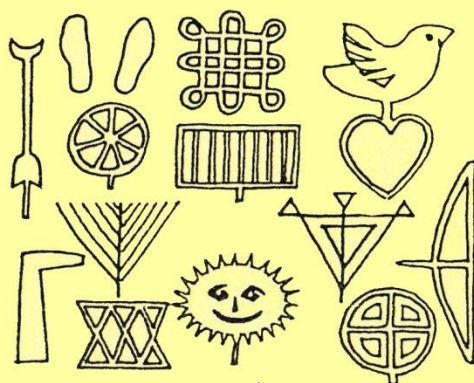
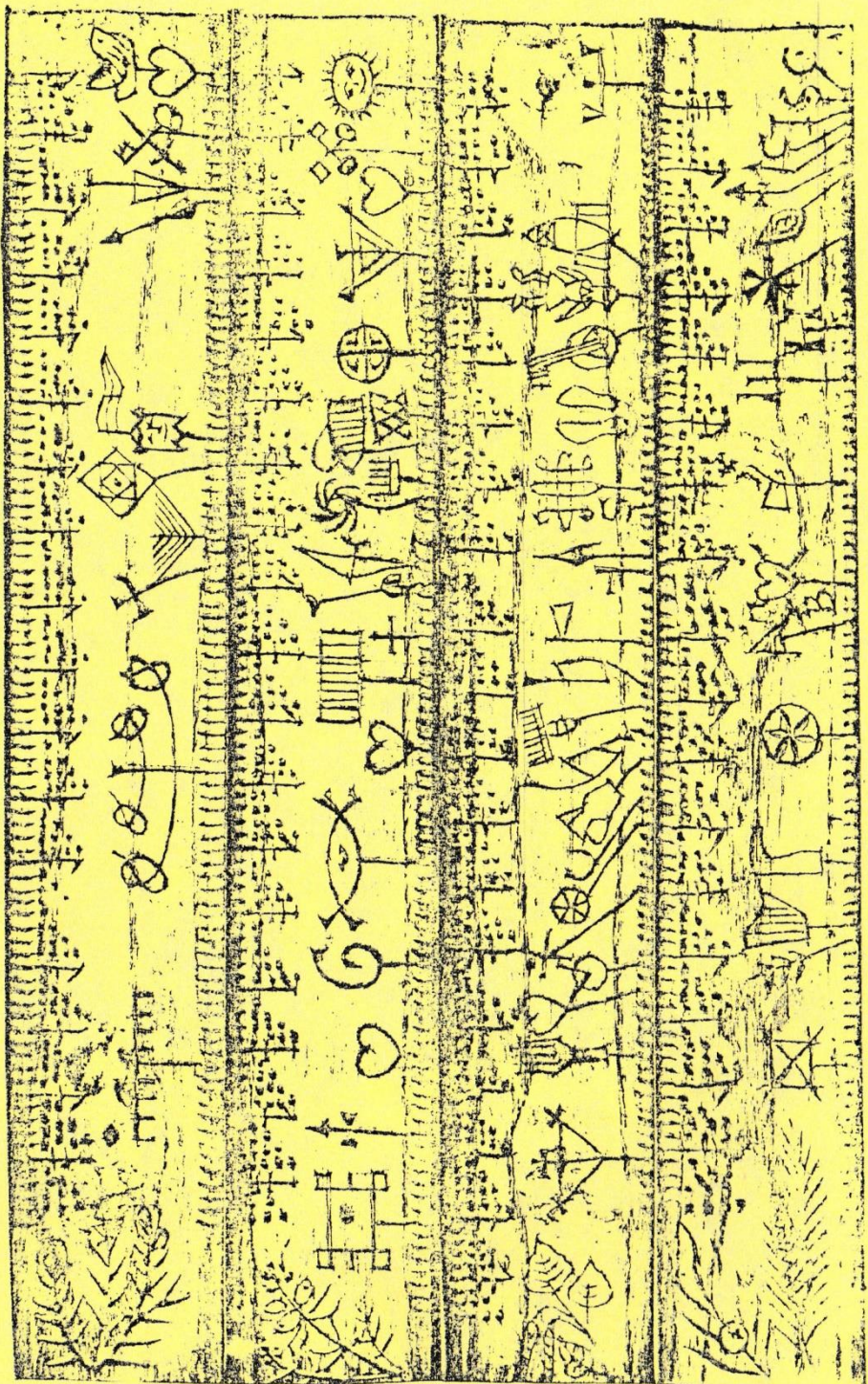


