The Dukes & the Department of English Literature and Creative Writing at Lancaster University Present

DON'T KEEP THE WICKER MAN WAITING

FOLK HORROR 50 YEARS AFTER THE WICKER MAN

Friday 27 October

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

ANDREW MICHAEL HURLEY

Andrew Michael Hurley's first novel, The Loney, was originally published in 2014 by Tartarus Press and then John Murray a year later, after which it won the 2015 Costa First Novel Award and the 2016 British Book Industry awards for Debut Novel and Book of the Year. Devil's Day was published in 2017 and went on to jointly win the 2018 Royal Society of Literature Encore Award for best second novel. His BBC Radio 4 series, Voices in the Valley, which aired in autumn 2022 won bronze at this year's Aria Awards for audio and radio broadcasts. His third novel, Starve Acre, published in 2019, has been recently adapted into a feature film, starring Matt Smith and Morfydd Clark which had its premiere at the 2023 London Film Festival. The author lives in Lancashire and teaches Creative Writing at Manchester Metropolitan University's Writing School.

SYMPOSIUM ORGANISERS

PROFESSOR CATHERINE SPOONER

Catherine Spooner is Professor of Literature and Culture at Lancaster University. Her research encompasses Gothic literature and culture from the late eighteenth century to the present, and fashion and costume in literature and film. She is the author of three books: Fashioning Gothic Bodies, Contemporary Gothic and Post-Millennial Gothic: Comedy, Romance and the Rise of Happy Gothic. She has also co-edited four books including The Routledge Companion to Gothic and The Cambridge History of the Gothic Volume 3: The Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries. Recently, she has published chapters on feminist folk horror and folk horror, tourism and the Lancashire witches. She is also a prize-winning writer of poetry and fiction with a Gothic slant.

JOHNATHAN ILOTT

Johnathan is a post-graduate researcher and Associate Lecturer with Lancaster University's Film Department. His research explores how the afterlife has been portrayed on screen. Johnathan works as a film programmer and curator with extensive experience working in the UK's independent cinema and cultural sector. He is Head of Film and Comedy at The Dukes in Lancaster, a creative hub in the heart of the city, dedicated to delivering live performances and film to audiences in Lancashire.

SYMPOSIUM SCHEDULE

FRIDAY 27 OCTOBER 2023

09.00 - 09.30 Arrival, Registration, Refreshments

09.30 - 09.45 Welcome (The Round)

09.45 - 10.45 Keynote: Andrew Michael Hurley: The Goose and the Common: Folk Horror and Land Ownership (The Round)

10.45 - 11.00 Refreshments

PARALLEL SESSIONS 1

11.00 - 12.20

BEFORE THE WICKER MAN (The Gallery)

Stephen Curtis - Folk Horror Renaissance? Representing the Early Modern in Folk Horror Cinema

Hannah O'Flanagan - Magic on the moors: the proto-folk horror of Marjorie Bowen's 'Kecksies'

Robert Edgar and Adam James Smith – Keeping the Wicker Man Waiting: 300 Years of Folk Horror

HISTORY OF THE WICKER MAN (The Round)

James Chapman - The Film Finances Archive and The Wicker Man

David Cottis – The Wicker Man & Anthony Shaffer

Andrew Smith - The Golden Bough from a Greco-Roman perspective in relation to the Wicker Man

12.20 - 13.00 Lunch

PARALLEL SESSIONS 2

13.00 - 14.20

ECO FOLK HORROR (The Gallery)

Tom Duxbury - Bring back your apples: Can folk horror help fight the ecological crisis?

Pam Walker - What if the old ways were right: To what extent is paganism exploited for shock effect in folk horror films?

Beth Cortese - The Green Future of Folk Horror

FOLK HORROR'S OBJECTS (The Round)

Hannah Singleton - Folk Horror's Material Culture: an analysis of Summerisle's objects, craft, and ritual

Beccy Kennedy-Schtyk - (Un)grounding the Stones: exploring the role of stone circles and walls in The Wicker Man, Children of the Stones and the work of Nigel Kneale

14.20 - 14.30 Break

PARALLEL SESSIONS 3

14.30 - 15.50

CREATIVE PRACTICES (The Gallery)

Maxine Gee - A Part, A Whole: A Creative Practices Screenwriting Exploration of Female Character Types in Folk Horror

Sophie Parkes-Nield - 'The Wicker Man effect': Writing Everyday folklore

Liam Bell - Embracing and resisting the influence of The Wicker Man on the writing of The Sleepless

GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN FOLK HORROR (The Round)

Chloe Campbell - Wicker Men and Wicca Women: Folk Horror, The Wicker Man (1973) and Twenty-First Century Witches

Clare Patterson – 'I am woman and man, light with darkness, nothing pure!': Queer(ing) folk horror

Rebecca Gibson - Cutting it: 'Film, Femininity and Folk Horror in Censor (2021)'

15.50 - 16.10 Refreshments

PARALLEL SESSIONS 4

16:10 - 17:30

THE SPACES OF FOLK HORROR (The Gallery)

Andy Thatcher - Shocks are so much better absorbed with the knees bent: exploring common land's complex history through a folk horror methodology.

Jimmy Packham - On strangers' shores: folk horror and the seaside

FOLK HORROR, PERFORMANCE AND MEDIA (The Round)

Andrew Ainscough - Riding the Wicker Man at Alton Towers: Constructing the Theatrics of Folk Horror.

Jodie Passey - The Wicker Man: musical or "film with music"?

Richard Sheppard - Place for 'A Place to Die': an audio/visual essay

17:30 - 17:45 Closing Remarks

18:30 Speakers Conference Dinner. At the Herberium (5, 7 Great John St. LA1 1NQ)

20:30 The Wicker Man: The Final Cut Screening. At The Dukes (ticket included with registration)

ABSTRACTS

ANDREW AINSCOUGH
Lancaster University, The University of Central Lancashire and Blackpool and the Fylde College.
Riding the Wicker Man at Alton Towers: Constructing the Theatrics of Folk Horror.

