

Earth Alchemy

Claire Gillman meets the much-loved expert on Earth traditions, Glennie Kindred, and hears about her new passion

Glennie Kindred is one of those rare understated experts who is supremely knowledgeable about her field of Earth traditions and yet who is modest and understated. Despite her humbleness, her enthusiasm for the subject shines out.

We met in her home which is testimony to her love of nature, sacred celebrations and all aspect of the sacred Earth. There is elderberry wine bubbling in dark demijohns, bottles of elixirs and tinctures filling the kitchen shelves and the garden is a riot of joyous abandon with herbs and native English plants growing in profusion.

Kindred walks the talk. Everything about her and her home reflects the philosophy of her book, *Letting in the Wild Edges*; from the kitchen medicine to the wild garden and the seasonal celebrations (she is preparing for Samhain when we meet). She is generous with her time and of heart – I leave our meeting armed with elixirs (active ingredients mixed with brandy and honey), which are my newfound passion, as Glennie felt sure they would be – herbs for my garden and an Earth Pathways diary. Now, I fully understand why she enjoys such a loyal following.

But I am here to talk about the release of the updated edition of her book, *The Alchemist Journey*, which is now entitled *Earth Alchemy*. It is a beautifully illustrated, magical book that explores the link between the ancient healing art of alchemy and the energy that is inherent in each of the eight Celtic festivals. It is a practical guide that will resonate well with anyone who wants to commune more closely with the natural world. From her own experiences, Glennie Kindred guides us on a journey of discovery that uses the seasonal and alchemical shifts to help us experience personal transformation – to find our own gold, which is the source of our healing and our happiness.



Interview

Here are Glennie Kindred's thoughts about how the book came about and what she hopes for it, followed by a brief extract on the following two pages:

'I started studying alchemy and I was fascinated by it. I was reading books on alchemy and they were very, very complicated and cloaked in symbolism

and pictures, but it intrigued me completely. What I began to see was that it had a long history and that we had a concept of alchemy as being flasks and chemistry and people trying to turn lead into gold, and it wasn't about that at all. That much I was clear on.

'When you look at the time that alchemy hit England, it was after the Crusades,

so it was brought back from the Middle East at a time when chemistry was very exciting. So that's why we ended up with our image of alchemy.

'Alchemy kept going underground and then resurfacing in different generations with different people. There's all kinds of very powerful people that you know about who were into alchemy. Carl Jung was into alchemy, for example. It's just so much more than flasks and chemistry.

'So then I began to look at the alchemical process, of which there's usually seven or eight. Originally it was a healing art, before it was a chemical process. It was connected to the chakras and to the planets.

'What the book is about and what happened to me, is that I started to look at the energy behind the processes. It's exactly what I've done with the earth cycles – I've looked at what is the energy, what is the essence?

'I had a Eureka moment. Each of those processes corresponded to the eight Celtic festivals – the energy of the Earth cycles. It was just like "Oh, I understand this – it's exactly the same as Lamas or Samhain." They fit exactly – one after the other, in chronological order after the cycle of the year. And then you've got Unity – the balance point – and there are eight festivals, so you have got that twice at the two equinoxes. It's fantastic.'

Personal Development

'I think it's the best book I've written. It's all practical because each of the alchemical processes is also an experience. It's personal development. So, for example, Nigredo is the alchemical process for Samhain, and the substance in the flask has broken down to a black sludge and everything is broken down – putrified, black and dark.

'I relate that to Samhain, when everything is dark on the earth and the trees have dropped their leaves and everything is rotting and going back into the earth and we too can do the same thing. We can shed the old – we can let go, like leaves from our trees. We can say, actually I don't need this any longer – I'd like to let go of that feeling that stops me from walking in the woods on my own, or let go of my negative stuff. I'm fed up with it now.

'We can work with the processes and Samhain is like a resting in the dark so you



people now are realising that they need to find their wild edges because we've all been dumbed down to think that this is the level we're operating on but there are many more levels.'

Wild Edges

'I value when a particular species of tree starts to call me, and I keep seeing it, and then I have to answer the call and go and sit with that tree and I say, "Well I'm open to any messages." More often than not, a very clear little message pops in. And it's so profound and so exactly what I need at that point in time.

'Sometimes it can happen really fast as well. Again, you don't have to think you've got to sit and meditate for a long time – it's not like that. I kept whizzing by an elder tree in the

woods, and I knew that I had to go and sit with that tree. Anyway, I didn't have much time and I went to sit with the tree, and then into my consciousness almost immediately came the message, "you have everything you need". It's true – I don't need to worry. I do worry, especially in the summer because I'm doing the talks and the workshops and that worries me, but it's true – I've got everything I need. Actually I can stop worrying about it. And I've had a really good summer this year. I've done impromptu talks, and I can do it and so I do have everything I need. I can stop worrying and enjoy. And that's the essence, don't you think, just enjoying everything you do.

