

Water Witchcraft



Magic and Lore from the
Celtic Tradition

ANNWYN AVALON



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Foreword



Maybe we sense a sacred connection with water because our bodies and our planet are composed largely of water. Maybe it's because, as science says, we emerged from aquatic sources. Long before the theory of evolution developed, however, creation stories from around the globe told us life on earth originated in the world's waters. According to Babylonian mythology, for instance, the water goddess Tiamat was the mother of everything, including the other gods and goddesses. The Aboriginal Australian story of the Rainbow Serpent also credits a water deity with bringing us all into existence.

Water goddesses, such as Anuket, Sulis, Oshun, and Danu (for whom the Danube River is named), figure prominently in the folklore of cultures everywhere. Our ancestors believed ponds, rivers, and seas teemed with spirits of all kinds. In his book *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*, Manly P. Hall wrote "According to the philosophers of antiquity, every fountain had its nymph; every ocean wave its oceanid. The water spirits were known



under such names as oreades, nereides, limoniades, naiades, water sprites, sea maids, mermaids, and potamides." Usually we link water with the feminine or yin force, which is why so many water entities are described as female.

Today we continue to revere the earth's waterways—the Ganges River, Lake Manasarovar in Tibet, Glastonbury's Chalice Well, the grotto at Lourdes, Crater Lake in Oregon. At these places of power and mystery, modern-day pilgrims seek healing, purification, consecration, and transformation, just as they did centuries ago. Even people who don't recognize the spiritual nature of water intuitively understand its curative properties. Who hasn't felt invigorated when sitting near a waterfall or cleansed after a dip in a cool lake? We go to spas to "take the waters" and flock to the seaside to rejuvenate our minds and bodies. Those who live near the ocean, as I did for thirty-one years, quickly become aligned physically, emotionally, and psychically with its shifting tides.

Countless legends also tell us about the magical nature of water. According to Celtic lore, evil spirits couldn't cross running water. Faeries resided in wells. Lakes served as portals into other realms. The River Styx in Greek myth led to the Underworld. In the Arthurian legends, the Lady of the Lake gave Arthur power by gifting him with the sword Excalibur. And we've all tossed coins into a pool or fountain hoping our wishes would come true.

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Water plays an important role in many magickal traditions and practices. It's one of the four elements that serve as the building blocks of life (along with fire, earth, and air). In the tarot, water is represented by the suit of cups. Three of the twelve zodiac signs—Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces—are water signs. In spellwork, a witch's magick chalice and cauldron are considered water tools. A still pond serves as the perfect scrying device—reputedly, the noted sixteenth-century seer Nostradamus sat for hours gazing into a bowl of water to divine the future.

When we think of water magick, we often think of cleansing tools and crystals, taking ritual baths, and formulating potions or elixirs. In *Water Witchcraft*, Annwyn Avalon offers a wealth of information about these practices; however, she also shares ways to use water magickally that you may never have considered before, such as freezing it to bind an enemy, making poppets of snow, and melting ice to release stuck energy. She also explains how to tap the properties of dew, fog, mist, hail, rain, and sleet—even the steam from your morning shower. Each type of water has its own, unique qualities and applications in witchcraft. For example, water collected during a thunderstorm is imbued with dynamic energy that can fuel aggressive spells. Water from a peaceful lake can ease stress and promote harmony.

The entities who guard and occupy earth's waterways also possess a wide range of characteristics and powers. Some are benevolent, others mischievous or

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downright dangerous. Annwyn (whose name refers to the Otherworld in Welsh mythology) describes these mysterious beings, such as the seductive Lake Ladies and the dark magick of marsh witches, and explains how to deal with them, should you encounter them in the physical or spirit realm.

Water Witchcraft is also a cornucopia of sea-based legends and lore from Ireland and the British Isles, and includes magick spells that draw upon aquatic ingredients. Early mariners believed fervently in water charms and employed them widely; however, modern-day witches can use gifts from the sea in their spell work, too. Annwyn shares her abundant knowledge of natural water tools: shells, sea glass, smooth river stones and stones with holes formed naturally by running water, sea salt, fossils, and quartz crystals that contain water bubbles (known as enhydro). Water plants—lotus flowers, seaweed, algae, and kelp—possess magickal properties as well.

In this treasure trove of water witchery, you'll find exercises, blessings, charms, incantations, spells, and rituals. I especially liked her spell to bind companies that harm our oceans. She recommends placing "their logo inside a clam or oyster shell. Wrap the shell with bindweed, tangled seaweed, or a fisherman's net. On the waning moon, take it to a place where three rivers meet and bury it near where they intersect, calling upon the local spirits to aid you. You can also take the shell to a

crossroads, preferably by a graveyard, and leave it in the center. In either case, walk away and don't look back."

Annwyn encourages you to "develop a personal relationship with water." Visit watery places—lakes, streams, oceans, marshes—and experience the special energies that exist there. Communicate with the genius loci or spirit guardians of these places. Learn about the plants and creatures that live there.

