



# Gylden Magick

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## Dec. 2022

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.

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 and we welcome new members constantly.

First things first though – we've decided to continue with the longer version of our magazine in our 5<sup>th</sup> year of publication, from September. So, our **Oak Moon** issue comes in at 29 pages, with lots of different topics. There are some longer pieces, to give authors more space.

Most of our contributors come from the Gylden area, providing a mix of

magick, wisdom and stories. Past editions of **GYLDEN MAGICK** can be accessed on our website and on Facebook too.

This issue has a **seasonal flavour** to it with both articles and some lollipops too. In the concert music sense, lollipops are short, entertaining pieces.

So, this issue of **GYLDEN MAGICK** includes Gaelic poetry, lighter pieces from Mark on biological alchemy and another on leap seconds. There are two texts from Charlie on crystals, Sinterklaas photos for 6 December, standing stones in winter, a ghost story, wildlife news, celestial forecasts, seasonal magick and stress-relief at Yule.

The photo above is indicative of the season – the druid feast of Alban

Arthan (Winter Solstice) falls on 21 December. The meaning of Alban Arthan is the light of winter.

Anything else? Oh yes, the title – we never forget that our faith is based upon Nature and that our strength comes from earth magick, regardless of the diversity of pagan pathways.

Many of our annual festivals are based upon the light, e.g. the solstices and the equinoxes, as significant to us today as to our ancestors. Talking of festivals, it's great that several are starting up again.

For more info, why not join the **Gylden Fellowship** community on Facebook today and catch up on our news?

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# Winter Solstice magick

## By Gylden Fellowship

Alban Arthan, also known as Yule, celebrates the winter solstice, the shortest day and longest night, after which the days lengthen and the march of the sun towards spring is begun. For some druids, **Alban Arthan** means the light of winter (Welsh), while others believe it means the light of Arthur – this could be King Arthur Pendragon, who was seen as the sun god, reborn at the Winter Solstice.

The word, **Yule**, comes from an ancient Norse word, Hjól (yoh-l) meaning wheel, i.e. when the wheel of the year was at its lowest point awaiting the sun's return. At Yule, we celebrate the turning of the year towards the light and warmth of summer. This is the night on which the hope of life and the promise of spring is given, to give us courage in the coming cold.

I was wondering about a spell for Yule, when I was tempted by some of the essential oils in-house, eg tangerine or frankincense. So, here's a few things you could do for Yule to make your place smell wonderful.

1. Take some large oranges and stud them with cloves – leave them around.
2. Slice some apples, pears or oranges into thin pieces and cook them in the oven on a low heat for most of the day until they are dried. Add the dried fruit to pine cones or yew branches for a table decoration.
3. For an instant good atmosphere, stew some plums or apples for tea with cloves or cinnamon.
4. The traditional Yule plants are bayberry, cinnamon, spruce, pine and frankincense.

While we're thinking about **Yule aromas and incense**, it isn't that difficult to make your own incense for this season – here's one suggestion – mix the ingredients together and let them dry out.

- 1 part cinnamon
- 1 part bayberry
- 3 parts cedar
- 3 parts pine needles.

It is true that aromas can re-create the ambience of past Yuletides and any incense will help this process. You have to decide whether your incense will be loose ingredients for burning on a flame, incense sticks or cones. Any coniferous trees can contribute to a good incense via needles, resins, cones or bark. Do not forget to add a blessing as you mix the incense, just as you would when making herbal remedies or meals...it's the focus and intent that count, as with any magickal activity. So, here's another suggestion for a Yuletide incense.

- 2 parts juniper berries
- 2 parts mugwort
- 1 part cedar
- 1 part dried mistletoe
- 1 part dried pine needles (or pine resin)
- 1 part laurel leaves
- 1/2 part cinnamon
- 1/2 part rosemary.

Add your ingredients to your mixing bowl one at a time. Measure carefully and, if the leaves or blossoms need to be crushed, use your mortar and pestle to do so. As you blend the herbs together, state your intent. You may find it helpful to charge your incense with a blessing or incantation. Store your incense in a tightly sealed jar. Make sure you label it with its name and date. Use within three months, so that it remains charged and fresh.



Apart from incense, you could create a **Yuletide potpourri** in a decorative bowl or basket using these ingredients and a small teacup. Once in the bowl, mix the ingredients together gently and add a scent or oil, if required.

- A cup of dried orange peel
- 1/2 a cup of dried lemon zest
- 1/3 of a cup of whole cloves
- 4 cinnamon sticks, broken into smaller pieces
- A handful of pine needles
- A sprig or two of seasonal berries
- A pinch of allspice or ginger.

A **Yule tree blessing** is an important task for this season. If you're thinking about altar or home decorations for Yule and a tree is in your mind, here is a blessing to use. Light some incense or scented candles, perhaps put on music or get a drink of herbal tea and make the whole thing into a mini-ritual. For the blessing, **you'll need a candle, some water, salt and incense** - as you say the blessing, sprinkle the salt around the tree in a circle (not on the tree, just around it), smudging with the incense, passing the candle over it and adding water to the pot at the bottom.

*By the powers of earth, I bless this tree - as it remains a symbol of life - stable and strong in my home throughout Yule.*

*By the powers of air, I bless this tree - as the cold winter winds blow away the burden of the old year and I welcome renewed energy into heart and home.*

*By the powers of fire, I bless this tree - as the warmth of the sun returns - bringing the end of dark days and life for next year.*

*By the powers of water, I bless this tree - so it may stay bright and green for longer and all can enjoy the harmony and peace of Yule.*

A **Yule log** can be decorated in-house by finding a log (about 15 inches long), tying cloth or paper ribbons on it and putting mistletoe, ivy, holly or yew under the ribbons. If you wish, the log can be decorated further by glueing on some seasonal berries or pine cones.

For **decorated fir cones or holly sprigs** that can hang on the Yule tree, take some pieces of holly or fir cones and add some glitter glue to them, to give sparkle and shine. If using holly, tie a few sprigs together using ribbon, making a loop at the top so you can hang it for decoration. If using fir cones, tie some string or ribbon around the base of each one, making a loop so you can hang the decoration. You can add some bells and pagan symbols to the ribbon tie too.

