



Sheffield
Goddess
Temple

NEWS LETTER

£1 *or*
FREE
with any
donation
to Temple

Cover image: goddess Hel
<https://pin.it/qxkgoh3d7r3vsf>

Issue 17

Samhain 2019

Our **Samhain** Goddess and Temple Events

Pen-Nain

'Wise Old One' of the North

As the leaves fall and the nights get shorter, we prepare for winter. The Sun God is dead and the Flower Goddess is mourning. But in the hidden depth of the underworld death works its alchemy of transformation.

Imperceptibly it decomposes and regenerates so that the litter of leaves and debris become the fertile ground that will nourish next year's growth. The veils between the worlds are thin at this time of the year and life and death are but opposite poles of the same continuously regenerating life-force.

Samhain is a time to honour the dead and to contemplate the mysteries of life, death and regeneration. It is a time to turn inwards and in the depth and silence of our souls we confront our shadows and our own mortality.

On our Northern Goddess Wheel, the Goddess for this season is Pen-Nain (Pennine). She is the head Grandmother or Modron. The origin of the name 'Pennine' is from the Cumbric (Brittonic) language; Pen means head (like our mountains Pen – Y – Ghent and Pendle hill also Penistone village), and Nain means Grandmother (as in the North Welsh word for Grandmother 'Nain'). The Pennine's literally means 'Head Grandmother'. She is the old wise one.



Images: Pennine Padley Gorge, October 2019 (JL)



Temple Celebrations

Samhain Celebration

Saturday 26th October 12:00 pm

Join us to celebrate Samhain - honouring the deceased and the beginning of the dark half of the year. Please ring the Airy Fairy shop (number below) to book on to this free event, to book refreshments if required, and for details of times and updates - or see the temple web page (sheffieldgoddess temple.org).

Yule Festival

Sunday 22nd December 12:00 pm

Yule marks the Winter Solstice in the northern hemisphere – our shortest day. From this date onwards in the annual wheel of the year daylight hours gradually lengthen. Please ring the Airy Fairy shop (number below) to book on to this free event, to book refreshments if required, and for details of times and updates - or see the temple web page (sheffieldgoddess temple.org).

Temple Diary Dates

Free Monthly Guided Meditation

Friday 8th November, 12:00 - 12:30 pm. No booking required.

Chakra Healing Course

Wednesday 6th and 13th November 7:30 – 9:00 pm
(with Crystal and Carmen). £22 per session.

Moon Meets

Celebrate changing energies of the moon with Carmen Edwards:

Monday 28th October 7:00 – 8:00 pm (*new moon*)

Monday 11th November 7:00 – 8:00 pm (*full moon*)

Cacao Ceremony – Coming Soon!

Please contact Carmen for date

For further information:

www.facebook.com/Livethemagicwithcarmenedwards

or text/phone: 07939497525

To book events please ring Airy Fairy on 0114 2492090



Spiritual Crisis Network

– Saturday 16th November, 1:30-3:30 pm

– Saturday 21st December, 1:30-3:30 pm

Pagan Pathways – Talks, Discussion, Tuesdays, 8:00 pm

- 12th November: *Jung and Individuation* – Tim Hill/Robin Ellis

- 26th November: *The Dark Haven* – Robin Ellis

- 10th December: *The Element Earth* – Jamie Lang

Hel – Samhain Goddess

Samhain is known as that time of the year when the veil between the realms of the living and the dead, that shroud hiding the Underworld, grows thin and transparent. At this time ancestors and the dead may be more effectively remembered or perhaps even communicated with.

Samhain *“is a Gaelic festival marking the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter or the ‘darker half’ of the year. Traditionally, it is celebrated from 31 October to 1 November, as the Celtic day began and ended at sunset.”*¹

It may initially seem odd to associate a Scandinavian goddess with Gaelic/Celtic Samhain, but in fact there are parallels between the ancient pagan beliefs of these two groups of peoples. Pagan Scandinavians and Anglo-Saxons for example, along with Celtic peoples, also counted days as ending and beginning at sunset, rather than midnight as we do now.