At this crucial time, when we're experiencing massive pollution of the world's waters, and when human-induced climate change threatens our seacoasts, marine life, and future generations, Annwyn's call to honor the spirits of the waters rings loud and true. Immersing yourself in this intriguing and informative book will give you a greater appreciation for the life-giving water from which we originated and on which we depend for our continued existence. *Water Witchery* will also help you attune yourself to the archetypal feminine force operating on our planet and in the universe. And it will empower you to work with this wondrous creative energy to generate healing, abundance, and happiness for yourself and others.

Blessed be,

Skye Alexander, author of *Mermaids: The Myths, Legends, & Lore* and *The Modern Guide to Witchcraft*

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Introduction



Water flows through our bodies and across the earth; we depend on it for life. Our bodies consist of 70 to 80 percent water and we need it to survive. Three days without water and we cannot live. Our bodies feel rundown when we are dehydrated. And it's not only our flesh and bones that require water—our souls seek it as well. Many of us are inexplicably drawn to the ocean. Body and soul, we long to be in the water.

As far back as we can remember, humans have been intimately connected with water, both physically and spiritually. We associate it with deities, spirits, souls, and creatures of other realms who find their homes in or near bodies of water that are often the setting for supernatural occurrences. We work with water in a sacred manner for our lives, for our children's lives, and for the lives of the deities and spirits we find there. Throughout history, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of named water deities and spirits—and just as many obscure and unnamed ones—have appeared in myth and legend, and folklore is full of



tales of magic wells, talking wells, water nymphs, great sea gods, and more.

Witches have long been associated with these water spirits and their supernatural powers—take, for instance, folk practitioners who dowsed for water using a forked branch. But there are many other types of water magic and water witchcraft. Being a water person myself, I set out to explore water magic as a craft, and discovered a host of magical practices based around the sea, wells, springs, rivers, and other bodies of water. My goal in this book is to share with you some of what I found. I hope to provide you with the history, folklore, and mythology of water, as well as some spells and tools that can help modern witches and magical practitioners pursue a water-based practice. Although these traditions and practices appear worldwide, this book will focus mainly on those rooted in Celtic and Brythonic lore. I hope the information given here will enrich your life and your overall magical praxis, and encourage you to work through both the mundane and astral realms to heal, protect, and nourish our precious water sources.

In this book, we will explore the folklore and mythology of the Celts and those that influenced them. We will discover how they worshipped the water, the ways in which they honored it, and the relationships they had with the spirits and supernatural forces dwelling within it. Since this is a witchcraft book, we will examine and consider these stories from the perspective of those who

see truth in the supernatural. Whether you view them as accurate accounts passed down through the ages, as folktales exaggerated to provide insight into unknown phenomenon or cultural values, or even as moral lessons is up to you. Regardless of how you approach them, these stories provide access to the Otherworld and clues about how to interact with it. As such, they can act as the foundation for a modern practice for all watery-natured witches.

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A modern water witch is simply one who works witchcraft with water and who is deeply connected to water and the spirits that dwell within it. By water, I do not mean just the ocean or large lakes, but also rain, snow, marshes, rivers, streams, and ponds, as well as many other forms of natural water that call to us.

Water witchcraft is very similar to sea magic and sea witchcraft. In fact, water witches often blend sea magic with their craft, focusing on tides and moon cycles, gathering their tools from the shoreline, and integrating shells, driftwood, and sea plants into their workings. But sea witches typically stick to the seashore, whereas water witches can be found just about anywhere—near lakes and rivers, around holy wells, beside streams and ponds. And although there is no universal “water magic tradition,” most sea witches and water witches tend work in a similar manner, their practices only varying based

on their chosen body of water, their training, and their path preference. What binds them together is water in its many forms.

Simply put, water magic is a craft based around bodies of water that uses water plants and other natural objects found near the water, and works primarily with spirits and deities that are associated with water. This craft is rooted in ancient water lore that developed in the traditions of country folk and was preserved in both ancient Pagan and Christian practices that centered around the British Isles, Brittany, and other Celtic regions. While not every story presented here is drawn from the Celtic tradition, these stories are gathered from lands where the ancient Celts exerted a strong influence and where their descendants preserved their traditions.

The Celts believed that water was sacred; it represented a liminal place, a portal to the Otherworld, Annwn, Avalon, and the ancestral realms. When the Romans occupied Britain, their culture mingled with and strongly influenced many of the Celtic practices. In many cases, the Romans simply took over ancient sacred sites, just as the Christians later did. This helped to preserve these practices, albeit slightly modified to fit into a Roman or Christian frame. In many cases, when Christianity began to take root in Britain, the new faith mingled with Celtic Pagan traditions, again preserving remnants of the water cult that had existed there from time immemorial, simply changing the names of many local rivers, springs,

and sacred wells to the names of saints. This happened again in the many cases of faery women who later came to be known as witches. It is important to note, however, that the numerous stories of these faery women, many of whom were water fae, always depicted them as holy and benevolent beings. In fact, in some stories, they are even likened to God and the Holy Virgin. This was not always the case, however, with many of the finfolk.