'The lead of course is all the things that weigh us down and stop us moving forward with joy. You feel leaden. So when you look for the lead, it's also the gold. Out of the lead then, you find your gold. It's the transformation.

'I started with the gold; I asked myself, "what is my gold?" My gold is love. I don't have any other gold. Love changes everything and heals everything. So I started off knowing that my gold was love and I went all through the alchemist's journey.

'The book explains the energy of each of the alchemical processes and how that ties in with the energy of each of the Celtic festivals. Then it has a few diary entries of what I did to tie it together and experience it for myself.

'It's metaphysics. It's the stuff of wise-men and shamans. Writing that book took me to a whole new level. It changed me forever in a really good way. I don't think I saw life in the same way after writing it. It's very, very special. If you're into metaphysics, it's a very exciting edge

'It's all to do with recognising that we're not just functioning on one level, we're functioning on many levels. So many

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'Enjoy every moment if you can. And if you can't – if you're caught in a grump or whatever, then it's back to the alchemy – look at what it is, turn it around; it's just a switch. You can turn anything around. It's making a choice.

'Alchemy is transformation. It worked for me fantastically, and I think it would work for anyone. Whatever their passion, they can apply alchemy to it. That's why so many people through all the ages have been into alchemy. It's an exciting system.

'Lead to gold – it's our own lead and our own gold; it's our own unhappy life or it's our own happy life; and we have the choice. We're so lucky here in the West because we have the choice. We are totally and utterly privileged. To me, it feels like a waste of this life if you don't live by your greater good and for the greater good of the Earth.'

The Gift of Spirit and Rebirth

Fermentation, Coagulation, Midwinter Solstice – taken from Earth Alchemy

by Glennie Kindred

The Alchemy of Spirit

In alchemy, Spirit is called Quintessence, the Fifth Element, the quintessential limitless energy of Life, the abundant Essence of All Things, the Source of All Things, the open circuit through which all things are united. Spirit is Unity – complete, harmonious, inclusive Unity. It is the alchemist's maxim 'As Above, so Below', Spirit in Matter, joined as One. For in Spirit there is no separation, only streams of vibrational energy – Infinite, boundless energy.

We are all Spirit, all the time, always. In this sense there is no separation between Life and death, no here and there, no Time, no duality or polarity. Spirit is Oneness, instant, eternal, total integration, never still but always One, always becoming yet never changing.

Spirit is the connecting force. In Spirit there is no beginning and no end. There is continuation, the continuous cycles of creation. I create vibrations in Spirit with my every thought, word and action, and whatever I do comes back to me. It is not who I am or what I am that is important, it is what I add to the vibrational streams all around me. This creates what I bring into being and what I bring to the whole.

My inner journey has brought me a deeper understanding of this, and the more I integrate it into my life, the more I experience it and the more my connection to Spirit is strengthened.

The Alchemy of the Midwinter Solstice

The Midwinter Solstice marks the end of the waning cycle of the Sun and the fullness of the Yin cycle. It is the darkest part of the year, the shortest day and the longest night. This falls between December 20th and 23rd in the Northern Hemisphere and June 20th and



23rd in the Southern Hemisphere. It marks the end of the Yin cycle and the beginning of the Yang cycle.

The Earth's cycle is kept in harmonious equilibrium by the waxing and waning cycle of the Sun, creating the balanced forces of Yin and Yang. At Midsummer, the element of Fire, the active force, energized the element of Water, the receptive force, and this took me on a journey within. Now, at Midwinter, it is the element of Water that energizes Fire to bring action, so that inspiration from within can become manifest.

The Midwinter Solstice is a celebration of the return of the Sun, the return of the Light and the return of the outer growth cycle. From now on the days will slowly become longer and lighter and the Sun warmer. After rest and regeneration in the Dark, the Earth

is once again preparing for new growth, ready to express the fertility and abundance of Life.

As with Midsummer Solstice, this is a dual celebration and I value and celebrate both the Dark and the Light as important parts of the whole. I look forward to the new possibilities that the new cycle will bring and I look back to celebrate the inner journey. I name and honour what I have achieved, what I have let go of and what has been transformed.

The Midwinter Solstice is a moment of rebirth when I activate what I choose to bring out into my life and into the Light. Solstice means 'Standing of the Sun' and this is a moment to stand still and stay in the moment. I stand at the great doorway between the inner growth cycle and the outer growth cycle and ask, 'What do I want to do? What do I wish to grow? What is my golden egg of rebirth? What energy do I wish to carry through into the year's new cycle?'