This paper will use the rollercoaster at Alton Towers theme park based around The Wicker Man as an exploration of how to construct motifs of folk horror and how the rides arranges these in a recognisable but comedic-satirical style. I will use a blend of memoir and critical thought to present the idea of how The Wicker Man is lodged in our cultural consciousness and exemplified by the repetitive sideshow of the theme park attraction and its various surrounding accoutrements such as the gift shop and photo booth. The idea of the Theme Park for understanding genre is under-utilised and it is a space of theatre, artifice and mimesis. Alton Towers in 2018 opened this rollercoaster with the unexpected theme of the folk-horror classic. The Wicker Man is probably the most culturally prevalent amongst folk-horror classics, but as a ride theme it stands out as a distinct peculiarity alongside other more expected attractions such as Nemesis, Oblivion and Galactica. However, in experiencing the ride itself (which I have) we are # propelled into folk horror imagery through the semi-safety of the rollercoaster cart. But what do we expect from these folk-theatrics along the way? What can it say about Folk-Horror's uncomfortable jostling with popular and the mainstream? This paper will ride the rollercoaster itself and re-interpret The Wicker Man's inherent theatricality in an ultra-processed world of artifice and performance and present a new aspect on folk horror's plunging sense of dread.

Dr Andrew Ainscough is an academic, playwright and musician based in Lancaster. He has a PhD from Lancaster University exploring Alan Bennett and the production of queer playwrighting. He is interested in the queer, influence and how personal biography interacts with text and interpretation. He is currently working on a monograph exploring queerness in Alan Bennett and a new play (that is not Bennett- related). He also has a strong interest in the post-critical and how music, theatre and a wider sense of the creative interact with critical discourse. He teaches in creative writing, experimental fiction and playwrighting across the northwest of England at Lancaster University, The University of Central Lancashire and Blackpool and the Fylde College.

LIAM BELL
University of Stirling
Embracing and resisting the influence of The Wicker Man on the writing of The Sleepless

My forthcoming novel The Sleepless, published September 2023, utilizes folk horror tropes, motifs and tone to explore a cult based in the remote peninsula of Ardnamurchan, Scotland, whose adherents believe that sleep is a social construct. From first inception (initially as a film treatment) the narrative has held echoes of Robin Hardy's film: the outsider arriving to investigate an isolated community; pagan-inspired rituals; and even a 'set-piece' scene with a large bonfire surrounded by dancing commune-members.

The proposed paper will chart the process of writing The Sleepless with an awareness of the influence of the film, focusing particularly on the ways in which the novel might signal a self-aware homage and, conversely, the points at which the narrative seeks to diverge from both The Wicker Man and wider/subsequent folk horror tropes. In doing so, the paper will make use of seminal readings including Folk Horror Revival: Field Studies and Adam Scovell's Folk Horror: hours dreadful and things strange; incorporate discussion of narrative theory through David Lodge and Monika Fludernik; and draw comparisons with contemporary novels from Max Porter, Francine Toon, and Andrew Michael Hurley. Primarily a practice-led investigation, the paper will allow for a first-hand account of the joys and challenges of writing a new narrative in a space dominated by an iconic, widely-known film like The Wicker Man.

Dr Liam Bell is a novelist and Senior Lecturer based at the University of Stirling. Author of three previous novels – So It Is, The Busker, Man at Sea – his fourth novel, The Sleepless, is forthcoming from Fly on the Wall Press in September 2023. More at www.liammurraybell.com.

CHLOE CAMPBELL
Lancaster University
Wicker Men and Wicca Women: Folk Horror, The Wicker Man (1973) and Twenty-First Century Witches

This paper identifies the influence of The Wicker Man (1973) on three postmillennial on-screen witch narratives: Robert Egger's 2015 film The Witch: A New England Folktale, Anna Biller's 2016 film The Love Witch, and Netflix's Chilling Adventures of Sabrina (2018 - 2020).

Brigid Cherry's 2006 chapter 'The Wicca Woman: gender, sexuality and religion in The Wicker Man' considers the 1973 film's female characters as neo-Pagan 'Wicca Women', whom embody empowerment and, as Chloe Germain Buckley summarises, whom female viewers can relate to. In extending Cherry's analysis to witch-centric films produced during the Folk Horror revival of the 2010s, this paper considers 'Wicca Women' in relation to archetypal witch characters. Such an examination recognises the reproduction of Folk Horror elements in an American setting and context, arguing that horror is constructed through the reimagining of associations between paganism and witchcraft, sacrifice and identity, and gender and power.

Drawing from Adam Scovell's categorisation of The Witch: A New England Folktale (2015) as Modern Folk Horror in Folk Horror: Hours Dreadful and Things Strange, this paper demonstrates protagonist Thomasin's potential as a 'Wicca Woman'. Interrogating the influence of the aesthetics, gender politics, and the occultism of 1960s and 1970s Folk Horror, on the 2016 film The Love Witch reveals a potent tension between twentieth and twenty-first century feminisms. Chilling Adventures of Sabrina narratively emulates The Wicker Man to distance witchcraft from paganism. These witch narratives illustrate the influence of The Wicker Man (1973) on modern folk horror, comedy horror, and supernatural coming-of-age narratives.

Chloe Campbell is a Commissioning Editor in academic publishing, based in the North West of England, UK. Chloe is a PhD student at Lancaster University, researching the figure of the suburban, domesticated witch in twentieth and twenty-first century popular culture.

JAMES CHAPMAN
University of Leicester
The Film Finances Archive and The Wicker Man (1973)

The Wicker Man (1973) had a notoriously difficult production history. Previous accounts of the making of the film have depended largely on interviews with surviving members of cast and crew: accordingly they are rich in anecdote but often unreliable on detail. This paper offers a new perspective on the production of The Wicker Man based on the archive of the completion guarantor Film Finances – and in the process challenges some of the common myths and misconceptions about the making of the film. Film Finances (established in London in 1950) was the leading provider of completion guarantees for independent British producers – a guarantee to distributors and investors that the film will be completed on schedule without any further call on the investors if it ran over budget (which The Wicker Man did quite significantly). Its archive includes scripts, budgets, schedules, daily progress reports, cost reports, and correspondence between the guarantor, producers and distributors.

