

Halloween in Cymru

Halloween is a holiday which marks the start of winter in the northern hemisphere, Seen as an American holiday, However, It has Celtic roots. In some Celtic nations, it is known as *Samhain*¹, In Cymru (Wales), *Nos Galan Gaeaf*². '*Nos Galan Gaeaf. All hallows eve, or Hollantide as it was sometimes called*'³ (Owen, *The Customs And Traditions Of Wales* P.50).

The cymry⁴, The people of Cymru, Have many traditions and festivities for this occasion, Where some have leaked into other revered winter celebrations. '*Many customs and beliefs now connected with New Year's Day seem to originally to have been Calan Gaeaf Customs*'⁵ (Jones, *Welsh Folklore And Folk Custom* P. 167) *Nos Calan Gaeaf* is one of the three spirit nights of Cymru, '*Y Tair Ysbrydnos*'⁶, that are observed through-out the calendar of Cymru. The *Ysbrydnos* translation from geiriadur.uwtsd.ac.uk states that *Ysbryd* is translated to Spirit in British English, and *Nos* is translated to Night in British English.

Spirit – Ysbryd n.m,

Night – Nos n.f (*nosweithiau*)⁷

The customs and traditions of Cymru tend to vary in different regions. Sometimes it can be ingredients of ritualist meals, words in a rhyme, and in some cases, different divinatory customs. Divination is a large part of the festivities, and divination is used to predict death or whom you will marry⁸. The Cymry also partook in divination practises in their church graveyard or courtyard, One practise is to look through the keyhole of the parish door at the stroke of midnight, this is to see who would die in the following year.

*Many forms of divination were connected with the church building: One might see who was going to die in the parish in the forthcoming year if one looked through the keyhole of the church door at midnight.*⁹ (Owen, *The Customs And Traditions Of Wales* P.50).

Other customs were in the form of bonfires, '*The habit of lighting bonfires (Coelcerthi) on Nos Galan Gaeaf is still observed*'¹⁰ (Jones, *Welsh Folklore And Folk Custom* P. 156), one of the above mentioned customs that had regional variations to the event, all seem to share divination in the form of stones and running home once the fire was out so *Yr Hwch Ddu Gwta and Ladi Wen* couldn't catch you¹¹. The cymry also feasted together with games of drinking with the puzzle jug¹², and games of divination, and apple bobbing. '*Indoors there was feasting, followed by various contests.*'¹³ (Jones– *Welsh Folklore And Folk Custom* P. 159)

¹ 1 James Mackillop – *Oxford Dictionary Of Celtic Mythology*, (Oxford University Press, New York 2004), 3rd edn, Page 378.

² Mackillop – (*Oxford Dictionary Of Celtic Mythology*), P.72.

³ Trefor M. Owen – *The Customs And Traditions Of Wales*. (University of Wales Press 2016.), Introduction by Emma Lile. P.50.

⁴ Mackillop – (*Oxford Dictionary Of Celtic Mythology*), P.124.

⁵ T. Gwynn Jones - *Welsh Folklore And Folk Custom*. (Cockatrice Books 2020, 1st edn 1930, Methuen, London) P.167.

⁶ Jones – *Welsh Folklore And Folk Custom*. P.161.

⁷ geiriadur.uwtsd.ac.uk, Accessed 23rd October 2022.

⁸ Wirt Sikes – *British Goblins, Welsh Folklore, Fairy Mythology, Legends And Traditions*. (Amazon 2017, GB). P.93.

⁹ Owen – *The Customs And Traditions Of Wales*. P.50.

¹⁰ Jones – *Welsh Folklore And Folk Custom*, P. 156.

¹¹ Sikes, *British Goblins*, P. 157.

¹² Sikes, *British Goblins*, P. 93.

¹³ Jones – *Welsh Folklore And Folk Custom*, P.159.

Bibliography

Jones, Trefor M. 2016. *The Customs and Traditions of Wales*, 2nd edn, ed. by Emma Lile (Chippenham: University of Wales Press)

McKillop, James. 2004. *Oxford Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*, 3rd edn (New York: Oxford University Press)

Sikes, Wirt. 2017. *British Goblins - Welsh Folklore, Fairy Mythology, Legends and Traditions* (Great Britain: Amazon)

T Gwynn Jones. 2020. *Welsh Folklore and Folk Custom* (cockatrice books)

‘Welsh-English / English-Welsh On-Line Dictionary’. [n.d.]. *Geiriadur.uwtsd.ac.uk*
<<https://geiriadur.uwtsd.ac.uk/>> [accessed 23 October 2022]