Similarly pagan Celtic tribes, Scandinavians, and Anglo-Saxons all lived in north western Europe during the same pre-Christian age, and experienced and related to the same north European climatic and environmental conditions. For all these peoples the onset of ‘dark half’ of the year meant the suspension of agrarian activities, the slaughtering of surplus animals (for there would not be sufficient food to provide for most of them through the winter), the careful storage of sufficient food and fuel stocks to see people through to the Spring, much shorter working days, and long dark hours at home - hopefully keeping warm by a fire and perhaps keeping minds entertained with story-telling evenings.

No doubt at this quieter time it would also be thought advisable to remember and acknowledge all those beings believed to have influenced the lives of those hoping to survive another winter, whether family members, ancestors, nature spirits of various kinds, or even the gods themselves.

The bringing to mind of deceased family members would no doubt prompt not just the voicing of memories of directly remembered lives (those who had died within a generation), but also the recalling of tales of the deeds of more distant ancestors, along with possible accounts of those ancestors’ more recent likely involvement in the lives of the still living, whether as guiding spirits offering good advice, or ghosts, malevolent or otherwise.

Direct family ancestors might be largely perceived as generally benevolent, but the ongoing activities of ancient tribal enemies, both the long dead and the still living, would more likely be feared as continually ill-intentioned.

Hence it would be necessary to attempt to understand something of what might be happening in the Underworld, the realms of the dead. Ancestors could be appealed to directly, but their knowledge and powers, just as in life, would be limited. And just as in life, it might be advisable to seek also the favour of more powerful relevant gods and, in Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian belief, goddesses in particular: *“It would certainly seem that we have a persistent tradition for a goddess of the dead; since not only Hel... and Freyja, but also Gefion and Rán are connected with death.”*²

*“Freyja is the true Valkyrie, welcoming the dead with wine in the house of the gods... Gefion is attended by all those women who die unmarried... Rán [is] the wife of Ægir, god of the sea... if drowned men attended their own funerals it was looked on as a sign that Rán had received them well.”*²

But first amongst the goddesses in the realms of the dead is surely Hel, child of Loki, the tortured god of trickery, and Angrboda the giantess, whose very name translates as “the one who brings grief”! Hel is a sister to the Midgard Serpent and the wolf Fenris who, along with Loki, will take the side of the forces of Chaos in the final battle at the end of the world (Ragnarok) and help destroy Asgard and Middle Earth.

North European deities are rarely simple archetypes, but rather complex and often contradictory characters, and Hel is no exception to this pattern. She is the ruler of the Underworld, known as Helheim. Her appearance is described as being morbid and fierce looking, with one half of her body being living and beautiful, and the other dead and decaying flesh, thereby demonstrating the dual nature of life and death, forcing us to confront their interconnectedness; without death there can be no birth or life.

[concludes on page 6]



¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samhain>

² Hilda Roderick Ellis, *The Road to Hel*, Cambridge 1943, p.75

Glastonbury Goddess Conference

is 25 in 2020

If you have attended the seasonal Wheel of the Year celebrations at Sheffield Goddess Temple, you may have seen leaflets or posters advertising the annual Goddess Conference held in Glastonbury. You might even have been

tempted to visit the Conference. If you have not actually managed a visit yet, this edition of the Sheffield Goddess Temple newsletter will try to explain something of what the Glastonbury Conference is all about, and to give you some sense of what it is like to attend.

The Glastonbury Goddess Conference is not a one day event. Over the years it has grown from three to six full days, with an additional three days of fringe events now extending its annual run to nine days. The Conference was initiated by Kathy Jones in 1996, with Tina Redpath acting as co-organiser. The first few years saw the Maiden, Mother, Crone aspects of the Goddess being celebrated at Glastonbury Assembly Rooms, and from 1999 the training of Priestesses of Avalon began, with new priestesses helping to manage the Conference.

The year 2000 saw the Maiden Goddess being honoured as part of a new four year cycle, and the Conference itself being moved to Glastonbury Town Hall, which has continued as a venue for annual Goddess Temple themed festivities ever since.

As the Conference has expanded, with increasing numbers attending, so the number of venues being used has also increased, as well as the number and range of activities on offer. In 2001 the building which was to become Glastonbury's permanent Goddess Temple was used for the first time, with Kathy Jones, Sally Pullinger and Tegwyn Hyndman powerfully embodying the



Great Maiden, Mother, and Crone Goddess.

