

Cailleach/Last Sheaf



What is it?

A *cailleach* is a special object woven from the last standing sheaf in a field. It was made to celebrate the gathering of the harvest.

What was it used for?

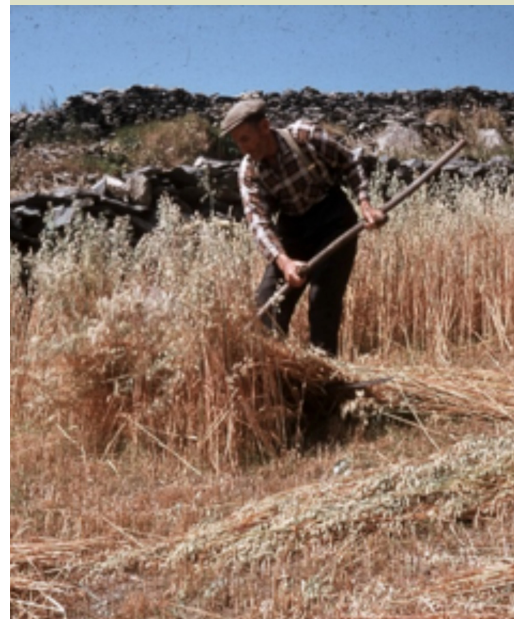
The *cailleach* had a manner of uses depending on what part of the country you were from. In general it was believed that the *cailleach*, like the corn dolly, celebrated bringing in the harvest, and the grain from it was sown in the New Year.



Brief History

The harvest needed to be gathered before the changing elements took hold. Often the community would work together as a *meitheal*, working from one farm to the next.

When cutting the last of the harvest, a small portion was left to make the last sheaf or *cailleach*. This was usually followed by "harvest home" - a feast provided to workers by the farmer in their home or barn, and the last sheaf was prominently displayed.



Mr Tomás Ó Dálaigh cutting oats with a scythe. Dunquin, Co Kerry

Image: NMI Collection

DID YOU KNOW?

Cailleach translates as a hag or witch, and was the name given to an animal that would make a dash to the neighbour's field. This animal was believed to be the 'hag' that was stealing the profit from the land.

Cailleach



Bailiúchán Láimhseála AMÉ

Céard atá ann?

Is rud speisialta í *cailleach* atá fite as an bpunann ar a chois is déanaí i ngort. Rinneadh é chun bailiú an fhómhair a cheiliúradh.

Cén úsáid a mbaintear as?

Bhí úsáidí éagsúla ag baint leis an *gcailleach* ag brath ar an gcuid den tír ina raibh tú. Tríd is tríd, creideadh gur baineadh úsáid as an *gcailleach*, amhail an bhábóg thuí, chun tabhairt an fhómhair a cheiliúradh, agus cuireadh an gráin a tháinig uaidh san Athbhliain.



Pictiúr: Bailiúchán AMÉ

AN RAIBH A FHIOS AGAT?

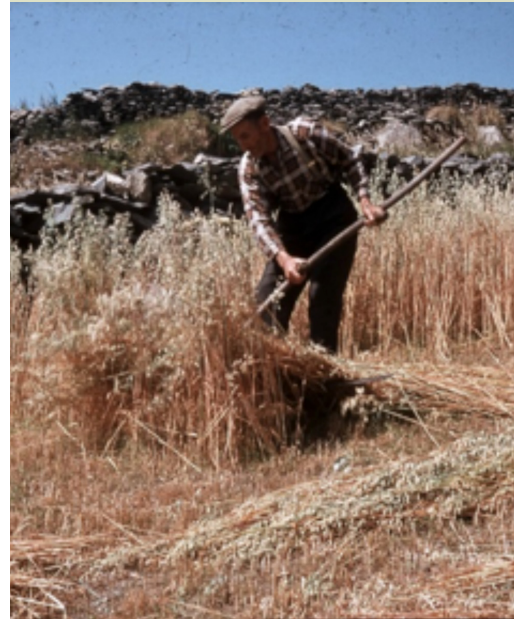
Is ionann *cailleach* agus bean feasa nó *cailleach feasa*, arb ainm é a tugadh ar ainmhí a dhéanfadh ráib ar ghort na comharsan. Creideadh gurbh é an t-ainmhí seo an '*cailleach*' a bhí ag goid an bhrabúis ón talamh.



Stair Ghairid

Ba ghá an fómhar a bhailiú sula raibh na heilimintí athraitheacha i réim. Go minic, d'oibrigh an pobal le chéile mar *mheitheal*, ag obair ó fheirm go feirm.

Agus an gcuid deireanach den fhómhar á gearradh, fágadh cuid bheag chun an punann deiridh nó an *cailleach* deiridh a dhéanamh. Tharla an "harvest home" ina dhiaidh sin de ghnáth - féasta a chuir an feirmeoir ar fáil d'oibrithe ina mbaile nó ina scioból, agus taispeánadh an punann deireanach go feiceálach.



An tUasal Tomás Ó Dálaigh ag gearradh coirce le speal.

Dún Chaoin, Co Chiarraí

Pictiúr: Bailiúchán AMÉ

museum

National Museum of Ireland

Ard-Mhúsaem na hÉireann

Country Life