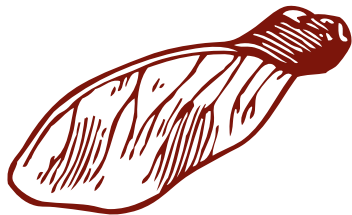
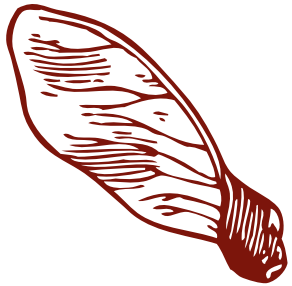


Seasons of Stories

AUTUMN





This book invites you to bring nature back into your life.

Inside is a collection of words, country traditions and folklore inspired by autumn to prompt memory, conversation and reflection through images, verse and story.

Reconnecting with nature, whether that's the landscape, wildlife or culture, can help boost your health, mood and build self-esteem. In short, it can make you feel better and put a smile on your face too!

Bringing outside indoors is a good way to do this and to think about how life can be mirrored in nature. It can be as simple as collecting pebbles or enjoying a jar of herbs or flowers on the table. Wherever we live we can all connect to nature by opening a window to feel the breeze, cutting a sweet ripe apple, or taking a gentle stroll at different times of the day throughout the seasons.

Turn the page to begin your journey through autumn...

Any little old song
will do for me
tell it of joys gone long,
or joys to be,
of friendly faces best
loved to see...

Thomas Hardy

When is Autumn?

When blackberries
are bursting, ivy flowers,
evenings draw in,
leaves flame-a-fire.

All's damp and earthy,
spun by spiders' webs,
stubbled fields laid bare,
and fog descends.

■ How can you tell when it's autumn for you?



HARVEST

The harvest moon is the full moon closest to the autumn equinox (around September 21st) when day and night are equal. It rises soon after sunset and gave harvesters valuable additional light.

*In spring we sow at the harvest mow
And that is how the seasons round they go*

Leaves fall

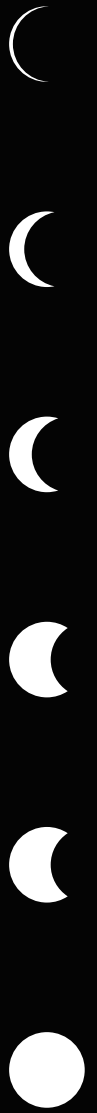
Come greens once full,
those leaves do fall
however the growth of the tree -
Come wind come frost,
those winds do blast
and so too it is for us,
you and me.

Come reds blazing high in
canopies of fire
beside the golds and the browns -
Come morning come light,
they'll lay down flat
and trod to the deep forest floor.

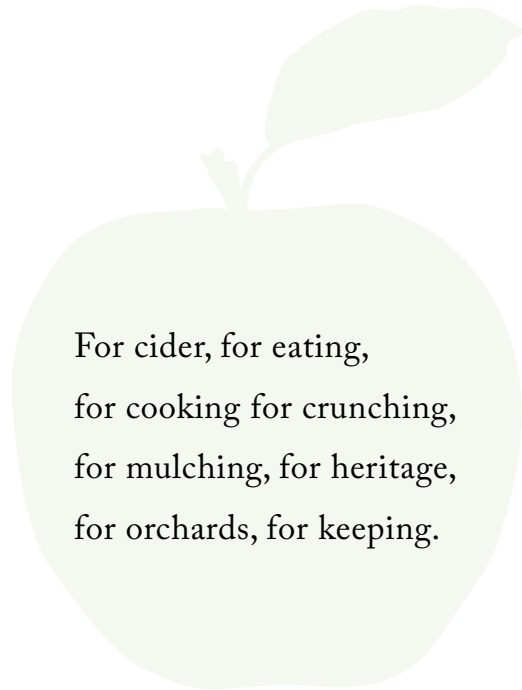
Come church bells come peels,
those leaves you and me
lying beside one and all -
'tis season's own right
to carry us light
like leaves from an old tree
we fall we fall
like leaves from the old tree
we fall.

■ What's your favourite autumnal tree?





