

## Chapter 1 : Mummers play - Wikipedia

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There are a few surviving traditional teams of mummers in England and Ireland, but there have been many revivals of mumming, often associated nowadays with morris and sword dance groups. On 4 November, following a similar announcement from the Lewes Bonfire Council, the Association of Mummers in England and Wales AMEW announced that Mummers would immediately cease the practice of "black-facing" or "blacking-up". Broadly comic performances, the most common type features a doctor who has a magic potion able to resuscitate the vanquished character. The principal characters, presented in a wide variety of manners, are a hero, most commonly Saint George, King George, or Prince George but Robin Hood in the Cotswolds and Galoshin in Scotland, and his chief opponent, known as the Turkish Knight in southern England, named Slasher elsewhere, and a quack Doctor who comes to restore the dead man to life. In the few instances where the dragon appears and speaks its words can be traced back to a Cornish script published by William Sandys in 1576. In a law was passed forbidding "mumming, plays, interludes or any other disguisings with any feigned beards, painted visors, deformed or coloured visages in any wise, upon pain of imprisonment". Many mummers and guisers, however, have no facial disguise at all. Mumming was a way of raising money and the play was taken round the big houses. Most Southern English versions end with the entrance of "Little Johnny Jack his wife and family on his back". Johnny, traditionally played by the youngest mummer in the group, first asks for food and then more urgently for money. This custom was practised by commoners as well as nobility. Other than this association there is no clear evidence linking these late medieval and early modern customs with English mumming. Textual evidence[ edit ] An depiction of an English mummers play Although there are earlier hints such as a fragmentary speech by St George from Exeter, Devon, which may date from the 14th century, although published in the 16th century, the earliest complete text of the "Doctor" play appears to be an undated chapbook of Alexander and the King of Egypt, published by John White in 1576. The full text "A petygree of the Plouboys or modes dancers songs" is available online. A text from Islip, Oxfordshire, dates back to 1576. Chambers has now been shown, by genealogical and other research, to have originated in Truro, Cornwall, around 1576. Mumming, at any rate in the South of England, had its heyday at the end of the 19th century and the earliest years of the 20th century. Most traditional mummers groups known as "sides" stopped with the onset of the first World War, but not before they had come to the attention of folklorists. In the second half of the 20th century many groups were revived, mostly by folk music and dance enthusiasts. The revived plays are frequently taken around inns and public houses around Christmas time and the begging done for some charity rather than for the mummers themselves. In north-eastern England the plays are traditionally associated with Sword dances or Rapper dances. In some parts of Britain and Ireland the plays are traditionally performed on or near Plough Monday. These are therefore known as Plough plays and the performers as Plough-jags, Plough-jacks, Plough-bullocks, Plough-stots or Plough witches. Examples of the play have been found in Denmark since the late 18th century. England[ edit ] Around Sheffield and in nearby parts of northern Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire a dramatised version of the well-known Derby Ram folksong, known as the Derby Tup another word for ram, has been performed, since at least the 18th century, by teams of boys. The brief play is usually introduced by two characters, an old man and an old woman "Me and our owd lass". The Tup was killed by a Butcher, and sometimes another boy held a basin to catch the "blood". There is a Sheffield version where the Tup is killed and then brought back to life by the Doctor. This is the main play performed by the Northstow Mummers based in Cambridge. The mummers are sometimes referred to as wrenboys. All the characters are introduced in turn by the Master, St. There is no real interplay between the characters and no combat or cure, so it is more of a "calling-on song" than a play. Some of the characters dance solos as they are introduced, then all dance a longsword dance together, which climaxes with their swords being meshed together to form a "shield". They each dance with the shield upon their head, then it is laid on the floor and they withdraw their swords to finish the dance. George makes a short speech to end the performance. This grand parade has history in the old

world. The parade traces back to midth-century roots, blending elements from Swedish, Finnish, Irish, English, German, and other European heritages, as well as African heritage. Other types of Mummies[ edit ] Feast Entertainers[ edit ] Mummung was used as a means of entertaining at feasts and functions, particular mention is made of one feast where torch bearers lead the same number of mummies in, who would do acrobatics in a variety of costumes, including animal costumes. Social Mummung[ edit ] At certain feast days e. Newfoundland Mummies[ edit ] " Mummering " is a Newfoundland custom that dates back to the time of the earliest settlers who came from England and Ireland. It shares common antecedents with the Mummies Play tradition, but in its current form is primarily a house-visiting tradition. Sometime during the Twelve Days of Christmas, usually on the night of the "Old Twelfth" 17 January; equivalent to 6 Jan in the old Julian calendar , people would disguise themselves with old articles of clothing and visit the homes of their friends and neighbours. They would at times cover their faces with a hood, scarf, mask or pillowcase to keep their identity hidden. In keeping with the theme of an inversion of rules, and of disguise, crossdressing was a common strategy, and men would sometimes dress as women and women as men. Travelling from house to house, some mummies would carry their own musical instruments to play, sing and dance in the houses they visited. Some mummies would drink a Christmas "grog" before they leave each house, a drink of an alcoholic beverage such as rum or whiskey. One important part of the custom was a guessing game to determine the identity of the visitors. As each mummer was identified, they would uncover their faces, but if their true identity is not guessed they did not have to unmask. The custom has recently enjoyed a revival, with a Mummies Festival taking place throughout December which even included workshops on how to make hobby horses and wren sticks. Mummies Parade Mummies plays were performed in Philadelphia in the 18th century as part of a wide variety of working class street celebrations around Christmas. By the early 19th century, it coalesced with two other New Year customs, shooting firearms, and the Pennsylvania German custom of "belsnickling" adults in masks questioning children about whether they had been good during the previous year. Unable to suppress the custom, by the s the city government began to pursue a policy of co-option, requiring participants to join organized groups with designated leaders who had to apply for permits and were responsible for their groups actions. By , these groups formed part of an organized, city-sanctioned parade with cash prizes for the best performances. They are organized into four distinct types of troupes: All dress in elaborate costumes. There is a Mummies Museum dedicated to the history of Philadelphia Mummies. It was based on experience from his childhood. They are depicted as a boisterous crowd dancing and laughing in outrageous costumes where men are dressed as women and women are dressed as men. The characters used in that dance are describes in great detail, in particular "The Fool", "The Hobbyhorse" and "The teaser" called "Betty". A hip-hop version by M. Mummies With Attitude was released in Mummer is the title of a album by the English rock band XTC.

