

LUNAR PATHWAYS

Sydney Pagans Newsletter

Volume 1

Issue 2

Yule 2012



Welcome to the Yule edition of Lunar Pathways. Sydney Pagans are a diverse group, and we look forward to ideas and submissions from our members, ensuring a creative and lively newsletter that we can all look forward to. Thank you to Ida, Jenny, Doris, Joy, Sith, Erin and Jo-ann for all your wonderful articles for this edition!

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The origins of the Yule Festival come from a mixture of Norse Mythology, Celtic Lore and Roman Spirituality.

Yule started as a festival of twelve nights (becoming 12 days of Christmas), and during this time, the Winter Solstice occurs, bringing the longest night/shortest day of the year.

The Norse God, Ingvi Freyr rides over the earth on the back of his shining boar, bringing light and love back to the world, and the days begin to last longer, through the wheel to the Summer Solstice.

The Celts celebrated the Winter Solstice by lighting bonfires in the fields, and crops and trees were "wassailed" with toasts of spiced cider. Children received gifts of orange coloured fruit that symbolised the re-birth of the sun. The Yule log was at the centre of the celebrations, and Ash was the traditional wood of the Yule fire, usually made from a piece of wood saved from the previous year.

Yule had counterparts across Europe and Britain, and was celebrated in similar form by various cultures. The Romans also celebrated the Festival of Saturnalia at the same time of the year. Eventually it was also adapted to the Christian religion, becoming Christmas.

In modern times, Yule is usually either celebrated as Christmas day by the Christians or as the Winter Solstice Festival by modern day Pagans. It is a time that family and friends get together, give gifts and feast, sing together, decorate with sacred Holly, and kiss under the mistletoe as a symbol of fertility.

Yule welcomes the birth of the Sun, and the turning of the Wheel of the year, celebrating the Winter Solstice, seedtime of the year, the longest night and shortest day. On this darkest of nights, the Goddess is born again. Yule is a reminder that death isn't final; there will be rebirth. Just as this is a time for seeds to sleep, waiting to burst forth with new growth in the spring, it is a time for us to go inside ourselves, planning for the future.

~Deb~

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Things to do for Yule

Have a Yule dinner. It is cold enough now to have that Roast with all the trimmings. Make a boiled fruit cake with brandied custard. Invite friends and relatives around.

Decorate the room with green and red and be sure to have a decorated tree to place gifts under.

Make a Yule log. European tradition is that the log is made from Oak. In Australia we can use yellow box, river red gum or red box. These woods are chosen for their ability to burn for a long time and generate good heat. Following traditions the Yule log should come from the hosts land or be a gift. You can decorate the log with evergreen plants, sprinkle it with corn or wheat flour then douse it with cider or ale. The log should be lit with a piece saved from last year's log. If you don't have a fire place you could still decorate a log and then use three white candles. Again these should be lit from a stub from last year's candles.

Another tradition of the Yule log from the Northern Hemisphere is to keep the Yule log burning for 12 days. This is done from Christmas to Epiphany. Or if this is not possible it could just burn for the longest night. When the log goes out it is time to make resolutions for the New Year.

Pass the Wassail Bowl around. Share a glass of mulled wine with friends and neighbours. Pour the remaining of the bowl around the base of fruit trees to ensure good crops for the coming year.

~Jenny~



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Wassailing.

Wassailing is a Middle English phrase meaning "Good Health" or "be you healthy", Waes Hail. To the drink of wassail, which is a hot mulled cider traditionally drunk as an integral part of the wassail ceremony. It is an Ancient southern English tradition that is performed with the intention of ensuring a good crop of cider apples for the next year's harvest.

The purpose of wassailing is to awake the cider apple trees and to scare away evil spirits to ensure a good harvest of fruit in the autumn. The ceremonies of each wassail vary from village to village but they generally all have the same core element.

The Ceremony.

A wassail King and Queen lead the song and/or a processional tune to be played/sung from one orchard to the next, the wassail Queen will then be lifted up into the boughs of the tree where she will place toast soaked in Wassail from the Clayen Cup as a gift to the tree spirits (and to show the fruits created the previous year). In some counties the youngest boy or "Tom Tit" would step in for the Queen and hang the cider soaked toast in the tree.

