



Gylden Magick

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Dec. 2023

PRACTICAL MAGICK & UNIVERSAL ENERGY FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

Editor's notes

by Gylden Fellowship

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

The **Gylden Community** is one of the most extensive pagan libraries in southern England. Its website, 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 6th year of publication, from September. So, our **Oak Moon** issue comes in at 30 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 particle accelerators and quantum dots. There is a text from Charlie on crystals, Norwegian Yule photos for 6 December, Gylden coasts in winter, perchta folklore, wildlife news, celestial forecasts, seasonal magick and flexitarian foods.

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

Arthan (Winter Solstice) falls on 22 December. **The meaning of Alban Arthan is the light of winter.**

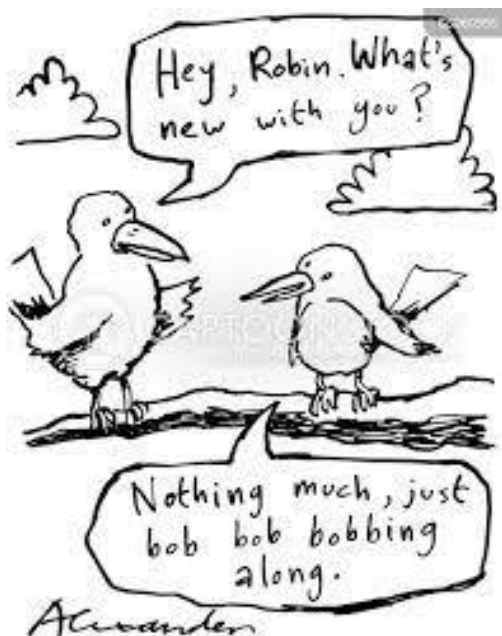
Anything else? Oh yes, the title – we never forget that our faith is based upon Nature and that our strength comes from earth magick, regardless of the diversity of pagan pathways.

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. **This year, Yule falls on Friday 22 December.**

The word, **Yule**, comes from an ancient Norse word, Hjóll (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, perhaps tangerine or frankincense. So, here's a few things you could do for Yule to make your home 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.
5. Put out a bowl of pine cones, holly leaves, yew and ivy and spray them with orange essential oil.

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 add music or have 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 gluing 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 2023.

Charlie Foreverdark

Joanna Bristow- Watkins

Diana Mary Rose

Erica Zann

Mark Sharpen

Dr Pat Morris & the British Hedgehog Preservation Society

Sussex Wildlife Trust

The Mammal Society

The Woodland Trust

Inge van Straalen

Bernadette Flynn

And we look forward to welcoming a slew of new contributors in 2024.

Gylden
Magick
Dec. 2023

Norwegian Yule

Collated by Gylden Fellowship







December crystals

By Charlie Foreverdark and Nic the Witch

Charlie Foreverdark is still coping with her new addition to the family! Many congratulations to Charlie and Rob on the arrival of their baby, River Castiel. So, we're looking at the correspondence crystals for December and their healing properties, using some of Charlie's notes from previous years – the key ones are haematite and sugilite.

Haematite is an ore of iron, a mineral form of iron oxide – it's fairly common and can be found in Britain. It's a dark red rock from which we get iron, with a red or brown colour and an earthy lustre. It's a heavy and usually hard mineral that constitutes the most important iron ore. Its name is derived from the Greek word for blood, reflecting its red colour. It is the most abundant mineral on Earth's surface and in the shallow crust. It is a rock type of mineral found in sedimentary rocks and igneous rocks.

Haematite can also occur as a result of volcanic activity. It is paramagnetic in nature. The crystals of haematite have a steel grey colour and metallic lustre and are known as *specular iron ore*. The scaly ore, which is thin, is known as *micaceous haematite*. It has opaque transparency and uneven fractures. Hematite is harder than pure iron ore.

One of the most commonly found mineral inclusions within haematite crystals are red or red sparkles.

The **main healing properties of haematite** are:

- As a crystal close to the base chakra, haematite is really good for dis-eases that affect the spine. So, one can place it at the top or base of the spine, to combat inflammations.
- In fact, haematite aids with spinal alignment and fractures.
- As its name suggests, haematite restores, strengthens and regulates the blood supply, healing blood conditions such as anaemia or Reynaud's Disease. It supports the kidneys and regeneration of tissues. Also, it helps to absorb iron in the blood for the formation of red blood cells.
- Haematite can be used to treat leg cramps, anxiety and insomnia.