THE ORIGINS
SIGNS AND
FESTIVALS OF
 THE
COG-ALMANAC



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The Origins Signs and Festivals of the Cog Almanac

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THE COG ALMANAC

There are probably not many people today who could tell you what a 'cog almanac' is, and few who have ever seen one, and even fewer who have used or made one. An ALMANAC is an old word for a calendar and COG is an old British word for our 'Ancestors'. The cog almanac was the form of calendar in common use before the invention of printing and before literacy was widespread. Surviving examples date from the C17 and C18. It consists of a squared billet of wood often turned at one end to enable it to be hung up, and with notches cut on the four arrises (the sharp edges between the flat surfaces), one for each day of the year. The four sides represent the four seasons starting with the quarter days: Ladyday, Midsummer, Michaelmas and Christmas.

The major feasts and festivals are denoted by symbols cut into the face of the billet, which are connected to the notch representing the day of the festival by an incised line. On some cog almanacs the days of the month are numbered in a form of Roman numerals.

Its nearest relation would seem to be the old wooden tallies used by medieval merchants and tax collectors. These were thin, even grained lathes of wood on which a count or accounts was kept by a series of notches cut on the edge. Finally the tally was split, one half being kept by each party to the bargain. This prevented fraud because neither party could alter the number of notches by himself, or the two halves of the count would not 'tally'. This method of accounting survived late in rural areas for counting sheep, for keeping the score in village cricket matches and such like. Similarly, the cog almanac survived longest in rural areas where life was more primitive, literacy least widespread and the need to keep the calendar in time with the seasons greatest. Its ancestor was perhaps the bundle of notched sticks reputedly used by some of the C1 Celts for recording messages or accounts, or perhaps

genealogies in 'ogam' which are referred to in some early writings. The ogam alphabet consisted of combinations of notches cut on one or other side of, or on the arris of, a squared up stick or stone. Many ancient inscriptions survive in Cornwall and Ireland, and there is even one doubtful one from Reading.

With this ancestry we should not be surprised to find that the word COG in the description 'a cog almanac' is Cornish or lowland Celtic for 'grandfather' or 'ancestor'. The cog almanac was in fact our (Celtic) 'ancestors' almanac'.

A study of the pictograms for the feasts and festivals reveals some surprising designs, for instance:

The feast day of St Peter on the 29 June is denoted by his keys, the Keys of Heaven. St Lucy's day on the 13 December is denoted by her hornbook with which she taught children to read. All just as one might have expected. However, St Nicholas' day on 6 December is denoted by a human head with horns! This is Old Nick, the Christians devil who was the pagans' winter sungod, the Great Hunter, and not St Nicholas the bishop.

Then again, St John the Baptist's birthday at Midsummer is marked with the smiling sun face of the summer sungod. The Christian interpretation is that it is the decapitated head of St John on a salver for Salome. If this is what the sign represents then it should be on the feast denoting St John's beheading on 29 August, the usual time to remember a saint, not near the Solstice or at Midsummer.

We find that the symbol used to denote St Lawrence's day is the grid-iron or bedstead that figures in the apocryphal story of his martyrdom. Historically it is almost certain that St Lawrence was beheaded, though popular fancy tells us that he was roasted alive on a brazen bedstead outside the walls of Rome. It makes one wonder if the apocryphal story

did not have its origins from this particular sign on the cog almanac, for in Roman times St Lawrence's day was the day on which the prostitutes in Rome had their festival - hence the sign of an empty bed! The festival was a survival of the ritual marriage of the incarnation of the Great Goddess with the Lord of the Harvest, consummated in public on this bed. If the cog almanac was marked with a bed on this date before St Lawrence was martyred then it must date from Roman times at least, if not earlier.

