

MYDDLE EARTH

OFFICIAL QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF THE
PAGAN FEDERATION MIDWEST AND WALES
DISTRICT

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Ways to Celebrate Lughnasadh

- Decorate your altar or sacred space with fresh herbs from the garden, Summer flowers like snapdragons and zinnias, a bowl of summer fruits, yellow, orange and green candles;
- Bake a loaf of homemade bread and share it with family and friends;
- Prepare a feast using locally sourced seasonal produce, decorating your table with fresh flowers, if possible from the garden;
- Clean up a space in nature, perhaps your local park, beach, woods, roadsides needs some litter picking done;
- Make a bird feeder with a pinecone, peanut butter and wild bird seed to hang up in your garden as an offering;
- Stop, pause, take a moment and witness the changing of the season.

The first harvest is upon us

In the fields near where I live the farmer has sown wheat this year. It is far more interesting to look at than the potatoes of last year. The wheat has grown tall and in the hot weather that we had in June, it has been turning the landscape a golden yellow. The hand of Lugh can be seen in every direction. I always go gleaning when the farmer has harvested to get any stray wheat stalks to make myself a corn dolly.

How do you and your family celebrate Lughnasadh? Email in to tell us.

Lughnasadh Blessings

Wren





DISTRICT MANAGERS' REPORT - Lughnasadh/Lammas 2023

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

Hello,

The balmy days of summer have reached their peak and now we reap the fruits of the harvest. Do you grow much of your own food, or are you mostly dependent on farm produce? We confess to not being into growing our own fruit and veg, just about everything we eat comes from a supermarket. The one exception to this is a burgeoning raspberry patch that began from a single cane some fifteen years ago and has taken over a corner of the garden. This year they are heavily laden, it is amazing! Just imagine our hunter-gatherer ancestors who had to forage for everything they ate and suffered starvation on a regular basis. Try taking a walk around your local area and see what edibles are available for the taking, even if you don't pick them yourself. Could you survive on what is there? Would you be able to identify what is edible and what to avoid? Some of our generous neighbours place boxes of pears or apples in their front gardens with a handwritten 'free windfalls, help yourself' note, which is always very welcome. Then there's safe drinking water, nowadays normally sourced via a tap in the kitchen. Can you find any springs in your locality, or even know how to look for one? In times past these would be marked with a stone structure and treated with great reverence in the community. Safe drinking water was vitally important, and if it wasn't available, the brewers' and vintners' arts made up for any lack. If home brewing or winemaking is your thing, you are carrying on a great and ancient tradition. Whatever way you get your sustenance, pause a moment before tucking in and think of how it all came to be there before you. Then set the table and eat and drink your fill.

DISTRICT VOLUNTEERS

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(Please note: there is a very old FB page called "Pagan Federation Midwest Region" which has not posted anything since 2015 and is nothing to do with us)

Website: Myddle Earth Mid-west and Wales District Pagan Federation

If you live in any of the Regions lacking a Regional Co-ordinator and you'd like to step into the role, get in touch with us for a no-obligation chat. We'd love to hear from you.

Wishing everyone, all 230+ of you, a bountiful harvest (in gardens, fields or your fertile imaginations).

Audrey & Richard District Managers, PF Mid-west and Wales

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Myddle Earth is distributed four times a year to local PF members (and a few others). Your contributions are essential to make this a great magazine. Don't be shy, get in touch. After all this is Your magazine.

COPY DEADLINES

- 31 December for Imbolc Issue
- 31 March for Beltaine Issue
- 30 June for Lughnasadh/Lammas issue
- 30 September for Samhain issue

ADVERTISING

This is free for non-profit making ventures. For commercial advertising, prices are available on request. Adverts can be emailed to the Editor or posted (see address opposite)

Submission Guidelines

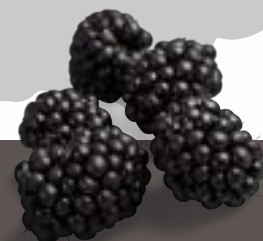
Your submission should meet the following guidelines:

- the content must have a pagan-theme or be of interest to the Mid-West and Wales Pagan community;
- articles should be submitted as a MS Word document or OpenOffice document.
- use a friendly, casual tone as we want to make the content as accessible as possible.
- authors are responsible for the accuracy of references and reference citations;
- images need to be of high quality, minimum resolution 300dpi, preferably in .jpeg format. Please ensure you have copyright permission for their further publication.

Please note the following before submitting your content:

- We reserve the right to abridge articles and to edit them for clarity, style, grammar and accuracy;
- All articles remain the copyright of the author;
- For Welsh language submissions, please accompany with the English translation;
- Although every effort will be made to accept your contributions for publication, we reserve the right to refuse submissions;
- We are sorry but we are unable to pay for submissions; and finally
- If you would like a copy of our GDPR statement, please email mwaw.editor@paganfederation.co.uk

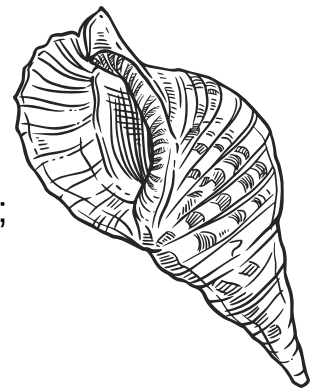
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THE WORLD BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