From a spiritual stance, haematite is believed to represent grounding and protection, with a strong connection to the earth element.

- Haematite promotes such qualities as vitality, strength and courage.
- It stimulates concentration and focus, enhancing memory and original thought.
- It dissolves negativity and prevents you from absorbing the negativity of others.
- Haematite uses the magnetic qualities of our yin and yang energies to balance and to provide a stable equilibrium between the ethereal nervous system and the physical nervous system. It focuses energy and emotions for balance between the body, mind and spirit.
- It helps to overcome compulsions and addictions, such as overeating, smoking and other addictions.



Sugilite is a relatively rare pink to purple cyclosilicate mineral with a complex chemical formula, $\text{KNa}_2(\text{Fe}, \text{Mn}, \text{Al})_2\text{Li}_3\text{Si}_{12}\text{O}_{30}$. Sugilite crystallizes in the hexagonal system with prismatic crystals. It is mostly translucent.

The crystals are rarely found and the form is usually massive. It has a Mohs hardness of 5.5–6.5 and a specific gravity of 2.75–2.80. Sugilite was first described in 1944 by the Japanese petrologist, Ken-ichi Sugi (1901–48) for an occurrence on Iwagi Islet, Japan. It is found also in Mont Saint-Hilaire, Quebec, Canada. In the Wessels mine in Northern Cape Province of South Africa, sugilite is mined from a strata-bound manganese deposit. It is also reported from Liguria and Tuscany, Italy; New South Wales, Australia and Madhya Pradesh, India.

Sugilite is commonly pronounced with a soft "g", as in ginger. However, as with most minerals, its pronunciation is intended to be the same as the person it is named after; in this case, the Japanese name Sugi has a hard "g", as in geese. The mineral is also referred to as lavulite, luvulite and royal azel by gem and mineral collectors.

Sugilite is believed to **generate positive energy to protect against and overcome negative emotions and situations**. Thought to be a nurturing gemstone, sugilite offers release from worries. It also promotes positive emotions to help relieve stress, establish peace of mind and emotional healing.



Sussex Wildlife Trust: photos of 2023

By Sussex Wildlife Trust, here is the winning picture: more details from www.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk.

It's Tim Nightingale, with his outstanding photo – Cormorant at sunrise.



Tim Nightingale had this to say, "I went down to Rye Harbour Nature Reserve at first light on 30 April this year. I got there just after 5a.m., before the sun came up, or blue hour, as us photographers call it. I followed the path that runs parallel to the Rother, beyond the Discovery Centre, stopping briefly at the first hide. There wasn't another soul in sight.

As I got down nearer to the beach and the river's estuary, the sun was just beginning to come up from behind the dunes on Camber Sands and then I spotted the Cormorant on the pole. I had to move quickly to get in a position where it would be silhouetted. With the brightness of the sunrise and the darkness or low light in the scene generally, I used a tripod and shot it on a telephoto lens at about 300mm. The Cormorant was very accommodating and stayed in situ allowing me to fire off a few different shots at different exposures. For all that, it really just came down to luck and being in the right place at the right time. But I'm glad I made the effort to get up early."

Onions and particle accelerators

By Mark Sharpen

Well, seeing as we've almost come to Christmas, I thought I'd share some of the interesting science bits from the last few months. And I'm starting with onions or, to be more precise, the **world's heaviest onion**. It weighed a massive 8.97kg and was grown in Guernsey by vegetable farmer, Gareth Griffin. He produced the root vegetable weighing 19.775lb for the National English Honour Society (NEHS) Giant Vegetable Competition. The large specimen went on display at the Harrogate Autumn Flower Show in September, alongside a fellow farmer's giant pumpkin that weighed 102kg.

From large items to small things. If you think of a particle accelerator, what may come to mind is something like CERN's Large Hadron Collider (LHC) - a multi-billion-dollar colossus that's dozens of miles wide and crosses international borders in the name of unlocking how the universe works. However, particle accelerators come in many shapes and sizes and there are more than 30,000 accelerators in the world today. Some of them (including LHC) are designed to unveil the universe's secrets, but the vast majority have are used for everything from manufacturing electronics to imaging the body and treating cancer. In fact, a hospital could buy a room-sized medical accelerator for just a few hundred thousand dollars. And now, scientists have made the **smallest particle accelerator yet**.