Every year the Conference has a specific Goddess related theme. This year (2019) has been the year of the Sun Lover. The theme for 2020 is Goddess as Earth Mother.

Whatever the focus of the Conference in any one particular year, the purpose is always to honour Goddess in Her many aspects, to celebrate Her, and to allow everyone to meet other Goddess-loving people through a wide range of inspiring ceremonies, presentations, workshops, and processions, as well as to joyously inform and educate about Goddess spirituality.

The 2020 Glastonbury Goddess Conference will be the 25th such event, running from Tuesday 28th July to Sunday 2nd August – with additional fringe events from Saturday 25th July. People come from all over the world to Glastonbury for the Conference, as do speakers and presenters. It is usually a good idea to book accommodation well in advance!

Initial information about the 2020 Earth Mother Conference is already available from the Conference web site at: <https://goddessconference.com/> and this will be continually updated. In particular further details are due to be made available on the web site from now, Samhain 2019 (31st October), with full programme details being published at Imbolc (1st February) 2020.



Glastonbury Goddess Conference Attendees – Summer 2019

In the meantime, if you would like a more intimate, personal view of what it is like to attend the Conference, you can read about "Brian's Experiences" in Glastonbury this year (July/August 2019) on page 5 of this newsletter.

Further Info:
<https://goddessconference.com/>

Glastonbury Goddess Conference 2019

Brian's Experiences

This year I had the joy and honour of being one of the first two men ever to be part of the Glastonbury Goddess Conference Ceremonial Group. That is the group of Priestesses (and this year Priests) who both design and enact all of the ceremonies that weave the six days of the conference together.

This year the conference was celebrating Goddess as Sun-Lover. The heart of this is that when we come back to a loving relationship with ourselves and overcome any conditioning that limit our full self-expression, then we can shine in the world and be free to fully be ourselves.

This was very relevant for me on a personal level. I have always felt that I did not belong 'in the limelight' and my role at the Goddess Conference for many years has been 'backstage'. So, when I was asked to be a Ceremonialist I worried that I would be well outside of my comfort zone. However I felt very ready to say 'yes' for several reasons: firstly I strongly believe that men have a place in Goddess Spirituality, secondly my wife Ali was also in the ceremonial group this year, and lastly I knew and trusted that if Marion and Katinka (the conference organisers) had asked me, then I would be ready.

Preparations for the Conference start almost as soon as the last one finishes, so just under a year before this year's Conference Ali and I started to travel down to Glastonbury every month for the ceremonial group meetings. I quickly learned that these meetings are not only the place where the ceremonies are planned, but also where an important group process unfolds that prepares us all to be able to hold the massive energies that will emerge during conference week.

A vitally important part of the role is to 'embody' the Goddess in ritual. That involves developing a deep relationship with the Goddess and allowing Her to shine out from you so that the conference participants can tangibly feel the presence of the form of the Goddess being embodied. Can a man do this?

Yes Indeed! From both my own internal experience of this and from the many people who gave lovely feedback this is totally possible. It requires us to step away from anthropomorphic, gender-based ideas about what Goddess is and to accept Goddess as a non-binary spiritual connection.

The first ceremony where we had to do that was the opening ceremony. This was the 'moment of truth' for me; would all my fears about getting stage fright and forgetting what to do and say come to pass? Actually I felt great! When we emerged from behind stage to meet the 200 people in the audience, I felt exhilarated as the energy of the Sun-Lover Goddess flowed into me and out from me.

The Fire Breathing Experience

The rest of the week was packed with happy memories. The following evening Ali and I lit the ceremonial fire by fire breathing into it. That was a high-risk moment because we had only ever done fire breathing once before and a lot could have gone wrong, but it was a perfect moment.



Ali and Brian's Fire Breathing

Another type of 'embodiment' happens towards the end of the conference. This is when every conference participant meets the Goddess in the form of one of the ceremonialists who is embodying Goddess. I had wondered how this would be, for me as a man, for both myself and the people that I was embodying Goddess for.

