

BELTANE



FIRE FESTIVAL

EVENT PROGRAM 2026

- Where World and Spirit Align -

A BELTANE FIRE SOCIETY PRODUCTION

BELTANE

-2026-

FIRE FESTIVAL

THE BELTANE FIRE FESTIVAL MARKS THE CHANGING SEASONS BY BRINGING ANCIENT CELTIC SPRING TRADITIONS AND STORIES ALIVE WITH A MODERN TWIST

Are you ready to turn the wheel and welcome the summer of 2026? Join the Beltane Fire Festival on Calton Hill on Thursday 30th April, as fire, story, and ritual bring us together once more to mark the season of growth, connection, and renewal.

Beltane is a living, breathing reimaging of an ancient Iron Age Celtic celebration, retold through modern performance and community ritual. Since 1988, the Beltane Fire Society has gathered thousands to witness the timeless story of the May Queen and the Green Man (spirit and body, world and self) entwined in an eternal dance.

This year's Beltane asks us to remember what happens when those forces drift out of alignment. The M^áy Queen is the world spirit, present in all things, illuminating and connecting. The Green Man is the living earth: the air, the water, the fire, the energy that binds us. They are inseparable, yet in a world of constant distraction, extraction, and division, we can forget this truth, losing our sense of agency and connection.

Through fire and performance, we explore what it means to realign, to listen again, to act from love and solidarity, and to remember that change is possible when we stand together. As the May Queen guides and the Green Man learns to listen, their reunion becomes a story of active hope: a reminder that when body and spirit move as one, our collective power is limitless. Along the Hill, you'll encounter drummers, dancers, fire-players, acrobats, musicians, and a host of mythic characters, all weaving a shared story of renewal and resistance, joy and responsibility.

Beltane 2026 is an invitation to remember who we are, what we value, and who we might yet become. Bring your fire. Bring your voice. Together, let us tell a story of alignment, connection, and a kinder, fairer world.

HOW TO EXPERIENCE BELTANE

There is no single path through Beltane, only the one that calls to you. This is a night for immersion in magic, mystery, and revelry as the wheel turns. Wander as you will, follow your instincts, and let the fire guide your steps. The only boundary we ask you to honour is around our fire performers. Please leave the flames to those trained in their dance, and resist the urge to light your own.

You are warmly invited to witness the procession of the May Queen as she journeys across the hill, encountering a vibrant tapestry of characters, creatures, and communities. We recommend beginning your evening at the Acropolis, and then let the fire lead you onward.

At times, you may feel lost and that is all part of the magic. Trust in the night. Let the rhythm, the music, the wild joy of it all carry you. Dance, cheer, and celebrate. This is your Beltane too.

Throughout the evening, the hill comes alive with gleaming performances, rituals, and celebrations (many unfolding at once) all woven into a single living story. You may not witness every chapter, but that's all part of the experience. Follow your curiosity, and use our Fire Festival map below to guide you to the moments you most wish to find.

We understand that not everyone wishes to engage directly with performers. While our creatures of fire and earth delight in sharing the spirit of the festival, they hold deep respect for personal boundaries.

IF YOU PREFER TO ENJOY THE MAGIC FROM A LITTLE DISTANCE, YOU CAN RAISE YOUR ARM UP AND POINT TO YOUR WRIST TO DEMONSTRATE THAT YOU DO NOT WANT TO BE INTERACTED WITH.

THE QUEST

The Pre-Dusk-Quest is a new project for you to enjoy on the hill before dusk. We love it when people arrive early to meet some of the groups, visit the Wishing Tree and enjoy the beautiful views Calton Hill provides. This year you will find a quest on your map to find QR codes on the hill with short videos of our different groups that you will meet on the night. See if you can find them all.



THE MAY QUEEN

The May Queen is the centre of gravity around which all the world spirals. She is the truth of the past and the promise of the future. She is held in the body of a soft animal. She lifts curses, opens veils, and, under the light of the full moon, tenderly supports the Green Man's rebirth. When you witness the May Queen, know that you, too, are being witnessed. What is your part in all of this?

