

Celtic Guide

Volume 2, Issue 10 –October 2013



*Halloween
Samhain*



From the Editor

The great, dry-witted comedian, Steven Wright, once asked “What happens if you get scared half to death . . . twice?” Well look out, it might just happen in this Halloween issue of the Celtic Guide.

We kick this month off with a great analysis of the Celtic holidays from our regular contributor, Sharron Gunn, who speaks and teaches Gaelic, and lectures on Scottish history. Of course, that's once you get past Larry Andrew's spooky artwork for our October 2013 cover. We have witches, good and bad. We have vampires, and assassins, and things that go bump in the night. Last year's Halloween issue was very popular and we just have a sneaky suspicion this year's issue will be too. If not scared, at least you'll walk away entertained and understanding more about Celtic legends and influence around the world.

I can't say it often enough how much I appreciate all those who volunteer their time or provide other types of assistance to keep our magazine going each month. For so many, present company included, it is a labor of love. For instance, another pair of Wright's, Deb and Cass, have amassed a fantastic library of clan histories through their monthly column 'Henceforth Tales'. There are just so many contributors from Scotland, Ireland, Wales, England, Canada, the U.S., Poland, Portugal, and, with this issue, Germany, that space doesn't allow mentioning them all . . . but they all make it happen just for YOU!

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Samhainn

by Sharron Gunn
Canada

and the Calendar Year in Gaelic Scotland

The yearly calendar was divided according to the events of the agricultural year; the seasons began and ended at different times than English seasons. In Gaelic Scotland every season started with a fire festival and celebrated with lots of ritual and food; midway through a season there was another festival.

For the Gaels the next day didn't start at midnight but earlier at sunset. So the celebrations of a given festival began with the evening before. For example, Christmas Eve is the beginning of Christmas Day; that is, Christmas Day begins at sunset not midnight. And Halloween (All Hallows Eve) was the beginning of All Hallows Day (i.e. All Saints Day).

Samhainn – The Beginning of Winter

Samhainn marked the end of the summer half of the year, the beginning of winter, the dark time (*Dùbhlachd*). *Oidhche Shamhna* (night of *Samhain*) is Gaelic for Halloween (English: The evening of Hallows or Saints). In modern Gaelic, *Samhain* is the word for the month of November.

Some sources in English say that a veil is removed between the two worlds at *Samhainn*, and passage is easier back and forth. I've never heard or read the word '*caille*' (noun: veil, covering) used this way in Gaelic. In 1861 William Winwood Reade published *The Veil of Isis or Mysteries of the Druids* in which Reade attempted to explain the religion of the druids which he thought must resemble the religion of ancient Egypt. He was hugely popular in his day. In Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Sign of Four*, Sherlock Holmes recommends *The Veil of Isis* to Watson. Needless to say Reade's interpretation is inaccurate, but his ideas linger on.

But communication with the Otherworld (*an Saoghal Ud Eile*) was easier at this time. Divination for marriage was popular among the young men and women. One method used three plates or bowls containing clean water, dirty water and no water. The petitioner was blindfolded and pushed in the direction of the plates. No water meant no spouse, dirty water meant a bad spouse and clean water a good one. The first one touched indicated what sort of spouse was in that person's future.

In Scotland *samhainn* is usually pronounced **sa-veeng** and *oidhche shamhna* is pronounced something like **oe-hyuh how-rah**.



Above: *Snap-Apple Night* (1832), by Daniel Maclise, depicts apple bobbing and divination games at a Halloween party in Blarney, Ireland.

Nollaig

Nollaig is Christmas and, in most of the Highlands and Islands, it was a purely religious holiday: no Christmas trees, no Santa Claus or Father Christmas, and no gift exchange. In districts which are Catholic, *laoidhean Nollaig* (Christmas carols) were sung.

Latha Callainn

Midway through winter is the celebration of New Year's. *Oidhche Challainn* (New Year's Eve) is the beginning of the new year and *Latha Challainn* is New Year's Day.

Houses were decorated with holly to keep the fairies away as it was one of the woods which repelled them.

Boys (*gilleán Challainn*) used to dress up in old clothes, stuffed with straw. While travelling through the village, the young men struck the walls of the houses they passed by, which was meant to frighten off evil spirits. One person wore a hardened bull hide with horns and hooves still attached; he jumped around and shook the horns and hooves while the others beat the hide with sticks, and sang New Year's songs (*duain Challainn*). These customs, which varied from place to place, were brought to Highland settlements in Canada and observed into the 20th century, and many of the songs have survived.

Duan Challainn:

The *gilleán Challainn* circled the houses *deasail* (clockwise), the lucky way. Going *tuathal* (counter-clockwise) was unlucky.

Callainn a bhuilg
Callainn a bhuilg
Buail am boicionn
Buail am boicionn
Callainn a bhuilg
Callainn a bhuilg
Sios e suas e
Buail am boicionn
Callainn a bhuilg
Callainn a bhuilg!

New Year's of the sack
New Year's of the sack
Strike the hide
Strike the hide
New Year's of the sack
New Year's of the sack

Down with it, up with it
Strike the sack
New Year's of the sack
New Year's of the sack

After the entertainment, they collected food and went round the fire *deasail* (clockwise) and sang. They singed a portion of hide and all had to smell it for luck.

If the young men were badly treated or not given food, they walked around the fire *tuathal* (counterclockwise) and further damned the house by building a cairn of cursing. When they had amassed a collection of food, they went to one house where the girls were waiting and prepared a feast; leftovers were taken to the sick and others in need.



*St Brigid's
Cross, made of
rushes or straw,
protects the
household from
evil spirits.*

Latha Fèill Brìghde – the Beginning of Spring

Latha Fèill Brìghde is St Brigid's Day (1 February); anciently this day was called *Imbalg* or *Imbolc*. It was the beginning of spring; many traditions concerning the pagan goddess were incorporated into the so-called 'First Life of Brigid'. *Brìghde* brought back fertility to the land with her magic white hazel wand, and honouring her was thought to please the Goddess.

Brìghde (Bree-juh) was also believed to be the mid-wife (*bean-glùin* = knee woman) of the virgin Mary. When a woman was in labour, she invoked the saint's name, and if the birth was easy, it meant *Brìghde* was pleased with the family. While in labour, a woman would recite the *sloinntearachd Bhrìghde*, the genealogy or lineage of Brigid.

*Sloinneadh na Ban-naomh Brìghde
Lasair dhealrach òir, muime chorr Chriosda
Brìghde nighinn Dughaill duinn
Mhic Aoidh, mhic Airt, mhic Cuinn,
Mhic Crearair, mhic Cis, mhic Carmaig,
mhic Carrunn.*

The genealogy of the Holy Woman Brigid
Radiant flame of gold,
noble foster woman of Christ
Brigid, daughter of Dugall Brown (haired)
Son of Hugh, son of Art, son of Conn
Son of Crearair, son of Cis, son of Cormac,
son of Carrunn.

(Carmichael 1900, v.1, 164)

On the eve of St Bride's festival, the girls of each *baile* (farm town) made sheaves of grain into corn dollies called *Brìdeagan* and decorated them with flowers and shells. The doll was taken around the village and an offering of a pin, button, pebble, shell etc. had to be made to it. The *bannag Brìghde* (Brigid's bannock) or a roll of cheese was made to honour the corn doll. The girls of the *baile* had an all-night feast with the boys in Brigid's honour.

Brìghde was believed to bring back fertility to the land with her magic white hazel wand.

Imbolc

Imbalg or *Imbolc* was the ancient name for this festival celebrating the coming of milk in pregnant farm animals. This word may mean 'the bag' or udder; this time is a milk festival as well as a fire festival.

Fires were banked in such a way that the flames were extinguished, but the embers were

kept alive covered with ashes. They could be relit the next morning if done properly. There were accompanying incantations for the *smàladh an teine* (banking of the fire).

Fèill Pàdraig

Fèill Pàdraig is St Patrick's Day (17 Mar). It used to be observed in the West Highlands and Islands. Observing St Patrick's Day properly might end winter storms so that the planting season could begin. Stories about Fionn and *An Fhèinn* (aka the Fiana, Fionn's band of men) were well-known in Gaelic Scotland as well as Gaelic Ireland. According to tradition, the stories lasted because Oisín, Fionn's son, and Caoilte, one of the Fiana, survived into the time of St Patrick, and he had a conversation with the saint about the wonderful things Fionn's band had seen and done.

Didòmhnaich Càisg / Didòmhnaich Ceusda

Didòmhnaich Càisg means Easter Sunday, the holiest day of the Christian calendar, and *Didòmhnaich Ceusda* means Crucifixion Sunday. On Sunday people used to climb to the top of a high hill before sunrise to worship God at Easter.

*Bha ghrian or-ghil an dèidh
eirigh air sgeith
nam beam mòra agus i a' caochladh dath.
Bha i a' dannsadh a sìos agus a suas ann an
gàirdeachas ri aiseirigh àigh
Slànaighear gràdhach nam buadh.*

The bright gold sun was just risen
on the crests
of the mountains changing colour.
It was dancing up and down in
exultation at the joyous resurrection of the
beloved Saviour of goodness.

Bealltainn – the Beginning of Summer

This festival marks the beginning of summer, and the summer half of the year.

Latha buidhe Bealltainn (the Yellow Day of Bealltuinn) is an expression still current among Highlanders; the day was yellow because of the huge fires built for the purification of cattle.

On May Day all the fires were extinguished and the *tein’-èiginn*, a fire made from friction, was lit on a hill. The fire was divided in two, and people and cattle rushed through for purification and safeguarding against disease in the year following. People took fire from the hill to each of their houses.



The Coligny Calendar, likely made for druids, was buried in the first century AD; SAM is the word for summer--samhradh in modern Scottish Gaelic.

Am Beannachadh Bealltainn

The *Bealltainn* Blessing was a blessing addressed to the Virgin Mary for a pagan ceremony; originally the day was sacred to the god Bel / Belenus.

*A Mhoire, a mhàthair nan naomh
Beannaich an t-àl ‘s an crodh-laoigh
Na leig fuath no fòirne, ‘n ar gaoith
Fuadaich oirne doigh nan daoib.*

Mary, mother of saints
Bless our flocks and calves
Do not let hate or harm come near us
Drive from us the ways of the wicked.

In many parts of the Highlands, the young people of the district would meet on the moors on 1st May. They cut a table in the green sod, of a round figure, by cutting a trench in the ground of sufficient circumferences to hold the whole company. They then kindled a fire, dressed a repast of eggs and milk of the constituency of custard. They kneaded a cake of oatmeal, which was toasted at the embers against a stone. After the custard was eaten, they divided the cake into as many portions as there were people in the company, as much alike as possible in size and shape. They daubed one of the pieces with charcoal, till it was black all over, and they were then all put into a bonnet together, and each one blindfolded took out a portion. The bonnet holder was entitled to the last bit, and whoever drew the black bit was the person who was compelled to leap three times over the flames. People say this was originally to appease a god, whose favour they tried to implore by making the year productive. (Dwelly 1911: 82-30)

Là Chaluim Chille

Là Chaluim Chille is literally ‘St Columba’s Day’ (9 June). The Thursday in June closest to Columba’s feast day is particularly lucky for beginnings. Thursdays are lucky for starting things except when Bealltainn falls on it.

On Wednesday Eve the mother makes a bere, rye or oat cake into which a small coin was put (shells, buttons formerly). The cake was toasted before a fire of rowan, yew, oak or other sacred wood. In the morning the father cut the cake into as many pieces as there were children.

The children each chose a cake from a *ciosan* (basket). The child who found the coin in her/his piece got the crop of lambs for that year for making a start on their own farm. (Carmichael 1900: 162)

Lughnasadh – the Beginning of Autumn

The name means ‘Lugh’s assembly’ from Lug(h) and *násad(h)*; Lugh was a sky god worshipped all over Gaul and Britain. Lugdunum, which became Lyon, France, means ‘Lugh’s fortress’.

In Ireland people make pilgrimages to Croagh Patrick (*Cruach Phádraig*) to memorialise the battle between St Patrick and Crom Dubh, a demon. But Maire MacNéill, an Irish scholar, has shown that pagans believed that a battle took place between Lugh and a storm or thunder god (Torran). August is the beginning of the harvest season, the time when first fruits, berries, were picked and eaten. During this time trial marriages were contracted for the year following.

Latha Fèill Mìcheil

Latha Fèill Mìcheil is St Michael’s Day (29 Sept). St Michael was called brian Mìcheil (the god/king Michael) showing his pre-Christian origin. He is the patron saint of the sea, of boats and boatmen, and of horses and horsemen. Mont St Michel in Brittany and Mount St Michael in Cornwall were religious foundations dedicated to him.

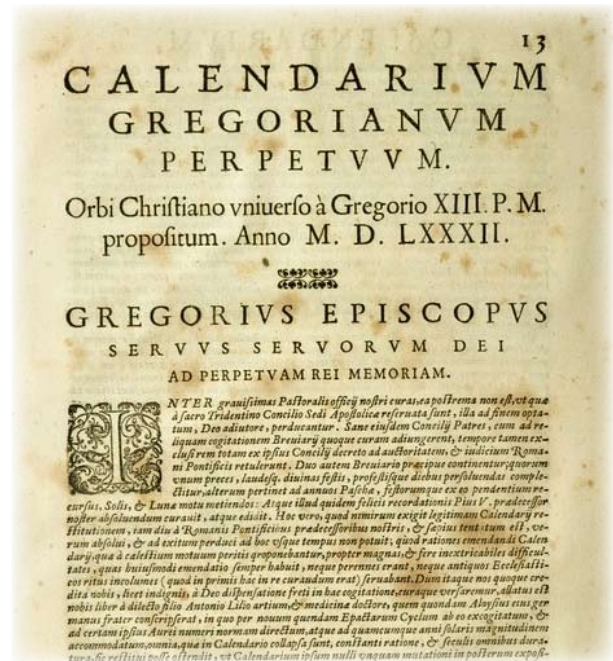
The festival took place at the time when the corn (grain) was harvested. It was more important in Scotland than Lughnasadh; many of the activities performed at Lughnasadh shifted to St Michael’s Day in Scotland.

