

MODERN WICCA



A HISTORY FROM
GERALD GARDNER TO THE PRESENT

Michael Howard

MODERN WICCA



A HISTORY FROM
GERALD GARDNER TO THE PRESENT

Michael Howard

MODERN

WICCA

About the Author

Michael Howard is a freelance writer, researcher, and editor specializing in witchcraft, the occult, ancient and modern paganism, mythology, folklore, and general esoteric subjects. Since 1970 he has written numerous articles and book reviews for occult and pagan magazines such as *Prediction*, *Insight*, *Fate*, *Destiny*, *The Hedgewytch*, *Green Egg*, *Pagan Dawn*, *Pentacle*, *Verdelet*, *Lamp of Thoth*, and *New Occult*.

He has edited and published *The Cauldron*, a quarterly journal featuring *Wicca*, *Ancient and Modern Paganism*, and *Folklore* since 1976. He is a member of the *Folklore Society*, the *Royal Stuart Society*, the *Friends of the Museum of Witchcraft* at Boscastle in Cornwall, and an honorary member of the *Pagan Federation (UK)*.

Howard is the author of twenty-seven books, and has five forthcoming. (see the bibliography, pp. 337.

MODERN

WICC.A



A HISTORY FROM GERALD GARDNER TO THE PRESENT

Michael Howard

Llewellyn Publications
Woodbury, Minnesota

Modern Wicca: A History from Gerald Gardner to the Present © 2009 by Michael Howard. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever, including Internet usage, without written permission from Llewellyn Publications, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

First Edition

First Printing, 2009

Cover art © 2009 Murat Domkhokov/iStockphoto (pentagram)

© Creatas/PunchStock (tree)

Cover design by Ellen Dahl

Editing by Connie Hill

Llewellyn is a registered trademark of Llewellyn Worldwide, Ltd.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data (Pending)

ISBN: 978-0-7387-1588-9

Llewellyn Worldwide does not participate in, endorse, or have any authority or responsibility concerning private business transactions between our authors and the public.

All mail addressed to the author is forwarded but the publisher cannot, unless specifically instructed by the author, give out an address or phone number.

Any Internet references contained in this work are current at publication time, but the publisher cannot guarantee that a specific location will continue to be maintained. Please refer to the publisher's website for links to authors' websites and other sources.

Llewellyn Publications

A Division of Llewellyn Worldwide, Ltd.

2143 Wooddale Drive, Dept. 978-0-7387-1588-9

Woodbury, Minnesota 55125-2989, U.S.A.

www.llewellyn.com

Printed in the United States of America

Also by this author

The Occult Conspiracy: Secret Societies Their Influence and Power in World History

(Destiny Books)

Also see Bibliography for complete list.

Dedication

To the memory of Fidelia, who showed me the Way all those
years ago.

Contents

[Introduction](#) 1

[Part One-Beginnings: 1884-1940](#)

Chapter [One: Journeying to Foreign Lands](#) 9

Chapter [Two: Into the Witch Cult](#) 23

Chapter [Three: The Pickingill Connection](#) 43

[Part Two-Development: 1941-1953](#)

Chapter [Four: Gerald Gardner and the Great Beast](#) 63

Chapter [Five: A Magical Book of Shadows](#) 81

Chapter [Six: The Museum of Witchcraft](#) 97

[Part Three-Expansion: 1954-1963](#)

Chapter [Seven: Witchcraft Today](#) 121

Chapter [Eight: Enemies Within and Without](#) 137

Chapter [Nine: New Witch Blood](#) 157

[Part Four-Evolution: 1964-1980](#)

Chapter [Ten: Pretenders and Rivals](#) 185

Chapter [Eleven: The King of the Witches](#) 201

Chapter [Twelve: The Politics of Wicca](#) 219

Chapter [Thirteen: The Pagan Federation Emerges](#) 239

[Part Five-The Future: 1981-2008](#)

Chapter [Fourteen: Wicca International](#) 263

Chapter [Fifteen: Witches in Cyberspace](#) 281

Chapter [Sixteen: Wiccans in the 21st Century](#) 299

[Resources and Contacts](#) 319

[Bibliography](#) 327



Introduction

Professor Ronald Hutton of the University of Bristol has said that Wicca (i.e., modern neopagan witchcraft) is the only religion that England has given to the world (pers. comm.). Wicca was founded, or perhaps created is a better word, by a retired civil servant, Gerald Brosseau Gardner (1884-1964) in the 1940s. Gardner had left England as a young man in the early 1900s to work as a tea planter, rubber plantation inspector, and Customs officer in the Far East, where he studied Eastern religions and the magical beliefs and practices of the indigenous peoples of Borneo and Malaysia. On his frequent visits back to England on leave, he attended Spiritualist seances and studied psychic research. In 1936, Gardner retired from the Customs Service and returned home permanently. He became involved in archaeology and naturism (for health reasons), joined the Folklore Society and the Ancient Druid Order, and was ordained as a minister in an unorthodox Christian sect known as the Ancient British Church.

