

:: MAY DAY... :: May day celebrations in UK and Scotland... ::

THE FIRST DAY OF THE MONTH OF MAY IS KNOWN AS "MAY DAY"

May Day is May 1, and refers to any of several holidays celebrated on this day. The earliest May Day celebrations appeared in pre-Christian Europe, as in the Celtic celebration of Beltane, and the Walpurgis Night of the Germanic countries. Although the pagan-oriented celebrations faded as Europe became Christianised, a more secular version of the holiday continued to be observed in the schools and churches of Europe well into the 20th century. In this form, May Day may be best known for its tradition of dancing the Maypole and crowning of the Queen of the May. Today many Neopagans, especially Wiccans, celebrate reconstructed versions of the old pagan holidays on May 1.

The first day of the month of May is known as May Day. It is the time of year when warmer weather begins and flowers and trees start to blossom. It is said to be a time of love and romance. It is when people celebrate the coming of summer with lots of different customs that are expressions of joy and hope after a long winter. May day celebrations have their origins in the Roman festival of flora, goddess of fruit and flowers, which marked the beginning of summer. Although May day is now the first day of the month of may, before 1752, when the calendar was changed, it was 11 days earlier. A traditional May dance is known as Maypole dancing. On May day, people used to cut down young trees and stick them in the ground in the village to mark the arrival of summer. People danced around them in celebration of the end of winter and the start of the fine weather that would allow planting to begin.

Maypoles were one common all over England and were kept from one year to the next. As a result would be either a beau-



tiful plaited pattern of ribbons round the pole or a tangled cat's rattle depending on how much rehearsing had been done. Many of the May day celebrations take place at the weekend is known as bank holiday weekend because it comes with the extra day holiday on the Monday. It was custom for everyone to go a-Maying early on May day. Herrick, a 17th century English poet wrote:

*"There's not a budding boy, or girl, this day,
but is got up and gone to bring in may."*

To decorate their houses and villages, people would go out before sunrise to gather flowers and greenery with in, the belief that the vegetation spirits would bring good fortune. In addition, in the dew of the early morning, girls have to wash their faces to be very beautiful for the following year. The highlight of the day was the crowning of the May queen, the human replica of flora. By tradition she took no part in the games or dancing but sat like a green in a flower-decked chair to watch her "subjects". Young girls have to make Garlands. They covered two hoops, one at right angles inside the other, with leaves and flowers.

Sometimes, they put a doll inside to represent the goddess of spring. There was once a tradition in England of "lifting", where a gang of young men would lift a pretty girl in a flower bedecked chair on May day. Then, the girl would choose a boy on a May 2nd.

MAY DAY IN SCOTLAND:

Also in Scotland celebrate May day. They celebrate on the 1st Monday of may every year. The roads are closed off to traffic from 10 am to 4 pm. They have a funfair at the local park, and they've lots of stalls in the town and different activities, and going on throughout the day, the local pipeband march round the town playing.

-It's a fantastic day for all attracts crowds of people to Turriff!- Say Veronica.

Tania Barbero Martín ESO 4A
tbarbero@e-quercus.es
Eva Riesco Domínguez ESO 4A
eriesco@e-quercus.es
Estefanía Herrero Cabrero ESO 4A
eherrero@e-quercus.es

<http://www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/customs/questions/mayday.htm>