The Chant

Here's to thee, old apple tree,
That blooms well, bears well.
Hats full, caps full,
Three bushel bags full,
An' all under one tree. Hurrah! Hurrah!
Here's to thee, old apple-tree,
Whence thou mayst bud, and whence thou mayst
blow,
And whence thou mayst bear apples now!
Hats-full! Caps-full!
Bushel, bushel sacks-full!
And my pockets full, too! Hurrah



Wassail beverage

Wassail the beverage is a hot, mulled punch often associated with Yuletide. Historically, the drink was a mulled cider made with sugar, cinnamon, ginger, and nutmeg and topped with slices of toast. Modern recipes begin with a base of wine, fruit juice, or mulled ale, sometimes with brandy or sherry added. Apples or oranges are often added to the mix. While the beverage typically served as "wassail" at modern holiday feasts with a medieval theme most closely resembles mulled cider, historical wassail drinks were completely different, more likely to be mulled beer or mead. Sugar, ale, ginger, nutmeg, and cinnamon would be placed in a bowl, heated, and topped with slices of toast as sops.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wassail>

Sunwise Celebrating the Sacred Wheel of the Year in Australia Roxanne T Bodsworth 2003

~Jenny~

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Demeter

Demeter is the daughter of Cronus and Rhea and sister of Zeus; by whom she became the mother of Persephone.

Persephone was gathering flowers in a meadow one day when the earth opened and Hades, King of the Dead, emerged from the Underworld. He seized Persephone and carried her off in his chariot, back down to his realm of the underworld, where she became his queen. Her mother, Demeter was heartbroken. She wandered the length and breadth of the earth in search of her daughter,

In her anger and despair at her daughter's loss, Demeter laid a curse on the world that caused plants to wither and die, the land became desolate. The earth brought forth no grain. All died and laid waste, the sun had no warmth, the earth was frozen in a perpetual winter, seeds would not sprout and nothing grew, Demeter wandered the earth in search of her lost child, the earth also mourned the loss of her daughter.

Finally Persephone's father, Zeus, sent Hermes to the underworld, ordering Hades to restore Persephone to her mother. However, before she left, Hades gave her a pomegranate (a common fertility symbol). Because she had eaten while in the underworld Hades had a claim on her, it was decreed that Persephone would spend a number of months each year in the underworld. Some myths say six months others say four still others say three, the number is not so important as the point is that the earth dies each winter. During these months Demeter grieves her daughter's absence, and withdraws her gifts from the world, creating winter. Only when her daughter returns, Demeter permits the spring to emerge.

This myth works on a number of levels, it is an explanation for the cycle of the year but is also the myth of death and rebirth, as the underworld is synonymous for death, and the raising to the earth is rebirth, the death of the year in winter and the rebirth of it all in spring, it also deals with the rebirth of the human soul or spirit through reincarnation.

Demeter is also known for founding the Eleusinian Mysteries. These were huge festivals held every five years. They were important events for many centuries. Yet, little is known of them as those attending were sworn to secrecy. The central tenant seems to have been that just as grain returns every spring after its harvest and wintry death, so too the human soul could be reborn after the death of the body.



Ceres

Ceres is the Roman Equivalent of Demeter

XXXIX. TO CERES.

O Universal mother, Ceres fam'd
August, the source of wealth, and various nam'd:
Great nurse, all-bounteous, blessed and divine,
Who joy'st in peace, to nourish corn is thine:
Goddess of seed, of fruits abundant, fair,
Harvest and threshing, are thy constant care;
Who dwell'st in Eleusina's seats retir'd,
Lovely, delightful queen, by all desir'd.
Nurse of all mortals, whose benignant mind,
First ploughing oxen to the yoke confin'd;
And gave to men, what nature's wants require,
With plenteous means of bliss which all desire.
In verdure flourishing in honor bright,
Assessor of great Bacchus, bearing light:

Rejoicing in the reapers sickles, kind,
Whose nature lucid, earthly, pure, we find.
Prolific, venerable, Nurse divine,
Thy daughter loving, holy Proserpine:
A car with dragons yok'd, 'tis thine to guide,
And orgies singing round thy throne to ride:
Only-begotten, much-producing queen,
All flowers are thine and fruits of lovely green.
Bright Goddess, come, with Summer's rich increase
Swelling and pregnant, leading smiling Peace;
Come, with fair Concord and imperial Health,
And join with these a needful store of wealth.

From: The Hymns of Orpheus

Translated by Thomas Taylor

[1792]



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Yule in England

As we come up to Yuletide I begin to think about when I was a young lass during the second World War in the early 1940's.

Back then it wasn't Yuletide but Christmas, with Santa, homemade mince tarts, Christmas cake made a couple of months before, Christmas pudding with custard, and of course chicken, which was a luxury as far as meat went. We so looked forward to it, and the smell of it roasting all around the house, Christmas!

