



# Gylden Magick

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## June 2024

PRACTICAL MAGICK & UNIVERSAL ENERGY FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

## Editor's notes

by Gylden Fellowship

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

Dear readers of **GYLDEN MAGICK**,

This solstice is the **Strawberry Moon** – and this issue of the magazine is a little different with a new ancient crystals series. The altar colours are bright yellow and dark green.

The solstice, **Alban Hefin**, is on 20 June and Midsummer's Day falls on 24 June.

I say Alban Hefin, but most pagans would describe this date as the **Summer Solstice** or as **Litha**. We'll feature an in-depth look at this

festival on our website, a little nearer to 21 June, but we've put in a few blessings here too.

Other notable dates for diaries in June are **Mother Shipton's Day** on 2 June, **World Environment Day** on 5 June and 22 June for the **next full moon**. Don't forget 6 June for the **next new moon**.

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

We continue with our regular series about celestial forecasts, folklore, dinosaurs, environment and magick. Our crystal expert, Charlie, turns her attention to Stonehenge, Mark looks at sulphur hexafluoride and we

include the first piece in a new series on archaeogemmology.

In past years, we would be frantic with preparations for various fayres or events, but not so in 2024. We enjoyed the Wandering Witches' Fayre in April and look forward to more festivals, camps, fayres and markets in the summer.

Thank you for all your feedback and many blessings.

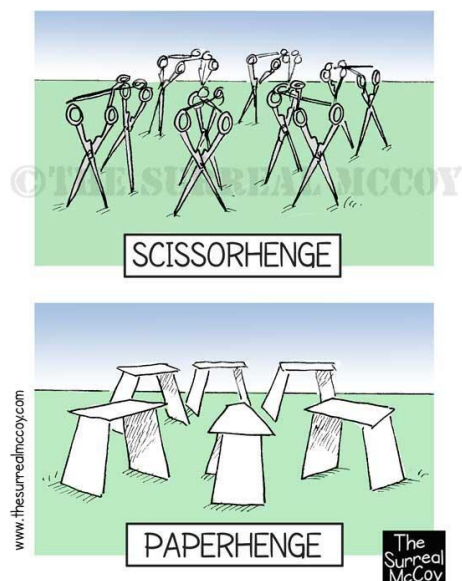
**Gylden Fellowship admins**

For more info, why not join [Gylden River LRC](#) or [Gylden Fellowship](#) groups on Facebook today and see our archives or new briefings?

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Early Prototypes



# Pagan history: Stonehenge

By Charlie Foreverdark

Stonehenge is believed by many cultures to be of religious significance and, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, it was a popular gathering place for nomadic people, travellers and alternative folk. Around the summer solstice, an event called the **Stonehenge Free Festival** was the scene of a celebratory encampment which lasted for several weeks. The authorities, claiming to be concerned with the preservation and protection of Stonehenge and local archaeology, sought to impose control measures and tensions subsequently accelerated. In 1985, English Heritage and the National Trust gained a High Court injunction to prevent gathering at Stonehenge for the annual festival. In order to police this, law enforcers set up an exclusion zone of road blocks on the approach, and barbed wire around the stones.

On the first day of June, the police intercepted a large peace convoy of vehicles containing several hundred people who were heading for Stonehenge to celebrate the turning seasons. **The Battle of the Beanfield** ensued: a violent and over-zealous confrontation of armed policemen in riot gear attacking unarmed festival goers and travellers (including pregnant women and young children) with truncheons, stones and riot shields, eventually setting fire to their vehicles and homes in a bloody stand-off. Although this event is actually relatively minor in terms of the scale incidents of mass violence committed by official law enforcement towards citizens, it certainly deserves wider recognition and I write on behalf of a community who will never forget the ferocity unleashed by the establishment upon peaceful protestors who challenged the status quo. Many men, women and children were injured and over 500 people were arrested. A small percentage of these were eventually awarded fairly derisory damages after suing Wiltshire police for wrongful arrest and imprisonment, criminal violence and criminal damage. The terrible event still resonates to this day.

Many modern-day pagan and druid groups believe Stonehenge to be an ancient and sacred temple and reason that they have a lawful right to worship there. The pilgrimage is the equivalent of attending a church or cathedral. After many years of consultation and communication, relations between the authorities and the pagan, druid and traveller groups have improved, though it was not until the millennium that Stonehenge was once again made accessible for the summer solstice under managed open access. Because of conservation fears, since 1977 the general public have been mandated to remain outside of a fenced periphery, and are no longer allowed to get close to the stones.

My husband and I are lucky enough to be members of an organisation who are allowed access to visit Stonehenge on intimate private gatherings of around 40 people, near in date to the Midsummer Solstice. Stonehenge now receives thousands of visitors upon the actual dawn of the Midsummer Solstice to witness the sunrise glide perfectly above the ancient stone stage. Our private access gatherings are usually arranged for a few days either before or after the actual solstice date. Much to the obvious displeasure of the English Heritage staff who patrol the site, our group is allowed beyond the observation periphery fence, into the centre of the stone circle for the purpose of religious observation. The ritual, in essence, is where we gather together to acknowledge the turning of the seasons with a beautiful ceremony of poetry, dancing, drumming, chanting and singing. This means different things to different people. I have had the privilege of sharing the space of primal sacredness within the stone circle with druids, pagans, wiccans, witches and cunning folk, each with their own diverse array of spiritual belief systems and practices, but all connected in the ancient idea that the turning of the seasons is an event to be marked and celebrated.

With regard to general history based upon careful assessment of the objects discovered in the nearby barrows, archaeologist **John Lubbock** was able to pinpoint the first activity at the site of Stonehenge to the Bronze Age. Whilst it goes without saying that not all theories can be correct, equally there is no reason to imagine that Stonehenge has had just one single defining and unchanging purpose/ meaning throughout its 5000-year lifespan. The site certainly appears to have been something of a tourist attraction for centuries. Buried Roman artefacts have been found nearby indicate that the site was frequently visited in the Roman era.

In 1640, **John Aubrey** made an academic attempt to formally survey the stones. He declared Stonehenge to be the work of native Celtic Druids, which challenged the long-standing theory of architect Inigo Jones that Stonehenge was the creation of Roman or Danish invaders. There was some debate as to whether Aubrey's Druids were of pagan origin or whether they were biblical patriarchs. In any case, Aubrey was able to demonstrate an astronomical and calendrical role in the placement of the stones, indicative of the monuments relevance to religious seasonal observation. Many modern scholars reason that Stonehenge existed long before the arrival of the Celtic Druids, possibly predating them by up to 2000 years. Regardless of whether they were responsible for its initial assembly, there is no doubt that the original Druidic society appropriated the monument for ancestral worship and seasonal observation - modern druidic and pagan orders continue to hold the site in high esteem for ritual workings.

