

# At home with *Glennie Kindred*



Who needs an air-conditioned office when you can make the natural world your workspace? That's the refreshing philosophy of artist and writer Glennie Kindred, who welcomed *Spirit & Destiny* into her Peak District home

Step out the back door of the wood-panelled house into the long garden, lush with hedges, trees and vegetable beds, and you'll find yourself in the office of Glennie Kindred. Artist and author Glennie has always preferred to work outside – weather permitting – and the garden is the true heart of her family home in Wirksworth, Derbyshire, where she has lived for 13 years.

In that time, Glennie has written and illustrated most of her 11 books about connecting with the earth's natural cycles, native plants and trees, and celebrating the seasons. A respected expert on earth traditions and natural lore, her mission is to enthuse people with her joy, love and wonder for the natural world and encourage everyone to get outside and engage with nature, which she's passionate about.

'Get out there in all weathers, especially barefoot,' she says. 'Take your shoes off as often as you can, and walk with your feet on the earth. It's only been 150 years since we've had rubber soles under our feet, stopping us living in harmony with the earth's electrical charge. Whenever I'm out walking, I put my shoes in a bag and walk barefoot on the grass, in the mud, on the beach. It's such a joy.'

It's hard to imagine that when Glennie and her partner, singer-songwriter Brian Boothby, moved into the 1920s semi-detached house, the garden was bare.

'Some of the hedges, plants and trees are from seeds that have blown in and grown where they

landed,' Glennie explains. 'I grew one of the elders from a twig, and rescued another from growing out of a wall. One of my book publishers gave me the four hazel trees, and we planted the fruit trees the first winter we were here. There are vegetable and fruit beds growing watercress, runner beans, fennel, raspberries and much more, so we have food all year round. Even salad plants, such as chickweed, grow through the winter.

Plus, we have a huge wild bird community, often in the fast-growing hawthorn near the house, which we call "the bird tree".'

In the garden, a fire pit sits close to the house. 'It's a really important part of my life, and I use it for personal ceremonies and social gatherings, often with my women's group, The Elementals. We meet to celebrate every Celtic festival, such as Imbolc in February, and the solstices, to examine where we are in our lives, past, present and future. It keeps me on track.'

Celebrations or not, the garden is definitely the place you're most likely to find Glennie. 'All summer, I'm in the garden,' she says, 'often in my outside office – my laptop on the table – writing my articles and books.' Most recently, she's been updating her book *Earth Alchemy* (£12.99, Hay House), which has been re-released, and writing her first new book in five years, *Letting In The Wild Edges* (£14.95, Permanent). 'I was spurred on to write it after all the talk of the European Union drawing up a law to limit the use of herbal medicine. They can't stop us growing native plants in our own gardens,' she protests.

The book is full of wild food recipes and instructions for making meals and wellbeing potions from native plants and herbs.

'I make loads of these tinctures and elixirs,' says Glennie. 'It's another of my big passions.' Her home-made remedies, for everything from colds and stress to sleep problems, line the shelves in her kitchen in little glass bottles, with labels that say, 'Lift the spirits elixir', 'Mama's drops of love' and 'Drops of calm'. Her potions contain the likes of home-grown vervain, borage and camomile (all calming for the nervous system), which are mixed with brandy or honey. Glennie



At work in her outdoor office, while husband Brian tends to the fire pit



Tinctures and tonics line the shelves



A wall hanging depicts the elements



Looking out through the garden and over the hills of the Peak District



Windowsills are filled with mementoes

stitched embroidery landscapes. Glennie has been creating artwork for years, making a living from it at one time, but she's happy now that she didn't put a price on everything. 'It's lovely to have around the home to remind me of my past endeavours,' she smiles.

The windowsill is full of pots of feathers, used in smudging – wafting the smoke from sage sticks to cleanse people and places – and wooden wands. Glennie runs workshops all around the country teaching people how to make these wands, which are decorated with bells, ribbons and crystals. The wood in the wands harnesses the healing energy and power of trees, and participants dedicate their wands to personal and world healing.

Glennie's most recent creation has 10 bells on it to symbolise 10 things she wants to attract into her life. Also on the windowsill you'll find crystals, and a collection of stones Glennie has found on her walks, in the shape of hearts and eggs. Dotted around, too, are 'hag stones', which are stones with a naturally formed hole in the middle, considered lucky by witches and used in protection and fertility spells.

'Stones are so beautiful,' Glennie says, 'I'm always finding them. I am such a "stone person". I just adore their energy and great age. I don't often buy crystals, because I hate to think of them being ripped out of the earth for commercial purposes or for healing, but I've got quite a lot ▶



These hag stones bring luck and protection

gathers the rest of her materials from the hedgerows nearby.