Physicists have fabricated an accelerator that is the size of a coin (*Nature*, 18 October 2023). This device is just a tech demo, but its creators hope it opens the gateway to even smaller accelerators that could fit on a silicon chip. This mini-accelerator is not merely a tiny LHC. Depending on its operational calendar, LHC fires protons or the nuclei of lead atoms around a large circle. Instead, the miniature accelerator fires electrons down a straight line.

Plenty of other linear electron accelerators have existed, such as the now-dismantled two-mile-long Stanford Linear Collider. Traditionally, electron accelerators boost their projectiles by shooting them through metallic cavities, typically made from copper, that contain twitching electromagnetic fields. The chambers thus push particles along like surfers on electric waves. Some physicists believe that these old-fashioned accelerators are not ideal, as the metallic cavities are prone to errors. They're also unwieldy and require large equipment. The researchers' new accelerator uses precise laser shots to push the electrons.

Physicists have been trying to make laser accelerators since the 1960s. Called photonic accelerators, referring to the study of light, they can be smaller and more cost-efficient than their cavity-based counterparts, but they've only become precise and affordable enough for even experimental photonic accelerators over the last decade. Making them smaller, then, brought its own series of daunting obstacles. A major stumbling block had been the fact that engineers didn't have the sophisticated technology needed to craft a mini-accelerator's tiny parts.

Take the coin-sized accelerator the researchers tried to build. First, it generates electrons using a part from an electron microscope. Then, the device pushes the electrons down a colonnade: two rows of several hundred silicon pillars, each just 2micrometres tall, with an even smaller gap between the rows. A laser strikes the top of the pillars, creating electric fields that boost the electrons squeezed inside.

However, with advanced chip fabrication, scientists could rely on techniques that are already common in the world of semiconductor manufacturing. They fashioned a successful prototype. The device can deliver only about 1 electron per second, a tiny trickle by particle accelerator standards. Moreover, the electrons have about the same energy as those inside an old-style CRT (cathode ray tube) television.

Indeed, the developers are long way from using this accelerator for anything resembling a real-world application. If they want to do that, they'll need to make many more electrons, with much higher energies, but if these hurdles are to be overcome, there may be many applications for particle accelerators that could be arranged on a standard silicon chip. Medical professionals already use electron accelerators to treat skin cancer. With that in mind, some doctors might imagine an accelerator that is small enough to insert inside the body via an endoscope.

OK then, going on from electrons, it's time to move into the quantum realm. **Quantum dots are semiconductor-based nanomaterials with numerous biomedical applications such as drug delivery, live imaging, and medical diagnosis**, in addition to other applications beyond medicine such as in solar cells. Quantum dots are tiny particles or nanocrystals of a semiconducting material with diameters in the range of 2-10 nanometres (10-50 atoms). They were first discovered in 1980, but The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences decided to award the Nobel Prize in Chemistry 2023 to Mounji G. Bawendi, Louis E. Brus, and Aleksey I. Yekimov, for the discovery and synthesis of quantum dots. Being zero-dimensional, quantum dots have a sharper density of states than higher-dimensional structures. As a result, they have superior transport and optical properties, with potential uses in diode lasers, amplifiers and biological sensors.

And I thought I'd finish with **azipods**. These aren't some weird type of insect, but are actually propulsion systems for ships, yachts and small boats. An azipod has no gears; its electric motor is located in a submerged pod outside the ship hull. By utilizing the Azipod® system's maneuverability, marine vessels can direct thrust in any direction with incredible precision, saving time and fuel. In fact, azipods achieve 9% better fuel efficiency than the conventional propulsion systems.

An azipod propeller reduces engine noise and vibration due to several factors - fewer components result in a simpler interface and can reduce the installation costs by up to 20%. The Azipod® system design means less space is required for auxiliary equipment and less height is required in the thruster room.