Unlike other temples across the world, which tend to be oriented towards the eastern equinoctial sunrise, the entrance of the circular structure at Stonehenge is oriented toward sunrise on the midsummer solstice and it is generally accepted that the architecture of the central stone setting as well as the ancient processional route from the River Avon (known as The Avenue) embodies a cardinal axis, referencing both the rising sun of the midsummer solstice and the setting sun of the midwinter solstice. At midsummer, the sun rises above the horizon to the north-east, close to the Heel Stone. At midwinter, the sun sets in the south-west and shines through the gap between the two tallest trilithons, one of which has now fallen.

Amongst some of the logical theories for the purpose of Stonehenge is the idea that it perhaps served as a monument to mark an elite cremation cemetery. Bone fragments were exhumed from the Stonehenge site more than a century ago, but the archaeologists considered the remains of little significance and promptly reburied them. They have since been re-exhumed, and more than 50,000 cremated bone fragments have been catalogued. They represent a mix of 63 individual men, women and children. Alongside the buried bone fragments were ritual items including a mace head and an incense bowl, suggesting that the people buried in the graves may have been of religious or political significance. It is also worth noting that a large number of the skeletal remains recovered from around Stonehenge showed signs of illness or injury: it is plausible that the site was believed to have healing benefits of some description. Evidence that fragments have been historically chipped away by ancient people suggests that the stones themselves may have been attributed with medicinal value, or believed to be effective talismans of protection.

Researchers in archaeoacoustics have confirmed that the original structure would also have had outstanding acoustics, creating reverberations similar to those experienced in modern day concert halls and cathedrals. So another speculation is that the site could have been used as a musical soundscape by prehistoric pipers and drummers. It is also particularly intriguing to note that one aspect of a fairly high proportion of Bluestone material is the presence of lithophonic properties. That is, the stones ring out like a bell or gong when struck.

Gylden  
Magick  
June 2024

# World Oceans Day: 8 June

Collated by Gylden Fellowship







## World Oceans Day is June 8

*What action will you take to celebrate?*

trash cleanup

plant native plants

create an anti-litter or plastic pollution awareness poster

make an item I'd normally buy

make art to celebrate the beauty of our waterways or to show threats to them

Be creative and share with us!



Together we can make a difference.

FRIENDS OF THE NORTH FORK  
of the Shenandoah River





# Crystals: Stonehenge

By Charlie Foreverdark

The outermost setting of Stonehenge, if completed, would once have been a circle of 30 upright sarsen stones. Unfortunately, the missing parts of the original monolith are unlikely to be recovered. An early antiquarian wrote in the 1700s that each time he visited, more of Stonehenge had been removed. Subjected to centuries of weathering, when the ancient stones eventually fell, some broke into smaller fragments, making quarrying easier. Throughout history, old and abandoned structures have been fair game for people requiring material for new constructions. It is plausible that stones from Stonehenge were removed and repurposed for the construction of roads, walls and houses. There are speculations that several large sections of bluestone are located in some of the older residential buildings in Avebury, although Avebury Circle itself was subject to the same social erosion by residents. There are also rumours that one or two stones may have been utilised underneath the old bridge near Countess Roundabout. Some of the missing stones are still believed to be buried at the original site or nearby in the surrounding rural landscape.

The larger standing stones are composed of **sarsen**, a type of hard and resistant sandstone silcrete rock, which is found scattered quite naturally across southern England. The origin of these large stones can be pinpointed to a specific local area of the West Woods in the Marlborough Downs, meaning that the largest stone pillars originated approximately 20 miles away. On average, the gargantuan sarsens weigh between 25 and 30 tonnes, so the enormity of the task of transportation and construction really cannot be overstated.

Most of the smaller bluestones are restricted to a single source location of origin, far further afield in the Preseli Hills of Western Wales. In terms of specific origin, at least two of the stones appear to have come from the Newport area of the North Pembrokeshire coast, whilst another seems to have come from the Brecon Beacons, and several appear to be from the Fishguard area.

**Bluestone** is an archaeological term, adopted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It refers collectively to a lithologically diverse selection of stones. The term incorporates spotted metamorphosed dolerite (also known as preselite), non-spotted dolerite, blue hued rhyolite, feldspar (plagioclase), biotite, diopside and quartz, in addition to inclusions of ashy shale and several different types of sandstone.

Preseli Bluestone crystallises in the form of amorphous masses. The dark green colouring can be attributed to the dolerite, but most specimens typically feature small white spots of quartzite and dark specks which are typically a mix of biotite, hematite and ilmenite. Inclusions of augite and mica lend a mysterious shimmering effect to the bluestone which can be seen in sunlight and some types of artificial light. Despite appearing green for the most part, the bluestone takes its name from the fact that it appears blue when moistened.

Preseli Bluestone is harder and stronger than granite, sitting at a score of between 8-9 on Moh's scale of hardness. For ancient people to have been able to develop an understanding of how to carve, sculpt and craft this mineral shows an exceptionally high level of capability and intelligence. Its use was not limited to the bluestone pillars at Stonehenge; there have been a large number of ancient tools and weapons carved from this specific mineral discovered in a variety of locations across mainland England.

In the Preseli Hills, igneous bluestone rock formed in giant natural pillars and, though no firm evidence of quarrying has been uncovered to date, the specific structural composition of the mineral would have allowed for prehistoric quarry-workers to detach megaliths by driving wooden wedges into cracks and natural fractures and fissures of the stone and then merely allowing the Welsh rain to swell the wood, so that great pillars of the stone could be eased away from the rock face with relatively minimal effort.



Many experts hypothesise that the bluestones not only originated in the Preseli Hills, but were actually physically dismantled from older original stone circles in Wales. During the filming for a documentary on the Welsh origins of the Stonehenge bluestone, archaeologists uncovered the remains of another considerably older stone circle site at **Waun Mawn** in Pembrokeshire's Preseli Hills. Scientific dating of charcoal and sediment from the holes reveal that this stone circle was initially constructed around 3400 BCE. The Waun Mawn circle featured a diameter of 360ft, which mirrors the ditch that encloses Stonehenge. Both sites appear to have been strategically aligned to the midsummer solstice sunrise.

One of the bluestones at Stonehenge has an unusual cross-section which closely resembles one of the holes left at Waun Mawn. This evidence, alongside the identical diameters and orientations of both Stonehenge and Waun Mawn, suggest that part of the current Stonehenge circle could have been disassembled from an original stone monument in this remote corner of rural Pembrokeshire and relocated all the way to Salisbury Plain.

The interpretation of a potential relocation from Wales complements recent isotopic work on human and animal remains found at Stonehenge. Unique chemical signatures indicate that the early years of these humans and animals were spent on the Welsh coast, supporting a hypothesis of migration. Radiocarbon dates and pollen evidence suggest that the region of Waun Mawn was an important and densely settled area in Neolithic times until around 3000 BCE when millennia of farming and human occupation abruptly ceased. Researchers have not reached a solid conclusion as to why people uprooted and relocated at this time.