The eve of St Michael’s is for bringing in the carrots, baking the strùan (cake of all grains locally grown), killing the lamb, and ‘stealing’ the horses for a horse race—they were returned after. During the day the lamb and strùan are distributed, there is a pilgrimage to the burial ground to honour the dead, and the horse races are held on the shore. Young men and women exchange gifts during the day and at the dance in the evening as tokens of interest in a continuing relationship.

Often remembered by old people as the best day of the calendar; there are references to this holiday in Gaelic songs as well.

Oidhch’ Fhèill Mìcheil agus Nollaig Blasaidh sinn uile dhè ‘n bhonnach.

On St Michael’s Eve and Christmas
We will all taste the bannock.
(Carmichael 1900: v-i, 119-152)



The Gregorian Calendar 1582

The reform of the Julian calendar resulted in much confusion in Gaelic Scotland and Ireland. Under Pope Gregory XIII the Gregorian calendar, adopted in 1582, meant that 10 to 12 days were removed so that the calendar matched the constellations. For example the summer solstice which had been observed on St John’s Day (c. 24 June) was celebrated on St Columba’s Day (9 June). In Scotland Lunasadh (1 August) disappeared and many activities done at the beginning of August shifted to St Michael’s Day.

Sources:

Alexander Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica*, v.1 & 2, 1900

Edward Dwelly, *Illustrated Gaelic to English Dictionary*, 1911

E G Richards, *Mapping Time: The Calendar and its History*, 2000



Damned Spot!

by James McQuiston
Pennsylvania, USA

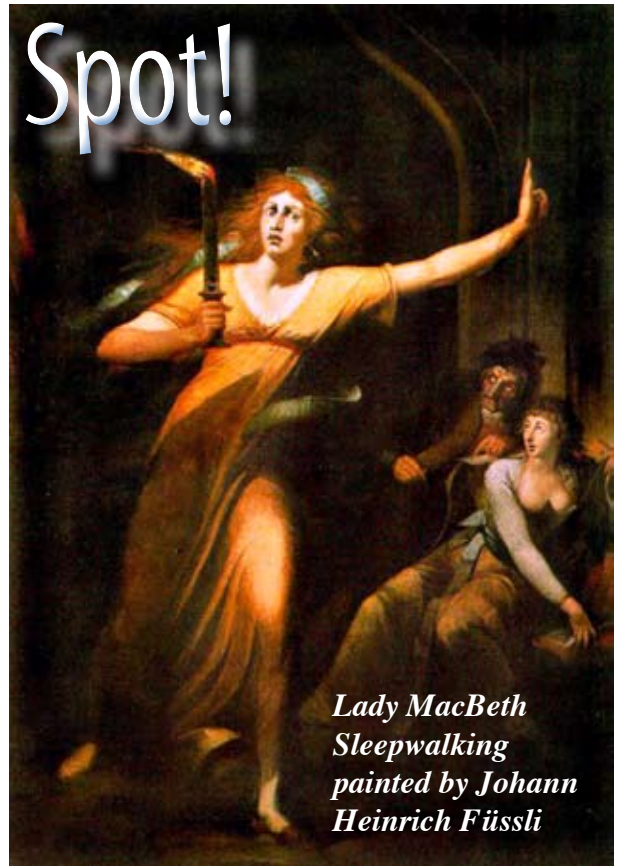
When Lady MacBeth uttered these famous words, she was not trying to get her puppy dog to go outside for his nightly doodies.

“Out damned spot! Out, I say!” is followed, within the next couple of sentences, with “. . . who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?”

The old man she was referring to, while engaged in a very remorseful sleepwalking episode, was Duncan, King of Scotland. Duncan was said to be killed, at her urging and insistence, by her own husband MacBeth, so that she might become Queen of Scotland. It may also have been that the ‘old man’ needed replaced with a younger more vibrant leader.

MacBeth, or *Mac Bethad mac Findlaích*, was a real character in ancient Scotland, as was his wife, who has been known as the Grouch of Scotland, not for the reason one might think. Her name was *Gruoch ingen Boite* and she was said to be the daughter of *Boite mac Cináeda*, son of King *Cináed*, or King Kenneth. She descended from royalty and, while awaiting her turn, saw two of her relatives die before they could take the throne. Her son, *Gille Coemgáin*, was killed in 1032, burned in a hall with fifty of his men. The next year one of her male relatives, probably her only brother, was murdered by Malcolm II.

In one last attempt, at least according to William Shakespeare, Lady MacBeth attempts to achieve her rightful place as the Queen of Scotland by convincing her husband to kill Duncan. Unfortunately, she never ascends to the throne, as she takes her own life, offstage, in remorse for her act, while still sleepwalking.



*Lady MacBeth
Sleepwalking
painted by Johann
Heinrich Füssli*

Blood plays a dual role in this scene, that of the abhorrent result of murder, and also that of the theory of ‘royal blood.’

The killing of a king even has it’s own descriptor - ‘regicide’; the death of a king, its own odd saying . . . “The King is dead. Long live the King.”

How can this last saying make any sense?

Well, in primitive cultures, long before Scotland was even a country, it was a noticed phenomenon that in any herd, the stallion, the bull, or the stag had to remain strong to keep the herd strong. Once he was defeated in the battle of ‘the survival of the fittest’ or became too old to procreate, a new stallion, bull or stag would take over and rejuvenate the herd with new blood, though the blood of the old leader still remained in the mix.

And so it developed that many ancient societies actually killed their own king when he became too feeble to lead the troops, or procreate new royal blood.



King James I of England (James VI of Scotland) was the first Scottish king to ever rule over England. He was the son of the executed Mary, Queen of Scots, and was also a descendant of the assassinated King James I of Scotland, showing just how dramatically a successor of murdered monarchs can bear even more amazing fruit.

And quite often the slain king would be deemed a god and would be said, in death, to be responsible for successful crops and for prosperity in coming years. In more civilized groups the king was often simply killed in effigy, and was replaced by a son or some other stronger rival. At times the king or chieftain was, in fact, killed by his own son.

Hints of this mythological and historical phenomenon can be seen even in the Biblical story of Jesus, who is said to have remarked, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit." Jesus became the ultimate, though not unique, religious version of the dying king phenomenon. Before his death he was called 'King of the Jews' and few can argue that his death bore much fruit in his name.

Throughout history, the king took the throne, for the most part, knowing the day would come when he would lose his life over it.

One king who died a famously 'infamous' death was James I of Scotland. He was kidnapped as a child and held captive for many years in England, while his Stewart uncle, the Duke of Albany, served as leader of Scotland in his absence.

Some say Albany strategically refused to pay the ransom simply to remain the pseudo king.

Eventually James was released and returned to his rightful place as King of Scotland. He almost immediately tried and executed many of his Stewart relatives who either had played a role in delaying his ransom, or posed some other threat to his kingship.

James was not satisfied to stop there and went on to kill or, at minimum, humiliate most nobles throughout Scotland, until there were few to oppose him. In the end, it only took a few.

In February of 1437, James lodged at the Blackfriars monastery on the outskirts of Perth. He was accompanied by the queen but was separated from most of their servants. The king's cousin, Sir Robert Stewart, was chamberlain of the royal household and used his privileged position to allow a small band of former Albany adherents, led by Sir Robert Graham, into the building.

James was alerted to the attackers' presence, after servants discovered their approach, giving him time to hide in a sewer tunnel. Unfortunately for King James, the exit of the sewer pipe had recently been blocked off, at his own request, to prevent tennis balls from getting lost. James was found trapped inside the sewer pipe and was assassinated. His most inglorious death was followed by the strong leadership of his wife and the succession of many men of his blood also becoming a 'King James', right up to, and including King James, son of Mary Queen of Scots, who became the first king of both Scotland and England. His mother's controversial royal death played a role in this unheard of situation – that of a Scottish king ruling England.

Over in Ireland, the aging 16th century Ulster warrior and hero, Sorley Boy McDonnell, was led into Dublin by the English to see the head of his son set on a spike at the castle wall. He intriguingly remarked, "My son has many heads." Sorley was well aware of the age-old phenomenon of the death of a chieftain breathing even more life into his clan's desire the fight.

From perhaps before, and certainly after the height of Egyptian power, the dead Pharaoh was considered a god. This carried on, to some degree or another, in the case of deceased kings, sacrificed Druids, persecuted Christian and Muslim holy men, who in many cases became saints or were called martyrs (for example St. Patrick), and even to William Wallace (Guardian of Scotland) and Robert Bruce (King of Scotland) whose giant statues still protect the entrance to Edinburgh Castle, and whose lives have inspired so many books, movies and poems . . . and so many freedom fighters.

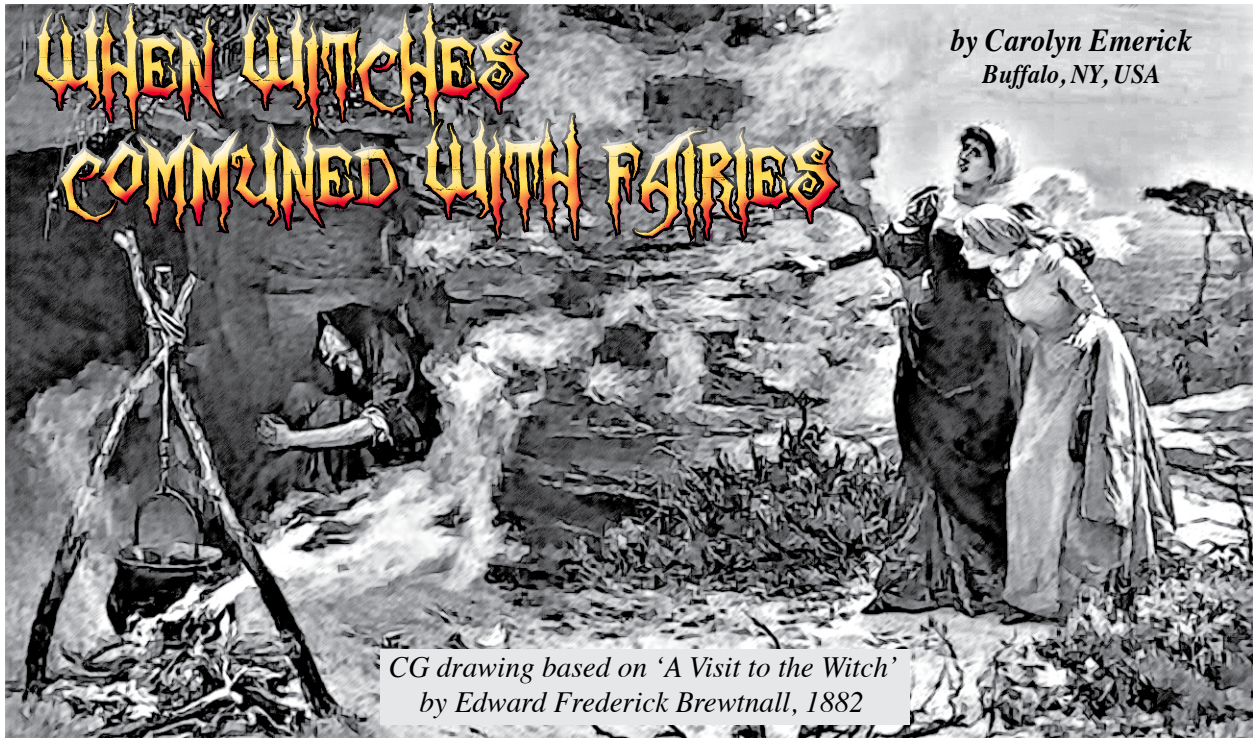
The deification of the dead king/hero/leader reinforced the divinity of his blood, so much so that kings were said to rule by 'divine right' simply because of their royal blood. Like the old query - Which came first, the chicken or the egg? – the question could be asked – Which came first, the divine blood, or the mundane, superstitious, even guilty assignment of godliness to deceased royalty, over thousands of years?

Modern humankind has attempted a more civilized approach to replacing the head of government - that of the vote. And yet, look at those two most famous, legendary U.S. Presidents, Lincoln and Kennedy – both dying while still in a pro-active position of leadership. Their deaths breathed new life into the fight for personal freedom, and their fame persists.

Today, the killing of leaders continues across the world, inspiring their followers to fight on. A quick look at the 'Arab Spring' proves this.

There is something about the spilling of blood, royal or otherwise, that seals the deal, from a simple blood-brother ceremony to the ultimate sacrifice paid for the kingdom. Perhaps the most accurate definition of a civilized society might be a society where the letting of blood is not the determining factor in establishing order and enjoying prosperity.

Or, perhaps the 'spot' has so deeply stained the human consciousness that humankind has no choice but to remain nothing more than its own worst enemy.



Our modern conventions tend to view the realms of fairies and witches separately. Witches have been viewed as evil, while fairies are seen as benevolent, cute, and kind. As scholars reevaluate witch trials and the confessions of those accused, we are coming to new conclusions on accused witches. One subject that has been discussed in the academic field of folklore, but has seemingly not seeped into the popular consciousness, is the connection between fairies and witches.



