



# Gylden Magick

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## Samhain 2024

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**,

This edition marks the end of the pagan year. October is the **Hunter's Moon** and Samhain is sometimes known as the **Feast of Winter** – more about that later. Altar colours are black, orange, red brown or gold.

So, 31 October is **Samhain** and we've included some seasonal blessings. Other notable dates for diaries are **Leif Erickson Day** on 9 October, **the Festival of Lights in Brazil** on 10 October, **United Nations Day** on 24 October, and **Allen Apple Day** on 27 October in Cornwall. The latter one is notable for divination and fortune-telling in relation to romance. Don't

forget **17 October** for the **next full moon**.

Our website has five collections of folklore and poetry, two from the **Storyteller** and three from **Nicola Ison**: the latest published in August – *Cuan Tuinn* (Gaelic for Ocean Waves).

This issue also features appropriate matters for the **Feast of Samhain**, as well as celestial forecasts, sacred occasions, nature, gemmology and magick.

Our crystal expert, Charlie, turns her attention to septarian and Mark considers plastic waste and chocolate!

But no ads – after all, we're like a pagan public library and all the information is free.

In past years, we would be frantic with preparations for various fayres or events, but not so in 2024. We will catch-up with friends and look forward to attending the moots, festivals, fayres and markets, just as soon as the Editor has recovered from a forced stay in hospital!

Thank you for all your feedback and many blessings.

**Gylden Fellowship admins**

For more info, why not join **Gylden River LRC** or **Gylden Fellowship** groups on Facebook today and see our archives or new briefings? I'm reminded by the admins that **Gylden Fellowship has an Instagram account** too, if you wish to follow it.

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# Samhain magick

By Nic the Witch

Although celebrating any of the sabbats in a group or open ritual can be inspiring and reaffirming, one of the attractions of worshipping as a solitary is that you can customise your ritual in your chosen setting. The article below gives some ways in which you can choose to decorate your place or altar, select a deity, use or edit a blessing and some magickal activities.

*Samhain Blessings to one and all - may those who have gone before walk with me at this time and share their wisdom.*

Interestingly, All Hallows Day was part of the pagan festival too and started at sunset on the evening of Samhain. The Roman Catholic Church used to celebrate All Saints' Day for saints and martyrs on 13 May, but the date was moved in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, to *coincide* with the pagan festival.

For the Celts, Samhain marked the end of the agricultural season (end of summer) and the beginning of winter: it was the time of year when the gates between this world and the next were open. It was a time both of communicating with the spirits (honouring the dead) and a time of divination or scrying, when the ancestors could be called upon for advice. The whole belief that underpins Samhain is death and transformation

Samhain was a key festival in Ireland, because of the widespread belief that all manner of supernatural beings roamed the land – not only the spirits of the dead, but also *færies*, goblins, etc. People did not tend to walk out at night on Samhain and it was also a time of peace – no fighting or violence was allowed.

In magickal terms, Samhain is the start of a new year and a time for releasing negative thoughts or closing matters or beginning new projects. Examples might include writing off a debt, closing an account or running an audit. It is the wisdom of the Crone that prevails at Samhain: asking for guidance, paying respects to departed ancestors and celebrating reincarnation. First things first then – remembering what Samhain is all about, the altar should be one that honours the ancestors and it could include photos or mementoes of relatives or friends that have passed on. The list below gives an idea of the **diversity of altar adornments**.

1. Good **incense** for Samhain could be sandalwood, wormwood, sage, myrrh or patchouli.
2. Typical **crystals** might include onyx, jasper, obsidian, bloodstone or jet.
3. The **altar cloth colour** should be one of black, orange, red, brown or gold.
4. You could have a **Samhain tree** (like a Yule tree), decorated with suitable coloured ribbons or baubles.
5. It's probably better to prepare some sort of **ritual foods** or feast in advance. If you have younger children in the house, the ritual area needs to be closed, but there is no harm in explaining the meaning of Samhain and offering up a family prayer for the ancestors.

There's loads of **food and drink** that can be used as part of a Samhain feast, including the following:

- a) Apples or apple dishes
- b) Nuts, which represent reincarnation
- c) Cider or mulled cider with spices or mulled wine
- d) Pumpkins or pumpkin bread or seeds
- e) Potatoes, turnips or corn
- f) Gingerbread
- g) This was a traditional meat festival, as many livestock would be slaughtered in late October and every part used to sustain a family through winter – even using the fat to make lamp oil or tallow. So, a good meat to use is pork.

A plate of food could be left outside the home for the souls of the dead; I can't do that myself due to foxes, mice, etc around our house, but placing a candle in the window or burying apples/ nuts in the soil are also expressions of respect for the dead. Thinking about it now, leaving a place setting for the spirits at your Samhain feast, shows appropriate respect to your ancestors too.

Much of the magick depends upon the type of pagan pathway followed...I might opt for Cernunnos or Brighid or the Morrighan as part of my magick, but other [deities](#) could include Hecate, Arianrhod, Bast, Hades, Persephone, Hel, Loki, Arawn or Anubis. This not an exhaustive list, but any deities that are believed to be part of death or the otherworld are welcome. Likewise, [animals](#) that are reputed to be linked with Samhain are stags, owls, bats, crows, cats and herons.

The [tools](#) needed for the ritual are the usual suspects: cauldron, black or orange candles, broom, a crystal ball or tarot deck and, perhaps, a magick mirror.



As to [the ritual](#) itself, every pagan has his or her own way of calling in the Guardians and opening the portals. The key points involve honouring the dead, asking the ancestors for guidance (perhaps by tarot interpretation), divination or scrying or past life recall. Here are some magickal things that could be done:

- a) Candle magick
- b) Divination of any type
- c) Astral projection
- d) Mirror spells
- e) Creating a labyrinth
- f) Casting protection for the family or home
- g) Contacting spirits of those who have passed on
- h) Creative visualisation
- i) Færy magick
- j) Past life regression
- k) Deep crystal meditation for remembrance.

Some pagans are strong on costumes and this is fine for ritual magick. Others tend towards craft skills, such as carving jack-o-lanterns, making masks, drying herbs, etc. Here's a [Samhain spell to remember a particular person](#) that you could use or adapt for purpose.

**What you will need:** a small candle (any colour or a tealight) and a picture/photo of the person whom you wish to remember.

- Carve or write the person's name on the candle.
- Set the candle alight.
- Visualise peace filling the spirit of the person in the picture/photo and a happy memory involving him/her and you.
- The spell is to summon one special ancestor in your memory. **Say these words:**  
*Let this flame blaze through the night,  
 Bringing both wisdom and caring insight,  
 Let anger and hostility now depart,  
 As peace and harmony fill my heart.  
 At this special time and in my sacred space,  
 I request my ancestor come to share this place.  
 Let you be welcome, forever in my heart,  
 Remaining here until I bid you depart.*
- Let the candle burn out and put the picture/photo away.

