



THE UMBRIAN MUG

Greetings and Salutations!

This edition covers the month of April 2005. If you know of a Kingdom member who isn't getting the Umbrian Mug, please let the Royal Chronicler know so that the problem can be rectified.

In Service,
Dame Circe-Skye O'Malley, Chronicler
& Dame Dominika, Deputy Chronicler.

From the Chancery:

On March 5 and on March 26, 2005 the Kingdom of Umbria held an Estate Meeting. Most of what was discussed and voted upon was the Umbrian Laws. I am awaiting the decision of the Imperial Chancellor regarding same. I will post the approval/denial of each law as numbered when received.

The next Umbrian Estate Meeting is July 9, 2005. The time and place to be announced.

Estates Writ XVII. Quarterly Estate Reports adopted by the Umbrian Estates requires heads of estates to turn in a quarterly roster.

The following estates have "not" sent in their 1st Quarterly Report and are hereby put on notice that ministry points for heading an estate will not be awarded for that quarter.

- ❖ House Silver Dagger,
- ❖ House Locksley,
- ❖ House Eternal Faith,
- ❖ Barony Fallen Keep,
- ❖ House Druis,
- ❖ House Fallen Keep.

These estates were put on notice in court at the Kingdom Tourney that they failed to file their report. A second consecutive offense, the Estate will be dissolved by Crown.

New Houses Formed:
House Crescent Blade (Free Standing)
Sire: Sir Gaetano

REMEMBER:

Two Laws passed by the Estates March 26, 2005 (A reposting reminder)
Estate Writ XVIII. Outlander Site Fee:
Non-Umbrians wishing to attend Kingdom events must pay a \$1.00 site fee at each event they attend.

Estate Writ XIV. Umbrian Participation Fee:

All members of the Kingdom of Umbria must pay an annual participation fee in the amount of \$10.00 for the first individual, plus \$5.00 for each additional family member, with a maximum of \$20.00 per family. This will be due by the 15th of April of each year. New members joining after October 15th will be required to pay half that amount. As an alternative, members may pay a \$1.00 site fee at each event they attend, with no annual maximum. (For the first year only, the due date will be extended until May 1, 2005)

Heraldry:

Barony Bismark and House Druis were put on notice at the Kingdom Tourney 4/16/05 that their estate has no blazon in process. They have until May 7, 2005 to present to the Sovereign of Arms a new blazon or lose their estate vote.

REPORTS NOT SUBMITTED FROM THE FOLLOWING OFFICES FOR THE MONTH OF APRIL:

- ❖ **HERALD**
- ❖ **STEWARD**
- ❖ **ARCHERY**
- ❖ **WAR AND JOUST**
- ❖ **HOSPITLAR**
- ❖ **SOVEREIGN OF ARMS**
- ❖ **JUSTICAR**
- ❖ **ROLLS**
- ❖ **ARTS & SCIENCE**

❖ PHYSIKER

It has been well publicized both verbal and written that when the minister reports to its Imperial counterpart that the local chronicler should be "cc". This has not occurred.

BELTANE: Its History and Modern Celebration



The celebration of May 1st, or Beltane as it is known in Wicca Circles, is one of the most important festivals of our religious year. I will attempt here to answer some of the most often asked questions about this holiday. An extensive bibliography follows the article so that the interested reader can do further research.

1. Where does the festival of Beltane originate?

Beltane, as practiced by modern day Witches and Pagans, has its origins among the Celtic peoples of Western Europe and the British Isles, particularly Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

2. What does the word Beltane mean?

Dr. Proinsias MacCana defines the word as follows: "... the Irish name for May Day is Beltane, of which the second element, 'tene', is the word for fire, and the first, 'bel', probably means 'shining or brilliant'."(1) The festival was known by other names in other Celtic countries. Beltaine in Ireland, Bealtunn in Scotland, Shenn do Boaldyn on the Isle of Mann, and Galan Mae in Wales.(2)

3. What was the significance of this holiday to the ancients?

To the ancient Celts, it symbolized the coming of spring. It was the time of year when the crops began to sprout, the animals bore their young, and the people could begin to get out of the houses where they had been cooped up during the long dark cold winter months. Keep in mind that the people in those days had no electric lights or heat, and that the Celtic counties are at a much more northerly latitude than many of us are used to. At that latitude, spring comes much later, and winter lasts much longer than in most of the US. The coming of fair weather and longer daylight hours would be most welcome after a long cold and dark winter.