It was an amazing experience. I could feel Goddess seeing through my eyes and hearing through my ears, and as I responded to each person, it was Her response. I'd find it very hard to fully explain what was happening; I was not in a trance because I felt fully awake and aware but at the same time the energy of Sun-Lover Goddess was fully within me.

The lesson is that if we are open to Her, we can all find the presence of Goddess within us.



Hel – Samhain Goddess

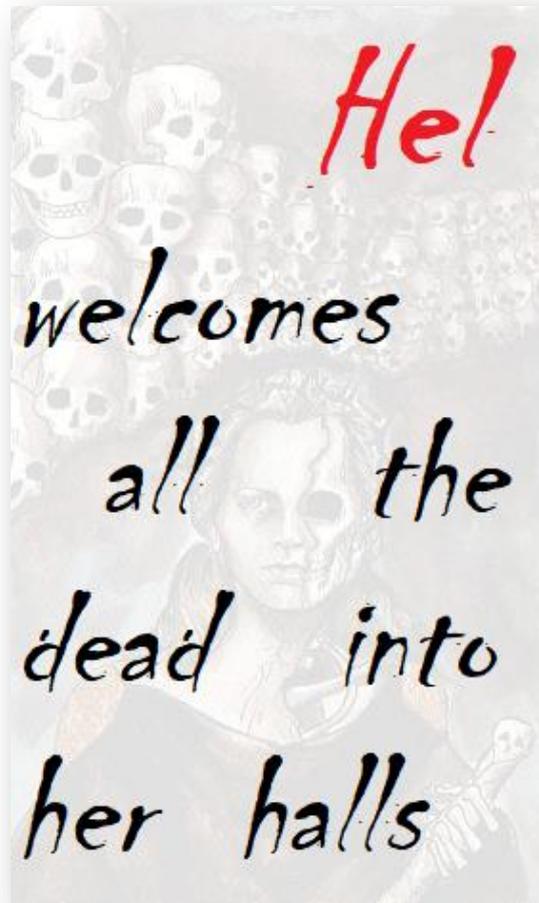
[continued from page 3]

Helheim is of course not the burning inferno of the Christian envisaged hell; in fact it is a glacial land of freezing fogs, connected to the icy realm of Niflheim – the land of mists. Hel welcomes all the dead into her halls. She takes those who die the 'straw deaths' of old age and disease, and mothers and children who die during childbirth. She does not discriminate, and welcomes all who died way from any battlefield.

Helheim is said to lie beneath one of the three roots of the World Tree, which is also close to the dwelling place of the Norns. Her name, Hel, means to conceal, cover, or keep hidden. Concealed by the Veil, this goddess is connected to the boundary between the living and the dead. She can be called upon for divination, and safe passage for those who desire to travel through her realm.

Hel is a 'hedge sitter' - a goddess whose magical nature spans both life and death. Her intermediary nature is important to those who work closely with the spirit realm. She is called upon for rites of scrying, the interpretation of dreams, and any means of communication with the dead.³

Helheim is a realm of perpetual Autumn. It was fashioned by the goddess when she took her throne. She created a peaceful place for the dead from the dark, dank caves of what was once an Underworld below Middle Earth. There is a bridge that leads into her realm, the Helvegen, or Hel's Road, guarded by the goddess Mordgud. This powerful female warrior tests those wanting to enter Hel's realm, allowing only those who already possess Hel's blessing to enter. The goddess can be petitioned directly prior to attempting to enter Helheim, or through shamanistic divination rituals. Only the dead who choose to speak are able to be reached, and they can be met only in special liminal places in Helheim. There are other deeper areas of her realm that cannot be accessed by the living at all.³



Altars to the Goddess of the Dead

Offerings can be made to Hel in various ways that correspond to her nature, those places in the middle realm that are closest to the Underworld. Natural caves and tunnels, wells and crossroads, which have long been associated with the Netherworld and spirit roads that the dead travel, are all appropriate places for seeking out Hel. Places of isolation in the wild, especially the trunks of decaying and broken trees, make perfect natural altars for this goddess of death and decomposition. Abandoned cemeteries, stone ruins and old bridges are also appropriate places for making offerings to this deity. Tending to these forgotten places, and paying them homage, are honourable ways for reaching out to her.