## Samhain muffins

125g wholemeal flour

125g plain flour

2tsp baking powder

100g dark brown sugar

A handful of pumpkin seeds

A handful of sultanas

100ml olive or sunflower oil

4 mashed bananas

2 eggs

2 tbsp milk

*Vegan ingredients can be used if necessary.*

1. Heat the oven to 180°C/fan 160°C/gas mark 4.
2. Line 6 holes of an oiled, non-stick muffin tin with squares of greaseproof paper.
3. Mix wholemeal flour, plain flour, baking powder, dark brown sugar, the pumpkin seeds and the sultanas.
4. Add the oil, eggs, mashed bananas and milk.
5. Stir the mix with a metal spoon.
6. Divide the mix equally between the muffin holes.
7. Fill each hole to the top and add a few extra pumpkin seeds to the tops.
8. Bake for about 20 minutes or until the muffins are cooked through.



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## Sacred art: Day of the Dead in Mexico

Collated by Gylden Fellowship











# Magpies

By James Duncan, Wilder Communities Officer, Sussex Wildlife Trust

The magpie may be our most maligned avian species. Though many other birds are deeply embedded in our folklore, it's fair to say that few of them have their own rhyme ("One for sorrow..."). The magpie (*Pica pica*) has been the source of a bewildering variety of superstitions and, whilst some cultures see them as ominous, to others they are a sign of good fortune. However viewed, these raucous, playful, mischievous characters are highly intelligent members of the crow family (*Corvidae*) - their lengthy tail, clattering calls and besuited appearance make them hard to miss. At a distance, they appear to be wholly black and white, but, when they catch the light, their resplendent wings and tail shimmer with iridescent green, blue and purple.

**Why are they so contentious?** They're certainly a voracious and highly opportunistic omnivore, taking pretty much any food they find. Up until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, their presence was actively encouraged as they feast on insect and rodent crop pests. However, since their diet also includes eggs, nestlings, fledglings and even adult birds (of smaller species), they became the foe of gamekeepers. Cue a sustained campaign of eradication (with the offer of "a tanner a tail"). It's only since the First World War that numbers have roughly doubled, the most dramatic rise being between the mid-1960s-1990s (though it's worth noting that magpies continue to be controlled in many areas across the UK).

Though people have perceived an increase in magpies over the last few decades, this isn't the case. Data from the **British Trust for Ornithology** (BTO) indicates that, over the last 25 years, their population has stabilised, even showing a small decline. This points to the magpie population reaching an ecological equilibrium within an intensively farmed and modern suburban landscape. The relative stability of this population compared with declining trends in other birds (over a quarter of our familiar British birds are red-listed species of conservation concern) may have only served only to highlight the magpie's conspicuousness. Current numbers show around 610,000 breeding territories. Interestingly, several woodland and garden bird species have bucked the national trend and increased in number since 1970 - Long-tailed Tit, Great Tit, Wren, Chiffchaff, Goldfinch, Nuthatch, Blackcap and Great-spotted Woodpecker.



Whereas woodland species may be benefitting from increased feeding opportunities in gardens, what has prompted the rise in magpies? Though we haven't empirical evidence to show the ecological drivers of this change, it's assumed to be linked to human activity. Along with a declining persecution of corvids, a boom in game shooting has had a huge impact on our countryside: placing forty-three million non-native pheasants, removing apex predators and dumping surplus grain on the landscape, do not make for a delicate ecological balance. (In fact, pheasants make up the greatest biomass of wild birds in Britain.) Add to this the increased roadkill on our heaving road network, and magpies (amongst other corvids) certainly benefit from this substantial food source. Having said that, the magpie's generalist ecology means they continue to prosper across all manner of habitats, whether farmed or urban.

As a family, the crows are thought to have originated during in the Paleogene era, around sixty million years ago and, after intense diversification, magpies may have evolved from a crow-like ancestor about ,20 million years ago. Thus, they've existed for an awfully long time in Britain as meso-predators within a complex food chain, but their taste for young birds remains key. As a predator the magpie tends to be highly visible - whilst rampant predation occurs at every trophic level, most of us just don't see much of it happening on a daily basis. When we do, sentiment is inevitable: it's that human response to seeing their prey ("*our garden birds taken*"), that divides opinion. But it makes little evolutionary sense for a predator to actually *reduce* its prey species significantly.

Around 80% is invertebrate based and most of the rest is carrion, acorns, grains, fruits, berries and small mammals. Small birds make up only around 2% of their typical diet, a tiny component, almost all taken within the breeding season to feed their own young. Professor Tim Birkhead's study over 15 years points to these conclusions about **magpie predation**:

- (a) with increasing magpie density, nine of eleven common songbird species studied on farmland and woodland (in rural England) showed no change in nest mortality. At the same time, two species showed significantly reduced nest mortality as magpies became more abundant!
- (b) nest mortality of all studied songbird species was not related to magpie density.
- (c) songbird populations either increased more, or decreased less, in areas where magpie density was higher.

The **RSPB also commissioned a BTO** study that reviewed 35 years of bird monitoring records, and "*songbird numbers were no different in places where there were many magpies from where there are few.*" It found no evidence that increased numbers of magpies have caused declines in songbirds. Rather, "*availability of food and suitable nesting sites are probably the main factors limiting songbird populations.*" Truthfully, the issue is complex and localised, specifically in areas where we've have already piled pressure on songbirds through our own actions, such as removing or damaging hedgerows plus extensive use of insecticides. It would seem that amongst these more pressing environmental concerns, contrary to people's fears, magpies have had little detectable effect on either songbird breeding success or population levels in rural environments.

Surprisingly, a **magpie's brain size** in relation to its body mass seems to equal that of both the great apes and marine cetaceans and it is not much less than in humans. They are known to utilise tools and, in urban settings, they use chances to showcase skills such as exploiting those anti-bird spikes to protect their nests! They are superb mimics, even able to imitate human speech. Thought to be highly advanced traits of intelligence, play and hunting teamwork also feature in the magpie repertoire. Most bird species have more than one mate, but magpies typically mate for life. They tend to hang around in raucous teenage gangs before they pair up, echoing human social dynamics. They're also known to grieve for their own kind, forming large aggregations whilst calling (a sort of funeral).

Unfortunately for the magpie, its revival in fortune coincided with declines in a whole host of other bird species; come springtime, both national press and social media repeat the same old rhetoric, that overwhelming magpie predation has led to songbird losses and that they should be controlled. Our single most important focus should be to make our natural environments more resilient through ensuring that predator-prey relationships remain balanced. They become unbalanced when we persecute species and fragment or destroy their habitats. Humans have a long history of demonising, oppressing and eliminating predators. As we continue to drive our metaphorical bulldozer through the earth's biosphere, we're the ones who need to change our habits, not the magpies.

Sussex Wildlife Trust - [www.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk)

# Wildcats (*Felis silvestris*)

By the Mammal Society

The wildcat can be differentiated from the domestic cat by its bushier tail with a blunt black tip and thicker, darker stripes on the body and tail. Once found throughout Britain, its range is now restricted to Scotland and it features on the UK Red List as a species of critical concern. Wildcats are confined to Scotland, north of Glasgow and Edinburgh, being absent from all of the Scottish Islands. They prefer areas with varied habitats on the edge of moors, with pasture, scrub and forests. High mountains, where prey is scarce and intensively farmed lowland regions are avoided. In winter, bad weather drives wildcats into more sheltered wooded valleys.