*'The Fairy Dance' - circa 1904,
Robert Alexander Hillingford*

Like so many of our contemporary notions, the image of the fairy is heavily influenced by Victorian representations. The conception of the fairy from previous ages was completely stripped and buried, while the image of childlike, sweet, innocent, and playful sprites was popularized. As an analogy, consider that many have observed a similar phenomenon with angels. Biblical angels are warriors. They are imposing and intimidating figures. The Victorian era stripped angels of their image of strength and imposed a soft, dainty, infantile nature to them. Similarly, fairies had a much different image prior to the Victorian age. They were often seen as dangerous and viewed with suspicion. They could be beautiful or very ugly. Sometimes fairies were construed with other creatures, such as the trows (hideous trollish creatures) of Orkney (Emerick, p19).

Just as the Victorian era influenced the perceptions of the time, the concept of the fairy was altered by trends and cultural movements of previous eras. To be sure, fairy and other lore did (and indeed still does) continue to thrive in the British Isles, but it is difficult to fully understand

the pre-Christian conception of these creatures due to the islands' very early conversion. In his heavily researched book called *Elves, Wights, and Trolls*, Kvedulf Gundarsson mentions that Scandinavian *alfs* (from whence we get the English word elf) and the Celtic *sidhe* were both initially related to the Neolithic practice of the worship of the dead buried in mounds. He says that at the time of the late Stone Age "the material cultures [of the Norse and Celts] were virtually identical: it is possible that the *sidhe* and some of the *alfs* may once have been related" however as time progressed and they became separate and distinct figures, they developed different connotations within each respective culture. Within folkloric traditions "Nordic mound-*alfs* feel welcoming to their kin; the *sidhe* feel indifferent" (Gundarsson, 2). He goes on to say that while "some of the characteristics and dangers of *sidhe* and *alfs* may be the same... *alfs* are much better-disposed towards humankind... they are far less inclined towards casual malice or deliberate entrapment than are the *sidhe*" (Gundarsson, 3). However "in later texts, the *alfs* often appear as malicious beings" (Gundarsson, 59).

The late sagas Gundarsson goes on to mention are written after conversion to Christianity, so we see a shift in the way *alfs* are viewed by the Norse during pre and post conversion periods. It stands to reason a similar shift would have occurred in the Celtic conception of such beings. The fact that Christianity came to Britain very early means that beliefs in these spirits would have been altered much earlier than in areas where indigenous beliefs continued to flourish for centuries.

We do know that local folklore and customs were allowed to continue under initial conversion to Catholicism. In fact, there are records that demonstrate the tactic of the Church was to simply whitewash pagan customs with a Christian veneer. A letter from Pope Gregory I to Abbot Mellitus in the late 6th century directly instructs English church leaders to keep the

pagan houses of worship in their original place, simply remove the idols and replace them with relics of saints:

Tell Augustine that he should be no means destroy the temples of the gods but rather the idols within those temples. Let him, after he has purified them with holy water, place altars and relics of the saints in them. For, if those temples are well built, they should be converted from the worship of demons to the service of the true God...

Note the use of the word "demons" to describe the indigenous European gods; we will circle back to this. Gregory I goes on to explain that pagan holy days and customs should be continued but with minor alterations:

Further, since it has been their custom to slaughter oxen in sacrifice, they should receive some solemnity in exchange. Let them therefore, on the day of the dedication of their churches, or on the feast of the martyrs whose relics are preserved in them, build themselves huts around their one-time temples and celebrate the occasion with religious feasting. They will sacrifice and eat the animals not any more as an offering to the devil, but for the glory of God... (Gregory I)

So here we see two things that are relevant to understanding the connection between fairies and the devil: the old gods are equated with demons in the eyes of the church, and folk religion (a fusion of the old beliefs with the new) has been allowed to carry on under Catholic domination.

Gundarsson also discusses the conflation of elves with demons. He says that "as the English grew further away from their native culture and Latin education spread... the 'demonic' terminology came to define the aelf-word to some degree." There was no word for

or concept of demons to the Anglo-Saxons, so “aelf was probably as close as the Anglo-Saxon language and culture could come to expressing the sense of a supernatural being which could interfere directly with human consciousness” (Gundarsson, 69). Ergo, when the new belief system was placed over the old, the two systems became blurred.

When we move forward in time to the Reformation, however, we see another shift in popular belief. In his paper published in the academic journal “Folklore” in 1921, “Mingling of Fairy and Witch Beliefs,” J.A. MacCulloch (author of the still popular book *The Religion of the Ancient Celts*) discusses the view of fairies held by Scottish witch hunters and demonologists during and after the Reformation. Although the Inquisition was a decidedly Catholic endeavor,

MacCulloch points out that it “never reached Scotland” and that pre-Reformation “trials for sorcery were few in number... Regular trials for witchcraft came in with the Reformation.”

Sadly, things that “were matters of everyday experience in Europe,” i.e. elements of folk religion, which were “never in question before the beginning of the sixteenth century” were now illegal and doggedly hunted by prosecutors (or persecutors) of witches (pp. 233-234).

To summarize the notions of fairies held by the new Protestant world view, he says “Fairyland and its denizens had become a real part of Satan’s kingdom of darkness” (p231). In other words, common folk beliefs of fairies had become combined with Christian beliefs of Satan, hell, and demons. Therefore, any person found to be communicating with a fairy (a folk



Joseph Noel Paton, 'Puck and Fairies' - from *A Midsummer Nights Dream*, 1850

occurrence that had been common for centuries if not longer) was suddenly considered Satanic.

Mainland Europe's Calvinism, called "Calvin's gloomy creed" by MacCulloch, had been adopted with great zeal in Scotland (p234). However, Scotland had zealots of her own pushing puritanical ideologies which bordered on obsession. John Knox was a well-known hunter of witches. Ironically the fervor became so intense that no one was safe, and he himself was accused (McQuiston, 23). But one of the most adamant of them all was the famous King James. Known as King James I when he inherited the English throne, he was previously titled James VI in Scotland. When monarchs make religious zealotry a component of their reign, it generally translates into the suffering of their subjects. Thus James VI's obsession with witches and demons brought the terror of witch hunting to Scotland.

Before commissioning his famous King James Bible, James VI literally wrote the book on demons. He read the many other books on demonology available at the time before penning his own "Demonologie." His volume very clearly demonstrates "the tendency to make fairyland a province of Satan's kingdom" (MacCulloch, 239).

James apparently had an obsession with witches, as he was known to attend witch trials and made their persecution a hallmark of his reign. James discusses the evils of fairies (spelled "Phairie" in his text) in Chapter V of his "Demonologie":

That fourth kinde of spirites, which by the Gentiles was called Diana, and her wandring court, and amongst vs was called the Phairie (as I tould you) or our good neighboures, was one of the sortes of illusiones that was rifest in the time of Papistrie: for although it was holden odious to Prophetie by the devill, yet whome these kinde of Spirites carryed awaie, and informed, they were thought to be sonsiest and of best life.

He writes in question and answer form, and goes on to ask why witches who interact with fairies ought to be put to death:

But how can it be then, that sundrie Witches have gone to death with that confession, that they have been transported with the Phairie to such a hill, which opening, they went in, and there saw a faire Queene, who being now lighter, gave them a stone that had sundrie vertues, which at sundrie times hath bene produced in judgement?

I say that, even as I said before of that imaginary ravishing of the spirite foorth of the bodie. For may not the devil object to their fantasie, their senses being dulled, and as it were a sleepe, such hilles & houses within them, such glistering courts and traines, and whatsoever such like wherewith he pleaseth to delude them. And in the meane time their bodies being senselesse, to convay in their hande any stone or such like thing, which he makes them to imagine to have received in such a place (James VI, p74).

James insists that any person's experiences in fairyland are delusions of the devil. Having willingly entered into an interaction with the devil is grounds for execution. Ergo, having a conversation with the fairies (albeit in a dream or hallucination, or sometimes even an odd looking stranger could be thought to be a fairy man) was punishable by death. This is the political climate of the late 16th and early 17th centuries in Scotland, and we can see that it is a complete reversal of the approach taken by the Roman Catholic Church during the previous millennium.

Another spirit often entwined with fairies were familiars. Emma Wilby, a modern scholar who has dedicated intensive study to Scottish and English witch trials, explains that fairies were often confused with witch's familiars in

her article “The Witch’s Familiar and the Fairy in Early Modern England and Scotland.” She asserts that “the evidence suggests that for those with a particularly obscure grasp of Christian teaching the cosmos would have been peopled by a medley of supernatural figures, of both Christian and pre-Christian origin, with little or no discrimination being made between them...” (p301). In other words, since the general public was largely illiterate and only knew bits and pieces of religion based on what was heard in church, the common people’s folk beliefs were a mixture of the old and new. But, as Wilby explains, it seems both commoners as well as church leaders and elites had no conception of which beliefs were old and which were new during this period. In effect, it was a confusing mess of pre-Christian religion becoming distorted and misinterpreted by a now Christian population who clearly did not understand either religion very well.

Today, we see the image of both witches and fairies changing yet again. The neo-pagan and pagan re-constructionist movements are making strives to revive (or re-invent) the indigenous religions of our ancestors. There is a renewed



‘The Magic Circle’
John William Waterhouse, 1885

interest in understanding folklore that involves communing with nature spirits. These movements as well as scholarship in the academic arena are re-shaping the conventional view of witches. We now understand that accused witches were often the innocent victims of political motives or jealous neighbors. However, there is strong evidence that at least some of the accused were people carrying on traditions of healing, herbalism, and possibly shamanic practices from the pre-Christian era. Communing with the spirits of the land and ancestors is a practice almost universal in indigenous world cultures. Fairies and other nature spirits were a remnant from a distant past – a past that threatened the new Protestant world view. Protestant reformers were absolutely correct in their assessment that Catholicism had allowed elements of paganism to continue. And from a folklorist’s perspective, thank goodness it did! A puritanical world devoid of imagination, stories of fairies, elves, and brownies seems like a very grim world, indeed.

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Henceforth Tales

by Cass and Deborah Wright
Bellows Falls, VT, USA

Kerr

Oft-quoted down through the centuries, rural Scottish monks addressing All Hallows' Eve liked to beseech in prayer: "Frae goblins an' ghoulies, an' lang-legged beesties, O Good Lord save and deliver us . . ." - but what about assassins hiding in the shadows of winding alleyways, knives in hand, or prowling highwaymen, who lie in wait to ambush a traveler merely for the coins in one's purse, or the value of a horse? How about ghoulish corpses hung from courtyard archways, or screaming raiders galloping out of the night to sack entire villages with torch and spear? Better still, imagine bloodthirsty headhunters, tracking their quarry into foreign countries, whet-sharpened hatchets hidden 'neath their cloaks? How safe would fears and worries like those leave you feeling, as you hasten home to your hearth, with long, dark October shadows deepening?

Clan Kerr, renowned for their status as both killers and lawmen, could perennially debate, as with the proverbial egg and chicken, which word had come first, and then inspired the other: their surname, or the ancient Scots term of '*corrie*' meaning "on the left" or "left-turning"? They were obviously linked: in the terminology of the Borders, the Kerrs have always been "corrie-fisted", or left-handed, and by no random coincidence, either, for not only did the Kerr men build their keeps with doors and shutters opening to the left, and stairs which rose clockwise, but also trained their sons to be left-hand dominant in all practices, most especially in riding, hunting and war.

Despite the Kerrs' Anglo-Norman origin, having settled in the Borders in the early 1300's, several published historians in the 19th and 20th centuries have suggested that their name could have come down from the Gaelic "*ciarr*" (dark-haired), or even the Norse "*kjalr*" (marsh dweller), but given this riding clan's peculiar traditions, and their pride of Norman descent, it's obvious to most Caledonian scholars that the "left-hand" origin is the correct one.

The first progenitor on record is one John Ker, a hunter in Swinhope, and however spelt, their surname always rhymes with star, despite having chosen a bold and triumphant sun to grace their crest, whose motto: *Sero Sed Serio*, translates from Latin as "late, but in earnest". The Clan's two branches descend from rival brothers, Ralph and John; the Kerrs of Ferniehurst tracing back to Ralph, and the Kerrs of Cessford to John. This distinction is pivotal, for just as the Kerrs were second only to the Scotts for sheer power and wealth in the Borders, they were also second only to the Douglasses in the way that two houses divided nearly an entire bloodline.



Kerr Tartan and Shield



One generation after another, the governing branches of the Kerrs were always those families of Cessford and Ferniehurst, with never one in majority for very long, two great houses continually locked in fierce competition for land and wealth, as well as for the Wardenship of the Middle Marches, an office of great authority held for the majority of the 16th century by one Kerr branch, or the other. That goal alone proved so great a pursuit that it provided years of employment by the Kerrs for the small but ambitious Border family of the Rutherfords.

But the post was not without grave risk: in 1511, Sir Robert Kerr, serving as Middle Marches Warden, was ambushed on a narrow, remote woodland track while on patrol, and murdered, by a trio of English outlaws. Two of the killers were caught in short order, but one of them escaped the grasp of the law, managing to vanish swiftly from common sight . . . but who was, in fact, secretly followed by two crafty Kerr kinsmen, men known by the surname of Tait.

