

# PAGANS OF THE NORTH

ISSUE 32



# Editors Letter

**So it's finally Spring! It still feels cold though!  
Have you spotted the daffodils?  
Are leaves finally starting to form  
on the barren trees? It's pretty  
exciting! Now we just need the sun to  
come out, please!**

**This issue is very visually focused with some  
beautiful photography and art pieces by local  
pagans such as Ivy Hewett (our newest  
member of the team) and Beverly Thornton  
with *'Picturing Pagans'*. We have our LEARN:  
Spring Equinox to discover the interesting  
stories and truths behind the Ostara holiday.**

**We have The Wiccan Lady in our Trader of the  
Month, discussing her experiences with  
Witchcraft and Wicca and her unique  
perspective and personal path.**

**We have so many wonderful poems and short  
stories and don't forget the deadline for  
nominations for the Spotlight Awards closes on  
20th March!**

**Have a wonderful Spring Equinox everyone!**

**Quinn**



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# Trader Of The Month

By Sam Stoker

*We first spoke to Louise Bloomer, The Wiccan Lady, right the way back in Issue 1, almost four years ago! Now a valued member of our Pagans of the North team, Louise is our Advertising Coordinator and likely who you've spoken to if your business has an ad with us. We caught up with her to see what's happening now with her online and in person courses and shop.*

**POTN:** Hi Louise! Thanks so much for chatting with us again. Tell us a little bit about your business! How have you grown since we last featured you?

**Louise:** I sell Pagan products, herbs, and witch things. Over the years I have changed my stock so much. As we change as people our witchcraft changes too, and we are drawn to different things. I sell more handmade items and homegrown items and far less bought-in items.

**POTN:** How has your path developed and how do you fit it into your day-to-day life?

**Louise:** I literally am Mrs. Witch; my whole life is about witchcraft. I'm either writing or teaching Pagan courses, attending MBS events with my stock, or making spells for people. I feel very privileged to be able to pay my bills doing what I love and fulfilling my lifestyle, and even prouder to be able to teach that to other people.

**POTN:** Why 'The Wiccan Lady'? What does your name mean to you?

**Louise:** When I first came up with the name, I didn't really think about the connotations! Most people associate Wiccan with Gerald Gardner, being skyclad, and raising energy through sex, and my witchcraft couldn't be further from that. I have no desire to be skyclad in British weather! In my family belief system we believe in karma, the rule of three, and we abide by certain parts of The Rede, but only because we are decent people and it feels right; my ancestors were doing that before it was a thing, the same as many Pagan families.

**POTN:** What advice would you give to someone new to witchcraft?

**Louise:** Do lots of reading, find a form of witchcraft that works for you, and if you can find a teacher then do so, but always stick to your own principles. If it feels right, it usually is right. I'm not a great follower of YouTube videos from other countries and I've been asked many times to break spells and hexes for people when they've followed a dramatic video and then realised it wasn't actually what they expected!! Witchcraft is about nature, people, a way of life - not drama, brimstone and fire. Hollywood has no place in real witchcraft. Finally, take it seriously - casting spells without thinking about the outcome has consequences.

**POTN:** What can we expect from you throughout 2024?

**Louise:** I have just brought out my second book; it's a Materia Medica Journal for those interested in herbalism for health. I'm in the process of writing an advanced Witches School class, because my graduate students won't stop nagging me! You would have thought three years was long enough, but apparently not! I am doing a couple of collaborations across the water in Australia and Canada and possibly Costa Rica too. And I'm about to take my final exam in advanced herbalism which will free up a lot of time and brain space. So who knows what will come next? Of course I'm still doing many of the Mind, Body and Spirit shows around the North, as I just love speaking to people about Paganism and witchcraft.

**You can find Louise at:**

**Website:** <https://www.thewiccanlady.co.uk/>

**Facebook:**

<https://www.facebook.com/TheWiccanLady>

**Phone:** 07903944022

# INTERVIEW WITH: Helen Steadman

In a slight change of pace to our regular book review feature, this issue we actually spoke to Helen Steadman, author of historical fiction novels *Widdershins*, *Sunwise*, and *Solstice*, stories inspired by the real witch trials in the North East of England.

**POTN:** Tell us about your historical novels *Widdershins*, *Sunwise* and *Solstice*...

**Helen:** Inspired by real witch trials in the north east of England, my trilogy tells the story of three women's struggle for survival in a hostile and superstitious world.

**POTN:** What inspired you to write a piece of fiction based on the Newcastle witch trials?

**Helen:** Back in 2011, I decided to write a historical novel about witches and was familiar with the Salem witch trials after studying Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* at college, but it was only when my research began that I discovered two sets of major witch hunts had taken place more or less on my doorstep – Newcastle in 1650, and Riding Mill in 1673. I began with Newcastle and after a lot of research and writing, *Widdershins* was published in 2017, followed by *Sunwise* in 2019 and *Solstice* in 2023.

**POTN:** Why does the third book feature a female witchfinder?

**Helen:** *Solstice* was inspired by the Riding Mill witch trials where a young girl – Anne Armstrong – accused a couple of dozen of her neighbours of being witches. Ms Armstrong was by no means the only female witchfinder in those days, and I was interested in the idea of a young girl pointing the finger, so I created Patience Leaton. If you'd like to know more about the curious case of Anne Armstrong, there is an article on my blog at [helensteadman.com](http://helensteadman.com).

**POTN:** Tell us about the girl who inspired *Widdershins*?

**Helen:** *Widdershins* was inspired by the Newcastle witch trials, which took place after a Scottish witchfinder rounded up dozens of people from the streets and put them on trial. According to eyewitnesses, during the trial, the witchfinder was revealed as a fraud and one girl was set free. However, the others were still executed and the witchfinder got away. There were no details about either the freed girl or the witchfinder, so *Widdershins* is my imagined story of the girl who escaped the hangman's noose.