THE GREEN MAN

The Green Man's body is the conduit between the lowest soil and the divine spark that illuminates all. Now though, His flesh screams and this lost rage feeds a flame outwith sacred connection and all but one hope. Fire-maiden, Witch-mother, Drum-Crone - The May Queen's voice rings across the hill and calls the Green Man back, into true alignment, and then forward, to a death lived through. Under the light of the full moon and the gaze of you, our sacred witnesses, they will ready themselves to dance and burn.



BELTANE CHARACTERS

THE BLUES

The Blues are guardians of the ritual elements of the festival, preserving traditions that have evolved in our community; guiding their enactment at each turn of the wheel. Our society's lore and stories are held by Blue through their considerable experience of the festivals, connecting participants to traditional elements through deepening understanding and awareness.

On Beltane night, from the moment the Neid fire is lit to the final embers of the Beltane bonfire- Blues can be seen guiding the procession around the hill through the festivities; focussed on holding space for the May Queen and Green Man as their narrative unfolds.

THE ORDER OF MAY

The Order of May is an ancient order of Pagan Knights, bound both by devotion to our beloved May Queen and adherence to a chivalric code of nine virtues: compassion, loyalty, stewardship of nature, wisdom, courage, justice, passion, humility, and generosity. Our journey on Beltane night will mirror that of an Arthurian grail quest - recognising the loss of humanity's connection to the land, expressing grief for this loss, and seeking reconnection. Painted in white and adorned with heraldry, our noble retinue will follow the May Queen around the hill, providing her with sense of profound stability, and a supportive, grounding presence.

BEASTIE DRUMMERS

The Beastie Drummers are a playful and chaotic drum crew, waking up on the Hill as if everything is new. Curious and full of mischief, they find their way across the Hill together; exploring, connecting, and discovering the world around them through sound and play.

Ferociously red and extravagant, they ring in summer with boisterous, bum-shaking, earth-shattering Beastie silliness and joy. They write their own tunes and bring them to life through djembes, basses, snares and shakers, building rhythms that are bold and energetic.



CIRCLE OF RED

Moving in a shared ritual, the Reds draw the hill into motion and spell, reminding everyone that heat without intention is not power. We dance with each other, playful, embracing those parts of us that we are often told to hide or change to be more palatable. We do not perform for anyone other than ourselves, and invite those witnessing to embrace their own truths

COVEN

For the gift of prophecy, blood is the price. Voices are buried, truth is punished, and silence is enforced. Across time, Cassandra spoke, and she was not believed. The witch was marked, othered, cursed, burned. Tonight, through the oracle archetype of Cassandra, we honour the voices dismissed, the truths ignored, and the stories buried. Seen by the May Queen, heard by the Green Man, witnessed by you, this story moves from silence to recognition, to unbinding, to freedom. Tonight, we reclaim our voices.

Every year Coven remembers the witch hunts, past and present, and stands with all who are othered, silenced, and victimised.

FIREARCHY

Fire - the primal energy of love, desire, passion, rage, rebellion, destruction and transformation. Every revolution in history has been sparked by this energy and burns in its name. Firearchy is an anarchic collective of punks and rebels who embody this spirit of radical change and blazing authenticity. Chaotic acolytes of fire, we are gatekeepers of the fire arch, letting only the truly authentic pass beyond the veil. We represent the divine fire of passion and transformation. We throw off our masks and societal conditioning into the fire pit, burn it all the f**k down and dance joyfully on the ashes of the old way.

Reality is here right now and it's time to rise up and choose how we want to create it.

GOBLIN TAILS TALES (BOWER)

Goblins are shaking off winter's chill to tidy and decorate Bower for summer!
Hanging up bunting, lighting lights, and sweeping away mud.

Yes yes. Us goblins are hard-working and never get distracted from-oooooh what's that over there? A wayward human bean who wants to hear some stories? We'll interact with anyone who catches our attention, enthusiastically sharing tails tales of festivals past and present. And they're all true. Honest!