The signs for Lammas, that is 1 August, and for the day following it suggest an even earlier origin. Lammas is marked with a bow and arrow, and this is followed with a crescent-headed bird arrow next day. These are neither Christian symbols nor Roman ones. The bow was used by the tanist or the incarnation of the summer sungod to shoot at the summer sun, which from now on begins to wane, and the bird arrow is a reminder that this is when, according to the old song, 'the birds of the air fell a sighing and a sobbing when they heard of the death of poor cock Robin'. The Celts who believed in multiple souls, held the belief that one of the souls of the summer sungod lived on in a cock robin, while that of his tanist or rival, his son, brother, or father, the winter sungod, lived on in the a gold crest wren which was nicknamed 'Bran's Sparrow'. Bran was the winter sungod whose name means crow or raven. The belief that the soul of a man, god or hero lives on in a bird is still with us. We protect the ravens at the Tower of London, which is built on the site of Bran's tumulus where his head was buried, so that his soul as a raven can protect Britain from invasion. King Arthur's soul survives in a Cornish chough, and the lower deck in the Royal Navy still claim that the souls of chief petty officers become gannets when they die - in the words of the old Cornish prayer, 'From ghosties and ghoulies and long nebbed (beaked) beasties and things that go bump in the night, Good Lord preserve us'. Long nebbed beasties are the birds as souls of the dead. Here on the cog almanac we have the bird arrow with which The Sparrow shot the Cock Robin, in which lived the soul of the

summer sungod as in Celtic mythology. The very name of the bird Cock Robin is Celtic, COCH RHI BEN, and is the chief king who is red.

The feast day of St Catherine is shown as one might expect by her wheel. But look more closely at the number of spokes, they are an odd number. This is no normal wheel (no wonder it fell to pieces), and in the sign language of our monumental masons, a circle divided into an odd number of sections shows that the person referred to was a harlot! No wonder the pope has disowned her - but he had to wait some 1600 years until religious apathy allowed the popular goddess of the turning year, Gwynevere or Creudyladd of Celtic mythology, Astarte in Lebanon and Cybele in Rome, to be removed from the calendar of saints.

The feast day of the decollation of St Paul on 25 January is denoted by an axe, a poll axe of the sort used to slaughter beasts. How very appropriate you may say, to use the sign of an axe for a saint who was beheaded. But it is not appropriate. St Paul was executed with a sword. How then is a poll axe connected with this day? There is one explanation that connects St Paul with such an axe. Up until the latter half of the C16, only some 300 years ago, a live buck was poll-axed on the high altar of St Paul's Cathedral in London on this day every year. This is nothing to do with St Paul or Christianity, it is the survival of a pagan Roman sacrifice on the altar of the temple of Diana that stood on its site, some 1600 years ago or more, and the poll axe still marks the date on the cog almanac.

The dove which is used to denote the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is also called The Queen of Heaven, used to be the bird of the Greeks' Queen of Heaven, the goddess Hera.

None of the signs on the cog almanac actually coincide with solstices or equinoxes which suggests a 'stellar' rather than a 'solar' calendar. From

the signs used to denote some of the dates, it would seem that the cog almanac has a very ancient origin, perhaps in pre-Roman, Celtic, Western Europe or in that stronghold of their druids, Britain. After all, that pillar of our mathematical and geometric traditions, Pythagoras the Greek, travelled across the known world of his day to learn from the Druids of Gaul and they suggested that he should visit the fount of their wisdom in Britain; so it could well be that the British Druids evolved the Cog Almanac, and the very accurate Celtic calendar, long before Meton gave the Greeks their somewhat inferior one, and before either Caesar or the Pope Gregory had devised their inaccurate 'improvements'.

A further analysis of the dates and signs of the Cog Almanac suggest to us that the Celts and the Etruscans or early Romans kept their calendars accurate by fixing their major feast days on those days marked by unfailing annual meteor showers from certain specific points in the heavens. This knowledge, inherited by the possibly unlettered users of the cog almanac, who towards the end of its life were only yeomen farmers and cottagers, enabled them to keep their calendar more accurately than the Christian Church with all its red letter days.

It was of course St Augustine's ignorance of matters astronomical, and his bigoted assumption that the church of Rome was the only fount of knowledge on all matters, that made the poor but learned Celtic priesthood of the semi-Christian Church in Britain reject him and adhere to their own religion, the Old Religion i.e. the teachings of the Druids modified to assume the appearance of Christianity. In this connection the Celtic belief in multiple souls was linked with the observance of annual meteor showers for the eternal soul of a man became a star in the heavens, and the soul of a god or hero became a great star. When a god, hero or saint died or was reborn on earth, his soul could be seen in the heavens travelling to or away from earth in the form of a shooting star. In particular the one day meteor shower on the