What would Yuletide be if there wasn't **a spell to find lost presents or to wish for something magickal?**

**Set-up:** Waxing moon, a small star charm, 12 small blue or white crystals, white or silver pouch and a slip of paper.

1. Put all the items on a moonlit window-sill for cleansing.
2. Write your wish on the paper and anchor it with the star charm.
3. Surround the wish/charm with crystals.
4. For next 11 nights, add 1 crystal per night to the pouch.
5. Each time you add a crystal, say:

*"Samhain has gone and Yule is near,  
With frost and ice and air so clear.  
Bring peaceful nights with shining stars,  
Grant my wish as winter's here.  
So mote it be."*

6. On the final night, put everything remaining into the pouch.
7. Carry the pouch with you.

**Note:** any crystals are OK – I keep a little bag of aquamarine, quartz shards, howlite, etc.

A Yuletide message from **Gylden Fellowship** – we wish all our readers a happy Yule and look forward to celebrating the Winter Solstice with some of them. However, we'd like to say special thanks to our **guest authors** in 2022.

Charlie Foreverdark

Joanna Bristow- Watkins

Paula Restall

Rebecca Granshaw

Mark Sharpen

Dr Pat Morris & the British Hedgehog Preservation Society

Sussex Wildlife Trust

The Mammal Society

The Woodland Trust

Inge van Straalen

Bernadette Flynn

Brianna Cilia

Matt Richards

**And we look forward to welcoming a slew of new contributors from next month.**

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# Sinterklaas: 6 December 2022

Collated by Gylden Fellowship





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# Crystal clear: inclusions

By Charlie Foreverdark

In very basic terms, when it comes to crystals, an “inclusion” is any foreign material that is trapped inside of another mineral during formation. The term also refers in gemmology to any imperfection in the appearance of the gemstone. As intriguing and beautiful as crystals are on the surface, under magnification they enter a whole different dimension of awe, as inner crevices and inclusions come to life.

Certain types of inclusions are found more often in natural gemstones than in their synthetic counterparts. For example, needles, fluids, phantoms and secondary minerals are inclusions typically found in natural gemstones. Synthetic gems can also feature inclusions; however, these are typically specific to their method of growth. Characteristics such as translucent to opaque colouring, uniform coarseness and web-like patterning can betray a lab-grown stone.

There are three main scientific categories for the classification of crystal inclusions.

1. **Protogenetic Inclusions** were already present when the host mineral began to form. The host mineral grew around existing mineral occurrences, such as quartz growing around rutile needles. The inclusions are therefore older than the host/matrix crystal.
2. **Syngenetic inclusions** were formed alongside the host mineral at the same time. These can be solid, liquid or gas or any combinations of these three forms of matter. A common example of syngenetic inclusion is the internal crystal “phantom”, often seen in quartz. These can appear as darker zoned brown/smoky or white translucent areas, and are typically caused by natural irradiation of the crystal during its growth cycle. Different coloured phantoms can be seen, such as wisps of purple amethyst within clear quartz.
3. **Epigenetic inclusions** were formed after the host crystal was formed. These inclusions are usually either formed by exsolution or from the recrystallisation of a fracture in a host mineral. They can be liquid, solid or gaseous. These inclusions are therefore younger than the host crystal.

Crystals can have other types of inclusions; not just fluid, but solid material and other minerals too. The most commonly found mineral inclusions within crystals are:

- Chlorite (green or lavender)
- Hematite (red/red sparkles)
- Goethite (orange yellow)
- Rutile (golden needles)
- Clay (reddish brown)
- Calcite (white opaque inclusions)
- Mica (shimmering hexagonal flakes)
- Specular Hematite (dark flakes, sparkle)
- Epidote (green needles)
- Tourmaline (black needles)
- Hollandite (tiny black radiating needles)
- Cacozenite (the golden-brown acicular needles within amethyst, known in the trade as Super Seven or Melody’s Stone)
- Precious metals, such as gold and silver.

Some examples of solid/mineral inclusions include deposits of green mica in aventurine, pyrite deposits within lapis lazuli, and rutile deposits found in sapphire. Fossilised amber and copal can even feature insects and entire creatures included within its solid form, as the preserved cadavers of insects, small lizards and even birds ended up trapped within the fossilised ancient tree sap millions of years ago.



**Static bubble inclusions** can come in many different shapes and sizes - it should be noted that very round perfect static bubbles are often an indication of synthetic or glass imitation rather than genuine gemstone. Some types of inclusion refer to the natural structure of the crystal and are the product of internal cracks, cleavage faults and fracture lines. These often have an effect upon the aesthetic features, creating “rainbows” within the crystal. They can occur naturally, but they can also be man-made: crackle quartz is artificially enhanced with heat and then very quickly cooled to create a myriad of these internal fractures and chromatic spectrums!

The effect caused by the cracks and fractures is sometimes referred to as **feathering**. During the growth process, the host crystal may grow, stops and then begin to grow again. This allows new secondary and tertiary mineral solutions to coat the pre-existing surface layers. This can result in changes to the structure or composition of a crystal, and cause colour zoning or phantoms. With more pronounced phantoms, the external shape of the host crystal can sometimes be seen within a cut gemstone. Additionally, radiation halos can be caused by radioactive minerals in crystals.

**Dendritic inclusions** are named after the Greek word for tree-like. These intricate inclusions appear organic due to their plant-like structure, but are actually inorganic traces of iron or manganese. The iron and manganese ions gain access to the forming stone as weathering solutions from neighbouring rock. Silk inclusions are dense inclusions of very fine intersecting acicular needles within crystals. They exhibit sheen similar to that of silk fabric. This inclusion is frequently seen in ruby and sapphire.

Inclusions are one of the most important factors when it comes to **gem valuation**. Different inclusions in different stones can have very different effects on the value of the piece. On the one hand, a large intrusive inclusion in an otherwise perfectly clear 3 carat tanzanite would significantly devalue the gemstone against a flawless specimen. With a diamond, inclusions affect the clarity of the gem and ultimately diminish the value. Whilst it is typical for emeralds to feature the “jardin” (garden) of visible inclusions – the priciest and most desirable emeralds are the rarer brilliantly clear flawless vivid examples.

