



**SPECIAL  
POINTS OF  
INTEREST:**

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## Lughnasadh

by Iain MacAnTsoir  
(<http://www.clannada.org/>)

Lughnasadh:

This festival is called Lughnasadh in Eire and Lunasdal in Alba. The date of this festival is July 31st.

We can trace Lugh back to the Pretani (Brythonic Celts). Amongst these cousins his name is spelled Llew. He is the son of Arianrhod and Gwydion. While Arianrhod gave birth to him, Llew was taken away by his father, who was also his uncle, and raised by him. However, by the old traditions there are certain things that can only be given by the mother. One of these is the name and Arianrhod refused to do so when Gwydion brought him to her. She said, "Why do you prolong my shame? He shall have no name until I give it to him." The next day Llew was practicing when Arianrhod remarked, "The fair one has a skillful hand." Which is the meaning of his name, "skillful hand", amongst the Pretani. She was absolutely livid at having been tricked so she swore that He would have no weapons lest they came from her hand, as this is the next thing to come from the mother. Gwydion proceeded to determine how to circumvent this problem and after having done so presented Llew as a champion in need of weapons. It was only after she had presented them that she realized who he was. She then swore Llew would have no wife, for this was the last blessing to come from the mother. However, by the work of Math, Gwydion created a woman made of the blossoms of oak, broom and meadowsweet. She was named Blodeuwydd which means "flower face". But that's a whole story unto itself and we'll leave it for our Pretani cousins to take those up.

Llew came to the Gaelic peoples just prior to the Second Battle of Maige Tuired (moy tura). We know Him as Lugh. In the lore it is told how He came to the Tuatha de Danaan, who were being led by the Dagda. He presented Himself to be a help in the coming fight against the Fomore. He was asked several times what His skill was. Each time He told them a skill and each time He was told that one of the Tuatha de Danaan already possessed that skill. Finally He broke the stalemate by asking who amongst the Tuatha had all of the skills, as did He. None did, and so He was not only admitted into the company of the Tuatha but also given the title Il Danach which showed that He possessed all of the skills. When the mighty battle finally roared and Tuatha de Danaan warrior met Fomore warrior on the field of honor, Lugh had been kept far away from the scene. Finally, He, going against the wishes of the Dagda, went out to the scene of battle Himself. The battle had gone hard for the Tuatha even though the weapons of Goibannion repaired themselves and the healing of Dianecht brought back those who had fallen. Lugh certainly saved that day. For He put out the

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evil eye of Balor before it could do more damage. Yet even with the help of Lugh, the Tuatha suffered losses with the death of Nuada and others. Lugh became permanent in the company of the Tuatha. Lugh, the God of Light, was eventually wounded Himself on the day that is named after him, Lughnasadh. His death, however, comes in the three days preceding the Samhain, when He dies at the hand of his Tanist who is the Lord of Mis-rule.

As there tends to be so much confusion about this topic, let me embellish a bit. At Lughnasadh, the God of Light is not killed. By studying the lore we discover that it is the force of growth that is taken from Him. One way this maiming took place was for the king to be tied by his hair to an Oak tree with one foot on the cauldron (representing the west) and his other on the back of a Horse or in some cases a Sow (Both these animals are representative of the southern quarter and are animal iconography for the Goddess of Sovereignty). The Horse or Sow was then sent from under Him causing Him to be maimed in such a way to destroy His fertility but not His life. His life was not taken until the three days before Samhain when his Tanist, the aforementioned Lord of Misrule, began His reign. What appears to be an act of betrayal by the Goddess of Sovereignty is in fact an act of love. Through the seed of his Tanist, whom He himself sired, He is reborn and grows to become in turn the slayer of His rival at the time of Beltaine, so the wheel turns.

