**2016 Samhain History**

**History:** At the end of October, the doorway to the dark half of the Celtic year swings open.  The dying sun is swallowed up by the lengthening nights; the green fields of summer have become brown and dry; leaves drop to earth, and animals prepare for winter sleep.  It is Samhain, meaning “summer’s end”, and it is the season of frost and firelight.  It is said that Samhain is upon us when the faeries commence to blast every last growing plant with their freezing breath, blighting any nuts, berries and fruits remaining on the summer stalks and vines.  It is therefore the time of preserving and storing food for the winter, and preparing for long dark nights; time by the hearth, time for sharing stories, dreaming into the dark, and introspection.  In Scotland, Samhain ushers in the reign of the Cailleach Bheur (Kalex Bheurach), the hag queen who rules over the winter season until the return of Bride in early spring.  Her name literally means “veiled one”.  She personified the cutting winds and harshness of the northern winter.  At winters end, some said she turned into a gray boulder until the warm days were over.  But others declared that she became Brigit, the beautiful young goddess of spring.  On the threshold to the dark half of the year, the Cailleach has much to teach us about darkness.  Having harvested kernels of our soul’s growth this year, we now begin clearing our inner fields of leftover stalks and stubble.  By doing so, we align ourselves with the cosmic cycle of death and rebirth.  This time on the sacred wheel of life creates a natural pause, allowing our thoughts to move towards death and the common fate we share with ancient gnarled pine trees and grasshoppers freshly hatched in September.   With this pausing, when the veil between the worlds is thinnest, we remember departed family and friends and begin to face our own mortality and crossing to the other side. Samhain provides a place in which to look at and begin to get comfortable with the idea of our own death and the deaths of our family and friends. From this important awareness we can choose to live more consciously with focus and intention and passionate awareness of our life and the choices we make.