook.com/Zoe.Oakley.Oakenspirit/

Normalising the Sabbats

The idea for this article started in the mundane. I was in discussion with my ex-partner about who would have the kids and when over the Christmas period. Shudder. Potentially a stressful conversation not least of which having to use Christian calendar references because Pagan celebrations are not generally recognised in UK society and definitely not recognised by my ex-partner.

Now I do appreciate that there will be far better experienced and qualified folk out there who know all about ancient and more recent Pagan calendars. For the sake of this article, I shall use the popular Celtic or Pagan Wheel of the Year. This article is not designed to be an academic critique. As my introduction suggests it's a commentary on how this Green Man seeks to normalise the Sabbats in his life, with his family and loved ones. It has only been over the last 12 months that I have become familiar with the wheel and indeed the main festivities being called Sabbats. Maybe I should do more reading. Readers of Witch Magazine will be familiar with the below current popular representation of the Pagan Wheel of the Year that appears to be heavily influenced by the Gregorian Calendar. I have found this representation difficult to interpret and consequently normalise in to my life with an interesting outcome from this year.



Throughout 2024 I have sought to integrate these celebrations with newly learnt traditions that I have tried to do with friends, community and above all the younger generations. Imbolc was a solitary, cold affair, harvesting reeds from the Somerset levels to make St

Brigid crosses for my home and homes of loved ones. I did give thanks with mead and a roaring fire where spare cuttings and unused reeds were burnt in ceremonial thanks but I was by myself. There was a distinct lack of festive cheer!

Beltane on the other hand is a rather large affair in Glastonbury that can get quite raucous. I spent the morning with a dear friend and druid at the Chalice Well in Glastonbury with a large crowd chanting on the hill side of the Tor followed by leaping over a fire pit, casting away the old and welcoming the new. The day was long, filled with mead, included the Green Men of Glastonbury parading the May pole, a horde of eclectic individuals from all manner of Pagan backgrounds heading the parade with drummers and the town alive to the joys of the Summer to come.

Lughnasadh was a simple family day of thanks giving where we made corn dolls and had a picnic with the children. More emphasis was given to Mabon where Wild Moon Morris celebrated Mabon and the end of the dancing season with mead, cider, a BBQ and ceremonial burning of Morris sticks that were broken during the season. Hazel sticks that we had harvested the year before with the blessings of the tree spirits. This simple act of asking members of the side to return their sticks to the fire whilst giving thanks for loaning the sticks to them brought an almost silent melancholy to the evening. It was clear many of the side were emotionally invested, having danced many hours with a particular stick. It seems odd that we can become emotionally attached to a bit of wood however, for me, this simple act affirmed the sacredness that we share with mother earth and all the wonders of nature around us. The following day I did sprinkle the ashes around the base of a local hazel tree saying thank you to the tree spirits.



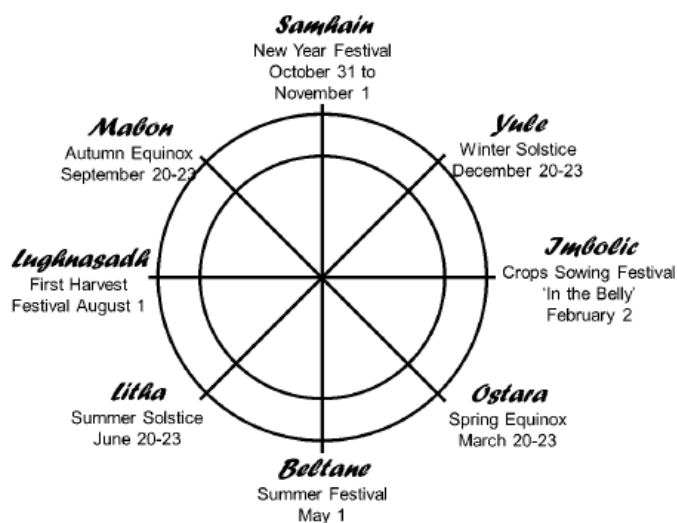
Photo: Wild Moon Morris celebrating Mabon and the end of the Morris Dancing season by having a BBQ and burning our broken Morris sticks.

And so, to Samhain on the 31st October, the Pagan New Year or Halloween. Of course I have decorated my house with Autumnal colours. Of course, my alter has all manner of squashes, pumpkins and harvest goodies on it. And yes, I have a plastic skeleton that plays creepy saxophone music wherever the kids decide to press the button. The plans for Samhain are still in the planning. I have suggested to Wild Moon Morris that we may wish to perform a morning dance just for us under the Yew Tree at St Andrews Church in Compton Dundon which is in the village where our practice hall is situated. The yew tree is a rather spectacular sight and dated at over 1,700 years of age and as we know the Yew is associated with death and rebirth. To me it seems very fitting for Samhain.

After the dance celebrations the usual mead, fire and joyousness was initially floated but we now seek to celebrate in an almost muted dinner party fashion. Normalising the celebration, making it main stream; which is why I have now changed the Pagan Wheel of the Year to make it easier for me to associate with the festivities. Of course, some will always wish to celebrate Pagan festivities as if they are wild people wishing to be closer to the elements and mother earth. For me this year it will be stuffed mushrooms for a starter, venison for a main and home picked blackberry and apple crumble with custard at a table shared with friends, mead for those who wish and a warm hearth. Hopefully with my new wheel of the year representation I will be able to celebrate the Sabbats even more heartily in 2025.

has the kids over the Christmas holidays and when. Well, my ex-partner has them from the 20th to 28th December to celebrate Christmas and I have them 28th December to 6th January to celebrate the New Year. There are some things in life that one can not completely escape especially when I am only on year 3 of my Pagan journey. However, after discussion with my new circle of friends and loved ones, 2025 may be the start of normalising the celebration of the Sabbats in my house-hold including delicately informing my ex-partner as to their importance. Blessing to all.

Ewan Cameron



In full wheel of the year fashion, I should like to bring you back to the mundane and the decision of who



Alchemy and Transformation

This time of year lends itself well to reflection, shadow work, ancestral musings and release. Samhain (celebrated in the Northern Hemisphere on 31st October) means 'Summers end' and traditionally marked the end of the season of light and the beginning of the season of darkness. Our ancestors knew that all things begin from endings, understanding that next year's harvest started here, where the darkness allowed the earth to rest, regenerate and prepare.

During this time, you may find yourself more inclined to looking inwards and withdrawing subtly from the world around you, just as the animals in nature prepare to do the same. Scorpio season inspires us to reflect deeply within ourselves on what we wish to shed from our lives, be that unhealthy relationships or connections, that unsatisfactory work setting, or even our own toxic personality cycles. This is a time for us to really pay attention to what isn't sitting right and is potentially blocking our path for the year ahead.

As the veil thins, you may notice more signs and synchronicities from spirit and the world around you supporting you as you reflect. These energies encourage you to release what doesn't fit before hibernation, to allow you to create more space to plant the seeds of passion, inspiration and purpose. But in order to release, you first have to recognise what no longer fits

in your life and potentially why that is. Initially you will have some form of idea about what or who makes you anxious, what projects seem to be more force than flow, and the scenarios of your life that bring you more pain and discomfort than peace and joy. The first step to change is recognition. Once we can recognise those things and the need to let them go, it is important to allow yourself time to mourn the notion of creating these changes. Even the most painful situations in life, can become uncomfortably familiar. We can get so used to the situations around us that it can be hard to see life in any other way than as we see it right now. No one ever talks about the feelings surrounding actually letting go though.

It may sound strange to mourn the release of an unhealthy situation or relationship, but it is important to feel through this process in order to make peace with its parting.

You may notice yourself feeling angry or nervous, upset or frustrated. But these emotions may soon turn to relief and peace, excitement and apprehension. But nature consistently reminds us that all new beginnings, come from necessary endings. This is the alchemy of transformation.