'It's pure alchemy, cutting up the roots or flowers and pouring brandy on to them to make amazing medicine,' Glennie says. 'Writing about it, so others could also learn how to do it, as I sat outside surrounded by it all, was amazing.'

'I'd sit writing in the shade under a lovely batik parasol made by my daughter, May, for the Earth

was playing his acoustic folk and world music in a nearby tent.

'It was an instant knowing that we'd be together,' says Glennie. They went on to have two children, Jack, now 24, and May, 21, and carried on being part of the festival, with Glennie holding workshops and Brian playing in his band, Tomorrows Ancestor.

They moved to their Peak District home so Jack and May could be in walking distance of a village school, and it has a very warm, welcoming feel. Everywhere you look in the cosy yet spacious living room, with a large window overlooking the back garden, there's something unique, handcrafted or home-made.

Most striking is the bright red, yellow and orange wall hanging that Glennie made for the Glastonbury Festival. It illustrates the element of fire, along with similar brightly painted shields to depict the elements of air, earth, water and ether – considered in Buddhism and Hinduism to be the fifth element, representing that which is beyond the material world. On the wall hang some of Glennie's seascape paintings and finely

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Garden area of last year's Glastonbury Festival. We also created an edible garden to teach people which herbs and leaves you can eat.'

Glastonbury Festival is dear to the whole family's hearts, as that's where Glennie first met Brian. She was running the Healing Field, an area offering everything from massage and reiki to spiritual healing and homeopathy. Brian



Looking through the front gate to Glennie's house



Drums raise the energy at Glennie's workshops



Glennie often gets lost in the musical tones of this sansula



Tending to her well-stocked garden area



Above: heart-shaped dishes. Below: a carving based on the cover of Glennie's book, *Earth Alchemy*



a solid mahogany carving of the pen and ink drawing Glennie did for the cover of her *Earth Alchemy* book – a gift from a friend.

'The design is probably the most bought postcard of mine, and one of my favourites,' Glennie says.

No doubt there will be more books to come, but Glennie is also intending to spend time campaigning on issues close to her heart. 'There are two big "no" issues for me right now,' she explains. These are fracking (drilling into the earth and using a high-pressure water mixture to release shale gas) and GM crops.

'I've always stayed in the background, but this year I'm stepping out into the world more, to get my message of love for the earth out to more people,' she says. 'It's challenging, but life's full of challenges and this is the next stage in sharing my passions in the hope others are inspired.'

With Glennie's passion for the earth and natural world in such abundance all around her, it's hard to believe people won't sit up and take notice when she shares it with a wider audience.

**WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?** For more information on Glennie's work, visit [glenniekindred.co.uk](http://glenniekindred.co.uk)

# How to create a holistic haven like Glennie's

## THUMB POTS

Roll a chunk of air-dry clay (available from [hobbycraft.co.uk](http://hobbycraft.co.uk)) into a ball, roughly the size of a fist. Hold it in one hand and use the opposing thumb to press into the centre, until it's about ¼-½in from the bottom. Slowly widen the hole by pinching up the walls, turning continuously to keep them even. The walls should be at least ¼in thick. Flatten the bottom by pressing gently on a hard surface, then use a toothpick or plastic spoon to decorate with lines and grooves. Leave to dry for two to three days before painting with acrylic or poster paint.



Thumb pots are an ancient form of pottery



Glennie making a special brew

## Herbal tinctures

Making a tincture from preserved herbs is a natural way to treat ailments. Take a herb with the healing properties you want and fill a dark jar with torn or chopped leaves. Top up with an 80 per cent spirit (such as brandy or vodka) and 20 per cent water mix. Press the plant matter down with a wooden spoon. Put the lid on tightly and shake well, then label and date the jar.

The following day, open the jar and press the herbs again

to release more air bubbles. Shake the jar every day or two for two weeks and thereafter, when you remember. After a month to six weeks, strain off the plant matter, first through a sieve, then a fine muslin or coffee filter paper.

Re-bottle the clear liquid into clean, dark dropper bottles or any dark bottle, label and date them. Tinctures will keep for three to five years in a cool dark place. They can be taken neat, but usually people add a few drops to water or fruit juice.

TEXT: EMILY ANDERSON  
PHOTOS: FOTOLIA, ROBIN PALMER

of crystals I've found on walks over the years, which are very special and have a powerful presence.'

Tucked away in their cases under the window are Glennie's musical instruments, including two circle drums. One is a deerskin drum for indoor ceremonies, made by a Native American. The other is a loud drum, better for outside gatherings and ceremonies, to raise the energy of the circle.

'I play the drums in workshops, getting people to make up a chant and sing it together. Something magical can happen when you start with three or four lines of uplifting, positive words and let people run with it. Their energy just expands. I love it.'

A newly acquired instrument nestles with them. It's a sansula, a special kind of thumb piano with a sound box behind it to make it more resonant.