I remember one year Mam was so excited because she had managed to get a duck, and none of us liked it!! Vegetables and fresh fruit weren't easy to get and we would take turns at the green grocers, ration book in hand, buying just about anything available.

Toffees, chocolates and dried fruit were a headache, usually having to queue for a while just for a small ration.

I lived in a mining village and when the little local grocer got any new thing in word would travel around like wildfire Christmas Day morning would start off with Dad being the first one up, the only day in the year that happened! He would get a roaring fire going, being a miner a ton of coal a month was a "perk"

We three girls, I had two sisters, all in the same bed, giggling away, waiting to hear Dad say "come on down girls the fire is on". Every year the same routine! Then we'd jump out of bed and race downstairs.

Christmas stockings were pinned to Mam's best velvet mantle cover on the mantelpiece; we would get one or two "big" presents; usually a doll and a book, with little things in our stockings and a tangerine down in the toe - always a tangerine. We didn't really care what we got, it was always a surprise because let's face it there wasn't money the rest of the year for frivolous things like toys.

We could always rely on a white Christmas, Jack Frost snowflakes etched into the window, snow deep enough for Dad to have to dig a path to the coal shed, snow deep enough that let us slip, slide, pull each other on sledges, do the snowman thing, all the good things for kids to do in snow.

No fear of being run over by cars, I think the only one in the village belonged to the mine manager!

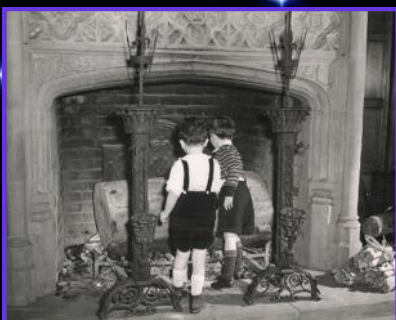
So that by 11 am; it was 11 am every year; the colliery band arrived to play Christmas carols, in our street, outside our back gate too, because three of the members were my Mam's brothers, two played the cornet and the other one lugged around a huge tuba, we could always hear Uncle Norman!

And Mam would have a bottle of sherry "to keep the boys warm"!

We didn't go to church at Christmas, Mam and Dad weren't church goers. We girls went to Sunday school, but well, that was for Sundays!

Ours wasn't a close family so there would only be 'us' on Christmas day; probably saved a lot of family arguments. So on recollection it was a very special time made all the more traditional because of the cold and snow, and to me here in Australia it reinforces the argument about having Yuletide in the coldest month of July, being able to have all the hearty, warming foods, and certainly being more Christmassy than an Australian December

~Doris~



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The Wheel of the Year

The wheel of the year is divided into eight festivals, shown here in the southern hemisphere direction. Each festival correlates with the eight phases of the moon and the cyclical journey of the Goddess:

New Moon – Winter Solstice/Yule: The Goddess reborn

Crescent Moon – Imbolc: The Goddess as a fragile, new seed

First Quarter – Ostara: She as a young naïve child

Gibbous Moon – Beltane: The Goddess as a maiden newly aware of her sexuality

Full Moon – Litha: She, the Mother of All

Disseminating Moon – Lammas: The mature Goddess

Last Quarter – Mabon: The Goddess reaches menopause and the beginning of her Crone journey

Balsamic Moon – Samhain: The Goddess as Crone prepares for death at Samhain

The moon cycle reminds us of the circle of life, as birth, growth, fullness, decay, and death followed by rebirth and growth.

The dark part of the cycle, illustrated between Samhain and the Winter Solstice is where life is cleansed, rested and revitalised; a time to let go of stale habits and unhealthy patterns; develop new ideas; and get ready to embrace a period of unlimited potential.

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An Affirmation:

| breath the strength of air, | drink the ebb and flow of water, | stand firm on the dirt of
the earth, | fuel myself with the fire of the world And | walk with my head held high,
Knowing | am the spirit of goddess And | am me!

~Erin~



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Dear Sith

"Could you please tell me what tools I need to Practice Witchcraft", from 'New to the craft'

Dear New to the Craft,

Practicing witchcraft is incredibly complex when one is new, and requires some of the most difficult tools to obtain. Usually many fledgling practitioners think they have the required tools, but sadly they do not possess the right quality to move beyond the most shallow and rudimentary practices. It is even sadder when one understands that there are many so-called practitioners that, despite years of 'practice', never obtain tools of quality that would allow them to progress any further than whatever they achieved in their first year.