When the Christians arrived and found that almost every body of water in Britain and other parts of Europe was named after a female water spirit, they simply renamed the sites. This is why there are so many wells named for Saint Mary or Saint Anne, or many other female saints whose names were co-opted to promote the new religion but still honor the *genius loci*, the protective spirit of the place. A good example of this is found in Sequana, goddess of the Seine, whose shrine sat at the head of the river that runs through Paris. The local spring that feeds the river was later renamed after a male saint, Saint Sequanus. But despite these attempts to erase the Celtic water cult from history, much of it is preserved in the folktales, stories, and lore passed on from generation to generation, in some cases through the lineage of faery women, whom many later figures can claim as ancestors.

Magic in the Molecules

Japanese entrepreneur, photographer, and author Dr. Masaru Emoto (1943–2014) wrote several books on the

structure of water molecules and how they are changed and affected by location, the human mind, and negative and positive energy. To demonstrate that vibrations and various types of energy could affect it, he subjected water to different types of music and recorded how the structure of the water molecules changed when exposed to classical music and then to rock and roll. He also compared the crystalline structure of water from many different locations, comparing and contrasting water from places like holy wells and sacred sites with water from places that were polluted by pesticides and other substances and considered unsanitary.

Using a very powerful microscope in a very cold room, along with high-speed photography, Emoto photographed newly formed crystals of frozen water samples drawn from different locations and subjected to different sound waves, music, and words. He found that the crystals of water drawn from one area were often vastly different from the crystals of water drawn from another. He also found that classical music produced beautiful crystals, while heavy rock and metal music produced crystals with scrambled circular patterns. Water taken from polluted areas would either not crystallize at all, or crystallize into distorted, misshapen forms.

Next, he began experimenting with language, using words like "love," "hate," "thank you," and "you fool" and photographing the results. He found significant differences in the water crystals produced. This led him to

form the hypothesis that molecules of water are affected by our thoughts, words, and feelings. He also studied the effects of prayer, ritual, and blessings, and found that they too changed the character of the water. Although his theory is controversial and has been attacked by many skeptics, Emoto has documented his work with hundreds of photographs and written several books on the subject, including *The Hidden Messages in Water*, which was a New York Times bestseller.

In my opinion, Emoto's work is ground-breaking and validates our craft. When we combine his visual evidence that vibrations, words, thoughts, and locations can vary the molecular structure of water with the reverence that ancient cultures had for water, water deities, and holy wells, we have evidence based in both history and science that water magic and enchantment work. Moreover, this proof comes from someone who is not a magical practitioner. Did Emoto simply find, through scientific methods, what our ancient ancestors already knew?

We know from Emoto's work that even the slightest word can create a change in a water molecular's structure. And we know that how that word is spoken influences the outcome of that change. Later in the book, we will dive into specific modern water-magic methods that draw directly on Emoto's insights, like creating gemstone elixirs and flower essences by infusing water with the energy and vibrations of flowers, plants, or stones to enhance its magical properties. What is important to note here is

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that, when we put these concepts about water's sensitivity to thoughts and feelings together with Aleister Crowley's definition of magic as causing changes to occur in conformity with the will, *we can actually see the energetic and vibrational changes that we call "magic" in the changing of the water crystals*. This is very important to understand. In fact, it is the theory on which this entire book is based.

Chapter 1



The Magic of Water

Two of the most famous magicians in the world—Aleister Crowley and Dion Fortune—have described magic as using the will to effect change. In water magic, we exert our will and intent through our physical and energetic bodies to perform rituals and spells that can change the properties of water. This is why water magic can be so powerful. Moreover, if we accept that words and intent influence the structure of water molecules, and we define magic as change according to will, and we consider will and intent to be virtually synonymous, we can state a clear and simple formula for water magic:

Intent + water + delivery method = magical change

In a way, we can even see the magic take place!

When we look at water magic as a practice, working with either small quantities (rain, ponds, or wells) or large quantities (rivers, lakes, or oceans), this formula

makes it very clear that chanting, spells, circumambulation, incantations, sigils, and many other magical tools can be incorporated into it with incredibly powerful results. This is evident from the ancient beliefs of the Celts and Romans, right up to the modern science of Dr. Emoto. With some practice, we can work the perfect combination to influence and direct specific change.

Almost every sea or water witch I have met is a bit of a magpie who collects shells, wood, glass, and other items from the water to create shrines or altars. I find that water witches are attracted to bottles, bowls, and other vessels. We are often found beach-combing or searching the banks of rivers and lakes. Water witches are often good at water scrying and divination with shells or bones found along the shoreline. Many love to swim, boat, or surf, and we are often found covered in flower petals and salts floating in the bath.

