



PRACTICAL MAGICK & UNIVERSAL ENERGY FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

# Gylden Magick

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Dec. 2020

## 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.

The **Gylden Community** is one of the most extensive pagan libraries in southern England. Its website, [www.gyldenfellowship.co.uk](http://www.gyldenfellowship.co.uk), is growing too – our Yule sabbat blog is projected to reach over 4000 people and we welcome new members constantly.

On Facebook, the **Gylden River LRC** (Learning Resources Centre) is a social learning hub with optional study units in key areas of magick.

**Gylden Fellowship** continues as a pagan support mechanism even under covid-19 constraints. We resemble **the library reference desk** at present, answering queries from

group members and offering advice to different FB sites. The lack of actual rituals, fayres and moots means that we can't issue calendars or be on meet-up at present, but we hope this will change next year.

We look forward to 2021 with real excitement. The January 2021 edition will be packed full of new series by new authors for you.

Our **Oak Moon** issue continues with the 20-page format with ever more guidance on spiritual issues and magick – this month has a definite emphasis on Yuletide magick. But no ads – after all, we're like a pagan public library and all the information is free.

Dates for your diaries – not least the **Blowing of the Midwinter Horn** in the Netherlands on 11 December (a custom that goes back 2 millennia)

and the **birthday of Nostradamus** on 14 December.

**What else is there?** Well, we have a piece of witchcraft history, photos from Amanda Hill (glass artist), poetry, celestial notes, news from the Sussex Wildlife Trust, a covid-friendly Yule ritual, using electrical energies, herbal healing, crystals, a story from Ancient Egypt, our spirit animal is the snake and lots more.

Anything else? Oh yes, the title – we never forget that our faith is based upon Nature and that our strength comes from earth magick. Many of our sabbats are based upon the light, eg solstices and equinoxes, as vital to us now as to our ancestors.

For more info, why not join **Gylden River LRC** or **Gylden Fellowship** groups on Facebook today and see our archives or new briefings?

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## Animal spirit guides: snake

Not all animal spirit guides take the form of primary mammals like wolves, lynxes, bears or birds, eg crows. It is common to have a reptile guide or an insect one. Last month, we considered the boar as a spirit guide – now we think about snakes or serpents. In the first part of this series, we looked at the *Place of Meeting*. So, you've crossed into the Otherworld and a spirit comes to you in the form of a snake – what does it symbolise?

OK then, the snake is a creature that indicates healing opportunities, change, important transitions and increased energy. It is a powerful source of spiritual and emotional energy.

A snake spirit guide is connected to the primary life force and shows that you might be about to undergo key changes in your life, particularly in relation to growth in some way. Think of it like a snake shedding its skin – you are in the process of moving from the old to the new.



Having a snake as your guide is all about earth energy. Snakes tend to be close to the earth and this guide does remind you to keep grounded throughout any changes. This guide also tends to show you how to best use your energy.

Healing opportunities are crucial for those with snake spirit guides. Your main sources of healing energy will be nature or earth-based, but using such energies should be more for the benefit of others.

You may dream about a snake and that is one way a spirit guide encourages you to review your lifestyle. Snakes in dreams can be scary, but this is rarely the case with spirit guides. You have lots of latent energy and the snake guide is showing you how to use this primal force for positive transformations.

## Crystals: snowflake obsidian

We've chosen snowflake obsidian as our crystal this month, if only because there's a tried and trusted spell, which may come in useful over Yule ([see later in this issue](#)). Obsidian is basically volcanic glass – an igneous rock that has little in it that is crystalline. It forms as soon as lava cools down. It's naturally black, but the white patches are called **phenocryst**, which are crystalline formations in the main mass.

The **main healing properties** of snowflake obsidian are:

- Snowflake obsidian helps with weight-loss diets, boosts the eyes and help to smooth the skin.
- Helps as a de-tox, to remove toxins from the body.
- It helps to combat dis-eases involving the vascular system and blood circulation.
- Also, it helps to heal joint pains, muscle strains, cramp and other musculo-skeletal problems.
- Snowflake obsidian aids with menstrual cycles and balancing your hormones as well.

