

Pagan World 29  
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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PAGAN FEDERATION INTERNATIONAL

# PAGAN WORLD



**Welcome to the 29th issue of Pagan World!**

After a one year hiatus, it is great to be back with my 'baby' Pagan World! A big thanks to Celeb for taking such good care of Pagan World during my one-year absence!

A bit of history about **Pagan World**:

This magazine began as a hard-copy only newsletter back in 1997, when Tony Kemp, who at the time was the International Coordinator of the PFI, realized that European members of the UK based Pagan Federation should have a newsletter for themselves, giving us more 'local' information than the UK oriented member magazine Pagan Dawn.

So on top of all of his other PF work, in 1998 Tony published two issues of a newsletter that he called **Europa**. In March 1999, being buried under with writing his own books and other personal obligations, Tony Kemp handed over the editorship of **Europa** to me and his position as International Coordinator over to Morgana. We then immediately began to produce **Europa** every 3 months in both a hard-copy version (for members without an internet connection), as well as an online version. The online version served 3 important purposes:

- 1) it cut our costs greatly letting us use the extra cash to organize more conferences and activities
- 2) it allowed us to spread our Pagan wings worldwide
- 3) and last but not least, we killed less trees.

It quickly became apparent that the online version 'worked'. Not only had the Pagan Federation branched out of the UK into Europe, but into the rest of the World. We soon had members in over 25 countries and so we decided to change the name to **Pagan World** in the year 2000.

Since 1997, when it began as only an 8 page newsletter, Pagan World has has grown into a quarterly 'magazine' of 28 pages. To our great surprise, as we begin our 8<sup>th</sup> year of consistent publication, we are soon to become one of the longest running Pagan magazines!

It's great to be back! May the Gods guide you on your spiritual path!

**Diana Aventina**

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***News from Morgana***

Hi all,

There have been a couple of changes and additions in the PFI team recently.

Diana Aventina has returned as Editor Pagan World. Please send her articles for PW.

Articles are accepted in all the languages "spoken" within PFI, which is quite a lot these days!! (English, French, German, Dutch, Italian Portuguese, Swedish and Turkish) Thanks to Diana for coming back and also thanks to Celeb for the last year and four Pagan World's.

It is with great pleasure to announce that Morgaine has offered to become our new NC for PFI Germany. Rhianna will remain with us on the PFI team but Morgaine will be dealing with the administration.

And Morgaine has exciting news for us and is already active organizing PFI activities:

PFI Pagan Get-together Baden-Württemberg in Tübingen, June 10, 2006

PFI Workshop with Vicky Gabriel Tree-Magic Tübingen, July 8, 2006

General information:

Please bring your own food – there will be two grills available nonalcoholic beverages can be bought on location, alcoholic beverages are not allowed!

The Workshop will be at a wonderful magical place in the woods. A cabin fitting about 20 people is available, but no toilets. Tickets are limited!

Cost:

PFI Members 85,00, Nonmembers € 95,00  
Information, directions & registration

PFI Southern Conference - BaBaHe-Tag.  
In September we have our first conference in Southern Germany.  
Tickets go on sale on March 1st.

For more information about all these events and more, please email:  
[morgaine@paganfederation.org](mailto:morgaine@paganfederation.org)

Also Branwen is the new NC for PFI World. She will be looking after all the members who live in a country who don't have their own national coordinator. She can be reached at [branwen@paganfederation.org](mailto:branwen@paganfederation.org).

I would just like to take this opportunity in thanking Angel who was the NC PFI World. Thanks again for everything,

I would like to wish Morgaine & Branwen good luck with your new posts.

Bright Blessings  
Morgana

## **Learning on the Sun-Wheel** by Ian Elliott

To follow the hidden path of witchcraft is to commit ourselves to a life of learning, and the Craft makes no distinction between learning from books and learning from experience. The same rules apply to both.

The stages in learning can be charted around the Sun-wheel, also called 'the wheel of the year,' since it is commonly used to map the eight Sabbats or 'restful recreations' of the witches throughout the year. <sup>1</sup> It is also a guide to the elemental directions <sup>2</sup> of the ritual Circle, and to the four powers of the witch. <sup>3</sup> The directions, Sabbats, elements and powers are mapped on the Sun-wheel thus:

<u>Direction</u>	<u>Sabbat (date)</u>	<u>Element</u>	<u>Power</u>
North	Yule (c. 12/21)	Earth	To keep silent
Northeast	Imbolc (2/2)		
East	Ostara (c. 3/21)	Air	To know
Southeast	Beltane (5/1)		
South	Litha (c. 6/21)	Fire	To will
Southwest	Lammas or Lughnasadh (8/1)		
West	Mabon (c. 9/21)	Water	To dare
Northwest	Samhain (10/31)		



The great Sabbats, Imbolc, Beltane, Lammas and Samhain, represent points of transition from one elemental quarter to another. The importance of these transition points can be seen when we chart the course of learning around the Sun-wheel.

The most important thing to realize in charting learning around the Sun-wheel is that it is a cumulative process, that is, the qualities of each direction are carried forward as we travel sunwise around the wheel. If the quality of a direction is relinquished or lost, the process of learning stops.

Any learning process can be said to begin in silence, at the northern point. We begin by knowing nothing about a skill; we haven't even considered learning it as yet. When we hear of a skill or subject that it is advantageous to know, we begin to cross over from the quarter of silence to

that of knowledge. Our knowledge of the skill is still virtually without content, but we have seen its spoor or track and begin to follow its trail. This crossing-over from silence to

<sup>1</sup> For an introduction to the eight Sabbats, see e.g. Campanelli, Pauline, Ancient Ways.

<sup>2</sup> For elemental associations with the Sabbats, see e.g. Sabrina, Lady, Secrets of Modern Witchcraft Revealed, pp. 47 – 57.

<sup>3</sup> For the four powers of the witch and their elemental associations, see e.g. Skelton, Robin, The Practice of Witchcraft Today, p. 80.

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knowledge, corresponding to the Sabbat of Imbolc or 'first stirrings,' marks the moment of intuition that begins the learning process.

From the northeast to the eastern point we may receive several of these intuitions or signals, and as we proceed sunwise we investigate some of them. At the east we settle on one skill and begin to find out just what it's all about. We are no longer following tracks; here is the animal itself. We open ourselves up to learning it.

This is the east, the point of knowledge, but it is only one station on the path of learning. Those who think otherwise become desultory readers and may spend their lives picking up odd scraps of information about a thousand and one subjects. The phrase 'jack of all trades and master of none' refers to them, the old term 'jack' signifying a beginner.

The effort of learning requires a union of the learner and what is learned, but this union does not involve a serious commitment until the southeastern point, corresponding to Beltane, the handfasting of the Lady and Lord. Here we take responsibility for learning, by recognizing the efforts and sacrifices we will have to make in order to master the desired skill. As yet our commitment is unrealized in action, but now we know in practical terms what is required to continue on the path of learning. We are at the transition point between knowledge and will, about to enter the quarter of elemental fire.

Will is inseparable from action. As we begin allotting a certain amount of time each day to learning and practicing the new skill, we are fired with the enthusiasm of the new. This regular sacrifice of time and effort is the fuel that feeds the sacrificial fire, and this fire carries a message to the gods <sup>4</sup> that we are serious about learning.



At the southern point, the heat of our enthusiasm reaches its peak, and we receive a check. Litha, the Sabbat of Midsummer, is the hinge between the waxing and the waning year. It is here that the Oak King is defeated by the Holly King and imprisoned in the sacred oak till Yule. <sup>5</sup> This is the point in our learning where our enthusiasm flags; we have mastered the rudiments of the subject and now we are face to face with its deeper complexities. This is similar to wading out in the surf and suddenly losing one's footing. Now it is time to start swimming!

At this point, a quality of persistence must come into play. Persistence is a quality of earth, and it is communicated to the learner along the spokes from the northern to the southern quarter, the Watcher of the North <sup>6</sup> responding to the many sacrifices we have made up till now. This is the most important point in the learning process, and if we can continue for a season without the fire of enthusiasm, we will be given something better in its place at the southwestern point, corresponding to Lammas.

As we labor to master the new complexities, we ourselves become the sacrifice, not just a few hours out of our days. It is no longer a question of studying or practicing from 5 to 7 every

<sup>4</sup> I no longer think it necessary to capitalize 'gods,' since I do not believe there is any being for whom the word 'god' is a proper noun, that is, a name.

<sup>5</sup> For the myth of the Oak and Holly kings, see Graves, Robert, The White Goddess, pp. 176-9, and Farrar, Janet and Stewart, Eight Sabbats for Witches, pp. 93 et. seq.

<sup>6</sup> For the Watchers or Lords of the Watchtowers see e.g. Farrar, pp. 39-41.

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evening; every spare waking moment must be given to this labor. It probably crosses our minds more than once that if we knew it was going to be this difficult, we would never have begun! We are climbing a mountain, and it is a truism among mountain climbers that no climb is worth it without the feeling that it should never have been attempted in the first place!