The individual stones have their own complex and varied history, and their present positioning at Stonehenge only represent the last paragraph of the last chapter of their historic journey. With a couple of the Stonehenge stones believed to have been part of the older Waun Mawn circle, archaeologists have subsequently theorised that monoliths from several other stone circles could also have been relocated to form sections of the Wiltshire monument. Several of the Welsh bluestones are thought to have been dragged about a mile from a stone circle at West Amesbury Henge in which they previously stood, on the bank of the river Avon.

Over the last few years Preseli bluestone has surfaced on the market in increasing quantities, both as ornamental items and as jewellery. Folklore in Pembrokeshire suggests that the Preseli bluestones possess healing qualities in their own right and an upsurge in sales have prompted the National Trust and English Heritage to consider unprecedented measures in order to restrict its distribution. It has even been proposed that a worldwide ban of the sale of Preseli spotted dolerite may be required.

The diverse ecosystems and intriguing prehistoric sites of the Preseli Hills have gained popularity as tourist destinations themselves. They do have Special Area of Conservation status with three protected sites of special scientific interest; however, the organisations responsible for protecting ancient sites have become increasingly concerned that illegal extraction of material may be occurring, due to the large quantity of material available on the market. The bulk of the material seems to be being polished in mainland China, with more elaborate carvings being worked in the Netherlands. Please remember, as with all gemstone acquisitions, that responsible and ethical sellers will always be able to clarify the origins of their wares, as well as the specific locations of the various stages of production from source to shelf.

Due to the history of the mineral, a number of esoteric attributes have been connected to Preseli Bluestone by new age lithotherapists. The roots of many of the associated modern metaphysical properties actually date back to Welsh folklore, when it was believed that bluestone offered grounding and stability to those who wore it. In addition to being a uniquely beautiful stone to wear ornamentally, it is one of the few precious minerals that originates here in the UK - it is a welcome addition to any gemstone collection, whether or not you ascribe to crystal healing.

# Celestial notes

By Joanna Bristow-Watkins, Harmony Healing

June is British summertime. The roses bloom, imprinting their perfumed scent into the extended evenings leading to the Summer Solstice. Garden flowers and hedgerows are splendidly colourful and summer berries are abundant. Seasons are topsy turvy with the elderflower, usually a May blossom, in full bloom as June begins. Many folks relish the picnic season with strawberries and ice-cream plus elderflower cordial; despite optimism versus realism whilst planning for both rain and/or sunburn risk.

The month could be named after **Juno**, the Roman Goddess linked with marriage. To the Anglo-Saxons, it was called **sera monath** (dry month), which is not necessarily our modern-day experience.

During June, as well as the Summer Solstice (20th this year) and our own traditional British Festivals including Midsummer's Eve (24th), we have a couple of international events – World Environment Day (3rd), World Ocean Day (8th) and Asteroid Day (30th). We can look forward to a sprinkling of Egyptian (16th and 20th), Chinese (10th) and Roman (24th) celebrations plus the Bootid Meteor Shower (peaking 27th). We have our online [Guided Full Moon Meditation on Saturday 21st \(it may be in person!\)](#) and our public [Surrey Forest Bathing event on Saturday 15 June](#).



**Saturday 1 June** 11am - 2pm, the chance for a private Forest Bathing session with friends in the grounds of Harry Edward's Healing Sanctuary for a group of up to 10 people (£333). Larger groups available, enquire for cost details.

Immerse yourself in the healing elements of nature and connect deeply with all your senses. Spend three hours in the woods mindfully connecting to your surroundings and living fully in the present moment, guided in simple sensory exercises: smell the flowers, stroke the bark, listen to the birds. The session culminates with a treelaxation, our unique nature meditation under the canopy of trees. A deeply relaxing and rejuvenating experience, and which, despite the title forest bathing, does not involve any swimming! Join with your friends, family or colleagues and enjoy the glorious bluebells together. Some of the scientifically proven benefits of spending time in woodland include reduced stress levels, stronger immune system response, and a stabilised cortisol cycle.

This 3-hour session which will take place in all weathers except high winds or electrical storms. Book via our [Harmony shop](#). Email [katieandjo@harmonyinnature.uk](mailto:katieandjo@harmonyinnature.uk) to go on our forest bathing mailing list.

**Wednesday 5 June is World Environment Day**, which has been celebrated annually since 1974. Over the years, the day has focused on such issues as acid rain, oceans, water and green cities. World Environment Day is also encouraging individuals into doing something personally to take care of the Earth. It doesn't matter whether the effort is on a local level or whether it's a group effort nationally or even globally; everyone is free to choose.

World Environment Day has a new theme each year, which focuses attention on a pressing environmental concern. The World Environment Day 2024 campaign focuses on land restoration, desertification and drought resilience under the slogan, *Our land. Our future. We are #GenerationRestoration*. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will host the 2024 World Environment Day global celebrations. 🌍

**Thursday 6 June @ 13:37 is 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 [Facebook Page](#) or [YouTube Page](#). New Moon is a good time to work on your Vision Board for the rest of 2024.



**Saturday 8 June is World Ocean Day.** This annual event, recognised since 2016, is designed to unite and rally the world to protect and restore our blue planet. World Ocean Day, powered by World Ocean Day Youth Advisory Council, works with an international network of youth and organisational leaders, in more than 140 countries, to support collaborative conservation.

The stated mission is: *on World Ocean Day, people everywhere can celebrate and take action for our shared ocean, which connects us all. Get together with your family, community, and/or your company, and join with millions of others around our blue planet to start creating a better future.* By working together, we can -- and will -- protect and restore our shared ocean. Join this growing global celebration in June and continue to grow the engagement year-round!

**Monday 10 June is scheduled as the Chinese Dragon Boat Festival, also known as Duanwu Festival in Mandarin and Tuen Ng Festival in Cantonese.** The Festival is to commemorate the Chinese patriot, Qu Yuan, who killed himself by jumping into the river Li in despair. He was desperate, because his master refused to take his advice and he feared his country falling into the enemy's hands. It falls on the fifth day of the fifth month of the Chinese calendar, which is 10 June 2024.

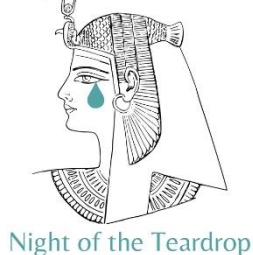
**Saturday 15 June, 11am-2pm, our public Forest Bathing session** in the grounds of Harry Edward's Healing Sanctuary, £39.77.

*Immerse yourself in the healing elements of nature and connect deeply with all your senses. Spend three hours in the woods mindfully connecting to your surroundings and living fully in the present moment, guided in simple sensory exercises: smell the flowers, stroke the bark, listen to the birds. The session culminates with a treerelaxation, our unique nature meditation under the canopy of trees. A deeply relaxing and rejuvenating experience, and which, despite the title forest bathing, does not involve any swimming! Join with your friends, family or colleagues and*

enjoy the glorious bluebells together. Some of the scientifically proven benefits of spending time in woodland include reduced stress levels, stronger immune system response, and a stabilised cortisol cycle.

This 3-hour session which will take place in all weathers except high winds or electrical storms. Book via our the [Harmony shop](#). Email [katieandjo@harmonyinnature.uk](mailto:katieandjo@harmonyinnature.uk) to go on our forest bathing mailing list.