When looking at the astrological correspondences of Tarot, we can see that as the Wheel of the year turns, there are aligning Tarot cards for each Decan in the twelve signs of the Zodiac. The corresponding Tarot card for Samhain, is the Five of Cups (23rd October – 2nd November)

The Five of Cups lets us know that it's ok to mourn and reflect. It reminds us to process and acknowledge emotional losses and regrets so that we can release these emotions and move forwards. In philosophy, we as individuals have five cups that we need to fill in order to feel whole and well balanced. These are the cup of connection, the cup of freedom, the cup of safety, the cup of fun and the cup of mastery. If we are stuck in the past and holding on to pain or regret, we cannot hope to fill these five cups and live a satisfied life. Now is the time to alchemise that pain into power and use this as a driving force to ensure we fill our five cups.



The corresponding Tarot card for Scorpio, is Death - the demise of the Fool's old self. They must leave behind their old values and beliefs. The death card can refer to a death and rebirth of the old self, it signifies endings, transformation and of course, new beginnings. So ultimately Death is a card of change. The black and white colours in the RWS Death card can represent transcending duality.

In mystery schools, initiates had to experience a symbolic death at the end of one phase of esoteric understanding before starting a new one.

The reaper like figure in the Death card is the first and only of the two RWS majors (2nd being the Sun) to move from left to right – moving from the unconscious into consciousness, from imprisonment of the

past to the rising awareness of the future.

With both the Five of Cups & the Death card, the Tarot reminds us to pause and reflect during this time, then to release and move forward with passion and determination, enabling us to fill our cups and live more calm and fulfilling lives.

Here is a simple 3 card spread to help you to release and transcend during this time:

- 1) Where have you been hiding in the shadows and concealing parts of yourself?
- 2) What can you offer to the world around you that no one else can?
- 3) How can you reclaim your power?
May the stars follow you always

Fauna Raine

Honoring Ancestors at Samhain

When Family Bonds Are Complex

Samhain can be difficult for witches with complicated relationships to family. The thinning of the veil is a time to honor ancestors, but for those of us with challenging or painful family experiences, ancestor worship can stir up complex emotions. How do you honor your lineage when those memories carry hurt or trauma? Here are some ways to navigate this sacred time with self care and intention:

Choose Which Ancestors to Honor

You are not obligated to connect with every ancestor. If some family relationships carry pain, focus on those who provided comfort or wisdom, even if they are farther back in your lineage. You can honor ancestors who you feel a connection to, whether through stories, old photos, or the values they embodied. For some of us, even this may be difficult. I was born late to an abusive mother who was also born late. I never got to know any of my grandparents, aunts, or uncles. My strategy here was to go through my family tree and find a name I like and connected with, and I choose to honor her at Samhain. (Thanks, great, great grandma Sarah!)

Focus on Positive Aspects of Your Lineage

Even if there are difficult family dynamics, there may be values, talents, or traits passed down through your lineage that you can celebrate in yourself. Reflect on the resilience, creativity, or strength that runs in your family, and use Samhain as a time to connect with those gifts and what they mean in your life.

Honor Your Spiritual Ancestors

If family connections feel too difficult, remember that ancestors can also be those you've chosen. You may want to honor mentors, friends, or historical figures who have influenced your life. They, too, are part of your spiritual lineage and can be celebrated during Samhain! I had a 5th grade teacher that always encouraged me and helped me form opinions about my abilities that shaped my whole academic life. She is always part of my Samhain altar! (Shout out to Audra!)

Create New Rituals of Healing

Samhain offers an opportunity for healing. You can perform a ritual specifically to release old pain or trauma from your lineage. This could involve lighting

a candle for forgiveness, writing a letter to an ancestor (burn it to carry it away or deliver it), or saying prayers for peace and healing in your family line. But please see the next suggestion:



Set Boundaries in Your Spiritual Practice

Also acceptable: you don't have to forgive anyone anything. This is your spiritual journey. Healing is often in the form of boundaries. If certain family members bring up difficult emotions, it's okay to set these healthy boundaries. It is your right to include only those who brought love and support into your life or to acknowledge the ancestors without inviting their energy into your space if you feel it might be harmful. In fact, you can:

Use Samhain for Personal Reflection

Instead of focusing on ancestor worship, you can use Samhain as a time to reflect on your personal growth and healing. Consider how your family experiences have shaped you and how you want to move forward. Set intentions for the coming year that are rooted in your desire to break negative cycles and create healthier patterns.

Samhain invites us to face the past, but it's also a time for transformation. By choosing how you engage with your ancestors, you can create a practice that feels empowering, healing, and deeply personal. Remember, your spiritual path is yours to shape—honor the ancestors and the parts of your lineage that serve your highest good.

Sammy Bass



GOSSIP, SUSPICION AND AFFLICTION

In 1692, mass hysteria and uncontrolled paranoia swept the New England village of Salem. Residents accused one another of witchcraft and consorting with the Devil, earning many an arrest, imprisonment and in most cases, a death warrant. The bible decreed in Exodus that, 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to lie'. This religious persecution had now reached Massachusetts, although witch trials had been rife across Europe for the past 300 years.

Despite this, early Christians tolerated Paganism and witchcraft, but the powerful Roman Catholic church changed this in 1231. Witchcraft was declared a heresy in 1484, punishable by death. Fuelled by bitter land disputes, religious fervour, animosities and tensions, witch hunts were conducted by concerned villagers, but this allowed for the widespread accusation of innocent people. Real or imaginary, old slights and grievances with neighbours were raked up, thus removing the alleged perpetrator from society. The authorities failed to take appropriate action, encouraging villagers to be suspicious of one another.

To prove that a particular spell or enchantment had been cast a 1486 guide, 'The Hammer of the Witches' was consulted. It stated a confession could be gained by force, torturing suspects until they admitted to practising evil magic. A sure sign of witchcraft was a Devil's mark or witch's teat on the body of the accused, where the Devil and his imps had suckled. After arrest, all hair was shaved from both male and female suspects before conducting a very thorough search. Any freckle, birthmark, mole or pimple was pierced with a three-inch long iron pin for hours. Pain or bleeding suggested no evidence of witchcraft, while the absence of pain or any blood indicated a witch's mark.

Witchcraft was considered a crime against the state and the church, a capital offence of treason punishable by death. The Puritan society in America very much believed that witches existed. Satan was real and central to their belief system. Salem was a largely Puritan society, and in 1692 this ignited a witch hunt fervour. Around 500 people lived in Salem village at the time of the first accusations. From early 1692 to mid-1693 there were 200 arrest warrants, indictments and depositions issued against various villagers suspected of witchcraft.

In January, 1692, 9-year old Elizabeth (Betty) Parris – daughter of the Reverend Samuel Parris – and her 11-year old cousin, Abigail Williams were being cared for by Tituba the housemaid. Tituba had shown the girls tricks with an egg white suspended in a glass of water held against a candle to reveal the identity of their future husbands. The girls later began to have screaming fits, their eyes rolling and mouths hanging open. Reverend Parris felt they were afflicted and bewitched under an evil hand, having been bitten, pinched and otherwise abused by an enchantment put upon them. Another girl, 12-year old Ann Putnam, was also afflicted.

By late February, things had not improved. When the Reverend demanded to know who was tormenting them, they claimed that this was due to Sarah Good, a homeless beggarwoman; elderly village resident, Sarah Osbourne, and Tituba, the Parris family slave. These three low-status women were seen as undesirable drains on society. It is thought that the girls' parents encouraged blame for the affliction to be placed accordingly, reporting this suspected witchcraft to local magistrates Johnathan Corwin and John Hawthorne.