The astrological charts of witches with a strong penchant for water witchcraft often indicate this— not only their sun signs, but also their ascendants and moons, may be in the water signs of Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces. Many are drawn to some sort of mythological water spirits or creatures like mermaids, selkies, and Lake Ladies.

Outside, water witches work with sea water, brackish waters, lakes, rivers, swamps, snow, hail, rain, ponds, canals, seasonal creeks, sacred wells, and other places where water resides. Inside, they work with teas, sacred baths, healing waters, hydrosols, distilled waters, and

water-based sprays. The following chapters go into these techniques in more detail and give examples and exercises for you to practice. Really, there is no limit to water magic!

WATER BY ANY OTHER NAME

Water exists in three states: liquid, solid, and gas. Water magic works with all three and all three, for our purposes, are considered to be water. In my practice, I use the Celtic *triskele*, or three-armed spiral, each arm of which represents one of the three states of water (see Figure 1). In this book, we will work primarily with water in its liquid state, but here are a few fun ways to work with water in its other two states:



Figure 1. The Celtic triskele, or three-armed spiral.

- Freeze water to stop an enemy, or to freeze something in place through the act of binding. Binding is the magical act of stopping or containing energy or intent. Frozen water in the form of ice or snow is often used in binding rites to prevent an action or to

keep someone from performing an action you want to stop.

- Defrost water to get stuck energy flowing again, to thaw a frozen heart, or in spells involving new beginnings. Through sympathetic magic, the act of thawing brings the perfect energy to spell work that unbinds, gets things moving forward, or gets something started. It holds energy similar to that of the Chariot card in tarot. Place a taglock—an item that represents a person like a photo, hair, nail clippings, something indicating their date of birth, or even clothing items—for the targeted person or action in a bowl of snow or ice and allow it to melt while chanting or charging the item. Once melted, you can empty the melted snow or ice into running water to speed up the spell.
- Etch protection sigils or other magical symbols and brief incantations on frosted or frozen windows. Make snow poppets to use in healing and cursing; use freshly fallen snow to make wonderful wintry cleansing water.
- Draw beauty symbols or sigils of cleansing on the bathroom mirror using the steam from a shower. Use fog and mist in visualizations or in the physical world to access the Otherworld or to clear the mind of fog.

The energy of rain and storms is particularly powerful. Witches, and especially sea witches, have long been associated with storm energy and with controlling the weather. There is nothing like sitting on the banks of a large body of water watching a terrible and powerful storm roll in. Many water witches enjoy this type of weather, and we pull energy from it, sending out spells and letting the roaring winds and waters weave the magic. I collect water everywhere I go, including water from storms. I label and date the containers, including information on the type of storm, its location, and how I plan to use the water. Summer sun showers possess beautiful warm energy, and sun shower water can encourage growth, health, and creativity. On the other hand, hail and lightning storms pack a very powerful punch that can be useful in magical workings that need an extra push. Storm water can also be used to curse and is useful for protection.

All types of water were used to predict fortune, cast spells, break enchantments, and heal. Meeting a woman with a full water jug was believed to bring good fortune, while meeting one with an empty jug foretold troubles ahead. In some areas, taking an article of clothing from a witch who had cast against you, tying it to a rock, and throwing it in a lake before moonrise protected you from the witch's magic. In other areas, just throwing a cursed object into a lake at midnight was enough to break the enchantment. In Orkney, water used to wash a sick

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person was thrown at a door or gateway to transfer the sickness to the first person who came through it. Here are some other types of water that have magical properties, along with some of their uses:

- *Black water*: a modern invention that is sold in many stores. It is infused with trace "fulvic" minerals that turn it black and make it very alkaline. It can be used during the dark half of the year's Sabbats and for shadow meditations, shadow work, shadow magic, or anything else that is nocturnal. Some wells produce water that is black or turns items touched by it black, but this water is not safe to ingest, while black water purchased from a store is. St. Joseph's Well, located in the crypt of the Lady Chapel of Glastonbury Abbey, is widely considered to have black water. A few others are mentioned in later chapters.
- *Brackish water*: occurs where fresh-water rivers meet salt water. This mix of fresh and salt water can be substituted for fresh or salt water, and carries its own calming but darker energy. The shorelines are liminal places full of healing and death, balance and bane, with yarrow growing among the poison hemlock. Use this water in magic to merge with or to enter the "betwixt and between."
- *Dew*: collected at dawn on May 1st (Beltane) it brings power to beauty rituals and spells.