The Film Finances Archive reveals three key points about The Wicker Man. 1. That it was considered a risky proposition from the outset and that Film Finances provided their guarantee in the expectation that the script and schedule would need to be revised during shooting (a highly irregular procedure). 2. That the film was completed on schedule but without all scenes having been completed. 3. That most of the overcost on The Wicker Man (£80,000 over its budget of £406,600) arose during post-production rather than principal photography. A comparison of the two scripts held by the archive and the progress reports also sheds light on the editing of The Wicker Man which was due less to the butchery of its distributor British Lion Films (as commonly maintained) but rather to the fact of the film itself being incomplete.

James Chapman is Professor of Film Studies at the University of Leicester and editor of the Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television. His books include The Money Behind the Screen: A History of British Film Finance, 1945-1985 (Edinburgh University Press, 2022) and Licence to Thrill: A Cultural History of the James Bond Films (3 rd edition, Bloomsbury Academic, 2023).

BETH CORTESE
University of Iceland
The Green Future of Folk Horror

Folk horror creates a sense of awe and anxiety about nature and our relationship to it. The current climate crisis is perhaps a part of renewed interest in the genre due to its focus on small and isolated communities that survive in remote and unforgiving landscapes. From The Wicker Man (1973) to Midsommar (2019) and Midnight Mass (2021), the rituals performed by folk communities offer a sense of solace and control over the future production of food and industry in their communities, hearkening back to Pagan rituals that honoured the seasons, fertility, and crops. The hidden horror contained in the ideology of the neopagan and religious communities depicted in modern folk horror is the role that people play in damaging or manipulating their environment, such as the oil spill that affects the island in Midnight Mass and leads to the search for a "miracle" to resuscitate the island that is their demise, or the artificial selection that leads to a new strain of apple in The Wicker Man. This paper will consider the tensions between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism in folk horror and what the genre still has to teach us about our evolving relationship with our environment and our own natures.

Beth Cortese is an Assistant Professor (Lecturer) in English Literature at the University of Iceland, specializing in Restoration and eighteenth-century Literature. Beth has had articles published in Law and Literature, Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Theatre Research, Orbis Litterarum and in edited collections with Routledge. She has a burgeoning interest in the horror genre and writes fiction and poetry in her spare time.

DAVID COTTIS
Middlesex University
The Wicker Man & Anthony Shaffer

Among the discussions of The Wicker Man's troubled production, complex release history, and continuing cultural influence, one thing that often gets ignored is its origin, and the central contribution of its screenwriter, Anthony Shaffer.

The proposed paper would aim to rectify this, placing the film within the screenwriter/playwright/novelist's body of work, in particular its focus on a recurring theme, a battle of intellects between two male authority figures accompanied by a structure of entrapment, a combination of what the playwright Stephen Jeffreys refers to as the 'rival brothers' and 'spider and the fly' archetypes. (A similar set of themes also predominates in the work of his own brother, the playwright Peter Shaffer.)

In this connection, the paper would look at the screenplay in relation to Shaffer's stage work, including Sleuth (1970), Murderer (1975), and The Case of the Oily Levantine (1977), and his other screenplays, notably for Hitchcock's Frenzy (1972), Absolution (1978), and the Agatha Christie adaptations Murder on the Orient Express (1974) and Death on the Nile (1978)

The paper would consider Shaffer's position as creator of the postmodern thriller subgenre, as identified by the critic Marvin Carlson, and will consider how The Wicker Man relates to this strand in his work, with Lord Summerisle as a version of the writer-surrogates who feature in the stage plays. It would also look at The Wicker Man's popularity as a countercultural icon, and how this squares with Shaffer's own right-wing views, as expressed In his autobiography.

Dr David Cottis is Senior Lecturer in Scriptwriting and Programme Leader for BA Film at Middlesex University. He received his Ph. D from Birkbeck College. He is also a theatre director, writer, lyricist, and dramaturg, most recently working with James Martin Charlton on the horror play Black Stone for Just Some Theatre Company. His five-actor adaptation of Oliver Twist was taken on national tour by the Love and Madness Company, his short plays Cash and Semolina were seen at the Royal Court Theatre, London, and his opera libretto She Stops at Costa's was shortlisted for the English National Opera's 'New Voices' project. He has edited A Dirty Broth and A Ladder of Words, two anthologies of Twentieth-Century Welsh Plays in English for the Parthian Press, and wrote the chapter on Anthony Newley and Leslie Bricusse for The Oxford Handbook of the British Musical. His book How Stage Playwrights Saved the British Cinema 1930-1956 will be published by Bloomsbury Academic Publishers in 2024.

STEPHEN CURTIS
University of Central Lancashire
Folk Horror Renaissance? Representing the Early Modern in Folk Horror Cinema

The Wicker-Man has long been thought of as part of the infamous 'Unholy Trinity' of folk horror cinema but in many ways it is the exception to this grouping. The other titles, Blood on Satan's Claw and Witchfinder General, are far more closely linked in their period setting and rural English location.
It is the former of these aspects that is the main concern of my paper as I examine the ways in which folk horror cinema depicts the superstitions and belief systems of the Early Modern period.

Alongside more recent films such as The VVitch and A Field in England, this particular branch of folk
horror cinema seeks to go back to the source of the uncertainties and anxieties on which the genre depends. My paper sets out to track the role of landscape, costume, and period setting details in establishing an uncanny sense of time and place. To establish this I will refer also to recent television depictions such as Witchfinder and 'The Trial of Elizabeth Gadge' episode of Inside Number 9, which
both offer a parodic version of familiar tropes and aesthetics.

In discussing the ways in which a specifically folk horror version of the Early Modern period is created and exploited, I aim to demonstrate that our idea of folk horror is inextricably linked to a popular representation of English history and that in turn this representation underpins more modern set examples.

Dr Stephen Curtis is a lecturer in English Literature at the University of Central Lancashire. He is currently writing a monograph entitled Early Modern Horror which seeks to establish a new conversation between two fields that are often considered to be unconnected. Having presented and written on a range of horror media from video games to 20 th century public information films about the dangers of British farms, he is fascinated by the darker side of things in general.