Leyleten-Nuktah



**Sunday 16 June is the Egyptian night, known as Leyleten-Nuktah**, the Night of the Tear Drop. A miraculous tear-drop as Aset (Isis) began the mourning of her brother/ husband Asar (Osirus), was believed to fall into the Nile causing it to rise and bring new life to the land. Sources vary as to whether this is 14/16/17 or 18 June; the date is actually the 11th day of the Ancient Egyptian month of *Ba-oo-neh*, so the confusion arises when trying to covert this to our Gregorian calendar.

To purchase instructions for a sacred bath ritual for *finding inner strength; removing the etheric mask to see the truth beneath* (£9.99 or £4.44 to email subscribers) see [Harmony Shop](#) or email [jo@harmonyhealing.co.uk](mailto:jo@harmonyhealing.co.uk). Subscriber discount code is HHSUB, also shown on the booking page.

**Thursday 20 June is the Egyptian Festival of the Burning of the Lamps**, which was held at Sais (source [Bibliotheca Alexandrina, p31](#), also available via [Academia.edu](#), date from Moonwise Calendar). This is the third great festival in Sais to Aset (Isis). In an under-chapel beneath the temple, lamps were carried in procession around the coffin of Asar (Osiris). It was by the power of light, symbolising the life-giving power of the Moon, that Aset rekindled life in her dead husband. The exact date is actually the 13th day of the Ancient Egyptian month of *Epeiph*, so confusion arises when trying to covert this to our Gregorian calendar and some sources give variations especially 21 June.

**Thursday 20 June at 21:50 UK is the pagan celebration of the Solstice**, the moment when the sun enters Cancer. In the Northern Hemisphere, this is viewed as the triumph of light, the ecstatic culmination of the sun, yet the start of growing darkness. Old traditions included: making a bonfire on a hilltop, singing, drinking, laughing and a time of merry-making. Or there were processions with torches and lanterns, rolling a wheel downhill to mark the start of the sun's descent, blessing cakes and wine, waiting for the dawn and greeting the sun when it rises, sleeping by a spring or rolling naked in the dew of the summer sunrise! More at [timeanddate.com](http://timeanddate.com).





**Friday 21-Sunday 23 June: Closed event for Silver Tent members.** *Silver Tent is an online global community for women over 50 discovering they have wisdom worth sharing. If you meet the criteria, request your group membership on [Facebook](#). Spanning the energies of the Summer Solstice, Egyptian Festival of the Burning Lamps (Saturday 20th) and the Solstice Strawberry Full Moon (Saturday night/Sunday morning at 02:27), let us whisk you into your Higher Self, fully connecting with nature, ley lines, the Moon Cycle and the energies of Khem (Ancient Egypt) you will hone into and/or rediscover your latent ancient wisdom to blossom into your full potential. See [Harmony Shop](#) for more details.*

**Friday 21 June, 7.30-9.30pm UK Time (GMT+1 which is also UT+1) is our [Full Moon Unity Consciousness Meditation](#).** *During this session, we connect with other like-minded people and together we work through a mindful chakra balancing process using colours and etheric crystals, with the aim that all participants will experience a degree of unity consciousness. Participants all receive a deeply healing experience. Cost to participate is £20 by online BACS payment (£1 admin fee added for PayPal, concessions to RSE/VFoA graduates), book at the [Harmony Shop](#).*

*This activity serves as a good taster of Joanna's work in general and the virtual format of our Zoom based programme. And, most importantly, it's a step towards making a difference to the global predicament. To find out how working on your own spiritual consciousness can help humanity and the planet by raising the overall human consciousness levels, see Joanna's [YouTube explanation](#). Please email [jo@harmonyhealing.co.uk](mailto:jo@harmonyhealing.co.uk) or contact me via Facebook Messenger/What's App to let me know you've booked to make sure I send you the link.*

**Saturday 22 June is Full Moon @ 02:07 UK time (Friday night/Saturday morning)** and it's the Solstice Strawberry Moon. It's also known as the Lotus Moon, Oak Moon, Cold Moon or Long Night's Moon.

*Between Full Moon and the next New Moon is considered as a good time energetically for detoxing the body. For instructions on how to conduct an [Angela McGerr's Full Moon Meditation with Gabriel](#) (from Angela McGerr's book *A Harmony of Angel*, we have a few unused signed editions available from the [Harmony Shop](#)), see the [Harmony Healing Full Moon listing](#).*

**Monday 24 June is also Midsummers Eve** and was considered magical in Cornwall and Ireland, when there was feasting, fires, songs, and dances. Bonfires were kindled on high hills to commemorate the high point of the year. Traditionally, the veil is thin between the dimensions housing the living and the dead at this time.

This is also the **Roman Festival of Fors Fortuna**. *Forsis* (note the name is very similar to *Isis*) an ancient Roman Goddess of prosperity, good luck, and divine blessings. Her name means "She Who Brings", from the Latin verb *fero*, synonymous with abundance and success. This seems to have merged with *Fortuna*, probably originally a

Goddess of fertility, into the Goddess called *Fors Fortuna*, who was acknowledged as sometimes being fickle or wanton and representing Fortune as Goddess of luck or chance. She was especially worshipped by slaves and commoners, as the goddess who could bring about rags-to-riches transformations; with at least two dedicated temples in Rome being founded by former slaves in gratitude for their changed luck.



**Thursday 27 June is predicted as the peak of the Bootids Meteor Shower**, if they are visible at all this year. Although they are not active every year, they can occur any time between 22 June and 2 July. In 2024, the best displays might be after dusk on 27 June as the shower is expected to reach peak activity at around 22:00 UK time on 27th. The Full Moon on 21 June means there could be some light pollution, but it could be a reasonable year for viewing (weather permitting). More at [in-the-sky.org](https://www.in-the-sky.org), including a map of the radiant point, which is circumpolar, which means it is always above the horizon and the shower will be active throughout the night.

**Saturday 29 June, 11-2pm, private Forest Bathing** session in the grounds of Harry Edward's Healing Sanctuary, £333 (for up to 10 people\*).

*Immerse yourself in the healing elements of nature and connect deeply with all your senses. Spend three hours in the woods mindfully connecting to your surroundings and living fully in the present moment, guided in simple sensory exercises: smell the bluebells, stroke the bark, listen to the birds. The session culminates with a treelaxation, our unique nature meditation under the canopy of trees. A deeply relaxing and rejuvenating experience, and which, despite the title forest bathing, does not involve any swimming! Join with your friends, family or colleagues and enjoy the glorious private grounds together. Some of the scientifically proven benefits of spending time in woodland include reduced stress levels, stronger immune system response, and a stabilised cortisol cycle.*

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*\*More people can be accommodated at additional cost, enquire for details.*

**Monday 30 June is Asteroid Day.** [Asteroid Day](https://www.asteroidday.org) was co-founded in 2014, by Dr Brian May, astrophysicist and lead guitarist of QUEEN, together with Rusty Schweickart, Apollo 9 Astronaut, Danica Remy, President of B612 Foundation and filmmaker, Grig Richters.