Amongst those who produce trendy "Celtic" writings, there is a propensity to deny that the Sacral Kingship was a part of general Celtic culture. Yet scholarship has proven this to be the case, and it was also true amongst the Gaelic Celts. A great deal of the lore shows this to whomever looks at it without preconceived notions. Inside the lore which has the God of Light, being maimed by having the Horse or Sow come out from under Him, we see these elements. In Bronze and early Iron Age times, it was the tradition that the Sacral King (the predecessor of the High Kings) was elected to serve for a specified time which varied from a year and a day, to five and even seven or nine years depending on location. In the Bronze Age and before, the Sacral King was very much sacrificed. In the later Bronze Age, the sacrifice of the kings was replaced by the Kings being exiled. The King embodied the fertility of the land, which he had come to be through his marriage to the Goddess of Sovereignty. This fertility, at times had to be stopped to allow ripening to take place. This theme is encoded within all the Celtic legends. In later times these practises were discontinued and the feast of Lughnasadh was instituted, as is said by Lugh himself, in honour of his foster mother, Tailtiu. In some locations the institution of the "scapegoat" or "Fool" was fully used to keep a much diminished reflection of the former practices. Within the festival of Lughnasadh are myriad echoes of these much earlier times.

Lughnasadh is said to have been named after Lugh. However, this harvest festival, which was usually dedicated to Lugh, was very often dedicated to his foster mother Tailtiu. There is quite a bit of evidence that Lugh stepped into the shoes once worn by Trograinn, the son of Griann, in the areas where They were venerated. The date of the celebration is approximately August 1st. In those areas where Trograinn was venerated, the festival was called Bron Trograinn (the Rage of Trograinn). Lughnasadh seems to have superceded that festival however.

This is the time when the warriors returned from the fields of battle to begin harvesting the crops. At this time fairs were held. Traditionally, this was also the time when marriages were contracted. There were many games and races. A great number of records still exist which show that this date held importance across all of the Gaelic lands. One of these, the 12th century manuscript of The Book of Leinster tells of a fair, an aenach, held at Carmun in Leinster (probably south of Kildare). This fair was held once every three years; it began on 1st August and ended on the 6th. Another example is the Curragh of the Liffey which is the most celebrated race course in Ireland. However, from the ancient lore we see the God of Light Lugh Himself, instituted the great fair of Tailtinn (now called Teltown) in honour of his foster mother Tailtiu (pronounced Telsha). The lore relates how Tailtiu's heart broke under the strain of clearing the plain that carries her name. Lugh then ordained that the fair, with feasting and games should be held there annually for all time as a memorial to Her. Tailtiu was in fact a Goddess of the Land who

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founded the kingship of Ireland under the Fir Bolgs, in the time before the coming of either the Tuatha de Danaan or the Milesians (Gaels).

It is said that the Fir Bolgs landed in Ireland at Lughnasadh, hence this festival seems to have a great deal of association with the older races of that land. The site of Tailltinn was also an ancient sacred burial place for the men of Ulster, which is traditionally the stronghold of the Fir Bolg warriors. The Fir Bolg peoples were closely associated with agriculture. Lughnasadh was an important land festival within the communities of the "common folk." Throughout Gaelic lands Lughnasadh is to this day known as "the festival of first fruits." It does in a very real way honor Tailltiu, who as a Goddess of the Land (and sovereignty), is the Earth Mother of local terrain. When considering the agricultural perhaps we can best establish the idea of the intent of this festival time by exploring the Gaelic language itself. By doing this study, we find that the name Lugh, transliterates to "the least." As the People were still by and large living on the stores of the previous years harvest, this was the time when the stores were at the least. It was a time of looking forward to the harvest time just starting. It must also be pointed out directly, to avoid confusion, that this festival either in veneration of Tailltiu or Lugh, has no connection to any concept of Corn Kings or harvest festivals, such as referenced to in Frazer's, *The Golden Bough*.

Tailltinn was the scene of the final battle between the Tuatha De Danaans and the Milesians. The Gaels here defeated the Tuatha de Danaan, and it is here that they buried their three kings. After this the Gaels divided Ireland between the Sons of Mil.

