

Course Title: Sussex Culture: tradition, superstition, songs and memories

Number of credits:

Tutor: Chris Hare

Partner Organisation: Weald and Downland Museum

Venue: Weald and Downland Museum

Convenor: Geoffrey Mead

Programme Group: LANDLOC

Day: Saturday

Start Date: 1 November 2008

Finish Date: 13 December 2008

Starting Time: 10am

Finishing Time: 4pm

No. sessions: 4

No. of hours: 20

Field trip grade:

Structure:

Introduction

This course is for all who wish to find out more about traditional rural life and to gain an understanding of how Sussex communities in the past ordered their society, interpreted their world and found pleasure in their lives.

Course Description

This course seeks to explore in an unsentimental way the nature and content of rural life in the period before the First World War. Four themes will form the basis of this exploration: traditions, superstition, songs and memories.

Tradition in this context is taken to be practices and observances that were integral to the rural year and were celebrated by the common people. In Sussex this would include Harvest, May Day, Bonfire Night and Midsummer. We will also consider the extent to which Christian holy days were integral to ordinary peoples' lives.

Superstition can be seen as a loaded term, implying a pejorative assumption on the part of the observer. Yet there is probably no better collective term for the multitude of cures, omens, rites and supernatural beliefs that still held a powerful sway over Sussex country people until late into the nineteenth century, and in some cases even as recently as the 1930s.

The songs of the Sussex country people tell us about their lives, their loves and their occupations. No other single source is able give such an insight into a people and their way of life in the days before formal education. We will listen to songs, both “live” and recorded.

Oral history provides a unique insight into past lives. The tutor has access to recorded interviews with Sussex people, most of who were born in the early twentieth century, some of whom were born in the late nineteenth century. There will be an opportunity to listen to extracts from these recordings and discuss their significance.

The course will be taught through illustrated lectures, primary and secondary source handouts, class discussion and group and individual study. Students will be encouraged to undertake individual research and advice will be given on how best to go about this.

Bibliography (minimum of 3)

Author, Date, Title, Place of publication, Publisher

1 Simpson, Jacqueline, 2002, The Folklore of Sussex, Npi Media Group

2 Hole, Christina, 2004, The Encyclopedia of Superstitions, Sterling Publishing

3 Hare, Chris, 2001, The Good Old, Bad Old Days, Worthing, Southern Heritage Books.

Course Learning Outcomes: 3 specific and 2 generic (provided)

By the end of the course successful students will be able to:

1. define what is meant by tradition, superstition, song and memory in a folklore context
2. identify the key characteristics of Sussex rural culture
3. discuss the social and economic circumstances that helped create this culture
4. demonstrate the skills of observation recording and analysis
5. engage critically with the subject

Teaching & Learning Methods:

Students will be taught through illustrated lectures, handouts from primary and secondary sources, classroom discussion, group and individual study. Students will be encouraged to undertake research outside of the classroom.

Assessment:

Students will be assessed on their contribution to class discussions and on individual study, reported back to the class. In addition they will undertake a written piece of work, in the form of an essay, project or log that will demonstrate the learning they have attained.

All CCE courses require students' active participation in the course. In addition students will produce (state minimum, e.g. 12 credits one piece of work 1,000 words or equivalent (oe), 18 credits one (or possibly two) 1,500 words oe, 24 credits two pieces of work 2,000 words oe, 30 credits two/three pieces of work 2,500 words oe)