Asteroid Day events take place annually on 30 June to mark the anniversary of the Tunguska impact in 1908. Its purpose is to expand the understanding of asteroids and to ensure that any asteroids which might ever have a direct impact on our planet are carefully monitored.

# Ancient Crystals: jacinth

By Grenville Millington, FGA

**Editor's note:** welcome to a new series on archaeogemmology. Most of the articles will be by guest writers – scholars, learned members of the Gemmological Association, etc. We kick off with an introduction to jacinth.

On one of the walls in the premises of the Gemmological Association of Great Britain in London is an illuminated manuscript that dates back only to 2004. In the text is the description of the crest, which describes a lynx holding a ruby (or red) escarbuncle (ancient design of eight radiating spokes) which features eight gems, although the actual rendering of the crest just uses the colours of the gems. The eight gems are:

- Pearl
- Ruby
- Jacinth
- Topaz
- Emerald
- Turquoise
- Sapphire
- Amethyst.

**Note:** these gems represent white light, the pearl, and its constituent spectrum colours, respectively, red, orange, yellow, green, sky blue, blue, violet. I'm sure most, if not all, readers will have no difficulty with seven of the eight gems in this list but what about jacinth?

**First of all, how is it pronounced?** The "J" is hard, as in "Jam". Then you have a choice: "Jassinth" or "Jay-sinth". Apart from the name of a gem, the term, *jacinth*, is also used in heraldry as a secondary colour, meaning orange, orangey brown or tawny. So, what gem is it? We can turn to Harold Newman's *An Illustrated Dictionary of Jewelry*; surely that will provide the answer. It states: "Jacinth – A variety of ZIRCON that is reddish brown, similar to HYACINTH which is more reddish orange. The term has been used in many confusing senses, such as for reddish brown GROSSULAR and SPINEL". What does Robert Webster say in *The Gemmologists Compendium* (1975)? "Jacinth; an unsatisfactory name variously applied to the red zircon and to the similarly coloured hessonite garnet."

This is what I understood about the word, until I began to dig deeper. In my version of Webster's great work, *Gems*, the term is not listed in the index at all, but is mentioned in the text, under **Zircon**: "Yellowish red and orange red stones have had the names, hyacinth and jacinth applied to them, but as these names have been used for any aurora-red stones whatever be their species they are better discontinued; indeed they are fast dying out." So, the names, jacinth and hyacinth, are closely linked, with only a tone or emphasis of colour separating them. In fact, they are one and the same with jacinth being just a shortened version of the word, hyacinth. Jacinth is really a name of reddish zircon with hessonite garnet or some other gem. However, there is much more to explore about jacinth and future pieces will expand on its history.

# Looking towards Litha

By Nic the Witch

The name for the Summer Solstice in Druidry is **Alban Hefin**, which means *The Light of the Shore*, but here, we're going to stick with the more common pagan name of Litha, which also means a ray of light. Litha is the height of summer, the longest day and the shortest night of the earth's solar year. At this time, we celebrate the completion of the cycle that began at the winter solstice. *Solstice* means *the standing of the sun* and we can connect to the great turning point in the earth's annual cycle to stop, be still and reflect on our progress since Yule. It is a time to count our blessings, celebrate our achievements and pass on the spirit of goodwill to all we encounter.

From now until Yule, everything will be drawing in and we can use this time to develop ourselves during the time of darkness. Past summer solstices meant that people stayed up all night to greet the dawn and many stone circles in the northern hemisphere have been aligned to the solstice sunrise. Actually, if I cast my mind back to [Litha 2015](#), this is how I described the event in another online site.

*"OK, I know that it's common for many pagans in my part of the UK (South) to rush off to Avebury Stone Circle or Stonehenge to celebrate Litha, but I'd like to share an alternative. I go to a local moot, which has no more than 5-6 people at best and none of us wanted to join the cast of thousands in Wiltshire.*

*So, we did what many small settlements might have done thousands of years ago: we used a local field, miles from anywhere (with the owner's permission) and used a portable fire pit to set up an all-night blaze. We had drums, guitars, food, mead and beer and held a short Litha ritual + prayers to the Goddess + all-night vigil, before greeting the dawn. Everyone joined in, there was much fellowship and I felt that this was the right way: a solitary or small-group act of worship, rather than the media circus that surrounds mass solstice celebrations. After all, if you visit Stonehenge now, you'll be able to buy more fuel or a cup of tea at the Solstice service station nearby."*

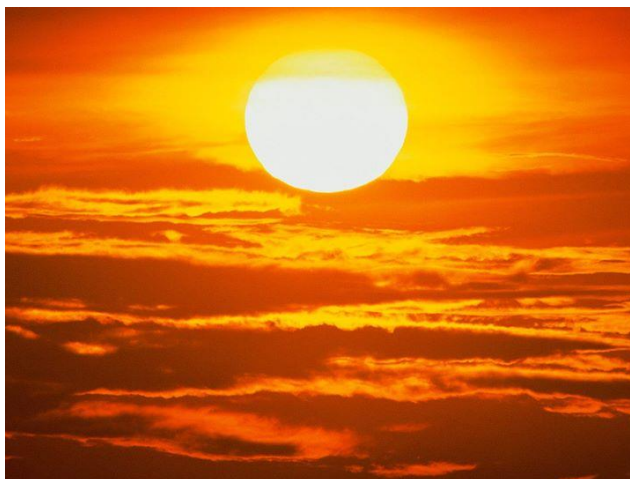
Now is the time to express our own growth through art, dance, stories, poetry and songs, remembering ancestral wisdom and preparing for future changes. This is also a time for grounding yourself and placing your spirit in alignment with the energy of Gaia. Be open to inner wishes, beliefs and feelings and follow your heart. Here are some ideas for celebrating Litha, whilst at home or in a family.

- Going out for as a family group (or with a friend) for a walk and a picnic.
- Accentuating kindness: make someone happy and try to be kind to strangers.
- Doing some performance activities, eg singing or storytelling, within social distancing rules.
- Drying herbs and storing them in jars...I've been using up my stocks to make massage oils and herbal teabags.
- Making a local map of trees in your area.
- Writing down lists of wildflowers you've seen on your walks.
- Listing the animals and birds that visit your garden, eg owls, bats, hedgehogs, etc.
- Taking a day out to do a solitary vision quest – take water to drink, fruits or basic foods to eat and seek solitude to evaluate your pathway.
- Making some incense for Litha – here's just one example:
  - 2 parts sandalwood
  - 1 part mugwort
  - 1 part chamomile
  - 1 part gardenia flowers
  - a few drops rose, lavender or yarrow essential oil.



On the subject of kindness, here's a little spell to send to anyone you know who is ill or depressed atm. Without mentioning any names, I run this spell (or a variation of it) every night for a close friend who needs my healing energies. Normally, I focus on that person beforehand and hold a piece of rough amethyst or citrine crystal.

