

Pagan World  
35 and 36

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PAGAN FEDERATION INTERNATIONAL

# PAGAN WORLD

***Hi all and welcome to the 35<sup>th</sup> and uh well um...  
36<sup>th</sup> issue of Pagan World!***

Well I do hope that some of you noticed that the fall issue that was due on September 21 is extremely horribly late. In fact I am so late that I am only just a bit early for issue 36, which is due on December 21. Sorry about that. This is really the first time this has ever happened in the 9 years that I've been the editor and it is my entire fault. Ok, first I was ill with whooping cough for a few months, but I was better by the beginning of November. But then everything seemed to take up so much time that Pagan World kept getting pushed to the side...

So this issue is a double issue—fall and winter together.

Well, tis the gift giving season folks which led to my mother and me to talking about the fact that I never liked dolls as a kid. My mother gave up buying them for me by the time I was 8 years old. The problem wasn't that I didn't like dolls. I just found dolls torturously boring. I couldn't understand why changing a doll's clothes was supposed to be entertaining. Or why walking up and down the street with the doll in a baby carriage was anything but a waste of time... So after pulling off their arms, legs and heads and then putting them back together a few times, I was bored. My mother says that if she knew that I was pulling off their heads she'd have probably have taken me to the psychiatrist! But actually I wasn't a disturbed child; I just liked toys that you could make something with. For example I had a toy called 'Zoom Loom' that I could make scarves with. I had a perfume making kit and a soap making kit and a candle making kit that I was crazy about. The Etch a Sketch and the Super Spirograph and Paint by Number were great too!

Even today as I went Yule shopping for my God daughter, all I wanted to buy for her were jewellery making kits. Unfortunately the only thing on her Christmas list is the bridal set from the Enchanted Castle Play Mobil. Ah well! At least it needs to be assembled!

A great Yule season to all of you!

Diana

December 10 2007

## ***The Mpumalanga Bill is History*** ***by Damon Leff***

In July this year the South African Pagan Rights Alliance (SAPRA) was informed by the Mpumalanga legislature that the proposed Witchcraft Suppression Bill will not be tabled and that the legislature will not proceed with any legislation either for or against Witchcraft in this Province. I've also been informed by the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development that SAPRA's appeal for legislative reform of the 1957 Witchcraft Suppression Act is being considered by the Minister.

Who would have thought that African Traditional Healers (iSangoma's - diviners and iNyanga's - herbalists) and Pagan Witches would ever have shown solidarity in their shared opposition to the Mpumalanga Witchcraft Suppression Bill? Well obviously Enmarie Potgieter did, and with good reason. It's not the first time Pagans and Traditional Healers have gathered in support of freedom and equality.

In 2004 hundreds of Traditional Healers, members of the Traditional Healers Organisation (THO), joined Pagans - many of whom defined their personal spiritual path as Witchcraft - at Zoo Lake to celebrate 10 years of religious freedom in South Africa on Freedom Day, 27 April 2004. The guest speakers of this 'Pagan Freedom Day' event included Dr. M. Motshekga, founder of the Kara Heritage Institute established in 1982 to promote African Traditional Religion, and Dr N. Maseko, the President of the THO, an organisation currently representing over 20 000 traditional healers in South Africa. In the Garden Route, Pagans invited traditional healer Dr. R. Kutela as the Garden Route Pagan Freedom Day guest at a function held at Beyond the Moon near Wilderness, George.



The Bill has elicited outrage from traditional healers according to Enmarie, member of the South African Pagan Rights Alliance (SAPRA) and Technical Administrator of the South African Pagan Council (SAPC). "It took some time to explain to the THO that we are not going to budge from calling ourselves Witches, and after explaining the history - they were able to see that they are currently in a very similar position. (i.e. a subtle smear campaign against traditional healing practises). They are completely livered that the bill contains incorrect definitions for words such as Muti, (which means medicine) and which can not be anything other than good by definition."

The Mpumalanga Witchcraft Suppression Bill defines "muti" as: "Muti" means any mixture of herbs, water, wollen cufs etc, used by wizards, ignedla, inyanga, African Churches, Foreign traditional Healers, etc for the purposes of curing diseases, helping others who come to consult to them for whatever purposes and including causing harm to others or their properties.

Traditional healers have offered the following alternative definition for muti: 'Umuthi' - means an object or substance used in traditional health practice for the purpose of:

a) The diagnosis, treatment or prevention of a physical or mental illness; or

b) For any curative or therapeutic purpose, including the maintenance or restoration of physical or mental health or wellbeing in humans.

Enmarie says, "Thanks to the media, the word 'muti' can now denote anything from human tissue to herbal concoctions. Traditional Healers will tell you how passionately they feel about the fact that their perception of muti is not the same as that which is put forward in the media, especially by those critical of Traditional Healing practices."

In 'Healers, pagans oppose new witchcraft bill', published in the Sowetan on 18 July 2007, Riot Hlatshwayo reported:

*About 50 THO members, led by its national president, Nhlavana Maseko, met the Local Government and Housing Department. Maseko said they were opposed to definitions such as umuthi and ubuthi. He said umuthi was a substance used in traditional health practice to diagnose, treat and prevent physical or mental illness, whereas ubuthi was used in the application of negative energy with the intention to kill or harm. Maseko said the proposed bill did not differentiate between "witchdoctors" and traditional healers. "Let there be two bills, not one," he argued. "Witchdoctors and traditional healers are not even on the same platform because they are different," he said. His organisation accused the government of failing to consult all stakeholders.*

Pagan Witches have opposed the Bill on the grounds that it incorrectly defines Witchcraft. The Bill defines 'witchcraft' as: "Witchcraft" means the secret use of muti, zombies, spells, spirits, magic powders, water, mixtures, etc, by any person with the purpose of causing harm, damage, or sickness to others or their property.



Witches themselves have offered an alternative definition of Witchcraft. Witchcraft is a religio-magical occupation that employs the use of sympathetic magic, ritual, herbalism and divination. After all, who exactly is being defined by the Bill?

But the revelation of the existence of self-defined Witches has been met with both shock and surprise. Although traditional healers knew who we Pagans were, they did not realise that many Pagans were also Witches. In 'Bewitched or de-witched?' published in the Mail & Guardian on 20 July 2007, Tshwarelo eseng Mogakane and Sydney Masinga reported:

*There was confused silence when Luke Martin told a group of traditional healers this week that he is a witch. Phephisile Maseko, the national coordinator of the Traditional Healers' Organisation (THO), quickly had to explain that some white people consider witchcraft to be a religion and were open about practising it. There was still some apprehension, however, because the healers come from communities where witchcraft is considered evil and where people have been evicted from their villages or even killed because they were suspected of being witches. Now here was someone standing up and admitting to being one.*

The THO presented their own definition of 'witchcraft' in their comments in objection to the Suppression Bill. The THO's proposed definition of Witchcraft is:

- (a) Any act or conduct, which causes or leads to the infliction of injury, illness, or even spiritual damage to another person through the use of ubuthi [1] or other destructive means;
- (b) Any act or conduct that leads to the death of another person through ukuthakatha [the practice of witchcrafts];
- (c) Any act or conduct which is perceived by the community as unnatural and capable of causing danger or damage to the person or property of another through some negative energy;
- (d) Any conduct or act which cannot be explained in western scientific terms but which is perceived or believed to exist and can be proved so to exist by those trained in African Science through diagnosis.

[1] 'ubuthi' is defined by the THO as: [(i) an object, act or substance used in the application of negative energy with an intention to kill or harm a person, (ii) the usage of any poisonous substance with an aim to kill or harm a person. (iii) any act that is evil in its nature and does not uphold the principles of humanity and nation building as enshrined in our constitution, and (iv) casting a spell on any person ].



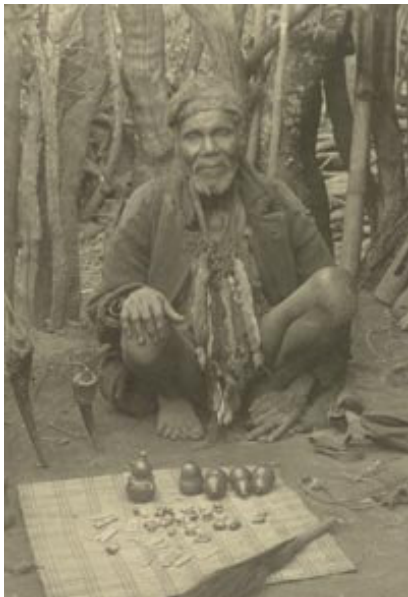
Luke Martin, Convenor of the SAPC and a member of SAPRA, is quoted as saying, "My idea of the word 'witch' is different from the others". In objecting to the Bill Luke said, "It is a mirror image of the apartheid-era's Witchcraft Suppression Act. It discriminates against the practices of minority groups." Luke's sentiments are echoed by many other Pagans.

Donna Vos, Arch Priestess of CAM and author of 'Dancing under an African Moon' (2002) said, "I feel shocked and cheated. We have been told for over a decade by Government officials, lawyers etc that there shall be freedom of expression, association, religion and freedom from discrimination. We were told that the Constitution of our country will override any danger posed to us by the Witchcraft Act of 1957. Now we are all in a conundrum with the advent of an even sterner witchcraft bill beginning in Mpumalanga. Whilst I understand the dynamics of the word 'witch/witchcraft' from an Afro-centric perspective, and government's serious attempt to stamp out those who would consider themselves witches (as per definition an evil-doer, amongst other things, and accepted as such in the Afro-centric community), Euro-centric witchcraft cannot be lumped together with these practices. Those of us that practice a Euro-centric brand of witchcraft are being radically discriminated against. I feel that this bill can definitely be re drafted in order for a win-win situation to happen. One must now exercise tolerance and realise that Government is to a large extent unaware of those of us who call ourselves Pagan or witches."

Arias Ndlovu, owner of VuyalPagan, one of the most popular South African online forums and the home of South Africa's first Pagan publishing house - Anubis Publishing - says, "Although the advocate who thought up this draft (read "daft") bill was trying to find away to eliminate the crimes related to African define witchcraft, it actually becomes a floodgate for every person with a gripe with a Witch to sue for very little reason. Now here's my problem: People fear the power of the Witch, but they

neglect to acknowledge the power of the average person too. Although the Witch has the power to harm or heal, so does every person; the "Evil eye" is something that all humans know how to do, whether a Witch or not... What this bill is proposing is that it's ok to "curse with the Eye" if you're (for example) a Christian, but if you define yourself as a Witch you're to be locked away?"

Pagan Witch Colleen Mollentz, who was interviewed by Radio Sonder Grense (RSG) on the Suppression Bill and Witchcraft says, "I would like to say that I fully support the government's attempts to address the killing and victimisation of people accused as being witches."Witch" murders and other abuses have been a major concern and many people, mainly women and the elderly, are affected by it. However, existing laws should prevent people from being murdered, beaten and driven off their land. Crime is crime whether "witchcraft" is involved or not. The proposed legislation seems a very simplistic way of dealing with a very complex issue. It's almost a case of "if you kids don't play nicely, I'll take the ball away". I feel that education and protection of people's rights are the keys to curbing the violence."



Advocate Thomas Bongo of the Office of the Premier has responded to the outrage from Pagans and Traditional healers by stating on SAfm on Thursday 19 July that he intends establishing an advisory panel composed of both Pagan Witches and Traditional Healers to advise him on a suitable alternative to the Witchcraft Suppression Bill.

But in 'Bewitched or de-witched?' of 20 July 2007 local government and housing spokesperson Simphiwe Kunene is quoted as saying people should not jump the gun. "It is very presumptuous for people to think this draft is infringing on their constitutional rights. This is not an Act, just a sketch to show what we are trying to prevent," said Kunene.

Despite Kunene's attempts to sweep Pagan concerns and objections against the Bill under the rug, Kunene cannot argue that to suppress accusations of witchcraft one must suppress witchcraft. The Bill contradicts 11 provisions of the Bill of Rights and no amount of back-peddling will change that fact.

In 'Western witches set out to defeat new law' published in the Weekend Argus on 29 July Kylie Walker writes, " Speaking on condition of anonymity, a member of the Mpumalanga department of local government and housing, which is writing the bill, said the Mpumalanga advocates were "extremely annoyed" that the national body Sapro had made public a document given to them in confidence."

The document in question was forwarded to Sapro by Luke Martin, not by the department of local government and housing. Despite the fact that Sapro repeatedly requested a copy of the Bill for comment, the Department instructed Sapro that the Bill was not available for viewing as it had not yet been published for public comment.

## ***Why is a Rabbit's Foot considered lucky?***

Superstitions, such as a rabbit's foot being considered lucky, grow out of man's attempts to explain the unknown. When man disproves the old belief, and some still cling to the belief, it becomes a superstition, such as in the instant case. In Western Europe, prior to 600 B.C., man considered rabbits to be sacred, because of their belief that spirits inhabited the bodies of animals, and also because of their belief that man directly descended from a select few of these animals.

Later, the ancient European Celts adopted portions of the older belief, that rabbits were sacred, and that spirits inhabited their bodies. The Celts, based upon the fact that these animals spent an inordinate amount of time in their underground burrows, held the belief that the rabbits' bodies were inhabited by numina, underground spirits with whom they communicated at very close proximity!

Another reason the Celts held the rabbit to be sacred, was because of their prowess in the field of reproduction. They believed that the numina intended for rabbits to be put upon pedestals and revered as symbols of procreation, reproduction with a high turnover rate, of health, and of prosperity.

Since the rabbit itself was considered to be lucky, it follows that any of its body parts would also be considered lucky. People selected the rabbit's foot to tote around for good luck, because of its capacity to dry quickly, its small size, and the fact that it made a great key chain!



'Right...The new system is up and running....I want every one of you to attach a lucky rabbit paw to their workstation.'

***PFI Italy is proud to present the Wicca workshop:  
First Steps on the Path, "Working Ritual, Working tools" with  
Morgana and Sddie LaMort***

***Location: Italy (exact address will be made known on registration)***

***Date: 15-17th FEBRUARY 2008 (Friday to Sunday - 2 nights)***

Cost: EUR 175.50 PFI Members, EUR 195.50 non-PFI Members

This is the second workshop in a series being given by Morgana & Sddie. It is not necessary that you have followed the first - each workshop weekend deals with different aspects of Wicca.

This time the emphasis will be on practical magic. How can we make our rituals more effective? What are the Magical tools and weapons we use? We will be looking at the various tools but also incorporating practical assignments. We will be making a pentacle, the magical tool associated with element Earth. We also be looking at how to compose rituals and working with deities dedicated to Earth and Nature.

The common language will be English but because of the practical nature of the workshop there will be an Italian translation.

Participation will be limited to 25 so early registration is advised.

Further information and registration please contact

Laugha@paganfederation.org (Italian)

ayslyng@paganfederation.org (Italian)

**Course "First Steps on the Path"**

The workshops are supported by a guidance course. Participants will be invited to join the course "First Steps on the Path"

The total package includes

- 8 course papers following the "wheel of the year" with questions and assignments
- at least 2 readers: "Beyond the Broomstick" and "The Mara Papers"
- a personal mentor
- in English or Italian.

Workshops and personal meetings in Italy are additional and can also be arranged. Theoretically the course spans a year and students can start at any time. Communication will be by email but because of the one-to-one nature of the coaching, it will be personal. More information will be available during the workshop.

Looking forward to seeing you there,

Blessed be,  
Morgana and Sddie, PFI Italy Ayslyng & Laugha

## ***Spiritualism, the invisible player*** ***By Francis Cameron***

Spiritualism : the invisible player in the story of the revival of the pagan witchcraft religion.

'The invisible player'. It's a wonderful expression. I wish I'd invented it. But I didn't. My good friend Ronald Hutton did. It's there in the preface to his *Triumph of the Moon* [1999] where he explains how he had set about writing his history of 'the only religion which England has ever given to the world'. He submits it is very possible he has not covered everything which might have been included and his own suspicion is 'that the greatest invisible player in the story is spirisatualism'.

I offer this essay as an act of homage to Professor Hutton.

So let us take a look at Spiritualism as it is today, where it began, what it was like in Gerald Gardner's lifetime, and how 'the invisible player' unwittingly unlocked the door for the pagan witchcraft religion.

It is very easy to gain at least a nodding acquaintance with Spiritualism. There are Spiritualist churches all over the country. In the City of Oxford, where I live, there are two of them. Their services remind me so much of those I used to frequent while I was still a boy at the Mercers' School in London. Back in those fading years of the 1930s, I played the harmonium for Sunday services at The Temple of Truth in the front room of a first floor flat on the Harrow Road. We began with a hymn from the Spiritualist hymnbook. The words and the music so often reminiscent of Sankey & Moody's 19<sup>th</sup> century revivalist meetings. One hymn, which I particularly remember, held out the certain promise of 'a land which is fairer than day', a land we would reach 'in the sweet by and by'. After the hymn there was a prayer and a reading; a second hymn followed by an address; a third hymn; a demonstration of clairvoyance; a final hymn; and a blessing. It's a pattern which shows its origins in the standard practice of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Nonconformist chapels with one very significant exception : the demonstration of clairvoyance

Demonstrations of clairvoyance are probably the most significant part of the public face of Spiritualism. They are the means by which 'life after death' is illustrated.