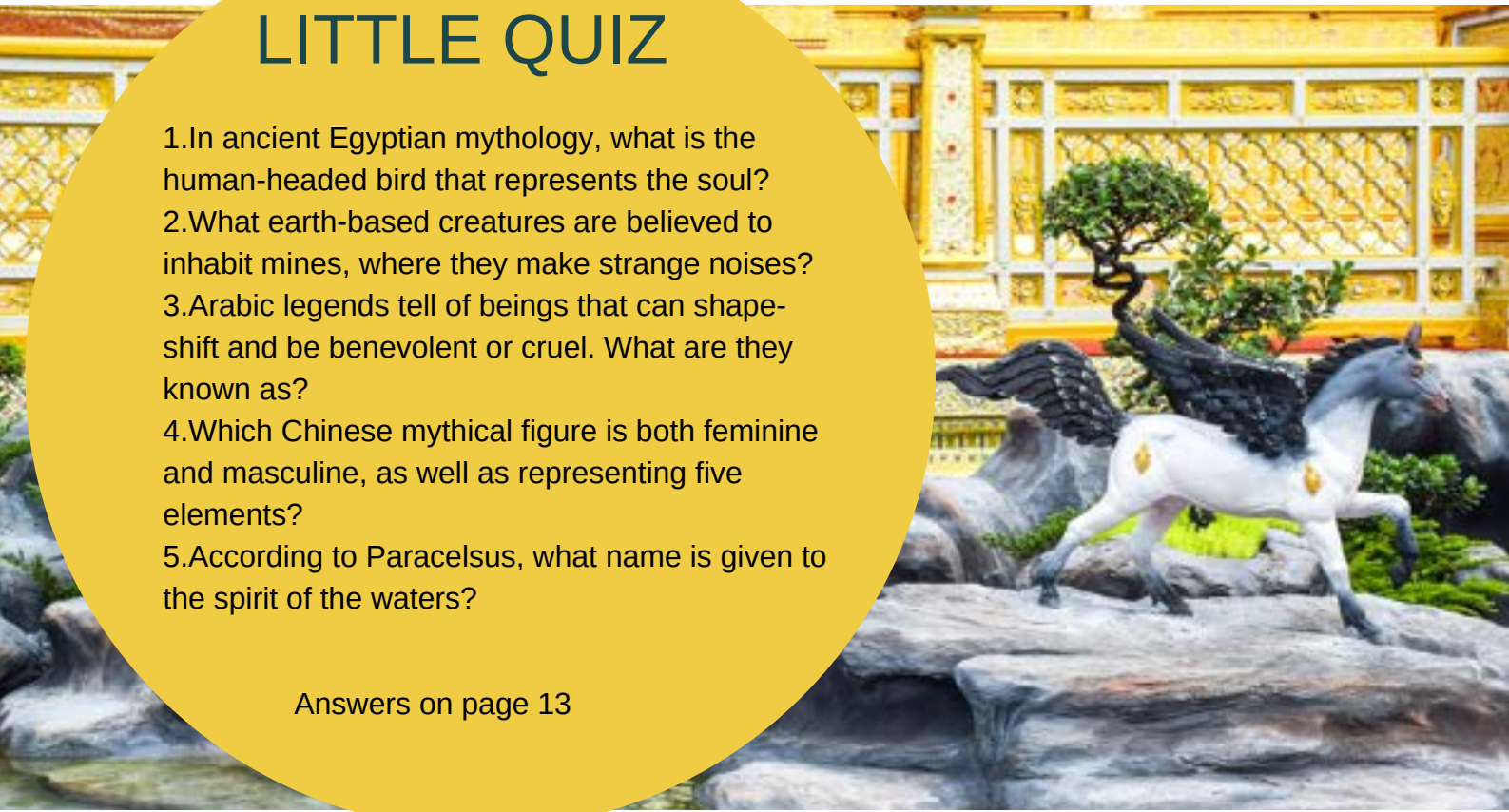
The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon,
This sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gather'd now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. --Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creen outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.



LITTLE QUIZ

1. In ancient Egyptian mythology, what is the human-headed bird that represents the soul?
2. What earth-based creatures are believed to inhabit mines, where they make strange noises?
3. Arabic legends tell of beings that can shape-shift and be benevolent or cruel. What are they known as?
4. Which Chinese mythical figure is both feminine and masculine, as well as representing five elements?
5. According to Paracelsus, what name is given to the spirit of the waters?

Answers on page 13



The Sky At Night for this Season

BY HANNAH

August

1st – Super full moon 19:31
1st – Lughnasadh/First Harvest
16th – Micro new moon 10:38
31st – Super Full Blue Moon 02:35

September

15th – New moon 02:39
23rd – Autumn Equinox 07:50
29th – Full moon 10:57

October

14th – New moon 18:55
28th – Full moon 21:24
31st – Samhain

Special Skies

12/13th August – Perseids Meteor Shower
8/9th October – Draconids Meteor Shower
21st/22nd October – Orionids Meteor Shower

Weather Lore

August 24th – St Bartholomews

If this day be clear, a prosperous autumn comes this year.

September 29th – Michaelmas

If the North wind blows upon this day, the month of October will be sunny and gay.

October 9th – St Denis

A hard winter follows a fine St Denis.



Children and Families Update

If you haven't checked them out yet then you really should. The Aether patches are a great way to introduce different pagan aspects to your children. There are loads to choose from and full of activities suitable for little ones and teens. Plus don't forget there's a free online pagan magazine for children too. It's published twice a year at the solstices and the summer edition is packed full of articles, stories and activities. And as if that wasn't enough the children and families blog is worth a read too.

All this can be found on the PF community website.

The families team hosted the Pagan Federation Imbolc festival online back in February and remain busy with monthly blogs to the communities website which you can check out here

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

Families are also in the process of creating videos all about deity for the PF YouTube channel. Check out the god Apollo here

<https://youtu.be/GekJD7wnXYs>

Plus we are constantly creating Aether patches, which are a great way for children to get to learn about Paganism. If you'd like to know more about them click the link below

<https://youtu.be/yUJtEnKkG88>

Gods and Goddesses of England

BY RACHEL PATTERSON- WRITER AND HP AND ELDER OF THE KITCHEN WITCH COVEN OF NATURAL WITCHERY AND THE KITCHEN WITCH SCHOOL

I am delighted to have an article to include in this issue by the lovely Rachel Patterson. As well as being a prolific author for Moon Books and Llewellyn (and more), she runs the Kitchen Witch School along with the Hearth Guardians as well as finding the time to bake endless amounts of cakes and sweet treats. I am proud to call myself one of her students of the KW School - Wren



www.rachelpatterson.co.uk



I live in England and have always been fascinated by the gods and goddesses from the land I live on. It has taken me down into several rabbit holes leading me on a journey to unearth gods and goddesses from England, those that were worshipped long before the Romans arrived on our shores to set up camp.