### Chapter 2 : The English mummings and their plays; traces of ancient mystery. -- book online read or download

*Mummings' and guisers' plays were formerly performed throughout much of English-speaking Great Britain and Ireland, spreading to other English-speaking parts of the world including Newfoundland and Saint Kitts and Nevis.*

History[ edit ] A few members of the Holy Rollers N. Swedes and Finns , the first European colonists in the Philadelphia area, brought the custom of visiting neighbors on "Second Day Christmas" December 26 with them to Tinicum. The Mummings continued their traditions of comic verse in exchange for cakes and ale. It was apparently never successfully enforced and was repealed in . The earliest documented club, the Chain Gang, had formed in and Golden Crown first marched in with cross-town rivals Silver Crown forming soon after. By , a local report said "Parties of paraders" made the street "almost like a masked Ball. The first cancellation happened in as a result of the aftermath of World War I and the second cancellation occurred in due to the effects of the Great Depression and a lack of prize money. As they assimilated to Philadelphia, many immigrant groups have joined the tradition. Numerous Irish immigrants and Irish-Americans from South Philadelphia became involved in the Mummings Parade as both Mummings performers and parade goers. Other ethnic groups were soon integrated into the parade through the years. The all African American Golden Eagle Club, formed in , had members in the parade, for example. Judges systematically discriminated against black clubs, however, and the last, the Octavius Catto Club, withdrew after receiving last place in the parade. By , only one African American mummer, Willis Fluelling, remained. The comic "wenches" and other female roles in most skits are typically performed by men in drag. After construction was completed, the parade returned to Broad Street from to . For various reasons, the parade was moved again to Market Street in . In , the parade was moved back to Broad Street. In , the Fancy Brigades were moved to the Pennsylvania Convention Center , allowing for larger sets, but limiting audience size. In , the Fancy Brigades returned to the parade. While club fund-raisers, hall rentals and bank loans often cover much of the expense, individual members frequently spend hundreds or thousands of dollars of their own money. Most charge annual dues for membership. The whole parade, at close to eleven hours, may have been the longest parade in the U. After the judging, the mummings will join the parade heading south on Broad St. Each year, there is a festival leading up to the parade called MummingsFest. Local residents and others in the area for the parade crowd the local bars, clubhouses and sidewalks, sometimes joining in the unofficial parade. With the parade they spent months preparing for finished, the Mummings let loose and celebrate. This multi-block party continues well into the night or early morning, with some Mummings not sleeping for twenty-four hours straight. Bob Brady helped secure funding for the event in the final hours. A city policy officially banned blackface, [18] [38] but some groups have continued to wear blackface into the 21st century over growing protests. The comics typically start the parade. Themes often gently parody current events and traditional life. Prizes are awarded for floats, groups, brigades, couples, original costume, original character, and juvenile. The comic clubs are.

**Chapter 3 : From "The English Mummers" Play "Stony Stratford Mummers"**

*Note: Citations are based on reference standards. However, formatting rules can vary widely between applications and fields of interest or study. The specific requirements or preferences of your reviewing publisher, classroom teacher, institution or organization should be applied.*

