

Waverly Fitzgerald writes, "Lammas is a festival of regrets and farewells, of harvest and preserves. Reflect on these topics alone in the privacy of your journal or share them with others around a fire. Lughnasad is one of the great Celtic fire-festivals, so if at all possible, have your feast around a bonfire. While you're sitting around the fire, you might want to tell stories. Look up the myths of any of the grain Gods and Goddesses mentioned above and try re-telling them in your own words.

"Regrets: Think of the things you meant to do this summer or this year that are not coming to fruition. You can project your regrets onto natural objects like pine cones and throw them into the fire, releasing them. Or you can write them on dried corn husks (as suggested by Nancy Brady Cunningham in *Feeding the Spirit*) or on a piece of paper and burn them.

"Farewells: What is passing from your life? What is over? Say good-bye to it. As with regrets, you can find visual symbols and throw them into the fire, the lake or the ocean. You can also bury them in the ground, perhaps in the form of bulbs which will manifest in a new form in spring.

"Harvest: What have you harvested this year? What seeds have you planted that are sprouting? Find a visual way to represent these, perhaps creating a decoration in your house or altar which represents the harvest to you. Or you could make a corn dolly or learn to weave wheat. Look for classes in your area which can teach you how to weave wheat into wall pieces, which were made by early grain farmers as a resting place for the harvest spirits.

"Preserves: This is also a good time for making preserves, either literally or symbolically. As you turn the summer's fruit into jams, jellies and chutneys for winter, think about the fruits that you have gathered this year and how you can hold onto them. How can you keep them sweet in the store of your memory?"

Many of the things Fitzgerald writes of here happen during our Lammas Gathering: the bonfires, the telling of stories at fire circle, the regrets, the farewells, the harvests & preserves; maybe not each of them, and maybe not for everyone, but I've seen & heard these things happen for many folks over the years. This seems a good reason for "calling it what it already is", so to speak. If these things haven't happened for you, then perhaps, if we start using this name, start invoking a "Lammas Gathering", they just might begin. I've heard some folks saying over the last couple of years that it seems the Gathering has gone somewhat adrift, that there's been a lack of focus, a lack of purpose, that some folks seem to be thinking of Gathering as just a faerie version of summer camp, a gay men's get-away vacation. While that's not necessarily a bad thing, it seems to me, and I believe some others too, that our Gathering could be so much more. I would certainly like it to be so, some others might want that too, which is at least part of the reason I have put all this together. And I think now that we need to have a means of speaking about two Gatherings, we have the opportunity to at least start with a name, the Lammas Gathering, and by using that name, to use our time together as a way to celebrate the abundance of the earth, the abundance of each other, the passings-away, the coming together, the what-might-have-beens, the collective Kawashaway memory... and hope that, along with this name, even more will follow.

I know I've gone on a good while here, what else is new? It's only because I really, really hope this can happen, that it will help us start down a path leading to wondrous things to come.

Love to All,
Two Bears

For an even further description of Lammas, see:
<http://www.mythinglinks.org/Lammas.html>

<http://www.ladybridget.com/r/augi001.html>
<http://www.schooloftheseasons.com/lammas.html>

"It is a hot, lazy, delicious time of the year. Bees buzz in the heat of the day, the air is still, and the force of the sun remains strong, even though its sway over the earth is slowly diminishing day by day. In the cooler nighttime, frogs and crickets keep us company. It is here, in the gloaming, when so many rituals begin....."

"This is when the powerful gods of the grain harvests are honored. They are in their prime, sometimes generous, sometimes quixotic, and always aware with a bittersweet pleasure that their time will wane, as it always does, and they will die, as they always do, and yet nevertheless they will return to another delicious summer next year, as they always do, and have, and will, for this is the endlessly circling Wheel of the Year, and they ride it proudly."

Quoted from MYTH*ING LINKS, An Annotated & Illustrated Collection of Worldwide Links to Mythologies, Fairy Tales & Folklore, Sacred Arts & Sacred Traditions by Kathleen Jenks, Ph.D., <http://www.mythinglinks.org/Lammas.html> For an even further description of Lammas, see <http://www.ladybridget.com/r/augi001.html>

Celebrating the Seasons

Lore and Rituals by Selena Fox

Lammas

Lammas, or Lughnassad, occurs in late July and early August. It marks the middle of Summer and the beginning of the harvest. It is the first of three harvest festivals and is usually associated with ripening grain. It heralds the coming of Autumn. The Goddess manifests as Demeter, Ceres, Corn Mother, and other agricultural Goddesses. The God manifests as Lugh, John Barleycorn, and vegetation Gods. Colors are Golden Yellow, Orange, Green, and Light Brown. It is a festival of plenty and prosperity.

Have a magical picnic and break bread with friends. Do a meditation in which you visualize yourself completing a project you have already begun. Make a corn dolly charm out of the first grain you harvest or acquire. Bake a sacred loaf bread and give a portion of it to Mother Earth with a prayer of appreciation. Make prayers for a good harvest season. Do prosperity magic. Harvest herbs in a sacred way for use in charms and rituals. Kindle a Lammas fire with sacred wood and dried herbs. If you live in or near a farming region, attend a public harvest festival, such as a corn or apple festival.