TOM DUXBURY
Independent Researcher
Bring back your apples: Can folk horror help fight the ecological crisis?

This paper examines how The Wicker Man speaks to the psychological impact of widespread ecological collapse, and asks how modern folk horror cinema might do the same.

Placing The Wicker Man within the context of 1970s eco activism - with reference to Donovan's failed Isle of Skye commune, environmental protest imagery, and the organic movement slogan, 'Know your farmer, know your food' - we see that, half a century on, the film speaks acutely to our current ecological crises. The people of Summerisle respond to crop failure with solutions both rational (respect for nature, land, the seasons) and deeply irrational (human sacrifice).

This paper will explore our psychological shortcomings in facing the ecological crisis that has occurred in the 50 years since The Wicker Man. 70% of the world's wildlife has been lost; a sixth mass extinction. Wes Craven said horror cinema is a boot camp for the psyche. What role can folk horror play for a social psyche confronted by widespread human-driven ecological collapse? Should it play such a role? The paper argues that successful folk horror cinema cannot help but do so.

Midsommar examines toxic relationships and sexual power. But many modern horror films do this. So, what is the purpose of its folk narratives and aesthetics? Perhaps a better way forward is shown by Enys Men, with its exploration of the shattering effects of landscape and memory, grief and loss. The horror in the ending of The Wicker Man is this: If the crops fail again, what will the people of Summerisle do next year? Recant? Or double down on their fatal irrationalism? Given the scale of our global crisis - and the retreat of many into 'post-truth' politics - this question has never been so crucial.

Tom is the author of the blog, Portals of London, a fictionalised account of strange occurrences in the capital. Classic folk horror is among its many influences. I have spoken about the blog with The Guardian and the Sense of Place podcast.

ROBERT EDGAR AND ADAM JAMES SMITH
York St John
Keeping the Wicker Man Waiting: 300 Years of Folk Horror

"I hear there is scarce a village in England that has not a Moll White in it".

Mr Spectator, the fictional editor of The Spectator (1711), makes this observation in the 117th issue of the eighteenth century's most famous periodical. Written by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, The Spectator typically delivered self-contained unified essays for a predominantly urban audience. This encounter with Moll White—a witch—forms the centerpiece in a continuing narrative that follows Mr Spectator on a countryside tour, where he, the 'outsider' encounters terrors, prophecies, and peculiar 'magical' rituals – elements that would later manifest on Summerisle. These episodes are indicative of a wider trend in eighteenth-century literature which mobilizes the countryside as a weird—yet domestic—mirror of urban politeness, one where rural ritual invites urban readers to reflect critically on the role of ritual and belief in their own lives – a form of proto-folk horror. The conditions under which Addison and Steele penned this sequence, writing with the Civil War, Restoration and Glorious Revolution all in living memory, were strikingly similar to the social ruptures and cultural traumas that precipitated the emergence of a form of folk horror evident in The Wicker Man. What comes into focus when tracing these cycles back to the early eighteenth century, is a hermeneutics of folk horror, with subsequent generations excising the cultural ghosts of their childhood by staging ghastly encounters in fictional countrysides populated with everything they and their readers don't want to see.

Dr Robert Edgar is a Professor of Writing and Popular Culture at York St John University. He recently co-authored Thomas Hardy and the Folk Horror Tradition (Bloomsbury, 2023) and co-edited and contributed to the forthcoming collections Routledge Companion to Folk Horror (Sept 2023) and Horrifying Children: Hauntology and the Legacy of Children's Fiction (Bloomsbury) and is co-director of the Hauntology and Spectrality research group. Dr Adam James Smith is an Associate Professor of Eighteenth-Century Literature at York St John University, where he is also a co-director of the York Research Unit for the Study of Satire. He works predominantly on satire in the eighteenth-century print culture, and has recently published on the role of satire in the Folk Horror Revival. Together Edgar and Smith are developing a new project exploring the applicability of Folk Horror to proto-Gothic writing of the early eighteenth century.

MAXINE GEE
Bournemouth University
A Part, A Whole: A Creative Practices Screenwriting Exploration of Female Character Types in Folk Horror

Folk Horror has been defined by Adam Scovell (2017) through a chain of interconnected elements: landscape, isolation, skewed beliefs and rituals or supernatural happenings. Developing from an identification of similar elements within the 'unholy trilogy' of The Witchfinder General (1968), The Blood on Stan's Claw (1971), and The Wicker Man (1973) this sub-genre now encompasses a wide-ranging body of scholarship and has seen a resurgence with contemporary films such as The Witch (2015) Midsommar (2019) and Men (2022). Within the sub-genre, female characters are presented in a variety of roles from innocent victim to the perpetrator of ritualistic acts, often shifting between these spaces across the course of the narrative. No character embodies this ambiguity of role and challenge to/consolidation of patriarchal power as the figure of the witch (Buckley 2019).

In this paper, I explore female roles within folk horror, before examining how I have experimented with them within my short screenplay A-Part, A Whole. Inspired by the structure of Akutagawa's short story, In the Grove, my screenplay examines one female- presenting character, Ava, from three different perspectives. To her partner Mark, Ava is an innocent victim of a ritualistic crime; to Hayley, a social worker investigating the disappearance of homeless people, Ava is a monstrous other; and Ava, the personification of an Aspen tree, only cares about the preservation of her non-human community. Through analysis of techniques used both within my screenplay, and within folk horror films I will demonstrate how multiple female voices are portrayed in the sub-genre.

Dr Maxine Gee is a Principal Academic in Screenwriting at Bournemouth University. She holds a PhD by Creative Practice in Screenwriting from the University of York. In 2015, she was a Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science Summer Fellow. As a creative practitioner, Maxine has written science fiction for film, theatre and prose. Her award-winning short films Terminal (2018) and Standing Woman (2020) have screened at a range of international film festivals. Maxine has published on science fiction screenwriting for BSFA FOCUS magazine, posthuman noir in Cinema: Journal of Film and Philosophy; web series in the Palgrave Handbook of Script Development and on her practice research screenplay Golems Inc. in Sightlines: Filmmaking in the Academy. She has recently received funding from the ESRC Festival of Social Science 2022 for an interactive theatre event exploring neurodivergence and how future humans are portrayed in science fiction film and television.