Mediums make contact with 'the other side' by a combination of clairvoyance (seeing with the inner eye) and clairaudience (listening with the inner ear to voices from the world of spirit). These are not special gifts. We are all born with them (just think of all those little children with their invisible playmates) but these innate abilities are all too often suppressed by parents and by teachers.

Some Spiritualist churches hold special developing circles where those who are more advanced help and guide the less advanced to rejuvenate these natural facilities.

There may be other events during the week. A visiting medium is sometimes engaged for an evening or an afternoon of psychometry. Each of the sitters brings with them a small object, such as a piece of jewellery they normally wear or an article they frequently use or carry about with them. As they arrive, each sitter places their object on a tray which is later set out in front of the medium who takes up the articles one by one, 'gives off' the impressions which result, and makes contact with the relevant

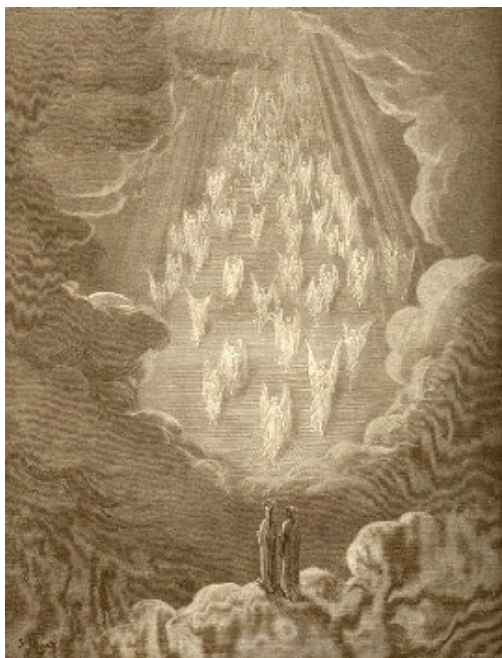
sitters. The messages which follow do not necessarily involve the spirits of the departed. They are often more of a personal nature.

I teach psychometry as a first stage in the art of divination. I find nearly everyone is sensitive to its possibilities even at their first attempt. It works like this. Objects we wear or use frequently act as recording devices. When I take a small article into my hand and contact it with the tips of my fingers, it is rather like fine tuning a television. I see one or more images, like a succession of stills from a film. I describe these images. They are a trigger to connection with the owner of the article. More images may follow. Sometimes I receive verbal messages as well. There often are questions and answers. Perplexing situations sorted out. I sometimes speak of possibilities but I do not foretell the future.

The advantage of psychometry for my students is that as soon as they feel the vibrations contained within each object and put into spoken words the impressions that make themselves known, more follow. And there are no books of ready-made interpretations to distract them.

At home my parents held a regular weekly healing circle.

Spiritual healers work in different ways. My own practice involves the use of psychic energy. When I hold out my hands a little way in front of me, with the palms facing each other, I feel an interplay, a connection between them which gradually pushes my hands a little further apart as the energy grows in strength. I place one or both hands on or near the patient, close my eyes and tune in. I focus the psychic energy. During this process I experience an interaction between my own consciousness and support and direction from the other side of life.



During the school holidays I was often at home when a Spiritualist friend of my mother's came to visit. The two of us would sit for 'the table'. We set up a card table (one of those lightweight folding contraptions with a green baize top). We sat facing each other across the table with our fingertips lightly in contact with its surface. We relaxed. Mentally prepared ourselves. The table began to rock from side to side. We greeted the spirit friends who had come to visit. We reminded them of the usual code. If we asked a question and the answer was 'Yes', the table was to rock once. If the answer was 'No', the table was to rock twice. In addition to that, the table should be rocked while we recited the alphabet and the rocking was to stop when we reached the intended letter. This is a rather slow and necessarily rudimentary means of communication but it was possible for spirits to identify themselves and to spell out simple abbreviated messages.

All this is reminiscent of the episodes which first brought Spiritualism to the attention of the outside world.

Let me take you across the Atlantic, back to the last days of March in the year 1848. While their own future home was being built, the Fox family John and his wife

Margaret, their eleven-year-old daughter Kate, and her fourteen-year-old sister Maggie had taken up a temporary residence among the farming community of Hydesville, in the west of New York State. They shared the one large bedroom in the house. The parents in one bed. The two girls in the other. Then the knockings began. There were rappings on the walls and ceiling, banging on the floor strong enough for the percussion to be felt as well as heard. They searched the house. There was no obvious physical explanation for the sounds. Back in the bedroom, sleep was impossible. On March 31st the women went to bed early to try to get some rest but the rappings were even more insistent. Young Kate snapped her fingers. The rappings replied. She snapped her fingers again and again. The rappings came back with the same number of sounds. When Kate stopped, the knocking stopped. Then her sister Maggie joined in. She called out 'Do the same as me,' and she began to clap her hands, counting as she did 'One, two three, four.' With each clap came an immediate response. Maggie was too scared to go on. Her mother, Margaret, chimed in. 'Count up to ten!' and immediately there were ten taps. Margaret began to ask questions. If there was a positive answer, there were to be two sounds. If not, there was to be silence. In this way Margaret teased out the information that the sounds were being made by the spirit of a man who had been murdered in that house. His body was buried in the cellar. Now John was sent off to fetch a neighbour. When the two of them came back, the knockings continued. More neighbours were brought in. The phenomena went on. In the days following, an alphabetical communication was established and the ghost identified. As the days went by, more and more people came to the house to witness the ghostly hauntings.

Late in April, the eldest Fox daughter, the thirty-five year old Leah, came from Rochester to see for herself what was going on. She found her parents looking old haggard and drawn from the strain of the past weeks. In a mutually agreed effort to put a stop to the disturbances, they decided to separate the two girls. Leah took young Kate back to Rochester. The first night passed peacefully enough, but the nights after that were dominated by poltergeist activity. Ghostly hands made their presence felt. Chairs and tables were moved about. Doors opened and were slammed shut. Leah moved to a different house. Margaret and Maggie arrived from Hydesville. Now the manifestations continued noisier than ever. Round about midnight there was the sound of footsteps on the stairs. They came into the room. There was shuffling of feet, whispering and giggling. Then the bed, with Leah in it, was shaken about and lifted up, almost to the ceiling, and let down with a great bang. Invisible hands stroked and patted the women. It was a terrifying ordeal. The disturbances resumed on the following night. Brass candlesticks were thrown about. Ghostly hands slapped the women. Kate fell into a trance and experienced a full replay of the Hydesville murder.

These were the first few weeks of the physical phenomena which came to be called Spiritualism. By the following year, the manifestations had been demonstrated in front of substantial public audiences. Not long after that, other men and women realised their inherent capacity for mediumship. Spiritualism began to acquire its widespread international reputation.

But there was already a rather different mode of communication which involved spirit beings from the Halls of Learning.

A little more than a century before the noisy hauntings at Hydesville, the Stockholm-born scientist Emanuel Swedenborg [1688 to 1772] had been through a series of profoundly moving mystical experiences. In 1747, he resigned from his official scientific position and devoted the rest of his life to writing - in Latin - a substantial

number of volumes describing the celestial realms and detailing his conversations with angels and other spirit beings.

In North America, Andrew Jackson Davis [1826 to 1910] freely entered into trance states where he collaborated with the spirit of Emanuel Swedenborg who shared his experiences of those who existed on the various planes of thought beyond the physical. Andrew Jackson Davis was convinced that the time was at hand when men and women in this world would communicate freely with spirits from beyond the grave and it is in this sense that he has been called the forerunner of the Spiritualist movement.

At home in London, I often joined the regular evening seances when my mother sat in circle with a small group of friends. She cleared her mind and moved into deep trance, willingly allowing her physical faculties to be controlled by a spirit guide from one of the higher realms, a guide who spoke of mysteries metaphysics and the wisdom of the ages. Only years later did I realise how closely akin some of these talks were to the mystical Neoplatonism associated with Plotinus in 3rd-century Alexandria and Rome, teachings that were certainly not part of my mother's everyday physical awareness. The guide also encouraged us in the practice of soul consciousness; and bade us tread the pathway towards perfection in this life in preparation for our lives to come.

And so, as I sat in the circle, I gradually came to appreciate the delicate balancings of Karma and how I might best prepare myself in this life to be ready for the transition leading to my next sojourn on the earth plane (and I grew to have some intimation of what that may involve). Now and then, a cross reference in this life sparks off distant memories. From time to time I encounter those with whom I have enjoyed intimate relationships when we were both living together in very different times and places. And I recognise that, as I neared the inevitability of this return, I chose to be born to parents who were Christian Spiritualists. They were both psychic. Clairvoyants and healers. My father was an outstanding public speaker and my mother's work, especially her séances in deep trance, delighted and enlightened those with whom she came into contact.



Now let us turn the page and consider just how it was that Spiritualism became involved with the revival of our pagan witchcraft religion.

We tell of Gerald Brosseau Gardner, the man who presented this religion to the world. He was in all respects the most visible player in our story. His part began in the last decade of the nineteenth century while he was still a young boy who had only just learned to read. He was wintering in Madeira. The nearest books were those left behind in the hotel by other English visitors. Young Gerald became completely absorbed in Florence Marryat's *There Is No Death*, which had been published in 1891 when he was some six or seven years old. The book is a compendious, sometimes rather chatty, account of the author's experiences with a great many Spiritualist mediums both in England and in the USA. She describes a form of mediumship very different from that usually found today in Spiritualist circles. In the late nineteenth

century, a veritable heyday of Spiritualism, mediums sat in a state of deep trance while the spirits used ectoplasm, exuded from the medium's body, to build up a materialised form which walked about, talked to the sitters, even sometimes sat on their laps. The materialised forms could be touched. Kisses were given and received. On occasion two or even three spirit forms were visible at the same time. And all this while, in the dim lighting of the séance room, the medium remained immobile at a perceptible distance from the materialisations.

In the year 1900, when he was sixteen, Gerald Gardner was sent to learn how to manage a tea plantation on the island now called Sri Lanka. After a couple of years he moved on and stayed a total of thirty-six years in the lands of that distant part of the British Empire.

Gardner was rather different from the general run of Englishmen out there in the colonies. Unlike them he made friends with the natives. He observed their customs, became familiar with their myths and legends, and noted how closely their daily lives were interwoven with spirit presences.

He spent some time among the head-hunting Dyaks in Borneo. These people had a very simple view of magic. It was real and it worked! Gardner often assisted with their shamanic ceremonies. The medium was a young girl. Gardner had come to know her family. They went to the shaman's house where everyone gossiped for a while until the shaman began his chant, a chant which might last for an hour or more. When he judged everything to be ready, the shaman made the girl to lie down on a special mat provided with a special pillow. He went on with his chanting and continually moved his hands in the air above her body from her head right down to her feet. The girl medium went into trance. The pitch of her voice changed dramatically. She was controlled by one or other of the various spirits 'owned' by her shaman. These were ancestors of the families present. The spirits answered questions and gave advice. It was all perfectly matter-of-fact. When humans died, their spirits remained part of the community. These shamanic rituals were one of their normal ways of keeping in touch.



1927 saw Gerald Gardner back home in Blundellsands on compassionate leave. His mother had died in 1920. Two of his closest friends had also passed on. His father was seriously ill and not expected to live. When someone mentioned a Spiritualist church not far from Liverpool, Gardner remembered the books of Florence Marryat from his boyhood days and the shamanic séances he had been party to in Borneo. Now would be a good time to find out for himself the truth about Spiritualism, survival after death and reincarnation.

I suspect the meeting he attended was like those I went to in the late 1930s, all very reminiscent of nonconformist worship. Gardner recalls there being about fifty in the congregation and a service with a man who stood up and preached the equivalent of a sermon. The medium was a woman who came forward, sat down facing the audience, and went into trance. She was quite unconvincing. She called out a variety of common Christian names which might have belonged to anyone. When one was acknowledged, the message that followed was banal in the extreme.

Gardner was bitterly disappointed but his interest had been pricked. He decided to investigate further. He heard that the best mediums were to be found in London. Before he set off he took every possible precaution to disguise his true identity and destination. When he reached the Cromwell Road, he chose a hotel at random.

The next morning, as he was walking towards South Kensington, he spotted a nameplate outside one of the houses. He had arrived at The London Spiritualist Alliance. He had never heard of it before. No one could have known he was going there. This would be the place for the test. He went in and paid in advance for three sessions.

The first medium was a straightforward clairvoyant who saw his sitter 'out East' then went on to say Uncle John was present. Gardner refuted the existence of an Uncle John. The medium repeated that Uncle John was present. Gardner repeated his denial.

*(Pause)*

*- Now there's a fair, blue-eyed lady. She says she's your cousin Anne.*

*- I never had a cousin Anne.*

*- She says she wants to speak to you.*

*- There's no point. I never had a cousin Anne.*

*(Another pause)*

*- Now there's another lady here. She says she's your mother.*

*- What's her name?*

*- She can't give her name.*

*- Why not? The others could.*

*- I don't know. She just can't.*

*- All right. What does she want?*

*- It's about your father. She's afraid he might die. They're all very worried about him.*

*- I'm worried too. Can she say any more?*

*- Only that she's very fond you.*

*- Then she can tell me her name.*

*- No, she can't. She's not able to do that.*

*(Silence)*

*- Is there anything else?*

*- No, 'fraid not. The power's gone.*

And Gardner walked out feeling it had all been an irritating waste of time. He certainly would not have returned had he not already booked and paid for two more sessions.

The medium that afternoon was a tall thin lady who demonstrated automatic writing. She sat quietly for a moment. Moved smoothly into a light trance and allowed each spirit in turn to control the actions of her arm and fingers. The first to sign in was the Uncle John who had been dismissed that morning and was equally quickly dismissed in the afternoon. Cousin Anne followed him. Once again she was disowned. She wrote that she had died of cancer four years before but this meant nothing to Gardner who once more sent her on her way. Now the style of the writing changed. His mother came through. She still was not able to give her name but she identified herself by describing the house they had lived in. She named each of Gerald's brothers, their wives and their children. Cautiously he began to accept that this might, after all, be a genuine communication. His mother went on writing. She was very anxious about his

father, as were all those who had known him on earth. And that was that. The medium came out of trance.

Gardner began to look forward to his final session. Back in his hotel, he made careful notes of the day's proceedings and was inclined on balance to think that perhaps after all he had been gulled by some rather convincing thought reading.

The medium the next morning was a rather gaunt woman with a sort of occult feeling about her. She sat down, went into trance, and her control came through. The sequence of the previous day reasserted itself. Uncle John did his best to speak and was brusquely sent packing. Cousin Anne followed. She told Gardner she had died of cancer four years previously and that they had known each other very well. When, for the third time, he objected that he never had a Cousin Anne, the medium interrupted. Cousin Anne had been known as 'G'. At first he was inclined to continue his scepticism but when he asked if it really was 'G', she replied with great animation. The words came pouring out. She had been trying so hard for so long to get hold of him. He was to get in touch with a relative of hers, deliver a stern message and get the girl to change her ways before it was too late. His compassionate leave might be pretty dull at the moment but something very nice would happen soon and he wouldn't get back to work until Christmas. Gardner thought this quite unlikely. His leave was up in two weeks and his tickets were already booked for the return journey. G chided him. "You'll jolly well see." She went on to speak of his father and the legal papers he had recently been signing. His mother was very fond of him but names were difficult on the other side. "Then why do you call yourself Anne?" But there was no answer. The medium returned from her trance. The séance was ended.

As Gardner left the building he was convinced he really had been contacted by the spirit of his dear friend G.



That evening a train of events was set in motion which put thoughts of G and the spirit world completely out of his mind. He took his brother's sister-in-law to a theatre. A stepdaughter came too. As soon as they shook hands, Gardner knew this was the woman he was going to marry. The next day he took the two of them to afternoon

tea at Kew. And the day after that he went to the hospital where Donna was a Sister and told her she would be going back to Malaya with him, as his wife. There was no argument, but she did want a church wedding. That presented a problem. Gardner's leave was nearly over. There was no time for the banns to be called. They needed a special licence. By persistence and great good fortune, Gardner obtained one from the Bishop of London's office. There was still the Matron at the hospital and she was not in the least inclined to release Donna. Gardner must have switched on the charm. Matron relented. The wedding took place. Matron was there in the church to give her blessing. Gerald received two months' additional leave. The couple went off to honeymoon on the Isle of Wight and then he took Donna to Blundellsands where they stayed with his brother Bob.

On their second evening there, the conversation turned to The London Spiritualist Alliance. The business about the insistent Uncle John was quickly settled. Bob knew him. Their Uncle John had died when Gerald was much too young to remember him. They looked at the pages of automatic writing. Their mother's handwriting was clear as day. It was identical to samples Bob took out of his desk. And, yes, even though his father was very ill, he had signed legal documents for their lawyer brother Harold.

Gerald went to Liverpool to deliver G's message. When he mentioned Anne, the girl broke down and cried. She knew the message must be authentic. G had been christened Anne Gertrude but only with her mother had she called herself Anne.

Final proof of the spirit messages came to Donna and Gerald as their ship steamed into Singapore harbour. It was Christmas Eve, just as his cousin G had predicted.

