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MYDDLE EARTH

OFFICIAL QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF THE
PAGAN FEDERATION MIDWEST AND WALES
DISTRICT



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And its a goodbye from me and, at least for a while, a goodbye from Myddle Earth

Well there certainly are a lot of changes happening this Imbolc. Audrey and Richard have their own tale to tell you so please take a look at page 2. For me, this is my last issue of Myddle Earth as editor and possibly this is also the last issue of Myddle Earth (at least until a new volunteer editor comes forward).

It is time to open a new chapter for me both with regards to work and to focus on my studies in the craft. My goddess is strongly indicating my priorities need to be adjusted. That said, the last couple of years have been lovely - being the first to read all your interesting and brilliantly written articles and then to compile them all into a new issue has been great fun. There are many more people who read the magazine than contribute though and so the input from my friends at Moon Books has been essential to provide content. Hopefully you have enjoyed reading the articles provided by those authors.

That said I do feel the magazine needs to be bursting with content provided by the members. You all have interesting stories to tell, issues to discuss and experiences to share. That is what the magazine needs more of. You don't have to make a regular commitment or worry about spelling and grammar. We can sort that out.

I am so grateful to the stalwart support of Hannah, Audrey, Richard and Andy, who have consistently provided content issue after issue. Thank you for making my job that much easier.

So this is farewell, this Wren is taking flight to a new destination.

Wren





DISTRICT MANAGERS' REPORT - Imbolc 2024

BY AUDREY & RICHARD
DISTRICT MANAGERS, PF MID-WEST AND WALES

Hello, and...Good-bye

There's a puzzle! What does this apparently contradictory opening mean?

It means that we have given in our notice as Pagan Federation Officers after many years' service. Between the two of us, we've clocked up in excess of 50 years volunteering for the PF in various ways, and are now announcing our retirement. This isn't a sad farewell, so don't feel sad for us. It's just come to that point when we feel it's time to go, to hand over to some other volunteers. They may decide to do some things differently, or perhaps continue in the same way, but it's down to them to make their own way and we aren't expecting anything in particular.

It's been an interesting journey! At times frustrating, tedious, rewarding. We go back to the days when all PF communication was done by telephone, paperwork and letter post. Council meetings were held in a hired room and Committee meetings in someone's home. Memberships were paid for exclusively by cheque and postal order, press releases were typed and leaflets of every kind and colour of paper were handed round at events. We remember the days of pseudonyms for members and Officers to protect them from hostile employers or family as well as unwelcome media attention and harassment. Pub moots might be billed as 'mythology and folklore group', for the same reason. Witches would talk about when they 'came out of the broom closet'. The very word 'Pagan', now used openly by mainstream society, was only used amongst trusted friends. Symbolic jewellery might be kept hidden inside clothing until the moot venue or seasonal celebration was reached, greetings of 'BB' (blessed be) whispered as people hugged their kindred spirits.

It all seems laughable now, but this goes to show what a big part the Pagan Federation has played in demonstrating to wider society that we are not evil, but just ordinary folks drawn to the mysteries that other religions left behind or actively shunned. Every one of you that has been on the journey has played a valuable part in making life easier, and meant we could hold our heads up without fear of censure. The ridicule is still there in certain amounts, it's impossible to please everyone, but take it from us, things have definitely got better for Pagans! Long may it continue!

All our Good Wishes go to every one of you, and to those who take the volunteering mantle from us. Thank you for your continued support.

Audrey & Richard
(Outgoing District Managers, Pagan Federation Mid-west and Wales)

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If you are interested in any of the vacant positions, please email the District Manager email address:

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Tilly Treehugger - Indulge Your Senses

Our world is saturated with stimulation of every kind, both natural and artificial. It seems, though, that the artificial, manufactured stimuli have overtaken the natural to a point that is harming us and Nature. I'm writing this in mid-December, when every street is a riot of fake brightness and noise. So would anyone like to join with me in shedding the pretend sensory input and instead spend a day bathing in Mother Nature's bounty? If a full day is too much (some folks work outside the home for a living and are carers who can't take that time out of their lives), take maybe 3 or 4 hours. Use whatever senses you have.

Begin by switching off all electronic devices. TV, computer, radio, 'Alexa', chiming clocks and alarms. Backlit screens and audio especially dominate our lives so much, they have become normal. Give them (and yourself) a break. Artificial light is the same, so do this at a time when you can manage with natural light.