However, on the other hand, without a mass of inclusions a “star sapphire” or “star ruby” loses its trademark optical effect. The white colour of milky quartz is due to thousands or millions of microscopic fluid inclusions. In the case of chrysoberyl, no inclusions would render the stone devoid of its characteristic chatoyancy. The cashmere sapphire – widely considered to be the finest of all sapphires – gets its trademark sleepy glow from its inclusions. Rutile quartz without rutile inclusions becomes ordinary quartz. Without inclusions, moonstone loses the beautiful ethereal blue lunar glow.

# Sussex seasons photograph of the year 2022

By Sussex Wildlife Trust, here is the winning picture: more details from [www.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk).

It's Brian Watkins of Haywards Heath, with his outstanding photo - Banded Demoiselle Silhouette.



Brian Watkins had this to say, "The photo was a lucky chance encounter - I noticed the Banded Demoiselle roosting on a piece of grass. I'd always wanted a nice shot of one of these, so quickly changed to a macro lens and just had enough time to frame the demoiselle using the setting sun before it disappeared below the horizon. I decided to try the silhouette as it was too dark for a standard shot and I'm so pleased it worked."

# Leap seconds

By Mark Sharpen

Seems a while since I did a piece on the **measurement of time**, but the topic of leap seconds has just hit the news. OK then, most people understand the principle of leap years, once every four years.

At the moment, governments add leap seconds to official clocks to keep them synchronised with the Earth's rotation. What is newsworthy is that this practice will be paused from 2035 – a decision made at the General Conference on Weights and Measures (CGPM) outside Paris on 18 November. It means that from 2035, or possibly earlier, astronomical time (known as UT<sub>1</sub>) will be allowed to diverge by more than one second from coordinated universal time (UTC), which is based on the steady tick of atomic clocks. Since 1972, whenever both time systems have drifted apart by more than 0.9 seconds, a leap second has been added.

The CGPM, which also oversees the international system of units (SI), has proposed that no leap second should be added for at least a century, allowing UT<sub>1</sub> and UTC to slide out of sync by about 1 minute. But it plans to consult with other international organisations and decide by 2026 on what upper limit, if any, to put on how much they be allowed to diverge.



Stopping the adjustments is “a leap forward for researchers who work on time and frequency”, says Georgette Macdonald, director general of the Metrology Research Centre in Halifax, Canada. Leap seconds aren't predictable, as they depend on the Earth's natural rotation. They disrupt systems based on precise timekeeping, Macdonald says, and can wreak havoc in the digital age. Facebook's parent company, Meta, and Google are among the tech companies that have suggested that leap seconds should be abolished.

However, there may be some problems - Russia wants to push the deadline back to 2040 or later to deal with technical issues within its satellite-navigation system, GLONASS. The Russian system incorporates leap seconds, while the Global Position System (GPS) and others already effectively ignore them. The decision means that Russia might need to install new satellites and ground stations, says the former director of the Time Department at the International Bureau of Weights and Measures (BIPM) in Sèvres, France.

“Astronomers who rely on UT<sub>1</sub> to align their telescopes will also need to adjust, but the current situation is unsustainable and would continue to get worse” says Elizabeth Donley, who leads the Time and Frequency division at the National Institute of Standards and Technology, in Boulder, Colorado. Different organisations handle the leap second differently (Google, for example, smears out the extra second in the 24 hours around midnight UTC). This creates an ambiguity between time sources of as much as half a second.

In the long term, the Earth's rotation slows due to the pull of the Moon, but a speed-up since 2020 has also made the issue more pressing, because for the first time, a leap second might need to be removed, rather than added. UTC has only ever had to slow a beat to wait for the Earth, not skip ahead to catch up with it.

# Gaelic blessings

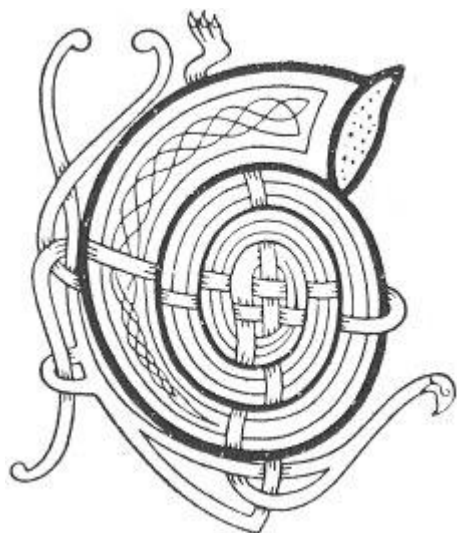
By Alexander Carmichael, from the *Carmina Gaedelica*

## CALLUINN A BHUILG [63]/ HOGMANAY HOGMANAY OF THE SACK

CALLUINN HO! - This rune is still repeated in the Isles. Rarely, however, do two persons recite it alike. This renders it difficult to decide the right form of the words.

The walls of the old houses in the West are very thick--from five to eight feet. There are no gables, the walls being of uniform height throughout. The roof of the house being raised from the inner edge of the wall, a broad terrace is left on the outside. Two or three stones project from the wall at the door, forming steps. On these the inmates ascend for purposes of thatching and securing the roof in time of storm.

The 'gilleán Callaig' carollers or Hogmanay lads perambulate the townland at night. One man is enveloped in the hard hide of a bull with the horns and hoofs still attached. When the men come to a house, they ascend the wall and run round sunwise, the man in the hide shaking the horns and hoofs, and the other men striking the hard hide with sticks. The appearance of the man in the hide is gruesome, while the din made is terrific. Having descended and recited their runes at the door, the Hogmanay men are admitted and treated to the best in the house. The performance seems to be symbolic, but of what it is not easy to say, unless of laying an evil spirit. That the rite is heathen and ancient is evident.



HOGMANAY of the sack,  
 Hogmanay of the sack,  
 Strike the hide,  
 Strike the hide.

Hogmanay of the sack,  
 Hogmanay of the sack,  
 Beat the skin,  
 Beat the skin.

Hogmanay of the sack,  
 Hogmanay of the sack,  
 Down with it! up with it!  
 Strike the hide.

Hogmanay of the sack,  
 Hogmanay of the sack,  
 Down with it! up with it!  
 Beat the skin.

