

# NEWS LETTER

£1 – to cover printing costs and small donation to temple

## Upcoming Events

### Beltane – Ritual and Celebration

Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> May from 12 noon.

Join us to celebrate fertility, fire, and life.

### Summer Solstice – Ritual and Celebration

Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> June from 12 noon.

Acclaiming warmth, light, and longer days.

## Regular Groups

### Pagan Pathways – Talks, Discussion, Tues. 8pm

- 8<sup>th</sup> May: "The Rune Poems" (Jamie)

- 22<sup>nd</sup> May: "The Goddess Eris" (Anwen)

- 5<sup>th</sup> June: "St. Catherine - Christianity's Hidden Goddess" (Robin)

### Shamanic Meditation Drum Group

Alternate Saturdays from 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2-3 pm. Each session £4 (concessions available). With Meranda Thompson.

### Kitchen Witchery – learn witchy ways, make things, grow things, and take part in practical magic to create positive change. With Tammy.

Fridays 2-4 pm.

### Traditional Crafts for Mindfulness – a

School of Magic event. Monday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2-4 pm.

To book your place on the above events please ring the Airy Fairy shop on 0114 2492090



## Goddess Arnemetiae

(Meaning 'she who dwells in the sacred grove')

### Goddess of the Sacred Grove

I give you the green fire of sunlight through leaves, fresh and full.

I bring forth the miraculous rush of life from the warm and wakeful earth.

I offer you blossom and bird song.

I call my Beloved

from the threshold of the wild wood to our marriage bed of flowers.

I am Queen of the May,

bringer of the fires of Beltane,

rising passion, love and tenderness.

I am Arnemetiae,

Goddess of the Sacred Grove,

where pure waters rise and flow.



The Celtic word Nemeton, refers to a sanctuary or sacred grove and elements of this word can be found in both ancient and modern place names across Western Europe and beyond.

On the Northern Wheel of the year, Arnemetia is our Goddess of the Sacred Grove whom we celebrate at Beltane (May Day festival). She is cognate with Brigid's Green mantle, sweeping life and rich renewal across the land. She is the Beloved who calls to the Green Man, Lord of the Wild Wood to join her in the Hieros Gamos, or Sacred Marriage. Beltane is the time of merriment, fecundity, love, passion and conception.

In her scholarly article, Nemeton in the Medieval World (2013), Dr Kelly Kilpatrick from the institute of Name Studies at the University of Nottingham, gives many examples of Nemeton place names from England, Britain, Ireland, Western Europe and beyond, and of dedications to the Goddess deity of the sacred grove, Nemetona.

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Join our Sheffield Goddess Temple Melissas between 12:30 and 1:30 pm, Monday to Saturday, to experience these seasonal energies in quiet contemplation.



## Goddess Arnemetiae [continued from page 1]

The prefix *aquae* means of the waters and refers to a natural spring or spa, the Celtic word *nemeton* refers to the sacred grove, undoubtedly a site of special importance for millennia from the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze and Iron ages. The site became a deity imbued spa during the Roman occupation and a Holy, healing well in the Christian era, until miserable Cromwell put a stop to 'idoltrous behaviour'. People did however continue to take the health giving waters, including Mary Queen of Scots during her imprisonment in Derbyshire.

As the keepers of the Sacred Groves, Druids are often associated with such places, particularly Oak groves. This may have had a pragmatic as well as a religious function. During the violent European Iron Ages, great forests were felled at an alarming rate in order to produce the vast quantities of charcoal required for the iron smelting of tools and weapons. As a consequence of the invention of the iron axe and the iron plough share, it was possible to clear more forest and to plough heavier, wetter soils for agriculture. By imposing a religious taboo upon the felling of sacred groves (with the death penalty for anyone foolish enough to transgress), the acorns and seeds for the next generation of trees were ensured.

Now for a little science; in the UK, the temperature of ground water is usually around 10 – 12 degrees centigrade. However, the Buxton thermal spring rises at a temperature of 28 degrees, is high in magnesium and calcium, and produces approximately a million litres of water every day (UK Groundwater forum).

Imagine the scene:- a pure thermal spring arising in a sacred grove. A life giving, lush, green, mysterious, flower strewn sanctuary - Her most sacred and majestic place of votive offerings, prayer and peace for untold generations.

Then in 1780, along came the 5th Duke of Devonshire. He decided to use the profits from his copper mines to develop a spa at Buxton. He was unable to buy the land adjacent to the sacred springs and so the idiot felled the trees – the green descendants of millennia of sacredness. He diverted what was St Ann's well and built a crescent of buildings over the springs!

