PAGANS OF THE NORTH ISSUE 31

Editors Letter

It's 2024! Hello everyone!

Our first ever issue of 2024, is filled with so much content! We have so many exciting new articles for you to read alongside our regulars. We have beautiful poems, artwork, story extracts, interviews and so much more!

Our deity of the month is about Rhiannon, inspired by an amazing artpiece submitted to us, and in Witching with Kids, Emma talks about horses and their symbolising and importance in her life, which is interesting because Rhiannon is a Goddess of horses! We love when things link up like that, like magic!

We also talk about our brand new Spotlight Awards! Our nominations are open for you to nominate your favourite businesses and people! Check out page 39 for more information and all the catergories!

We hope you enjoy this issue as much as we enjoyed creating it! We have been so lúcky to háve Andrew, lvy and Jo join our team to make this issue extra special!

Sending you all love, Quinn

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Trader Of The Month

By Sam Stoker

This month we spoke to Brittania from Myth and Moon Relics based in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne.

POTN: Can you tell us a little about your business?

Brittania: My business is called Myth and Moon Relics and I make jewellery inspired by Victorian specimen collecting and curiosity cabinets mixed with my spiritual practice. I use vintage inspired glass specimen jars and fill them with gifts from nature from dried flowers to ethically sourced butterfly specimens. But my favourite are my spell pendants. I fill beautiful hand blown glass spheres with botanicals and crystals using the old knowledge of their meaning and power and I follow the cycles of the moon when making them. I love when customers come to me with specific needs and I can make them a unique and powerful tool to face their problems and give them strength.

POTN: How would you describe your path?

Brittania: I am very much a solitary practitioner, I think that comes from being raised in a very Christian environment full of people who really judged and didn't understand Paganism. I read a lot of books and am particularly drawn to following the moon cycles and nature. I like celebrating the traditional holidays but most of all nature is my church. Nature is so healing and powerful and its gifts are boundless.

POTN: What's in the future for your business?

Brittania: It's still quite new. I've made jewellery for a while, but making this type of jewellery that reflects my practice is new. I'm actually a disabled business owner, too. So finding a balance of running my business while taking care of my health is tricky. Right now I am still just trying to get my name out. I would love to do more of my bespoke spell necklaces and I have been working on making some homeware items and just would like to grow at my own steady pace.

POTN: What brought you to your path?

Brittania: As I mentioned I was raised in a very Christian environment, but when I was 16 I got a job in a hippie/occult shop and I remember just devouring all the books on Wicca, Paganism, Witch Craft, and all the ingredients for creating spells and altar relics. It was a whole new world that was so different from the rigidity and powerlessness of Christianity. I always had a problem with the idea of God as a man who created woman to be a partner when it is women who bring life into the world, and the idea of blind faith, and here was a practice where I could make spells and rituals to have a bit of control over my own destiny. It felt like coming home.

POTN: Are your faith and business entwined?

Brittania: My business is directly inspired by my faith and wouldn't exist without it. Even with my butterfly specimen jars, I make sure my specimens are ethically sourced; they come from butterfly gardeners who maintain gardens and collect those that have died naturally, it's all a part of nature's cycle of life and I believe if it was beautiful in life why would it not be beautiful in death? My business also keeps my faith alive and challenges me when I get requests for bespoke pieces to help overcome specific issues, I get to study what botanicals and crystals would work well and I love the ritual of creating these spells and putting my positive energy into helping people out. It gives me a sense of purpose beyond making a pretty adornment.

Thank you very much for this opportunity!

You can find Myth and Moon Relics on Etsy at:

www.etsy.com/uk/shop/MythAndMoonRelics

BOOK REVIEW:

The Witches Apothecary by Lorraine Anderson

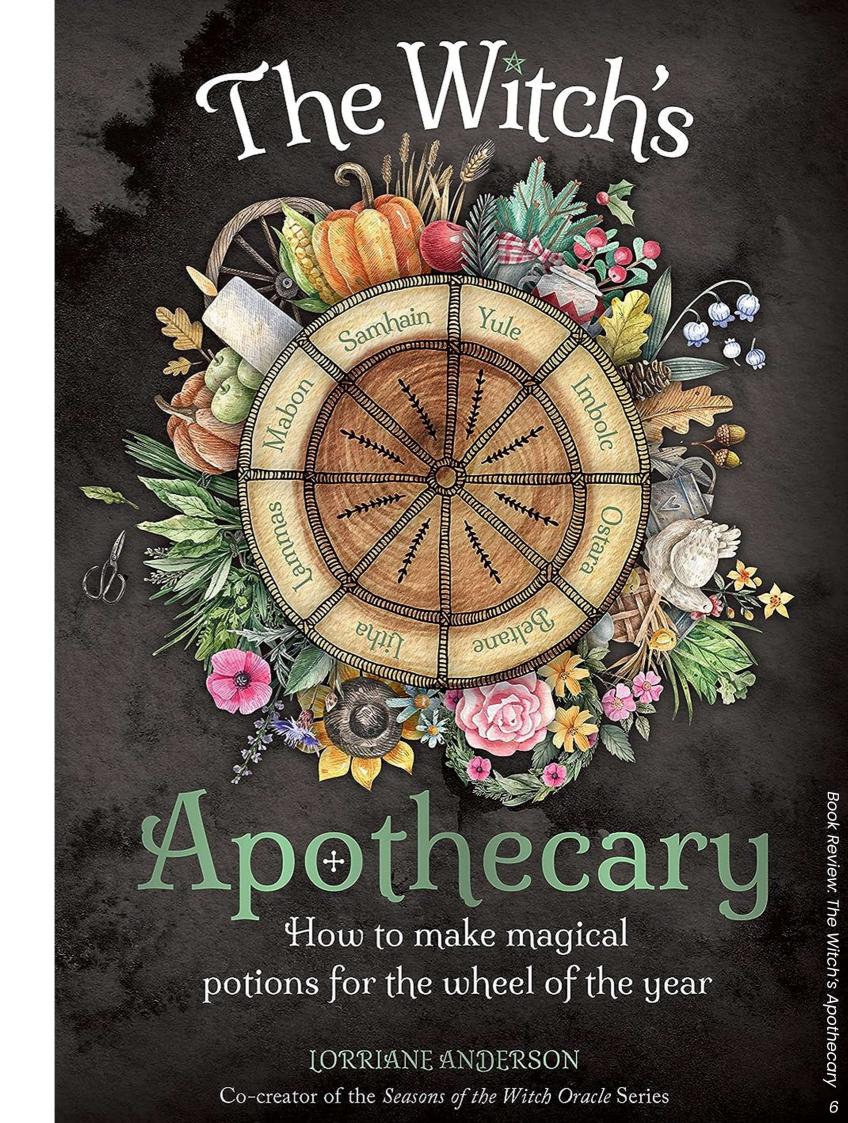
Reviewed by Jo Chandler

This book will undoubtedly be one of the most beautiful in your magical collection. Not surprising when you realise that it comes from the creator of The Season of the Witch oracle cards. The illustrations are not only plentiful, but helpful and really beautiful. However is it style over substance? I think that really depends on where you are in your witchcraft journey and where your interests lay.

The book is split into 3 sections starting with 'Introduction to Magical Workings,' then 'Magic Maker Process' and finally 'Working with The Wheel of the year.' The first two are great for beginners and have a few bits for the more experienced witch. In short they cover the basic tools, herbs needed, gratitude, self care, sustainability and basic potion making. It shows how to incorporate nature synergy and potions along with self care into your everyday life. The last part is related to the 8 Sabbats and potions that correspond to them to enhance your celebration and acknowledgement of them. The potions do lean towards the self care aspect of witchcraft, which is not my area of interest, but I know a lot of witches will enjoy this. For those of you who like myself do not enjoy this so much, the incense, tea and coffee brews and house cleaning potions are really quite gorgeous. The Apothecary Cabinet at the end of part 1 has some excellent advice with regards to carrier oils and essential oils and the risks of buying fake oils. It also has a useful chart of herbs and their medical associations. It has a small section that covers clays, waters and crystals.

Part 2 also covers storage, labelling, scents, colours, animals and the importance of research in all areas of magical/potion workings. Part 3 is set out for The Wheel of the Year. There is a brief bit about each Sabbat, some themes and magical workings and correspondences to do with that particular Sabbat. There are then several recipes that tie in to help you enhance your celebrations. The recipes are all simply laid out and easy to follow, with the majority of ingredients being easy to find.

One drawback I found with the book was that it doesn't include an index. If you want to find a particular recipe, unless you either remember what it is called or what Sabbat it is for, you will struggle to find it without going through all of them. Overall I did enjoy the book, I learnt a few new magical correspondences and it was an enjoyable read. It is great for beginners, as well as witches interested in making their own bath salts and beauty potions. It would also be good for tying in your potions to enhance your Sabbat celebrations, not to mention looking gorgeous on your magical bookshelf.



