

Drawn from
Lia Leendertz's *The Almanac*
comes a compilation of stories and
songs that celebrates the activities
and festivities of the seasons.

Featuring mischievous boggarts, saints
and sailors, leprechauns and dragons,
pilgrimages and charms, add a
little magic to your journey
through each year.

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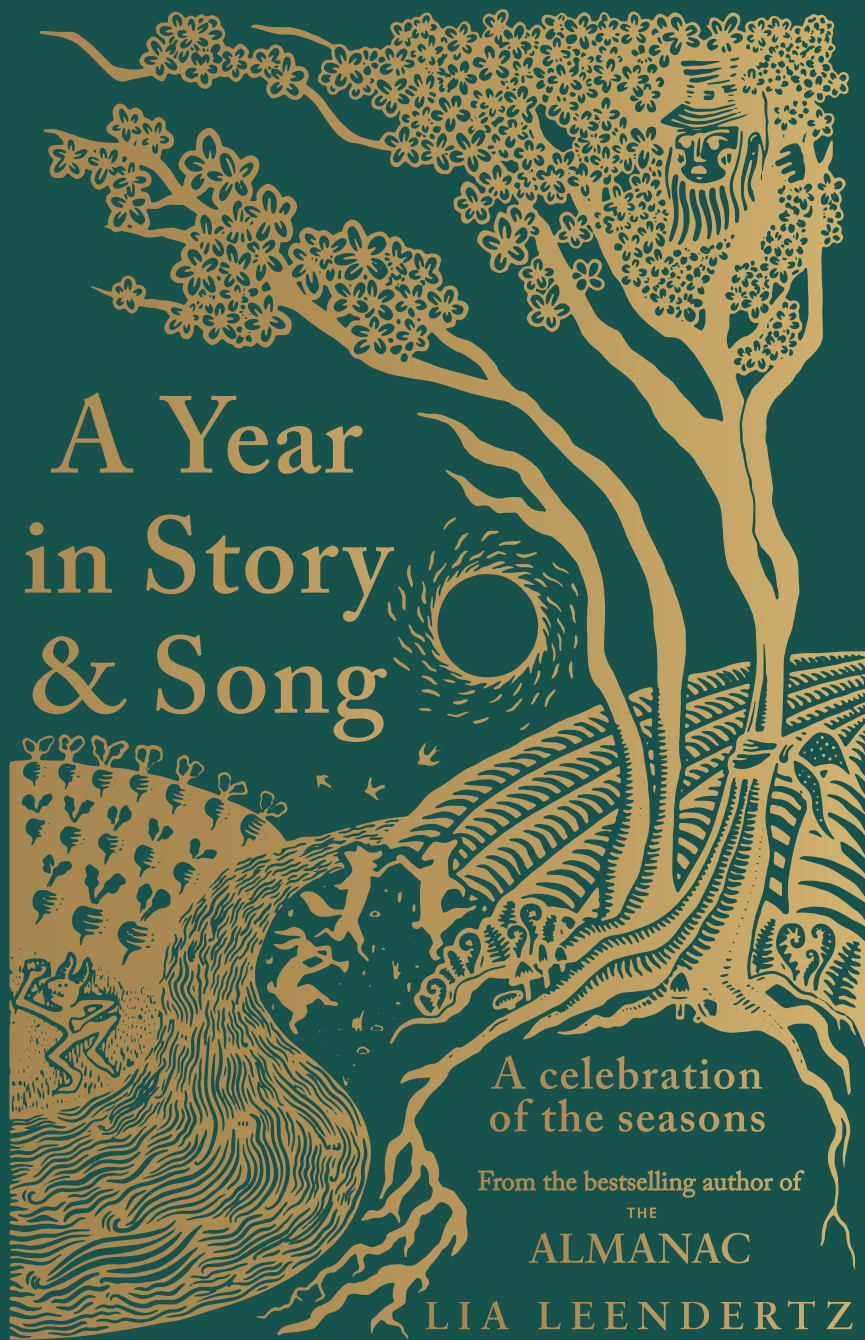
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A Year in Story & Song



