



Gylden Magick

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Feb. 2023

PRACTICAL MAGICK & UNIVERSAL ENERGY FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

Editor's notes

By Gylden Fellowship

Welcome to **GYLDEN MAGICK** – the spiritual magazine from Gylden Fellowship that spans both traditional and newer pagan beliefs and practice.

Dear readers of **GYLDEN MAGICK**,

It's February (the **Snow Moon**) – I've been reflecting on love and new projects. Let's start with love. Of course, it's the **Feast of St Valentine** on 14 February, but also the Roman festival of **Lupercalia** on 15 February. Altar colours at this time are white, sky blue, pink and rose, with Brighid crosses or dolls to adorn.

On the topic of love though, it's not just romantic love – the Ancient Greeks defined 7 different types of love: eros (most like modern romantic love), philia (love between friends), storge (love of family), agape (altruism), ludus (flirting), pragma (practical or arranged

marriages) and philautia (self-love or hubris). We feature a poem on emotional love and love spells later in the issue.

Imbolg offers the opportunity for planning new projects, while the winter rages outside. Talking of that, why not check out the **Dice Tower**, which celebrates its first birthday, as a hub for devotees of board or role play games.

This is a time to imagine yourself as a seed or a bulb, dormant in the soil, but ready to flower once all the restrictions are lifted and pagan events start to re-appear.

We continue with sacred geometry, celestial forecasts, environmental science and sacred art. Our crystal expert, Charlie, turns her attention to moonstone and, also, opals. Our science writer, Mark, has two pieces this month – screaming tomatoes

and the environmental benefits of hydrogen trains. We also feature, a piece on animal safety in zoos and an update on Neanderthal culture.

In past years, we would be frantic with preparations for the Enchanted Market, but not so in 2023. We look forward to the return of all the festivals, camps, fayres and markets in a post-covid world. It didn't take very long for the markets and fayres to return to medieval communities after the Black Death – there's lots of hope for our community in 2023.

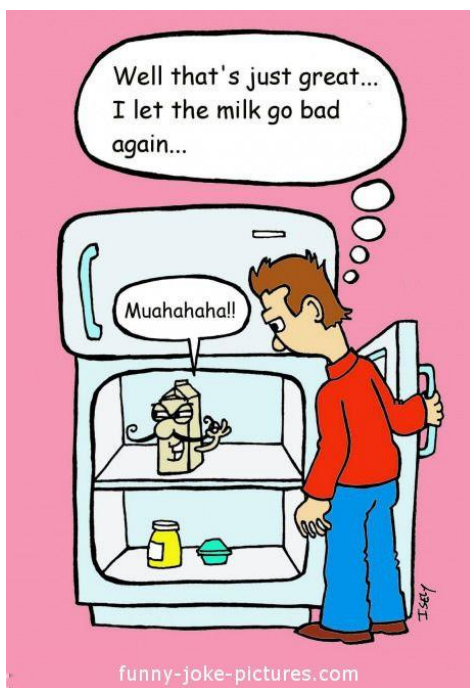
Thank you for all your feedback and many blessings.

Gylden Fellowship admins

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Crystal clear: opal

By Charlie Foreverdark

Oh, the spectral delight that is opal. Like lightning in a rainbow, it flashes its brilliance with even the slightest movement and is prized by all who witness its phenomenal fire. The name, **opal**, has long been thought to have derived from the Latin word, **opalus**, meaning precious stone, and the Greek, **opallios**, meaning a change in colour, but these two words are themselves derived from the older Sanskrit word, **upala**, referring simply to a rock or stone.

Opal is formed from a solution of silicon dioxide and water. Mainly, it occurs in sedimentary rocks or where low temperature solutions bearing silica can percolate through rocks. As water runs down through the earth, it picks up silica from sandstone, and carries this silica-rich solution into the cracks and voids caused by natural faults or decomposing fossils. As the water evaporates, it leaves behind the silica deposit. This cycle repeats over very long periods of time, and eventually beautiful opal is formed.

Mineralogically, opal is an amorphous hydrous silicon dioxide, with no ordered atomic crystalline structure, and without a definite chemical composition. Opals contain a variable amount of water, therefore they are a "mineraloid" rather than a mineral. When we talk about opal having an amorphous internal structure, on a microscopic level, opal is composed of tiny silica spheres in a hexagonal or cubic close-packed lattice, with moisture and solidified acids trapped in the gaps between them. It was shown by J. V. Sanders in the mid-1960s that these ordered silica spheres create the internal colours by causing the interference and diffraction of light passing through the opals microstructure. The discovery of the ordered sphere structure of precious opal led to its synthesis by Pierre Gilson in 1974. The resulting lab created material is distinguishable from natural opal mainly by its unnatural regularity; under magnification, the patches of colour are seen to be arranged in synthetic patterns. Synthetic opals also will not fluoresce under ultraviolet light.

There are two broad classes of opal: precious (or noble) and common (or potch).

Precious opal displays iridescence, referred to as "play-of-colour", whereas common opal does not. In gemmology, "opalescence" is the term applied to the milky hazy sheen of common opal which does not show a play of colour. Opalescence is a form of adularescence; an optical phenomenon similar to the labradorescence of labradorite. With precious opals, it is the amorphous internal structure of the stone that causes it to diffract light, resulting in play-of-colour. The white light is diffracted into its component colours and exits the opal in the flash of spectral colours like a rainbow from a prism. Depending on the conditions in which it formed, opal may be transparent, translucent, or opaque and the background colour may be almost any colour. Black opal is considered to be the rarest.

Opal mining is considered to be one of the more difficult gemstones to mine. This is due to the fact that on the surface of the land, there is very little in the way of tell-tale signs to direct miners towards bountiful harvests below ground. Opal only very rarely forms in coherent seams, so very often the mining is a case of trial and error. On the rare occasion that a seam is discovered, the underground ribbons can bend, turn, dip to impossible depths, or simply disappear according to the pressures exerted on the earth long ago. Tantalising hints of those prehistoric times sometimes are uncovered in the form of opalised sea shells or opalised fossils from the days of the dinosaurs. Whilst mining machines and technology can be utilised, the best examples of opals tend to be extracted most economically by miners working with a handpick or screwdriver to delicately extract any opal found, due to the frailty of the stone. In addition to increasing the cost of the operation, big labour saving machines often result in bitter tears, when the opal is spotted only after it has been shattered. Many locals make a living out of searching through the heaps of discarded mined rock for pieces of precious opal. Noodling

machines in which the rock is passed by conveyor under an ultra-violet light in a darkened enclosure are also used to identify smaller pieces of opal from the discarded mined rock.

Opal mining also brings up a variety of different associated health risks and issues. Inhalation of silica over an extended period of time can lead to silicosis (Silicosis is an interstitial lung disease caused by breathing in tiny bits of silica, a common mineral found in many types of rock and soil. Over time, exposure to silica particles causes permanent lung scarring, called pulmonary fibrosis).

Black opal – Out of all the Opal types, black opal is the most sort after and most valuable type. In fact it is so highly prized it has been an object of desire throughout the ages with kings, emperors, maharajas and sultans all being mesmerized by its beauty. If Shakespeare referred to opal as the “Queen of Gems” then the black opal is surely the Queen of Queens. Black Opal displays a dark body colour with little to no opalescence, and is considered to be the most desirable of opal types. Unlike ordinary opals, black opals have carbon and iron oxide trace elements present, which cause the unusual darkness of the stone. The black background provides a dark contrast to the yellows, oranges and reds, allowing for a more impressive play of colour. A colour chart is used to distinguish the different background colour specifics of precious opals. The chart ranges from N1 to N9, with anything between N1 and N4 being classed officially as a black opal. N5 and N6 are classed as “dark opals” and N7 through N9 are “light opals”. Black opal predominantly comes from Lightning Ridge, Australia, and was first discovered there in 1873. Specimens have also been found in Hungary, Honduras and the USA. The value of black opals is not solely defined by the darkness of their hue, but in the play of colour within individual specimens. Brightness is a better indicator of the value of opal than its body tone scale. True black opals are often collected as incredibly rare specimens, and are not used for jewellery. The price for even minute slices and slithers of black opal start at around £7,000!