When we reach the southwestern point of Lammas we will know it, because suddenly some parts of the new skill become easier. We are beginning to acquire a 'feel' or knack for it. If it is a subject, a light begins to shine in certain formerly dark corners. At the same time, and perhaps as a result, we begin to discover that we like what we are learning. Our old enthusiasm was no genuine liking for it; we were drawn on by the prospect of benefits, what we could gain by learning it. But now, for some odd reason, we begin to feel that it is 'our' knowledge, 'our' skill. We have acquired what the teacher Gurdjieff called 'valuation' of the subject.<sup>7</sup> This is the first or grain harvest, when the Holly King lays down his John Barleycorn aspect as a sacrifice in the earth. The learner likewise lays him or herself down in the earth of the subject and is transformed into the sacred loaf of the journeyman. Having acquired valuation, he or she can now see the way clear to mastery. Of course this will be mastered, for it is now a part of the learner!

The quarter of west or daring is where we dare to go beyond our present limits, giving ourselves up completely to the task at hand. Like water cascading over a cliff, we dare to 'go under,' borrowing a phrase from Nietzsche's Zarathustra.<sup>8</sup> We may die in the attempt, but we are going to achieve mastery! And we begin to do so at the western point, the point of death and initiation.

And now the dead come visiting. The valuation gained at Lammas was the result of the learner reaching deep within, past the personality of this incarnation, to his or her root-soul in the Otherworld, and there contacting talents and abilities from past lives. By Mabon, at the western point, these talents, along with past life memory associations, begin traveling up into the conscious personality and manifesting in the light of everyday life. The dead come visiting from Mabon to Samhain,<sup>9</sup> including one's own past selves. We are no longer who we were, but are transformed through our new mastery; and yet we are more fully ourselves than before.

Then, at the northwestern point, the transition from daring to silence, the dead return in the Wild Hunt to the Otherworld and the quiet of winter descends. The mastered skill becomes second nature to us, and we build on it in new directions. What cost us so much to acquire can now be taken for granted. It has become so much a part of us that we are ready to direct our conscious learning beyond it, using it as we use the muscles and sinews of our limbs. Thus it disappears at the northern point. We have come full circle in the path of learning and await the arrival of new intuitions, new directions at the northeastern point of the Sun-wheel.

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<sup>7</sup> P.D. Ouspensky, The Fourth Way, p. 50.

<sup>8</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich, Thus Spake Zarathustra, I:10. In Kaufmann, Walter, ed., The Portable Nietzsche, p. 137.

<sup>9</sup> For comparison with another pagan tradition, see Trinkunas, Jonas, ed., Of Gods and Holidays, pp. 127-9.

## **What is Wicca?** by Yvonne Aburrow

Wicca is primarily a religion where the practitioners interact with the world on many levels – physical, spiritual, magical and emotional. Witchcraft is the craft of magic. Wicca and Witchcraft overlap – all Wiccans are also witches, but not all witches are Wiccans. But the practice of witchcraft (in the sense of doing spells and so on) is only part of the practice of Wicca.

Initiatory Wicca is essentially an esoteric mystery religion in which every practitioner is a priestess or priest. This may also apply to other systems, but we are mainly discussing the initiatory Craft here. A mystery religion is one in which the dramas of the psyche are enacted by and for the benefit of its initiates, but because these mysteries often involve non-verbal concepts, they cannot be communicated. Also, some material is oathbound (initiates are forbidden to disclose it).

After the first degree initiation, the initiate is responsible for their own spiritual development; in some groups, the period between first and second is where the new initiate is helped to develop their spirituality by their Coven and High Priestess and High Priest; after the second, they may take on responsibility for assisting others' development; after the third, their psyche is fully integrated with itself. (The third degree is generally regarded as a personal step in British Gardnerian Wicca, not something that is required in order to be able to run a coven.)

Modern initiatory Wicca has many variants (Gardnerian, Alexandrian, and offshoots of these) but all share an adherence to a similar ritual structure and the practice of initiation.

The term Wicca has come to be applied to many different non-initiatory variants of the original form, such as solitary or non-initiatory wicca. There is nothing wrong with this – it can be argued that this is a natural outgrowth of any religious impulse.

### **Everyone's experience of Wicca is different**

Many people experience a feeling of spiritually coming home. The words, the energies, and the space are beautiful and resonant. Crossing the threshold into a new realm, a realm that feels closer to the gods and goddesses. This is the place between the worlds, where we walk on the edge of time and space, with one foot in the otherworld. The circle is a space where you can commune with the universe, develop the self, engage in sacred play, and honour the divine with each other. There is freedom from unnecessary social constraint. Celebrating the beauty of the night and the human body, and the firelight flickering on the naked flesh. The ecstatic leaping across the fire, wild and free. The flames, symbolic of life and passion... The feeling of journeying together to other worlds, communing with the ancestors, the land, and the spirits of the land. Walking with gods and goddesses.



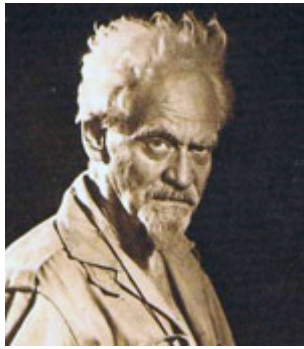
The above is just an example of how Wicca feels – it's not the same for everyone. If you want to find out more about how it feels, browse some websites about Wicca.

### **Sources**

Early modern Wicca was inspired by the general interest in the early 20th century in ancient paganisms, esoteric orders of the 19th century, and a passionate interest in nature and magical realms. It appears that the basic structure of modern Wicca was devised by two women in the Bournemouth area in the mid-1920s. They passed this on to Gerald Gardner via Dafo. Gardner genuinely believed that he had found an ancient practice which could be traced back centuries, possibly even millennia. [1] There were, however, other covens practising in other parts of Britain, but little is known about these other than that they

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existed, and most claims that traditional and hereditary Craft existed before Gardner have not been proven – but nor have they been disproved. [2] As archaeologists will tell you, “Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.”



Gardner proceeded eventually to publish *High Magic's Aid* (a fictional account of medieval witchcraft) and *Witchcraft Today*, an account of the Wica (as it was spelt in those days, referring to the people and not the practice) that he had encountered. He augmented the rather sketchy rituals with material from Co-Masonry [1] and Aleister Crowley [3].

Many people joined Gardner's early covens, including Doreen Valiente, who added quite a lot of new material into Gardner's *Book of Shadows*, and took out some of the more obviously Crowley-derived phrases (though she left quite a lot in).

There was and is a strong strain of folklore-inspired material in the Craft. Gardner was a member of the Folklore Society and had extensively researched the local folklore during his time in Malaya. Many of the themes found in the celebration of festivals are inspired by folklore.

There were also many literary influences on the Craft, in particular Rudyard Kipling, James Branch Cabell, and many other writers with a strong sense of landscape.

During the 1980s, the Craft became more left-wing, radical, feminist and ecology-oriented. Gardner's political stance was conservative, in spite of some of his more radical ideas. However, Gardner was by no means a typical conservative, as while in Malaya he actually talked to Malaysians, unlike most of his contemporaries. He was also strongly committed to naturism, a very unusual interest in the 1940s and 50s.

The modern Craft both draws upon its roots in the Western Mystery Tradition, and looks to traditional forms of folk magic, folklore, and the pagan traditions of the British Isles for inspiration. The structure of rituals remains reasonably constant, but the content varies quite a lot according to the inclinations and tastes of individual covens. Only initiations remain fairly standard, in order to ensure that they will be recognised across the whole Craft, should a covener wish to transfer to another coven.

## Gods and other beings

### Wicca encompasses a variety of beliefs:

- A belief in many gods and goddesses, spirits of place, nature and elemental spirits (polytheism)
- A belief that “all the gods are one God and all the Goddesses are one Goddess” (duotheism)
- A belief that there is no duality of good versus evil (monism)
- Devotion to a specific deity (henotheism)
- Belief that there is only one deity, usually the Goddess or the Great Spirit (monotheism)
- A belief that everything has a soul, including trees, rocks, animals, birds, places (animism)
- A belief that the divine is immanent or manifest in the physical world (pantheism)
- A combination of one or more of the above

There is a strong emphasis in the early *Books of Shadows* on the union of masculine and feminine, but many covens have dropped this on the grounds that the universe is more complicated than that. Polytheist Wiccans honour the Horned God and the Moon Goddess as patron deities of the Craft, and do not regard them as “The God” and “The Goddess”. This two-deity approach seems to be a feature of popular exoteric Wicca, though some initiated Wiccans adhere to the dictum that “All the Gods are one God, and all the Goddesses are one Goddess”, regarding various deities as aspects or archetypes of the masculine principle or the feminine principle. Most people feel that polytheism and duotheism are incompatible, though

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some see this as a matter of perspective. Some Wiccans (mainly of the Dianic persuasion) are Goddess-monotheists. Most Wiccans believe that their deities are immanent in the universe, not external to it. Many are also animists, believing in nature-spirits and spirits of place. Polytheist Wiccans believe that each deity is distinct, and not an aspect of some other deity. They may take the view that some deity-names are a different culture's name for the same being, but they do not conflate all deities into one. Fortunately it is possible to accommodate all these different views within Wicca because of the autonomy of covens and the diversity in unity of Wiccan practice.