What can you see? Notice the shapes and colours of things around you. Plants, animals, birds, other people, are busying themselves in their own ways. Clouds float in the sky, streams flow, waves break on the beach. Just watch without interacting.

Listen...can you hear small creatures scuttling in the undergrowth, birds singing, wind whistling in bare tree branches, rain falling? If the sounds of civilisation intrude, try going somewhere more remote if possible. It's surprising how much sound travels when the cacophony of modern life is tuned out. Have you heard anything unfamiliar to you, or seldom noticed?

Touch the Earth. At this time of year it may be cold, damp, unpleasant to human skin, so let your fingers stray to sprouting new shoots of green life awakening as Spring approaches. Feel the sticky buds on trees, furry pussy-willows, dangling catkins, the rough bark of a poplar or the smoothness of a paper-like silver birch. Is there a cold wind on your face, still air or gentle sunlight?

Smell the air. Can you detect damp soil, or is there no discernible scent? Are you by the coast or inland body of water, and does it have a different odour to other times of year? Very few flowers have opened yet to give out their perfumes, but if you do this on a mild day, some insects with a much more keen sense of smell than us may have emerged from hibernation to feast from snowdrops or crocuses.

Taste is the most difficult sense to explore at this time, as there is so little growing yet. If you find a hawthorn sprouting very early leaves, take a few of them to eat. They are edible, and can be included in salads or added to sandwiches. Young stinging nettles can be eaten too, but steam them first, or you'll get a sensation that is not pleasant at all! If you are out in the rain, stick out your tongue and catch the drops. Do they taste of anything?

I hope this has been a pleasant experience for you, and a welcome diversion from an otherwise busy day. Try to make it a regular thing, if only for an hour.

Tilly's Top Tip

Go "plogging"! This word comes from Denmark, and describes the practice of picking up litter whilst jogging. As well as keeping fit by the footwork (walk if you can't jog), stooping to pick up litter exercises the lower limbs and has the added bonus of clearing unsightly and wildlife-harming discarded rubbish. Take any cans or bottles to your local or home recycling bin, if possible. Double win!



Tilly

INTRAFATH INTERESTS

BY HANNAH

In case you missed the Intrafaith blog on the PF Communities site here is an interview with Paul Pearson of the wonderful Greenmantle magazine.

Pagan Insights – Interview with Paul Pearson

The wonderful thing about Paganism is the freedom to tailor your beliefs to you as an individual. You can very much be rooted in one aspect but still have elements from other paths included. Here Paul Pearson of Greenmantle magazine tells us about his path.

What is your path. How would you define it?

I consider myself an animist, though my path has included Wicca and the rural Strega in Tuscany.

What drew you to this particular path?

I think it was my interest in Wicca and the occult from an early age – but this was inspired by the writings of Alan Garner which inspired my interest in myth and landscape when I was still at primary school. Later I explored mythology and folklore which eventually led to working with a rural tradition in Cheshire and my later initiation into The Hermetic Order of the Silver Blade.

What festivals do you celebrate as part of your path?

I have no rigidity in celebrating festivals, but I generally acknowledge the Equinoxes and Solstices and festivals such as Beltaine, Yule etc. I find my main celebrations come from the land – much of this coming from my experiences in the rural traditions where the seasons and the changes in the farming landscape become apparent.

If rituals form a part of your path, what is included, or could you possibly give an example?

Rituals take many forms, from simple acts to more elaborate ceremonies. They usually take place in the natural world – the countryside, though occasionally indoors. As some of the rituals incorporate the teachings from my past, they can be varied in their delivery.

Is yours a magical path? If yes in what way?

Yes, there is much magic incorporated in my path. Some of it comes from my Wiccan training and some from my ceremonial workings from the past. Within animism, the magic can also be very intuitive and spontaneous.

Do you work with the deity? If yes which ones?

I see deities as aspects of nature, and as such I recognise and respect most deities, but none specifically.

What do you like best about your path?

I work and experience magic in the natural world. Living in a rural area I experience nature in all its guises on a daily basis. Each day I am firmly entrenched in the landscape and the myths and magic it contains.

INTRAFATH INTERESTS

CONTINUED

Are there any books you'd recommend that relate to your path?