REBECCA GIBSON
Lancaster University
Cutting it: 'Film, Femininity and Folk Horror in Censor (2021)'

Enid Baines, the protagonist of Prano Bailey-Bond's directorial debut Censor (2021), dreams of a world free of video nasties. She takes her job as a censor for the British Board of Film Classification seriously, exerting extreme control over every minute of the fictional atrocities she witnesses. My interest in this paper is in exploring how Enid's control slips over the course of the film, and how Bailey-Bond uses this slippage to play with perceptions of folk horror and video nasties, suggesting that repression of trauma and undiagnosed mental illness are far more dangerous than the perceived fictional threat of ritualistic murder in the woods. As Enid's fractured psyche devolves into hallucinogenic visions of her long-disappeared little sister, who she believes to be alive and in danger of falling victim to one of the video nasty plots she tries so hard to protect the British public from, she loses sight of the divide between fiction and reality. Bailey-Bond uses a combination of Gothic visual cues and camera techniques to blur the audiovisual lines for the viewer, putting Enid in a long white dress as she begins to perform as her own folk horror alter ego and narrowing the camera frame to replicate the look of eighties video nasties. Censor is ultimately a film about the power of films, specifically horror films – about the creation, fictionalisation and consumption of extreme violence and cruelty – but Bailey-Bond summarily rejects the idea that film violence incites the same in real life. Instead, she invites a re-examination of the role of viewership in constructing horror conventions.

Dr Rebecca Gibson completed her PhD entitled 'Uncanny Incisions: Plastic Surgery in the Gothic Mode' in 2021 under the supervision of Catherine Spooner and Sara Wasson at Lancaster University, where she now works in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Office. She loves weird body horror of all kinds and has also published articles on ecohorror, folk horror, feminism and queer Gothic.

BECCY KENNEDY-SCHTYK
Bournemouth University
(Un)grounding the Stones: exploring the role of stone circles and walls in The Wicker Man, Children of the Stones and the work of Nigel Kneale

This presentation explores the ways in which the material of stone (or stone reproduction) has been used within British 1970s Folk Horror film and television to create a paradoxical foci for narratives of protection and disruption. It will consider the tendency for stone – in the form of walls and Neolithic era stone circles – to both veil and bolster folk mythologies connecting to pre-Modern(ist) landscapes as well as its capacity, relatedly, to signify cyclicity. This will be contextualised in terms of late 20th century sociopolitical fears around the environment and spirituality, looking at mise on scenes in The Wicker Man, Children of the Stones and Nigel Kneale's Baby (from the Beasts anthology), The Stone Tape and Quatermass.

Beccy Kennedy-Schtyk is a Senior Lecturer and programme leader for Art Theory and Practice at Manchester School of Art, MMU. She has curated exhibitions for Asia Triennial Manchester. Recent book publications include: (2022) Imaging Migration in Post-war Britain: Artists of Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Taiwanese Heritage, London: Routledge and co-edited – with Paul Gladston and Ming Turner (2021) Visual Culture Wars at the Borders of Contemporary China: Art, Design, Film, New Media and the Prospects of "Post-West" Contemporaneity, London: Palgrave Macmillan. Emerging from research into contested territories in Asia and Diasporic hauntologies, she is currently working on a project involving place research into Welsh history and mythology in conjunction with writing a Folk Horror novel, both of which consider nostalgia, legend and the macabre in relation to late 20thC visual cultures.

HANNAH O'FLANAGAN
Lancaster University
Magic on the moors: the proto-folk horror of Marjorie Bowen's 'Kecksies'

Folk Horror, as a term, is shifting and amorphous. Suggested as a specific identifier by Mark Gatiss in a 2010 BBC documentary, tentative agreement is that the genesis of folk horror stems from an unholy trinity of films: Witchfinder General (1968), The Blood on Satan's Claw (1971) and, of course, The Wicker Man (1973).

However, during the period before these films were released—and, indeed, within other forms of media—examples of what might now fall under the 'folk horror' label may be found. This paper hopes illuminate one such example of proto-folk horror in the work of late fin-de-siecle writer, Marjorie Bowen. Bowen's work, already stepping across genre labels such as the Gothic, the Weird and incorporating the ghost fiction so widely associated with the Victorian and Edwardian periods, displays that specific mixture of rural isolation, superstition and ominous landscape that Adam Scovell felt so integral to the folk horror mode. In particular, Bowen's 'Kecksies' with its backdrop of storm-battered moorlands, historical setting and the mundane yet eerie funerary ritual at its centre works in the same aesthetic vein as Witchfinder General or Robert Eggers' 2015 folk horror offering The VVitch: A New-England Folktale. I hope to demonstrate that her work, using 'Kecksies' as an example, engenders the same feelings and aesthetic effects as more established and understood folk horror works, and shows how 'folk horror' can be used as a descriptor to encompass a wider range of earlier works than currently understood.

Han O'Flanagan is a third-year PhD candidate at Lancaster University, where her research focuses on asexuality in the supernatural short stories of the fin-de-siecle. They have also presented papers and delivered talks on Victorian occulture and queer vampire fiction.

JIMMY PACKHAM
University of Birmingam
On strangers' shores: folk horror and the seaside

The Wicker Man (1973) begins with a flight across the sea, as Sgt. Howie travels from mainland Scotland to the island community of Summerisle in the Hebrides. The sea, the film suggests, is a figure for the cultural abyss that separates Howie from the pagan – and littoral – community to which he travels: Howie crosses the sea and travels beyond the limits of his world(view). Indeed, The Wicker Man is awash with ocean: from the opening coastal sequence, to the libations sacrificed to the 'sea god' that precede the film's 'more dreadful sacrifice' – to the role played by the warm waters of the Gulf Stream, enabling the growth of tropical flora in the otherwise rather cool northern Atlantic.

