

The Pagan Federation



Paganism Information Pack

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THE PAGAN FEDERATION

The Pagan Federation is an international organisation, which is run almost entirely by volunteers. It was founded in 1971 to provide information and counter misconceptions about Paganism. It helps and supports members of the Pagan community and campaigns on issues which affect Paganism.

Its aims and objectives are:

- To seek to support all Pagans in their personal and public life, to help ensure that they have the same rights as the followers of other beliefs and members of other religions.
- To promote a positive profile for Pagans and Paganism and to provide information on Pagan paths and beliefs to the media, official bodies and the greater community.
- To facilitate effective communication, education and dialogue within and between Pagan communities and with non Pagans, through publications and events.

The Pagan Federation works for the rights of Pagans to worship freely and without censure. Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to which Britain is a signatory, states:

'Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.'

Some of the main work of the organisation includes Hospital Visiting, Prison Ministry Work and Interfaith liaison. We provide educational resources for education authorities and other public and private agencies. We also have an international network of contact points to supply information for the media and the establishment.

Within the United Kingdom & Ireland The Pagan Federation is divided into twelve districts, plus the autonomous federal body of PF Scotland & Ireland. Each district has a District Manager, Regional Co-Ordinators and Local Co-Ordinators to help and support the members of their Pagan community. We strive to support both individual Pagans and Pagan organisations alike.

Local meetings called 'moots' – for socialising and debate – have developed. These take place in pubs, coffee bars and private houses. In addition, most districts also produce their own local contact lists and magazine/newsletter, for their members.

Pagan Federation International covers the rest of Europe, North America, South America, Canada and Australia. It serves as a contact point for Pagans outside of the United Kingdom and Ireland.

The Pagan Federation publishes a quarterly journal, ***Pagan Dawn***, formerly ***The Wiccan*** (founded in 1968) It arranges members-only and public events, and maintains personal contact by letter with individual members and with the wider Pagan community. There are a range of national, district and regional gatherings throughout the year. Membership is open to anyone who is Pagan, 16 years of age or over and agrees with the Aims and Objectives (in England & Wales) or the Three Principles (in the rest of the World).

Annual subscription rates to Pagan Dawn are available in the current issue, or by sending for an introductory leaflet. If you wish to become a member, a membership application form can be requested by post or downloaded from our Website.

A sample magazine is available at a cost of £3.00 UK, £4.50 overseas (including post and packing). Only sterling cheques can be accepted. Please enclose SAE (UK only) or 2 International Reply Coupons (available from large post offices worldwide) when writing.

If you would like further help or information please write to the following address, enclosing an SAE and allowing 28 days for a response:

**The Pagan Federation
BM Box 7097
London
WC1N 3XX**

**Visit our Website at: www.paganfed.org
General Help and Information Telephone Line: 07986 034387**

**The Pagan Federation: In Service to Paganism and the Pagan
Community**

PAGANISM

Paganism is a very diverse religion - some say a family of closely related religions - with its roots in the indigenous, pre-Christian religions of Europe, evolved and adapted to the circumstances of modern life. The word 'Paganism' covers many aspects ranging from classical literature, history and folklore through to complete belief systems. The definitions of the words Pagan and Paganism have been described as follows:

Definition of a Pagan:

A follower of a predominantly nature-worshipping, polytheistic or pantheistic religion which incorporates beliefs and ritual practices from ancient traditions.

Definition of Paganism:

A predominantly nature-worshipping, polytheistic or pantheistic religion which incorporates beliefs and ritual practices from ancient traditions.

Paganism is constantly evolving, changing and growing, as it is not a static revealed religion where universal truths are recorded for all time. No one person delivers its message to a following, as it does not rely on experts to interpret its teachings or beliefs. Paganism is reliant on experience and self-expression and the principle that all can commune with nature and its essential life force.

The path of Paganism is a path of celebration, challenge and personal growth. It is not one governed by fear or external rules. However, within Paganism there is awareness that all actions are the personal responsibility of the individual and they themselves will be responsible for the consequences for them and those around them.

Pagans believe that they are a part of nature and not separate from it or superior to it. Nearly all Pagans honour nature, the earth and the greater universe within their spirituality and are actively concerned about environmental issues.

There are certain attitudes and beliefs which nearly all Pagans hold:

1. Honouring of the cycle of the seasons or wheel of the year and participation in its festivals (either alone or as part of a group).
2. The honouring of deity, or deities, as objective divinity. (This could be God /Goddess, or nature as deity, or a range of pantheistic or polytheistic beliefs.)
3. Believing in and participating in ritual, both as spiritual practice and occasionally as a means of effecting objective change.
4. Specific self-identification as a 'Pagan'.

Within modern Paganism there are those that are content to define themselves as Pagans, whereas others follow a specific path within Paganism itself. Five of these specific paths are described in the following pages.