**From a spiritual stance**, snowflake obsidian is a very positive stone for balance, courage and new ideas.

- It is aligned with the root chakra and draws grounding energy into the body, helping to balance both body and mind in times of instability.
- It is a stone of purification – dispelling negativity and replacing it with positivity - snowflake obsidian serves to cleanse your spirit.
- It also soothes and calms against any fears.
- Snowflake obsidian is connected to guardian spirits and acts as a stone of protection.
- It is also a stone of abundance and helps a person to make wise decisions.



## Herb of the month: hyssop

Common or garden hyssop (*hyssopus officinalis*) is a popular plant, used for both cooking and for its medicinal properties. Herbal healers use the leaves and flowers for infusions or tinctures or for essential oils. It is a semi-evergreen shrub with purple, pink and white flowers, part of the mint family. Some people choose to use hyssop leaves as a flavouring in casseroles or stews. And it is good for bees and butterflies.

OK then, [what would you use hyssop for?](#)

- It's good for coughs and colds with phlegm: an infusion or tincture helps to loosen phlegm or stop coughs, due to its expectorant property.
- Needless to say, one can also make a syrup from hyssop for this purpose.
- It is possible to make an infusion out of the fresh green tops of hyssop as a remedy for rheumatism.
- The minty taste means that hyssop clears a stuffy nose or headache, if used as a steam inhalation.
- Hyssop is really good for digestive problems, eg wind or stomach cramps, or to boost the appetite.
- What else to say? Oh yes, hyssop is a good herb that is used to combat tapeworms.
- Recent studies have found that hyssop is good for diabetics too – hyssop leaves or an extract of them prevent spikes in blood sugar levels.



## Recipe: Solstice soup-er meal

As we approach Yule/ Alban Arthan, there are many traditional recipes to make. In past Yule issues of **GYLDEN MAGICK**, we've had recipes for ginger biscuits and vegan gravy. This time, we're including several suggestions for a Yule feast, including soup. So, let's start with a hot fruit soup, which might go down well on a cold solstice evening.

### Ingredients

1. Water
2. 256g of **dried** fruit – this could be whatever's in the cupboard, eg apricots, peaches, pears, raisins or cranberries.
3. 256g of **fresh** apples slices.
4. 1 orange, sliced.
5. 1 lemon, sliced.
6. 2-3 cinnamon sticks.
7. 12 cloves and other spices, if required.

### Method

1. Half-fill a kettle with water and warm it up, not to boil.
2. Add the water to a pan.
3. Put all the fruits and spices in the pan and simmer for 45–60 minutes.
4. Add a little extra water if it becomes too syrupy.
5. When it's warmed thoroughly, serve as part of a solstice ritual or meal.
6. One could add fresh bread to the meal, late harvest crops (eg berries or nuts) and shortbread rounds – to represent the birth of the new sun.



# Winter Solstice blessings

By Gylden Fellowship

The victory of the Oak King over the Holly King is complete for this year.  
 His reign begins and the wheel of the year turns once again.  
 The winter solstice is a time when darkness reigns supreme,  
     And as the earth lies still, wrapped in sleep,  
     No-one needs have a fear of the winter's dark and cold.  
     When the new light of day dawns, it will be stronger.  
     The wheel turns again awakening the earth,  
     Awakening our potential for life, love and joy.  
 From this darkness, the light of our world and our spirits will be reborn.  
     We look forward to Imbolg and the first stirrings of life.

In our circle, we gather round,  
 And with songs our voices ring.  
 We settle down to enjoy the tale,  
     Of the Oak and the Holly King.

Then we sit and share the feast,  
 As we pass bread and wine around.  
 As blessings from mingled voices...  
     "Never hunger," "Never thirst" abound.

*(c) Isha ArrowHawk, 2 November 2000*



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## Amanda Hill, glass artist

Photos from <https://www.amandahillglass.co.uk>





**Artist's note:** All the pieces here are hand-painted or powder-painted and the tree is kiln-carved, so it is indented on one side. My website is: <https://www.amandahillglass.co.uk>

# Environmental round-up

By Sussex Wildlife Trust

In the November issue of **GYLDEN MAGICK**, we featured a few of the entrants for the Into the Wild 2020 competition from Sussex Wildlife Trust. The entrants have been judged and the winner was the photo of the kingfishers.



The photographer, Michael Vickers of Pulborough, said afterwards, "I was lucky to be in the right place at the right time, when one male kingfisher aggressively confronted another, who had been quietly watching the water." The runner-up was Richard French from St Leonards-on-Sea with his picture of ancient woodland, *A Twist in Time*.