This paper explores the role of littoral geographies in folk horror, with reference, alongside The Wicker Man, to Neither the Sea Nor the Sand (1972) and tales by M.R. James, Adrian Ross, and Lucie McKnight Hardy. It is especially interested in seasides as sites to consider questions of endurance and belonging. If folk horror concerns itself with what might endure at the strange outer limits of the nation, with areas mostly tucked away from the prying eyes of the metropole, then the seaside functions as a dramatic manifestation of that limit-point. But littoral space is also, as these texts suggest, a site of perishability and impermanence, reshaped daily by the tides and erosion. What kinds of tradition and belonging persist in folk horror narratives when folk horror goes to the seaside? What role does the coast play in maintaining, or troubling, tradition?

Jimmy Packham is a senior lecturer in English at the University of Birmingham, where he specialises in gothic literature and maritime writing. He is currently writing a volume on gothic coasts in British and Irish literature for Cambridge's Elements in the Gothic series and co-editing, with Emily Alder and Joan Passey, a global study of coastal gothic (UWP); with Laurence Publicover, he is writing a book on the human history of the seabed (U of Chicago P). He has recently published on folk horror and war, and co-runs the Haunted Shores research network.

SOPHIE PARKES-NIELD
Sheffield Hallam
'The Wicker Man effect': Writing Everyday folklore

Adam Scovell's 'Folk Horror Chain' describes common motifs found in Folk Horror texts and stresses the significance of a 'summoning' or otherwise violent act (such as possession or sacrifice) resulting from a 'skewed morality' of an isolated community (2014). The Wicker Man's unforgettable dénouement is a paradigm example of this, as we see the fictional Summerisle community perform a strange and, ultimately, barbaric calendar custom to secure a bountiful harvest.

The UK has a rich, varied contemporary calendar of real traditional customs. The intended purposes of these customs might have become redundant or obscured over time – the renewal of rushes in church, for example – or may be unknown altogether, but still customs remain at the heart of many communities. Few such customs, if any, can be considered macabre or have their origins in the supernatural.

Yet the popularity and enduring legacy of The Wicker Man has coloured the perception of calendar customs altogether, something I term 'The Wicker Man effect'. My practice-based PhD in Creative Writing examines representations of the calendar custom in contemporary literature and when introducing my research, I am frequently met by 'The Wicker Man effect': the presumption that my novel explores the 'monstrous tribe' (Keetley, 2020), and their barbaric practices.

This paper examines 'The Wicker Man effect' on my research, with excerpts from my novel-in-progress, Thankstide, to understand how the tropes of Folk Horror and the film's legacy affect our

understanding of everyday folklore and the calendar custom.

Sophie Parkes-Nield is a writer, PhD candidate and Associate Lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University, researching English calendar customs at the Centre for Contemporary Legend (www.contemporarylegend.co.uk). A practice-based PhD programme, Sophie is writing a novel that incorporates a calendar custom to examine what it reveals about individuals and communities in contemporary England. Her debut novel, Out of Human Sight, was published in January 2023. For more information about Sophie, her writing and her research, please visit www.sophieparkes.co.uk

JODIE PASSEY
Lancaster University
The Wicker Man: musical or "film with music"?

The Wicker Man is laced with theatricality as well as music. The cult's traditions derive from folk ritual and performance: e.g., the maypole dance, fire dance, Willow's mating dance, and the May Day celebration. The residents of Summerisle go to incredible lengths to put on a show, essentially following a script that situates Sgt. Howie at the centre of their own medieval mystery play. While critical consensus largely agrees The Wicker Man is a "film with music", it fulfils many genre markers of a musical - and the residents certainly act like they're in a musical. This paper will engage in this debate and argue the validity of placing the film within the musical genre, looking at the structure of the songs, their diegetic qualities, and what they do for the narrative – the technicalities that differentiate a "musical" from a "film with music". I will also discuss the stigma associated with musicals that perhaps keeps the film distanced from the title. As folk elements in early shows such as Oklahoma! (1943) and Brigadoon (1947) helped build the modern musical, I will discuss the musical folk tradition and what The Wicker Man inherits from this. I will also contemplate the film in a wider context of musicals; the dark, experimental film musicals of the 1970s, a 2012 Wicker Man parody musical, and some examples that have interesting parallels with the film such as Jesus Christ Superstar (1970), The Rocky Horror Show (1973), and Spring Awakening (2007).

Jodie Passey is a third-year PhD student at Lancaster University currently writing her dissertation on the Gothic in musical theatre. She has spoken on this subject at conferences in Sheffield and Dublin, and has recently published an article on the Gothic in Schmigadoon! for The Conversation.

CLARE PATTERSON
University of Manchester
'I am woman and man, light with darkness, nothing pure!': Queer(ing) folk horror

This creative-critical paper will examine gender and queerness in folk horror, looking both at gendered violence and oppression as a site of (folk) horror, and at representations of queerness and the possibilities of queer embodiment within the genre. Beginning by looking at the potential for gender essentialism in the ancient and modern pagan religions which inspire and appear within folk horror, this paper with consider how imagery and metaphor of birth and fertility are used as tools of (gendered) violence, particularly in the 1970 BBC film Robin Redbreast, as well as in films including The Wicker Man (1973) and Blood on Satan's Claw (1971).

This paper will then consider films that interrogate this potential for gendered violence, reaching variously towards both queer horror and queer embodiment. This will focus initially on Men (2022) and its use of body horror to queer both the gendered body and gendered violence, then on the 1974 BBC film Penda's Fen and its depiction of queer adolescence, using elements of folk horror to explore both queer alienation and queer embodiment in relation to national, locational, and gendered identities. This paper will combine academic and film criticism with nature and life writing, exploring these films through a creative-critical lens which includes personal anecdote alongside academic analysis.

Clare Patterson (they/she) is a writer from Northumberland. They are currently pursuing a PhD in Creative Writing from the University of Manchester on the British countryside, the climate crisis, and queer temporality.

RICHARD SHEPPARD
University of East Anglia
Place for 'A Place to Die': an audio/visual essay

1973 saw the release of a British chiller in which a secretive rural community's bloodthirsty religion is scrutinised and revealed through the intrusion of an outsider. This outsider is considered to be a perfect sacrifice due to their disposition and predicament, and plans are made to murder them to ensure the prosperity of the community. The plot of the Wicker Man, certainly, but also the narrative for A Place to Die, an episode of the ITY anthology series Thriller, created by Brian Clemens (And Soon the Darkness, The Watcher in the Woods) and broadcast on the 26th May 1973, seven months before The Wicker Man.