Over a period of weeks, the Taits tracked the culprit, a brigand named Starhead, across the breadth of the Marches, and over the Border into England, and finally, to tawdry lodgings

in the English city of York. There, under cover of night, they finally confronted and seized the murderer, savagely slaying and decapitating him. Leaving their prey's headless body spilling blood across the cobblestones, the Brothers Tait then rode for home, returning in high spirits to the Scottish Marches with the outlaw's head proudly borne along in a burlap sack, and soon began presenting it for public display at the Kerr's various family keeps, the message being simple and to the point: no-one crossed this Clan with impunity!

In 1526, while attempting to liberate James V (then a minor) from his forced tutelage by the Douglas Earl of Angus, Scott of Buccleuch intercepted the royal progression in Melrose. Though commanding 600 lancers, his attempted "rescue" of the conspiring prince was defeated, largely due to Kerr riders from the houses of both Cessford and Ferniehurst, who slew nearly 100 of the liberators. Unfortunately, the rout was not absolute, as one of Buccleuch's fleeing lancers turned on no less an opponent than Sir Andrew Kerr (at a place still called "Turn Again"), and in slaying his pursuer, initiated what became the long and "verrie bluddy" feud of the Kerrs versus the Scotts.

Raging along for 26 years, the feud seemed to defy all attempts to be permanently quelled, including the marriage of Buccleuch and Janet Kerr of Ferniehurst, with the body-count between the two clans continuing to rise with waxing of each month's moon, until the keystone incident of "the Murder in the High Street", an event so alarming that it was immediately heralded throughout the taverns, barracks, coach stops and churchyards across all of southern Scotland.

On that occasion, in 1552, clan chief Scott of Buccleuch was waylaid, alone and afoot, while visiting the city of Edinburgh, by a mixed party of Kerrs, Homeses, and other confederates, who viciously stabbed the old man to death in plain sight of onlookers.

All passion and bravado aside, this deed proved to be a line whose crossing could not be borne. Report of the crime by the City Guard resulted in the assassins being swiftly declared outlaws by the Crown, causing every Scott clansman between Edinburgh and Gretna Green to go riding out hot for vengeance with steel bared, manning dire, torch-lit vigils at every bridge and crossroad across the Marches. Very soon thereafter, the Kerr lairds and chieftains, haggard from fleeing armed pursuit over virtually every mile they travelled, hastened to sue for peace with truces, treaties and further marriages, until all thirst for vengeance was suitably cooled.

With the great feud finally over, the rivalry between Cessford and Ferniehurst flared back up, focusing on the town of Jedburgh, the folk of which the Ferniehurst Kerrs maligned for politically favoring the infant King James VI over Mary, Queen of Scots. Under that excuse, Sir Thomas Kerr of Ferniehurst, leading a band of Kerrs and Turnbells, began campaigns of raid and pillage on Jedburgh in 1572. Lord Ruthven was dispatched from Edinburgh to defend the townsfolk, and at that point Walter Kerr of Cessford found enough grist in that churning cauldron to justify his joining the fray on the side of the defenders, in order to challenge his

Ferniehurst rivals. To that end, Walter invited the Clan's favorite henchmen, the Rutherfords, along at stirrup; in turn, they brought along a clutch of their cronies from Clan Bell. Never one to be outfoxed, Sir Thomas then turned his predatory attentions to the town of Roxburgh, recruiting the assistance of his cousin Robert Kerr of Ancrum, as well as the reviled wolfshhead known as Alexander Trotter and his gang of highwaymen, in order to assure plenty of fire and sword.

In the grand scheme, though, the checkerboard tactics of raiding or defending towns, rescuing or ransoming noblemen, and lifting or losing cattle, became mere details in a long, old chain of chaos; where the fruits of sacking and reiving beckoned, the House of Ferniehurst raised arms in the name of Mary, Queen of Scots, or the Catholic Earls, and then the Kerrs of Cessford would oppose them on behalf of James VI, either side often in alliance with the Eliotts, the Youngs or the Rutherfords.

But most internicine struggles were ultimately resolved by default, through the Union of Crowns, when James VI of Scotland became James I of England in 1603, and also, finally, by the marriage of Anne Kerr of Cessford to William Kerr of Ferniehurst, from whom the Earls and Marquesses of Lothian descend. Their growing proclivity to behave in more upright and lawful ways, and do more to curry favor at the court of the powerful new King of Great Britain, served to place all the Houses of the Kerrs in the best position to acquire more honors, more titles, and more land.

Strategically, these positions of royal favor also allowed them to avoid being leveraged into the attrition of the Scotch-Irish Plantation Act, which had forcibly relocated so many of the other reiving families of Borders, despite the fact that they raided alongside the Kerrs on many a moonlit night. The Armstrongs, the Bells, the Turnbells, the Littles, the Youngs - *they* may have to learn to like the taste of Irish porridge, but ne'er a Kerr!

When the last Jacobite uprising led to open rebellion against the throne of King George II in 1745, the Kerrs, unlike most of their Borders neighbors who had claimed neutrality, proudly pledged their allegiance and their arms to the Hanoverian forces, and along with a few other clans, such as the MacKenzies, the Campbells, and the MacKays, marched to war against the Highland regiments who fought for the dream of the Bonnie Prince. In points of fact, the Kerr's Ferniehurst line alone boasted three nobleman who were high-ranking officers under the Duke of Cumberland, including a Knight of the Thistle, a colonel commanding troops of cavalry, and the defending governor of Edinburgh Castle.

Since then, seldom has a generation passed with Kerr descendants absent from the annals of Parliament, the Royal Navy, University administration, or other seats of high, public service.

Late, but in Earnest, they may have arrived, but what their history in Scotland lacked in age, these corrie-fisted men of the Marches more than made-up for, with an epic reach that seldom exceeded their grasp!

This material is just a sampling of one of the 60 clan names and legends appearing in the upcoming book -

Henceforth Tales

by Cass and Deborah Wright

Follow future issues of Celtic Guide for further information about publication details. . . . and thank you for joining us at the hearth ! - DW



SCOTLAND'S MIGHTY MEN OF OLD

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PART FOUR

by Piotr Kronenberger
Poland

THE OTHER SIDE

THE TRUE STORY

Archeological evidence from the 1st Century A.D. only reaffirms Greek and Roman reports about Celtic human sacrifices. In the village of Alverstone, Isle of Wight, Great Britain, a burial shaft full of human skulls was uncovered. Nice tie-in to Halloween, as skulls are among the symbols of this festival.

The Holy Trinity is almost universally associated with Christianity. Records left by Julius Caesar and Roman poet Lucan suggest, however, that the Celts may have venerated a “holy trinity” all their own before Christ’s time. It consisted of the gods Taranis, Teutates and Esus.

Taranis was the lord of sky and thunder, hence Caesar likened him to Jupiter. People sacrificed to him were burned in order to appease the elements of Fire and Air.

Perhaps this deity is the source of the “Wicker Man” legends – about a gigantic human-like construction inside which people and animals were locked and burned.

Teutates was one of the oldest and most terrible gods, perhaps borrowed by my brothers from the Germanic tribes. He was the lord of Water, and he delighted in sacrificial drownings. His sacred animal was the bull.

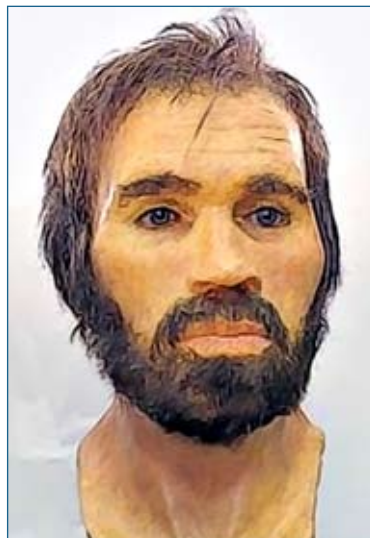
He was also known to his worshipers as “Albiorix” – the Lord of All, or “Teutorix”, Lord of the Tribe. The Romans saw in him a combination of Mars and Mercury.

Esus liked his sacrifices to be either hung or buried alive. This appeased the element of

Earth and was thought to be connected with the growth of plants.

To some, he was an incarnation of the horned god Cernunnos – guardian of the Wild and lord of the Underworld. Others venerated him as the god of plenty. In that form, Esus was commonly depicted with a sack full of coins.

Another perfect example of sacrificial practices among the Celts is “The Lindow Moss Man”, found in 1984 in the peatbogs of Central England – a very well-preserved corpse of a Celtic aristocrat from the turn of the centuries.



The Lindow Man, was nicknamed ‘Pete Marsh’ and is Britain’s best known and best preserved Iron Age bog body. He was pulled from the peat on Lindow Moss near Mobberley.

About 25 years of age when he died he was approx. 5ft 7in tall. Top drawing shows his remains; bottom is a facial reconstruction.

From the looks of the Lindow Man it can be deduced he was a victim of a three-fold murder. First consecrated by the Druids, he was then struck in the parietal lobe from behind, stabbed in the abdomen and finally strangled. The mark from the garrote is still visible on the Celt's neck.

The Greek geographer Strabo (or historian Herodotus, I am unsure which) mentions a similar tactic, in which death is associated with fortune-telling. First a victim is chosen. He is then stripped naked and consecrated to the gods. Next a warrior stabs this person in the abdomen. From the victim's death-throws and the flow of blood, the Druids were able to foretell the outcome of an imminent battle...

In Part Two, I mentioned sacrificial altars discovered in Normandy and Brittany. The evidence gathered there shocked scientists – it is probable that the Celts practiced ritualistic cannibalism!

They took the bones of their dead and ate the marrow, believing that the spirit of their

kinsman would guide and protect the living this way. This concept may have given rise to “head-hunting”, which we shall examine closer in the last part of this column...

To Be Continued.



EMERALD AND BRITISH ISLES

NOTHING LIKE REALLY TASTING YOUR OLD FAVORITE — FOR THE FIRST TIME.

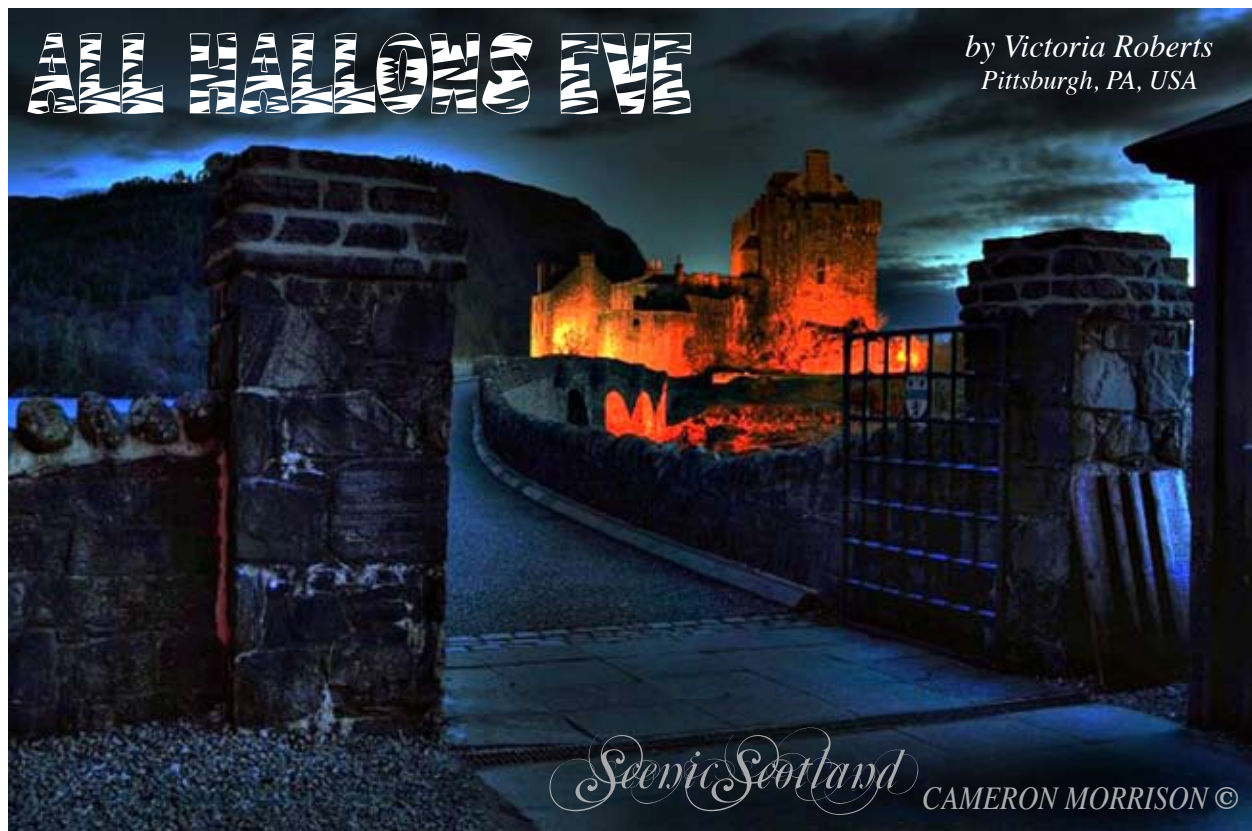
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ALL HALLOWS EVE

by Victoria Roberts
Pittsburgh, PA, USA



October is this Celtic Guide author's favorite month of the year. With ghosts, goblins, and things that go bump in the night, October 31st is a constant reminder that I'm another year older. You heard that right. Halloween is my birthday. Now stop right there. I know what you're thinking. Believe me when I say, I've heard all the jokes known to man. I may be a witch, but I'm certainly a good witch.