Wildcats are found mainly in woodland, moorland and upland areas. Similar to domestic tabby cats, they are larger and more robust. Wildcats have darker body stripes with no white patches and thicker, bushy tails. Their size averages 56cm for head and body length and the tail measures 29cm. In general, wildcats live for 10-12 years in the wild. Rabbits, hares and small mammals are their principal prey, but quite large birds and animals freshly killed on the roads may also be taken.



Wildcats are active at night, mainly around dawn and dusk. During the day, and in periods of heavy rain and snow, wildcats lie up in dens located amongst boulders rocky cairns, in old fox earths, badgers setts, peat hags, or tree roots. Wildcats are solitary and territorial, living at a low population density; there may be one cat to 3km<sup>2</sup> in good habitats, but only one cat in 10km<sup>2</sup> in less favourable areas. Urine sprayed on boulders and tree trunks and droppings deposited in prominent places marks territories. Mating generally takes place in February with litters of 2-6 kittens being born in May, though litters may be born up until August. Wildcats produce only one litter a year. Kittens are weaned at 12 weeks and stay with their mother until about five months old.

Wildcats used to be found throughout mainland Britain, but persecution and woodland clearance have led to declining populations. Wildcats almost became extinct in Britain in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but declines were reversed. However, this recovery now seems to have slowed down. The urbanised habitat seems to be a barrier to further dispersal. The [Wildlife and Countryside Acts \(1981, as amended\)](#) give strict legal protection to wildcats and their dens. Although increasing afforestation helps the spread of wildcats, mature forest plantations become less suitable for the small mammals on which wildcats prey. Forestry management to encourage wildcats should therefore aim to diversify the age of plantations.



# Gemmology: a ciborium from Einsiedeln Abbey

By Stefanos Karampela, Marie Wörle, Katja Hunger et al

This is a brief overview of the gemstones that adorn a late-16<sup>th</sup> century ciborium from Einsiedeln Abbey in Switzerland; the stones were investigated by non-destructive gemmological methods, energy-dispersive X-ray fluorescence (EDXRF) and Raman spectroscopy at the Collections Centre of the Swiss National Museum. A ciborium is shaped like a cup with an arched cover, used in the Christian Church to hold the Eucharist. This ciborium is decorated with 17 coloured stones: 10 almandine garnets, four grossular garnets and three sapphires. Inclusions in the sapphires and a historic description of the piece suggest a Sri Lankan origin for the gems.

The EDXRF includes an Edax Eagle III XXL micro-analyser. It has a large sample chamber and is equipped with a lens for micro-measurements (spot-size ~50µm). A rhodium tube was used for the analysis, under the following conditions: no filter, 20 kV, 100 µA, a live-time of 200 seconds per measurement point and 30 points per measurement area. Conclusive identifications were made by taking Raman spectra of all the gems and comparing them to the Gübelin Gem Lab's reference spectra as well as those in the RRUFF project (<http://rruff.info>). Spectra were obtained with a Horiba Jobin Yvon (LabRam Aramis) spectrometer coupled to an Olympus metallurgical microscope. As all stones were difficult to access, we used an additional L-shaped lens (magnification 30x) to take the spectra and a camera for adequate positioning of the beam. Measurements were carried out using excitation wavelengths of 532 nm (Nd:YAG laser), 633 nm (He:Ne laser), and 785 nm (diode laser). Laser power was 50 mW, with a 60 second acquisition time, at various resolutions (2-4cm<sup>-1</sup>) in the range from 200-2000 (sometimes up to 4000) cm<sup>-1</sup>. To confirm the results, we took measurements on at least two different points of each gemstone.

The ciborium contains 17 coloured stones: 10 pinkish red, four orange, and three light blue, mounted in metal settings that are attached to the body and lid. Its total weight is 1350g and its height is 33 cm (about 13 in.). All the gems are held in closed-back settings; thus, their faceting arrangements were identified only from the crown. They were polished in near-round, rectangular, octagonal, and cushion shapes (all the light blue stones had slightly domed tables), with one step of parallel facets on the crown. No indications of doublets, imitations, glasses or synthetics were observed with magnification.



**Raman spectroscopy** demonstrated that all 10 red stones were Al-garnets. Father Tonassini had described these stones as rubies. All four orange stones were Ca-garnets. These were identified by Father Tonassini as hyacinth (an archaic term for red-orange-yellow zircon). Although some slight differences in the spectra of the 10 Al- and four Ca-garnets were observed (reflecting differences in composition), all were close to almandine and grossular.

The blue stones all showed the main characteristic vibration band of corundum at about  $415\text{ cm}^{-1}$ . Additionally, bands at  $1400$  and  $1370\text{ cm}^{-1}$  were observed with  $633\text{ nm}$  excitation; these are the characteristic Cr photoluminescence emission bands of corundum. This gold and gem-set ciborium ( $33\text{ cm}$  high), dates from the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and is part of the treasures of Einsiedeln Abbey in Switzerland. Father Tonassini correctly identified these stones as sapphires.

The EDXRF results for the six stones analysed were in agreement with the Raman data. Different points on the metal were also analysed and found to contain 82-85% gold, 7-8% silver and 6-9% copper. No evidence was observed that any of the stones had been removed after they were originally set. All the garnets were inert to UV radiation. The three sapphires fluoresced faint orange-yellow to long-wave UV and faint orange to short-wave UV. With magnification, the almandines showed mainly rutile needle-like inclusions and zircons, while the grossular hyacinths contained no such crystals. A Raman spectrometer with an L-shaped lens was used to take spectra on the mounted ciborium gems, which were difficult to access with conventional equipment. All the stones were conclusively identified with this instrument.

The ciborium is mentioned in an 18<sup>th</sup> century inventory prepared by Father Eustache Tonassini (1794–98).

CN1S1 Pinkish red Modified rectangular/step  $5.9 \times 5.6$  Almandine Ruby  
 CN1S2 Pinkish red Near round/step  $5.4 \times 5.2$  Almandine Ruby  
 CN1S3 Pinkish red Near round/step  $5.2 \times 4.9$  Almandine Ruby  
 CN1S4 Pinkish red Modified rectangular/step  $3.7 \times 3.5$  Almandine Ruby  
 CN1S5 Pinkish red Modified rectangular/step  $4.4 \times 3.4$  Almandine Ruby  
 CN2S1 Orange Modified rectangular/step  $7.4 \times 6.3$  Grossular Hyacinth  
 CN2S2 Pinkish red Near round/step  $5.5 \times 5.2$  Almandine Ruby  
 CN2S3 Pinkish red Near round/step  $5.2 \times 4.7$  Almandine Ruby  
 CN2S4 Orange Near round/step  $5.5 \times 5.4$  Grossular Hyacinth  
 CN2S5 Pinkish red Oval/step  $5.1 \times 4.7$  Almandine Ruby  
 CN2S6 Pinkish red Modified rectangular/step  $7.6 \times 6.0$  Almandine Ruby  
 KS1 Light blue Octagonal/step  $10.4 \times 9.0$  Sapphire  
 KS2 Orange Modified rectangular/step  $10.0 \times 7.3$  Grossular Hyacinth  
 KS3 Light blue Octagonal/step  $10.1 \times 8.0$  Sapphire  
 KS4 Orange Octagonal/step  $13.3 \times 10.0$  Grossular Hyacinth  
 KS5 Light blue Octagonal/step  $12.4 \times 9.7$  Sapphire  
 KS6 Pinkish red Oval/cabochon  $13.9 \times 10.7$  Almandine Ruby

# Obsidian

By Charlie Foreverdark

Obsidian is often listed as a correspondence stone for Samhain, due to its black appearance. Obsidian is an igneous rock consisting mainly of silicon dioxide, which occurs as a natural glass. It is formed during the eruption of felsic lava from volcanoes. Because of the high concentration of silica within felsic lava, the high viscosity coupled with the rapid cooling upon its expulsion from the earth, inhibits the formation of mineral crystals, allowing instead for a **natural glass** to form from the lava. The structures that we find within crystalline forms simply do not have time to group together due to the rapid cooling process. To illustrate this point, imagine melted sugar. If it is rapidly cooled, you are left with a delicious brittle that breaks into shards. However, if allowed to cool slowly, internal crystals can form and harden - the end product is a softer toffee or fudge.

