

THE GEORGIAN NEWSLETTER



Samhain 2012

What's Inside:

- Spotlight
- Announcements
- The Origins of Halloween: by Rowan Moonstone
- Halloween Traditions
- Scene, 1976
- Arts & Crafts

copyright © 1989, Rowan Moonstone

Submitted by our very own Rowen Moonstone

Announcements!

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

Dedication:

- ~1st degree -
- ~2nd degree -
- ~3rd degree -

Birthdays!

Sibyl Shadowdrake - September 22, 1964.
Fig - October 17th
Taran YoungOak - October 13th at 4:43am
Raven Spirit - Oct 17 1970
Indigo - October 28th
Lord Josh-wa-ah - 10-13-1949,

It should also be mentioned that they (Lady Kundalini and Lord Josh-wa-ah) have been together 33 years as of the 19th of this month!

The Origins of Halloween

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 magical 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.

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 Pelner Cosman, "Medieval Holidays and Festivals", (New York, 1981), p. 81

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Bord, Janet & Colin, "The Secret Country", (London: Paladin Books, 1978)
- Briggs, Katherine, "Nine Lives, Cats in Folklore", (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980)
- Chadwick, Nora, "The Celts", (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1982)
- Coglean, Ronan, "A Dictionary of Irish Myth and Legend", (Dublin: 1979)
- Cosman, Madeleine Pelner, "Medieval Holidays and Festivals", (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1981)
- Danaher, Kevin, "The Year in Ireland", (Cork, Ireland: The Mercier Press, 1972)
- Dinneen, Rev. Patrick S., M.A., "An Irish-English Dictionary", (Dublin: The Irish Texts Society, 1927)

- Joyce, P.W., "A Social History of Ancient Ireland", (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968)
- MacCana, Proinsias, "Celtic Mythology", (London: The Hamlyn Publishing Group Limited, 1970)
- MacLennan, Malcolm, "A pronouncing and Etymological Dictionary of the Gaelic Language", (Aberdeen: Acair and Aberdeen University Press, 1979)
- MacNeill, Maire', "The Festival of Lughnasa", (Dublin: Comhairle Bhealoideas Eireann, 1982)
- Powell, T.G.E., "The Celts", (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1980)
- Primiano, Leonard Norman, "Halloween" from "The Encyclopedia of Religion", ed. Mircea Eliade, (New York, McMillan Publishing Co., 1987)
- Rees, Alwyn and Brinley, "Celtic Heritage, Ancient Tradition in Ireland and Wales", (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1961)
- Ross, Dr. Anne, "Pagan Celtic Britain", (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967)
- Sharkey, John, "Celtic Mysteries", (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1975)
- Spence, Lewis, "British Fairy Origins", (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1946)
- Squire, Charles, "Celtic Myth & Legend, Poetry & Romance", (New York: Newcastle Publishing Co., Inc., 1975)

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

- Toulson, Shirley, "The Winter Solstice", (London: Jill Norman & Hobhouse, Ltd., 1981)
- Wood-Martin, W.G., "Traces of the Elder Faiths of Ireland", Vols. I & II, (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1902)



Recipe's

All listed recipes were submitted by Spiritmother ☺

Pumpkin Crunch Cake

Amount Measure Ingredient -- Preparation Method

1 box yellow cake mix
1 can pumpkin puree -- (15 oz)
1 can evaporated milk -- (12 oz)
3 large eggs
1 1/2 cups sugar
1 tsp. cinnamon
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 cups chopped pecans -- (1/2 to 1 1/2)
1 cup butter -- melted

Heat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease bottom of 9 x 13" pan.

Mix pumpkin, milk, eggs, sugar, cinnamon, and salt. Pour mixture into greased pan.

Sprinkle dry cake mix over pumpkin mixture and top with pecans. Drizzle melted butter over pecans. Bake 50-55 minutes

WINE BOTTLE TIKI TORCHES



So, since summer is over, you can't find tiki torches, but want to use something cool to mark your Samhain circle, or your Gate to the Underworld? Shawn found this nifty craft where you can turn your wine bottles into tiki torches!