Louis Neathery de Safita of Burj al Mudeira of the Three River Baronry in the Kingdom of Calentir during to duplicate a "classic" Medieval mummer mask as illustrated in an 14th century illuminated manuscript in the Bodleian library of Oxford University Ms. A marginal panel in the lower right corner of the verso of Plate 21 shows a stag masked mummer leading four other dancers two women and two masked men to a musical tune provided by a man playing the lute. The entire plate is illustrated in a collotype by the Bodleian Library The detail of the mummer is illustrated in color as figure 5. Faces of Cultures by John W. The stag mask was not an invention of the Medieval Period in Europe. The function of the stag in Paleolithic religion is hard to reconstruct. Wiccan believers see him as the powerful male spirit of the animal world or as one writer described him "The God, is the sun, the source of masculine energy; he is the raw force, wisdom and law" [http:](http://) Some Medieval writers would link the stag with a force that attempts to stamp out evil because of its tendency to trample snakes. The Christian writers had transformed the Stag into a beast of goodness. The text is dated ca. AD and is attributed to Lambert li Tors. It was written in the French dialect typical of the region around Flanders - the dialect is called Picard Bodleian Library She in turn touches the hand of a rabbit, the rabbit touches the hand of a wolf, and the wolf touches the hand of another cowled woman a nun or saint? The whole scene is clearly viewed as sacrilegious by a tonsured Benedictine monk who holds a club in his left hand and raises his right hand in a gesture meant to stop the dance. Kirby noted in *Ur-Drama: The Origins of Theatre* published by New York University Press in that the Roman Catholic church issued several edicts that condemned masked performances and several specifically mentioned the Stag. It was likewise condemned in the 6th century Council of Auxerre. The scene of the stag mummer has nothing to do with the text recorded on the page or the other illustrative scenes. The text deals with Alexander the Great and the attack of the Greek Army on the defended city of Tyre. The major panels on the page show Alexander, his horsemen, the soldiers of Gaza and Eumenidus. It shows two examples of puppet plays performed for an audience [http:](http://) The images on Plate show a drummer providing the beat for 9 dancers that include men wearing the masks of a dog, old man? Women dancers are positioned between the mummies and each woman touches the hand of the mummer to her right and left. The mummies illustrated on the verso of Plate show five men, wearing daggers, and disguised in mummer masks. The variety of masks include a falcon, ox, goat, monkey and donkey. Heraldic devices belonging to the donkey, goat, and falcon are clearly meant to show that these mummies were at least knights. The five mummies on the verso of Plate form a line that is opposite of six women who hold hands and lean their bodies as if to join the mummies in dance. The panel of mummies led by the falcon is illustrated in color in *Storia Universale del Teatro* by Cesare Molinari published in by Arnoldo Mondadori Editore. A black-and-white print of the mummies led by the falcon is illustrated on Plate 3 in *Masks, Transformation and Paradox* by A. David Napier published by the University of California Press in *Mummers* What does the term "mummer" mean during the Medieval Period? Several explanations have been offered in print. The second edition of the Oxford English Dictionary identifies the word used in for "One who mutters and murmurs" and used in for "An Actor in a dumb show. Mummeries a play involving many mummies included aristocratic amateurs and the bourgeoisie according to historians. King Richard II was entertained by mummies at Kennington in Numbers of costumed mummies took part in performances for Edward III in , and Who watched a mummies play? Tydeman noted that the audiences would include the "King and Queen, mayor of London, the city sheriffs and alderman" and lords of the "great estates of the realm. Act 2, Scene 1 contains the story of "melancholy" Jaques who mourned over the killing of a deer. Tiddy felt confident that Shakespeare made use of material he had witnessed in Mummer plays. It is unlikely that Shakespeare would have linked the deer-killing with the Celtic god named Cernunnos who is born at the winter solstice and dies at the summer solstice. Louis Community College library: Barber, Richard *Bestiary*: Boydell Press,

Woodbridge [England]. Barber, William and Julier Barker Tournaments: Jousts, Chivalry and Pageants in the Middle Ages. Bartsch, Albert Holzmasken: Fasnachts und Maskenbrauchtum in der Schweiz in Suddeutschland und Osterreich. Oxford University Press, London. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia. University of Pennsylvania Press. Cosman, Madeleine Pelner Medieval Wordbook. Facts on File, Inc. Kinser, Samuel Carnival, American Style. University of Chicago Press. The Origins of Theatre. New York University Press. Molinari, Storia Theatre through the Ages. David Masks, Transformation and Paradox. University of California Press, Berkeley. Nicoll, Allardyce Masks, Mimes and Miracles: Studies in the Popular Theatre. Cooper Square Publishers, New York. Wickham, Glynne Medieval Theatre.

**Chapter 4 : Mystery History : The Origins of British Mummers' Plays**

*The English mummers and their plays by Alan Brody, , University of Pennsylvania Press edition, in English.*

This may be a much-cherished theory, after all it has been around for a hundred years, changing little. However over the past decade or so this view has lost favour as a new generation of folklorists has researched the subject. But whilst the old theory has been shown to be flawed, alternative theories are only just emerging. In this article therefore I intend to assemble the currently known facts and viewpoints. In the process some of the problems with the old theory should become self-evident. I will then try to suggest an alternative history for the plays. Types of Play Let us get it clear in our minds what these plays are. It starts with an introductory prologue and is followed by challenges and a sword fight between the hero and an antagonist. As a result of this, one of them not always the villain is "slain" and a quack doctor is brought in to perform a cure. This is usually achieved with a degree of comedy and may be the major scene of the play. To finish, a number of supernumerary characters may enter, chief among whom is Beelzebub, and often the whole affair finishes with a seasonal song. In some cases there may be more than one combat. The second main type of play is the Recruiting Sergeant play, and is found in the English East Midlands. It is usually associated with Plough Monday the second Monday in January. A quack doctor is then brought in to perform an intricate comical cure. The whole thing ends up in a song. A handful of these plays collected in the s and performed at Christmas, featured a multiple wooing scene instead of a recruiting scene. Hence they are often called Wooing plays. None of them succeed, and she decides to marry Noble Anthony the fool instead. The last type of play is the Sword Dance play, found in Yorkshire and north east England. This is a linked sword dance with drama thrown in. Here the characters are the dancers, whose lines are normally spoken in single verses one character after the other. In the dance the Fool is "executed" in the time honoured fashion of putting the sword lock round his neck and drawing the swords simultaneously. Then after a series of alibis from the dancers, someone is brought on - usually a quack doctor - to cure the victim. Those then are the three main types of play. It should be obvious that the common linking factor is the presence of a quack doctor. Indeed it would not be out of place to call them Quack Doctor plays to distinguish them from other English folk plays such as the Derby Tup. The costumes of the actors are worthy of note. Many sides wore costumes intended to portray the character being acted, much as you would expect in a regular stage play. However many sides wore non-representational costumes instead, typically smocks or shirts covered with patches, ribbons, paper strips, etc. Also the face was commonly disguised either by blacking up or by obscuring the face with the headgear.

