



THE GEORGIAN NEWSLETTER



SAMHAIN 2010

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ANNOUNCEMENTS!

It is always of the greatest pleasure that I get to put announcements into the newsletter!

Dedication:

~1st degree

Circle of the Imbolc Moon proudly announces the First Degree Initiation of Celtess. The ritual was performed by Morgan Greywolf and Rain Greywolf. We congratulate her on her great accomplishment!

Morgan and Rain

Circle of the Imbolc Moon 10/18/2010

~2nd degree

Last night, in the light of the waxing moon, Anam Taith elevated Orchid to the second degree. The ritual was performed by Lord Wotan and Lady Rowan and was witnessed by Bard Devin, Wolfmaiden, Owlson, and Joe D. from Denver, an initiate from another trad, and friend of Anam Taith. Orchid has studied long and hard for this degree and I'm VERY proud of her.

BB

Rowan 10/9/2010

The Family of the Aquarian Moon Coven initiated our Michelle to a 2nd degree today. The ritual was performed by HP Dan with Linda standing in as his Priestess. We are very proud of Michelle and all the hard work she has done. 9/6/2010

Birthdays!

Sibyl Shadowdrake - September 22, 1964.
Lord Josh-wa-ah has a birthday on 10-13-1949
Taran YoungOak, born October 13th
Duane "Raven Spirit" Marshal Oct 17 1970
Fig - October 17th.
Indigo - Oct 28
Marjenna...23?
October 28

Marla - Nov 4
Larry- Nov 7
Jacy's birthday is Nov. 23, 1992
Rayna
Cosette

It should also be mentioned that they (Lady Kundalini and Lord Josh-wa-ah) have been together 32 years as of the 19th of this month!

HANDBASTING: On Nov 7, 2009, Duane "Raven" Marshall And Nikki Ryan were handfasted by Lady Indigo and Rev Shae Rightmire. CONGRATS TO ALL!!!

The Origins of Halloween

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Submitted by our very own Rowen Moonstone

In recent years, there have been a number of pamphlets and books put out by various Christian organizations dealing with the origins of modern-day Halloween customs.

Being a Witch myself, and a student of the ancient Celts from whom we get this holiday, I have found these pamphlets woefully inaccurate and poorly researched. A typical example of this information is contained in the following quote from the pamphlet entitled "What's Wrong with Halloween?" by Russell K. Tardo. "The Druids believed that on October 31st, the last day of the year by the ancient Celtic calendar, the lord of death gathered together the souls of the dead who had been made to enter bodies of animals, and decided what forms they should take the following year. Cats were held sacred because it was believed that they were once human beings ... We see that this holiday has its origin, basis and root in the occultic Druid celebration of the dead. Only they called it 'Samhain', who was the Lord of the Dead (a big demon)".¹ When these books and pamphlets cite sources at all, they usually list the Encyclopedia Britannica, Encyclopedia Americana, and the World Book Encyclopedia. The Britannica and the Americana make no mention of cats, but do indeed list Samhain as the Lord of Death, contrary to Celtic scholars, and list no references. The World Book mentions the cats and calls Samhain the Lord of Death, and lists as its sources several children's books (hardly what one could consider scholarly texts, and, of course, themselves citing no references).

In an effort to correct some of this erroneous information, I have researched the religious life of the ancient Celtic peoples and the survivals of that religious life in modern times. Listed below are some of the most commonly asked questions concerning the origins and customs of Halloween. Following the questions is a lengthy bibliography where the curious reader can go to learn more about this holiday than space in this small pamphlet permits.

1. Where does Halloween come from?

Our modern celebration of Halloween is a descendent of the ancient Celtic festival called "Samhain". The word is pronounced "sow-in", with "sow" rhyming with "cow".