The result of this natural volcanic process is a smooth, uniform, non-crystalline texture which breaks with a sharp conchoidal (curved) fracture, as there are no natural planes of separation within the material.

It is what is known as an **extrusive rock**, meaning that it usually solidifies above the Earth's surface where the edges of a lava flow come into contact with cool air or water. Obsidian is not a true mineral, as its atomic structure is not crystalline. In addition, the composition of obsidian is variable and cannot easily be classified as a distinct mineral; we refer to such substances as **mineraloids**. Every volcano (and, in some cases, each specific volcanic eruption) produces a distinguishable type of obsidian, which makes it possible for archaeologists to trace the exact origins of a particular artefact.

Though obsidian is typically jet-black in **colour**, the presence of hematite (iron oxide) can produce red or brown tinted varieties and the inclusion of tiny gas bubbles may create a golden or silvery sheen. Other impurities can even cause specimens to display distinct rainbow-coloured banding. In some examples, the inclusion of small, white, radially clustered crystals of **crystalite** (known as spherulites) within the dark volcanic glass produce a blotchy or snowflake pattern, known in the trade as **snowflake obsidian**. Occasionally, attractive bicoloured specimens are formed when reddish-brown obsidian (high in iron impurities) swirls together with purer black obsidian, creating **mahogany obsidian**.

The word, **obsidian**, essentially means *stone of Obsius*. It was so named as (according to ancient Roman writer and naturalist Pliny the Elder) it was first discovered in Ethiopia by an explorer called Obsius.

For centuries obsidian has been used to create weapons and tools. Radiocarbon dating suggests that obsidian tools found in Ethiopia might be as much as 180,000 years old! Due to its brittle nature and a score of 5 on the Moh's hardness test, the material fractures with very sharp edges and can be easily worked into desired shapes. Today, obsidian is very easy to cut with a diamond saw as well as to carve with a Dremel diamond tip drill, but prior to the Bronze Age it was shaped through a technique known as **knapping**. The ancient Aztec and Greek civilizations first used obsidian decoratively for mirrors and as jewellery or ornaments, but it proved an immensely useful material in the construction of weaponry, implements and tools by Native Americans and other ancient peoples. Prehistoric obsidian arrowheads, knives, spear points and cutting tools have been found in many parts of the world from a wide range of Neolithic cultures. Obsidian tools have even been discovered at famous archaeological sites such as Göbekli Tepe, which might be as old as 11,000 years. Spanish conquistadors were dismayed to discover that a single blow from a good Aztec obsidian-edged sword could cleanly behead a horse.

The **sources of obsidian** were limited to locations that experienced volcanic activity. However, obsidian was a highly valued commodity and the volcanic glass stone was used in trading by Mayan merchants, dating as far



back as 100 years BCE. Given the abundance of obsidian found in the area and its usefulness, we know that it was historically valued and considered most precious.

The original settlers of Rapa Nui (known now as Easter Island) used obsidian to decorate their enormous monolithic Moai statues on Easter Island. Chunks of dark-coloured obsidian were set into contrasting white circles of bird bone or seashell, forming striking pupils for their eyes. Only one intact example of the eyes of the Moai survives to this day. The Rapa Nui people also used sharp obsidian tools to inscribe what came to be known as the Rongorongo glyphs into wooden tablets. These glyphs have never been deciphered, but are thought to be an independent invention of writing. Rongorongo is the modern name for the inscriptions, which in the Rapa Nui language means to recite or chant, suggesting that the engraved tablets were used for sacred prayer during ancestral worship and ceremony.

**Apache Tears** are a specific type of black obsidian found in the south-western USA and Mexico where the native Apache tribes lived (primarily Arizona, Nevada, and New Mexico.) Apache Tear nodules were formed when beads of molten magma were thrown up into the air during a volcanic explosion, and then cooled very quickly as it rained down over the arid barren desert. As a result of this abrupt trajectory, apache tears have an opaque, dull and far less glassy appearance to standard obsidian. The meaning of their name comes from a Native American legend. It was said that the Pinal Apache tribe were pursued by the invading cavalry and, though they fought bravely, they were significantly outnumbered. Rather than be captured, they rode their horses over the cliff face, tumbling to their deaths. The dark strangely-shaped stones were said have formed as the tears of the distraught women and children fell to the earth as they mourned their loss.

With a plethora of historic record of its use in weaponry, **obsidian is still prized to this day** in the world of crystal healing as a stone of protection and it is still used in modern times for surgical scalpel blades. The edges of obsidian can be flaked to veritable molecular thinness, and well-crafted obsidian blades have a cutting edge up to five times sharper than high-quality steel surgical scalpels. Viewed under a strong electron microscope, a surgical steel scalpel looks like a blunt axe in comparison to the smooth cutting edge of an obsidian blade! Obsidian blades produce cleaner cuts with less tissue trauma, which translates to faster healing and healthier scar tissue.

Another use of obsidian, steeped in history, that is still practised today is as a scrying device. You will most certainly be familiar with the image of a gypsy fortune teller gazing deeply into a crystal ball and making predictions based on what is seen. Obsidian is a perfect choice for the mystical process known as scrying, because of its dark reflective surface. In addition to a truly fascinating history, there is no denying that obsidian is a fascinating gemstone to look at, and it is amongst the most widely used stones in jewellery and other artisan crafts. The captivating deep black colour complements a variety of different styles and designs, and always makes for a beautiful piece.



## SAMHAIN PRAYER

We are all part of one universal community – the power of family extends to all. In *Gylden Fellowship*, we invite each of you to take a candle on Samhain and hold this thought.

### FOR THE FORGOTTEN DEAD

This candle is for the people out there, some in our community and others around the country who are buried with no headstones or markers, eg:

- Old people in care homes or hospitals with no families.
- Homeless people who greeted us to or from work, from whom we bought the Big Issue.
- Lost children who ran from home and died who knows where.
- Those who wandered our streets with mental health issues and who died unknown and ignored.
- All those who died from violence or neglect and now lie in unremembered or untended graves.
- And all those too numerous to mention.

These are the **Forgotten Dead**, whose spirits we pay tribute to, even though we do not know your names. Accept my candle tonight for you – the unknown, the unwanted, the unloved of our community and be at peace for a while.



