

# What are 'Elements'??

Elements are symbolic rituals during a wedding ceremony. Many of them are Celtic in origin and older forms of Christianity in Britain. Some are Pagan in origin, which precedes Christianity.

Today, some think elements are for 'hippies' but they're not. They're historical, culturally. There's no reason why you can't incorporate elements in your wedding ceremony. In fact, they're really visual, meaningful and they focus on unity between couples, and you can expand that to involve your loved ones too. I love them!

The elements below have advice on what they are; where they go in a ceremony and a review of how you can alter them to suit you. I also show the benefits to the experience of the ceremony they give and what you need to consider for health and safety or cost.



# Ceremonial Elements

*I'm all smiley and warm inside just writing this ...* 

The Elements really enhance the occasion and as your Celebrant, I can add emotion, symbolism and other people to your ceremony. I highly recommend having them and will present and demonstrate them at our 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting. They're steeped in old traditions and I'm pleased to say they're making a big comeback.



***Elements*** can be very personal to you as a couple or a family.

The only thing stopping us would be any legalities like land ownership or a criminal act and our imagination (but I have a lot of that so we can come up with something unique to you).

Below are suggestions of elements at different parts of your ceremony, so you might choose to spread them out, but I can personalise every one of them and you can certainly discuss your own ideas outside of these options. (See my price list on the last page for what you can get.)



# Wishing Jar / Box

The wishing jar or box occurs **BEFORE** your guests take their seat for the ceremony. A table will be set up at the back of the ceremony area, adorned with whatever you choose guests to write on and the container they'll place their wishes into. You will then choose your own future date (often your anniversary) when you'll open the jar/box and read the special messages from your special people.

## Variations:

- ◆ You choose the container. It could be a lantern, a bird cage, a retro vanity case ... in fact, any vessel significant to you that holds the wishes.
- ◆ You choose what guests write their wishes on. It could be wooden hearts, specifically shaped and coloured notes or I can type and print your names, date and 'please write your message here' (or however you wish me to word it.)

## Advantages:

- ✓ It has full guest participation and you get to read lovely messages to you both.
- ✓ The vessel can be decorated to personalise it just for you and match your wedding colours and taste.
- ✓ You have it as a keepsake forever (particularly poignant down the line, when some of your special people will inevitably no longer be around)

## Things to consider:

- ❖ How fragile the vessel is.



# Wedding Ring Warming

***This occurs AT THE START OF THE CEREMONY, Before you exchange rings (your Best Person will start it off and will be the final one to hand them to you).*** Your wedding rings are placed in a pouch, on a cushion or tied with ribbon and I orate before passing it around the guests. As they cup their hands around the ring, (the warming), they make a wish for you before passing it on. They then remain on my ceremony table or with the Best Person until needed.



## Variations

- ◆ Keep it just to your immediate people
- ◆ The pouch, cushion or ribbon can be personalised to fit your style and colours.
- ◆ You can choose your own encasement idea, e.g. your grandmother's watch box or plaster cast of your pet's paw.

## Advantages:

- ✓ Children, blended families and stepchildren can be included in the passing of rings
- ✓ Can include all guests.
- ✓ The rings can be handed over to your Best Person by your parent/s or anyone of your choice to symbolise acceptance of the union.
- ✓ Your pouch/encasement can be decorated to personalise it.
- ✓ You have it as a keepsake of your union forever.

## Things to consider:

- ✓ How fragile the encasement is. I recommend a cloth pouch as your guests can feel the rings through it.



# Unity Lantern or Candle

**This occurs AT THE START OF YOUR CEREMONY, ONCE YOU'RE BOTH WITH ME.** The candle flickers throughout your ceremony, which sets a romantic tone. Traditionally, mothers of the couple each light a small candle which they give to their child (you) and the couple light the one larger candle together. This symbolises how this one union was made from two families and there is a passing on element to it that indicates the passing of approval, love, support etc. You keep all the candles, which I'll decorate before the ceremony.