Her altars are dressed with dark fabrics, rich deep colours of crimson and rust; even the fallen leaves abundant at this time of year add to the sensory experience of putrefaction. Skulls, bones, and the pelts of nocturnal animals may also be used. Offerings of food, specifically dark breads, meats, beer and wine, are also fine offerings for her.

There are a number of botanical associations that connect with this goddess and her realm. In particular, Apples, the fruit of the Underworld, are used during Samhain celebrations and any altar dedicated to the dead. Trees of the dead and Underworld, such as the Yew and Elder are also appropriate in ritual tools and altar adornments for working with Hel the goddess. The areas occupied by these trees are also traditional places of traveling to her realm⁵, but if you wish to talk to your dead ancestors, make sure you have obtained Hel's consent first. You would not wish to become a wandering lost soul in the frozen Underworld that is Helheim.



³ <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/poisonersapothecary/2018/10/21/elivdnir-approaching-Hels-hall-at-samhain/>

Samhain Recipe 1

source: <http://recipesforapagansoul.weebly.com/>

Fried Fairy Spice Cakes

These delicious cakes are best left in the garden for the Elemental Folk on nights of Wiccan significance, such as Samhain or Lammas.



Ingredients

- ½ cup sweet sherry
- 2 tablespoons fine brown sugar
- 1 large egg
- ⅓ cup flour
- ½ teaspoon poppy seeds
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- Sunflower oil for frying

Method

Mix the egg and the sherry in a bowl. In a smaller bowl, mix together the flour, poppy seeds, cinnamon, sugar and salt. Stir this into the egg mixture. Let it stand for about ½ hour. Combine the nutmeg and honey in a small bowl. Heat some oil in a frying pan (about ½ inch in the bottom) until it's hot. Drop the batter into the oil one generous spoonful each time and fry until golden. Place on paper towels to drain and then dip into the honey mix. Delicious!

image: <https://pixnio.com/>

The Temple on the Web



- Welcome
- Events
- Gallery
- Our Publications
- Links
- FaceBook
- Twitter
- Contact Us

For all the most up to date information on what is going on at the temple, don't forget to check out our website which has all the latest news of events, and links to our Facebook and Twitter pages: <https://sheffieldgoddessesemple.org/>

Samhain Recipe 2

source: <http://recipesforapagansoul.weebly.com>

Irish Potatoes

Ingredients

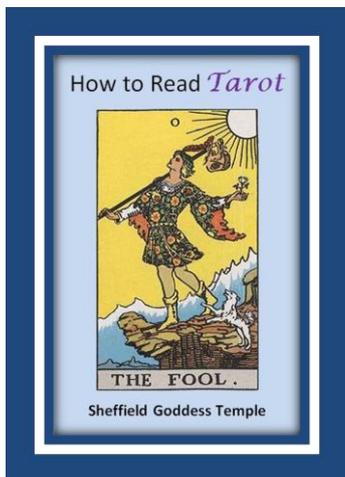
- 12 medium potatoes, peeled, cooked & mashed
- 2 Eggs; well beaten
- 8 ounces Cream cheese, softened
- 1 teaspoon Salt
- 1/4 cup Butter
- Pepper
- 1/2 cup Sour cream
- 1/4 slice Green onions
- 1/2 cup Milk

Method

Mix potatoes with remaining ingredients. Mix well, but lightly; do not whip! Place in a greased round casserole and bake in a preheated oven for 45 minutes.

image: <https://pixnio.com/>

Discover The Tarot



Booklet available in the temple (£4).

The temple is open each day, Monday to Saturday 12:30 to 1:30pm, or ask in the Airy Fairy shop.

Agree or Disagree?

“The gods are too fond of a joke”

Aristotle – (384 BC - 322 BC)

Write for the Newsletter

Do you follow a particular pagan path? Do you have an interest in an individual goddess, or a whole set of deities? Are specific aspects of daily life, such as the environment or social relationship issues, of concern to you? Do you have a favourite seasonal recipe?

Please consider writing for this newsletter (articles can be as short as you like or up to about 1,500 words). Contact Jamie at:

temple@lovecat.com

Discover Our Northern Wheel of the Year



Booklet available in the temple (£4).