This audio visual essay looks at the eerie similarities between both texts, and how A Place to Die both represents and eventually turns away from being Folk Horror into a more commonplace tale of Satanic worship that places it more alongside the iconography of Dennis Wheatley then as the successor to the BBC's Play for Today's Robin Redbreast, broadcast three years before. The essay will also try and place the episode within a larger cultural context of a growing middle class moving to the country to escape 'the rat race' and the back to nature mentality that enjoyed a resurgence in the late 1960s and 1970s.

Richard Sheppard is a podcaster, academic and author, as well as the co-founder of the Hallowed Histories Project, which deals with the folklore of East Anglia. His academic works can be found in the recent ReFocus: the Films of Wes Cravem (EUP) as well as the upcoming edited collection American Horror Story and Cult Television: Narratives, Histories and Discourses (Anthem). He is also an assistant editor for the Journal of Performance and Adaptation Studies. His fiction can be found in Egaeus Press's The Book of the Sea and in the anthologies Sockhops and Seances (18th Wall Productions) and Shadows Over Avalon (18th Wall Productions).

HANNAH SINGLETON
Manchester School of Art
Folk Horror's Material Culture: an analysis of Summerisle's objects, craft, and ritual

This paper explores the manner in which material culture (costumes and objects) are made use of within The Wicker Man to convey a sense of both tradition and horror to viewers encountering Summerisle. These elements which reappear throughout the folk horror genre connect making, ritual and landscape counter to the bucolic traditions associated with folk art.

Tension is built between half-forgotten rituals of a Britain which have passed from living memory and the reality of these which the character of Howie must confront within the film; the maypole being a still common enough symbol in 1970s Britain, yet on the island is placed back in the centre of a rural agriculturally dependent economy and overlayed with sexuality connecting the human residents as part of this ecosystem.

Within the film crafting of objects again connects the residents to the land and agrarian economies. Corn dollies appear as a motif throughout and represent this combining of ritual crafting and the crops produced from the landscape. The population of Summerisle is shown to be dependent on the land in a manner which is counter to the post-industrialised society of Howie (and most of the British population), from this reliance on the landscape the 'horror' of the film is set in motion. This tension between the old and new is played with through the objects and costumes used, traditional translated into the present day has an edge of horror. Jones writing in 1951 stated that the folk arts were "dead" yet within The Wicker Man corn dollies and maypoles have been given a new, threatening presence within the imagined British countryside.

Hannah Singleton is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Art and Performance, within Manchester School of Art. She teaches critical and cultural theory units across art and design programmes, with a particular emphasis on material cultures, place and identity.

Recent work explores the legacy of the Pendle Witches through analysis of material culture and artistic practice situated in this northern English landscape; trauma and memorialisation in the countryside (particularly related to female trauma and witch hunts); the performance of genders and homemaking in contemporary arts practice. Current research and writing in development connects folk horror, material culture, and craft within the rural and semi-rural landscape.

ANDREW SMITH
Independent Researcher
The Golden Bough from a Greco-Roman perspective in relation to the Wicker Man

Sir James Frazer's The Golden Bough is regarded as the main written source of folklore for The Wicker Man. In the magazine Cinefantastique (1977), the director Robin Hardy confirmed that many of the film's iconic ideas and images are sourced from this text such as: sympathetic magic, the hand of glory, beetles on strings, fire jumping, phallic May poles, and the Wicker Man itself. Subsequent articles have usually elaborated on this perspective and examined The Golden Bough as a source of folklore. However, there is another way this text can be read.

The classicist Paula James observes that although The Wicker Man emphasises Celtic ritual, it has an underlying "Greco-Roman timbre" that may not have been "consciously created". However, she did not link this observation to the source text. This paper explores this perspective further and proposes a supplementary way of reading The Golden Bough as a source of Greco-Roman myth-themes that also found their way into the film.

Firstly, some general features of the film are compared to devices found in Greek Tragedy. Secondly, the mythology of specific Greek-Tragic figures found in The Golden Bough are examined to argue that their stories have parallels in the more hidden sub-text and subliminal imagery of the film. Frazer's method was to interweave classical Greco-Roman mythology with folklore. The aim of this paper is to open up an additional perspective to show The Wicker Man also incorporates these two influences and thereby mirrors the internal methodology of The Golden Bough.

Andy Smith has been a Wicker Man enthusiast since he stumbled across the film on Alex Cox's Moviedrome in 1988. He has also been interested in Greek mythology since a child. In the last few years, he has re-kindled this interest and been visiting the theatres of London to watch Greek Tragic plays. To his surprise this opened up a new perspective on The Wicker Man and an article discussing this will appear in the 2023 edition of the fanzine Nuada. He lives in Croydon, a place coincidently linked to the Wicker Man. Edward Woodward (Sergeant Howie) was born there. The plane Howie flew in the film made an emergency landing in outskirts of the Croydon area and was left overnight. In a strange mirror of the fiery ending of the film it was torched by the locals.

ANDY THATCHER
University of Bristol
Shocks are so much better absorbed with the knees bent: exploring common land's complex history through a folk horror methodology.

Doreen Massey argues that place is a 'simultaneity of stories-so-far' (2005, 130) which requires 'thinking time and space as mutually imbricated and...the product of interrelations' (125). My research explores the complex meanings of a specific kind of place – English common land – by considering commons as sites of haunting through both creative and archival work; Clouties (2022) combined folklore, folk ritual and historical sources to examine female commoners, female anti-enclosure protest and male violence at a woodland common near to Stonehenge. Following this 'spectral turn' from a more documentary approach, I'm now researching centuries of warfare and extraction at heathland overlooking the Jurassic Coast in Devon. Such work has drawn on Avery Gordon's (2008) theorising of the erased and the traumatic as spectral, and Mark Fisher's (2012) reworking of Derrida's term hauntology as lost and unrealised utopias.