2. What does "Samhain" mean?

The "Irish-English Dictionary" published by the Irish Texts Society defines the word as follows: "Samhain, All Hallowtide, the feast of the dead in Pagan and Christian times, signalling the close of harvest and the initiation of the winter season, lasting till May, during

which troops were quartered. Fairies were imagined as particularly active at this season. From it, the half-year is reckoned. Also called Feile Moingfinne (Snow Goddess)."² The "Scottish Gaelic Dictionary" defines it as "Hallowtide. The Feast of All Souls. Sam + Fuin = end of summer."³ Contrary to the information published by many organizations, there is no archaeological or literary evidence to indicate that Samhain was a deity. Eliade's "Encyclopedia of Religion" states as follows: "The Eve and day of Samhain were characterized as a time when the barriers between the human and supernatural worlds were broken... Not a festival honoring any particular Celtic deity, Samhain acknowledged the entire spectrum of nonhuman forces that roamed the earth during that period."⁴ The Celtic Gods of the dead were Gwynn ap Nudd for the British and Arawn for the Welsh. The Irish did not have a "Lord of Death" as such.

3. Why was the end of summer of significance to the Celts?

The Celts were a pastoral people as opposed to an agricultural people. The end of summer was significant to them because it meant the time of year when the structure of their lives changed radically. The cattle were brought down from the summer pastures in the hills and the people were gathered into the houses for the long winter nights of story-telling and handicrafts.

4. What does it have to do with a festival of the dead?

The Celts believed that when people died, they went to a land of eternal youth and happiness called Tír na nÓg. They did not have the concept of Heaven and Hell that the Christian Church later brought into the land. The dead were sometimes believed to be dwelling with the Fairy Folk, who lived in the numerous mounds, or sidhe, (pronounced "shee" or "sh-thee") that dotted the Irish and Scottish countryside. Samhain was the new year to the Celts. In the Celtic belief system, turning points such as the time between one day and the next, the meeting of sea and shore or the turning of one year into the next, were seen as magickal times. The turning of the year was the most potent of these times. This was the time when the "veil between the worlds" was at its thinnest and the living could communicate with their beloved dead in Tír na nÓg.

5. What about the aspects of "evil" that we associate with the night today?

The Celts did not have demons and devils in their belief system. The fairies, however, were often considered hostile and dangerous to humans because they were seen as being resentful of man taking over their land. On this night, they would sometimes trick humans into becoming lost in the fairy mounds where they would be trapped forever. After the coming of the Christians to the Celtic lands, certain of the folk saw the fairies as those angels who had sided neither with God or with Lucifer in their dispute and thus were condemned to walk the Earth until Judgment Day.⁵ In addition to the fairies, many humans were abroad on this night causing mischief. Since this night belonged neither to one year or the other, Celtic folk believed that chaos reigned and the people would engage in "horseplay and practical jokes".⁶ This also served as a final outlet for high spirits before the gloom of winter set in.

6. What about "trick or treat"?

During the course of these hijinks, many of the people would imitate the fairies and go from house to house begging for treats. Failure to supply the treats would usually result in practical jokes being visited on the owner of the house. Since the fairies were abroad on this night, an offering of food or milk was frequently left for them on the steps of the house so the homeowner could gain the blessing of the "good folk" for the coming year. Many of the households would also leave out a "dumb supper" for the spirits of the departed.⁷ The folks who were abroad in the night imitating the fairies would sometimes carry turnips carved to represent faces. This is the origin of our modern Jack-o-lantern.

7. Was there any special significance of cats to the Celts?

According to Katherine Briggs in "Nine Lives: Cats in Folklore", the Celts associated cats with the Cailleach Bheur, or Blue Hag of Winter. "She was a nature goddess, who herded the deer as her cattle. The touch of her staff drove the leaves off the trees and brought snow and harsh weather."⁸ Dr. Anne Ross addresses the use of divine animals in her book "Pagan Celtic Britain" and has this to say about cats: "Cats do not play a large role in Celtic mythology ... the evidence for the cat as an important cult animal in Celtic mythology is slight".⁹ She cites as supporting evidence the lack of archaeological artifacts and literary references in surviving works of mythology.