SWT has **announced several online talks** (zoom) – it's probably worth booking in advance:

- Thrushes in winter: 2 December – 3pm
- Flowers of Rye Harbour: 8 December – 7.30pm
- Winter birds of Sussex: 9 December – 7.30pm
- Nature table live (6): 10 December – 7.30pm

All the talks and webinars can be watched again via the link, <https://sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/discover/go-wild-at-home/sussex-wildlife-trust-tv>.

On we go with some news about **Horsham**. SWT has set up a new partnership with Horsham District Council, called **Wilder Horsham District**. It's a 5-year project, designed to develop a Nature Recovery Network for Horsham District. The overall aim is reverse the decline in species and

habitats and enrich the natural environment for all residents and visitors. This project will bring together the local council, SWT, landowners and local communities – local wildlife will be protected at a local level.

**The objectives of this project are to:**

1. Help wildlife thrive across the Horsham District.
2. Create networks of land that are protected and enhanced for wildlife, to allow habitats to expand and for species populations to increase which will ensure that they are resilient to change.
3. Increase awareness of actions that communities can take to improve their local natural environment and the benefits that wildlife provides.
4. Maximise the opportunities that protecting and enhancing wildlife brings for climate change mitigation and adaptation.
5. It will also contribute to the wider vision for a **Wilder Future**, the Wildlife Trusts' national campaign for a UK-wide Nature Recovery Network.



## Poetry - Shrine

By Nicola Ison

Ancient yews, a spring and sarsen stones,  
A meeting place for merry Pharisees,  
Or a centre for latent magic.  
Age-old, this place is the hub,  
Attracting pilgrims old and new,  
With feelings of awed reverence.  
It's listed in all the tourist guides,  
But very few sightseers come –  
There are no ice cream vans or,  
Amusement arcades or even,  
A shop for postcards and souvenirs.  
This is Nature in the raw –  
An opportunity for reflective peace,  
In a world of turgid soap-operas,  
That lurches from one crisis to another.  
Immune to such melodramas,  
The shrine dreams on in partial sentience,  
Remembering prayers from druids,  
And tributes from modern pagans.  
Some visitors come armed with cameras and,  
All manner of photo-accessories,  
Taking pictures from every angle.  
Such intrusions are allowed, but ignore,  
The essential truth of the shrine –  
True pilgrims need no photos or guided tours.  
To gain a glimpse of other levels,  
One needs to absorb the aura of the shrine,  
Letting it seep into your spirit and,  
Remaining there forever and beyond.  
This is a place for those who can see,  
For those who can perceive the history,  
Of ever-changing landscapes and life.  
The shrine was here when men still,  
Walked on all fours and ran from thunder.  
It will be here when men have vanished,  
Leaving small traces of their existence.  
Ageless and tranquil, the spirits of place,  
Via powers of sun, water, air and earth,  
Maintain unceasing vigilance at all times,  
Throughout the Wheel of each year.

# Celestial notes

By Joanna Bristow-Watkins

We are very pleased to welcome **Joanna Bristow-Watkins** as one of our new contributors for **GYLDEN MAGICK** in 2021 and, here, we're including a few details about her expertise – many thanks to Rebecca Granshaw for suggesting Joanna. Joanna runs **Harmony Healing**, which may be accessed at [www.harmonyhealing.co.uk](http://www.harmonyhealing.co.uk). It should be noted that many of the training events are online at present, although some of the Forest Bathing+ sessions are going ahead, near Guildford, with modifications due to covid-19 rules – all details on Joanna's website.

Virtual training events include healing circles, readings, unity consciousness meditations, moon attunements, an Imbolg ritual and other online gatherings that are based on the lunar cycle. Again, more details on Joanna's website. One thing that we are excited to learn more about in 2021 is the fact that Joanna organises **Egyptian Alchemy Healing using the Reyad Sekh Em** (RSE) system. Joanna is a Reyad Sekh Em® (Egyptian Alchemy Healing) Practitioner & Teacher. We'll feature more details about these courses in the next issue, as they commence in February 2021.

Another area of Joanna's expertise is her regular **Celestial Forecasting**, including the one for 1-31 December 2020. We cannot reprint the whole forecast here – readers who want more information are recommended to consult her website or subscribe to her newsletter. What we can do is to take a selection of items from the December 2020 forecast, which we think will appeal to our readers.

