



Gylden Magick

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May 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**,

It's **May** (the **Flower Moon**) – I've been reflecting on the beauty of nature with all the flowers and blossom at this time. Beltaine was the beginning of summer for the Saxons – a time when sheep were moved to the upland pastures until the Feast of Winter in October.

The hours of daylight have been growing steadily. The power of the sun increases each day as the nights get shorter, until we reach the solstice/ Alban Hefin in June. To that end, this edition has an emphasis on the elements – light, earth, air and water.

Dates for your diaries – not least **Thargelia** (ancient Greece) on 7 May. Held on the island of Delos, this festival celebrated Apollo and Artemis. Other key dates include the **Festival of St Brendan the Navigator** on 16 May, **The Hammer of Thor** on 19-20 May, **Sacred Well Days** across Europe on 26-28 May (as pictured above) and **Oak Apple Day** on 29 May. Oak Apple Day commemorates the return of King Charles II from exile in 1660.

One of the correspondence crystals for May is jade. If you do happen to have a jade elephant, remember it's lucky to turn its head towards the door.

The altar colours for this period around **Beltaine** are green, white and yellow. 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, world art, folklore, witchcraft history and magick; this time we consider fire elemental magick. Our crystal expert, Charlie, turns her attention to the Buddha. Also, we have two other pieces on science (synthetic diamonds and food waste) from Mark Sharpen. Water is featured in our pieces from SWT, well-dressings and healing waters.

Thank you for all your feedback and many blessings.

Gylden Fellowship admins

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Well-being

By Nic the Witch

Links between bathing and health have often carried a religious subtext. Egyptians submerged themselves in the Nile River, Israelites in the Jordan River, and Hindus in the Ganges River; all of these waters have a history as places of spiritual healing.

Baths continued to have religious and therapeutic meanings in Ancient Greece, where the concept of health was first tied to Apollo, because he represented the Sun, which was believed to have healing power. Apollo's divine progeny inherited this bond with health. His son, Asclepius, became known as a god of medicine and among Asclepius' offspring was Hygeia, a goddess of health who gave rise to the word, *hygiene*.

Archaeologists found the fragments of six sculptures representing Asclepius and his family at the Great Baths of Dion, part of a complex that was home to thermal baths in the 2nd and 3rd centuries C.E. before an earthquake destroyed them. Asclepius also inspired the creation of temples used for worship and healing, known as Asclepieia. Water was a key feature of Asclepieia, since the temples were often built near sources of water, such as natural springs and aquifers.

The thermal baths of Dion featured a heating system called a hypocaust, which produced and circulated hot air below the floor. Hypocausts would later be used in Roman baths as well. Following in the footsteps of their Greek neighbours, Romans made bathing a fundamental activity in daily life. However, it seemed to include a stronger emphasis on social and leisure activities, similar to today's spas. Public baths took the form of *thermae* - large and luxurious complexes - and *balneae*, smaller and simpler spaces that were scattered throughout Roman neighbourhoods. *Thermae* embodied the imperial essence of the Roman Empire: grand in scale and embellished with stucco reliefs and mosaics. Surrounded by other amenities like libraries, shops, and lecture halls, they acted as a sort of early health resort.

The elements of health and well-being were promoted at *thermae*, which followed a structured process that moved visitors through several chambers. Visitors would often enter and undress in the *apodyterium* (a changing or locker room). They would then be anointed with oil and may have exercised immediately afterward in a court area. The three main bathing chambers, used in varying order were the *tepidarium* (a warm room), the *caldarium* (a hot room), and the *frigidarium* (a cold room, often including a swimming pool). There were also two types of steam rooms, the *laconicum* (a dry heat room) and the *sudatorium* (a wet heat room with more steam).

As the Roman Empire expanded across Europe, so did *thermae*. Remnants of these facilities have been left in Italy and other countries, such as France, the United Kingdom and Turkey. Perhaps the most famous of all Roman *thermae* lies in Bath, England, where Romans constructed *thermae* near a natural spring around 70 C.E., early on in the Roman occupation of Britain. Having been updated in modern times, these Roman Baths are an iconic tourist destination. They attract over a million visitors every year - visitors aren't allowed to bathe in the waters, they can tour the baths and a museum with Roman artefacts.

Thermae went out of fashion along with the fall of the Roman Empire, but their spirit lived on through the Turkish Bath, in the Islamic world. These facilities adopted the *thermae* style of communal bathing, with multiple rooms to move through, while adding distinct aspects of Islamic tradition.



The natural springs, once cherished by the Greeks and Romans were still visited despite thermae falling into disrepair. Public bathing ebbed during Medieval times due to bathhouses being associated with syphilis, but spas eventually became more popular. The word, spa, comes from the Belgian city of Spa. From the 16th century, the city's natural springs captured the attention of many who came to believe the water possessed healing powers. As spas grew, monarchs and aristocrats desired to take the waters. Later, the wealthy bourgeoisie followed the trend in the 19th century, finally breathing life back into the social appeal of spas and making them fashionable. By the turn of the 20th century, spas had become massive resorts enjoyed by middle-class visitors who arrived in crowds via trains. Around World War II, people started to leave them behind for revolutionary innovations in entertainment, technology, and medicine.

Despite this downward trend, the spa and thermal/ mineral spring industries survived into the 21st century and have even seen a renewed wave of revivals. In 2021, UNESCO officially designated 11 European cities as transnational World Heritage Sites. Examples include:

- Baden bei Wien (Austria)
- Spa (Belgium)
- Mariánské Lázně (Czechia)
- Vichy (France)
- Baden-Baden (Germany)
- Montecatini Terme (Italy)
- City of Bath (UK).

Other cultures outside of Europe enjoy quality spa time as well. In particular, Japan is famous for its picturesque hot springs and the bathing facilities and inns around them. The U.S.A. caught spa fever during the late 19th-20th centuries, though American spa towns don't quite boast the same renown as European ones. A well-known example of an American spa town is Hot Springs, Arkansas (known for Bath House Row). Although most of the bath houses do not operate as traditional bathing facilities anymore, there are still some opportunities for visitors to soak in warm water and unwind.

However, does taking the waters really improve your health? In a few ways, it appears so, but mineral water is not a cure-all for any affliction, as proposed by the affluent spa patrons of old who tended to latch onto pseudoscience. The actual term is Balneotherapy (Latin: balneum "bath") is *a method of treating diseases by bathing*, a traditional medicine technique usually practised at spas. Balneotherapy has been shown to give certain physical and mental benefits, particularly for those with musculoskeletal diseases. A research paper, *Therapeutic Benefits of Balneotherapy on Quality of Life of Patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis: A Systematic Review* (18 December 2021), found that balneotherapy seemed to improve the quality of life of patients with rheumatoid arthritis.

Studies have suggested that balneotherapy can improve cardiovascular issues and reduce hypertension - being exposed to a hot spring bath lowers blood pressure and reduces stiffness of the arteries. However, for those with more serious heart-related issues, it is recommended to talk with a doctor before going to a hot spring. Sudden or prolonged immersion in hot water can elevate heart rate, causing cardiovascular stress depending on one's condition. Also, it is crucial to remember is that sitting in a hot spring for too long can lead to hyperthermia (overheating of the body) and heat stroke.

