

Returning to the Green of England



English calendar customs in the post-Brexit, digital village

**A one day symposium at Sheffield Hallam University
Thursday 9th July, 2020.**

CALL FOR PAPERS - Deadline: 23rd April 2020

This one-day symposium, hosted by Sheffield Hallam University's Centre for Contemporary Legend, seeks to explore the influence and impact of England's calendar customs on contemporary communities, and what their continued performance means for us today. We actively encourage dialogue between disciplines and areas of study, and welcome speakers from the academy as well as practitioners, collectors, participants and governors of English calendar customs.

England has a rich and varied calendar of folkloric customs, communal traditions that take place in the same place at the same time each year, which are usually governed, stewarded and performed by the community itself. Though the origin or purpose of the custom itself may have been lost, or the function now deemed archaic, communities continue to perform them, often attracting crowds of spectators and tourists, not to mention significant media coverage, both in traditional press and online, through social media channels.

Ronald Hutton (1996) observes that collective, society-wide holidays, such as Whitsun and Wakes Week, have declined in favour of the 'celebration of private relationships and the individual lifecycle'. So why do these customs persist? Why are old customs surviving or being revived and new customs being invented? Are we experiencing a resurgence of interest in English calendar customs and, if so, what is driving this? What role does digital technology (the internet, social media and audio visual technology) play in contemporary calendar customs? Is social media, with its opportunities to publicise customs to a broader

audience beyond the boundary stone, contributing to a raised profile and increased interest? And with easy access to smart phones and digital media, are we documenting customs and disseminating the resulting media more easily and more frequently? What is the impact of this documentation, and what happens to this documentation once the custom is complete for the year?

England's calendar customs can be dramatic and dangerous, such as the tar barrels of Ottery St Mary, or as delicate and diligent as Derbyshire's well dressings. What do contemporary communities achieve by performing their annual custom, and what is the function of the custom for individual participants and spectators from within and without the community? Does the custom bring together communities that would otherwise be fragmented for a unified moment of celebration, or is the custom another indication of exclusivity and elitism orchestrated by particular groups? Is it an opportunity to assert and express distinct local identity?

We invite contributions that address one of the following, or related, themes:

- Identity, nationalism and patriotism
- Englishness and tradition
- The English custom of the future
- Revival and invention
- Commercialisation and the money problem
- Imagery and photography, film and moving image
- Social media and online representation
- Documentation and the future archive
- Politics, and the problems with governance and stewardship
- Performance and practice
- Placemaking, custom tourism
- Customs and community cohesion
- Representations of customs in the arts, culture and media

Proposals should be 200-300 words for 20-minute papers, and please also include a personal biography of no more than 200 words. We also welcome suggestions for themed or grouped panels.

Proposals and any enquiries should be sent to:

- centre.contemporary.legend@gmail.com by 5pm on Thursday 23rd April 2020 (St Georges Day)

Date and Location:

- Thursday 9 July 2020
- 9:30am – 5.00pm with evening exhibition opening
- Sheffield Hallam University, Cantor Building, 153 Arundel Street, Sheffield S1 2NT.

Further Information - Keep up to date on our website – view the [BLOG](#) or visit the [EVENTS](#) page

Accompanying Exhibition - *Lore and the Living Archive*

- Private view: Thursday 9 July 2020, 6.30pm.
- Exhibition Dates: Friday 10 July – Friday August 7th 2020.
- Sheffield Institute of Arts, The Old Head Post Office, Fitzalan Square, Sheffield S1 2AY

After the symposium, there will be the opportunity to attend the launch and Private View of *Lore and the Living Archive*, an exhibition of original artworks inspired by the Doc Rowe Archive and Collection opening at Sheffield Institute of Arts' The Old Head Post Office.