I would, of course, recommend *The Mountain and the Stream* by myself and Tallis Harill – this gives a broad outline of my path. I would also recommend any book written by Doreen Valiente, especially “*Witchcraft for Tomorrow*” for a workable and ‘user friendly’ approach to Wicca.

Are there any resources for people who would like to know more?

Of course, there is the Pagan Federation – the first port of call for anyone needing to find information on their spiritual path. There are few Animist groups, I think, because of the many ideas in a nature-based path.



The Sky At Night for this Season

BY HANNAH



February

1st Imbolc

9th New Moon 22:29

24th Full Moon 12:30

March

10th New Moon 09:00

20th Spring Equinox 03:07

25th Full Moon 07:00

April

8th New Moon 19:20

22nd Peak of Lyrids Meteor Shower

24th Full Moon 00:48

Children and Families Update

The Families team have been busy working on new Aether patches. The theme of the next one will be Stars.

A new blog is running on the PF Community site, all about connecting with nature each month. Plus the Families team are hosting the online Imbolc festival which will be held on 4th February.

Our monthly blogs continue, you can check them out at

<https://www.pfcommunity.org.uk/category/children-families/>

The Magic of Snow

BY EARTH MOTHER NATURE LOVER

My pagan path is very much about embracing everything in nature and the elements in all their aspects including the weather. I find nature to be inspirational, and a wonderful muse for creativity which I express through poetry and photography.

Now I love the snow, it's my favourite weather, which is a shame as I live in a place where it is rarely seen these days although February seems to be the month that it often does appear. Perhaps if I lived in a location where it snowed all the time my love for it would wane – too much of a good thing so to speak. As it is however, one flake of snow and my inner child races to the surface. I am mesmerised and have to run outside and raise my face to the sky, to watch and to feel the flakes brush cold against my skin.

A Flake of Snow

It's funny how a flake of snow
Can make the world stand still,
Every child sat mesmerised
Beside the window sill,
Noses pressed against the pane,
Willing more to fall.
Yes, it's funny how one tiny flake
Can fill a child with awe.

Snowflakes are a wonder of the natural world, each one beautiful and unique with the most intricate patterns and as I stand outside watching, I find myself willing more to fall. Just like a child, I could just sit and watch snow fall for hours, the act has meditative qualities. Knowing each flake starts as a tiny ice droplet and grows into the intricate entity is humbling. It really is nature at its most magical and this is the kind of experience that gives me the inspiration to write.

Snowflakes

Filigree fineness falls,
A flurry of feathery flakes,
Softening the starkness
Of a frozen, frigid scape.

Snow has such a purity, mellowing winters harsh landscape and nothing makes me happier than waking up to a wintry wonderland. Where the land is snow blanketed and sparkling in the watery morning sun. This is when I love to get out and bask in one of nature's most ethereal atmospheres – winter silence.



The Magic of Snow

BY EARTH MOTHER NATURE LOVER

Winter Silence

There's a seamless serenity to the woods
Where the snow lays like a muffler
Cocooning nature,
And as more flakes fall
Not even a breeze dares to whisper
For fear of dispelling the tranquillity.

Of course, eventually the snow must thaw. I'm always a little sad to see it disappear, becoming black slush and dirty streaked ice lying in piles like slag heaps, the land once again becoming dark and barren, the magic and mystery gone.

Retreating Snow

Retreating snow,
Like foamy waves upon the shore,
As the day draws on
It slips back a little more,
Revealing the land slowly
As it quietly ebbs away,
Retreating snow
Has thawed a little more today.

It makes me realise just how transformative snow is, not just changing the landscape but people too. For some it releases the inner child with the building of snowmen, making snow angels, snowball fights and just feeling captivated by glee. For some it is a powerful way of connecting with nature, the element of water and the deities of the season. Deities such as Tengliu, the Chinese snow goddess, Norse jötunn Skadi and the Greek goddess of snow Khione. There's also the Russian folk tale of "The snow maiden." This story has enchanted every generation and has been retold many times, who doesn't love Raymond Briggs' "The Snowman," which is an obvious modern retelling. For others the falling snow is a way of embracing the silences in reflective thinking or meditating and for others it is about capturing inspiration in a creative form, whether art, photography, writing or sculpture.

I also appreciate snow isn't an elemental aspect that everyone welcomes and is dangerous and disruptive to many people. This is just my personal, creative, romantic and inspirational view.