Like many festivals abroad, Samhain continued with the coming of Christianity. All Saints Day is November 1st in honor of the saints, known and unknown. It's only fitting that the day before All Saints Day is called All Hallows Eve. We know the typical Halloween festivities consist of trick-or-treating, costume parties, carving pumpkins, bobbing for apples, pulling pranks, visiting haunted houses, telling scary stories, and let's not forget watching horror movies. *The Exorcist* still scares me to death!

For the most part, I did all of the above, even pranks. In my younger days, my friends (who were mostly boys) and I would go corning and

tapping. Corning consisted of grabbing a handful of uncooked popcorn kernels and hurling them at the siding of houses—no windows. *Author note:* Corning does not work on brick houses! When the houses were corned, it gave the occupants quite a fright, but other than the loud crackling sound, didn't harm a thing. Tapping consisted of fastening a fishing line and sinker to the front door of an unsuspecting neighbor and hiding behind a conveniently placed shrub. When the fishing line was pulled, the sinker would knock on the door. The neighbor would answer, but low and behold, no one was there. When the fishing line was pulled again and again, the poor neighbor couldn't quite figure out where the sound was coming from. Ghost perhaps?

Even though October 31st is known by many different names, it's a time of year when warlocks, witches and the souls of the dead are set free to roam the earth. The hour before midnight is called the "witching hour" when our departed friends have a chance to return and walk among

the living. In many parts of Scotland, it was customary to leave an empty chair and a plate of food for any “guests” who might appear. To this day, flames from Halloween bonfires can still be seen on the ramparts of ancient castles in Scotland.

In the past, the wee lads and lasses blackened their faces, pretending to be spirits. The custom traced back to a time when children could be disguised as spirits and walk among the dead that eve. Any child who approached a house would be given a token to ward off evil spirits.

In today’s world, turnips are no longer used as lanterns, pumpkins are now commonplace and children no longer have to blacken their faces to walk among the dead. Instead, they wear their first grade dance costume, don Goth boots, vampire fangs, and fake blood. Yep, the Roberts’ household was pretty awe-struck when our daughter pulled this one out of her arsenal.



*A traditional Irish
turnip Jack o' Lantern
from the early 20th
century – photo taken
at the Museum of
Country Life Ireland*

VICTORIA ROBERTS
Author of Scottish Historical Romance

“One of the most exciting Highland romances
I have read. Definitely worthy of five stars!”
—*Night Owl Reviews* TOP PICK

“This book captivates the reader immediately”
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Back from the dead!!

Jim McQuiston
USA

Mary Queen of Scots

On February 8, 1587 Mary Queen of Scots was beheaded . . . but not with a single strike. The first blow missed her neck and struck the back of her head. The second blow severed the neck, except for a small bit of sinew, which the executioner cut through using the axe.

Now Mary's head has returned in the form of a 3D reconstruction carried out by the University of Dundee

The University has striven to bring us a more realistic image of one of Scotland's most famous historical figures: Mary, Queen of Scots.

The 3D virtual sculpture of Mary has been created by a team of experts for a new exhibition on the Scottish leader's life, which opened at the National Museum of Scotland in June of 2013 and runs until November 17, 2013.

Professor Caroline Wilkinson of the University of Dundee used existing portraits plus Mary's biography to reconstruct the queen's face during her reign in Scotland from the ages of 19 to 26 - a period when there is no portrait record.

The model was created using 3D modelling software and craniofacial templates, after which digital artist Janice Aitken sculpted clothing and hair, adding textures and lighting to create the finished image.

Mary succeeded to the Scottish throne when he father, King James V, died just days after her birth. She was sent to live in France when she was five and stayed there until she returned 14 years later.

After a tumultuous reign, Mary was forced to abdicate to her son and fled to England seeking protection from her cousin Queen Elizabeth I. Instead, she was imprisoned for 18 years before being executed.



Facial reconstruction of Mary Queen of Scots

Professor Wilkinson says "There were no portraits painted during Mary's time in Scotland, but there were portraits from both before and after this period.

"Normally we would begin the process of craniofacial reconstruction by examining skeletal remains, but of course we didn't have a skull to work from, in this case, so we had to work from portraits earlier and later than the depiction we were asked to create.

"What we wanted to do was depict how she would have looked at the time she lived in Scotland. This was a difficult time for her marked with illness, grief, miscarriage, and imprisonment so we wanted to show the stresses and strains of life on her face because later portraits make her look significantly older than her years.

"She is not what you would describe as a classic beauty. Mary had quite a big nose and a strong chin so when you describe her verbally she doesn't sound attractive, but the paleness of her skin, red hair, and strong features meant she had a very striking appearance."

Our Man Flint

A Celtic Guide Interview

by Alessandra Ress
Germany

EDITOR'S NOTE: Alessandra Ress is a blogger from Germany whose site deals with fantasy literature. It is called Geisterspiegel. Alessandra brings us this Celtic Guide interview with American fantasy novelist Kenneth C. Flint, who has also written under the pseudonym Casey Flynn. A resident of Omaha, Nebraska, Flint taught literature and writing at the University of Nebraska at Omaha for six years before becoming English department head for Plattsmouth High School. In 1986 he quit teaching to become a full-time novelist. The majority of his works are either based on Irish myths and legends, or else are original stories involving concepts, and sometimes characters, from Irish mythology. His earliest and best known works center around three of the most important characters of Irish legend: Lugh, Cúchulainn, and Finn MacCumhal. More recently he has written a pair of *Star Wars* short stories, and a historical fiction novel, *On Earth's Remotest Bounds: Year One: Blood and Water*, the first of a planned series.



Kenneth C. Flint

Celtic Guide: Thank you very much for taking the time to answer these questions. Could you start by introducing yourself to those of our readers who have not yet heard of you?

Kenneth C. Flint: Basically I am a writer. It's all I've ever really wanted to do. I have had the luck to work as a writer in just about every capacity, to learn about writing, and to teach it. I have realized in the process that there are certain elements, processes, and truths which are alike in every kind of writing. I have published 18 novels plus other fiction and nonfiction works including *Star Wars* stories and a history of Fort Atkinson, Nebraska, USA. I have lived all my life in Omaha, Nebraska, in the center of the USA. My wife Judith and I have two sons, Devin and Gavin. Devin is married to Melissa.

Celtic Guide: Most of your novels may be characterized as open reinterpretations of Irish Celtic myths. What fascinates you about this topic?

Kenneth C. Flint: I took a class in college called Celtic and Germanic Myths. It mainly examined the mythology of Ireland, Iceland, and Germany. I realized that these amazing stories were largely unknown to most people, and I decided to retell them in a more modern form. I started with the Celtic, as my wife is Irish. I would still like to write novels based on the Germanic tales, especially the *Völsungasaga* and *Nibelungenlied*.

Celtic Guide: Which sources did you consult for your work and how did you go about your research?

Kenneth C. Flint: We visited Ireland and explored

the countryside, meeting my wife's relatives. Most of the descriptions of places in my books come from that. I also studied the history to make the settings, dress, and customs as accurate as possible. My greatest source was the books of Lady Gregory, including *Gods and Fighting Men* and *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*. She was the first to compile the ancient tales as they were told by the bards.

Celtic Guide: In an interview, Manfred Böckl, a German author who has also written novels about, for instance, the character of Cuchulain has recently stated that we would prefer his books to be seen as retellings of myths rather than fantasy novels. Incorporating motifs from ancient Celtic mythology in your own stories rather than adopting the myths themselves, how do you feel about this subject?

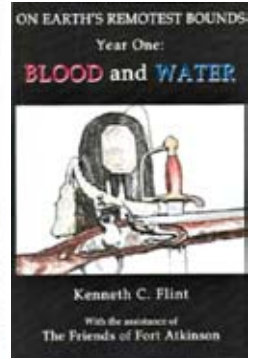
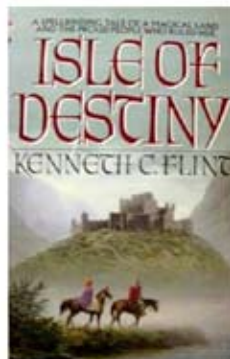
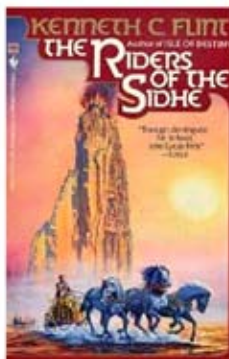
Kenneth C. Flint: I agree. As a teacher of Western literature, I know that modern versions which stick closely to the original myths are vital to making sure this literature survives. I commend any effort to provide this. Initially, I intended to stick as closely as possible to the original tales. My first book, *A Storm Upon Ulster* (Der Sohn der Sidhe) was my attempt to do that. But the elements of the more ancient tales which became my Sidhe series involved such ephemeral and fantastic elements that making novels of them turned them into more fantasy than myth. So, from that point on, my stories have been developed freely according to what I feel provides the most readable story in terms of contemporary, popular interests. I make

no claim to be providing scholarly works, and I make no apologies for that fact.

Celtic Guide: Why did you choose to publish your Gods of Ireland series under the pseudonym of Casey Flynn?

Kenneth C. Flint: Like many things in publishing, the choices are not yours but your editors. I have several regrets over the way publishing decisions were made for me by Bantam/Spectra. They pushed me to produce crossover books (like *The Dark Druid*) which could enter Romance Novel territory. They wanted bigger books, which produced *Isle of Destiny*. All I really wanted to do was write lots of smaller books which would eventually cover all of the Irish myths. *The Gods of Ireland* books were to do that, as prequels to the bestselling *Sidhe* trilogy. But as my big book was coming out at the same time, my editor insisted that the *Gods* books come out under a pseudonym, so my readers would not be confused by them. I am glad they are now out under my own name, as I think they do introduce the rest of the books very well.

Celtic Guide: Sadly, the only one of your novels translated into German is *A Storm upon Ulster* (Der Sohn der Sidhe). *Isle of Destiny* which has not been translated so far may be characterized as a sort of prequel to the former; a recent e-book publication even goes so far as to advertise *A Storm upon Ulster* as part of the *Isle of Destiny* trilogy with *The Hound of Eire* and *Tara of the Kings* as the first two parts.



However, there are major differences since in *Isle of Destiny* you seem to stick closer to the original legends. So in how far, would you say, are these novels related? Would you consider *A Storm upon Ulster* a sequel to the *Isle of Destiny* books?

Kenneth C. Flint: That was originally how I designed the books. Remember, *A Storm Upon Ulster* was my first published book. I based it on what I found the most powerful and coherent of the old tales. Once that was published, my intent was (and still is) to do a whole series on Cuchulain's life, which would be at least seven books. The first book would be about Cu's childhood. Another would deal with his aiding the tragic High-King of Ireland. Then my editor pressed me to that bigger book. I ended up combining elements and shortening the childhood of Cu. So, with these new books, I returned to telling the story of how Cu earned his name and his championship as a separate book. Many of the elements of Meave were removed as they were intended for a separate book about how she becomes Queen of Connacht. The tale of Conaire Mor also became a separate book, as originally intended.

Celtic Guide: Your most recent novel, *On Earth's Remotest Bounds. Year One: Blood and Water*, revolves around a completely different topic. How did you come to change genres?

Kenneth C. Flint: When my son Gavin was twelve, he joined a living history group at Fort Atkinson. This is an 1820's frontier fortress near our city of Omaha, Nebraska. Gavin is fascinated by the Napoleonic era, and this is as close as we get to it in Nebraska. The rest of our family joined the group too. As a writer, I became interested in the history of the fort. My intent is to write a series of historical novels about it. The first follows the thousand-man expedition as it battles hundreds of miles up the wild Missouri, survives a severe winter, near-starvation, a scurvy epidemic, and a devastating flood. They

hang on by courage and sheer doggedness to build their fortress atop the Council Bluff.

Celtic Guide: Are there any new publications coming up? And could you imagine returning to Celtic mythology for future projects?

Kenneth C. Flint: Having my previous books republished in this amazing new medium of eBooks has given me a chance to continue on the track I was derailed from years ago. I can put the Celtic books into the chronological order and form originally intended. I can also add the many books I have plotted and, in some cases, been writing. These will fill out all the cycles of Irish mythology (assuming I live long enough). The rest of Cuchulain's story and the stories of Finn's son Ossian especially haunt me to complete. In addition, I have completed an adventure set in the American Civil War involving a state-of-the-art ironclad ram, the newly invented explosive of Alfred Nobel, and a Rebel plot to destroy Washington DC. I am continuing work on my Fort Atkinson series. I am also developing a series of Young Adult Urban Fantasy books taking elements of the Celtic period into the modern world.

Celtic Guide: Do you have any final words for your readers?

Kenneth C. Flint: I mainly want to say that I am most grateful for all the fans who have stayed with me over the years. It is a great honor to realize that my books have both entertained and even influenced so many. I hope that all those people who have looked for my books in the past will discover that they are now available in this so-convenient new medium, and will also look for my new books as they come out. And, if anybody should wish to translate or produce any other of my books for readers in Germany, please let me know!

Celtic Guide: Thanks a lot for the interview!

Kenneth C. Flint: You are most welcome.