Balneotherapy may boost skin health and improve inflammation; it has been used to treat certain conditions like psoriasis and atopic dermatitis. This is largely due to the mineral composition of spring water, which contains varying amounts of sulphur, manganese, magnesium, zinc, selenium, strontium, silica, and calcium bicarbonate. Along with the physical benefits, soaking in a spa may also lower stress and improve mental health, as shown in August 2023 in a Japanese research paper, *Hot spring bathing practices have a positive effect on mental health in Japan*.

International Day of Light: 16 May 2024

By UNESCO

The International Day of Light (IDL) is observed every year on 16 May to highlight the role of light in science, culture, education, art, energy, medicine and sustainable development. Through the researches accumulated over 2000 years of time, the true nature of light (namely, the photon) was discovered. The celebration of the day offers UNESCO an opportunity to fulfil its mission of promoting international cooperation in the basic sciences and STEM Education. It will contribute to achieving the objective to render science, technology and innovation accessible to all with a focus on Africa.

The IDL provides an enduring follow-up of the achievements of previous IDLs by raising the profile of science and technology globally and highlighting its applications for stimulating education, improving quality of life worldwide and **achieving the Sustainable Development Goals** set in the 2030 United Nations agenda. For 2024, the IDL theme is **Light in our Lives**

Through the efforts of UNESCO, the International Day of Light inspires events and activities taking place on 16 May around the world, each raising awareness associated with this theme on various topics:

- The beautiful effects of light and colour in nature
- The ways in which new technologies in lighting enhance our daily lives
- The ways in which natural daylight enhances design and architecture
- How the science of light brings life-changing advances in healthcare
- The ways in which light pollution impacts our ecosystem and appreciation of the night sky
- How our lives are enriched by telescope images of the universe
- The ways in which metaphors of light are used in art and culture.

Light continues to play a central role in science, culture and art, education and sustainable development and in fields as diverse as medicine, communications and energy. The broad theme of light will allow many different sectors of society worldwide to participate in activities that demonstrates **how science, technology, art and culture can help achieve the goals** of UNESCO – education, equality, and peace.

[What does the dark and quiet sky mean to you?](#) To us, it means a whole lot. We will host our **Dark and Quiet Skies month in May**. Follow the conversation with the hashtags: **[#IAUOutreach](#)**, **[#Photonics](#)**, **[#LightbasedTechnologies](#)**, **[#Light](#)**, **[#16May](#)**, **[#DarkSkies4All](#)**, **[#InternationalDayofLight](#)**.

International day of Light @ Rose Bruford College

Join us at Rose Bruford College in London as our BA (Hons) Creative Lighting Control students and our MA Light in Performance students take over our Campus to create light installations to celebrate UNESCO's day of Light!

Contact: [Sofia Alexiadou](#) (Rose Bruford College)

Date: 16 May 2024.

Gylden
Magick
May 2024

International Day of Light: 16 May 2024

Collated by Gylden Fellowship







Hedgehog update

By the British Hedgehog Preservation Society (BHPS)

It's Hedgehog Awareness Week during 5-11 May

Here's a few things that you can do towards helping hedgehogs in or around your garden each year.

- Avoid using pesticides and slug pellets in your garden – such things harm hedgehogs and also damage their food chain; organic methods of pest control are best.
- Ensure that hedgehogs have easy access to your garden...boundary fences or walls should have 13cm x 13cm gaps in the bottom to allow hedgehogs to pass through.
- Keep a corner of your garden wild to offer shelter, protection and natural food for hedgehogs and other wildlife.
- Encourage hedgehogs into your garden, but you should never just move one in from another area, as it may well have a nest of dependent young that you would be condemning to death.
- Provide a shallow dish of fresh water for all wildlife and food such as meaty hedgehog food, meaty cat or dog food or cat biscuits for hedgehogs, especially during long dry spells.
- Make or buy a hedgehog home, as this offers a hibernation site that is safer from predators in the winter. It may also be used as a nesting box for a mother and her hoglets in the warmer months. The **British Hedgehog Preservation Society** can provide a leaflet on building hedgehog homes and sells them in its shop (see www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk).
- Check garden areas thoroughly for hedgehogs and other wildlife before strimming or mowing.
- Keep pea netting 22-30cms (9-12 inches) off the ground so that hedgehogs can pass safely under it and plants will grow to the netting.
- Dispose of litter responsibly - each year, hedgehogs are injured by litter and starve to death by getting trapped in discarded rubbish.
- Bonfires offer tempting homes for hedgehogs. The safest method is for you to collect and re-site such materials just before the fire is to be lit. If this is not possible, lift the base up with poles or broom handles (not a fork!) – listen and shine a torch to look for any wildlife or pets in need of rescue before lighting your bonfire. Once checked, light from one side only to allow an escape route for anything you may have missed.
- Hedgehogs are good swimmers, but can become trapped in ponds or pools with sheer sides. Keep water levels topped up, provide a gently sloping edge if possible or place half submerged rocks in the water as an escape for them.
- Cattle grids can be a problem as hedgehogs fall in and become trapped; a simple ramp placed in the grid will save their lives. The surface should be rough to enable the escapee to gain a foothold. Holes in the ground should be covered over or surrounded by a barrier that keeps hedgehogs out.
- Take care on the roads, hedgehogs are nocturnal so are out at night. A hedgehog's natural defence mechanism is to roll into a ball and this is no match for a vehicle.

The British Hedgehog Preservation Society - Registered Charity Number 1164542 (formerly 326885)

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The **National Hedgehog Monitoring Programme** (NHMP) is an exciting new pilot project, that will, for the first time, produce robust hedgehog population estimates. This new survey will tell us how many hedgehogs there are, as well as where they are present.

Monitoring numbers can give us warning if the population is in trouble. Artificial intelligence will be used for the first time to track hedgehog populations as part of a pioneering project aimed at understanding how many of them are left in the UK and why they have suffered a decline. Images of the prickly mammals snuffling around urban parks, private gardens, woodlands and farmland will be captured by cameras and filtered by AI trained to differentiate between wildlife and humans. The images will then be sent to human spotters who will pick out those featuring hedgehogs and send them to analysts, who will record the numbers and locations. Using this method, the NHMP hopes to be able to produce estimates of hedgehog populations in different habitats across the country, to show how these are changing year on year and, in time, give a national estimate of the UK's hedgehog population.

The British Hedgehog Preservation Society (BHPS) and the People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) have said that this project would produce crucial insights into the factors causing hedgehog populations to plummet and enable conservationists to implement practical conservation measures to try to reverse the decline. The three-year project is in partnership with Nottingham Trent University, ZSL's London HogWatch, Durham University and MammalWeb; it is largely funded by Natural England.