- *Fog and mist*: useful especially to access the Otherworld. Mist can be used as a portal, especially during the liminal hours of dusk and dawn. Meditating, walking, or sitting in a light trance state while a fog or mist rolls in creates an environment that calms the mind and allows you to connect with or even enter the Otherworld.
- *Hail or sleet*: collected during or after a storm, it comes from the sky in a furious frozen state. Keep it frozen or melt it and store it in a bottle. It is generally used for cursing and can make a great base for War Water, an aggressive formula containing water and rust that is used for physical and psychic protection, spiritual cleansing, and to place or reverse a curse.
- *Marsh, bog, swamp, and canal water*: dark dirty water that is imbued with decaying plant matter and has become stagnant. These waters can be used for darker magic, ancestral work, and to hide, cover, or mask. Swamp water is full of mystery and poison. Toads, snakes, and spiders lurk within the grooves of hollowed trees and mingle with the reeds peeking above the surface of these waters. Swamp waters can be found all over the world, and can be used for any type of magic.
- *Mud*: water and earth mixed together. It is mysterious and messy. You can use it as an earth element and to bury old worn-out cycles, or for grounding.

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- *Sea water*: has unlimited uses. It can be used for work with spirits and water deities; with a prayer or blessing, it can be used as holy water, as it is already salty. It has many useful healing properties and can be used for healing, protection, charming, and cleansing. It is also useful in banishing rituals.
- *Fountains and pools*: Water pumped through homes, heaters, and fountains is sometimes chlorinated. When I first started to encounter water spirits, I looked to the old and traditional ways. As my practice expanded, however, I found that these waters also had both personality and spirit and could be used in my personal work. If you live near or around these types of manmade waters, you can still develop a relationship with them and use them for specific and personal purposes.
- *Pond and lake water*: typically calm and serene and often resembles a mirror. Use lake water to discover mysteries. Lakes are considered portals and many creatures dwell in and under them. These waters are good for relaxation or revitalizing spells. If you are in an argument with someone, use lake water to "calm" the situation. Because of its still surface, lake and pond water is also useful in scrying—divining or foretelling the future by gazing. Lakes are like mirrors, and so support self-reflection. They can

also be used in watery mirror work and vision journeys as a portal to the watery realms.

- *Rain water*: ideal medium for water magic. I work with three major types of rain: water from sun showers, "dreary water," and water from thunderstorms. Sun-shower water can be used for healing, nourishment, and solar magic. It is a great base for Florida Water—a perfumed water made with various herbs and flowers. What I call "dreary water" occurs when a light rainfall continues for days, typically accompanied by gray skies and cool temperatures. Collected over several days, this water is great for shadow work, resting, rejuvenation, invisibility, and protection. Thunderstorm water is fierce. It can be used in aggressive magic, cursing, and in any spell that needs a really big power-packed punch! It's particularly effective if you can safely collect and work with water from a large storm like a hurricane, but always remember to make safety your priority.
- *River water*: fast-moving water that can be used in conjunction with or in place of the Chariot card in the tarot to speed things up. If you need something to move along quickly, find a river and work with its water. It is also useful for aggressively cleansing your energetic body of impurities and negativities. Sit in a river with the directional flow hitting your back to enhance a purging or cleansing visualization.

(I often use the phrase "Send it down the river!") Launch little boats made of twigs and leaves and send them down the river with the intent of getting rid of something or someone. Rivers, canals, and streams can be used for spells involving moving forward, change, getting unstuck, and sending things away. The Celts believed that evil spirits could not cross running water, so rivers are also useful for escaping an astral enemy. Remember, however, that bodies of water that flow freely will have energy different from that of stagnant canal systems.

- *Snow or ice:* can be kept frozen or placed in a jar or bottle and allowed to melt. It is great for winter water magic. Like all ice magic, it can "freeze" your enemies in place. Likewise, the act of defrosting will help you get "unstuck" and move to a more flexible place. It can also be used to defrost an enemy's icy heart. Draw sigils in snow for temporary binding or to help unbind.
- *Spring and well water:* fresh waters that literally "spring" up from below the ground. These waters are usually crystal clear and are often associated with mystery, mythology, and folklore. They can be used in healing magic and to connect with water fae. They were also used to remove curses and enchantments, and to place curses—often for a fee.

- *Waterfalls*: some of the most beautiful waters. Some flow all year, while others are seasonal. This water is useful in cleansing and purification, and in rites of birth and beauty.

This list shows how water, as an element, can be worked with in all its various physical stages and states. But it can also be worked with as an *entity*—as a spirit or otherworldly being. An example of this can be found in the old Irish tale of the Horned Woman, which was first recorded in the late 19th century, although its origins are believed to be much older. This tale tells of a woman who is tricked into letting twelve horned witches into her home. The first witch to appear has one horn, the second has two, and the pattern continues up to the twelfth witch, who, of course, has twelve. The witches begin to put enchantments on the woman, her home, and her family.

When the woman becomes distraught by her lack of power over the enchantments in her own home, she goes to the well, which speaks to her, helpfully revealing its knowledge of magic and counter-cursing. When the horned witches direct the woman to collect water from the well using a sieve, the well tells her how to patch the sieve and then teaches her how to defeat the witches' enchantments. The story is important, because it portrays the well as an entity and makes it clear that the water (or the spirit within it) is speaking directly to the

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woman. Many modern water witches tell me that they speak to water or that water has spoken to them.