The three women were interrogated for several days at the beginning of March, 1692 to determine what evil spirits they consorted with. Osbourne and Good denied the accusation, but after relentless questioning, Tituba confessed. She eventually admitted that while cleaning the lean-to porch of the Parris parsonage, she had seen something in the shape and form of a man that asked her to be its servant, but Tituba had refused. She then admitted that there were four other village women who were servants of the Devil: the ones she recognised were Good and Osbourne accompanied by a tall man who between them, Tituba insisted, had tormented and hurt the afflicted girls.



Seeing that witchcraft had long roots in Salem, the following months heralded a stream of accusations. No one was beyond suspicion, with even devout church-goer, Martha Corey, and Sarah Good's 4-year-old daughter, Dorothy being questioned and imprisoned. As witch hunt fervour increased, the Deputy Governor of the colony and his assistants attended the hearings as dozens of people from Salem and the surrounding area were interrogated about practising evil magic.

By the end of May a court of Oyer (to hear) and Terminer (to decide) was formed. Bridget Bishop, a promiscuous gossip, was the first to be tried at the court. Despite pleading her innocence, she was found guilty and hanged for the crime of witchcraft on 10th June, 1692. Respected minister, Cotton Mather, wrote to the court, imploring them to ignore 'spectral evidence' that centred around dreams and visions. This was ignored, sentencing the hangings of eighteen more suspected witches in August and September.

Giles Corey, Martha's 71-year-old husband, faced a terrible end after he refused to admit to witchcraft. In September, 1692 he was pressed to death beneath heavy stones for three days before his chest was crushed. To the very end he refused to submit to a trial and would neither admit or deny having practised witchcraft.

Fortunately, Governor William Phips prohibited further arrests following his own wife being accused and questioned as a suspected witch. He replaced the court of Oyer and Terminer with a Superior Court of Judicature that disallowed spectral evidence and condemned only three out of 56 defendants. By May, 1693, Phips had pardoned all those imprisoned for witchcraft. Despite this change of attitude, innocent men and women had now been hanged, and many more had lost their reputations following false accusation of evil doing.

Although over two hundred people were accused of witchcraft during the Salem trials, no doubt many more accusations went unrecorded between feuding neighbours and rivals. Some accusations were clearly made due to discord between two parties and these allegations were never pursued by the authorities. A total of 130 people were brought to trial for suspected witchcraft and several members of the same family were often also implicated.

Of the 130 arrests, 52 people were sentenced to death with 19 hanged on the charge of witchcraft, including Good and Osbourne. Two men went on the run and managed to escape the barbarity of Salem with their lives. Tituba escaped hanging after confessing to witchcraft; she was sold back into slavery to pay for her court costs and imprisonment dues. Her husband, John, disappeared without trace.

In the years following the witch hunts, judge Samuel Sewell admitted his guilt over the trials and executions, while wealthy villager and prominent accuser, Ann Putnam, admitted to having made accusations of witchcraft in error. January 14th, 1697 saw a day of public fasting and soul-searching over events that were now regarded as a tragedy. A bill was finally passed in 1711, restoring the rights and good names of many who had lost their lives. But it took 250 years for Massachusetts to formally apologise for the injustice, bigotry and intolerance perpetuating the extraordinary series of events of the 1692 Salem witch trial atrocities.

Val Wilson



James Jacob Pierri
Tarot Reader & Author

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Braucherei & Hexerei: Healing and Witchery of the Pennsylvania Dutch

I first learned of Braucherei, the folk healing practice of my Pennsylvania Dutch ancestors, in 2010. I was working a high-stress career as a criminal investigator while off-setting my stress with inner exploration of myself as a Healer, when a Spirit Medium at the Mind, Body, Spirit Expo in Philadelphia introduced me to a guiding ancestral spirit who was performing hand motions unfamiliar to him in the space before her. Though I never met this woman in body, I felt a bond with her as though she had been living through me my entire life. When I took the physical descriptors of this spirit, and information relayed by her, back to my mother following the Expo, she declared excitedly, though in a slightly hushed tone, that the woman was my maternal great-grandmother, “Libby,” for whom my middle name, “Elizabeth,” was given, and that “Libby” was also a Healer. My mother said Libby removed warts from her skin once with a coin, and she was known to “blow fire,” among other ritual acts that earned her whispers of “witch” behind her back from the same neighbors who knocked on her back door when a burn needed healing. My mom hushed her voice further and informed me she was sworn to secrecy, as the family was not to talk of such things.

It did not take me long to discover Libby was a practitioner of the Pennsylvania Dutch healing art of Braucherei, which is commonly called Powwow in Pennsylvania. I am Pennsylvania Dutch with both Plain and Fancy Deitsch bloodlines. The Plain Deitsch (Pennsylvania German) are of the Amish and Mennonite faiths, while the Fancy Deitsch are those people outside of the Amish/Mennonite community (mostly identifying to various denominations of Christianity). Libby was descended through one of my maternal, Fancy Deitsch lines. During the 20th Century, World War I and World War II pushed anti-German sentiment in America to a boiling point, especially in states such as Pennsylvania which had a high saturation of citizens of German ethnicity, though descendants of the first settlers from the German-speaking regions of Europe immigrated from the Palatinate region of what is now Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and Alsace-Lorraine before Germany became a nation, and our forebears left their motherland in search of refuge from the fallout from the Thirty Years War and famine, in search of religious freedom and other rights and privileges promised by William Penn in his Holy Experiment. The experience and motivations of our ancestors who arrived in the new world and helped

form our developing nation between 1683 and 1820 was much different than that of those who arrived later, after Germany had formed a nation, yet pressure to assimilate with mainstream culture was high.



Our large numbers and our desire to keep to ourselves, within our own communities, with our own language, customs, and traditions, was seen as a threat to English colonial rule early on, and was perceived as a threat through the 20th century when World Wars erupted with Germany as the aggravating force. The York County Hex Murder of 1928 brought our folk healing practice into the national spotlight for exploitation when Braucher, Nelson Rehmeyer, was murdered in his home because of suspicion of cursing another man. The spectacle cast embarrassment upon the state of Pennsylvania and further pressure to assimilate ramped up between World Wars. The older generations stopped passing our Pennsylvania Dutch language on to the younger generations, and our folk magic tradition went underground, as we were shamed into near submission.

This introduction to my great-grandmother, and to Braucherei, was a homecoming. I had always known I was different: emotionally empathic, highly intuitive, with an intimate connection to nature and the world around me. In many ways, these “gifts” were uncomfortable, even burdensome, and sometimes downright scary, so I found ways to adapt my life around them, though I eventually faced fact: if you are called to be a Healer, your path will lead you where you are meant to be. We are born into this role. In one way, or another, whether by ancestry, nature, evolution, mystical bestowment, or study, those of us who have come here as stewards to the earth, and to one another, are part of a journey that chooses us for the walking.

And so, mine unfolded rapidly from that point forward. My walk became a run, with several stumbles, and very few rests along the way.

My research in 2010 provided a few academic resources, with the main online resources from the Christian expression of the practice, as well as the pre-Christian perspective of Urglaawe, which is a modern expression of the ancient Germanic religion as seen through the lens of the Pennsylvania Dutch. I was immediately unsuccessful finding a teacher, so I obtained a copy of the Long Lost Friend grimoire, I listened to my mother's accounts of Libby, and I read every book possible on the subject for many years as I developed my own self as a Healer.

Finally, in 2021 I saw an advertisement for an opportunity to learn "PA Dutch Powwow" from one of the well-known Christian resources I had discovered online back in 2010. I immediately enrolled in his six-week course. I was raised Catholic, so the tenets of practice within the confines of Christianity were not difficult for me; however, the pre-Christian roots of the practice were evident, as my education in cultural / religious studies and my life experience confirmed. I knew there was more to the practice beyond the confines of the Christian expression, and that was when my ancestors crossed my path with that of Robert L. Schreiwer, the founder of Urglaawe, and we figuratively collided at the intersection.