Deity Of The Month - Rhiannon

Deity Of The Month Rhiannon By Sam Stoker

Goddess of horses, spirituality, fertility, femininity, and rebirth, Rhiannon is a mythical figure hailing from Wales who has been celebrated since at least the 11th century when she first appeared in the traditional Welsh works, The Four Branches of the Mabinogi, a piece of literature that is widely regarded as the earliest prose in Britain. The Four Branches are four separate stories that interweave and were taken from oral records, and Rhiannon appears in the First Branch riding a white horse.

The Story

Rhiannon first appears to a prince named Pwyll, who rules over the historical area of Dyfed - which now incorporates Carmarthenshire, Cardiganshire and Pembrokeshire. Pwyll climbed the hill known as Gorsedd Arberth with his horsemen in order to use its magic. The hill is known to offer either a marvel or to battle those who ascend it, and Pwyll is lucky enough that he gets the marvel - Rhiannon on a white horse. She flees on horseback, albeit at a steady pace, and he sends his men to chase after her. Despite her not going full pelt, his men are unable to catch up to her. After three days, Pwyll asks Rhiannon to stop, and she does so.

She reveals to him that she has chosen him to marry despite already being engaged to another. Pwyll agrees, but at their wedding feast another man asks Pwyll to give him Rhiannon and he agrees (without knowing what is being asked of him), which naturally upsets her. With some cunning magic she has Pwyll use an enchanted bag at her wedding feast to her third betrothed, and ask the new fiancé to fill it with food. But it can't be filled, and she and Pwyll trap the man inside it and finally get married.

Rhiannon and Pwyll have a son, Pryderi, but his birth and childhood are far from plain sailing. After Rhiannon gives birth, Pryderi is kidnapped in the night while she is sleeping, and to avoid being blamed, her maids who were supposed to be watching him smear dog blood on her face to frame her for his disappearance. She is accused of murdering and eating her infant child, and agrees to the punishment of having to sit outside and tell travellers her story, and offering to carry them, acting as a horse. Pwyll does not believe she is to blame and stands by her. It turns out their child was found and raised by a lord and as he grows, his guardian realises his resemblance to Pwyll and he returns home to his rightful parents, who learn that he has grown up rapidly and with an affinity for horses like his mother. When Pwyll dies, Pryderi becomes King of Dyfed.

In the Third Branch, Pryderi sets his mother up with his friend Manawydan, and Rhiannon marries him. The three of them along with Pryderi's wife Cigna return to the hill Gorsedd Arberth but this time they don't get a miracle, and a magical storm arrives and all living creatures disappear barring the four friends. They journey to England and after a hunting trip takes Pryderi into a curious tower, he and Rhiannon become trapped inside and disappear. The story then focuses on Manawydan and his rescue of the two.



Rhiannon riding in Arberth. From The Mabinogion, translated by Lady Charlotte Guest, 1877

The Goddess

Rhiannon is acknowledged as being from the Otherworld, the land of magic and fairies and mythical beings, and is therefore not human in the stories about her. She is known for her magical horse riding, her magic bag, and the Adar Rhiannon (the 'birds of Rhiannon'), three birds connected to her whose song can 'wake the dead and lull the living to sleep' which appear in the 14th century Arthurian text Culhwch and Olwen.

Rhiannon can be considered a feminist goddess, a writer of her own fortune, and is a strong female figure. It is easy to see why people may look up to her as a leader and someone to worship or work with; she embodies female empowerment and gender equality by making her own decisions and not standing by when she was wronged.

Turn the page to see the beautiful artwork created by Beverley Thornton titled: 'The Song Of Rhiannon' which makes up the background of this page.





ANCIENT CITIES ANCIENT STORIES

Keswick - Lake District

Although Keswick is not a city, it is a beautiful town in the heart of Cumbria, with a wonderful history dating back thousands of years, even pre-dating the Roman period.

Castlerigg Stone Circle, an ancient monument dating back to around 3200 BCE (Before Common Era) is one of the earliest stone circles in Britain and is visited annually by many tourists. As with all stone circles, we don't know the true purpose of Castlerigg but we can assume our ancestors used it for rituals, keeping time or burial purposes. There have also been some settlements and hillforts found nearby.

South of Keswick is a neolithic stone tool production centre called the Langdale Axe Industry. This centre was created around 4000 - 3500 BCE, which would have been around the same time as the construction of Castlerigg Stone Circle. In modern times, people have discovered abandoned axes, partially completed tools, and sharp-edged fragments created by shaping huge rocks in the vicinity. They have also discovered stones used as hammers and other evidence of the mass production of axes. These axes have been found all over Great Britain, which shows how connected the Neolithic people probably were.

In Roman Britain, Cumbria was a part of the Carvetii tribe's territory. Given that the western section of Hadrian's Wall was located there, it was strategically significant. While there is a wealth of Roman archaeological material in the county's northernmost regions, there is little evidence of Roman presence in the Keswick area other than the discovery of one or more Roman roads close to the town today. The majority of the nearby villages that date from the Roman era and the years after their departure seem to have been Celtic in origin. The Celtic roots of many of the geographical names from that era, such as the River Derwent, are linked to their Welsh closely counterparts.

Keswick was first recorded in the early Middle Ages when the Kingdom of Northumbria, stretching from the East coast to the West, was in power. This collection of Celtic and Christian inhabitants littered the Lake District landscape, including Keswick. So before the rise of Christianity and the Normans arriving in England, Keswick, although small, saw many different Pagan cultures, whether they lived in the settlements there, built stone circles near it, or built roads near it, Keswick has seen it all.

Imbolc

Imbolc is an ancient festival that has been celebrated for centuries to mark the arrival of spring in Celtic culture. The Celtic people saw the world a little differently, with new days starting at sunset and seasons starting in different months compared to our modern calendar.

This festival, which takes place on the first day of February is a time for purification and renewal, as well as a celebration of the goddess Brigid. Imbolc holds great significance in Pagan traditions and has been adapted and celebrated by modern Pagans and even modern Witches around the world.

Imbolc originated in Celtic lands such as Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man. It was a festival celebrated by farmers as a way to purify and cleanse, occurring halfway between winter solstice and spring equinox. During this period they would prepare the fields for planting, signifying the land's renewal and rebirth.

The term "Imbolc" is believed to have originated from an Old Irish word meaning "milking," which likely refers to the beginning of the lambing season. This connection to the agricultural cycle highlights the association of Imbolc with fertility and the renewal of life.

Central to the celebration of Imbolc is the goddess Brigid who is revered as the patroness of poetry, healing, and metalworking. Brigid is often depicted as a triple goddess to modern Pagans, associated with the elements of fire, water, and earth. She represents the transition from winter to spring, the awakening of the land and the return of light.

In ancient Celtic mythology, Brigid was highly revered and worshiped as one of the most powerful Celtic gods. She was believed to be the daughter of the Dagda, the oldest god in the Celtic pantheon. Brigid's significance extended beyond the festival of Imbolc, as she was also associated with the sacred flame, healing springs and the protection of livestock.

In pre-Christian times, Imbolc was celebrated with various rituals and customs that highlighted the connection between the festival and the goddess Brigid. On the day of Imbolc, rituals such as burning lamps and lighting bonfires were performed in her honour.

These fires served as a beacon of light representing the return of warmth and sunlight and people would gather around the fires, offering prayers and blessings for the coming year.

With the spread of Christianity, many pagan traditions and deities were assimilated into Christian practices. Brigid, also known as Bridget of Kildare was seamlessly integrated into the emerging Christian faith and became St. Brigid.

Imbolc has changed and adjusted over time to fit different cultures and beliefs. Although some ancient customs may have disappeared in certain areas, modern Pagans and Wiccans have embraced Imbolc. They have revived and reimagined its traditions to align with their spiritual practices and the combination of old and new customs results in a special and significant festival celebration.

This wonderful festival serves as a reminder to find balance within ourselves and with the world around us.

It's a time to let go of the old, purify our intentions and welcome the new possibilities that spring offers. So let us celebrate Imbolc with gratitude, joy and a renewed sense of connection to the natural world.







Witches Corner. WANDS

By Claire Louise from Hedge Witchery UK

There are many tools that Pagan witches choose to use in their crafts. One that until recently I haven't really used is maybe one of the most often associated with magical workings: the witches' wand.