It is so sad that such an important, mystical site was lost so recently. However, the fertility rites of well dressings are again celebrated at Buxton. As Kim Aimson states:- *'...the grove may be cut down, the chapel destroyed, the spring diverted to another site, the medical spa no more, but at least a well of living waters will be celebrated with a well dressing.'*

### References

Aquae Arnemetiae, [roman-britain.co.uk](http://roman-britain.co.uk)  
Aqua Arnemetia. Wikipedia, open commons  
Dr Kelly Kilpatrick. Nemeton in the Medieval world; Nemi to Nottingham: In the footsteps of Fundilia. (03.09.2013)  
<https://nemitonottingham.wordpress.com>  
Kim Aimson Beltane 2000 [Whitedragon.org.uk](http://Whitedragon.org.uk)  
UK groundwater forum. [Groundwateruk.org](http://Groundwateruk.org)  
See also, Miranda J Green, Dictionary of Celtic Myth and legend. 1997

## Temple Melissas



Our Temple Melissas are the people who hold space in the Temple between 12.30 and 1.30 pm every day, Monday to Saturday. It is a delightful job to do. If you would like to be part of the Melissa team please leave a message at Airy Fairy for Ann Staniland or Brian Harrison.

## The Temple on Facebook

facebook



Sheffield Goddess Temple



For all the most up to date information on what is going on at the temple, don't forget to check out our Facebook page which has all the latest news of events, and photos of recent happenings.

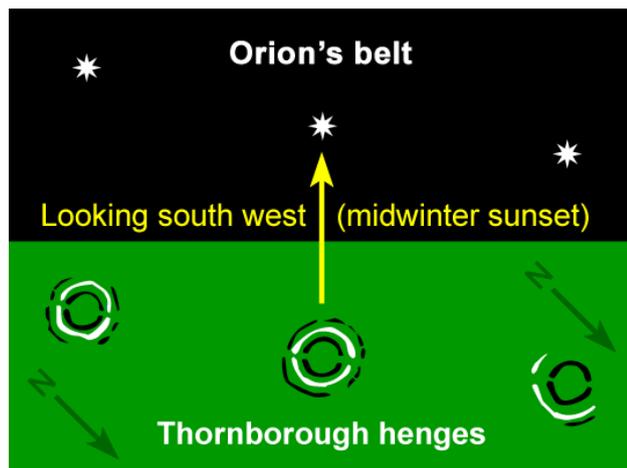
<https://www.facebook.com/SheffieldGoddessTemple/>

## Contact Sheffield Goddess Temple Newsletter

To submit articles, news of relevant upcoming events, or to make suggestions, please email us at: [temple@lovecat.com](mailto:temple@lovecat.com)

## Beltane at Thornborough Henge

Thornborough Henge is a 5,000-year-old prehistoric monument near Ripon in North Yorkshire. It consists of three giant circular earthworks extending for over a mile in length and aligning with the stars of Orion's Belt on the Winter Solstice.



The henge is also the site of an annual Beltane festival<sup>1</sup>. Beltane is the Celtic fire festival that celebrates the beginning of summer.

The festival originated with the rural tradition of lighting 'lucky fires' at the beginning of May. People and livestock would pass between these fires in order to be given magical protection in the year ahead. This ancient rite was said to have once been performed by the Druids of Britain.

Thornborough Henge itself was constructed by the first Neolithic farmers as an enclosure for their ritual gatherings. The Henge became an important centre in Britain for pilgrimage and trade.

Although the exact purpose of henge monuments remains a mystery, the three henges at Thornborough (which are arranged slightly askew on the ground) do appear to

align with the three stars of Orion's Belt on the Winter Solstice.

The annual Beltane festival at the henge is a popular visitor attraction. Details for 2019 will be available in due course from the Celebrate Beltane website listed below<sup>1</sup>, a linked Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/celebratebeltane](http://www.facebook.com/celebratebeltane), or by emailing [susanhelps8@gmail.com](mailto:susanhelps8@gmail.com).

### The Goddess Brigantia

Thornborough Henge is located in the heart of the tribal territory of the Brigantes. It is for this reason that celebrants at the festival of Beltane at Thornborough honour the goddess of this land, Brigantia. Brigantia is the Celtic goddess of the Brigantes tribe, who were the largest tribal group in Britain at the time of the Roman invasion, 2,000-years-ago.

Their territory extended from the river Mersey to the river Tyne and covered most of what is now northern England. They were also recorded as having territory in south east Ireland, and Brigantia may be considered cognate with the Irish deity Brigid.



