

Beltane Fire Society returns to the digital realm with new May Queen

The spirit of Beltane will be brought to life in a digital format once again this month with their online celebration, BOnFire 2021 (Beltane Online Fire Festival). BOnFire takes place on Beltane night, Friday 30 April from 7.30PM and will broadcast across all the Society's digital platforms in synchronicity.

This festival sees a new May Queen take up the role and focuses on our connection with both each other and our natural spaces, as we emerge from another lockdown.

With COVID19 restrictions continuing across the country, the volunteers who would ordinarily throw Edinburgh's world-famous fire festival have worked together in a COVID-safe fashion for the past few months to create an online stream and digital exhibition.



Copyright Gladys Yelland for Beltane Fire Society

In a different approach to their 2020 digital celebrations, this year the Beltane Fire Society's website will host a digital exhibition; including a podcast on the stories and history of Beltane, an interactive map of Beltane memories and a photo gallery of outdoor art installations amongst other content. Edinburgh residents may have spotted some of these 'pop up' outdoor art installations created with natural materials, on their daily walks.

This year also sees the Society welcome a new May Queen. Rosa McKay has accepted the role which embodies the Goddess. This

role is held by one individual and personified each Beltane Festival until they choose to pass the mantle on to another.

On her new role, Rosa said, “I am thrilled to be taking on the role of May Queen for Beltane Fire Society. Over the lockdowns of this last year, the way we relate to the wilder spaces around us has been put under a magnifying glass. We’ve seen the value of natural spaces – beaches, parks, woodland – and the importance of taking care of and respecting these environments.

“Community, staying connected, and spending time outdoors are so important in the current climate; these are strong themes for our digital festival this year. I’m constantly impressed by the way BFS has adapted and remained through this strange time, and look forward with excitement and anticipation at the years to come”.



May Queen. Credit Anna Chaney (this and featured image)

Online attendees do not need a ticket to take part in the festival, however they do have the option to purchase a “pay what you can” ticket as a donation to the festival. Ticket sales for the Beltane Fire Festival are usually Beltane Fire Society’s main source of income, so all donations big and small will help supplement that loss. Funds raised from BOnFire will go towards funding the society’s next in-person festival, once it is deemed safe to hold large events according to government advice.

Donations can be made on [Citizen Ticket’s website](#), where a suggested gift of £5.50 (including booking fee) has been set. The audience can amend that price to whatever they feel they can afford.

This is only the third time Beltane has not been celebrated on Calton Hill since the festival began in 1988. Beltane Fire Festival 2020, which was due to take place on Edinburgh’s

Calton Hill with an anticipated audience of 8,000, was cancelled on 17 March following the first announcement of a national lockdown.



Copyright Vince Graham for Beltane Fire Society

Tom Watton, chair of Beltane Fire Society's board, said, "With Beltane 2021 the Society and the global community are once again pulling out the stops to put on a festival like no other. Our 8th May Queen Rosa joins us for her first trip round the hill, albeit a virtual journey around a digital hill, to join with the Green Man, Rosamund, in this, the second year of a remote Beltane.

"Our dedicated and creative volunteers and collaborators are joining forces around the world to create shared community experiences, as well as unique original content for the upcoming festival, to which I extend to you this invitation."