8. Was this also a religious festival?

Yes. Celtic religion was very closely tied to the Earth. The great legends are concerned with momentous happenings which took place around the time of Samhain. Many of the great battles and legends of kings and heroes center on this night. Many of the legends concern the promotion of fertility of the Earth and the insurance of the continuance of the lives of the people through the dark winter season.

9. How was the religious festival observed?

Unfortunately, we know very little about that. W.G. Wood-Martin, in his book "Traces of the Elder Faiths of Ireland", states: "There is comparatively little trace of the religion of the Druids now discoverable, save in the folklore of the peasantry and the references relative to it that occur in ancient and authentic Irish manuscripts are, as far as present appearances go, meager and insufficient to support anything like a sound theory for full development of the ancient religion."¹⁰ The Druids were the priests of the Celtic peoples. They passed on their teachings by oral tradition instead of committing them to writing, so when they perished, most of their religious teachings were lost. We do know that this festival was characterized as one of the four great "Fire Festivals" of the Celts. Legends tell us that on this night all the hearth fires in Ireland were extinguished and then re-lit from the central fire of the Druids at Tlachtga, 12 miles from the royal hill of Tara. This fire was kindled from "need fire" which had been generated by the friction of rubbing two sticks together, as opposed to more conventional methods (such as the flint-and-steel method) common in those days.¹¹ The extinguishing of the fires symbolized the "dark half" of the year, and the re-kindling from the Druidic fires was symbolic of the returning life hoped for and brought about through the ministrations of the priesthood.

10. What about sacrifices?

Animals were certainly killed at this time of year. This was the time to "cull" from the herds those animals which were not desired for breeding purposes for the next year. Most certainly, some of these would have been done in a ritual manner for the use of the priesthood.

11. Were humans sacrificed?

Scholars are sharply divided on this account, with about half believing that it took place and half doubting its veracity. Caesar and Tacitus certainly tell tales of the human sacrifices of the Celts, but Nora Chadwick points out in her book "The Celts" that "it is not without interest that the Romans themselves had abolished human sacrifice not long before Caesar's time, and references to the practice among various barbarian peoples have certain overtones of self-righteousness. There is little direct archaeological evidence relevant to Celtic sacrifice."¹² Indeed, there is little reference to this practice in Celtic literature. The only surviving story echoes the tale of the Minotaur in Greek legend: the Fomorians, a race of evil giants said to inhabit portions of Ireland before the coming of the Tuatha Dé Danann (or "people of the Goddess Danu"), demanded the sacrifice of 2/3 of the corn, milk and first-born children of the Fir Bolg, or human inhabitants of Ireland. The Tuatha Dé Danann ended this practice in the second battle of Moy Tura, which incidentally, took place on

Samhain. It should be noted, however, that this story appears in only one (relatively modern) manuscript from Irish literature, and that manuscript, the "Dinnsenchus", is known to be a collection of fables. According to P.W. Joyce in Vol. 2 of his "Social History of Ancient Ireland", "Scattered everywhere through our ancient literature, both secular and ecclesiastical, we find abundant descriptions and details of the rites and superstitions of the pagan Irish; and in no place -- with this single exception -- do we find a word or hint pointing to human sacrifice to pagan gods or idols."¹³

12. What other practices were associated with this season?

Folk tradition tells us of many divination practices associated with Samhain. Among the most common were divinations dealing with marriage, weather and the coming fortunes for the year. These were performed via such methods as ducking for apples and apple peeling. Ducking for apples was a marriage divination. The first person to bite an apple would be the first to marry in the coming year. Apple peeling was a divination to see how long your life would be. The longer the unbroken apple peel, the longer your life was destined to be.¹⁴ In Scotland, people would place stones in the ashes of the hearth before retiring for the night. Anyone whose stone had been disturbed during the night was said to be destined to die during the coming year.

13. How did these ancient Celtic practices come to America?

When the potato crop in Ireland failed, many of the Irish people, modern descendants of the Celts, emigrated to America bringing with them their folk practices which were remnants of the Celtic festival observances.