As the energy moves outwards once again, I aim to keep connected to my Inner Realms during the new growth season.

The time for action has not yet come, but in the stillness I look for the alchemy, the changes I can make in my life, the things that would make a difference. I don't want to rush into things that I can't sustain, so as well as keeping hold of the bigger picture, I concentrate on what is manageable and sustainable in my life right now. This reduces stress and ensures a greater chance of real success. As I move into this new phase, I bring out the Gold that has been revealed in the Dark, my realization that Universal Love is the transformative Gold I wish to work with consciously and purposefully.

I feel like a snake shedding its skin as I leave behind old ways of being, old patterns, old parts of myself, and reach out

December 22nd A Journey to the King's Oak

Here at the Midwinter Solstice I make a journey in my mind's eye back to the Kings Oak that I visited at the Midsummer Solstice. I make myself comfortable in my darkened room and play a shamanic drumming CD (see Appendix, page 269). Because I know the physical landscape so well from all the times I have been in this field, I have a clear picture and instantly feel that I am there.

It is very quiet here now, the stone circle standing silent and still. Only a few birds are active, flitting about in the trees and hedgerows, bringing the only movement and sound in the sleeping landscape. It feels so good to return here at the heart of the winter. The mighty Kings Oak tree stands in its stillness, its branches bare of leaves, the pulse of its Life Force so low now, so deep within the Earth.

I greet the tree deeply and gently and once again sit at the interface where the tree's huge root system disappears below ground. I am conscious again of the message from the Oak given to me at the Midsummer Solstice. It has

been within me throughout my journey as I have searched for what truly inspires me.

Time and again I have experienced and understood that the thing that truly inspires me is the Love in my heart. When I am touched by this Love, this central core of my Unity, I am happy; when I lose touch with it, I am unhappy.

I sit and meditate with this, understanding, which the Midwinter Solstice and the Fermentation and Coagulation experience have strengthened. I find myself merging with the pulse of the tree, deep inside the Earth, aware of the Earth's energy waiting to turn outwards and upwards once again.

I breathe in the stillness of Midwinter, feeling the deep strength and stability of my inner stillness. I earth this in my inner Philosopher's Stone, so that I can reconnect to this moment again, anchoring it in my heart as it blends with my joy and the Love already there.

for the new. My awareness of the Unity and interconnectedness of the Web of Life is strengthened. I am aware of the aspects of myself that have held me back in the past and I am determined to leave these behind.

As part of my active rebirth I name new seeds, new intentions – my resolutions for the new cycle. I nurture these inside myself, in my heart and in my mind, earthing them in the practical changes I begin to make.

The vibration in which these new seeds are planted sets them in motion. It is this that attracts what they need to grow. So I meditate with this awareness and create an alchemical moment as I unite past, present and future into One, picturing what I wish to bring in as whole and complete and happening now. I do not need to know how it will be achieved, only have the certainty that it will. I reach for my dreams and remove any limiting thoughts of what is possible and what is impossible.


This isn't easy! Every day I confront my negative voice, the voice that limits me and blocks the flow to my abundance. I take these doubts, accept that they are part of me and then set about reversing their destructive energy. Once again I use the alchemy of Separation and Union and the

transformative power of Universal Love to transform the old. So I take every negative statement that I hear myself making and replace it with a positive statement. I say the positive statement often – whenever I remember, first thing in the morning and last thing at night, and especially when I find myself reverting back to the old familiar negative patterns. Eventually, the new positive statement becomes established, the old patterns of negative response begin to stop and I know that I am making real progress.

I embrace the certainty that all my positive and loving actions are helping to change my life for the better and are bringing more positivity, Peace and Love into the world.

I use this time at the Midwinter Solstice to activate my 'Yes!' to fire up the Love in my heart and bring to birth positive loving solutions for myself and for the world. When I choose loving solutions, whether in my personal life or on a world scale, the door opens to positive change and healing. Everything I do makes a difference. I use my power as a consumer to buy products that support fair trade, renewable energy, sustainability, recycling and organic farming. I support ethical businesses,

ethical banking and ethical trade. Each one of my purchases increases the availability of these things. This is my 'Yes!' and my inner truth, and I support my truth with every choice I make.

I activate appreciation as one of my rebirthing solutions. Appreciation makes my heart sing! I appreciate all I have right now and I am filled up, I have so much! I use appreciation to dispel dissatisfaction and resentment and to balance any feelings of lack or unworthiness. Appreciation for the positive increases the positive and opens the door to its abundance in the world and in my life. 

Earth Alchemy: A Seasonal Guide to Healing our Relationship with the Earth by Glennie Kindred (Hay House, £12.99) is beautifully illustrated with Glennie's own deep evocations of alchemical spirit. www.glenniekindred.co.uk