LIA LEENDERTZ

Gaia



A Year in Story & Song

A celebration
of the seasons

From the bestselling author of

THE
ALMANAC

LIA LEENDERTZ

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in Story
& Song**

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A Year in Story and Song

We humans love stories. We love to hear them and to tell them, around fires and by bedsides, and we love to use them to make sense of the world around us. The seasons, in all their ever-changing variety, give us many opportunities for storytelling. I have been making *The Almanac*, my seasonal guide to each year, since 2018, and every year within it I have sought out and told some of the year's stories and songs. Many are brought together here.

The year and its seasons tell a story. It begins dark and chilled, but soon bursts open into the life and zest and sunshine of spring. Summer brings a flowering of romance, warm breezes and lengthy twilights, and then autumn – a time of plenty, of ripening and harvesting and bringing in. Finally, the year retreats again, and settles down into a time of dreaming and dark.

I have dug out those stories and songs that mark and celebrate the activities and festivities of each season: the full moons and their names, Epiphany in January, St Patrick's Day in March, May Day, Midsummer, Hallowe'en and more. They feature mischievous boggarts and fairies, saints and sailors, leprechauns and dragons, pilgrimages and charms, milk maids and rose queens, Robin Hood and the Green Man. The songs range from shanties and love songs, to bawdy ballads and wassails, to carols and rounds, and have been sung for hundreds of years, often at particular moments in the calendar. With this book you can now bless your apple trees with a wassail in January and serenade your love with a carol on Midsummer's Eve, joining a thread of voices stretching back through time.

For me, this process of telling, reading, singing and listening to the stories and songs of the year provides a vibrant echo of past lives and past ways of celebrating and marking the turning of the year: they are pieces of history that feel alive and spirited, and that we can be a part of. I hope you are tempted to include these stories and songs in your traditions too, and that they add a little magic to your own journey through each year.



January

The Naming of January

Faoilleach (Scots Gaelic)

Januar (Scots/Ulster Scots) | *Eanáir* (Irish Gaelic)

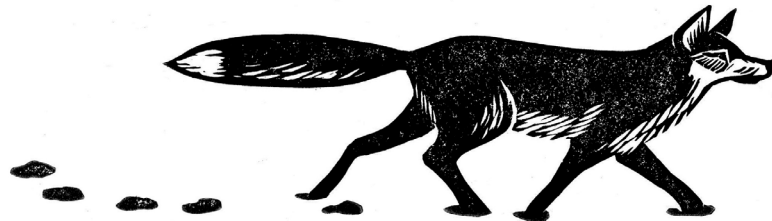
Jerry-gueree (Manx) | *Ionawr* (Welsh)

Genver (Cornish) | *Janvyi* (Jèrriais)

Iveskero (Romani)

The word *Faoilleach* in Scots Gaelic originally referred to a period of winter, but has come to mean specifically January in modern Scots Gaelic. It comes from *faol-chu* which means 'wolf', and this gives a glimpse into Scotland's wilder past Januarys, as there have been no wolves in Scotland for hundreds of years (the last wolf having been slain by legendary deerstalker MacQueen of Findhorn in 1743). Wolves' howling reaches its height in January in mating season as the males compete for mates, before falling quiet during the denning season.

All of the other words for January from the various languages of the British Isles appear to be variants on the Latin *Januarius*. This may have arisen from either the Latin for 'door', *ianua* (the door onto the year), or the Roman god Janus, the god of transitions and beginnings, traditionally depicted as having two faces, one looking back into the past and one looking ahead to the future.



Romani Names for the Months

Since the 16th century, following their migration from continental Europe, there have been Romani families and communities living in the UK. Romani, spoken by many Romanies in the UK, is a language with movement at its core. It is a mixed language that has picked up influences wherever the Romanies have travelled, and so incorporates aspects of Indian, Greek, Persian, Slavic and Romance languages, creating a philological map of their wanderings north and west from, it is thought, the Indian subcontinent. In Britain and Ireland this is mixed with English and with elements from the language of Irish Travellers (known as Gamin, Shelta or Cant).