It seems that a common element was the prevalence of horses at the fairs associated with Lughnasadh. Of course the White Stead is a common companion of Lugh in the lore. Even in the Ulster Cycle, the foot race between Macha and the chariots of MacNessa speak of this. The emphasis on horse races and horsemanship seem to drive home the point. This is very significant, for the horse is the embodiment of the Goddess of Sovereignty. In this, Her task seems to be to deliver spirits to Tir na Nog (OtherWorld). A telling custom related to this belief which was once widely practised in the coastal lands of the Gaidhealtachd (Gaelic lands) was for people to drive their horses down to the beach and into the sea on Lughnasadh.

The Fair of Tailltinn, became a major annual event held on the 1st of August, which was attended by people of all classes in Gaelic Celt. It had all the usual attractions of a great festival, but was particularly renowned for its excellent games and its "marriage market."

Lughnasadh was the season of handfastings, or trial marriages that lasted a year and a day. After that time the couple had to return to the same place at the fair the following year to make their contract a permanent one. They also had the right to declare themselves divorced by walking in opposite directions away from each other. Trial marriages of a year and a day lasted up until recent centuries in many Gaelic areas. During this time young people would often simply "pair up " with a "brother " or "sister " for the duration of the fair, after which they went their separate ways. As a matter of fact, even into the 18th century the ribald flavor of the Teltown Fair (Teltown being the Anglicised version of Tailltinn) was held to be quite scandalous.

In some places one whole day was dedicated to horse and chariot races. In addition to the games, there were recitations of poems, genealogies and romantic tales. Music was provided by cruids (harps), timpani, trumpets, horns and cuisig or piob (pipes). Feats of horsemanship were performed. There were also jugglers and clowns. It seems that there were usually three distinct market places; one for food and clothes, one for livestock and another for luxury goods. If it rained during this festival, it was believed that Lugh himself was present.

Like the other fire festivals, this one too was once celebrated with great bonfires in every district. These saw the people gather on the sacred hills, and visiting the sacred wells. These fires lasted well into the nineteenth century in many areas. In many places the elderly women would go to the cattle and tie red

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## Lughnasadh Ritual for Families

by Patrick McCleary

### Supplies:

Five Candles -- yellow, red, blue, green, brown  
A bowl of water  
A bowl of dirt  
A feather  
Musical Instruments if you so wish  
Bell for each of the children participating

### Ritual:

Arrange the colored candles and other items in a circle around you. In the East put the yellow candle and the feather. In the South put the red candle. In the West put the bowl of water and the blue candle. And finally in the North put the bowl of dirt and the green candle. Light these candles as you set them out. Walk with your children from candle to candle, ringing a bell as you leave from candle to another. Start in the East and tell them that it represents Air. Wave the feather at them so that they can feel the wind.

In the South tell them that here is Fire represented. Carefully let them feel the heat from the candle. In the West talk to them about Water. Have them wash their hands in the water. In the North speak about the element of Earth. Let them touch the dirt. When you return to the Center talk to them about the Goddess and the God and how they are always there. Let them know about Love and the Blessings that the Gods can give us.

Now sit with your children and tell them about Lughnasadh, while you light the brown candle. Tell them about the Sacrifice of the God, the harvesting of the grain and the passing of the year to the control of the Holly King. You could read them the Rede of the Harvest Lord. Now have some fun and celebrate. Play some music and sing some chants. Raise some energy. One of the traditional songs for this time of the year goes:

Horned One, Lover, Son  
Leaper in the Corn  
Deep in the Mother  
Die and be Reborn

After you are done with this take the time to break bread with your family and have each one tell what it is that they are thankful for. Be sure to leave a offering for the Gods when you are done.