# Disposing of plastic waste

By Mark Sharpen

Despite the growing plastic pollution crisis, petroleum-based polymers are still an integral part of life, making cars and airplanes lighter and more energy efficient. They constitute a core material of modern medicine by helping to keep equipment sterile, delivering medicines and building prosthetics. And they are a critical component of the wiring and hardware that underlies our technology-driven civilization, but when they outlive their usefulness, they become waste and end up polluting our oceans, rivers, soils and bodies.

New research from a team of chemists at UC Berkeley suggests a glimmer of hope when it comes to the thorny problem of recycling plastics: one that may allow us to have our cake and potentially take a very small bite, too. The group has devised a catalytic recycling process that breaks apart the chains of some of the more commonly used plastics, such as polyethylene and polypropylene, in such a way that the building blocks of those plastics can be used again. In some cases, with more than 90% efficiency. The catalysts required for the reaction (sodium or tungsten) are readily available and inexpensive. Early tests show the process is likely scalable at industrial levels. It uses no water and has fewer energy requirements than other recycling methods and is even more efficient than manufacturing new, or so-called virgin, plastics, the researchers say.

*“So, by making one product or two products in very high yield and at much lower temperatures, we are using some energy, but significantly less energy than any other process that’s breaking down polyolefins or taking the petroleum resources and turning them into the monomers for polyolefins in the first place,”* said John Hartwig, a UC Berkeley chemist who was a co-author of the study published in the journal, *Science*.

Polyolefins are a family of thermoplastics that include polyethylene (used to make single-use and reusable plastic bags) and polypropylene (used for yoghurt pots, forms microwaveable dishes and car bumpers). They are produced by combining small chain links, or monomers, of ethylene or propylene, which are typically obtained from oil and natural gas. Polyethylene and polypropylene account for the majority (57%) of all polymer resins produced, the study authors noted. They have proven a plague to the environment - in microplastic form, they have been found in drinking water, beer and every organ in the human body.

*“We don’t have a way to bring those [plastics] back to monomer, and they also poison our catalyst,”* said Hartwig. *“So for us, and basically for everybody else, PVC is bad. It’s not able to be chemically recycled”.* He said other contaminants, such as food waste, dyes or adhesives, could also cause problems. However, the researchers are still early in the process. Plastic bags, such as the ones used to hold produce in supermarkets, offer promise as they are relatively clean and nobody knows what to do with them. Hartwig said plastic bags are problematic for material recovery facilities where they are known to gum up machinery.

Neil Tangri, science and policy director at GAIA (an international environmental organisation) said that there are broader issues that could prevent such a technology from taking off. He noted that while the reaction temperature cited was lower than that used in pyrolysis (the burning of plastic for fuel when plastics are made from virgin material), it still requires a lot of energy, and potentially creates a fairly sizable carbon footprint. In addition, he said, 608° is the temperature where dioxins like to form. “Dioxins are highly toxic by-products of some industrial processes. “Even if you could solve all of those issues, it is so cheap to make virgin plastic that the collection, the sorting, the cleaning ... you just can’t sell your [recycled material] at a price that makes sense to justify all that. And that’s not really the fault of the technical approach. It’s the realities of the economics of plastic these days.”



# Folklore: hags

## By the Storyteller

A good place to start might be the small village of Hascombe in Surrey. The place name means *valley of the witches*, according to Ekwall. The linguistic provenance here is Old English, namely *hætse* or *hægtesse* (witch or person that uses magic) plus *cumbe* or *cumbe* (deep hollow or valley). The village itself is mentioned in the Charter Rolls of 1232 (Hescumb) and 1307 (Hascoumbe) and the Feet of Fines for the County of Surrey in 1266 (Hasecoumbe). It is not beyond a stretch of imagination to suggest that this area was once a place in which a witch lived.

The nomenclature of Old English derives from Anglo-Saxon roots, largely spoken from the 5<sup>th</sup> century up to the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> centuries in England. And it is with the Saxons that we should start to trace the place of the witch in local communities. Much of the history from 449-1066 is recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and in the work of the historian, Bede. Much Anglo-Saxon medicine was administered by clerics who could read earlier Roman guides on healing, but many remedies comprised simple herbal infusions or salves.

What is known is that every Anglo-Saxon community would have had a person who knew how to use plants for medicine. This knowledge would probably be handed down from generation to generation within the family. For example, garlic was used for infections, lichens or horehound for bad chests and for healing broken bones, and chamomile for digestive illnesses. Plants were used to make salves, poultices, infusions and other medicines to be swallowed. And here is the archetype of the witch as we know it – the wise woman who was the source of advice to the community and who could provide either wise advice or a remedy. Midwifery might also be part of her knowledge.

*Here's an example of the witch as wise woman. Once upon a time, there were two sisters who were giants and they did everything together, but there was a problem. Each wanted to be better than the other at all their activities, except that they also made lots of mistakes – if one baked a cake, her sister would do the same, but each might forget the sugar!*

*This endless competition to be top giant might have carried on forever, but the sisters started to hear stories from newly-converted Christians about the need to help others: stories like the Good Samaritan. The sisters started to calm down and to stop competing in life. To celebrate their new outlook, they decided to each build a chapel outside Guildford: one on St Catherine's Hill and the other on St Martha's Hill. But they only had one hammer and lots of nails between them. Once they would have competed to grab the hammer first, but now each sister insisted on the other taking the hammer first. This could have gone on a long time, but a local wise woman suggested a solution.*

*Can you guess? One sister picked up the hammer, went to her chosen hill, set up the wood and hammered in the first nail. Then she turned and threw the hammer across the valley to her sister who was waiting on the other hill to hammer her first nail. Then the hammer was thrown back to the first sister. And that's how they shared the hammer, sending it back and forth between the hills until the chapels were finished. If you visit either hill now, one has a chapel on top and the other has the ruins of another old chapel.*

However, the wise women changed abruptly into hags with publication of the *Malleus Maleficarum* (roughly translates as the Hammer of Witches). First written in 1486 by two Dominicans, Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger, it was published in 1487. With an introduction by Pope Innocent VIII, this book was written with the express purpose of identifying, prosecuting and executing witches anywhere in the known world.

As a set of key questions and definitions for Catholic inquisitors, the *Malleus Maleficarum* was regarded as literal truth and as an answer against sceptics who saw the existence of witches as superstition. It also set out the very real possibility of a person being accused of **heresy**, if he or she disputed the existence of witches at all, namely asking questions about inquisitors. In fact, it might be said that a residual effect of the *Malleus Maleficarum* has been to maintain a general belief in the threat of witchcraft by Christians, even up to this century.

The *Malleus Maleficarum* should be seen as a tool of the Catholic Church at that time, time where many people did believe in magic and wise women were commonly found in many villages to help cure local people. However, this book was mainly responsible for taking such beliefs and imposing anti-magical, canonical law instead and, to some extent, validating the existence of the Inquisition. The book lay on the bench of every judge and on the desk of every magistrate.

And then, in 1590, the *Malleus Maleficarum* was reinforced by a work written by King James I of England. The book, *Dæmonologie*, also set out ways of identifying witches by physical marks. The king used parts of the *Malleus Maleficarum* for his work and his own dreams or advice from courtiers, but he was the king. And so, the wise women took heed and adopted low profiles. Here's a typical hag tale after this period.