The Romani words for the months have fallen out of common use now, but records of the Welsh Romani month names exist, and these were possibly once used by Romani communities all over Britain. They show a pattern of deep connection to the land and the seasons, as well as to work and food.

The word for January, *Iveskero*, means 'month of the snows'. The name dates from before 'wagon time' – the time when the Romani started living in wagons – and from a period when they would travel by walking alongside their wagons, which carried the makings of simple tents. These were constructed from willow wands bent and pushed into the ground and then covered with serge, a thick woollen fabric. Snow would have meant great hardship, as well as a struggle to look after their beloved horses, which would have been covered in cloths stuffed with straw to keep the cold away.

Charm of the Month

Calennig and Coal for New Year's Day

Some days are naturally more strongly invested with meaning than others and so have held particular weight when it comes to luck and charms, and 1st January is one of them, acting as a hopeful microcosm for the whole year. Charms have always lent a sense of control and security where little existed, or have been used to hold on to the special qualities of certain moments of the year. On New Year's Day throughout the British Isles, charms must be carried through doors to carry in luck for the year ahead. In the southeast of Wales, children carry from door to door an apple skewered with sticks, cloves and pieces of evergreens, thought to bring luck and prosperity, and in return they are given 'calennig' – New Year's gifts of pennies or sweets. Sometimes the apples are then placed on windowsills to bring the household good luck through the year. In Scotland and the north of England, 'first footing' relates to the first person through your door on New Year's Day. Ideally it should be a bachelor, and he must have been out of the house at midnight. He should bring coal, bread, a coin, a piece of greenery, salt or whisky over the threshold.

A Song for Burns Night

'Ae Fond Kiss'

Robert Burns

On Burns Night on 25th January, cullen skink, haggis and tatties followed by cranachan are eaten, and the poems and songs of Robert Burns are recited, to celebrate the life of the great Scottish poet. 'Ae Fond Kiss' is one of his most beautiful songs and was written after his final meeting with his adored friend Mrs Agnes McLehose, known to her friends as Nancy, on her leaving Scotland to attempt a reconciliation with her estranged husband in Jamaica.



Who shall say that Fortune grieves him,
While the star of hope she leaves him?
Me, nae cheerful twinkle lights me;
Dark despair around benights me.

I'll ne'er blame my partial fancy,
Naething could resist my Nancy;
But to see her was to love her;
Love but her, and love for ever.

Had we never lov'd sae kindly,
Had we never lov'd sae blindly,
Never met – or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

Fare-thee-weel, thou first and fairest!
Fare-thee-weel, thou best and dearest!
Thine be ilka joy and treasure,
Peace, Enjoyment, Love and Pleasure!

Ae fond kiss, and then we sever!
Ae fareweel, alas, for ever!
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee.

Folk Song of the Month
'Here We Come A-Wassailing'

Traditional, arr. Richard Barnard

This is a traditional wassailing song for Twelfth Night. There were two distinct types of wassailing. One involved moving from door to door singing and carrying a wassail bowl, and the other was held in orchards, singing to and blessing the trees for a fruitful year ahead. It is the second type that is now more widespread, the rise in community orchards sparking a revival, so look out for one near you on or around Twelfth Night.

5 Here we come a - was - sail - ing a - mong the leaves so green,
9 here we come a - was - sail - ing so fair to be seen. *Love and*
13 joy come to you and to you a was - sail too, and God
17 bless you and send you a hap - py New Year and God
send you a hap - py New Year!

Here we come a-wassailing among the leaves so green,
Here we come a-wassailing so fair to be seen.
Love and joy come to you
And to you a wassail too,
And God bless you and send you a happy New Year
And God send you a happy New Year!