4. How did the ancient Celts celebrate this festival?

The most ancient way of observing this day is with fire. Beltane, along with Samhain (Nov. 1), Imbolc (Feb. 1), and Lughnassadh (Aug. 1), was one of the four great "fire festivals" which marked the turning points of the Celtic year. The most ancient records tell us that the people would extinguish all the hearth fires in the country and then relight them from the "need fires" lit by the druids (who used friction as a means of ignition). In many areas, the cattle were driven between two great bonfires to protect them from disease during the coming year. It is my personal belief, although I have no documentation to back up the assumption, that certain herbs would have been burnt in the fires, thus producing smoke which would help destroy parasites which might make cattle and other livestock ill.

5. In what other ways was this festival celebrated?

One of the most beautiful customs associated with this festival was "bringing in the May." The young people of the villages and towns would go out into the fields and forests at Midnight on April 30th and gather flowers with which to bedeck themselves, their families, and their homes. They would process back into the villages, stopping at each home to leave flowers, and to receive the best of food and drink that the home had to offer. This custom is somewhat similar to "trick or treat" at Samhain and was very significant to the ancients. John Williamson, in his study, [The Oak King, the Holly King, and the Unicorn](#), writes, "These revelers were messengers of the renewal of vegetation, and they assumed the right to punish the niggardly, because avarice (as opposed to generosity) was dangerous to the community's hope for the abundance of nature. At an important time like the coming of summer, food, the substance of life must be ritually circulated generously within the community in order that the cosmic circuit of life's substance may be kept in motion (trees, flocks, harvests, etc.)."(3) These revelers would bless the fields and flocks of those who were generous and wish ill harvests on those who withheld their bounty.

6. What about maypoles?

The maypole was an adjunct to the festival of bringing in the May. It is a phallic symbol, and as such represented fertility to the participants in the festival. In olden days, the revelers who went into the woods would cut a tree and bring it into town, decking it with flowers and greenery and dance around it, clockwise (also called deosil, meaning "sun-wise", the direction

of the sun's apparent travel across the face of the Earth) to bring fertility and good luck. The ribbons which we associate with the maypole today were a later addition.

7. Why was fertility important?

The people who originated this custom lived in close connection with the land. If the flocks and fields were fertile, they were able to eat; if there was famine or drought, they went hungry. It is hard for us today to relate to this concept, but to the ancients, it was literally a life and death matter. The Celts were a very close tribal people, and fertility of their women literally meant continuity of the tribe.

8. How is the maypole connected with fertility?

Many scholars see the maypole as a phallic symbol. In this aspect, it is a very powerful symbol of the fertility of nature and spring.

9. How did these ancient customs come down to us?

When Christianity came to the British Isles, many of the ancient holy sites were taken over by the new religion and converted to Christian sites. Many of the old Gods and Goddesses became Christian saints, and many of the customs were appropriated. Charles Squire says, "An ingenious theory was invented after the introduction of Christianity, with the purpose of allowing such ancient rites to continue with a changed meaning. The passing of persons and cattle through flame or smoke was explained as a practice which interposed a magic protection between them and the powers of evil." (4) This is precisely what the original festival was intended to do; only the definition of "evil" had changed. These old customs continued to be practiced in many areas for centuries. "In Scotland in 1282, John, the priest in Iverkething, led the young girls of his parish in a phallic dance of decidedly obscene character during Easter week. For this, penance was laid upon him, but his punishment was not severe, and he was allowed to retain his benefice."(5)

10. Were sacrifices practiced during this festival?

Scholars are divided in their opinions of this. There is no surviving account of sacrifices in the legends and mythology which have come down to us. As these were originally set down on paper by Christian monks, one would think that if such a thing had been regularly practiced, the good brothers would most certainly have recorded it, if for no other reason than to make the pagans look more depraved. There are, however, some surviving folk customs which point to a person representing the gloom and ill fortune of winter being ostracized and forced to jump through the fires. Some scholars see this as a survival of ancient human sacrificial practices. The notion that animals were sacrificed during this time doesn't make sense from a practical standpoint. The animals which had been retained a breeding stock through the winter would either be lean and hungry from winter feed, or would be mothers nursing young, which could not be spared.