Gardner retired from the colonial service in 1936 and the couple returned to England where they rented a flat in London. Gerald joined a nudist club, met new and interesting people, and fell in love with one of them. She was a nudist. She was also a practising witch. Gerald Gardner wrote about the two of them in his first novel *A Goddess Arrives* [1939] which describes a substantial part of a previous life they had long ago shared on the island of Cyprus. In our story of the pagan witchcraft religion, this woman is known as Dafo. At home near the south coast she was Mrs Edith Woodford-Grimes, in private practice as a teacher of music and elocution. In the month that war began, Gerald Gardner was initiated into the coven she belonged to. They were both part of the 1940 anti-invasion workings in the New Forest and when the war was over they set up their own covenstead at Bricket Wood near St Albans.

In the meantime there had been a very significant event which is not usually chronicled in the witchcraft story.

I remember it well. It made national headline news at the time.



In March of 1944 there was a spectacular trial at the Old Bailey, London's Central Criminal Court. In the dock was Helen Duncan, a Spiritualist medium, accused of 'pretending to exercise or use a kind of conjuration that ... spirits of deceased persons should appear to be present ... communicating with living persons ... contrary to Section 4 of the Witchcraft Act 1735'. She was found guilty and sentenced to nine months in Holloway prison.

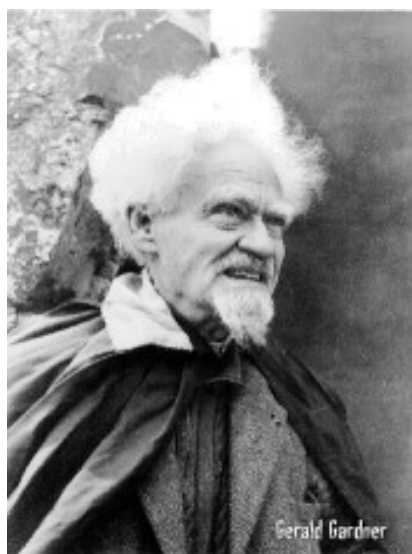
Helen Duncan was a much loved, much respected materialisation medium. She had already attracted official attention when a sailor killed by enemy action had built up and been recognised in one of her séances, much to the distress of the sitter who believed the man was still alive. (The news of the sinking of his ship had been kept secret to avoid giving valuable information to the enemy.) Now, in the last crucial months of preparation for the allied invasion of northern Europe, Helen Duncan was a potential security risk who had to be prevented from making further damaging disclosures. The all-but-obsolete Witchcraft Act of 1735 was brought into action to ensure a custodial sentence, but the real reason for its use was concealed.

Spiritualists were dismayed and angry at this prosecution which seemed to them to be an undeserved attack on their religion. Many in the legal profession had their own

misgivings at the use of this antiquated piece of legislation. Objections were raised on both sides but were overtaken by the priorities of war.

It was some years before the matter was raised again. One of the last actions of Clement Attlee's Labour government was The Fraudulent Mediums Act, 1951, whose first provision repealed the Witchcraft Act 1735. Spiritualists saw this as a long-overdue vindication of their cause.

I doubt if much attention was focussed anywhere else, save for one prominent exception.



Gerald Gardner interpreted the repeal of the 1735 Act as a signal for him to go public, to tell the world about the pagan witchcraft religion. He was already involved with Cecil Williamson's Folklore Centre of Superstition and Witchcraft at Castleton on the Isle of Man. Two years earlier he had written a fantasy novel *High Magic's Aid* [1949] which combined the ceremonial magic of *The Key of Solomon* with the witchcraft religion practised by his coven. The rest, as they say, is history. The revival of pagan witchcraft was well under way by the time Gerald Gardner died in 1964 and the centre stage was beginning to be occupied by Alex Sanders (who had once been known for his Spiritualist activities) and his attractive young wife Maxine.

More than thirty years ago, I was introduced to the Craft by an Australian witch whose tradition stretched back for a full two hundred years. His philosophy had been modified by the writings of Margaret Murray and some of his practices are to be found mirrored in Stewart Farrar's *What witches do* [1971]. Right from the start I noticed the distinctions between Spiritualism and Pagan Witchcraft. I also noticed where they overlapped.

I continue to work in the Craft with that same kind of psychic energy I first experienced as a London schoolboy in a Spiritualist circle. Moving into a trance state is of primary importance, especially when the Goddess and the God are to be manifested in the ritual of the Chalice and the Blade. Pathworkings and constructive visualisations, including spellcraft, are extensions of techniques I absorbed as a young man. I heal and practise divination as I have always done : when called for. Soul consciousness is at the heart of my Pagan interaction with local landscapes and the procession of the seasons. My perception of the Mystical Cabalah is enhanced by the teachings received through my mother's mediumship. I am aware of some of my past lives and that, as is common to all of us, I am perpetually creating my own future.

The world between the worlds is my beginning and mine end.

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***Human rights are invisible but... They exist..!  
Public Hearing Fundamental Rights Agency,  
Brussels, 18th October 2007.  
By Anton***

After several interesting and nice conversations with Morgana, I asked if I could be of some assistance regarding to activities for PFI. A few days went by and suddenly I got a telephone call: "I send you an email about a hearing in Brussels. Maybe you could go..?" After some moments of silent shock, I replied, "well that would be very nice, but I do need some background information about PFI. I really want to go prepared to such a meeting." A crash course in PFI history was the result. After reading all the information about the hearing and together with my renewed knowledge about PFI, I went on my way. My job; be present, keep eyes and ears wide open and learn...

It was very busy at the hearing, which was organized to gather information with regard to a coming proposal from the Agency of fundamental rights towards the European parliament. Within this proposal the agency is asking for more power and workspace. The general impression from the attending NGO was that they had the feeling that such a big issue 'Fundamental rights in Europe' is handled by a very small agency. The agency, which was installed five years ago, agreed and stated that their main focus would be flexibility and follow ups. There is nothing more demotivating as having no achievements. Protecting fundamental rights is an important fight. Rights are not visible, but they do exist. We (PFI) as NGO have a part in this. Cultural and religious freedom is still a hot issue in some countries. Cooperating with other organisations, giving information to the public and integrating our beliefs would strengthen our position and such the position of for instance the agency. Their existence relies on the support of NGO.

I learned a lot during my first job for PFI. Most important, if PFI wants to be heard within Europe about religious and cultural matter, investments must be made. The EU is a funny place to be, it looks like a country by itself. If you want to find your way, you have to learn their ways... A thing that I am most willing to try.

Anton  
PFI, Coordinator Human Rights  
[anton@paganfederation.org](mailto:anton@paganfederation.org)



**HIT ME! KICK ME! BUT PLEASE STOP TORTURING ME  
WITH BRITNEY-SPEARS-SONGS!!**

## ***European and American Charm Bracelets*** ***By Catherine Yronwode***

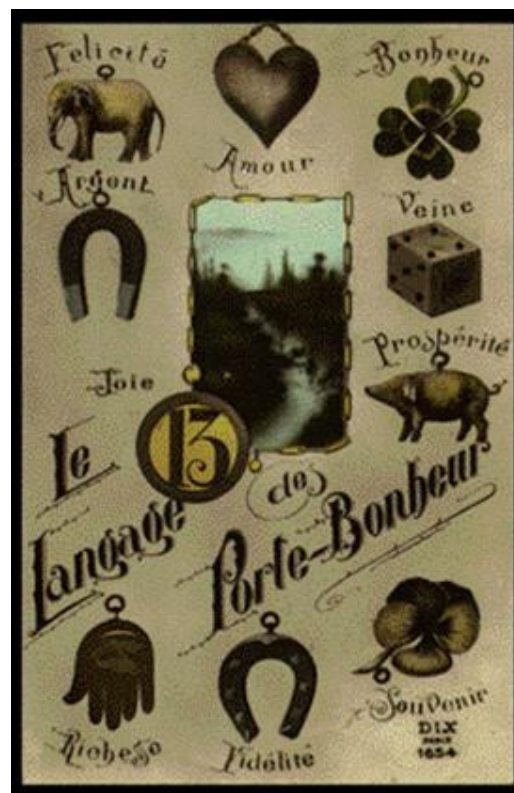
Beginning in the early years of the 20th century and extending until around 1960, it was a mark of middle-class prosperity that young girls be given a charm bracelet before they reached puberty and that at every holiday or anniversary, a new charm be added to the assemblage, often by the doting relative who had supplied the original bracelet. One suspects that jewelers were behind the craze, but in fact, the demand for charms is ancient; only this method of marketing them is relatively recent. Not all the charms on these bracelets were lucky emblems -- equally common were hobby-related and school-related charms. In fact, the multiplicity of charms available, and the mundanity of many of them -- a telephone, a car, a cheerleader's megaphone, a windmill -- served to devalue the word "charm" in the English language, so that today one may be misunderstood if one refers to "charms" when one means "amulets."

The picture here is an undated French postcard that was mailed in 1921. Printed in sepia tone, with modest touches of colour, it is a photo of 10 good luck charms of the type then popular in Europe and America.

The legend reads "Le Langage de Porte Bonheur" ("The Language of Good Luck Charms") and the 10 charms are labelled with their meanings -- which, i feel compelled to note, do not accord in every case with their usual symbolism.

The charms are:

- an elephant: "Felicite" (happiness)
- a heart: "Amour" (love)
- a four-leaf clover: "Bonheur" (luck)
- a horseshoe magnet: "Argent" (silver -- or money, due to the magnet's "drawing" power)
- a die, showing seven spots: "Veine" (games of chance; gambler's luck)
- the number 13: "Joie" (joy; the usual use of this number is as general luck or gambler's luck)
- a pig: "Prosperite" (prosperity)
- a hamsa hand: "Richesse" (riches; this is not accurate -- the hamsa hand protects against the evil eye; this one is unusual in that in place of the bilaterally symmetrical filigree design of an Arab "hand of Fatima" or an eye in the palm (which would make it an eye-in-hand amulet), it has a little arabesque curliques in the palm which is not visible on this scan (and barely visible on the original)
- a horseshoe: "Fidelite" (fidelity; not entirely accurate -- the usual meaning is attraction or "drawing")
- a pansy: "Souvenir" (remembrance; i have not encountered the pansy as a lucky charm elsewhere; it belongs more properly to the "language of flowers" than the "language of good luck charms")



The 20th century American charm bracelet below features a variety of lucky charms in a bright mix of brass, copper, sterling silver, and gold-plated metal.



This bracelet is typical of the kind of jewelry worn by adolescent girls in the 1950s and 1960s, collected charm by charm while travelling through the tourist traps, flea markets, jewelry stores, and yard sales of the heartland. It is, in fact, my very own charm bracelet! There are 13 charms on it, demonstrating the use of "unlucky" 13 as reversed bad luck. Clockwise from the top, they are:

- a silver heart engraved with initials: love for the named individual
- a brass heart pierced by an arrow: smitten romantic love
- a silver horseshoe: attraction or

"drawing" luck

- a gold wishbone set with a pearl: wishes come true
- a silver horseshoe on which is placed a wishbone, a four-leaf clover, a horseshoe and the words "Good Luck": good luck
- a gold and green enameled four-leaf clover: luck
- a silver money bag with a \$ sign: wealth
- a copper horseshoe on which is placed a four-leaf clover: good luck
- a brass heart padlock: faithful love
- a silver spread of playing cards: gambling luck
- a gold double horseshoe set with an artificial diamond: money luck
- a brass money bag marked 1000: wealth
- a silver horseshoe: attraction or "drawing" luck

Other popular 20th century charms not depicted on this page but often found on European and American charm bracelets include:

- a swastika: luck (pre-Hitlerian, of course)
- twin hearts pierced by a single arrow: reciprocated love
- an Amanita muscaria mushroom: luck
- a chimney sweep or his ladder and brush: luck
- a so-called "Lucky Buddha": luck
- a black cat: gambling luck

Unrelated to European and American charm bracelets -- but probably made to meet Occidental rather than Oriental tastes -- are the so-called Chinese charm bracelets made with glass beads, jade carvings, and metal amulets strung on black cord and tied around the wrist.

## ***Wicca – A Solitary Path?*** ***by Ashmyt***

Since I first became interested in Wicca and Neo-paganism quite a few times I've come across the following question: Is Wicca essentially a collective path, or can it be equally valid and effective as a solitary path?

I'm afraid the only basis I have in order to attempt an answer to this question is my own experience as both a solitary practitioner and a member of a group. Therefore, these lines don't intend to be a doctoral essay on human psychology or the nature of spiritual experience, but a collection of personal thoughts that may be of use to fellow seekers.

On any spiritual path, or self-discovery/self-transformation path, there's certain introspective processes that ought to be worked upon by the individual on his or her own, without any external aid. There can be external guidance, there can be physical and emotional support, but the work has to be done on our own.

The reason for this is not highly metaphysical but extremely practical - nobody can get inside our head and clean up the mess for us. Even if this were possible, this person would be depriving us from one of the most precious jewels of spiritual experience – the essence of Attainment: self-discovery, self-acceptance, and self-transformation.

By walking this 'long and winding road' across the depths of our own being we become, more and more, the crafters of our own destiny, the sculptors of our own being.

Don't take me wrong – this is not an apology of loneliness. We humans are social and historical beings, and without the phenomenon of the 'other' there's no possible construction of what we call 'reality'. Still, we're individuals, we're able to think for ourselves and decide what's best for ourselves, many times going against what the social body considers correct.

If we look at the Wheel of the Year, both from a mythical and from a practical point of view, we will find periods of external activity, of collective activity - sawing, harvesting, breeding, etc. - as well as periods of intense internal activity, especially during the 'dark half' of the year. The same happens, on a different timeline, in every spiritual path.

There are moments of exteriorization and moments of introspection. There's a time to seek outside, to communicate with others, to share experiences and expectations – there's a time to look inside, to meditate, to whisper to oneself. There are cycles, some longer, some shorter, and each individual has his own internal rhythm.

Could we say that life is a solitary path? Probably he who walks alone will say yes. He who shares his life with others will say definitely no. And he who has experienced both loneliness and company will say neither nor, and at the same time, both.

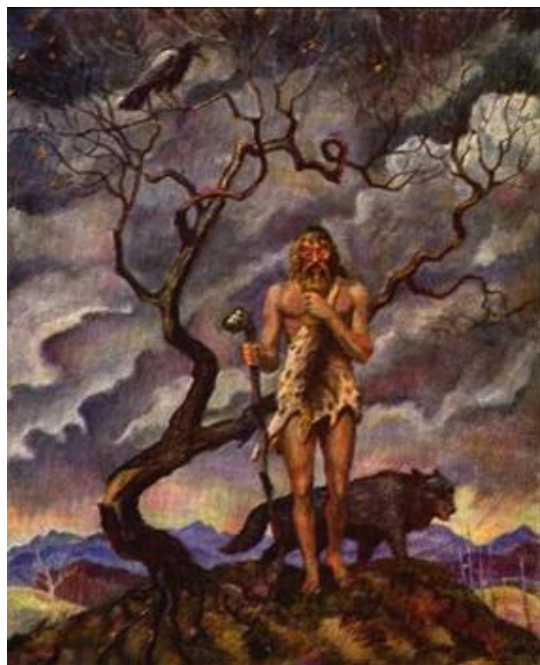
Wicca is not alien to life itself. As Wiccans we follow the cycles of the Cosmos, the cycles of the Earth, the cycles of our body and of our psyche. We reach outwards and we reach inwards, we share and we keep for ourselves, we ebb and flow, we wax and wane.

How can we say then that Wicca, or that any spiritual path, must be either collective or solitary? How can we chop off half of our own human nature, of our own being?

In my humble experience, a balanced spiritual path includes both inner work and collective experience, in the same way that a balanced life includes both social interaction and privacy.

Solitary practice and inner work are essential to spiritual Attainment - each individual upon himself or herself performs the Great Work.

Alone we descend into the Abyss, confront and integrate with our Shadows alone, experience Epiphany alone, and alone re-emerge into profane space and time to communicate our experience to the world. Even when facilitated or witnessed by others, the initiatory experience is private.



We can find several examples of the private nature of the initiatory experience both in myth and in literature. Let us have a look at the Hávamál, and Odin's account of his initiatory experience:

*Wounded I hung on a wind-swept gallows  
For nine long nights,  
Pierced by a spear, pledged to Odin  
Offered myself to myself  
High on that Tree of which none hath heard  
from what roots it rises to heaven.  
None refreshed me ever with food or drink,  
I peered right down in the deep;  
crying aloud I lifted the Runes  
then back I fell from thence.*

Odin's initiatory experience is triggered by his desire for knowledge. Alone, he finds his way to that 'tree of which none hath heard' (that is, initiatory space) and without any aid withstands the trial of the descent 'right down into the deep'.

Moving forward in time, and to a completely different cultural setting, let us have a look at some of the verses in the 'Canto I' of Dante's 'Inferno':

*Midway upon the journey of our life  
I found myself within a forest dark,  
For the straightforward pathway had been lost.*

*I cannot well repeat how there I entered,  
So full was I of slumber at the moment  
In which I had abandoned the true way.*

*And even as he, who, with distressful breath,  
Forth issued from the sea upon the shore,  
Turns to the water perilous and gazes;*

*So did my soul, that still was fleeing onward,*

*Turn itself back to re-behold the pass  
Which never yet a living person left.*

Following an event that acts as trigger (the straightforward pathway has been lost) Dante finds himself lost in the middle of a dark and menacing forest, and without knowing exactly how, he descends into the underworld through that pass 'which never yet a living person left.' The initiatory process, the descent, has begun. And that pass has been crossed alone.