Hogmanay of the sack,  
 Hogmanay of the sack.

PEAT is the fuel of the Highlands and Islands. Where wood is not obtainable, the fire is kept in during the night. The process by which this is accomplished is **called in Gaelic smaladh; in Scottish, smooring; and in English, smothering, or more correctly, subduing**. The ceremony of smooring the fire is artistic and symbolic and is performed with loving care. The embers are evenly spread on the hearth, which is generally in the middle of the floor -and formed into a circle. This circle is then divided into three equal sections, a small boss being left in the middle. A peat is laid between **each** section, each peat touching the boss, which forms a common centre. The first peat is laid down in name of the God of Life, the second in name of the God of Peace, the third in name of the God of Grace. The circle is then covered over with ashes sufficient to subdue, but not to extinguish the fire, in name of the Three of Light. The heap slightly raised in the centre is called **Tula nan Tri**, the Hearth of the Three. When the smooring operation is complete, the woman closes her eyes, stretches her hand, and softly intones one of the many formulae current for these occasions.

Another way of keeping embers for morning use is to place them in a pit at night. The pit consists of a hole in the clay floor, generally under the dresser. The pit may be from half a foot to a foot in depth and diameter, with a flag fixed in the floor over the top. In the centre of this flag there is a hole by which the embers are put in and taken out. Another flag covers the hole to extinguish the fire at night, and to guard against accidents during the day. This extinguishing fire-pit is called **slochd guail**, coke or coal-pit. This coke or charcoal is serviceable in kindling the fire.



THE sacred Three  
 To save,  
 To shield,  
 To surround  
 The hearth,  
 The house,  
 The household,  
 This eve,  
 This night,  
 Oh! this eve,  
 This night,  
 And every night,  
 Each single night.  
 Amen.

# Tales for darker evenings: A Christmas Journey

By the Storyteller

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

This tale comes from North Devon in 1825 and concerns an interesting experience of a Mr Ackroyd and his wife, when travelling from Tawton to Great Torrington for Christmastide. They had chosen to travel on the road by the River Torridge, snow was on the ground and their carriage wheels kept slipping on the ice. It was late afternoon and dusk was drawing in, but 'twas not far from Torrington when the Ackroyds came to a great gateway leading to a wide drive.

The drive had woods on both sides, but beyond the trees, the Ackroyds could dimly see the outlines of a large mansion, brilliantly lit up. Mr Ackroyd decided to stop and call in, just to make sure they were still on the right road.

As the Ackroyd carriage came nearer to the house, both husband and wife could see that there was some sort of Christmas feast going on – hundreds of shining candles could be seen through the large windows and many people in medieval fancy-dress were apparent.

Mr Ackroyd stopped the carriage outside the main door, where two footmen stood to welcome visitors. Mr Ackroyd asked if he and his wife were on the right road for Great Torrington and a footman went inside to ask. After a moment, the owner of the house came out to greet the visitors. He was dressed in red and black velvet robes, dark of hair and with many jewelled rings on his fingers. He invited Mr and Mrs Ackroyd inside to join the feast, but Mrs Ackroyd declined, claiming their friends would be worried about them.

Mr Ackroyd himself was not keen on staying. He felt that the owner was menacing, even cruel. So, he thanked the owner for his invitation and the footmen, the carriage was turned around and the Ackroyds returned to the main road. When they reached Great Torrington and told their friends about their journey, they learned that no house had existed in that place since the mid-1300s! **But**, there had been a mansion, Dolton Manor, which had been the residence of a wicked brother and sister who lured visitors inside to their deaths – the manor house had fallen into ruin since then.

# Crystal clear: prophecy stones

By Charlie Foreverdark

Prophecy stones are a very rare and unique occurrence in the gemstone world. They are limited to desert regions such as the Sahara, the Libyan Desert and also Egypt. Perhaps the most fascinating thing about this unique stone is that they are a pseudomorph. In geology, a **pseudomorph** is formed by a process of substitution, deposition or alteration. In the case of prophecy stones, it is a process of substitution which occurs. The outer appearance and dimensions remain the same, but the original mineral is entirely replaced by another.

Prophecy stones commenced life as marcasite and/or pyrite and transformed their composition into a concretion of hematite and goethite (both of which have been referred to in literature as **limonite minerals**). Though the outer structure remains consistent in appearance, pseudomorphs rarely retain their internal crystalline structure and, instead, typically feature a granular or waxy internal structure and exhibit no regular cleavage.

A prophecy stone originally formed as a solid crystal nodule of marcasite, but was altered into a completely separate and distinct limonite material. The morphing process is similar to that which gradually replaces fossils with rock or mineral.

The first part of the process begins in a reef environment where the sediments from coral, shells, fish skeletons and waste matter are deposited in warm, shallow seas. Much of this material is calcite. Gradually, the sediment is buried and also compacted by new sediment layers and/or tectonic processes. The more that sediment is compressed, the more it becomes heated. The energy from heating allows the calcite grains within the sediment to begin to re-crystallise and cement together. Groundwater flows continually through the sediment, depositing more calcite in a process called **lithification** (think limescale build up in a shower). The calcite cements the loose sediment into solid limestone or chalk. Chalk is essentially a form of extremely pure, fine-grained limestone made up of the calcite skeletons of single-celled phytoplankton known as **coccolithophores**.





During lithification, another equally amazing process called **diagenesis** occurs simultaneously. This is where the heat and pressure of compaction and burial, combined with the interaction of water and rock begins to form new minerals.

In order to form the initial marcasite within the sediment and sulphur-and-iron rich groundwater; all that is required is a little organic matter, such as a small clump of algae or bacteria, in order to slightly reduce the neutral pH of the fluid and turn it acidic. These changes in the chemistry of the groundwater force it to drop some of the elements it holds in solution. The oxidised, neutral groundwater is rich with iron and sulphur in solution, but when that little bit of organic material reduces the water and lowers its pH, the iron and sulphur begin to precipitate out as iron sulphide. The more common result of this process is the formation of pyrite, but in this case the pressure, temperature, and pH environments favour the formation of marcasite, which is a polymorph of pyrite (same material – different structure).