Burials

We can learn a lot from how our ancestors buried their dead. Finding these burial sites has helped us understand them. How the dead were buried may have been influenced by travellers arriving from other countries and perhaps our people adapting and changing to new ideas and influences. 4200BCE onwards saw the trend of collective burial. The dead were left to rot and stored safely until they were just bones, these were then transferred to burial chambers. Often these were great earth mounds lined with slabs of stone. These we recognise as 'barrows'. Each barrow contained anywhere between five and fifty bodies, the suggestion being that these people held high status within the group. In the north and west of Britain these burial chambers are stone tombs often referred to as 'dolmens'. The dolmens had separate chambers used for feasts, rituals and then the human remains which were often sorted into age and sex. Some stone chambers or 'passage graves' in North Wales and Ireland held hundreds of remains. More common folk it seems found their resting place left open to the elements and wildlife, ending up in ditches.

A change came about when Beaker burials occurred, somewhere around 2750 BCE. The collective grave system was abandoned in favour of single graves covered with a small mound. The body was placed in a foetal position inside a stone coffin, often with added grave goods such as pottery. Cremation was a favourite in the north of Britain, but about the same time as Beaker burials became popular, cremations also found their way down south.



Gods and Goddesses of England continued...

BY RACHEL PATTERSON- WRITER AND ELDER OF THE KITCHEN WITCH COVEN OF NATURAL WITCHERY AND THE KITCHEN WITCH SCHOOL

The Tribes of Ancient Britain

To help me with my research I was led to discover more about the tribes that spread across ancient Britain. Each tribe in ancient Britain had a specific area with its own monarch too. My research is drawn from various sources, but obviously we don't know any of the exact details for sure. The ancient Britons were not particularly good at keeping written records. So bad in fact that their written history is pretty much non-existent. What we know about the ancient tribes of Britain comes from the Romans.

The tribes are also important because archaeological finds have discovered most of them gave offerings often thrown into bogs, lakes, rivers and natural water springs. Some of the offerings were in the form of jewellery, coins, decorated metal, pieces or armour and other fineries. This shows they were honouring deities or spirits of nature in some way. This seems to have been the general 'birth' of deities in ancient Britain, by way of the people worshipping the local water in some way.

Gods & Goddesses

For some of these deities I have been able to find a fair amount of information. For others all we have is a record of their name, sometimes all that was found was one inscription on a relic or mention in an old manuscript. A lot of what we know came from the Romans who documented the names of a lot of our native deities. Christian monks also recorded a lot of information. Bear in mind that these sources may well have been tainted by their own personal views and beliefs.

When the Romans arrived in Britain, they liked to worship their gods with grand ceremony, and they expected everyone else to do the same. Temples were built to honour their gods such as Juno and Minerva. The deities that were worshipped in Britannia were merged with Roman gods such as Sulis becoming Sulis Minerva and Tuetates becoming Mars Teutates. Eventually the Romans and their trade partners also introduced gods from other countries such as Astarte, Mithras-Sol and, of course, Jesus Christ.

Britain had many travellers from other countries, some were just visiting, others stayed and made their home here. Many of them brought their own deities with them, some of them were then adopted by us. A lot of our native deities are only mentioned in one town or city, even just connected to one specific river. Perhaps because that was their only place of worship, although they did seem to revere the power and energy of rivers, or maybe any records or stories have been lost in the mists of time. Nature and the landscape seems to have inspired a lot of these gods and goddesses. The Celts in particular did not build temples for their gods, they didn't worship inside buildings. Their connection to deity was made through nature, often in sacred groves of trees or by sacred water. They would probably have also revered gods of the sky, the sun and the moon as well. Fertility would have also played a big part in their spirituality.

Where possible I worked with the evidence from archaeological finds. Generally these are from the Roman period where they took on English deities as their own or, perhaps, they felt it would be of benefit to them to worship the local gods.

Gods and Goddesses of England continued..2

BY RACHEL PATTERSON- WRITER AND ELDER OF THE KITCHEN WITCH COVEN OF NATURAL WITCHERY AND THE KITCHEN WITCH SCHOOL

The fact that they did take on the local deities helps us with a record of their names and areas they were worshipped in. Here I give you an example of a few of the deities and some of the information I discovered about them.

Andred/Andraste - Goddess, Location: Norfolk, Suffolk

I give two names here because, originally, she was called Andred, it was the Romans who referred to her as Andraste, but this is the more commonly used name now. The Roman historian Dio Cassius said that Queen Boudicca invoked the goddess Andraste before going into battle with the Iceni tribe against the Romans. This seems to be one of the only mentions of this goddess. However, there is an ancient forest in Sussex called 'The Weald', right up to and during Anglo-Saxon times the forest was referred to as 'Andredes Weald' meaning 'the forest of Andred'.

Arnemetia - Goddess, Location: Buxton, Derbyshire

Arnemetia is the goddess of the healing spring in Buxton, Derbyshire. The Romans had a well-known love of spas and built the town of Buxton, centred around the spring. But the site was sacred to the indigenous tribe known as the Corieltavi, long before the Roman occupation. The usual Roman practice when invading a country, was to integrate the local gods into their own pantheon, so they named the town 'Aquae Arnemetiae, which means 'The waters of the goddess Arnemetia'. The name 'Arnemetia' means 'She who dwells in front of the Sacred Grove' and contains the Celtic word 'Nemeton' meaning 'sacred grove'. It is believed that the Corieltavi worshipped Arnemetia in a sacred grove as it was the custom of the Celts to honour their deities amongst trees.

Belenus - God, Location: Durham, Lancashire

At the Roman Baths in Bath, Somerset you will see what was originally thought to be a stone gorgon's head found above the temple of the goddess Sulis. It is now thought to be a depiction of the god Belenus. He is believed to have been widely worshipped throughout Britain and Europe. His name translates as 'bright or shining one'.