The temple is open each day, Monday to Saturday 12:30 to 1:30pm, or ask in the Airy Fairy shop.

Goddesses of the World – An Occasional Series – Part One

China – *The Silk Mother Goddess*

In 2016 BBC4 presented a series entitled *The Silk Road*, which traced for viewers the many important aspects of this historic trade route. Along the way the presenter came across a goddess figure still popular in parts of China today – Leizu, the Silk Mother Goddess.

Leizu was a legendary Chinese empress and wife of the Yellow Emperor, a deity whose traditional reign dates are 2697–2597 BCE. According to tradition, she discovered sericulture, and invented the silk loom. According to one account, a silkworm cocoon fell into her tea, and the heat unwrapped the silk until it stretched across her entire garden. When the silk ran out, she saw a small cocoon and realized that this cocoon was the source of the silk. Another version says that she found silkworms eating the mulberry leaves and spinning cocoons. She collected some cocoons, then sat down to have some tea. While she was sipping a cup, she dropped a cocoon into the steaming water. A fine thread started to separate itself from the silkworm cocoon. Leizu found that she could unwind this soft and lovely thread around her finger.

She persuaded her husband to give her a grove of mulberry trees, where she could domesticate the worms that made these cocoons. She is attributed with inventing the silk reel, which joins fine filaments into a thread strong enough for weaving. She is also credited with inventing the first silk loom. It is not known how much, if any, of this story is true, but historians do know that China was the first civilization to use silk. Leizu shared her discoveries with others, and the knowledge became widespread in China.

She is a popular object of worship in modern China, with the title of 'Silkworm Mother'. In 2003 an in-depth study of the continuing popularity of this goddess was carried out by an academic, Fan Lizhu, whose findings were reported in *The China Quarterly*⁴. The article reported on the activities of a woman spirit medium in a small village in Hebei province. She was believed to represent the Silk Mother Goddess, and people turned to her for healing not dealt with by western or Chinese medicine.

The article reported that despite the violent destruction of temples and statues during the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), devotion to local deities continues to thrive in China. Temples are being rebuilt, and mediums who represent these gods are to be found everywhere. In 2000 Fan Lizhu visited the village of Zhiwuying, and unexpectedly met a local spirit-medium, a Mrs. Wu. According to local belief Mrs. Wu is an incarnation of the Silkworm Mother goddess.

⁴ Fan Lizhu, *The Cult of the Silkworm Mother as a Core of Local Community Religion in a North China Village*, in *The China Quarterly* issue #174, June 2003, Cambridge University Press for Uni. of London.



A Silk Mother Goddess statue in northern China

Devotees seek, through her shamanic abilities, personal and direct access to divine power to heal them. The gods are believed to have independent power in their own right (they are divine living beings), and to dwell in temples, where they are represented by both images and human beings. Shamanic mediums are recognised as temporary manifestations of gods with divine power to help people solve difficulties and answer questions.

Silk production was a traditional industry in China, and its major producers were women. The original function of the Silkworm Mother goddess was to protect the silk industry and its mainly women workers. Eventually the silk industry declined, but worship of the Silkworm Mother goddess actually expanded, with her perceived functions broadening out to include healing, and the ability to respond to virtually all needs, particularly those of women.

In Chinese tradition there are two types of illness. One is physical, which can be treated by doctors. The other is getting in trouble with the nether world for which one needs the help of the gods – which may be obtained through mediums such as Mrs. Wu. People testify that they have benefitted from the divine power of the Silkworm Mother goddess manifested through Mrs. Wu, with the result that her popularity has grown. In 2001, on the 9th day of the 9th month, 150 people, including some from Beijing, gathered at Mrs. Wu's house to make a pilgrimage to the Silkworm Mother temple 200 miles away.

Fan Lizhu concluded that in rural northern China people still have a sense that their efforts cannot succeed without divine approval and support, but that they can discover whether or not a problem is being caused by an angry ancestor, why, when a sacrifice should be performed, and with what offerings. All this is made possible with the help of shamanic mediums such as Mrs. Wu functioning as manifestations of the Silk Mother goddess.