One conversation with Schreiwer opened so many doors. He validated my intuition that Braucherei was richer and deeper than I had been taught in the Christian expression. Soon, I committed to an apprenticeship within the Urglaawe Guild of Braucherei and Hexerei Practitioners, and all the pieces fell into place. The history of our people, and our practice, which evolved through the centuries, finally had context and meaning. Schreiwer's ideas to move our culture forward were solidly rooted in his studies and his research. He and his teachers before him had conducted over eighty interviews with elder practitioners which enriched knowledge and teachings not previously available. Through these interviews, he learned that the word Hexerei was used interchangeably

with Braucherei by many of these practitioners in certain regions of Pennsylvania, which led to a greater understanding of the nuances of our language. With this information, a deeper understanding was gleaned related to the appropriation and usage of the word Hexerei by the dominant culture to further shame and silence us as a people, as the dominant culture, with subscription to the dominant Christian religion, typically associates the word Hexerei directly with witchcraft, and their own distortion of the practice, relating it solely to the work of Satan. As a Guild, we have reclaimed that word to uphold our own cultural integrity. We embrace Braucherei as the healing practice we do outwardly into the community for others, while we uphold Hexerei as the internal self-work we do to deepen our own practice and help ourselves. We honor balance, the necessity of both working outward and inward, for healing and evolution to occur.

Braucherei/Hexerei includes incantations and spoken charms, either written by the practitioner, or taken from a grimoire, such as the Long Lost Friend or The Egyptian Book of Secrets. It also includes written charms, talismans, herbal remedies, energy work, as well as spiritual journeys with our ancestors for purposes of healing ourselves and others. It is a simple practice, with very little "tools" required. Most practitioners keep red string on hand for ritual healing work, and certain herbs that are sacred to the practitioner for particular uses. Items from nature, such as rocks and branches from trees, serve in sympathetic healing rituals in the transference of energy and illness from a person to the earth for healing. Whenever practical and possible, we work in alignment with the phases of the moon to affect the most benefit from our work, and we also plant and harvest our crops in alignment with the moon's phase. We honor the seasons and we work accordingly to the cycles of the earth. In short, practitioners of Braucherei and Hexerei are deeply rooted in our heritage, the culture of the Pennsylvania Dutch people, and we are intimately connected to the world around us.

The practice of Braucherei/Hexerei within the heathen context of Urglaawe honors the Germanic deities, such as Frau Holle, leader of the Wild Hunt and Goddess of the Cycle of Life, she guided our ancestors from the Palatinate to the new world, and Ewicher Yeeger, the Eternal Hunter, who drove wild game toward starving Deutsch settlers. Our spiritual observances align with events of seasonal and cultural importance within our Lewesraad / Wheel of the Year. At these times we gather in ritual and fellowship, with specific deities, aspects of Deutsch culture, folklore, food, and the season central to the day.

At the time of this writing, we are between Erntfescht and Allelieweziel. Erntfescht is associated with the Autumn Equinox, and it is called “Harvest Home” in English. It is the Pennsylvania Dutch thanksgiving feast and celebration to honor the harvest. It was a time to ensure everyone in the community had enough to get through the winter months, and tradition carries forward today with charitable food drives. Deitsch communities resisted the “Yankee” Thanksgiving holiday when it was declared in November, as it made no sense to indulge in a bountiful feast when food had already been preserved and rationed for the winter months. Deitsch communities continued to celebrate Erntfescht at the peak of their harvest and plenty. Urglaawe observes the Deitsch deities of Dunner, Siwwa, and Idunna at this observation. Dunner brings forth the rain associated with farmland and crops, while his wife, Siwwa’s golden hair is seen in the wheat and grain’s of harvest. Idunna governs the apples that are of abundance this time of year, and which have become a staple food to the Pennsylvania Dutch.



From the perspective of Braucherei/Hexerei, Erntfescht shines a spotlight on the necessity for balance. With equal hours of light and darkness of the Equinox, we are reminded of the importance of equal parts working outward for others (Braucherei) and working inward for ourselves (Hexerei), while the nature of the season nudges us to accept help from others when we are in need, rather than deplete ourselves from continuous giving.

Allelieweziel falls on October 31st (aligning with the Celtic celebration of Samhain). In his blog post, Es Allelieweziel, Robert L. Schreier advised that a significant amount of lore was passed along from interviews conducted with elder Braucherei practitioners who maintained a Heathen worldview when it came to healing of souls departed. The word Allelieweziel, translated from Pennsylvania Dutch as “the goal of all love,” was used by these practitioners to describe the event, but it was not used by Christian practitioners. In observance, Allelieweziel represents the transition

from the light half of the year to the dark half. Frau Holle departs on the Wild Hunt, followed by land spirits and souls of the recently departed, she hunts for stray souls throughout the dark half of the year. Allelieweziel marks the death of fertility of the soil and represents the death phase of the life-death-rebirth cycle.

From the perspective of Braucherei/Hexerei, Allelieweziel is the deadline for the burning of the Butzemann (spiritually activated scarecrow) to release the plant spirits and destroy his shell body as to not be inhabited by stray souls after the departure of his plant spirits. This is also a time for us to reflect upon the things in our lives that need to be banished or simply released. With days becoming darker, we honor departed souls in a manner respectful to the cycle of life, and “the goal of all love,” before diving inward toward the things that need to be symbolically “burned” as we enter the Hexerei season of deeper self-reflection to come brought by the darkest days of the year.

At the heart of Urglaawe, and our folk magic tradition of Braucherei/Hexerei, nature resides in her fullness, with her cycles, and her gifts. We recognize our work is in vain if we are not in harmony with the elements that surround us. Bound by our ancestors and our forebears who got us here, we are committed to moving our people and our culture forward. Once nearly lost to oppression and assimilation, our language and folk art of Braucherei/Hexerei is rising again. Pennsylvania Dutch language classes are offered online, at community colleges, and historical centers, while Urglaawe has become an international religious organization offering fellowship and education on the Deitsch culture through a Heathen lens, where one also has an opportunity to apprentice within the Braucherei and Hexerei Guild of Urglaawe Practitioners. Urglaawe and the Guild and welcoming of all. One does not need to be of Pennsylvania Dutch heritage to join; only an open mind, an open heart, and a deep interest in, and respect for, the culture.

Macht’s immer besser! (Always make it better)!

Gretchen E. Swank

Further Reading/ References:

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Samhain Ritual for Honouring the Ancestors

Samhain, celebrated on the night of October 31st, is a significant festival in many pagan traditions, marking the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter. It is a time when the veil between the worlds is thinnest, allowing for communication with ancestors and spirits. Here's a simple ritual you can perform to honour this sacred time:

What You'll Need:

- A small altar or table
- A black or orange candle
- Photos or mementos of your ancestors (optional)
- A bowl of water (representing the element of water)
- A bowl of salt (representing the element of earth)
- Incense (such as sandalwood or sage)
- Seasonal offerings (like apples, nuts, or bread)
- A journal and pen for reflection

Steps:

Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. Set up your altar with the candle, bowls of water and salt, and any photos or mementos of your ancestors.

Take a few moments to center yourself. Close your eyes, take deep breaths, and visualise roots extending from your feet into the earth, grounding you.

If you practice circle casting, walk around your ritual space, visualising a protective circle of light surrounding you.

As you light the black or orange candle, say a few words of intention, such as: "I light this candle to

honour those who have come before me, to invite their wisdom and guidance into my life."

Place the seasonal offerings on your altar as a gesture of gratitude. You might say, "I offer these gifts to my ancestors, acknowledging their presence and the lessons they have imparted."

Spend some time in quiet reflection. You can meditate, journal about your ancestors, or ask for guidance. If you feel comfortable, you can speak aloud to your ancestors, sharing your thoughts and feelings.