night of the 24-25 March which is Ladyday marked the death and rebirth of the Lord of the Harvest; Attis Adonis, whose name means the Lord, the son, and the lover of the Great Goddess Astarte or Cybele. Jesus Christ, The Lord of the Christians was born in a cave in Bethlehem, a city the name of which means the city of bread, just below the wooded hill still known as the Grove of Adonis. This shows how well both the Christian and ancient pagan mythologies are linked and why it was quite possible for the ancient religious beliefs of Western Europe to evolve into the Celtic Church without a break, allowing the Druids in the form of Culdees to survive within the Christian Church up to 1124 in Scotland and 1595 in Ireland. In lowland Britain they survived as Coleprophets or hedgepriests and fortune-tellers into Elizabethan times, perhaps making cog almanacs for the yeomanry and peasantry so they could order their agricultural year by a stellar calendar that was accurate. Even today the Welsh word for religion is CREFU - YDD meaning to 'implore for corn'.

The 25 March is known as Ladyday and was the start of the year until the calendar reforms of the C18. The title of Ladyday was diplomatically chosen to offend no one, Christian nor Pagan, Pagan after all originally meant merely 'of the country'. It allowed the Christians to worship the Virgin Mary or St Bride and others to worship Bride, Bridget, Ceres or Astarte. When considering the signs of the Cog Almanac in relation to Christian and Pagan feast days and to days marked by annual predictable meteor showers, one should note and remember the following facts:-

There are some 121 days in the year marked by regular annual meteor showers of 13 days or under. There are 123 main well known Roman or Celtic pagan festivals per year, or 172 including minor holy days. Of these, 95 of the main festivals are Roman and 59 are Celtic. While there are saints for every day of the Christian year, the church in England

only recognises 49 fixed feast days and 35 moveable ones making a total of 84 days a year.

On average there are 69 signs on the Cog Almanac, of these half, that is 35, lay on the eve, day or morrow of a meteor shower. 12% mark major Roman or Pagan festivals and only 12% of the signs mark major Christian festivals, while 49% mark the days of festivals that are both Christian and Pagan.

Even if one 'fixes' the moveable Christian feast days by setting Easter on Ladyday, as seems was the practise in the early Celtic Church, this 'impartiality' of the Cog Almanac only just disappears when considering all 126 Roman, 77 Celtic and 84 Christian festivals. 62% of the Cog Almanac signs are on Christian feast days but 71% are on Roman and Celtic feast days. The latter being evenly divided as 36% and 35% respectively. Remembering that this is some 1400 years after the introduction of Christianity into Britain on any scale, and 1300 years after the end of the Roman Empire here, because surviving Cog Almanacs probably date at the latest from the C18.

All this suggests that the Cog Almanac has been added to in Christian times and that Christians are not interested in correcting their calendar from the stars.

In the following tables the Cog Almanac sign is set against its date in the month, and is followed by the name of the most important Christian festival or saints day on the same or an adjacent date, together with a description of what the sign depicts.

The next column contains a brief note on British and Roman festivals on the dates denoted and the final columns show firstly, which dates are those of Major and Minor Roman festivals known or probable Pagan British festivals, and Moveable or Fixed Christian feast days. Then

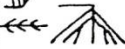
secondly the dates, points of origin of the annual meteor showers and their duration.

M	Denotes a Moveable Christian feast 'Fixed' by the setting of Easter on Ladyday
F	Denotes a Fixed Christian feast
R	Denotes a Roman feast day
r	Denotes a day holy to Jupiter, Juno, the Furies and Drymias
P	Denotes Pagan British feasts
p	Denotes probable Pagan feasts
★	Denotes end of an annual meteor shower
☀	Denotes a sun festival

JANUARY	
1	  FEAST of the CIRCUMCISION F F
2	
3	R
4	R
5	R r
6	  EPIPHANY F P Abbots Bromley Horn <u>the Star the Wise men followed</u> <i>dance</i>
7	
8	M R P
9	R
10	
11	R
12	
13	  ST HILARY F r P Birth of Dionysus <u>his initial</u> <i>Sacrifice to Jephth</i>
14	
15	R
16	
17	 ST ANTONY F
18	
19	
20	
21	
22	
23	
24	R
25	  BEHEADING OF ST PAUL with a sword. <i>Sacrifice of a live doe FM on the altar of St Paul in London till 1557 with an axe</i> R P
26	R
27	R
28	M
29	
30	P
31	P