1. **Sunday 13-Monday 14 December** is the peak of the **Geminid Meteor Shower**. The Geminids are considered by many to be the best annual meteor shower and are known for producing multi-coloured meteors: 65% being white, 26% yellow and the remaining 9% blue, red and green. Rates typically peak at 100-120/hour; this high activity lasts for several hours. It is certainly possible to see 80-100 Geminids in a single hour, but only from a dark site! With the recent New Moon, viewing could be excellent, weather permitting. The Geminid Meteor Shower is expected to peak in activity on the nights of 13-14 December, although some meteors should be visible from 7-21 December. The radiant point for this shower will be in the constellation, Gemini. Best viewing is usually to the east after midnight. The New Moon on the 14 December will aid viewing due to less light pollution – try the [Earthsky](http://Earthsky.org) [Website](#) for further information.
2. **Monday 14 December** is the **Solstice New Moon and a total Solar Eclipse**, though not visible in London, more details at [timeanddate.com](http://timeanddate.com). Moonrise should be at 4.15pm or so. A solar eclipse happens whenever the moon passes between the Earth and the Sun, partly or totally obscuring the Sun for anyone viewing from Earth. This eclipse will not be visible in London, but will affect all of us energetically. What you could do is carry out a New Moon Abundance ritual just after the new moon, to take advantage of the waxing energy.
3. **Thursday 17 December** is the **Roman Festival of Saturnalia**. This was the popular banquet commemorating the dedication of the temple of the god Saturn. It was marked by tomfoolery and reversal of social roles, in which slaves and masters ostensibly switched places. The holiday was celebrated with a sacrifice at the Temple of Saturn, in the Roman Forum and a public feast, continual partying with private gift-giving, gambling and a celebratory atmosphere that reversed the usual Roman social norms with masters providing table service for their slaves. Saturn was an agricultural deity who was associated with the Golden Age, when humans enjoyed the spontaneous bounty of the earth, without work, in a state of innocence.

4. **Friday 1-Tuesday 5 January 2021** (peaking on the 3-4 January) is the **Quadrantids Meteor Shower**; visible from 1 January after midnight and peaking in the early hours of 4 January. Typically, 40 or so bright, blue and fast (25.5 miles per second) meteors will radiate from near the Plough constellation (see picture below), some blazing more than halfway across the sky. A small percentage of them leave persistent dust trains. This shower usually has a very sharp peak, usually lasting only about an hour. The particles that cause the Quadrantid meteor show originate from the asteroid 2003 EH<sub>1</sub>, an asteroid that is probably a piece broken off from an obsolete comet. Since the orbit of 2003 EH<sub>1</sub> is highly inclined to the orbit of the Earth, the Earth passes through it very quickly. Thus, the Quadrantid meteor shower is an extremely short one, lasting only a few hours. With the recent full moon on 30 December, there could be too much light pollution to see much...see [www.earthsky.org](http://www.earthsky.org) for more details.



# Spi-rituality - Gylden Yule

**By Gylden Fellowship**

*Here's a ritual that we created in 2017 as an indoor event. Again, who knows which restrictions will be in place at the Winter Solstice, but this one could be carried out while having a restaurant meal or, simply, while eating with relatives in the house – your choices.*

**Before going to the table, pick someone to lead the ritual (RL)**

**RL** – We call to the spirits of this place. We ask for your love and protection and for your permission to conduct our ritual during this feast. This is your space and we invite you to be present at our ceremony. Hail and Welcome.

**All** - Hail and Welcome

**RL** - Yule is Midwinter, the shortest day and longest night of the year. The time since Samhain has given us rest, reflection and the development of new ideas. At the winter solstice, the cycle of the waning sun stops and the days start to lengthen. Warmth and new growth will return to us.

At Yule, we celebrate the birth of the new sun, make solstice resolutions for the new year and anticipate the rebirth of our active selves. It is a good time to reflect on our achievements since Litha. We are at one with the rising sun and we are part of the change for our new dawn.

**Before eating, put some Yuletide symbols in the centre of the table. Plate with breads and a chalice of water.**

*All - O Brighid, we thank you so,  
For the food and drink that you bestow.  
For your protection and your love,  
To us below from you above.  
Joyful laughter comes your way,  
As we eat your fruits upon this day,  
So, mote it be.*

**During the meal**

This is a time for fellowship – share your creativity with stories, poems and, above all, laughter. The deities wish for us to be happy with the dawn of a new sun. Group magick is all about inclusivity, respect for others and shared energies. Let your inner love and magick be revealed to all those at the meal.

