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Marcus Katz is a witch-priest who teaches witchcraft courses and magic workshops at the Far Away Centre in Keswick. "As a teacher of witchcraft, for me Halloween is a festival based on an ancient Celtic fire-festival," he explains. "The few records that there are describe how cattle were brought down from the hills as summer ended and it tends to be a time when practitioners perform a divination, a kind of fortune-telling for the year ahead."

Tomorrow, 13 (yes, really) people will come from as far as Manchester, London and Leicester to celebrate Halloween with Marcus, somewhere in Cumbria (he is reluctant to disclose the exact location).

"All Hallows Eve is seen as a dark time, and we are entering the darkest time of the year," he continues. "It's an opportunity to talk to spirits. It allows a ritual to take place, which is something of a forgotten art. It allows people to experience a form of breathing deeper and to follow a pattern to help them in their everyday lives. It's about the practice of observing the seasons and reconnecting to nature."

"We will do a fire dance, fully robed, and perform a ritual where we will encounter dead parts of ourselves. If we have lost our sense of humour, or an event or experience has taken away our sense of self, we try to reconnect to it. Our coven is very innovative and we are combining the traditional with a contemporary perspective."

And what do people like Marcus think of this commercialisation? In fact, he is fairly philosophical about it. "It's an inevitable simplification of the deeper concerns," he says.

"It's about rebelling against the dark. It's a long winter and it's all we can do to sit it out, hope we don't get ill and come out in Spring. Everyone can enjoy these seasons. It's just if you have rituals in your life it is more profound."

"And I believe that it's important to have a party, to celebrate with family and friends. It is saying, we are entering a dark time, let's set fire to the sky and have light. I would think as well that because of the credit crunch people will be partying even more, in response to all the recent doom and gloom."