The Earliest Plays The earliest play for which we have a text is a chapbook published in Newcastle by J. This is undated, but research into the book trade has indicated that it must have been published sometime between and Our assumption is that the Mummers were as we think of them now, but it would not have been out of step with Eighteenth Century theatrical publishing practice for them to have been a stage-based company. Eight editions of this chapbook are known, the most recent being published around There are a couple of references to apparently earlier performances. The first is a manuscript describing a performance in Cork, Ireland. It was written about , and was thought to relate to a performance in , but is now believed to be of much later date. A footnote to the poem quotes a St. George speech from a play described as being "lately" performed around Exeter in Devon. The footnote was obviously added after the poem was written, and it is conceivable that the footnote was only added just before publication. Otherwise, it could be the oldest fragment of text we have. The words are almost identical to lines in the "Alexander and the King of Egypt" chapbook, indicating a fairly close relationship. The texts of some of these early plays share lines with the chapbooks, otherwise they appear to paraphrase them. A special case among the early plays is the play from Revesby, Lincs. This is a Multiple Wooing play, lacking a quack doctor, and was a special production for the famous botanist Sir Joseph Banks. No similar plays are recorded again until the s when a single notebook gives the texts of the only other known Multiple Wooing plays and the first true Recruiting Sergeant play. Both these and the Revesby play are very heterogeneous affairs, being pastiches of material drawn from a variety of sources; chapbooks, literary plays even Shakespeare , wassail carols, etc. This suggests that they

were recent creations. From the 1830s and 40s, other chapbooks began to appear, most notably those entitled "The Peace Egg" from northern England, and "The Christmas Rhyme" from Northern Ireland. Some editions were still being published in the 1850s. The early Nineteenth Century saw the dawning of an interest in what we now call folklore, and the publication of play texts in folklore books. We know that many teams used such books as sources for their texts. A case in point are the Recruiting Sergeant plays. By the latter part of the Nineteenth Century the Recruiting Sergeant plays had evolved into a fairly standard form and transferred themselves from Christmas to Plough Monday. Hence they are also termed Plough Plays. In the mid to late Nineteenth Century, the plays appear to have been at their zenith. From the 1860s, folklorists and theatre historians started to take a particular interest, and both collecting and academic publishing mushroomed. It is difficult to say if the performance of the plays really began to decline at this time, but undoubtedly the First World War dealt a crippling blow to them. Some traditional sides continued to perform between the Wars, and in addition, revivals involving folk enthusiasts were performed. The Second World War dealt a second major blow, the number of traditional adult sides being reduced almost to the handful which remain today. The Marshfield Paper Boys and the Rippon Plough Stots are two examples, but there are no longer any traditional sides performing these Recruiting Sergeant plays. The folk revival took off in the sixties, and a large number of teams have been formed by enthusiasts much along the lines of Morris Ring sides. Although these sides usually use authentic texts, they often perform at any time of the year, unlike the traditional sides. The familiar theory is that the plays originated in some pre-Christian ritual, of which more later. There are now as many if not more records of plays as there are of morris dancing, but no earlier plays have been found. With other customs, including Morris dancing, although historical records may not yield detailed descriptions of the customs, unequivocal records have been found - e. My favourite early record is of a court case of in North Muskham, Nottinghamshire, in which ten men, appearing in costumes, were ordered to turn back the furrow they had ploughed across the church yard on "Plow Daie". For the plays we have none of this sort of record. So where did the plays come from? It is not sufficient to suggest that they started with some individual writing the text for a chapbook. We can start to make life easier for ourselves by examining the component parts of the plays and examine their precursors. Precursors to the Plays First let us look at the festivals with which the plays are associated. It is easy to overlook the fact that in every case the plays are only one of the traditions practiced at that time. Furthermore, the plays are in the minority, house visiting customs such as carol singing being far more common. For these non-play customs, historical records older than the plays are relatively plentiful, and in some cases quite detailed. As an aside, The name "Mummers" is not unique to the plays either. Medieval Mummers are well documented. These coexist in the same place with plays performed by Guisers. The situation is the same for all the other names used in Britain and Ireland, such as Guysers, Pace Eggers, etc. Taking dramatic precursors of the plays we are on rich territory. There were earlier folk plays, but not with any obvious relationship with our plays, other than occasional shared characters. It would be odd in England if we did not find records of St. George and likewise Robin Hood. Texts of two old Robin Hood plays are to be found in the Child Ballads. These are in rhyme, and have a similar dramaturgy to our plays, but are textually dissimilar. Surprisingly, parts of the play texts are also found in earlier sources. The most notable case is a version of the speech of the Doctor which was originally published as a broadside. As noted before, most of the Multiple Wooing plays had large chunks of text copied from identifiable literary sources, much to the disquiet of some theorists. One early scholar, C. Baskervill, a supporter of the pagan ritual school of thought, said, "Indeed, one of the greatest difficulties in dealing with the ritual elements of the plays lies in the fact that the very features in which these elements are clearest show a strong literary influence exerted at various periods English Pantomimes are I feel a much overlooked influence on folk drama. This is surprising, bearing in mind the continuing popularity of pantomime, and of its offshoots, "Punch and Judy" puppet plays and circus clowns. English pantomime is a direct descendant of the drama of Italian Comedians who first came to the country in the Seventeenth Century. Stock characters, Harlequin, Columbine, Pantaloon, etc. They remained a central feature for two hundred years until effectively disappearing at the beginning of this century. The Harlequinade was interwoven with an "opening", a play on any other theme. The number of Italian characters was reduced sadly the Doctor was was one casualty, but the costumes and methods of performance