11. How do modern day pagans observe this day?

Modern day pagan observances of Beltane include the maypole dances, bringing in the May, and jumping the cauldron for fertility. Many couples wishing to conceive children will jump the cauldron together at this time. Fertility of imagination and other varieties of fertility are invoked along with sexual fertility. In Wiccan and other Pagan circles, this is a joyous day, full of laughter and good times.

12. What about Walpurgisnacht? Is this the same thing as Beltane?

Walpurgisnacht comes from an Eastern European background, and has little in common with the Celtic practices. I have not studied the folklore from that region and do not consider myself qualified to write about it. As the vast majority of Wiccan traditions today stem from Celtic roots, I have confined myself to research in those areas.

by Rowan Moonstone
(<http://www.tryskelion.com/beltfaq.htm>)

FOOTNOTES

- (1) MacCana, Proinsias, Celtic Mythology, The Hamlyn Publishing Group Limited, London, 1970, p.32.
- (2) Squire, Charles, Celtic Myth and Legend, Poetry and Romance, Newcastle Publishing Co., Van Nuys, CA, 1975, p.408.
- (3) Williamson, John, The Oak King, the Holly King, and the Unicorn, Harper & Row, NY, 1986, p.126.
- (4) Squire, p.411.
- (5) Hole, Christina, Witchcraft In England, Rowman & Littlefield, Totowa, NJ, 1977, p.36.

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- Bord, Janet & Colin, Earth Rites, Fertility Practices in Pre-Industrial Britain, Granada, London, 1982.
- Danaher, Kevin, The Year in Ireland, The Mercier Press, Cork, 1972.
- Hole, Christina, Witchcraft in England, Rowman & Littlefield, Totowa NJ, 1977.
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- MacCulloch, J.A. Religion of the Ancient Celts, Folcroft Library Editions, London, 1977.
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- Wood-Martin, W.G., Traces of the Elder Faiths of Ireland, Kennikat Press, Port Washington, NY, 1902.

DAY 2005

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4 Canton of Thunar Tourney Encanto Park 8 p.m.	5	6	7
8	9	10	11 Fighter Practice Encanto Park 8 p.m.	12 Canton of Montfort @ Paradise Valley Park 7:00 p.m.	13	14
15	16	17	18 Fighter Practice Encanto Park 8 p.m.	19	20	21 Umbria Kingdom Tourney
22	23 Full Moon ☺	24	25 Fighter Practice Encanto Park 8 p.m.	26	27	28
29	30	31				

JUNE 2005

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
			1 Canton of Thunar Tourney Encanto Park 8 p.m.	2	3	4
5	6	7	8 Fighter Practice Encanto Park 8 p.m.	9 Canton of Montfort @ Paradise Valley Park 7:00 p.m.	10	11
12	13	14	15 Fighter Practice Encanto Park 8 p.m.	16	17	18 Umbria Kingdom Tourney
19	20	21	22 Fighter Practice Encanto Park 8 p.m. Full Moon ☺	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		



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WEBSITE ADDRESSES AND POINTS OF INTEREST

Imperial: www.adrianempire.org

Kingdom: www.kingdomofumbria.org

Kingdom Yahoo Groups:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Adria-Umbria/>

The Official Kingdom of Umbria E-group. No restricted memberships, no censorship. Respect and common courtesy are expected at all times! Just pure Umbrian Chat.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/KingdomOfUmbria/>

A meeting place for Members of the Kingdom of Umbria, in the Adrian Empire. While not official in any shape or form, an additional (and quite useful) method of keeping the Populace of Umbria well-informed.

MINISTER REPORT ADDENDUMS

From the Steward's Office:

Steward's Monthly Report Worksheet

NO REPORT SUBMITTED