

BRITISH FESTIVALS AND TRADITIONS: BELTANE

by Richie Mullaney

<http://naukabezgranic.pl/podcasty/great-britain/>

Up in Scotland and North England they celebrate the Beltane. Beltane is celebrated on the night of the first of May, it marks the beginning of Summer, it's a very old festival that goes back thousands of years.

The story is that Beltane, the pagan God of fire, he came down and gave the gift of fire to man, when he was on Earth he fell in love with a mortal woman, and took her as his Queen.

When that union was formed he had to sacrifice his immortality, his godlike powers...for the love of his life, and he did! When this happened he transformed from being the God of fire to becoming the 'Green Man.'

The green man respects in ancient Celtic history fertility, good harvest, good weather, and each year we reenact the union of Beltane and his Queen.

The main celebration happens in Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland and that's the experience I'll talk about.

Beltane is a strange tradition, but it's an old one and it's very important for the Scottish, the Irish, the English and the Welsh that we remember the time before Christianity, when we had lots of different traditions and beliefs.

So, on the night of Beltane, you'll walk up Calton Hill [in Edinburgh] and when you get close to the top, you will walk through an archway of fire! It is a fire festival, with a lot of bonfires around the hill. People are dressed up like faeries, demons, wizards, and warlocks.

Drums will be going in the back and there'll be flutes, double basses, and fiddles playing Celtic music.

Then, there's a procession led by the Green Man and his Queen, followed by the Queen's handmaidens, protected by Beltane's 'bodyguards' dressed in black cloaks and then they reenact the union on an altar built on Calton Hill.

It's a very long standing tradition of ours, it's not religious, although pagan but paganism to the Scots and Irish is more of a culture.

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After the union there's ceilí dancing, drumming lessons, bagpiping and fire dancing, singing etc.

Beltane's festival finishes with the sun rising.

Note: This is spoken English and spoken grammar, the script reflects the story telling style.