Other popular types of opal include:

– White opal: This is the most ubiquitous variety of opal. It has a white background and is sub-transparent to translucent and usually displays opalescence and a variety of the spectral colours

– Fire opal: A transparent to translucent opal, with warm body colours of yellow to orange to red. Although it does not usually show any play of colour, occasionally a stone will exhibit bright green flashes. First discovered in South America at least 6,000 years ago fire opal was highly coveted by the indigenous peoples. The Aztecs worshipped the gem and named it “quetzalitzlipyllitli”, meaning the “stone of the bird of paradise”. In ancient India and Persia, fire opal was admired as a symbol of ardent love, and also thought to offer it’s wearers protection from disease.

- Girasol opal: A type of opal that exhibits a bluish glow or sheen that follows the light source around. It is not a play of colour as seen in precious opal, but rather an effect from microscopic inclusions.
- Peruvian (or blue) opal: A semi-opaque to opaque blue-green stone found in Peru, which is often cut to include the matrix in the more opaque stones. It does not display a play of colour.
- Boulder (or matrix) opal: The term used for a rough or cut opal that displays precious opal within or attached to its host matrix. Often just a thin vein of precious opal is present within cracks in the host rock.
- Hyalite opal: A colourless opal which gives the appearance of glass. Rarely, it does display a faint tint of colour (blue, green or yellow). It is also sometimes referred to as Mexican water opal.

There are also individual names for the patterning of colour within opal specimens, describing the arrangement of an opal's play of colour. In general, connoisseurs prefer large and closely arranged patches of colour to smaller scattered dots. And the brighter the colour, the more valuable the specimen.

Common terms for patterns include:

- Pinfire or pinpoint: Small, closely set patches of color
- Harlequin or mosaic: Broad, angular, closely set patches of color
- Flame: Sweeping reddish bands or streaks that shoot across the stone
- Peacock: Mainly blue and green

In addition to fully synthesised opals, another less expensive type of opal to acquire are composites known as doublets or triplets. Doublet opals are comprised of a top slice of opal, glued onto a dark opaque backing made of plastic or another gem material. In the more convincing examples ironstone is used in an attempt to mimic the host rock of boulder opal. Triplet opals are similar to the doublet, but the slice of opal is much thinner and crowned by a transparent colourless domed cabochon made of quartz, plastic or glass. In addition to protecting the opal, the dome also works as a magnifier for the play of colour. Viewed from the sides, the composite can be easily spotted, however, when incorporated into jewellery, the effect can be quite convincing. Opal is softer and more easily chipped than most other popular gemstones, with a hardness of around 5.5 to 6.0 on the Moh's scale, so arguably triplet opals are an effective way of procuring a long lasting wearable opal.

Archaeologists have dated early opal finds to over 10,000 years ago in North America and 6,000 years ago in Kenya. Opal was long thought to be the most precious of gems because it simultaneously possessed many of the colours of other revered gemstones. Roman scholar Pliny the Elder spoke of opal in his Natural History encyclopedia, he wrote: "In the opal, you shall see the burning fire of the carbuncle/ruby, the glorious purple of the amethyst, the green sea of the emerald and all glittering together, mixed after an incredible manner. Some opals carry such resplendent luster with them that they are able to match the bravest and richest colors of painters: others represent the flaming fire of brimstone, yea and the bright blaze of burning oil."

Following the 1829 publication of a novel by Sir Walter Scott, opal acquired a somewhat dubious reputation. In Scott's popular novel, (Anne of Geierstein), a baroness wears an opal talisman with supernatural powers. When a drop of holy water falls on the talisman, the opal turns into a plain stone and the Baroness dies. So, people began to associate opals with bad luck and death. Within a year of the publishing of Scott's novel, the sale of opals in Europe dropped by 50%, and subsequently remained low for the next 20 years or so. Opals can dry out if they're not treated with care and this can lead to the stone going dull or even cracking in extreme cases, which historically lead many to conclude that opal was a harbinger of bad luck. As recently as the beginning of the 20th century, in Russian culture, opal was believed to embody the evil eye.

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Lailat al Miraj: this Muslim holy day celebrates Muhammad's pilgrimage from Mecca to Jerusalem.

Collated by Gylden Fellowship



May Allah bless us all this Laylat al-Miraj, with the bounty of increased prayer, faith, and wisdom to discern His signs, on the horizons and in ourselves. Amin!



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Crystal clear: moonstone

By Charlie Foreverdark

Moonstone has always been one of my all-time favourite stones, with its wealth of mysterious folklore and stunning aesthetics. I recently acquired a black moonstone sphere and it is one of the most beautiful pieces that I personally own, but my first experience of moonstone goes back to a set of stunning earrings and necklace that my parents gifted me upon my graduation. .

Moonstone is best known for its unfathomable pearlescent sheen, also known as the **schiller effect**, where light reflects off of the two types of feldspar that make up this stone. Feldspars are amongst the most widespread minerals within the Earth's crust, as well as some of the most diverse. You can pick up a rock anywhere in the world and you'll probably find that it contains a feldspar mineral or two, but moonstone is perhaps the most well-known gemstone of the feldspar group.

In moonstone, the two feldspar minerals - orthoclase and albit- initially intermingle, but then begin to form in separate alternating layers which produce a lamellar (scaly) structure. These layered minerals are what enable the beautiful phenomena known as **adularescence** to occur when light beams hit the surface of the stone and are diffracted and diffused. The schiller effect is produced because of interference caused by light beams having to weave their way through layers with slightly different optical properties. The best examples of moonstone exhibit a distinctive visual effect; as you turn it in your hand, an ethereal sheen skips across the surface. This sheen may even appear to glow with a ghostly blue hue.

Adularescence is specific to moonstone, (as labradorescence is specific to labradorite) and is described as a vibrant, natural optical effect similar to the shimmering appearance of the moon on a cloudless evening. Its name is derived from *adularia*, which was the original name for moonstone, as one of the first mines of high-quality moonstone was discovered in a Swiss city Mt. Adular (now called St Gotthard).

Jean Claude Delam  therie was the first person to identify and name the crystal independently as moonstone in 1801, but throughout the ages, it has been synonymous with the moon, magic, mystery, ethereal beauty, love and protection, and it has captivated the hearts of jewellery lovers and gemstone enthusiasts for centuries. Not wishing to discount the science and geology, Moonstone is one crystal that I particularly love to look at through the eyes of the Ancient Egyptians, Greeks or Romans. Is it any wonder that they thought this incredibly beautiful gemstone originated in the rays of the moon?

In ancient times, moonstone was said to be able to elicit deep passion between lovers. It was also thought to bestow gifts of prophecy and clairvoyance to the wearer. Ancient civilisations believed that a wearer of moonstone could determine their own future in dreams; this was attributed in legend to the moon's ability to coax powerful energies forth from the stone with its gravitational pull. It was believed that moonstone could also clear the mind and encourage the manifestation of arcane wisdom. To unlock this particular ability, the moonstone was held in the mouths of magical practitioners during full moon rituals.

Moonstone was also believed to offer the owner good health and fortune. Despite actually being perfectly terrestrial in origin, the ancient Romans and Greeks believed moonstone was formed from solidified or frozen beams of actual moonlight. They attributed it with powerful revitalising and deeply transformative healing properties and even associated moonstone with their lunar deities. Aphroselene was the name that the Ancient Greeks gave to moonstone after their goddesses, Aphrodite of love, and Selene of the moon. The ancient

Egyptians used moonstone amongst ritual offerings to their moon deities, Thoth and Khonsu, and the Mayans created decorative imitations of their moon goddess, Ixchel, from moonstone.

Due to its lunar attributes, moonstone was considered feminine in nature and, as a result, it has a specific history of use in addressing female ailments, including premenstrual syndrome and pain or difficulty during pregnancy and childbirth. Even I will admit to keeping a piece of moonstone upon my person during each of my five pregnancies.