**Mid-meal: Bread and Water ceremony**

**RL** - We celebrate the grains, seeds and all of our earth's abundance for they nourish both our bodies and souls. As we endure winter, the bread of life will help sustain us and I mark this bread as part of our lives. (Eats a piece of the bread.)

**RL** - We celebrate this water and all natural springs of our earth's streams and rivers for they nourish both our bodies and souls. As we approach winter, the water will help sustain us and I mark this water as part of our lives. (Takes a sip from the chalice.)

The bread pieces and chalice are passed from person to person with each person saying *May you never thirst and May you never be hungry*, in turn. Each person replies: *Blessed be*.

### At the end of the meal

RL - We thank the spirits of above, the spirits of below and the spirits of within. We thank you for your love and protection and for your presence here tonight. We acknowledge that this is their space and that they remain present here after our meal is complete and our gathering is done. No doubt we shall meet again soon, but for now we take our leave of you and bid you - Hail and Farewell.

All - Hail and Farewell

All - Merry meet, merry part and merry meet again

**Each person receives a Gylden candle for Yule**

### Things to do after the Yuletide Meal

- ⊕ Try a winter solstice bath to de-stress yourself and eliminate any dis-ease from your system at Yule. Use whatever oils you find soothing, eg rosemary, orange, pine, patchouli or sandalwood. Light gold and green candles and soak yourself in the water, to refresh your weary holiday spirit. Meditate on the Goddess and her virtues of peace, cool moonlight and clean purification – no clutter or stress.
- ⊕ Clear your living areas at home and infuse them with new energies. Gather a symbol for each element, eg a feather for air, a crystal for earth, etc. Wash anything that can be washed, smudge other things, let new air into the room and clear out anything not needed. Replace with fresh flowers.
- ⊕ Start a dream diary until Imbolg and meditate on what you remember.
- ⊕ Create a Yule shrine, inside or out.



# Tales for darker evenings: The Feather of Truth

By the Storyteller

Rather than a traditional ghost story (and there's plenty of these on our FB group this year), here's a morality tale from Ancient Egypt – from about 3000 years ago.

We start with two brothers. Ahmed was the older brother and not a nice person at all – he was a bully, stole food or money from people and refused to work. Yussef was his younger brother – he worked as a farmer and could be seen around the village helping the ill or the needy.

This state of affairs might have gone on, but for a plague that swept through the brothers' part of Egypt – both Ahmed and Yussef died. In Ancient Egypt, anyone who died could only get to the Kingdom of the West (= heaven) by passing a set of tests from the gods.

1. The **River of Death** could only be crossed by boat and the newly dead had to persuade the ferryman to row them across. Ahmed and Yussef approached the ferry and Ahmed said that he was very good, sure to go to heaven and his brother was wicked, but as they were brothers, they had to travel together. The ferryman took them across the river and gave them a map. Yussef stayed quiet, not criticising Ahmed.
2. There were **12 Gates**, each guarded by a huge snake. Ahmed repeated his story to each snake so that they attacked his brother instead. Yussef survived and stayed quiet.
3. A special boat was needed to cross the **Lake of Fire** and, as with the River of Death, Ahmed persuaded the boatman to take them across. Yussef was burned, but not Ahmed.
4. The next test was a team of **42 judges** who read out a list of all the bad deeds done by the brothers, but Ahmed blamed Yussef for all of them and Yussef stayed quiet.
5. The final test took place in the **Judgement Hall of Osiris**, god of the dead. He had a special set of scales. On one side was a feather from the eagle goddess of justice and truth, Ma'at. The heart of each new dead person was put on the other side. Yussef went first – his heart was pure and balanced with the feather, so he was allowed to go to the Kingdom of the West to meet his ancestors. Ahmed's heart was heavy with all the lies he had told in the tests and all the bad deeds of his life. The scales tipped against him and Osiris called for Ammut, a crocodile goddess, to feed on Ahmed's heart – and that is what happened.



# Trivial pursuits! - excommunicants anonymous

By Gylden Fellowship

A notable date in the history of the Roman Catholic Church, (I know this isn't pagan, but it is interesting) is [1717](#), because Pope Clement XI issued a decision that the excommunication of animals would no longer be permitted. You might be forgiven for thinking that I've lost my mind here, but the medieval Catholic Church was noted for the (fairly) frequent excommunication of animals and insects.

