



# The North East Ohio Witches' Network Magazine

Imbolc - 2008



## The Magickal Month of February *by Toni Anne*

**2nd** - Candlemas or Imbolc, one of the four Major Sabbats is celebrated today by Witches and Pagans. This is a fire festival, sacred to the Celtic goddess Brigid, in her Maiden aspect of the Bride awaiting the return of the youthful Sun God groom. In the USA, "Puxatawny Phil" is the famous groundhog who, upon leaving his burrow, if he becomes frightened at seeing his own shadow and returns to his safe home it is a sure sign that we will have six more weeks of winter.

**3rd** - In Japan this day is known as Setsubun, in which evil spirits are driven out of the home by the use of throwing dried soy beans, and chanting "Oni-wa soto! Uku-wa uchi!" which means, "Devils out! Good luck in!"

**5th** Since February was the last month in the "old" Roman calendar, but strangely enough (from our point of view), their first day of spring was celebrated on February 5 (the Nones). It was a month, accordingly of "spring cleaning," i.e. purification and fertility rituals. According to Ovid, the Latin word februa, ("the means of purification") derived from an

Etruscan word equivalent for "purgamentum" (purging).

**13th** Sleeping with five bay leaves under the pillow is said to foretell in dreams of a future mate.

**14th** Saint Valentine's Day. A day commemorated to the 3rd century priest during the reign of Emperor Claudius II of Rome, for helping to arrange the sending of love notes of soldiers to their lovers. Since marriage of soldiers was strictly forbidden at this time, and Valentine assisted in arranging secret trysts, he was condemned to death. While in prison, Valentine discovered violets with heart shaped leaves outside his cell, gathered them and pierced the words, "Remember me, your Valentine" on the leaves and with the aid of his pet dove, sent them to family and friends. This day has since been associated with flowers and lovers and declarations of love's longing. Today is also sacred to the mother goddess, Juno, Queen of the Heavens as well as all love deities.

**17th** Fornacalia, in ancient Rome, was observed to the oven goddess to ensure a good growing season. Plants should be treated on this day with special loving care. On this day the Celtic tree month of Rowan (Luis) ends.

**18th** Celtic tree month of Ash (Nuin) begins

**23rd** Maple trees are traditionally honored by Iroquois Indians to insure the rising of the sap. Catkins of birch, hazel and willow trees are bursting with new life and all Nature awaits the coming of Spring.

**24th** In Elizabethan and Victorian times, hopeful bridesmaids would plant sprigs of myrtle today to ensure that their romances blossom into marriage.

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## Imbolc

*by Toni Anne*

The land is still frozen in a season of stillness and sleep, but the first stirrings of the promise of new life are awakening. Imbolc honors the life force and energy of the element fire and the sun's gradual lengthening of days. And although the nights are still long, as light comes out of darkness, so is it a time of contemplation and renewal of the mind and spirit. It is a time of healing and the new realization for the opportunities of change.

Celtic people dedicated this day to Brigid, goddess of creativity. Agriculture, blessing of seeds, black-smithing and the protection of young animals are sacred to this day. It is a sabbat of the "eternal return" as Brigid's magick cauldron never ran out of sustenance for it was forever replenishing.

Imbolc is one of the cross-quarter days, which is halfway between the Winter Solstice and Vernal Equinox. It is celebrated on the Eve of February 1st to the 3rd depending upon tradition. Imbolc is also known as Candlemas, Brigantia, Imbolg (in the belly), Brigit's Day, Lady Day, Feast of Brighid, Lupercus, The

Festival of Lights, and the Feast of the Virgin.

Imbolc comes six weeks after Yule and six weeks before the Spring Equinox. At this time, Witches honor the Celtic Triple Goddess Brid (pronounced Breed) in her maiden aspect. Brid, Brede, or Brigid is goddess of fire, inspiration, healing, craftsmanship, and midwifery. She is patroness of the hearth, poets, smiths, craftspeople, healers, and priests.