were retained. The popularity of early pantomime was such that it cannot have failed to have had some effect on traditional customs and plays.



## Chapter 5 : Christmas traditions: The Mummings Play | The Shakespeare blog

*The Mummings Plays This type of seasonal English folk drama was often performed at Christmas time from house to house. The play has been described as a strange processional dance and mimetic game with dialogue, however the term 'mummings' has a rather imprecise meaning.*

The key character is the comical quack doctor, who is brought in to revive the loser of, say, the sword fight between a hero and an adversary. The adversaries include Slasher a soldier, Hector and the Turkish Knight. Additionally, there are a variable number of extra characters whose main purpose is to ask the audience for money, food and drink at the end of the performance. The most memorable of these characters is Beelzebub. However, Mummings is only one of the collective names used. Contrariwise, there were plenty of Mummings who did not perform plays. It appears that this was always the case in Medieval times, but non-play Mummings have continued to exist in England, Newfoundland and Philadelphia right up to the present day. Nonetheless, Mummings Play is still a frequently used term, and it causes no end of confusion. The Doctor reviving the dragon, watched by Father Christmas England has a number of traditional plays performed exclusively by male non-actors including female parts from within the community, handed down in oral tradition with lost origins. These take a number of forms. This is claimed by some as an ancient tradition but seems reliably to date back to the early 18th century. In fact the title describes a wide variety of plays handed down by word of mouth with varying forms and costumes. Originally the players were drawn from the working class community in groupings, so for example the Plough Monday plays were performed by Plough Hands and so on. The performers carried on family participation handing down the roles on death or retirement. It was a matter of pride and continuity to take part within the family. The revived form of Mummings from the twentieth century onwards is typically more middle class in nature as it is a deliberate rather than spontaneous communal act. However the plays are not pantomime in nature and taken very seriously by the performers. Many of the costumes for the Mummings hide their faces and this acts as both increasing the mystery and liberating the performers around those they would know and love. So masks, streamers, hats with strips hanging down and blackened faces are variously used to strange and beguiling effect. A mumming play performed by the Paperboys, so-called because they wear costumes covering them from head to toe in paper streamers. They may have originally been made of leaves or skins symbolising the death and rebirth in nature. After the Christmas Hymns are sung and beginning at 11am, seven figures seven was thought to be a lucky number led by the town cryer and his handbell perform the play several times along the High Street beginning in the Market Place. In the 19th century the mummings may have been villagers who toured the large houses collecting money for village festivities, but there is some evidence that the plays were performed here since the 11th century. The play lapsed in the s after many of the troupe died of influenza but was revived in The Revd Alford heard his gardener mumble the words "Room, room, gallant room, I say" and encouraged the surviving troupe members to reform. Gloucester - City of Gloucester Mummings Perform outside Gloucester Cathedral - began in outside the cathedral and performed every year since. The members were given the text of the Gloucester play by David Todd who had researched and printed a pamphlet as a student. Laurie Lee was the Patron of the Mummings until his death. This troupe is unlike many others in that it is not exclusive to the members of Mumming families.

**Chapter 6 : Mummers Parade - Wikipedia**

*The English mummers and their plays: traces of ancient mystery.* by Brody, Alan, Publication date Topics Mumming -- England, Folk drama, English, Mumming.