This paper explores the centrality of place to folk horror by combining Massey's scholarship with Gordon's and Fisher's to discuss key works such as The Wicker Man (1973), Penda's Fen (1974) and Enys Men (2022), considering melancholic (Bowring, 2017) and nostalgic (Wright, 2009) approaches to history and landscape. It argues that a folk horror approach is a valid and valuable means of understanding and representing a material and historic place, especially in a time of climate emergency and social crisis, by pointing to the complex history of common land, the recent radical folk revival and to my own creative practice.

Andy Thatcher is in the second year of a practice-as-research PhD in Film and TV at the University of Bristol where he is exploring the meanings of English common land and ways of representing this through filmmaking. He has presented papers and short films internationally at conferences and festivals, made films with several conservation charities and his work has appeared in The Guardian and on the BBC. He is a member of Bristol's Centre for Environmental Humanities and currently working on a book about common land.

PAM WALKER
Open University
What if the old ways were right: To what extent is paganism exploited for shock effect in folk horror films?

My paper will address how paganism is situated in folk horror films and whether, and in what way, alternative value systems are exploited to provide the horror aspect. I will look at whether pagan themes are close to the reality of pagan or nature religions or is this where the writer/director has to move into the realms of fantasy or the supernatural to scare.

I will be looking at the Unholy Trinity of The Wicker Man, The Witchfinder General and Blood on Satan's Claw, and comparing how paganism is used in these to how it is used in folk horror revival films of the twenty first century such as Wake Wood, The Ritual, Kill List, Dogged and Men.

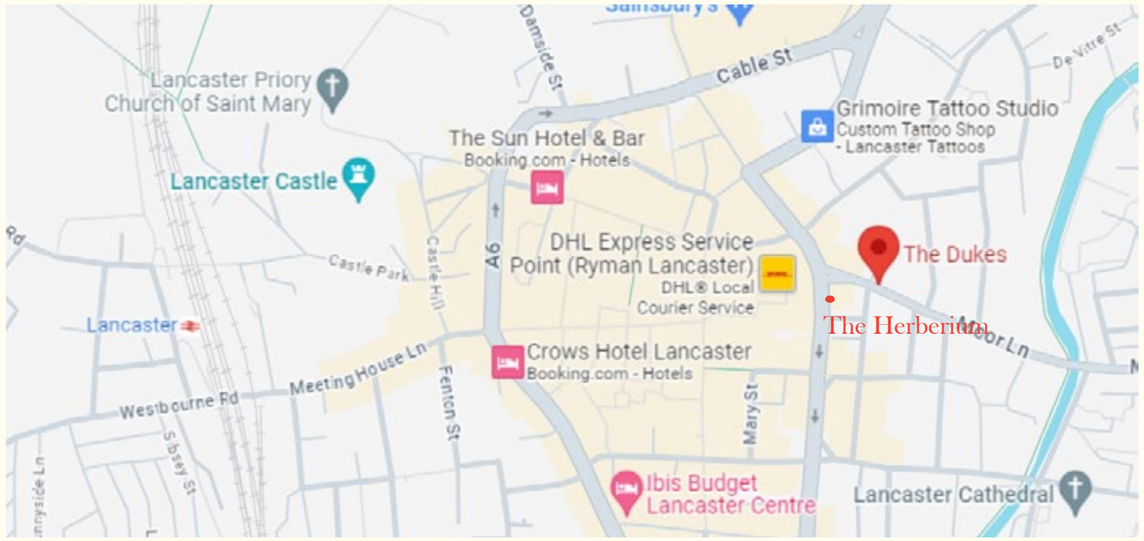
My research considers what, if any, aspects of paganism are used to horrify or terrify the viewer, using Ann Radcliffe's definitions of horror and terror and Freud's theory of The Uncanny.

The new films use pagan religions and cults in a folk horror genre which re-invents or resurrects ideas from previous films such as The Wicker Man and The Blood on Satan's Claw.

But my research looks at whether it is these pagan aspects which provide the scares or do the films revert to standard horror. My conclusion is that paganism in various forms is used to provide terror which despite suggesting horrific events, can still be seen as 'morally good'.
I argue that the shock effect in folk horror films is provided by the 'horror' which show more explicit and gory violent events, which are immoral.

Dr Walker is a lecturer for the Open University specialising in Early Modern History. She has always had an interest in the Gothic and Folk Horror, particularly that set in the early modern period. She gained her PhD in Art History and Visual Studies from Manchester University in 2012, focusing on dress on medieval funeral monuments. She decided to return to study and has just finished her dissertation as part of the MA in English Studies (The Gothic) at Manchester Metropolitan University.

USEFUL INFORMATION



TRAVEL
Venue: The Dukes, Moor Lane, Lancaster, LA1 1QE

The Dukes is a 10-minute walk from Lancaster Train Station and only a 5-minute walk from Lancaster Bus Station. Lancaster is a walkable city so if you are staying in the town centre we are easy to get to.

There is nearby pay-and-display car park on Bulk Street (LA1 1PX) a few minutes from the building. A full day's parking is between £9-£12

PERSONAL PROPERTY
The Dukes and Lancaster University do not accept responsibility for the loss of or damage to personal property. Symposium delegates are advised to always keep their personal possessions with them.

SHOPS/ATM
There is an ATM located down the road at the Stonewell Post Office, 3 Stonewell, Lancaster LA1 1NJ.
Lancaster City Centre is a few minutes walk from the venue.

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CONTACT INFORMATION
This symposium is timed to coincide with the Dukes Theatre's annual Dark Dukes festival, which this year celebrates the anniversary of The Wicker Man with a season of folk horror curated by Andrew Michael Hurley.

Dark Dukes, an annual festival partly supported by Film Hub North. It takes place 25-31 October and celebrates horror classics alongside new releases. Delegates registration includes a ticket to a screening of The Wicker Man: The Final Cut at 8.30pm taking place at The Dukes. The ticket will be emailed to participants in advance of the screening.

The full programme can be found HERE. With the booking screen code 'keepwaiting' delegates can claim a discount to all Friday 27 - Sunday 29 screenings.