## Variations

- ◆ You choose the style and colour of candles as well as the lantern (or candle encasement).
- ◆ Your guests can cheer/applaud on the closing of lantern door if you want them to.

## Advantages:

- ✓ It brings families into the ceremony itself
- ✓ You choose your VIPs to light the candles
- ✓ It's very visual so guests at the back can see
- ✓ Your names and wedding date can be added
- ✓ You have it as a keepsake of your union forever.

## Things to consider:

- ❖ It's not child friendly due to the flames. I only advise adults take part.
- ❖ Consider bridal material and styles – there are open flames, however brief (the lantern helps)
- ❖ If outdoors, the weather may impact its effect (although there is often an alternative cover)
- ❖ If indoors, permission from owners will be needed to light the candles.



# Unity Sand

**This can occur *BFORE* or *AFTER* your promises and exchanging of rings.**

For the Unity Sand ritual, you and your special person have an individual jar of sand, which you each pour into one unity jar to symbolise your union while I orate what it symbolises. You can do this between you as a couple or your VIPs could also have their sand. Your guests clap and cheer on completion.



## Variations:

- ◆ You choose colours of the sand as well as the jar.

## Advantages:

- ✓ Children can join in – beautiful for a blended family or stepchild as a result of your union.
- ✓ Any of your chosen VIPs can join in
- ✓ Even your whole guest list can add a pinch of sand to your jar (bear in mind the number of guests you have though!)
- ✓ Your names and wedding date can be added to the jar.
- ✓ You have it as a keepsake of your union forever.

## Things to consider:

- ❖ It's unlawful to take any natural materials like sand or pebbles from a beach in the UK.
- ❖ We would have to do some research worldwide where it is legal if your wedding is abroad
- ❖ Sand can be purchased legally – and coloured.



# Oathing Stone

***This occurs WHILE I orate your secret paragraphs to me on what you love about each other. JUST BEFORE your promises and exchange of rings.*** Another Celtic ritual. A union was considered stronger if an oath was given beside stone. I'll orate your secret paragraphs while you each hold the stone. Then, during the promises and ring exchange, you will place it on the table next to you for you to take each other's hand (or begin the Handfasting Element (see next Element)). You'll be setting your promises in stone!



## Variations:

- ◆ If you're climbers, you might want the ceremony at the foot of your special climb. At the top is an option – do consider your guests though.
- ◆ It might be a stone from your garden or a special person's garden
- ◆ You might want guests to pass it round to each other, like the ring warming.
- ◆ You may want to change it to a precious stone or crystal.

## Advantages:

- ✓ Children, blended families and stepchildren can also have the stone passed to them.
- ✓ Include guests: as they hold the object, they make a wish to you before passing it on.  
***\*This will begin before your make your promises and exchange rings. Depending on numbers, guests can make a wish and pass it on from the start of the ceremony to ensure everyone makes a wish before it's time for your promises.***
- ✓ Your object can be decorated to personalise it just for you.
- ✓ You have it as a keepsake of your union forever.

## Things to consider:

- ❖ Final cost to you depends on price of object if it's a precious stone.
- ❖ It's illegal to take stones, rocks or pebbles from its setting – they will need to be purchased and sourced legally



# Handfasting

## **BEGINS AFTER YOUR SECRET PARAGRAPHS TO ME - AT THE START OF MAKING YOUR PROMISES AND EXCHANGING RINGS** *Guests will cheer and applaud.*

Handfasting is a Celtic / Pagan tradition and the origin of the phrase 'tying the knot'! It involves a selection of long ribbons or cords of different colours/styles that will be wrapped around your joined right hands while I orate what each ribbon symbolises. Please see the videos of various handfasting elements, where either the Celebrant ties the cords or I teach you how to tie the knot yourselves. **It ENDS AS I DECLARE THAT YOU HAVE 'TIED THE KNOT' and you raise your hands and turn to the guests. Guests clap and applaud.**