Gaelic blessing

By Alexander Carmichael, from the *Carmina Gaedelica*

This is volume I of Alexander Carmichael's collection of folk poetry from the Western Isles of Scotland. Carmichael spent years collecting folklore from the vanishing cultures of Scotland. The poems in this volume include prayers, invocations, blessings and charms. They are a synthesis of Christian and pre-Christian belief systems. Besides invoking Jesus, Mary, and the saints, a number of these call on other powers. One of these is "Bride", who is explained as Jesus' midwife, but who is probably Brigid, the ancient Celtic goddess. Also mentioned throughout are a triune deity which is equated to the Christian Trinity, but which may also be an echo of a set of three pagan deities. The text includes notes on seasonal observances and folk customs which are probably likewise survivals of pre-Christian customs. All of these are woven into the cycles of the year, and activities such as weaving, fishing and herding. A vivid picture of life in pre-modern rural Scotland emerges.

CHRISTMAS chants were numerous and their recital common throughout Scotland. They are now disappearing with the customs they accompanied. Where they still linger their recital is relegated to boys. Formerly on Christmas Eve bands of young men went about from house to house and from town to town chanting Christmas songs. The band was called *goisearan*, *guisers*, *firduan*, *rejoicers*, and other names. The rejoicers wore long white shirts for surplices, and very tall white hats for mitres, in which they made a picturesque appearance as they moved along singing their loudest. Sometimes they went about as one band, sometimes in sections of twos and threes.

When they entered a dwelling, they took possession of a child, if there was one in the house. In the absence of a child, a lay figure was improvised. The child was called *Crist or Cristean* (Christ, Little Christ). The assumed Christ was placed on a skin, and carried three times round the fire, sunwise, by the *ceannsnaodh* (the head of the band), the song men singing the Christmas Hail. The skin on which the symbolic Christ was carried was that of a white male lamb without spot or blemish and consecrated to this service. The skin was called *uilim*. Homage and offerings and much rejoicing were made to the symbolic Christ. The people of the house gave bread, butter, crowdie and other food to the *guisers*, on which they feasted afterwards.



DUAN NOLLAIG [57]**CHRISTMAS CHANT**

HAIL King! hail King! blessed is He! blessed is He!
 Hail King! hail King! blessed is He! blessed is He!
 Ho, hail! blessed the King!
 Ho, hi! let there be joy!

Prosperity be upon this dwelling,
 On all that ye have heard and seen,
 On the bare bright floor flags,
 On the shapely standing stone staves,
 Hail King! hail King! blessed is He! blessed is He!

Bless this house and all that it contains,
 From rafter and stone and beam;
 Deliver it to God from pall to cover,
 Be the healing of men therein,
 Hail King! hail King! blessed is He! blessed is He!

Be ye in lasting possession of the house,
 Be ye healthy about the hearth,
 Many be the ties and stakes in the homestead,
 People dwelling on this foundation,
 Hail King! hail King! blessed is He! blessed is He!

Offer to the Being from found to cover,
 Include stave and stone and beam;
 Offer again both rods and cloth,
 Be health to the people therein,
 Hail King! hail King! blessed is He! blessed is He!
 Hail King! hail King! blessed is He! blessed is He!
 Ho, hail! blessed the King!
 Let there be joy!

Blessed the King,
 Without beginning, without ending,
 To everlasting, to eternity,
 Every generation for aye,
 Ho! hi! let there be joy!

Folklore: Perchta

By the Storyteller

Perchta was a goddess in Alpine paganism in the Upper German and Austrian regions of the Alps. Her name may mean *the bright one* (Old High German: *beraht*, *bereht*, from Proto-Germanic, *berhtaz*) and is probably related to the name *Berchtentag*, meaning the feast of the Epiphany. Perchta is often identified as stemming from the same Germanic goddess as Holda and other female figures of Germanic folklore.

According to Jacob Grimm and Lotte Motz, Perchta is Holda's southern cousin or equivalent, as they both share the role of *guardian of the beasts* and appear during the Twelve Days of Christmas, when they oversee spinning. Perchta was known in the folklore of Upper Germany, in Alsace, in Switzerland, in Bavaria and Austria. It is likely that Perchta emerged from an amalgamation of Germanic and pre-Germanic/ Celtic, traditions of the Alpine regions during the Early Middle Ages

Perchta has two forms - she may appear either as beautiful and white as snow like her name or as elderly and haggard. In many old descriptions, Perchta had one large foot, sometimes called a goose foot or swan foot. Grimm thought the strange foot denoted her being a higher being who could shapeshift to animal form. In the Tyrol, she appears as little old woman with a wrinkled face, bright lively eyes and a hooked nose; her hair is dishevelled with tattered clothing