Goblins will be at Bower from gates open, welcoming all to the hill. Once the festival begins, we'll welcome in other groups and tell you all their tales. Though we may just sneak off to steal borrow a certain greenbean's horns...

At the end of the night, we'll gather everyone at our home on the hill and distribute snacks and tea. And we definitely haven't replaced all the snacks with onions. No no. We're very well behaved goblins. We promise!

LUAN-LUS

As the moon shines down, the white hares emerge from their slumber. We are the hares from folk tales and myth. The bringers of legends, and the carriers of dreams and secret messages. Dancing the spectral space between witch and the wilds, you will find us roaming the hill, sharing our stories, passing on our messages, and bringing light to the dark places. Come and dance with us, and share in our stories.

NIGHTWATCH (STEWARDS AND TORCHIES)

A welcoming group of Beltane Stewards and Torchbearers. The two have an interwoven role at Beltane. We guard the space between the audience and performers. Torchbearers light the way around Calton Hill as

Stewards act as chaperones, guided by the May Queen and Green Man amongst the cosmos that we all inhabit. Torchbearers, in their black cloaks, light the performance with open fire carried in long metal torches.

Stewards, clad in high-vis, answer audience questions, hold the performance space, with optional further interactions with audience, spreading Beltane stories; both modern and of old. Stewards are also part of the fire safety for the festival.

PHOTOPOINT

Photopoint are the volunteer photographers of the festival. During the run-up, we capture each group's journey as they prepare for the big night. During the festival, we weave between the spiritual and the physical, capturing the ways our community comes together to create the festival – acrobatics, fire spinning, tech, stewarding, everything.

PROCESSIONAL DRUMMERS

The Processional Drummers are the engine of the procession, a cosmic clockwork heartbeat of dark, gnarly rhythms that propel the procession around the hill at the May Queen's command. Look for us up on the Acropolis as the sun sets, silent at first, then responding to the triple blast of the Call Horn with the relentless thump of Acropolis Sevens - a beat that has echoed across Calton Hill every year for longer than some of our members have been alive.

SELKIE SOUNDSPHERE (WATER POINT)

Selkies are a race of shape-shifting seal creatures from both Celtic and Nordic coastal mythology. Whilst living mostly amongst the seals they can also shed their skin and walk on land in human form, where their interactions with humans can bring great happiness, and great misery...

On Beltane night we'll be weaving an original story between interactive musical and theatrical forms, including both choreography and improvisation. As frolicking seals we may be whimsical and mischievous, but we will also be expressing tragedy and distress in this classic tale of heartbreak and impossible choices.

TECH

We help facilitate the tech needs of each Beltane group and the wider production. We create and provide light by fire cans, to help tell the Beltane story with fire sculptures.

On the night we are there to light fires and contribute to the safety and smooth running of the festival. From stage building to fire safety, we do a bit of everything: Tech is the glue that pastes the festival together by fire and sometimes nuts and bolts.



ZEPHYR (AIR POINT)

We are a Zephyr, air spirits who dance across the evening sky with acrobatics, ribbons and lights. The wind on the Hill can be many things. Soft and gentle, harsh and howling, a constantly changing pattern of flowing currents. Looking out from the traditional Air Point towards Arthur's Seat, witnesses will frequently be pulled, pushed, or tousled by the wind.

Zephyr embodies the spectrum of the wind through dynamic acrobatics, and movement amplified with long silks following our graceful choreography. We are cohort of wind spirits, coloured with the spectrum of the evening sky, and enhanced by lights on our costumes. Find us at Air Point when we greet the May Queen's Procession, before we travel towards the Stage and continue to show off our acrobatics.

CALL HORN

Callhorn is the first sound called out into the night, announcing the beginning of our festival and the May Queen's journey around our hill.

WISHING TREE

It has long been a tradition in the community to add something onto the Beltane Fire. Perhaps something to release and set free or a wish to commit to the cleansing energy of fire.