APPLE



Eat an apple. Keep the seeds.

Apple varieties in a Dorset orchard

Slack-ma-Gurdle, Golden Ball
Hoary Morning and Buttery D'Or,
Green custards and Greasy Jacks,
Blooded Ploughmen, Cap of Liberty pips,
Neverblight, Polly, Ironsides fall
with Sour Cadbury and Dorset Warriors.

*Apples in a barrel,
'who's Afeared,' the roar,
apples in a barrel,
sweet cider for all.*

■ Cut an apple through the middle
to see the five pointed star.



Lazy Lawrence

There was once a name that every West Country boy or girl used to know: Lazy Lawrence...

He's the pixie pony, the faerie horse, who gallops around the orchards guarding the apple trees and protecting their juicy treasures. Lazy by name but not by nature, for he's as feisty and free as the wild, west wind that blows through the orchards in autumn.

And if anyone was ever out and about in an orchard up to no good, picking other people's apples, then they'd better beware... For if that faerie horse caught you in the glare of his green, glowing eyes you'd be spell-bound, rooted to the spot, unable to move a muscle except to cry:

"Lazy Lawrence let me go, don't hold me autumn and winter too!"

Those that follow the old ways still remember Lazy Lawrence. They leave a bucket of spring water and a little dish of apples and cream in the orchard. Sure enough in the morning both are empty, with hoofprints on the ground and apples safely on the trees.



A Riddle

Green as grass,
an' grass it's not.

White as snow,
an' snow it's not.

Red as blood,
an' blood it's not.

Black as ink,
an' ink it's not.



Traditional folklore says that blackberries should never be picked after Michaelmas Day (29th September). After this date the Devil allegedly spits on them as an act of revenge, having landed in a patch of brambles when he was expelled from heaven by St Michael.



Cold-free Cordial

Cover a panful of ripe elderberries with water, gently boil.

Strain the liquid and for each pint add 225g of sugar, 12 cloves, 1tsp cinnamon & 1tsp ginger.

Simmer for 30 more minutes, allow to cool and bottle.

■ What's your favourite type of fruit jam?



HARE

The White Hare

One dusky autumn evening four farmworkers were out hunting for their supper, when they caught a glimpse of a pure white hare nimbling across an open field. A magical, mysterious creature and, yes, the proud hunters desperately wanted to catch such a prize.

They sent two of their hunting dogs ahead to flush her out. The startled hare ran, as fast as the wind, like silver lightning streaking across the grass. She easily outdistanced the chasing dogs but as she dashed through a gap in a hedge another dog was waiting to pounce...

... a snap and a snarl, a scrabble and a squeal.