Making a Connection - If you feel drawn to any deities local to you, or any gods or goddesses from around the world for that matter, there are some simple ways to connect. If you live near any of the places they are associated with or happen to be visiting the area I would encourage you to make a visit. Once on a site you can try and make a connection with the energy of the land. Sit quietly and breathe slowly in and out, as if you were beginning to meditate. Now open your senses to the land, to the flora and fauna around you and to the ground beneath you. Send out a request to the ancestors, to the deity you want to connect with and see what happens. If at any time you feel uncomfortable or uneasy know that you are in total control and can shut down the connection immediately. Bring up your psychic shields and walk away. Hopefully you make a positive contact, be open to what comes to you, listen and pay attention to any sights, sounds and feelings. Once you are done, give thanks and, if possible, leave an offering, make sure it is biodegradable.

Tilly Treehugger - RAGE !!!

I'm in the mood to let loose some full-on, unashamed FUEL RAGE!

How about the recent infiltration of the Shell Corporation shareholders meeting, when some cunningly-disguised (in smart suits) protesters disrupted the proceedings with chants of "Go to hell, Shell, and don't you come back no more, no more, no more, no more"? Bravo to those daring folks! They were quickly bundled out of the venue by security, but films of it are online and going viral. If you do social media, maybe download the films and pass them on. I mean, such barefaced and harmless audacity deserves a larger audience. Would it be wrong to phone them and sing this cheeky ditty at the top of your voice? Okay, the call will be disconnected forthwith, but it will be logged...



Seriously, I am not having a pop at anyone who genuinely can't manage without a car. Our society is structured largely around car use but until that changes, we are stuck with the system. Challenge the CEOs of the petrochemical giants and tell them we're not convinced by their green-washing on the destructive consequences of the industry. Ask them what they are doing to fund alternatives to the fossil fuels that have made them so rich they could collectively buy the world. Remind them that their own scientists warned decades ago that the carbon their products spew into the atmosphere would become a massive problem one day, and that day has arrived. Record-breaking heatwaves, floods, storms, are becoming common. Humanity is staring at the monster of a climate emergency with greenhouse gases from fossil fuels a major culprit, and we are taking many other forms of life along with us to the ensuing wasteland. Clean air has no price, food won't grow in deserts, plastics are not edible and extinction is forever.

We don't have to give up all travel, but maybe we can cut our wanderings a bit to reduce the impact on the biosphere. If possible, walk or cycle or bus ride to your various destinations. I can imagine a day when private car ownership is restricted to people with disabilities (or the carers of such), or people are going to be required to justify their need. Those who live in a remote rural location with scant public transport should be exempt, unless bus services can be extended to serve the sticks. Vast improvements to the entire public transport infrastructure need to happen urgently all over the UK to reduce car dependency, and green technology has to be part of that equation or not much has been gained. Manufacturers of electric vehicle batteries need to clean up their act too, like quit supporting the modern slavery that mines the vital ingredients.

Some days I don't feel so good about things. I am filled with despair, bereft of all hope. Duvet-diving, screaming into a pillow, having an urge to hurl missiles through the windows of big business or government. It's draining. Instead, I read a book by Sami Grover (*We're All Climate Hypocrites Now*, New Society 2021). He describes how we can turn away from being 'purity police' pointing the finger and shouting "CHEAT!" at people who ride a bike (nice) but also own a car (naughty), and direct our attention to the pervasive structures that support car-dependency. Cut Big Oil down to size. They've had it too good for too long.

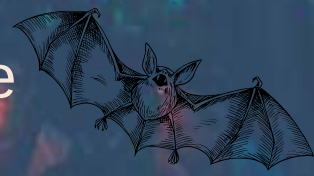
A stylized, handwritten signature of the name 'Tilly' in black ink.

Tilly's Top Tip

Make your own household cleaner. Take a wide-mouth jar, put in equal amounts of water and white vinegar (250 ml each is how I do it). Add shavings of the peel of a lemon, and leave to marinade for 10 days. Discard lemon peel and decant the vinegar and water into spray bottles for cleaning surfaces in the home. A bonus is that this mixture won't harm inquisitive toddlers who might try to taste it.

A Bard's Tale: Animals in Folktales and Lore

By Andy Harrop-Smith



Hi my name's Andy Harrop-Smith, Druid, storyteller, folklorist and a bit of a historian. All at an amateur level of course. I enjoy researching folklore and history to inform my stories, and I'd love to share some of my findings with you.

A FOCUS ON BATS

I've always been fascinated by animals, and have been privileged to care for them on a very intimate basis on many occasions. Long ago I was an RSPCA Inspector, I've worked as a warden on a wonderful Wolf rescue reserve in Portugal, and have been enchanted by Ospreys as a volunteer at the RSPB reserve at Loch Garten in Scotland. Now that I'm retired, I fill some of my spare time with volunteering for the Wildlife Trust. As you might imagine, 'wildlife' often features in my stories. So, for the next few editions of ME I'd like to share some of the research I've uncovered about a variety of animals, both wild and domesticated.



Our ancestors, especially the 'Hunter Gatherers' were very dependent on animals for food, clothing, shelter and tools. It's not too difficult to imagine how they perceived their lives to be completely intertwined with those of the creatures that they needed to survive. Although it's mainly well-informed guess-work, it's almost certain that those animals crossed the bridge into our ancestor's beliefs and spirituality, and thus took on 'supernatural' qualities. This idea is backed up with evidence from pre-historic archaeology, mostly Mesolithic, such as the discoveries at Star Carr in Yorkshire, the caves at Creswell Crags in Derbyshire, and the amazing cave art at Lascaux in France. So too, today's Shamanic practices have been handed down over the eons to reflect the deep thoughts and beliefs of the human race when it was still young and sensible. And let's face it, we just 'know' that's how it was!

Many cultures around the world claim that they descend from animals, and many folk tales are themed around a marriage between human and wild-animal, the best examples being the 'Selkie' stories of the Scottish Isles.

