

# Cunning Folk

A personal reflection

# European Cunning Folk

- Names given to folk-healers and magic-workers in Europe include:
- the French *devins-guérisseurs* ("soothsayer-healers") and *leveurs de sorts* ("curse-lifters")
- the Italian [\*benandanti\*](#) ("good walkers")
- the Dutch *toverdokters* ("magic-doctors") or *duivelbanners* ("devil-banners")
- the German *Hexenmeister* or *Kräuterhexen*
- the Irish *bean feasa* ("woman of knowledge"), *banfháidh* or *fáidhbhean* ("seeress")<sup>[4][5]</sup>
- the Spanish [\*curanderos\*](#) ("healers")
- the Portuguese *curandeiros/as*, *benzedeiros/as* ("blessers") or *mulheres de virtude* ("women of virtue")
- the Danish *kloge folk* ("wise folk")<sup>[2]</sup>
- the Swedish *klok gumma* ("wise old woman") or *klok gubbe* ("wise old man")<sup>[6][7][8][9][10]</sup>
- the Slavic [\*vedmaki\*](#) ("warlocks")
- the Finnish and Karelian [\*tietäjät\*](#) ("knowers")

# Who were or are they?

- Folk magical practitioners who earned their living selling magical services.
- Not of an elite class who tended to use High Magic privately if at all
- Certainly not witches.
- Sold methods of un-bewitching oneself or others
- Sold herbal cures for common problems
- They sold methods of finding buried treasure
- Information was private. Doctor patient only.
- They provided divination, normally forbidden

# Brief history of magic

- Beginning in the Roman Empire where Latin, Greek, Egyptian and Babylonian magic fused together.
- Christian magic particularly in monasteries
- The Reformation. Several ritual methods were forbidden leading to local cunning folks arising on a local basis.
- The Enlightenment and the Victorian magic. Magical Revivals
- Modern times Golden Dawn, AO spare, Crowley, Cubical Stone, Chaos Magicians, etc.

# Cunning man's/woman's resources

- Impressive reception room
- Impressive magical outfit
- Suitable books
- Correct astrological times of day/week or month
- Personal purity. Magical baths
- Spells Invocations, psalms, charms etc
- Figures and images
- Natural objects
- Tools particularly for treasure seeking
- Means of communication with spirits. Drawing pad. Magical journal. Etc.

# What were the roles of cunning folk?

Medicine and surgery, illicit abortion

Finding stolen property, detection

Magic of an operative kind Making something happen. Relationship matters,

Maker of magical objects

Controlling animals, typically working horses

Divination

astrology

# Old Winter cunning man

- Lived near Stowmarket in Suffolk
- Had the power of hypnosis and detection
- Hypnotised person stealing wood at night
- Made that person wander round a field without being able to get out
- Eventually un- hypnotised the thief
- Possible teacher of George Bang Bang White
- And thus the clan of Robert Cochrane witches
- Victorian Derren Brown

# Cunning Murrell

- Cunning man of Hadleigh , Essex
- Made his own witch Bottles some of iron
- Had a copy of Key of Solomon magical text
- Had a collection of books on obstetrics
- From which he gave out advice and practice
- Folklore. He could fly far away. Power of transvection

# What role can they have now?

- Medical practice is now thoroughly professional, with academically qualified staff.
- Medical Herbalists are similarly qualified
- Magical practitioners. Regulated by contract law.
- All Cunning magic was Judeo Christian. Can it now be Pagan or Heathen if desired?
- Yes. Particularly in the field of English spirit entities.
- The Spirit Lodge, a virtual temple, can be used

# East Anglian Spirit Lodge or East Anglian Cunning Lodge

- Devoted to the spirits and deities of East Anglia
- Concentration on operative magical work and allied mystical states
- Visiting and detecting power points in the land or cityscape
- Making magical machines and objects.
- Cunning is knowing. Cunnan AS “He kens it” Scots
- Knowing by a system of knowledge gnosis
- Lodge is a work room in vernacular English

# Lodge Spirits: a selection

Norse and/or Anglo Saxon deities

Spirits of the larger towns

Spirits of Norfolk, Suffolk and East Anglia

Personal Hot Points located along chosen routes

Folk spirits of the land of East Anglia, Black Shuck,  
Hidden tunnels, Wells, Castles, and others

Milton's good angels from Paradise Lost

Milton's bad angels (demons). All Pagan deities.

Lodge Daemon: Aratron Intelligence of Saturn

# Other East Anglian folkloric spirits

- Old Shuck in his many different forms
- Hidden Tunnels
- Springs and wells
- Castles
- Grey Lady and “the Goddess”
- Spirit of nature. Green Man
- Bunyan’s spirits, etc from Pilgrim’s Progress
- Etc, etc. Spirits of the Lodge are self selected

# Hot Points of East Anglia

- Hot points are places of energy concentration in the Land and Cityscape. Although personal in choice they tend to follow very ancient routes
- Route 140 Cromer outside of Grand Hotel
- Route 140 Norwich. Royal Hotel, Agricultural Hall Plain
- A 140 Scole Bridge across Waveney
- A140 Beacon Hill near Coddensham/ Combretovium
- A47 trunk road East to West

