

It is customary on Lughnasadh for Irish people to go on pilgrimages. Garland Sunday and Domhnach Chrom Dubh are two of the many names given to the festival celebrated by Irish country people at the end of July or the beginning of August. It marked the end of summer and the beginning of the harvest season, and on that day the first meal of the year's new food crop was eaten. The chief custom was the for rural communities to make pilgrimages certain high places or water-sides and spend the day in festivity, such as sports and bilberry-picking. This custom existed also in the Isle of Man, Cornwall, Wales and in the north of England. Formerly, it must have been general custom in all Celtic lands for there is no doubt that it is a survival of Lughnasadh. Because the people preserved legends of the origin of the festival and of the assembly-sites, it has been possible to show a correspondence with ancient Celtic mythology, as expressed in Irish literature and in the cult-figures of Roman (Celtic) Gaul. Thus, it has been shown (by Maire MacNeill in *The Festival of Lughnasa*) that the legends of Cu Chulainn, Saint Patrick, and Cornwall's Jack the Tinkard originate in tales of the Celtic god Lugh. It has also been shown there is a direct relationship between the old assembly of Tailtiu and the modern Croagh Patrick pilgrimage.

One of the most popular longtime pilgrimage sites in Ireland is the local sacred well. Many of the sacred wells in Ireland are dedicated to Christian saints but were originally the sites of pagan shrines. The Celts believed the earth's waters were especially sacred and healing, that they issued from the realm of the Underworld Goddess who ruled both birth and death, linking her domain with the Upper World. For them, the waters represented Her eternal wisdom and Her life-giving properties. They believed that the easiest way to gain access to the Otherworld was through the divine springs and wells. Every well had its own guardian spirit or local goddess who presided over it.