I think everyone can relate to the wand and its use in magic. As a child I remember seeing a magic show or two where a long, black-centred wand tipped with two white ends was used to produce a white rabbit from a hat, or a bunch of flowers from a

First, when making your wand, take some time to find a branch you wish to work with. Perhaps take a walk and feel yourself drawn to a branch. You may be drawn to its shape or colour, or it may be that you want to work with a specific type of wood for its magical properties. Here's some ideas on the different trees and plants and their magical correspondences to guide you to take your walk near a specific plant you may wish to work with:

Apple - love, desire, wholeness Oak - strength, stability, protection Elder - faery communication, protection Birch - new beginnings, protection (especially children)

Ash - the world tree, justice, prosperity Fir - spiritual enlightenment, intuition, regeneration

Rowan - divination, strength and success Mugwort- Although this is not a tree, its stem is strong and is filled with lots of magical feminine energies. For this reason I have chosen to make my wand from the stalk of a large mugwort plant I have grown in my garden.

For me now though, the wand is a tool I use for focusing energy in spells and rituals, mixing up herbal blends for teas or loose incense, and I also use my current wand when I'm reading my magpie charm oracle for others. It helps me to focus on the main items in the reading, drawing in the person to the objects, their connections and meanings.

I believe wands are best suited to the individual witch if they are handcrafted, so here's my guide to crafting a wand of your own for this issue's Witches Corner. As always the opinions, views, and information in this article are my own and I believe each witch should follow their own path.

Obviously, it is best to use fallen branches. For my wand however, I'm using the part of the mugwort plant that I don't use in teas or incense, and would usually end up in my compost or constructed into pentagram wall hangings. Once you have found your branch, I would take some time to give thanks to the tree or plant that it came from, and consider all the magical workings your wand will assist you with. When harvesting, I gave thanks to my mugwort before I cut the stem that I will now use. You may want to make an offering of thanks to the tree or plant you choose.

When you are ready to construct your wand it's time to get creative. I started by cleansing my wood with a burning bundle to remove any negative energies it may have picked up, and also to cleanse my work area.

There are many ways to make a wand; some people carve their wands, burn markings into them, paint or dye them, or, like me, dress them with crystals and ribbons. I also use clay to sculpt the ends of the wands. The choice is yours and I'd definitely go with what you are drawn to. This is the time to really get to know your wand by working with it, and by doing this I feel you are giving it some of your own magical energies.

For my wand I chose to use a small amount of oven bake clay to adorn it with a small crystal on each end. My favourite crystal to work with is ruby in zoisite for its correspondences with creativity and uniqueness, so I chose this for one end, and for the other I chose clear quartz to amplify the magical energies I work with.

Before using the clay, I used a little hot glue to keep the crystals in place while I worked on them. Then I gently smoothed and pushed the clay to join the crystal with the wood. I used a little extra to make decorative components such as swirly vines. Metal charms can also be attached by pushing them into the clay. I baked my wand as stated in the clays instructions. After baking I added yarns to protect the wood where the wand was to be held. I tried to pick yarns and fabrics that complimented my stem and the crystals.

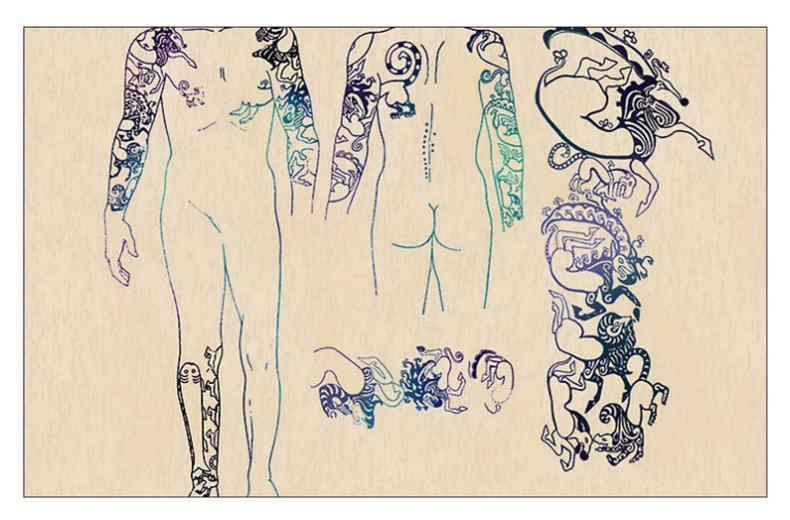
I'm totally in love with my wand and feel it will serve me well in my magical workings. I reached out as always to members of Hedge Witchery UK for their uses for wands and this is what they came back with:

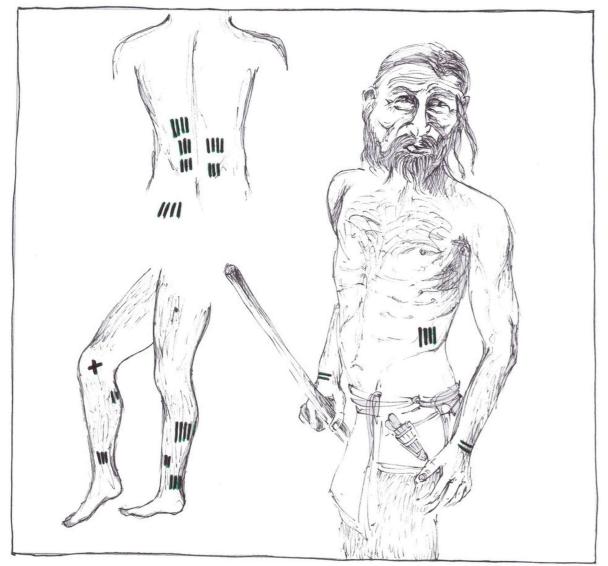
Dawn: An elder once taught me that if you put the non casting end into the crook of your elbow and along your forearm, holding it lightly, then raise it and slowly lower your arm, that should give you a feeling of the power of the wand and if you resonate with it. I feel strongly connected to mine.

Kirsty: 'Cast with the pointier end!'

Until next time, Claire







Tattoos, A History With A Pagan Origin?

By Louisa Chisholm-Kelly

Since the Neolithic period, humans worldwide have been tattooing their skin. Archaeological finds suggest tattooing may have been utilised before then, from as early as the late Paleolithic period in Europe. The tattoo equipment that has been found shows that inks were made from combinations of natural elements and carbon, likely ash or soot. Before the invention of electricity, tattoo technique remained largely unchanged, though it was refined with the use of sharper implements and cleaner inks.

One of the oldest known physical examples of tattoos belong to a man mummified in the ice of The Alps. Ötzi, as he was named by scientists, lived around 3250 BCE (The Bronze Age). He had 61 tattoos, mostly lines, some of which seem to have been tattooed over repeatedly, leading scientists to suggest that the tattooing formed a type of acupressure treatment for his many body ailments.

Seven female Egyptian mummies from Deir el-Madina, that lived around the same time as Ötzi, also have tattoos. Infrared imaging was used to discover the hieroglyphic style markings on the women that were believed to be artisans and craftspeople.

The most famous example of ancient tattooing belongs to the Siberian Ice Maiden, also known as the Ukok Princess. She lived around 2500 years ago, and had many tattoos featuring animals. The most famous being a stylised kicking deer.

Some anthropologists insist that these tattoos are purely decorative or commemorative, many more believe that these tattoos were done to either protect or empower the owner with the spirit of the animal, or, as in the case of patterns and plants, a form of healing. This is a theory that carries on throughout subsequent archaeological finds. It also appears in the research modern anthropologists have done with

Some of the first written descriptions of tattoos appear in the Roman accounts of meeting the Picts in Scotland. The word 'Pictii' means 'painted ones' in Latin. According to the accounts, the Picts were covered with pictures of animals, figures and patterns. It is unknown, however, if these were permanent tattoos or if they were painting their skin with a dark blue plant based dye called woad.

In 921 CE, Ahmed Iban Fadlan, an Arabic scholar and traveller, wrote about meeting Vikings along the Volga River in Russia. Along with descriptions of their clothing and customs, he spoke about their body types and said their skin was covered in dark pictures that looked like, amongst other things, trees. This is likely a description of tattoos, or woad style dyes.

Greco-Roman cultures saw tattoos as marks of punishment and shame, a viewpoint that persisted throughout Europe's conversion to Christianity. Tattoos were linked to Godlessness, Pagans and Heathens. It was seen as a custom belonging to undesirables and the ways of the past. This was perpetuated throughout history in stories of pirates, highwaymen, prisoners and criminals. The stories brought back from the New World by explorers and missionaries often include descriptions of tattooed Indigenous people. The tattoos becoming a shorthand description for so-called savages.





However, luckily, it didn't stay that way. Those that took part in The Crusades were often secretly tattooed with a religious symbol as a right of pilgrimage to The Holy Land. There are rumours that this also extended to Royalty up to the early 1900s.

