

NEWS LETTER

£1

– to cover printing costs and small donation to temple

Upcoming Events

Lammas/Lúnasa Celebration Walk

Saturday 4th August – Open to all. Meet at Airy Fairy at 11.00 to car share for a walk to Gardom's Edge to find the enigmatic standing stone and cup and ring marked stone. There we will seek a creative connection to the elements and the ancestors. Please book with Airy Fairy.

Autumn Equinox Celebration

Weekend 22nd/23rd September - Details to be confirmed. Please ring the Airy Fairy shop (number below), or see the temple Facebook page (web address on back page), for updates.

Regular Groups

Magic Witchcraft Chaos & Beyond

From simple techniques and ways of working magic to deeper principles and discoveries.

- Restarts 15th September 2-6 pm. For details see: www.facebook.com/SheffieldGoddessTemple/

Pagan Pathways – Talks, Discussion, Tues. 8pm

- 14th August: Trip to Big Moor Stone Circles
- 28th August: The Mountain and the Stream - Rural Animism and Pagan Practices (Paul Pearson and Tallis Harrill)
- 11th Sep: The Mauve Zone (Stephen Djdzkiewicz)

Shamanic Meditation Drum Group

- 4th August and following alternate Saturdays, 2-3 pm. Each session £5 (concessions available). With Jo Johnson-Smith.

Gwenith

Mother of the First Harvest

The ancient cross quarter festival occurring on the first of August has an important place in the history and culture of Britain and Ireland. It is also importantly to us Sheffields:

YORKSHIRE DAY!

Falling between the Summer solstice and the Autumn equinox, it is a festival which celebrated the first fruits of both the wild and the



cultivated harvest, a time when people gathered to meet for fairs, athletic games and hand fasting. It is the point between the hay harvest and the communal work to come of the gathering in of the grain. A point where the fields are rich, golden and full of ripe standing grain.

However, held deep within the joy of summer celebration and the holiday atmosphere, Lammas, Lughnasadh (or in modern Irish Lúnasa), Welsh

Calan Awst, there lies an element of poignancy due to the sacrifices of nature as she gives over her bounty to sustain us through the season to come and through harsh winter. Then the fields stand razed and empty.

In order to understand the relevance of this festival within our own land and for the ancestors of this region, we must look to the folklore of the Western Isles in general. In Ireland, the festival of Lughnasadh commemorates the sun god Lugh. Great gatherings were held which included visits to holy wells (perhaps on the journey to the gathering?), matchmaking (including trial marriages of a year and a day - very sensible!), bonfires, dancing, trading, religious observances, music, storytelling, the settling of legal disputes, contracts and of course ritual and competitive athletic games including horse racing.

These Tailteann games were held to commemorate the memory of Lugh's foster mother Taitiu, who is said to have died of exhaustion after clearing the plains of Ireland for agriculture. She was undoubtedly an Earth Goddess representing the gift of food, and a personification of the earth stripped bare and exhausted after gathering and reaping. According to the folklorist Máire MacNeill, some of the specifics of the festival included:-

[article continues overleaf]

To book events please ring *Airy Fairy* on **0114 2492090**



Gwenith *[continued from front page]*

- a meal including bilberries of which all must partake
- the sacrifice of a sacred bull for feasting and its replacement by a young bull
- a solemn cutting of the first corn which was made into a corn dolly and taken to a high place to be buried as an offering
- ritual dance, fighting and storytelling, perhaps as a retelling of the struggle of and for the Goddess.
- an installation of a carved stone head on the top of a hill over which someone representing Lugh would triumph.

According to MacNeill, the rituals and folklore surrounding Lúnasa involve a struggle between the Deity who has generated growth and the harvest, and the one who must seize this for the people.

Even today, the remnants of this ancient festival are marked by the blessing of fields, the Puck Fair in County Kerry, and mountain pilgrimages, most notably the climbing of Croagh Patrick mountain.

The Lammas festival or Lammastide has roots which are very similar to the above. This English festival marks the first harvest festival of the year and although still celebrated by Christians, the pagan roots of the festival are very obvious. Traditionally, the first loaf was made from the first grain to be harvested from the field and taken to the church to be blessed. This ritual began to represent the transfiguration of Christ.

John Barley Corn

Some readers may be familiar with John Barleycorn, the personification of the cycle of growth, maturation, and reaping of the grain harvest in order to brew alcoholic drinks including beer and whiskey. There is a fascinating ballad written in by Alexander Pennecuik in 1725 entitled *'A Hue and Cry After Sir John Barleycorn'* in which poor John suffers indignities as he is reaped and thrashed, mashed and brewed in order to make the brew. John ultimately has his revenge when he is transformed into alcohol and he thereby gets the better of the drunkards - you will have to read the story!