INTRODUCTORY READING

If you are interested in learning more about Paganism or any of the subjects covered within this publication, a book list appears at the end of each section. The books may be obtained from good bookshops, libraries, or esoteric mail order companies advertising in Pagan Dawn.

It would be impossible to list all the books which are published upon these diverse subjects so please enjoy your journey of discovery.

Paganism

- | | |
|---|--|
| Margot Adler | Drawing Down the Moon
Penguin, 2006 |
| Vivianne Crowley | Principles of Paganism
Thorsons, 1996 |
| | The Phoenix from the Flame.
Thorsons, 1994. |
| Ronald Hutton | Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles.
Blackwell, 1994. |
| | Witches, Druids and King Arthur
Hambledon & London, 2003 |
| Graham Harvey & Charlott Hardman | Pagan Pathways
Thorsons, 2000 |
| Prudence Jones & Nigel Pennick | A History of Pagan Europe.
Routledge, 1995
A detailed historical view of the development of Paganism |
| Pete Jennings | Pagan Paths
www.gippeswic.demon.co.uk
Gruff Books BM Gippeswic London WC1N 3XX |
| Graham Harvey | Listening People, Speaking Earth
Hurst, 1997 |
| Pagan Dawn | Journal of The Pagan Federation
BM Box 7097, London. WC1N 3XX |
- Four issues a year: 1st Feb; 1st May; 1st August; 1st Nov**

BRANCHES OF PAGANISM

Pagans may be trained in particular traditions or they may follow their own inspiration. Paganism is not dogmatic. Pagans pursue their own vision of the Divine as a direct and personal experience.

The Pagan Federation recognises the rich diversity of paths and traditions that form the body of modern Paganism. In a brief introductory booklet, it is not possible to describe each and every one. Rather than attempt this, the following pages contain an introduction to five examples of Pagan paths and traditions:

Druidry

Heathenry

Shamanism

Witchcraft

Women's Traditions

This is not an exhaustive list, but these five insights provide an overview of modern Paganism.

Many call themselves simply - **Pagans**. Those whose orientation is towards the Great Earth Mother and the preservation of her realm, our planet, may call themselves **Ecopagans**. Others may define themselves as followers of a particular Pagan tradition: **Wiccan, Witch, Druid, Odinist, Shaman, Goddess-worshipper**, etc. Some may call themselves **Pantheists**, meaning that they believe the divine is in-dwelling in nature.

People come to Paganism in many ways: through reading the myths of our ancestors; through experiencing a sense of the "Divine in Nature" - a feeling that spiritual forces inhabit the trees, forests, fields and hills; through an awareness that their inner response to the Divine is not to a male God but to a female deity, the Great Goddess; or through participating, sometimes purely by chance, in a Pagan festival, ceremony, conference or workshop. This may be at some gathering formally designated as Pagan, or at some other event where Pagan celebration may arise spontaneously, such as at folk festivals.

There are no particular admission ceremonies which make people Pagan.

People consider themselves Pagan if their beliefs match those of Pagan thought. Particular Pagan denominations may have entry through a ceremony of dedication or initiation, but people can identify as Pagan without any formal rite.

Paganism is not administered by a hierarchical bureaucracy. The Pagan movement is made up of individuals and small autonomous groups linked by common traditions and beliefs.

There are organisations which do cater for particular Pagan paths. The Pagan Federation does not undertake to recommend other organisations within the following pages. If you do require further help and information please contact us and we will assist you.

Paganism is tolerant, life-affirming and respectful of other religious paths.

DRUIDRY

The Druids Vow

***We swear by Peace and Love to stand,
Heart to heart and hand in hand;
Mark, O Spirit and hear us now,
Confirming this, our sacred vow.***

Step with me into the Druid forest. It is a place of mystery; of death, of light and gentle glades, and the dancing shadows of night. As we walk further you can see that the path you are following has been walked before, by Druids from pre-Christian times, right up to the present day, and that there are smaller paths also to explore, that lead into the shadows. There is no need to stay on the path, for the Druid forest is a place of freedom, and every step from the main pathway leads to new insights, wisdom and wonder, and creates new paths that others might follow in the future.

That is the creation of the many pathways that lie within the tradition of modern Druidry. Some paths created by the pre-Christian Druids who added their own footsteps to those of the existing paths of our Neolithic ancestors, their ways kept alive within the hidden messages in the old myths and stories of the land and within the folklore of the countryside. Newer paths were created by the revivalists and antiquarians of the 1700s. These are linked further to the Masonic Druids, paths which were crisscrossed again by the Druid Orders that grew out of the 1960s. Paving the way for the modern Pagan Druid revival that we have witnessed over the last fifteen years, one that continues to grow to this day.