As a Storyteller and 'Shamanic student', these ideas captivate my imagination. Was the first story ever told around a stone-age campfire about an animal? Maybe Bear, Wolf or Eagle? Perhaps Mouse! It's entirely possible that those early stories were used to teach, focusing on the wisdom of the message that each animal species brought as a gift. Certainly, the First Peoples of Australia have a wealth of 'Dreamtime stories' that are used as 'maps' (both physical and mental), that have been handed down orally for more than 40,000 years. It's my theory, for what it's worth, that the animal stories and lore of our Ancestors have been handed down through millennia, firstly in oral form, and later written down, to manifest later as 'The Tales of Beatrix Potter', 'Aesop's Fables', 'The Jungle Book' etc. And there's the endless marvelous myriad of so called 'fairytales', many of which come with a message from a particular animal protagonist.



A Bard's Tale: Animals in Folktales and Lore

By Andy Harrop-Smith

In other folk stories the animal often plays an important role in providing help and advice to a central human character (so long as they've previously been kind or generous in some way, ie they've respected, revered or honoured the creature in question). It's only a short 'hop' or 'leap' back to a Mesolithic fire-side and a Shamanic wisdom tale, told under a star-lit sky in the red glow of the hot embers.

As always, I've gone on a bit with my introduction! For my first offering (not burnt!) I'd like to share some folklore surrounding Bats, for no other reason than a couple of nights ago I was treated to an ariel display by two Bats, probably Pipistrelles, flying in perfect synchronicity around my garden. I'm glad I wasn't a moth at the time! Bat obviously wanted me to tell its story, and we must never overlook the message!

Bat facts

The oldest bat fossil found is 52 million years old, so they've been around a lot longer than we have. Bats 'hover' between being birds and mammals as they're the only mammal capable of sustained flight. They make up a quarter of the Earth's mammal population, the largest species being the Flying Fox (Fruit bat) with a 6ft wingspan and the smallest being the 'Hog-nosed' or 'Bumblebee' Bat at 3 cm long. They're not blind either, but some don't have such good eyesight, and rely on 'echolocation' (like sonar) to navigate and find prey at night, a much better way of getting around in the dark. Unfortunately, the much-maligned 'Vampire Bat' has given all Bat species something of an unfounded bad reputation. The little bloodsuckers are only 9 cm long, and prey mostly on livestock, taking only small amounts of blood. Bram Stoker added fuel to the 'myth' in his book 'Dracula'. The anti-coagulant in their saliva may prove valuable in the prevention of strokes. In fact, all bat species, of which there are 1,300, are important to all ecosystems, acting as pest controllers, pollinators and seed dispersers. Bat poo is a great fertilizer, much better than cow poo and they don't get tangled in your hair unless you use them as curlers (not recommended).

Folklore and Tales

Due to their nocturnal and cave-dwelling habits, Bats have been associated with death, the supernatural and the sinister by many cultures from the earliest times. The Babylonians considered them to be the physical manifestations of the souls of the dead. In many areas of Africa they are thought to be the souls of sorcerers, the unburied dead and criminals. The Mayans had a God of Caves called Camazotz, who had a human body and the wings of a Bat. He was immensely strong and lived in a 'Bat house' in the Underworld's labyrinth of caves. Remind you of anyone? I'll bet he had a 'utility belt' too! In the Middle Ages Bats were thought to be Witch's 'familiars' and were often called 'Witch Birds', their blood being used to make 'flying ointment' for broomsticks. Even Shakespeare had 'wool of bat' in the witch's brew in MacBeth. In France in 1332 Lady Jacaume was burned at the stake because Bats flew around her home each night.

A Bard's Tale: Animals in Folktales and Lore

By Andy Harrop-Smith

As always, it's not all bad Bat news. The Mayans associated Bats with transformation and re-birth. In China and Poland they were believed to bring happiness, long life and good fortune. The Romany folk thought Bats were good luck, and would make 'medicine bags' containing their bones. The Egyptians believed that Bats could fly across the 'veil' between worlds and commune with the dead. They also nailed them above doorways to prevent Demons entering a house to spread illness.

As with many animal species, humankind has had (and still does have) some pretty weird ideas about Bats that are often cruel, disgusting, dangerous and mostly stupid: Wash your face in Bat's blood to be able to see in the dark, or drink it as an aphrodisiac. Carry the left eye of a Bat to become invisible. Keep a Bat's heart bound with red thread in your pocket, and you'll be lucky at cards, or dry it and pound it into a powder to staunch blood and stop a bullet. Hmm!

The folktales are mainly about how the Bat 'became'. The Romans tell us that long ago there was a battle between the birds and mammals. The wingless Bat wisely remained neutral during the conflict, and when Mars declared the birds the victors, Bat joined them and was given wings. Native American folktales have much the same theme. In the animal's early struggle for superiority, Mouse was rejected by the mammals, being considered too small. Eagle saw Mouse's potential, gave him wings, and subsequently the newly formed 'Bat' became very useful in intelligence gathering (the first 'drone'?).

Bat as a 'guardian' animal. Bat lives in highly supportive colonies in the womb of Mother Earth, emerging to fly out of the darkness and into the light to be re-born, a symbol of transition. This signifies the death of old fears or unwanted life-styles and habits. Bat gives us the ability to 'seek and find' what we're looking for, and highlights the need for 'community' and 'freedom'.

I honour Bat for its message. Ho!

If you have any comments, anecdotes or stories about any of the topics that I write about, please feel free to contact me by Email on: andy.harrop121@btinternet.com

Thanks for listening

Andy



IN THE BOOK NOOK WITH WREN



In this issue's Book Nook and following on from the last issue, I have a book I was inspired to read by the article from Erin Aurelia - Torch of Brighid – Flametending for Transformation. ISBN: 978 1 78904 281 8 published by Moon Books. Available from John Hunt Publishing, Amazon and all good booksellers.

Before I get going, if you have read a pagan-inspired book (fiction or non-fiction) and you would like to share a review, please contact me at the usual address (mwaw.editor@paganfederation.co.uk).