The Goddess

The Goddess as we know is everywhere. Before and since the beginning of agriculture she has offered wild and cultivated harvests to sustain us all; from the milk of the mother's breast, to the bilberries upon our wild moors, the first blackberries, the brown trout in the river Don, to the wheat and barley growing in our golden fields. For our Northern Goddess Wheel of the year we are fortunate to have rediscovered the many genuine and timeless Goddess names

historically attested or held by our own landscape names. These are known by archaeologists as "The Eternal Names", given by the earliest ancestors, held and retained by the land.

Because so many of these names have ancient Brythonic roots (the language once spoken throughout Britain and from which modern Welsh is descended), we have turned to the Brythonic language to find the name for our own Goddess of the harvest. Wheat is the first cereal crop to have been grown and harvested in Britain and dates back to the Neolithic (approximately 6000 years ago). Our Goddess for Lammas is therefore called Gwenith, which literally translates as wheat, but also means golden, bright and fair, as are our fields at this time of year.

We decorate our temple with traditional corn dollies, including the large Harvest Mother dolly. These female figures had huge heads of grain and were carefully made, cared for and displayed in a safe place. Both decorative and functional, they ensured the survival of seed grain in the case of storage failure. She is the personification of the life sustaining mother.

There are so many ancient and modern, wonderful grain harvest stories and songs relating to harvest Goddesses and the sacrifices made at Lúnasa/Lammas. In Yorkshire men would compete to create the best, biggest and most spectacular chandeliers of wheat 'drop dollies', a craft and tradition lost in the last century but still retained in photographs. The mention above of the Irish stone head tradition is significant. Yorkshire is particularly rich in Iron Age stone head finds and cults. A huge stone head on display in Castleton museum was recovered from a wall but thought to have been originally in place on Mam Tor. This was

labelled 'Brigantia' but some uninformed person has now relabelled it as a male god head. Please feel free to complain vociferously to the museum!

The rural world is vanishing, but we still all rely on Nature and Her bounty. Remember the sacrifices of the land as you celebrate this glorious summer festival. Please visit the temple and read our temple Gwenith song in honour of the Mother and her Son, who grows and falls so that we may be sustained (which many of you to my joy have sung along with me). Her joy and sorrow at his sacrifice has so many metaphors which each of us in our own way will understand.

Around the Harvest Wheel Again

Mother will you give me birth
Mother grow me back from the earth
Mother will you midwife my soul
Around the Harvest wheel again
Around, the harvest wheel again

Blessed Be,
Lynne Harling



Celebrating & Preparing for Lammas

Lammas is the seasonal peak of high summer, and as with all Cross Quarter festivals, it represents a change in the manifest energy. Summer feels as if it will last forever, but now we begin to see the first signs of change and transformation. In the fields the cereal crops have turned from green to gold and are gathered in. The first fruits, nuts and seeds are ripening and we must think about what we wish to gather in, such as seeds and plant medicines that will see us through the winter. This is a time to make the most of the fine long days, travel about, have adventures and walk the land.

Here we begin to assimilate and gather in our own harvest, the first fruits of our active phase now manifest in the outer world – the harvest of our hearts' desires, and the fruits of our labours. This is a period of assessment as we begin to gather ourselves together again after much scattering of energy. This is often a holiday period, and gives us time to take a reflective look at ourselves. In the spring we planted the seeds of our hopes, our dreams and ourselves. Some things may have manifested and some not. The Lammas assessment helps us to have a deeper understanding of our actions and ourselves at this point in time.

At Lammas we count our blessings and give thanks for all that we are harvesting. Being aware of them will help us to see ways to take them forwards into the next part of the cycle.

Preparations for Lammas

Lammas is traditionally a tribal gathering, bringing the tribe together for work and play, for enjoyment and assessment. It may last over a period of many days and therefore camping space would help with this influx of visitors. It is a good time to harness many people's energy for a community project such as clearing a piece of land, building work or a garden project.

Prepare a place for the Lammas fire, with space around it for dancing and some seating. Moveable benches can be made easily with a plank of wood nailed to two rounds of tree trunk. You will need several 10 or 15cm nails for each. Give them a coat of wood preserver and they will last for years. They are very versatile and can be used for tables as well as seating and for creating a theatre space. Ask everyone to bring firewood.

Prepare an area for the Lammas feast. An outdoor feast is very central to this celebration. Ask everyone to bring food to share and set up some tables for this. Provide sleeping mats, carpets and rugs so that the children can lie in their sleeping bags when tired. Decorate the area



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with flags, bunting, and sheaves of grasses, wheat, oats, rye or barley tied up with red ribbon.