Some Druids say that the path will fork in three - Christian, Pagan, philosopher; knowing also whichever you take it will fork again Bard, Ovate, Druid, and again - Wizard, Witch, Warrior, and again and again -active, cultural, learned.

The Orders of Druids are just as diverse - teaching, political, magical, yet knowing also what unites them; in circle and celebration.

A Druid explains:

'Druidry has no book of law, the only lessons being those learnt from nature. There are no gurus and hierarchy is kept to a working minimum. Central to Druidic belief is a love of nature combined with the pragmatic view that spiritual insight should be expressed in daily life. Druidry stresses the importance of working as a part of a group and working as an individual to develop the spiri-tual life. Druidry is especially concerned with the ecological crisis faced by the modern world, and works in many ways for the healing of the Earth.'

It is the Druid way to celebrate the turning of the wheel and to revere nature in all her splendour. Celebrating not only the solar and agricultural festivals, but also observing the lunar cycles and seeking to find truth and wisdom in ancient and sacred places and sites.

Rites may vary from Order to Order, and from Druid to Druid but in essence all will honour the ancestors and the elements. All will meet in circle, as there is no distinct hierarchy other than is necessary for ritual and for the public face of the Druids in the outerworld.

Most modern Pagan Druids will honour the duality of God and Goddess, man and woman and many will use the Awen symbol /|\ to illustrate the divine spirit that they believe moves through them.

To say that Druids fall into three groups or sub-groups is somewhat simplistic but there are within the Druid tradition often three separate roles and responsibilities:

Bards: Which generally includes musicians, storytellers, keepers of the lore.

Vates or Ovates: Healers, seekers, and mystics.

Druids: Celebrants, ritualists and keepers of the law.

All strive to live as part of (not apart from) nature. Some individuals and Orders will take this responsibility further and be involved on one level or another with protest, in some cases using non-violent direct action to protect our environment.

Many believe in reincarnation or the ability of the soul or spirit to continue after death in one form or another and many believe in the spirit of others, be it animal, vegetable or (in the case of site) even mineral.

All live by a very strong ethical and moral code though this code may vary considerably from Order to Order, Grove to Grove, and Druid to Druid.

Druid

By Damh the Bard

I look behind me and see the face of a poet,
 Flaming eyes that know no bounds,
 Who understands the secrets of the land, the sea, the sky,
 And the language of the birds,
 Who can hear the message of the cry of the gull,
 In the voice of the wave
 And the cold, dark, Earth.
 I look before me.
 And see my reflection
 And our voices sing the tales of the land,
 As the old Druid whispers them to us,
 From tree, river, from land of old

For further information, please also see the Pagan Federation Druidry Information Pack.

Books on Druidry

- | | |
|---|---|
| Phillip Carr-Gomm | <p>Elements of the Druid Tradition.
 Element Books, 1991</p> <p>The Druid Mysteries.
 Rider, 2002</p> <p>Druidcraft.
 Thorsons, 2003</p> |
| Emma Restall-Orr | <p>Druidry
 Thorsons First Directions, 2001</p> <p>Druid Priestess
 Harper Collins, 2001</p> |
| Arthur Pendragon
and Christopher
James Stone | <p>The Trials of Arthur
 Thorsons element
 ISBN 007 121148</p> |
| Sandra Parson | <p>Druidry and the Four Elements
 Capall Bann</p> |
| Ronald Hutton | <p>The Druids
 Hambledon Continuum, 2007</p> |

HEATHENRY

Heathenry (also known as 'the Northern Tradition' by some) is a term used to describe the religious practices of two main groups of people, one historical and one modern.

The original Heathens were the pre-Christian Northern European peoples who lived a thousand and more years ago in the lands around what is now called the North Sea. These included the peoples of Anglo-Saxon England, Scandinavia, Germany and Frisia (Friesland).

Modern Heathen groups around the world are reviving these old practices and call their religion by various names including Asatru, The Northern Tradition, Odinism, Forn Sed, Germanic Pagan Reconstructionism or, simply, Heathenry. In Iceland, which did not convert to Christianity until the 11th Century, Heathenry has once again become an official i.e. nationally recognised, religion.

Heathens work to build healthy relationships with gods and goddesses, ancestors, spirits of the land, and others in their communities, both through holy rites and through their day to day actions.

Gods and Other Beings

Heathenry, like all ancient European pagan religions, is polytheistic and recognises a large number of gods and other spiritual entities. Although the Heathen gods are best known from Norse Mythology (and often called by Anglicised versions of their Old Norse names) they were honoured by many peoples outside of Scandinavia. Some of the most well known Heathen gods are enshrined in our English days of the week. Tuesday is named after Tiw (Tyr), Wednesday after Woden (Odin), Thursday after Thunor (Thor) and Friday after the goddess Frige (Frigg).