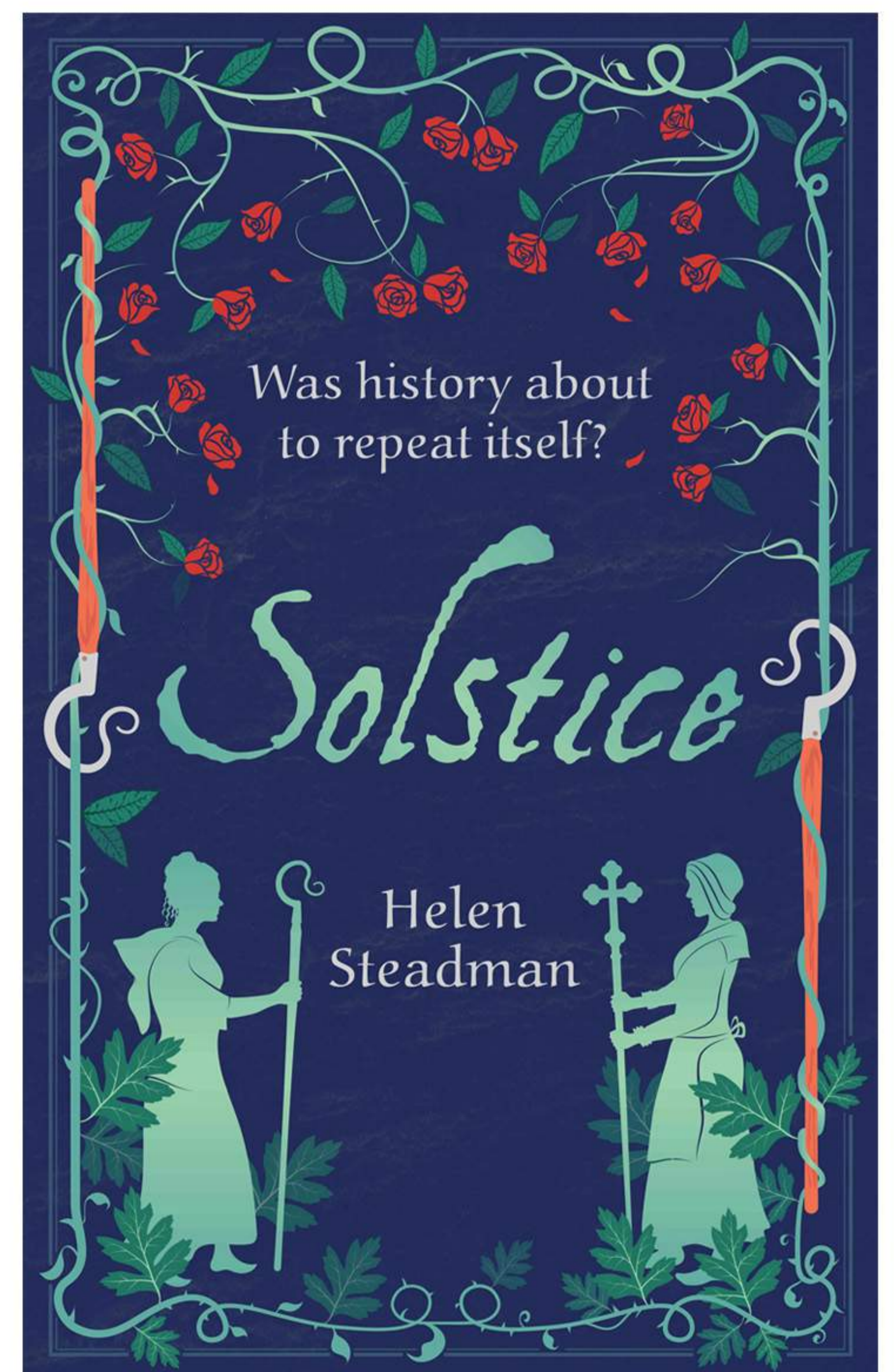
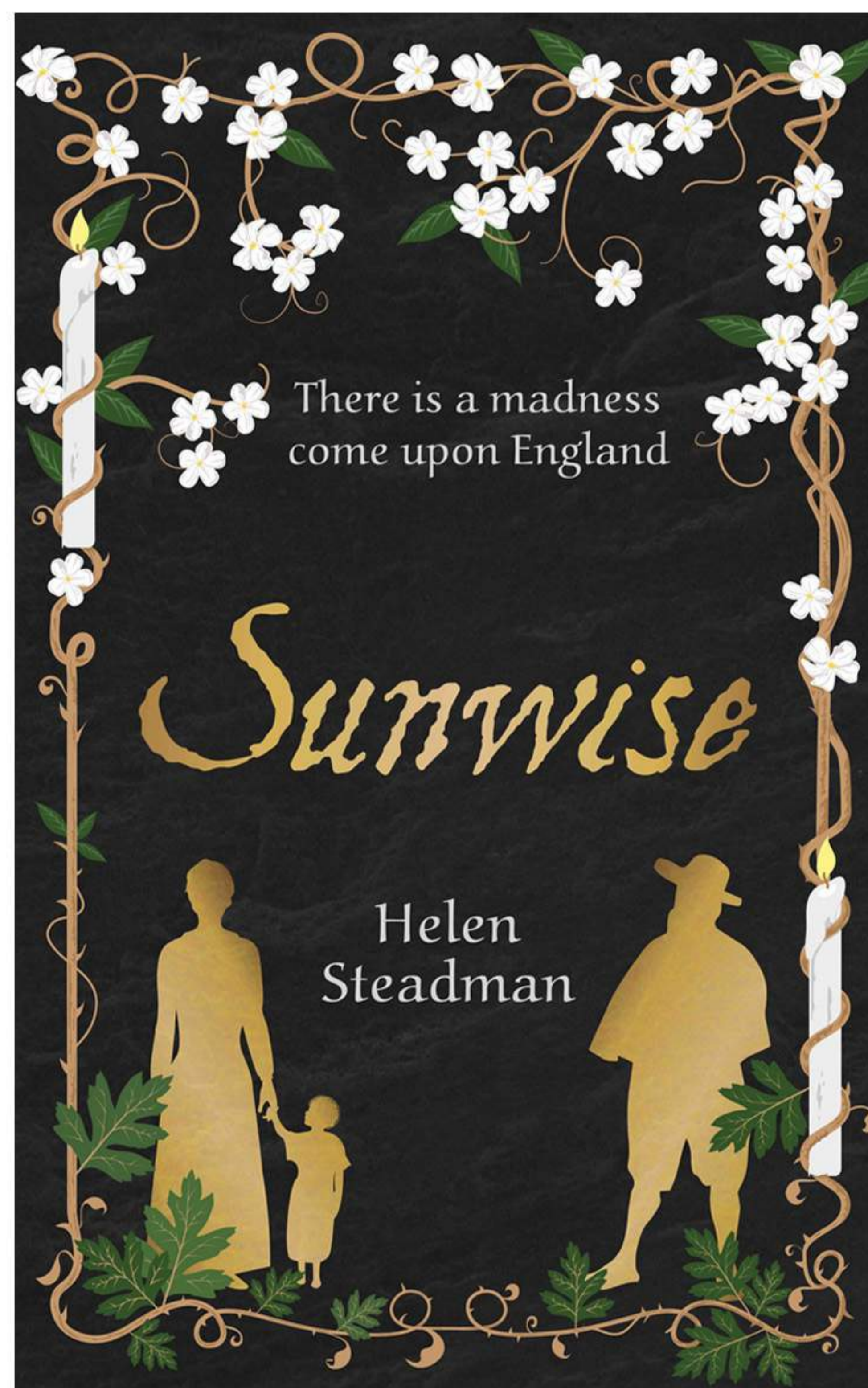
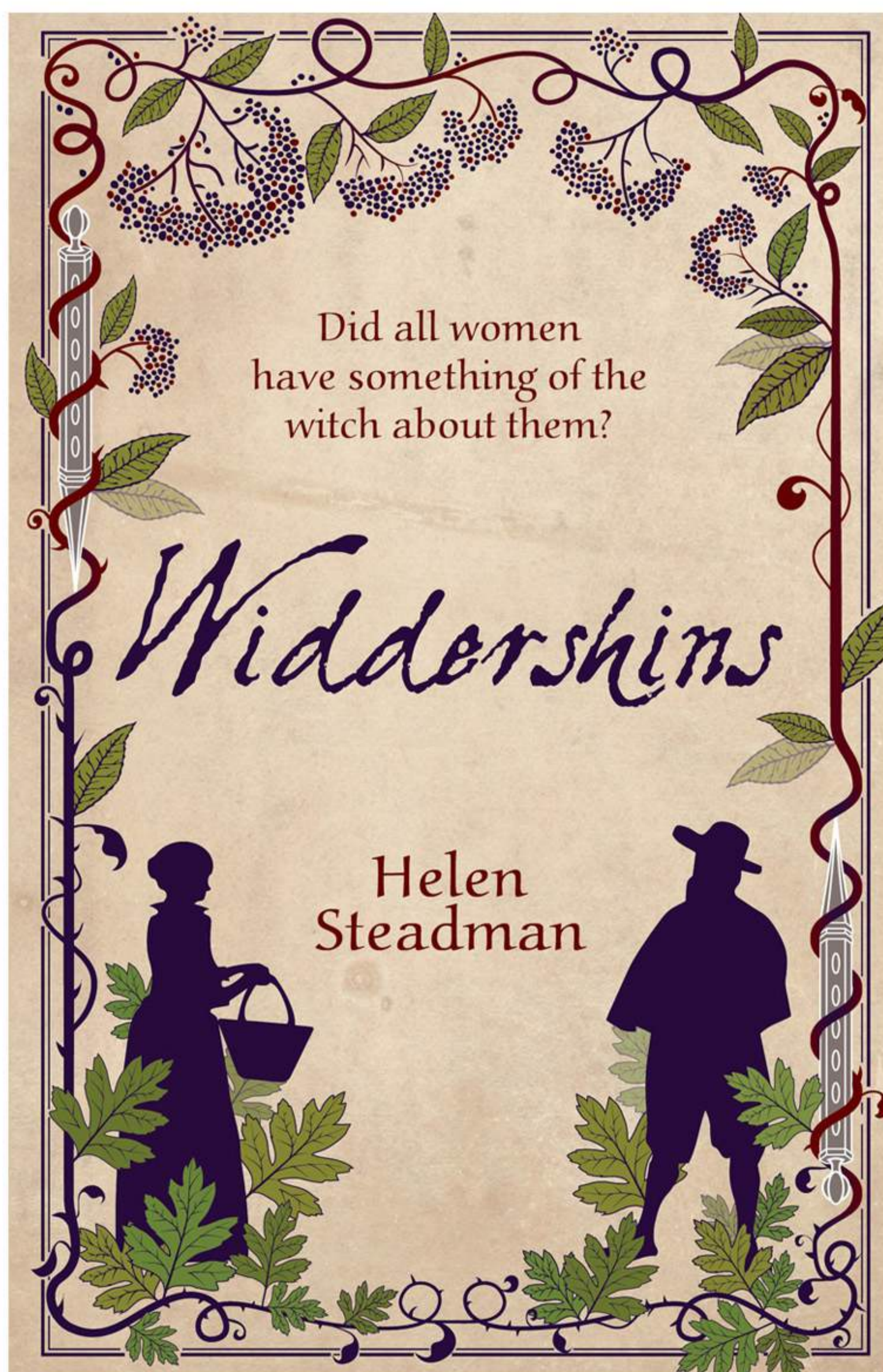
**POTN:** Is anything known about the people executed at the Newcastle witch trials?