The three tools I reveal here, while difficult to obtain, are related:

The first tool is a healthy curiosity. Sounds simple, but it is not. The practice of 'witchcraft' can be a life-long pursuit of knowledge. There is no end to what one can learn if one is committed to the learning, and 'witchcraft' is an incredibly broad set of skills and knowledge, and each element is equally deep. A decent practitioner will seek to master as many skill sets as possible over the course of their life, which can lead the practitioner to an in-depth understanding of modern sciences alongside ancient histories and folk laws.

Of course, a healthy curiosity may also lead one to defining what one means by 'witchcraft'. It is such an elastic concept in today's discussions. One person's understanding of witchcraft may be the collections of rituals and recipes used by members of the modern cult of Wicca. Others may believe it to be a set of practices belonging to ancient illiterate peoples used to poison wells and cure cowpox. Regardless, a healthy curiosity is probably the hardest tool to obtain for those new to the craft: it forces the fledgling practitioner to ask a lot of questions, most of which lead to unsatisfactory answers. It is difficult to maintain one's curiosity, and much easier to sit in unquestioning complacency believing one knows much without having devoted the effort to discovering anything.

Secondly, scepticism is required of the practitioner. One's studies will lead one to meet many unusual people and read many unusual texts, many of which will represent lies as truth and truth as lies. Some will do so to deliberately misdirect the student while others do so out of ignorance. Often truths are wrapped up in metaphor and tied with shallow platitudes. Scepticism combined with curiosity will lead our fledgling and more experienced practitioners to question the why behind the answers revealed, which may allow them to obtain mastery. Never take anything at face value and independently confirm everything. Witchcraft belongs to the mystery traditions, and so therefore there are layers of truth that need to be peeled back to get to the core – the first layer that is revealed is usually only the first of many.

The third tool is keen observation. 'Witchcraft' is often associated with nature, both the nature associated with the wider environment and human nature. Observation is a learning style rarely practiced these days, with people rushing into situations claiming expertise based on what they have picked out of books or Youtube. Many lessons can be gained by watching and listening with a mind free of judgement, with the best course of action revealed to the one who spends the time to understand the situation they will enter into.

As mentioned previously, these tools are difficult to obtain and many people never seem to obtain the quality required for the masterful practice of whatever they define as 'witchcraft'.

If you find them too difficult to obtain or sustain, do what many others do: wave about a pretty knife or stick, light a few candles, stink up the place with cheap incense, and always refresh a bowl or pot of water sprinkled with salt. Let's not forget a five pointed star made from cheap silver to symbolise your commitment to some form of alternative lifestyle. This is all that's needed these days to claim the dubious title of 'witch'.

^Sith^



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Herbs for Yule

English Oak, *Quercus robur*

Protection, Health, Money, Healing, Potency, Fertility, luck.

Since the Oak was a source of food for the early settlers in Britain as well as Europe it came to be revered and worshipped far back into prehistory. The Druids (traditionally) would not meet unless an Oak tree was present. Religious idols were fashioned from oak wood and witches often danced beneath the Oak tree.

Two twigs of Oak, bound with red thread so that they form an equal armed cross, makes a potent safeguard against evil. It should be hung in the house. A piece of Oak wood, carried, will protect its bearer from all harm. Acorns placed in the window will guard against lightning. Carry an Acorn to promote immortality and longevity and to preserve youthfulness.



English Oak

Holly, *Ilex aquifolium*

Protection, luck, Anti-lightning, Dream magic.

An excellent protective herb, Holly guards against lightning, poison and evil spirits, planted around the home it protects it and its inhabitants from mischevious sorcerers.

Holly is carried for good luck, especially by men, since holly is a masculine plant. (ivy is the corresponding feminine plant). It is hung around the house at Yule for good luck.

After midnight on a Friday night, without making a sound, gather nine holly leaves, wrap them up in a white cloth using nine knots to tie the ends together. Place this beneath your pillow and your dreams will come true.



Holly

Mistletoe, *Viscum album*

Deities: Isis, Diana, Artemis

Powers....Protection, love, hunting, fertility, health, exorcism

As it is well known, Druids revered Mistletoe especially when found on an oak tree. It was and still is cut on Midsummers Day, or else when the moon is six days old. One stroke of a gold sickle was used to cut the herb, and it wasn't allowed to touch the ground.