In addition to gods, Heathens recognise and relate to a wide variety of spiritual beings or 'wights'. Another characteristic of Heathen religion is the respect given to ancestors in general. These may be a person's literal forebears, or may be people now dead who have inspired them in some way.

Structure

There are no central authorities in Heathenry and no single organisation to which all Heathens belong, though there are national and international organisations created to facilitate networking between Heathens. There is no widely recognised priesthood, although sometimes individuals may be recognised as godhis and gydhjas (priests and priestesses) within their own communities.

Many Heathens belong to small groups made up of Heathen friends and family members. These groups are sometimes called 'hearths' or 'kindreds' and meet for religious rituals in members' homes or in outdoor spaces. Some hearths and kindreds have recognised leaders. Others are entirely egalitarian.

Rites and Celebrations

The main rites celebrated in Heathenry are called blot (pronounced 'bloat') and symbol (pronounced 'sumble'). Heathen groups and individuals hold feasts and celebrations based around blot and symbol at rites of passage (such as weddings or baby-namings), seasonal holidays, oath-takings, rites in honour of a particular god or gods, and rites of need (in which gods are asked for help).

Festivals

Different Heathen communities and individuals celebrate different cycles of seasonal holidays based on their cultural affiliations, local traditions, and relationships with particular gods. There is no fixed calendar of Heathen festival dates. The three Heathen festivals most commonly celebrated in the UK are Winter Nights - usually celebrated in October or November, Yule - a twelve day festival that begins around the time of the winter solstice, and a festival for the Anglo-Saxon goddess Eostre in the spring.

Magic and Seership

Magic and seership were practiced by some individuals within ancient Heathen cultures, and this is also the case with today's Heathen community. Some Heathens are also rediscovering Northern European shamanistic practices known as seidh (pronounced 'sayth'). Many modern Heathens also practice runic divination. Although magic was part of ancient Heathen culture, it did not play a part in the religious rituals of blot and symbol therefore it is not seen as an intrinsic part of the religion. Although all Heathens share a belief in the ability of the gods to enact change in the world, they do not all believe in the ability of magicians to do so.

Wyrd and Ethics

One of the central concepts in Heathenry is **wyrd**, the force that connects everything in the universe throughout space and time. Heathens believe that all of their actions can have far reaching consequences through the web of wyrd. They understand that who they are, where they are, and what they are doing today is dependent on actions they and others have taken in the past, and that every choice they make in the present builds upon choices they have previously made.

With an understanding of wyrd comes a great responsibility. If we know that every action we take (or fail to take) will have implications for our own future choices and for the future choices of others, we have an ethical obligation to think carefully about the possible consequences of everything we do. Thus one of the principal ethics of Heathenry is that of taking responsibility for one's own actions.

After Death

Heathenry is focused on right living in the here and now and does not place as great an emphasis on the afterlife as do some other religions. Whereas Valhalla - Odhin's hall - is popularly seen as the Norse equivalent of heaven, this is a misconception. According to the mythology as recorded in the Eddas, Valhalla is only for warriors who die in battle. Moreover, half of these battle-slain warriors go to Freyja's hall and half to Odhin's hall. Those who drown at sea go to the goddess Ran's hall. People who die of natural causes go to the hall of the goddess Hel. Most of today's Heathens see Hel as a neutral place where they will be reunited with their ancestors.

Heathenry and other Contemporary Pagan Spiritualities

Heathenry is a living religion based on literary and archaeological sources for the religious practices of a particular pre-Christian culture and extended by the relationships of modern Heathens with their gods. Heathens are 'hard polytheists': they honour a large number of individual gods, goddesses and other spiritual beings whom they see as existing independently from humans. And in common with many indigenous religions world-wide, they also honour their ancestors.

Heathens reject the concept that all goddesses are aspects of 'The Goddess' and that all gods are aspects of her consort. They also reject the Jungian concept of Gods and Goddesses as archetypes in the unconscious mind. Heathen festivals do not follow the 'Eight Fold Wheel of the Year' based on solstices and equinoxes. Their rituals do not involve 'casting circles' or 'calling quarters'. Magic is not an essential or central part of Heathenry, and the majority of Heathens do not consider themselves 'witches'. There are no 'degrees of initiation' within Heathen religion and no 'high priests' or 'high priestesses'.

Despite these theological differences, many Heathens are involved in the wider pagan community for social and political reasons.

For further information, please also see the Pagan Federation Northern Tradition Information Pack.

Books on Heathenry**Kevin Crossley-Holland****The Penguin Book of Norse Myths**
Penguin 1996**Hilda R Ellis Davidson****Gods and Myths of Northern Europe**
Penguin, 1990**Myths and symbols in Pagan Europe: Early Scandinavian and Celtic Religions.**

Manchester University Press, 1988.