Imbolc is the winter Festival of Lights. It is the quickening of the year, the new life-force stirrings of Spring in the womb of Mother Earth. Spring lies within sight and the seed is prepared for sowing. It is a fire festival, but emphasis is put on light rather than heat, for it is uplifting light that begins to break through the dark gloom of dreary winter days.

February 2nd is also Groundhog's Day (USA). The groundhog is a manifestation of the God. He has been sleeping since Samhain and stirs in his slumber to get a take on the coming light.

At Imbolc, witches cast for fertility and protection and self-dedication in their lives. Imbolc is a good time to get your life in order, spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically. It is a wonderful time to clean out your home of dust and clutter and give items that you no longer use to others. Make or bless your candles that you will be using for your altar or sacred space today.

Imbolc is also the festival of the lactating sheep. It is derived from the Gaelic word "oimelc" which means "ewes milk." Herd animals have either given birth to the first offspring of the year or their wombs are

swollen and the milk of life is flowing into their teats and udders. It is the time of blessing of the seeds and consecration of agricultural tools.

It marks the center point of the dark half of the year. It is the festival of the Maiden, for from this day to March 21, it is her season to prepare for growth and renewal. Brigid's snake emerges from the womb of the Earth Mother to test the weather, (the origin of Groundhog Day), and in many places the first crocus and snow-drop flowers began to peep forth from the frozen earth.

Brigid's Crosses are fashioned from wheat stalks and exchanged as symbols of protection and prosperity in the coming year. Home hearth fires are put out and re-lit, and a besom is placed by the front door to symbolize sweeping out the old and welcoming the new. Candles are lit and placed in each room of the house to honor the re-birth of the Sun.

Traditional activities for this holiday include blessing of seeds for this year's garden, fertility and purification, consecration of agricultural tools, initiation, transformation, and new beginnings. A besom is placed by the front door to symbolize sweeping out the old and welcoming the new, candle lighting and making, searching for signs of spring, making Bride's Beds, making priapic wands, feasting, spring cleaning. The eve before Imbolc, have a candle lit at each window to welcome the return of the Sun God to join his bride.

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**Editor@neowitches.net**

### ***The Three-Fold Fire of Brigid***

"Fire in the forge that shapes and tempers  
Fire in the cauldron that nourishes and heals  
Fire in the head that incites and inspires"

Brigid's sacred day is started by the kindling of sacred fires, since she symbolized the fire of birth and healing, the fire of the forge, and the fire of poetic inspiration. Bonfires were lighted on the beacon tors, and chandlers celebrated their special holiday. The Roman Church was quick to confiscate this symbolism as well; using 'Candlemas' as the day to bless all the church candles that would be used for the coming liturgical year.

The Maiden is honored as the Bride on this Sabbat. Straw corn dollies are created from oat or wheat straw and placed in baskets with white flower bedding. Young girls then carry them door to door, and gifts are bestowed upon the image from each household. Afterwards at the traditional feast, the older women make special acorn wands for the dollies to hold, and in the morning, the ashes in the hearth are examined to see if the magic wands left marks as a good omen.

Other customs of the holiday include weaving 'Brigid's crosses' from straw or wheat to hang around the house for protection, performing rites of spiritual cleansing and purification, making 'Brigid's beds' to ensure fertility of mind and spirit (and body, if desired), and making Crowns of Light (i.e. of candles) for the High Priestess to wear for the Candlemas Circle, similar to those worn on St. Lucy's Day in Scandinavian countries. All in all, this Pagan Festival of Lights, sacred to the young Maiden Goddess, is one of the most beautiful and poetic sabbats of the year.