WATER ALTARS AND SHRINES

No matter what their chosen path, most witches pursue their magic in a sacred working space like an altar or a shrine. An altar is a sacred surface on which to create and work magic, as well as a place to commune with the spirit(s) it is dedicated to. Altars can also provide a setting for divination. Shrines are structures erected in honor of a divine spirit that serve as a focus of devotion, prayer, energy, and meditation. Shrines are gifts to the spirits they honor. They may be simple, or adorned with beautiful offerings and objects of significance. Shrines tend to be permanent; altars can be built and taken down as needed.

Creating a water altar or a water shrine is a magical act in itself, an act of devotion that establishes a sacred space in which you can honor or work with water and its spirits. A great deal of magic, energy, and intent goes into creating shrines and altars. In fact, the act is akin to a form of moving meditation and I am always very grounded after I create one. Be sure to keep your altars and shrines clean. Freshen up the offerings they hold and rearrange them periodically so that their energy does not become stagnant. There really are no rules for creating



shrines and altars, but here is a general overview of how to set them up and how to use them.

Exercise: Creating a Water Altar

Begin by selecting a space that is safe and that will go untouched by tiny hands or curious guests. If at all possible, set up your altar facing west, as that is the direction traditionally believed to align with the water element. If this isn't possible, orient your altar toward the closest body of water or the one that you work with regularly, so that you consistently align yourself with it.

Once your table or other surface is set up, cleanse and consecrate the space in the spirit of water and dedicate it to any water deity or spirit with whom you currently work or wish to work. If there is no particular spirit you want to honor, or your practice tends toward the agnostic or atheistic, consider dedicating the altar to a particular body of water or perhaps just to water in general. If you are not currently working with a particular spirit, but you would like to connect with one, create the altar as directed, but leave the dedication open until your spirit's identity has been discovered or established.

Next, cleanse the altar space, both physically and spiritually. Of course, you can use any method you like. But to get you started, I have included some very basic ways to create holy water below. Choose one and work with it in this exercise.





Gather your holy water and consecrate your sacred space by sprinkling the altar with it, saying:

With my breath,
With my heart,
And with my will,
I consecrate this space.

Once the space for your altar has been cleansed and consecrated, you can begin to set it up. You'll find a list of items you may want to add to your space later in this chapter. Once the items have all been cleansed, dedicate the altar to water, or to a water spirit or deity.

HOLY AND SACRED WATER

Using holy water to bless or cleanse objects, yourself, or others is a great alternative to smudging. Though I love to smudge, smudging uses smoke and fire to cleanse and purify, and that is not always safe or convenient. As water witches, we can use water in the same manner without those disadvantages.

There are numerous sources from which you can collect sacred water, like holy wells or sacred rivers or springs. This water is generally already magical, but you can add an additional charge to it with your intent or an incantation. Please note, however, that not all water from sacred sources is safe to drink. Be sure to do your research and find out if the water can be ingested.





There are also many ways to create your own sacred water. Here are just a few of them:

- *Charm water*: Take nine white quartz stones from a running river, disturbing the water as little as possible. Then retrieve water from the stream, collecting it in the same direction as the flow. Heat the quartz stones until they are red, then drop them into the water. You can bottle this water and use it in curative spells or in magic. To align with the old folk method, I recommend that it be used nine times or nine days in a row.
- *Moon water*: Here I tell you how to make Full Moon water, but you can also make New Moon, Dark Moon, and quarter moon water in the same way, depending on the cycle of the moon. During the Full Moon, cleanse your sacred vessel and place your selected water in it. If you have water from a sacred source or a local drinkable source, use this; if not, work with spring water. Let the vessel filled with water sit under the Full Moon. Make sure the moonlight shines on it for a good portion of the night. You can also leave the water out for three nights and add quartz to enhance it. You can cover the vessel with a lid or plastic wrap so that the water isn't contaminated with rain water or bits of nature, or you may decide that these are suitable additions and work with them as well. When you are satisfied

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that your water has been sufficiently charged, bring the bowl back to your altar or sacred space and whisper prayers or blessings over it. Ask your spirits, deity, or guides to bless the water, then bottle it and save it for the future.

- *Hagstone water*: Hagstones, also known as holed stones or bored stones, are stones that contain a natural hole formed by running water. They were thought to resemble the vaginal opening and birth canal, and were used in sympathetic magic during childbirth. They have been used in this manner since at least the 1500's and, most likely, long before that. Sometimes these stones are called cramp stones, presumably from their use to ease menstrual cramps and labor pains. Steep the stone in water for several hours, then use the water to wash the afflicted body part. Water made with a hagstone can be used for charm water, in healing, and as holy water.
- *Floral water*: Sacred water can be created with various flowers and plants by combining them with water in various ways (see chapter 9). Create a blend of flowers or herbs and steep them in your selected water to create an infusion. Then use the infusion in your magic.
- *Gemstone elixirs*: Combine gemstones and water to create sacred, magical elixirs. There are two different ways to make these elixirs—the direct and the

indirect methods (see chapter 9). Remember that not all gemstone elixirs are safe to ingest and some stones cannot be placed in water, as they will be damaged.