*Academic study examining the religious practices of these two great European peoples. Excellent overview from an academic.***Rudolf Simek****Dictionary of Northern Mythology**

DS Brewer 1996

(Translated by Angela Hall)

Jenny Blain**Understanding Wyrð: The Norns and the Tree****Wights and Ancestors: Heathenism in a Living Landscape**

Both published by Wyrð's Well 2000

Nine Worlds of Seid-Magic: Ecstasy and Neo-Shamanism in North European Paganism

Routledge 2002

Essential Source Material**Snorri Sturloson & Edda**

Everyman 1987

(Translated by Anthony Faulkes)

SHAMANISM

Modern Shamanism is perhaps the most diverse of all the forms of Paganism and is less clearly defined as a tradition than other Pagan paths. Shamanic practices are an underlying aspect of all expressions of Pagan religion and there are those who would describe themselves as Wiccan, Druidic or Women's Mystery Shamans. Bearing this in mind, there are, however, a growing number of men and women who see themselves on a specifically Shamanic path.

Those who see themselves as Shamans place great emphasis upon individual experience. Shamans may sometimes work together in groups, but the ethos of this way of working is more of a solitary path. Shamanic practice is characterized by seeking vision in solitude and is deeply rooted in the mysteries of Nature.

Shamanism is an ecstatic spirituality with an essential belief in the reality of the spirit world. The Shaman, through training or calling, is one who is able to enter that world and work with the unseen powers. The Shaman acts as an intermediary between the spirit world and the everyday lives of men and women. He or she may also guide others to experience the spirit world for themselves and so deepen their spiritual lives. Through contact with the spirits, the Shaman can work acts of healing, divination and magic - revealing by way of vision, poetry and myth the deeper reaches of the human spirit.

'Shamans are healers, seers, and visionaries...they are in communication with the world of gods and spirits. Their bodies can be left behind while they fly to unearthly realms. They are poets and singers. They dance and create works of art...they are familiar with cosmic as well as physical geography; the ways of plants, animals, and the elements are known to them. They are psychologists, entertainers, and food finders. Above all, however, shamans are technicians of the sacred and masters of ecstasy.'

Joan Halifax, Shamanic Voices, E P Dutton, NY, 1979.

The Shamanic practice of today ranges from those trained in the paths of traditional societies such as the Native American tribes, to those reconstructing Shamanic practice from historical accounts and from their own experience. Shamanism in its pure form, as practiced in tribal society as a part of tribal spiritual practices, is less accessible than other Pagan paths, but modern reconstructions are growing in popularity.

Books on Shamanism

- Brian Bates** **The Way of Wyrd: tales of an Anglo-Saxon sorcerer** (Fiction)
Beaver 1986
- Gordon MacLellan** **The Piatkus Guide to Shamanism.**
Piatkus Books 1999.
- Talking to the Earth**
Capall Bann 1996
- Sacred Animals**
Capall Bann 1997
- John Matthews** **The Celtic Shaman: A Practical Guide.**
Rider 2001
- Caitlin Matthews** **Singing the Soul back Home: Shamanism in daily life.**
Connections 2002
- Alby Stone** **Explore Shamanism**
Explore Books 2003
- Sarangerele** **Chosen by the Spirit: Following your Shamanic Calling**
Destiny Books 2001
- Robert E Ryan** **Shamanism and the Psychology of C G Jung**
Sterling 2002
- Kenneth Meadows** **Shamanic Experience**
Inner Traditions 2003
- Mircea Eilade** **Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy**
Princetown University Press. Paperback 2004.
- Robert J Wallis** **Shamans/Neo-Shamans**
Ecstasy, alternative archaeologies and contemporary Pagans.
Routledge 2003
- Leo Rutherford** **Way of Shamanism**
Thorsons 2001
- Ronald Hutton** **Shamans: Siberian Spirituality and the Western Imagination.**
Hambledon & London Ltd.

WITCHCRAFT

The roots of Pagan Witchcraft lie way back in the mists of time. Images of Witchcraft appear from the stories of Morgan le Fay in the Arthurian legends, right through to the modern day.

The practice of Witchcraft can include anything from herb lore, healing, spellcraft and counselling to conducting public open rituals.

The most publicly known branch of modern Witchcraft is Wicca. Witchcraft also includes Solitary Practitioners (sometimes known as Hedgewitches) plus Traditional and Hereditary paths.

Witchcraft may also be known as 'The Craft of the Wise' or 'The Craft'

Wicca

The Wiccan form of Witchcraft began to emerge publicly in the late 1940s. It is an initiatory path, a mystery tradition that guides its initiates to a deep communion with the powers of nature and of the human psyche, leading to a spiritual transformation of the self. Women who follow this path are initiated as Priestesses and men are initiated as Priests.