# Breaking the Three Fold Law

*by Rev. Marx*

Everything we do comes back to us three times. This is something that every apprentice witch and neophyte wizard learns and carries with him for the rest of his life. It is one of the cornerstones of modern magickal thinking, and it is referred to as The Three-Fold Law. It means that any harm, or good, we do will be revisited upon us three times over. And anyone who walks the magickal path can attest to its truth.

But is it really true? It certainly feels that way. But how can it be? This is one of the questions I struggled with as a developing practitioner. In my youth I took it as fact, like so many other gems of wisdom handed down to me by the books and tutors who's teachings I absorbed. But as I entered college and began to more fully examine my beliefs and cosmology, I began to find issue with this axiom.

As my understanding of magick, the Universe and the nature of truth took shape, I became convinced that the Universe was a thing of balance. A plenum, full and vast; boundless, but finite. A place where every action has an equal reaction. Equal by necessity. You can't get something from nothing, and you can't get three from one. The Three-Fold law seemed at odds with the principle of balance and the very nature of the Universe. Balance dictates that you can't get a return that is three times greater than its impetus. In my model of the Universe, the Three-Fold Law was not only suspect, it was impossible.

But must it not be true? Do not

countless ages of wisdom and experience tell us that it is true? Surely so many of our accomplished predecessors could not have been wrong. Is it not verifiable through observation? Who amongst the initiated can not testify to having felt its veracity? Perhaps it was my understanding of the nature of the Universe which was wrong. Certainly I was not prepared to unseat decades, perhaps centuries, of accepted doctrine. Yet I could not, and can not, fathom a Universe without balance.

The answer to this conundrum lies in our own failings. Specifically, in our inability to comprehend the vastness of the Universe. More specifically, in our inability to understand ourselves and the consequences of our own actions. As human beings we are limited. And our perception and understanding are also limited - very limited. The collected experience of humankind would make but a drop in the vast ocean of the Universe. But the Universe is only a collection of such drops, and each is as important as the next. Everything we do sends out ripples into that ocean. Those ripples are felt throughout the whole of existence, and travel to the distant shores before reflecting off them and returning again. Because our perceptions and understanding are so limited, we can not see beyond our own surroundings. We can not see the length and breadth of the ocean, nor can we hope to see the distant shores which our ripples, like waves, will crash upon. That is, not until they reflect and return to us.

When those ripples return to us after having been felt by every corner of the Universe, to varying degrees, our impression is that they are greater than whence they were created. This is the verisimilitude of the Three-Fold Law. But in truth, our actions can not return to us magnified beyond their initial

power. It is our ignorance that makes it seem so. Our ignorance and naiveté as to the consequences of those actions. Only through the observation of their effects can we see the full reach and extent our actions have upon the countless droplets in the ocean, or upon those unseen distant shores.

The Three-Fold Law is the product of our flawed perception, and nature's way of showing us that our actions have power and effect that reaches far beyond what we can see. The consequences of our actions can never be fully understood before the fact, because our limited perspective prevents us from knowing what lies on those distant shores. Only when our ripples bounce back to us do we get our first glimpse at how we have truly affected the Universe around us. And those who do not observe the Three-Fold Law, erroneous though it may be, are almost always stymied by the revelation.

## Tarot Cards and Why They Work

*by Toni Anne*

The tarot is the key to ancient wisdom; the deck is a picture book of life. An answer to the deepest questions of history and philosophy, and sometimes a means of prediction.

Each card represents a facet or "house" of our lives, much like the houses of a natal astrological chart. It is up to the diviner or interpreter to take the individual cards and weave their pictures into one whole tapestry to get an entire story.

Each card may well be referred to as a "house of destiny". They are the link between the subconscious mind and the physical level. They are the first principles of thought manifesting themselves onto the material plane. Thus they combine the infallible instincts of nature with the logical intuitive reasoning guidance of our higher spiritual selves. The reader's skill is in the correlation of the entire spread.

