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Walking With Trees

GLENNIE KINDRED

Writing my new book *Walking with Trees* has been a joy and a profound and insightful journey with thirteen of our native trees. I called them my 'Council of Thirteen', and I have learnt such a lot from them. I can honestly say I am in love with trees. They fill me with delight and awe in equal measure. I collect their leaves, blossom and fruit for my medicine cupboard and they gift me with layer upon layer of medicine for my soul. Being in their presence nurtures me, and the more sensitive and open I become to their sentience, the more levels of interaction and communication we exchange. When I am walking with the trees beside me I feel complete. Their wild beauty opens my heart and moves me to profound joy, and their needless felling moves me to tears. When I stand with them I breathe more deeply and become more rooted, and more fully present in the here and now. They help me to slow down and to find my sense of inner stillness. This guides me to listen more closely to my intuition and the wild edges of my instinctive self. I am forever grateful for their blessed presence in my life.

My last book, *Letting In the Wild Edges* was an exploration of wild gardening with the native plants in my town garden, unlocking my own wild edges and finding a more present and fluid relationship with the interconnected natural world around me. I have since moved house and now

live surrounded by large trees. They are living, breathing, mighty beings, who are constantly moving and changing, expressing their life-force, spreading their seeds, and expanding their green world into mine. Their deep roots fill the very ground beneath me. Their intrinsic tree-wisdom permeates my consciousness. They have a big presence and I am learning to live with them and to respect them deeply.

My new book, *Walking with Trees*, grew out of my daily life, walking out from my house into the lanes, walking along the hedgerows, and walking in the woods. I practise mindfulness as part of my spiritual practice and this has helped me to slow down and meet the trees from a place of deep inner stillness. Trees are beautifully present, complex beings, deeply interconnected with the natural world around them, and the flow of the year's seasonal cycles. To meet with trees it is essential that you learn to slow down, settle your energy and breathe deeply with them. It is one of their many gifts to us.

Trees are totally intrinsic to present life on Earth. I find it easy to connect to them through my heart and my love, and to naturally value and revere them. These great water-lovers draw up water from below the ground, and fill our air with the circulating waters of life, bringing many beneficial nutrients and minerals to the surface from deep within the Earth. They store and utilise vast amounts of carbon from our atmosphere, and are the co-creators of our weather systems and climate. They generate the oxygen-rich air that all of us air-breathing creatures need to breathe. We breathe with them and because of them. Their out-breath is our in-breath. They literally give us life.

My love of trees has taken me on a great adventure, and I have deepened the already deep connection to them that began when I was young. I have always found it easy to strike up a relationship with trees, and this is something I have done since I was a child. Even though I was a city child, born and brought up in Sherwood, a few miles from the centre of Nottingham, I was always drawn to trees. I sought them out. I found them in other people's gardens, in the nearby park and along the wild back ways and abandoned places, that as a roaming child I would always be drawn to explore. In my imagination I lived within the great forest of Sherwood and felt the presence of the great oak trees that would have grown there in the past. Many trips to Sherwood Forest, playing 'Robin Hood', hiding out in the Major Oak and inside other enormous 400 year old oak trees fuelled my imagination further. The story of Robin Hood and his merry men, living in the heart of the forest, taking from the rich to give to the poor, fuelled my sense of social justice that has never left me, and I give thanks for that.

When I was in my late twenties, I taught myself to draw by drawing trees. I would sit for hours with pencil and

Photo © Glennie Kindred



Elder



Hawthorn

rubber, occasionally surfacing to become aware of deeper layers of understanding pervading my consciousness. This subliminal layer began to appear in my drawings, which added to my understanding of what I was 'receiving' from the trees as I drew them. An archetypal character or energy 'signature' began to emerge for each of the different tree species. Later I began to understand how their herbal uses also reflected this and how the folklore, myths and legends handed down from the past also revealed similar patterns of understanding. From that point on the trees became my valued life-coaches and guides. I learnt from them about adaptability and flexibility; about the Otherworld and the shifting of time; about co-operation and community; when to let go of the old and why to rest in the winter. They opened doors to understanding myself as part of the Earth and her yearly cycles, and as I translated the tree's wisdom to my own life, my understanding of our interconnectivity with the natural world and the subtle world grew.

This was the beginning of the journey that unfolded next, as I recognised my need to write down my understanding and then to share it with others – for the sake of the trees as much as anything. I was picking up their distress at being ignored and I wanted to raise awareness of them and put them back into people's consciousness. I wrote my first handwritten book about trees, *The Sacred Tree*, in 1995, and filled it with my observations, my findings and some of my drawings. This was followed by another handwritten book called the *Tree Ogham*. This was my journey through the Celtic system of the Tree Ogham, which deepened my relationship with the subtle world, the alchemy of change and healing.

I had no computer so I wrote the books out in pen and switched to drawing in pen and ink. I photocopied them at first, on A4 sheets and folded them to make a book. I didn't have a stapler big enough to reach the middle so I sewed them together with embroidery thread. I took them to festivals to sell, with a note in the back about where to get them from, and eventually the demand took me to a printer for my first print run, paid for by a friend. I got them out into bookshops myself until a book distributor saw them and offered to distribute them. Altogether I have five handwritten books and each one brought together my deepening journey with the natural world. To date, those combined five simple handwritten books have sold over 65,000 copies and just keep selling... They represent what can happen when you do what you love and follow your own deep joy and your heart. Later, publishers invited me to write books for them, and this has enabled me to carry on doing what I love while being a busy mum, bringing up children and exploring my ever deepening relationship with the Earth and the trees. I feel very blessed and thankful for this.

I write to make sense of things, and each book is a sharing of where I am at in my understanding. I am fascinated by the journey we are collectively making to change and grow into a more integrated holistic consciousness. The movement towards caring for our unique and astoundingly beautiful Earth grows every day, and this gives me hope for the future. I know that I am just one of many people making this journey, and I align myself, my kinship and my heart with all the people who love the Earth as I do; who are redefining themselves as one of many interconnected complex intelligent life-forms sharing the Earth's resources; who are filled with a deep desire to help the Earth restore and heal the damage we have done. Each one of us has our own strengths and parts to play as we collectively do what we can to bring about intelligent compassionate change. Together, our many actions, both overt and subtle, are creating the great transformation of our time.



Glennie Kindred is the author of twelve books on Earth wisdom, creating ceremony, native plants and trees and celebrating the Earth's cycles. She is a much loved expert on natural lore and Earth traditions with a strong and committed following. She is renowned for her ability to enthuse people with joy, love and wonder for the Earth, to step beyond the everyday into

the extraordinary, to tap into the imaginal realms within, and to create simple heart-felt ceremony. She is an Earth Restorer and Earth Protector and committed to the power we collectively have to bring about change, both for ourselves and for the Earth.

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