Perchta was the upholder of cultural traditions, such as the ban on spinning on holidays. In the folklore of Bavaria and Austria, Perchta was said to roam the countryside at midwinter and to enter homes during the twelve days between Christmas and Epiphany (especially on the Twelfth Night). She would know whether the children of the household had behaved well and worked hard all year. If they had, they might find a small silver coin the next day, in a shoe or pail. If they had not, she would slit their bellies open, remove their stomach and guts, and stuff the hole with straw and pebbles. She was particularly concerned to see that girls had spun the whole of their allotted portion of flax or wool during the year. She would also slit people's bellies open and stuff them with straw if they ate something on the night of her feast day, other than the traditional meal of fish and gruel.

Perchten is plural for *Perchta* - and this has become the name of her entourage, as well as the name of animal masks worn in parades and festivals in the mountains of Austria. In the 16th century, the Perchten took two forms: some are beautiful and bright, known as the *Schönperchten* (beautiful Perchten). These come during the Twelve Nights and festivals to bring luck and wealth to the people. The other form is the *Schiachperchten* (ugly Perchten) who have fangs, tusks and horse tails, which are used to drive out demons and ghosts. People dress as both the beautiful and ugly Perchten and go from house to house driving out bad spirits. Nowadays, Perchta is portrayed as a rewarder of the generous and the punisher of the bad, particularly lying children. Today in Austria, the Perchten are still a traditional part of holidays and festivals (such as the Carnival Fastnacht). The wooden animal masks made for the festivals are today still called Perchten.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

MIND BODY
SPIRIT EVENT

HELIOUS & PAULA

HELIOUS & PAULA
SUNDAY

DECEMBER | 10 | 2023
1:30PM - 5:30PM

FREE MEDIUMSHIP
DEMONSTRATION @ 3PM

£2 ENTRY FEE ON THE DOOR

110 SPRINGWOOD AVENUE, COMMUNITY CENTRE
STAKES WATERLOOVILLE
PO7 0BI

MERRY CHRISTMAS



<https://www.eventbrite.com/.../lord-of-misrule-tickets...>

"The Lord of Misrule was generally a peasant or sub-deacon appointed to be in charge of Christmas revelries, which often included drunkenness and wild partying"

So.....

[The Good Witch Quercus](#), aka John Rivers, seems the obvious person to take over the crown for the night! right?

Yup, for one night only (maybe more, we dunno to be truthful) Quercus returns to Berkshire from DDD yep Deepest Darkest Devon! with performances from:

- Vocalese
- The Hedge Inspectors
- Jadoo-Tribal Dance
- Interspersed with The Lord of Misrule's fun and games...no one parties like Da Spriggs!

Flexitarian food for Yule

By Gylden Fellowship

Our bodies are great at handling meatier meals, but if your meals lack balance, swapping out a sausage or two can improve your overall health in a matter of weeks. In fact, according to the University of Oxford, a flexitarian diet could even reduce your food expenses by about one-third! Did you know that making simple swaps goes further than benefiting your bank account? Eating less meat can even be kinder on the planet, and your heart, stomach, and brain benefit, too! Here are five ways that could change your life...

1. **Improved digestion:** plant-based diets are typically high in fibre, which aids digestion and promotes gut health. A healthy gut microbiome is increasingly recognised as a key factor in overall health and can also have positive implications for mental health.
2. **Calmer mind:** vegetarian meals are often lower in fat. Eating less fat can help reduce the release of a stress-causing chemical called cholecystokinin, ultimately lowering the risk of stress and panic attacks.
3. **Heart health:** vegetarian diets are low in fat and cholesterol while having more fibre, magnesium, potassium, folate, and vitamins C and E. These factors are all contributors to heart health.
4. **Peace of mind:** choosing a vegetarian meal can be kinder to the planet and the animals that inhabit it. By making occasional swaps, you make a meaningful contribution to the mission to protect Earth, helping you to feel happier and more at ease.
5. **Stronger mind-body connection:** a plant-based diet may promote a healthier mind-body connection. Feeling physically well can positively impact mental and emotional well-being, supporting personal growth, emotional resilience, and mental clarity.

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.