# Further geographical hot points

- A11 and similar 11 roads leading via Norwich to Bacton. M11 originates in London. St Stephens Norwich was via Icenorum
- A14 etc. Felixstowe, Land guard Fort to Old Hunstanton. South East to North East of EA
- The coast road where it exists Landguard to Cromer then to Hunstanton & Kings Lynn
- Not to ignore routes leading to and from Peddar' s Way often now c roads and tracks

# Bodily meridians

- Physical hot points located on the body.
- see the Secret Book of John or other non western systems for details
- Old books on Physic illustrate them
- Also appear in the Indian chakra system
- Similar systems in China for accupuncture  
Persia etc

# Lodge operative magical workings

- Admission and greeting of strangers
- Lighting of power candles
- Invocation and evocation of Spirits
- Empowerment of spirits and cunning folk
- Doing magic
- Lodge dismissal and closure
- I choose Red. white and black **candles**. Other combinations can be used.

# Magical training and exercise

- The wheel of the year.
- Local deities and local spirits roles and abilities
- Materia medica.
- Role of candles
- Pact making with spirits
- Conjuring and charging of spirits
- Expulsion of unruly spirits
- Building of the spirit house.

# Spirit House

- Wooden spirit house can help visualisation
- Structure. 3 floors and a dungeon basement
- The basement is a room for the unconscious
- The middle floors are for strategy and tactics
- The roof leads are for sensory input. Sound  
smell
- For those who know it, think of Orford Castle

# Victorian changes to cunning craft

- Move to universal Education
- Adoption of Secular attitudes in religion, medicine
- Persecution of non institutional healing
- Loosening of the grip of religion
- Adoption of non standard religions, Indian, Neo Gnostic Theosophy for example
- Path from religion C of E, Nonconformist, Cult group, Atheism

# Fringe knowledge

- New science and pseudo science
- Female mysteries, Male mysteries?
- Herbalism and hydrotherapy
- Mysteries of Britain, ley lines
- UFOs and Ancient Astronauts
- Some ecological thinking
- The Spirit Lodge is similar to Spiritualism

# Wicca and or Traditional craft?

- Different roots. Folk magic VS High Magic
- Lucifer/ the Devil is accepted part of folk culture. Not of high culture.
- Pagan gods. Not of traditional Culture
- Some learnt about Pagan deities at school
- The US has retained an active folk culture and is arguably older

# A reborn cunning craft

- Cunning craft is eminently practical
- On the whole it is without the negative prejudice of witchcraft
- It is a systematic way of achieving objectives
- The lodge aids in the achievement of objectives. A blank screen for wishes
- Country wisdom to solve humane problems

# Heathen or Pagan? Genealogy of modern Paganism

- Wicca arose from Italian Witchcraft in 1930's
- The First Norse Hearths in North London in the 1960s. See Stubba's Book of Rites
- Druidry. First Pagan Druidry London 1960s
- Female Mysteries a spreading interest
- Cunning Folk. A home for regional spirits
- The lodge a place where workers lodged, not exclusively masonic.

# Are Cunning Folk modern Shamans?

- They have a priestly role.
- They claim to change someone's luck
- They can increase confidence
- By increasing confidence they can help plan and execute events.
- Shamans are a priestly class of the nomadic Russian Tungus
- Local priorities apply to the Shaman or Shamanka

# Lodge or personal Daemon

- In occult lore every person is attended by a personal daemon.
- A daemon is a spiritual being . It is neither good nor bad of itself, Socrates (pagan)says it is **a kind of divine spirit, oracle, or “sign,” that takes the form of an inner voice or non-vocal nudge**
- It has many popular names. Holy Guardian Angel (in Thelema and Christianity) is one. The daemonic spirit can be the ruler of a Lodge
- Saturn (Saeter Anglo Saxon) rules EA spirit Lodge

# Charmers and Blessers

- Based on an innate ability passed on by God at birth
- Did not normally charge for their skills
- Easily confused with the Cunning Folk
- Took on psychiatric cases. Obsessive illnesses and fairy trouble could be treated.
- Blessers more typical of the West Country
- International comparisons of role

# Murky doings

- In the heyday of cunning craft the malevolent power of witches was widely believed in.
- Unbewitching was a widely desired power
- Cunning men and women made Unbewitching part of their repertoire of powers
- Expellers (pellars) removed undesirable spirits from a person or place

# In summary

- Historically lodges of cunning folk are rare
- A case can be made for Spirit lodges. Lodges typical of places of labour
- Pagan revivals tend to be centred on one type or tradition. Eg Druid, Heathen, Wicca, Trad Craft, Shaman
- A lodge allows for all local traditions to be represented and worked.

# Books to read

- The Cunning man's Handbook, The practice of English Folk Magic, Jim Baker, Avalonia
- Defences against the witches Craft John Canard Avalonia
- Cunning Folk. Owen Davies
- Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits, Emma Wilby, Sussex Academic Press
- Ecstasies, Carlo Ginsburg. Anthropological and trans European angle. Penguin

# Some books read by Cunning Folk

- Key of Solomon. Anon
- The Book of Oberon Anon English Spirit Craft
- The Fourth Book of Cornelius Agrippa. Not written by Agrippa, but with interesting content. Tr. Robert Turner
- Cornelius Agrippa the first Three books, Not a fake. Aristotelian Medicine
- James I Demonologie. Anti Magic and anti Pagan. But was consulted by Cunning Folk