In 1939, Gardner and his wife Donna moved from London to the New Forest area in Hampshire. Once living there, Gardner joined a Rosicrucian group known as the Fellowship of Crotona, and he claimed to have encountered a surviving coven of witches who belonged to it. They invited him to join the Craft, and in September 1939, a few days after World War II began, Gardner was initiated into the witch cult, as he called it. He was eager to tell the world about his amazing discovery, but his fellow witches were not so keen. As one member of the coven told Gardner, if it was discovered in the village what they were, every time a chicken died or a child became sick they would be blamed. They added: "Witchcraft doesn't pay for broken windows" (Gardner 1954: 10). Reluctantly the witches gave him permission to reveal a little about what they believed and practiced in a fictional form. This Gardner did in his occult novel *High Magic's Aid*, published in 1949.

Around the same time, Gardner founded his own coven on land owned by the Five Acres naturist camp at Brickett Wood in Hertfordshire, just north of London. Because, as Gardner was later to tell his initiate Doreen Valiente, the rituals he had received from the New Forest Coven were fragmentary, he wrote his own version. These were based on standard occult works such as the medieval grimoire known

as the Key of Solomon, the writings of the controversial magician Aleister Crowley, known popularly as the Great Beast 666, whom Gardner had met in 1947, and the American folklorist Charles Godfrey Leland's book *Aradia: The Gospel of the Witches* (1899), based on the teachings of the Italian witch cult in Tuscany.

In 1951, Gardner became the business partner of Cecil Williamson, an ex-tobacco farmer in Africa, pre-war film producer, and wartime M16 (Secret Intelligence Service) officer, in launching a witchcraft museum at Castletown on the Isle of Man. When Williamson decided to sell up a few years later Gardner took over the museum and ran it until his death. In 1953, Gardner initiated Doreen Valiente into the Craft. She was responsible for rewriting the "Book of Shadows" (BoS), the ritual manual of Gardner's version of witchcraft, including the famous invocation known as the "Charge of the Goddess" and the "Witches' Rune" chant. A year later Gardner's first nonfiction book, *Witchcraft Today*, was published. This was followed five years later by *The Meaning of Witchcraft*.

Before his death in 1964, Gardner initiated several more women as Wiccan priestesses, including Patricia Crowther, Monique Wilson, Lois Pearson (Bourne), and Eleanor

("Ray") Bone. All these women went on to found their own covens, and Monique Wilson inherited the witchcraft museum on the Isle of Man in Gardner's will, which he controversially changed a few days before he died. Wilson eventually sold the collection in the museum in the 1970s to the Ripley "Believe It or Not" organization in Canada, which then transferred it to the United States for exhibition in their museum on Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Wicca expanded from its original small base in the United Kingdom to other English-speaking countries. In the United States, a Gardnerian coven was established by one of Monique Wilson's initiates, Raymond Buckland. Separately, a form of Wicca was also brought to the States by an Englishwoman who had married an American serviceman and had emigrated to the Central Valley in California. Wicca was also established in Australia in the early 1960s by an initiate of the Brickett Wood Coven and later by Alex Sanders, the so-called "King of the Witches," who had followed in Gardner's footsteps as the leading public promoter of modern witchcraft. Eventually Wicca was also to establish itself in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and Italy, and even in Far Eastern countries such as Japan and India, in Central and South America (principally Mexico and Brazil), and South Africa. It

is now claimed that Wicca is one of the fastest growing religions in the world.

With the publication of popular books by American writers such as Z. Budapest, Starhawk (Miriam Simos), and Scott Cunningham there came an interest in eclectic and solitary forms of witchcraft. In the 1970s, Wicca was influenced by the emerging neopagan, feminist, and environmental movements that had originated in the alternative counterculture. Politically oriented groups like the Pagan Federation in the United Kingdom began to campaign for the legal rights of pagans and witches under the United Nations and European Declarations of Human Rights. Activists such as Starhawk also demonstrated against the arms trade, the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and the use of nuclear power to generate electricity.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Wiccans became involved in the new interfaith initiative with other religions, and neopagan and Wiccan delegates attended the World Parliament of World Religions in Chicago. Many young people also became interested in Wicca through the influence of television programs and Hollywood movies portraying fantasy versions of the Craft. This spawned the phenomenon of so-called "teen witches" and "cyber

witches" using the Internet to communicate with others worldwide. With the widespread concern about environmental problems such as global warming and climate change, Wicca reinvented itself in the early twenty-first century as a green religion involved with Goddess spirituality and healing Mother Earth. At the same time academics, historians, and anthropologists began to take a sociological interest in Wicca and its origins. They also attempted to discover if it had genuine links with historical witchcraft, or had just been invented by Gerald Gardner.