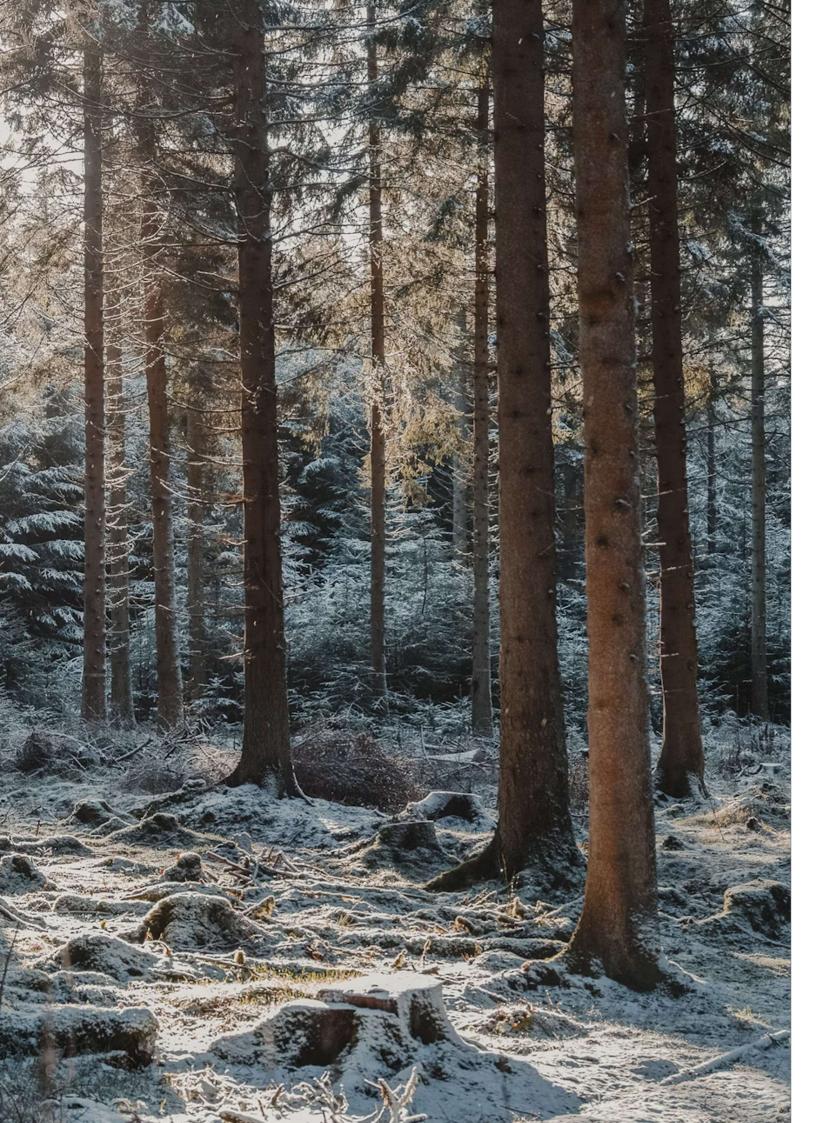
Travelling sideshows became extremely popular in America and Europe during the 1800s. One common character was the tattooed lady. Photographs of these infamous women travelled far and wide, and helped to bring the practise of tattooing out of the shadows and into the mainstream. It was said that aristocratic people, especially women, often had a small tattoo that was created as a secret gift or message for their lover.

Tattoos became a custom of the Armed forces, especially the Navy. King George V reportedly got two tattoos while serving in the Navy in 1881. King Edward VII had multiple tattoos. One infamous tattooist of the era stated that he had tattooed the subjects of six sovereigns, including the Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha and a grandson of Queen Victoria. He said that he worked late into the night for weeks after the death of Queen Victoria, tattooing memorial designs.

By the 1940s tattoos were firmly breaking into the mainstream. No longer a secret, the change in trend was likely helped by the scores of servicemen wanting to tattoo their allegiance to their battalion or their country. This trend continues to grow throughout the 20th Century, with music movements such as Punk and Rock mostly leading the charge.

By the beginning of this century, tattoos had come full circle. People get them either just because they like them, or with a purpose. That purpose often being remembrance or somewhat magical in meaning.

Tattoos are undoubtedly an incredibly old, persistent, tradition. While the techniques and accessibility have changed, the basic reasoning hasn't. Tattoos for some are seen as a right of passage, with arguments that the pain is a part of it all. For some, showing your allegiances on your skin is an important part of their tribal identity, even if that tribe is a football club or a certain band. The roots of all of these reasons stand firmly within Paganism, within Animism, within Pre-Christian, ancient societies, and I am very happy to see it continuing.



Hello Maiden, Goodbye Crone

A Simple Reflection On Imbolc

By Selis Oswin

I love rituals and festivals and as the year turns again, bringing us away from Yule and into the freshness of Imbolc, I have enjoyed the reflective journey inwards that the year's end has brought.

As a winter born person who came into the world on New Year's Day, I feel a connection to Janus, that two-faced Roman God of beginning, transitions and time. I look back on what has passed while looking forward to what is to come.

And so to Imbolc, or Candlemas. The thawing of the land and the crowning of snowdrops. Life emerging, the year resurrected but still half in shadow, encouraging us to give thought to what we wish to birth in the year ahead. What can we plant, nurture and bring forth from the darkness of creation?

Consider the Major Arcana of the Tarot deck; it begins with the Fool, aligned to Aries and Spring and ends with the World, symbolic of completion, the earth, the mother principle and creation from which all stirs.

I like to lay out the Fool and the World with a gap between and draw a 'bridging' card to suggest how the step will be made personally from one to another and what energies I can draw from the completed year to take forward to coming projects; what considerations I might like to make while bridging the gap between receding darkness and solar rebirth.

And as the Cailleach offers the baton to Brigid, it is time to honour the wakening of the land and perhaps assemble seeds and pots as a physical and metaphorical act of birthing and nurturing ideas.

Honouring Brigid can be done in the simplest of acts of care to yourself and your living space by cleansing surfaces and doorways/entrances (I favour pine oil in filtered water), removing clutter, and moving items around to change energy patterns. The observance of lighting a plain white tea light on a hearth or sill; wearing an item of white, pale yellow, or pale green (I have my pale green nail polish in waiting). Nothing complicated, everything understated, clean and fresh.

Imbolc represents new beginnings and simplicity and like the uncomplicated little snowdrop it can be incredibly refreshing.

BELOW THE WINTER SKY

Poem by Chris Roe

Below the grey, winter sky,
A covering of snow,
Lay upon the distant hills.
In the valley
The familiar, but welcome sight
Of the grey stone cottage,
With smoke from the single chimney,
Gently drifting away
Upon the chilling winter breeze.

Journey's end closer now,
Footsteps quicken through the snow,
Along the narrow lane,
Leading to the path
And the solid timber door
At the front of the cottage.

Already in my mind,
Smells of the kitchen,
A glowing fire in the grate,
The warmth and comfort of home.
As I close the door,
Fresh snow covers my tracks
Along the lane,
As winter secures its hold
Upon the cottage in the valley.

Inside at last.

Expectations of journey's end,
Fulfilled,
As I rest, by the fire,
Of the cottage, in the valley,
Below the grey, winter sky

Charm Against An Egg Boat

By Aly Smith

Pre Warning: This piece of work has mild swearing

You must break the shell to bits, for fear
The witches should make it a boat, my dear
For over the sea away from home
Far by night the witches roam.

Trad./Anon.

'Shit, shit, shit. We have to go back. Turn around now. Now.... now... please...now.'
'What's wrong?' I asked, taking a sideways glance as I tried to keep driving in a straight line continuing away from the street we both lived in, three doors apart.
'Please turn back... please'. Her voice was getting higher, breathier and I could hear the panic in it. Deciding to act on her request I approached the next roundabout and drove back towards her house shortly pulling into the drive. I hadn't fully stopped before she had the car door open and with keys previously taken from her handbag she ran and let herself in. I stopped the car and followed.

She was in the kitchen bent over her table staring at an empty egg cup, tears running down her face as she turned to me holding a teaspoon in her right hand. 'Oh God,' I muttered, understanding the cause of her distress. 'Has it gone?' 'Yes,' she sobbed violently. 'Yes.'

'It may be alright' I lied. And then we heard it. A distant cackle and a splash as another one was launched at sea, the fleet building steadily, awaiting nightfall.

God help us all.

Witching With Kids

By Emma Swailes

Happy New Calendar Year from the Bell Witch mad house!

