



# The Tonsured Times

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## Greetings!!!!

Clan MacMillan Pacific Branch is reviving a old tradition by hosting a Celtic New Year on November 6, 2004. Judy Young has taken the lead for this event and it is sounding like a lot of fun. I would like to thank her for all her hard work. Andy Amerson of Clan Chattan will be assisting us by hosting the Celtic festivities. Tickets will be limited and no tickets will be sold at the door. Please see the flyer included with this newsletter. I hope to see many of you there!!!

Clan MacMillan will be attending the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Seaside Games at the Ventura County Fairgrounds. It was a good time last year and this year promises more of the same. Don't miss out on buying your chance in the kilt raffle benefiting the Clan Centre in Scotland.

Yours aye,

Ron



## Up Coming Events...

**Seaside Games**  
Oct. 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, & 10<sup>th</sup> 2004

**Celtic New Year**  
Nov. 6<sup>th</sup> 2004

**Robbie Burns Dinner**  
Late Jan. 2005  
Check for local event

**Queen Mary Games**  
Feb. 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> 2005



Birthdays  
Happy days to you.

Charlie Cooke (Oct)  
Paula Hall (Oct)  
Kevin Bergerson (Oct)  
Martin Pack (Oct)  
Linda Harlow (Nov)  
Judy Young (Nov)  
Connall Bell (Nov)  
Amanda Mullins (Nov)  
Beverly McMillan (Dec)  
Bob Hall (Dec)  
Viola Bandel (Dec)  
Ralph "Mac" McMillan (Dec)  
Brendan McMillin (Dec)

The ancient feast of Samhain (pronounced Sah-win), celebrated on November 1, was the most important feast on the Celtic calendar. It marked the end of one year and the start of another. It is the time of the Autumnal Equinox, when days become noticeably shorter and nights become longer. To the Celts, it was the time at which the power of the sun began to fall victim to the gods of darkness, winter, and the underworld. On the morning of Nov 1, bonfires were lit to encourage the return of the sun; they were also lit to celebrate the fact that the eve of Samhain or Oiche Samhain, (Ee-ha Sowna) was over, for it contained the last moments of the old year, and was a very dangerous time.

Oiche Samhain was the night on which the veil between the natural and supernatural worlds was lowered, and residents of the underworld, both good and evil, were free to roam the earth. It was the holiday of the dead, and the sidh (shee) - the supernatural residents of the fairy kingdom, both fun-loving and fearful. It was a time sacred to the moon, and called for sacrifices to Crom Cruagh, Lord of the Mound, a golden idol surrounded by 12 stones on the plain of Moy Slecht in Cavan. Any who went out that night wore animal skins to disguise themselves from hostile spirits. If a skin was not available, then the traveler would carry a candle in a hollowed-out turnip so that they would be mistaken for a sheerie or Will-o-the-Wisp and left alone.

With so much to fear, the obvious question is why would anyone venture out at all, and the answer lies in the very same lowering of the veil, for supernatural things occur, hidden things are visible, and the future can be read on Oiche Samhain. If, for example, a maiden washes her dress in a stream on that eve and hangs it on a bush to dry, the image of her future husband will appear beside it. One may also catch a glimpse of recently-departed loved ones, and secure information - like where did they hide the money.

In spite of the temptation to see the future, the curious were cautioned to be wary. If beautiful music is heard in the distance, do not investigate, for the spirits will entice you away to the dance, and keep you entertained until dawn breaks, and you will be trapped behind the veil. Tales are told of those who were lost to the Fairy kingdom in that manner, and not seen until the following year when the veil was lowered again, and they were seen on the other side. Some have been enticed back to tell their stories, but they are very few, and usually came to a violent end shortly thereafter.

Food and drink were left out on Oiche Samhain to appease the wandering spirits so they would trespass no further into a dwelling. If the offering was gone in the morning, it was a good sign that the spirits had accepted it, for no mortal man would dare steal a gift left for the dead. It was also a fortunate time for the hungry and homeless who wandered the roads, and were willing to take that chance. Due to the fear and anxiety associated with the Eve of Samhain, great rejoicing greeted the dawn of the new year, for the threat had passed for another 12 months.

The fear and the celebration associated with Samhain made it one of the hardest of the old Druidic feasts for the young Irish Church to dispel in the early centuries of Christianity. As a consequence, it was decided that the meaning of the date should be altered, and the new meaning sanctified. November 1st would remain a day associated with the dead, but henceforth, it would be All Hallows Day - a day to honor those souls that had achieved heaven. To the Irish, whatever it was called, the day was still dedicated to the spirits, and the ancient customs lived on. In time, the Christian meaning became accepted, at least on the surface, but in many areas, the parish priest was given a polite nod of the head in acquiescence to the Church's definition, while a wink of the eye signified that the ancient traditions were still being observed, just in case.

Stories of witches, goblins, and little people persisted, and cautions proscribed as protection against the spirits of the netherworld remained as All Hallows Evening became Halloween - the only Celtic feast still observed on the modern calendar. Today, costumes are still in evidence only they are the dime store variety instead of animal skins; pumpkins have replaced turnips as the Jack o Lantern; and the token food or candy given to visiting ghosts and goblins, who shout Trick or Treat, should remind us of the food and drink freely given as a ransom against harm. The spirit of the occasion - no pun intended - is still intact.

In recent years, a heightened awareness of the origins of Halloween has led a greater appreciation of our Celtic ancestors, and in some cases, the celebration of Halloween is again being remembered as the Celtic New Year. In fact, some rather enjoyable Halloween costume parties have ended with a countdown to midnight, a Happy New Year toast, and a renewed celebration.

However, there are still some who are not aware of the rich cultural heritage of our forbears who based their pastoral activities on a sophisticated celestial calendar fostered by a knowledge of astronomy unequalled in their time. These modern incapable intellectuals attach other meanings and explanations to the celebration of Halloween which disguise or erase its Celtic roots, and makes it appear as a generic holiday custom. Don't let that happen! When Halloween comes around, and you send a card to a friend, or even when you greet a friend or fellow Celt, make sure you wish them, as we wish you: A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR

Insert celtic new year flyer

Information Inside!  
Collaboration  
Get the New Year

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