### Structure

Many Wiccans gather in covens. All covens have a High Priestess and High Priest, but the extent to which these are leaders in the generally-accepted sense of the word varies from one coven to another. Their role is more like that of a facilitator or mentor; their aim is to empower their coveners to develop as priestesses and priests in their own right, passing on their experience and knowledge to their coveners, and usually learning from them in the process. Covens are autonomous, but as their founders will have been trained in another coven, they usually maintain contact with their previous High Priestess and sometimes seek guidance from her. The maximum size of a coven is usually limited by the size of the room where they meet.

Most coven members will also practice on their own (either a full ritual or meditation and visualisation), and sometimes will become solitary for a time if they move to another part of the country and cannot find a compatible coven or simply because that is what they wish to do at the time. Solitary Wicca is also practised by non-initiates, either because they do not want to join a coven or cannot find a compatible one. Solitaries sometimes perform a self-dedication or self-initiation ritual.

### Rites and celebrations & the structure of a ritual

Wiccans celebrate eight festivals and the thirteen Full Moons of the year. They will sometimes meet on other festivals and other phases of the Moon.

The basic structure of a ritual is similar to that of a story. It has a beginning (the opening of the circle), a middle (the purpose for which the ritual is being conducted be it celebratory or magical) and an end (the closing of the circle).

Wicca is practised in a sacred circle, and most rituals have a structure broadly based upon the Western Mystery Tradition. This involves consecrating the space, orienting it to sacred geometry, raising some power, performing the ritual, sharing consecrated food and drink, and then closing the circle and bidding farewell to the beings and powers that have been called upon. Coveners usually bring a contribution to the feast.

### Festivals

There are eight festivals in the Wiccan year: Samhain or Hallowe'en (31st October); Yule (21st December); Imbolc (2nd February); Spring Equinox (21st March); Beltane (1st May); Midsummer or Litha (21st June); Lammas or Lughnasadh (1st August); and Autumn Equinox (21st September). The dates, practice and meaning of these vary according to where the coven is located, when particular plants actually come out, and the local traditions where the coven members live. Some covens celebrate on the nearest weekend to the actual festival.

It is now generally recognised that the eight festivals were not all celebrated by the same culture (in spite of wild claims made on some web sites), and some of them are retro-engineered Christian festivals [4], but this is in keeping with the eclectic nature of Wiccan practice. Whatever the dubious origins of the festivals, they have now taken on a life of their own, and could be considered a valid development of pagan tradition, provided that spurious claims for their antiquity are dropped.

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While the Solstices and Equinoxes are fixed points governed by the movements of specific movements of the Sun and Moon, the other four, Imbolc, Beltane, Lammastide and Samhain are moveable and relate to the passing of the seasons as they display themselves wherever the practitioner happens to be geographically. They do not have to be conducted on specific dates such as 1st May or 31st October. The allocation of specific dates to these festivals is an entirely modern feature. In the Southern Hemisphere, the equinoxes and solstices are reversed, so the winter solstice is in June, and so on.

## Magic

Most Wiccans practice magic for healing and other ethical results. The intention behind the working of magic is not to impose one's will on the universe, but to bend the currents of possibility somewhat to bring about a desired outcome. Magic is generally practised at Full Moons rather than major festivals.

## Ethics

The Wiccan attitude to ethics is mainly based on the Wiccan Rede, "An it harm none, do what thou wilt". However, it is significant that this injunction occurs as part of the first degree initiation, and was probably originally meant to show the new initiate that it is impossible to do anything without causing some harm, so it is necessary to consider carefully the consequences of one's actions (Dee Weardale, pers. comm.) The other famous (and often misquoted) injunction occurs at the second degree, and is generally known as the Law of Threefold Return. The actual text enjoins the initiate to return good threefold wherever s/he receives it. To my mind, the most important aspect of Wiccan ethics is the list of the eight virtues which occurs in the Charge of the Goddess. These are beauty and strength, power and compassion, mirth and reverence, honour and humility. Each of these pairs of virtues points to the need for balance. Virtue ethics seem to have originated in ancient Greek philosophy [5], though whether Doreen Valiente was aware of this when writing the Charge of the Goddess is not known.

## After death

Most Wiccans believe in reincarnation, with the possibility of rest between lives in a region generally referred to as the Summerlands. Some believe that the spirit joins the Ancestors, whilst the soul is reincarnated. The degree to which the personality survives death is a matter of personal belief. Early Wiccan liturgy refers to the possibility of meeting one's loved ones again in future lives. Philip Heselton suggests convincingly that this is because the coven that Gerald joined believed that they had been in a coven together in a previous life. [1]

## Wicca and other contemporary Pagan spiritualities

Wicca and Druidry are closely linked, both by their origins (Gerald Gardner and Ross Nichols were close friends [4]) and by the fact that many Wiccans are also members of Druid groves. Owing to the large number of books available on Wicca, there are many people practising some form of Wicca outside the initiatory Craft, and much eclectic Pagan practice bears a close resemblance to the structure of Wiccan rituals and festivals. As more information becomes available on other paths and traditions, however, this may change. The rise of Heathenry and other reconstructionist paths should be welcomed as a valuable contribution to the diversity of Paganisms being practised in Britain today.

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- [3] Rikki La Coste (2001), *Gerald Gardner, a biographical sketch of a friend & acquaintance of Aleister Crowley*, <http://www.redflame93.com/Gardner.html>
- [4] Moonhunter (2003), *The Eightfold Wheel of the Year*, <http://www.wyrdwords.vispa.com/APT/articles/essays/wheel.html>
- [5] Wikipedia, *Virtue ethics*, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virtue\\_ethics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virtue_ethics)



**MADGE WORTHINGTON - HIGH PRIESTESS EXTRAORDINAIRE**  
**Obituary by Jean Willams**

Madge may be unknown to some younger Pagans as in recent years she was reclusive and increasingly incapacitated by Parkinsons but she was immensely important in the development of the Gardnerian Craft. To the hundreds in the Whitecroft line of Gardnerian Wicca, she is legendary.

Initiated in 1964, her enthusiasm and dedication to the development of the Craft, her wisdom, generosity and sound common sense opened doors to many seekers. She was a Founder and Honorary Member of the PF which was inaugurated in her house at Beltane 1971.

Madge died on November 6<sup>th</sup>, a few days short of her 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday. Her funeral was at Mortlake crematorium. Madge had planned her own ceremony several years earlier and her two sons faithfully carried out her wishes: an eco-friendly wicker coffin, donations to charities instead of floral tributes. After Pan-pipe music by Zamfir, one of her grandsons read the beautiful passage from "The Wind in the Willows" in which Ratty and Mole have a vision of Pan; her son Nigel spoke of the family's memories of Madge; Vivianne Crowley and I read excerpts from the Charge of the Goddess and gave a Wiccan Blessing. Her coffin passed through for cremation to lively Highland dance music. Madge loved to dance and I'm sure she is dancing still.

The family generously invited all who attended, including about twenty Pagans, to join them for a reception in Pembroke Lodge, Richmond Park, where we were surrounded by Autumn glory. It was a privilege to be able to talk to her family and to bring the two sides of her life together.

The following article was printed in Pagan Dawn (issue 151, Beltane 2004) in honour of her 90th birthday. In it, four long-term members of the PF pay tribute to Madge. Sadly, two of them, Harry Greenfield and Maureen Brown, have both died since the article was written and will be there to greet Madge in the Summerlands.

**Memories of Madge**

**Prudence Jones writes:**

In the early days of the Pagan Federation Madge was a brave champion of the Old Religion. Soon after publication of the first edition of The Wiccan (the forerunner of Pagan Dawn), the coven behind the magazine was infiltrated and Madge and others exposed in a lurid newspaper article. It is characteristic of her principled outlook that she did not recant or run away, despite ostracism by the neighbours and the distress it caused her family, but continued to be involved with The Wiccan and her initiate, its editor John Score.

Madge had come into contact with the Craft in the early 1960s, when she was in her 40s. Here at last was a natural, life-affirming religion, not burdened down with sin and guilt in the way that Christianity seemed to be. Beauty and pleasure were seen as sacred, and Witches were encouraged to be at one with the tides of nature - rather literally in Madge's case. Brought up in various parts of the old Empire, she had sailed a dinghy from an early age. When she married and settled by the Thames she mortified the male yachtsmen in her area by taking part in their annual race and beating them all by a huge stretch of clear water.

Following the newspaper atrocity she hosted the inaugural meeting of the Pagan Front, on May Day 1971, at her riverside home. This later became the PF. By April 1970 she had already begun hosting Witchcraft discussion groups at a coffee house in London, and soon the new Pagan Front encouraged its members to form similar groups across the UK. These duly became the Pagan Federation moots.