**Helen:** Widdershins and its characters are a work of fiction. However, the Newcastle witch trials were only too real, and here are the names of those executed: Elizabeth Anderson, Elizabeth Brown, Margaret Brown, Matthew Bulmer, Jane Copeland, Katherine Coulter, Elizabeth Dobson, Elianor Henderson, Alice Hume, Jane Hunter, Margaret Maddison, Jane Martin,\* Margaret Muffet, Mary Pots, Elianor Rogerson, Ann Watson.

*\*The parish burial records for St Andrew's Church in Newcastle list fifteen women and one man buried as witches in the churchyard. However, according to a deposition made shortly after the trials, fourteen women and one man were executed for witchcraft. That list does not include the name of Jane Martin, but I have erred on the side of caution and included her name.*

**POTN:** How do you feel about the English witch trials and the wrongful conviction of people – mainly women? Do you feel they deserve to be remembered today in some way?

**Helen:** It's horrifying that so many people – as you say, mainly women – were executed on trumped-up charges in fairly recent history. And it's a shame that the victims' names are not widely known, with no memorial either on Newcastle's Town Moor where the executions occurred or in St Andrew's churchyard where the victims are buried. I have heard rumours of a potential memorial mooted for nearby Leazes Park, so fingers crossed...



You can find Helen's work online at:  
Website: <https://helensteadman.com/>  
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/helensteadmanauthor/>  
Amazon: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Helen-Steadman/e/B076P4VRJD>

# Deity Of The Month

*By Sam Stoker*

## *Artemis*

Artemis, known for her chaste-like ways, is the Hellenic goddess of the hunt, nature, childbirth, childcare, animals, the wilderness, chastity, archery, and midwifery - among others. Deity of many skills, she hails from Ancient Greece, where she was worshipped in many cults, separate pockets of followers throughout the lands who loved and feared her in equal measure. Some historians believe that she may have been around even before Ancient Greece, perhaps from Crete or Greece in pre-Hellenic times.

Daughter of Zeus and Leto (his standard cheating on Hera, just the usual), herself daughter of Titans, Artemis had some pretty big heritage to live up to. Born ahead of her twin brother Apollo, it is believed that she assisted in his birth just after her own, which naturally led to the childbirth and midwifery aspects of her reverence.

Linked to deer, Artemis features in many myths - including that of the Trojan War in which Agamemnon kills her sacred deer and his troops find themselves unable to set sail, and in the tale of Actaeon, where the titular character was out hunting and found Artemis bathing, stared at her nudity, and in her fury she transformed him into a stag and he was torn apart by his own hunting hounds, truly showing her for the chaste goddess of the hunt she is.