Dr Henrietta Pringle, the NHMP coordinator at PTES, said: *"For the first time in the history of hedgehog conservation we're using AI to open up new opportunities, which is extremely exciting. Previous studies have estimated hedgehog populations, but there has never been a rigorous nationwide survey of them until now. We know hedgehogs are struggling – especially in the countryside – but before we can put practical conservation measures in place we need to understand where they are and why they're declining. This is the first study where populations are measured year after year in the same location, which will produce vital data and allow us to identify those at risk, which in time will hopefully help us to reverse the decline. The results will also allow us to see regional and habitat differences, and identify what factors impact them in different places, which will not only be fascinating but also incredibly useful for their long-term conservation."*

Fay Vass, the chief executive of the BHPS, said: *"Everyone loves hedgehogs, but we recognise that not everyone is in a position to help them in the wild. Becoming a spotter for the National Hedgehog Monitoring Programme is a fantastic way for everyone to get involved. Now, those with mobility issues, who don't have a garden or perhaps are away studying at university or college, can help from the comfort of home. Helping hedgehogs has never been easier or more accessible, so we really hope people from all walks of life take part."*



Buddha's birthday: 15 May 2024

By Charlie Foreverdark

This year, Buddha's Birthday Holiday Day falls on **Wednesday 15 May**. But, what do we actually know about The Buddha? In the singular, a man called **Siddhartha Gautama**, also known as Śākyamuni Buddha or Gautama Buddha, is widely revered as the founder of Buddhism. Over time, the Buddhist religion has developed in complicated ways which I couldn't hope to convey in just one blog. Unlike monotheistic Christianity, Buddhism has expanded over millennia to include a veritable pantheon of deities, divine beings and associated avatars. Think Father/Son/Holy-Spirit and then add some extra friends, faces and relations for good measure! Whilst Buddhism lacks a supreme creator deity – Siddhartha Gautama is probably about as close as you'll get to the Buddhist equivalent of Jesus of Nazareth.

The holy texts say of Siddhartha Gautama that he was born a prince in around 600BCE to royal parents, King Suddhodana and Queen Māyā of Sakya. He was brought up in the region around the border of modern-day Nepal and India. In Sanskrit, the name, *Siddhartha*, means *He Who Achieves His Goal*. After witnessing the sufferings of mankind, prince Siddhartha Gautama made the decision to shun his luxurious lifestyle, leaving his palace and devoting himself to a 6-year journey into the wilderness: seeking answers to the meaning of existence through the practices of devout fasting and meditation.

He embarked upon a journey of self-denial in order to overcome the adversities of life such as pain, sorrow, suffering, loss, sickness, death and impermanence. After 49 days of meditation under the Bodhi tree (also known as the Peepal tree or Ficus Religiosa/ Sacred Fig tree), Siddhartha Gautama became enlightened and achieved liberation from the cycle of birth, suffering and death. Buddhism, incidentally, accepts the pan-Indian presupposition of Samsara, in which living beings are trapped in a continual cycle of birth-death-rebirth, with the momentum to rebirth dictated by one's previous physical and mental actions (Karma.)

After his spiritual endeavour, Siddhartha Gautama achieved the spiritual echelon of *Nirvana*. Nirvana literally means to extinguish. It is said to be a state of consciousness where suffering has been extinguished. In short, it is a state of ultimate freedom - freedom from sorrow, but also freedom from happiness. Following this revelation, Siddhartha Gautama would eventually come to settle upon a balanced Middle Way, avoiding the extremes of both asceticism and hedonism. He lived the rest of his life modestly, refraining from social indulgences, but also from deprivation.

It wasn't until after his death that Siddhartha Gautama came to be known posthumously by the title of *Buddha*. In Southeast Asian Theravada Buddhism (the only remaining school from the early Buddhist period), the name of Buddha refers to one who has become enlightened through their own insight and effort, rather than by following or ascribing to the teachings or guidance of another.

In the same way that Christianity is attributed to Jesus, so the spiritual teachings of Buddhism are attributed to the enlightened teacher, Siddhartha Gautama. After his death in around 483BCE, his followers began to organise a religious movement. His teachings (*Dharma*) and monastic practices were compiled into a sacred text known as *The Vinaya Pitaka* (literally "The basket of discipline"). Revered tales known as Sutta literature based upon his discourses were added for flavour, and then (like all good legends), this Holy Scripture was passed down, altered and embellished through the ages. In the 3rd century BCE Buddhism was declared the official state religion of India by emperor Ashoka the Great and many Buddhist monasteries were built under his reign - however, many monasteries and temples were destroyed during the subsequent invasion of India.

Over the centuries, the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama spread throughout India, into China, across Asia and eventually around the world. Today, there are an estimated 470 million followers of Buddhism worldwide. Buddhism splits into 3 main religious branches, and several additional subsects and religious fusions, each with slightly differing interpretations and texts.

According to the main holy scripture, Siddhartha Gautama is venerated as the most recent incarnation of a total of 29 different Buddhas described in the *Buddhavamsa* – essentially a holy chronicle of Buddhas, which describes not only the life of Siddhartha Gautama, but also the 27 Buddhas who preceded him, and even the future Maitreya Buddha.

For the first six centuries after the death of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha was never depicted in human form. He was only ever represented without idols or images – instead he was depicted by a sacred synecdoche, such as his footprints, a parasol (an auspicious mark of kingship and spirituality) or the Bodhi Tree, under which he gained enlightenment. **Statues of Buddha** weren't created until the first century CE. This separates Buddhist art from other religious symbolism somewhat, as physical representations of Buddha and his teachings did not begin to surface until long after his death. Here are some famous and interesting examples of imagery surrounding Siddhartha Gautama.

1. The **Seated Buddha from Gandhara** is one of the earliest surviving statues of the Buddha. It was discovered at the site of Jamal Garhi in ancient Gandhara (modern-day Pakistan), and dates back to somewhere between the 2nd and 3rd century CE, during the Kushan Empire. The statue is carved from schist, allowing for very intricate detail and is now on display in the British Museum.
2. Standing more than 88m high, the **Great Buddha of Ling Shan** is a bronze Buddha. It was completed at the end of 1996, weighs over 700 tons and can be reached by ascending 99 steps. The Great Buddha is poised atop a lotus pedestal embraced by three hills and faces Taihu Lake. The construction was managed by Zhao Puchu, the former chairman of the Buddhist Association of China.
3. The **Daibutsu Buddha of Kamakura**, built in the year 1252, sits serenely in the south of Japan. Framed by Sakura cherry blossoms in the spring and snow in the winter, this bronze Buddha behemoth famously survived the great tsunami resulting from the Nankai earthquake of 20 September 1498, which washed away the temple in which he was originally housed. Originally there were 32 bronze lotus petals at the base of the statue, but only 4 remain now and they have been relocated to museums. A notice near to the statue reads: *"Stranger, whosoever thou art and whatsoever be thy creed, when thou enter this sanctuary remember thou tread upon ground hallowed by the worship of ages. This is the Temple of Buddha and the gate of the eternal, and should therefore be entered with reverence."* The statue was referred to as the "Buddha at Kamakura" by Rudyard Kipling in preface to his novel, *Kim*, and also a poem he wrote after visiting Kamakura in 1892.
4. The **Tang Dynasty Leshan Buddha** is another of the world's largest Buddha statues, measuring 71m in height. Carved on the side of a cliff in 713 CE, the statue overlooks the Min and Dadu rivers of central Sichuan. This carving was the brainchild of a monk called Haithong, who hoped the statue would offer protection to river travellers, guiding their shipping vessels through treacherous currents. Unfortunately, Haithong ran out of funds and the statue wasn't completed until 90 years later. The statue is a hugely popular attraction and often included in cruises along the nearby Yangtze river and Three Gorges.
5. Visitors to **Monywa, Myanmar** are treated to the sight of two giant Buddhas - one standing, and one laying down. At a length of 90m, the laying Buddha is the largest reclining-pose Buddha in the world. The giant statue is hollow and houses a collection of 9000 etchings which illustrate the life of Buddha. This display can be accessed via a door in the rear. The standing Buddha, positioned directly behind, is 116m tall and is commonly referred to as **Laykyun Setkyar**. It is thought to be the third tallest statue in the world.