'Wicca is both a religion and a Craft. As a religion - like any other religion - its purpose is to put the individual and the group in harmony with the divine creative principal of the Cosmos, and its manifestation at all levels. As a Craft, its purpose is to achieve practical ends by psychic means, for good, useful and healing purposes. In both aspects, the distinguishing characteristics of Wicca are its Nature-based attitude, its small group autonomy with no gulf between priesthood and 'congregation', and its philosophy of creative polarity at all levels, from Goddess and God to Priestess and Priest.'

Janet & Stewart Farrar, *Eight Sabbats For Witches*, Robert Hale, London 1981.

Those wishing to be initiated must be at least 18 years of age. Wicca does not seek converts and initiation is never offered. Initiation must be asked for and is only given to those who have proved themselves suitable. It is traditional to wait a year and a day before being accepted into Wicca, although this can vary.

In Britain, there are two main branches of Wicca: Gardnerian Wicca and Alexandrian Wicca. In other countries, further traditions have evolved based on these branches. Gardnerians claim lineage from Gerald Gardner, who was mostly responsible for the revival of the modern Craft. Alexandrians descend from Alex and Maxine Sanders.

Wiccans celebrate eight seasonal festivals called Sabbats and hold meetings called Esbats at the full moon. Wiccan rituals are often conducted out of doors and involve simple rites to celebrate the seasons and the gift of life. Wiccan

ritual is a means of contacting the divine beyond our individual lives, but also a way of understanding our inner psyche and contacting the divine within.

Wiccans honour the Goddess and God, or Goddesses and Gods, and recognise the creative energy and polarity between male and female. Most working groups include male and female members, but there are single gender groups too. Although some people do work alone, the practice of Wicca is primarily done by group working. Such groups are known as Covens.

The senior members of a Wiccan Coven are the High Priestess and High Priest. Rites and magical practices are carried out within a circle which is cast to create a sacred space in which to work. People are encouraged to think for themselves and be responsible for their own actions. At the heart of most Wiccan magical practice is the Wiccan Rede:

“An it harm none, do as you will”

Many Wiccans believe that after death the spirit continues upon its journey over the course of many lives.

Many of the material and techniques used within Wicca and, indeed, other branches of the modern day Craft is attributed to Doreen Valiente who has been described as the mother of modern witchcraft.

The White Moon Charge

By

Doreen Valiente

For I am the beauty of the green earth
 And the white moon amongst the stars,
 And the mystery of the waters,
 And the desire of the heart of man,
 I call unto thy soul
 Arise and come unto me;
 For I am the soul of nature
 Who gives life to the Universe.
 From me all things proceed,
 And unto me they must return:
 And before my face,
 Beloved of Gods and man,
 Thine innermost divine self
 Shall be enfolded in the rapture of the infinite.
 Let my worship be in the heart that rejoices
 For behold all acts of love and pleasure are my rituals.
 Let there be beauty and strength
 Power and compassion
 Honour and Humility

Mirth and Reverence, within you.
 And those who seek to know me, know
 That your seeking and yearning shall avail thee not,
 Unless you know the mystery:
 If that which you seek you find not within yourself,
 You will never find it without;
 For behold I have been with you from the beginning,
 And I am that which is attained at the end of desire.
 Blessed Be

Traditional Witchcraft

Traditional Witches follow a form of Witchcraft that differs from Wicca. It is sometimes known to its followers as the 'Old Craft'— a term which was first used in print by Robert Cochrane (1931 to 1966) Today the term is widely used to describe the disparate forms of non-Wiccan Witchcraft. The 'Old Craft' has no organised structure or central leadership except for a loose network of individuals and groups sharing common contacts and aims. While there are many differences within Traditional Witchcraft, there are also some quite striking similarities in the beliefs and practices of various traditions. Although some traditional crafters work in groups, many others are solitary practitioners following the path of the cunning man or wise women of olden times.

Traditionalists believe strongly in ancestors, in the numinous quality of the *geni loci* or spirit of place, the concept of the sacred and enchanted landscape and an ancient relationship with the land. While traditionalists may utilise Pagan imagery, they may also practice dual faith observance and agree with Cochrane that witchcraft is not a Pagan religion. In his opinion, while it retains versions of the old Paganism, the Craft is foremost a mystery cultus, magical tradition and a Gnostic belief system.

Major elements of the 'Old Craft' include robed and outdoor workings, contact in the realm of Elfbane, communion with the spirit world, psychic visions, trance and mediumship, divination, summoning spirits and wortcunning or herbal lore.