An early feminist icon, Artemis didn't need a man. One of the maiden, virginal deities alongside Hestia and Athena, she was believed to have been surrounded by nymphs - nature personified into women - regularly, and some of her worshippers would perform dances representing the tree nymphs or dryads from her lore. These nymphs are similarly chaste and would follow her as she roamed the countryside, woodlands and mountains.

Artemis's Roman equivalent is Diana, and she was also conflated with Selene, goddess of the moon, and even Hecate herself. Worth a look back on our previous deity piece on Hecate, but this Artemis/Selene/Hecate trio is reminiscent of the triple goddess trope too.





Deity Of The Month - Artemis ∞

# Witches Corner.

Welcome to another Witches' Corner with me, Claire, from Hedge Witchery UK.

In this issue I wanted to look at using nature grids in ritual and spell work. Some of you may have already heard about using crystal grids to amplify your magic, manifest intentions and goals, or to cleanse and purify. As a Pagan Hedgewitch I use more than just crystals. I like to use the magical power in objects I find in grids

Have you ever been out enjoying the earth's beauty and found yourself drawn to certain sticks, stones, feathers, plants or shells and picked them up just because you felt like it? Maybe you were drawn to their magical energies, shape, texture, or colour. Gridding with these items is a perfect way to use their energy to amplify your magical workings.

I would caution though when using items that have not naturally fallen from a tree or plant, as we don't want to cause unnecessary damage to the earth. I only use items that are in abundance and only take what I need. There is no good to come of snapping branches off trees or picking plants unnecessarily. I would also be 100% certain of a plant's identification before using it in my magical workings.

So what do I mean by gridding? To put it simply, it's placing your items in a special arrangement with intention, to manifest a desired result. I really believe that within my magical workings I should only try to manifest what I need, not what I want, so I always keep this in mind when I do my own magical workings.

Before creating a grid I find a space that suits my chosen intention. This does not have to be at home or at your altar - it could be anywhere, such as a beach, forest or moorside. Once I've found my location, I usually cleanse the area using a burning bundle of sacred herbs. I then go about creating a magical grid.



# MAGICAL NATURE GRIDS

By Claire Louise from Hedge Witchery UK

Each item I place on the grid, I do with the intention to draw the energy to the centre of the grid where the magical working will be taking place. Some people believe that it's best to start from the outside of your chosen space and go inwards, others prefer to start in the middle and work outwards. I think this is a personal choice and you should choose what feels right for you. Some people choose to use sacred geometry patterns to create a grid. For me though, I use my intuition to place the items. I also consider what I think is aesthetically pleasing as this builds my positive energy.

For gridding with nature items I would always try to find similar items that come in threes or more so I can include them into an arranged pattern. You can use pretty much anything you like in your grids. Here are some ideas:

Sea shells\*

Fallen sticks and twigs

Pebbles from the beach\*

Stones from the forest floor

Pebbles from a stream

Moss

Mushrooms

Flowers

Herbs

Leaves of different colours, shapes and sizes

Berries

Feathers

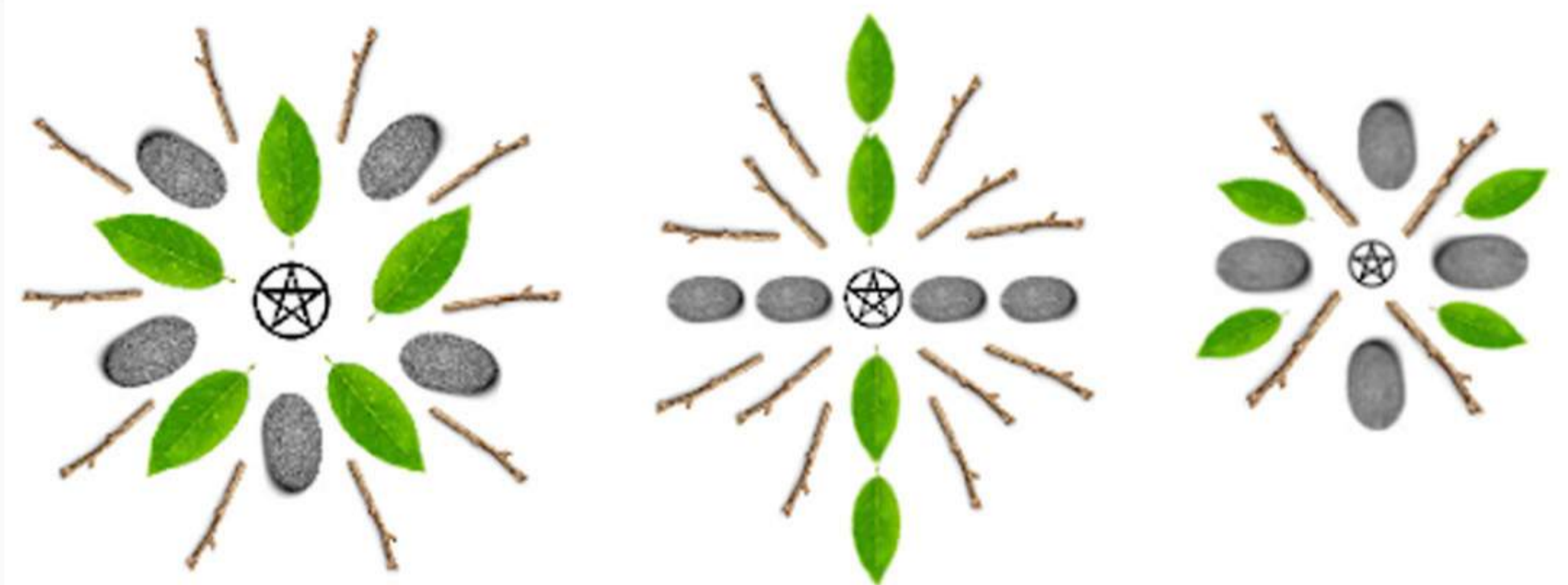
Bones

Pine cones

*\*Editor's Note: under the Coastal Protection Act 1949, it is illegal to take any natural material from a beach.*

There are really no rules when it comes to creating grids; it's best to use your own intuition and work with what you feel guided to do with the items you have selected or found. So go with your gut feeling and what feels right for you as an individual.

If you're struggling with ideas, I've drawn out some possible grids for you to try, just using stones, sticks and leaves. In the centre of my grids I usually place my cauldron, a candle, or other sacred item that's key to my magical working.



To enhance your grid you could try purposely selecting items that correspond to your chosen intention; for example, if you are working on breaking a hex you could use hydrangea, nettles, mint, and bay leaves. For a magical working of peace and harmony you could use sea shells, lavender, mugwort, chamomile, and pebbles from a gentle stream or beach. You can really get creative when you're creating magical nature grids.

