



OAK, ASH & HEIRS

Autumn Equinox 2026

Hello,

If you are receiving this email, you had a reading with me, came to one of my events, or signed up for the newsletter. Thank you for being here.



Holiday Gift Certificate Special: Three hours for \$279 – 25% off the total. See the special below.

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Harvest Home – Autumn Equinox, September 22

Harvest Home is not just a pretty pause between summer and winter. It is a Witch's Sabbat: the autumnal equinox, a Lesser Sabbat, and the point where light and dark stand in balance before the dark half of the year takes the throne.



The work of the growing season is gathered in. We count what came to fruit, give thanks for what sustained us, and decide what will be carried through winter. The balance does not last. After the equinox, darkness gains a little more ground each day.

In the old myth, the God of Light yields to the God of Darkness. The bright power of the sun has entered the grain and must be cut so the people can live. This is a symbolic sacrifice, not a human one. John Barleycorn is cut down, threshed, milled, baked and brewed – and still the seed waits to rise again.

The last sheaf matters. It was treated as the dwelling place of the field spirit, dressed or woven into a corn dolly and carried home with respect. A corn dolly on the altar is not decoration alone. It holds the memory of the harvest and the promise that the wheel will turn again.

For your own observance, light one candle for what has ripened and one for what must now be released. Place grain, bread, apples, wine or ale on the altar. Name the work that is complete. Then welcome the longer night without pretending that darkness is the enemy.

(Quoted with permission from Mike Nichols, "Harvest Home," *The Witches' Sabbats*.)

Samhain – When the Dead Walk Closest

Samhain is the festival, not the name of a god. It is the Celtic new year: the harvest is in, winter begins, and the old year gives way at the darkest threshold. On this night the veil is at its thinnest, and the dead are believed to walk closest to the living. That is why Samhain matters so deeply to a medium.

In Scotland, people did not treat that thin place casually. Hilltop and hearth bonfires were lit against the dark. Fire marked the boundary, protected the household, and gave the community a center while the unseen world moved close around it.



Guising came from the same need to move safely through a spirit-filled night. Scots went door to door in old clothes, with blackened faces or masks, so the spirits abroad would not recognize them. A guiser did not simply demand a sweet. They recited a rhyme, sang a song, told a joke or performed for food. That is the true forerunner of trick-or-treating.

Before pumpkins, there were neeps. Scots hollowed out turnips, carved frightening faces into them and placed a light inside. These hard little lanterns were meant to frighten off wandering ghouls. The pumpkin jack-o'-lantern came later, after the custom crossed the Atlantic and people found a vegetable much easier to carve.

Samhain was also a night for divination. An apple peel thrown over the shoulder might fall in the shape of a future lover's initial. Nuts were named for suitors and placed in the fire: a quiet burn promised a happy union, while hissing, crackling or jumping apart warned of trouble.

After dark, a person could be led blindfolded into the kail yard to pull a stalk. Its height and shape were read as the height and figure of a future

lover; earth clinging to the root suggested fortune. Robert Burns recorded this and other Scottish customs in his 1785 poem “Halloween” – not in theory, but as the country practices of the people around him.

Dooking for apples kept the harvest fruit at the center of the night. Apples floated in a basin while players tried to catch one with their teeth, hands kept out of the way. It became a party game, but its roots belong to the same season of harvest, chance and looking ahead.

These customs carry one clear instruction: respect the threshold. Samhain is a time to set a place for the ancestors, speak the names of the dead, listen carefully and keep good boundaries. The closeness of Spirit is not an excuse to provoke anything. It is a call to remember where we came from and to meet the unseen with sense, reverence and courage.



Historical sources: School of Scottish Studies Archives · Robert Burns, “Halloween” · Scottish Halloween traditions

October Ancestor Reading

Samhain is the season when the ancestors are closest. Book a 60-minute mediumship reading focused on your ancestors — \$100 (regularly \$125), October only. Book by October 31: scheduler.zoom.us/heiditaylor or call/text (816) 868-9675.