Madge's main interest in the 1970s was in spreading the Craft to suitable initiates. With Arthur, her High Priest, she initiated many people and gave them the experience of working in a coven so that they could hive off and found their own. Like her initiator's initiator, Rae Bone, Madge has always said that the trappings of ceremonial magic are incidental to the Craft,

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which is essentially about channelling the life force.

Many people passed through Madge's coven, but when Arthur died in 1981 she withdrew gradually from active Witchcraft and lived a quiet life as a PF Honorary Member, supporting her animal charities, with no high profile in the Pagan world. It is our pleasure now to offer this impressive and influential woman the recognition she deserves.

### **Vivianne Crowley writes:**

In 1974, Madge became my High Priestess. The Alexandrian coven into which I had first been initiated was going through turbulent times and the remnants of the coven no longer felt like 'home'. A second hand copy of an occult guide gave an address for a 'Witchcraft Discussion Group'. I wrote saying I was interested and received a quick response from Arthur, Madge's High Priest, inviting me to afternoon tea in a genteel suburb in Kent. The front door of Arthur's house in Whitecroft Way was promisingly witchy, with overgrown greenery and wrought iron doorknocker.

The door was answered by Arthur, a sprightly Gerald Gardner look-alike and I realised that the Witchcraft Discussion Group was a very different age group from the Alexandrians I had been working with – mostly teen witches who had joined at the coven's minimum age of eighteen.

In Arthur's living room I found the discussion group presided over by Madge, a woman of extraordinary presence and aristocratic bearing. Around six feet tall with gray hair to her waist, I guessed she was in her 50s, from my perspective fantastically ancient.

'Would you like some tea?' Another kind middle-aged lady with an impressive amber and jet necklace poured tea into a willow pattern china cup. Neatly-quartered sandwich-spread sandwiches followed, then Battenberg cake and some gently probing questions from Madge and Arthur about my commitment to the Craft. Other afternoon tea sessions followed until next Hallowe'en (the fashion for calling 31st October Samhain came later) I was initiated into Madge and Arthur's coven. The most impressive part of the initiation was Madge's rendering of The Charge. It had a different quality from anything I'd heard before in ritual. Later I realised why: Madge and Arthur knew their rituals by heart. With this came insight that by incorporating the words into our hearts and minds, they become part of us and a vehicle for the transmission of energy. The phrase 'word of power' suddenly meant something in a way that it had never done before.

The initiation ended with the removal of the blindfold and I found myself facing a true witch queen – Madge, her gray flowing hair unbound, magnificent in a moon crown, a true representation of the Goddess. I had never known that older women could be so beautiful.

The lessons of those early encounters with Madge and Arthur have stayed with me: their willingness to bring a young witch into their coven, the power of ritual learned rather than read, that age, wisdom and dignity have their own beauty, and the power of chant and dance for making magic.

Madge and Arthur through their willingness to embrace others became two of the most prolific initiators of their generation. I have no idea of the numbers of their descendants. It is certainly hundreds; it may be over a thousand. Both had physical children. Both too have spiritual children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, great great grandchildren – at least four generations of witches around the world – for their descendants are found across Britain and continental Europe, in Canada and the United States, and in many other countries too. They are a living tribute to the dedication to the Craft, to the Goddess and to the rebirth of Witchcraft of Madge and of her High Priest Arthur who went to the Summerlands many years ago.

### **Harry Greenfield writes:**

I first encountered Madge as far back as the 1970s. I had just learnt of Wicca, and excitedly concluded that this might be where I belonged, when I spotted a notice giving details of a moot she was running in a London pub. So along I went, nervously looking for someone reading a copy of The Cauldron.

Fighting my way through a throng of thirsty office workers, I found myself in the presence of this somewhat daunting and authoritative figure, who nevertheless made me

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warmly welcome – despite the fact that I was a Fleet Street journalist! We enquirers were a motley bunch, but for all of us Madge opened the door onto a magical world that promised to change our lives for ever. Even in a noisy pub, Madge managed to convey to us the ethos, challenges and rewards of Wicca, while testing our commitment by requiring us all to read Robert Graves's "White Goddess", cover to cover.

By the time I was ready for initiation, Madge had deputed Veronica (now, sadly, long departed to the Summerlands) to set up her own group. "Veronica," she declared, in her inimitable fashion. "You will establish a daughter coven, your first initiate will be Harry, and I will be his sponsor."

And so it was that, on a memorable evening in Dulwich, I had the tremendous honour of being brought into the Craft by two of the finest witches anyone could have wished for – Veronica, the kindest and gentlest of High Priestesses, and Madge, one of the true "greats" of the Gardnerian tradition, who has introduced so many seekers to the Way of the Wise.

A tall, commanding presence, with long flowing locks and piercing gaze, Madge is every inch the aristocrat, and always demanded the most of her covenors. On the one occasion that I attended a meeting of Whitecroft, in a small room over the garage, she led us in such prolonged and vigorous dancing that I ended up completely exhausted, feeling as though I had been put through a bout of extreme gymnastics in a Turkish bath.

Madge has ever been one for bringing people in, not keeping them out. Some have discovered that the Craft is not for them, but Madge gave them the opportunity to find out for themselves. As for the rest of us who have had the privilege of knowing her, and through her discovering our True Path, we are forever in her debt, throughout this life and all our lives to come.

#### **Maureen Brown writes:**

I first met Madge thirty years ago and was welcomed with open arms into her coven. Fifteen months later I and my partner were asked to take over the running of the coven as Madge's High Priest was in poor health. Ever since that time Madge has had a keen interest in its and my progress. Still whenever I see Madge she asks "Are you doing it right?"

I remember most clearly the feelings of awe and wonder as, at my first degree initiation, the blindfold was removed and she spoke the words of The Charge of the Great Mother. To this day whenever I hear or speak The Charge I remember her look of love for The Goddess, the serious intent of the message and the pleasure she felt in helping another person into The Craft, all shown on her beautiful face.

Madge has always urged me to make the Craft something that is appropriate to the now, very much a religion of our time, with its roots firmly planted in the mists of time and all human experience. She saw dance as a continuum of that experience. She loved to dance and through her dancing expressed her joy in being a part of the life force, surely the greatest form of worship. She has boundless life energy and has seen the Craft and her coven and its offshoots evolve over many years into what it is today . Many witches today respect Madge as the source of their coven; although many have never had the opportunity to meet her, they have heard much about her inspiration and life.

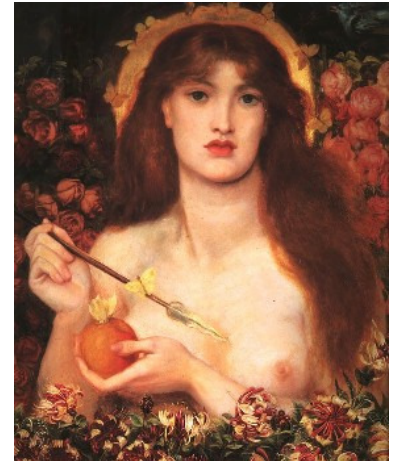
The most notable thing about her is her love and respect for nature, the Earth and the animals; she has been active in the Green Movement and has over the years donated a small fortune to animal charities. The only grief I currently hear her express is that she has nothing left to give. I shall be delighted to be the first to contribute to the PF's fund for animal charities in honour of Madge's 90th birthday. Blessed be Madge, I love you.



**The Veneralia**  
by Diana Aventina

The entire month of April is named after Aphrodite, the Goddess of Love who was known to the Romans as Venus. Venus is known as the Mother of the Roman people, as her distant grandson was Romulus, the founder of Rome. As the Mother of the Roman people, she was worshipped as Venus Genetrix and as such is one of the most honored Goddess of the Romans.

In April there are two festivals dedicated to the Goddess Venus: The first is April 1 and is called the Veneralia. It honors Venus Verticordia, 'the Changer of Hearts' who later became the protector against vice. When 3 Vestal virgins were found to be unchaste, the Syballine books were consulted. The answer was to build a Temple to Venus Verticordia. Her temple was completed on April 1, 114 CE so this April 1<sup>st</sup> is the 2120th anniversary of the opening of that Temple. The worship of the goddess Fortuna Virilis was also part of this festival.



This festival is specifically one for women. According to Ovidius' Fasti, the statue of the Goddess was undressed and bathed on this day by both married & unmarried women and prostitutes. The ladies wore crowns of myrtle and once the goddess was bathed, they adorned Her again with jewels and garlands of roses:

"Yours are the Goddess's rites, Latin mothers and brides,  
You too, who wear not the fillets and long robe (prostitutes).  
Remove the golden necklaces from her marble neck,  
Remove the jewels: bathe the Goddess whole.  
Dry her neck and restore the golden necklace to it;  
Then dress her with flowers and new roses.  
She tells you too to bathe beneath the green myrtle,  
And the cause of it is certain.  
She was naked on a beach, drying her dripping hair  
When a randy band of satyrs saw her.  
She noticed them and screened her body with myrtle.  
This saved her and she tells you to repeat it."