Since ancient times, moonstone has been used to create elegant ornamental jewellery. In India, it was heralded as a love stone and was used as a traditional wedding gift. It was also thought to be instrumental in reconciling estranged lovers. There was a belief in India and in parts of Europe that two people wearing moonstone on the full moon would fall passionately in love.

The moonstone's history in India includes the belief that since the beginning of time, a moonstone has been set into the forehead of India's moon god, Chandra. In fact, his full name was Chandrashekar and he was an incarnation of the Hindu god, Shiva. Etymologically, the name, Chandrashekar comes from the Sanskrit words, candra (meaning moon) and śekhara (meaning crown). The moonstone on Chandra's forehead was said to grow dimmer or brighter with the waning and waxing of the moon. It is said in an Asian myth that the most beautiful blue moonstones are brought by tides once every 21 years, and the gem was historically hung in fruit trees across parts of Asia to attract abundant crops.

Moonstone also has a long history worldwide as a protector of travellers. When worn as an amulet, moonstone was said to protect those travelling at night. Ancient mariners believed it would protect them when travelling over water.

More recently, during the Art Nouveau period, moonstone gained a resurgence in popularity. The French goldsmith, Rene Lalique, produced some really stunning pieces of moonstone jewellery, though now most of his creations are now in museums. Louis Comfort Tiffany also created some unique and beautiful moonstone jewellery in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The Art Nouveau period was short-lived and the Art Deco movement was soon to follow with heavy emphasis on diamonds and more precious gemstones.

It wasn't really until the 1960s that moonstone came back into fashion. With just the right ethereal and whimsical qualities, moonstone really captured the spirit of the hippie movement.

On the 20 May 1970, Florida lawmakers passed a bill adopting moonstone as Florida's Official State Gemstone, to commemorate the landing of U.S. astronauts on the moon. The moon landings took off from the Kennedy Space Centre in Florida. Despite it being the Florida State Gemstone, moonstone does not naturally occur in the state. Deposits of moonstone have been uncovered in Armenia, Australia, Mexico, Madagascar, Myanmar, Norway, Poland, India, Sri Lanka and, although not specifically in Florida, there are locations in the USA that have yielded deposits of the beautiful stone.

Moonstone has been used in many supernatural applications, particularly in pop culture features such as *The Vampire Diaries*, and *Teen Wolf*, though in the latter it is referred to by another name – Hecatolite. When it appears in such stories, it tends to have connection to paranormal elements and characters such as vampires or werewolves, with moonstone depicted as either enhancing or suppressing the abilities of these supernatural creatures. In fact, harking back to the Victorian era and a man called Wilkie Collins, who was a friend, occasional collaborator, and contemporary of the inimitable Charles Dickens, *The Moonstone* was the title of what is now considered to be one of the first ever Victorian detective novels, predating Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Homes by a few decades. The story connects a sinister and mysterious plot to the great imperial drama of mid-century India, the society over which Queen Victoria would eventually declare herself Empress. The moonstone

within the story is actually an Indian diamond, but the magic and mystery associated with moonstone folklore is pivotal to the narrative.

Moonstone is composed of potassium aluminium silicate, and scores between 6-6.5 on Moh's hardness scale. Whilst it can be carved into some absolutely stunning and unique shapes and pieces, the lapidary of the stone requires real skill and expertise, so as to not chip it along one of the internal fracture planes. Since moonstone is prone to chipping, gem cutters need to take care with how intricate and fragile their designs become. Moonstone naturally sheers along a horizontal plane, making it very difficult to carve with detail, so its lapidary is often a painstaking process.

The most important job in cutting a moonstone cabochon is orienting the rough to allow for the best display of the schiller. This requires specific knowledge of how light enters and behaves within the stone. The cutter must first identify the plane of adularescence, which will always be parallel to an internal cleavage plane.

When it comes to procuring the material, large, mechanised moonstone mines simply do not exist. Instead, most production is from artisanal mining through stream sediments and gravels. A smaller amount is mined underground, where miners dig by hand into soft kaolinite clay which developed as a residual material above weathering feldspar deposits and masses of igneous rock.

Black Moonstone is a gorgeous dark variety of the magical feldspar mineral that exhibits a velvety silver and green flash. Its colours range from dark slate greys to lighter cloudy pastel lilacs with specimens often reflecting peach, yellow, pink or reddish undertones. This dark coloured variety of moonstone mainly originates in Madagascar. Although it is called black or dark, when exposed to light it takes on the same characteristically beautiful shimmer of white moonstone, except with gorgeous green hues and delightful peach toned veins which run throughout each stone.

Opalite is a man-made glass that is made to look like both opal and moonstone. This is a simulated stone and not a natural gemstone. Some sellers will try to deceive by calling the synthetic glass opalite moonstone - however, whilst it is certainly a pretty creation, it is not the same thing! Anybody who has examples of opalite in their collection will be familiar with its glassy faultless structure, it is entirely devoid of the minor inclusions, imperfections and noticeable fracture planes found within natural moonstone.

Another potential moonstone imposter is the igneous rock, larvikite, which isn't a mineral. It contains feldspar crystals, typically thumbnail-sized and numerous in quantity. Because there are alternating layers of plagioclase and alkali feldspar within larvikite, it does display a silvery bluish sheen not dissimilar to moonstone; however, it is not a true form of moonstone.

Rainbow moonstone is transparent labradorite, a closely related feldspar mineral with sheen in a variety of iridescent colours and inclusions of black tourmaline. Although it's technically not moonstone, it's similar enough that the trade has accepted it as a gem in its own right with some even preferring it to traditional moonstone.

Environment: tomato screams

By Mark Sharpen

OK then, this month's offering is a long way from quantum physics, but has lots to do with tomatoes! Or, to be more precise, I'm looking at recent research into plant sentience, which is very bad news for vegans and vegetarians. For the first time, researchers appear to have evidence that, like animals, plants can audibly show their agony when deprived of water or forced to endure bodily harm. If a drought-parched plant lets out a scream, it's at an ultrasonic frequency too high to hear, but does it count as a cry of distress? According to a [study](#) posted on the server bioRxiv in January, the answer could very well be yes.

The study, which has yet to be published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal, adds another dimension to scientists' growing understanding of how plants detect and interact with their surroundings, despite lacking many of the sensory organs used by animals.

In recent years, it's become abundantly clear that plants are far more sensitive than researchers once gave them credit for. They respond when [touched by insects](#), [turn toward sources of light](#) and some even [sniff out other plants](#). Others are even [sensitive to anesthetics](#), suggesting that they're capable of experiencing something akin to "pain."

Actually making that anguish audible, however, is another matter entirely. To test that possibility, a team led by Itzhak Khait, a plant scientist at Tel Aviv University in Israel, placed microphones capable of detecting ultrasonic frequencies four inches from tomato and tobacco plants, then either stopped watering them or snipped their stems. Measuring in the range of 20-150kHz, the researchers found that even happy, healthy plants made the occasional noise. But when cut, tobacco plants emitted an average of 15 sounds within an hour of being cut, while tomato plants produced 25 sounds. Stress from drought—brought on by up to ten days without water—elicited about 11 squeals per hour from the tobacco plants, and about 35 from the tomato plants.

The shrieks were also surprisingly informative. When the team fed the recordings into a machine-learning model, it was able to use the sounds' intensity and frequency, to distinguish whether they were related to dryness or physical harm or were just regular, day-to-day chatter.

Researchers aren't yet sure how plants produce these sounds, but Khait and his colleagues propose one possibility in their paper. As water travels through the plants' xylem tubes, which help keep them hydrated, air bubbles will form and explode, generating small vibrations. Previous studies have picked up these waves, but only through devices attached directly to plants. Still, the process, called cavitation, could explain longer-range sound production as well. Edward Farmer, a plant biologist at the University of Lausanne in Switzerland remains cautious about the recordings, which may have picked up ambient noise as well. Even drying soil can produce faint sounds, reports Nicolette Lanese for [Live Science](#).