14. We in America view this as a harvest festival. Did the Celts also view it as such?

Yes. The Celts had 3 harvests. Aug 1, or Lammas, was the first harvest, when the first fruits were offered to the Gods in thanks. The Fall Equinox was the true harvest. This was when the bulk of the crops would be brought in. Samhain was the final harvest of the year. Anything left on the vines or in the fields after this date was considered blasted by the fairies ("pu'ka") and unfit for human consumption.

15. Does anyone today celebrate Samhain as a religious observance?

Yes. Many followers of various pagan religions, such as Druidism and Wicca, observe this day as a religious festival. They view it as a memorial day for their dead friends and family, much as the mainstream US does the national Memorial Day holiday in May. It is still a night to practice various forms of divination concerning future events. It is also considered a time to wrap up old projects, take stock of one's life and initiate new projects

for the coming year. As the winter season is approaching, it is a good time to do studying on research projects, and also a good time to begin handwork such as sewing, leatherworking, woodworking etc., for Yule gifts later in the year. And while "satanists" are using this holiday as their own, this is certainly not the only example of a holiday (or even religious symbols) being "borrowed" from an older religion by a newer one.

16. Does this involve human or animal sacrifice?

Absolutely *NOT!* Hollywood to the contrary, blood sacrifice is not practiced by modern followers of Wicca or Druidism. There may be some people who *think* they are practicing Wicca by performing blood sacrificing but this is *not* condoned by reputable practitioners of today's neo-Pagan religions.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Tardo, Russell K., "What's Wrong with Halloween?", Faithful Word Publishers, (Arabi, LA, undated), p. 2
2. Rev. Patrick Dinneen, "An Irish-English Dictionary", (Dublin, 1927), p. 937
3. Malcolm MacLennan, "A Pronouncing and Etymological Dictionary of the Gaelic Language", (Aberdeen, 1979), p. 279
4. "The Encyclopedia of Religion", ed. Mircea Eliade, "Halloween" by Primiano, (New York, 1987) pp. 176-177
5. Alwyn & Brinley Rees, "Celtic Heritage", (New York, 1961), p. 90
6. W.G. Wood-Martin, "Traces of the Elder Faiths of Ireland", Vol. II, (Port Washington, NY, 1902), p. 5
7. Kevin Danaher, "The Year in Ireland", (Cork, 1972), p. 214
8. Katherine Briggs, "Nine Lives: Cats in Folklore", (London,1980), p.5
9. Dr. Anne Ross, "Pagan Celtic Britain", (London,1967), p. 301-302
10. Wood-Martin, op. cit., p. 249
11. Rees & Rees, op. cit., p. 90
12. Nora Chadwick, "The Celts", (Harmondsworth, 1982), p. 151
13. P.W. Joyce, "A Social History of Ancient Ireland", Vol.2, (New York, 1968), pp. 282-283
14. Madeleine Pelter Cosman, "Medieval Holidays and Festivals", (New York, 1981), p. 81

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Recipe

Samhain Pork Roast

1 pork loin
mushrooms
onions
garlic
bread crumbs
sage
parsley
rosemary
salt
pepper
1 egg

Take a very sharp knife and begin cutting the roast, a slice about one inch thick, but don't cut through. Keep cutting and unrolling the roast until you have one, continuous slice. Spread a thick layer of the stuffing on the slice and, carefully, roll it back up. Tie it shut with butcher's twine and lay in a roasting pan and cover with foil. Roast on 350 degrees for 1 1/2 to 2 hours.

For the stuffing, figure the amounts according to the size of the roast. You want enough to be able to spread over the entire unrolled loin. Dried herbs are okay, but fresh offers a much fuller flavor. I use whatever mushrooms I can get, usually white mushrooms, tree ears, shitake, but porcini are okay if you want to go to the trouble of peeling the tough skin off the tops. With the onions, try to use yellow mushrooms, they are at their fullest flavor right now. Use the entire garlic, if you want, it won't hurt and it's good for you.

Chop everything very finely and mix together in a bowl with a tiny bit of water if you need a little more moisture to make a paste-like spread, but not much, you don't want it to quirt out of the roast.