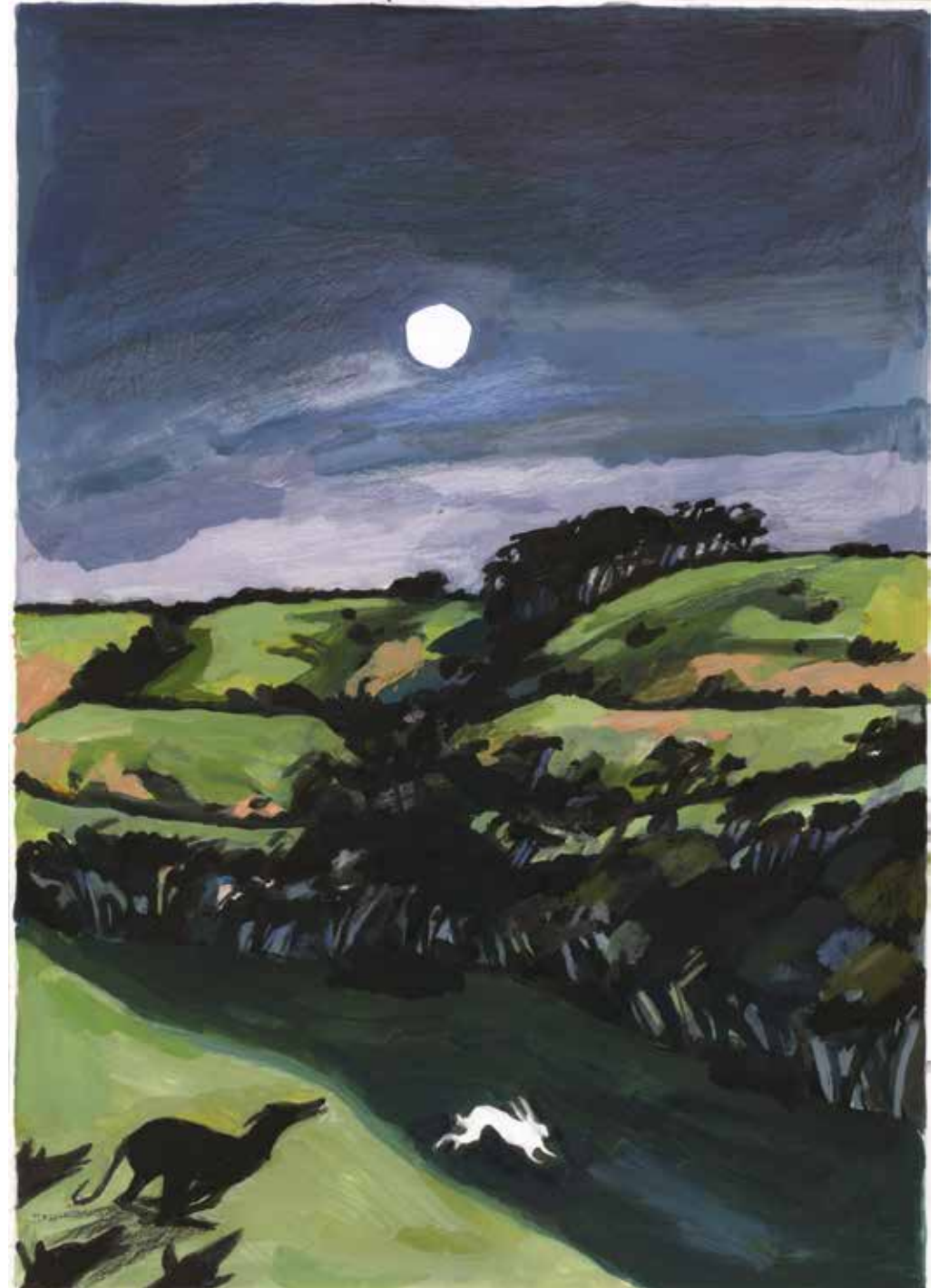
The hare was caught in the jaws of the dog and viciously flung into the air, white fur flecked with red. She landed on the top of the hedge and managed to scramble away, slipping into the safety of the deep, dark woods.

The hunters searched long and late but eventually gave up the chase. On their way home they passed a stone cottage on the far side of the forest. The door was ajar and peering inside they saw an old woman collapsed on the floor, bruised and bleeding.

Three of the hunters ran in guilt and fear but the youngest stayed to tend and care for the old woman. When restored to health she released him but from that day on the men vowed never to hunt the white hare again.



White Hare! Wild hare!
flashing across the ridgeway,
lord-leaper-love, silver-windswift-wan,
lurching from Abbotsbury across the land -
the one they chase, the one they track,
from tump's hollow hip over stone valley path,
dancing an endless jig across the old bones
of silent grassways and purple meadows.



■ Have you had any encounters with wild animals
in your garden or neighbourhood ?

WIND



North winds blow cold, cleansing the soul,
South winds blow warm, green returns,
East winds blow knowing, a place of growing,
West winds blow to the end, where all water wends.

Several British folktales tell of 'wind-knots' - a rope with three tied knots given to sailors by witches (wise women).

The sailors untied them at sea to summon the wind, but were told never to undo the last one, for it would unleash a terrible tempest ...



The Mermaid

(Dorset sea shanty)

It was on a Friday morn when we set sail
And our ship not far from the land,
When a fair, pretty mermaid we did espy
With a comb and a glass in her hand.