Simply, the Philadelphia Mummers are costumed entertainers welcoming in the New Year. The parade participants take their name from Momus, the Greek god of ridicule. But the tradition developed from a blending of cultures. Some of the earliest mummers date back to early Egypt. Mummers would lead the burial procession of the Pharaohs in extravagant costumes, playing finger cymbals, tambourines and other rhythm instruments. Tracing back through the mazes of history that led to England, Wales, Scotland, Germany, ancient France, and pagan Rome and Greece, we find mummery has influenced customs and perpetuated many interesting traditions. Every nation had its festivals at one time or another, each marked by parades and displays of fanciful costumes. As early as BC, Roman laborers observed the feast of the Saturnalia in honor of their god, Saturn, and the reaping of the harvest. They made calls on friends, they exchanged gifts and it was customary for some of the gifts to bear greetings for a Happy New Year. Unrestrained merry-making marked the pagan Saturnalia and Carnival, the ancient Roman festival of Saturn that began on December 17th. Slaves sported robes from their masters, and the patricians wearing fantastic costumes, roamed the streets with their slaves. Age and rank were forgotten for the fiesta and all persons were free for the day. There was a musical background for the capers of the multitude with songs and ballads befitting the joyous occasion. Another early custom was the Florentine Carnival usually held in the beginning of Lent – a day set aside by monks of the Middle Ages for the lords of misrule and the abbots of unreason. At this time, England and Germany celebrated their Christmas Masque, resulting in riotous indulgence. This took the form of a dramatic entertainment popular in the 16th and 17th centuries, and following usually an allegorical theme, which embodied pageantry, music and dancing. The use of masks and different costumes were incorporated from the Greek celebrations of King Momus, the Italian feast of Saturnalia, and the British Mummery Play. The Philadelphia Tradition The tradition of Philadelphia Mummery started in the late 17th century as a continuation of the Old World customs of ushering in the New Year. Masqueraders paraded through the streets of Philadelphia. Most people carried firearms for protection in those early days of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and it did not take long before pistols and muskets joined with bells and noisemakers to create the sound of a New Year. Groups would travel from house to house, sing songs, and perform dances – all to be rewarded with food and drink. The party was truly a pageant that recreated a tournament of the Middle Ages, including decorated barges, heralds and trumpeters, a jousting field and the Knights of the Blended Rose. The mummers continued to celebrate annually in their traditional way, reciting jokes, ill-conceived poems, and receiving in return cakes and ale. George and the Dragon. This shooter impersonating Washington had several poems and speeches to recite, which still survive today. Fancy Dress clubs and Comic clubs. Early forms of the parades were present in Official sponsorship by the City of Philadelphia began with the turn of the century in There are four distinct divisions of the parade: Comic division clubs lampoon modern day local and national political and social themes. The Fancy division clubs wear large, ornate costumes, carrying back pieces and performing with floats and props. The String Band division clubs not only wear elaborate costumes like the Fancy division, but also drill and perform playing musical instruments. The first String Band club was formed in , and featured violins, banjos and guitars. A few years later, drums, saxophones, accordions and glockenspiels were introduced, giving the String Band a unique sound. Parade rules do not permit the use of brass instruments in a String Band. The instrumentation is exclusively saxophones, banjos, accordions, violins, bass violins, and percussion instruments. Mummers String Bands are known, not only for the unique sound, but also for their elaborate costumes. Brilliant materials, glitter, sequins and feathers are all combined to make the showy costumes. Traditionally, band members, wives and friends made the costumes. Today, most bands contract them out to professional costumers. There are eighteen String Band organizations in existence today. This parade is a fascinating annual tradition, brimming with dancers and marching units. Commitment to the community has always been

one of the basic principles of Mummers clubs, especially String Band clubs. It is from the entire Delaware Valley community where musicians and helpers called Marshals are recruited and trained. It is also from this community where the clubs derive the funds used for the costumes and operations of their clubhouses.

**Chapter 7 : Robin Hood – The Facts and the Fiction – The Mummers Plays**

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One of the most persistent is the Mummers play, still surviving in scattered places in the British Isles, and although it is eagerly anticipated by the audiences who gather often from many miles away, it is almost completely misunderstood by performers and witnesses alike. The performances usually occur during the Christmas period, though they are a feature of the winter months from All Souls to Easter. They take place in the streets, but also in pubs, dance halls, large houses, or the performers make the rounds of outlying farms as they still do in Ireland. Widely scattered as they survive are, they still retain elements common to versions long since extinct and to each other. A group of men enter to stand silently in a semi-circle at the back of where they are to perform. They are disguised either by a poor attempt at dressing in character, or by strips of paper or ribbon sewn to their everyday clothes. They remain silent and immobile until, when it is their turn to speak, they step forward, declaim their lines in a loud voice devoid of any inflexions, and stand back at the conclusion of their speech. The performance only shows lively action when two of the performers fight each other with swords, one is killed and brought to life again by a wonder-working doctor. Following this other characters step forward and speak lines completely irrelevant to what has just occurred. At the end, a collection is taken and the performers leave. This kind of performance, with variations discussed below was once a familiar scene of the winter months. On paper the texts read badly; they were an amalgam of misunderstood words and local allusions, often with garbled passages from reputable literature interpolated without any sign of relevance. The named characters are often mutually anachronistic. Napoleon can appear in company with Julius Caesar, the legendary St George accompanies the historical St Patrick, and even Lord Nelson is found in the company of characters who could never have any real life counterpart. Beelzebub is an important character of almost all Mummers plays. Despite these absurdities, once the performance begins, all nonsense disappears and the performers become very different beings from the rather peculiarly dressed individuals they appear at first sight. Without effort they establish a bond between themselves and their audience, so that all are caught up in an atmosphere far remote from the 20th century. This atmosphere cannot be transmitted on paper, it must be experienced physically during a performance before the sense of age, magic and mystery, all caught up together can be felt. There are three varieties of Mummers plays, The sword dance ceremonies are confined to Yorkshire and the North-East, the essential feature being that each dancer holds a link, the sword, with the next dancer, but other features such as a death and cure by the doctor are common. The main variety is the hero-combat play, widespread through England, Scotland, southern Wales and English speaking Ireland, as well as in America and Canada. Its basic theme is revitalisation, expressed in the following terms: In a combat of champions, one is killed and revived by a doctor. Occasionally the combats are multiplied. These names are however subject to endless local variations. Some named characters, the last three mentioned amongst them, do not carry the action further. A central feature of all Mummers plays is the nonsensical dialogue of the Doctor which is only equalled by the way in which the cure is brought about. It adds to the attraction of the combat and allows a streak of comic inventiveness on the part of the performers to develop. Unlike the Hero-Combat versions, which attracted comment at an early date, they seem to have escaped notice. It may be that their survival in only a small area of the country prevented them being better known. Whatever the reason, the earliest known example is from Basingham in , contained in the Hunter collection in the British Museum. The version contains all the ingredients of those existing in the century and can be defined as follows: The action continues with a champion overcoming an opponent who is revived by the ubiquitous doctor. A major difference in the Wooing plays is that much of the action is expressed in song.