Long used for protection against lightning, fire, disease, misfortune of every kind. Mistletoe is placed in baby's cradles to protect them from being stolen by the fairies and replaced with changelings. It is carried or worn for good luck when hunting; and women carry the herb to aid in conception. It has also been utilised in spells to capture the elusive state of immortality. Laid near the bedroom door it will give you a restful sleep and beautiful dreams, it can also be placed under the pillow or on the headboard.

Source: Cunningham's Encyclopaedia of Magical Herbs

Llewellyn Publications Copyright 1985

~Joy~



Mistletoe

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Yule Incense

2 parts Frankincense

2 parts Pine needles or resin

1 part Cedar

1 part Juniper Berries

Mix together and smoulder on charcoal block

Source: Cunningham's Incense and Oil Brews

~Joy~



Simmering Potpourri for an abundant Yule

Note: Prepare and dry the orange peel and apple slices ahead so they are dry when making potpourri.



Ingredients:

1 1/2 cups of dried orange peel

1/2 cup cardamom pods

13 cinnamon sticks (one for each lunar month)

1 cup dried apple slices

1/2 cup mace

1/4 cup of whole allspice

1/4 cup whole cloves

1/2 cup sandalwood chips

1/8 cup wintergreen

11 tonka beans (for mastery over your finances)

A few drops of pine essential oil

When you have your dried orange peel and apple slices ready, sprinkle a few drops of pine oil over them and place into a glass jar (big enough to hold all the potpourri mixture); place the lid on the jar, and set aside for 3 days. Mix together the rest of the ingredients and add to the jar, ensuring that it is well combined. Replace the lid and store for at least 4 days before use.

When ready to use, place an old pot on the stove and fill with water. When boiling, add the desired amount of potpourri to the pan, and lower heat to a simmer. You can add some fresh ginger, and oil of lemons and oranges to the pan, and some fresh orange slices that are studded with cloves.

Keep an eye on the water level to ensure it does not boil dry!

Source: Cunningham's Incense and Oil Brews

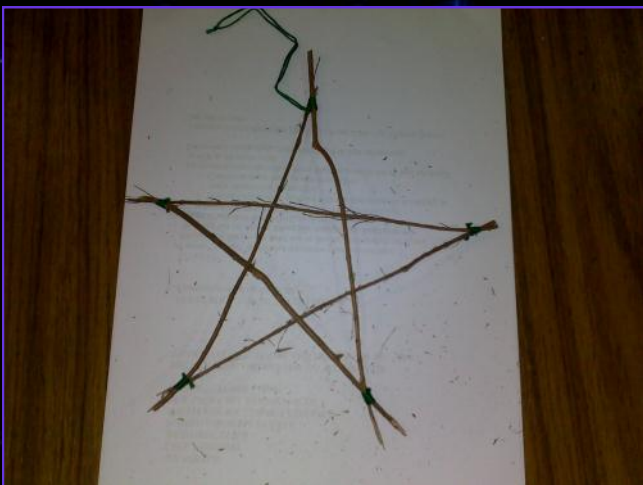
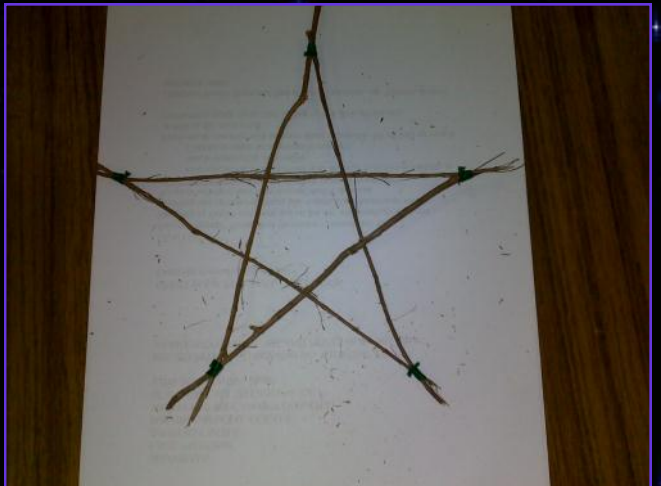
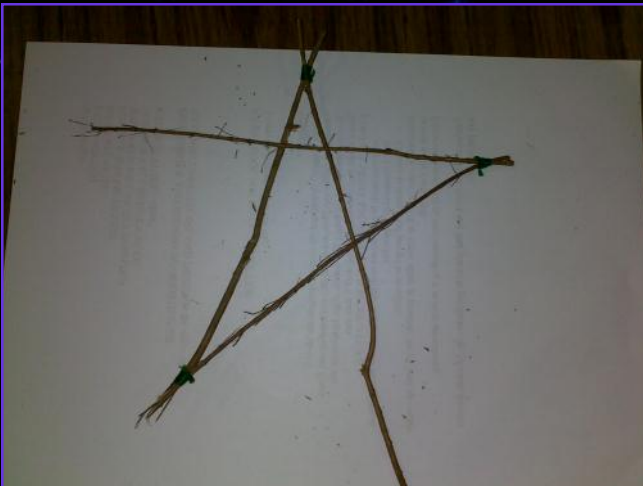
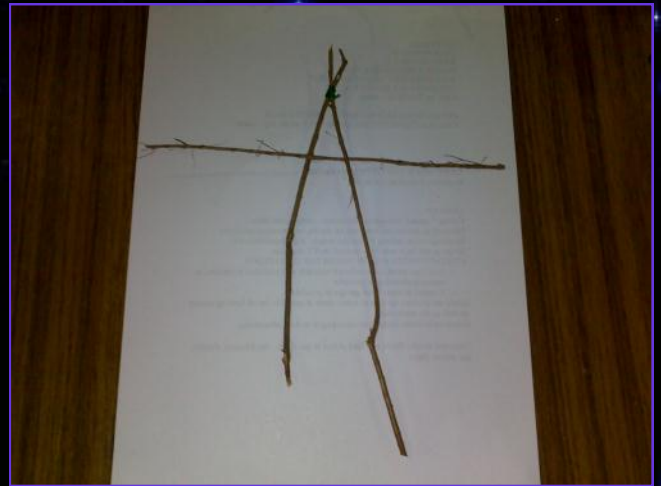
~Joy~