I see you with my mind,  
 And keep you in my heart –  
 Healing circles of magick,  
 From me to you depart.  
 This energy it soothes,  
 And eases all your pain –  
 Bringing only blessed relief,  
 And freedom from stress again.  
 So, mote it be – from me to you <Name> forever.



## Sunset prayer for Litha

The longest day is over,  
 As the sun sinks slowly away.  
 At dawn, we greeted and honoured you,  
 Celebrating your light over the land.  
 You make crops grow and bloom,  
 And your heat warms the earth -  
 You are the bringer of life for us all.  
 Now the darkness starts once again,  
 A minute more of night each day,  
 Until we celebrate your rebirth at Yule.  
 Radiant Aine\*, we ask for your blessings  
 At your festival of Midsummer –  
 Help us to experience true joy and divinity.  
 May the goddess of love and light,  
 Bring us the sun's power during every day and,  
 Throughout the remainder of our lives.  
 So, mote it be.

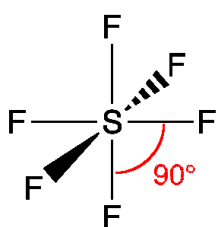
\* Aine = Aw-neh

# Sulphur hexafluoride

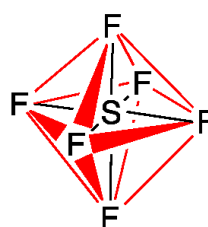
By Mark Sharpen

OK then, chemistry one this time, although one could say that it's a chemistry and ecology topic. Scientists have hailed the discovery of a type of porous material that can store carbon dioxide. The research was published in the journal, *Nature Synthesis*, describing a team led by scientists at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh that created hollow, cage-like molecules with high storage capacities for greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide and sulphur hexafluoride.

Sulphur hexafluoride is a more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide and can last thousands of years in the atmosphere. The molecular geometry of sulphur hexafluoride is **octahedral**. The central atom of sulphur forms a single bond with six fluorine atoms; it is a big atom with 12 bonding electrons comprised of six single bonds and no lone pairs of electrons.



The F–S–F angles are all 90°



The red lines outline an **octahedron**.  
Black lines show the **covalent bonds**

Dr Marc Little, who jointly led the research, said: *"This is an exciting discovery because we need new porous materials to help solve society's biggest challenges. For example, direct air capture of carbon dioxide is increasingly important, because even when we stop emitting carbon dioxide, there's still going to be a huge need to capture previous emissions that are already in the environment. Planting trees is a very effective way to absorb carbon, but it's very slow. So, we need a human intervention – like human-made molecules – to capture greenhouse gases efficiently from the environment more quickly"*.

The researchers used computer simulations to accurately predict how molecules would assemble themselves into the new porous material, a method which Dr Little said could be further enhanced in future through the use of artificial intelligence (AI). He said: *"Combining computational studies like ours with new AI technologies could create an unprecedented supply of new materials to solve the most pressing societal challenges and this study is an important step in this direction. If you're able to use AI tools to predict those quicker and more accurately, then we can really accelerate the rate at which we can discover these new types of porous materials without actually having to make any of them in the lab beforehand"*. Dr Little added that molecules with complex structures could also be used to remove toxic compounds known as volatile organic compounds from the air and could play an important role in medical science.

As well as scientists at Heriot-Watt, the study involved researchers from the University of Liverpool, Imperial College London, the University of Southampton and East China University of Science and Technology. The project was funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council and the Leverhulme Trust.

# Folklore: tree spirits

## By the Storyteller

So, what do we mean by tree spirits? JRR Tolkien would point us towards the Ents or Huorns in the *Lord of the Rings* and Stephen Donaldson would suggest either Wraiths or Forestals in his *Thomas Covenant* saga. JRR Tolkien later wrote that the source of his inspiration was the wealth of English folktales about giants and the word, *Ent*, is derived from the Anglo-Saxon term for giant. Yet we're also veering into the idea of tree shepherds. Sentient trees that can move and communicate are scientific reality, as my co-writer, Mark Sharpen has demonstrated in his article on *Tomato Screams* (**GYLDEN MAGICK**, February 2023). And there's always the Scottish tale of *Jack and the Dancing Trees*.

In Classical myths (and in the *Narnia* books by CS Lewis), tree spirits are represented by dryads or hamadryads - nymphs or nature spirits who live in trees and take the form of beautiful young women. Dryads were originally the spirits of oak trees, but the name was later applied to all tree nymphs. It was believed that they lived only as long as the trees they inhabited. In the iconography, dryads sometimes appear as embodied trees. Further, they are often associated with Pan, god of shepherds and herds, and to satyrs. For CS Lewis, dryads were spirits of Narnian trees. They were able to assume physical bodies similar to human form and the same size as normal humans. They could go in and out of their trees like blossom petals, appearing as minor characters in *The Chronicles of Narnia* film series.

*"Far overhead from beyond the veil of blue sky which hid them the stars sang again; a pure, cold, difficult music. Then there came a swift flash like fire (but it burnt nobody) either from the sky or from the Lion itself, and every drop of blood tingled in the children's bodies, and the deepest, wildest voice they had ever heard was saying: "Narnia, Narnia, Narnia, awake. Love. Think. Speak. Be walking trees. Be talking beasts. Be divine waters" (C. S. Lewis).*

Incidentally, the tree zodiac that underpins the popular Celtic calendar was actually the work of Robert Graves in his work, *The White Goddess*, in 1946. Where did Robert Graves obtain his findings? Well there were three main sources for the Celtic astrology described by Robert Graves and none of them were historians or archaeologists.

1. Source No. 1 was Iolo Morganwg (a Welsh poet, 1747-1826, whose real name was Edward Williams). Iolo Morganwg was a talented bard and storyteller, who romanticised the idea of Welsh druidry as part of Welsh history. Some of his flights of fancy were shown up when the Department of Celtic Studies was established at Jesus College, Oxford in 1877 and the study of Celtic history was placed on an academic level.
2. Source No. 2 was another Welsh poet and dramatist, Edward Davies (1756-1831), who was also a great believer in the revival of Welsh druidry. Robert Graves used much of the work of Edward Davies in *The White Goddess*, but again this work tended to be poetic rather than historical.
3. Source No. 3 was an Irish writer, Roderick O'Flaherty (1629-1718) (this is the English form of his name), born in Galway and notable for his book, *A Chronological Account of Irish Events* – in other words, a history of Ireland. The book was written in Latin and published in 1685; the English translation was published in 1793.

It could be said that O'Flaherty was the main source for Robert Graves, because O'Flaherty's book listed the Ogham characters and stated that each character was supposedly named after a tree. This was a popular concept in 17<sup>th</sup> century Ireland and owed its lineage to a 14<sup>th</sup> century work, the *Book of Ballymote* (by Maghnus Ó Duibhgeánáin of Sligo).