“Samhain is the season when the ancestors are closest.”

By Heidi L Taylor, Professional Genealogist

Samhain at Drumin Castle

My 8th through 11th great-grandfathers were Stewarts of Drumin — lairds of Drumin Castle in Glenlivet, Banffshire: Thomas, 1st Laird of Drumin (1590–1670); his son Thomas (1620–1700); his grandson Thomas (1655–1715); and John Hugh Stewart, 4th of Drumin (1675–1719).

Drumin Castle stands on a ridge above the meeting of the River Livet and the River Avon. The Stewarts held those lands from 1372. Four generations of my family lived and died within sight of that ridge — through the witch trials, the Covenanting wars, the Cromwellian occupation, and the famine years of the 1690s.

What would Samhain have looked like for them? No diary survives, but the folk record of Gaelic Scotland tells us what people in their glen did on October 31st. The cattle came down from the summer pastures. Hilltop bonfires were kindled as need-fires — struck fresh by friction, never carried up from a hearth — and every household fire was put out and re-lit from the communal flame: one fire for the whole winter. Livestock were driven between two fires for protection before being brought into winter shelter. Young people went guising in animal skins with blackened faces — disguise as protection on the night the dead walked. It was the great night for divination: hazelnuts named for sweethearts thrown onto the fire, marked stones left in the bonfire ashes overnight (a missing stone meant its owner would not live to see another Samhain), and a place set at the table for the household dead, who were expected. All of it under the kirk's disapproval — after the Reformation the old customs went quieter and moved indoors, but the cattle and the harvest kept the calendar anyway.



While the Drumin Stewarts watched the fires from their ridge, my Mitchell ancestors — Edinburgh and Aberdeen burgesses — kept the same night in the

Lowlands: fireside divination, guising in the closes, turnip lanterns in the wynds. Same night, same turning year, different ground.

Four centuries later, my son — the 12th-great-grandson of Thomas, 1st Laird of Drumin — drinks Glenlivet scotch. The family's glen, in a glass. And it's the same ground twice over: The Glenlivet distillery was founded in 1824 at Upper Drumin, on the family's own lands, when George Smith became the first licensed distiller in the Livet valley after the Excise Act of 1823. Before that, the glen was famous for its illicit stills — the whisky was so prized that King George IV asked for Glenlivet whisky on his 1822 visit to Scotland, two years before a legal drop of it existed.

The line — my direct descent from the Drumin lairds:

Thomas Stewart, 1st Laird of Drumin (1590–1670) — 11th great-grandfather

Thomas Stewart, 2nd Laird of Drumin (1620–1700), m. Isobell Gordone — 10th great-grandfather

Thomas Stewart, 3rd Laird of Drumin (1655–1715), m. Lillias Grant — 9th great-grandfather

John Hugh Stewart, 4th of Drumin (1675–1719), m. Elspet Isabella Forbes — 8th great-grandfather

John Stewart of Glentanner (1700–1791), m. Joanna Maria Murray — 7th great-grandfather

John Stewart of Tulloch (1728–1794), m. Margaret Marjory Michie — 6th great-grandfather

Margaret Stewart (c. 1774–1850), m. James Angus — 5th great-grandmother

Ann Angus (c. 1807–1876), m. John Mitchell — 4th great-grandmother

William Mitchell (c. 1839–1876), m. Mary Ann McIntosh — 3rd great-grandfather

Elizabeth "Lizzie" Mary Mitchell (1871–1954) — 2nd great-grandmother

Toras Lewellyn Fisk, born Claude Mitchell (1895–1973), m. Beatrice Sylvia Jardo — great-grandfather

Mabel Dorothy Fisk (1928–2022), m. Ellis Leroy Meihls — grandmother

Karen Sue Meihls (1948–), m. Gerald Lee Powell — mother

Heidi Lynn Powell (1967–)

Sources: Generational facts from "Heidi Powell Taylor Bloodlines," Ancestry family tree (primary-record verification in progress). Drumin Castle history: Historic Environment Scotland and regional histories of Glenlivet, Moray. Stewarts of Drumin lineage: Electric Scotland, "Clan Stewart"; FamilySearch person records. Samhain folk customs: Alexander Carmichael, Carmina Gadelica; Scottish parish statistical accounts and 18th–19th century folk collections. The Glenlivet distillery history: distillery and regional histories.