All this stress-induced "screaming" wasn't in a range detectable by human ears. But organisms that can hear ultrasonic frequencies, [like mice, bats](#) or other plants could hear the plants' cries from as far as 15 feet away. Plants also experience many kinds of stress, such as those brought on by extreme temperatures or salinity and may not always react in the same way, Anne Visscher, a plant biologist at the Royal Botanic Gardens in the UK, says that any ideas on what purpose the sounds might serve, from warning other plants to passing information onto animals, remains speculative. For now, it's useful to simply know what plants are truly capable of. Something to chew on, perhaps, the next time you're pruning your tomato plants.

Environment: hydrogen trains

By Mark Sharpen

Travel by train, [one of the most eco-friendly ways to get around](#), now has the potential to be even greener.

In August 2022, the [world's first fleet of hydrogen-powered passenger trains](#) was shown at Hamburg. Manufactured by French mobility company, Alstom, in a €93 million deal, the trains run on hydrogen fuel-cell technology that generates electrical energy propulsion for the engines, thereby eliminating the need for fossil fuels.

By early 2023, this region of [Germany](#) will have a total of 14 zero-emission trains, six of which are already in service, all replacing former diesel trains. Instead of generating diesel pollution, the hydrogen-powered trains emit only steam and condensed water.

The trains, called Coradia iLint trains, can run for an entire day on a single tank of hydrogen. The trains will save more than 422,000 gallons of diesel fuel annually and prevent [over 4,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions](#) each year, as compared to diesel trains, according to Alstom estimates.

A hydrogen fuel cell train carries its own power source and can cover the same distances as a diesel train, minus the emissions. Germany's new hydrogen trains will run along a 62-mile regional route in the Lower Saxony region, operated by German rail company, LNVG. Commuters and travellers can hop aboard the 300-passenger trains to zip between the seaside town of Cuxhaven and the port city of Bremerhaven. The route also links nature haven Bremervörde and historic Buxtehude.

Faced with a worsening worldwide climate crisis, greener alternative energy solutions like hydrogen are being actively pursued by the largely fossil fuel-reliant global transport sector. And while trains are generally viewed as an environmentally favourable transport choice, compared to air travel, rail is a contributor [of 1% of global transport emissions](#). In the EU, [trains emitted 3.8 million metric tons of carbon dioxide](#) in 2019.

Rail pollution has significant and long-lasting negative impacts on public health, including increased rates of childhood asthma, lung disease, and premature death - locomotive emissions are concentrated near ports and rail yards and pose significant health effects to nearby communities.

Worldwide, diesel trains are still commonplace. While [more than half of trains in Europe today are electric](#), the investment for electrifying less-used and lower-revenue-generating routes, via overhead power lines or other infrastructure, can be cost-prohibitive. In these cases, hydrogen trains, which are compatible with non-electrified [rail lines](#), can present a more viable, cost-effective alternative. In addition, hydrogen trains are known for their noise reduction.

Experts are projecting major growth for the hydrogen train market. Alstom states that around 6000 passenger trains in Europe still run on diesel fuel, which will require replacement by 2035 in order to achieve climate targets. About a fifth of train journeys in Germany today are diesel-powered it is estimated that between 2500-3000 diesel trains in the country could be replaced with hydrogen-powered models.

German gas and engineering company, Linde, has established the [world's first hydrogen filling station for passenger trains](#) along the new Lower Saxony route, where the trains can refuel daily. However, environmentalists caution that Germany's new fleet [is powered by grey hydrogen](#), a less environmentally-friendly version of hydrogen that's reliant on fossil-fuel-dependent infrastructure for its extraction. Only green hydrogen, powered by renewable energy like wind and solar, is deemed eco-friendly. Alstom says that a hydrogen production site for the train route that is powered by wind is now in the works.

Ancient peoples: Neanderthals

By Gylden Fellowship

In February 1990, footsteps echoed through the Bruniquel Cave for the first time in tens of thousands of years. The cave sits in France's Aveyron Valley, but its entrance had long been sealed by an ancient rockslide. A local man had detected faint wisps of air emerging from the scree and his son spent three years clearing away the rubble. He eventually dug out a tight 30m long passage that the thinnest members of the local caving club could squeeze through. They found themselves in a large, roomy corridor. There were animal bones and signs of bear activity, but nothing recent. The floor was pockmarked with pools of water. The walls were punctuated by stalactites and stalagmites.

Some 336m into the cave, a caver stumbled across a vast chamber where several stalagmites had been *deliberately* broken. Most of the 400 pieces had been arranged into two rings - a large one between 4-7m across and a smaller one just 2m wide. Others had been propped up against these rings. Yet others had been stacked into four piles. Traces of fire were everywhere and there was a mass of burned bones. These weren't natural formations, and they weren't the work of bears. They were built by people.

Recognising the site's value, the caver brought in archaeologist, Francois Rouzaud. Using [carbon-dating](#), Rouzaud estimated that a burned bear bone found within the chamber was 47,600 years old, which meant that the stalagmite rings were older than any known cave painting. It also meant that they couldn't have been the work of *Homo sapiens*. Their builders must have been the only early humans in the south of France at the time: Neanderthals.

"I think we have several lines of evidence showing that the cognitive abilities and behaviours of Neanderthals were complex, but we had no direct evidence of their ability to build. That changes the picture. It's puzzling to find such structures so deep inside the cave."

The discovery suggested that Neanderthals were more sophisticated than anyone had given them credit for. They wielded fire, ventured deep underground and shaped the subterranean rock into complex constructions. Perhaps they even carried out rituals; after all, there was no evidence that anyone actually *lived* in the cave, so what else were the rings and mounds for?

Rouzaud would never know. In April 1999, while guiding colleagues through a different cave, [he suffered a fatal heart attack](#). With his death, work on the Bruniquel Cave ceased, and its incredible contents were neglected. They've only now re-entered the limelight, because Sophie Verheyden went on holiday.

A life-long caver, Verheyden works at the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, where she specialises in stalagmites. She treats them as time capsules, using the chemicals within them to reconstruct the climate of past millennia. So, when she learned about Bruniquel Cave, while visiting the region on holiday and seeing a display at a nearby castle, she had only one thought: why hadn't anyone dated the broken stalagmites themselves?

She knew that Rouzaud's date of 47,600 years was impressive, but suspect. Carbon-dating is only accurate for samples younger than 50,000 years, so the Bruniquel material was hitting the technique's limits. They could well

have been much older. To get a better estimate, Verheyden assembled a team, including archaeologist Jacques Jaubert and fellow stalagmite expert Dominique Genty. In 2013, they got permission to study the site and crawled into it themselves.

After drilling into the stalagmites and pulling out cylinders of rock, the team could see an obvious transition between two layers. On one side were old minerals that were part of the original stalagmites; on the other were newer layers that had been laid down *after* the fragments were broken off by the cave's former users. [By measuring uranium levels on either side of the divide](#), the team could accurately tell when each stalagmite had been snapped off for construction...their date was 176,500 years ago, give or take a few millennia.

Outside Bruniquel Cave, the earliest, unambiguous human constructions are just 20,000 years old. Most of these are ruins - collapsed collections of mammoth bones and deer antlers. By comparison, the Bruniquel stalagmite rings are well-preserved and *far* more ancient.

And if Rouzaud's work made it unlikely that modern humans built the rings, [Verheyden's study](#) grinds that possibility into the dust. Neanderthals *must* have been responsible. There simply wasn't any other human type in that region at that time. Why did they build the rings and mounds? The structures weren't foundations for huts; the chamber contains no stone tools, human bones or any other sign of permanent occupation and, besides, why build shelter *inside* a cave?

Nor is it clear *how* the Neanderthals made the structures. Verheyden says it couldn't have been one lone artisan, toiling away in the dark. Most likely, there was a team and a technically skilled one at that. They broke rocks deliberately and arranged them precisely. They used fire too. More than 120 fragments have red and black streaks that aren't found elsewhere in the chamber or the cave beyond. They were the result of deliberately applied heat, at intensities strong enough to occasionally crack the rock.

These discoveries are [part of the Neanderthals' ongoing review](#). Since their discovery, scientists have tried to understand why the Neanderthals died out and we did not, with the implicit assumption that they were inferior in some important way.