Elements build on a scaffolding of bonds in order to form minerals. If an element within the surrounding solution comes into contact with a crystal structure, it can kick out or replace the existing elements and bond to the crystal lattice in its place.

To morph what began initially as a crystal of marcasite into its pseudomorph, the iron-oxide rich fluids travel through and saturate the chalk in which the marcasite crystals formed. This groundwater slowly erodes and dissolves the chalk, leaving the unstable marcasite. As more water comes into contact with the marcasite nodule, it continues to oxidise – that is, the sulphur content is reduced and oxygen is added. Atom by atom, the marcasite morphs into hematite and goethite. Leaving the structural appearance of the original marcasite crystal, but now entirely comprised of oxides!

Prophecy stones were named by the Australian man who discovered them in Egypt in 1997, after he claimed to have experienced a prophetic vision whilst meditating with one of them. Naturally, owing to the nature of his report, these rarities became something of an obsession in the world of crystal healing, with many spiritually inclined people attributing them with the power of transformation and also foretelling.

Initially, prophecy stones were believed to be extra-terrestrial in origin, as their colouring and texture was reminiscent of meteorites. However, subsequent geological analysis revealed that the material was actually a fascinating (but entirely terrestrial) pseudomorph. After the initial discovery, a decade passed with no further examples being uncovered. In the last few years, more have been found in similar desert areas.

No two prophecy stones are precisely the same but the overall form and uneven appearance of each specimen tends to be fairly similar. They are typically dark reddish brown, but have also been found in paler tertiary colours. Depending upon the conditions of the environment in which they formed, some are more rounded and some look sharper and more pointed.

It is said that in the desert that anything can imitate everything and nothing is what it seems. Given that the hot and arid desert climate promotes fairly uniform weathering and sandblasting conditions, there are several differing concretion types that do look similar enough to prophecy stones that they can be passed off convincingly as such. Some geological experts say that genuine prophecy stones will typically feature a slightly blueish lustre, and will have varying results from streak tests depending upon the individual constitution of each specimen. They are virtually impossible to break.

# Biological alchemy

By Mark Sharpen

Now here's an interesting scientific "lollipop". For the first time, a team of Scottish scientists at the University of Edinburgh have watched infectious bacteria enacting biological alchemy. This term refers to the ability of certain bacteria to alter cells in a host body to another purpose. In this case, leprosy-causing bacteria were studied as they turned nerves into muscles and stem cells.

The team noted that these results could develop further therapies and stem-cell research...experts described the discovery as "amazing" and "exciting".

It is a feat that scientists have already achieved in the laboratory. Skin cells have been transformed into flexible stem cells that can become any of the body's building blocks from heart muscle to brain cells. One of the researchers, Professor Anura Rambukkana, said: "Our body's cells can be manipulated and why would a bacterium not take advantage of that?"

Experiments on mice and cells grown in the laboratory showed the leprosy bug infected nerve cells. Over a period of a few weeks, the bacteria began to subvert the nerves for their own ends. The chemistry of the nerve cells changed and they became stem cells, which can grow and spread around the body, unlike the static nerves.

"This is a stem cell that is generated by the body's own tissue so the immune system does not recognise it and they can get any place they want without being attacked," said Professor Rambukkana.

Those cells could lodge inside muscle and become muscle cells.

"We realised, 'Wow, this is something very, very striking'. It's the first time a bacterial infection has been shown to make stem cells, that's the big thing here."

He hopes the findings will increase understanding of leprosy and lead to new ways of developing stem cells - which have been touted as future treatments for a range of diseases. Professor Rambukkana also believes it is probable that other species of bacteria would have evolved the same ability to reprogramme their host.

Professor Chris Mason, a specialist in stem cell research at University College London, said: "The ability of bacteria to convert one mammalian cell type to another is alchemy by nature on a grand scale. Whilst this amazing discovery is in a mouse model, it highlights the extraordinary complexity of the interactions between mammals and bacteria and the ingenuity of scientists to uncover disease mechanisms that a decade ago would have been beyond science fiction. The next essential step is to translate this valuable piece of knowledge into tangible benefits for patients - a process that may take a decade before its relevance to clinical medicine is fully understood."

Professor Diana Lockwood, from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, said: "Finding that bacteria can reprogramme cells is very interesting and exciting. However, there's quite a gap between this and clinical leprosy and I don't think it's going to lead to new treatments".

Dr Rob Buckle, head of regenerative medicine at the Medical Research Council, said: "This discovery is important not just for our understanding and treatment of bacterial disease, but for the rapidly progressing field of regenerative medicine."

# A recipe for Yule

By Gylden Fellowship

## Vegan Yule gravy

A lot of traditional Yule or Christmas fare involves meat, be it turkey or chicken or whatever. So, this recipe is about a vegetarian alternative.

### Ingredients

- 2 onions
- 2 carrots
- 25g dried mushrooms
- Sunflower or olive oil
- 2 fresh bay leaves
- 2 sprigs of fresh thyme
- 2 tablespoons blackcurrant jam
- 2 tablespoons plain flour
- 1 tablespoon tomato purée
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1.5 litres vegetable stock

### Method

1. Peel the vegetables and chop roughly.
2. Put in a large pan over a medium heat with oil and the herbs.
3. Fry for 25 minutes or so until golden, stirring occasionally.
4. Add the jam and continue to cook for another 5 minutes until sticky and caramelised.
5. Stir in the flour, then add the tomato purée and vinegar.
6. Pour in the stock and bring to the boil.
7. Reduce to a simmer for 10 minutes until thickened and reduced.
8. Sieve into another large pan, using a spoon to squeeze out all extra flavour.