### **Variations:**

- ◆ Your VIPs can place a ribbon over your joined hands as a symbol of family bonds and approval of your union.
- ◆ The cords are specific to you, so as long as it's cord-like and can wrap and be tied, you can handfast with something symbolic like your late father's special tie, a dog lead ...
- ◆ I can attach charms of your choice to the cords to make it even more symbolic (this will be done prior to the wedding day.) I have my own special charms that offer marriage advice. It's my bespoke element so you won't get this from any other Celebrant.
- ◆ The 'charms' may be special buttons like military buttons, medals or some buttons from your mother's wedding dress. Perhaps a name tag or pin that is meaningful for you or embroidery flowers/applique from the garment of a special person to you. They could be jewellery pieces.
- ◆ I can give you a tutorial to make your own plaited or woven cords before the big day or I can plait them after the ceremony – or you can keep them loose. The knot you tie at your ceremony remains.
- ◆ You can separate the handfasting from the exchange of rings or you can handfast with them – they don't need to occur at the same time.

### **Advantages:**

- ✓ Children can join in placing the ribbons over your joined hands – beautiful for a blended family or stepchild as a result of your union.
- ✓ You choose colours / materials that represent you.
- ✓ You can add charms that are also relevant to you (your choice)
- ✓ It's very visual so guests further back can see what's happening.
- ✓ It isn't complex or heavy so an older or frail person can join in.
- ✓ You have it as a keepsake of your union forever.

### **Things to consider:**

- ❖ I can't think of one thing that may be a disadvantage or health and safety issue, except if a charm is very expensive (like a pair of earrings or ring) and it takes the overall cost of all purchases up – but you'll purchase these and hand them to me before the Big Day..





## Quaich (Scottish Loving Cup)

***This will occur AFTER your promises and exchange of rings or before/after your parchment signing.*** A Quaich is an old Celtic tradition.

It's a small, fairly shallow, bowl-like vessel, often made of pewter with two handles each side. Traditionally, you choose someone from your guests to pour Scotch Whisky in the quaich, but as you'll see below, you can choose differently. The more modern tradition is to make it another symbol of the union between couples, so the alcohol is something that blends together, usually a red and white wine to make a blush.

I orate what the quaich means while you each hold the handle while your guest/s pours the liquid into the quaich. You each take turns to offer the drink the other. Guests cheer and applaud afterwards.



### Variations:

- ◆ You don't have to use wine or whisky. The liquid can be shots of alcohol or anything like gin & tonic!
- ◆ You can choose who you want to pour the liquid into the quaich and if it's a blend of two drinks, you can choose two people.
- ◆ The drinking vessel can be personal to you both.

### Advantages:

- ✓ It's very visual and if you have a small group of guests, why not let them all join in with a wee snifter?? We can send shot glasses round.
- ✓ You choose your own personal encasement that means something to you.
- ✓ If it's towards the end of the ceremony, after the promises, it sets up the idea that it's now the beginning of the 'party'!

### Things to consider:

- ❖ Final cost depends on price of wine, box and engraving if you want it. If it's a really expensive beverage, it would be reasonable to reimburse me, otherwise it's in with the cost of the wedding.
- ❖ Children won't be able to join in if it's alcohol.



# Wine Box / Love Letter

***This will occur AFTER your promises and exchange of rings., and parchment signing.*** A bottle of wine (or alternative) is encased in an engraved box. You can also write a letter to each other pre-wedding day and add it to the box while I orate. You ceremoniously seal the box, usually with a hammer and nails, to be opened on an important date in your future (the birth of your first child or an anniversary for example).



## **Variations:**

- ◆ It doesn't have to be wine, or a wine box.
- ◆ You can keep other elements in there, like the handfasting cords or messages before sealing it.

## **Advantages:**

- ✓ Children can join in and write their own letters to be placed into the box with yours
- ✓ Any of your chosen VIPs can pre-write their letters and bring to the ceremony. They can form a procession, placing it in the box.
- ✓ You choose the box and its bottle that represents you.
- ✓ Your names and wedding date can be engraved into the lid of the box.
- ✓ You have it as a keepsake of your union forever.