*I guess it all started with the annual apple howling. I'm old now, but I remember the events of that terrible year as if it was yesterday. I used to live in the village, but not since then and only yesterday, I heard that several children have gone missing from there over the years. Just to explain the custom to you folks, apple howling by night was an ancient tradition in our village, part of the wassail. One local farm had many apple trees and the previous year had produced a bumper crop. But to ensure good apples, you have to drive out the orchard demons from the trees or they will ruin the crop for the next year.*

*So, the whole village set up for the howling and we all followed in a torchlight procession down Pegs Lane to the orchard. The village elders surrounded the oldest tree and everyone shared in the wassail cakes and cider. Then the elders hit the tree with sticks to rouse any demon and other villagers fired their shotguns into the upper branches in case a demon tried to hide up there. We sang the wassail, ate more cakes and the ritual was over for another year. And then I saw, at least I thought I saw, a movement in the tree – up high, just a shadow really and then it was gone. We all went home, but I saw Old Jen trailing along slowly. Well, that was usual. To me, she seemed about 90 years old anyway and the long walk to the howling in the dark and cold hurts the bones when you're old. I went back to help her, but she snarled at me, pushing my arm away – so I left her alone.*

*The apple howling was in early January, but when I tell you that the village had its worst run of luck for many years, that was a fact. Not only was the apple crop bad, but rain ruined much of the harvest. One of the inn-keeper's daughters, playing by the mill-pond, fell in and drowned. A cart ran out of control on the village green and hurt some children. There were lots of unexplained fires and that's a problem with hay ricks or thatched cottages. When did people suspect the truth? Can't really put a time on it, but it seemed to me that we were all avoiding Old Jen. Her temper was never good, but she was always angry and she seemed to be around each time another accident took place. Finally, a group of elders and the local priest went around and we all heard what happened next. Old Jen had gone, left her house and all her goods, but her clothes and walking stick were found by the river that evening.*

*And I saw the result – just me, out of all the village, but I'll never forget it, because we were mistaken – all of us – the apple howling had not driven out the demon. The demon had just moved into the most vulnerable person there – Old Jen – and then carried on its mischief. I'd crept down to the river that night to see where Old Jen had died and I saw something. It was most like an old woman with green skin, long wet hair and very long sharp teeth. I saw the teeth glow green in the moonlight and it had hold of an animal which it dragged into the water. Nothing surfaced. And that's my story*

**Vetrnaetr or Winternights** is a Norse winter festival that was celebrated in pre-Christian Scandinavia. Winter Nights is a key festival, marking the end of summer, the start of winter and the beginning of a new year.

By Gylden Fellowship







# Why do we love chocolate?

By Mark Sharpen

Researchers at Leeds University are now one step closer to unravelling the secrets **of why we love chocolate so much**. Texture, they say, is the critical factor here: our brains find the textural change from solid to creamy highly pleasurable. And this is exactly what chocolate promises – it begins to melt almost the instant it hits our tongue, coating our mouths in silky sweetness.

So, they used an artificial 3D tongue **to investigate** whether it was the fat content (fat makes up about 55% of cacao beans) or our saliva that causes chocolate to melt so deliciously. “When you first put a piece of chocolate on your tongue, the fat mixes with a little saliva to form droplets, and then more droplets are formed,” explains **Dr Anwsha Sarkar from the School of Food Science and Nutrition at Leeds**. “It's this lubrication which gives you that chocolatey sensation in your mouth.”

Dr Sarkar's recent experiments revealed something surprising about the next part of the process. Once the chocolate has begun to melt and coat your mouth, fat plays a less important role. “You still need some fat to form those droplets but not as much because, now, saliva drives the process.” In other words, the satisfaction we feel when we place a square of chocolate on our tongue is caused by the fat that coats its surface. Meanwhile, the fat contained deeper inside plays a limited role and could be reduced without lessening that desirable melting sensation.

“Our research opens the possibility that manufacturers can intelligently design dark chocolate to reduce the overall fat content,” Dr Sarkar says. This could be done by making chocolate in layers, with the high fat content on the outside and lower amounts inside, so we get all the same satisfaction with a fraction of the fat content. This research could prove important not just for the development of chocolate, but for all kinds of foods, says Dr Sarkar. It could help us refine the texture of more divisive products to make them more enjoyable. For instance, Dr Sarkar's team is working on ways to make plant-based cheese, which can be gritty and astringent, more appealing by re-engineering the way the fat coats the proteins. A similar technique could improve the texture of other plant-based products like ice cream. Here are some other reasons why chocolate is so enjoyable.

1. Of course, it's not just texture that makes chocolate appealing. One theory is that we're hard-wired to like milk chocolate, because it contains roughly the same sugar-to-fat ratio **as breast milk** (around 1g fat to 2g sugars). A few studies suggest that alongside this combination of sugar and fat, some of the hundreds of chemical compounds in chocolate influence the reward and pleasure centres of the brain. Chocolate can trigger a surge of feel-good hormones such as endorphins, dopamine and serotonin, which can make you feel happy and relaxed. Don't take that as a green light try and improve your mood by eat copious amounts of chocolate. Some scientists say it doesn't contain enough of these active compounds to have much of an effect on our mental state – unless we eat unhealthy amounts.
2. **The shape** chocolate is moulded into also has a part to play. Research shows that we associate sweetness with roundness and bitterness with angularity. Studies by Nestlé scientists found that rounded chocolate was also best when it came to achieving and maximising that satisfying melt and silky-smooth texture. In fact, in 2013, some chocolate lovers claimed Cadbury had surreptitiously changed the recipe of its Dairy Milk bar, insisting that it tasted different. Cadbury maintained that the recipe was the same and all that had been updated was the shape of the chunks, which had gone from angular to curved.

While these recent scientific discoveries may well help shape the future of this popular confectionery, other influences are already at play to mix things up in the world of chocolate. Here's what the experts are expecting to see over the next few years, including **the introduction of unusual flavours**.

Academy of Chocolate member and international chocolate judge, **Hazel Lee** believes different fruit flavours will become the next big chocolate sensation: "while a few specialist brands of chocolate have been using exotic fruit flavours for years, I expect this to become mainstream in the next 5-10 years. Think hibiscus, yuzu and passionfruit." Lee is also seeing other unusual flavours emerge – recently she's sampled chocolate containing ants, black garlic, durian (the southeast Asian fruit that famously smells like rotting meat), cheese, freeze-dried ice cream and croissants!

A surge in demand is predicted for chocolate that's seen as **healthy as well as delicious**. "Since the pandemic, there has been a global health and wellness mega-trend across all food categories – including chocolate," Lee says. Although low and sugar-free chocolate isn't new, researchers are looking for ways to make it taste as good the sugary stuff. A recent US study suggested that in the future this might take the form of chocolate made with 3D printers.

Researchers used the technology to create chocolate made of three distinct layers: some containing high amounts of sugar, and other layers with low amounts. They found that chocolate with one low-sugar layer and two high-sugar layers tasted just as sweet as that made with three high-sugar layers. By making chocolate this way, sugar content could be reduced by 19% with no noticeable difference in sweetness, researchers concluded.

