



# The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain

By Ronald Hutton

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From the twelve days of Christmas to the Spring traditions of Valentine, Shrovetide, and Easter eggs, through May Day revels and Midsummer fires, and on to the waning of the year, Harvest Home, and Hallowe'en; Ronald Hutton takes us on a fascinating journey through the ritual year in Britain.

His comprehensive study covers all the British Isles and the whole sweep of history from the earliest written records to the present day. Great and lesser, ancient and modern, Christian and pagan, all rituals are treated with the same attention. The result is a colorful and absorbing history in which Ronald Hutton challenges many common assumptions about the customs of the past and the festivals of the present debunking many myths and illuminates the history of the calendar we live by.

*Stations of the Sun* is the first complete scholarly work to cover the full span of British rituals, challenging the work of specialists from the late Victorian period onwards, reworking our picture of the field thoroughly, and raising issues for historians of every period.

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### **Editorial Review**

#### Review

`absorbing study' Lorn Macintyre, Glasgow Herald

`a scholarly work meticulously detailing the origins of every traditional holiday or ritual day in Britain's history ... As a historical document, the breadth of detail is gripping, but as an exploration of British beliefs over the millenium about to go forever, it's unmissable.' Flic Everett, Manchester Evening News

`an exhaustive account of the traditions and rituals practised in the British Isles from time immemorial to the present' Sybil Owen, Oxford Times

`Hutton's work is not dry as dust but of a piece with the ever-expanding purlieux of social history. He does not string out paragraphs upon a modicum of fact. Each is fertile with detail ... this elegantly produced and remarkably cheap volume will find an honoured place in the library of every self-respecting New Age caravan that is Glastonbury-bound, and, elsewhere, it will command a sale well beyond the run-up to Christmas once known as Advent.' Christopher Hawtree, The Independent

`The Stations of the Sun is a dedicated, meticulous piece of research.' David Woodthorpe, Plymouth Evening Herald

`scholarly, readable history of British seasonal rituals ... Hutton takes us informatively through "the ritual year", from Christmas to Bonfire Night' Paul Barker, The Times

`he seeks ... to put the record straight rather than stir up controversy for the sake of it, and has prduced a work that will be respected for its temperate argument and its prodigious research. From Christmas to Hallowe'en, there is barely a ritual or a custom that escapes his eye in the most detailed book of its kind ever written.' Henry Hardcastle, Evergeen, Autumn 1996

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`Ronald Hutton's splendid new book is a comprehensive history of the customs and beliefs which constitute the ritual year in Britain ... it is a tour de force, from one of the livelist and most wide-ranging of practising English historians ... this is a historical encyclopaedia, unfailingly informative and stimulating; but a connecting thread does run through the book ... This is a welcome work of demystification, bringing the cold light of historical inquiry to bear on an area which has been surrounded with a good deal of pseudo-science and sheer gobbledegook ... this is a marvellously detailed exploration of a now familiar historical pheomenon, the invention of "tradition" ... unfailingly stimulating, learned and engaging book, which places a relatively neglected aspect of English social history firmly on the map.' Times Literary Supplement

`uncovers a mass of fascinating material about rites and festivals, showing how irrepressible such inventiveness remains in spite of globalised entertainment' Marina Warner, Independent on Sunday

## About the Author

**Ronald Hutton** is Reader in British History at the University of Bristol. He is the author of *The Rise and Fall of Merry England* (OUP 1994) and *Charles II: King of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (OUP, 1989; OPB, 1991).

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