6. **Wat Pho** is one of the largest and oldest temples in Bangkok, boasting the largest number of Buddha images in the country. It also houses the largest reclining Buddha in Thailand. The gold-plated statue is 46m long and 15m high. Its eyes and feet are decorated with engraved mother of pearl.
7. The **Foquan Temple Buddha (also named Spring Temple Buddha)** after the Tianrui hot spring near to the temple) stands at a height of 128m including the 20m lotus throne. It is thought to be the tallest Buddha statue in the world. If the building upon which the statue stands is taken into account, the total height is 153m! It is thought to be the world's second tallest statue.
8. In October 2013, Sotheby's of Hong Kong sold a gilt bronze figure of a Ming Dynasty seated Buddha for 30 million dollars! Similar sculptures from the Ming and early Qing dynasties are amongst the most sought-after ornaments at auction today.
9. The mummified remains of a monk have been discovered inside a 1000-year-old Chinese statue of a Buddha. The mummy inside the gold-painted papier-mâché statue is believed to be that of **Liuquan**, a Buddhist master of the Chinese Meditation School who died around the year 1100. The mummy was discovered to be encased in a cavity in the statue, when a private buyer brought it to an expert for restoration. It is believed that the monk may have practised an arduous and gruesome process of self-mummification in order to prepare for life after death. This process involved eating a special diet which reduced moisture and inhibited bacterial growth, preventing decay. This living buddha consumed increasing quantities of a poisonous tea made from a tree sap as this suffused the body as a natural embalming fluid, whilst the toxicity repelled insects and maggots. After years of this gradual poisoning and starvation, the monk would be buried alive in a sealed tomb underground and left to chant sutra in the darkness.



Seated Buddha from Gandhara, British Museum

Science: food waste

By Mark Sharpen

Global food waste is a huge problem – about one-third (1.3 billion tons) of food is wasted annually (according to figures from the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN, The World Counts) And it's not just food leftovers that go to waste in homes and restaurants; waste happens before the food even gets to our homes. Food is lost in every step of the food life cycle:

1. Agricultural production (e.g. fields)
2. Post-harvest handling and storage
3. Processing
4. Distribution
5. Consumption and end of life.

In fields, food is lost due to crop pests and diseases. Food is also lost because of inefficient harvesting methods, transportation and storage. And food is wasted through the deliberate discarding of food in shops, supermarkets, and households. The largest source of food waste is in the production phase where over 500 million tons is lost due to things like crop pests, ineffective harvesting and irrigation. This is followed by post-harvest handling and storage and consumption, both wasting around 350 million tons. These phases account for around 75% of all food waste

However, new technology in the area of optical sensors and analytics offers the opportunity to reduce such waste. The idea is that optical sensors created by the food-safe ink can determine the oxygen level inside packaged foods, offering manufacturers and retailers real-time insights into the condition of goods inside. Such technology would predict spoilage before it happens. One company has developed these methods since 2018 - **Senoptica** was a spin-out company from Trinity College Dublin. This week, it announced that the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had approved its entry into the North American market.

The company is focused on food sold in modified atmosphere packaging (MAP), which accounts for half of the world's fresh packaged food, from bagged salad to sliced cooked meat, cheese, some fruits and bread. MAP is a food packaging technology that extends the shelf life of perishable foods by altering the gas composition inside the package. Regular air contains about 21% oxygen, which can cause spoilage in many foods. MAP reduces the amount of oxygen and replaces it with a mixture of gases, such as nitrogen, carbon dioxide or carbon monoxide, which extend the shelf life of perishable food and reduces the need for preservatives. If the package leaks or is not sealed correctly in the first instance, the modified atmosphere can be compromised and the food can spoil more quickly.

In the Senoptica system, each pack has an optical oxygen sensor based on a patented food-safe ink printed inside the film covering the pack. As the pack approaches the end-of-line inspection system, it goes through a leak accelerator. This device helps accelerate seal and packaging defects and slow leakers. In supermarkets and retail stores, an inline scanning system reads the sensor output and determines whether a pack should be rejected. This scanning system can be easily incorporated into existing packing lines. As a result, out-of-spec packs can be rejected, and the food can be repacked. Further, using a handheld scanner, the sensor can be read at any point in the supply chain, from the cold store to the supermarket shelf, allowing spot checks of the pack gas levels to be carried out. In the future, Senoptica's system could send a signal to the retailer's systems, allowing them to print out a ticket that says, "*Use this today.*"

For manufacturers, this means defective food packs can immediately be returned to the packing line and repacked, saving time and money across the entire food value chain. It saves time and money for retailers and consumers and could effectively mean the end of best-before dates. Senoptica has increased the chances of finding a failed product by 11,000 times, so failed packs are unlikely to get out into the supply chain in the first instance. The company recently conducted UK supermarket trials, which found that about 5% of packs on the shelf had already failed, because the atmosphere designed to keep the food fresh just wasn't there.

Celestial Forecasts: May

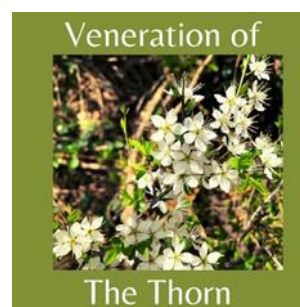
By Joanna Bristow-Watkins

May is a month when our Pagan heritage breaks through into parochial folklore. 1st May is **Beltane**, also known as **May Day**, with the UK Bank Holiday being the first Monday of the month, which this year is May Day itself. Beltane a Pagan Festival still celebrated in parishes across the country featuring elaborate traditions involving May Poles, floral-dressed girls bedecked with flower garlands, Morris Dancers, Green Man imagery, hobby horses etc. We usher in the promise of sunshine and summer as we welcome green shoots and abundant blossom everywhere, not least the Mayflower (Hawthorn) associated with the old adage, *ne'er cast a clout till May be out* (which I always assumed meant the month itself) ...

The month could be named after **Maia**, a Greek Goddess linked with the land, fertility and growth. To the Anglo-Saxons, it was called **Thrimilci**, the month when cows could be milked three times a day due to constant grazing on abundant new grass.

During May, as well as our own British Traditional Pagan Festivals (1st, 4th, 16th, 29th) plus Mental Health Awareness Week (13th-19th) and we can look forward to Roman (1st, 9th & 15th), Egyptian (14th) & Romani/French (24th) celebrations. Sky watchers can enjoy the Aquariid Meteors peaking on the 5 May. Our [Full Moon Online Guided Meditation](#) is 7.30-9.30pm UK time on Thursday 23 May.

We have [Surrey Forest Bathing events](#) with bluebells at Harry Edwards on [Saturday 4 May \(for a group of up to 10 people\)](#) and [Sunday 19 May](#). We can organise other dates subject to availability of the site.



Wednesday 1 May is May Day and Beltane - a Celtic word meaning fires of Bel (Bel was a Celtic deity). It is a fire festival that celebrates the coming of summer and the fertility of the coming year. Celtic festivals often tied in with the needs of the community. In springtime, at the beginning of the farming calendar, everybody would be hoping for a fruitful year for their fields and hence also their families. Beltane rituals would often include courting: for example, young men and women collecting blossoms in the woods and lighting fires in the evening. These rituals would often lead to matches and marriages, either immediately or in the coming summer or autumn.