Call up the master of the house, put on his golden ring,
Bring us all a glass of ale and better we shall sing.
Love and joy come to you ...

We have a little purse and it is made of leather skin,
We want a silver sixpence to line it well within.
Love and joy come to you ...

God bless the master of the house and bless the mistress too,
And all the little children that round the table go.
Love and joy come to you ...

Epiphany, Lidat and the Three Kings

Balthazar was the King of Ethiopia. A new and bright star appeared in the sky, as had been foretold in the Star Prophecy: a prediction of the coming of a new Messiah. And so Balthazar gathered myrrh, the precious resin of the small thorny tree *Commiphora myrrha*, which grows in eastern and northern Ethiopia, and set off for Bethlehem with two other great kings – Caspar and Melchior – to pay their respects.

Rastafarians celebrate the birth of Christ, who they believe was Black, on 7th January, and call it Lidat, which means ‘birthday’ in Amharic, the main language of Ethiopia. Rastafari is intricately connected to Christianity but based upon a particular reading of the Bible that centres on its many mentions of Ethiopia, including its role as the ‘promised land’. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is after all one of the oldest churches in the world: Christianity has existed in Ethiopia since AD 330. Rastafari itself is a young religion, originating among impoverished African–Jamaican communities in the 1930s, its Africa-centric vision emerging partly as a reaction to British colonialism and as a way of reclaiming an African identity lost through slavery. Rastas believe that the Bible was originally written in Amharic and is an authentic account of early Black history and Black Africans’ place as God’s favoured people, the Israelites, but that this original meaning has been warped by mistranslation to deny Black Africans their true history.

This date of 7th January is in tune with the Julian calendar followed by the older Orthodox churches, but Rastas do not insist that this was the actual date of Jesus’ birth (merely rejecting the date of the 25th December, which they consider a later construct to convert midwinter-worshipping pagans to Christianity). They do, however, consider this as the date upon which the Magi visited Jesus. A feast is prepared, children are given simple presents and they play games. The main decoration is that of the manger with the three Magi, including the Ethiopian king paying homage to the young Black Messiah.

The Farmer and the Boggart

The first Monday after Epiphany is Plough Monday. This was the traditional start of the English agricultural year and the day when work resumed after Christmas. Here is a very old tale said to originate in Lincolnshire, about a farmer ploughing and tilling his land, and outwitting a boggart – a malevolent spirit – in the process.

There was once a strong, handsome, hardworking farmer. The harvests were good for several years, and he saved up a little money so that when the fallow field alongside his farm came up for sale, he bought it. That night, he called to his wife, ‘I am so happy to own the new field. We shall get a good crop this year.’

They were both shocked to hear a low, growly voice say, ‘But it ain’t yours, is it?’ There, next to the fire, was a boggart – squat, hairy and strongly built. He told them that the field belonged to him, and that it had produced no crops for many years because the farmer wouldn’t give him his fair share. Now, our farmer was canny and knew that a deal had to be made, so he asked the boggart what he required. ‘I own the field, and you do the work,’ said the boggart, ‘so we should split the crop half and half.’ ‘Deal,’ said the farmer. ‘What do you want to take the first year then? The tops or the bottoms?’ The boggart laughed as if it was obvious. ‘Why, I’ll take the tops, of course!’

The next day the farmer went out and sowed his field with turnips. At harvest time the boggart came to collect his half and the farmer presented him with a cartful of turnip tops. The boggart was furious, but the farmer reminded him of their deal and said, ‘What will you have next year?’ ‘Why the bottoms, of course!’ shouted the boggart. The farmer sowed his field with barley. Come harvest time, when the boggart came to collect his share the farmer presented him with a field full of stubble. The boggart stamped and raged and then stomped off away from the field, knowing he was beaten. He was never seen again.

January's Full Moon

Wolf Moon | Stay Home Moon Moon After Yule

January's moon has several old names: Wolf Moon, from the time wolves howled particularly loudly to their packs through January nights; Stay Home Moon, a sensible idea in the cold and the frost and with all those wolves about; and Moon after Yule, which was given to the first full moon after the winter solstice.