Using O'Flaherty's work, Robert Graves saw that the Ogham letters/tree names had been cited as 13 consonants and 5 vowels. He disregarded the fact that the *Book of Ballymote* (as published by the Royal Irish Academy in 1887) quoted 25 Ogham letters: 15 consonants, 5 vowels and 5 extra letters that were not present in early Ogham (forfeda).

The problem then was that 15 consonants did not match Robert Graves's belief that the Celtic calendar was calculated by lunar months and he also correlated the fact that there were 13 constellations in the zodiac. You might be able to see where this is going – Robert Graves concluded that O'Flaherty's 13 Ogham consonants were the same as the 13 lunar months and the 13 constellations.

In *The White Goddess*, the reader is told that the tree names must, logically, be the ancient Celtic names for the months and constellations. The only obstacle was that Robert Graves had to decide which trees were chosen and the seasonal order of this placing and he did so – his tree calendar was complete. In his own words, "I noticed almost at once, that the consonants of the alphabet form a calendar of seasonal tree magic" (*The White Goddess*, p.165). In other words, the tree calendar is a work of fiction.

It is worth noting that druids did not worship trees *in situ*. Very early religion was based on animism – everything had a spirit presence, from rocks to plants and all animals. The land itself was alive and people revered their environment. Druidry recognised the three realms of earth, sea and sky; druid cosmology was taught at Irish universities up to the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. In Celtic mythology, dryads are called *Sidhe Draoi* - they are more elf-like and fairy-like druids rather than bridal tree spirits, as they have many males and females.





# Parrots and dinosaurs

By Mark Sharpen

I was watching one of the *Jurassic World* films the other night, which included a feathered dinosaur with a parrot-like beak, and I was idly wondering how traditional dinosaurs with scales evolved into bird feathers. Apparently, there was a dinosaur (*Psittacosaurus*), a plant-eating creature about the size of a large dog, which lived in the forests of eastern Russia and northern China about 120-135 million years ago. Palaeontologists have now discovered the creature, often known as the **parrot lizard**, had reptile-like skin in areas of the body without feathers. The findings, published in the journal *Nature Communications*, is unlocking the mysteries of the evolutionary transition from scales to feathers.

The researchers said that they had discovered something unexpected – the dinosaur skin fossil they analysed was composed of silica, the same compound that is used to make glass. Scientists at the University College of Cork (UCC) teamed up with experts in Nanjing University in China to analyse a fossil specimen of a juvenile *Psittacosaurus* unearthed in north-eastern China.

Describing the fossil as a hidden gem, Dr Zixiao Yang, of UCC's School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences and the first author on the study, said the preserved skin cannot be seen with the naked eye. He said: *"Only under UV (ultraviolet) light is the skin visible, in a striking orange-yellow glow. What is really surprising is the chemistry of the fossil skin. It is composed of silica – the same as glass"*.

Feathers are highly complex structures that require specific skin adaptations to help with feather growth, flight, and regulating body heat. This makes feathered skin distinct from reptilian scales. While feathers are thought to have evolved in dinosaurs, birds' extinct ancestors, not much is known about the transition between the two skin types. When the researchers analysed the samples from the *Psittacosaurus* fossil, it showed two layers of skin which strongly resembled that seen in living reptiles - there are potentially many more fossils with hidden soft tissues awaiting discovery.

The team also found the preserved skin pigment to be consistent with that seen in the scales of reptiles, like crocodiles. Their findings suggest that the skin of *Psittacosaurus* had **zoned development**, with reptile-style scales in some areas (such as the torso) and bird-like skin with feathers in other areas (such as the tail).

Professor Maria McNamara, of UCC's School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences and a senior author on the study, said: *"The evolution of feathers from reptilian scales is one of the most profound yet poorly understood events in vertebrate evolution. While numerous fossils of feathers have been studied, fossil skin is much rarer. Our discovery suggests that soft, bird-like skin initially developed only in feathered regions of the body, while the rest of the skin was still scaly, like in modern reptiles. This zoned development would have maintained essential skin functions, such as protection against abrasion, dehydration and parasites. The first dinosaur to experiment with feathers could therefore survive and pass down the genes for feathers to their offspring"*.

So, now I know more about my idle thoughts on the evolution of feathered dinosaurs!

# National Dawn Chorus Day: photos

By The Wildlife Trusts





# Environment: red squirrels

By Lauren Petruzzo and Gylden Fellowship

Red squirrels living in Canada's Yukon territory can have a pretty hard life. Bitterly cold winters, resource scarcity, intense competition for habitat and threats from larger predators (namely the Canadian lynx) can all affect their genetic strength. Their early life struggles can also leave a lasting mark. The more challenges faced by young red squirrels in the year they're born, the shorter their adult lifespan. These findings are detailed in a study published 24 April in the journal, *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*. What is interesting is that there are some implications for humans.

Red squirrels are about 28cm long and weigh about 0.2-3kg. They are known for their rust-coloured fur and distinctive chatter above the trees. A new study uses data collected by the **Kluane Red Squirrel Project**, a multi-university long-term field study. The project has tracked and studied thousands of wild North American red squirrels in the south-western region of the Yukon for more than 30 years that individually tags and tracks individual red squirrels to learn how they deal with all that's thrown at them.

New research has analysed the observations and found that red squirrels that survive past their first year go on to live about 3.5 years on average. However, early life adversity like food scarcity can cut their life expectancy by at least 14%. Study co-author and University of Arizona ecologist and evolutionary biologist, **Lauren Petruzzo**, said, "The ecosystem red squirrels inhabit in this region is unique. Every three to seven years, their favourite food (seed from cones of white spruce trees) is produced in superabundance during what we call a food boom." The team found that even though these food booms are rare, they can interrupt some biological processes for the squirrels and help shape their lifespans. *"If a squirrel had a harsh first year of life, if they were lucky enough to experience a food boom in their second year of life, they lived just as long, if not longer, in spite of early-life adversity,"* said Petruzzo.

Rodents like squirrels, mice and rats are often used as models for humans in laboratory settings, but the laboratory environment often has limited relevance to the bigger pictures of what is going on at an ecological and evolutionary level. Wild red squirrels can offer scientists a chance to better study the role that early-life environment plays. Petruzzo and her colleagues hope that continued observations in the wild can help them learn more about the biological mechanisms that link squirrels' early developmental conditions with their later-life survival. This could have some insights into our understanding of human resilience. According to Petruzzo, *"Our findings in red squirrels echo what we know about how early-life adversity can shorten adult lifespan in humans and other primates. Humans vary widely in how vulnerable or resilient they are to challenges faced during early development. Our study demonstrates that future environmental quality might be an important factor that can explain why some individuals appear to be more or less susceptible to the consequences of early-life adversity"*.

While growing up as a young red squirrel in the Yukon can be quite difficult, there are some things that can go right. *"Some red squirrels have the luck of being born into gentler early environments, akin to being born with a silver spoon,"* Petruzzo said. *"Because of this, we've got this really nice individual variation in early-life environmental quality across a natural ecology"*. As global temperatures climb, this environment is expected to see a good deal of change. It's possible that food booms and other ecological patterns could change right alongside the climate and the connections between early-life experiences and lifespan could also shift. According to Petruzzo, these changes could offer more insight into how animals may continue to adapt to environments that are only getting more challenging to survive in. Future study could also help scientists learn more about which factors can buffer these squirrels from ongoing environmental threats.



