Archer Wickerman at Beltain Fire Festival 2026

Wednesday 1 April, 2026

EMBARGOED: Not for broadcast or publication until 4.00pm on Saturday 2 May 2026

Butser Ancient Farm's bestselling Beltain festival returns to the slopes of the South Downs on 2 May 2026 - with a Bronze Age twist!

The 30ft wickerman, which is set alight at nightfall, will be inspired by the Amesbury Archer. The grave of this early Bronze Age man was discovered in 2002, just three miles from Stonehenge. Despite his name, he was not found with a bow and arrow - but archaeologists believe he was an archer due to the two sandstone wristguards found in his grave, which would have protected his wrists from the bow string.

The wickerman is once again being designed by environmental artists Mark and Rebecca Ford, known as Two Circles Design. These innovative Sussex natives use found and grown natural materials to build their site-specific, ephemeral works of art, inspired by the archaeology, geography and ancient traditions of the area.

Mark says: 'We embrace the challenge of making the wickerman, particularly without the use of scaffolding and only from natural coloured willow and hazel. It is fun to push the boundaries in scale, and the spectacle is worth it. Each year we make the wicker man, we have experimented with how to control the burn in designing the way it's constructed, and where the very dry straw is specifically placed within it. It's good to see the figure fully on fire and silhouetted by flames. Everything has its moment and the event is worth it to see how many people are there. It then exists in a virtual way, as a memory or in pictures and film.'

For a flavour of the Beltain festival, watch the 2025 highlight video on our website, which includes last year's sculpture by Two Circles Design.

To secure a **press pass** for Beltain festival, please email tiffany@butserancientfarm.co.uk

Photo Opportunities:

- The completed wickerman before and during the burn. One of the wickerman legs is hollow with a 'wishbone' doorway, the perfect photo opportunity to festival goers to stand inside the wickerman itself.
- A selection of musicians, entertainers, Morris Dancers and traders, celebrating all aspects of folk music, dance and craft.

About the Farm:

Butser Ancient Farm is a unique experimental archaeology site nestled into the rolling countryside of the South Downs National Park. For over 50 years it has pioneered a hands-on, practical approach to understanding life in the ancient past through experimentation and reconstruction.

Beltain (also spelled Beltane or Bealtaine) is an ancient Iron Age precursor to May Day celebrations, celebrated by Celtic peoples in Ireland and the UK. We don't know exactly how people celebrated in the past, so this festival at Butser isn't a historical recreation. Instead, it's an opportunity to carry on some part of this ancient tradition and celebrate the beginning of summer with a spectacular festival of activities, performances - and fire!

Butser welcomes thousands of visitors and education groups to the farm each year to explore its timeline of homes from the Stone Age, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and Saxon periods, as well as conserving crops from pre-history and meeting rare-breed animals such as Manx Loaghtan sheep and English goats.

More about the farm can be found at www.butserancientfarm.co.uk.

The farm also has a growing library of high-quality, documentary-style videos on their YouTube channel.

Media:












Company Contact:

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Butser Ancient Farm

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