After the Goddess was bathed and dressed, incense was then offered to Fortuna Virilis. The ladies would make a libation and then drink the potion that Venus drank on her own wedding night: crushed poppy in milk and honey. Then wearing garlands of myrtle on their heads, they would bathe in the public baths and pray to Fortuna Virilis that the men would not see any flaws or blemishes that they might have on their body. According to Lydus and the Prenaestine Fasti, only the ordinary populace bathed in the men's baths in honor of Fortuna Virilis and this was possibly aimed at promoting sexual union.

Honoring Venus Verticordia on this day is relatively easy to recreate with friends or alone at home.

I have a room at home which is specifically and only Venus's Temple. No one is even allowed in that room unless I know for sure that they will show respect for the Goddess (so basically all Pagans are welcome!). In her Temple I have many statues of Venus and her altar. Her altar is decorated with sea shells, rose quartz and rocks shape like hearts, which I gathered on the beaches of Greece. I also have the altar decorated with fresh flowers (usually roses) which are sacred to her plus jewelry and other pretty trinkets which I find fitting for the Goddess of Love and Beauty. The main Venus of the Temple wears a gold chain around her neck.

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I have not found an ancient Venus Verticordia ritual in any ancient texts. So the following are suggestions only. I realize that most people do not have a separate temple at home dedicated to the Goddess of Love, but if you own a statue of her, that will work as well.

Before starting, it is necessary to be clean. If you don't have a wreath of myrtle cover your head with a shawl, and you should burn some incense in offering. I find that reciting a Homeric hymn or another prayer out of the Classics sets the mood. Then take Venus as honorably as you can and bring her to your bath. It is nice also to have some very very quiet music (flutes or recorders are nice) to drown out any unasked for background noise. Burning incense in the bathroom also adds a nice aroma and will mask any disinfectant or any toilet smells that may be lurking.

Give Venus a nice warm bath with a soft sponge. Make sure that your statue is not made of chalk before you bathe her or she may melt! To me the general feeling should be one of a bridesmaid fawning over a bride.

Dry Venus gently but thoroughly. Then return her to her place and make another offering of incense accompanied by roses or other pretty flowers. If you can afford it, a gold necklace would be perfect to drape around her neck or some other pretty necklace. Remember that once offered to her, the necklace is Hers :-)

Next is your ritual bath. As you run your bath water, prepare a drink of warm milk and honey (and poppys if you have them). Unfortunately, I don't own a statue of Fortuna (a friend knocked it over and broke it a few years ago—not the best of omens!), but in the bathroom I burn incense in offering to her. Again very very soft background music is quite nice. As the bath fills, first make a libation to the both Goddesses and then slowly drink your milk and honey potion.

As you drink it, pray to Venus and Fortuna Virilis. Use your own words or something similar to:

'Venus Goddess of Love and Beauty,  
grant me beauty within and without.  
Fortuna Virilis,  
let those who look upon me see only the goodness in my heart  
and the beauty of my spirit.

Goddesses, grant that my negativity be washed away by your bath  
and that I be purified both in body and in spirit."

Then enter your bath and visualize the Goddesses melting your inner and outer blemishes away. Stay in the nice relaxing bath as long as you like giving thought to the fact that you have spiritually connected to all of the women in ancient times who have performed a ritual to Venus Verticordia and Fortuna Virilis!



## News from the U.S.A.:

### The Struggle for Pagan Veterans to Have Pentacles on Headstones & Markers

Circle Sanctuary is among those working to have the Pentacle added to the US Department of Veterans Affairs list of emblems that can be inscribed on government issued memorial markers, headstones, and plaques for deceased veterans.

#### HISTORY

Since its founding in 1974, Circle Sanctuary has provided support to Wiccan and other Pagans in the US military. Circle Sanctuary's worldwide membership includes veterans as well as those on active duty and in reserves in all branches of the US military. For more than twenty years, through Lady Liberty League, its religious freedom networking ministry, Circle Sanctuary has been working for equal rights for Pagans in the US military as well as in society as a whole.

For decades, the US Department of Veterans Affairs has provided deceased veterans with memorial markers, plaques, and headstone grave markers that include an emblem of belief. Veterans can receive these markers regardless of whether or not they are killed in action and wherever they are buried or have their remains interred. The Christian cross and the Jewish Star of David are the most commonly requested emblems, but the VA has also approved symbols for other religious groups, including Islam, Hindu, Sikh, and smaller groups such as Eckankar, Baha'i, and Sufi. Even atheism has managed to meet the VA's emblem of belief standards and is permitted the symbol of an atom, with the letter A in the center. There are currently 38 emblems of belief on the VA's list.



However, unlike those of members of these other groups, the headstones, grave markers, and memorial plaques of Wiccans and Pagans on related paths do not yet display their emblem of their belief, a five-pointed star enclosed in a circle, with one point facing skyward. The United States Department of Veterans Affairs and its National Cemetery Administration (NCA) prohibit graphics on government-furnished headstones, markers, and plaques other than those they have approved as emblems of belief.

Aware of the growing need to have Pagan symbols inscribed on veteran markers, on April 8, 2005, Circle Sanctuary applied to the US Department of Veterans Affairs for the addition of the Pentacle to the NCA list of emblems of belief. In a letter from a VA official the following month, we were told that procedures for requesting the addition of an emblem of belief were being revised and that no requests would be granted until new procedures were in place. In November 2005, we received a letter from the VA indicating that new procedures were now in place and details about the new procedures were included. The new procedures required that requests for an addition to the VA's emblem of belief list be part of an application from the next of kin for a deceased veteran requesting a memorial marker, headstone, or plaque.

On November 17, 2005, a long time member of Circle Sanctuary died. He was a Korean War veteran. In December, his widow decided to request a memorial marker with a Pentacle for him. Reverend Selena Fox, senior minister of Circle Sanctuary, worked with her in completing the application for the marker and the request for the Pentacle emblem. Our 24-page application was completed on January 6, 2006 and was received by the VA on January 10, 2006.

Circle Sanctuary, with the support of the Covenant of the Goddess and Sacred Well Congregation, was the first to re-apply for the approval of the Pentacle emblem under the new procedures.



Aquarian Tabernacle Church, which first applied in 1997, chose to append required additional material to its application, and submitted their additional information in mid January.

Both applications are now being reviewed by the National Cemetery Administration of the US Department of Veterans Affairs.

In February, Circle Sanctuary member Roberta Stewart decided to publicly speak out about her immediate need to get the Pentacle approved so that she could order a memorial plaque for her husband, Sgt. Patrick Stewart, who was killed in action in September 2005 in Afghanistan. Media coverage and other work have moved the approval process along.

On March 2, the VA called Rev. Selena Fox and told her that Circle Sanctuary's application had gone to the next step in the approval process. ATC's application also has gone to the next step.

Despite repeated requests, thus far the VA has not been willing to describe specifics about the approval process or give a timeline.

We hope that the Pentacle will be approved in March. The grave of the Korean War veteran who died in November remains unmarked. There continues to be a blank spot on the wall of the Veterans Memorial in Nevada where Sgt. Stewart's plaque will go. And, there is another widow associated with Circle Sanctuary that wants to apply for a marker for her deceased veteran husband. Plus there are others waiting on this approval, including Pentacles for at least two headstones in Arlington Cemetery.

Please support this quest with prayers and by spreading the word about this need to others you know who may be interested and in a position to help.

For updates and more information please see <http://www.circlesanctuary.org/liberty/veteranpentacle/>

In Liberty,  
Lady Liberty League Military Affairs Task Force



## ***An Interview with Christopher Penczak***

by Ash Russell

### **How did you get involved in witchcraft?**

I went in as a total sceptic. I was actually not a typical witchy type of guy. I had 12 years of Catholic school and believed in something of a higher power and knew that Catholicism wasn't quite right for me. A friend of the family slowly introduced me to the esoteric concepts of witchcraft. She was actually my art teacher for many years, an adult role model of mine. She came around and finally announced to me one day after I graduated high school that she was a witch. I thought she had flipped. I respected her a lot, but wanted to know what she had to say, and the more she explained it to me, the more I was interested yet sceptical. She taught me a little bit about meditation, a little bit about psychic development. She got me into tarot cards. We both had a love of art, so having the art aspect in common, she showed me the tarot deck. I didn't know they were tarot cards at the start but that's what she started me out with.



We got to the point where she invited me to a full moon ritual. It really amazed me, as an experience, and at the same time I was sceptical that it might be just about getting all dressed up and acting out, but the spell she let me do that night actually came true. After having that spell experience, I said ok, maybe there is something real to this. We got to the point where she thought she couldn't teach me any more, so she sent me to her teacher, who is Laurie Cabot. I don't know how well she is known here, but she is pretty well known in America.

### **How do you contrast Wicca and witchcraft in your own publications and teaching?**

I guess that depends on where I am and to whom I'm talking. I was warned that America and England have a little bit different definitions before I left for this visit. In general I prefer the word witch, and I use witch in this sense as a kind of a broad spectrum. I have a pretty broad definition of the word witchcraft. I see a witchcraft tradition wherever you are working with the forces of nature, the forces of sun, moon and earth, planets, spirits, animals, as practicing some form of witchcraft.