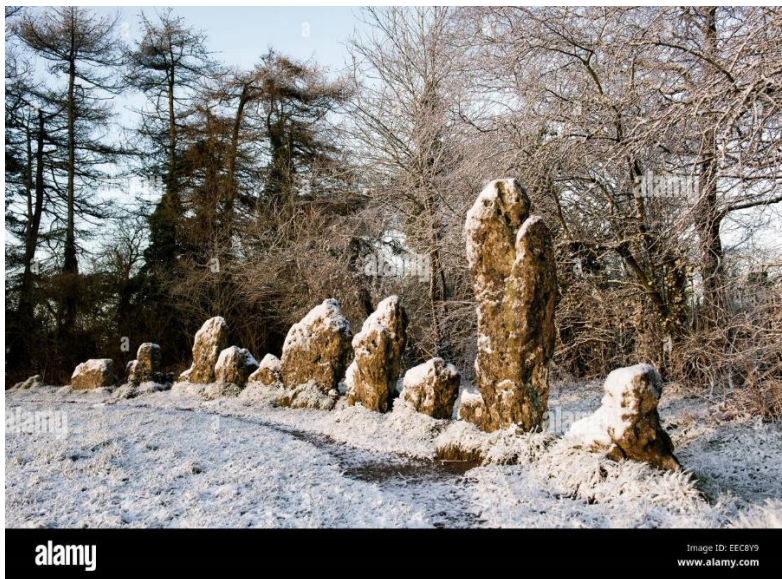


# Standing stones in winter

Collated by Gylden Fellowship







## Having a stress-free Yule

By Nic the Witch

Have you ever noticed how much **anger** is around nowadays? It seems that instant rage is everywhere on the roads, in car parks, in supermarket aisles and in all sorts of queues. And I'm writing this in the wake of the Feast of Mammon, otherwise known as Black Friday and Cyber Monday. The reason is that we're all under so much stress, much of it self-inflicted (not enough time), that anger is the only outlet. But it's not a good outlet, because anger hurts all around us and only contributes to our own dis-ease. Common spells or charms can work via crystals or herbs, but the first thing to consider is daily practice: crucial to witches, particularly those who practise magick every day of the year. For those of us who start each day anxious to get to work on time or have lots of chores to do at home, the following tasks **help to keep you grounded and in touch with the earth**.

1. To start each day: 15 minutes to set aside for stretching or a few gentle exercises, thinking about your blessings and sending good wishes to friends and family, record any dreams in a diary, face **east** and welcome the chance for new opportunities. If possible, make a positive pledge about the day to come or recite a blessing to your own deities (a common one that I use is shown at the end of this list).
2. During the day: keep reminding yourself of your positive pledge and try to achieve it, try and drink only water now and again as a detox and set aside 10-15 minutes for meditation, perhaps at lunch-time.
3. At the end of each day: face the **west** and give thanks for what the day has brought you, list good things in a diary and do what you can do ensure a restful sleep. My suggestion here is to drink a soothing tea that has lavender or valerian in it and say a night-time charm (as shown below).

### Nic's morning blessing

*Brigid and Cernunnos, I greet you,  
Help me to understand your earth.  
Guide my feet as they tread your pathways,  
And keep me safely out of harm's way.  
My life is just part of your creation and,  
I ask you to not test me, but make my day a joy,  
And speak to me through my intuition.  
As above, so below, so mote it be.*

### Nic's evening blessing

*You will need a crystal of serenity, eg amethyst  
Stone of peaceful calming light,  
Shining in my mind so bright,  
I pass you all my dreams tonight.  
Dissolve the nightmares – the rest can stay,  
For me to sleep until next day,  
So mote it be and come what may.*

I do carry **crystals** with me, but if asked, I would choose one of amethyst, howlite or aventurine, on the grounds that all are stress-relievers and protect against anger. Amethyst brings peace, aventurine promotes wisdom and good decision-making, while howlite absorbs resentment. Or, you could trust to either orange calcite or citrine as both these stones promote happiness or joy and are essential antidotes to anger. And shells are good substitutes for crystals – there's the benefit of an oceanic calm and a memory of the animal that lived in the shell. Many **herbal infusions** can be used to soothe and calm the after-effects of anger or resentment and the list below gives a selection. Each plant can be used either fresh or dried and I find it is best to allow the plants to infuse for five minutes in a teapot/teahouse of boiled water before drinking.

- 16 lemon balm leaves (or 1 tbsp dried lemon balm) – **Gylden Fellowship** now offers lemon balm teabags as part of its natural healing service at fayres or talks.
- 2 rose heads or buds (2 tbsp dried rose petals).
- 1 tsp each of skullcap, orange flowers, St John's wort, betony and lemon balm.
- 1 tsp peppermint leaves, 1 tsp calendula flowers (marigold), 1 tsp spearmint leaves and 1 tsp field mint.
- 1 tsp each of hawthorn flowers, lavender, rosebuds, orange flowers and jasmine.
- 5 tbsp chamomile and 4 tbsp lavender.
- 2 tsp blackberry leaves, 1 tsp wild strawberry leaves, 1 tsp raspberry leaves and 1 tsp blackcurrant leaves.

**Note:** it's quite OK to add a little honey or slice of lemon to an infusion for flavour if you want.

# Celestial forecasts: December 2022

By Joanna Bristow-Watkins

December in Britain is the month with the least hours of daylight, but sunlight hours increase from 21st onwards, after the Winter Solstice. The increased daylight - promising optimism - is celebrated as **Yule** and here, in the UK, **Christmas Day** on the 25th, which pre-Christianity, in Roman times, was celebrated as the birth date of **Sol Invictus** (Roman Solar Deity).

Landscapes and gardens are skeletal now, except for the evergreens, looking charming when snow-covered and laced with spider's webs kissed by frost. Keep the shivers at bay with seasonal soups utilising Jerusalem artichokes, leeks, carrots, beetroot, parsnips, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, kale, potatoes and winter squash. Enjoy nutty snacks from chestnuts, hazelnuts and walnuts. Late fruiting apples, pears and quince also remain plentiful together with mushrooms and black truffles.

The month of December was named after "decem" meaning 10th in Latin, as November was the 10th month when the year started in March. To the Anglo-Saxons, December was called **Ærra Gēol** meaning "before Yule" or "First Yule".

During December, we can also look forward to the Celtic Festival of Yule (Winter Solstice = 21 December) followed by the Christian Festival of **Christmas** (25th) which is also the Zoroastrian Celebration of **Zartosht-no Diso** and **St Stephens Day/Boxing Day** (26th) plus two annual Roman Festivals **Bona Dea** (3rd) and **Saturnalia** (17th), **Hannukah** (18th-26th) and the month culminates with **New Year's Eve** (31st), celebrated as a two-day festival called **Hogmanay** in Scotland.