And the ocean waves did roll

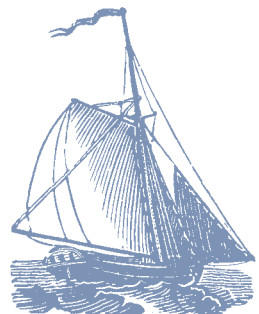
And the stormy winds did blow

And we jolly sailors were up, up above

*With the landlubbers lying down below,
below, below,*

With the landlubbers lying down below.

■ What is blown or carried on the wind?



HEARTH

The image features a dark, almost black background filled with a dense shower of small, glowing orange and red particles. These particles, which resemble sparks or embers, are scattered throughout the frame, with a higher concentration in the lower half. The lighting is warm and directional, creating a sense of depth and movement as if the particles are falling from above. The overall effect is one of intense heat and energy.

A Fire Riddle

On earth this great warrior is
wonderfully formed of two dumb
creatures, brightly burst forth,
useful to all.

Enemies use him to fight each other.
Strong though he is, any woman can
hold him.

He obeys well, serves quietly – to any
who tend him properly and feed him
fairly. To these he brings comfort,
makes life better.

But if anyone lets him grow too proud,
there's only grim reward.



Autumn is a time when spiders creep into our homes. According to one old tradition placing conkers in cupboards keeps them away. Other folklore says that a spider entering the house brings prosperity!

What do you think?

The Traveller

A knock on the door in the dusky haze,
candles shiver and we stand amazed,
for who would call by here so late?
friends open the door, an old man says -
we stay by the hearth.

Faith open it up, Mother agrees,
throwing back locks, turning iron keys
for who would call by here so dark?
friends open up will you, an old man barks -
we stay by the hearth.

The door creaks open, a chill wind raised,
blowing leaves behind the old clock case,
now who would come by this lonely place?
there's no one outside, but a thin voice remains -
you were right to stay by the hearth, my friends.

It's nothing says Pa, the door tight again,
but to hear that voice, we quietly strain,
for who would call by here so dark?
and what of his body, the rest of his parts -
we stay by the hearth.



■ How does sitting around a flickering fire make you feel?

Fireside gifts

In the old days the Little People were always busy helping on the farm: tweaking the leaf-buds, wrestling with weeds, opening the ears of corn and ripening the apples in the orchard.

Grateful for their help, our ancestors respected the Fair Folk. They followed the old traditions and left them gifts of gratitude: the last sheaf of wheat from the fields; a cup of freshly picked blackberries; an apple left hanging on every tree in the orchard. They baked little fairy cakes and placed them by the fireplace with a thimble of cream and an egg-shell of frothing beer.

Nut Crack Night 31 October

Two hazel-nuts I threw
into the flame,
And to each nut I gave
a sweetheart's name...



ALL SOULS



Souling (at Samhain)

We take soul cakes,
soul-singing to givers,
we swap soul cakes for
those loved not with us,
we go a-souling
year after year,
under great yews
we deliver your prayers.

Old Tom lived his whole life on the same farm where he was born and raised. By the time he retired he had a sheep dog that was still young and willing to work. One day the eager dog found its way to a neighbouring farmer, who was more than happy making use of a four-legged helper. Old Tom agreed his neighbour could keep the dog, even though he knew he'd miss her company.

Several years went by, until one misty autumn morning Old Tom heard a familiar barking outside. Opening the back door he saw his old dog, wagging her tail. She stayed all that day, following him around the garden, then just before dusk she dashed away across the fields.

That evening Old Tom called his neighbour to check the dog had returned safely. There was silence on the other end of the line for a moment.

"I'm sorry, Tom. Your old dog died - just two days ago."

After that Old Tom often told his tale of the faithful ghost who came to say goodbye...



FOX

*The fox went out on a chilly night,
he prayed to the Moon to give him light.*

*He'd many a mile to go that night
before he reached the town-o.*

As sly as a fox...

... you've been outfoxed!

The Fox Woman

One day a woodcutter was returning home to his cabin in the woods where he lived alone. Suddenly he froze as he saw smoke rising from the chimney. Someone else was inside...