## Lammas Recipes

### Barley Mushroom Soup

Prep Time: 30 minutes

Cook Time: 1 hour, 20 minutes

#### Ingredients:

5 C. vegetable broth  
 1 C. barley, uncooked  
 1/2 lb. mushrooms (use morels or enoki for a woodsy flavor)  
 1/2 C. onion, diced  
 1/2 C. fresh carrots, chopped  
 1/2 C. celery, chopped  
 2 cloves fresh garlic, minced  
 Salt and pepper to taste

#### Preparation:

Bring the vegetable broth to a low rolling boil on the stove and then reduce heat. Add the mushrooms, onions, carrots and celery, and allow to simmer for ten minutes. Add the barley and garlic, cover and simmer for another hour.

Add salt and pepper, seasoning to taste.

Serve as a side dish accompanied by a nice soft chunk of buttered bread!

### Baked Polenta with Sausage and Mushrooms

1 tb olive oil  
 1 sm Yellow onion; chopped  
 2 lg Garlic cloves; minced  
 1 md Red sweet pepper, cored, seeded and chopped  
 1/2 lb Mild Italian sausage, loose  
 1/2 lb Fresh mushrooms, (white or brown), trimmed and thinly sliced  
 2 1/2 c Milk, broth or water  
 3/4 c Yellow cornmeal, preferably stone-ground  
 1 tb Chopped fresh sage  
 1 tb Chopped Italian parsley  
 1/4 ts Ground cayenne pepper  
 1 c Ricotta cheese  
 1/2 c gruyere or swiss cheese  
 Salt  
 Freshly ground black pepper  
 4 tb Butter or margarine; melted  
 4 tb Grated parmesan cheese

Heat olive oil in a medium skillet. Sauté onion, garlic, and sweet pepper until hot through. Add crumbled sausage and continue cooking just until meat changes color. Stir in mushrooms and cook until they release their liquid. Drain excess fat and set mixture aside.

Place milk or other liquid in a large, heavy saucepan over moderately high heat. Slowly add cornmeal, stirring briskly with a wire whisk to prevent lumping. Bring to a boil and cook 10 minutes or until mixture is very thick and smooth while stirring constantly to prevent scorching. Remove pan from heat and stir in herbs, cayenne pepper, and ricotta and gruyere cheeses. Add sausage and sweet pepper mixture. Combine all parts well and then season to taste with salt and pepper. Pour mixture into two 9-inch pie plates lined with plastic wrap. Cool on a wire rack, then cover and refrigerate at least an hour, or as long as three days.

When ready to serve dish, preheat oven to 375 degrees. Cut polenta in wedges and place on an oiled shallow baking pan large enough to hold polenta in one layer without crowding. Drizzle with melted butter and sprinkle with parmesan cheese. Bake 15 to 20 minutes, or until polenta is lightly browned and very hot when tested with a small knife in center of wedge. Serve with a topping of Tomato Sauce and sprinkled with more parmesan cheese.

### Game Hens with Rosemary and Garlic

3 Cornish Game Hens, halved  
 3/4 cup Olive oil  
 4 Garlic cloves, crushed  
 3 Tablespoons Dry sherry  
 1 Tablespoon Fine chopped fresh rosemary  
 Juice of 1 lemon  
 Salt to taste  
 Freshly ground black pepper to taste

Split each bird in half. Set aside. Using a very large bowl mix the remaining ingredients together. Marinate the bird halves in this mixture for 1 hour, turning often. Broil in oven 7 or 8 minutes on a side, or on a charcoal barbecue. (If using charcoal, but be sure the coals are not too hot.) Cook to your liking.

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or blue threads onto their tails, while repeating incantations. This they did for the milk to retain its goodness, a ball of cow's hair or ronag was put into the milk pail on this day.