We have various angel demos and a book sale on Tuesday 13th (7.30-9.30pm in Ash). Excitingly, we have a couple of in-person events at Harmony Healing in Walton-on-Thames, on **Thursday 15th** & **Wednesday 21st** (Solstice), see below for details. Our **Full Moon Meditation takes place 7.30-9.30pm (UK time)** on Wednesday 7th, with the **Cold Full Moon** peaking the following morning at 04:09. Aligning with the moon cycle is very therapeutic, and our next Lunar Alignment Programme commences with the New Moon on 21st January 2023. We also have the **Geminid Meteor Shower** peaking 13th/14th.



**Wednesday 7 December** is our **Full Moon Unity Consciousness Meditation**, 7.30-9.30pm UK time (GMT/UT). This is the night before Full Moon takes place at 04:09 on the 8th. 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**.



**Thursday 8 December is the Cold Full Moon at 04:09.** Between this date and the next New Moon is considered as a good time energetically for detoxing the body...a brilliant time for oil pulling.

*Saturday 10 December, 2-7 pm, is Beata's Open Inner Goddess Within & Live Your Magic, at The Bisley Yurt, GU24 9AR. Beata is a founder of the New Earth Goddess Heart Temple. This is a monthly activity, for women only, full of healing, cleansing, letting go, joy, love and liberating on Soul. This New Earth Goddess Temple events feature sacred ceremonial cacao to connect to wisdom of your Soul, to your heart, re-claim your power, let go of the old, welcome the new. It's an interactive 5 hour mini-retreat offering deep powerful healing, full of joy. Each time will be unique, enhanced with a different invited guest (Empowered Women), but always the event will be tailored to the needs of the attending Goddesses. Very limited sacred spaces offered. More at [Beata's website](#). The next monthly event will be 2-7pm, 14 January. Contact Beata on [info@ifeelgoodtherapy.com](mailto:info@ifeelgoodtherapy.com) or 07731 673759 using the code BEA12, to receive details on how to pay via bank transfer and save the Eventbrite fee.*

*Tuesday 13 December, 7.30-9.30 pm, is Adam Buttery's monthly EnergyWorks gathering at Ash Victoria Hall, 121 Ash Hill Road, Ash, GU12 5DN - parking across the road Joanna will be introducing the work of her sister, Angela McGerr, who has created 10 different Angel Card sets over the years, selling close to a million in total. At Energyworks, Joanna will demonstrate how to invoke Angels in the Essene Angelology system. The Essenes were a spiritual sect based by the Dead Sea around 2,000 years ago). As this event is on a Tuesday, we will invoke Camael (Angelic Guardian of Tuesdays and the planet Mars) and Joanna will demonstrate various ways to develop a closer connection with that Angel.*

*There will be new and some pre-loved editions of Angela's angel cards and books for sale even though they have been out of print for years. See the book selection available at the [Harmony Shop](#) (costs will be lower on many items at the event). Email [jo@harmonyhealing.co.uk](mailto:jo@harmonyhealing.co.uk) in advance if you want a specific publication brought along. Other stalls will be available to browse after the presentation. Email Adam on [a.buttery@sky.com](mailto:a.buttery@sky.com) to receive regular notification of his events.*



**Tuesday 13 - Wednesday 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 multicoloured 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! The Geminid Meteor Shower is expected to peak in activity on the night 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 of Gemini. Best viewing is usually to the east after midnight. The waning Gibbous Moon following the Full Moon early on 8 December will hamper viewing due to light pollution. Go to [timeanddate.com](http://timeanddate.com) for further information.

**Thursday 15 December, 10am-1pm. Angels are not just for Christmas mini-workshop;** a brief introduction to the weekday angels (in the Essene Angelology System) from Joanna and how to work with them, £30 per person.

**Thursday 15 December, 2-8pm, angel book sale drop-in at Harmony Healing,** Walton-on-Thames, KT12 3BH. Starting at 10am, there will be a 3-hour workshop introducing the seven weekday angels: Raphael, Gabriel, Camael, Michael, Zadkiel, Haniel, Cassiel plus the patriarchal angel Melchisadec and the Matriarchal angel, Pistis Sophia. Each angel will be invoked in turn, introducing their key attributes and how to work with them more closely. A crib sheet for calling on them on a daily basis will be supplied as a handout. We will look at the angel cards and channellings in Angela McGerr's publications (Angela is Joanna's sister) which will also be available for sale (both new and pre-loved editions, making excellent and unusual Christmas gifts) during the course. This will be a deep and cathartic experience to prepare you for the festive season. Book via the [Harmony Shop](#).

In the afternoon/evening, from 2pm, there will be a drop-in (no need to book but it would be helpful to let me know a rough time) for anyone wanting to purchase angel books and cards, but who are not able to attend the morning workshop. An optional one card reading will be available for £5 and it will be possible to book an optional mini-reading (30 mins for £30). Only 3 x 30-minute readings will be available at 2pm, 5pm and 7pm - pre-booking essential to guarantee a slot. See [Harmony Shop](#) to book the workshop and/or a personal reading or email [jo@harmonyhealing.co.uk](mailto:jo@harmonyhealing.co.uk)



**Saturday 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 provided table service for their slaves. The poet Catullus referred to it as "the best of days." Saturn was an agricultural deity who, in Roman mythology, was associated with the Golden Age, when humans enjoyed the spontaneous bounty of the earth without labour in a state of innocence.

**Sunday 18 December is the start of Hanukkah** (also known as Chanukah) in Jewish tradition. This year it commences after nightfall on 18 December and continues until nightfall on 26 December. It is the Jewish eight-day, wintertime festival of lights, celebrated with special prayers, a nightly menorah lighting, and fried foods.

**Wednesday 21 December, 10-8 pm,** is Joanna's drop-in Solstice event, at Walton-on-Thames...**10-1pm,** chakra balancing solstice meditation, followed by buffet salad lunch (vegetarian/vegan) with £30 per person [£20 to my

students or you can bring your own...**2-8pm**, angel book sale drop-in at Harmony Healing, Walton-on-Thames, KT12 3BH.