**Chapter 8 : Mummers Plays performed by Green Man Mummers**

*Mummers Plays. Here we present the scripts of several Mummers Plays.. We have listed them in the 3 groups as defined by Alan Brody in his book 'The English Mummers and Their Plays' (Pub.*

Louis Neathery de Safita of Burj al Muderah of the Three River Barony in the Kingdom of Calentir during to duplicate a "classic" Medieval mummer mask as illustrated in an 14th century illuminated manuscript in the Bodleian library of Oxford University Ms. A marginal panel in the lower right corner of the verso of Plate 21 shows a stag masked mummer leading four other dancers two women and two masked men to a musical tune provided by a man playing the lute. The entire plate is illustrated in a collotype by the Bodleian Library The detail of the mummer is illustrated in color as figure 5. Faces of Cultures by John W. The stag mask is a very ancient, dating to the stone age in Europe. The stag shaman painting at Le Trois Freres has not been directly dated by C analysis, but the style of subject of the paintings in the cave place it to the period at the end of the Ice Age around 15, to 10, B. Wiccan believers see him as the powerful male spirit of the animal world or as one writer described him "The God, is the sun, the source of masculine energy; he is the raw force, wisdom and law" [http:](http://) Some Medieval writers would link the stag with a force that attempts to stamp out evil because of its tendency to trample snakes. The symbolic meaning of the stag could easily change through time. Clark and Meradith T. McMunn noted that the stag crossing dangerous seas was symbolic of a Christian who leaves the profane world to enter the sacred world of religious life *Beasts and Birds of the Middle Ages*, , page 4. The text was written in April of and is attributed to Lambert li Tors. It was written in a Flemish scribe in the dialect typical of the region around Flanders - the dialect is called Picard Bodleian Library She in turn touches the hand of a rabbit, the rabbit touches the hand of a wolf, and the wolf touches the hand of another cowed woman a nun or saint? The whole scene is clearly viewed as sacrilegious by a tonsured Benedictine monk who holds a club in his left hand and raises his right hand in a gesture meant to stop the dance. What could be the meaning of the small illustration? Kirby noted in *Ur-Drama: The Origins of Theatre* published by New York University Press in that the Roman Catholic church issued several edicts that condemned masked performances and several specifically mentioned the Stag. It was likewise condemned in the 6th century Council of Auxerre. The scene of the stag mummer has nothing to do with the text recorded on the page or the other illustrative scenes. The text deals with Alexander the Great and the attack of the Greek Army on the defended city of Tyre. The major panels on the page show Alexander, his horse men, the soldiers of Gaza and Eumenidus. It shows two examples of puppet plays performed for an audience [http:](http://) The images on Plate show a drummer providing the beat for 9 dancers that include men wearing the mask of a dog, old man? Women dancers are positioned between the mummers. The panel of mummers led by the falcon is illustrated in color in *Storia Universale del Teatro* by Cesare Molinari published in by Arnoldo Mondadori Editore. A black-and-white print of the mummers led by the donkey is illustrated on Plate 3 in *Masks, Transformation and Paradox* by A. David Napier published by the University of California Press in Mummers What does the term "mummer" mean during the Medieval Period? Several explanations have been offered in print. The second edition of the Oxford English Dictionary identifies the word used in for "One who mutters and murmurs" and used in for "An Actor in a dumb show. King Richard II was entertained by mummers at Kennington in Numbers of costumed mummers took part in performances for Edward III in , and In England, masked celebrations were held on on Shrove Tuesday, the day before the start of the fast of Lent. Something of this tradition continues in the carnival of Mardi Gras. Chambers *The Mediaeval Stage*, Vol. Allardyce Nicoll disagrees with the Oxford English Dictionary and derives the English word from the German word Mumme that means "a mask. Ingrid Brainard argues that the English word "mummer" is ultimately derived from the Greek name Momus - a god of mockery and scoff "Mommerie" in the *International Encyclopedia of Dance* , Vol. Mummeries plays involving many mummers were performed by aristocratic amateurs and the bourgeoisie according to historians. Bottom the weaver, Peter Quince, Snug the joiner, and Flute the bellow mender [http:](http://) Who watched a mummers play? Tydeman noted that the audiences included the "King and Queen, mayor of London, the city sheriffs and alderman" and lords of the "great estates of the realm. Alan