Let's start with an example and some of the earliest records come from France in 1120-21, when Bishop Laon (Picardy) decided to excommunicate all the caterpillars that were feeding off the crops in his diocese. Shortly afterwards, St Bernard of Clairvaux was irritated by swarms of flies during his preaching at the Foigny monastery (also in the Aisne region). He excommunicated them all on the spot. Apparently, all the flies were found dead on the floor of the church next day and had to be swept out.

To make matters worse, some of these excommunications took the form of show trials, where the accused animals were placed in the dock of an ecclesiastical court to hear evidence against them. Here is another example from France in 1510. At that time, the area of Autun (Burgundy) was infested with rats and many farmers asked the bishop of that region for help. An Episcopal court was convened with judge, prosecutors and defence counsel for the rats. The defence lawyer based his argument on the fact that the rats had not been summoned properly and that any such summoning was very dangerous due to the numbers of local cats. The trial went on and on and on due to the long list of witness evidence against the rats, but the sentence was decisive: the rats were condemned and duly excommunicated.

Here are some more cases from the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries from France, Austria and Italy, which I've summarised below, but the general idea is clear – to protect crops and livestock, excommunication was an authorised Roman Catholic tool against vermin or insects.

1. Flocks of sparrows that pooped on the Church of St Vincent the Martyr were excommunicated.
2. In Burgundy, a relative of the Duke of Burgundy bought an orchard, but one tree was barren. The local priest explained that the tree had been excommunicated by virtue of the fact that young people of the parish had abandoned mass on one occasion, to collect the ripe fruit from that tree.
3. In 1451, fishes in Lake Geneva were plagued by leeches and the Bishop of Lausanne convened a court. The sentence was that the leeches were ordered to confine themselves to one area or face excommunication.
4. Back to the region of Autun in 1480 where more very hungry caterpillars were excommunicated by an Episcopal Court and the local priests were asked to repeat the sentence until the insects went away.
5. Still in Autun region in 1488, a similar sentence was passed against snails.
6. In Normandy, in 1516, there were identical proceedings against grasshoppers.
7. In 1587, there was a formal ecclesiastical trial to prosecute the weevils that were attacking crops in the area around St Julien in the Bordeaux region of France. The sentence is not known, but the trial itself lasted for over 8 months!

# Using snowflake obsidian for Yuletide stress

By Nick the Witch

Yule is a common time for all manner of tensions, particularly in the light of government restrictions on covid-19. As I write this, I'm still not entirely sure what the final rules are meant to achieve or what format will be imposed. Still, here's a simple little charm to help people cope with stress or anxieties over Yuletide. I've been using this charm for healing for a long time now and it uses **snowflake obsidian**, which is our featured crystal for this month.

1. Cleanse a piece of snowflake obsidian and a piece of rose quartz, eg under the light of a full moon or in spring water.
2. Put the snowflake obsidian into your dominant hand (right hand if right-handed).
3. Close your eyes, focus on the stone in your hand and spend 5-10 minutes imagining all the feelings of tension, namely anger, depression, low self-esteem, etc running from your head and heart into your arm and down into the stone.
4. Open your eyes and bin the stone or cleanse it again, eg under cold running water - all the bad feelings have gone too.
5. Then, you repeat the procedure with the rose quartz, except this time, think of joyous, inspiring memories and place them in the stone.
6. This stone should be kept or carried with you, to remind you of happier times.



# Witchcraft history: The Tebay Witch

By Gylden Fellowship

Last month, we featured a short piece on the infamous Malleus Maleficarum. This month, we're staying in Britain – in Cumbria to look at the case of **Mary Baines**, who was certainly famous, if not that rich. Tebay is a small village on the M6, not far from Kendal and the Lake District.

Mary Baines (or Baynes) was a farmer's daughter, born on an isolated farm in 1721. She was a spinster and stayed at home to look after her parents. When they died, she was forced to take a cottage in Tebay. She had become more eccentric as she had grown older and the villagers treated her with fear and hatred. If children teased Mary, she would threaten them.

Anything strange that happened was thought to be her fault and some believed she had magic powers to help her in her malicious deeds. She was not a good-looking woman and it wasn't long before she was known as *The Tebay Witch*.