# History: bee-keeping

By Gylden Fellowship

It was **World Bee Day** on Monday 20 May. This date corresponds with an important influencer in the pioneering of beekeeping. Anton Janša, who in the 18<sup>th</sup> century pioneered modern beekeeping techniques in his native Slovenia, was one of the first people to help bring about the importance of bees in the world environment. Since then, beekeeping has become a vital necessity in the world's ecosystems and economic systems. However, not many people realize the importance of bees or know how to help save the bees, which led to the announcement of World Bee Day through the United Nations.

Bees are under a continuous threat from human activity, which includes the introduction of invasive insects, pesticides, land-use change and monocropping practices, which have continuously been destroying bee colonies over time. World Bee Day helps educate people about the importance of bees and what they do for the environment. This includes how they help grow 90% of the world's wildflower plants, 35% of the world's crops depend on bees to grow and how they help build ecosystems all over the world. With these statistics, the United Nations has created various programs all over the world to increase awareness of protecting bees and what you can do to help this cause.



This day is also open to other pollinators as well as bees, like bats, hummingbirds, and butterflies. Together, these essential animals help keep ecosystems healthy and maintain biodiversity. Bees and other creatures also help us fight problems on a global level, like world hunger and helping to adapt to climate change. These fantastic creatures help keep our plants and our planet alive.

If you consider bees as creatures, they are a fascinating insect even without all the services they provide for us. Bees also communicate by dancing – can you imagine if humans didn't talk and only communicated via the medium of dance? If you think about honey too - it has also been used as an antiseptic and treatment for burns and wounds for centuries.



Bees have been around for thousands of years, and the very first bee found was 100 million years old! Bees might also have been the very first species to decide to go vegetarian. Originally, bees used to eat other insects, but they evolved to eat nectar and pollen instead. Bees have long supported us, humans with honey being a monumental discovery for our ancestors. From sweetening food to dressing wounds, we loved honey so much that our children are still named after bees. Names like Melissa and Ali mean bee in Greek and Urdu, showing that across the world, we share a global appreciation for bees.

Let's take a step back to the Ancient Greek era and to the early Middle Ages (long before Anton Janša), when the Greek word, *Geoponica*, meant agricultural pursuits, in its widest sense. It is the only surviving Greek Byzantine agricultural work. During the Macedonian Renaissance, the emperor Constantine VII assembled several compendia (compilations and excerpts of ancient writings), of which *Geoponica* was one. The most recent edition was translated by Andrew Dalby and is widely available.

Beekeeping has been a practice going back to ancient times and, during the Middle Ages, one could find many farms that kept beehives and collected honey. However, few medieval texts offer in-depth information on how this was done. A collection of selected writings from ancient and Byzantine writers in the *Geoponica* includes a chapter on bees and beekeeping. One of the most interesting parts is a long description of bees, which praises the creatures:

*"The bee is the wisest and cleverest of all animals and the closest to man in intelligence; its works is truly divine and of the greatest use to mankind. Its social life resembles that of the best regulated cities. In their excursions bees follow a leader and obey instructions. They bring back sticky secretions from flowers and trees and spread them like ointment on their floors and doorways. Some are employed in making honey and some in other tasks. The bee is extremely clean, settling on nothing that is bad-smelling or impure; it is not greedy; it will not approach flesh or blood or fat but only things of sweet flavour. It does not spoil the work of others, but fiercely defends its own work against those who try to spoil it. Aware of its own weakness, it makes the entrance to its home narrow and winding, so that those entering in large numbers to do harm are easily destroyed by the guardian bees.*

*This animal is pleased by a good tune: when they are scattered, therefore, beekeepers clash cymbals or clap their hands rhythmically to bring them home. This is the only animal that looks for a leader to take care of the whole community: it always honours its king, follows him enthusiastically wherever he goes, supports him when he is exhausted, carries him and keeps him safe when he cannot fly. It particularly hates laziness; bees unite to kill the ones who do no work and use up others' production. Its mechanical skill and near-logical understanding are shown by the fact that it makes hexagonal cells to store honey".*

Most of the chapter offers helpful advice on medieval beekeeping, ranging from how to build hives to ways to keep the bees from flying away. Here are some examples.

*"The best hives, that is, containers for the swarms, are made from beechwood boards, or from fig, or equally from pine or Valonia oak; these should be one cubit wide and two cubits long, and rubbed on the outside with a kneaded mixture of ash and cow dung so that they are less likely to rot. They should be ventilated obliquely so that the wind, blowing gently, will dry and cool whatever is cobwebby and mouldy...*

*If there is a need to move them, at the demand of a purchaser or for some other reason, it must be done gently and during the night; the hives should be wrapped in skins; they should be set in place before dawn. When it is done in this way the combs will not be damaged and the creatures will not be injured".*



"As food for young bees, put out wine mixed with honey, in basins, and in these place leaves of many-flowered savory so that they do not drown. To feed your swarms in the best possible way whenever they stay at home because of wintry weather or burning heat and run out of food, pound together raisins and savory finely and give them this with barley cakes. When the first ten days of spring are past, drive them out to their pastures with the smoke of dried cow-dung, then clean and sweep out their hives: the bad smell of the dung disturbs them, but cobwebs are an obstacle to them. If there are many combs in the hives, take away the worst, so that they are not made unhealthy by overcrowding".

The *Geoponica* recommends that honey be harvested three times per year: the beginning of May, then in summer and around October. One should not take away all the honey, otherwise the bees are angry and stop working, but leave one-tenth of the produce during the first two harvests, and two-thirds before winter.

The text adds a couple of methods to make sure the harvester avoids being stung while collecting the honey, including using smoke from cow dung to drive the bees off and smearing oneself with the juice of the male wild mallow. A more complex recipe is also given: *Take flour of roasted fenugreek, add the decoction of wild mallow with olive oil so that it has the consistency of honey; anoint the face and bare skin with this thickly, take it into the mouth and blow into the beehive three or four times.*

The *Geoponica* even offers readers a description of what is the best kind of honey:

*"It should be translucent and pale yellow in colour, smooth to the touch, remaining in a long string when pulled, readily raised to a point and slow to sink back, thick when it reluctantly separates; and it should have a good aroma".*



# Seasonal events in June

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Hampshire RG25 2AR  
[www.witchfest.net](http://www.witchfest.net)



**Harry Edwards Foundation**  
Burrows Lea, Hook Lane  
Shere, Near Guildford  
Surrey. GU5 9QQ

**8th June 2024 | Forest Bathing + Mindfulness in Nature: £45.00**

**Forest Bathing + Mindfulness in Nature by Woodland Vale Retreats: 10am – 12.30pm**

If you have any questions, please call 01483 205620 or email [enquiries@burrowslea.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@burrowslea.org.uk)

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