When you're ready, thank your ancestors for their presence and guidance. You can say, "Thank you for being here with me tonight. I honour you and your memory."

If you cast a circle, walk around your space again, visualising the circle closing and the energies returning to the earth.

Allow the candle to burn safely if you can, or extinguish it with your fingers or a snuffer, symbolizing the end of the ritual.

Take a moment to ground yourself once more, thanking the earth for its support.

Blessings

Julie Aspinall

Beyond the Veil

I look for you in shadows,
On lonely evening walks
The wind the only sigh to hear
Reflected in my thoughts.

A candle in the window
Awaits your ghostly tread
But would you, Dear, return to me
With feelings such to dread?

I lay your place with sadness
Our table, sacred space
For on this night of Samhain
I reach through time and space.

And on this final harvest,
The fires built within
I call you from beyond the veil
Our supper to begin.

Mel Webb

Samhain

October arrives in a riot of colour
The leaves are sacrificed
For the turn of the season,
I light a candle for my ancestors
Thanking them for all that has gone
And all that will be,
Placing outside a plate of food
For any passing spirits
On the eve of Samhain,
As the darkness embraces the light
The wheel turns,
And the evening air
Is aching with new energy.

Deborah Maudlin

Into the earth I go

Into the earth I wish to go,
Fare thee well my sisters and brothers,
As I end this journey,
To start many others.

Into the earth I am to go,
I thank the goddess for the harvest,
for the gifts given and received,
we have earned our rest.

Into the earth I shall go,
I hear my ancestors stir,
hear their murmurs and mutters.
It is time to light the candles,
And close down tight the shutters.

Into the earth I need to go,
As the light begins to subside,
I let go of what I do not need,
And cast these things aside.

Into the earth I must go,
Now the daylight hours are few.
To rest, to sleep, to dream,
So, I can grow anew.

Beverley White

Long Lost Lizzy

A toy box contains her broken dolls, and a shoe box holds her dreams.
All that remains of a childhood, ripped apart at the seams.
Now lost in the attic forever, with the cobwebs and the dust.
Along with her little tricycle, now decayed and covered in rust.

In through a tiny skylight, shines the light from Samhain's moon.
Illuminating the timbers, chalked with magickal sigils and runes.
Upon this night the broken dolls, await the veil to thin.
They sit on the floor excited, to be played with once again.

Downstairs alone in the parlour, old mothers been keeping busy.
She's made a poppet and baked some cakes, gifts for long lost Lizzy.
All these years our Lizzy's been missing, somewhere out there all alone.
Tonight's the night she finally, finds her way back home.

Old mother leaves the poppet and plate of cakes, outside the attic door
Now listens for our Lizzys footsteps, tippy tapping on the floor.
Sitting by the fire, slowly rocking in her chair.
Gazing up at the ceiling, you sense that she is there.

Smile as you hear a young child's voice, talking with her toys.
Try not to laugh as she tells poppet, to stay away from boys.
Now sleep old mother rest easy, dream of our Lizzy in your arms.
Dream deep beneath this Samhain moon, protect her with your charms.

Then upon the morrow, when again you wake.
You'll find our Lizzy's hair ribbons, next to an empty plate.
You look into the attic, at little footprints left in the dust.
That lead to the little tricycle, with its cobwebs and its rust.

The broken dolls back in the box, you notice something's wrong
The poppet that you made for her, and the box of dreams are gone
You lift your apron to your face, to wipe away the tears.
It helps you bare the pain of loss, you've felt for all these years.

Taken from you all too soon, no one was to blame.
You've endured every torment, the anguish guilt and shame.
So every year at Samhain, when the veil begins to thin.
We gather to spend an evening, with long lost Lizzy again.

Even though no longer with us, we can't help feel that she is here.
We'll keep her in our hearts, knowing she'll be back again this time next year.

Jeff Turner





Shadows

A change of season
Clung to the air,
The magic of Samhain
Moved the veil,
Shadows of yesterday
Touched this world and the next,
Voices of our ancestors
Echoed in the ears of the young,
Asking to be remembered
Honoured
For all they had done.

Deborah Maudlin

Harm ye none; do what you will, A story of jealousy

Upon a night, when spirits fly, on Hampshire Downs they dance,
In splendid blaze below moon haze, the sprightly coursers prance;
Straight and crooked amulets are hung around the doors,
To Jinx the spirits in the hopes that evil stays outdoors.

Beneath the moon's pale beams at night, the fairy folk convene
To celebrate, to eat, to drink, tell tales of things unseen.
Tonight's a night, a special time to face our darkest fears.
So listen to my sorry tale as the midnight hour nears.

'Twas Hallowse'en when all young girls, their lovers long to see,
They gaze with candle held in hand, into the mirrors sheen.
Upon the midnight hour they toss a new cut apple peel,
And pray the letter made therewith, will their lovers name reveal.

Young Nell, a simple farmers lass of seventeen, no more,
Whispered to her sister Jean she loved a lad so sore.
'His name?' her sister asked her with a laugh and eyes askance,
'Tis Will', Nell sighed but did not see her sisters countenance.

'Will Travis?' asked the sister shocked, a scowl upon her face,
'Indeed,' young Nell sighed, unaware that Jean had wanted first.
'She'll have him not,' the sister thought and started on a plan
'She'll have him NOT', Jean parried more, 'I'll have him, he's MY man!'

Jean set her plan, a devilish plot upon the downs that night,
She'd send her sister out to meet her love, and give a fright.
She'd make well sure that handsome Will, would love Jean first and best
And so she'd plot and set a trap, a tryst, a hunt, a quest.

'Come Nell,' Jean smiled, 'and peel the apple, see what lies within,
Take the candle to the glass and stare full hard therein,
Then go along the downland path and wait to see your lover,
I hear young Will comes this soon way to meet up with his brother.

'What shall I do to find him thus?' Nell she asked her sister dearly,
'Recite his name both loud and clear and then you'll see him clearly.
The right hand pathway down to the pond is where you need to be,
The moon is bright and its guiding light, shall show you what you seek.

The Devil heard Jean plot and plan and smiled and said 'OH MY,
I'll have some fun with these young girls' and gestured at the sky.
The ashen sky bled grey to black, the moon behind the cloud,
The Lord of darkness waited there his face was grim and hard.

Soon Nell walked past the Devil dark, reciting young Will's name,
Unaware her sister followed set to bring her shame.
'Will Travis, Will, I love you so,' Nell sang so loud and strong,
The Devil heard, but knew Jeans' plan, so thought he'd play along.

Nell found the path but in the dim and ink black moonless night,
She lost her foot and slithered down the mud bank, out of sight.
'Help me someone, help me please' she called to one and all,
Jean laughed at Nells' pathetic plight and hid behind the wall.

Now, by and by young Will strode out, along the desolate trail,
He whistled up a merry tune, his courage being frail,
He heard Nells' shout and turned to run because it sounded chilling,
But the kindness of his soul prevailed and helpful Will was willing.

He found poor Nell stuck as she was and helped her up the bank,
The mud was wet, the bank too steep as into the pond he sank.
He roared a final death marred shout, in dreadful desperation,
Young Nell tried hard to reach him but, t'was the Devils reparation.

Jean saw the upshot of her plan, and tried to save her beau,
She too slid down the steep, soft bank and then sank, deep down below.
The Devil laughed, two souls he gained that night upon the downs,
His patience was rewarded as evil knows no bounds.

*So if you plot and hope to gain from others dire misfortune,
Think fast upon this tale of woe and know no one's immune.
What you give out comes back threefold be it evil, bad or good
Do unto others as you'd like, and be done by as you would.*

The Old Crone



Across the Veil

The roses look beautiful.....