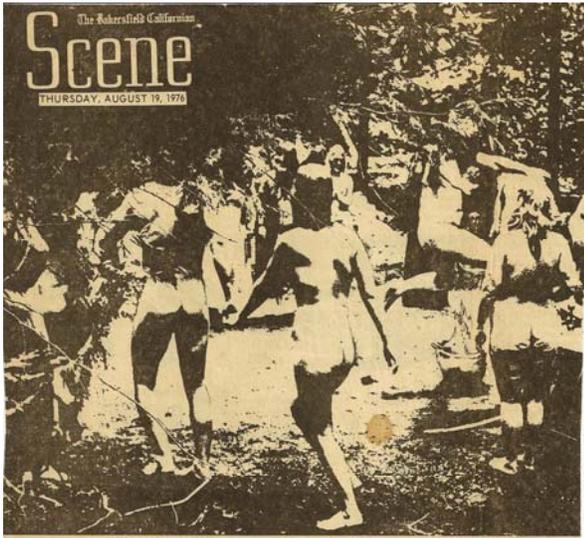
<http://www.jennifervandahm.com/2012/01/diy-wine-bottle-torches.html>

1 empty and cleaned wine bottle
1 Tiki Torch wick refill (thick)
Tiki Torch citronella lamp oil
3/8" metal washer (or adjust washer size if bottle opening is larger/smaller)
Decorative glass rocks or beads of your choice (optional) *small enough to fit in bottle opening

Place the decorative rocks/beads in the bottle. The more you have, the less oil you will need to use.

Feed the wick through the opening of the washer, leaving about a 1/4-inch of the wick sticking out of the top. Make sure the washer fits the opening of the bottle top (It will just sit on top of the bottle opening). If you have gaps between the washer and the wick it could allow air in, which may cause the bottle to fill up with smoke.

Pour the oil into a bottle, using a funnel, enough to cover half of the wick. Feed the longer side of wick into the bottle. If your wick is thick enough, you don't have to secure the washer down. Light the top wick and enjoy your new torch outdoors! Remember, burning citronella indoors is not recommend.

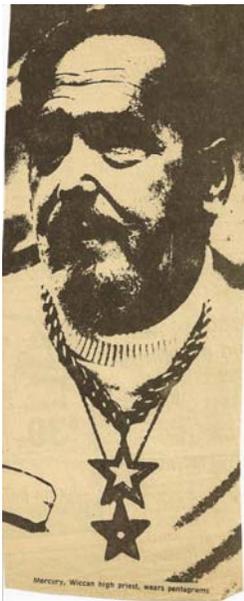


Oblivious to the temperature, Kern witches get close to nature

Bakersfield witches meet, leave broomsticks home

Nude dancers drink potions around caldron

The front page is us in circle. Bobby is the one front right, Walt Bowser jumping the cauldron, Gail B in front holding hands with Dean Raines, who has moved on, he was my ex-bro-in-law. Not sure about the others, it was so long ago.



Mercury, Wiccan high priest, wears headdresses



Allison, a Bay Area witch, peers into a flask she says conveys power.

Lord Mercury and Lady Allison

Story by ROBIN WITT, Staff Writer
Photography by LIZ SNYDER
Layout by LINDA WONG, Scene Associate Editor

An unreasonable, late summer mist was beginning to form around the small bundle of campfires, making the night colder and somehow more haunting. The smell of wet earth was in the air and the agitation one feels when the wind is up began to creep in.

It was Friday the 13th, the moon just four days past full, and the witches of Bakersfield had begun to gather to dance around a fiery caldron near Panorama Heights, on Greenhorn Mountain.

They were members of the Church of Wicca of Bakersfield, meeting in their first national convention last weekend.

Instead of flying on broomsticks they drove from as far away as Texas and Washington. Rather than being grotesque men and pickled-nosed hags, the witches looked like anyone else camping for a weekend.

In fact, they told a Californian reporter-photographer team, most stereotypes about witches are lies. They don't fly on broomsticks, turn unbelievers into frogs or eat Christian children during sabbats — their periodic rituals.

Ten to 15 witches danced and hugged their way around the circle of flames in the cool, after-noon temperatures.

"You've got to remember," said Mercury, high priest and founder of the Church of Wicca, "we believe in sexual freedom. The freedom to say 'yes' and the freedom to say 'no'.

"Our basic rule is 'Do whatever you want, just as long as you don't hurt anybody'."

Mercury, a middle-aged radio station employee, is careful that his church's members don't go too far, however. "What people do on their own time is their business. But when they are here (at his Bakersfield headquarters) I won't allow the use of drugs. Can you imagine what the publicity would be like if we were raided for drugs?"

Witches say they join the "craft" for a variety of reasons. Allison, a four-generation atheist, said the goddess (usually envisioned by witches as Aphrodite) "appeared to me in a vision." She soon joined a coven.

Others, like Vulcan, say they joined to understand nature better. Witches believe people can sometimes communicate with trees and rocks because they also have spirits.