We now know that Neanderthals made tools, used fire, [made art](#), [buried their dead](#) and, perhaps, even had language. And now, we have Bruniquel Cave with its structures that are unprecedented in their complexity, antiquity and depth within the darkness. We know that 400,000 years ago, some ancient humans [chucked their dead into a cave at Sima de los Huesos](#), but there's no evidence of the careful constructions in Bruniquel. There's evidence of painting and sculpture within caves, but none older than 42,000 years. There are signs that Neanderthals used caves, but nothing to suggest that they frequently ventured deeper than sunlight.

"I think we have several lines of evidence showing that the cognitive abilities and behaviors of Neanderthals were complex," says [Marie Soressi](#) from Leiden University. "But we had no direct evidence of their ability to build. That changes the picture for me. It's puzzling to find such structures so deep inside the cave."

To solve these puzzles, Verheyden wants to start cutting into the cave's floor. It has been covered by layers of calcite, which may conceal specimens that hint at the chamber's purpose. Verheyden also notes that the entrance they've been using cannot possibly have been the only one. "We're crawling through this small thing and **there are bear hollows in the cave. I don't think the bears went in that way**" she says. "There must have been some other passage that collapsed."

Tales for lighter evenings: Pluckley

By the Storyteller

Editor's note: the latest collection from the Storyteller, *Tales of Wonder and Magick*, has been published on the **Gylden Fellowship** website and is free to download. Readers can also find a collection of ghost stories, *Winter Chills*, from the website.

Pluckley is a small village in Kent, not far from Ashford. In 1989, the *Guinness Book of World Records* listed it as the most haunted village in England, with some 12 different ghosts. Other sources, such as *Mysterious Britain and Ireland*, have noted the reported sightings of up to 15 different ghosts. Of all the ghosts, the only repeated sightings over the past two decades have been the monk and the phantom coach. It is not possible to detail every sighting, so I'll describe the 12 main ghosts in summary form.

Let's start with the phantom coach, which haunts Maltman's Hill – many people have heard the sounds of a horse-drawn coach there and the coach itself has been seen in Pluckley. One October night, a married couple were returning home by car from babysitting their granddaughter. At Pinnocks Crossroads, the woman saw a coach being pulled by horses with light coming from its windows. On another occasion, a local resident (using back roads to drive home) had the coach pass straight in front of him. In early November 1997, around 7.00pm, someone who was driving through Pluckley had the inside of their car filled with the sound of horses' hooves on cobbles: the road wasn't cobbled, but would have been in the past.

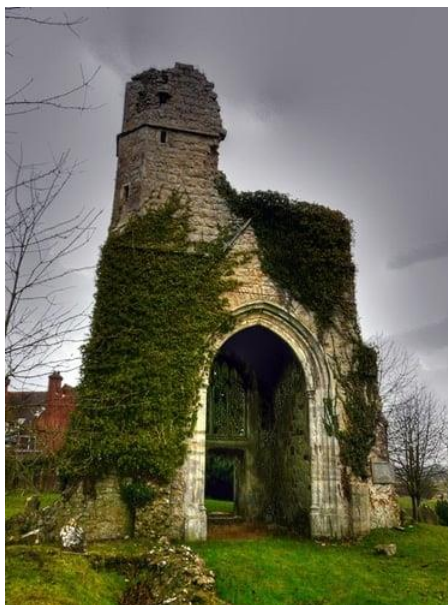
Next, we come to the monk, who is supposed to haunt Greystones House or, to be more precise, the grounds of the house. The house was called Rectory Cottage when it was built in 1863, as a home for the rector of St Nicholas's Church. It became Greystones in 1924.

Another oft-sighted ghost is the highwayman at what used to be Frith Corner. The unknown highwayman was ambushed by either the law or by other criminals and killed with a sword, pinning him to a hollow oak tree that once stood in this area. In some accounts, there was a fight between the highwayman and his attackers and, in others, he was trying to hide in the hollow tree and when it was pierced through the tree. According to legend, several ghosts appear in a re-enactment of the killing.

The ghostly figure of the gypsy woman smoking a pipe (also known as the watercress woman) is usually seen at the Pinnocks Crossroads Bridge. It is said that the woman once sold watercress that she found in the stream, but there was an accident one night when a spark from her pipe set fire to the alcohol in her drink. She burned to death and has haunted the site since. Witnesses have described her as being a misty figure that sits on the bridge.

Some other Pluckley ghosts are listed below.

1. A black shadow has been seen near the ruined windmill by The Pinnocks. The mill was closed in the 1930s and burned down in 1939 after being hit by lightning.
2. After the First World War, a schoolmaster from a nearby village committed suicide in Pluckley by hanging himself and his ghost is supposed to walk here. This ghost is sometimes confused with the story of a military man who hanged himself in Park Wood, for reasons unknown.
3. Several versions exist of the accident at the clay pit and brick works. What is agreed is that a man was killed there either because he fell into the clay pit and was trapped or a wall of clay fell on him. This ghost takes the form of ghostly screams in the disused clay pit.
4. Rose Court is another haunted Pluckley house that has a ghost from a suicide, this time from Tudor years. The ghost is a lady, believed to be part of the Dering family who ate poisonous berries to kill herself. Her phantom can be seen in Rose Court or its grounds in the late afternoon, calling for her two dogs.
5. The White Lady has two localities to haunt – the site of the Dering manor at Surrenden Dering, which burned down in 1952 and the inside of St Nicholas's Church, where there is a tunnel between church and manor. During 1918-39, the manor was used as the American Embassy and several official visitors saw her ghost – one of them shot at her and the bullet hit the wood panels behind her.
6. The Black Horse pub is old and was once a farmhouse, the home of the local bailiff. It is haunted by a poltergeist that takes clothes away and returns them much later.
7. The Dering Arms was once an old hunting lodge is said to be haunted by an old lady in a bonnet. This ghost is often mistaken as a customer whilst sitting at a table.
8. The Blacksmiths Arms is haunted by a cavalier in one of the



Safety of animals in zoos

By the Caltrop Consultancy

An investigation into the emergency drills in case of animal escapes at UK zoos by iNews revealed a shocking lack of appropriate precautions being taken in a large number of zoos. Such lapses in security are incredibly dangerous and can result in horrendous animal deaths, such as that of a rare Amur tiger, [who was killed at Longleat Safari Park in February 2019, following a fight with two others after a door was left open between enclosures.](#)

[iNews revealed that dozens of British zoos received warnings by inspectors for failing to carry out adequate emergency drills for dealing with escaped animals,](#) with some procedures being described as rather vague in inspection reports. An analysis of more than 150 zoo licensing inspection reports, taken between 2016-2018, revealed that 32 zoos and animal parks failed to properly carry out or record escape drills in that time. Under the [Zoo Licensing Act 1981](#), zoos and aquariums must conduct escape drills at least four times a year. Worrying issues that were highlighted in the reports included:

- failure to lock doors
- lack of electrical safeguards on gates to large carnivore drive-through exhibits
- a weak barrier on a jaguar enclosure
- a cobra enclosure that keepers had to enter head-first through a narrow opening
- an unlabelled piranha tank with an open lid
- a tentacled snake exhibit left unpadlocked
- a lemur enclosure where the public could be bitten or subjected to an electric shock if they put their fingers through wire mesh
- a room holding a venomous snake was cluttered with potential hiding spaces, as well as a hole in the wall

Such issues could prove incredibly dangerous to the public or even the zoo workers themselves. In 2017, visitors had to be evacuated when an orangutan escaped from its enclosure at Chester Zoo. In Port Lympne Reserve the same year, visitors hid in toilets while a cheetah was on the loose. And in 2013, zookeeper Sarah McClay was tragically killed at South Lakes Safari Zoo when a tiger managed to get through an unlocked gate.



Security lapses are dangerous to us, but can also prove deadly to the animals. Escapees were also highlighted in the reports, with one wildlife centre listing a red stag, a pig, two goats, a peacock and three alpacas as escapees in 2018.