Brighid was the first goddess I felt a connection with when I began my pagan pathway. I wish I had had this book way back then. The book, as the author states, isn't about reconstructing an ancient practice, it is about the now, it is directed at the modern pagan who feels the call to create a devotional practice to Brighid. The book sets our feet at the start of a new journey of personal transformation and spiritual development by linking the twenty days of flametending practice with the twenty feda of the Ogham with Brighid as our Guide.

It is not a book meant for passive reading, it is a book that guides us to put in the work. It introduces us to the "three cauldrons", the power centres and how we need to keep these upright. We are prepared for the start of our flametending journey, step by step, until we are ready to undertake the ritual of the flametending vigil.

This is a book that will take you time to work through but the author's words support you along the journey. I would recommend this book to any devotees of Brighid and those who feel her call for the first time.



Intrafaith Interests

Can you help? Do you follow a path that isn't Druidry, Wicca or Witchcraft? I'd love to hear from you!!

As Intrafaith manager I'm trying to make sure every path has a voice and is represented within paganism. To do this I need your help.

If you'd like to know more about what this involves then please get in touch by emailing:

intrafaith@paganfederation.co.uk

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Little Quiz Answers

1. Ba
2. Goblins
3. Jinn
4. Ky-Linn
5. Undine



The Sacred Yew - Tree of Life

By Janis Fry - Writer and Moon Books' Author

www.janisfryart.co.uk

When it comes to the Yew tree, it's often hard to know where to start! I enter a vast other world and leave the day to day material world behind. I've been involved with this Deva Daru, since the early 1970's and the yew continues to lead me on an incredible adventure where my life is not entirely my own as the tree will engineer extraordinary meetings and events for me in its service. It puts these trees in my way and often redirects my plans. My latest book on yews (there are 2 others and 2 booklets) is 'The Cult of the Yew, Tree of Life, Mystery and Magic' published by Moon Books and just out. It is essentially a spiritual history of this iconic sacred tree, which has figured in all the old religions of the Northern hemisphere and is wrapped in ancient mysteries and civilisations. So many cultures, such as the Hittite, held this tree sacred. It was central to their belief system and understanding of how life worked. The Hittite name for the yew tree was 'Eya', translated as 'I am' and if someone had the yew painted on their gate, they were exempt from tax! It is the sacred yews that intrigue me; *Taxus Sanctus* a sacred tree traceable back 15,000 years. These precious trees brought to Britain from the East, from the Holy Lands, Egypt, the Caucasus, Mesopotamia, Armenia etc. as dry staffs were planted in often remote sanctuaries to ensure their protection and continued existence well into the future. Most of the sites were taken over by the Christian church and the yews largely preserved, while the wells and standing stones that went with them were mostly destroyed. It's interesting to note that in Brittany it is the other way round. My book lists the sites which have yews aged between 2 and 5,000 years old, including the 2 oldest trees at Defynnog (Wales) and Fortingall (Scotland), both at least 5,000 years old and probably the oldest trees in Europe. Our ancient yews have no legal protection, a matter I am addressing with my petition, which has gained 316,000 signatures, on change.org. (Save Britain's ancient yew trees before we lose any more - please sign).

The question we must ask is why were these trees sacred and why were they so important that people went to such lengths to bring them here to Britain, the White Island, known by the Egyptians and other cultures as such, the far western isles, home of the Tree of Life? They are immortal giants that speak of eternity and continued existence and my particular interest is in the sacred bloodlines, tree bloodlines, yew trees descended by layering or cuttings, not seed.

Particular Celtic saints, known in the centuries-old Welsh Triads as 'Keepers of the Secret of the Grail', specifically Illtyd, Cadoc and Peredur but also others associated with them such as Gildas, knew the Grail to be, not a cup but a very special tree. These saints were 'warrior saints', some of them were related to the Welsh King Arthur, Arthmael of Gwent and had double identities as Saints and Knights. The Grail was revealed by Wolfram Von Eschenbach in his 12th century epic poem called 'Parzival', to be 'the Perfection of Paradise, both root and branch'. In other words, the Tree of Life. What is it about these trees? We may never know but I am convinced they are here for some very special purpose. They are our anchor, our link to the distant past, our Axis Mundi, our connection to Divinity and our planet and the secret as to who we are. In modern times so much of Nature is genetically modified for the interests of humans but the ancient yew, that sentient being, was here long before us, before the Dinosaurs. The Yew has been here for 200 million years while we have been here for just 4. It holds many of the secrets of life, some of which were known to a few people such as the Templars, St Columba and Joseph of Arimathea who were in its service.

The Sacred Yew - Tree of Life continued...

By Janis Fry - Writer and Moon Books' Author

This brings me to Joseph of Arimathea, the uncle of Jesus and guardian of Mary Magdalene and Mary, mother of Jesus. He was a metal merchant, carried the title 'Nobilis Decurio' and was familiar with Britain and particularly the area around Bristol and South Wales. It was Joseph who brought both the Tree of Life and Christianity to these shores, to Llanilid near Bridgend in South Wales, to be precise, a place where you can still see the only extant Druid temple, the earthwork next to the church, where he came to meet the Druids of Siluria. Part of my mission is to re-establish the well documented but little known history of what happened at Llanilid in those times soon after the death of Jesus, for this was the place of the first church in Britain where a smooth transition from the Old Religion to the new took place. What is also little known, is the manner of Jesus' death which was changed by Emperor Constantine who put Christianity together in a political form that suited Rome in 300 AD. Jesus' death was not by crucifixion but by hanging on the Tree of Life, which he did to demonstrate the resurrective properties of this tree. Constantine separated Jesus from the Tree of Life and put him on a cross. The Romans also divorced Jesus from the yew staff he used to perform magic and miracles and swapped it for a halo. The death of the god on the tree was actually an age-old tradition. Other gods before Jesus demonstrated the same phenomena. I have to tell all this in broad terms, there is no room for detail here but if you are interested you can read about what really happened in my books. The point is that the Druids welcomed both Joseph and Christianity as a new light, a new spirit. It was all part of a continuum and they recognised the branch that he brought and planted there. The Druid's connection to the tree was central to who they were. Only later was part of that branch taken to Glastonbury where Joseph was given lands by Arviragus, Caradog's cousin, who also converted to Christianity. It was Constantine who did the damage and manipulated the truth for reasons of Power, both personal and Roman. Constantine knew the truth, coming as he did from the Cult of Mithras which practised the tasting of Yew blood for the visionary inspiration it bestowed (Be Warned! I am not advocating you do this. All parts of the yew except the red flesh of the aril or berry are poisonous, including the nut inside it!) . This ceremony he turned into the Christian Eucharist. Constantine's mother Helena also knew about the Yew and brought the Holy Wood to Wales where they were both stationed..