As he gently opened the door a delicious smell of simmering stew wafted out. Standing by the fire was a young woman with thick, auburn-red hair falling across her shoulders. The woman said she would stay with him as his wife, as long as she could keep her fox-skin coat hanging in the house.

The two of them lived happily together for a while. Eventually, however, the scent of the fox-skin began to bother the woodcutter. Sometimes, especially in autumn, it had a pungent, musky odour that was almost unbearable.

One morning, in a fit of agitation, he grabbed the fox-skin and threw it out of the cabin. His wife ran outside, picked up her coat from the ground and pulled it around her. In that moment she transformed into a fox, her twitching tail disappearing into the leafy forest. He never saw the fox woman again.

Reynard the Fox

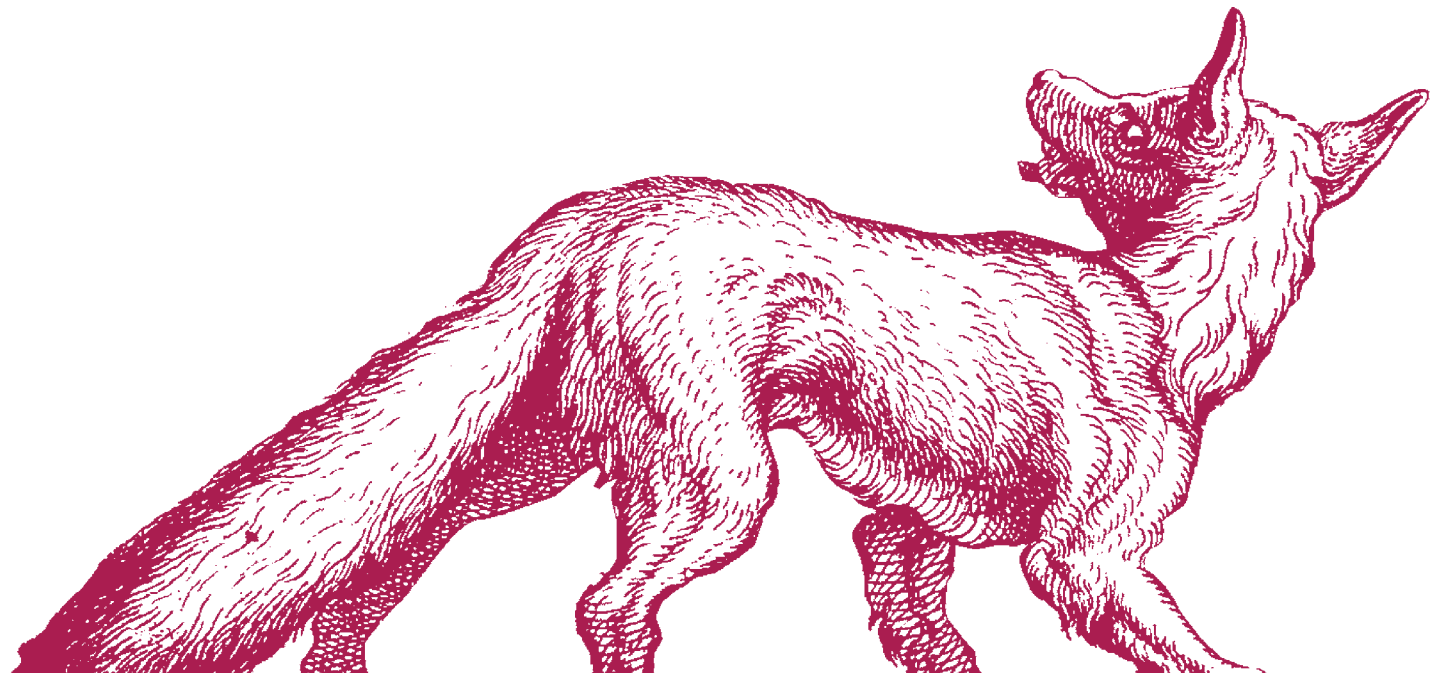
An evening it was as I walked out
all upon the hillside dark
when I overheard a sweet young maid
as she talked to the fox, Reynard.

She gave him only bashful looks,
he soon put her at ease,
he cut a dash in cape and boots
and cap of silk velveteen.