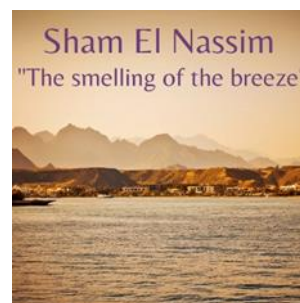
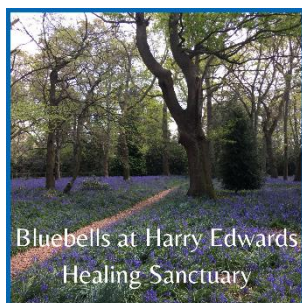
Festivals are frequently held on the May bank holiday in the UK (the first Monday on or after 1 May), when many towns and villages offer May Day celebrations. **Jack in the Green Festival** is held in Hastings, with four days of festivities around the May Day weekend, this year Friday 3 May-Monday 6 May. Since its revival in the 1980s, the festival has become synonymous with the town of Hastings and is now one of its largest events. Details from www.hastingstraditionaljackinthegreen.co.uk.

Over the long weekend there is Morris dancing around the town, a traditional ceilidh and a sunrise ceremony to welcome in the dawn of summer on Monday 1 May. Bank holiday Monday is the highlight as the town turns green. A grand procession leads the giant foliage-covered Jack through the Old Town and up to the West Hill, where he is eventually slain and the spirit of summer is released! Hastings *Jack in the Green* is a hugely popular event so local roads and the A21 can get congested and car parking around the town is limited.

Wednesday 1 May was the annual Roman Festival of Bona Dea. 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 traditionally invoked for freedom from slavery; many of her worshippers were freed slaves, plebeians and women seeking aid in sickness or for fertility. This Festival was celebrated by women only!

Saturday 4 May is the festival of the Veneration of the Thorn at which the Hawthorn is honoured. It is a festival of modern origin that may have been adapted from the night of **Lunantisidhe on 16 May**, honouring the fairy spirits of Hawthorns. Holy bushes and trees marking sacred places and wells are acknowledged and new scraps of cloth are tied to their branches.



Saturday 4 May, 11am-2pm, is the last chance this year for a private bluebell **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 bluebells, 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 will take place in all weathers except 30+mph winds or electrical storms. Book via the [Harmony shop](#) Email katieandjo@harmonyinnature.uk to go on our forest bathing mailing list.

Sunday 5 May-Monday 6 May (specifically Sunday night/ Monday morning) is the peak of the ETA Aquariid Meteor Shower, see rmg.org or [EarthSky Website](#).. Predominantly, this is a pre-dawn shower, that is one where the meteors may occur in the dark hour before dawn. The best display will rain down on the morning of 6 May (between midnight on 5 May and dawn on 6 May) and with New moon on 8 May, there will be minimal light pollution so visibility could be good, but these ETA Aquariids can appear any time between 24 April and 20 May.

Monday 6 May in Egypt is the ancient festival of Sham El Nassim (literally meaning "smelling of the breeze"), which dates back to Pharaonic times (about 2700BCE), although it is celebrated on the Coptic Easter Monday, generally a week after our Easter Monday, but this year over a month later. It's not seen as a religious festival as it's a national holiday for both Egyptian Christians and Muslims. Traditional activities include painting eggs, picnicking, and eating feseekh (fermented mullet).

Wednesday 8 May @ 04:21 (Tuesday night/Wednesday morning) is a Beltane New Supermoon.

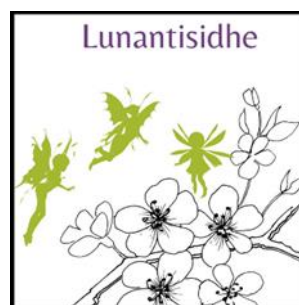
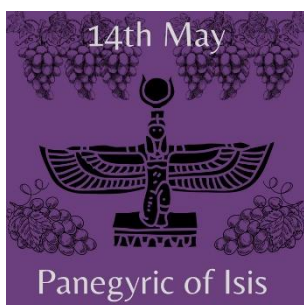
The **New Moon Abundance Ritual** should be carried out within 24 hours after the New Moon. It needs to be after the New Moon, because the moon should be waxing (getting bigger again) to carry the manifestation energy. There are video instructions on my [Facebook Page](#) and/or [You Tube Page](#). New Moon is a good time to work on your Vision Board for the rest of 2024.



Thursday 9 May is the Roman Festival of Lemuria. This involved a ritual by the master (or mistress) of the house with nine black beans(!) to honour the *Lemures* – spirits of those who died unnatural or violent deaths. I wondered if it was connected to the ancient land of *Lemuria*, believed to have been situated in the Pacific area near Hawaii, and a possible belief by the Romans that the land may have been destroyed violently (legend says that, like Atlantis, a disaster such as volcanic eruption or flood caused its destruction).

Saturday 11 May is Surrey Day in our locality. The fifth annual Surrey Day takes place on Saturday 11 May 2024, led by Visit Surrey and partners - BBC Radio Surrey, Surrey Life Magazine, Surrey Lieutenancy and Local Food Surrey...details on the [Visit Surrey](#) website.

Monday 13-Sunday 19 May is Mental Health Awareness Week here in the UK and the theme this year is **Movement: Moving more for our mental health.** Movement is important for our mental health, but so many of us struggle to move enough. There are many different reasons for this, so this Mental Health Awareness Week, the idea is to help people to find moments for movement in their daily routines, such as going for a walk in your neighbourhood, putting on your favourite music and dancing around the living room or chair exercises when watching television.



Tuesday 14 May is the Egyptian Celebration known as the Panegyric of Isis, when Aset (Isis) found Asar (Osiris) and duly celebrated. Offerings of wine, bread and milk are made and, traditionally, Auset is praised for her gifts. It is a happy time for celebrating quests in life. Informative laminated posters of Isis, by Jacqui Taliesin El Masry from *Alkhemi*, are available to purchase from the [Harmony Shop](#).

Wednesday 15 May is the Ancient Roman Ceremony of Argei. At this festival, 27 human-shaped bundles of rushes, known as *Argei* were carried in an anti-clockwise procession through the city; possibly in a ritual undertaken as a substitute for human sacrifice. Finally, the bundles were thrown into the River Tiber from the Bridge of Subclivus.

Thursday 16 May honours the fairy spirits of hawthorns at Lunantisidhe. Whitethorns are honoured as opposed to the blackthorns venerated at Samhain. Holy bushes and trees marking sacred places and wells are acknowledged and new scraps of cloth are tied to their branches.

Sunday 19 May, 11am-2pm, is Forest Bathing in the grounds of Harry Edward's Healing Sanctuary at a cost per person of £39.77. Immerse yourself in the healing elements of nature and connect deeply with all your senses. We will take you on a 2½ hour journey through the beautiful landscaped park, nestled. Through a selection of simple sensory activities, you will learn how to enhance your perceptions and slow down to focus on what could easily be missed. We end with a treelaxation; it is a deeply

relaxing and rejuvenating experience, and which, despite the title of forest bathing, does not involve any swimming! Some of the scientifically proven benefits of spending time in woodland include reduced stress levels, stronger immune system response and a stabilised cortisol cycle. This session will take place in all weathers, except high winds or electrical storms. Book via the [Harmony Healing shop](#). Email katieandjo@harmonyinnature.uk to go on our forest bathing mailing list.



Thursday 23 May is Flower Moon @ 14:53 UK time.