- *Salt water*: Use salt to transform ordinary water into holy water by placing it in a sacred vessel and dropping three pinches of salt into it. Place your wand, athame, or other energy-directing device into the water with its point facing into the vessel. Twirl the water three times and say:

Three pinches of salt
Twirled thrice about
I hereby cast all bane out!

- You can use any of the many varieties and forms of salt to create holy water. Salt is also used on altars to represent the earth element. Himalayan pink salt is often used in healing; Dead Sea salt is prized for its curative properties; black salt is used for protection, exorcism, and shadow work; sea salt can help to align you with ocean energies. Traditional Ceremonial Wicca favors salt circles and sigils, and it is widely believed that a salt circle forms a barrier of protection. Some believe that salt repels spirits and so tend not to use it in rituals except when actively banishing spirits. In Scotland, it is often used to protect from witchcraft, while in Ireland, it is used to cure faery sickness. In Japan, people carry

small bundles of salt for protection. Be sure to add a prayer or blessing when creating your salt water!


- *Silvered water*: Silvered water is created by dropping a silver coin or other silver object into water that has been obtained from a liminal place. Place your silver object into a sacred vessel and pour your selected water over it, filling up the bowl. Bless the water with a prayer or incantation—folk custom recommends that you repeat the words nine times. You can call on the spirit of a sacred well or on an ancient water maiden using words like this:

Maiden of the sacred well,
Bless this water,
Bless the well.
In your sacred spiral swell,
Bless this water,
Bless the well.

- Label your water and store it in a mason jar with a tight lid. In Scotland, silvered water was often used by faery doctors to cure the curse of the evil eye. There are also many accounts of it being used to heal and cure, and in various other forms of magic


TOOLS FOR WATER WITCHES

A water witch uses many tools. These vary from witch to witch and practice to practice. What I give below is not




a complete list; as you progress through this book and along your path, you will discover new tools—both conventional and unconventional. The ocean is a wonderful place to find tools like shells, bones, sea glass, and other strange objects that have been washed up by the tide.

The sacred vessel is perhaps the most important tool for water witches. I have several different ones that I use for different purposes—the chalice that customarily sits on my altar, as well as a cauldron. But my most sacred vessel is a beautiful blue bowl that was consecrated with the waters of Glastonbury's Chalice Well. This treasured bowl resonates with Glastonbury's energy and folklore.




Years ago, when I first wanted to start working with a sacred vessel, I was given the vision of a sacred blue bowl in a meditation, so I set out to find one. At about that same time, I learned of the Glastonbury Blue Bowl and the history that surrounds its mysterious connection to the Holy Grail. I use my sacred blue bowl to make floral waters, gemstone elixirs, and moon waters. Chalices can also be used in this manner, as can glass or crystal bowls. Black bowls are often useful for scrying.





There are many tools that water witches use in their magic besides sacred vessels and holy water, however. Shells, bones, and driftwood washed up along the shore, hagstones found along a river bank, even a magical mirror that can function like the clear reflective surface of a calm body of water can all be added to a water altar or a sacred space. And these and other objects can be blended with water to make healing elixirs and potions.

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Other tools that are useful to water witches include a mortar and pestle, wands, and ritual blades. Some use ritual musical devices like bullroarers to cast a circle (but some don't cast a circle at all!). Indeed, it is almost impossible to cover all the diverse tools that water witches use. Below, I give you a list of just the most basic tools. You can purchase most of these items new or make them yourself; you can gather some of them from nature; you can even get some of them at an antique store or second-hand shop. Just remember to cleanse all second-hand items thoroughly to remove residual energies that may interfere with your magic.

- *Bathtubs*: A modern water witch's magic circle is frequently the bathtub, which can become a sacred place for spiritual cleansing.
 - *Bones*: Bones of all types are often found in the "tween" places on the banks of rivers and the shores of sounds, lakes, or oceans—washed up on the sand or tucked away in the weeds. They can be powerful spirit allies, and can be used in a variety of magic and divination.
 - *Bowls*: Bowls can hold anything from water for scrying to offerings, and even sacred water for water workings. My sacred bowls are the tools I use most frequently.
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- *Cauldrons*: These are often used to represent the Goddess, but can also be used in place of a chalice. Be warned, however: Do not use cast-iron cauldrons for water-fae magic! This is a great way to anger the water fae, and water's nature is often to retaliate.
- *Chalices*: These can be used to represent the Goddess or the female form, as well as for holding wine for offerings and libations. Shells can also serve as chalices.
- *Combs*: Magical combs are associated with mermaids, but can also be used to comb your hair and entwine wishes, spells, and magic into braids or dreadlocks.
- *Crab claws*: These are great tools to use in binding magic, or when something needs a little pinch. I also like to use them when I'm working rituals of solitude. They can be found washed up on the beach.
- *Jars, bottles, and vials*: These can be used to store gemstone elixirs. They can also be enchanted and turned into magical bottles that hold potions or used to gather water from a sacred source.
- *Mirrors*: These are closely associated with mermaids and magic, and also function well as portals and scrying devices.