Mary did not like cruelty to animals and, when the fox hunt was in Tebay one day, she was said to have turned herself into a hare to lead the hunt down into Tebay Gorge. When she reached the bottom of the gorge, she re-charged her magickal powers on a heap of stones. She then ran up the fell above and the hounds followed her, but couldn't keep up with her and returned to Tebay completely exhausted. Of course, by this time, the hare had turned back into Mary Baines. Here is a story about Mary, told by one of her Tebay peers.

*"Ned Nisson, of the Cross Keys Inn, had a mastiff which worried Mary's favourite cat to death. She decided to have the cat properly buried in her garden and a man named Willan dug a grave for it. Old Mary handed him an open book and pointed to something he was to read, but Willan, not thinking it worthwhile to read anything over the cat, took pussy by the leg and said: 'Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, Here's a hole and in tha must'.*

*Mary grew angry and warned her companion he would fare no better than his levity. Soon afterwards, Willan was ploughing his field when the implement suddenly bound up and the handle struck one of his eyes causing blindness. Mary Baines was given credit for having bewitched his plough."*

Mary also predicted widely that, one day, carriages would go over Loops Fell without the help of horses. She would die before her prophecy was realised, but the prediction came true when the London & Glasgow Railway came to Tebay, some 50 years later.

Mary died aged 90 in 1811, the most celebrated witch in that area: at that time, many people in Cumbria were superstitious and took pains to keep witches away from their homes. Was Mary a real witch or was it just superstition? What is curious is that there are no records as to the location of her grave.



# Cosmic energies: the theremin

By Mark Sharpen

As this is the Yule issue, it was suggested that I lay off the complicated quantum stuff for now! So, I'll introduce you to the wonders of quantum physics in 2021. But I wondered what to do now and was idly thinking about electrical energy fields – as you do. Let's have a look at the theremin, beloved of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop. **Fun fact:** it's a customised theremin (an electro-theremin) that was used on the Beach Boys song, *Good Vibrations*.

Theremins were invented in the early 1920s. **Fun fact (2):** the early Doctor Who episodes and theme tune were **not** played on a theremin, but via tape loops and hand-tuned oscillators. In short, a theremin is an electronic musical instrument that is played without being touched. It looks most like a wooden box with a couple of metal antennae. By waving your hands near the antennae, you can control the pitch and volume of the sounds.

This might sound like magick but it's not really. There's a principle known as heterodyning, which is what happens when you combine a high-frequency signal with another one to produce a lower frequency. So, if you wave your hands in the electrical fields from the antennae, you're actually producing a capacitor between your hands and the antennae. The sound varies according to the distance between the two and the air too – this interaction between your hands and the antennae forms part of an electrical circuit, the oscillator. The output from your hand/antennae oscillator is combined with the output from a fixed oscillator and these two outputs produce both the volume and the pitch or tone. This is a really brief overview, but it's the best I can do – I'm sure there's some sound engineers out there who are gnashing their teeth right now!



I've put a picture above. The left antenna does the volume and the right antenna controls the pitch. If you move your hand really close to the left antenna, the sound is really quiet. If you move your hand really close to the right antenna, the pitch is higher. I guess it depends what pitch you want, finding the right placement of your hands and then moving them for the volume. What else to say? Some theremins only have one antenna, because it's cheaper and it is possible to build your own model. So, wishing you all a happy, scientific Yule.

## Poetry - *The Healing Witch*

By Nicola Ison

Hello, old friend – so here we are,  
Trapped in our isolation cells, but,  
Harsh realities give a chance to reflect,  
On afternoons and evenings of love and laughter.

Memories come thick and fast when asked,  
You ordering more tea and scones,  
A comfortable meal at the tea-room or cafe,  
All your training courses and workshops.

A storm of kindness that evokes,  
Sage advice and precious moments in time –  
A Yuletide feast and music from a long-ago solstice,  
And holistic or crystal fayres across the years.

You made such a difference in all of your tasks,  
With smiles, light-based healing and empathic help,  
Earning natural respect from all you met,  
And spreading cosmic love on the way.

From a vantage point, I should say,  
You were such a diligent and reliable poet,  
Transformed now into stunning visions in paint,  
I'll remember the colours and patterns always.

And here we are – memories are all different leaves,  
You and I were blown together and then apart,  
Then together again, but the memories continue between,  
As we yearn for cell-doors to be opened.



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