Once I've completed my magical work in the centre of my grid I like to leave the grid for a period of time. If I've made it outside with all natural materials I'd leave it where it is. Imagine the magic of stumbling across another's gorgeous creation. At home I'd leave it out for as long as possible until I needed the space for another magical working.

I hope you've enjoyed this article on creating magical grids. We would love to see some of your own creations so please feel free to post them in our Pagans of the North Facebook group until next time.

BERNICA

Monkwearmouth  
Jarrow

DEIRA

York

Sancton

ELMET

LINDSEY

MERCIA

Crowla

# ANCIENT CITIES ANCIENT STORIES

## Elmet - Leeds

Elmet was a Celtic kingdom located in West Yorkshire which was founded by the Brigantes during the 5th century and its capital was Leodis.

The kingdom was characterised by its strong Pagan traditions that were closely linked to nature. Although it eventually became a part of Anglo-Saxon lands, Elmet's Pagan legacy still fascinates historians today.

Leeds was first mentioned by historian Bede in his book II, chapter 14 of *Historia ecclesiastica* in around 731. It was a regional name but was later used for a settlement. The name is an Anglo-Saxon adaptation of an earlier Celtic name and its meaning is unclear. It is thought to be either a forest that covered most of the kingdom of Elmet or an early River Aire name. The inhabitants of Leeds are known as "Loiners".

Existing between the 4th and mid-7th centuries, the exact borders of the kingdom remain uncertain, but it was bounded by the rivers Sheaf in the south and Wharfe in the east. Elmet is significant because it survived relatively late in the period of Anglo-Saxon settlement of Britain.

The people of Elmet continued to exist as a distinctly recognised Brittonic Celtic group for centuries afterwards, in what later became the smaller area of the West Riding of Yorkshire, then West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, and North Derbyshire.

Elmet's Pagan past has left a lasting impression on the City of Leeds, blending old traditions with new elements and featuring Pagan symbols in local art, architecture, and events.

Visitors to Leeds can explore the folklore, mythology and spiritual practices that once thrived in the area through museums, heritage sites and archaeological findings. The ancient Celtic settlements, burial grounds and sacred sites in Leeds serve as reminders of Elmet's legacy and attract those interested in its mystical origins.

The renowned Pagan heritage of Elmet, a Brythonic kingdom, has had a profound impact on Leeds and studying its Pagan past not only reveals the secrets of the past but also deepens our understanding of the cultural fabric that influences our society today.



# *Picturing Pagans*

*Beverley Thornton*

Back in Autumn 2021, I was looking for a personal project to photograph.

All around me were stereotypical images of witches, from buxom beauties to raddled hags, and I was struck by how these did no justice to the real-life Pagans that I knew through my own spiritual practice. These images reflected fear and loathing for many people outside of Paganism, and I felt drawn to create some portraiture that would offer positive alternatives, closely reflecting the warmth, creativity and connection with nature that was central to the values of the Pagan people that I had met.

So, pretty much between Mabon and Yule, I put together a collection of photographs entitled 'Everyday Magic'. Each of the people I photographed followed a Pagan path, were comfortable with being identified, or were photographed in such a way that their anonymity was preserved. Working on a one-to-one basis using natural light, in a place where they each felt a special connection to the environment, I photographed Pagans in woods, parks, moorlands, allotments, and follies. Some people chose to dress casually, some wore ceremonial outfits that represented how they worked magically, or showed how they wished to be represented publicly. One lovely witch decided to risk being sky-clad in local woods we both knew, mindfully dodging dog-walkers, and with carefully deploying a ritual robe when required. The three-month project was a life-affirming experience, and it felt a real privilege to work with fellow Pagans in this way.

Two years on, with two cataract surgeries waited for and completed, and with adjustment to how I go forward given some mobility issues I didn't have back then, I feel ready to photograph some more wonderful, willing Pagans this year, hopefully from Spring Equinox 2024 onwards. I am based in Bradford, West Yorkshire, and would love to hear from anyone interested in being photographed, be they local or willing to travel. This would be a collaborative project, with no monetary exchange involved, and digital copies of edited photos will be provided to people taking part for their own personal use, on the understanding that I retain the copyright and may use them for social media, publishing and exhibition. For more information, please contact me at:

***beverleytpaganportraits@gmail.com***

Bright Blessings!

- Beverley Thornton

*Cauldron With Fire*







*Jo - Second Degree Wiccan*





*Harry - Druid*





*Sam - Witch*





*Louise – Magic Practitioner*

*Brian – Wiccan High Priest*







# Spring Equinox

This year the spring equinox will be on the 20th March astronomically.

Solstices and equinoxes are marked annually by the rotation of the Earth on its axis in relation to the sun. Spring equinox usually marks the first day of spring and thus is celebrated by Pagans and witches alike.

Our ancestors from around the world celebrated the spring equinox in a variety of ways. The Babylonian calendar began with the first full moon after the equinox and marked the return of the goddess Inanna (later known as Ishtar) from the underworld.

In Norse Paganism, the Dísablót was celebrated on the equinox. This was a celebration of female spirits or deities called the Dísir and the Valkyries.

In modern times Pagans, mainly Wiccans - and some witches - celebrate the spring equinox as a festival called Ostara, taken from a goddess called Ēostre.

Ēostre is considered a west Germanic spring goddess and the Germanic month of April bears the same name. The only real recorded evidence we have about Ēostre is by Bede in his 8th century work, 'The Reckoning of Time,' where he says that during Eosturmonath (Ēosturmōnath), which is the equivalent to April, Anglo Saxon Pagans had feasts to honour and celebrate Ēostre. The tradition had died out by his time and had been replaced with the Christian 'Paschal month' celebrating the resurrection of Jesus.

There is evidence of other Indo-European and Germanic dawn or spring goddesses which may give a link to Ēostre. It has been long debated on whether Bede made up this goddess and there is no real evidence to link Ēostre to Easter eggs. The earliest evidence for the Easter hare was recorded in south-west Germany in 1678 - probably thanks to an age-old tradition that hares must have been birds and laid eggs. Eventually over time, the German people travelled the world and brought with them their traditions and thus the Easter bunny was created with the boom of commercialisation triggering Easter cards, chocolate and the like. In north west Europe, English and German folklore made links between Easter and hares; although there are no direct connections stating that hares are associated with a goddess specifically, it makes sense to suggest that hares were an important symbol to our ancestors.

Whether or not the goddess Ēostre was ever worshipped by the Anglo Saxons is still debated today and may or may not be true, but there are certainly separate threads that have similarities among them. A lot of what is said about Ostara and its connection to Easter's traditions in order to make them seem more ancient and Pagan is not necessarily true and may be more of a modern invention.