There is a twin destiny within us, the natural and the supernatural; the cards are attracted to the supernatural part of our destiny. Much as one pole of a magnet is attracted to its opposite pole, happiness, prosperity, health, abundance, true love from false, are revealed in the cards. Marriage, the birth of a child, all the joyous aspects in the "Grand Procession" of life are there for those who choose to see. But because life is not always pleasant, and can be filled with pitfalls, the tarot also gives us clues if we are perceptive enough and, perhaps more importantly, have the courage to recognize them. All too often people see only what they wish to see and even knowing the truth,

# Book of Shadows

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choose to ignore it.

Then there are the darker aspects of life. There are some cards whose aspects can be considered quite frightening, though the cards themselves are in no way evil. There is a reason for this. If the cards are to indicate serious warnings they must be sufficiently imposing to convey the seriousness of the matter. The strange, the weird, the mysterious, the frightening and possibly the dangerous can all be represented by the cards. Tarot cards can act as warning signs on the crossroads of our destiny. They can be looked upon as the sign posts of caution. In this way the tarot can forewarn us of possible impending disasters and we may be able to outwit fate if we heed the signs.

The tarot is a serious matter, not to be taken lightly like some parlor game. The cards are a link with the universal collective cosmic consciousness and the human soul. That knowledge is always the truth, even if that truth is sometimes hard to accept. But the truth gives knowledge, and sometimes our very survival may depend upon that knowledge. The cards predict the truth... the supernatural truth.

We are reasoning creatures who have a free will and an intuitive mind. The tarot helps us utilize this to encourage us to make the correct choices in life.



## Tarot Deck Review

*by Toni Anne*

### The Rider–Waite Deck

Of the literally thousands of tarot decks in print, by far the most popular and recognized deck of the 20th century is the Rider-Waite. It is the definitive classic and is often referred to as the "first modern tarot deck" and is the most widely circulated and most often reprinted deck in the world.

The cards were drawn by Pamela Colman-Smith under the direction and spiritual guidance of Arthur Edward Waite, and have strong overtones of the occult symbolism of the Golden Dawn, both of whom Colman-Smith and Waite were dedicated members.

The cards were issued in 1909 by William Rider & Son, London. Originally the cards appeared on flimsy card stock with a brown pebble design on the back, but owing to the popularity of the deck, they were reissued a year later on superior quality paper with a lovely light blue Tudor roses and white lilies background.

Sadly, their publication came to an abrupt end during the Second World War when the printing plates were virtually destroyed in the London Blitz by German air strikes. Rider & Son did not resume publication, but have copyrights and patents and made arrangements with Stuart Kaplan and U.S. Games who began republishing the deck in 1971 and has continued to do so. Sybil, Arthur Edward Waite's daughter, gave her permission to use the images and colors, giving completion and credence to the fully authorized new version. Now U.S. Games

System has exclusive license to the publishing of the cards and has done so many times, occasionally with various designs on the back. The design on my own deck is a pink background with an irreversible Egyptian ankh; however, it is the familiar blue and gray tartan plaid that most people recognize and is in use on decks printed today.

All seventy-eight cards depict full scenes and symbols, whereas before the Rider-Waite, in nearly every previously published tarot deck, only the twenty-two Major Arcana cards were shown with full illustrations. The fifty-six Minor Arcana or "pips" were simply marked with the four suit signs of Cups, Wands, Swords and Pentacles. The Rider-Waite deck still utilizes these four suits, but the Minor Arcana are all illustrated with full pictures depicting everyday life scenes. The drawings by Colman-Smith are timeless and even the most novice reader can relate to them. The Major Arcana are numbered 0 through 22, with "The Fool" being 0 and "The World" being 21. There are Pages, Knights, Queens and Kings in the court suit.

The Rider-Waite cards are 2.75 x 4.75 inches long and printed in full intense colors. There is a narrow quarter inch white frame border around the edges. The backs of the cards are reversible with blue and white tartan plaid. As to the detailed symbolism, the Rider-Waite should be the first deck for both serious students of tarot and for divination seekers alike, for no deck is so filled with Jungian archetypes and symbols which employ so many magickal disciplines and multiple spiritual paths.