As the wheel turns and we step forward into the summer, we extend this tradition to those visiting and witnessing our festival on the 30th April. We will have two Wishing Trees which you can visit and tie a provided clootie (scrap of fabric) to, a symbol of your wish. There will also be a basket at the feet of our Willow Goddess into which can be placed small tokens that you wish to be added to the fire. These must be made of natural fibres.

It is important to note that on Beltane night the Wishing Trees are held as sacred and quiet space. As such, please be respectful of each other and our volunteers while moving around and refrain from taking photos.

BELTANE

-2026-

-  FIRST AID & LOST CHILDREN
-  FOOD & DRINK
-  TOILETS
-  DISABLED TOILETS



PROCESSION ROUTES

PERFORMANCE AREAS

FENCES/NO ACCESS

ENTRANCE/GATES

PRE DUSK QUEST

BOX OFFICE

TICKET HOLDERS
ENTRANCE: WAVERLY STEPS

REGENT ROAD

BOX OFFICE, TICKET HOLDERS
& UNDER 16s ENTRANCE:
CARRIAGE DRIVE

NEED HELP WITH TICKETS?
BOX OFFICE CAN HELP

FOR UNDER 16 WRISTBANDS LOOK FOR Y SYMBOL

F.A.Q's

Where should I arrive? Please have your QR code ready for scanning, either in print or on mobile. Where possible, approach Calton Hill from Regent Road. There will be a second entrance via Waterloo Steps, but those with children should enter via the Box Office via Carriage Drive

What time does the procession start and end? Festival gates open at 7:30pm (last entry 11pm) with the main procession beginning at dusk (approx. 9.22). Please try to arrive before 8.30pm to ensure you can witness the start of the celebrations. The procession will end around 12/12:30am.

What should I wear? Dress for the weather. This is a fire festival, and as such we recommend natural fabrics. Loud drumming will take place throughout the night so ear plugs are advised if you plan to get up close to the action.

Can I bring food and beverages to Calton Hill? Alcohol is not being sold on site, but you can bring your own drinks (Please, NO GLASS).

Will I be able to pay for things with cash? We recommend bringing cash just in case, however all of the traders accept card payment, and the box office will be a card only operation. There is no ATM on site.

Are my dogs able to be on the Hill? Dogs are not allowed – nor would particularly enjoy – this fire-focused event! (Access dogs are welcome, in line with guidance)

How big a bag can I bring? Please limit bag size to no bigger than an A3 piece of paper.

Are children allowed at this festival? Under 16s must be accompanied by an adult with a ticket. Parents and guardians please note - this event contains semi-nudity and uninhibited behaviour. Your discretion is advised. We recommend ear plugs for little ones. Missing persons is located at the Welfare area.

What if I don't want to interact with characters? Beltane Fire Society deeply respects people's boundaries and understands that some attendees might not want to be interacted with. If you do not wish to be interacted with by a performer, you can raise your arm up and point to your wrist to demonstrate that you do not want to be interacted with.

Is this event being filmed? Yes! While not live streamed, we will later share a festival video on our social channels and website, as there will be film crews on-site capturing the action.

For the safety of our performers and audience, please do not use flash photography. The fire should light up your photos nicely. Re-entry to the festival is not permitted.

The Beltane Fire Society (BFS) is a community arts performance charity responsible for putting on the annual Beltane Fire Festival and Samhuinn Fire Festival in

Edinburgh, having celebrated these festivals since 1988.

BFS is run by a volunteer Board of Trustees who oversee the year-round operation of the organisation and our dedicated volunteers who keep the fire burning year after year. The Society is funded entirely by donations, charitable grants and ticket sales.

Help us put on more 'fire' festivals by making a BFS PayPal donation

<https://bit.ly/4tUD3Ah>

ARTWORK

By Lucy Wills-Wright

www.lucywillswright.com

[@lucys_imaginarium](https://twitter.com/lucys_imaginarium)

Beltane Fire Society | www.beltane.org

@BeltaneFire Society

Taken some great photos? Join the conversation and tag us using #Beltane2026

HAPPY BELTANE