## **Things to consider:**

- ❖ Final cost depends on price of wine, box and engraving.



# Unity Tree Planting

***This would occur at the very end of your ceremony or it could be incorporated into each promise, where you take a spade or trowel of soil, make your promise and cast the soil into the tree's container.*** Although it's not related to any traditional ceremony, trees often symbolise longevity and commitment. A tree planted in a garden is a sign of hope because it's linked to settling down and establishing your roots. To see a tree grow takes a long time so committing to planting it represents optimism for your union.



## Variations:

- ◆ Your tree can be placed into a planter for the ceremony, then moved to a place of your choice so don't worry, your ceremony doesn't have to occur where the tree will go.
- ◆ Alternatives to trees can also be used e.g. a rose bush, small bonsai ...
- ◆ It might be that you want a small cutting from a special person's plant or tree. You don't need to plant with something you need a big spade for!
- ◆ The spade, trowel and container can be decorated to match your wedding style.

## Advantages:

- ✓ Your VIPs can join in with the planting.
- ✓ Children, blended families and stepchildren can also help to plant the tree or water the plant to symbolise family union.
- ✓ Good for couples or families who have travelled a lot as children or adults – as this element symbolises permanence and rooting.
- ✓ It's lovely if you're getting married in your own garden.
- ✓ You might get permission from the landowner to plant it in a location that is important to you both.

## Things to consider:

- ❖ It involves a spade or trowel and soil! I can provide aprons but I can't guarantee you won't get some soil on your clothes.
- ❖ You need to organise the moving of it to its final location and it may be heavy
- ❖ Final cost depends on price of tree and planter if I'm buying it.



## Wine Ceremony (without the Quaich)

***This occurs AFTER your promises and exchange of rings – or before your exit to indicate it's party time! The choice is yours.*** One of you will have a glass of red wine and one a glass of white. There is an empty glass in the middle. You take one sip of your \*single\* wine before blending it together to make a blush wine. You both drink the wine with straws to symbolise your union. **\*This can be paired with smashing of the glass below\*.**



### Variations:

- ◆ You choose your alcohol or non-alcoholic drink and vessel.

### Advantages:

- ✓ You can give your VIPs or all adult guests a glass to salute you.
- ✓ Your joint glass can be decorated to personalise it just for you.
- ✓ You have it as a keepsake of your union forever (if you don't smash it)
- ✓ It makes a great wedding photo!

### Things to consider:

- ❖ Final cost depends on price of alcohol and glass if I need to buy it.
- ❖ Children can only join in with a non-alcoholic drink
- ❖ Health & Safety issues with glass smashing (we always advice placing it in a pouch/bag so your shoes don't tear)



# Plate/Glass Smashing

**This can occur AT THE END of your ceremony to indicate your exit or it's party time - or if you hire me as your MC during your reception, we can do it then.** In Greece, it's common for wedding guests to break dishes during the reception to ward off evil spirits and bring good luck to the newlyweds. The couple then clean up the broken pieces together, symbolizing their ability to handle life's challenges and guests clap and cheer. Similar glass breaking is also done in Jewish weddings.

## Variations:

- ◆ It doesn't have to be plates or glasses you smash (but it does need to be easily breakable). For children, a balloon with confetti might be a nice alternative.
- ◆ The container to hold your plates/glasses in can represent your wedding colours and style.



## Advantages:

- ✓ You can combine it with your wine ceremony above and smash the glass.
- ✓ You can give your VIPs or all adult guests a glass to salute you.
- ✓ Your joint glass can be decorated to personalise it just for you.
- ✓ It makes a great wedding photo!
- ✓ You can keep the container and its contents as a keepsake

## Things to consider:

- ❖ Not child-friendly unless you use an alternative to plate or glass.
- ❖ It's not recommended that there is a smash-fest with guests. It will need cleaning up and do your guests want to clean up after themselves? Venue staff may not be paid to do it.
- ❖ Final cost depends on what you wish to smash if I'm buying it.
- ❖ Health & Safety issues with glass smashing. Will need permission by land/venue owners.