Thornborough Henge Site from the air

<sup>1</sup> For details of the Thornborough Henge Beltane festival see the "Beltane at Thornborough" web site at: <http://www.celebratebeltane.co.uk/>





# What is Beltane?



## Sunset to Sunset: 30<sup>th</sup> April – 1<sup>st</sup> May

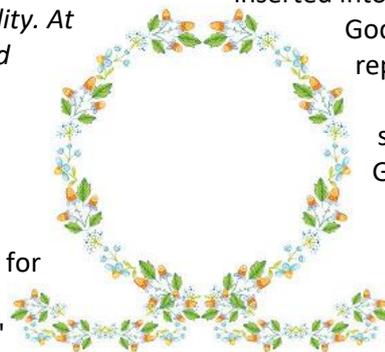
Beltane honours Life. It represents the peak of Spring and the beginning of Summer. Earth energies are at their strongest and most active. All of life is bursting with potent fertility and at this point in the Wheel of the Year, the potential becomes conception. On May Eve the sexuality of life and the earth is at its peak. Abundant fertility, on all levels, is the central theme. The Maiden goddess has reached her fullness. She is the manifestation of growth and renewal, Flora, the Goddess of Spring, the May Queen, the May Bride. The Young Oak King, as Jack-In-The-Green, as the Green Man, falls in love with her and wins her hand. The union is consummated and the May Queen becomes pregnant. Together the May Queen and the May King are symbols of the Sacred Marriage (or Heiros Gamos), the union of Earth and Sky, and this union has merrily been re-enacted by humans throughout the centuries. For this is the night of the Greenwood Marriage. It is about sexuality and sensuality, passion, vitality and joy. And about conception. A brilliant moment in the Wheel of the Year to bring ideas, hopes and dreams into action. And to have some fun.....

## Traditions of Beltane

Beltane is a Fire Festival. The word 'Beltane' originates from the Celtic God 'Bel', meaning 'the bright one' and the Gaelic word 'teine' meaning fire. Together they make 'Bright Fire', or 'Goodly Fire' and traditionally bonfires were lit to honour the Sun and encourage the support of Bel and the Sun's light to nurture the emerging future harvest and protect the community. Bel had to be won over through human effort. Traditionally all fires in the community were put out and a special fire was kindled for Beltane. *"This was the Tein-eigen, the need fire. People jumped the fire to purify, cleanse and to bring fertility. Couples jumped the fire together to pledge themselves to each other. Cattle and other animals were driven through the smoke as a protection from disease and to bring fertility. At the end of the evening, the villagers would take some of the Teineigen to start their fires anew."*

## Handfasting

As Beltane is the Great Wedding of the Goddess and the God, it is a popular time for pagan weddings or Handfastings, a traditional betrothal for 'a year and a day'



after which the couple would either choose to stay together or part without recrimination. Today, the length of commitment is a matter of choice for the couple, and can often be for life. Handfasting ceremonies are often unique to the couple, but include common elements, most importantly the exchange of vows and rings (or a token of their choice). The act of handfasting always involves tying the hands [Handfasting - 'tying the knot'] of the two people involved, in a figure of eight, at some point in the ceremony, and later unbinding. This is done with a red cord or ribbon. Tying the hands together symbolises that the two people have come together and the untying means that they remain together of their own free will.

Another common element is 'jumping the broomstick' - this goes back to a time when two people who could not afford a church ceremony, or want one, would be accepted in the community as a married couple if they literally jumped over a broom laid on the floor. The broom marked a 'threshold', moving from an old life to a new one. Mead and cakes are often shared in communion as part of the ceremony. Mead is known as the Brew of the Divine, made from honey, which is appropriate for a love ceremony (and is the oldest alcoholic drink known to humankind).

## Going A-Maying and Maypoles

Handfasting or not, both young and old went A-Maying... Couples spent the night in the woods and fields, made love and brought back armfuls of the first May or haw thorn blossoms to decorate their homes and barns. Hawthorn was never brought into the home except at Beltane - at other times it was considered unlucky. Young women gathered the dew to wash their faces, made Flower Crowns and May Baskets to give as gifts. Everyone was free to enact the Sacred Marriage of Goddess and God, and there was an accepted tradition of Beltane babies arriving nine months later!

The Maypole is a popular and familiar image of May Day and Beltane. A phallic pole, often made from birch, was inserted into the Earth representing the potency of the God. The ring of flowers at the top of the Maypole represents the fertile Goddess. Its many coloured ribbons and the ensuing weaving dance symbolise the spiral of Life and the union of the Goddess and God, the union between Earth and Sky ✨

Source:

<http://www.goddessandgreenman.co.uk/beltane>