Gylden coasts in winter

Collated by Gylden Fellowship







Shrooms

By Erica Zann

Hi, welcome to more witterings from an elderly resident of a small English village. Everything is preparing for Yule, with Xmas markets aplenty, all the pubs and shops offering seasonal meals or food; Xmas lights too always look so pretty to me, on the lamp posts and hanging across the streets. I've been to two such markets already, one at the church and one in my sheltered housing – we raised about £435. Won't be long before, I dig out a box of the familiar tinsel, candles and decorations.

It's pouring with rain outside and I'm glad I did most of my weekly grocery shopping this morning. The only thing outstanding is to visit the butcher tomorrow. Our village butcher is very traditional. There's a counter for selecting one's meat, eggs, sauces and pies. All are chopped, sliced and wrapped up for you to take to another counter where the cashier sits. It means the food is separated from the money. I love the fact that I can choose a cut of meat or some herby sausages – not like the plastic versions from the local supermarket.

Actually, the fact that it's so cold or raining means that I can play bingo with my friends this afternoon. We play in the residents' lounge once a week – it's very civilised with a raffle, coffee and cakes after the bingo. The keys to life are to slow down, listen to others, find out news and shared memories. Some of my friends are aged 90+, but memories are so important to them and I learn things too.

We remember stuff and chat about it. For example, we recall mint Toffos, advent calendars, Passing Cloud cigarettes and cats playing with Xmas tree baubles. I remember spiced apples & raisins, haberdashery for all those fiddly repairs, taking the children to a Christingle service at the church and buying second-hand clothes. In my day, it was not so much online, charity shops or boot sales, but there were always jumble sales and the like. Listening can be a form of healing if it's done with kindness and empathy and that's part of a druid's box of medicines.

Hasn't it been cold at night recently? In my experience, there's only one thing for really cold evenings – warm clothes, hot drinks or soup, a fan heater, the wireless and a hot water bottle for later. The icy pavements in the morning mean that I need a stick nowadays and boots with good grips. I try to donate a small something to various charities for the homeless too. If the weather is too cold for me at night, how much worse is it for those without a home who try to exist on the streets?

When I have a moment, I try to make some basic remedies for my fellow residents. Examples are winter syrups for sore throats, oil of calendula for dry or chapped skin, oil of cleavers for psoriasis, spearmint teabags for upset stomachs, rose and lemon balm teabags for de-stressing and oil of comfrey for joint pains or pulled muscles.

Yule blessings to you all.

Erica

Celestial forecasts: December 2023

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.

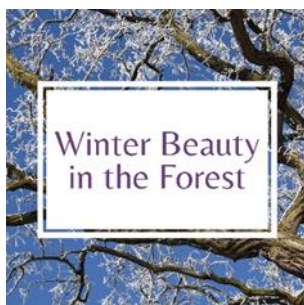
The month of December was named after **decem**, meaning tenth in Latin, as November was the 10th month when the year started in March. To the Anglo-Saxons, December was called **Ærra Gēola**, meaning **before Yule or First Yule**.

During December, we can also look forward to the British Celtic Festival of Yule (Winter Solstice = 22 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** (7th-15th) and the month culminates with **New Year's Eve** (31st), celebrated as a two-day festival called **Hogmanay** in Scotland.

We have a Forest Bathing event on **Saturday 2nd** (11am-1.30pm at Harry Edwards, Shere). Our **Full Moon Meditation takes place 7.30-9.30pm (UK time)** on Wednesday 27th, with the **Cold Full Moon** peaking earlier that morning at 00:33. Aligning with the moon cycle is very therapeutic, and our next Lunar Alignment Programme commences with the New Moon on 11 January 2024. We also have the **Geminid Meteor Shower** peaking 13th/14th.

Saturday 2 December, 11.00am - 1.30pm, 2½-hours Forest Therapy session with Joanna in the beautiful private grounds of the Harry Edwards Healing Sanctuary (Shere, near Guildford, Surrey), £37.77 (+ admin fee by PayPal). This Winter Forest Bathing+ session will take place in all weathers except 30+mph winds.

A deeply relaxing and rejuvenating experience, and which, despite the title forest bathing, does not involve any swimming! Some of the scientifically proven benefits of spending time in woodland include reduced stress levels, stronger immune system response, and a stabilised cortisol cycle. Book via our **Harmony Healing shop**. Email katieandjo@harmonyinnature.uk to go on our monthly forest bathing update email list.