Finally, in contemporary myth, we have our Gardnerian version of the 'descent of the Goddess':

*"Now the Goddess had never loved,  
but she would solve all mysteries,  
even the mystery of Death, and so she journeyed to the  
nether lands. The guardians of the portals challenged her,  
"Strip off thy garments, lay aside thy jewels, for nought may ye bring with you into this  
our land." So she laid down her garments and her jewels and was bound as are all who  
enter the realms of Death, the mighty one. "*



Again we find the same three elements: the trigger, the difficulty of finding the way towards initiatory time and space, and the fact that the descent is undertaken alone. Nevertheless, the importance of the community as facilitators and witnesses to the spiritual experience cannot be underestimated. The role of the community as a 'theatre of the world' where we can project ourselves and receive feedback, its collective knowledge and experience, as well as its greater ability to handle emotional crises, makes it the safest possible environment for inner exploration.

Although spiritual experience is unique to every individual, certain patterns can be discerned, patterns that repeat themselves across different cultures, religions and historical moments.

As a species we share the same biological structure, the same 'hardware', and to a certain extent, the same 'software' as well. The way our individual minds and bodies handle experience is very similar, and this makes us predictable to a large extent. We can safely assume that, in most people, a similar stimulus will trigger a similar reaction.

Therefore, the experience of others who have come before us, who have already trodden several paths, who have tried and failed and tried again, and in some cases have succeeded, can be of great value to our own path.

And if those elders are of flesh and bone, and are willing to lend a helping hand, why not accepting the gift of the fruits of their lives?

This doesn't mean in any way following their steps, or accepting their points of view, but being open to consider different possibilities and enriching our lives with the lives of others.



**NEWS FROM PAGAN FEDERATION INTERNATIONAL**  
***By Morgana***

Hi folks,

Highlight on Stichting (Foundation) PFI.

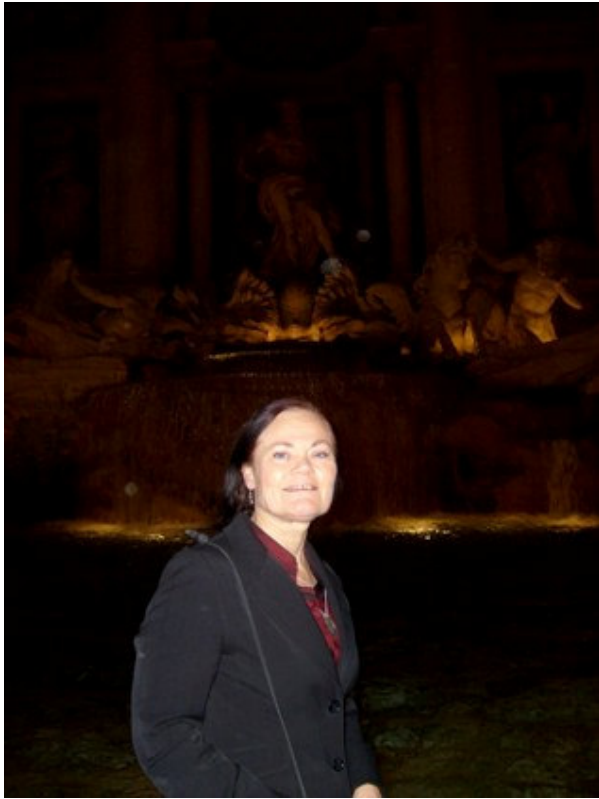
When the “district PFI” became an affiliated organisation of the PF in July 2006, PFI was also incorporated in a Foundation, registered in The Hague, the Netherlands. As such it became a legal entity. We have been present at a number of academic conferences and meetings during the last few months. But first what is Stichting PFI and what do we do apart from coordinating the activities of the PFI nations?

Functions of the Foundation:

Some of the functions include:

- To promote inter-religious and intercultural dialogue and education. This also includes anti-defamation work; one of the grassroots functions of the PF. PFI is also a member of ESITIS (The European Society for Intercultural Theology and Inter-religious Studies). Regular conferences dealing with religious themes are being organised. Recently for example Raven represented PFI in Birmingham and I was at the RIPE conference in Rome. “Religious Pluralism”. See short extracts below.
- Organising and coordinating projects of an International character. (For example for the EU, Council of Europe) We are currently involved in the organisation of EYID 2008. (European Year of the Intercultural dialogue 2008. Recently we have also been working with the Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), which is an agency under the wings of the EU dealing with fundamental rights issues rising from religious violence, gay rights and women’s rights. They are also monitoring extreme right activism and ethno-nationalism. See extract of the report below.
- Working with other human rights organisations (for example UNITED in NL – anti-racism, etc)
- Dealing with international affairs – also from non-members – pagans in general. Looking at the more social aspects and legal position of pagans. Advisory task. We can’t give legal support, but can give information about similar cases for example in the UK & USA, where pagans have been involved in court cases.
- Contact with the Press/Media where necessary. PFI Nations handle local press.
- To coordinate the activities of the PFI Nations, including creating new PFI’s and the appointment and coaching of new NC’s

These are brief reports of some of the events being attended by representatives of Stichting PFI:



**R.i.p.e. Conference – Religious Innovation and Pluralism in the 21st Century Europe, Rome, 19th-20 October 2007 (Morgana & Sddie)**

Morgana and I took part in the Religious Innovation and Pluralism in the 21st Century Europe (RIPE) conference that took place in Rome. The idea was to scientifically examine the religious palette of the EU and explore the possibility of dialogue. Morgana's talk on Paganism in general, and Wicca in particular was greeted with awe and a lot of enthusiasm. Scientists went out of their way to ask questions and most were amazed since they have not heard about the Pagan movement at all. They were so interested, that the questions kept on coming even at the dinner table. PFI did it again; Paganism is now being taken into consideration in these high-level discussions.

The next RIPE conference is being planned for Autumn 2008, in Hungary. However there will be other opportunities no doubt for the Foundation to attend and make a contribution. Watch this space!

**ESITIS Conference, 'The Resurgence of Religion in Europe' Birmingham, 11-13th April 2007 (Raven)**

This three day academic conference focused mainly upon the three major religions, Christianity, Islam and Judaism, and how they have seen a re-emergence in Europe and their implications for Religious Pluralism in Europe. However, not being an academic, but being a practitioner of a faith and not a critical analyser of it, made me somewhat of an outsider and curiosity for the other participants. This I did not mind, as I was able to network and discuss an area of their studies that I do not think any of them had even considered. My discussions with others brought some fruition when one of the speakers included witchcraft and possession in relation to "Christian migrants and their theologies", and I was able to demarcate differences in perceptions and beliefs of witchcraft in a Christian sense and that of the neo-pagan movement.

I am hoping that the suggestion made at the AGM for the next conference to consider "new spiritualities" will bear fruit and thus measure some progression. If not, it is enough that attending this conference led to Morgana and Sddie's attendance at the RIPE21 event in Italy, and put us on the academic map as an emergent religion in Europe.

Public Hearing Fundamental Rights Agency, Brussels, 18th October 2007. (Anton)  
It was very busy at the hearing, which was organised to gather information with regard to a coming proposal from the Agency of Fundamental Rights towards the European Parliament. Within this proposal the agency is asking for more power. The general

impression from the attending NGO was that they had the feeling that such a big issue 'Fundamental rights in Europe' is handled by a very small agency. The agency, which was installed five years ago, agreed and stated that their main focus would be flexibility and follow ups. There is nothing more demoralising as having no achievements. Protecting fundamental rights is an important fight. Rights are not visible, but they do exist. We (PFI) as NGO (non- governmental organisation) have a part in this. Cultural and religious freedom is still a hot issue in some countries. Cooperating with other organisations, giving information to the public and integrating our beliefs would strengthen our position and such the position of for instance the agency. Their existence relies on the support of NGO's.

### **News bits:**

#### **AUSTRIA**

It is with great pleasure to announce the new PFI Austrian website. Our National Coordinators for PFI Austria will be Jeff & Vernon, who are already very active in the pagan/wiccan community in Austria. They will replacing Karen & Werner who have been the NC's for Austria for a number of years. Karen & Werner will still be active in Austria - many thanks to them for their help over the years. Jeff & Vernon can be contacted at [jeff@paganfederation.org](mailto:jeff@paganfederation.org) & [vc@paganfederation.org](mailto:vc@paganfederation.org)

Please take a look at <http://www.at.paganfederation.org/>

Good luck Jeff & Vernon and everyone at PFI Austria, hopefully we will be seeing more of each other in 2008.

#### **HUNGARY**

Saddie has graciously offered to take over as NC for PFI Hungary. Shade will remain the contact person IN Hungary so the postbox address will remain in place. The Hungarian website will continue to be managed by Saddie too. He is working on an update. Email address: [saddie@paganfederation.org](mailto:saddie@paganfederation.org)

#### **MEXICO**

Tarwe who was a Local Organiser for Mexico under PFI South America, now has a website for PFI Mexico and will be acting as an independent PFI nation now. Congratulations Tarwe & PFI Mexico!! This is great news for the Spanish speaking world and I am sure Duxiet & Werty (PFI SPAIN) and Lady Majo (LO Argentine) and Oscar (LO Colombia) will welcome this new initiative.

#### **PFI FORUM**

Yes, the subject heading is right, the PFI Forum is operational!

<http://www.paganfederation.org/forum/index.php>

Please go and register! Branwen & Saddie are the administrators and will be available for help and questions. Email: [branwen@paganfederation.org](mailto:branwen@paganfederation.org) & [saddie@paganfederation.org](mailto:saddie@paganfederation.org)

In Future the forum will also replace the PFI email chat list. More details will be available later. First just get used to using the Forum :-) Thanks to Inga & Dennis for the work they have put into this already, and to Saddie who will be helping out too.

## **PFI PARENT & YOUTH COORDINATOR**

It is with great pleasure to announce that Dana has volunteered to be our new "PFI Parent & Youth Coordinator", for PFI Netherlands. Dana will be offering her services to parents and teenagers alike - about all sorts of subjects to do with paganism. She will also be acting as contact person for schools and youth organisations. Hopefully she will also have time to make regular contributions to "Pagan World" about pagan parenting and similar subjects.

For information and questions please email [dana@paganfederation.org](mailto:dana@paganfederation.org)

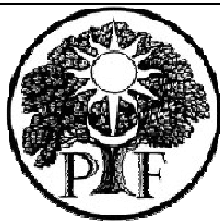
Many thanks to Dana for offering what we think will be a valuable addition to the PFI team in the Netherlands. Dana will be contributing articles about pagan parenting and other related subjects to Pagan World. And of course she will be more than happy to answer your questions, be it as worried parent or just wanting to know more about upbringing from a pagan perspective.

En nu een introductie van Dana zelf:

Merry meet,

Ik ben Dana en wil mijzelf graag even voorstellen als de PFI ouder/jeugd coördinator. 48 jaar jong, moeder van vijf kinderen en oma. Ik werk met fytotherapie, bach bloesem therapie en werk ook met reiki. Ik ben een Alexandrian heks en loop al weer heel wat jaartjes mee in Pagan Nederland. Wat ik ga doen onder de noemer PFI ouder/jeugd coördinator, is in het kort het volgende: Ik ga advies geven aan ouders over vraagstukken als hoe ga je om met pagan ouderschap en alles wat daar uit vloeit. Ik ga advies geven aan kinderen/ jongeren, die vragen of problemen hebben die te maken hebben met paganisme. Ook ben ik aanspreekpunt en adviespunt voor organisatie's die met jongeren te maken hebben, zoals scholen en dergelijke. Ik ben aanspreekpunt voor jongeren die scripties willen maken en zorg voor informatiepakketten. Boekenlijsten enz.

Blessed Be,  
Dana,



***The highlight of the year!***

***PFI Netherlands Conference!  
Saturday May 10<sup>th</sup> 2008***

***With workshops, speakers, music, a pagan market, and dinner!  
Details in the next issue!***



***Bring back the Greek gods!  
Mere mortals had a better life  
when more than one ruler  
presided from on high.  
By Mary Lefkowitz***

Prominent secular and atheist commentators have argued lately that religion "poisons" human life and causes endless violence and suffering. But the poison isn't religion; it's monotheism. The polytheistic Greeks didn't advocate killing those who worshiped different gods, and they did not pretend that their religion provided the right answers. Their religion made the ancient Greeks aware of their ignorance and weakness, letting them

recognize multiple points of view.

There is much we still can learn from these ancient notions of divinity, even if we can agree that the practices of animal sacrifice, deification of leaders and divining the future through animal entrails and bird flights are well lost. The Greek gods weren't mere representations of forces in nature, but independent beings with transcendent powers that controlled the world and everything in it. Some of the gods were strictly local, such as the deities of rivers and forests. Others were universal, such as Zeus, his siblings and his children.

Zeus did not communicate directly with humankind. But his children -- Athena, Apollo and Dionysus -- played active roles in human life. Athena was the closest to Zeus of all the gods; without her aid, none of the great heroes could accomplish anything extraordinary. Apollo could tell mortals what the future had in store for them. Dionysus could alter human perception to make people see what's not really there. He was worshiped in antiquity as the god of the theatre and of wine. Today, he would be the god of psychology.

Zeus, the ruler of the gods, retained his power by using his intelligence along with superior force. Unlike his father (whom he deposed), he did not keep all the power for himself but granted rights and privileges to other gods. He was not an autocratic ruler but listened to, and was often persuaded by, the other gods.

Openness to discussion and inquiry is a distinguishing feature of Greek theology. It suggests that collective decisions often lead to a better outcome. Respect for a diversity of viewpoints informs the cooperative system of government the Athenians called democracy.

Unlike the monotheistic traditions, Greco-Roman polytheism was multicultural. The Greeks and Romans did not share the narrow view of the ancient Hebrews that a divinity could only be masculine. Like many other ancient peoples in the eastern Mediterranean, the Greeks recognized female divinities, and they attributed to goddesses almost all of the powers held by the male gods.

The world, as the Greek philosopher Thales wrote, is full of gods, and all deserve respect and honour. Such a generous understanding of the nature of divinity allowed the ancient Greeks and Romans to accept and respect other people's gods and to admire (rather than despise) other nations for their own notions of piety. If the Greeks were in close contact with a particular nation, they gave the foreign gods names of their own gods: the Egyptian goddess Isis was Demeter, Horus was Apollo, and so on. Thus they incorporated other people's gods into their pantheon.

What they did not approve of was atheism, by which they meant refusal to believe in the existence of any gods at all. One reason many Athenians resented Socrates was that he claimed a divinity spoke with him privately, but he could not name it. Similarly, when Christians denied the existence of any gods other than their own, the Romans suspected political or seditious motives and persecuted them as enemies of the state.

The existence of many different gods also offers a more plausible account than monotheism of the presence of evil and confusion in the world. A mortal may have had the support of one god but incur the enmity of another, who could attack when the patron god was away. The goddess Hera hated the hero Heracles and sent the goddess Madness to make him kill his wife and children. Heracles' father, Zeus, did nothing to stop her, although he did in the end make Heracles immortal. But in the monotheistic traditions, in which God is omnipresent and always good, mortals must take the blame for whatever goes wrong, even though God permits evil to exist in the world he created. In the Old Testament, God takes away Job's family and his wealth but restores him to prosperity after Job acknowledges God's power.

The god of the Hebrews created the Earth for the benefit of humankind. But as the Greeks saw it, the gods made life hard for humans, didn't seek to improve the human condition and allowed people to suffer and die. As a palliative, the gods could offer only to see that great achievement was memorialized. There was no hope of redemption, no promise of a happy life or rewards after death. If things did go wrong, as they inevitably did, humans had to seek comfort not from the gods but from other humans.

The separation between humankind and the gods made it possible for humans to complain to the gods without the guilt or fear of reprisal the deity of the Old Testament inspired. Mortals were free to speculate about the character and intentions of the gods. By allowing mortals to ask hard questions, Greek theology encouraged them to learn, to seek all the possible causes of events. Philosophy -- that characteristically Greek invention -- had its roots in such theological inquiry. As did science.

Paradoxically, the main advantage of ancient Greek religion lies in this ability to recognize and accept human fallibility. Mortals cannot suppose that they have all the answers and are particularly prone to error at the moments when they think they know what they are doing. The gods are fully aware of this human weakness. If they choose to communicate with mortals, they tend to do so only indirectly, by signs and portents, which mortals often misinterpret.

Ancient Greek religion gives an account of the world that in many respects is more plausible than that offered by the monotheistic traditions. Greek theology openly discourages blind confidence based on unrealistic hopes that everything will work out in the end. Such healthy scepticism about human intelligence and achievements has never been needed more than it is today.

## ***Witchcraft and the battle for reclamation in South Africa by Damon Leff***

In September 2007 South African Pagans elected five self-defined Witches (myself included) to act as representatives, under the auspices of the South African Pagan Council (SAPC) chaired by Luke Martin, in order to fulfil what has become known as the 'Melville Mandate'.