Joseph originally met Caradog, re-named Caratacus by the Romans, in Rome where he had been taken with the rest of the Royal Druid family, including his father Bran the Blessed, King of the Silures, for punishment for his rebellion against the Romans. The Silures were the fiercest warring tribe who caused the most trouble to the Romans. They were never defeated but their leader Caradog was betrayed. After his historic speech which led to his life being spared and his sentence being reduced from execution to 7 years imprisonment in Rome, Caradog and his family returned home bringing Joseph and St Paul, and some of Jesus' disciples with them. Paul wrote his letter to Timothy exhorting him to come before winter and Joseph came and went, each time bringing new disciples. In Rome, Caradog's daughter Eurgain had become a fervent Christian and back in Llanilid became the leader of the new female disciples. It was not long however before Llanilid had to be abandoned as Caradog was closely watched by the Romans and Christianity, before the Romans put their stamp on it, was an outlawed religion. The former Druids of Llanilid moved to what is now Llanelltyd Fawr, 7 miles south, by an old straight track.

The Sacred Yew - Tree of Life continued...2

By Janis Fry - Writer and Moon Books' Author

It's confusing but this place was named several centuries later, after St Illtyd, not Ilid. Llanilid was named after Joseph of Arimathea. Ilid meaning 'the Israelite'.

To go to Llanilid today is something of a pilgrimage. The Yew is still there on the south of the church, the circles formed by the Druid Temple, known as the Cor and the churchyard touch and form a 'bifurcated line' spoken of by the Prophet Melcas as Joseph of Arimathea's last resting place. Llanilid has not lost any of the atmosphere of its ancient past and it is easy to dream here of times long ago when everything changed.



The Awakening By Coedwigwr

I was six years old and living in a coastal town in North Wales. It was a Saturday morning in high summer. My mother was working and I was left in the care of my father. "What do you want to do this morning?" he asked. For some reason (I still don't know why), I blurted out "I'd like to go to countryside".

My father obliged, put me in the car and drove us out of town and along a tree and hedgerow lined lane. The car then turned up a hill and crawled its way through a small village on the far side of town. The car stopped at a dead end and we got out. To our left two houses were being built, one right next to woodland. "Come on", said my father, "you wanted countryside, so here it is". We walked through an old Iron Gate and past two delightful cottages following the path around the side of the building site, over a stile and there we were. We were in the most perfect woodland. The trees were in full leaf, a cool breeze blowing gently in our faces, the faint buzzing of numerous insects and that glorious dappled light everywhere.

It felt to me like a magic kingdom. I was mesmerised for the next hour and a half as we walked along paths which revealed all kinds of wonder to a six year old. It was a morning I will never forget. Why I blurted "countryside" that morning I don't know. Were the woods calling me across the traffic and tarmac? Quite possibly!

Now as I approach seventy years old, that house being built next to the woods has been my home for the last forty years. The woods must surely have been calling me home all those years ago. During that time, I have been fascinated by the seasons, what they do to this corner of the world and the beauty the Mother brings to each and every day. I was for many years, a conventional church goer, even playing guitar in a church band. But something didn't sit right. I left, much to the consternation of the worshipers. I examined other religions, all of which had constraints and falsehoods which were accepted by the worshipers as the only truth and pedantically dismissing all other forms of worship. Paganism in all its various forms attracted me. Not because of its individual forms, but for its freedom to worship and hold sacred anything that Mother Nature showed me. No, you must read the Bible, no you must go to church on a Sunday, no you must get involved and be part of 'the Fellowship'. With Paganism, you can be a part of a group, or a sole practitioner, everything is up to you.

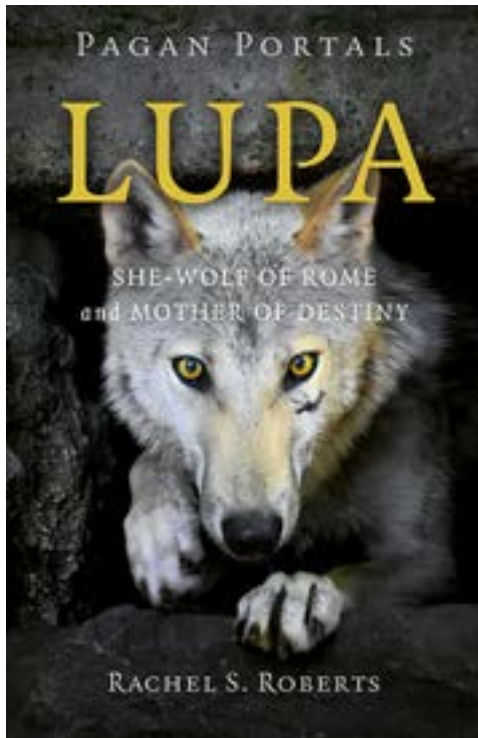
My love of Nature, focuses me, it gives me a *raison d'être*, a consistency and most of all, a grounding. So now, after an unnerving sixty-four years since that walk (where did all that go?), my creed remains, as one beautiful poet, John Clare put it:

*Me not the noise of brawling pleasure cheers
In mighty revels or in city streets
But joys which soothe and not distract the ears
That one at leisure meets.
In the green woods and meadows summer-shorn
Or fields where bee-fly greets
The ears with mellow horn.*