Weave and fashion a large Grain Mother from a bundle of grasses and flowers. As you weave and plait the stalks, give thanks for the grain harvest and share with each other all that this means to you.

Weave and plait smaller corn dollies from wheat or grass stalks. A single plait or concertina can be used to create simple shapes that can be hung up. As you plait and weave, focus on your own harvest. Look into your heart and celebrate all you have to be grateful for and for the hidden blessings held within the more difficult aspects of your harvest.

Create a Lammas shrine and ask everyone to bring something for it. If you have enough space, you can place this within an area created for contemplation and meditation. A circle of stones 4.5m across or a circle of bent willow or hazel rods is enough to define a space. Use a lump hammer and a metal spike to make holes in the ground and push in the thick end of the rod. Space the rods 30-60cm apart, bending them over and weaving the tops in the usual way. This could easily be created on a lawn, as it is impermanent and leaves just a circle of small holes. If you wish to turn this into something more permanent, use freshly cut willow-rods, keep them well watered and leave them over the winter. By the spring they will be growing well and can be woven and clipped to create a living willow hedge or dome.

Finish off the outdoor projects you began this summer, while you still have the energy and the light ✨

Extracted from:

Glennie Kindred's *Sacred Earth Celebrations*

available at:

www.green-shopping.co.uk/sacred-earth-celebrations.html

1st of August is... Pachamama Day!

In the northern hemisphere early August corresponds with the start of harvesting, and Lammas (or Lughnasadh), when “people reap those things they have sown; when they celebrate the fruits of the mystery of Nature... [and] Pagans give thanks for the bounty of the Goddess as Queen of the Land.”¹

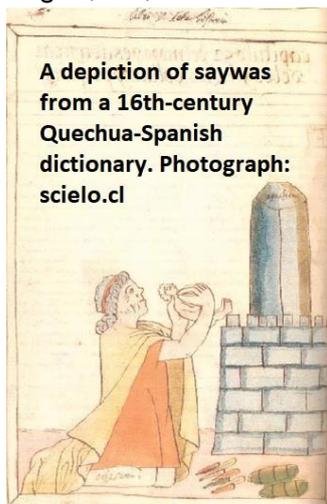
In the southern hemisphere however early August marks the first stirrings of spring, not the harvests of late summer. Remarkably though the very same day, - 1st August - is, in South American countries such as Chile, Peru and Bolivia, also a day when “the Goddess as Queen of the Land” is honoured. The indigenous populations in particular still remember Pachamama, their traditional Earth Goddess.

The Guardian newspaper recently reported how childhood memories of 1st August being celebrated as Pachamama Day helped to solve the mystery of the purpose and placement of Chilean pre-Hispanic standing stones called “saywas”.²

Observation of one of the saywas on 1st August by archaeologists revealed a true solar alignment on that date, with the stone clearly having been placed to honour the Goddess on her special day.

These saywa standing stones have been called “Chile’s answer to Stonehenge”. They stretch along the ancient pathways of the Qhapaq Ñan – an Inca road network stretching from southern Colombia to central Chile. Like the Stonehenge constructions, the saywas are believed to have had a calendrical, astronomical and religious purpose. On the winter and summer solstices, the sun god, Inti, was believed to “rest” atop them.

The sun was also observed to rise directly atop some saywas on the southern hemisphere’s Autumn and Spring equinoxes. The alignment of saywas at one location however remained a mystery – until in 2017 an indigenous Chilean anthropologist, Jimena Cruz, “recalling childhood family rituals observed in honour of Pachamama, the Andean earth mother, on 1 August, suggested observing them on that date.”² This proved to be the solution to the mystery*



A depiction of saywas from a 16th-century Quechua-Spanish dictionary. Photograph: scienceloci

Article sources:

- 1 paganfed.org/index.php/paganism/pf-wheel-of-the-year
- 2 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/16/chile-atacama-desert-saywas-inca-solar-discovery>



Join our Sheffield Goddess Temple Melissas between 12:30 and 1:30 pm, Monday to Saturday, to experience these seasonal energies in quiet contemplation.

Temple Melissas are the people who hold space in the Temple between 12.30 and 1.30 pm every day, Monday to Saturday. It is a delightful job to do. If you would like to be part of the Melissa team please leave a message at Airy Fairy for Ann Staniland or Brian Harrison.

The Temple on Facebook



For all the most up to date information on what is going on at the temple, don’t forget to check out our Facebook page which has all the latest news of events, and photos of recent happenings.

<https://www.facebook.com/SheffieldGoddessTemple/>

Contact Sheffield Goddess Temple Newsletter

To submit articles, news of relevant upcoming events, or to make suggestions, please email us at:

temple@lovecat.com

Happy Lammas/
Lughnasadh

[celticanamcara.blogspot.com]