The Ox driven or
NORTHERN CROWN

FEBRUARY				
1			St BRIDE Celtic IMBOLC	Fr P
2		PURIFICATION OF THE B.V. M	Candlemas Witches Sabbath	P F
3	B 	St BLAIZE <u>stonemason's mallet</u>	Patron St. of masons	F
4				M
5	A 	St. AGATHA <u>her initial</u>		p F r
6				P
7				
8				
9				P
10		When Passover is 24 March this is the feast of Esther = Ishtar = Cybele = Bride		
11				
12				M
13				M
14		St VALENTINE <u>lovers knot</u>	The birds wedding day Roman Lupercalia	r RM PF M
15				R 
16				RP
17				R
18				RM
19				R
20				R
21				RM
22				
23				RM
24		St MATTHIAS <u>a mason's square</u> <u>or the ox arc</u>	Roman REFUGIUM Greek Bauphonia when an ox was polloned.	R FM
25				M
26				
27				R
28				

MARCH				
1		Sr DAVID		R
2		the Welsh Harp Sr CHAD medicinal spring		
3				P
4				M ★
5				r
6				R
7				R
8				
9				R
10				D
11				M
12	 	Sr GREGORY Sr Alphage		
13				
14				R
15				R
16				P
17				FRP
18				MP
19				FRP
20				R
21			Apollo came to Stonehenge.	RP ☀
22			PHRYGIAN Festival of CYBELL	M PR
23				MPR
24			PASSOVER MF LADY DAY PR	VERNAL EQUINOX GREAT BEARS FOOT ★
25	 	ANNUNCIATION OF THE B.V.M. <u>dove of the Holy Spirit or Hera</u>	OLD NEW YEAR PR EASTER Great Nativity Day	
26				PR
27				R
28				P
29				r
30		ST OSBURGA of Coventry. Hocktoly at <u>her Key & dagger</u>	Hungerford	v
31			Roman Festival of Lunae	r

APRIL	
1	Mr
2	MP
3	 ST RICHARD .1253 AD To the Britons his name means Holy King of the plough FM
4	 ST AMBROSE 334 AD. Roman Festival of Cybele R whose symbol was an arrow RPr
5	
6	R
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	R
13	R
14	R
15	R
16	R
17	R
18	R
19	R
20	
21	R
22	HERCULES & THE HARP
23	  ST GEORGE FRP
24	R
25	  ST MARK - Black Cross Day RF <u>a covered cross</u>
26	
27	
28	R
29	M
30	MP

MAY	
1	ST JAMES WALPURGIS NIGHT MF MAY DAY
2	May pole Fullers bat St James Symbol
3	INVENTION OF THE HOLY CROSS St Helen Found the cross Well dressing Derbyshire Chertsey
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	
13	WHITSUN Celtic CAINGEIR MR + P M
14	
15	
16	
17	
18	
19	ST DUNSTAN } days of fast to spoil apples arranged by St Dunstan with the M Devil to increase his beer sales.
20	
21	
22	
23	
24	
25	
26	
27	
28	
29	
30	
31	

JUNE	
1	r
2	
3	
4	
5	r R
6	
7	
8	
9	R
10	
11	 ST BARNABAS <u>hayrake</u> Roman Matralia to Mater Matuta of the ripening grain F R
12	
13	 R
14	P
15	P
16	
17	F
18	
19	
20	
21	
22	SR ALBAN Summer Solstice  P
23	P
24	  ST JOHN BAPTIST (birthday) CELTIC BALE FIRES & Feast of the Birds Day of Baldur, Juno's wedding FP
25	
26	
27	
28	
29	  ST PETER & ST PAUL Live buck sacrificed at St Pauls till 1557 FP
30	  <u>keys of heaven of St Peter</u> <u>probably once a year.</u> P

mouth of the dragon

JULY		
1		Roman Calends of Quintilly to Juno Queen of Heaven
2	♥	VISITATION OF THE B.V.M. the Christian Queen of Heaven F
3		
4		
5		r
6	☐	ST THOMAS A Roman murder of Romulus & Ferial Ancillarum & BECKET'S translation Nones to Juno of the Figtree
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		ST SWITHIN Swan Upping starts
15	☉ ☿	disguised sign of Casseopea = King Arthurs Chair = ST Swathins Chair = W.
16		
17		
18		
19	XXX	ST MARGARET
20		
21	☕	ST MARY MAGDALEN
22		ointment jar
23		
24		
25	☿	ST CHRISTOPHER
26	☿	ST JAMES
27	☿	ST Anne
28		the sun going Derbyshire Well dressing - wells water shines after mid-summer spring from foot of Pegasus.
29		
30		
31		