And the name Ostara? A modern concept and our ancestors never called it that; sadly if they did have a name for this holiday, it is lost to time.



# MEET THE MOOT: WAKEFIELD

*By Sam Stoker*

In our newest regular feature, we will be speaking to a different person each issue regarding a moot, group, kindred or hearth taking place in the North of England. We're hoping these chats will help readers considering attending a moot to take that step and feel more comfortable and confident doing so. If you would like your moot to be featured, please email us at [sam.pagansofthenorth@gmail.com](mailto:sam.pagansofthenorth@gmail.com), or contact us on social media.

This month, we spoke to Steve Jones from Wakefield Moot.

**POTN:** What is a moot to you?

**Steve:** It is a place where people can exchange information as well as pass it on. Where people can feel safe discussing all types of stuff as well as finding out stuff that isn't written down or put out on social media.

**POTN:** How did your moot come about?

**Steve:** Back in 1988 I was travelling back from a **PAGANLINK** meeting in Leeds with the late *Rona Peace Waters a.k.a Rona The Lovely* and we decided to set up a moot in Wakefield. After the first one he dropped out and I have run it ever since.

**POTN:** Is alcohol served? Are children welcome?

**Steve:** Yes, it is held in The Polka Hop pub, George Street, Wakefield on the 1st Sunday of every month. Children are not allowed in the pub although dogs are.

**POTN:** I'm anxious, can someone meet me? How will I know who you are?

**Steve:** I will arrange to meet up with newcomers beforehand to explain and put people at ease. We are in the small room on the left of the entrance of The Polka Hop. The bar staff can also direct people to me as well.

**POTN:** Is there a topic of conversation or structure to the moot?

**Steve:** No, it is a free flowing discussion of whatever comes up.

**POTN:** Is it accessible?

**Steve:** Unfortunately no, there are 8 steps up to the pub entrance.

**POTN:** What should someone brand new who comes to your moot expect?

**Steve:** A friendly and knowledgeable group willing to listen to anything, advise and discuss all sorts of stuff - not just witchcraft, e.g. ghosts, Fortean, divination, cryptozoology etc.

**POTN:** Can I find you online?

**Steve:** We have a Facebook group, and are on Meetup as West Yorkshire Pagan Meetup.

**POTN:** Anything else?

**Steve:** The moot has been running continuously since October 1988 with the same organiser, so as other moots died out, it is now the oldest still going in the UK.



*You can find Wakefield Moot at:*

*Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/wakefieldpaganmoot>*

*Meetup: <https://www.meetup.com/West-Yorkshire-Pagan-Meetup/>*

*In person: The Polka Hop, 60 George Street, Wakefield WF1 1DL*

*1st Sunday of every month (next 7th April 2024) - 12pm onwards*

# CONCERNING THE PAGAN IN TEXTILES

*By Ivy Hewett*

In my last ART-icle, I mentioned that my draw to the Pagan path started with my textiles A-level a few years ago. And it is this beginning, in the spirit of the Spring Equinox, that I would like to focus on today.

I have always been fascinated by the visualisation of spirituality. From sacred Renaissance depictions to divine Arabesque, ancient Murtis, and transcendental mandalas. My mother is a teacher of religion, and raised me with an interest in all faiths. However, from a young age I have felt the draw of nature specifically – not just from seventeen, but for as long as I can remember, there has always been something beckoning me, pulling me towards the earth.

I am sure many of us grew up talking to the trees and listening to the wind – that collective experience feels integral to us all. Mirroring my intrigue with spirituality, art, crafting and sewing have followed me from my beginning. Having the privilege of growing up in the same house as my parents and my maternal grandparents, my granny placed a sewing needle in my hand the second I was old enough to hold one (without injuring myself!). And so, my love of textiles was born. I began sewing little toys and creatures, making garments with my granny, witnessing her creating with such care and adoration for her craft.

The second I could choose my GCSEs, textiles was the first subject on my list. Having the creative freedom to explore any theme I desired, I fell into nature's twisting roots and focused my GCSE exam project on the little critters who call her home. It was this project that allowed me to fully immerse myself into my craft – not worrying about exact seam lines or symmetry – but to connect my love for art and nature through a practical method.



*above: Fabric sample details 'Spell This' 2018*



*below: Sketch book details 'Spell This' 2018*

And then came my A-level. Dazzled at first by the glimmer of medals and intimate stories from the trenches, my coursework centred on the First World War, creating collages from coins, ribbons, and poppies. And then came my exam piece – the moment where I finally felt able to return to the root of my artistic practice: spirituality and her nature. And so, I began researching my chosen subject matter, diving in purely from an academic and aesthetic point of view. I had a friend who was a witch, and she allowed me to photograph her and explained her practices to me.

I found local spiritual shops in my hometown of Norwich and formed relationships with those who worked there. I would trot down from school in my lunchtime to pick another candle, or to buy my first tarot, or to ask about some new symbolism I encountered. I was creating the knowledge base from which the rest of my practice would grow, without truly realising it.

I fell into the arms of Pamela Colman-Smith, whose tarot became my obsession. From the very beginning of the creative process to my final piece, her cards were my constant. Tarot is now a core form of divination in my everyday practice – so much so that my love has one tattooed on his arm – and it is so funny to think that such an anchor came from an A-level...



Details from my GCSE final project 'Nature and her Critics' 2016

My final piece was created over the course of a 15-hour exam. The mammoth task took over three days where we were locked in the textiles room and emerged like 90-year-old dears, our backs broken from hunching over our sewing machines. But that final piece, my floor length hooded cloak, is still my prize possession.

I have never quite understood how something made by humans could transcend to the world of the divine – and yet, the evidence is bountiful. Or at least, that is what my younger self could not understand. Through my spiritual path and journey with Paganism, I now believe that sacred and divine energies run through us all, and visual art is but one of the many systems we have at our disposal to realise such divinity. At seventeen, I had the opportunity to truly explore this realisation for the first time, and with each stitch, each screen-print, each drawing, those ancient energies spoke to me.

I don't quite have the ego – or the talent – to sit here and say that I created something divine those years ago. But rather, perhaps it was the other way around. The Spring Equinox is a time for new beginnings, but I also find that it is a time to honour those beginnings that brought you to where you are now. For my practice, textiles A-level was the final push I needed to truly begin exploring the Pagan path. Sitting in my school's textiles room, allowing my hands to create something so once beyond myself – it was that act of creation, or rather the creation itself – fed its energy back through me, and led me down the beginnings of my path.



Sketch book details 'Spell This' 2018

# ***Witching With Kids***

## ***Magic Of The Sea***

*By Emma Swailes*

*Happy New Calendar Year from the Bell Witch mad house!*

Greetings witches and beautiful souls. I am so happy to observe the Spring Equinox. I can feel the season coming around from her long slumber and I am so ready for the change.