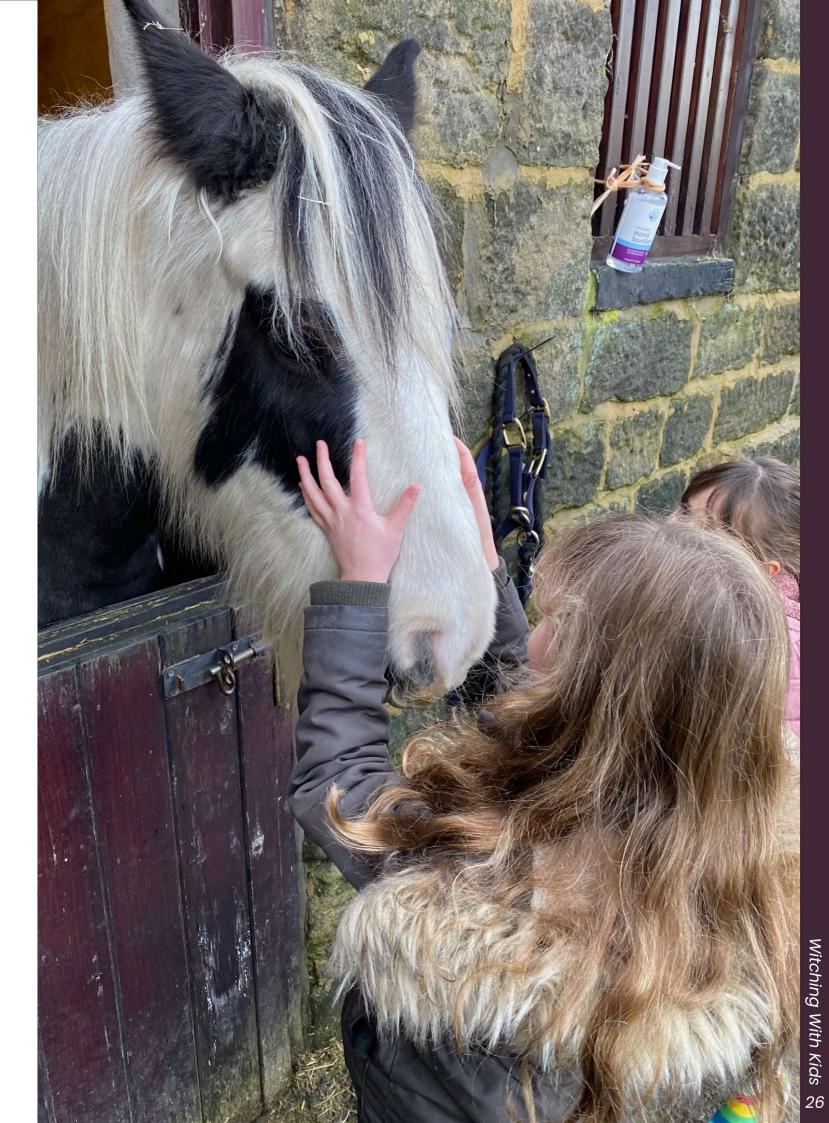
Don't you think the Christmas tree box looks a bit like a coffin when it is mummified with years of cellotape, and shoved back in the attic? Like 'death to Christmas!' Kinda morbid, but I like it! I don't know about you, but I am very happy to resume the normal rhythm of life now it's 2024. It gets a bit confusing and 'toy heavy' towards the end of December, especially with kids! This Christmas holiday was strange. In Leeds the children did not finish until the 22nd of December. It was too close, and I felt thrown in at the deep end suddenly. We didn't have time to ease into the festivities with trips to see Santa or craft sessions at the Museum, and I couldn't face going into the city on the last weekend before the big day. This is the first time I haven't booked festive activities for my two, and for a fleeting time I felt guilty. Then I had a word with myself, and realised it's a good thing really. Boo to capitalism rituals and money-making schemes!

I am lucky enough to be blessed with a Yule time baby. Flossy's birthday is on the 21st. It was the first time she was at school on her actual birthday, much to her dad's disappointment. (He had booked the day off work thinking we would be home together, oops!) As Floss's birthday is so close to Christmas the party tends to be held the weekend before. In the past we have had full on bounce parks and wall climbing, where a load of kids dangle like a spider off a web, or run around a squishy landscape hyped up on sugar, but I had a feeling this party would be different. Since she turned 7, Floss has really grown in spirit and understanding of the world around her.

She has become more interested in nature. She has a very calm energy and aura, and animals and babies alike are drawn to her because of this. Over the last year a new love of horses has been steadily growing for her. It's more than 'My Little Pony' and 'Spirit' toy horses. She wants to be near them, to be in their presence and to watch them. It is lovely to observe.

What I find most amazing is that as I have connected to my Reiki Guide who happens to be a horse, my little witchling has a new appreciation for them too. It's uncanny. I hadn't given horses much thought until May 2023, when I did a meditation in The Wiccan Lady's Witch School to identify our spirit guides. I was expecting a fierce tiger, a black Jaguar or a deadly snake. Something with a bit of bite. I was stunned and rather confused when I found out that it is a white speckled, lean and regal looking horse. So calm, I wasn't expecting that!

Shortly after this I stayed at a camping retreat in the beautiful landscape of Settle, and there was a horse that stood looking over at us from the hillside. It was such a calm silhouette; the horse stood for some time like a statue in the sunset. From this moment on, when I meditate or practise Reiki, my horse is galloping around my mind's field, sending me messages and helping me to connect.



The horse is steeped in tradition and symbolizes freedom, power, confidence, and grace. Traditionally the horse embodies a positive omen. As a spirit guide it represents the delicate equilibrium independence and between duty, epitomising self-actualisation and bravery in its powerful and reliable companionship. Horses are loyal and dependable but have a masculine energy that is strong and determined. The horse as a symbol has a powerful energy that will help to overcome hurdles and drive one forward in life. Very positive.

Over summer, while we were meeting 'Luna the Unicorn' (a glamorous horse with a pink dyed mane, glittered hooves and flowers in her tail). I was informed by another parent about this amazing place called Hope Pastures near Adel on the Leeds ring road. They are a charity that rescues horses and donkeys. Hope Pastures is a mostly volunteer run charity that shelters unwanted, or unruly, horses and helps them to become healthy and happy again. Some get rehomed, and some horses retire there. The parent then shared a golden nugget of information; "they offer an affordable party package for 6 children over the age of 7". It was perfect! I quickly got that booked.

The event was beautiful, a calm group of children visiting the farm and being given a talk on horsey facts. Did you know that donkeys make friends for life and get sad if they are split up? So much so that if one donkey gets ill and needs a trip to the donkey hospital, his or her mate goes with them! The stress of moving two of them together is worth their wellbeing. (I think that's just so sweet). There was craft in the café and cake, but the real jewel was the time the children got to spend with the horses, brushing them and plaiting their manes.

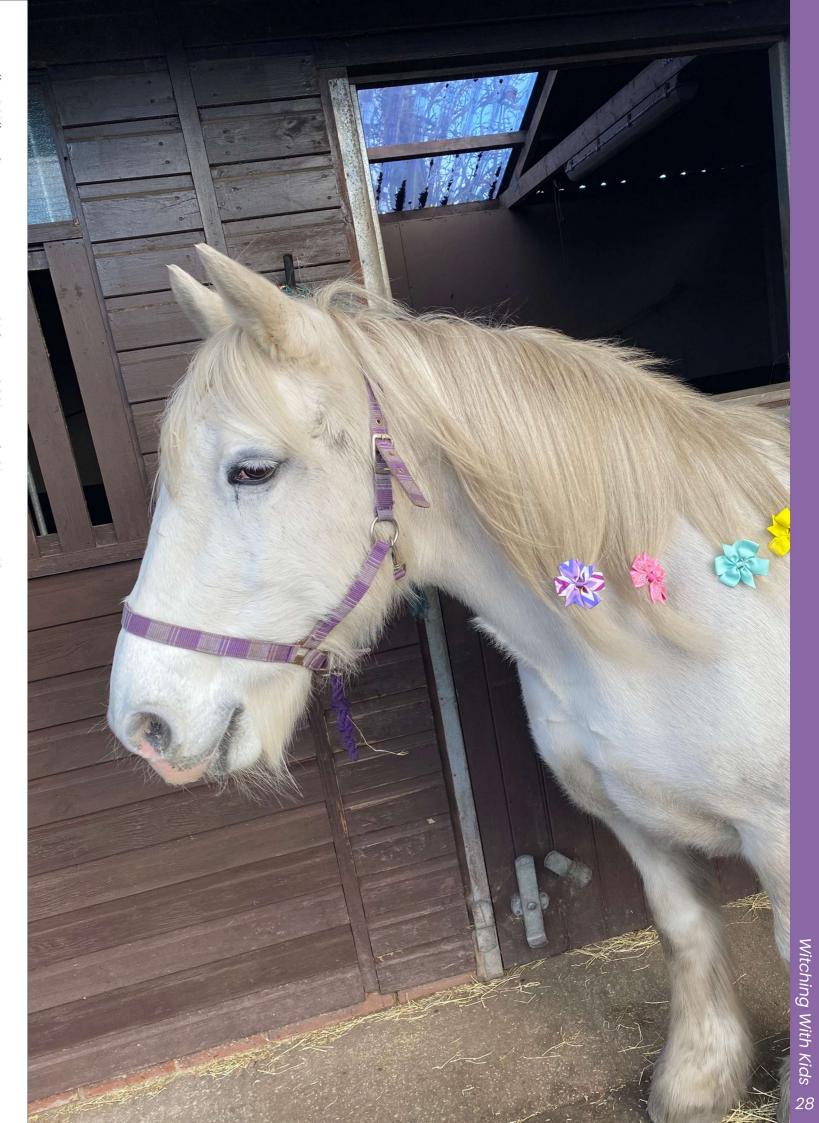
Castle and Rose are two big white horses that were reserved for this activity at parties. They used to pull wedding carts in their 'hey days' (hay?! Ha!), and were used to being close to humans. It was so magical, to be standing there with them, watching the children pet them and plait their manes. A calmness came over the party and I saw the healing properties of being close to animals, gently touching their white hair and feeling the connection. I cannot really put it into words, but I am sure you know what I mean. There is a healing in connecting with an animal, or a pet, with love and respect, and to observe young people experiencing this magic was incredible. (Like the big kid I am, I grabbed a brush and took part too. Couldn't resist!)