Archangels, Egyptian, Hebrew, Christian, mythical creatures, animals, birds,

fish, flowers, herbs, trees and plants abound, as well as the seasons, land and water settings, the elements, sun, moon and heavenly bodies are used in this deck to form unforgettable images. The underlying subconscious association of these symbols is there for those who have the dedication and perception to look beneath the surface and explore their meanings which have been steeped in tradition of various occult systems of belief.

It was the intention of Arthur Edward Waite, through the use of such recognized symbols, that by handling and meditating with the cards, they would strike a deep cord in all of us. That they would reawaken old memories and serve to connect us to the "Cosmic Consciousness". Recognizing these ingrained symbols, permits an interpretation without relying on constant referencing of a printed instructional text. This deck was intended to not only be used as a reliable tool of divination, but as an inner guide to the "Grand Procession" of the "Fool's Journey" in meditation and spiritual guidance. Waite, a serious scholar of the occult, was able to restore the original hidden symbols of the ancient occult, and by inserting subtle references to Christian symbolism, he was able to present the cards with their deep esoteric meanings without interference (for the most part) by the clergy.



**North East Ohio Community Events**

**1-12-08 Intro to Tarot 3pm-5pm**

*This workshop introduces participants to the history of Tarot, different decks, different techniques on how to read the cards, and how you can use the cards to meditate.*

Goddess Blessed - (216) 221-8755  
15729 Madison ave. Lakewood

**1-13-08 Get Together 6pm**

*The Lorain County Pagans group and the Circle of Standing Stones Shrine get together on the 13th of each month for a get together. We meet at the Elyria Midway Mall in Elyria, at 6pm.*

Elyria Midway Mall West River Rd Elyria

**1-15-08 Realm to Realm 7pm**

*Join Angel Reader Laura in a beautiful evening of spiritual enlightenment. Laura will lead you into a enchanting meditation, then share what she sees and hears around you. Registration required.*

Spirit Apothecary - (440) 439-HERB  
664 Broadway Avenue Bedford

**1-16-08 Drum Circle 8pm**

*Come to Aradia's Garden on the 3rd Wednesday of every month for Drum Circle. Bring your drums, and hand percussion instruments. Belly Dancers Welcome as well!*

Aradia's Garden - (440) 975-1911  
34510 Lakeshore blvd Eastlake

**1-22-08 Meet and Greet 7pm**

*We welcome good hearted pagan or pagan friendly people to join us for dinner, desert or maybe just coffee. This meeting is hosted by the Trumbull-Portage County Eclectic Woman's Group.*

Denny's Belmont Ave, Route 193, Youngstown

**2-03-08 Psychic Fair 12pm-5pm**

*Psychic Sundays feature the talents of some of our best area Psychics and other metaphysical people too. We offer Reiki, Massage, Lomi Lomi, Ionic Detox foot spa and energetic Chakra Balancing!*

Aradia's Garden - (440) 975-1911  
34510 Lakeshore blvd Eastlake

**2-03-08 Coffee Social 4pm**

*Canton Pagan Network Roundtable Coffee Social. Informal networking, social and discussion for pagans and pagan groups in the Stark and surrounding county areas. First Sunday every Month.*

Denny's, 4646 W. Tuscarawas Canton

**2-05-08 Paganism 101 7pm**

*Paganism 101 classes offered by the Kent CUUPS (Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans) , on the first Monday of every month .*

Kent CUUPS - (330) 673-4247

Unitarian Universalist Church - 228 Gougler Ave. Kent

**THURSDAYS 185th St. Drum Jam 9:30pm**

*We have a group of folks that have been getting together for years now. We bring in our drums and instruments and jam til we must leave.*

712 E 185th St. Cleveland

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