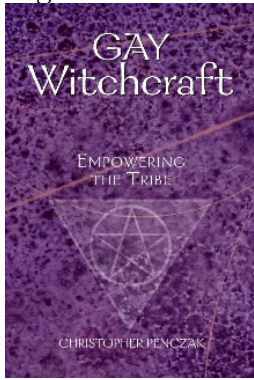
Some people disagree with that though, because it can be defined as shamanism or some kind of African witchdoctors of Africa, or other spiritual traditions. But to me, it's all under one kind of broad umbrella. I think Wicca can be used to denote specific traditions within the larger umbrella of witchcraft.

It's interesting that mostly in America a lot of people have heard of Wicca as a kind of solitary, eclectic, kind of Scott Cunningham inspired witchcraft. I find that other groups of people really look at only Gardnerian and Alexandrian traditions as Wicca.

Before becoming an author, I would often use Wicca as the non-scary word to my friends, when compared to witchcraft. When I first met someone, I began by describing myself as a practitioner of an earth religion. If they were interested in hearing more, I would then mention I'm a pagan and explain what a pagan is. Gradually I eased them into the word Wicca. Then finally when they're ready for it, and know me better, I would use the word witch. I used to build up to it. Now with being in the public eye and teaching classes, I just start with witch, and if they can't handle it, then they can't handle it.

### **How has coming from a line like Laurie Cabot's influenced your impression of what it means to be Wiccan?**

Well, there are a lot of things, particularly with my book *Gay Witchcraft*, that are still so much a part of Laurie's tradition. Her first teachings, particularly about sexuality, really influenced me. The concepts of literal, gender-based polarity were not stressed, such as having an equal coven of male and female, and having the real hierarchical structures. Laurie didn't emphasise that. Her teachings framed my particular view on magick as a gay man. She did casually talk



about this high priest with a husband or a lesbian high priestess leading this ritual with the goddess Diana, and with a whole lesbian coven. For her and her community being gay is very accepted and very matter of fact and wasn't a big deal, and it wasn't until I started looking at more formal traditions of witchcraft where I found more fixed ideas of gender and polarity. From a traditional view, there are some questions if a group of all men could do spells and could do magic, which in my experience they can. But I never questioned. Maybe if I thought it was strange and thought you couldn't, maybe I wouldn't have tried.

**Indeed. Does it put you at odds with some of the US community?**

No actually, I found that in general the US community to be very open and very welcoming. The vast majority of pagans I come across in the public sphere doing this now are more of the eclectic non-traditionalists. Many of them are looking for more information. In fact as many straight people have bought my book *Gay Witchcraft* as gay. They wanted to know about it, and wanted to educate their covens, and are interested more in the aesthetics.

**Pretty broad-minded.**

Yeah, they really have been.

**What are the perceived differences in gender issues between something like Laurie's way of doing things and say British Traditional Witchcraft, as it's called in America?**

Well, there really wasn't an emphasis on having to be boy-girl, boy-girl line up. Ideally if that's what you have that's great, but if you had a circle of 6 women and three men, it wasn't going to throw anything off. It wasn't a big deal. It wasn't a case of having to take a role because of your gender. There is real emphasis on the idea that each person has both male and female currents in them. So it wasn't where you stood, and we both were using both currents all the time.

**Do you use degrees in your tradition, and if so how do you know that someone is ready for the next stage?**

My personal tradition that I teach in my work – I'm not teaching the Cabot tradition, I just want to make that clear – I teach a very self-initiatory tradition because that's really the focus of the books that I'm publishing now through Llewellyn – the *Temple of Witchcraft* series – I teach various levels of witchcraft in a five degree system. Each element is based on one of the elements. I teach each level over a number of weeks, and there is a kind of a waiting period between levels. We close with the fifth level, which lasts for over a year, training priests and priestesses to be ministers and teachers of this tradition.

I guess I really believe that whether you are a witch or what degree you take or what title you take is really between you and the gods. I create an environment and an experience where you can have a meaningful experience with the gods and the spirits and receive those transformative inner initiations. I'm much less focused on degrees and ranks and titles than expanding consciousness. I think an initiation - I look at it from a more shamanic point of view, and from that I think that initiation is anything that alters your consciousness and expands your consciousness to the point that you can't go back to be the way you were before that. Sometimes you get that with a formal ritual, sometimes you don't.

And my most initiatory experience was doing a psychic healing that actually worked. That was the moment for me that I became a witch. It wasn't a ritual, it wasn't a degree, it wasn't a certificate, it wasn't someone saying that I could be a witch, that was something that rocked my world open and made me really look at the world that we live in, and made me want to say that the word witch was just a part of me and a part of my soul.

I try to create those experiences for my students. So as long as they do all of the coursework, as long as they fulfil all the requirements, as long as they complete all the lessons, they can earn the "degree" in this tradition, but it's really between the student and the gods. In the end, we usually close with a ritual and some type of journey. And in that experience, they know

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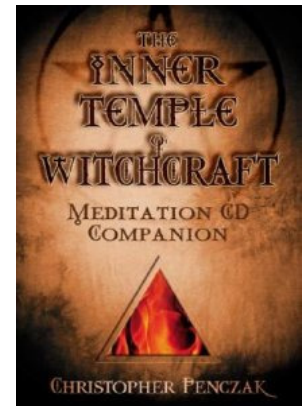
whether they are ready to want to go on or not, because really if they're not unwilling to talk about whether they are comfortable to go on with their training or not, then we will encourage them to wait, because in the end I think it's important that they wait, and if they want to know more they will go on.

**What do the different degrees mean within the tradition, if it's judgement on your own?**

I don't have specific degrees in the way British Traditional covens do. I have specific course levels. After you have completed the course, you must decide for yourself if you are prepared to go onto the next level. Very rarely will I stop someone from going on, only when it's clear they haven't done any of the work.

**So they have to continue with the course, or they wouldn't...**

Yes, because you need level one to go on to level two. That's the basic requirement that I have for it. I'm not running an initiatory coven so there's no rank of who does what in rituals. Basically each of the levels is based on different elements, based on a different branch that I see is an aspect of witchcraft. This is a very broad definition. The first level is psychic development, the element for it is fire, based on learning of things such as psychic light, psychic visions, how to get the tools going before you go to the outer work. They need to learn about themselves. If they don't have a sense of mediation and altering consciousness, rituals and spells can be pretty meaningless.



**You give them the tools, and then you let them learn how to build on those tools.**

Exactly.

**Would someone go on to lead a group? Or would they go on to do the training in the style you taught them?**

Well, they are more than welcome to lead groups or teach in this tradition. The last training that I have, this class is a year-long class, a little bit over a year, and it's really looking to teach them to be ministers in whatever their capacity is. Some people are meant to be teaching, and that's great, and they can use the book material, and take their course training from that. That's why I'm writing the books on it because I want the material to be available.

Other people are not meant to be teachers, and there is some training in these courses to teach other people about other paths, other than formal teaching. I could open the door and you find that maybe you are meant to be a healer. Not everybody is meant to be a healer. What are you meant to be? What is your spiritual vocation? What are the ministerial roles of a healer and a counsellor, a ritual leader, an educator or maybe even a crafter, someone who serves the community by making things? So, this course is how do you fit in the community, and how do you minister to the community. You explore many roles. Sometimes the most you can do to be a minister is just to be a model of healthy life. I tell people we do a lot of self-work meditations, really trying to get ourselves as healthy as possible. Call it healthy adults or call it high priests or priestesses or whatever.

**How much does your traditional training borrow from Crowley or other sources?**

I take a little bit from every place. I have great admiration for Aleister Crowley. He has done a lot of amazing things in his work, and I think he really influenced modern witchcraft, which I know a lot of witches don't like to admit. I think so much of that Thelemic current has fallen into witchcraft. People argue about where the books of shadows were influenced by him. I think there was a current in there that threaded its way into modern witchcraft.

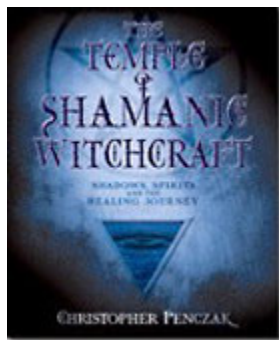
The fourth level of training that I do compares witchcraft to ceremonial magic. So I have a lot of Crowley in that. There's a lot more of the tarot and how that applies to modern witchcraft.

**People are expected to get some sort of grounding in ritual magic.**

Definitely. The basic rituals and how they are accepted. Some people take that little link of what I teach and decide 'I really want to be a ritual magician' and they go off and they'll train

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more formally in that tradition. The third level of my training is about shamanism, shamanic healing aspects of witchcraft and some people take that segment and think 'I really meant to be a shaman.' Some places in my classes are launching points off to other traditions, but to me it encompasses everything in that represents witchcraft, including basic shamanism and ceremonial magick.