It's been a few weeks now and Flossy mentions visiting the horses regularly. The party package also included a gift for the birthday girl, a 1 year adoption of a horse of their choice. Floss chose a toffee brown horse with a poorly heart called Burnie, who had a sad start to life. Left in a muddy field to fend for himself for a long time, he is learning to trust humans again. Flossy really connected with him. We plan to visit him every month or so. I think it will develop into an important part of her life.

I highly recommend Hope Pastures as a place to visit and experience a little bit of horsey magic. It is free to go and walk around, there is a wonderful little visitor centre and they are passionate about the horsey residents welfare. (Donations welcome) https://www.hopepastures.org/

Blessed Imbolc Swailes X https://linktr.ee/friendlygreenwitch

Listen to Swailes and guests on her biweekly show- The Bell Witch Podcast. Available on all major podcast streaming sites.



lmbolc Message From Your Inner Selt

Imbolc Message from Your Inner Self By Rachdoesmagic

Hello, dear reader. How are you? I invite you, whilst you are here, to take a few moments to become really present with yourself. If it feels accessible, tap into the sensations in your body and notice, without needing to change it, what is there? It can be really valuable to find some space to connect with our soma: the living body that "is" right now.

Through our body, and the familiarity with it, is how we can truly tap into the depth of our consciousness, and train ourselves to trust our intuition. And as you are perhaps 1% more connected to this side of yourself, I invite you to take a look at the images below. Feel where your instinct wants you to go, and then take a breath or two and notice if that choice feels aligned still. This reading is one that wants to speak to your subconscious: let the messages from that hidden side of you speak up. Even if just for a few moments. And now, with that at heart: What message from your subconscious do you need to hear, to embrace the new cycle of life that is about to

Make your choice. And give yourself permission to choose 2 cards if that is what your inner self is asking of you; or all three even!



Message from card two: "Her Book of Shadow" You have come a long way. Truly. If you could rewind and review the last year or so of your life in a "highlights" kind of fashion, you would marvel at the leaps forward that you have made. You have grown, then shrunk, then grown again. You have learned a lot and put in practice just as much. You have created, supported, dreamed, and left a little glimmer of joy with so many people who have been in your presence. But why is it that if you think back, if you tune into how you feel, there is this heavy sense of stasis, stuckness? Well, it's because you don't have those highlights at hand to watch. And so what can you do? You can start now, creating your own version of that for future you. Maybe it is a leatherbound book you write your daily triggers and glimmers on. Maybe it's a notes app on your phone, or voice notes that start with "hey future me!". Whatever it is, you will thank yourself later.

And in the meantime, reminisce, not from the ego but from the heart. So you can thank yourself now too. Affirmation for Imbolc season: As I move through the world, I make progress, with softness.



Message from card one: "Nearing Skyclad" A crave for authenticity. To be finally freed from dogmas, impositions, and freed of the need to mask and present a version of yourself that maybe was true, or was needed, at some point but it no longer is. You want to leave the sticky feeling of stuffy air and uncomfortable clothes behind you and just walk a path that is right for the version of you that exists here, today. And perhaps you had started to reflect on this already and then shrugged it off because life and responsibilities and expectations and blah blah blah. Don't get me wrong, all of that is also truly important. And you don't have to abandon it, leave it behind and forget about it! You can see it change with you, so that you start feeling comfortable again, while those layers of unease and resentment are shed off.

Affirmation for Imbolc season: I am honest to myself in all my vulnerability.



Message from card three: "When Fretful Times Come" A bleak title for this card. So much hurt in the world, so much change around you and pain within you. So much weight to carry. So many worries for what is and what will be and all that could be different. You are a sensitive soul, and that is so beautiful! At this time though, for you to be present and make the difference you want to make, you are required to refill your cup. Put a pause on the worries: even for just 10 minutes a day choose to do something that brings you peace and childlike joy. You don't have to feel the pain of the whole world just because you can! And by nurturing yourself, you also recharge and make space. Give yourself a permission slip; if you don't tackle it today, it's ok. If you don't think about it for the next hour, it is ok. It is time to rebuild your capacity, give yourself some grace. Because your body needs it, your soul needs it, and the world will be a better place because of it. You can find a state of flow and balance. Affirmation for Imbolc season: I take responsibility for that which I can influence

Well my beloved reader, this little chapter has come to a close. I wish for you to absorb all (and only) the medicine that is in alignment with where you are right now. Take what feels good, ask yourself why, and then leave the rest.

I hope our paths will cross again, In Shadow and Light, Rach, @rachdoesmagic

CONCERNING THE PAGAN IN ART



Hilma af Klint, The Ten Largest, No. 7, Adulthood Group IV, 1907.

By Ivy Hewett

I have always adored art. Art is my passion, my work, my hobby, my inspiration and my joy. And there has always been something so sacred within my own artistic practice, and something so artistic within my pagan practice, that I can no longer differentiate between the two. And neither do I want it to - for me, paganism and art have always been, and will always be, intrinsically interlinked.

I am sure I am not the only pagan who marries their artistic and spiritual practices. The relationship between paganism and art is as old as each other. The ancient symbols that adorn so many of our altars are artistic representations of concepts central to our belief systems. The cards we shuffle, runes we throw, or mirrors we scry are all works of art in their own right.

From an Art History point of view, there is such a rich tradition of artistic representations within paganism. Iconic symbols such as the eyes of Ra and Horus, pentacles, the Triple Horn of Odin, and the Triskele splatter the art historical canon, making their presence impossible to wash out. Looking forward to the twentieth century, spiritual women were at the forefront of painting the face of modern-day paganism and the occult.

Rider and Waite are often the first names that surface when thinking of the artistic minds behind the most revered tarot deck. However, it was artist Pamela Colman Smith who designed and created all 78 cards, her style oozing from The Fool to The King of Pentacles. After doing a deep dive into the history and background of the most popular tarot deck as part of my textiles A-level a few years ago, I am now rather obsessed with the artistry drawn into each card.

From the somehow muted-yet-brightly-coloured palette to the balance between simplicity and extreme detail, Pamela Colman Smith formed the look of a divination practice which is central to so many pagans. Not only that, but Colman Smith's art almost stands as a figurehead for our belief systems, regardless of relevance to our own personal practices, as Tarot (and therefore Pamela's work) is now accessible and witnessed by so many non-pagans throughout the world.



the 1909 Smith-Waite tarot deck, illustrated by Pamela Colman Smith.

Hilma af Klint is another woman who shaped the visual landscape of the 20th and 21st century. The first western abstract artist was drawn to the occult early in life, and created art with the help of her spirits, who she called the High Masters, until her death in 1944. Although Wassily Kandinsky is too often falsely heralded as the first western abstract artist, there is no denying the impact that Kandinsky's 1911 publication Concerning the Spiritual in Art had within the art historical world. His work was a way of legitimising the relationship too often banished under the ridiculous notions of oooOoooo "evil witchcraft"... Unfortunately for the time, Hilma af Klint rarely ever exhibited her abstract works after being shunned by her spiritual leader Rudolf Steiner, the then Head of the German branch of Theosophy. But there is something ancient within af Klint's paintings. I really implore anyone to research her work – they are so full of colour and life, riddled with symbols and nature, so beyond human. She also included automatic writing and drawing into her seances with the high masters, surrounded by her fellow women artists and spiritualists, De fem. I love to explore differing forms of divination in my own pagan practice, so sharing that method with one of (if not my absolute) favourite artists gives me such a thrill!