Ghost Hunting Etiquette – Ask Before You Open the Door



Do not walk into a reportedly haunted building determined to hunt spirits down at all costs, with every electronic device running and every voice demanding proof. Curiosity is natural. Disrespect is a choice.

Spirits are not play toys. They deserve the same kindness and compassion as the living. Many are stuck. Some do not know they are dead. Some want to talk. Others want you gone. A flashing meter does not give anyone permission to provoke, mock or corner them.

When I enter an investigation, I communicate telepathically first. The rest of the team may not know that a conversation is already happening. I do not open that communication to the room until the spirit gives me permission. Consent still matters when a person no longer has a body.

If a spirit is distressed, my first responsibility is not collecting evidence. I may help the spirit cross, or I may write down the messages it needs carried to loved ones. When I am able to identify the correct family, I do what I can to deliver those messages responsibly.

Electronic equipment can support an investigation, but it should never replace awareness, compassion or judgment. If a spirit says no, leave it alone. If the atmosphere changes, pay attention. If a living property owner sets a boundary, honor it.

Take a trusted medium with you. A good medium can tell the difference between a spirit willing to communicate, one in distress and one that wants the team out. Go in to listen, not to conquer. You are entering someone else's space, even when you cannot see who is there.

Adapted from Heidi Taylor's 2021 paper, "Ethics in Paranormal Searches from Psychics View."

New: The Neighborhood Elementals

by Heidi L. Taylor

My children's book *The Neighborhood Elementals* is out now. Here is a look inside:



The sun climbed higher over the cul-de-sac, casting warm amber light across the red brick facade of the townhouse. Princess MaBrie stood on her front porch, taking in the quiet hum of the neighborhood. The morning was always a delicate time here, where the boundary between ordinary reality and the vast, unseen realm pulsed like a beating heart.

Between Beatrice the Grand Oak and her partner Edward, the primary astral portal hummed with a soft, violet light. Swirls of stardust drifted out from between the twin trunks, settling onto the freshly cut grass like glowing dew. Beatrice rustled her leaves in a welcoming breeze, her trunk standing proud and ancient as Edward leaned subtly in toward her.

Long before daybreak, while the sky was still dark and Princess MaBrie was fast asleep in her bed, a sudden surge in the portal had prompted M.R. Sasquatch to let out a low, earth-rattling roar—a deep sound that echoed off the surrounding brick facades like a localized crack of thunder. Standing on the porch now in the morning sun, MaBrie looked over at his shaggy form. Realizing what must have caused the early morning rumble, she offered him a quiet, raised eyebrow, silently asking if his pre-dawn roar had woken the entire block.



"None at all," M.R. Sasquatch replied, shaking his shaggy head. "They simply woke up with a start, thinking it was a sudden clap of thunder. But because of that shock, every single one of them kept their memories of the twilight realms. They'll carry that wonder into their day, even if they think it was just a vivid dream."

Recipe: Caramel Apple Sundae



1 Granny Smith apple, cut into eighths
Caramel sauce
Heath bar toffee bits
Peanuts
Whipped cream

Cut the Granny Smith apple into eight wedges and arrange them in a sundae dish. Drizzle caramel sauce over the apples, then sprinkle with Heath bar toffee bits and peanuts. Finish with whipped cream on top.

An Autumn Equinox Balance Ritual

Twice a year, the light and the dark stand equal. The equinox is the hinge of the year — the harvest is coming in, and the long dark is on its way. This is the night to take honest stock.

You will need one white candle, one black candle, a small bowl of salt, and a piece of paper.

Light the white candle first. On the paper, write down what this year's light brought you — the things that grew, the work that paid off, the people who showed up. Speak each one aloud. Let yourself feel the weight of it.

