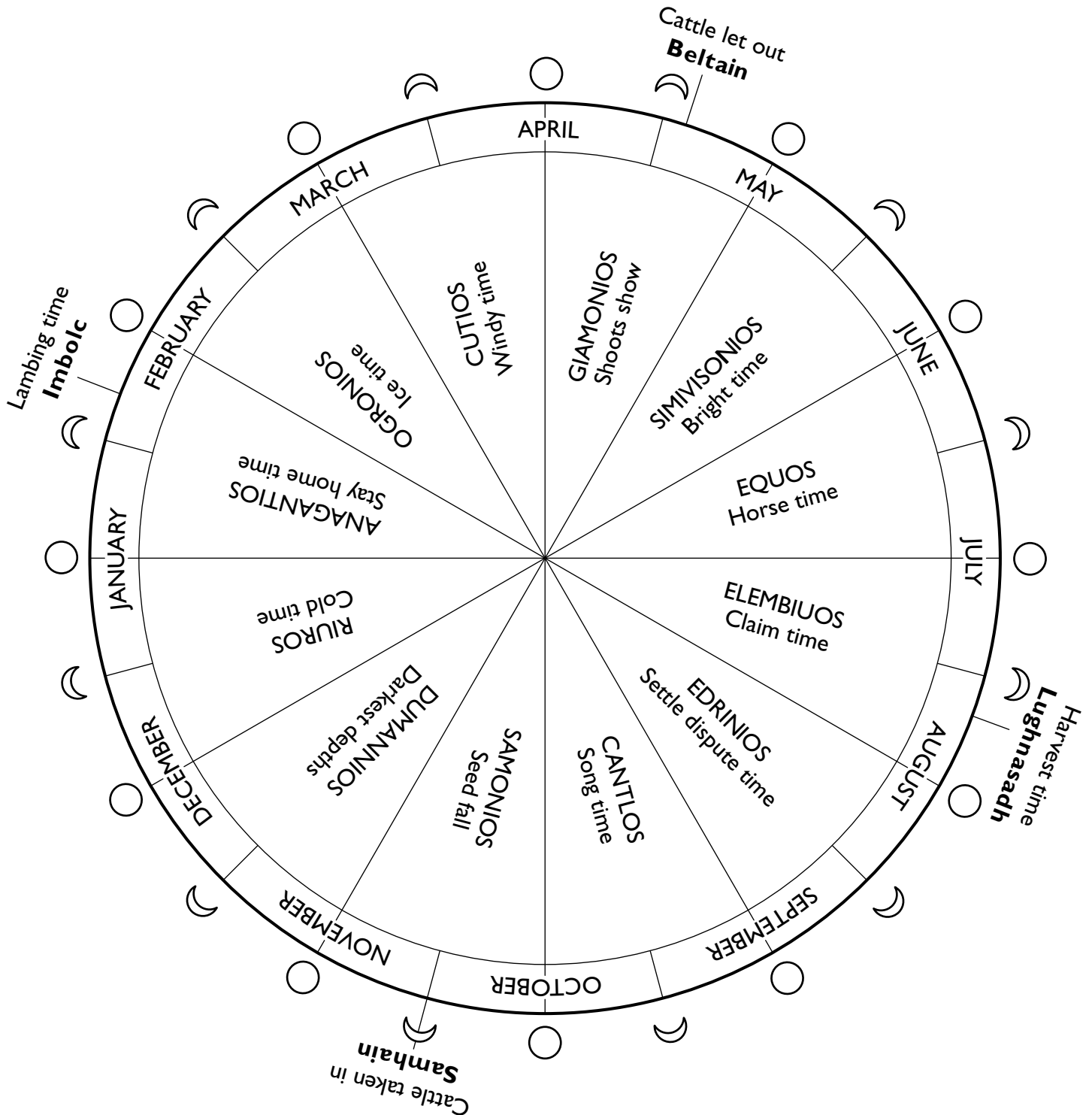


# The wheel of the Celtic Year



# The Celtic Year

Month/time of year	Celtic months	Description
October/November	<b>Samonios</b>	Seed-fall
November/December	<b>Dumannios</b>	Darkest depths
December/January	<b>Riuos</b>	Cold-time
January/February	<b>Anagantios</b>	Stay-home time
February/March	<b>Ogronios</b>	Ice time
March/April	<b>Cutios</b>	Windy time
April/May	<b>Giamonios</b>	Shoots-show
May/June	<b>Simivisonios</b>	Bright time
June/July	<b>Equos</b>	Horse-time
July/August	<b>Elembiuos</b>	Claim-time
August/September	<b>Edrinios</b>	Settle dispute time
September/October	<b>Cantlos</b>	Song-time

Month/time of year	Celtic festivals	Description
Spring	<b>Beltain</b>	Cattle let out
Summer	<b>Lughnasadh</b>	Harvest time
Autumn	<b>Samhain</b>	Cattle taken in
Winter	<b>Imbolc</b>	Lambing time

# Celtic festivals (i)

## Samhain

Samhain means summer's end. At this time cattle are brought inside and sheep are brought down from the high hills, all the crops are gathered in and fuel is gathered for the winter.

The Celts believed that when people died they went to another world and at this time the wall between this world and the other world became so thin that the spirits could pass through and re-enter their homes to warm themselves by the fire. This was a time of merriment and the festival continues today as Halloween.