Starting at 10am, there will be a 3-hour workshop featuring a chakra balancing with colours, crystal energy, angels and planets (similar to my monthly Full Moon meditation). We will look at the angel cards and channellings in Angela McGerr's publications (Angela is Joanna's sister) which will also be available for sale (both new and pre-loved editions, making excellent and unusual Christmas gifts) during the course. This will be a very balancing experience to prepare you for the festive season. Book via the [Harmony Shop](#).

In the afternoon/evening (from 2pm) there will be a drop-in (no need to book but it would be helpful to let me know a rough time) for anyone wanting to purchase angel books and cards but who are not able to attend the morning workshop. An optional one card reading will be available for £5 and it will be possible to book an in-person Equilibrium Attunement for £22 at 6pm. Pre-booking essential to guarantee your attunement. See [Harmony Shop](#) to book your attunement or email [jo@harmonyhealing.co.uk](mailto:jo@harmonyhealing.co.uk),



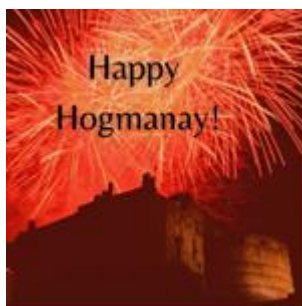
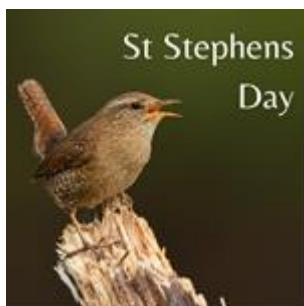
**Wednesday 21 December is the Pagan Solstice @ 21:47. It's the Winter Solstice here in the UK** - the shortest day of the year with just 7 hours and 49 minutes daylight. The solstice itself is the moment the sun is shining farthest to the south, directly over the Tropic of Capricorn, so the time varies every year, between December 20th and 23rd.

The solstice marks the moment the sun shines at its most southern point and has been celebrated as a major pagan festival, with rituals of rebirth, for thousands of years. Revellers gather at Stonehenge to watch the sunrise on the shortest day. Then, in the Northern Hemisphere, our days will gradually get longer until the summer solstice on Wednesday 21 June 2023 at 15:57.

Many of the traditions now associated with Christmas had their roots in pagan Winter Solstice celebrations; including Yule logs, mistletoe and Christmas trees. The Druids - an ancient Celtic order of priests, teachers, diviners and leaders who gleaned knowledge and enlightenment from sacred landscapes and ancient trees such as 'Tutorial Oaks' - used evergreen trees, holly and mistletoe to represent everlasting life. Druids would consider the cutting of trees as an offence against nature, but would decorate them with colourful rags tied on the branches.

**Friday 23 December @ 10:16 is the Solstice New Moon, as it's taking place close to the Solstice on the 21 December.** 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**. The New Moon is great time to create Vision Boards. How about creating one for 2023?

**Sunday 25 December is the Christian Festival of Christmas, commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ.**



**Sunday 25 December is also, in the Fasli Zoroastrian Calendar, is *Zartosht-no Diso*, commemorating the anniversary of the death of the prophet Zarathustra.**

**Monday 26 December is *St Stephen's Day* in the Christian Calendar, also known as *Boxing Day*.**

**Saturday 31 December is *New Year's Eve and Hogmanay* in Scottish tradition.**

Many Scots had to work over Christmas because celebrations were virtually banned in Scotland for around 400 years, from the end of the 17th century to the 1950s. The Protestant Reformation led to the Presbyterian outlook, branding Christmas as a Popish or Catholic feast which was, therefore, prohibited. As a result, their winter solstice celebrations took place at New Year when family and friends gathered for a party and exchange presents, especially for the children, which came to be called Hogmanay. Historians believe that the Vikings who, coming from even further north than the UK, paid strong attention to the passing of the shortest day and may have initiated the post-Solstice celebrations. (Image of fireworks over Edinburgh Castle by Chris Flexen.)

There is no definitive view on the origins of the word *Hogmanay*. Many Scottish words have derived from Flemish, so one popular view is that *Hogmanay* came from *hoog min dag* which means *great love day*, whereas the Scandinavian word *Hoggo-nott* described the feast preceding Yule (itself a Scandinavian word commonly used in Shetland where the Scandinavian influence was strongest).

Alternatively, Hogmanay could source from the Anglo-Saxon, *Haleg monath*, Holy Month, or the Gaelic for new morning, *oge maidne*. Phonetically, a good candidate might be the similar sounding French expression *Homme est né* which means Man is born. Also, in France the last day of the year when gifts were exchanged was *aguillaneuf*, though specifically in Normandy presents given at the year-end were *hoguignetes*. In Scotland, a similar practice to that in Normandy was noted, rather disapprovingly, by the Church.

*"It is ordinary among some Plebians in the South of Scotland, to go about from door to door upon New Year's Eve, crying Hagmane."* Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence, 1693.

Common Scottish practices on 31 December, before midnight, involve a thorough cleaning of the house (including taking out the ashes from the coal fire) plus the superstition to clear all your debts. Immediately after midnight, the long-held tradition to sing Robert Burns's *For Auld Lang Syne* has now evolved into a popular international custom.

Many areas of Scotland often developed their own local *Hogmanay* rituals such as the fireball swinging rituals in Stonehaven, Aberdeenshire, in northeast Scotland. Chicken wire structures, filled with old newspaper, sticks, rags and other dry flammable materials, are attached to lengths of wire, chain or non-flammable rope. When the Old Town House bell marks the New Year, the balls are set alight and the celebrants set off along a heritage route, swinging the burning balls around their heads as they go. At the end of the ceremony, any fireballs that are still burning are cast into the harbour.

**Sunday 1 January is *New Year's Day* and is a Bank Holiday in the UK and time for New Year's Resolutions!**

**Sunday 1 – Wednesday 5 January (peaking on the 3rd, 4th January) is the Quadrantids Meteor Shower;** visible from 1st – 5th January after midnight and peaking in the early hours of the 4th. With the New Moon on 2 January, it could be a good year. Typically, 40 or so bright, blue and fast (25.5 miles per second) meteors will radiate from the constellation Bootes, 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 EH1 an asteroid that is probably a piece broken off from an obsolete comet. Since the orbit of 2003 EH1 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 approaching Full Moon on 6 January, there could be too much light pollution to see much.



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