# Ceremony Parchment (certificate)

***This occurs STRAIGHT AFTER your promises and exchange of rings the ceremony, before your exit.*** A table and chairs will be prepared for you at the front of the ceremony to use while you and witnesses (if you want them) sign a Certificate of Wedding. This will be your 2<sup>nd</sup> music choice in the ceremony. On completion, I prompt your guests to clap and cheer. I will present it back to you as a scroll tied with a ribbon of your choice or I can use sealing wax and a stamp.



## Advantages:

- ✓ Your chosen VIPs are signing the certificate.
- ✓ Because it's not a legal document, all surnames from a blended family can be on it.
- ✓ You have some choice over the look of the certificate (colours, decoration etc)
- ✓ You have it as a keepsake of your union forever.
- ✓ It makes a great wedding photo!

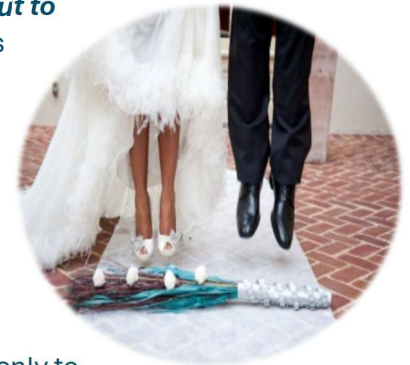
## Things to consider:

- ❖ The ceremony is not a legal marriage, nor is the certificate a legal certificate of marriage. Currently in England and Wales, only members of the clergy or registrars can legally marry. This is why we say it's a wedding (this is the celebration part) and make promises rather than exchange vows. Language is chosen to ensure we differentiate from a legal marriage.
- ❖ NB: Currently, we Celebrants are trying to put a bill through to the government to make it legal for Celebrants to marry couples. If you choose me as your Celebrant, I will keep you updated on this as it might mean you can cancel a registry office marriage if the bill goes through. Fingers crossed the bill is passed!



# Jumping the Broom (or Jumping the Besom)

**This occurs AT THE END of your ceremony & signals that you are about to make your exit down the aisle.** In African-American weddings, couples often "jump the broom" to symbolise their entrance into a new life together at a time when black slaves weren't allowed to officially marry.



- ◆ Of course, something like jumping the broom can symbolise how you as a couple have overcome a struggle (or hurdle) in order to be together and marry, for example, a long distance relationship or when one of you works away. It might be that you are re-marrying or are childhood sweethearts who parted ways, only to be reunited years later. It might be that you're from very different backgrounds ... I would orate before and after your jump (or leap of faith) and guests clap and cheer.

## Variations:

- ◆ You can jump objects based on your hobbies or careers: tennis rackets etc / dog leads / a garland of flowers / spoons for chefs / ruler or apple for teachers/ a saddle for horse riders etc.
- ◆ The broom/object can be decorated to represent you as a couple – or it doesn't have to be a broom although it's best if it's a low object! I would orate before and after your jump (or leap of faith) and guests clap and cheer.
- ◆ Couples often combine this with handfasting, so you jump while your hands are joined together (this then wouldn't mark the end of the ceremony but it doesn't have to.)

## Advantages:

- ✓ You can have your VIPs place the broom down and hold it while you leap.
- ✓ Children, blended families and stepchildren can also jump to symbolise family union.
- ✓ You can include guests – pass the object around them, they make a wish to you.
- ✓ Your object can be decorated to personalise it just for you.
- ✓ You have it as a keepsake of your union forever.
- ✓ It makes a great wedding photo!

## Things to consider:

- ❖ Final cost depends on price of object.
- ❖ Ensure that if you're choosing your own object to jump, it's fairly low!



*Contact me for a chat if you have your own ideas and let's see what we can incorporate into your unique day!*

*Barbs xx*