"Eris Polaris, an unemployed teacher and sometime photographer, likes the freedom he feels in the craft. "I once seriously considered becoming a Baptist minister," he said. "But one day I realized how hypocritical that would be."

He said he enjoyed sex and alcohol too much to remain a Baptist. "I was preaching things I didn't believe." Witchcraft is part of a family tradition for him. "In the early 1700s in New Jersey, one of my relatives was killed for being a witch," he said.

Today it is not nearly as risky being a witch, the Wiccans say. But still they have some fear of being identified. Mercury sometimes speaks to religion classes at Bakersfield College and Cal State Bakersfield, but notes his employer would rather Mercury keep his identity quiet.

The Panorama Heights convention was an attempt to communicate the craft to the outside world, Allison and Mercury said.

Witchcraft, properly called Wicca, is considered to be the "craft of the wise," and possibly derives from the ancient Welsh, according to Mercury.

Although witch tradition varies, Mercury teaches there "is an ultimate god/goddess," which may be thought of in many forms but usually depicted as Aphrodite or Pan (the horned god of the Greeks). From the horned god comes the inaccurate Christian concept of Satan, Mercury said.

"We don't even believe in Satan. We think it's an excuse for human weakness," he added. Although Aphrodite is venerated for her sexual powers, she is thought of more as a kind of mother nature, Mercury said.

Witch theology is a sort of vague pantheism or henotheism (worship of one god without denying the existence of another). But according to Allison, the theology is purposefully vague.

"We try to experience nature, not go into head trips," she said.

Wicca members, all considered to be "clergy without a laity," are said to have access to magical powers. The powers are not spelled out completely, but some witches are said to have "psychic power," and can "heal the sick," Allison said.

But still the witches remain in mystery. Outsiders are not allowed into serious rituals. Mercury said the ritual Saturday afternoon "was for public consumption but does have real aspects to it." Only initiates can see the inner-most practices, he said.

It takes a minimum of a year to be inducted into Mercury's Georgian (after his first name) brand of witchcraft, and no one ever has made it in less than two years, he said. After that they are sworn not to tell the inner mysteries.

Most witches say they are opposed to Satanism and consider Christianity and Judaism just "two other faiths which arose after we did."

Mercury said he welcomed interested persons to call him for information at 336-1111.



Most important of all, they insisted, witches don't worship Satan or sign pacts with evil forces.

As explained by Allison, a San Francisco Bay Area practitioner, witchcraft can best be described as a mixture of mystery religion and nature worship. Mystery religions were Hellenistic cults which stressed secret knowledge open only to initiates.

She is a representative of the Covenant of the Goddess, a confederation of covens (13-member witch congregations) and traditions from across the United States.

She speaks with the enthusiasm of a latter-day St. Paul and admits her goal is much the same — to popularize and act as public relations person between witches and the public.

There are a few witch stereotypes that are true. They do drink "witches' potion" and dance around a flaming caldron in the nude.

Saturday afternoon, while the temperature dropped below 60 degrees, 20 members of Wicca of Bakersfield began gulping drafts of "witches' potion," which they admit is a rather conventional red wine occasionally laced with vodka. Stepping into a "circle," a cleared area surrounding a simple altar, the Wiccans were dressed in simple multi-colored robes.

Several men were nude. As the art prayers to various nature spirits continued and followed by ritual dancing, singing and drinking of potion, more came but

Submitted by Gail Billsborough

A LITTLE ART

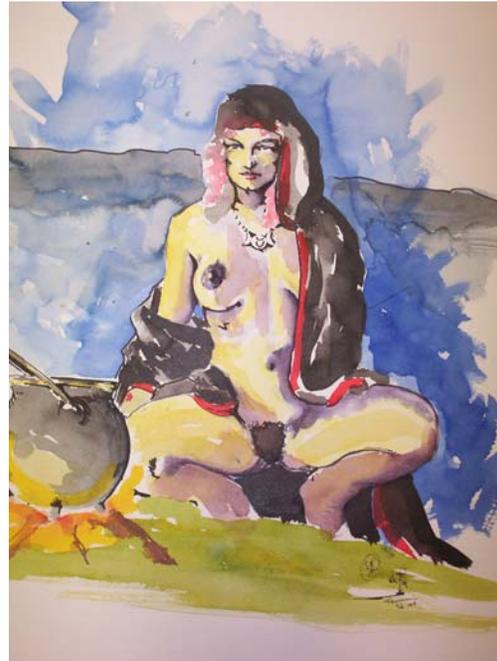
The House



Renaissance Woman



Dragon



Witch – water color

Hope you enjoyed this edition of the Georgian Newsletter.

Loye Pournier