Between Full Moon and the next New Moon is considered as a good time energetically for detoxing the body. See below for our monthly [Full Moon Personal and Global Healing & Unity Consciousness Live Virtual Meditation](#) or, if you prefer instructions to meditate alone, see [Angela McGerr's Full Moon Meditation with Gabriel](#), from Angela McGerr's book *A Harmony of Angels*; signed copies of which are available from the [Harmony Shop](#).

Thursday 23 May, 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 [You Tube explanation](#).

Friday 24 May is the Romani and Christian Festival of the Three Marys at Sainte-Maries-de-la-Mar, on the south coast of France. Here landed Mary Magdalene, Mary Jacob (the sister of Our Lady) and Mary Salome (mother of James and John). A local chieftain, Sara the Kali, had a vision of their arrival and, by spreading her cloak over the rough sea, ensured their safe arrival.

Wednesday 29 May is the English Folk Festival of Oak Apple Day - held in honour of oak trees after Charles II escaped from Cromwell's army by hiding in an oak tree. Oak leaves are worn until mid-day. In May 1660, Oak Apple Day or Royal Oak Day was declared as a formal public holiday, to be celebrated in England on 29 May, to commemorate the restoration of the English Monarchy. Although it was formally abolished in 1869, until national lockdown, the day was still celebrated in some parts of the country and is alternatively known as Shick Shack Day, Oak and Nettle Day, Yak Bob Day or Arbour Tree Day.



Science: synthetic diamonds

By Mark Sharpen

OK then, I guess that those of you who check out my articles regularly will know that my fishing net catches all sorts of weird and wonderful stuff, encompassing innovations in maths, ecology, astrophysics, nature and archaeology. Now, it's time to add gemmology to the list, not that I'm any sort of expert here, but the topic of artificial diamonds caught my eye the other day.

Natural diamonds form under immense pressure in the Earth's mantle – that we know, but they can be grown in the laboratory too and new developments have allowed synthetic diamonds to avoid the pressure phase. The most common method for producing synthetic diamonds is known as **high-pressure and high-temperature growth** (HPHT), requires around 5 gigapascals of pressure, similar to that in the upper mantle where diamonds form naturally. With this technique, carbon dissolved in liquid metal forms diamonds at temperatures around 1400° Celsius.

Another technique to produce synthetic diamonds is called **chemical vapour deposition** (CVD), which takes place at low pressures, with a vapour of carbon-rich gas being deposited on a surface.

However, diamonds can now be grown at atmospheric pressure in a liquid mixture of gallium, iron, nickel and silicon, while exposed to a gas of carbon-rich methane as well as hydrogen (details can be found in the journal, *Nature*, April 2024). The technique also requires lower temperatures than HPHT: 1025° C. The addition of silicon seems to kick off the initial stages of growth, allowing a tiny bit of diamond to nucleate - from there, the rest of the crystal can grow. The new method could make generating such materials easier. Unlike CVD and HPHT, the new technique doesn't make necessarily use an initial bit of diamond to kick off the growth.

Laboratory grown diamonds are 100% real diamonds, with the same properties as natural diamonds. They have no physical differences from natural diamonds and it is almost impossible to tell them apart without specialist laboratory equipment. The prices are different though. Whether synthetic or natural, a diamond is a significant investment, but you'll find a larger diamond for your money with a synthetic diamond. While a synthetic diamond's price will normally be within the thousands, this will probably be between 60%-85% less than the price of a natural diamond of the same size and quality.



Environment: local marine recovery

By Sussex Wildlife Trust



© Alexander Mustard (Spiny seahorse)



© Alexander Mustard (Grey seal)



© Ryan Greaves (Snakelocks anemone)



© Paul Naylor (Tompot blenny)



© Paul Naylor (Common cuttlefish)

History: May Queens and well-dressings

By Gylden Fellowship

It's interesting to note how many of our traditions were invented during the Victorian age. There's lots of data on our website about maypoles in the [Gylden Briefings](#) section, but here, we're looking briefly at two other customs – the May Queen and well-dressings. A common view is that Beltaine was the time when a village would choose a young woman as the May Queen to represent the Goddess in her transition from maiden to mother. That may be what some in the pagan community believe, but it's not actually true, from history.

According to the *Oxford Dictionary of English Folklore*, the tradition of crowning the May Queen comes from the Victorian era, based on the popularity of Tennyson's poem, *The May Queen*. It seems to have evolved from a practice of selecting a Lord and Lady or King and Queen for a festival, carnival or just for the day. Women and girls were the focus and the May Queen celebration, by the mid-19th and early 20th centuries, involved the coronation of a local girl or young woman who would preside over events with a group of ladies to support her. In villages with strong Roman Catholic histories, the focus honoured the Virgin Mary and she was designated as Queen of the May.

If we look back to the May Day festivities in the town of Bridport in 1918, we find an account of the Crowning the May Queen and the Maypole Dance.

"On Thursday the girls of the National Schools had their annual festival of crowning the May Queen and dancing round the Maypole. There was a very good attendance of the general public, the ceremony taking place in the school-yard. Favoured with fine weather, the scene was a very picturesque one, and the proceedings were watched with the greatest interest and pleasure. The children, as is their custom, were dressed in white, and with their Queen (Vera Meech), who is elected by the votes of her schoolmates, they paraded the Rope Walks, St. Michael's Lane, and Gundry Lane, and returned to the playground. Here the Maypole was set up and the Queen was then enthroned. She recited a verse of Tennyson's May Queen, and then the Rector crowned her with a wreath of flowers. Some very pretty Maypole dances were then gone through, and some nicely rendered songs gave variety to the programme, while at the close a collection, which realized £4, was made to defray the cost of a new set of strings for the Maypole."

Onward to [well-dressings](#), which have ancient origins, but which took on new aspects in the Victorian era. The practice of honouring springs and wells originated in pre-Roman times. Some springs were found to have medicinal qualities and were revered for that too, eg Bath, Malvern or Buxton. Many places with pagan associations for water deities were later changed by Christians from the Lady of the Well to Our Lady's Well.

Some of the medicinal wells evolved into fashionable spa towns, but the age-old custom of giving gifts or coins to a well continues to this day. Well-dressing is a variation of this offering, eg tying ribbons around the well or decorating it with flowers and green branches. At present, most of the well-dressings are found in Derbyshire or Staffordshire, such as Endon, Barlow or Tissington.

Tissington is famous for its well-dressing and visitors come to watch the annual ceremony. This takes place on Ascension Day, when people gather to see the wells blessed. For centuries, five wells have been dressed in the village: Yew Tree Well, Hall Well, Hands Well, Coffin Well and Town Well (since 1982, a smaller Children's Well was added). The well-dressing involves erecting boards covered in clay, into which thousands of flower petals are pressed to create an elaborate tableau of some biblical or topographical scene. It is likely that well-dressing took place here in 1348, to give thanks for the village's escape from the Black Death, which the villagers attributed to the purity of its water. Tissington is considered to have been the first place to dress wells in the county and wells have been dressed there for over 650 years.

Elemental magick: fire and salamanders

By Nic the Witch

Fire is the element of the South, connected to passion, desire and enthusiasm. Fire is an agent of change in both heat and light, as it may heat or light a room, but also destroy a place if the fire is out of control. A person who uses fire magick is usually doing so to cast out something or change a situation, regardless of whether the fire takes the form of a bonfire, a candle, a lit burner or a sun spell.