When the full moon rises, it will be bright and bluish, but it will illuminate very few nocturnal creatures. Almost all stay home this month, tucking themselves away to survive the cold.

The wolf's close relative the fox is one of the few that do not hibernate. It picks its way on moonlit January nights through stubbly fields and down chilly streets to find a meal, or calls in unearthly cries for its mate, just as the wolves would have done hundreds of years ago.



A Song for January's Full Moon

'The Fox and the Goose'

Traditional, arr. Richard Barnard

This song follows a wily fox out on a chilly moonlit night. It started life as a 15th-century English poem and then made its way across the Atlantic to become a popular bluegrass song, albeit with a different tune to the original. This is closer to the old English version.

The fox went out on a winter night
And he prayed to the moon to give him light,
For he had no coal or candlelight
To guide him to the town-o...

The false fox came upon a croft
And there he stalked the geese so soft
For he had been here so fearful oft
When he had come to town-o...

He took a goose fast by the neck
And threw it quick behind his back.
The other geese began to quack
But he wouldn't lay it down-o...

The good man came out with his flail
And smote the fox upon the tail,
'Please come no more unto our hall
To bear our geese away-o,
way-o, way-o...'

The false fox ran back to his den
And there he was all merry then,
His wife and whelps could eat again
And chew upon the bones-o...

The fox went out on a win - ter night and he prayed to the moon to
4 give him light, _____ for he had no coal or
7 can - dle - light to guide him to the town - o,
10 town - o, town - o _____ for he had no coal or
14 can - dle - light to guide him to the town - o. _____

A Sea Shanty for January

'Hieland Laddie'

For hundreds of years whaling was a huge part of the Scottish economy, with men setting off in whaleboats from the east-coast ports of Dundee and Peterhead to catch bowhead whales off Greenland in unimaginably cold, harsh and dangerous conditions. Happily, ever since the hunting of blue and humpback whales was banned globally in 1966 and a moratorium on commercial whaling took effect in 1986, the population has recovered significantly.

Shanties were working songs, from a time when human muscle had to do what steam and oil did later. The shanties kept men working together in time as they hauled and heaved on the various ropes and pumps on a merchant sailing vessel. Each shanty had a different use.

This is a 'walkaway' shanty for a continual hauling action, requiring a line of men to hold a rope and walk backwards while hauling on it. They would run back to the start of the line when they ran out of space. Such shanties generally had long choruses suited to the action.

$\text{♩} = 84$

There was a lad - die came from Scot - land, Hie - land lad - die, Bon - nie lad - die!

5
Bon - nie lad - die from fair Scot - land, me bon - nie Hie - land lad - die O!

9
Way, hay an' a - way we go, Hie - land lad - die! Bon - nie lad - die!

13
Way, hay an' a - way we go, me bon - nie Hie - land lad - die O!

Where have ye been when I looked for ye,
Heiland laddie, bonnie laddie?
Where have ye been when I looked for ye,
Me bonnie Hieland laddie O?

*Way, hay an' away we go,
Hieland laddie! Bonnie laddie!
Way, hay an' away we go,
Me bonnie Hieland laddie O!*

Joined a ship and went a-sailin'
Heiland laddie! Bonnie laddie!
Sailed far north and went a-whalin'
Me bonnie Hieland laddie O!
Way, hay...

Bound away to Iceland cold
Heiland laddie! Bonnie laddie!
Found much ice but not much gold
Me bonnie Hieland laddie O!
Way, hay...

I'll be glad when I get hame
Heiland laddie! Bonnie laddie!
I'll give up this whalin' game
Me bonnie Hieland laddie O!
Way, hay...

Soon be homeward bound to Scotland
Heiland laddie! Bonnie laddie!
Homeward bound to bonnie Scotland
Me bonnie Hieland laddie O!
Way, hay...