Robert Cochrane's tradition is an example of the 'Old Craft' teachings that survived the premature death of its founder. It is still practiced today as the *Clan of Tubal Cain* in the United Kingdom and as the *Roebuck Coven* and the *1734 tradition* in the United States of America. Cochrane claimed to have been a hereditary Witch belonging to one of the old Witch families that could be traced back over 200 years. In the 1960s his working group met outdoors in southern England to perform their rites wearing black hooded robes.

The natural domain of the Traditional Witch is the shadows. It is only recently that a few have attempted to relate to outsiders. However, many continue to practice their 'Old Craft' in secret, as they believe their ancestors did before them.

Hereditary Witches say that their traditions have been passed on by particular families through relations of blood, marriage and adoptions.

Hedgewitches practice alone (or with a magical partner) and may follow their own craft or any of the other branches of Witchcraft.

For further information, please also see Pagan Federation Witchcraft Information Pack.

Books on Witchcraft

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| Rae Beth | <p>Hedge Witch: a Guide for the Solitary Practitioner.
Hale, 1990</p> <p>Hedge Witch: Guide to Solitary Witchcraft.
Hale, 1992</p> <p>The Hedge Witch's Way: Magical Spirituality for the lone spellcaster.
Hale, 2003</p> |
| Marian Green | <p>A Witch Alone: 13 Moons to Master Natural Magic.
Thorsons, Harper Collins, 2002</p> <p>Practical Magic
Lorenz Books, 2001</p> <p>Wild Witchcraft
Thorsons, 2002</p> <p>The Gentle Arts of Natural Magic
Thoth Publications. Reprinted 2003</p> |
| Ronald Hutton | <p>The Triumph of the Moon.
Oxford University Press, 1999</p> |
| Michael Jordan | <p>Witches.
Kyle Cathie Ltd, 1996
<i>Includes interviews with, Vivianne Crowley, Olivia Robertson, Doreen Valiente and Maxine Sanders.</i></p> |
| Doreen Valiente | <p>ABC of Witchcraft.
Hale, 1973</p> <p>Witchcraft for Tomorrow.
Hale, 1978</p> |

- Doreen Valiente** **The Charge of the Goddess.**
Hexagon Hoopix, 2000
- Poppy Palin** **Wildwitch – The Craft of the Natural Psychic**
Capall Bann

Books on Wicca

- Vivianne Crowley** **Wicca: the Old Religion in the New Millennium**
(2nd ed.).
Thorsons, 1996.
- Phyllis Currott** **Book of Shadows**
Journey into the wisdom of Witchcraft and the
Magic of the Goddess.
Broadway, 1999
- Witchcrafting: A spiritual guide to making magic.**
Thorsons, 2002
- Janet & Stewart** **A Witches Bible.**
Farrar Phoenix, 1996
- Stewart Farrar** **What Witches Do**
Phoenix, 1983
- Teresa Moorey** **Witchcraft A Beginners Guide.**
Hodden & Stoughton 1996
- Silver Moon**
Rider, 2003
- Christopher** **Gay Witchcraft**
Penczak Red Wheel/Weiser
- Philip Heselton** **Wiccan Roots**
Capall Bann, 2000
- Gerald Gardner and the Cauldron of Inspiration**
Capall Bann, 2003
- Patricia Crowther** **Lid Off the Cauldron**
Weisser, 1992
- Maxine Sanders** **Firechild**
Mandrake of Oxford, 2007.

Books on Traditional Craft

- Evan John Jones & Robert Cochrane** **The Roebuck in the Thicket**
 Edited by Michael Howard. Capall Bann, 2001
- The Robert Cochrane Letters**
 Edited by Michael Howard. Capall Bann, 2002
- Evan John Jones & Doreen Valiente** **Witchcraft a Tradition Renewed**
 Hale, 1990

MAGAZINES/NEWSLETTERS

- Quest** **Quest, BCM-SCL Quest, London. WC1N 3XX.**
 Four issues a year Mar, Jun, Sep and Dec
- The Cauldron** **BM Cauldron, London. WC1N 3XX**
 Four issues a year Feb, May, Aug and Nov.
- and of course, Pagan Dawn.

WOMEN'S TRADITIONS

Women's spirituality is one of the richest and most dynamic forces in modern Paganism. Women are respected in all Pagan traditions and have enriched Paganism with a powerful vision of the Goddess - the long-ignored feminine aspect of the Divine. In many branches of Paganism, women are Priestesses in their own right, strong and proud, with their own vision.

As well as working in the various traditions of Paganism, women have established their own traditions. These traditions have many forms and are often deeply entwined with the aspirations of the Women's Movement.