After so many days of autumnal fury there was an unusual stillness that night. Marcus noticed that the tapping of the apple tree branch on the kitchen window was strangely absent. It had been like a metronome over the past few days.

I drifted off again, he thought. How long have I been musing? It's been years.....

The aroma of warm bread and roasting vegetables greeted his nostrils as he inhaled and straightened in his seat. He had already laid the table for three. For a moment he brought his feet beneath him ready to stand, thinking that he needed to check the oven, but remembering quickly that if he were to do so he would only be scolded. Emma was stood only adjacent, over the hob, wooden spoon in hand, gently stirring a broth which even Marcus' aging ears could hear bubbling away.

She was such a good girl. Such a doting daughter. Particularly since.....

A deep sigh from the right of his old leather boot and Marcus looked down over the knee of his jeans to his other loyal companion with whom he shared his life. Holly, the dog, had settled there, as she always did. After the inexhaustible energies of the border collie were done for the day she was always there, snoozing beside him and stirring only when he might rise to fetch a drink, or visit the toilet. Most of the time these days it was only the two of them.

Yet here on the night when the veil was most thin, Emma was there. Such stark contrast to the surroundings, Marcus preferring his deep greens and greys which adorned the décor, in comparison to the bright patchwork dungarees which his daughter was wearing, her wavy blonde hair cascading down to the small of her back. Ever since her mother had passed, she had visited usually every two to three weeks. Emma still attended church, but whilst most of the sabbats were left to he and his faithful hound, she had always joined him for Samhain. Some frowned upon it, no doubt. But she had always understood what it meant to her father.

Marcus looked across the table at the place which had been set there, with mat and plate, knife, fork, spoon and glass and none of which would be touched until it was time to clear them away. Sal's place. Emma came over to the table, almost silently, wearing only socks to tread across the slate floor. She carried with her a small vase, now filled with water and decorated with ten red roses, which she placed where the table met the kitchen wall, to Marcus' left. She stooped for a moment, her hair brushing over the petals as she inhaled the aroma and smiled slightly. Then her mother's eyes turned sideways to regard her father dubiously.

"Are you going to light the candles then?" her melodic voice took on an impatient staccato.

Marcus raised his eyebrows and immediately started fumbling across his jeans and shirt pockets to find his cigarette lighter, eventually feeling it there at his breast.

"I've asked you three times already", she added haughtily as she stood upright again and turned on her heel back to the range.

"Sorry", he croaked, then coughing to clear his throat, "I was miles away".

She'd moved back to the hob, but turned back to look at him, her stone visage melting away and softening.

"I know Dad", she said softly, "I'll let you off".

And so he lit the candles. Three black candles sat in their silver holders in the table centre, alongside the salt and pepper mills. Toward the wall and now partially obscured by the flowers, rested a small framed photograph of his wife, now illuminated. He looked once again into Sal's eyes, staring lifelessly back at him and yet so full of the life which they possessed at that time. Her crooked smile. Her beautiful deep green eyes. Her brown hair, long, wavy and full, like a shroud about her face, setting off her chiselled features which he so loved. His Sal. She had been gone almost four years to the day.

Yet he'd never wept.

The loss of a spouse was always supposed to be one of the hardest and most painful things, so he'd heard. He remembered how he'd cried when his mother passed, all those years ago and had imagined that when the light finally left Sal's eyes, he would feel the same only magnified several times over. He'd had to console Emma for many days afterwards and then for many days after the funeral too. She'd been devastated, the poor girl.

And yet what he had felt hadn't felt like pain. Only emptiness. Like a stillness in his mind, just like the still air of the Samhain night as it was right then. Like floating in a void where everything melts away to nothing and nothing has meaning and all is just, simply, there. He'd not shed a single tear. And he always felt that that should have stabbed guilt into his heart, but he didn't feel that. Didn't really feel anything.

Every day he still looked at his favourite photograph of Sal and smiled at her just as he always had each morning when they looked upon each other after the night. Then, he would just carry on, doing things which he was supposed to do. Most of the time he had little recollection of what exactly he'd been doing.

And now, of course, others had moved on. Even Emma, every so often, would look at him and say, "you know you really should allow yourself to live now Dad. It's been years. It's okay to let go".

You really should allow yourself to live.....

The first time she said that to him was two years ago. She almost cowered for a moment, perhaps expecting his temper of old to re-emerge and for him to explode with fury. But he never had and never would. He would simply nod to her and smile. Marcus sometimes thought about getting out and doing things. Visiting the pub perhaps, or taking himself out to the cinema. But in the end, it was always something which he would do another day.

Once everything was ready, father and daughter ate a hearty meal. Holly too, was indulged with a fine platter and ate it noisily as her human counterparts sat and ate in relative silence. The food was beautifully cooked, but Marcus always observed his traditions at this time of year. No word of thanks would be said to Emma for her culinary skills, until the meal was done.

It was, in fact, only when she uncorked a bottle of red wine and poured him a glass that he finally looked at her and spoke. "Thank you little love", he said, "that really was a meal fit for a king"

She half smiled, but the look on her face said otherwise. Marcus noticed a single tear which had trickled from the corner of her eye and down her cheek. There was a moment of silence as they looked into each other's eyes, before she inhaled deeply and sat back, pouring some wine into her own glass and then into the one at her mother's place. "I know Dad", she whispered, "I do always love doing this with you, you know".

For a while, the two of them busied themselves, Marcus finally insisting on doing something and exercising his old muscles to join his daughter at the range, washing the pots and pans as she hurriedly dried them with a tea towel. They chatted about the things going on in her life. How her husband's job was progressing. How hers wasn't, as she put it. How the decorations on her flat were looking. What she needed her Dad's help with if he didn't mind driving down at some point. Marcus always listened intently, nodding and smiling as he did, but rarely speaking. Always a man of few words. Ever since that day, anyway.

And in the end, he found himself back there, sat in his old oak chair at his table, sipping his wine and looking at the flickering flames on the now depleted candles and the hot wax trickling down the candlesticks. He felt a hand place itself gently on his right shoulder.

“It’s been years now Dad”, Emma spoke softly, “It’s okay to let go”. It’s okay to let go.....

He nodded, without really acknowledging the words. His daughter’s hand slipped away, brushing across his back briefly before he heard her soft footsteps padding into the hallway. Holly briefly raised her head to watch her go to the door and then she sighed again, as she rested her chin back down on his boot.

So another dumb supper was ended. Another evening spent remembering all of those years. A sacred evening amongst all of the profane days which all blurred meaninglessly into one now as the sand in the hourglass of Marcus’ life trickled inexorably down into the pile at it’s base until one day the day would come when he would pass too. Whenever that might be. And so long as Emma and Holly were okay, it was all just the same to him. Marcus looked at the flickering lights of the candles again and beyond, the image of his lost love. He pursed his lips together as he reached for the first of them, stopping momentarily and remembering to lick his finger and thumb before moving to extinguish the flame.

He pinched out the nearest which went with a slight hiss and a small tumble of smoke flying up toward the ceiling beams. He pinched out the second. Went to do so to the third but then he caught Sal’s eyes there in the photograph and he paused. Her candle.

Emma’s hand placed itself softly on his right shoulder again. “It’s been years now”

He tilted his head toward her hand, nodding slightly and pursing his lips again as he so often did. “It’s okay to let go”

But he didn’t want to put out that flame just yet. In previous years on Samhain night, he’d let that last candle burn until he put Holly to bed and went off to his own slumber. The first time he’d simply fallen asleep right there in the chair and let that candle burn out by itself. He felt Holly stir just then, the old hound letting out a slight murmur, her tail slapping a few times on the ground. He turned his eyes sidelong to her. “What is it girl?”

The toilet flushed upstairs. Emma no doubt mooching around up there. But Emma was behind him. Wasn’t she? He suddenly felt his heart beating in his chest. Thudding, there like a drum as the hairs on the back of his neck bristled and he suddenly lurched around in his chair. There was nobody there.

