

Seeking the Green Pathways

Magical Nature Walks

By

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Other books by Tylluan Penry:

Sacred Shadows (2013); The Magical World of the Anglo-Saxons (2012);
Staying on the Old Track (2012); Magic on the Breath (2011); The
Essential Guide to Psychic Self Defence (2010); The Magical Properties
of Plants (2009); Seeking the Green (2008)

This book is dedicated with much love to my dear mother-in-law, Hannah Mary.



Magical Nature Walks



This is *not* a guide to identifying birds or plants. There are plenty of those already on the market. Instead this book is intended to inspire the reader to get out and explore, to engage with Nature in all her wonderful, magical and mystical aspects. Because once you reach out to Nature, She takes you to places you previously only dreamed about. And life will never be quite the same again.

Getting out into the open air is not only invigorating and good for the body but also for the spirit. Of course, many of us live in urban environments such as towns and cities, so there isn't much chance for us to experience the 'real' countryside any more. But a lack of countryside doesn't mean the absence of Nature. Even in the tallest, greyest urban sprawl, Nature is ever present, waiting for Her chance to reclaim what has been taken.

If nothing else, being out of doors boosts our levels of Vitamin D, which is particularly important if, like me, you live in an area that doesn't get a great deal of sunshine. Getting outside and learning to observe is often all we need, we don't have to pick things or dig them

up in order to enjoy them, (and it's against the law to pick many wild plants anyway). Simply being in their presence and acknowledging them is normally quite enough to start bringing what I like to call 'The Green' into our lives.

Sometimes we forget how important it is just to get outside. When I was young, even though I was brought up in a city, 'nature walks' were an important part of school life. These could take us to local parks, riverbanks (until someone fell in) and even through the local cemetery. I welcomed the walks because they took me out of the dark classroom for a few hours, and I always felt better for having been outside in the fresh air. Of course, not everyone agreed with me. Many of the older children thought they were boring and childish.

On weekends my family usually tried to get out of the house for a few hours, weather permitting. Looking back it was probably preferable to having us all running amok! Sometimes this meant a long walk with our dog but if we were lucky an uncle would cram us all into his car and drive out to the countryside or beach where we would go walking and exploring. My father always took one of his old field guides in order to identify plants (and sometimes also birds) and this is a practice I still recommend.

However, a magical nature walk doesn't just identify things and stick labels on them. It should teach us to engage with the natural world across both space and time. It teaches us about our local area and its social history. For example, when I was young we often passed a Victorian lamppost at the end of a lane. The story was how, back in the day, a local boy had once thrown a stone and broken it, and as a result was deported to Canada (yes, that sort of thing happened in the early years of the twentieth century.)

One of the problems with modern urban living is that we may have to travel miles if we want to get out and explore the natural world. Compared to ancient woodlands, moors or meadows, it's rather soulless. Surrounded by drab buildings and car parks day after day, it's difficult to feel inspired at all.

The American humorist and poet, Ogden Nash, hit the nail on the head when he wrote:

*I think that I shall never see,
A billboard lovely as a tree.
Perhaps unless the billboards fall,
I'll never see a tree at all.*

Well, I believe it's up to us to get past the billboards and the bustle of modern life and see what the natural world has to offer.

We may be very pleasantly surprised...

What is a magical nature walk?

People often make the mistake of believing that successful nature walks involve being able to identify anything and everything we see. This simply isn't true. Very few people can identify everything, but the more we walk, the more we explore and learn, the better we become at engaging with our local area, feeling part of it, learning its secrets.

For make no mistake, *everywhere* has something magical to offer – the trick is to find it. Even the most ordinary parks and gardens all have a story to tell. We don't need to be out in deepest countryside in order to spot something interesting on our nature walk. Many of the weeds that grow between the cracks on the pavements and on derelict buildings or chimneys have been in this country for many centuries if not millennia, and are steeped in legends and folklore.

Sometimes it is the *absence* of plants that indicates magical activity. Areas – especially circular ones – where no grass grew were said to be the haunt of fairies, elves, mountain spirits, witches, sorcerers and the devil. Similarly, those dark circles in the grass called 'fairy rings' were thought to mark where the fairies had been dancing. Another explanation of bare patches of grass was that they marked either the site of a murder or the hanging of an innocent man. This is where a little research in the local library can come in handy, but if there's no information there, then we just have to rely on our own instincts to guide us.