(. . . and thanks to Alessandra Ress)

*Lise Christofferson
Colorado, USA*

Sacred Season

*The last root tucked away
In cool earth, 'neath flooring stones
Pray damp be held at bay
Throughout the coming storms
Onions strung from solid beams
Dance slow grinds with garlic woven
Let dark wind cry and keen
While I prepare in autumns gloaming.*

*Bundled plants be dusty, nay poor
And scent the moted air
Their magic clasped in faded flor
Released when illness dare.
Children carve wicked gourds
To ward all haints baleful
And girls they dance widdershins
Round standing stones pale*

*The woods and paths are done with me
I'm free to part the veil
For now my tired feet may rest
While my spirit rides the sail
She that minds my hearth has much
To teach while small sun shivers
In my hand a rune I clutch
While Other Me fords rivers*

*Yes, I feel the breathless quiet
Of Samhain time afoot
Caresses my tingled spine
Restless shadow in the nook
Working fields may rest
And children learn from stories
My magic sings its best
When sacred season glories.*

Chilling Tales from **Wales**

artwork and stories
by
Pollyanna Jones
England

T*he Knight of the Blood Red Plume*

In north east Wales, on the banks of the river Clwyd, sits Rhuddlan Castle, an impressive fortification built by Edward I during his campaign to try to tame the Welsh. It has been a place of much strife and bloodshed, with a mediaeval legend adding to its infamy.

During these times of conflict, efforts were made to unite the north and south of Wales. Peace negotiations had resulted in an arrangement of marriage by the rulers of the respective kingdoms. The north was to offer fair Erilda's hand to the prince of south Wales. The maiden had objected to this political union and prayed to any who would listen to help her get out of the marriage. It seems that her calls were answered.

On the day of the wedding, she and her betrothed were led to the chapel for the ceremony. Nobles and dignitaries from north and south attended in their finest attire, with weapons left behind as a token of respect for the hallowed ground. With murmurs of excitement and anticipation, the guests were filled with hope that this union would bring peace to Wales.

Just before the vows were to be exchanged, the doors burst open, and a knight raced in. His helm was decorated with a plume of crimson, and his armour was the finest any had ever seen. Striding purposefully to the bride and groom, he pushed the prince aside and swept the princess off



her feet. Crying out with joy, she kissed the handsome fellow as he took her in his arms. But her happiness was to be short lived.

Holding her fast, the knight swung his sword and cut off the head of the young prince, which landed on the chapel flagstones with a meaty thud. The knight then drove his blade through the heart of Erilda's father, as the wedding guests screamed and clamoured in panic. Traumatized by the bloodshed, Erilda could do nothing against her saviour who dragged her out of the chapel. The fair maid was never to be seen alive again.

Many believe that the knight was an infernal angel, sent from Hell with a mission of discord. The events at the wedding that day caused old feuds to be reignited. What was to be the feast night of the wedding became a devastating evening of outrage, anger and blame, as each guest accused the other of arranging the kidnapping and murders. All previous efforts towards obtaining peace were ruined that day, and Wales once again was thrown into turmoil.

It is said that as the knight fled with Erilda, the glamour of his spell faded and he revealed himself as a daemon with scaly skin and eyes like hot coals. Some say that the princess died of fright the moment she saw him in his devilish form. Others believe that he drowned her in the river Clwyd.

To this day, Erilda's spirit remains bound to the place of this tragedy. Traumatized by the bloody events of her wedding day, her phantom is sometimes glimpsed in Rhuddlan Castle, her sobs and cries echoing among the walls at night.

***L**lyn-y-Forwyn*

Legend tells of a beautiful maid that dwells beneath the waters of the lake known as Llyn-y-Forwyn in Rhondda Cynon Taff. The name of the lake translates as "The Lake of the Damsel" in Welsh. If you ever visit, you can see a beautiful wood sculpture of the fair lady of many legends.

She revealed herself to a farmer one day, emerging from the water as he took his pony to the water's edge for a cool drink. She told the stunned fellow that her name was Nelferch, and that she dwelt in the lake with her father, sisters, and cattle. The farmer fell head over heels in love with her, and it was just as well, for Nelferch was looking for a husband. All Welshmen are blessed with voices of honey, and with his sweet singing, he charmed her. The fair maid agreed to marry him on one condition. If they quarrelled three times, she would return to the lake.

Happily they lived together until that fateful day when she let the fire in the hearth go out. The farmer raised his voice in anger against his fairy wife, and they quarrelled. She reminded him of his promise, and he apologised and all was well for a few months more until again he had cause for anger. His wife spilled a milk churn, and the farmer raised his voice at her carelessness. Sternly she warned him that he had no more chances



left. If he quarrelled with her one more time, she would go. Cursing himself, he promised to be more careful and an entire year passed before a fox took some lambs and he quarrelled with his wife, laying blame on her for not locking the young animals safely away in the barn. Before he could apologise, she vanished right before his eyes, taking the cattle with her. The farmer returned to the lake each day and night, begging her to return. He spent the rest of his days pining for the beautiful maiden of the waters and went mad with grief.

Some believe that Nelferch still dwells in the watery realm beneath the lake's surface, and calls out to young men to join her in the depths of the lake. A sorrowful event from the start of the twentieth century describes how a young local boy drowned in the waters in his attempt to rescue a friend who had fallen in. His family believe that Nelferch took him for her own, his act of unselfish bravery making him a worthy husband. Some say that the singing voices of their children can be heard if you listen carefully.

Another, more sinister tale, describes how the maid of Llyn-y-Forwyn was an unfortunate human girl who met her end due to foul deeds. She was betrothed to a young man who had fallen in love with another, and made wicked plans to be rid of her. On the evening before their wedding, he took his bride-to-be for a walk along the lakeside, and pushed her in. The poor girl was drowned, and denying any knowledge of his missing fiancée, the young man was free to marry his sweetheart. Ever after, the damsel's spirit haunted the scene of her murder. Some have reported hearing shrieks from the waterside, and the sound of splashing water. A few tell of seeing a half-naked maiden emerging out of the lake with a terrifying scream, her wet hair hanging lankly over her pallid shoulders.

So dear reader, take heed you see a beautiful woman emerging from the waters of Llyn-y-Forwyn, lest you too become a thing of legend.

The Doom of Owain ap Gruffydd

Long ago, a terrible monster dwelt in Wybrnant valley near Penmachno in North Wales. Described as a giant snake, this worm could live in both water and land. It cleared the river of fish, and gorged itself on livestock. The locals had tried to chase the monster off, but instead of fleeing, the huge snake would turn on them instead.

The villagers knew that this could not continue. The great adder must be killed, and so a reward was offered to anyone who was able to slay the monster. News travelled far and wide, up and down Wales, until a brave young man named Owain ap Gruffydd learned of the plight of the inhabitants of Wybrnant.

Owain lived in the Hiraethog Mountains, and before he ventured forth on his quest, decided to visit the local seer to help guide his actions. He travelled to Rhys Ddewin's abode and introduced himself, before asking if he would succeed in killing the Wybrnant monster.

"No, the serpent will bite you and kill you."

Bold Owain was shaken by this prediction, but the reward was a vast amount of money, and so he decided to visit the seer again. The next day he visited Rhys Ddewin, disguising himself with a hood. Speaking with a gruff voice, he asked again if he would succeed in killing the Wybrnant monster.

"No, you will break your neck in a fall."

Now Owain begun to suspect that Rhys Ddewin was full of nonsense when he heard this prediction. So the next day he visited the wise man one last time, disguising himself as a shepherd.

He asked once more if he would succeed in his task.

“No, you will drown.”

Owain laughed out loud and took off his hat and cape, revealing his true identity to Rhys Ddewin.

“Old man, you are full of lies. Three times I have been to see you, and you have told me that I should die in three different ways! How would that be possible?”

“We shall see...” muttered Rhys Ddewin as Owain ap Gruffydd marched out of the seer’s cottage. Convinced that the predictions were false, he took his spear and bow and set off down from the mountains to the Wybrnant valley.

Boldly following the river to the great serpent’s lair, he did not see the snake curled up on the rocks above a waterfall until it was too late. The worm struck, biting him on the shoulder. Owain slipped on the rocks and broke his neck, before tumbling into the water and drowning.

When Owain’s friends learned of his doom, they vowed to kill the monster and travelled to the valley where they shot at it with their bows and arrows. This was too much for the Wybrnant serpent, and wounded, it slipped into the water, never to be seen again.

It is not known whether the giant snake survived, but the valley still bears its name. And its children, the adders, are still known as “gwiber” to the Welsh. Perhaps if left alone long enough, one might grow as large as the monster that killed Owain ap Gruffydd.



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Celtic, Nordic, Germanic and Anglo Saxon

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PART ONE

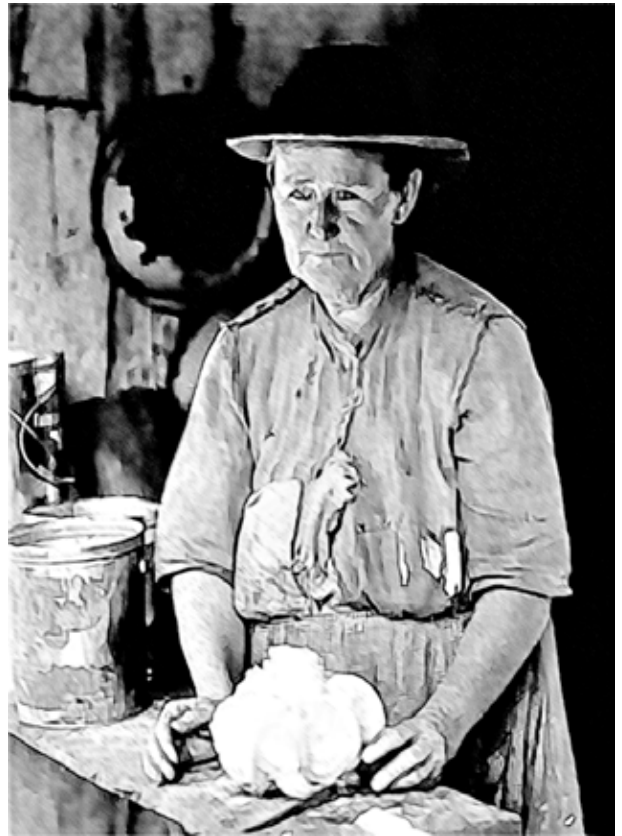
APPALACHIAN MEDICINE

EDITOR'S NOTE: In this two-part series, Laura delves into the Celtic background of Appalachian healing techniques. Part two will appear in our "Loose Ends" November issue.

Healers, witches, witchdoctors, waterwitches, witchcraft, Granny Women, Granny Magic, Appalachian Magic, "the Craft," faery folk" magic, "haints," wand, dowsing rod, herbalism, herb doctors, folk medicine, wildcrafting, snake healing, faith healing, homemade remedies, superstition, religion, tradition, and storytelling; all are terms used to describe different aspects of Appalachian Medicine.

Appalachian Medicine is a compilation of different cultures. Eires and Scots (Irish and Scottish) both began to immigrate to the Appalachian Mountain region in the 1700's, in an attempt to escape both religious persecution and to try to forge a better way of life due to the extremely poor economic and living conditions they had experienced in their countries of origin. With them, they brought many traditions, healing skills, lore, superstitions, and religious beliefs that became entwined with those of the Cherokee (then called Tsalagi) Indians, as well as blacks who had originally come over as slaves and settled in that area. The Appalachian Mountain region covers "Mississippi to New York and includes eleven states within its official boundaries" (Stone, 2010, p. 1).

Appalachian folk medicine has been passed down orally and primarily through families for hundreds of years. It wasn't until the mid-twentieth century that remedies began to be written down. Because of the isolation in Appalachia (due to the mountainous terrain), families have stayed cohesed in traditions and customs; in fact, the whole culture, has stayed immersed in the past.



Celtic Guide drawing of granny woman based on image from Doris Ulmann Photograph Collection

Family is one of the strongest components of the Appalachian culture. When geographical and economic isolation are factored in, it makes sense that families have stayed as tight and dependent upon one another as they have. Much of the medicine, having been passed from one generation to the next, has stayed within the family unit and is based on that particular family's history and traditions, dating back to life in their country-of-origin. This includes storytelling, one's particular style of folk medicine, his/her apprenticeship, or matters concerning day-to-day life.

Much of the behavior and many of the remedies are based on superstitious beliefs. These are blended with herbal tradition and

knowledge of what heals the body and the soul. Appalachians are typically very fundamental in their religious practice and beliefs, yet have found a way to incorporate religion into the mix, as well.

Witchcraft is/was a very practical part of the Appalachian culture. However, it's very different from the conventional definition of witchcraft, what those outside of that culture envision it as being. The witchcraft practiced in Appalachia is one which relied upon the gifts of Mother Nature. The belief is in "one universal God (the "Creator", the "Maker"). They do, however, observe the sabbaths, solstices, and equinoxes, but do not relate them to mythology; it's the seasonal changes they recognize" (MEDEA Study Guide, 2009, p. 6).

This form of healing and magic became known as Granny Magic and the magic and healing was performed by Granny Women. These healers were an integral part of the culture. "Appalachian Granny Magic wasn't quite a religion, not quite a secular practice. Magic and religion and practical concerns became one path, out of which many skilled midwives and herbalists and lay preachers were created" (MEDEA Study Guide, 2009, p. 4).

Due to minimal or no access to physicians or health care in general, reliance on these practitioners was extensive. Granny Women wore many hats. Among those, they acted as midwives and were called in even when a physician had been called. In the event that a doctor couldn't make it, they were there to deliver. If he did, then the Granny Woman would either assist and/or stay to care for the newborn and the new mother. They didn't charge fees, so if they were the primary "doctor," their concern wasn't that it be a quick delivery, as time wasn't their main concern.

Granny Women used herbal remedies, superstition, and were not opposed to the using pharmaceuticals if and when the need arose. Their training was through years of experience and apprenticeship. At that point in time, the

majority of women were illiterate (another reason for oral tradition). However, there were those who could read and those few carried what was called a "Midwife's Book," which was used in the event that they had to attend to a complicated delivery.

