**Folkloric Rites of the British Isles workshop.** Several historic folk rituals, folk dances and theatrical plays are ancient, and survived in the British Isles right up until the 1930s. Some are genuinely Pagan, some are syncretized with Christianity, others are secular, and no one really knows the difference. Many of these rites have been revived as ceremonies or tourist attractions. Some, like the Oak King and Holly King, were borrowed by Gerald Gardner and included in his practice of Wicca. Some, like the Mummer’s Parade, have made their way to the USA and Canada. Some were killed off by WWI and WWII (not suppressed by Christianity!) while others continue today. They have different magickal properties and requirements than Western Esoteric Traditions. We’ll look at some examples online, if we can get Wifi to work in the park. We’ll make beast masks or oak leaf masks out of paper plates, glue, and string, and parade around the grounds (parades are fun). Age: Teen to adult. Mobility-impaired participants will be included, asked to drum, guard the firepit, and act really obnoxious along with the rest of us.

\*\*\* Welcome, Caer Intro. British Isles = Ireland, Scotland, Wales, the Isle of Man, Cornwall, what is now England. This workshop is intended for people who already know something about Wicca and Modern Paganism. Related to that.

Folklore = practices of a culture, including dances, recipes, stories, and folk magick

Cultures: Proto-humans, Neanderthals, Pre-Celtic people, Celts = Iberians, Gauls (now modern France, Germany, Austria / Hungary, and Finns; once covered Britain but now mostly in Ireland, Scotland, Wales; Romans – their religion & early Christianity; Scandinavian – Norse, Danish; Teutonic tribes – Angles, Saxons, Jutes, etc. Then Normans / Christianity. Also includes places emigrants went like USA & Australia, merged w/ cultures there. Folkways merged and changed.

Neanderthals – circle. Paleolithic – burials, fire, images, Shamanism, hoodening. Mesolithic – more images, agricultural deities. Neolithic – stone circles.

Syncretization. Mutation of Folkway. Gardner folklorist, friends, Cecil Williamson, collected, put into witchcraft museum, Cornwall. Common, like spells, talismanic objects, dances, folkplays, idea of magick. Added ceremonial, other cultures’ rites, tradesman’s magick like SMIB, degrees, etc.

Christianity – Merged with what was left of Celtic, Roman, then Norse / Teutonic. Not really supplanted ‘til after Norman Conquest. Witch trials not ‘til much later – 1600s. Some modern scholars think no trads continued – not true. For instance:

Apotropaic objects & signs, “witch marks”, hex foils, medieval graffiti. Avert evil. 2014 survey churches, found hundreds, including Pagan / magio-religious. In 2016 in homes, businesses, barns. Pentacles, tree w/ snakes, mazy cross, daisy wheel, spectacles, corn king, ships / windmills. VM, = armed cross. Found hundreds more. Shakespeare’s birthplace. Tower of London. Hidden objects: shoes, witch bottles, underwear, cats in walls, floors, rafters and chimneys. Scythes in chimneys. Widespread, common. May be reason for Green Men and Sheela-ha-Gigs, others say no. Belief in magick, bad / good luck, summon / banish.

Older rite – Hoodening: Cave walls on continent. Star Carr helmets. St. Augustine forbid, another Catholic leader forbid again in 700s, again and again, lasted til Protestant era, not lost, underground. Various documented til mid-1800s, sometimes up to 1930s. Taghairm. Folk Dances / Processions: Abbots Bromley Horn Dance. Mari Lewyd, Pen Kefall, Kent Hooden horses, hobby horses, Christmas bull, Dorset ‘Ooser (Hoosier), Skimmety, Ermula, Cornish Pellar staff, Stag Hunt. To Morris beasties and Folkplays. Robin Hood plays – Guy of Gisborn, Capal. Fertility, Death and Rebirth, Sacrificial King… some scholars say no. May be Devil figure, horns/ antlers, one in church witches’ mark – antlers. Stag Hunt worldwide.

MASK instructions

Folkplay – Ritual Drama: Two opposing forces – Summer and Winter, Forest and Agriculture, Good and Bad. Robin Hood vs. Guy, Gawain vs. Green Knight, King Arthur vs. any number, Sir or King George vs. Turkish knight, Dragon, other opponent. Could be where Gardner got Oak King vs. Holly King, other legends. One in every town. Poems / lines, some mutated. Good guy killed. Revived by Dr. or witch (Besom Betty). Molly, Maid Marian revive w/ kiss. Crusades? Pre-Christian? aka Mummer’s Play, Yuletide, also other plays / processions, holidays, Pace Egging, Plow Plays. Veneer of Christianity. All holidays procession, play or dance; costumes, trick-or-treat – perform for reward.

May pole: Dance, decoration might be Saxon. British – May branch, May bush, May gam, bringing in May older, Celtic. Wreaths, decorate with greenery May, Yule. Came from…

Clootie Tree, Tree veneration, Well veneration. Sacred wells, atypical or folk saint, Madrone in Penzance Cornwall, merged, Brigid’s in Kildare Ireland. Coins, pins, clooties. Contagion magick. Over 60 in British Isles.

Halloween: Fire festivals, still done in Ireland up ‘til 1800s. Divination rites, spells, spirit communication. Chapbooks and pamphlets for tourists – quaint superstitions of rude uneducated peasant class. Trick or Treat folk processions, costumes those & hoodening.

Revival 1800s. Killed off? WWI, flu, WWII

Revival 1980s, done for fun, tourism, Pagan rites.