Also, in 2018, there was the [killing of a rare snow leopard](#) at Dudley Zoo when she was shot dead after escaping her enclosure. And in 2017, [Lillith the lynx was shot after leaping from a tree to escape her enclosure at Borth Zoo.](#)

An earlier security breach at Dudley Zoo occurred on 5 May 2004. It was first discovered when night patrols found a group of juveniles inside the zoo after its daily closure. The juveniles, aged between 8-11 years, were taunting a lion and the patrol officers escorted them from the site. Subsequently, the CCTV cameras at the zoo revealed that some of the juveniles had broken into the wallaby enclosure and had deliberately killed a baby wallaby. As some of the offenders were under the age of criminal responsibility (10 years of age), no prosecutions could be brought. It was also disclosed that the zoo had suffered another security breach a few days previously, but in this incident the boys had simply put a rubbish bin against the wall and used it to climb into the wallaby pen, thereby avoiding the electric fences. The zoo curator said that the zoo was reviewing its security features and, it could be argued, about time too. It appears that the animals are on the wrong side of the fences.

Without undue anthropomorphism, it is worth reflecting that zoos (and safari parks and aquariums) owe a duty of care to the safety and welfare to their charges. Just as the visitors should be protected from injury by the more ferocious or poisonous animals, so the animals should be protected from the criminals, the mad and the simply malicious visitors. Here is an example of a criminal risk, which took place at Toledo Zoo in September 2000. A man went into the aviary and used a knife to cut through the protective screen on a cage containing a rare falcon. He snatched the falcon, put it into his coat and ran out of the zoo. Neither the falcon nor the kidnapper was seen again. So, what are the main risks that are encountered in zoos? The list below gives some examples.

- Animal abductions (as typified above).
- Crimes of theft that occur in large crowds, e.g. pickpockets, steamers and shoplifters.
- Crimes of violence against people, e.g. assaults, fights and crimes involving drugs or alcohol.
- Vandalism and other damage.
- Animal harassment and pranks. For example, the juveniles at Dudley Zoo who teased the lion fall into this category or an incident at Cincinnati Zoo in 1998, when some late-night intruders tried to break into the camel enclosure with the aim of having some free camel rides. In this latter example, the patrol officers in the zoo arrested the intruders before they could disturb the camels. In general, children who throw stones or toys at the animals, without any intervention from the parents, cause a lot of damage.
- Animal assaults and killings. This category covers serious incidents, such as the wallaby example earlier in this text and usually (not always) involves an assailant with some form of mental problems. Another example of such behaviour could be the one in February 2002 at Beijing Zoo, when a deranged visitor threw acid into the bear enclosure, causing severe injuries to some of the bears.
- Problems occasioned by the animals themselves. This is quite a common category and is best typified by animals that manage to escape their enclosures regularly.

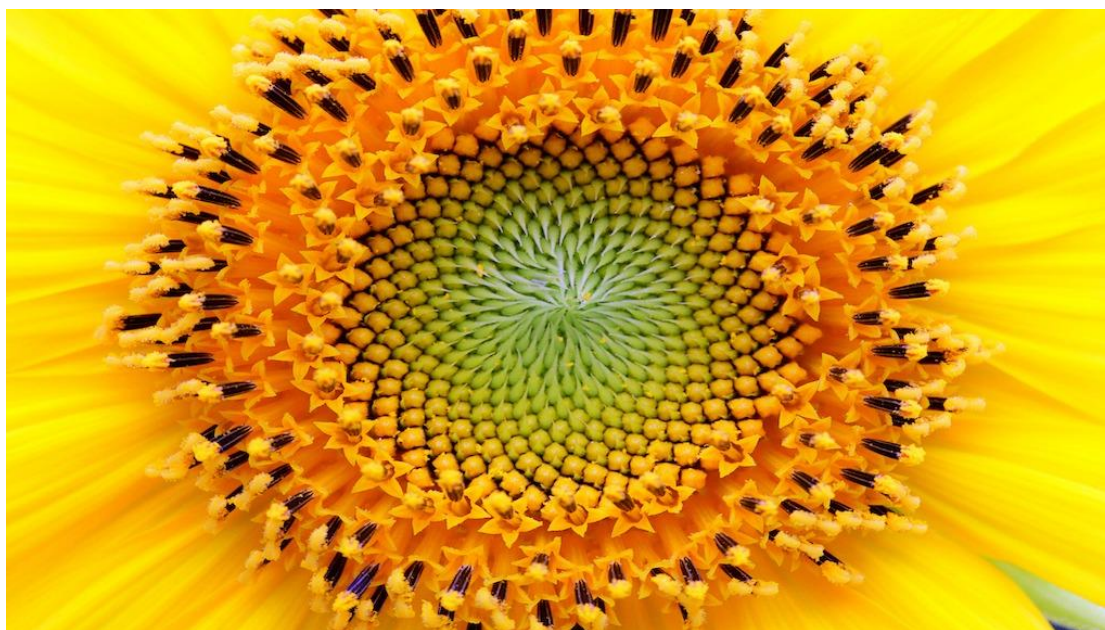
Many years ago, a Caltrop law seminar discussed the various ways of protecting property and one of the delegates suggested that the best way of deterring intruders was to dig a moat around that site and fill it with alligators. Fine, but what is needed here is a good way of stopping the seriously motivated humans from jumping in the moat and harming the poor alligators and most zoos need to think seriously about strong barriers that do not restrict the visitors too much. The list below suggests some effective security measures that are used in zoos around the world.

- Just as museums could reduce the risk of theft or damage by restricting public access, so zoos could cut down on visitor access, but this measure is self-defeating, because it is the public who finance the zoo's existence. The immediate reaction of the authorities at Beijing Zoo in the wake of the acid attack was to restrict the public feeding of animals.
- One feature of the Dudley Zoo incident was the taunting of a lion. This is a problem that was experienced at Toledo Zoo, where the wardens discovered children spending too long in front of the lions and other big cats and making roaring sounds at them. The Toledo Zoo response was to set up a children's education programme. This programme teaches younger visitors how to behave in front of the animals and applies instant re-education to any older offenders caught in the act.
- A zoo should have a contingency plan for the painless recapture of any animals that have escaped their enclosures, regardless of whether the animal in question has been set free by accident or by design. This plan should involve joint working with the emergency services and veterinarians, as necessary.
- Most zoos organise security patrols during the day and by night for perimeter and enclosure protection. However, the choice is normally between foot patrols and vehicles. In Los Angeles Zoo (and also in the National Zoo in Washington D.C.), security officers are encouraged to patrol via bicycles. It has been seen that bicycles bring the officers a better rapport with the visitors, provide quicker response in an emergency and are better at traversing different types of terrain. It is important that the security officers have easy access to fast communications in all parts of the zoo.
- Barriers should not be seen as the only answer to security, because even electric fences did not prevent the Dudley Zoo intruders. Bars and glass walls are the old answers, but CCTV cameras, graffiti-proof glass, moats offering a degree of separation and perimeter fences that are alarmed are all measures that help security. However, the best way of ensuring safety for the animals is to design the security into new enclosures and walkways, particularly when new animals are added to the zoo's holdings. At the National Zoo in Washington D.C., the security department is able to comment on the designs for all new exhibits during the planning stage.

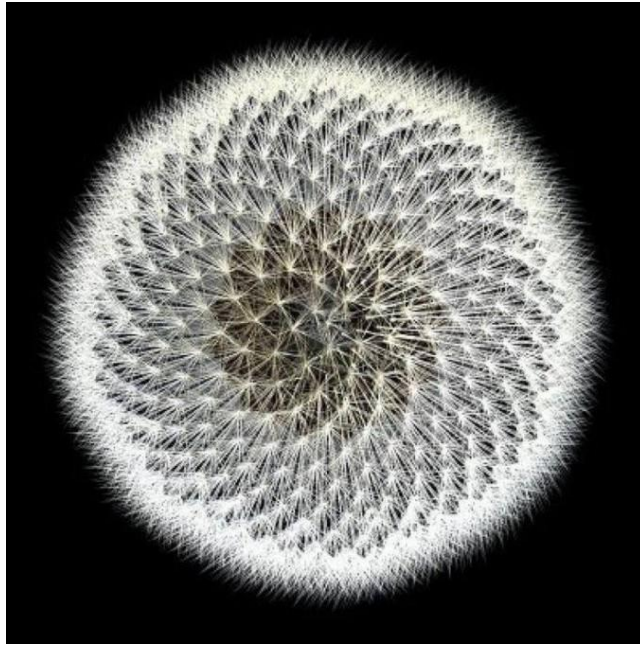
Apart from anything else, the key to zoo security is to raise staff awareness to the risks through training and to encourage the staff to be vigilant for the most likely offenders. For example, birds and snakes are the most frequently stolen animals from zoos, because they are the most portable and are the easiest to sell. And then there are the thoughtless. In 2000, teenagers broke into San Francisco Zoo and stole two koala bears. The offenders were caught, but boasted that they had committed the theft to impress their girlfriends. Perhaps the animals are on the wrong side of the fences after all.