Said representatives have secured the legal services of Lawyers for Human Rights in order to have the Witchcraft Suppression Act of 1957 revoked. We are fairly confident given the protections afforded to religious minorities in our country's constitution that we will succeed in having said act revoked in due course.

The 'Melville Mandate' also seeks to reclaim the terms 'Witch' and 'Witchcraft' within a modern Pagan context and representatives have been tasked with fulfilling the goal of reclamation through various educational and other processes, including the possible establishment of a formal Commission of Enquiry to investigate ongoing violence against innocent persons accused of practicing malefic witchcraft.

### The Witchcraft Suppression Act of 1957

The Witchcraft Suppression Act (Act 3 of 1957 as amended by Act 50 of 1970) determines that any person who professes to use any supernatural power, or witchcraft, or professes knowledge of witchcraft or the use of charms, or for gain exercises any supernatural power or witchcraft shall be guilty of a criminal offence.

South African Pagans who self-define as Witches argue that Act 3 prohibits South African citizens from practicing their religion. These citizens of the Republic of South Africa have been and are being denied their constitutional rights to religious freedom, expression, equality, liberty, dignity, security and their right to choose and practice their occupation within South Africa.

The 'Melville Mandate' seeks to initiate urgent legislative reform to the Witchcraft Suppression Act in order to prevent any further or future unfair discrimination and prejudice against citizens of a free and democratic country founded on the recognition of human dignity, equality for all - irrespective of religion or belief, and the advancement of human rights and freedoms for all South African citizens equally.

### Reclamation of the terms 'Witch' and 'Witchcraft'

Historically the words 'Witch' and 'Witchcraft' have been used in South Africa to describe evil or criminal practices associated with ritual killings, human mutilations and misfortune in general. The 1995 Report of the Ralushai Commission of Inquiry into Witchcraft Violence and Ritual Murder in the Northern Province, defined the term 'witch' to mean a person who,

"...through sheer malice, either consciously or subconsciously, employs magical means to inflict all manner of evil on their fellow human beings. They destroy property, bring disease or misfortune and cause death, often entirely without provocation to satisfy their inherent craving for evil doing."



Testifying before a Truth and Reconciliation Commission Amnesty Hearing in July 1999 Professor Ralushai confirmed his Commission's definition of 'a witch' when he was asked by attorney Patrick Ndou to define what a Witch was. Ralushai stated, "A witch is supposed to be a person who is endowed with powers of causing illness or ill luck or death to the person that he wants to destroy."

The recently proposed Mpumalanga Witchcraft Suppression Bill attempted to define Witchcraft as: "...the secret use of muti, zombies, spells, spirits, magic powders, water, mixtures, etc, by any person with the purpose of causing harm, damage, sickness to others or their property."

These definitions of 'witchcraft' stereotype witchcraft as harmful by portraying Witches as a danger to the communities within which they live and work. These harmful stereotypical definitions merely serve to justify irrational public fear of witchcraft as a harmful practice that is associated with criminal activity. Maintaining and reinforcing a definition of 'witchcraft' predisposed to eliciting violence against alleged or accused witches does not promote religious tolerance, but serves to incite further malice and violence against suspected witches, and fosters further discrimination against Witchcraft.

The characterization of a person or group of persons (witches) as 'evil' and so deserving of criminal classification by default makes a mockery of the values of human dignity, equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms on which the Republic of South Africa is founded.

South African Witches regard harmful stereotypical definitions of Witchcraft as injurious to the dignity of self-defined Witches and the use of the terms 'witch' and 'witchcraft' to describe criminal activities as harmful discrimination against self-defined Witches. The use of the English term 'witchcraft' with which to describe harmful magical practices brings into disrepute anyone who may self-identify as a Witch, irrespective of whether or not said self-defined Witch is a European Pagan or a practitioner of Traditional African magic.

The 'Melville Mandate' seeks to reclaim the terms 'Witch' and 'Witchcraft' within a modern Pagan religious context and determines that the right to define the words 'Witch' and 'Witchcraft' rests with self-defined Witches themselves and no one else.

The following definition is a good standard definition of Witchcraft as understood and as practiced by South African Witches.

"Witchcraft is an ancient religio-magical technique and modern Pagan spirituality that employs the use of divination, sympathetic magic and Pagan ritual practices." - SAPRA

As self-defined Witches we stand as testimony to the existence of both Witches and Witchcraft, but we wish to reiterate that we are neither evil nor criminals. As Witches, as practitioners of Witchcraft, we claim the right to self-definition and self-determination of our own spirituality and its practices. As equal citizens of South Africa we claim our right to freedom of belief and religion.

***Boudicca: A Woman Warlord's Rebellion***  
© ***David White***



The Iceni rebellion, with Boudicca at the helm, had its roots in the Roman struggles in Gaul. Beginning with Julius Caesar, the Romans battled their way through Gaul to the Atlantic Ocean. The struggles were fierce, but the Romans finally subdued the troublesome Gauls. (Imagine! People wanting to rule themselves in their homeland!)

One of the peoples displaced by the Romans was the Keltoi, or Celtae. Such a person was Boudicca.

Five years after the Claudius-led invasion of Britannia, Boudicca married Prasutagus, King of the Iceni. He had submitted to Roman authority in 43 and kept his crown as a client-king. When he died in 60, Boudicca became Regent.

In his will, Prasutagus had left much of his wealth to the Roman emperor but a goodly sum also to his wife and family. When he died, Rome tried to take it all, also charging Boudicca, the Regent, with paying back outrageous debts. When she refused, she was publicly tortured and her daughters raped. She struck back with full force.

Historians tells us that Boudicca's rebellious troops numbered 100,000. Since both sides agree on this figure, it seems in little doubt. Although not the only rebellion occurring at the time, Boudicca's was the most famous. It hit Camulodonum hard, slaughtering the Romans and burning the city to the ground.



To this Rome responded with a legion--a full 5,000 men--all of whom were slaughtered. Boudicca moved on to London, also burning it to the ground. Rome responded slowly again, this time with about 10,000 men. Seeing Boudicca turn from London to St. Albans, the Romans determined to meet her on the field of battle.

Where this final battle was fought historians do not know. What they do know is that it was confusing and full of confusion. Puzzling is the fact that with the British army traveled their families and their pack animals and their livestock and their farmers-- basically a large city on the move. Why were these grandfathers and toddlers here? Some historians think the British thought their families better protected while near the army than at home, defenceless against marauding Romans. Whatever the case, there the families were--in the middle of the battlefield.

By the time of this final battle, Boudicca herself and many of her followers were in bad shape. They were tired and injured. They had been on the move for many days. They were not as adept in battle as were the Romans. The only thing the Britons had going for them was their sheer numbers. And this time, this backfired. Through a devastating combination of javelin fire, cavalry maneuvering and sheer will, the outnumbered Romans cut down the advancing British, forced them to retreat into the midst of their families, and cut the whole lot of them to pieces.

The rebellion was over. Boudicca herself survived, some say only to return to her homeland and take poison. The Iceni remained a client-kingdom of Rome. But retribution was swift and terrible. The Romans took everything from the Iceni but had paid a terrible price as well. It was a costly lesson for both sides.

### **Boadicea's last speech**



"But now, it is not as a woman descended from noble ancestry, but as one of the people that I am avenging lost freedom, my scourged body, and the outraged chastity of my daughters. Roman lust has gone so far that not our very person, nor even age or virginity, are left unpolluted. But heaven is on the side of a righteous vengeance; a legion which dared to fight has perished; the rest are hiding themselves in their camp, or are thinking anxiously of flight. They will not sustain even the din and the shout of so many thousands, much less our charge and our blows. If you weigh well the strength of the armies, and the causes of the war, you will see that in this battle you must conquer or die. This is a woman's resolve; as for men, they may live and be slaves."

## A Bit of Christmas History

Long before the birth of Christ, midwinter had always been a time for merry making by the masses. The root of the midwinter rituals was the winter solstice - the shortest day - which falls on 21st December. After this date the days lengthened and the return of spring, the season of life, was eagerly anticipated. It was therefore a time to celebrate both the end of the autumn sowing and the fact that the 'life giving' sun had not deserted them. Bonfires were lit to help strengthen the 'Unconquered Sun'.

For Christians the world over this period celebrates the story of the birth of Jesus, in a manger, in Bethlehem. The scriptures however make no mention as to the time of year yet alone the actual date of the nativity. Even our current calendar which supposedly calculates the years from the birth of Christ, was drawn up in the sixth century by Dionysius, an 'innumerate' Italian monk to correspond with a Roman Festival.

Until the 4th century Christmas could be celebrated throughout Europe anywhere between early January through to late September. It was Pope Julius I who happened upon the bright idea of adopting 25th December as the actual date of the Nativity. The choice appears both logical and shrewd - blurring religion with existing feast days and celebrations. Any merrymaking could now be attributed to the birth of Christ rather than any ancient pagan ritual.

One such blurring may involve the Feast of Fools, presided over by the Lord of Misrule. The feast was an unruly event, involving much drinking, revelry and role reversal. The Lord of Misrule, normally a commoner with a reputation of knowing how to enjoy himself, was selected to direct the entertainment. The festival is thought to have originated from the benevolent Roman masters who allowed their servants to be the boss for a while.

The Church entered the act by allowing a choirboy, elected by his peers, to be a Bishop during the period starting with St. Nicholas Day (6th December) until Holy Innocents Day (28th December). Within the period the chosen boy, symbolising the lowliest authority, would dress in full Bishop's regalia and conduct the Church services. Many of the great cathedrals adopted this custom including York, Winchester, Salisbury Canterbury and Westminster. Henry VIII abolished Boy Bishops however a few churches, including Hereford and Salisbury Cathedrals, continue the practice today.



The burning of the Yule Log is thought to derive from the midwinter ritual of the early Viking invaders, who built enormous bonfires to celebrate their festival of light. The word 'Yule' has existed in the English language for many centuries as an alternative term for Christmas.

Traditionally, a large log would be selected in the forest on Christmas Eve, decorated with ribbons, dragged home and laid upon the hearth. After lighting it was kept burning throughout the twelve days of Christmas. It was considered lucky to keep some of the charred remains to kindle the log of the following year.

Whether the word carol comes from the Latin caraula or the French carole, its original meaning is the same - a dance with a song. The dance element appears to have

disappeared over the centuries but the song was used to convey stories, normally that of the Nativity. The earliest recorded published collection of carols is in 1521, by Wynken de Worde which includes the Boars Head Carol.

Carols flourished throughout Tudor times as a way to celebrate Christmas and to spread the story of the nativity. Celebrations came to an abrupt end however in the seventeenth century when the Puritans banned all festivities including Christmas. Surprisingly carols remained virtually extinct until the Victorians reinstated the concept of an 'Olde English Christmas' which included traditional gems such as While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks By Night and The Holly and the Ivy as well as introducing a plethora of new hits - Away in a Manger, O Little Town of Bethlehem - to mention but a few.

The twelve days of Christmas would have been a most welcome break for the workers on the land, which in Tudor times would have been the majority of the people. All work, except for looking after the animals, would stop, restarting again on Plough Monday, the first Monday after Twelfth Night.

The 'Twelfths' had strict rules, one of which banned spinning, the prime occupation for women. Flowers were ceremonially placed upon and around the wheels to prevent their use.

During the Twelve Days, people would visit their neighbours sharing and enjoying the traditional 'minced pye'. The pyes would have included thirteen ingredients, representing Christ and his apostles, typically dried fruits, spices and of course a little chopped mutton - in remembrance of the shepherds.

Serious feasting would have been the reserve of Royalty and the Gentry. Turkey was first introduced into Britain in about 1523 with Henry VIII being one of the first people to eat it as part of the Christmas feast. The popularity of the bird grew quickly, and soon, each year, large flocks of turkeys could be seen walking to London from Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire on foot; a journey which they may have started as early as August.



A Tudor Christmas Pie was indeed a sight to behold but not one to be enjoyed by a vegetarian. The contents of this dish consisted of a Turkey stuffed with a goose stuffed with a chicken stuffed with a partridge stuffed with a pigeon. All of this was put in a pastry case, called a coffin and was served surrounded by jointed hare, small game birds and wild fowl.

And to wash it all down, a drink from the Wassail bowl. The word 'Wassail' derives from the Anglo-Saxon 'Waes-hael', meaning 'be whole' or 'be of good health'. The bowl, a large wooden container holding as much as a gallon of punch made of hot-ale, sugar, spices and apples was to be shared with friends and neighbours. A crust of bread was placed at the bottom of the Wassail bowl and offered to the most important person in the room - hence today's toast as part of any drinking ceremony.

***Modern Christmas  
& Ancient Rome  
The Influence of Saturnalia on  
Christmas  
© Allan M. Heller***

The early Christians absorbed certain pagan practices into observances of Christmas.

The consolidation of cultures that resulted from invasion, migration and proliferation of certain religions is no where more evident than in the example of ancient Rome and the burgeoning new faith of Christianity. While the Romans often incorporated into their worship



gods of conquered nations, one of their major holidays was eventually to be entirely absorbed by the observance of Christ's nativity. The exact birth date of Jesus is unknown, but estimated to be between 8 and 4 BC. December 25 was selected circa 336 AD because that coincided with the culmination of the celebration of the Winter Solstice in ancient Rome, and church officials saw the date as expedient for promoting Christianity. The Winter Solstice marked the shortest day of the year, as well as the point at which the days gradually grew longer, and symbolized for the Romans re-birth, new growth, and the abundance of nature.

Saturnalia, which originally ran from the 17th to the 23rd of December, probably contributed most to modern Christmas traditions, and was observed by feasting, merry making, gambling and gift giving. Saturnalia was but one-third of a three-part holiday, and was preceded by Consualia, which honored Consus, the god of storage bins, and followed by Opalia, which honored Ops, Saturn's wife (Sophistes).

The beginning of Saturnalia was marked by the dedication of the harvest god's temple. Worshippers passed around lit candles while a priest made sacrifices, and ceremonially cut away strips of wool binding the legs of an idol of the god. After the preliminaries came a great feast, during which the celebrants would wish one another "Bona Saturnalia!" much like Christians today say "Merry Christmas." Following the seven-day festival, the priest would once again bind the legs of the Saturn doll until the following year (ibid.)

Saturnalia centered on giving thanks for the fruits of the earth, for plentiful crops, and praying for the same in the coming year. Business transactions were forbidden. Even slaves in Roman households were allowed to relax, to the point of having their masters wait on them instead. The tradition of decorating Christmas trees grew in part from the practice of hanging tiny ceramic dolls called "sigillaria" on the branches of pine trees. Even the pointed felt hats worn by department store Santas are similar to the pileus –a brimless hat worn by the Romans, especially during Saturnalia. In 17th century America, the Puritans viewed Christmas celebrations with great distaste, believing that such practices were blasphemous, pagan activities, and outlawing them. Not until the 1800's did celebrating Christmas become widely-accepted in the U.S.A.



## Earth inherited by Meek

***And the Meek shall inherit the Earth.....***

***By Adrian Barnett***

In a surprise announcement this morning, it was revealed that the Meek have inherited the Earth. The actual change of ownership itself happened three weeks ago, but the spokesperson for the Meek was too shy to contact the press. After much polite cajoling from fellow Meek Persons, the fulfilment of this ancient prophecy has finally come to pass.

A representative for the Meek gave us these comments - "As you know, the Earth was promised to us almost 2000 years ago by Jesus Christ himself, during his famous Sermon on the Mount. We have been Blessed for all that time, which was quite nice, but simply had to wait for the momentous event itself. The Earth and all it contains now belongs to us. By Divine Command, we Meek have absolute domination over the planet. We hope you don't mind". Blushing, she continued, "I know it's a bit of a big change, but it's really out of our hands. It's all a bit embarrassing actually".

The process of democracy has been rewritten to ensure that only the modest and passive are able to vote or run for public office. The first hiccup in this new system was caused when it turned out that no Meek people were planning to come forward as candidates. The most common reasons cited were "not wanting to cause a fuss" and "who would want to vote for someone like me anyway?". Assertive and confident candidates may have to be found in the meantime, until a truly Meek government can be formed.

Now that the Meek have inherited the Earth, what are they going to do with it? The Meek Affairs correspondent from The Times gave us this view : "The Meek have some very good ideas about tackling global problems. Unfortunately, very few of them are prepared to present these ideas to the international community, and when they do they tend to mumble so quietly that nobody can understand what they are saying. They really need to get assistance from some loud and pushy people, otherwise the fact that they are now the rulers of the globe is, frankly, going to pass completely unnoticed. The Meek need to stop being so acquiescent and submissive and get out there and kick some butt! Put plainly, they need to stop being so damned meek."

When asked what their plans for the Earth are, the Meek are said to have timidly replied, "Umm.. we don't really know. What do you think we should do?"

News of the Inheritance is reported to have slightly raised the spirits of The Poor In Spirit. However, they are trying to remain as poor in spirit as possible, otherwise theirs will not be the kingdom of heaven.

## **Two Tales of the Wild Hunt**

### ***Dando and the Wild Hunt***

There are many tales to explain the origin of the spectral wild hunt; this one is from the Parish of St Germans in Cornwall. It explains how a priest with low morals became a demon huntsman.