'I use this in my meditations and talks. I might say: "Imagine sitting under an oak tree," then play the sansula and take people on a journey with the

music. At home, I can sit and play this for half an hour and be totally lost in the lovely sound.'

On the mantelpiece above an unusual, blue porcelain fireplace from France, sit many of Glennie's earthy thumb pots – one of the most simple forms of pottery, made by pinching a ball of clay into the shape of a pot.

'I'm a thumb pot obsessive. I absolutely love getting a lump of clay, putting my thumb in the middle and pinching out the clay to make a pot. I close my eyes and feel the thickness of the clay.'

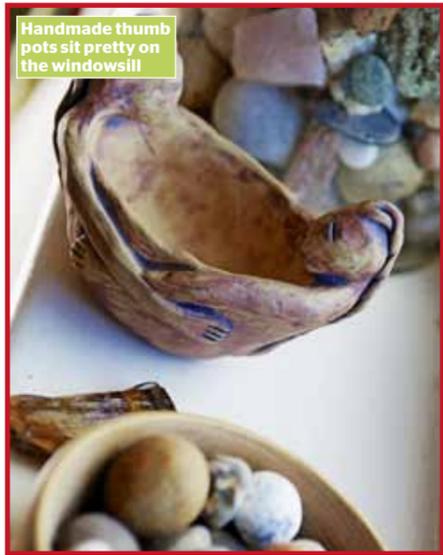
Once she's made the pot, Glennie shapes another piece of clay with her fingers and carving tools to create shapes such as faces and dragons and attaches them to the pots with more wet clay.

Another of Glennie's big passions is wood. On a book cabinet lies a collection of little, blue heart-shaped bowls, plus a bag of smoothed, wooden ogham sticks, with Celtic symbols carved

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into them. The ogham sticks are similar to runes and are used in an ancient Celtic method of divination. Glennie teaches people how to make them at her Sacred Tree Workshops, as well as exploring the sacred and healing connections between people, the earth and trees, communicating with tree spirits, ancient tree lore, meditations, ceremonies and guided visualisations.

Another nod to Glennie's love of trees is at the top of the stairs in the form of her beloved collection of 'twisties'. These sticks, made of honeysuckle twisted around ash, hazel and hawthorn, have been found over the years on woodland walks, and Glennie then carves off the bark and polishes them to create walking sticks. They sit alongside



Handmade thumb pots sit pretty on the windowsill

## Ogham sticks

The Celtic tree ogham of 20 native trees and shrubs is an ancient system used by Druids to encode their wisdom. Make your own set by spending time with trees you're drawn to. Ask each one for a twig to use for an ogham stick – this will hold the wisdom you gain from the tree. To make your ogham sticks, strip off the bark, then sand, oil or carve them before marking on ogham symbols (visit [dorsetgrove.co.uk/Ogham.htm](http://dorsetgrove.co.uk/Ogham.htm)). Keep your sticks in a pouch, pick one to three at random and intuitively interpret their meaning by tuning in to your understanding of the tree. Glennie's book, *The Tree Ogham* (£6, available from [glenniekindred.co.uk](http://glenniekindred.co.uk)), has a symbol chart and interpretations for each tree, or visit the symbol gallery at [paganwiccan.about.com/od/thecelticogham](http://paganwiccan.about.com/od/thecelticogham)



Ogham sticks can be used for divination

## Top tips for a creative space

**If you're inspired by Glennie's remedies, use these feng-shui tips to plant a flourishing healing garden**

- **Give your plants space.** Arrange your herb garden in a way that allows you to walk freely among the plants. Crowding them together can reduce the flow of energy and could cause health problems for your plants.
- **Avoid angles.** Choose circular pots and planters with rounded curves, as sharp angles produce 'cutting chi', or arrow-like energy, which can make people feel irritable, uncomfortable and unsafe.
- **Use wood.** In feng shui, wood represents new life, so if you don't have trees in your garden, consider putting herbs in wooden planters. Or if you're planting them in the ground, a wooden bench or garden



Circular pots allow chi to flow freely

- **ornament nearby can encourage growth.**
- **Choose fragrant herbs.** Grow herbs from cuttings in pots in your kitchen. Scents like basil, thyme and oregano will energise your kitchen space and celebrate the abundance of the earth, as well as connect you to it. ■

**READER OFFER** Buy Glennie Kindred's *Letting In The Wild Edges* (rrp £14.95) for just £11.21, plus £4 p&p, and receive a free copy of *Permaculture In A Nutshell* (rrp £4.99) by Patrick Whitefield. Call 01730-823311 and quote 'Spirit & Destiny book offer'. Offer closes 28 February 2014. Visit [green-shopping.co.uk](http://green-shopping.co.uk)