Sacred geometry: In nature

Collated by Gylden Fellowship







Celestial forecasts: February 2023

By Joanna Bristow-Watkins

February in Britain sees the steady increase of daylight hours leading us towards spring, but air temperature remains unpredictable with this month often presenting as the coldest month of the year with reasonable chance of snow. Look out for snowdrops poking through the soil, together with the yellow, white and violet of crocuses). The subtle aroma of witch hazel blossoms may linger and the pretty white flowers of the wood anemone, known as an indicator of ancient woodland (rather like bluebells come May), may also appear but it's still early for them. Local ponds should be full of frogspawn, as well as similar gelatinous spawns laid by toads and newts.

The month of February was named after the Roman God Februa (sometimes called Februus) and his annual Roman springtime festival of purification and cleanliness. To the Anglo-Saxons, February was called 'Sōlmōnath', derived from 'sōl' - an Old English word for wet sand or mud. However, according to medieval scholar Bede, it relates to the month when ritual offerings of loaves of bread and savory cakes were typical to ensure a good year's harvest.

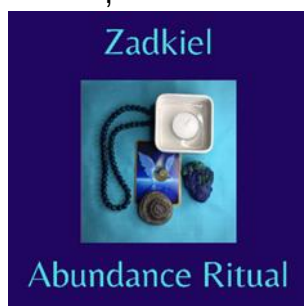
This month we can look forward to the Japanese Celebration of Setsuban (3rd), the traditional Festival of Valentine's Day (14th) plus the Roman festivals of Lupercalia (15th) and Caristia (22nd). We're also running an online [Global Love Meditation](#) on Valentine's Day, 7.30 -9pm, £17.

This year, February features the lead up to Lent, including Collop Monday (20th), Shrove Tuesday (21st), Ash Wednesday (22nd), Fritter Thursday (23rd) and Kissing Friday (24th). We have our only [February Forest Bathing event](#) 11am-1.30pm on Sunday 26th February at Harry Edwards in Shere (Surrey). Our [Full Moon Meditation](#) takes place 7.30-9.30pm (UK time) on Sunday 5th, with Snow Full Moon peaking at 18:28. We have Forest Bathing and Harmony Healing vouchers available as gifts.

The New Year New Moon New Vision Course ends 20th February with an [Equilibrium Attunement](#), which is available as a stand-alone purchase for £55, go to [Harmony Shop](#) to reserve your place.

Wednesday 1st & Thursday 2nd February is the Pagan *Imbolc* Ceremony, which is one of the four Great Celtic Festivals, and which is a Wiccan and Druid Festival of Fertility and Growing Light. Imbolc (pronounced EE-molk) is the old Celtic word; the celebration is also known as Candlemas (the latter is generally celebrated 2 February).

Astrologer [Ysanne Lewis](#) (ysanne.com) explained that the 2023 planetary alignments indicate transformation and, in the future years, this may be seen as an age of enlightenment and science. It's important to trust your intuition this year, especially during a window of opportunity for new ventures between mid/late January and April. For a fuller summary of 2023 astrology, listen to Ysanne's interview on Marlow FM radio, go to <https://www.marlowfm.co.uk/listen-again/>, Good Morning Marlow, Thursday 29 December at 10am, her interview starts 89:49 minutes in.



Thursday 2 February is a great time to conduct an abundance ritual with Zadkiel (Guardian of Jupiter and Thursdays), as it's the final week of the waxing moon. Any time on Thursday (Zadkiel's Day) 2 February is ideal

Create an altar to Zadkiel with a white night light (keep it safe by floating in water), ideally a white, blue or turquoise cloth and a sodalite, lapis or other blue/ turquoise crystal to represent Zadkiel's blue/ indigo/ turquoise energy. If you have Angela's Harmony Angel Cards, place the Zadkiel card on the altar.

Friday 3 February is Setsubun Bean-Throwing Festival, which is the day before the beginning of Spring in Japan. The name literally means seasonal division, but usually the term refers to the Spring Setsubun, celebrated yearly on 3 February as part of the Spring Festival and accompanied by a special ritual to cleanse away all the evil of the former year and drive away disease-bringing evil spirits, or naughty ogres or spirits called Oni for the year to come.

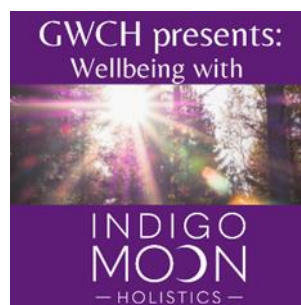
Why bean throwing? Families celebrate by scattering roasted soybeans outside the door of their house to chase out the Oni. They may also throw soybeans at a member of the family dressed

Sunday 5 February @ 18:28 is the Snow Full Moon.

Between Full Moon and the next New Moon (Saturday 13 March) is considered as a good time energetically for detoxing the body.

*To celebrate on your own, see **Angela McGerr's Full Moon Meditation with Gabriel**, taken from Angela McGerr's Harmony of Angels book; now out of print but signed copies are available from the **Harmony Shop**.*

Aligning ourselves with the moon cycle is very therapeutic, hence being aware of the New moon (good for starting new projects) and Full Moon (a good time for bringing projects to a conclusion) is excellent for bringing harmony and wellbeing into our lives. Anyway, whatever the weather conditions, it's a fantastic excuse to get people of all ages outside in the fresh air and re-connecting with nature. Something our modern lifestyles and obsession with technology can distract us from doing.



Sunday 5 February, 7.30-9.30pm UK time (GMT) is our GWCH monthly meet-up, showcasing Indigo Moon Holistics who are presenting on Wellness. This meeting is held in West Clendon. Email gwchnetwork@gmail.com if you want to book in. All meetings start at 11:30am and end at 1:20pm with a light lunch till 2pm.

Guildford & Woking Complementary Health (GWCH) group holds monthly gatherings. Suitable for therapists and/or healers who would like to network and connect with other like-minded individuals as well as anyone with a curiosity to find out more about complementary therapies and other spiritually enriching subjects. You can join as a paid member and come regularly or drop in as a guest on an ad hoc basis, paying a small fee (in the region of £10) to join a specific session and stay on for the informal buffet lunch.

Tuesday 14 February is Valentine's Day and is all about love and compassion, which includes Universal Love for all other living things and also Self-love which is so often overlooked. Some bitterly refer to it as Singles Awareness Day and blame card manufacturers and our materialistic society for love being ritualistically forced upon us every year at this time. See below for details of our Valentine's Day Global Healing Love Meditation, taking place tonight.

However, although the story of Saint Valentine long precedes Hallmark et al, the origins are somewhat blurred as there are historical references to the existence of several different Valentines. Folklore indicates that Valentine was a priest during the third century in Rome. Emperor Claudius II outlawed marriage as he believed that single men made better soldiers than those with wives and families. Valentine, however, defied Claudius and continued to perform marriages in secret. Claudius found out and Valentine was imprisoned, where one version of the legend indicates he befriended a jailer with a blind daughter and he may have somehow managed to restore her sight, resulting in the jailer converting to Christianity. Claudius ordered that Valentine be executed on 14 February and allegedly before his death sentence was carried out, he sent a note to the jailer's daughter and signed it, "From Your Valentine." Hence, Valentine's Day is celebrated in his memory.