And yet Holly was sat up now wagging her tail and letting out a confused whine, her head tilted to one side as she always used to. Used to.....when.....Marcus tried to speak, but he only opened his mouth, gaping like a hooked fish with no sound coming forth. He sucked in a breath, realising that it had been held and whirled back around, the chair legs scraping on the slate as his frame lurched sideways.

The candle. The last candle. It was out.

“My.....no.....no, no, no”, he murmured as he shook his head, tears welling in his eyes.

Emma would never forget the Samhain night when her father’s life began to begin again. She would never forget seeing the look frozen in his wide eyes as he stared across the table where she found him. Would never be able to erase the memory of her father in floods of tears as though the damns of the ancients had finally given way. Would always relive in her dreams, the sobs which wracked his body as she ran to him and held him as his agonised cries were cast forth into the night.

“My Sal! Sally.....”

Richard C Hick

Wise Words

from the Old Crone



I first heard of hag stones on holiday in Cornwall many years ago.

The weather was dire, the children were small and we had a new puppy with us. The wet and windy days were not conducive to sunbathing, picnicking on the beach or surfing. We looked around for things to do, visited the Witch Museum in Boscastle and then heard about a druid, a man who was a stone collector. I have always loved stones of all descriptions and studied geology as part of my Geography degree, so a man who was a collector of stones and was willing to show us around his collections and garden, sparked my interest immediately and off we set.

The man was called Edward Prynn and he was the self-proclaimed Arch Druid of Cornwall. He lived close to where we were staying, near Padstow and we found the house easily. A few others had also gathered there for a visit and he gave us a tour of his garden, his stones and a magical underground chamber. He had many stones, and I don't mean small ones, from all over the world. Among other mystical things he had built a huge stone circle in the garden and it really did resonate with good energy.



In pride of place, in the garden, by the side of a colossal quoit, was a massive triangular rock with a hole in it. Ed explained that this was a hag stone.

I was not convinced it was a naturally occurring stone being very smooth and triangular in shape, with a perfectly symmetrical hole, but it looked good. He told us that when a child was born it was good practice to pass the baby through the giant hole for protection, love and a positive life. Whilst this stone looked more manmade than water carved, it was no less impressive.

I was skinny in those days, (oh yes indeed). Edward asked me if I would like to try and clamber through the hole in the magical stone. I did so, with a little help, and so did my children. He told us that some people believe that only good things and positivity can pass through the hole in a hag stone, while bad luck and negative thoughts are too big to pass through. Best I don't try it now then!!!!

Whilst I felt no different after I had clambered through, it was an incredibly exciting experience. Ed Prynn was a mystical, spiritual and wonderfully excentric man who had so much love in him it constantly spilled over to those who visited him. A really genuine, vibrant soul and I will never forget his kindness and enthusiasm for life, love and stones. Since then I have loved hag stones. Edward Prynn passed in 2021 at the age of 85. My he rest in the peace and love he spread to everyone his whole life.

Hag stones, generally, are much smaller than the one I clambered though. Usually small enough to be held in one hand. They can be any stone or rock through which the sea, or any fast flowing water, has managed to carve a hole. With a little help from a mollusc.

Hag stones are very often flint, but can be other stones and even shells. It is said that if you spy through the hole you can view the fairy realm or even see the truth of your own situation. It is a magical portal to another kingdom, another dominion, a magical world. Look through mine and see if you can view another realm!

The term Hag, like witch, crone and many others, so often misused, comes from the word 'Holy,' (not holey) meaning revered and respected. Hag stones are not only fascinating, and each one different, but it is thought that they also hold protective properties. You can wear one as a talisman, keeping you safe from harm and calming your psyche. It is believed that they can help achieve better sleep patterns if hung over or close to the bed, and when hung by the front door, offer protection to the home. In fact they can do all the things we come to know and love about crystals. They are enchanted stones as well as being fascinating to look at.

Hag stones have many different names depending on which part of the country, or even the world, they are found. They can be called, witch stones, adder stones, fairy stones, snake eggs and even just lucky stones. The hole is caused initially by a burrowing mollusc called a Common Piddock, and the water then does the rest. The folk lore around hag stones is almost infinite and changes as to where the stories originated. In some Russian folklore, stories are told of a god living in the hole. He was supposed to scare away evil spirits and keep the household safe from harm. There are Irish tales of water spirits and snake like creatures living in the holes and when on land, would chase away evil, and many sources tell of peering through the holes to see the world of the fae, spirit worlds and magical beings and even your own dreams and innermost thoughts.

Sailors tales tell of hanging hag stones around their ships or boats to keep witches at bay, (no pun intended) and farmers hanging them above the barn or shelter, to stop animals getting foot rot and other diseases.

Hag stones are one of the many charms our predecessors used to help keep themselves and their animals safe from harm, disease and disaster. It tells us how concerned they all were and what fearful times they faced. This time of year was always an anxious time for all, as the colder wetter days of winter approached. Would they have enough food for themselves and their animals to get them through? Would disease stay away? Were they safe from marauders and thieves.

Like crystals and other charms, whatever you believe, hag stones are mystical and enchanting. It is easy to see that these folk tales have developed about a hard rock or stone with a natural hole in it, is a powerful talisman. If you fancy a magical adventure you can go on a treasure hunt for hag stones. The best places are pebble beaches, but you can sometimes find them by rivers and streams anywhere where the water can slowly bore a hole in the stone. It is so exciting when you find one. It is as if that very stone has waited for many years for you to walk along at that exact point, on that particular day, spot it, and pick it up. Happy hunting!

The Old Crone



An extract from

Cord of Three

a pagan novella

“The Gods can guide. But, there are other forces at work here. You know that. But, whatever happens, I will be with you until the end.” Maria says.

“Then, let us see what the Gods have to tell us now.” I pick up my rune pouch to begin.

A runecaster does not see the future. Rune casting examines cause and effect to point out possible outcomes.



I lay out my white cloth, setting the boundary for my casting. I begin forming different questions in my mind and then dwindle those questions down to one pressing inquiry. Maria is quiet. A bystander for this process.

I hold my rune pouch, massaging the tiles through the pouch. All the while repeating the question in my head. There is no set time for this process. Just whenever I feel that I have given the Gods enough time to calculate fate.

I draw only one tile from the pouch. The side that faces me is blank. I look at Maria. She looks back, wide eyed. She can see the

rune on the other side.

We say no words.

Without turning it to see the other side, I lay the rune face down, as pulled, on the cloth. Then, trying to drop the remaining pieces onto the cloth, only 2 tumble out.

The sound is like sticks knocking the side of a tree. The other pieces remain in the pouch as if held there by the hand of Odin himself. Maria and I sit and stare, on the edge of our seats, at the way they lay before us.

They are both reversed, merkstave. I turn the first to fall over, to reveal its secret.

It is Raidho.

“Not without death.” I say in barely a whisper. I guide my hand to the second to fall. I flip it fast.

“Algiz.” I fall back in my chair.

“A warning. Danger.” Maria says quietly, her eyes locking with mine.

I still have the first one that I pulled from the pouch. I look at Maria. She says nothing. She already knows.

I tap the top of it as if I can somehow change what is on the other side. I breathe deep and flip it as I exhale. It is Mannaz. I gasp, not realizing that the sound came from within me.