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Yule Craft

Yule Xmas Pentacles

1. collect twigs, have them all around the same size you need 5 to make a pentacle/star. You also need string, embroidery thread or similar to tie the twigs together.



Tie twigs together as per illustrations.
Your pentagram is now ready to hang.
~Jo-Ann~

May Events

Womyn's Discussion Group

Our womyn's discussion group got off to a great start last month. The theme being the elements; we started with water, and after a guided meditation to depths of the ocean, we were all in the mood for lively discussion.

Starting with just what we thought empowerment for womyn is; we covered strength, individuality, independence, creativity; we talked about the choices we make and our own issues regarding disempowerment, and ended up seeing our empowerment as the ability to be ourselves without the hindrance or judgement of outside influences.

We talked about the Goddess, and how her archetypal qualities can assist us in achieving our goals. We concluded that if we channel her strengths, and recognise that we are embodiment of the Goddess; that self-empowerment will follow. We discussed owning the shadow side of the Goddess, and shared some wonderful examples of how we like to channel this onto an unwary world!

Throughout the afternoon, we laughed, we ate, made new friends; all in all a good time was had.

In June we will be meeting again; with an earth theme this time; and I know I am looking forward to another wonderful afternoon. We will be looking at strategies for dealing with the negative forces that strive to hold us back, and playing with some clay too!

If you would like to be involved, email sydneypagans@hotmail.com for details, or send an email through our [contact us page](#).



Samhain 2012



Medieval Fayre Blacktown 2012



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Upcoming Events

Winter Magic Festival

23rd June, All day
Katoomba St, Katoomba

[Website](#)

Winterfest Medieval Festival

Saturday 30th June & Sunday 1st July
Parramatta Park, Coleman oval, Westmead side of the park, off
Railway parade. Parramatta
Just off O'Connell Street

Admission Adults - \$15 Children - \$10 Under 5 - Free Pensioner/
Senior Discounts Group and School Rate

[Website](#)

Women's Discussion Group

Subject: Empowerment through the Goddess

24th June, 2012, 1pm to 5pm
Gold coin donation for afternoon tea

[Email us](#) for details



Next Edition will be Beltane 2012. Please have submissions in by 1st September at the latest.

Please send all submissions to sydneypagans@hotmail.com

Sydney Pagans are a diverse group, and we look forward to ideas and submissions from our members, ensuring a creative and lively newsletter that we can all look forward to. Please forward your submissions and ideas to our email address for consideration. We are looking for original written pieces, or artwork, and of course photos of events attended by Sydney Pagan members. All original written, art and photographic work in this newsletter is copyright, and not to be used anywhere without permission of the owner. All pictures sourced from the web are copyright free, sourced from http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page.

Bright Blessings Everyone!

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