**Does Qabalistic magick figure into that? Would you go that far to the ritual magic end of the spectrum?**

Oh, absolutely – in the level 4 class we take each of the spheres and we do meditations and pathworkings on it and talk about the correspondences. I try to get very ritualistic about it, so we will set up an altar and that has all of the correspondences on it and the colour symbols and stones and the perfumes. I used to teach it from a very intellectual point of view and I found that with witches it didn't really work out that well for me, so I try to do it as more of an experience. You know, not only see the vision of what it is and call upon the angels and god forms but also hold the corresponding crystals or having the appropriate incense burning and see how that works. But I

definitely get into the Tree of Life.

**But on an experiential level.**

That's right.

**How does this fit with a strong connection to nature? Would that just be one end of the training?**

When I think of the ancestors of the witch, I think we have those kind of clever, wise woman and men of the village and kind of natural witch with folk magic, but also feel like the priests and priestesses of Osiris and Isis and of the Greek temple has had an influence on witchcraft, so one current is rural, and the other is an ancient city or a modern city and a little intellectual. Here we have the influence of all forms of Qabalistic magick and alchemy on witchcraft. Modern covens have drawn on both. One does not negate the other. You can be intellectual and still have a connection to nature. I mean look at the Qabalah, with all of the herbal correspondences, and you have the perfume correspondences and the stone correspondences. I think it's a way of organising how you think about nature in terms of the spheres. It's a tool.

**They are cultural or intellectual ancestors as well?**

Definitely. Modern witchcraft draws on a lot of sources. And these different methods help us understand how modern people learn the craft. Some people just learn by very little instructions and read a simple outline and just light some incense and go, and other people don't know what to do with that but they need step-by-step and how it works and the ideas behind it. So it's about trying to figure out who needs what to be the best teacher, and best student, you can be. .

**How did being gay fit in or conflict with your training and working method?**

It didn't conflict at all. Actually it was really a draw for me to come to witchcraft. Coming from Laurie's tradition, she talks so matter-of-factly about gay people in her tradition and she talked about (she only talked briefly about it) about how ancient cultures didn't have strict roles about sexuality, orientation and identity, and that there were homosexual and transgendered mystics, priestesses and shamans. Knowing that I was welcomed in witchcraft, as a gay man, made it all the more appealing to me. I really felt kind of betrayed by Catholicism. I never felt comfortable, but I liked the incense and the candles. I think those tools are a draw in themselves, but I didn't know why at the time. So I found a religion with the same type of tools, but where my sexuality was welcomed, and not rejected.

**There were many more questions to ask but we decided to end the interview at this point. Thanks Chris for your insights!**

## ***Pagan Marriage in Scotland***

- an update on recent legal changes from PF Scotland

As many of you will be aware, there has recently been a very welcome change in the law. This will allow gay and lesbian couples in Scotland to officially register their partnership, with the first civil partnership ceremonies taking place on December 21st 2005.

I feel in light of this change that it is our duty, as the largest Pagan organisation in Scotland involved in celebrancy, to keep the community informed of what these changes mean.

There are two distinct types of marriage in Scotland - religious and civil. PF Scotland's approved celebrants can only perform religious marriages. We receive a license - the marriage schedule - from the local registrar for each marriage to allow us to do this.

All civil marriages, which may only be held in a registry office or certain other registered civil buildings, are performed by registrars who are employed by the local councils - no religious content is allowed in a civil ceremony, with even the music having to be very carefully chosen to avoid religious themes.

Civil partnership falls into a similar category to civil marriage. It is not legally a form of marriage, despite headlines to that effect in the press, but it does convey certain rights and responsibilities to couples that are similar to some of those conveyed by marriage.

Because the civil partnership ceremony is a civil ceremony, our celebrants are not allowed, by law, to carry these out, nor are celebrants from any other religious group. They must be performed by a council-employed registrar, and must not have any religious content. We are not discriminating against the lesbian and gay community in this - we simply have no choice. As a member of the LGBT Pagan community I intensely dislike this, but the fact is that we have to work within the law.

If we have a request from a couple who are planning on holding a civil partnership ceremony (and I hope we will have many), we can do exactly the same as we did before we could legally marry heterosexual couples -we can perform a handfasting or partnering ceremony for them either before or after their civil partnership ceremony. These must be strictly separate from the civil ceremony, but can take whatever form the couple choose.

I hope this clarifies the current situation for you all, and sincerely hope for future changes in the law to allow us to legally marry any couple who wish to do so. And to any of you planning to have your own civil partnership ceremony, we hope you'll be in touch!

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**Introducing Syd**  
**The New National Coordinator for PFI France**

by Morgana

In the past we have profiled most of the PFI National Coordinators. Recently Syd stepped into Alrune's shoes and is the new NC for PFI France.

**Morgana: Hallo Syd, you have been involved in Pagan Federation International for some time. Can you tell us a little about how you became a member and now NC?**

Syd: It seems to me important to be present and set up a group just to tell everyone loud and clearly ' We pagans are alive'. I can't see any point in creating different structures with the same goal and I think the PFI is a good one. The best thing is to enrich it with our presence and the fact that it is an international organisation motivates me a lot.

I think the notion of " federation" is very important. People lead a kind of battle for our rights and the respect of our beliefs. I think my role is not to remain hidden but to join up behind them. Union makes strength, I believe. And I want so much not to be recognized as such but to be allowed to tell my prayers (without hiding myself) on sacred sites...

**M: I remember "meeting" you when you were the web mistress for the druid website [www.druides.org](http://www.druides.org). I was very impressed in your work then. And I still am. You have recently designed the PFI France website. Have you been designing websites for a long time?**

Syd: I've spent a lot of my time in presenting Druidry and Paganism for 7 years now and one of my favourite medium is a website. But I'm not doing professionally, it's only to support my spirituality. And if I have some good graphical bases, I'm very bad at technical things. Happily, skilful people help me and they are not afraid of spending as much time on work as I do.

**M: You are the now the National Coordinator for France. Can you tell us a little about the kind of people who approach you and where they live? How do they find out about Pagan Federation International?**

Syd: Pagans in France are very lonely, everywhere in the whole France and it's very difficult for them to meet and gather. The PFI structure is a good means to get in touch and I hope to organize more meetings and events, more activity.

People who come to us are from every origin and every background. It's incredible to see how people of different age are represented. I like this diversity of cultures and backgrounds, it's very nourishing.

**M: Are there many pagans in France. We know of the Breton people of course and their Celtic roots and wonderful music, but do they consider themselves part of the neo-pagan culture?**

Syd: Briton paganism is very folkloristic, mostly because of the Celtic- but very Christian-culture that we can see there. People often don't know that their practises, even cultural ones, have very pagan origins. Or people mislead themselves thinking that paganism and Druidism is only for the Britons and the Irish. In fact, the most numerous pagans are in regions that we could have thought forgetful as they are seen as "corridors". On the contrary, it's incredible how a lot of pagans live in border regions like Alsace, Lorraine, Alps, and Savoy.



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Paganism is not more present in big cities; most of the members live in the countryside (where a pagan lifestyle has been kept for a long time). In fact, lost areas in France have remained pagan for a long time and that memory is a very representative feedback for us.



**M: yes I understand. This is very similar to the situation in England. Many pagan customs are still very much alive! I believe you have organised a pub moot recently. How did you get on? Are pub moots or merry meets something that fit well in the French culture?**

Syd: In France, meeting in pubs is very common. We like sunny terraces in summer and a good coffee in winter. But the atmosphere is less informal than it is in Irish pubs and it's hard to talk and to organize like a "round table". We have had a first try-out in Paris and of course we had the problem of finding the best place to meet (hi, hi without knowing it, we chose an English pub on the night of a football match).

We ended by eating some pancakes in a creperie and it was very nice. But we took good note of it: next time we'll choose a reserved and booked place. Moreover, the number of participants is far higher than what we expected and thus it will become easier to organize it, with the hope that other cities will follow the example.

**M: Excellent. Internet can bring people together but it is still very important to meet people face-to-face. In December 2005 we saw our first PFI French newsletter. What kind of events are you planning – I noticed mention of a conference. Can you tell us a little bit more about that?**

Syd: it's a big plan. And it's one of the reasons why I would like to tell you about it now. We will organize a day conference of meetings between the different pagan traditions. The purpose is that the principal players of European paganism meet and be heard. In this way our French movement become more self-confident and that paganism will become more prepared in our area. It will be a meeting but also an explanation, a presentation of what paganism is. There is still so much to do in France!

**M: I agree with you wholeheartedly. I hope we can work together on presenting an interesting line-up of speakers. It is important too to hear what French pagans think. Discourse is also important in building up a pagan community. How do you see the PFI International progressing in France? Have you any other suggestions??!**

Syd: Like everything else, I have to take into account the slow and doubtful temper of the French. But I'm very surprised of the numerous subscriptions that are coming and the will of moving things that is awakening. But the French are very self-sufficient and they'll wait to be confident. But then, I'm sure we'll be able to count on our dynamism, our nice and shining energy of inspired and sincere people. For my part, I'm very motivated by the idea of a French commitment in the life of paganism (for the PR work) within a group of European and international resources. It has been a long time that I commit myself in it, being through my works for OBOD, my participation in the TDN (The Druid Network) or my commitment in the PFI now. My purpose? To bind, share my life energy for this marvellous spirituality that is ours and that I hold close in my heart.