This winter (or perhaps all winters) did seem to drag, didn't it? I for one miss the life dancing all around in the warmer seasons of Gaia. I get a little impatient with the snoozing trees and the resting bulbs below. Then I remind myself: life is still there, growing and living, but only resting, and rest is needed to grow and succeed. It is easy to get bogged down in the winter with S.A.D rearing its ugly head, always a challenge for me in January. When I see those happy little snowdrops and crocuses popping their sweet heads through the soggy cold soil, I do a little witchy dance on the inside! There is a gradual awakening to observe, it takes time, it's beautiful really. Delightful and a bit daunting...because it also reminds me that the first school holiday of the year is upon us. And that is the February half term!

The February half term holiday is a conflicting one as it tends to be the most affordable of all the holidays (pre-season) but the weather is cold and unpredictable. It's dark out there and I am tempted to carry on the hibernation along with those slumbering trees. I have been known to shy away from making plans that span more than a night or two and don't involve staying at a friend's place (is that cheating?). However, this time I took a chance and booked not one...but TWO little seaside getaways, one after the other! Barmy.

Three nights in Butlins Skegness followed by one night at home, then three nights in Robin Hood's Bay (I can't quite believe I did it!). The first part was rather intense and most unspiritual for me (my girls loved it of course); luckily, I was saved from losing my mind and all my money on slot machines by the following holiday in the beautiful and mystical village of Robin Hood's Bay, or Baytown as the locals prefer to call it.

The gorgeous tiny village of postcard-like houses and independent business has over 1000 years of rich history.

It is packed to the brim with fascinating tales from stories of smuggler delights such as tunnels, trap doors and moving walls hidden in the sardined buildings on a cliff edge, to ghosts of sailors, shipwrecks, dark magic, and witches and the church living together in sweet harmony. In the 1700s it used to be double the size of its current 200 houses, but a road that abruptly stops and a strange layout all indicate that more than half of the then bustling village fell into the sea in a severe landslide, graveyards and all! I had been to Baytown a couple of instances before this trip, as a moody gothic teen with my mum (desperate to leg it to Whitby!), and as an adult (pre kids) for a spontaneous beach picnic. I remember thinking back then 'well there's nawt here, is there?'; I was as yet unaware of anything about the beautiful place, and never gave it a second thought.







This trip was different. I don't know if it is because we stayed there overnight or if it's because I am now a witch...but I felt a deep connection and appreciation to the changeable tide and surrounding landscape. The whole place just enchanted me! What is amazing is that my daughters felt it too.

They wanted to stay in the town every day and beachcomb for beautiful treasures. I suggested a bus to the famous neighbouring town, but they were both disinterested. The beach and rock pools astounded them. There was a tiny dinosaur museum in the bay which had an impressive collection of Jurassic bones, skulls and fossils.

They loved learning about the fossils of prehistoric animals uncovered as the local landscape fell. I think it opened their minds massively on just how old the earth is and how enormous the power of the elements that govern our land are! They were truly fascinated.

On the first evening of our stay, we went investigating in the sunset. It was quiet and the shops were shut, but it wasn't eerie. It was calm red skies and seagulls squawking above, with the sound of the waves in the far distance. Walking around the narrow labyrinth of beautiful streets and alleyways, Flossy turned to me and asked, "have we been here before?". I said, "no, but I have before you were born". She replied, "I feel like I know it, one day we will live here". It was strange because I felt this too. Like we used to live here, or somewhere like it, and if we were to move here it would be home. It is hard to recall the feeling now and perhaps it sounds a bit fluffy, but it was weirdly strong while we were there. Time flew, we were busy every day. It is such a tiny village, with a population of 1,200, you would think children would be bored by day two, but on the last day none of us wanted to leave.

Looking back now, with all the assorted pebbles and shells laying around my messy house. I realise I am so lucky to have my two lovely girls who do not need much entertaining when outside. They have gained a deeper connection to the earth. Of course, they can be glued to a screen for way too long after school (because let's be honest here, it's a helpful parenting tool, it's easy, and it enables us to cook their tea in peace. No judgement from me!). Then they will mostly complain when I don't pick them up in the car. But these things can both be true. Children can still be delighted day after day by a simple stroll on a tiny beach, finding tidal forces wonderfully captivating. Give them an opportunity to be enchanted by a lush forest, a vast mountain, or a wild sea, and they will connect to the magic of the earth, see treasure everywhere, and it will be wonderful.

When asking Floss what the best part of the holiday was for her, she said finding the ammonite imprinted on the bedrock under the seaweed, so clear. I said, "it's a shame we couldn't bring it home with us". Floss replied, "I didn't need to keep it mum, it was enough just to find it and take a picture".

Blessed Be

*Swailes the Friendly Green Witch*  
<https://linktr.ee/friendlygreenwitch>

*Listen to Swailes on The Bell Witch Podcast.  
Stay tuned as this seaside trip has inspired two episodes!  
Available wherever you listen to your podcasts.*

The beach was our main destination; we were there all day spying the tiny crabs and sea snails left by the receding tides, collecting a bucket of beautiful pebbles and stones, talking about the Boggle that lived in the local cave- it was magic.

The sea's presence was astounding; it comes in with such force as it hits the sea wall, it is shocking! It transforms the look and atmosphere of the bay so dramatically. I think my 'witchlings' were astounded by the whole thing, they waited for low tide every day, wanting to go look at what the sea had gifted them, excited like it was Christmas morning.

I was surprised as the lack of sand prevented any sandcastles from being made, and it was too cold to swim in the ocean (although all of us got our feet out on the grounding beach), but these things didn't matter to them. Amazing really.

