

## The origins of Hallowe'en

The origins of Hallowe'en go back to the ancient Celts.

The Celts were pagans and believed in the gods of nature.

The Celtic year was divided into four seasons. There was a festival at the beginning of each season.

Two of the most important festivals in the Celtic calendar were Beltane (the beginning of summer) and Samhain on October 31<sup>st</sup> (the end of summer and the last day of the year).

The Celts were afraid of winter and associated it with death and evil spirits.

In order to frighten the spirits of evil and death, fires were lit and people dressed in scary costumes such as witches, ghosts and skeletons.

The Celtic priests called druids foretold the future and made predictions about the weather, crops, health and any forthcoming marriages.

After the Roman invasion in 43 A.D., Samhain also became a harvest festival.

Nuts, fruits and apples were part of the ceremonies. Apples were sacred and lucky.

The colours orange and black represented harvest and death.

Eventually, Christian rites replaced the pagan ones and the first day of November became the day of all saints and was called All Hallows' Day.

The evening before became All Hallow's Eve. This was shortened to Hallowe'en.

The Druid religion went on a long time in Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and Hallowe'en continued to be important in these places.

In the 19th century, Irish immigrants chased by famine brought their Hallowe'en customs to the United States.

The festival now comes back from the States to Europe, but it has lost its original religious meaning.