

Hallowe'en

As the sun sinks below the horizon on Hallowe'en, [The Morrigan](#) - Goddess of destruction and fertility – with her minions emerge from a cave in Co. Roscommon known as [Oweynagat](#) - The Cave of the Cats. This is no band of merry pranksters. They are intent on sowing chaos, destruction, death and fear across the land. The people are dressed in frightening costumes to either blend in with the released monsters or frighten them off. They huddle around bonfires that do little to hold back the darkness of the impending winter.

This is one of many theories about Hallowe'en but given that Hallowe'en was celebrated and feared by Celtic peoples in several countries, it is a bit parochial. It does however indicate the through line from ancient Celts in costume to today's tradition of costumed children going trick or treating. In Ireland, bonfires have been replaced by fireworks.

Hallowe'en, known in pre-Christian Ireland as [Samhain](#) (Sow-en) has always been one of the most important festivals of the Celtic calendar. It is one of the four cross quarter days. These are days that fall between the solstices and equinoxes and are considered to be transitions between seasons. The others are Imbolg, Bealtaine and Lughnasa. Not only do they mark seasonal change, but they are also, particularly Samhain, liminal days when the barrier between this world and the spirit world is thin and can easily be crossed. From a practical perspective it was crucial that the population, so tied to the rhythm of the seasons, and the land had a reliable method of tracking the changes of the seasons.

The importance of Hallowe'en to Celtic societies is difficult to overstate. In Irish the month of November is known as Samhain. It marked the absolute end of the growing season as well as the disappearance of the sun. Given that fodder for cattle and sheep would soon be limited, the herds would be culled and the meat preserved by salting or smoking. During the short winter days in the northern hemisphere, the sun gave way to darkness and had less power in the world. They believed that the land slumbered, if not died, to be reborn at Imbolg. Imbolg (St. Brigid's day in today's ecclesiastical calendar) means from the womb and marked the symbolic return of the land to fruitfulness by being reborn.

The Church declared November 1 to be All Saints day, so October 31 became All Hallows Eve, i.e., Hallowe'en. Obviously as devout as the Irish have traditionally been,

converting Hallowe'en into a Christian celebration did not mark the end of the more earthy traditions. Today, efforts are being made to return to a more traditional way to mark the day and move away from the materialism that has taken over in the last few years.

For more detailed information follow this [link](#).