However, his death day and his association with lovers and notes may have been convenient for Roman Christians looking for ways to blend existing Pagan/Roman celebrations into their Calendar. Image by Harmony Healing. Join our love meditation -details below.

Tuesday 14 February, join Joanna and other healers for our Global Healing Love Meditation, 7.30-9pm (UK time = GMT), £17. We meet online for a Valentine Love Meditation to send our love & gratitude to our beautiful planet and beyond. Book at the Harmony Shop

Full Moon Unity Consciousness Meditation

During this session, we connect with other like-minded people and together we work through a mindful chakra balancing process using colours and etheric crystals, with the aim that all participants will experience a degree of unity consciousness. Participants all receive a deeply healing experience. Cost to participate is £20 by online BACS payment (£1 admin fee added for PayPal, concessions to RSE/VFoA graduates), book at the Harmony Shop.

This activity serves as a good taster of Joanna's work in general and the virtual format of our Zoom based programme. And, most importantly, it's a step towards making a difference to the global predicament. To find out how working on your own spiritual consciousness can help humanity and the planet by raising the overall human consciousness levels.

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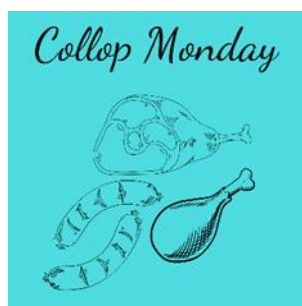
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Wednesday 15 February is Lupericalia in Ancient Roman tradition. Apparently, this was the popular ceremony of fertility, featuring naked men running through the street! I can't see this catching on in the UK climate! Roman images show men dressed as dogs (or wolves, since Lupus meant wolf) and goats, Cupid and other personifications of fertility. Hence, some say this ceremony was the precursor for Valentine's Day.

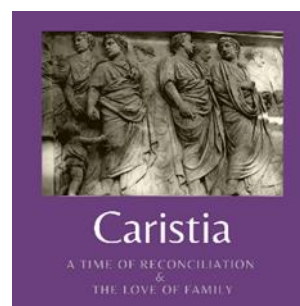
Monday 20 February, this year is Collop Monday, also known as Shrove Monday. It's the day before Shrove Tuesday and isn't widely observed, but it is a similar frugal tradition to the consumption of eggs in the form of pancakes to use them up before the start of the fasting period of Lent.

As described in an extract from the Nottingham Evening Post 1931, Collops are chunks of cured meat (such as bacon) or leftover roasted meat, so this involves using up any remaining meat in the household before Lent. In Cornwall, it's known as Peasen Monday, because pea soup was the traditional dish of the day.

Monday 20 February@ 07:05 is Imbolc New Moon and it's also a Super New Moon. Ikkk

The New Moon Abundance Ritual should be carried out within 24 hours after the New Moon. It needs to be after the New Moon because the moon should be waxing (getting bigger again) to carry the manifestation

energy. There are video instructions on my [Facebook Page](#) or [You Tube Page](#). It's good day for creating a personal or corporate Vision Board for 2023. Our current New Year New Vision moon connection programme ends today, 20 February, with an Equilibrium Attunement to energetically align participants with the sun, moon, planet Earth, the constellations, the current Zodiac of Pisces, which is available as a stand-alone purchase for £55, go to [Harmony Shop](#) to reserve your place. Aligning ourselves with the moon cycle is very therapeutic, hence being aware of the New Moon (good for starting new projects) and Full Moon (a good time for bringing projects to a conclusion) is excellent for bringing harmony and wellbeing into our lives.



Tuesday 21 February is Mardi Gras, also known as Shrove Tuesday or, within the UK, as Pancake Day. Being the final day before Lent, this was traditionally a day for confessing sins and using up all the foods banned during the Lent fast. With pancakes containing butter and milk, they became associated with the date.

The verb, shrive, means to gain absolution for one's sins through confession and/or penance. Hence Shrove Tuesday is derived from the tradition that Christians were shriven before Lent.

The date of Lent - which takes place in either February or March, but always seven weeks before Easter - varies from year to year according to the lunar calendar, which determines when Easter falls.

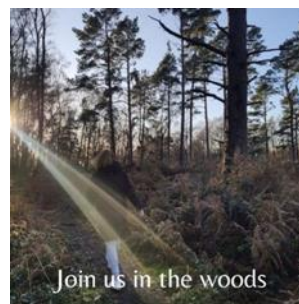
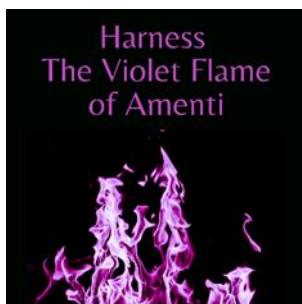
Interestingly, as with many Christian Festivals, there is a theory that Pancake Day might actually have originated as a pagan holiday; when eating warm, circular yellow pancakes - resembling the sun - celebrated the arrival of spring.

Wednesday 22 February is Ash Wednesday this year, which is generally said to have been named after the tradition of burning away old issues in preparation for Lent. However, Ash Wednesday could have obtained its name from an apparent tradition of placing a stick of Ash down one's sock for good luck! I can't see that being popular, but then maybe the choice of stick, regarding size and shape, is paramount!

Wednesday 22 February is the Roman Festival of Caristia. This was a Feast Day occasion of family reunion, when Roman fathers would pay special attention to their families. It was a day of reconciliation when disagreements were to be set aside, but the satirical poet, Ovid, apparently suggested this would be best achieved by excluding family members who caused trouble. Families gathered together to dine and offer food and incense to the Guardian Deities, collectively known as Lares.

Thursdays 23 February, 2nd & 9th March = Harmony Healing Virtual Workshop: [Violet Flame of Amenti \(Level 1\)](#), 7.15pm - 9.30pm (UK time/GMT = UK & USA friendly evening hours), £88. 3 x 2¼-hour evening course, held remotely on Zoom. This course features instructions on the ancient alchemical properties of the Violet Flame and how to use it in your daily life. See [Violet Flame of Amenti](#) page for

further details and to book. Worth 1 unit towards the [RSE Level 1](#), available at a special package rate of £266, which includes a personal angelic attunement, worth £33, created around your date of birth.



Thursday 23 February is Fritter Thursday. Its name derives from the custom of eating apple fritters, which were fruit-filled cakes deep-fried in fat on this day.

I was surprised that this would be an acceptable dish once Lent had commenced (as 'fritter' suggests batter which would contain egg and milk) and, on further research, I discovered that in [Lancashire](#) (source: [lep.co.uk](#)) traditionally Shrovetide meant the three days before Lent and comprised of Collop Monday, Pancake Tuesday and [Fritters Wednesday](#) (rather than Thursday) with the fritters being sliced apples fried in batter.

Friday 24 February is Kissing Friday. According to [historic.co.uk](#), this bizarre custom was especially popular in the Victorian and Edwardian period and only died out in the mid-20th century. A schoolboy could kiss a girl on this day without fear of repercussions. Of course, first of all the girl had to be caught and, in some instances, this involved tying ropes across the street and passing girls would have to pay a kiss for safe passage across the rope. Others would simply chase the girls until they caught them. Indeed, *Kissing Friday* was also the one day every year when girls could leave school early, to avoid being chased home by the boys.

Sunday 26 February, 11am-1pm, Forest Bathing+ with Joanna at Harry Edwards Healing Sanctuary (Shere, near Guildford, Surrey). Cost is £35 (+ £1.75 PayPal fee if not paid by BACS). This is a 2½-hour Winter Forest Bathing+ session which will take place in all weathers except 30+mph winds or storms.

Join us on a mindful, sensory journey through the beautiful woodland at Harry Edwards Healing Sanctuary, deep in the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Forest Bathing+ is based on the Japanese art of Shinrin-Yoku and involves a slow exploration of nature through your senses.

A deeply relaxing and rejuvenating experience, and which, despite the title forest bathing does not involve any swimming! Some of the scientifically proven benefits of spending time in woodland include reduced stress levels, stronger immune system response and a stabilised cortisol cycle.

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