Submitted by Cindy and her spiderpigs in 2008



And, let us not forget those that went before us. On this sacred night of Samhain, a time when we remember our passed Loved ones, Ancestors and not to be forgotten, both human and non human.

- Jerita Reed Hardin.6/14/2010 Mother of Marla
- Mary Sue Haramut 7/13/2010 my mother (Becca Willing)
- Lajo Walker 3/31/2010 my step mother (Becca Willing)
- Sara Solis Garner- Taran YoungOak's Grandmother 08/26/10
- Lady Sintana passed. She was the founder and High Priestess of Ravenwood Church in Atlanta, Georgia.9/18/2010
- E's mother Lillian Elizabeth Ogle
- Jamie "Puck" McKim for Duane "Raven" Marshall
- Charlotte J. Alvarez (S)kip from Bakersfield 9/15/2010
- Robert Lee Pournier 1960 – 2010 (8/29/2010) Big brother to Loye.
- Tanya, animal companion of Loye's for 15 years



SAMHAIN and HALLOWEEN *Costumes and Traditions*

So, every year we all sit down and celebrate this season in our own way. Some set a plate for the dumb supper, others place food out on the porch or window sill, the ever popular pumpkin carving, and dressing up in an attempt to be funny, scary, sexy, whatever.

Here are some of the homes that were decorated up for this August occasion!

Here we have Branwen Ravenwood and friends!

Since I started with pictures of her loveliness, I figure we will start with her creative talents !





Here we start our journey at what looks to be Branwen's front door, very proper and cozy indeed...until you look around a little.

Puck

Our next spotlight is Puck, and NO one can accuse him of being refined in any definition of the word. I have known the man for years and though I have often be referred to with colorful metaphors, Puck IS those colorful metaphors!

It should surprise no one at all to find his yard full of skeletons!



Witches in the front yard, dancing around a cauldron. For most this may seem a little odd, but to us, it's just another day in the neighborhood!



Here we go....I knew she had skeletons in the closet...or yard as it turns out.

And, just to make sure no one can escape once inside, a spiffy fence complete with the skulls of victims mounted to the top!



Looks like Momma taught her little boy all the family secrets too!

I suggest we don't dig to deep into this families goings ons...we may not sleep for weeks!



Meanwhile, down in Bakersfield, the witches gathered for the yearly debauchery! I am sorry I missed all the activities!



Bobbie was obviously feeling her oats.

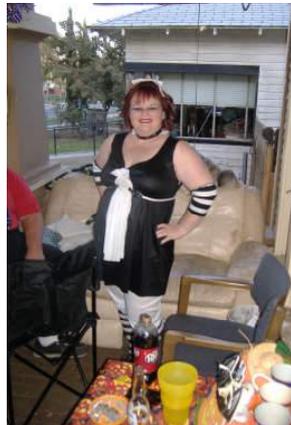
Cindy being all fashionable!



Shawn shownen (yes, a play on words here! I'm a poet and don't know it!) off

her own fashion sense! And a fine job she's doing too!

And this young lady is Shannon, threatening to dedicate the 13th! If I can, I will certainly be there for that event.



KS told me this young lady holding a little one is Bonnie...she has grown a lot since the last time I saw her!



Love's neck of the woods.

Over the years, I have honed my skills in an effort to be the reason children don't sleep alone for weeks and parents use my name as a curse word. This Halloween / Samhain was no different!



This little princess was the first trick or treater to my haunted abode, even my own Miss Minnie couldn't get this poor little soul to calm down <veg>. You'll notice that her eyes are on me...and never left me for a minute! That's right, you hadn't seen me yet! Here is what she was seeing. There was actually two of us, but I was the first one she saw lol.



Treebeard and I greeted children till about 9pm! And more often than not screams were involved and more than a couple times Minnie had to give candy to freaked out little ones lol



ere is myself and Treebeard (Robert) and one of my pumpkin greeters that I carved for the children's viewing pleasure...I just wish they had gotten close enough to appreciate the artistic nature of it!