In the medieval period the priest of the parish of St Germans was called Dando. Dando was not a figure of priestly virtue but abused his powers to enjoy earthly delights. He was not pretty to look upon, and his vices were reflected in his potbelly and his fat red face. His chief pleasures were good food, copious quantities of wine, the pleasure of the ladies of the town, and the drunken company of the more unsavoury parishioners. The one thing that he valued above these delights was hunting, and whenever he had the chance he could be found riding with his friends, more often than not inebriated on wine and ale.

One Autumn Sunday, as the leaves were beginning to brown, he gathered around him a troop of thirty people and set out on a hunt. As usual they saw no barriers to their roaming, trampling crops, breaking fences, and crossing boundaries where they passed.

In time they rode into the bleak moorland, which surrounds the parish, and were joined by a dark stranger, who seemed to appear from out of the mist. He did not speak or acknowledge any of the men but easily rode past the front horseman and Dando.

Some time later Dando shouted for the company to stop, he was in need of ale, and the men and dogs were tired after such a long day. They halted in the middle of open moorland, and the servants set about laying the days catch upon the floor.

Dando Bellowed for drink but a servant replied that there was none, he had quaffed the last drop that very afternoon. "No drink" Dando roared in drunken bravado, "I shall have drink if I have to go to hell for it."

At this the stranger stirred for the first time, and calmly drew a golden drinking horn from under his dark cloak. He offered this to Dando who quaffed the lot in one quick draught. The golden ale still dripping from his flabby lips, Dando proclaimed that the drink was the sweetest that he had ever tasted, and that gods must drink of such.

"Gods do not drink of it but devils do" The stranger replied in a straight voice. "Then I wish that I was a devil" replied Dando. At this the stranger dismounted in one fluid movement, and quickly gathered the day's game. With astonishing deftness he tied the game to his saddle and remounted.

Dando let out a furious howl. "Those are mine" he shouted, and staggered to the side of the stranger, he fumbled with the game and declared again they were his game, and the stranger had no right to touch them. "What I have I will hold" said the stranger. Dando lurched forward again "I shall have them back if I have to ride to fiery hell to get them".

"And so you will", said the stranger, and with that he leaned forward, grabbed Dando by the scruff of the neck and lifted him with ease in front of him. He spurred the horse

on its way, and with tremendous speed they took of across the moorland. The other men could only stand open mouthed as they sped away, but Dando's hounds were quickly on their heels.

Over the moorland and through the valleys they rode, until finally they came to the river Lynter. Without pausing the dark rider and Dando, and all of Dando's hounds plunged into the river, where they were swallowed up in a pall of flame, which left the river waters a bubbling mass of steam.

In the years after, Dando returned to the parish in demonic form, riding with his ember eyed pack of hounds over the moorland and valleys on dark nights. It was said that he had become an emissary of Hell, searching for souls such as his that he could claim for his master. He is still seen now and again, on stormy nights when few people venture out on to the moorland.



### ***The Wild Hunt, A Tale from Devon***

This particularly sinister folktale of the wild hunt is from Devon, and is based in the Dartmoor area, a place full of tales of the supernatural, especially the wild hunt.

One wild stormy night a farmer was returning home from Widecombe, somewhat worse the wear from the strong local beverages brewed on-site. The wind raged, and the rain beat down on him, forcing him to pull his hood over his face, and to wrap his jacket tight around him.

As he pressed on his journey, he heard the soft thudding of hoofs, and the baying of a huntsman's pack, and found himself surrounded by many large black hounds. A black clad huntsman came up from the rear, a broad rimmed hat casting dark shadows over his face, hiding his features. A bundle of bulging sacks were tied to his saddle, no doubt carrying the fruits of his hunt.

The farmer, filled with drunken bravado shouted over the storm: "Share with me some of your game". The huntsman let out a laugh, and threw a heavy sack at the farmer's feet. In a moment he and his hounds were gone, riding as wild as the storm over the moors and into the darkness.

The farmer bent down and fumbled with the sinews that tied the sacking; at last his drunken fingers released the contents of the sack onto the water soaked pathway. The farmer choked back his breath, for before him was the crumpled and bruised body of his own infant son.

He turned away for a moment, and when he had the courage to return his gaze, the terrible vision had gone, leaving only the empty pathway before him. Sober now he hurried the last part of his journey, to be met at his cottage by his wife who was creening in grief, for their son had died during the storm.

## ***The Grey Man of Ben Macdhui***

Ben Macdhui is the second highest peak in Scotland, a huge mountain with deep corries, situated in the Cairngorms: one of Scotland's finest mountain ranges, and a magnet for walkers, climbers and other outdoor enthusiasts. Ben Machdhuì is also reputed to be haunted by 'something' that is popularly known as the Grey Man or Fear Liath Mhor in Gaelic.

Strange experiences have been recorded on the mountain from at least the turn of the twentieth century. Various witness sightings and experiences have amalgamated into a popular image of a huge ape-like misty figure that has the malign power to send people into a blind panic. In an attempt - as some writers have speculated - to push them over the steep cliffs of Lurcher's crag.

### **Witness Experiences on Ben Macdhui**

The Fear Liath Mhor first came to general public attention when the respected mountaineer Professor Norman Collie addressed the Annual General Meeting of the Cairngorm club in 1925. His experience dated from 1891 when he was climbing the mountain alone. I have reproduced it in full.



"I was returning from a cairn on the summit in the mist when I began to think I heard something else other than my own footsteps. For every few steps I took I heard a crunch and then another crunch as if someone was walking after me but taking footsteps three or four times the length of my own. I said to myself this is all nonsense. I listened and heard it again but could see nothing in the mist. As I walked on and the eerie crunch, crunch sounded behind me I was seized with terror and took to my heels staggering blindly among the boulders for four or five miles nearly down to Rothiemurchus Forest. Whatever you make of it I do not know but there is something very queer at the top of Ben Macdhui and I will not go there again by myself I know."

This is the first recorded encounter of the Grey Man (although the Brocken effect was noted earlier, see Explanations) and caused something of a sensation at the time, creating a lot of interest in the mountain and its possible other-world denizen. It is interesting to note that Cameron McNeish, the respected outdoor author and walker, has noted that Norman Collie was a well known practical joker. He would certainly have been amused by all the publicity that has been generated by the story.

A second hand account exists that the mountaineer Henry Kellas, and his brother witnessed a giant figure on the mountain around the turn of the 20th Century, which caused them to flee down Corrie Etchachan. This has never been verified as Henry Kellas died on the Everest reconnaissance mission of 1921, before Norman Collie's speech to the Cairngorm Club.

In 1945 a climber called Peter Densham reported hearing footsteps and fleeing the mountain in panic. Peter was part of the team that was responsible for aeroplane rescue in the Cairngorms during the war.

Another experience on the mountain by Alexander Tewnion - Naturalist and Mountaineer - appeared in 'The Scots Magazine', in June 1958. It took place in 1943

when he was climbing Ben Macdhui armed with a loaded revolver in search of game for the pot (perhaps naturalist was stretching it a bit). He was returning from the mountain by the Corrie Etchachnan track in fear of getting caught in a storm, here is his account of the event:

"I am not unduly imaginative, but my thought flew instantly to the well known story of professor Collie and the Fear Liath Mhor. Then I felt the reassuring weight of the loaded revolver in my pocket. Grasping the butt, I peered about in the mist here rent and tattered by the eddies of wind. A strange shape loomed up, receded, came charging at me! Without hesitation I whipped out the revolver and fired three times at the figure. When it still came on I turned and hared down the path, reaching Glen Derry in a time that I have never bettered. You may ask was it really the Fear Laith Mhor? Frankly I think it was. Many times since then I have traversed MacDhui in the mist, bivouacked out in the open, camped on its summit for days on end on different occasions - often alone, and always with an easy mind. For on that day I am convinced I shot the only Fear Liath Mhor my imagination will ever see." Fortunately for Alexander the figure that he filled with lead was intangible and not a lost tourist, this account does show that by 1958 the Fear Liath Mhor had become part of the popular culture of the mountain.

Another witness encounter involved a friend of the author Richard Frere, who wished to remain anonymous. He was camping on top of the mountain when he saw a large brown creature swaggering away down the mountainside in the moonlight. He estimated the size of the figure at around twenty feet tall. Author Wendy Wood heard footsteps following her in the vicinity of the mountain, after hearing Gaelic music, and there have been other reports of phenomena on the mountain, from ghostly music, feelings of panic to the discovery of huge footprints in the 1940's.

### **Explanations?**

There have been many explanations for the Grey Man phenomena, but looking at the experiences as a whole there are actually very few sightings of a 'Grey Man' most accounts are associated with feeling rather than actual physical sightings, even these sightings do not agree: A huge grey mist like figure, a great brown creature 20 feet tall, and a dark human shaped figure.

Some people have put forward the theory that a wild-man or yeti type creature inhabits the area. I think we can safely dismiss this, I have met some wild men from the area, but they were much less hairy than the average yeti and more inclined to be propping up a bar in the wee hours than roaming the cairngorm plateaux scaring the wits out of hapless tourists. Besides explaining a mystery with another mystery is never a good option.

A more reasonable explanation for some of the sightings of huge figures in the mist could be phenomena known as the Brocken spectre, named after the German mountains where the effect was first discovered. An early account of such an event occurs in 'In the Shadow of Cairngorm' by The Rev. W. Forsyth,

'Sir Thomas Dick Lauder describes such an appearance ("Edinburgh New Philosophic Journal, 1831.") "On descending from the top (of Ben Mac Dhui) at about half-past three P.M., an interesting optical appearance presented itself to our view. We had turned towards the east, and the sun shone on our backs, when we saw a very bright rainbow described on the mist before us. The bow, of beautifully distinct prismatic colours, formed about two-thirds of a circle, the extremities of which appeared to rest

on the lower portion of the mountain. In the centre of this incomplete circle there was described a luminous disc, surrounded by the prismatic colours displayed in concentric rings. On the disc itself, each of the party (three in number), as they stood about fifty yards apart, saw his own figure most distinctly delineated, although those of the other two were invisible to him. The representation appeared of the natural size, and the outline of the whole person of the spectator was most correctly portrayed. To prove that the shadow seen by each individual was that of himself, we resorted to various gestures, such as waving our hats, flapping our plaids, &c., all which motions were exactly followed by the airy figure.'

This account shows that the Brocken effect, where shadows are reflected onto mist banks giving the appearance of huge figures, has occurred on Ben Machdhuil.

An interesting explanation for the sound of following footsteps was put forward some years ago, and appeared in the popular Trail magazine. It was suggested that the sound could be caused by freezing action upon footprints recently created in snow. We would first have to presume that the encounter in 1891, and other witness testimonies of footsteps, took place in the appropriate conditions.

The most common factor that links the experiences on the mountain is the feeling of blind panic that the witnesses feel. Some researchers have named such experiences 'Mountain Panic' which is basically a blind panic in wild places. Either as a feeling of a powerful presence, or just an overwhelming sense of fear about nature or something that lies behind nature. This kind of encounter is not uncommon: Chris Townsend the respected long distance walker and author mentions such an experience in 'The Munro's and the Tops'. In Glen Strathfarrar on a track by the Allt Innis a'Mhuill. Chris had an overwhelming feeling of a presence watching him, waiting for him to leave. Rennie McOwan mentions a similar experience in his 'Magic Mountains', and I have heard first hand accounts of similar experiences in wild places. The mechanisms behind this are not at all clear. Some witnesses felt that it was a power behind nature itself, usually hostile (unsurprising given man's track record), and have felt compelled to get away from the area as quickly as possible. When this occurs all the rationality in the world cannot stem the depth of feeling involved. In classical times these experiences were identified with the nature god Pan, who lends his name to the word Pan-ic itself. Whether these experiences are a combination of location, solitude and unfamiliarity, or an actual physical effect is unclear.



In folklore there is a whole denizen of nasties wandering the wilderness perhaps old explanations for the feeling people felt and experienced in the wild areas. From the hideous Nuckelavee, and the Each Uisge, to the Headless Trunk of the MacDonalds, Folklore has a virtual who's who of things you would not like to meet down a dark valley.

Ben Machdhuil is a marvellous mountain in a stunning and prestigious wild area, whether haunted or not the mountain will hopefully remain an unspoiled wild part of Scotland into the future. Personally I believe the Grey Man to be modern Folklore, perhaps relating to older legends, a belief I will repeat in my mind if I ever hear slow thunderous footsteps behind me in the Lairig Ghru.

## ***The Helen Duncan Story***

The remarkable story of Helen Duncan Spiritualist and medium branded a traitor in WWII.



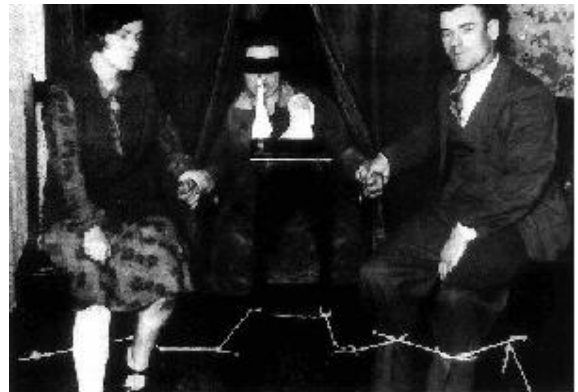
Helen was born in Callander, a small Scottish town on the 25th of November 1897 the daughter of a master cabinet maker. Her family was far from rich. Like many of her fellow Celtic lassies she struggled to earn a living even after her marriage at the age of 20. Her husband, Henry, another cabinet maker, had been injured during WW1. She had 12 pregnancies, but only six children survived. To sustain this large family and a disabled husband she worked in the local bleach factory by day and her Spiritual work and domestic duties by night. The small amount of cash she made from her sittings, mostly token donations from friends and neighbours existing in a similar poverty to her would often discreetly go to their local doctor to pay for those patients who were destitute. This was in the time before Britain's National Health Service concept of free medicine for all had been introduced. But her skill lay in Mediumship of a particular kind, that rare psychic gift of being a vehicle for physical phenomena whilst in trance state. A precious gift that brought comfort to thousands, but one which was eventually going to cost her earthly life.

By the 1930s and 1940s she was travelling the length of wartime Britain giving regular seances in hundreds of Spiritualist churches and home circles. The evidence that flowed from these physical phenomena seances was astonishing.

'Dead' loved ones appeared in physical form, spoke to and touched their earthly relatives and in this way brought both proof of survival and much comfort to thousands of traumatised and grieving wartime families.

One such sitting was attended by a man named Vincent Woodcock, he had brought his sister in law for an evening's demonstration. Those 60 minutes changed both their lives. Vincent gave evidence in London's premier Old Bailey courtroom that the medium Helen Duncan slipped into trance and began producing the much-scoffed 'ectoplasm'. Then his 'dead' wife materialised from this ectoplasmic matter and asked both Vincent and his sister in law to stand up.

The materialised spirit then removed her wedding ring and placed it on her sister's wedding finger, adding, "It is my wish that this takes place for the sake of my little girl". A year later the couple were married and returned for a further seance during which the dead woman appeared once more to give her renewed blessings to the happy couple.



But this touching human story, along with other similar unsolicited and genuine testimonials to her remarkable gifts, were ignored by the law courts for Helen Duncan was destined to 'go down' to appease an establishment terrified that she might accurately discern the date of the D-Day Normandy Landings.

During the Second World War Helen was in great demand from anxious relatives, especially those who had lost close family on active war service. One of many such sittings took place in a private house in the homeport of Britain's Royal Naval fleet, the southern coastal city of Portsmouth on the evening of January 19 1944. It was a dangerous place to hold any meeting - such was the German Luftwaffe's intent on reducing Portsmouth to rubble and disable Britain's fleet. But the real danger lay not in a hail of enemy bombs but with the scepticism and fear of the establishment. For that night a plain-clothes policeman who blew his whistle to launch a raid disrupted her seance. Police hands made a grab for the ectoplasm but the spirit world was too quick for them and it dematerialised quicker than they could catch.

Thus Helen Duncan, together with three of her innocent sitters, were taken up before Portsmouth magistrates and charged with Vagrancy. At this hearing the court was told that Lieutenant R. Worth of the Royal Navy had attended this seance suspecting fraud. He had paid 25 shillings (then worth about \$5) each for two tickets and had passed the second ticket to a policeman. It was this policeman who had made the unsuccessful grab for the ectoplasm, believing it to be a white sheet. But the subsequent finger tip search of the room immediately after the raid failed to discover any white sheets.

Even if she had been found guilty under this charge the maximum fine at that time would have been some five shillings (\$1) and she would have been released. But, very oddly Helen was refused bail. Instead she was sent to London and forced to spend four days in the notorious women's prison called Holloway. It was this same Victorian goal where suffragettes had been forced fed by prison warders and where the grisly gallows waited for all female murderers, spies and traitors. Meanwhile an anxious establishment debated the best charge to lay against this dangerous war criminal Helen Duncan. One her first appearance before the Portsmouth magistrates she had been charged under the catchall act of Vagrancy. This was later amended to one of Conspiracy, which, in wartime Britain, carried the ultimate sentence of death, by hanging. But by the time the case had been referred to England's central criminal court - know as the Old Bailey - the charge had been changed yet again. This time to one of witchcraft and an old Act of 1735 had been dredged out of the dusty law libraries. Under this ancient rune Helen Duncan and her innocent sitters were accused of pretending 'to exercise or use human conjuration that through the agency of Helen Duncan spirits of deceased dead persons should appear to be present'.