Then light the black candle. Write what you are done carrying — the grudge that never paid rent, the worry you've rehearsed a hundred times, the habit that keeps eating your harvest. Read that list once, then burn it in the black candle's flame. Drop the ash in the salt.

Sit between the two flames for a few minutes. You are standing where the year stands: one foot in the light that fed you, one foot in the dark that will rest you. Both are yours. Neither needs to win.

When you are ready, snuff the black candle first, then the white. Scatter the salt at your threshold. Walk into the dark half of the year knowing exactly what you brought with you, and exactly what you left behind.

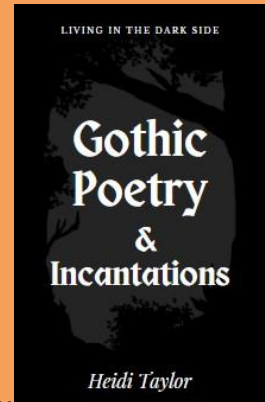
— HLT

Poetry

Buried – by Heidi L. Taylor

October 30, 2018

“Buried” appears in Gothic Poetry & Incantations by Heidi Taylor.



The smell of earth creeps into the air
Inside a box, you lie right there
Your last dress clings to a shell
The way they did my hair.....ewww that smell!!
The chapel full of white lily flowers
Candle torches lit on gilded towers
Strangers touch your pampered skin
Your watching soul shudders within
Wet tissues line the wooden pews
While a preachers words are intensely spewed
A song of farewell echoes down the hall
Whispers of goodbyes are heard from one and all
Wait!! That's not me
How is it that I see, The deathly woes of a corpse
The lid is closed as I watch from a space above.
All the ones that I care for and Love
Carried to a deep carved dirt hole
Lowered slowly with a set of poles
One last song and sprigs of rose
Left to be covered, I am all alone
The sexton waits to finish his job
While the last ones in black hats
Ramble to the waiting mob
A body in a graveyard is what remains
My soul yearns for one last tear
Left to journey to unknown paths
Family and Friends finally clear
For they don't know you still watch on
Buried, but never never really gone

Autumn Specials

Ancestor Reading — \$100

October only — a 60-minute mediumship reading with a focus on your ancestors. Samhain is the night the veil is thinnest, when those who came before us walk closest to the living. \$100 (regularly \$125) when you book by October 31.

Holiday Gift Certificate Special



Give the gift of insight this holiday season — a precursor to the holidays ahead. A three-hour gift certificate is \$279 — 25% off the total — and may be used for any reading or service. Available through December 31.

PURCHASE GIFT CERTIFICATE — \$279

Genealogy Autumn Special

New clients: my 10-hour research block (the minimum for new genealogy work) at 25% off — \$412.50, regularly \$550.
Returning clients: 3 hours for the price of 2 — \$110, regularly \$165.

BOOK YOUR SESSION

Where to Find Me This Autumn

- ♦ KC Metaphysical Fair, Lawrence — September 25-27
- ♦ Mystic Fest by G.E., Council Bluffs, IA — October 3-4
- ♦ Ghouls Night Out on the Square, Independence — October 8 (card & mediumship readings)
- ♦ KC Metaphysical Fair, Collinsville, IL — October 17-18
- ♦ Witches Tea, Albrecht-Kemper Museum of Art, St. Joseph — October 26 (readings all day)
- ♦ KC Metaphysical Fair, Kansas City — November 20-22
- ♦ In 2027, KC Metaphysical becomes Heartland Metaphysical — full 2027 schedule at heidiltaylor.com
- ♦ Private sessions by phone or Zoom: scheduler.zoom.us/heiditaylor or (816) 868-9675

Coming in the December issue

Yule lore and the rebirth of light • Scottish winter traditions — Hogmanay & Burns Night • Ancestors in the dark months • A ghost story for the longest night • Solstice poetry • Divination for the new year

Holiday Gift Certificate Special — three hours for \$279, 25% off the total.
Purchase with PayPal.

Thank you for reading,

Heidi

Heidi Powell Taylor

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