**M: Many thanks for your time and also good luck with PFI France.**

For more up-to-date information please go to [www.fr.paganfederation.org](http://www.fr.paganfederation.org)

And to all the PFI team in France keep up the good work!

Bright blessings at springtime,  
Morgana

**Introducing Turtle,  
the new PFI Interfaith Coordinator**

by Morgana



It is with great pleasure to announce the new post of PFI Interfaith Coordinator.

I would like to introduce Turtle, who has been a PFI member for a number of years now, as our PFI Interfaith Coordinator. She has offered her time and expertise as writer and expressed her desire to do more active work in the field of Interfaith. For the last couple of months Turtle and I have been working out the function of Interfaith Coordinator and hope that you will all see the results soon.

Turtle and I met via the email group which she was moderating at the time called "Eigenwijze Heksen" (literally "Headstrong Witches"). Later we met in person and she became involved in PFI work, helping me with the member administration. She also became involved in the editorial team for "Wiccan Rede" an Anglo Dutch pagan magazine. Her major interest there was the work of solo witches. Later she decided to begin the OBOD training and is now busy with her Bard grade.

With respect to the post of PFI Interfaith Coordinator Turtle and I discovered that we were both interested in a dialogue with people of different faiths in an attempt to understand their cultural and spiritual background. Also the growing intolerance in the Netherlands has led to a keener awareness of the necessity of living harmoniously in a multi cultural, multi religious society.

Turtle writes:

"I hope to create a network of interested people, within the pagan community and also create a focal point within PFI as a source of information for people from other religions. My aim is to develop the dialogue between pagans and other religions and to give form to the positive reactions in a world where religions and sociological viewpoints are becoming harder, or even worse in a society which is becoming increasingly indifferent."

Turtle hopes to make regular contributions to "Pagan World" about her experiences and looks forward to meeting both pagans and people of other faiths to work towards a happier, richer spiritual society.

Watch out for announcements and dates of forthcoming events in the Interfaith diary.

Good luck Turtle,  
Bright Blessings,  
Morgana,

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## ***The Pentagram and Ritual Eating***

by Ian Elliott

Religious symbols are intelligible mysteries. The difference between a mystery and a puzzle is that the latter has only one layer of meaning, and therefore only one solution. In this way a puzzle resembles a rational number, such as 3. A mystery is like an irrational number, such as  $\sqrt{10}$ , which approaches 3.15 but never gets there. The more you work it out, the more decimal places you find, but you never reach its limit. This is known as an asymptotic approach. Interpreting religious symbols such as the pentagram, pentacle and Sun-wheel can go on indefinitely, revealing layer after layer of meaning, until it seems that the whole world can be contained in the symbol.

The primary symbol of our religion of Witchcraft is the pentagram or five-pointed star. This is a very old religious symbol that served as the emblem of the goddess Ishtar in ancient Mesopotamia. When it is drawn inside a circle, it is more properly called a pentacle, though that word tends to be reserved for the elemental tool of earth, which depicts it.

In this article I will concentrate on only one aspect of this fertile symbol, namely elemental nourishment.

Earth, air, fire and water are of course not elements in the modern chemical sense, but represent the three states of matter plus measurable energy. Spirit is aether, a fifth state of matter that is more refined and cannot be detected by the instruments of science, at least not yet. It is the matter out of which we as spirits, that is, as awarenesses, are made. For spirit is not regarded as wholly immaterial in the ancient religions, differing in kind from matter; it is itself a subtler or finer state of matter, differing from the latter only in degree. The pentagram illustrates the five known states of matter in their interrelations. The lower left point corresponds to earth. Following the ray from this point to the upper right-hand point we arrive at the place of water. Continuing widdershins or counter-clockwise, we move left to the upper left-hand point of air, then down to the lower right-hand point of fire. The ray from fire ascends to the crowning point of the pentagram, the place of aether or spirit. Completing the cycle, a ray shoots down from spirit to earth again at the lower left. This sequence illustrates the process of spiritual evolution as well as the circulation of energies involved in nourishment.

The elements have gross outer forms as well as subtle inner ones. The subtle inner forms of earth, air, fire and water are themselves forms of aether and combine in the fifth element. Their properties are the four powers of the magus or witch, and these enter into the properties of the fifth element or quintessence. Ritual eating involves eating consciously, and is vitally necessary from time to time in order to nourish aether or spirit. When the witch eats consciously, she is aware of taking in the four foods corresponding to the four elements. These foods nourish the body as well as the mind, for body and mind are linked along a continuum.

The subtle energy of earth, containing the power of stillness and steadfastness, is derived from the proper assimilation and digestion of solid food. Here diet is most important, but also thorough chewing. Do not bolt your food, and do not wash it down with drink. Take your time. As to diet, I do not say we must be vegetarians like the Buddhists, but we should avoid food that makes us feel either sluggish or excitable. The best diet promotes a light feeling of calm.

The subtle energy of water, containing the fluid power of daring, that is, the impulse to growth and change, is derived from water itself and other liquids. I will confine myself here to saying that most of us do not drink enough good water every day. There would be fewer kidney ailments if water were our main beverage.

It might seem strange to speak of air as food, but it is a food that nourishes us every minute of our lives. We recognize that we need air to breathe, but as yogis in India know, breathing is

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an art that must be learned in order to be done properly. When we reach this element, the seat of knowledge and understanding, we reach a boundary beyond which people in general do not properly assimilate and digest the subtle elements in food.

In ritual eating, the witch will chew her food thoroughly, taking sips of water in between swallows but not using drink to wash down solid food. All the while, she is breathing, and tries to remain aware that in drawing breaths she is eating a third kind of food that is vital to the assimilation of subtle matter. This very effort, quite apart from breathing yogically, will have a marked effect on her level of energy at the conclusion of the ritual meal.

Apart from being careful not to breathe while swallowing, the main points in yogic breathing are as follows: (1) Breathe through the nose; (2) Gently depress the abdomen while exhaling, then relax those muscles, which leads automatically to an inhalation; (3) Pause very slightly before inhaling and before exhaling; (4) Feel the air traveling along your throat; and (5) Imagine there is a minute hole at the bridge of your nose and that the air is going in and out there. Don't try to do all five things at once, but gradually add the later points as refinements. This is basic pranayama, the Hindu science of assimilating prana, the subtle element of air.

The fourth food, the food of subtle elemental fire, consists of perceptions; for fire is energy, and energy enters the body and mind every second in the form of perceptions. It may sound strange to say that perceptions are a form of nourishment, until you recall your last vacation and how exhilarating it was to travel to new places and take in fresh perceptions every minute. This gives us a clue as to how to digest perceptions; for just as improper eating, drinking and breathing can hamper our digestion of food, water and air, so there is an effective and an ineffective way to digest perceptions. The vacation example makes this clear. If you have out-of-town guests staying with you for the first time, you may see how vividly they sense everything, and when you take them for a drive around town, the same tired old scenes that you barely notice on a daily basis engage all their attention. We generally find this humorous, as though our guests were like small children, forgetting that we ourselves behave exactly the same when visiting a place that is new to us.

Clearly, then, fresh perceptions are very nourishing; but how can we digest the same old daily impressions as though we were on holiday in some place we had never seen before? The trick lies in noticing things we usually ignore, things that change every minute or seem unimportant, or both. This includes clouds, telephone poles and wires, trees, cars, shadows, reflections in windows, things seen out of the corners of the eyes, sounds of traffic, the little one can see of one's nose or eyeglass frames without looking in a mirror. The point here is not to stare at these things (after all, you still have to look where you are going) but just glance at them (or in the case of background sounds, attend to them) casually as you go through the day. If you develop the habit of attending to things you usually ignore, you will find your perceptions becoming fresher as though you were on vacation, your mind will be quieter and calmer, and your body will be filled with a vitality reminiscent of childhood. This vitality in turn nourishes the will, and is a sign that you are properly digesting your fire-food.

So at the ritual meal, the witch will take a bite of solid food, chew it thoroughly, and swallow it. She will take a sip or two of water. While doing these things she has been breathing automatically, but now (or every now and then) she will draw a conscious breath in the yogic manner. While doing all this she will neither talk nor watch television, but instead will take occasional glimpses of things out of the corners of her eyes, or lower and raise her eyelids a few times fairly rapidly, like the shutter of a camera (though naturally not nearly so quick as a shutter mechanism). These are only two of the ways for assimilating the subtle energy of fire locked up in our perceptions. They are best done while eating outside, preferably alone.

It all sounds rather complicated but it isn't. Any description of a physical process takes much longer to describe than to do. Try taking an occasional ritual meal in this way and you will find it very relaxing and energizing at the same time. You will probably get up and go for a walk when you are done eating!

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