## Imbolc

Imbolc, which occurred about the last day of January, means that ewes are giving milk to their lambs. The Celts believed that this was a time when the world was awakening from the depths of winter and celebrated by making a meal made from lambs' tails. This time was a celebration when women worshipped the Brigid who was the goddess of healing and was believed to help babies to be born.

## Beltain

Beltain was celebrated about the 1st of May. The second half of the word means fire but nobody is sure what Bel meant. Some people believe that it may stand for the god Belenus who was a Celtic god of the Sun. At Beltain fires were lit to welcome in the summer. The fires were considered to bring good luck if you jumped through their flames and drove your livestock between them. The embers were taken away to re-light home fires which had been previously put out and the ashes were scattered on the fields to make the crops grow well. A time of merrymaking followed which continues today as maypole dancing and a May Day holiday.

## Lughnasadh

This festival on about the 1st of July was in honour of the god Lugh who was a god of skill. The festival began a week before the end of July and continued for about a week afterwards. During this time Lugh was honoured by games of skill which included horse racing. The festival ended with bringing in the last cartload of crops from the field known as harvest home and the corn goddess was captured by the making of a corn dolly which was hung up indoors over winter and put back in the ground when ploughing began in the new year.

## Celtic festivals (ii)

Answer these questions using worksheets 16A, 16B and 16C to help you.

1. Which festival celebrates the beginning of the Celtic year?

☐ .....

2. In which month did this festival occur and what was the translation of the month's name?

☐ .....

3. What do we call the celebrations that occur today at the date of this festival?

☐ .....

4. How did the Celts know when a new month was beginning?

☐ .....

5. When was imbolc and what does it mean?

☐ .....

6. What is the translation of the Celtic name for the month in which Imbolc occurs?

☐ .....

7. Which of our months are in the 'Windy Time' month?

☐ .....

8. In which Celtic month was Beltain celebrated?

☐ .....

9. Which present day activity is associated with Beltain?

☐ .....

10. What is the Celtic name of the second month after Beltain?

☐ .....

11. How long was the festival of Lughnasadh and what did it celebrate?

☐ .....

12. How does the Celtic calendar compare with the one we use today and the festivals that people celebrate? (You may write more on the other side of this sheet.)

☐ .....

# The wheel of the Celtic Year and Celtic festivals

## Objectives

- To know how the Celts measured time and divided up the year.
- To know about the major events in the Celtic year.

## Cross-curricular links

### History

- 2a** To know about the characteristic features of a society including ideas, beliefs and attitudes.

### English

#### En2

- 3a** Scan texts to find information.

- 5g** Engage with challenging and demanding subject matter.

- 8e** Texts drawn from a variety of cultures and traditions.

## Resources

Each child or group will need worksheets

**16A**, **16B**, **16C** and **16D**.

## Starter

Tell the children that in 1897 in France pieces of bronze were found with inscriptions on them. Archaeologists discovered that the pieces could fit together and when they were all in place they made a bronze sheet 1.5m x 1m in size now known as the Coligny Tablet on which was written the details of the Celtic Calendar. Archaeologists think it was written down by druids as reminder to the Celts because the Romans who had conquered them were trying to make them use their own calendar – the one which we use in a modified form today.

## Main activities

1. Issue worksheet **16A** and point out how the Celtic months cut across two of the months in our calendar. Tell the children that each Celtic month began on a full moon and the month was divided into two parts – one of fourteen days and one of fourteen of fifteen days. It is from this way of measuring time as fourteen days that we get the term fortnight.

2. Point out that the Celts viewed time as circular rather than as we do as linear. Each day for them began at dusk rather than midnight and their year began with the festival of Samhain in Samonios (October–November) as the year moved into its darkest period.
3. Point out the months in the Celtic year with their translations and the four major Celtic festivals.
4. Issue all the worksheets and let the children answer the questions on worksheet **16D**.

## Answers

1. Samhain.
2. Samonios, seed fall.
3. Halloween.
4. There was a full moon.
5. About the last day of January or 31st January. Ewes are giving milk to their lambs.
6. Stay home time.
7. March and April.
8. Giamonios.
9. Maypole dancing.
10. Equos.
11. Two weeks, the bringing in of the harvest/the god Lugh (god of skill).
12. Both calendars have twelve months but the names are different. The months of the Celtic calendar cross two of our months. We measure months from the new moon not the full moon but our months do not usually begin when the new moon is first seen. (You may like to check this with a diary.) The festival of Samhain is at the time of our Halloween but other festivals such as Christmas fall at different times to the Celtic festivals. The answer could then feature festivals from the religions of the children in the class.

## Plenary

You should go through the answers to the worksheet and let the children discuss their answers to question 12. The children may like to think if they lived in Celtic times what month it would be now. They could predict how the Moon would look and look at the changing shapes of its phases over a few nights to see if it is following the trend of the Celtic calendar. The children may also like to think

# The wheel of the Celtic Year and Celtic festivals (cont...)

about what month their birthdays would be in and what would be the next festival in the calendar that they would celebrate.

## Outcomes

The children can:

- Identify features of the Celtic calendar.
- Compare the Celtic calendar with the one we use today.