Pamela Colman Smith, 1912.

Neither woman, Hilma af Klint or Pamela Colman Smith, have even their own graves. Both were forgotten by history, painted over by falsehoods and other people's names.

But isn't it exciting that these women's legacies survived to today? The artistic and spiritual practices of both Hilma and Pamela are being rightly rediscovered and revered. For me, this isn't just the start of an exciting new epoch in art history, but a rebirth within my own spiritual path.

I aim to dedicate my life to this relationship between paganism and art. Much like Hilma af Klint and her occult dedications, I cannot see a life path which doesn't orbit the deeper world of the 'other' through artistic means. Art speaks a language that is beyond comprehension. Art evokes feeling, connects us to spirit and has the power to transcend humanity itself – to elevate us to a different realm. And isn't that what nature does? Isn't that what our beliefs and faiths, our spiritual practices do?

Now that is magic.



Hilma af Klint in her studio in Stockholm, 1895

INTERVIEW WITH BACKYARDBANSHEE

I'm Lizzie, or L.B. I'm in my mid 30's, and I've been interested in witchcraft, Paganism and divination since I was young. Growing up, I was always into dark macabre things. My mam had a holistic business with a friend, and I was always borrowing or rehoming their crystals, and pinching her angel cards. I started by reading books on Wicca, as that's what my local bookstore and library had. I also read history and folklore books. That led me to having a 'pick what I fancy' type of path.

I tried to develop my psychic ability in my teens, but I wasn't following the basics, and my energy was dropping. I had a lot going on in life, and it freaked me out to the point that I stopped, and didn't pick it up until my early 20s. I secretly started learning tarot, and had readings at Mind, Body Spirit fairs. I was consuming everything I could online, there was so much more available.

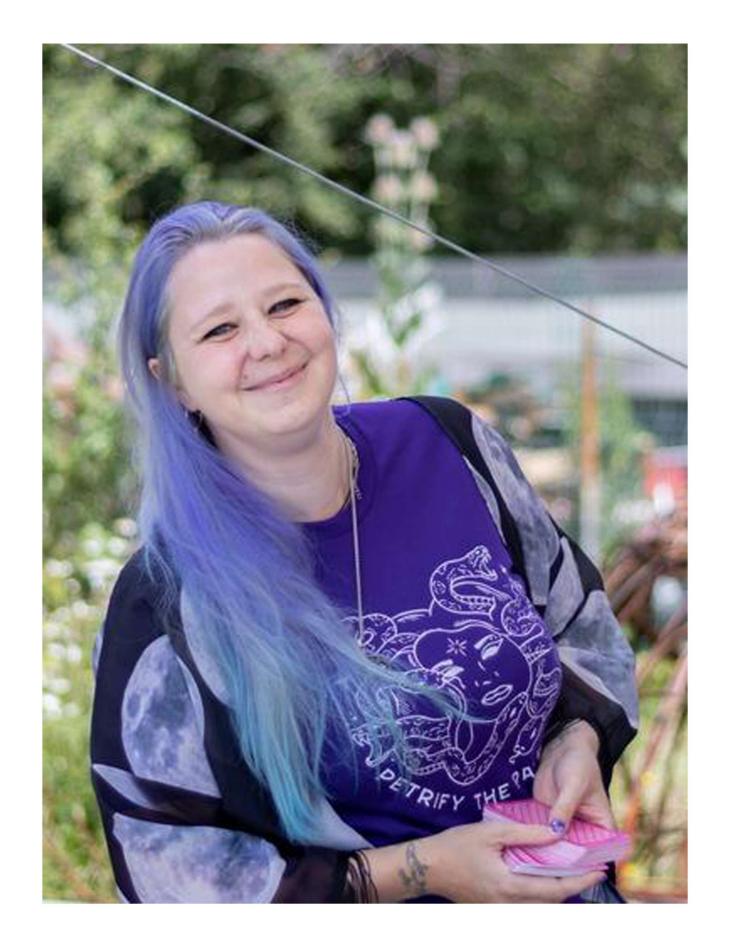
Spells, charms, spell jars and kitchen witchery were my biggest interests until I went to an art museum in Norway. I was struck by the ink and patterns in one exhibit. Listening to the other tourist's interpretations reminded me of Klecksography and the Rorschach test. I subsequently discovered a form of ink divination called Encromancy after reading about different methods of divination, and started to test my spirituality. I was open about it with people that I was close to, but found that the online community was absolutely game changing. It was amazing to be able to share knowledge and find resources, even so, I found it really difficult to find people like me.

I was pregnant, trying to set up two businesses, and looking for investors. I had a big "I don't want to do this anymore" feeling. I was reading tarot as a self-care practice while on bed rest. I did readings for a few friends, and then I was recommended to someone else, and it took off from there. It's something I really love to share with other people. I don't like the traditional tarot imagery, but I love some of the interpretations of the original Rider-Waite-Smith structure by amazing, independent creators across the world.

Seeing so many people putting their work out there helped me feel more confident, so I created Backyard Banshee. I made perfume oils, and did different types of readings. It's been almost five years. I have a monthly residency for tarot readings, I read at events, and I recently supported The George House Trust fundraiser for World AIDS Day. That was amazing as a queer, bi, witch, to be out there in my community, sharing my passion and skill in an environment that was supporting people that I care about.

Backyard Banshee was named after two concepts. Banshees, much like the death card in tarot, are misunderstood. They're depicted as vengeful, malevolent female spirits, wailing and shrieking as they warn of impending doom, however this is not entirely true. The name Banshee comes from the Irish Gaelic term bean sí, which is like a fairy woman. In Celtic mythology, Banshees would warn families of impending deaths, and would mourn with them. They acted as a messenger, or guide, between the living and the dead. It's through time and changes in culture that the once revered Banshee has gained a negative, evil, connotation. Banshees would be with families for generations, this is the type of support I want to offer my clients.

The backyard aspect describes the casual nature of my readings. For me, tarot and divination is a method of support, introspection and self-care. It's more like coffee and a catch up in the garden with a friend. I want to create a space that allows us to work together to build the support that fits your journey. No one's backyard looks the same, much like everyone's description of a Banshee would be different. It's individual to you.



You can find Backyardbanshee on Instagram at: @backyardbanshee

Pagans Of The North Special

How To Involve Divination In Your Practice - Tarot & Oracle Card Spread @backyardbanshee / backyardbanshee.com

This spread focuses on whether involving divination in your practice will be beneficial for you, and how it can impact your spiritual growth. You can use any deck you like or are familiar with, and if you don't have access to a deck, check out backyardbanshee.com for free readings.

1. What ancestral or cultural elements could you incorporate into your Pagan practice?

Ancestral or cultural elements in your pagan practice provide a rich tapestry of traditions for you to draw from. For instance, pulling The Emperor could suggest a connection to Odin and Norse practices. Invoking the wisdom of your ancestors through rituals, symbols, or even language can create a powerful link to your roots, enriching your spiritual journey. If you'd ever felt the nod to learn more about Heathenry, this could be the confirmation you were looking for.

2. What spiritual practices or rituals will guide you toward your desired spiritual evolution?

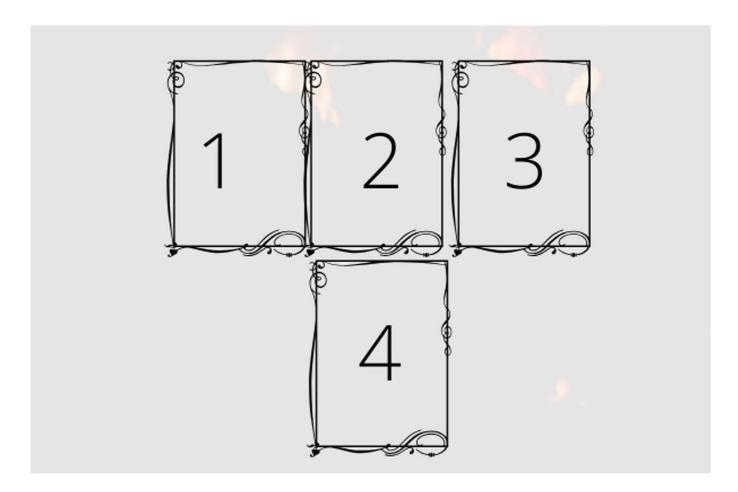
For example, if you pulled The Hierophant the cards may guide you to explore group settings or study circles, emphasising shared wisdom and rituals. This could manifest as leading rituals based on the knowledge you've accumulated. In traditional witchcraft, forming a coven or participating in gatherings with like-minded individuals may be the key to your spiritual growth, as the Hierophant is still a spiritually connected individual even though there is absolutely a firm lean on logic and structures.