Sunday 3 December is the Roman Festival of Bona Dea; this is a smaller festival than the one celebrated on 1 May, but similarly for women only. In Roman mythology, Bona Dea (literally the *good goddess*) was the goddess of fertility, healing, virginity and women. She was the daughter of the god, Faunus, and was associated with supplying medicinal healing herbs in her temple garden. Bona Dea was also invoked for freedom from slavery; many of her worshippers were freed slaves and plebeians and many were women seeking aid in sickness or for fertility.

Thursday 7 - Friday 15 December is the eight-day Jewish celebration of Hanukkah (or Chanukah). Hanukkah is the wintertime festival of lights, celebrated with a nightly menorah lighting, fried foods and special prayers.

Tuesday 12 December @ 23:32 is the New Moon.

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 2024?

Wednesday 13 - Thursday 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! 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 on 27 November) early on 8 December will hamper viewing due to light pollution. Go to **timeanddate.com** for further information.

Sunday 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.



Friday 22 December is the Pagan Solstice @ 03.27. 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 20 December and 23 December.

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 2024 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 magicians 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.

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

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

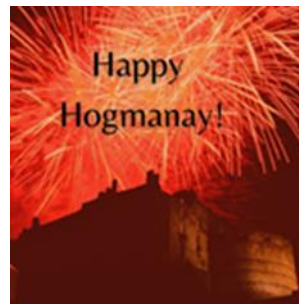
Tuesday 26 December is St Stephen's Day in the Christian Calendar, also known as Boxing Day. Boxing Day is so named because traditionally it was a day off for servants, when they received a special Christmas box from their masters and would also go home on Boxing Day to give Christmas boxes to their families.



Wednesday 27 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](#).

Wednesday 27 December is the Cold Full Moon at 00:23. 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.

Click here for [Angela McGerr's Full Moon Meditation with Gabriel](#), from Angela McGerr's [A Harmony of Angels](#) available from the [Harmony Shop](#) (with some signed by Angela).



Sunday 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 3-4 January) is the Quadrantids Meteor Shower; visible from 1-5 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.



Acknowledgments

Celestial Forecast is compiled by Joanna Bristow-Watkins of Harmony Healing, the original is published at Joanna's [Monthly Celestial Forecasts](#). It is created using many sources but notably the [Moonwise Calendar](#) and Lia Leendertz's annual *Almanac*. Whilst considerable effort is made to ensure accuracy, this is not an exact science and sources are sometimes contradictory!

The Harmony Healing regular Blog update can be emailed out with more information as the events above happen (updates are headed with a title detailing the occasion so you can choose whether to open it or not), featuring New and Full Moon, meteor showers, eclipses and other meteorological events, interesting anniversaries, ancient festival dates plus notification of dates of numerological significance. See <https://harmonyhealing.co.uk/blog> for typical Blog entries. Sometimes Blogs will appear on successive days and at other times there will be no messages for a while. The sender e-mail address is jo@harmonyhealing.co.uk (and the sender will show as Joanna Bristow-Watkins @ Harmony Healing). You may need add this email to your safe list and check your junk filter initially.

You can sign up at <https://harmonyhealing.co.uk/newsletter-sign-up> or at any page of the Harmony Healing website.

Poetry

By Nicola Ison

Editor's note: this is a piece from Nicola Ison's forthcoming work, Cuan Tuinn.

Brighton pier in autumn

*Waves crash endlessly over stony pebbles,
On and on under fleecy clouds,
Scudding across the sky like ships with sails –
The wind ruffles summer hats and,
Tugs at multi-coloured tee shirts.
Overhead, fulmars and herring gulls,
Wheel forward and backward,
Hoping for a glimpse of discarded sandwiches,
Or broken ice cream cones;
Failing that, they perch on posts or railings,
Screeching displeasure at avian intruders.
I sit alone, not intruding and tuning out,
Both human voices and pier amusements –
Garish fairground snares for the unwary.
After a while, I tune into the three realms,
Each with their own voices and frequencies.
Here is the voice of the earth or the beach,
Covered with its quilt of stones and sand, washed anew.
Here is the voice of the sky and the wind,
Drawing patterns in the sand and the gulls.
Here is the voice of the sea and its waves,
Soothing sounds on and on forever.*

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