But, lest this single charge may falter, the authorities scoured their dusty law precedents for further charges and they found them. One such was the Larceny Act, which accused her of taking money ' by falsely pretending she was in a position to bring about the appearances of these spirits of deceased persons'.

The prosecution was determined to prove Helen Duncan was a fraud. Her trial took place barely a few months before the famous D-Day landings and lasted for seven gruelling days. Spiritualists everywhere were up in arms that one of their most treasured and gifted demonstrators should be treated in such a tawdry manner. A defence fund was quickly raised. It was used to bring witnesses from all over the world to testify to her genuine gifts. Because of this, her case rapidly became a cause celebre which attracted daily headlines in tabloid and broad sheets alike.

One telling development that this was no ordinary case was that in a rare example of cross border co-operation both the Law Societies (senior legal bar councils) of England and Scotland jointly and simultaneously declared this case to be a travesty of justice.

As a debunking exercise the case failed miserably. Sceptics must have winced at the daily reporting of case after case where 'dead' relatives had materialised and given absolute proof of their continued existence. One Kathleen McNeill, wife of a Glaswegian forgemaster, told how she has attended such a seance at which her sister appeared. Her sister had died some a few hours previously, after an operation, and news of her death could not have been known. Yet Albert, Helen Duncan's guide, announced that she had just passed over. And, at a subsequent seance, some years later Mrs McNeill's father strode out of the cabinet and came within six feet of her to better display his single eye, a hallmark of his earthly life.

By the penultimate day of this ridiculous trial the defence was ready to call their star witness Alfred Dodd, an academic and much respected author of works on Shakespeare's sonnets. Alfred told the court that during 1932 and 1940 he had been a regular guest at Helen Duncan's home seances. At one of these sittings his grandfather had materialised, a tall, corpulent man with a bronzed face and smoking cap, hair dressed in his customary donkey-fringe. After speaking with his grandson the spirit then turned to his friend Tom and said, "Look into my face and into my eyes. Ask Alfred to show you my portrait. It is the same man".

Two equally respected journalists, James Herries and Hannen Swaffer then took their places in the Old Bailey witness box - a place where for hundreds of years many a murderer has given evidence and many a witness has pointed an accusing finger. The chain smoking Swaffer, who had already won acclaim as the acerbic un-crowned father of Fleet Street (home of England's newspaper quarter) and co-founder of the Spiritualist weekly "Psychic News", told the court that anyone who described ectoplasm as butter Muslim " would be a child. Under a red light in a seance room it would look yellow or pink whilst these spirit forms all displayed a white appearance".

James Herries himself, a Justice of the Peace and much respected psychic investigator of some 20 years standing and the chief reporter of the prestigious and influential "Scotsman" broad sheet, affirmed that he had seen Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, famed author of the Sherlock Holmes books, himself to materialise at one of Helen Duncan's seances. He had especially noted the distinctive Doyle rounded features, moustache and equally unmistakable gravely voice.

But, wisely or otherwise, the defence had decided that the best test of Helen Duncan's genuine gifts were for her to give a demonstration of physical phenomena whilst in trance from the very witness box of England's Central Criminal Courts. This suggestion really did cause a frightened flurry in the ivory dovecotes of the establishment. If she pulled it off, they debated, then instead of the censure they sought her cause would be spread throughout the land and even beyond. And this would mean that the famed British legal system adopted by so many former colonies - including America - would be held to total ridicule.



Hurried conferences with the best legal minds were held throughout the night. Their solution was to reject this offer and suggest instead that Mrs Duncan be called as a witness - thus giving the prosecution an opportunity to cross examine this ordinary

Scottish housewife and, in doing so, attempt to destroy her credibility. But Helen's defence lawyers saw through this ploy. They pointed out that Mrs Duncan could not testify since she was in a trance state during these seances and could not, therefore, discuss what had transpired.



The jury only took half an hour to reach their verdict; Helen and her co-defendants were found Guilty of conspiracy to contravene that ancient 1735 Witchcraft Act but Not Guilty on all other charges. Portsmouth's chief of police then described this new 'criminal's' background. Mrs Duncan was married to a cabinetmaker and had a family of six children ranging from 18-26 and she had been visiting Portsmouth for some five years. He then described her as " an unmitigated humbug and pest" and revealed that in 1941 she had been reported for announcing the loss of one of His Majesty's ships before the fact had been publicly known. The presiding judge announced a weekend's delay whilst he considered sentence. Helen herself left the dock weeping in her broad Scottish dialect, "I never hee'd so mony lies in a' my life".

The following Monday morning the judge declared that the verdict had not been concerned with whether ' genuine manifestations of the kind are possible . . .this court has nothing whatever to do with such abstract questions'. However he interpreted the jury's findings to mean that Helen Duncan had been involved in plain dishonesty and for this reason he therefore sentenced her to nine months imprisonment. The shocked Spiritualist movement immediately demanded a change in the law. They felt that she had been prosecuted to stop any leakage of classified wartime information. As one of many, many, examples during 1943 and once more in that ungrateful city of Portsmouth Helen Duncan had given a seance during which a sailor materialised reporting that he had gone down with His Majesty's Ship "Barham" whose loss was not officially announced until three months later.

But, the defence right of appeal to the House of Lords, Britain's highest court of appeal, was denied. The establishment had achieved its objective and certainly did not want one single inch of further publicity. Helen was sent back to London's Holloway prison, that Victorian monstrosity for female prisoners still being used today. It was not only the best legal minds in the country that felt this case had been a major miscarriage of justice. So too did her prison warders. They refused to 'bang her up'. For the entire nine months of her unjust incarceration Helen Duncan's prison cell door was never once locked! What's more she continued to apply her psychic gifts, as a constant steam of warders and inmates alike found their way to her cell for spiritual upliftment and guidance.

And many senior Spiritualists who were close to Helen report that it was not only prisoners and staff who made pilgrimage to the dreaded Holloway Goal. So too did some of her other more notable sitters, including Britain's Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill himself. Churchill was no stranger to psychic phenomena. Recalling the events of the Boer War, when he had been captured, then later escaping and seeking sanctuary. He explained in his autobiography how he was " guided by some form of mental planchette (a Spiritualist tool) to the only house in a 30 mile radius that was sympathetic to the British cause". Had he knocked on the back door of any other

house he would have been arrested and returned to the Boer commanders to be shot as an escaping prisoner of war. Many years prior to this he had been ordained into the Grand Ancient Order of Druids. And throughout his life he experienced many times when his psychic sixth sense saved his life.

Churchill was exceeding angry indeed when the Helen Duncan case began. He penned an irate ministerial note to the Home Secretary, " Give me a report of the 1735 Witchcraft Act. What was the cost of a trial to the State in which the Recorder (junior magistrate) was kept busy with all this obsolete tomfoolery to the detriment of the necessary work in the courts?" But his civil servants were over-ridden by the all - powerful intelligence community. D-Day was coming and their levels of paranoia had reached an all time high and even a Prime Minister's anger was to be set aside. Helen Duncan, mother of nine and part time bleach factory employee was considered a risk and they wanted her out of the way when the Allies struck. Her case was a transparent conspiracy to frame her ' in the interests of national security',

Meanwhile, having served her full sentence, Helen Duncan was released on 22 September 1944, vowing never to give another seance. Despite her declaration with in a few months she felt that strong call from the Spirit World to continue her work and was soon spending more time than ever in trance state. Perhaps too much so, for the quality of her seances since imprisonment appeared to have had deteriorated even to the point where Spiritualism's governing National Union actually withdrew her diploma at one stage. Helen's Spiritualist friends say that during his visits to her cell Prime Minister Churchill made promises of making mends to Helen. True or speculative it is a fact that in 1951 the damning 1735 Witchcraft Act, which had been used to imprison Helen, was finally repealed. In its place came the Fraudulent Mediums Act and some four years later in 1954 Spiritualism was officially recognised as a proper religion by formal Act of Parliament. And Spiritualists everywhere knew why and they rejoiced that whilst frauds would be properly prosecuted the authorities, especially the police, would stop harassing true working Mediums.

They were wrong. In November 1956 police raided a seance in the Midlands City of Nottingham. They grabbed the presiding medium, strip searched her and took endless flashlight photographs. They shouted at her that they were looking for beards, masks and shrouds. But they found nothing. The medium was Helen Duncan and in their ignorance the police had committed the worst possible sin of physical phenomena, that a medium in trance must NEVER, ever be touched. As the Spirit World's teachers have patiently explained so many times when this happens the ectoplasm returns to the medium's body far too quickly and can cause immense - sometimes even fatal - damage.

And so it was in this case. A doctor was summonsed and discovered two second degree burns across Helen's stomach. She was so ill that she was immediately taken back to her Scottish home and later rushed to hospital.

Five weeks after that police raid she was dead.

*My thanks goes to Michael Colmer (Author) for his kind permission to use his article on the life of Helen Duncan spiritualist and medium.*

## ***Christmas, Yule and the Winter Solstice***

The 25th of December is associated with the birth of Christ and the celebration of the nativity, but it is also an amalgamation of pagan festivals and traditions dating back before the birth of Christ.

To our ancestors the shortest day (21st December) marked the lowest ebb of the year, but it also marked the day when the sun was reborn, gradually growing in strength to the Midsummer Solstice.

Yule was the traditional name for the celebrations around the 25th; the festival lasted for twelve days, which are now the twelve days of Christmas. The origin of the word Yule seems to originate from the Anglo Saxon word for sun and light. Most likely it refers to the rebirth of the sun from the shortest day. In many places fires or candles were kindled to burn through the twelve days that marked the festivities. Another fire tradition was that of the Yule log, lit from the remains of last years log at sunset on the 25th of December. The Yule log was often of Oak or Ash, and the burned remains of it were thought to guard a home against fire and lightning. The ashes were also sprinkled on the surrounding fields to ensure good luck for the coming year's harvest. The largest remaining part of the log was kept safe to kindle next year's fire. Fraser in his book 'The Golden Bough' suggests that Midwinter was a major fire festival in ancient times, and it is highly probable that the Yule Log was a remnant of that tradition.

Many of the symbols of Christmas echo its aspect of rebirth and hope in darkness. Holly was thought to be important because it retains its greenery right through the winter months, and as such is a symbol of summer life in the winter starkness. Holly was the male symbol of this greenery, and Ivy was the feminine, the two often placed together as a symbol of fecundity at the dark end of the year. There was also a belief that evergreen plants and trees were refuges for the woodland spirits through the winter months.

The Christmas tree may have also been a symbol of the above aspects, although the tradition of setting up a Christmas tree within the home is generally traced back to Prince Albert who started the practice in 1841. Mistletoe is another plant associated with Christmas; sacred to the druids, its importance can be traced back to Celtic times, although the original reason for their significance is now largely forgotten.

The 25th of December was also the birthday of the Roman god Mithras and the Greek hero Dionysus. Mithras was known as the unconquered sun, hence his association with the solstice time. Early Christianity adopted the 25th as Christ's birthday around the 3rd or 4th century BCE, as the early scriptures do not record the day of Christ's birth. This is generally accepted to have been a way of amalgamating Christmas with the older festival of the sun, which was still being observed by the Pagan community. It also helped to replace the worship of Mithras, which once rivalled Christianity in popularity.

Today Christmas has many other associations and traditions dating back through the centuries, and stemming from different cultures and influences. It has always been a time for celebration and merry making at the dark end of the year.

## ***The Mystery of Lincoln Cathedral by Dan Green***

**An article by the controversial author Dan Green on the mysteries of Lincoln Cathedral.**

There is a suspicion of true irony in the fact that Hollywood came to film scenes of Dan Brown's 'The Da Vinci Code' at the splendid Gothic Cathedral of Lincoln, since it has been discovered that it has its own authentic code entwining with the global mystery of Rennes-le-Chateau, starting with the discovery of a strange depiction at the scene of The Last Supper at the Great East Window, whereupon instead of either a cup or loaf on Christ's plate, we see a dog! Furthermore, this dog symbology reappears a further twice - once inside the Cathedral and once outside - reinforcing the theory that hidden symbolism and the layout of the building embraces the principles of sacred geometry and a transmission of secret architectural knowledge hinting at the dog star Sirius.



The same dog that appears on the platter also appears on a 15th century woodcut of the Stations of the Cross, inexplicably staring up at Jesus on his way to Calvary, and another dog that stares up accompanies the statue of famed Holy Grail poet Lord Tennyson, standing in the precincts of the Cathedral. The magnificent 13th century Rose Window at the North Transept may be more correctly known as a Wind Rose or Compass Rose. It has been said by Masons that if the window of this beautifully stained glass decorated Rose Window be removed, and if one were to stand in a certain position within the Cathedral at night, one would clearly see in all its beauty, the constellations of the Northern 'Star Clock' revolving through the stone circles. Thirty foot up the buttress of the south-east corner of the Transept, we find an East sundial that is unusual owing to the oddity of its numerals - no hour lines are marked earlier than 6am - in Lincoln, it is earlier than 6am that we see the sunrise during the Egyptian 'Dog Days' in conjunction with the star Sirius, suggesting the Dial is a dog day marker.



Much of the hidden symbology within the Cathedral alludes to the bright and morning star Sirius and the current chapel dedicated to Mary in the Cathedral is called the Morning chapel. According to 'The Da Vinci Code', the Grail waits underneath ancient Roslin. This may be alluding to the ROSE Window at LINcoln - spelling ROSLIN. Brown's alleged fiction assures us that She, Mary, the Grail, rests at last beneath the starry skies...given that the Rose Window is a planisphere, the

Round Table given to Guinevere (correctly pronounced 'Queen-of-air'), a map or atlas of the Northern Constellations, a possible reinterpretation can read 'rests ATLAST' beneath the starry skies of the Rose Window, atlas of the Northern Heavens? Radio

astronomy has proven to us that the iron content of the star Sirius is the same as the iron in our blood and the iron of the earth and of our solar system. Sirius is our blood.....the Blood and the Grail ? For further explanations of the relationship between the Cathedral and Rennes-le-Chateau and the Grail, please visit my interview at [www.andrewgough.co.uk](http://www.andrewgough.co.uk)



We can't leave the Cathedral behind without a word about the Masonic marker of its infamous Lincoln Imp, high up between two arches on the North side of the Angel Choir. This 13th century demon is said to have been blown into the Cathedral by the wind. Generally speaking, an imp is a small demon that has such a restricted power that it relishes in creating havoc by spreading untrue tales and lies amongst the gullible. The word originates from Old English 'impa' meaning 'shoot', 'offspring', 'graft'. In Masonic architecture a graft is 'the place of junction of stock and scion'...'scion' a word from Old French 'sion, scion', meaning a young member of a family, a descendant, an offshoot. Is this a reference to what Dan Brown in his novel refers to as the alleged fathered child of Jesus and Mary, and the Priory of Sion who keep the secret ?

The East Dial sundial faces the splendour of the East Porch, known as the Judgement Porch. Underneath a dog rose shaped detail, we see Jesus high above Mary and child. It is strange that we are asked to accept the adult Jesus above Mary, cradling the infant Jesus in her arms. To gain entry to heaven, we must be as children, and so it is reasonable to suggest, that seen through a child's eyes, one could be forgiven for thinking that we are looking at the adult Jesus, or father, above the mother and child - the child of that father and mother, Jesus and Mary Magdalene? Why is the statue of Mary outside of the church ? Is it because she is the Magdalene, upon whom the early church passed Judgement and cast her out ? Jesus wears a robe and sash that clearly shows a specific tied knot. Is this the Masons telling us that he has 'tied the knot', a phrase that goes back to Roman days and means 'to be married' ?

It is interesting to note that that the first church built on this site in 60AD was that of Mary Magdalene, destroyed to make way for the Minster in 1097. So who may be responsible for all these clues concerning the cathedral? It is thought that the Knights Templar, alleged Guardians of the Grail, through their discoveries during the Crusades formed a missing link in the chain of transmission of secret architectural knowledge. Viewed from the air, Lincoln Cathedral is in the shape of the Cross of Lorraine, the original insignia employed by the Templars. For further information regarding the Templars in Lincolnshire, view my feature at [farshores.org/a07tq.htm](http://farshores.org/a07tq.htm)



## Book Reviews

### *The Witches' Heart* By Eileen Smith Reviewed by Link

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#### ***A new look at Traditional Wicca, straight from the heart...***

"*The Witches' Heart*," by Eileen Smith, offers a new and innovative look at traditional Wicca. The book is the perfect teaching tool for covens to use with their students, or for individual seekers to use as a guide along their journey. Based on the EarthGuard tradition, founded by the author in 1998, "*The Witches' Heart*" is an insightful mix of both personal experiences and traditional teachings.