- *Pearls*: Pearls are incredibly powerful, very beautiful, and highly prized. They come in many colors and shapes, and can be used in ways similar to crystals in magic.
- *Plants*: Virtually all witches work with herbs, flowers, and plants. Flowers growing on the bank of a river or in a sand dune are particularly effective. Roots that have washed up on shore can be incredibly powerful talismans. Charms can also be crafted from seaweed—for example, bladderwrack is a very powerful plant that is used by many witches, not just sea witches.
- *Sea glass*: These frosted bits of glass are often found on the sea shore; if you are lucky, you may find river glass as well. These are best used for color associations—to remind you of the places where you found them, or to recall what your intuition is telling you.
- *Sea glass balls*: These glass fisher floats, which are sometimes quite old, are usually hand-blown glass balls that can be found washed up on shore. Today, you can find them for purchase in stores, but I suggest bringing store-bought balls to the sea and consecrating them with ocean water. These are sometimes also called witches' balls, and are often hung in windows and around the home to trap negative energies. They can be used as talismans to protect against the evil eye, especially if they are blue.

- *Sharks teeth*: These are amazingly powerful talismans that can be used in protection and magic that needs a bit more aggression. Fossil shark or megalodon teeth are believed to radiate a more ancient power.
- *Shells*: Shells of all kinds have a wide range of magical uses.
- *Stones and fossils*: River rocks or other stones can be used in magic as an earth element. Crystals have many uses and, in folk magic, hagstones were highly prized. You can find these in river beds and at the sea shore. In addition, ammonite, belemnite, and other fossils that are associated with water or found on the shore are prized possessions of water witches.
- *Wands*: Driftwood or trees from the banks of rivers and streams are the ideal material for making a water witch's wand. These can be left plain or be lightly sanded, or they can be decorated with runes or sigils. The wand is a witch's tool for directing energy. Some sea witches choose to use a marlin spike to align with both the athame and nautical energies.

Exercise: Water Glyph Meditation

Now that you have a general understanding of water magic and some of its basic tools and practices, it is time to begin attuning your energy with that of water. Start



by gathering drinkable water in a sacred vessel. Place this vessel in your lap or on your working space. Ground yourself (see chapter 2) and sit in front of your newly created and consecrated altar. Read through this visualization a few times to become familiar with it. Then close your eyes and complete the visualization.

Sit facing your altar, then take your hands and make the alchemical glyph for water. You can do this by placing your thumbs together and touching at the tip. Place your index fingers together, touching at their tips and pointing down, then curl your pinkie, middle, and ring fingers together into a fist. This will create a downward-facing triangle that, throughout the Western Mystery Tradition, is used as the alchemical symbol for water.

Once your hands are in position, close your eyes and begin to visualize water—your favorite body of water, rain, or a bath. Let your mind wander for a while and let the spirits guide you across different bodies of water—lakes, oceans, rivers, or streams.

Once you feel as if you have a strong image and feeling of the water, hold that vision in your mind. Visualize the water crashing over you and cleansing you. Visualize your heart center being cleansed of heavy burdens. Visualize the water washing over your body, covering all of you.

When you are done, let the water begin to swirl in front of you in your mind's eye. Let it create a floating, shining ball of water and let this shining ball start to





form a downward-facing triangle—like the glyph you are making with your fingers. Make sure that the point is at the bottom. See this glyph in watery blue.

Holding this triangle in your mind, begin to connect with the water energy. Let the triskele symbol—the three-armed spiral (see Figure 1)—begin to form in the center of your triangle, each spiral representing water in one of its forms—liquid, gas, or solid. Let the triangle pulse and the triskele swirl in your mind's eye. Talk to the water; feel the water and try to feel what it is communicating to you. When you are finished, bring your focus back to the triangle. Ask if there is anything that water would like to teach you. Then wait and listen.

When you are finished, see the water glyph and triskele move toward the bowl of water in front of you. Let the watery glyph begin to pulsate on the surface of the water; let the triskele swirl. Let the glyph merge with the water in the vessel. It becomes small and then dissolves into it. When you are satisfied, slowly open your eyes, lift the bowl to your lips, and sip in the water that is now charged with the alchemical glyph. As you do this, allow your spirit to merge with the spirit of water and become one with it.

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