<http://www.circlesanctuary.org/pholidays/Lammas.html>

Falling midway between Summer Solstice and Autumnal Equinox is the cross-quarter holiday of Lughnasadh, which is the first in the trilogy of harvest festivals, Lughnasadh, Mabon and finally Samhain. It is at the time of Lughnasadh when the days suddenly seem to shorten and the nights grow longer.

http://www.witchvox.com/va/dt_va.html?a=usxx&c=holidays&sc=lughnasadh&id=1989

From "Gay Witchcraft", by Christopher Penczak (who came the first weekend of Gathering last year!-Two Bears)

By actively celebrating the wheel (of the year-TB), a witch gets to know and understand the changing faces of the God and Goddess, as represented through the various myths associated with the holidays. The direct experience that can come through ritual and meditative celebrations is more important than intellectual understanding.

By itself, the wheel consists of four solar festivals - the two equinoxes and two solstices - and four fire festivals, celebrations between those solar holidays, marking shifts in humanity's relationship with the land through agriculture. Fire is used in such celebrations for light, cleansing, and energy, hence the name fire festival.

Collectively the wheel of the year is the story of the Goddess and God and their relationship. (Lammas is one of these four fire festivals, although Franklin & Mason [authors cited below], claim this is a modern notion.-TB)

On Lammas... celebrated on August 1, we have the first harvest. The solar and grain god of the light is sacrificed by the god of the dark. We take the first grain harvest, and offer it to the gods. This is a funeral celebration, thanking the god of grain for his

sacrifice, so that we may live. The Celtic god Lugh is associated with this harvest, being both a grain and solar figure.

Lammas is the first harvest when effigies of the God, made from grains and cornhusks were sacrificed. Make your own by gathering hay, cornhusks, dried grass, or dried flowers. Bundle them with string to form the figure of a man. In ritual, burn the corn dolly in your cauldron or if you have a fire. Burn offerings of cornmeal or wheat. Bake and share bread as a part of the Great Rite. You are consuming the grains of the God. Although this is a funeral, think of it as a celebration. Games are often played on Lammas.

From "Lammas: Celebrating the Fruits of the First Harvest" by Anna Franklin & Paul Mason (This is a 276 page book, from which I have tried to present just a few highlights we might find useful for ourselves while at Kawashaway-TB)

Traditional Lammas Customs

Well Dressing (England)

In many English villages, especially those in Derbyshire, wells are decorated with elaborate floral tributes, a custom known as well dressing. This practice dates back thousands of years in one form or another but is not a continuous tradition; in many cases the custom died out and was revived in Victorian times or even more recently. Originally wells would have been adorned with simple garlands. Nowadays, well dressing has developed into a highly ornate folk art, with a strong element of friendly competition between neighboring villages. A wooden framework is erected and covered with clay into which flower petals, leaves, moss, berry seeds, and pine cones are pressed to produce elaborate pictures, usually of biblical subjects.

Ancient Themes for Modern Pagans

First Fruits

Lughnasa (or Lammas) celebrates the fruition of the year's work with the weaning of calves and lambs, the ripening of the grain, and the first apples, pears, bilberries, blackberries and grapes.

For your Lughnasa celebrations, gather a basket of assorted ripe fruit and place it on the altar, or decorate the ritual area with fruit. They may be blessed during the course of the ritual and shared with others at the end of the evening for luck.

An old custom was to pick the first apples and make them into a drink called Lammas Wool, (the recipe calls for beer or ale, but we could use "soft" cider at Kasa instead!-TB)

Another tradition you might like to enact is the election of the Harvest Lord and lady to oversee the Lammas feast. They can be chosen by lot or by merit and crowned with wreaths of wheat ears, cornflowers, and poppies. At the end of the feast, the crowns are buried in the earth as an offering to the earth goddess.

(The chapter on foods contains recipes for: Soda Bread, Plaited Bread, St. Oswald's Gingerbread Squares, various Bannocks, {oat cakes}, Potatoes, Scones, Three Sisters Soup, Fish & Seafood, berry & fruit preparations, and a few beverages.

There is also a large chapter on rituals.-TB)

COLORS

Royal Purple or heather purple

Gold and yellow (for the ripening corn)

Brown (for the earth)

Red (for blood and/or fire)

PLANTS

Alder

Apple

Arum lily

Ash

Basil

Borage

Daisy

Fennel

Gorse

Grain

Hazel

Heather
Honeysuckle
Oak
Poppy
Reed
Rush
Vine
Woad

GEMS
Tigers-eye
Amber
Rutilated quartz

TOOLS
Staff
Stang
Sickle
Flail

BASIC ENERGIES
Sacrifice
Harvest
Redemption
Renewal
Death
Mourning
Protection