The element of Fire can be [symbolised](#) in many ways among cultures, namely:

- a) in some traditions of Celtic belief, fire is pictured as a triple flame or rays
- b) as the ken rune in the Nordic Futhark
- c) as a seven-ray sun image for the Cherokees
- d) in alchemy, as an upwards triangle.

In [feng shui](#), the fire element represents renewal, transformation and change. It is the energy of the sun, happy celebrations and joyful achievements. The fire element also brings the energy of strong sexual desire, passion and romance, in a heart-warming way. Just as there can be no life without the energy of the sun, so there can be no good feng shui energy in any space without the light and heat from the fire.

The fire element is the most volatile of the five feng shui elements — it has the power to both destroy and renew. However, fire's power to destroy is often seen as a means to rebirth at a higher level. It is a symbol of purification and regeneration. Of the five elements of feng shui, fire is best used if you seek change or transformation.

All types of lighting, candles, and fireplaces are great feng shui cures and fiery colours (like red or orange) add a boost to the fire element in a house. Here are some decorative features that draw on the fire element for good feng shui in a home:

- ✚ All lights — electric, oil, candles, sunlight, fireplaces; good lighting draws energy into rooms.
- ✚ Red or orange shades for lamps.
- ✚ Candles.
- ✚ Fireplaces.
- ✚ Art relating to the sun, light or fire.
- ✚ Art relating to animals or people.
- ✚ Pets.
- ✚ Bright gloss paint that reflects the light, in reds or yellows.

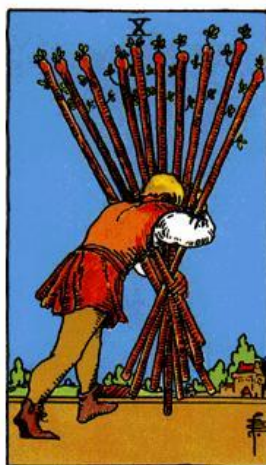
Note: TVs or gadgets with high electromagnetic fields should not be placed next to hearths, as the fire energy will be diluted.

If one uses [tarot cards](#) for guidance or divination, the fire element can be interpreted in several ways. Fire is linked to the [suit of rods or wands](#), because the tarot deck shows that wands are associated with:

- Primal energy
- Spirituality and intuition
- Inspiration and creativity
- Determination or strength.

Wands deal with the spiritual level of consciousness and address our personalities and personal energy, both internal and external. Rods or wands indicate all the things done during the day to keep us busy, such as working at the office, home or the outside, like an aide-memoire of ideas and tasks.

On the other hand, wands reversed include such negative aspects as egotistical behaviour, impulsiveness, a lack of direction or self-esteem or a feeling of ennui. The picture below shows the Ten of Wands, which represents initiative, ambition and desire. In this case, it shows an almost obsessive commitment to a task which demands everything you've got. The person is in no position to rest until he makes it inside the safe walls of the castle in the distance for fear of wolves or marauders. It doesn't matter that he's overloaded and underfed. With this card, you have to do whatever it takes complete the task — nothing can be allowed to interfere.



Here are some of the **correspondences** that are associated with the Fire element.

Direction	South
Celtic festival	Litha
Archangel	Michael
Qualities	Activity, force and willpower
Colour	Red or orange
Meaning	To will
Altar tool	Athame or wand
Animal	Lion
Symbols	Fire, sun, passion or candles
Elemental spirit	Salamanders
Elemental ruler	Djyn
+ve features	Energy, enthusiasm, will or strength
-ve features	Greed, vengeance, ego or jealousy.

Note: in many magical traditions, fire is associated with various spirits and elemental beings. Entities known as **salamanders** are winged creatures and are related to powers of wisdom and intuition, as are angels or archangels.

To understand the concepts of elemental spirits and rulers, it is vital to be aware of a Renaissance philosopher, alchemist and physician called **Paracelsus**. This is not the place to include a detailed analysis of his beliefs, but a brief summary here may suffice and other texts on the cardinal elements will help to expand his world view.

Paracelsus was responsible for the naming of the elementals. He believed in supernatural beings and felt that continuous exploration of the invisible side of nature was vital. He defined elemental beings as existing in the gap between humans and the spirit world and able to travel between realms. Such beings had supernatural powers and were formed of different substances, but able to change thoughts into physical forms. Typical elementals named by Paracelsus in his work, *Liber de Nymphis* (1566), included:

- a) færies
- b) gnomes
- c) elves
- d) sprites
- e) sylphs
- f) salamanders.

Salamanders (or *vulcani*) were named by Paracelsus as the class of elemental spirit that corresponded with the fire element. Described as “long, narrow and lean”, salamanders are defined as fire spirits of will, power, intensity, and ardour (spiritual and erotic). Their fiery nature can make them volatile and dangerous for any persons who interact with them.

Salamanders could only exist in incendiary environments, such as forest fires, volcanoes and balls of fire in storms. Fires could not exist without salamanders and Paracelsus considered them to be the strongest and most powerful of all the elementals. From the human perspective, salamanders were responsible for health and well-being via heat and light, working through the heart and bloodstream. Any person with a fiery temper was seen as influenced by a salamander.



The ruler of the salamanders was a magnificent flaming being called **King Djyn (or Djinn)**. This figure could be seen both in the blazing sun or the heart of a forest fire, because Djyn is the Lord of the fire element. As such, he helps to control the movement of fire and the life energy around our world. For those who are attuned to the fire energy, King Djyn appears as an explosion of white light and heat — a living flame with a cloak of yellow and red, like molten lava. On the other hand, he can appear in the warm firelight of a hearth or the flame of a candle. It is his power that attracts salamanders to his command.

While referring to key correspondences, it's worth looking at some of the main **deities** connected with the fire element. In many cultures, fire and/or the sun are associated with powerful gods or goddesses and the list below gives an indication of the diversity of the respect paid to the Fire element.

- a) Ancient Egypt: Ra; other deities for the sun include Amun, Sekhmet, Khepri and Khnum
- b) Ancient Greece: Apollo was the main god of light and the sun with various lesser gods too (Helios and Hyperion)
- c) Ancient Rome: Sol and Apollo

- d) Aztec: Nanauatzin was god of the sun, but Tonatiuh was also god of the sun and ruler of the heavens, while Xiuhtecuhtli was the god of fire, day and heat
- e) Norse: Sól (also known as Sunna) was a solar goddess, but Dagr was god of the daylight
- f) Iroquois: Doyadaste was the goddess of the dawn, but the ruler of the gods was Hawenneyu and he had a sun-tree next to his lodge, which gave light to all.
- g) Celtic sun goddesses: Étain in Ireland and Olwen in Wales.

Of course, when it comes to Celtic sun goddesses, we should not forget Brigid whose name means *bright arrow* and who represents both light and fire. There aren't many original accounts of the [Celtic gods](#) except for a brief commentary by Julius Caesar and he attempted to correlate the Celtic gods with the Roman deities, so that Brigid was linked by him to Minerva. Caesar referred to the Celtic god, Taranis, as responsible for the sun ("the fire of the skies") and storms ("the fire of the air, lightning, and its voice, thunder"). The Celtic scholar, Professor Proinsias Mac Cana (Francis McCann) considered the solar wheel to be the symbol of Taranis. If correct, Taranis was among the highest deities of the Celts as the solar wheel is one of the most common symbols on all Celtic artefacts.

Here is a tale from the Alabama tribe about the Discovery of Fire.