‘Dear sir, I’ll pray you kindly pass,’
she bravely managed to say,
‘a lone girl, as I, dare not tarry here,
In the dim dusky wood this way.’

He said, ‘Pray calm your sweetest face,
I’d have passed by now, by my word,
but if you’ll be guest at a nearby palace,
you find Reynard its master and lord.’

The blush, enough to seal her fate,
she followed that fox-copper tail,
disappeared into the greenwood night,
and no one ever heard from her again.



May the sun bring you
energy in the morning

May the moon keep you
company in the night

May the rain wash away
all your worries

And the wind blow
strength into your bones.

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing.



Some helpful information
about this book and the
Stepping into Nature project.

We decided against a 'how to use' this book.
It is a book like any other, for individuals and
groups of all ages, from school age upwards.

We want to celebrate autumn and share our
favourite stories and autumn themes. Our
intention is simply to create a conversation
starter and stimulate thoughts, song and
conversation... plus ideas, memories and joy.

We have both worked professionally with this
book in memory cafes, shared it with friends
and family, and used it to run adult workshop
groups. If you are using this book as a group
facilitator or with a family member, you may
develop your own personal question prompts
inspired by the ones at the bottom of these
pages, and there is space in here to make your
own notes to record what works for you.

We really hope you enjoy it, please send us
your thoughts on the feedback slips enclosed.

Fair Winds and blessings,

Sarah and Mark

Some more poems for you to seek out

Autumn

(from *The Shepherd's Calendar*)

by John Clare

Autumn Fires

by Robert Louis Stevenson

Nothing Gold Can Stay

by Robert Frost

To Autumn

('Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness')

by John Keats

The Listener

by Walter de la Mare

About Martin

Martin Maudsley is a professional storyteller based in Bridport in Dorset, telling traditional tales and local legends for schools, community groups and national organisations. He is currently the storyteller-in-residence for pioneering environmental arts charity Common Ground. He has been collaborating with Stepping in Nature for the last two years running creative workshops using folk-tales and folk-songs to connect participants with nature, the seasons and a sense of place. He is also very active practically celebrating the seasons in and around his neighbourhood, including putting on Mummers Plays, Apple Days and Winter Wassails.

Martin's maternal grandparents were farmers in rural Lancashire where he happily spent many school holidays, throughout the seasons, roaming the countryside, foraging for fruit and picking up juicy titbits of folklore. The Old Tom story retold here is from his grandfather. Nowadays he loves telling tales about apples and orchards, as well as drinking a glass of Dorset cider in the place where it's made!



About Sarah

Sarah is a professional poet. She grew up daydreaming of wind-roaring skies and foam breakers crashing over the suburbs of her West Midlands home. The wilderness sea and a longing for nature always called, and after many miles and many poems, she now she lives, writes and creates events for others to explore and reconnect to the landscape and coastline in Devon and Dorset.

Spending time outdoors and on the land is an essential part of Sarah's well-being and creative practice. Sarah celebrates the seasons and nature everyday by walking the cliffs and fields alone, gig rowing at sea, and working outdoors. Sarah says that life in apprenticeship to poetry is a voyage over the oceans of myth and language, love and belonging, agreeing with Philip Larkin, "what will survive of us is love."

Sarah is poet-in-residence for the Jurassic Coast (UNESCO) World Heritage Site, Portland Museum writer-in-residence, and she works with many other museums and organisations. Sarah has worked with Stepping into Nature for two years, bringing nature connection, poetry and creativity into the everyday for participants of all ages indoors and outdoors.



About Stepping into Nature

The Stepping into Nature project aims to help people be happier and healthier by connecting with nature.

The project, funded through the National Lottery Community Fund, uses Dorset's natural and cultural landscape to provide activities and sensory rich places for older people, including those living with dementia and their care partners.

The project works with local organisations to deliver inclusive nature themed activities – both indoors and out – to help people find new places to go, learn new skills and meet like-minded people. The project also funds communities and organisations to help create more inclusive, accessible and enjoyable green spaces and train staff and volunteers to become dementia friendly.