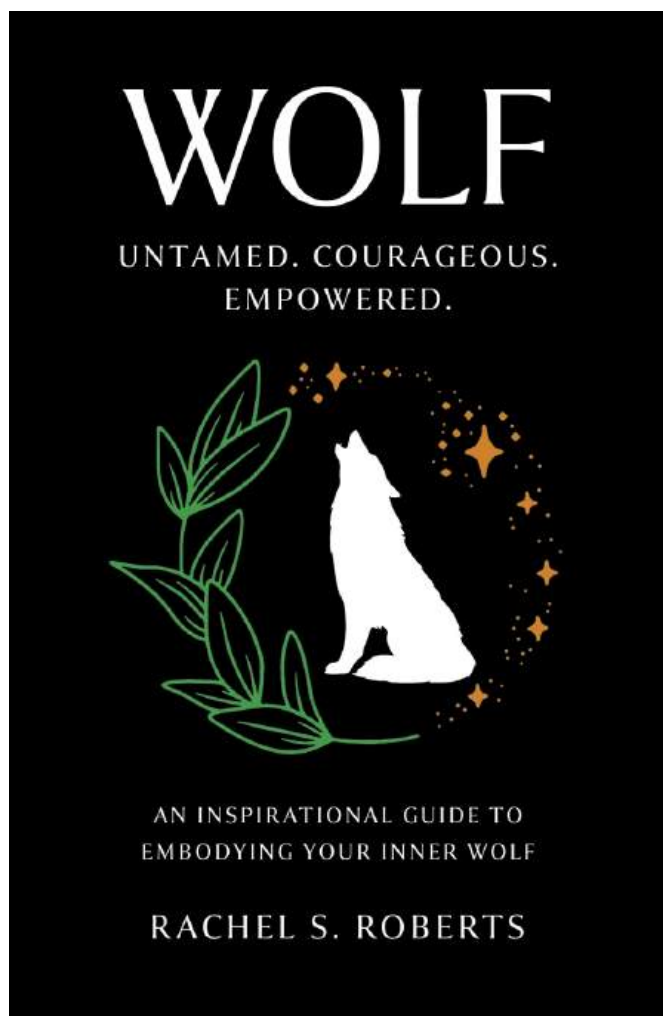
“Expect no help now.” My mouth is dry. My hands are shaking. My fears seem to be well founded.

Maria finally asks, “What was your question?”



Rena Craven

What We're Reading



Wolf is available to order now on Amazon, at WH Smiths and in Barnes and Noble

Wolf

by Rachel S. Roberts

Untamed. Courageous. Empowered. An Inspirational Guide to Embodying Your Inner Wolf

An inspirational guide to deepening your spiritual connection to Wolves, exploring embodiment practices for personal empowerment.

Through an exploration of wolf wisdom, myth, legend, gods and goddesses this guide will lead you on the hunt for self-acceptance and self-actualisation. Through guided connection to Wolf spirit and the wolf council, you will increase your self-confidence, learn to honour your unique self and celebrate all the ways in which you are and can be, Wolf; untamed, courageous and wildly free.

I enjoyed the previous book by Rachel S. Roberts, titled Lupa, and Wolf did not disappoint. This is a text that I will be dipping back into whenever I need that little boost of wolf energy.

Wolf does an excellent job of offering a useful perspective to both those just beginning on their journey with wolf energy, as well as those who are further along on the path. Roberts' enthusiasm and adoration are infectious and I couldn't help but feel empowered, with the book in my hand.

Helen JR Bruce

Submissions for both reviews, and books to review, are currently open. Please send your enquiry to submissions@witchzine.co.uk.

TAROT MUSINGS WITH AUSET GYPSY



The Mystical Intersection of Halloween, Samhain, and Tarot

Halloween, known for its spooky allure and mischievous celebrations, two of my favorite reasons, has deep historical roots intertwined with Samhain, a sacred festival in Pagan and witchcraft traditions. Samhain, pronounced “Sow-in,” marks the end of the harvest and the beginning of winter, celebrated from October 31st to November 1st. Originating in ancient cultures throughout Europe and Mediterranean cultures, it was believed that on this day, the veil between the worlds of the living and the dead was at its thinnest, allowing spirits to pass through and communicate with the living. A prime example of this is The Isia, celebrated in Italy during the Roman era in honor of Isis wandering to find the corpse or Mummy of Osiris, complete with revelers wandering in costume and dark robes, holding oil lamps moaning and asking for alms and food, yep, door to door! Halloween, as it is popularly known today, evolved from these ancient customs, combining Celtic rituals with Christian traditions, particularly All Hallows’ Eve.

For witches, Samhain is one of the most important Sabbats in the Wheel of the Year. It is a time of introspection, ancestral veneration, and honoring the dead. Witches often view this holiday not only as a celebration of the cycle of life and death but also as a powerful moment for spellwork and divination, particularly with tools like Tarot.

Tarot and Samhain: The Connection to the Spirit World

Tarot plays a significant role in Samhain rituals, as this is a time when divination is believed to be especially potent. Witches and practitioners use Tarot to gain insights from the spirit world, seek guidance from ancestors, and explore hidden truths. Two Tarot cards that resonate strongly with Samhain are The Death card and The Devil card.

The Death card, often misunderstood and most feared, symbolizes transformation, endings, and the cyclical nature of life and death. Depending on how it appears in a reading it can hold both releasing meanings or ominous warnings. It encourages us to let go of what no longer serves us and to embrace the natural transition to something new. In witchcraft, the Death card is a reminder that death is not to be feared but respected as a sacred part of the human experience. It is seen as a doorway to spiritual evolution and growth.

The Devil card represents personal fears, limitations, and attachments, symbolizing the shadow aspects of the self. For witches, this card is not about external evil, but rather the internal struggles that hold us back from realizing our true power. The Devil card invites practitioners to confront their fears and break free from self-imposed chains, an ideal theme during Samhain, when introspection is paramount. According to past traditional meanings The Devil did represent outward dangers and facing harrowing dilemmas. We mustn’t turn from tradition, but learn from it!



Rituals and Spells Using The Death and Devil Cards

Working with spirits and the dead during Samhain can be a profound experience, and using The Death and Devil cards in spellwork can enhance this connection. Below are some suggested rituals and spells to perform during this magical time.

1. **Ancestral Altar Ritual:** Set up an altar dedicated to your ancestors. Place photos, mementos, and offerings of food or drink on the altar. Light black and white candles to symbolize the balance of life and death. Lay The Death card in the center of the altar to honor the natural cycle of transformation. Meditate on the card and ask your ancestors for guidance or messages. Allow yourself to feel the presence of your loved ones, trusting that they are near.

2. **Breaking Fear Spell with The Devil Card:** If there is something holding you back—whether it's fear of the unknown, personal doubts, or unhealthy attachments—this spell can help break those bonds. Lay The Devil card in front of you and light a red candle, symbolizing courage and strength. Write down your fears or limitations on a piece of paper, then burn the paper in the flame, visualizing the chains breaking. As the ashes rise, so does your freedom from these burdens.

3. **Spirit Communication:** Samhain is an ideal time for communicating with spirits. Use Tarot as a tool to invite messages from the dead. Begin by placing both The Death and Devil cards on your altar. Light incense (mugwort or sandalwood are excellent choices for spirit communication). Shuffle your Tarot deck and ask for a message from the spirit realm. Pull three cards and reflect on their meanings. The Death and Devil cards on your altar will help anchor the energy of the spirit world, guiding you through your reading.

Confronting Fear and Embracing Transformation

Both The Death and Devil cards serve as powerful symbols for personal transformation in witchcraft. The Death card teaches us that letting go of old patterns and embracing change is a natural part of life, while The Devil card challenges us to face our internal fears and limitations head-on. By working with these energies during Samhain, witches can harness the power of this sacred time to deepen their spiritual practice, honor the dead, and release what no longer serves them.

As we celebrate Halloween and Samhain, we're reminded that fear is often a gateway to wisdom, and death is merely a step in the eternal cycle of life. Through Tarot, spellwork, and rituals, we can explore the mysteries of the spirit world and our own souls, transforming our fears into a source of strength and renewal.



Annie Jones

I love painting landscapes and trying to capture the feel of the season in my art.