Although **dark chocolate** is a natural source of fibre, vitamins and minerals, Lee says there's a growing trend for bars fortified with other healthy add-ins like mushrooms and botanicals – plants valued for their medicinal or therapeutic benefits. "More craft chocolate makers are using botanicals alongside single origin cacao to provide both health benefits and harmonious flavour combinations," she says. "I believe this trend will continue to grow as we understand more about the potential benefits of certain ingredients."

With growing awareness and concern about how our food choices impact the environment, more chocolate products will be made in a sustainable way, predicts Lee. This includes using parts of the cacao bean normally discarded. "It's early days but some cocoa producers are experimenting with flour made from the cocoa pod itself. Even a few big brands have been making whole fruit bars using cacao pulp to sweeten."



# Celestial forecast for October

By Joanna Bristow-Watkins

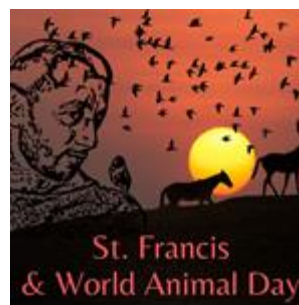
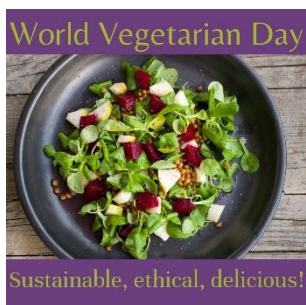
October in Britain features the full splendour of autumn colours with an array of brown, red and golden yellow mixed with the remaining green as trees shed their leaves. Nature is truly remarkable; this process eliminates environmental toxins which have collected, and trees do it to protect themselves. In winter sunshine, water would continue to evaporate from the leaves and, should the ground water freeze, the tree's water supply would no longer be guaranteed. Hence the plant produces phytohormones and directs them to its leaf stalks. These hormones cause a corky layer to form, then the leaves fall off. This cork prevents pathogens such as fungi or bacteria from penetrating. Furthermore, should it snow, the tree will not have to bear the additional weight of snow on the leaf surfaces.

This month is the ideal time to harvest chestnuts, conkers and apples and, on the allotments, we have many seasonal vegetables including broccoli, leeks, turnips, potatoes, kale plus (of course) squashes, including pumpkin. It's easy to see why apple bobbing and pumpkin carving became associated with Halloween, celebrated on the 31st. We also have two separate sets of Meteor Showers, the Draconids (peaks 8th/9th) and the Orionids (peaks 20th/21st).

The month of October was named after *octo* meaning 8th in Latin, as October was the 8th month when the year started in March. To the Anglo-Saxons, October was called **Winterfylleth** or the "winter full moon," because winter was said to begin on the first Full Moon in October.

During October, we have a plethora of international festivals such as **World Vegetarian Day** (1st), **World Mental Health Day** (10th), **World Food Day** (16th), **International Day for the Eradication of Poverty** (17th) as well as Thanksgiving in Canada (10th). We can also look forward to the Christian Festival of **St Francis of Assisi Day** (4th), two annual Egyptian Festivals **Going Forth of Isis** (6th) & **Isia** (28th) and Roman **October Horse** (15th) annual commemorations, plus of course the pagan Festival of **Samhain** (better known as Halloween) on 31st. We have our Forest Bathing event in Shere on **Saturday 12 October**. Aligning with the moon cycle is very therapeutic, our October **Full Moon Meditation** takes place 7.30-9.30pm (UK time) on **Thursday 17th October**, with the Hunter Moon peaking at 12:26.

I'm have some ongoing projects to complete so I'm not offering any live online modules at the moment. Please get in touch if you would like to study any of the Reyad Sekh Em modules.



**Tuesday 1 October is World Vegetarian Day.** Established by the North American Vegetarian Society in 1977 and endorsed by the International Vegetarian Union in 1978, it is a day of celebration "to promote the joy, compassion and life-enhancing possibilities of vegetarianism." It brings awareness to the ethical, environmental, health and humanitarian benefits of a vegetarian lifestyle and hence is a time set aside to raise awareness of the positive

effects of a vegetarian lifestyle on “humans, other animals and our shared earth.” See more details on the [Awareness.com](https://www.awareness.com) website.

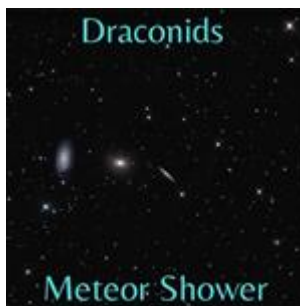
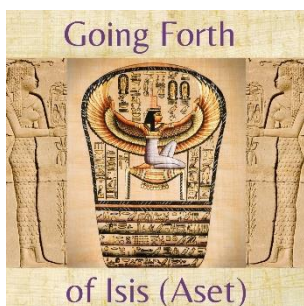
World Vegetarian Day marks the start of **Vegetarian Awareness Month** throughout October, which ends with **World Vegan Day on 1 November**, marking the end of that month of celebration.

**Wednesday 2 October @ 19:49 is Ivy Micro New Moon and an Annular Solar Eclipse.** A solar eclipse takes place when the Moon passes between Earth and the Sun, hence totally or partly obscuring the image of the Sun for a viewer on Earth. The eclipse won't be visible in London. A partial eclipse (a least) will be visible in most of South America, Pacific, Atlantic, Antarctica. More information at [timeanddate.com](https://timeanddate.com)

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 [You Tube Page](#).

**Friday 4 October is the Feast of Francis of Assisi** in the Christian Calendar, so it is appropriate that it is also **World Animal Day** since St Francis is the Patron Saint of Animals and the Environment. It is a popular date for animals to be blessed.

St Francis, who founded the Catholic Church's Franciscan order, lived in Italy between approximately 1181 and 1226. He is remembered for his love for animals and nature and his generosity to the poor, as well as well as his willingness to minister to the lepers. St Francis was canonised (pronounced a saint), shortly after his death (in 1228) by Pope Gregory IX. The Pope also laid the foundation stone for the UNESCO World Heritage site, Basilica of St Francis d'Assisi, Italy.



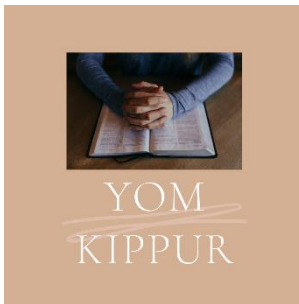
**Wednesday 7 October**, though some sources say **10 October**, is Going Forth of Isis (Aset) in Egyptian Tradition. Apparently, her heart is pleased on this day because the heritage is granted to her son Horus (Heru).

On this special day, a specially selected team of Priests and/or Priestesses would commence a procession to take their most treasured image or statue of Aset (Isis) to another temple, with many planned stops en route. At each stop, a sacred rite would be performed by the Priests/Priestesses and often divinations would be offered. When the final temple destination was reached, the image or statue would be placed in an honoured location and a joyful festival celebration would ensue.

**Tuesday 8 and Wednesday 9 October, is the Draconids Meteor Shower.** The radiant point for the Draconid meteor shower almost coincides with the head of the constellation, Draco the Dragon, in the northern sky. That's why the Draconids are best viewed from the Northern Hemisphere and, surprisingly, in the early evening soon after dusk. Draco has been known to spew forth many hundreds of meteors in a single hour. In 2024, the recent New Moon on the 2 October should help viewing. See [Earthsky Website](#) or [timeanddate.com](https://timeanddate.com) for more details.