Feasts of St Margaret
 R
 HEAD OF THE SWAN
 R
 R
 R
 P R
 PERSEUS
 FRONT FOOT OF PEGASUS

AUGUST

1		LAMMAS <u>bow & arrow</u>	Yorkshire Silver Arrow Cantest, Festival of LUGH. "Death of Cock Robin"	Fr P
2		<u>a bird arrow</u>		
3				
4				
5			Roman festival of Salus	R
6	+	TRANSFIGURATION		F
7				
8				
9			Festival of Venus in Rome End of Mother Diana's F.	R
10		ST. LAWRENCE <u>his gridiron bed</u>	Selling of Dog star	R
11		<u>once the bed of Venus</u>		R
12			Roman festival of Hercules	R
13		DEATH OF B.V.M. ST Hypolytus	Roman festival of Love & Mother Goddess Diana	R
14				R
15		ASSUMPTION of Bretons Pardons B.V.M.		FR
16				PERSEUS
17				R
18				
19				R
20				R
21				R
22				R
23			Calf sacrificed in Rome to Vulcanus	R
24		ST. BARTHOLOMEW <u>a flayed man or</u> <u>butchered animal</u>	Roman Opiconsivia Hambleton pig roast	Fr P
25				R
26				
27				R
28				
29				r
30				r
31				r

SEPTEMBER

1	φ ⑥	ST GILES	JEWISH NEW YEAR r. P. Day Sacred to Juno Greek Mysteries of Demeter
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8	♡	BIRTH OF THE B.V.M	Church Clipping at Painswick.
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14	A	EXULTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS	Avening Feast by 3 barrows Roman Equorum Probatio
15			
16			
17			
18			
19			
20			
21	⌒	ST MATTHEW	Hogfair + pork feast INPF Bornham Bucks - Mysteries of Demeter + pork feast F
22			
23			
24			
25			
26			
27			
28			
29	⌒	ST MICHAEL	Lord Mayors Election F Festivals at Celtic P Barrows & Weyhill Fair
30		scales for weighing good & evil in souls	3000 years old.