And of course, What kinda person would I be if I didn't show off the yen to my yang and last baby bird I'm trying to get out of my nest!



Here is my daughter Miranda, wife Tiffany and some guy Tiff is sleeping around with.



And, Coven Symbollic wishing all a Blessed Samhain!!

Marla and Gypsey

Lets not forget our own Marla and Gypsey. I don't consider Marla scary at all...of course, I'm not in her coven and there is plenty of space between her and I to allow me plenty of time to get away should the need arise . She sent me these pictures of their goings on.

Evidently "E" was there for ritual and brought a few things...I keep meaning to ask who "E" is, but perhaps it adds to the mystery of Samhain!

Here we have a picture and a pair of glasses that belonged to Pat.



Here we have Marla's ancestor altar, very elegant and simple.



Very lovely Marla! As always a pleasure to experience your talents dear.

Samhain in Bakersfield

I am going to attempt to write a quick description of our Samhain now.

Here goes.....

Samhain finally arrives and i find myself excited that i will finally have both of my students at the same Sabbat. I am running late as usual but finally get there. For the first time i have brought a friend to meet my spiritual family, his name is Steve. Hugs and introductions all around as i take a mental check list: Cindy, Sherri, Shannon, Dee, Katie, Andrea and Brian... Anton, Anna and there's little Alister, Jay comes strolling in from the back. There's a horde of children wreaking havoc in the front yard. Bobbie and Allen are missing and...one of my students is still not here.

When i text my wayward student, Joey, he informs me that he will not be coming and explains why. I text him back, saying i understand his delemma but that i am getting irritated with him. Then back to the party....a few minutes later i get a phone call saying he is loading the kids in the car and will be there in a few minutes. I am confused but happy that he changed his mind.

As i make my way back to the porch and crowd of people there, the aromas coming from the kitchen are making my stomach grumble. It all smells delicious and my taste buds begin to anticipate the coming feast. Ahhh, friendship, laughter and love are overflowing...this is just what i needed right now.

Bobbie and Allen arrive and join the party. Bobbie brought her famous "witch's punch". Very tasty and potent too. A few glasses of that and i will be flying high. It tastes like a liquid Jolly Rancher.

We finally decide we are going to feast before ritual (mostly because i think everyone's stomachs are grumbling like mine). Just as we start serving

ourselves, Joey arrives with Sugar and their six kids. The decibel level goes up another five notches in the front yard, but the kids seem to be having fun.

We eventually get everyone fed and while i am chit chatting with Sugar, i find out why Joey changed his mind. I didn't think anything of it but apparently, i have never told my student i am irritated with him before. He told Sugar "She has never told me she was irritated with me, we gotta go, now!!". I am finding out that it is good to be the priestess. I will have to remember that...lol.

Finally, all is right with the world, the family is together at last. After we all have our fill of the delicious food, we retire to the dining room and circle up around it. We are packed in tight but Bonnie has been nice enough to keep the kids occupied outside with the apple dunking...ooooops i mean bobbing..lol. Our ritual includes some energy work and a dumb supper as well as saying farewell to Skip. There was much reminiscing and laughter around the table as well as some tom foolery...nothing unusual for one of our rituals. Then cakes and wine and libation. It was a very relaxing ritual and i think everyone took what they needed from it.

As the candy infused children started going home, the decibel level lowers and we can finally have an uninterrupted conversation. So catching up with old friends and getting to know new ones is how we spend the rest of the evening. The only thing missing was the annual screening of Rocky Horror Picture Show. I hope you all had a wonderful Samhain too.

Well, it isnt my best work but it will have to do. i hope you can get a feel for it from what i wrote. Hugs and kisses. love you.

Lady Kerridwyn Springsong

Hell hath no fury like a woman with a sword.

Well, I think that should wrap up this issue of the Georgian Newsletter, as always it was my pleasure to put this together for all of you!. May the Lady and Lord bring all of you a blessed New Year filled with love, laughter and joy.

Blessings and Light