**Thursday 10 October is World Mental Health Day.** World Mental Health Day has been observed since 10 October 1992. Initially held by the World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH), it's now officially commemorated annually and this year's theme is "It is time to prioritize mental health in the workplace".



**Friday 11 October [2024] is Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement),** which is the Jewish day of repentance - probably the holiest and most solemn day of the year. In Israel, it is an annual holiday. There's no public transport, no form of media communication and all businesses and shops are closed. It takes place on the tenth day of Tishrei, the seventh month. In the Western calendar; this means it will occur between 14 September and 14 October.

**Saturday 12 October, 11am-2pm, Forest Bathing in the grounds of [Harry Edward's Healing Sanctuary](#), £39-77.**

*Immerse yourself in the healing elements of nature and connect deeply with all your senses. Spend 3 hours in the woods mindfully connecting to your surroundings and living fully in the present moment, guided by me in simple sensory exercises and a treelaxation. 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.*

*This is a 3-hour Forest Bathing session which will take place in all weathers except very high winds or electrical storms. Book at [Harmony Shop](#). Please email us on [katieandjo@harmonyinnature.uk](mailto:katieandjo@harmonyinnature.uk) to go on our monthly forest bathing update email list.*

**Monday 14 October is Thanksgiving Day in Canada, sometimes called Canadian Thanksgiving** to distinguish it from the American holiday which is the fourth Thursday in November (this year it's Thursday 28 November). Canadian Thanksgiving occurs on the second Monday in October. It is an annual Canadian holiday, celebrating the harvest and other blessings of the past year.



**Tuesday 15 October is the Roman celebration of October Horse,** as it is the Ides of October. The October Ides featured a two-horse chariot race on the Campus Martius.

**Wednesday 16 October is World Food Day**; it is a global event to increase awareness, understanding and year-around action to alleviate hunger. This day, declared by the UN General Assembly, aims to heighten public awareness of world food problems and strengthen solidarity in the struggle against hunger, malnutrition and poverty. The theme for **World Food Day 2024** is "Right to foods for a better life and a better future".

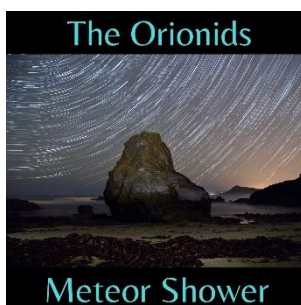
The promotional website reminds us that hunger persists despite the world's farmers producing enough food for the global population. Due to repeated conflicts, weather anomalies, recession, inequality and the lasting effects of the pandemic, around 733 million people are facing hunger in the world. Each year, on **16 October, Concern Worldwide** joins organisations around the world in commemorating World Food Day, marking the day the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) was founded in 1945. Concern Worldwide, whose motto is tackling hunger, transforming lives highlight some incredibly worthy causes on their website.

**Thursday 17 October is the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.** The observance of the **International Day for the Eradication of Poverty** can be traced back to 17 October 1987, when over a hundred thousand people gathered at the Trocadéro in Paris. This was the location where the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed in 1948, to honour the victims of extreme poverty, violence and hunger. They proclaimed that poverty is a violation of human rights and affirmed the need to come together to ensure that these rights are respected. These convictions are inscribed in a commemorative stone unveiled on this day. Since then, every year on 17 October, people of all backgrounds, beliefs and social origins have gathered to renew their commitment and show their solidarity with the poor.

The 2024 theme is "support educational programs and initiatives that empower individuals and communities to break the cycle of poverty".

**Thursday 17 October @ 12:26 is the Ivy Hunter Supermoon and almost a Lunar Eclipse.** It's also the third of four consecutive Supermoons. Calculations show that the Sun, Earth, and Moon will be very closely aligned on this day, but there will be no lunar eclipse. See [timeanddate.com](https://timeanddate.com) for details.

*Between this date and the next New Moon is considered as a good time energetically for detoxing the body. This is also the night of our **Full Moon Meditation**, 19.30-21.30 UK time (GMT+1). This will be a Zoom video gathering and all participants will receive group healing, be able to nominate others for healing, plus there will be a global healing exercise. The Zoom link will be sent to all those booked in prior to the event. Book by 5pm at the [Harmony Shop](#).*



**Sunday 20 - Monday 21 October is the peak of the Orionids** which is the most prolific meteor shower associated with [Halley's Comet](#) and lasts from 15-29 October. The Orionids are so-called because they appear to come from the constellation of Orion. In some years, meteors may occur at rates of 50-70 per hour.

This year, close to the Full Moon on the 17th, it's likely to be somewhat hampered viewing. In 2024, the annual Orionid meteor shower is expected to rain down the greatest number of meteors before dawn on 21 October, perhaps as many as 20 meteors per hour.

The hours between midnight and dawn on the mornings of 20-22 October may offer a decent sprinkling of meteors as well, and you might see some anytime in October or early November (overall duration is 26 September - 22 November) if you have a dark sky for viewing. See also [EarthSky website](#) where you will also find more details about the event.

**Saturday 26 October is also the end of the Summer Daylight Saving Time in 2024**, so the UK clocks go back an hour at 01.00 hrs (Saturday night/early Sunday morning).

*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 (small admin fee added for PayPal). This activity serves as a good taster of Joanna's work in general. For more details and to book, see [Harmony Shop](#).*

**Monday 28 October** is the Egyptian celebration of Isia, marking the 7 days that Aset (Isis) spent searching for the body parts of Asar (Osiris) following his death and dismemberment by his brother Set. This culminates on **3 November** with Hilaria when she resurrected him by re-remembering him; no doubt contributing to the definition of our word remember meaning to recall someone from memory.



**Thursday 31 October traditionally marks the end of the harvest and the beginning of the Celtic and Pagan New Year.** Samhain is Irish-Gaelic for the Summer's end, and is pronounced, 'sow-in'. I will be offering an [online Samhain-themed meditation](#) on Thursday 31 October.

Samhain represents the death of the summer sun god, Lugh. This festival celebrates Nature's cycle of death and renewal. Samhain is perhaps better known these days as Halloween. The latter has been hi-jacked by ghouls and trick-or-treat activities, but this was a serious festival to celebrate deceased loved ones and feel near to them, as the veil between this world and the next was considered thin on this date. Samhain is one of the four Gaelic seasonal festivals; along with Lughnasadh, Imbolc and Beltane.

In the Northern Hemisphere, Samhain heralds the beginning of Winter, when the world starts to darken and the days are getting shorter; the dark half of the year and the demise of the sun's uplifting influence. The crone, personified as Cailleach (the Queen of the Winter) was reborn on every All Hallows Eve, returning to bring the Winter and protect animals through the coldest months. She turned to stone on Beltane Eve, Beltane being 1 May.



# SPRIGGAN MIST

RBL Winnersh

18th Oct 2024



# Ghostly Tales 2024

Doors 7.30pm

Adv £10 - On door £15

[www.sprigganmist.co.uk](http://www.sprigganmist.co.uk)





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