r
 P
 F
 Roman Festival to Juno Jupiter + Minerva
 * PEGASUS & THE WAGONER

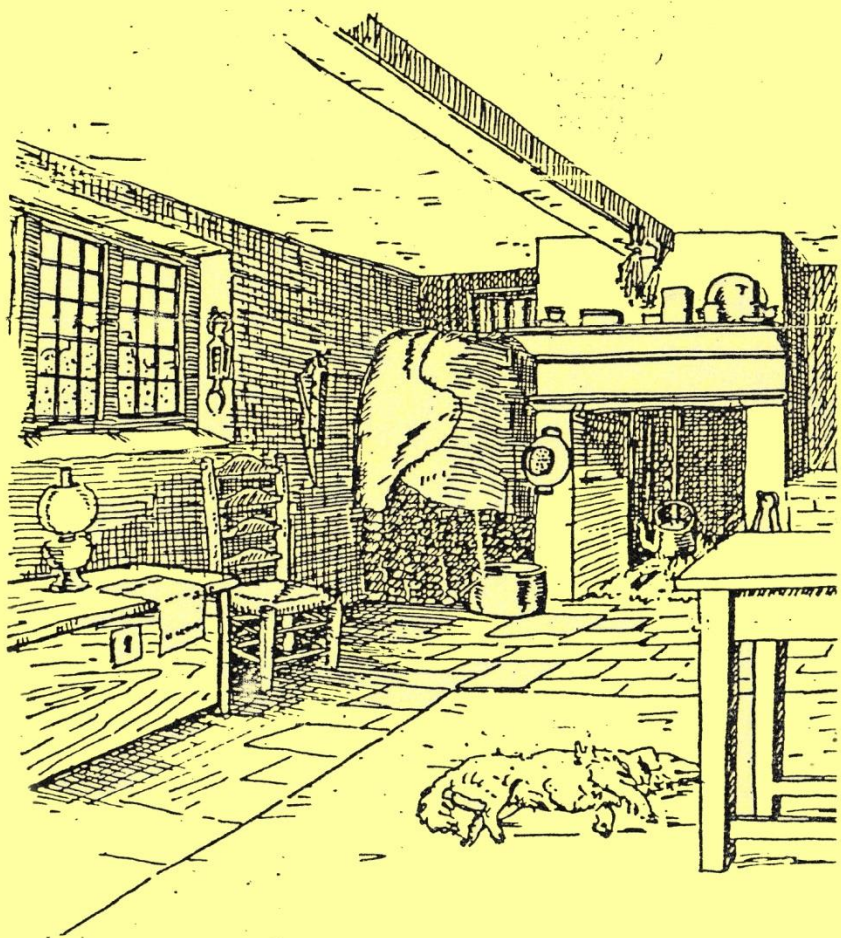
OCTOBER	
1	Roman Festival of Mars Jupiter + Quirinus R
2	The Ox Drive X
3	
4	Nottingham Goose Fair F CEPHUS X
5	Hunters Full moon r
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	R
12	
13	 TRANSLATION OF FAUNALIA in ROME ST EDWARD R r <u>a crowned head</u>
14	
15	EQUERIA in ROME R P
16	 ST GALL ST MICHAEL of the Mount. THE SMAPHORIA in GREECE
17	
18	 ST LUKE <u>a lute</u> Charleston Horn Fair F P
19	Armillarium to Mars. R
20	
21	
22	
23	
24	
25	 ST CRISPIN Bullbaiting at Windsor X <u>shoes</u>
26	
27	
28	F P BULL
29	P THE
30	THE RAM
31	HALLOWEEN Celtic SAMHAIN Roman Pomona P X

NOVEMBER

1		ALL SAINTS	Cailleach Day White Lady's Day Saprethoes to Lough & Cronin Craigh	F TP	★
2	 	ALL SOULS	Roman Festum dei Mortis	FP	★
3					PLEIADES
4					R
5		ST ZACHARY & ST ELIZABETH		R P	
6	 	ST LEONARD			
7					
8					
9					
10					
11	 	ST MARTIN <u>poll axe</u>	surplus stock killed for eating - also St Martin in Scotland	TP	★
12					
13					
14		ST DUBRICUS	Roman Equorum Probatio	R	★
15					
16		ST Edmund of Abingdon (bishop)			
17		ST HUGH of Lincoln <u>his pet swan</u>			
18					
19					
20		ST Edmund of East Anglia (king) <u>shot full of arrows</u>			
21		a jug of water for the Hyades who weep.			
22					
23		ST CLEMENT <u>his initial</u>			
24					
25	 	ST CATHERINE <u>her wheel</u>			
26					
27					
28					
29					
30		ST ANDREW <u>his cross</u>	THE Peak of the Celtic god of Winter MABON	FP	

DECEMBER

1			
2			
3			r
4			Front foot of X GREAT BEAR
5			ROMAN FAUNALIA R
6		ST NICHOLAS	GREEK Rural Dionysia Horn dance Abbots Bromley Feast of Celtic Cerunos
7		3 bags of gold a head with horns CONCEPTION of THE B.V.M.	Old Nick. R
8			
9			
10			CASTOR & POLLUX
11			R
12			R
13		ST. LUCY	Roman Festival of her horn book Tellus Mater + Ceres
14			★
15			R
16			F
17			R
18			F
19			RF
20			start of Roman Saturnalia EOPelia F
21		ST THOMAS	Roman Angerona R
22	his lance		WINTER SOLSTICE Feast of the Shoulder Blade
23			★ LITTLE BEAR
24			R
25		CHRISTMAS	Celtic "Little Nativity Day" F GREEN HELIA to the Sun God ROMAN SOL - INVICTUS P
26		St Stephen his initial	Celtic Wren Hunt F P
27		St John	Greek Rural Dionysia F P
28		CHILDERMASS	Dorset Ozer out F P
29		HOLY INNOCENTS	Feast of Fools F P
30		ST THOMAS of Canterbury	Tundermas Eve F P
31		St. Sylvester	Hogmany: - Feast of the Sm of the Heifer F P.



A cottage interior showing a love spoon
at the window & a cog almanac on the wall