In the beginning of the world, it was Bear who owned Fire. It warmed Bear and his people on cold nights and gave them light when it was dark. Bear and his people carried Fire with them wherever they went. One day, Bear and his people came to a great forest, where they found many acorns lying on the forest floor. Bear set Fire at the edge of the forest, and he and his people began eating acorns. The acorns were crunchy and crisp and tasted better than any other acorns Bear and his people had ever eaten. They wandered further and further away from Fire, eating the delicious acorns and seeking out more when the acorn supply grew low.

Fire blazed up merrily for a while, until it had burned nearly all of its wood. It started to smoke and flicker, then dwindled down and down. Fire was alarmed - it was nearly out - "Feed me! Feed me!" Fire shouted to Bear. But Bear and his people had wandered deep into the forest, and did not hear Fire's cries. At that moment, Man came walking through the forest and saw the small, flickering Fire. "Feed me! Feed me!" Fire cried in despair. "What should I feed you?" Man asked. He had never seen Fire before. "I eat sticks and logs and wood of all kinds," Fire explained.

Man picked up a stick and leaned it on the North side of Fire. Fire sent its orange-blue flames flickering up the side of the stick until it started to burn. Man got a second stick and laid it on the West side of the fire. Fire, nourished by the first stick, burned brighter and stretched taller and eagerly claimed the second stick. Man picked up a third stick and laid it on the south side of Fire and laid a fourth stick on the East. By this time, Fire was leaping and dancing in delight, its hunger satisfied. Man warmed himself by the blazing Fire, enjoying the changed colours and the hissing and snapping sound Fire made as it ate the wood. Man and Fire were very happy together and Man fed sticks to Fire whenever it got hungry.

A long time later, Bear and his people came back to the edge of the forest, looking for Fire. Fire was angry when it saw Bear. It blazed until it was white-hot and so bright that Bear had to shade his eyes with both paws. "I do not even know you!" Fire shouted at Bear. The terrible heat rolling off Fire drove Bear and his people away, so they could not take it and carry it away with them. And now Fire belongs to Man.

History: Elizabeth/ Bess Clarke

By Gylden Fellowship

What happened first, as they say, was the repeal of previous laws by Edward VI in 1547, only to be replaced by the **Witchcraft Act 1563** by Elizabeth I. This act made it a capital crime to “*use, practise, or exercise any Witchcraft, Enchantment, Charm, or Sorcery, whereby any person shall happen to be killed or destroyed.*”

Then came the introduction of the **Witchcraft Act 1604**, a year on from James I becoming king in England. The strap-line (if you like) to the 1604 Act was to forbid, “*Conjuration, Witchcraft and dealing with evil and wicked spirits*”

It was this law that gave the mandate to the so-called **Witchfinder-General, Matthew Hopkins** (see below), but it is important to note that the two anti-witch acts (1563 and 1604) made witchcraft into a crime. One legacy was that accused witches could be tried in normal courts rather than ecclesiastical courts and burning at the stake was not a usual sentence here – though you could still be burned at the stake if you were convicted of witchcraft and treason. However, most convicted witches were put to death by hanging after 1604. Minor witchcraft sentences involved a short time in prison for a first offence and hanging for a repeat offence.

One of the most infamous periods was that of 1645-46 and the activities of Matthew Hopkins. Much of his activities took place in East Anglia, where people were anti-Catholic and strongly Puritan. Hopkins was a failed lawyer who appointed himself as Witchfinder-General and investigated all accusations of witchcraft in the region. Starting in Essex and Suffolk, he was responsible for 68 trials ending in death for the accused witches in Bury St Edmunds and 19 deaths in Chelmsford. Then, he moved his operations north.

His MO was to listen to gossip about possible witches, arrest the accused, use torture for confessions, have show trials and ensure death sentences ensued. Much of his evidence depended upon the discovery of the demonic marks and a series of tests to determine witchcraft. An example included a jabbing needle to see if a wart or mole was insensitive to pain (the needle could be retracted into the handle during the torture, so no pain was inflicted) – guilty as charged!

Another test was to tie up the accused and throw the victim into a river – drowning proved innocence and floating proved guilt. Consider this fact – in 1646, the average daily pay was nine pence. The local authority in Aldeburgh paid Hopkins £6 for clearing the town of witches. In Kings Lynn, he received £15 for the same job and £23 from Stowmarket. In Great Yarmouth, Hopkins brought 16 suspected witches to trial and 5 of them were sentenced to death.

Hopkins died in 1647, having made a good living from witch-finding and after bringing some 300 witch trials that had led to the deaths of 100 or so victims. In fact, estimates of the number of witches put to death in England are about 400 – 90% of them were women – and Hopkins was responsible for over a quarter of the total

Elizabeth (Bess) Clarke (c. 1565–1645), alias **Bedinfield**, was the first woman persecuted by Hopkins in 1645 in Manningtree in Essex. At 80 years old, Bess Clarke was accused of cursing the wife of a local tailor, John Rivet,

during the winter of 1643. A lynch mob brought her to Sir Harbottle Grimston (her landowner), who decided that she should be tried.

Matthew Hopkins, assisted by John Stearne and Mary Phillipps, took up the role of investigators and prosecutors, known as *Watchers*. Hopkins and John Stearne stated that they had seen demonic familiars appear while watching Clarke. During the process, she was deprived of sleep for multiple nights before confessing and implicating other women in the local area. Although torture was illegal in England, suspected witches were subject to scrutiny by their Watchers. In Clarke's case, Hopkins and colleagues watched her for several days and nights. After this treatment, Hopkins claimed to have witnessed Clarke summoning imps in animal form. The watchers described many of the imps seen with Clarke, including the following:

- Jarmana - a white dog with sandy spots, fat with short legs
- Vinegar Tom - a greyhound with long legs, who turned into a 4-year-old boy with no head
- A black imp
- Newes - a polecat with a large head
- Hoult - a white imp, smaller than a cat
- A white imp that went to bed with Clarke in the shape of a proper gentleman with a laced band
- Three brown imps from her mother
- Sacke and Sugar – demonic black rabbits.

During this ordeal, Clarke implicated other women from Manningtree: Anne West and her daughter Rebecca, Anne Leech, Helen Clarke Elizabeth Gooding as well as women from other villages. Clarke stated that she had been brought into witchcraft by Anne West, who took pity on her due to her poverty and only having one leg. The women discovered by Hopkins were tried at Chelmsford Assizes on 17 July 1645. Bess then confessed, due to the persuading, forcing and imprisonment. This led to 36 women who were accused and imprisoned – 19 were found guilty and hanged.



Recipe: flower salad

By Gylden Fellowship

Beltaine marked the end of winter farming and heralded the start of summer, so that sheep or goats could be moved to upland pastures. Stocks of dried meat from the winter would have been low and the start of May was a chance to use fresh vegetables, oatmeal or cheese. One of the correspondence foods for this period are edible flowers and here's a Beltaine salad.

Ingredients

- Shredded lettuce
- Fresh berries, sliced
- Fresh tomatoes, peppers and cucumber
- Onion, sliced
- Bread roll
- 2tbsp fresh lemon juice (add at end)
- Mixed garden leaves or flowers, washed:

Borage

Hollyhock

Alkanet

Dandelions

Lavender

Plantains

Chickweed

Lemon verbena

Calendula

Rose petals

Nasturtiums

Daisies

Chervil

Sweet violets

Pansies

Note: try to remember to avoid any plants that have been treated with pesticides.

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