In the event that herbal remedies such as blackberry tea (for hemorrhaging), raspberry tea (to relax uterine muscles), slippery elm bark (for speeding up delivery), or willow bark tea (for pain relief) didn't work, the Granny Women had no problem with the use of pharmaceuticals. Local drugstores always had supplies of morphine and quinine available over-the-counter, therefore, if pain were a major issue, a morphine tablet was readily available.

Granny Women and Appalachians in general, were very superstitious. Witch doctors and water witches were very common and held in high esteem within each community. In fact, being known as the "local witch" was considered to be an honor. Each title spoke of specific skills, but it wasn't uncommon for one person to possess the skills of both.

The "witch doctor" was one who practiced midwifery, healing, tended to sick children, and practiced magic. In both "practices," the work was sometimes referred to as conjuring or working.

The "water witch" was she who made charms and potions, worked with water dowsing, energy vortexes, and ley lines. She was more likely to be involved with mill magic than the "witch doctor" (Stilwell, 2001, para. 8).

The Appalachian area is so isolated that many practices and traditions from the countries of origin continued, whereas in areas outside of there, became modernized. With modernization, traditions and culture changed; not so in Appalachia. The unfortunate piece is that, because of oral tradition, original meanings of customs, traditions, wisdom, and spells have changed or gotten lost.

Many of the traditions and customs surround lore such as faeries and the ancestral dead

(sometimes referred to as “haints.” The faery lore is brought from Europe, where faeries, leprechauns, brownies, sprites, and magical creatures such as selkies and waterhorses were a common part of the culture.

The Cherokee (Tsalagi) have their own version of the “little people,” called *Yunuwi Tsusdi* (pronounced Yowee Uoodskee), and of course, the slaves still had their spirit deities from Africa. With all four cultures, the lore of the “wee people” remained and evolved to fit the new land and new life.

The Tsalagi believed that the *Yunuwi Tsusdi* lived in the forest and that they could be a help or a menace. Few could/ would see them, but of those that did, what was seen was likened to miniature versions of warriors. In fact, one of the beliefs was that if you had offended one (perhaps by not leaving a food offering), that sharp pain one might feel in his/ her calf while walking, could be the result of having been shot with a miniature arrow.

The faerie lore/faith was very similar. “The body of practice that works specifically with Faery and otherworld beings is called Faery Seership” (Foxwood, 2009, p. 4). Faeries are known by many names, including but not limited to: faeries, Them, Little People, Sidewise Folk, and the Gentry.

Those practicing in this area knew more than the average person about faeries and spirits. They knew where these and

other spirits lived and how to contact them. Additionally, they knew what to do when they were menacing or how to harness the good.

Similar to the Cherokee, it was known that one should leave food for the little people. In so doing, that individual would stay on their good side and be blessed with luck and good wishes. They were considered to be like family, and as family was central to the culture, one must take care of his/her own. To not do so, would be to bring wrath and fury down on an individual and his/her family and life and luck both could become very ugly.

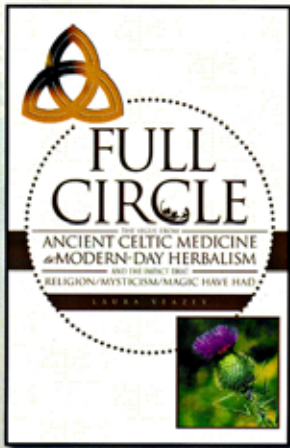
(CONTINUED IN NOVEMBER ISSUE)

FULL CIRCLE

THE SEGUE FROM ANCIENT CELTIC MEDICINE TO MODERN-DAY
HERBALISM AND THE IMPACT THAT RELIGION/MYSTICISM/MAGIC HAVE HAD

Laura Veazey

www.herownanamcara.com




About the Book

Full Circle: The Segue from Ancient Celtic Medicine to Modern-Day Herbalism and the Impact that Religion/ Mysticism/Magic Have Had provides historical insight, focusing on seven areas of herbal medicine for research, comparison, and contrast: Celtic herbal history, druidic medicine, Native American medicine, Christianity, Witchcraft, Voodoo, and 20th and 21st Century herbalism. Herbalism has been used throughout the ages. Full Circle will take you on a journey beginning with Ancient Celtic medicine and moving forward to modern-day herbalism in the Southern United States.

Herbalism has come full circle, with many of the ancient recipes and traditions being utilized in the present. Economics, a changing trend in health care policies, and with individuals taking responsibility for their own decisions relative to their health, this historical perspective will give you the connections that make more sense of what you do, how you do it, and how those traditions came about.

About the Author

Laura Morrison-Roets has a diverse background in traditional naturopathy, allopathic health, therapeutic and outdoor recreation, possesses an EdD in Applied Educational Studies and a PhD in Traditional Naturopathy, an MA in Athletic Administration, and is a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor and Certified/Licensed Therapeutic Recreation Specialist. She is Scottish, Irish, and Cherokee and Member of Scottish Club of Tulsa and Beta Sigma Phi Board Member, as well as a re-enactor for Scots of the Old West, portraying Belle Starr and Calamity Jane. She is a musician and writer and loves camping, hiking, kayaking, geocaching, raising Mina, spending time with her beau, children, mother, and spending as much time as possible at their cabin.



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*by Jemmy Farmer
England*



Above - Avebury cemetery

Samhain marks the conclusion of the Celtic agricultural cycle and the beginning of the Celtic New Year, therefore, my Celtic ancestors acknowledged the mystery of beginnings and endings and recognised that the two unite and flow together. The herds would be thinned leaving the strong and hearty animals to face the harshness of winter while providing food for the tribe. Any ungathered crops were left in the fields for the spirits who travel easily through the veil of death at Samhain.

As a contemporary Celtic witch Samhain is when I restructure my ancestral altar as a mark of remembrance, respect and connection with my lineage that reside in spirit and guide me through this physical life. I also celebrate the crone aspect of the goddess and the sage of the god at this time as they represent wisdom and the mystery of death itself. As a witch, I celebrate death rather than view it as something morbid, unpleasant and frightening. In truth, I have no real feelings about death and dying as it is just

part of the natural progression of existence. I do not fear it therefore; it holds no supremacy over me.

Samhain reinforces my belief that death is not just an end but also a beginning. I believe the spirit does not become extinct but survives death and reunites with the ancestors for a period of rejuvenation and preparation for the next physical existence. I believe in reincarnation and that its purpose is spiritual learning.

Samhain is a time of contemplation when I examine my own beginnings and endings over the last year. Each moment of existence is an end and a beginning as everything we experience affects us in some way so we evolve to who we are. Like my ancient ancestors I am beginning to recognise that unity and flow that is the progression of life.

One of my observances at Samhain is to visit the local graveyard at Avebury village church and wander around quietly looking at the headstones until one draws my closer attention.

I then go and sit by that stone and connect with the soul that rests there. I try and visualise what their life may have been. I also reflect on the limited time I have in life even if I live to be one hundred years old it is so little in the greater scheme of things. Life is short and I am here to learn as much as I can. Afterwards I always leave flowers and set some incense to bid the visited spirit a peaceful repose, if they are indeed resting. The spirit may have already returned a few times to mortality, indeed it maybe the spirit that resides within me.

Finally, I honour my deceased family not just as names on a piece of paper but in a wider visual sense of the family tree. The branches that are my ancestors rise up from me and the roots of my descendants grow from me – it is the tree of existence. Above me is the past, below me is the future and I am the now. When I call upon the ancestors for magical or spiritual purposes I am calling on all those who came before me for me in the now and for those yet to come.

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Jemmy Farmer

Jemmy is freelance writer and poet. She started writing after raising her two boys as a way of discovering just who Jemmy is. She is a neo-formalist poet preferring to write in meter and form rather than free verse, but as she journeys on in her hobbit hole she is beginning to learn to relax and let the feel and sound of words take over, rather than be dictated to by rigid rules and structure. However she will still argue that a sonnet without consistent iambic meter *ain't* a sonnet and Lewis Turco's *Book of Form* is never far from her side.

Jemmy was a moderator and contributor to the poetic forum *Tir na nog*, and is co-founder of Sapphic Poets, a forum for poets, writers and artists who yearn to share the beauty of femininity. She is also the author of two chapbooks and an anthology of poems. She is currently working on her second collection and on a collaborative collection with her fellow poet and partner, Roxi St Clair. See more of Jemmy's work at:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/PoetJemmy-Farmer/238992992813885>

<http://poemaday2013.wordpress.com/>

<http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/Jemmy>

Celtic Guide saga continues

- All past and current issues of Celtic Guide are now available on Amazon.com **at cost**. This is a service provided to our readers, just as the PDF versions are offered **free of charge**. Instruction on how to order are available on our website. Remember, the Celtic Guide e magazine is produce entirely by **volunteers**.
- In addition to making all issues available in print, we expect to surpass **20,000** page hits by the end of October, which far and away beats all of last year. We should come close to **25,000** by year's end.
- We've also garnered around **9,500** likes on our Facebook page and have a strong community there, often with a weekly reach of over **30,000 to 35,000** people.

We are so thankful to all our contributors and readers for making this such a **resounding success**.

<http://www.celticguide.com>

A Walk

©2004

by Kelli Lowry
USA

EDITOR'S NOTE: Kelli Lowry is new to the pages of Celtic Guide and she brings us a spooky tale just in time for Halloween. Her maiden name is McGoron by way of Ireland.

It had been his hope, his prayer, a litany deeply contained within his soul; a wish hidden so far beneath the surface of his mind, he dared not speak it until now and the words were carried away on the wind – “I desire a glimpse of the Underworld.”

Putting the thought aside, he lay in the lush grass beneath the oak. Watching the clouds float by in the gentle breeze, his eyes closed as he drowsed off.

Following a whisper on the breeze, she came upon a lone figure and stood watching him in the beautiful repose of sleep. The corners of her mouth turned up and she blew a small kiss in his direction. She had been lonely and to find such a delightful man pleased her. At the stirring of his hair, he turned his head in her direction. She spoke again. “Thomas, awaken.”

Slowly, he opened his eyes and stared at the woman in front of him. “Who are you?”

“I am that which you seek, and a queen.” Smiling, she leaned over, offering her hand.

He was afraid to touch her, only to learn he was dreaming, but still more afraid of offending her if he did not take her hand. The woman was ethereal, her skin was flawless and almost glowing. Her hair was very long and straight, a dark red-brown, and her eyes were a brilliant blue. His thumb brushed the back of her long green sleeve as he stood. The deep forest green of her dress embraced her body lovingly, as he



wanted to. “I will be your servant.”

“Will you come with me, Thomas?”

He noticed a large, white horse waiting patiently beneath a tree. The long mane and tail of the horse were interwoven with colorful ribbons and the tack was of ornately carved leather. Without hesitation, he turned to her and put his hands on her waist. Lifting, he put her atop the horse.

For a split second, his father's words came to his mind about never accepting things as they appeared, for much more could hide beneath the surface. Looking up at the beautiful woman before him, he put the warning to the back of his mind. “To where do we journey?”

“To my lands, though they are far. Would you still go, Thomas?”

“I would.”

“Come, then.” He nodded and began walking alongside the horse. The farther they went, the more the countryside started to look different. Bright and contrasting, it looked almost eerie and unearthly.

She captivated him and Thomas felt his thoughts becoming more difficult to control as confusion clouded his mind.

Reaching out, she put her hand on his shoulder and smiled to reassure him. “You desired to see something of the Underworld. Here I am.”

At her touch, he felt as if the ground were no longer beneath him and nodded.

“You hesitate before me? Why, Thomas?”

“I—I’m not certain, Queen. I had not thought to see anything of the sort.”

“Be careful what you wish, for you may receive it and what, then?” She pulled the horse to a stop.

Putting his hands up, he allowed her to lean into them. He set her on the ground gently. “I never believed this could happen. Please, tell me your name.”

A demure smile graced her features. “Morrigan.”

“That is a beautiful name, Queen Morrigan.” He found himself unable or unwilling to remove his hands from her waist. Leaning over, he kissed her. It progressed from a gentle, slow kiss to an inquisitive touch, as if he were seeking her blessing. When she didn’t resist, he held her to him.

A slight sigh escaped her as she ended the touch of his mouth upon hers, wishing she could allow it to linger. “Since you kissed

me of your own free will, I shall allow you to choose which you would do. Will you continue to journey along with me? Or will you return to your world?”

He could faintly hear someone calling his name.

Looking at Queen Morrigan, he saw a subtle change within her face. An impression of hate gleamed in her eyes and her features sharpened into a shadow of something non-human. Heat seared through him and he shook his head quickly to dispel the illusion. “I would return, Queen.”

“You have chosen, so it shall be. Return whence we came and you shall reach your world soon enough.”

At her words, unexplainable relief washed over him. “Thank you. Before I go, might I ask, where is your domain, Queen?”

Turning the horse to ride away, the beautiful woman spoke, knowing the words would make his blood run cold. “Not where, Thomas; rather, what. I am the Phantom Queen, my domain is Death.” She smiled coldly at him, disappointed he had chosen to return and not remain.

He turned and walked away, understanding he was fortunate, indeed.





The Emerald Society

*Jim McQuiston
USA*

Mr. Hilary Beirne, Chairman of the St. Patrick's Day Foundation of New York City, and Executive Secretary of the NYC St. Patrick's Day Parade, has been an occasional contributor to the Celtic Guide with news about that event - the largest parade in the world.

However, the latest news is that he has been named 'Irishman of the Year' by the Emerald Society of the New York City Transit Authority and will be honored on October 19th at a dinner.

Many Americans aren't aware of the scope and origins of the Emerald Society.