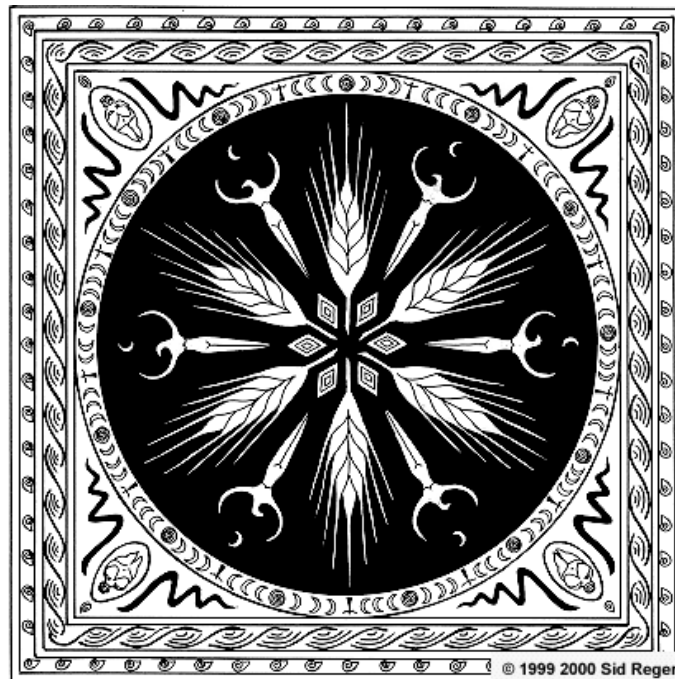
Curds and cheese were specially prepared from that day's milk. In many places, after the rise to dominance of Christianity, the pagan bannock became the Moilean Moire, dedicated to Mary. In this way the ancient customs were carried on under a thin veneer of Christianity as La Feill Moire, The Feast day of Mary. This festival falls on August 15th, very close to the ancient date of Lughnasadh before the Gregorian calendar changes. We can see many similarities between Mary as mother of Jesus (the Sun King) and one of the ancestral Goddesses of the Land, Tailltiu, foster mother of the God of Sun Light Lugh. La Feill Moire has retained much of its pagan roots. It is not very difficult to back-engineer this verse to regain a wholly pre-Christian expression. I shall, however, leave that for the reader. In this rite the father of the household breaks the bannock, giving a piece to his wife and his children in order of age, then the whole family walks sunwise round the fire singing the rune (incantation) of Mother Mary:

'Iolach Mhoire Mhathair':

On the feast day of Mary the fragrant,  
 Mother of the Shepherd of the flocks,  
 I cut me a handful of the new corn,  
 I dried it gently in the sun,  
 I rubbed it sharply from the husk  
 With mine own palms.  
 I ground it in a quern of Friday  
 I baked it on a fan of sheep-skin  
 I toasted it to a fire of rowan  
 And I shared it round my people.

I went sunways round my dwelling  
 In the name of Mary Mother  
 Who promised to preserve me  
 Who did preserve  
 And who will preserve me...

(Translated from the Gaelic by the Dal Riadh Celtic Trust)



## Lammas images and pictures



## Suggested Reading List

**Dance of the Moon: Celebrating the Sacred Cycles of the Earth** by Dan Furst  
**Fate of the Children of Tuireann** by Gill & son  
**Spirited: Taking Paganism Beyond the Circle** by Gede Parma  
**Dedicant: A Witch's Circle of Fire (Course of Study in the Old Religion)** by Thuri Calafia

## Pagan Chants

Title: Sun King  
 Lyrics by: Raven Moonshadow  
 Tune: original  
 Date: 1987

O tell me why, o tell me why  
 Tell me why must the clouds come to darken the sky

This is the wake of Lugh the Sun King  
 He lost his life on the Solstice day  
 This is the wake of Lugh the Sun King  
 He steps into the dark and guides the way

Title: Harvest Chant  
 Lyrics by: Theresa Dutton  
 Tune: original  
 Date: 1993

Our hands will work for peace and justice  
 Our hands will work to heal the land  
 Gather 'round the harvest table  
 Let us feast and bless the land

## Newsletter Submission Due Dates

Imbolc Issue—January 2nd  
Ostara Issue—February 22nd  
Beltane Issue—April 2nd  
Midsummer Issue—May 20th  
Lammas Issue—July 2nd  
Mabon Issue—August 21st  
Samhain Issue—October 2nd  
Yule Issue—November 21st

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