# VOTING CLOSES SOON

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!*

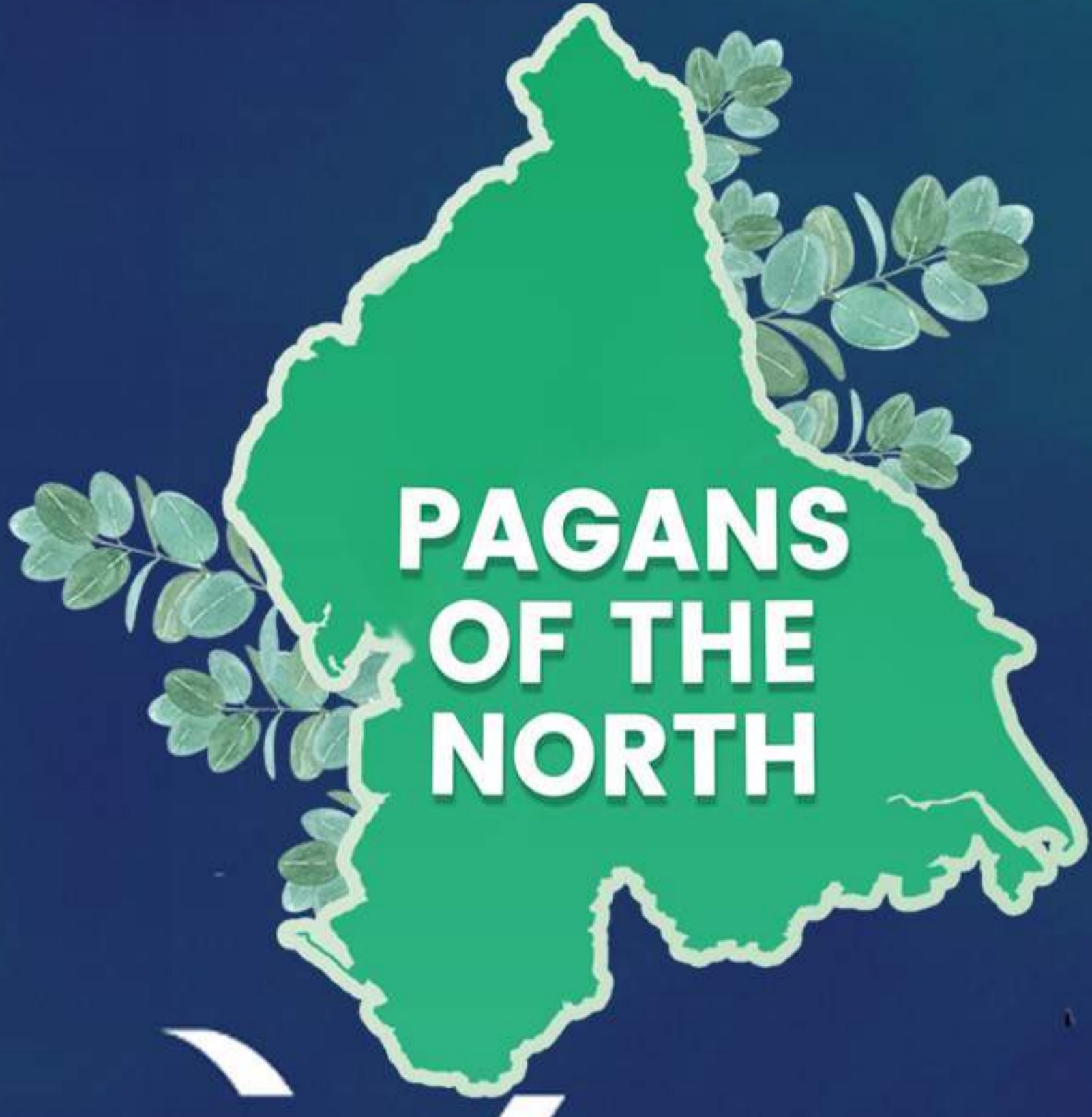
To submit a nomination, we kindly request that you consider any Northern Pagan, Witch, Druid, Heathen, or individual following a similar spiritual path who you believe deserves recognition and the honour of the Pagans Of The North Spotlight Award.

The requirements for nomination are as follows: the nominee must:  
*Identify as a Pagan, Witch, or follow any other spiritual path such as Heathen, or  
Druid.  
Reside in the North of England,  
And/or operate a business within the North of England.*

The Spotlight Awards encompass a wide range of categories to ensure that all deserving individuals and businesses have the opportunity to be acknowledged. These categories include *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*.

Want to nominate someone? Check out our website on how to nominate and more details.

**NOMINATIONS CLOSE 20TH MARCH!  
PUBLIC VOTING FOR SHORTLIST  
OPENS 1ST MAY**



# SPOTLIGHT AWARDS 2024

# ENTER THE WOODS

Nicola R

I love the sound of the wind through the trees  
Especially on days when you feel on your knees  
To listen to their chatter, their knowledge, their song  
In me it creates the feeling, this is where I belong  
Looking at these creatures with their majestic stance  
Their dancing branches hypnotise me, into a trance

Gnarly old bark that holds wisdom and knowing  
Your shady cover ever reaching, up to the sky you are growing  
Birds perch on your boughs to sing a lament of longing  
Green leaves and new growth reinforce a sense of belonging  
Trees beckon me into the woods, with a promise of healing  
The answers they give me are truthful and very revealing

Now it is time for me to leave, your arboreal work here is done  
Mindfulness achieved, body and mind are reunited, I really must run  
Gratitude given, then a hug, my arms wrapped tightly as I bid you farewell  
Your counsel I sought; our secrets exchanged that neither will tell  
You know if I could, I would stay and sit with you longer  
Thank you for your reverence, you've made me feel stronger

# Ring O' Roses

By Aly Smith

*Ring-a-ring o' roses  
A pocket full of posies  
A-tishoo, A-tishoo  
We all fall down  
Trad.*

'Hold my hand. Come on, this way.' She pulled the slight girl with long, matted hair and red-rimmed eyes and dragged her towards the group of children already arranging themselves into a tight ring, heads down huddled, their whispers just audible as the two girls approached them.

One of the boys turned to face them, 'Hello' he smiled, 'You sit down here, in the middle.'

The girl's eyes were still red-rimmed but her face relaxed and she appeared happy as she was given a garland of daisies placed around her neck by an older girl whilst another put a halo of them on her head.

'Thank you', her words were quiet but clear.

The group, now all holding hands and facing towards her, started to move around her in a slow dance, chanting words that had been passed down from mothers and grandmothers. The sound of stones being thrown towards the girl in the middle grew louder as did the singing. Tap, tap, tap. The collection of small rocks landed on the ground around her. Tap, tap, tap. They started to reach her with a few grazing her small body.

The girl sat still and didn't make a noise as the circle moved closer and it was now that her red-rimmed eyes gleamed bluer and harder and it was now that the words her grandmother and mother had taught her came from her mouth. She repeated the chants until finally giving out a great sneeze that shook the bodies of the dancing children and sent ripples through the ground. Some were crying, some scared into muteness as they watched the girl walk away from their broken bodies lying on the ground.

# SOUL

Chris Roe

*Be silent  
Be still,  
Awakened.  
Be the silence  
That struggles  
To be heard.  
Perceive  
Acknowledge ,  
Be the wisdom.*

*Love  
Be loved  
Be silence.  
Be this space,  
This inner sanctum,  
That is  
Your soul.*



# **WE ARE HIRING**

## **JOIN OUR TEAM**

*Positions Available:*

*Events Officer*

*Social Media Officer*

*Copy Editor*

*Please visit our website online to submit an application.*

**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 again, we will let you know!**

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

*[pagansofthenorth@gmail.com](mailto:pagansofthenorth@gmail.com)*

Pagans Of The North are a volunteer run publication.

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