In the early days of America, Irish immigrants were not always welcomed. They were the first ethnic group to live in the slums of the larger cities. Furthermore, the Irish were also the first ethnicity to be publicly discriminated against for jobs. It was common practice for employers to state "Irish need not apply", so the only jobs they could get were in low paying, back breaking work that few wanted. However, through determination and hard work the Irish overcame these and other obstacles.

One profession that the Irish gravitated to were police and fire departments. In the late part of the 19th century and early part of the 20th century, police jobs were undesirable because of low pay, few benefits, and the danger involved.

In fire departments it was even worse; there was no pay because they were largely made up of volunteers. The Irish took up these professions because it was a way to become a part of America, a way to be accepted by mainstream America, and a way to give back to their new found country. By the beginning of the 20th century, not only were the Irish fully immersed in police and fire departments, they were often in charge of them! The Irish transformed the job

of watchman and fire watch into the organized police and fire departments of today.

The line drawing shown below is from Harper's Magazine depicting Irish cops breaking up a draft riot in New York City.



The public perception of the ever present Irish cop on the beat is more than just a stereotype - it is a fact. Up to the mid 20th century, the Irish dominated the police and fire departments of larger cities. These departments were largely made up of either Irish born or 1st or 2nd generation Irish. The Irish have produced more chiefs of the police and fire departments than any other ethnic group in America.

Furthermore, they were at the forefront of the labor movement in these professions, as well as in many others.

However, two events in the 20th century changed that phenomenon; the Great Depression and World War II.

New ethnic groups started to join the public safety ranks. Germans, Italians, Polish and African-Americans joined police and fire departments and eventually formed fraternal associations. Organizations were also formed for officers of Catholic, Protestant and Jewish religions.

By the second half of the 20th century, the Irish in police and fire departments felt they were losing their identity and proud traditions.

By the early 1950's, other ethnic organizations were flourishing and creating a fraternity of brotherhood amongst their membership. In 1953, members of the New York City Police Department formed the first organization for Irish-American police officers. Thus on March 16, 1953, the first Emerald Society was founded.



The New York City Police Department Emerald Society was formed to help foster the spirit of Irish heritage within its membership and to promote and preserve their accomplishments.

Word spread about the new Irish organization and Emerald Societies and other units were formed by the New York City Corrections ('55) as well as the Transit ('56) and Housing Police Department ('58). By the end of the 1950's, New Jersey and the Essex County Police & Fire Emerald Society were formed ('58) – this would be the first Emerald Society with both police and fire under one organization. The 1960's saw new Emerald Societies formed outside New York City – Suffolk ('67) New Jersey ('68) and Nassau County ('68) Police Departments on Long Island, as well as Westchester County

Police all established Emerald Societies. In 1965, the Port Authority Police organized an Emerald Society which included police officers from both states of New York and New Jersey.






We congratulate Hilary Beirne (shown above) on being named Irishman of the Year by this group of brave first responders and public servants, who have recognized the need and importance of preserving the history of Irish-Americans who have dedicated their careers and lives to NYC and to other cities across this country.

Emerald Society

New York City Transit Authority

52nd ANNIVERSARY DINNER DANCE

Honoring

The Emerald Society NYCTA - Irishmen of the Year

Mr. Hilary Beirne

Secretary/ Director of the New York St. Patrick's Day Parade

NYCTA Emerald Society Lifetime Achievement Award:

Mr. Robert Manning

When: Saturday, October 19th, 2013

Where: Riccardo's by the Bridge, 21-01 24th Ave, Astoria, NY
Contact Info: 718.721.7777, www.riccardos.com

Time: 7 pm - Cocktail Hour
8 pm to Midnight - Dinner, Awards, and Dancing

Tickets: \$85 per person; \$800 for a table of 10

Entertainment: Transit Pipes and Drums; Music by DJ Party Time

For reservations and information, contact Gil Murphy @ 516.655.8448, Larry Gallagher @ 718.815.6697, or Larry Burns @ 718.375.9256

Please make all checks payable to: Emerald Society – NYC Transit
P.O. Box 090319, Brooklyn, NY 11209-0319

The Widow's Curse

by Jim McQuiston
USA

I found this story in a 'Celtic Magazine' article from 1885. The significance of this is that the families, the locations, and the phenomenon of the Highland Clearances were all still fresh in the minds of the local people, and so it would have been a bit dangerous or at least rude to tell this story if in fact it was simply a fabrication.

Seems a landlord by the name of Campbell owned land in an area known as Glenfalcon. It came to be that a widow by the name of Cameron could not pay her rent because her husband had recently died while fishing for herring. The head factor for the landlord was a man by the name of Macneil. Accompanied by lawmen, he approached the glen and first came upon a Macdonald family home. The husband being away at the time and also delinquent on his rent, the landlord's henchmen turned the Macdonald family out into the cold November weather. The door to the home was padlocked and the thatched roof was pulled off the structure.

The men proceeded through the glen, turning out crofter after crofter until they arrived at the Cameron home where they likewise turned Mrs. Cameron and her daughter out into the cold. The daughter was very sick, but despite her mother's pleading they found themselves standing in the snow with no place to go. Mrs. Cameron felt her child die in her arms while she watched the roof being pulled from her home, as the fire in her hearth slowly died out. She cried out, "Here in the sight of Heaven and by the side of my ruined home and dead child, I curse Mr. Campbell and pray that, if there is justice in Heaven, it will fall and crush him as he has crushed others."

The henchmen decided that she had gone mad and that they should take her with them. She instead flung herself over a nearby cliff. The men recovered her body and buried it in the Glenfalcon graveyard, which was located in a small valley not far from the Campbell residence.

The day of the funeral was gloomy. A thaw had set in and the ground was flush with standing water. Later that evening a storm, the likes of which had never been seen, began to ravish the area.

Mr. Campbell sat in his parlor, and even this iron-willed, heartless man began to feel a chill in his spine. He called to his servant for a glass of whiskey, followed by another and then another. He fell fast asleep, waking once to say "Keep off. Go back to the grave, back to the grave!"

Campbell locked himself in his room and, in his agitation, accidentally knocked over his lantern, putting its light out. Now he was locked inside with no light and the sound of rushing water just outside his door. In a frantic attempt to escape, or at least to see what conditions prevailed outside his home, he forced open a window. The volume of water that rushed in bore a black object which, striking Mr. Campbell on his side, threw him backward and knocked him senseless on the floor.

Factor Macneil had been out on an assignment and as he approached the Campbell home he realized it was quite damaged by the flash flood caused by the rain. He forced his way into the home to find, in the darkness, his master lying dead. He realized the widow's curse had been fulfilled. His horror was magnified many times over as he approached the body of Mr. Campbell to see that it was resting on a coffin. One look inside revealed the corpse of poor Mrs. Cameron.

The story ends by saying, "It has been years since these events happened but they are still fresh in the minds of the old people of the district who remember the flood, and some believe the widow's curse still hangs over the ruins of the Campbell land, and that on dark and stormy nights, when the wind howls mournfully through the glen, the sheeted dead leave their graves to mingle their ghostly voices with the storm."



VAMPIRES: THE UNDEAD

by Lucy Stewart
Scotland

Several Celts have contributed to vampire fiction over the years. The first (modern) vampire story is said to have been written by John Polidori (Scottish-Italian) in 1819. It was titled 'The Vampyre' and was responsible for a new wave of interest in vampires.

Sir Walter Scott and Bram Stoker are another two big names in vampire literature, both also Celts.

Vampire lore is popular the world over today. Various books, films and television shows have kept the myth very much alive and also evolving. Many of today's stories have focused on the anthropomorphism of vampires in a way that has never really been done before. Vampires are even shown to have strong morals and compassion. This is what we see in the phenomenal *Twilight*, *The Vampire Diaries* and also in *True Blood*... all adapted from series written by Stephenie Meyer (*Twilight*), Charlaine Harris (*The Southern Vampire Mysteries/True Blood*) and L.J. Smith (*The Vampire Diaries*).

However, for many of us, vampires will always represent the more demonic or dark related mythology that has been taught over thousands of years within many different cultures.

The celebration of Halloween was introduced in America as well as England and mainland Europe in the 1840s with the arrival of Irish immigrants (a result of the Irish diaspora), but Halloween started out as a Celtic/Pagan festival dating back over two thousand years.

Before being assimilated and Christianised it was referred to as Samhain and it marked the end of summer and harvest and thus the start of the cold, dark winter, which was associated with human death.

"It was thought that on this night the veil between the dead and the living was at its thinnest and the spirits of the earth could rise from their graves and wander freely on earth."

(The Element Encyclopedia of Vampires.)

This was of course referring to many different entities as well as vampires which included fairies, witches, werewolves and other demons, and the Celtic Samhain festival was thought to be a night where such beings sought revenge for any wrong doings done in their human existence.



This book, 'Varney the Vampire', was actually published in London, England, fifty years BEFORE Stoker's 'Dracula' novel! Many of today's standard vampire traits originated in Varney.

Apart from the Samhain, what other influence has Celtic mythology had on vampire folklore?

We are all very familiar with the very famous story that is Bram Stoker's *Dracula* which is more thought of as typically Romanian (and thought to be based on a Romanian man named 'Vlad The Impaler') or Eastern European, but it is important to take into consideration the fact that Bram Stoker was an Irishman with a keen interest in folklore. This alone does not

mean that Dracula is Celtic in origin but a very interesting case has been made which could mean that Bram Stoker's Dracula was based on a Celtic vampire myth.

The myth is of Abhartach, a powerful magician and evil ruler (in a small town called Slaghtaverty) who terrorised people to the point that they wanted him dead. Nobody wanted to kill him themselves and so a warrior called Cathain from a neighbouring area was asked to kill him.

Abhartach is said to have returned the following day, demanding the blood from the wrists of his victims. Cathain is believed to have buried Abhartach three times (in an upright position as was the tradition at the time) but in desperation, had to seek help from a Christian saint who instructed Cathain to kill Abhartach again by using a sword made of Yew wood, and to bury him upside down before placing a large stone on top of the grave. Abhartach is said to have never been seen again although his grave still stands in Slaghtaverty. This story shares many similarities to the Dracula story so it is possible that it was based on this Celtic myth.

Something else very interesting is an archaeological find in the Czech Republic, said to be "the world's first burial place for one of the presumed 'undead'" (Herald Scotland); it dates back at least four thousand years.

It is thought that migrating Celts in the area are responsible for the burial because the grave shows typical signs of Celtic ritual not seen in other European peoples.....this was a unique practice of the ancient Irish and Western Scotland region of Dalriada. The Celts covered the graves with heavy stones to weigh down vampires and stop them from escaping. This could be evidence that the Celts are responsible for most European vampire mythology and it does seem plausible because the Celts migrated through Eastern Bohemia and also into the Balkans. For instance, in 1966, an archaeologist named Jaroslav Spacek investigated several graves having typical characteristics of Celtic rituals, just outside of Prague.

What is also unique to Celtic Vampire lore is that the Vampires were often considered to be fairies – especially if they were female. The *Leanan Sidhe* was both a demon and a muse – an Irish vampire who was very beautiful and inspired the creativity of poets and musicians. this was however, at the cost of their lives.

It is said that after sharing her love, magic and creativity with the men she would leave, and the men would become very depressed and die. Leanan was then said to take her dead lovers back to her lair where she would collect their blood in a giant red cauldron – this was her source of beauty and inspiration.

Another Irish vampire is the *Dearg-due* (red blood sucker), another female who seduces men and then drains them of their blood. According to legend, an Irish woman known for her beauty fell in love with a peasant but her father forced her to marry a rich man who treated her badly. As a result, she committed suicide and was then buried near Strongbow's Tree in Waterford and rose from the dead to seek her revenge. Like Leanan, she used her beauty to lure men and her grave was also covered with a pile of stones to prevent her from rising.

Another Celtic vampire which is also considered to be a fairy, witch and ghost is the Scottish *Baobhan-sith*. There are a few stories about her, some saying she appeared as a small dark woman with a human body and hind quarters of a goat, whilst another story is that she is a tall woman with ice cold breath who likes to dance in the moonlight. She is also believed, in some regions, to have portrayed a skeleton with vampire like teeth, dancing all alone in long robes under the trees, while waiting for someone to pass by.

These vampire myths give us a different take on the whole vampire lore we have become familiar with today and are very distinctively Celtic. It does appear that the Celtic vampire may have been where it all started and after thousands of years of folklore and different cultural interpretations the vampire is as popular as ever.

So, what's next?

Once again we need to announce that if anyone is charging you for this publication, or for hard copies other than those available by us on Amazon, they are stealing the work of a lot of good people who volunteer their time each month. We continue to get reports of a person in Wales trying to make an unfair profit off other people's work, so please don't encourage him.

Now. . .

For November we are going to have a "Loose Ends" issue. We often get articles that don't exactly fit the theme and, also, following the theme may sometimes prove challenging, so this will be a free for all theme, with the usual caveat of good Celtic/Viking taste.

For December the theme will be "The End" and what I mean by this is stories about the end of an era, a dynasty, maybe and sadly even a life. Whatever makes a good and interesting tale.

Our goal is just to get through this year with great issues, so the first few themes of next year will be announced most likely in the December issue of the Guide.

Once again, we'd like to thank everyone who participated in this fun (and sometimes spooky) issue of the Guide. Enjoy October, send me your comments and theme ideas, keep reading and spreading the word, and watch for traffic while you're out in your little Halloween outfit.



SCOTLAND'S MIGHTY MEN OF OLD

SCOTLAND'S MIGHTY MEN OF OLD

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