

## Samhain is not Hallowe'en

If you take the trouble to count the days between an Equinox or Solstice (their dates wandering between the 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> of their respective months), it clearly shows that the 'Cross-Quarter' days of the Wheel of the Year, the festivals of Samhain, Imbolc, Beltain and Lughnasadh, fall not on the 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> of their respective months, but between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> of November, February, May and August.

Another way of putting this in astronomical/astrological terms is to say that the Cross-Quarter days of the Wheel of the Year truly fall 'when the sun is at 15 degrees' of the relevant Zodiacal signs. Quite a few other watchers of the skies and votaries of the Wheel have made this assertion, or rather observation—the late Hamish Miller, for example.

I always suspected that November 5<sup>th</sup>, 'Bonfire Night', being clearly the only surviving member of the Keltic fire-festivals, represented true Samhain, and both a simple bit of arithmetic and calendrical counting, would appear to bear this out.

These are the novelist Thomas Hardy's remarks re the opening scenes of his novel *Return of The Native*, set very clearly and emphatically on November 5<sup>th</sup>, with the characters in remote Dorset depicted making bonfires (no fireworks) largely on the numerous hill-top barrows to be found in such abundance in this magical part of the world:

*November 5th...it is pretty well known that such blazes as this the heathmen were now enjoying are rather the lineal descendents from jumbled Druidical rites and Saxon ceremonies than the invention of popular feeling about the Gunpowder Plot.*

--Thomas Hardy *Return Of The Native* (1874)

The drifting of the dates of the Cross Quarter days towards the beginning of the month were, one suspects, an attempt to erase their significance when appropriated by the Christian Church for the purposes of their own ceremonies and practices, i.e. ‘Hallowe’en’ is the evening before the day of ‘All Hallows’, assigned to Nov 1<sup>st</sup>.

When in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the founders of the ‘Modern Magical Revival’ and those seeking to restore the lost vestiges of Paganism so cruelly and fully suppressed by the Christianity, (whether via the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages, or their equally dogmatic, one might say ‘fundamentalist’ successors professing varying degrees of ‘Protestantism’), while reviving the lost *names* of the days involved and seeking to re-institute ceremonials appropriate to each stage, they did so while retaining their revised and Christianised *dates*.

Thence our incorrect modern perception of the dates of these ceremonies as being ‘from time-immemorial’—neglecting the rather obvious, one would have thought, ‘smoking gun’ clue of the survival of ‘Bonfire Night’ at the correct time and date (pun intended).

My proposal, then, is that sincere ‘Pagans’ or lovers of the Wheel of the Year, and/or groups affiliated with such, should shift their ceremonies and celebrations of the Cross Quarter Days of the Wheel of the Year to the true dates falling between 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> of the relevant months, unpopular as that might appear at first. Any change of an apparent tradition is bound to be unpopular at first, my point being that this change would actually a *reversion* to the original and true pagan calendar.

Further remaining vestiges of celebrations held on the original dates to support my argument from Nigel Pennick’s invaluable book *The Pagan Book Of Days* might include, for Imbolc, Feb 5<sup>th</sup> being St. Agatha’s Day/Wyrd Day; for Beltane, May 4<sup>th</sup> being the Veneration of the Thorn, and May the 7<sup>th</sup> being the day of the ‘Helston Furry Dance’ still maintained in Cornwall.

As for Lughnasadh, August 6<sup>th</sup> was the date of the Tan Hill festival celebrated until the 19<sup>th</sup> century at Tan Hill near Avebury. ‘Tan’ = a truncation of ‘St. Ann’, the mother of Mary the Mother of God. She is the Christianisation of such ancient creatrix-Goddesses as Egyptian ‘Neith’ (as she is largely mis-titled) and Sumerian/Kaananite ‘Anath’—being clearly only slightly differing names for the same Mother Goddess who we know in the Irish Keltik tradition by her name of ‘Anu’, and Brythonic Keltik ‘Don’.

‘I married Isis on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of May...’ sings Bob Dylan in his song/poem ‘Isis’ on the 1975 album *Desire*. I used to think him hopelessly wrong with his dates re the Pagan tradition and Wheel of the Year. Now I feel he was (working intuitively) right.

(c) Dean Carter 28<sup>th</sup> October 2021