Brody identified three types of mummer plays that survived into the 20th century in England. Act 2, Scene 1 contains the story of "melancholy" Jaques who mourned over the killing of a deer. Tiddy felt confident that Shakespeare made use of material he had witnessed in Mummer plays when writing the deer-killing scenes. The Celtic religious tradition included the god named Cernunnos, sometimes portrayed as a stag, who is born at the winter solstice and dies at the summer solstice. It is difficult to determine if the stag-hunt rituals, associated with the figure of Tristan as in *Tristan und Isolt* in German, *Tristrams saga* in Old Norse, and *Sir Tristrem* in Middle English derive from the Classical tradition, Celtic tradition, or a mixture of both. Plate 34a from *Roman de Fauvel*, an illuminated manuscript produced in Paris during the 14th century, is a satirical work that includes text, music and images. Cesare Molinari identifies this scene as men wearing masks both grotesque and animal forms who are serenading widows preparing to sleep. Drummers provide the rhythm for the singing. Two of the men walk bent over with sticks to imitate apes. Two men push hand carts containing children or fools. The animal masks include lions, bears, and goats. The six women in the windows are clearly frowning at the mummers. This color plate is from *Theatre through the Ages* by Cesare Molinari, page 100. Plate 36b from *Roman de Fauvel* shows a donkey headed mummer approaching a woman in her bed. Two lower panels show a dozen mummers masked as apes, lions, and fools singing and dancing. The mummers play drums, fiddle, bells, cymbals, and one bangs of a metal cooking pot. The four women in the windows and the woman in the bed are clearly frowning at the mummers. An extravagant dinner theatrical entremet devised by Philippe de Mezieres depicted the Conquest of Jerusalem by Godfrey of Bouillon during the Crusades. The play was performed in at the Palais de la Cite in Paris. Actors, dressed as Crusaders, arrive in a ship-cart lower left and ladders are used to scale the city wall lower right that was defended by actors dressed as Saracens. Spears are used as props by both the Crusaders and Saracens. The original color manuscript illumination was part of the *Chronique de Charles V* that was produced in the late 14th century. The variety of masks include a falcon, ox, goat, monkey and donkey. Heraldic devices decorate the surcoats of the donkey, goat, and falcon. The five mummers on the verso of Plate 36b form a line that is opposite of six women who hold hands and lean their bodies as if to join the mummers in dance.

*The mummers continued to celebrate annually in their traditional way, reciting jokes, ill-conceived poems, and receiving in return cakes and ale. Groups of five to twenty would march from home to home, shooting and shouting, doing friendly impersonations of General Washington and burllesquing the fashionable English mummers' play of St. George.*

And the book is very interesting, containing a good deal of information which was new to me, presented in a clear and accessible way. Indeed, the text makes it clear that the book is aimed partly at schools and groups of presumably young people interested in starting the performance of a play for the first time. As such, I think it works very well. The book has five sections, plus a Foreword and Introduction. Section 2 covers the detail of the play and its performers: Section 3 deals with everything you need to know about starting your own Mumming Play tradition, whilst Section 4 covers finding material - and I would have thought, should properly have been subsumed within Section 3. Much of this is couched in rather hallowed tones, and is studded with words like mysterious or mystery several times, ritual, forbears, finely-honed, serious and balanced, respect, custodians of heritage, faithful reproduction. He exhorts us to respect these traditions and hand them on faithfully, as we have learnt them, to enrich the lives of future generations. This sounds all very well, except that, as you will have noticed above, much of the book deals with revival plays and their performance and performers. Indeed, very little is heard from any members of the six currently existing traditional sides. This is an area to which I will return later. More is heard of words like excitement, strangeness, wonder. These quotations are mostly from 19th century observers and participants - again underlining the view that an old source is better than a new one. It then goes on to point out that much that has been written about the Mumming Play has been erroneous - and this is dealt with in some detail in Section 1. The patronage of the wealthier members of the society, who made the performances financially worthwhile, is dealt with, but the role of such people in the village or town culture is not. What do the participants and the rest of their community get out of it? Obviously, they have discovered worthwhile benefits within them which elude the rest of us. It does seem odd to me that, whilst these three motives are the only ones actually reported from participants, nobody seems to have realised that they are the ones which almost anybody would advance when being questioned by a stranger. Yet they continue to perform. Has nobody thought to ask them why? But discussions with those who have known them for half a lifetime would be likely to lead to some interesting and more useful conclusions than those on offer here. But enough quibbling - this is a good book, and probably deals with its subject in quite enough detail and depth for its intended audience. Anyone interested in starting the performance of a Mumming Play next Christmas will find all they need here, and useful pointers as to where to go for further information.