The book starts off with a description of Smith's own personal discovery of the Craft, with a very warm and heart-felt description of her early days with Gardnerian Wicca, including encounters both with Ray Buckland, Patricia Crowther and others. Unlike many of today's more popular authors, Eileen Smith experienced first-hand the early days of British Traditional Wicca taking root in the Americas, serving as a teacher and mentor to students since 1975.

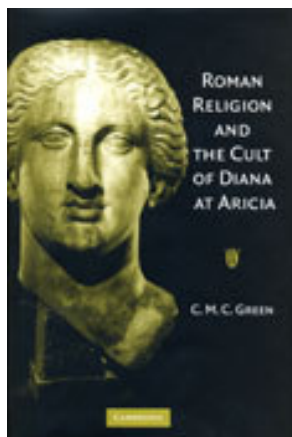
Smith's very conversational writing style makes the book entertaining and easy to read. It is an excellent resource for exercises, meditations and rituals to help the reader along their own personal path towards self-discovery. "As you begin tuning into nature, you will find yourself tuning into yourself as well," explains Smith.

"*The Witches' Heart*" is also a working Book of Shadows, explaining the basics of Circle, the seasonal holidays and a wide variety of magickal workings that will intrigue both sages and seekers. Of special note is the section entitled "Journey with the Goddess" – which guides the reader though their own personal 30-day journey to connect with and richly experience deity. The book also shares a generous number of photos, artwork and tables to better illustrate each chapter.

Insightful and entertaining, both useful and unique, "*The Witches' Heart*" beats loud and clear to readers around the world, and is a great addition to your library!



**Roman Religion**  
**and the Cult of Diana at Aricia by C. M. C. Green,**  
**Reviewed by Susanne William Rasmussen**



The cult of Diana flourished for more than a thousand years, from the Bronze Age to the second century C.E., in the landscape of Aricia about 11 miles from Rome. Green's book examines the various archaeological and literary evidence for Diana's Arician sanctuary and its cult. The purpose of the book is to analyse the many aspects of the cult and to rethink traditional views and arguments in the light of recent theoretical insights and new material evidence unearthed since Wissowa's authoritative exposition of the cult in *Religion und Kultus der Römer* (1912), not to mention Frazer's much disputed treatment of the subject in *The Golden Bough* (1911-15).

Green's book has a clear structure and is divided into three parts. The first one treats the archaeological evidence of Diana's sanctuary as well as her representation in art and literature. The excavations of the site are examined, especially those of the sanctuary on the shore of Lake Nemi, which lies in the crater of a small, extinct volcano. (The lake appears almost round and the Romans called it *speculum Dianae*, the mirror of Diana.) The various sources are placed in the cultural context of Latium and Rome, with focus on religious and political rivalry between Rome and Aricia. Green distinguishes sharply between Roman and Latin religion and identifies Diana as a Latin goddess of hunters worshipped long before the Artemis type came to Italy. Along these lines, the book deals with the (supposed) problem of how to reconcile the many faces of Diana: the moon goddess, the hunting goddess, the goddess of the underworld, the healer, the guardian of women in childbirth, the guardian of the roads, etc.

The second part of the book comprises a discussion of the qualities and errors in Frazer's and Wissowa's interpretations of Diana's cult and of the ritual of the *rex nemorensis*, the fugitive slave priest-king who possesses the golden bough, and who kills his predecessor and is killed by his successor. Green reproduces in an appendix the fourth-century grammarian Servius' commentary on *Aeneid* 6.136, one of the disputed sources about the *rex nemorensis*, and offers a new translation of the passage, as well as useful discussion of particularly philological problems. Furthermore, the second part of the book seeks to reconstruct various relations between Diana's Arician cult and the mythical figures Orestes and Iphigenia, Virbius, Hippolytus, and Egeria.

The third part of the book aims at establishing Diana's relationship with her worshippers, especially concerning the goddess' healing function. Contrary to the view of several modern scholars on ancient medicine and healing, Green convincingly shows that healing sanctuaries, far from being indifferent to medical theory, were at the forefront of medical developments. Practical medicine was mixed with religious conduct in the context of the sanctuary and the priests were the agents of the god or goddess, who was the ultimate source of the healing knowledge. Or, as Green concludes: "The goddess would seem, on the face of it, to have combined the various skills of family practitioner, psychiatrist, and veterinarian" (p.236).

Green stresses that the strange and violent ritual of the *rex nemorensis* stands well within the parameters of Roman and Latin kingship. According to this point of view,



the rex nemorensis at Aricia remained a constant reminder of the nature of early Latin monarchy and of the relationship between marginalized men (fugitive slaves, criminals, exiles, foreigners) and the exercise of monarchical power. The rex nemorensis, as well as Orestes and Hippolytus, is thus interpreted as the cultic representation of the meaning of exile, flight and escape, and as an integral part of the religious identity of the Arician cult of Diana.

As an example of the religious significance of the rex nemorensis, Green proposes a special interpretation: according to Ovid, the area around the Arician sanctuary had become a very popular retreat from the city, with villas springing up everywhere. Julius Caesar, among others, appreciated the beauty of the place and commissioned a villa to be built at Nemi. According to Suetonius, however, when Caesar saw the new villa, he had it destroyed because it had not met his expectations (*quia non tota ad animum ei responderat totam diruisse*) (p. 27). Green explains this act with reference to religious symbolism

involving the rex nemorensis and Caesar's victory over Pompey. According to Green, the ritual of the rex nemorensis was still the central symbol of the sanctuary and therefore "Caesar, the fugitive and challenger who had fought Pompey, the ruling (if not reigning) Roman, to the death, could not have a villa overlooking the sanctuary and hope that his enemies would fail to use the symbolism of this other rex against him" (p. 28). Even though Caesar's religious attitude is a matter of some modern scholarly dispute, it is tempting to call Green's interpretation religious overkill. First of all, we do not know for sure if Caesar's villa overlooked the sanctuary at all. Secondly, why not believe Suetonius in this matter? He explicitly refers to the story as one example among several of Caesar's appreciation of beauty and comfort. In addition, he emphasizes that Caesar was broke and deep in debt at the time, information that makes the story even more significant. If we consider the fact that the villa was therefore built with money lent by Pompey to Atticus, who then lent it to Caesar (much to Pompey's irritation) (Cicero, *ad Att.* 6.1.25) the destruction of the villa could be seen as a manifestation of personal-political conflicts, rather than as coming out of fear (from a religious perspective) of a villa with a view of the sanctuary. If, of course, Suetonius's story is true at all.



The book focuses on the religious "experience," "belief," "commitment," or "devotion" of the worshippers (e.g. pp. 7, 81, 108, 283, 286). One could therefore have wished for just a brief comment on the relevant theoretical discussion of the question of religious belief in relation to the (crucial) importance of performing ritual in Roman religion. A few remarks explaining the author's view on these matters would have been instructive in dealing with, e.g., the worshippers of Diana the healer. At Aricia there were springs for good water, pools for

therapeutic bathing, and votive testimonials in abundance testifying to Diana's effective assistance to human beings, as well as animals, in need. Nevertheless, as Green herself remarks, albeit in a note (note 4 p. 285), the inscriptions concerning e.g. Asclepius at Epidaurus indicate that skeptics were common in these situations. Could this not confirm the view that it was accurate performance of ritual (sacrifices, votives etc.) rather than the religious belief or disbelief that was the touchstone of such religious contexts?

The book gives a vivid picture of the sacred topography of Aricia, including the crater, the woods, the lake, the springs, the caves, the theatre, and the baths. Vivid, too, is Green's attempt to reconstruct Diana's cult and the temple with the golden roof, her priest with the golden bough, her representation of the golden moon etc., not to mention her significance to Augustus as he was inaugurating his own golden age. Green seeks to establish the Arician cult's history during more than a thousand years and "to construct a complete portrait of this goddess" (p. xx). This kind of synthesis is of course always left open to both methodological and theoretical objections, involving critical considerations of the character of the source material in general and of modern theories of Roman religion in particular. Green relies, for instance, very much on fourth-century Servius, without really discussing the problems involved in using such a late source. Likewise, elements of ritual, myth, and philosophy from different periods and cultural contexts are sometimes mixed uncritically in the reconstruction, smoothing over the gaps in our knowledge, in order to present an even surface.

Expressing her gratitude towards Wissowa's and Frazer's excellent works, Green quotes Bernard of Chartres' famous apophthegm (p. xv): "we are dwarves standing on the shoulders of giants." And she stresses the conclusion of the maxim: "we stand on the shoulders of giants to see better and farther than they." Green offers an engaging and comprehensive examination and interpretation of the archaeological and literary evidence for Diana's cult. Having her feet planted on such scholarly shoulders, she certainly makes one see farther and better, with new perspectives on the important interplay between ancient religion, politics, and society as a whole. So never mind, that, when it comes to the art of scholarly speculation, Green's right foot sometimes seems to slip from Wissowa's solid shoulder and seek footing on Frazer's golden but more fragile bough.



## ***The Malleus Maleficarum*** ***Reviewed by Jenny Gibbons***

The *Malleus Maleficarum* (Hammer of Witches) is a detailed and accurate guide to how the Inquisition ran a Witch trial. Written by two respected inquisitors and enthusiastically endorsed by the Pope, the *Malleus* lay on the bench of every Witch hunter in Europe. Its detailed descriptions of sabbats and covens spread the fear of Witches throughout Europe, dramatically increasing the number of Witch trials.

Not!!!

That's the common view of the *Malleus*, but every sentence in that first paragraph is dead wrong.

The *Malleus Maleficarum* is indeed one of the most influential Witch-hunting manuals of all times. And since it's easily available in modern English translation, it's still influential, the darling of amateur historians today. But it's not a reliable guide to the Burning Times: it's a duplicitous text with a checkered past, a book you simply can't take at face value. So most of this review will focus on common misconceptions about the *Malleus* -- things you ought to know if you want to use it in your research.

### **#1: The Author and His Motivation**

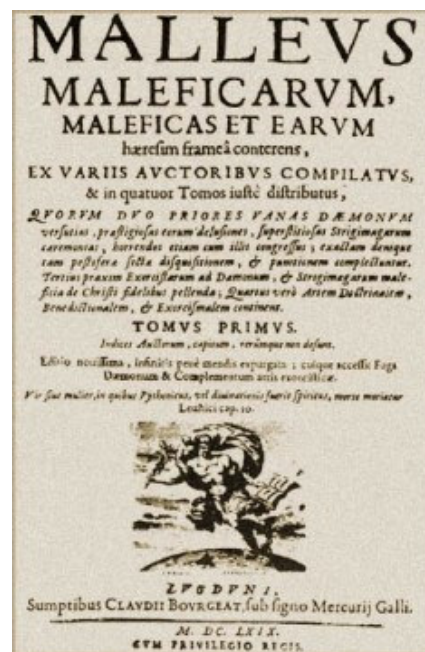
Almost all of the *Malleus* was written by one man: Heinrich Kramer (aka Henry Institoris). A German inquisitor of the late 15th century, Kramer was not a well-respected man. His views on Witchcraft were considered weird and extreme by most of his fellow clergymen, who continually opposed and hindered his trials. For instance, Kramer ran a large trial in Innsbruck in 1485, where 57 people were investigated. Nobody was killed. The bishop of Innsbruck became so irritated with Kramer's fascination with the Witches' sexual behaviour that he shut down the trials, claiming that the devil was in the inquisitor, not the Witches.

Kramer wrote the *Malleus* to win the cooperation of his peers. The book isn't -- as some assume -- a guide to what most 15th century Christians believed about Witches. It's a minority opinion, written to convince the populace at large of the dangers of Witchcraft.

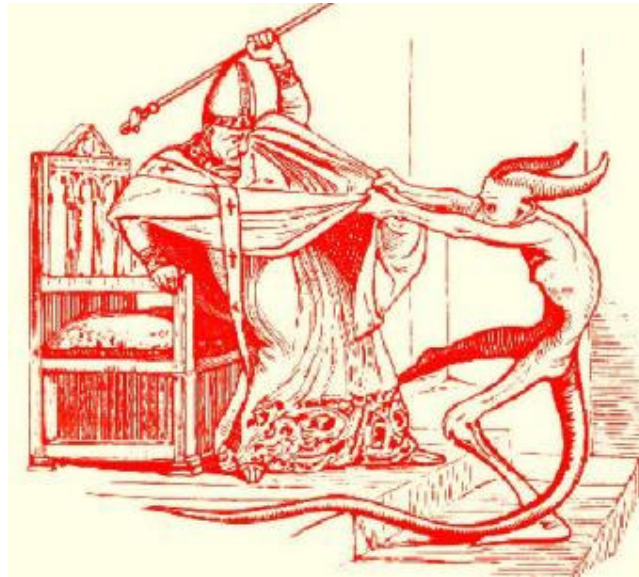
### **#2: The Endorsements**

The *Malleus* is usually circulated along with a papal bull "Summis Desiderantes", which rails against Witches and the people who oppose Kramer and his co-author, Jacob (or James) Sprenger. In the 15th century, there was also a little recommendation from the Faculty of Cologne (the Inquisition's top theologians). Both of these endorsements are misleading.

Pope Innocent had actually never read the *Malleus* when he wrote "Summis Desiderantes". Kramer complained to the Pope about the poor reception he was receiving from other priests, and the Pope (who was very superstitious and feared



Witches greatly) obligingly gave Kramer this bull. He also asked a respected Dominican scholar, Jacob Sprenger, to help Kramer write the Malleus. Kramer treated the bull as if it was a full endorsement of his book, but it wasn't.



The recommendation from Cologne is an out-and-out forgery. When they were finished writing, Sprenger presented the Malleus to the Faculty, asking for its approval. Instead, the Inquisition resoundingly condemned the book. It said that the legal procedures it recommended were unethical and illegal, and that its demonology was not consistent with Catholic doctrine. Undaunted, Kramer forged an enthusiastic endorsement. As you might expect, the Faculty discovered this quickly and was enraged! Kramer and Sprenger parted on bad terms, and the Inquisition condemned Kramer in 1490, just four years after the Malleus was published.

### **#3: The Impact of the Malleus**

The Malleus wasn't an immediately influential book. Most Church and Inquisitorial courts ignored it, probably because of the Faculty's condemnation. Civil courts, unfortunately, gave it more weight. Fooled by the forged recommendation and the out-of-context bull, many non-religious judges believed that the Malleus had the approval of the Church. Many used it, though it did not -- as some authors say -- lie on the bench of every judge.

Its publication did not increase the number of Witch trials. In fact, it came at the beginning of a slight lull, when the steady rise in trials stalled for a few decades. But when the major panics of the Burning Times hit in the mid-16th century, the Malleus came into its own. It was the most detailed discussion of Witchcraft around. Many civil courts were handling Witch trials for the first time. They had no idea how to proceed, and so they latched onto the Malleus' recommendations gladly. By the end of the 16th century, other Witch hunting manuals eclipsed the Malleus. But at the beginning of the crazes, it did have an enormous impact.

### **#4: The Theories**

You also have to take the Malleus' theories with a grain of salt. As I've said, Kramer's views were condemned by the Inquisition. They certainly don't represent the official view of the Church of the 15th century.

If you compare the Malleus to other Witch-hunting manuals, you can see how unique its theories are. Kramer's sexual hang-ups shine through like a super nova. I mean, there are seven entire chapters on all the awful things Witches can do to penises, and Kramer apparently thought that it was quite common for men to wake up and discover that their Virile Member had walked off in the middle of the night... The book's sexism is also extreme. Most manual profer sexist explanations for why the majority of Witches are women. But none are as virulently misogynist as the Malleus.

The theology is also primitive. Read the Malleus closely, and you'll notice that many of the "traditional" bits of Witch lore are missing. There are no sabbats. No covens. No Witches' marks. Many of the Witchcraft stereotypes we're familiar with developed in the 16th century. By comparing the Malleus (1484) to, say, the Compendium Maleficarum (1608), you can see how much beliefs changed during the height of the panics.



**That's the history of the Malleus, in brief. Now for a review:**

The Malleus is dreadfully dull reading. It's long, confusing, and dry, "enlivened" only by occasional shocking bits of misogyny and bigotry. So before you read it, I encourage you to ask yourself why you're bothering.

Is it to learn what Witch hunting was like? Well, the Malleus won't tell you. You're better off reading trial records or pamphlet accounts of individual trials. (Which you can find in books like *Witchcraft in England* by Barbara Rosen, or Alan Kors' *Witchcraft in Europe, 1100 - 1700*.)

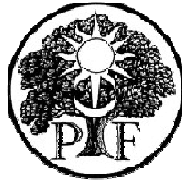
Do you want to learn what the Church taught about Witches? Again, the Malleus won't help you. You need to read tons of material to understand the Church's responses (or, more sensibly, you can read scholarly summaries of the debate).

The Malleus will help you if:

- a) You want to get a feel for what a Witch hunting manual was like.
- b) You want to understand the origins of some of the later stereotypes.
- c) You want some shocking quotations (the Malleus is chock-full of them...)



The big thing to remember, however, is that the Malleus does not give an accurate picture of what Witch hunting was like. It's an extreme, radical text, and gives a very distorted view of life in the Burning Times.



## **Contact us !**

On a national level, each country has a National Coordinator. This is the person you should write to with all your questions and you should keep him/her informed of changes of address or e-mail! If you cannot contact your National Coordinator, you can contact the International Coordinator.

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