Drawing upon the inspiration of the image of the Goddess, women explore their own feminine mysteries. For some women, this involves a denial of all things seen as patriarchal; for others it is a spiritual calling to throw off the conditioning chains of society's stereotypes of women. These women see themselves as reclaiming or creating a new understanding of what it is to be female. They explore the mythologies of the world to discover the deeper meaning of what it is to be a woman. They seek to bring their discoveries to life in their own lives, sharing this newfound knowledge by way of myth, song, dance and, where needed, political action.

One of the best-known women's traditions is the Dianic movement, named in honour of the Goddess Diana. There are many expressions of this tradition. Two of the founding streams were developed by Z. Budapest and Morgan McFarland in the USA. Greatly inspired by the idea of matriarchy, many Dianic groups exclude men and see their tradition as a sisterhood, as wimmins' religion. Others work with men, but see their role as less important than that of women. Many Dianic groups worship only the Goddess and those that acknowledge the God see the male deity as a part of the mystery of the Goddess.

Women's traditions are often eclectic and loosely structured. They tend to be highly creative with many spontaneous elements. Some women's traditions are modelled on Wiccan practice and use rituals and celebrate seasonal festivals in a similar way. Other groups are more Shamanic. Others have blended aspects of different traditions to create new unique pathways.

Women's traditions have an especially powerful vision of the Earth as the Goddess and are deeply involved with caring for the Earth and protecting her from the rape of modern civilization. They are concerned with the healing of the Earth and with the healing of the image of women.

'The Goddess awakens in infinite forms and a thousand disguises. She is found where She is least expected, appears out of nowhere and everywhere to illumine the open heart.'

Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance*, Harper and Row, NY, 1989 edition.

Books about The Goddess and Women's Mysteries

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Z Budapest | The Holy Book of Women's' Mysteries.
Z Budapest 2003 |
| | Summoning the Fates.
Z Budapest 2003 |
| Z Budapest &
Diana Paxson | Celestial Wisdom – For every year of your life.
Red Wheel/Weiser 2003 |
| Clarissa Pinkola-Estes | Women who run with the Wolves: contacting
the Power of the Wild Woman.
Rider, 1992. |
| Starhawk | The Spiral Dance (2nd ed.).
Harper & Row, 1989.
<i>Influential book on Wiccan-oriented Goddess religion.</i> |
| | Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex and Politics
Beacon, 1997 |



THE WHEEL OF THE YEAR

Many Pagans celebrate the changing seasons. Following 'The Wheel of the Year' is one of the ways that this can be done. The dates listed here are the most well known times for ritual and celebration but the actual times of Solstice and Equinox are governed by the solar cycle. Some Pagan's do not use set times to celebrate but wait for nature's sign that a particular season is beginning.

Samhain - 31st October (pronounced *Sow-in*): The Wheel of the Year is seen to begin at Samhain, which is also known as Halloween or All Hallows Eve. Some believe that this was the time when the Celts celebrated the New Year. The veil between the worlds of life and death is at its thinnest. Samhain is a festival of the dead, when people remember those who have gone before and acknowledge the cycle of life and death.

Yule/Winter Solstice - 21st December: This is the longest night of the year when the Sun is reborn. Light and new life return to the earth. This is a time when the accepted order of things is challenged with mirth and laughter. The Lord/Lady of Misrule may be appointed.

Imbolc/Candlemas - 2nd February: This is a celebration of the awakening of the land, the growing power of the Sun and the life force of nature awakening through the darkness. Often, the Goddess is venerated in her aspect as the maiden and her altar is decked with Snow-drops, the heralds of spring.

Ostara/Spring Equinox - 21st March: This is a time of balance when night and day stand equal. The Sun grows in power and the land begins to bloom. For many this symbolises the youthful God with his hunting call, leading the way in dance and celebration. Others dedicate this time to Eostre the Anglo-Saxon Goddess of fertility.

Beltane - 30th April: The powers of light and new life now dance and move through all creation. Spring gives way to summer's first full bloom. Beltane is celebrated with maypole dances, symbolizing the mystery of the Sacred Marriage of Goddess and God.

Summer Solstice - 21st June: Summer solstice is the festival of Midsummer, the longest day of the year, when the Sun is at its highest point. During ritual at this time the God in his light aspect is at the height of his power and is crowned Lord of Light. It is a time of plenty and celebration.

Lughnasadh/Lammas 1st August (pronounced *Loo-nassa*): This is the time of the corn harvest, a time of reaping things that have been sown. When the fruits of the mystery of Nature are celebrated and thanks is given for the bounty of the Land.

Autumn Equinox - 21 September: This marks the end of the harvest season. It is a time of balance when day and night are equal. As the shadows lengthen the onset of the winter months is apparent. For many this time honours old age and the approach of winter.

Samhain - 31st October: The seasons turn and we are back at the festival of Samhain, the festival of the dead and New Year. This is not a time of fear, but a time to understand more deeply that life and death are part of a sacred whole.