3. What will using divination (tarot, dowsing, scrying, smoke etc) look like for you in terms of spiritual progression?

If the Chariot appeared here in your spread, it suggests a dynamic force propelling you forward. Using divination tools becomes a driving force not only for spiritual victories but also for manifesting tangible results in your life. Your divination practice acts as a conduit, steering you towards your goals with purpose and determination. Divination is so varied and can totally be personalised, much like how everyone uses different forms of transport, and so it is truly about seeking what works best for you.

4. Should I involve more divination in my practice?

This is your conclusive "yes or no" card. For example, if the 7 of Swords appears reversed, it gently nudges you towards a sincere "yes." This isn't about self-deception but an affirmation that honest determination to incorporate divination into your practice will bring positive results. It absolutely encourages you to commit genuinely, steering clear of potential pitfalls and ensuring that your engagement with divination aligns with your authentic self.



Spend time meditating on the cards, reflecting on the messages, and journaling your insights. This way, the tarot spread becomes a dynamic and personal tool for your pagan practice and development.

Incorporating divination into your pagan practice is like forging a personal dialogue with the divine, tapping into the wisdom of your ancestors, and navigating the intricate web of your spiritual path with intention and authenticity. And it doesn't even have to involve "invoking spirits". Trust the cards as guides on this journey, and let their insights illuminate your way forward.

Follow Backyardbanshee on Instagram at: @backyardbanshee

Drum roll please... Introducing the Pagans Of The North Spotlight Awards!

The Pagans Of The North Spotlight Awards serve as a platform to recognise and honour the accomplishments of both businesses and individuals within the community and aim to draw attention to the exceptional contributions made by organisations and people in the North. For the past four years, Pagans Of The North has been dedicated to showcasing and highlighting the community through our online and print magazine, as well as our online blog. From the very beginning, we have made it a priority to feature a new business in each issue through our 'Trader Of The Month' article. We firmly believe that highlighting those who serve the community is of utmost importance to us. To take this initiative to the next level, we are thrilled to announce the creation of the Spotlight Awards!

To submit a nomination, we kindly request that you consider any Northern Pagan, Witch, Druid, Heathen, or individual following a similar spiritual path who you believe deserves recognition and the honour of the *Pagans Of The North Spotlight Award*.

The requirements for nominations are as follows:

the nominee must identify as a Pagan, a Witch, or follow any other spiritual path (such as Heathen, Druid, etc;)

Reside in the North of England (Whether that is born here or moved here)

And/or operate a business within the North of England depending on the category.

The Spotlight Awards encompass a wide range of categories to ensure that all deserving individuals and businesses have the opportunity to be acknowledged. The Categories are:

Author of the Year, for those who have released a book in either 2023 or 2024 (so far),

Podcaster of the Year / Video Star for content on platforms such as YouTube or TikTok,

Business of the Year, Physical Store, Business Stall/Pop Up, Business Online,

Content Creator on any platform / Best Blog and Best Event/Market & Organiser.

To nominate someone please fill out our nominations form on our website You cannot nominate yourself.

Nominations close on Spring Equinox (20th March)! We will then open public voting for the selected nominees on Bealtaine (1st May) and close 1st June. The Winners will be announced in our Summer Solstice Issue in June!

Good luck everyone!



THE CATEGORIES ARE:

AUTHOR OF THE YEAR 2023/24

VIDEO STAR
Youtube/Tiktok

PODCASTER OF THE YEAR

BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

- Physical Store

- Pop Up/Stall

- Online

CONTENT CREATOR
Any Platform

BEST EVENT/MARKET
& ORGANISER

BEST BLOG

IMBOLC JOURNALING RITUAL

In February, we glimpse the first signs of light in the dark of winter and begin to look towards the hopefulness that spring brings. We witness the earth emerging from sleep, seeing new growth on trees and the first spring bulbs beginning to bloom.

February 1st is the Pagan sabbat of Imbolc. The word Imbolc means 'in the belly'. Through ritual work, Pagans mirror the earth's fertility and consider what we would like to awaken and see emerge in the year ahead.

Imbolc is an opportune time to bring new ideas and projects forth into the world, for growing what we've been reflecting on over winter, so to me, journaling is an ideal ritual. I hope this one I've written for the occasion, serves you well. With warmest wishes, Hayley, Rituals Revived Apothecary and Botanica.

Before setting pen to paper, take some time to create an inviting space in which to begin your journal ritual. Personally, I like silence, but whatever feels right to you! You might prefer background noise, such as calm meditation music, the sound of a crackling log fire in a log burner if you have one at home or the sound of waves crashing on the shore of a beach if you choose to journal outside.

Whichever space you choose to hold for your ritual journaling, make sure you won't be disturbed and are comfy and cosy, perhaps grab a warm blanket and a soothing cup of herbal tea before you begin. Now, think about what it is you would like to journal about this Imbolc - do you wish to enable artistic development? overcome workplace hurdles? find peace after a traumatic life event? or would you simply like to harness positive thinking and set intentions?

You may find words, ideas, or even illustrations flowing onto the page, that you really weren't expecting, so really try to free your mind and let loose! Ok, here we go!

IOURNAL PROMPTS

1. We are about to leave the dark months of winter. Reflect on how you have lived through them, then list the things you wish to leave in the past.

2. Write about how you would spend a perfect day this year. No matter how unrealistic it feels to you right now, describe it in fine detail.

> 3. This is one important goal I have for myself... It is important to me because...

After writing, I advise ending the ritual by having a good read through what you have written. Then, lay both hands atop the paper. Close your eyes and take a deep breath in for the count of four, then out for the count of four, several times.

Once you have settled into a calming rhythm, continue your breathwork, but on in-breaths - envision your hands soaking up the positive hopes and wishes you have written in your journal, up through your palms, then arms, through into your chest then saturating throughout your body.

On our breaths, envision your hands pushing the things you wish to leave in the past down through the paper, down into the earth, to decay and rot away.

Focus on doing this for a long as you feel you need.

When you are ready, take a last few breaths in and out to finish and slowly open your eyes. Take the next few days easy, you might have a lot to think about, so be mindful of self care.

RITUALS REVIVED Apothecary & Botanica

WEARE HIRING

JOIN OUR TEAM

Want to be our Social Media Officer?

Pagans Of The North uses social media to reach our readers and aims for our social media platforms to be a place for information, updates and news. We will want to be visible on platforms such as our Facebook and Instagram multiple times a week.

Your role will require you to create engaging posts. We want to utilise TikTok so if you have experience in that, that would be even better.

You will also be required to find events/workshops and other such events online so we can place them in our online Calendar.

Thank you to everyone who has applied for other positions over the past couple of months, we cannot always include everyone in one go but when we are looking for Writers and Copyeditors again, we will let you know!

> For more information please send us an email or message on our socials.

> > pagansofthenorth@gmail.com

Pagans Of The North are a volunteer run publication.

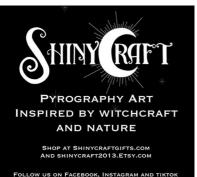




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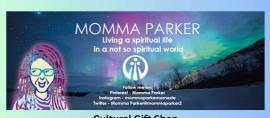
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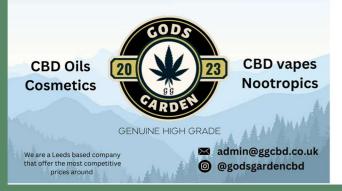


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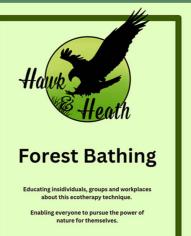








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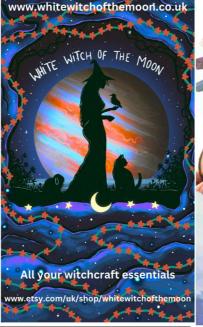
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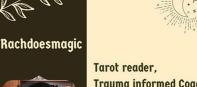
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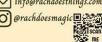


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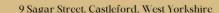
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Louisa Chisholm-Kelly – Editorial Manager, Writer and Copyeditor

Sam Stoker - Editorial Manager, Writer and Copyeditor

Louise Bloomer - Advertising Coordinator and Writer

Claire Keen - Writer

Emma Swailes - Writer

Rachele Pasinato - Writer

Ivy Hewett - Writer

Jo Chandler - Writer

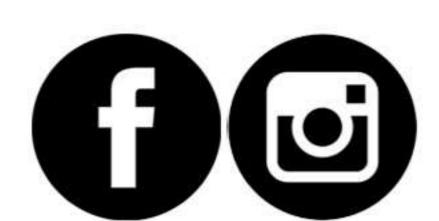
Andrew Orchard - Copyeditor

Jen Dobson - Events Officer

Thank you to:

Backyardbanshee, Rituals Revived, Selis Oswin, Beverley Thornton Aly Smith & Chris Roe





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