An extract from Lupa. She-Wolf of Rome, Mother of Destiny

By Rachel S Roberts, Writer and Moon Books' Author

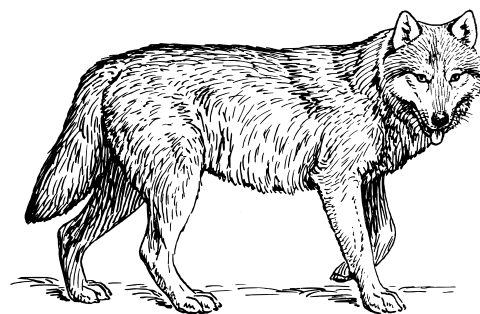


In many cultures, myths and legends there are wolves depicted, from cave paintings, to traditional fables and modern-day film and television. Often their role in these depictions is to represent the themes of power, strength, underworld travel and entry, death, instinct and vision in the darkness. Wolves capture the imagination and, I believe, stir something deep within us that remembers that first encounter of wolf and man on the hunt, which still pulses in our blood and lives on in our companionship with dogs.

What is different about Lupa is not just that she can be a wolf, but that she is a she-wolf. She is not ethereal, disconnected from us or living above and beyond the human realm. She is not an otherwise distant being that only transforms into an animal when she wishes to influence someone or something. She is the full embodiment of raw, wild feminine primal power, living and breathing in the strong and fierce body of a wolf. As the she-wolf, she is the Goddess that is nature and the Goddess that takes a very present and active supporting role in our lives.

As wolf she is that which has the ability and courage to destroy and create and she is that which knows, sees and embraces what lies in the dark and the light and so she is life and death simultaneously. The she-wolf is of a time when the Goddess who, like the bird and snake goddesses of the Neolithic peoples, was the embodiment and manifestation of Nature. She is the inherent life force within us, the wild and untamed beauty of the natural world. She is the part of that which lies within all of us, no matter our physical gender, or age or background. Within us all lies this primal mother, this archetype or aspect of ourself that calls to be remembered and utilised.

Through her you will remember and witness in your own life the sacred relationship of knowledge and wisdom. Wisdom is knowledge when it is experienced and embodied; our heads may be full but we must return it home to our body, as our earth and foundation, and there assimilate, create, transform and transmute. In her myths, the twin boys Romulus and Remus must return to her before they can follow their paths of kingship. They must meet the she-wolf, be suckled by her, receive her wisdom and enter the cave as initiation. And so, the she-wolf will take all into her cave, so that knowledge can become wisdom, for what use is knowledge if not channelled into service, purpose, compassion and loving action?



An extract from Lupa. She-Wolf of Rome, Mother of Destiny continued...



Lupa steps forth now on mighty paws to reclaim her seat and stage. She has been waiting a long time to work with us in this way. You may have already had encounters, glimpses of something stirring within the dark of her cave, but if you are holding and reading this book, it is time for you to work more deeply with her. She has so much to offer beyond the limitations of recorded history and truly her unique offering to humankind is that of facilitator and midwife in remembering and enabling your unique blueprint. She will support and guide you in living a life of embodied destiny. She will remind you of your pure potentiality and together you will journey to discover and create a life courageously lived on-purpose.

When sharing her mythology often historians' comment on the astonishing coincidence of Lupa finding the twins at the river's edge. Even more so that it was pure luck that a child laden basket arrived nowhere else but at the feet of a politically sympathetic wolf (and also pretty handy the babies were too cute to have made a great breakfast for a wild and untamed predator).

But as we know from our own life's journeys, there is no co-incidence, and believing it was such, so there lies a misunderstanding of Her way and truth. We may seem to stumble upon experiences, people and places in life but there is always a thread, a path of preparation to those destined spots. In truth, she was there waiting at the river side at the time that was always meant to be. She was there, ready, because there is a destiny, a divine purpose for us all, that is fulfilled when we are ready to trust and receive. She knew and so will you know.

She was there all along, waiting at the riverside of the Tiber and now she is there waiting for you also. So come let us journey with our Wolf Mother.



About Lupa:

Come enter the cave of destiny with the She-Wolf. She transcends timelines, space and dimensions to become your guide in remembering and embodying your unique purpose and path.

This book is an exploration of Lupa as the she-wolf of Rome, from Wet-nurse to the founders of Ancient Rome to Modern day teacher of embodiment practices. Lupa is a powerful Goddess for supporting a life lived on purpose and for those that desire to discover and manifest their unique destiny.



An extract from Lupa. She-Wolf of Rome, Mother of Destiny continued...

Explore the mythos of Lupa and its meaning and importance for the Ancient Romans as well as for you now. She is not only central and vital importance to the history of Rome and the Ancient Roman empire but also to womankind.

As an ambassador for the Wolf Genius and essence, Lupa comes forth now to support the empowerment and healing of the inner and outer wild, primal feminine. Her deep howl from the cave is a call to her pack asking you to step forward in alignment with your truth. This book contains tools and practices to support you in your journey with Lupa as you take these steps, and the re-telling of her story is testament to her invaluable role as Mother of Destiny.

[Click here for Publishers website and book page](#)

About Rachel

Rachel is a bestselling author, sacred dance teacher, priestess, women's empowerment coach and flower essence practitioner.

Rachel is the creatrix of Wolf Woman Rising, a wisdom school where she empowers you to embody your wisdom, reclaim your authentic, wild, untamed self and create a life lived on purpose. Through online community, courses and training, as well as in-person retreats and workshops she initiates women into the feminine arts, nature alchemy & divine connection.

Her desire has always been to create a bridge between history and spirituality, mythology and well-being; transmuting mythology into embodied wisdom, so that it becomes a tool of healing, empowerment and awakening for men and women. Described by students as inspiring and encouraging, Rachel uses over 20 years' experience of teaching and training to guide your empowerment journey.

You can follow Rachel and find out more about her books, workshops and courses via Facebook www.facebook.com/wolfwomanrising
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