This book will examine the history of modern neopagan witchcraft and the various personalities who were responsible for practicing it and promoting it publicly during the last sixty years. It will naturally focus on Gerald Gardner and Alex Sanders and their initiates, but it will also examine Wicca's links with older forms of traditional witchcraft such as the Pickingill Craft, the Coven of Atho, and the Clan of Tubal Cain.

The contents of this book will be illuminated by my own personal experience and involvement in witchcraft going back over forty-five years. I joined the newly formed Witchcraft Association in 1964 and in 1967 became a student of Madeline Montalban, an old associate of Gardner, and her

magical group the Order of the Morning Star. Two years later I became a third-degree initiate of Gardnerian Wicca. My initiator was a member of the Regency, the neopagan group founded by two members of Robert Cochrane's coven (a friend of Doreen Valiente), and she could trace her Craft lineage back to one of Gardner's last priestesses, Celia Penny (witch name Florannis).

In 1976, I founded my own witchcraft magazine, *The Cauldron*, which is still being published today. Through TCI I made contact in 1977 with E. W. "Bill" Liddell of the Pickingill Craft, and we have corresponded ever since. In the 1990s I also made contact with Evan John Jones, who was a member of Robert Cochrane's coven in the 1960s and revived his Clan of Tubal Cain. I have also had lengthy correspondence over the years with many prominent witchcraft figures including Cecil Williamson and Doreen Valiente. This wealth of experience has given me a unique insight into the origins and history of modern Wicca and this is reflected in the contents of this book.

I would like to acknowledge the following for their support, encouragement, and assistance in the writing of this book: Helen S. for suggesting the idea for the book in the first place; Alan Richardson for recommending me to

Llewellyn Publications; Graham King, the owner and curator of the Museum of Witchcraft and Witchcraft Research Centre at Boscastle in Cornwall for all his help and support in my research, and for allowing me unlimited access to the museum's extensive library and historical documents archive; Hannah Fox, the Museum of Witchcraft's administrator, for her valuable help in my research and for finding me books and documents from its library collection; Mags Anderson for the information on the history of the Association of Hedgewitches; and last, but not least, Caterina Fusca of Llewellyn Publications for her enthusiasm and support for the project.

-Michael Howard February
2009



PART ONE

Beginnings 1884- 1940



Chapter One

Journeying to Foreign Lands

G

erald Brosseau Gardner, who played such an important and central role in the modern revival of witchcraft, remains very much an enigma. A mercurial character as befitted his Gemini star sign, he has variously been described by his friends, critics, and enemies as a brilliant scholar, a lovable rogue, a charlatan, a compulsive liar, and a sexual pervert. Over forty years after his death, controversy still rages as to whether he created Wicca from an eclectic combination of material drawn from esoteric sources, or was the rightful heir to a genuine historical witchcraft tradition.

Gardner was born on June 13, 1884, into a wealthy middle-class family living at Blundellsands in Lancashire, a Victorian housing development on the coast a few miles north of Liverpool. In those days the city was a busy port and the Gardner family had obtained their wealth from the timber trade. Gardner's father was a partner in the family business of Joseph Gardner and Sons, which had been founded in the eighteenth century. This background meant that Gardner inherited money in later life and did not have to worry about an income when he retired. The Gardners claimed to have had Scottish ancestry, something that obviously caught Gerald Gardner's imagination as there are several photographs showing him wearing full Highland regalia, including a kilt. In his will he left to his relatives a dirk (a traditional Scottish ceremonial dagger) that had been passed down through the family.

In an interview that Gardner gave to the Scottish newspaper the Daily Record, he actually said that he was a Scot and that his parental home was in North Berwick, a place that was coincidentally associated with a famous sixteenth-century witch trial. He also mentioned that his grandfather had lived there and was a witch. This claim was based on a story Gardner had been told by distant relatives that his grandfather Joseph, the founder of the family

business, had married a woman who was involved in witchcraft. Allegedly, she had led Joseph Gardner into "wicked ways" by taking him "up into the hills [where] secret meetings and horrible rites were held." This was regarded as a great scandal in the family and nobody talked about it. (Bracelin 1960: 114-115.) Years later, when Gardner met a coven of witches in the New Forest, he told them he also had a Scottish ancestor called Grizell Gardner who had been burnt at the stake in Newburgh as a witch in 1640. However there is no evidence linking her with Gardner's branch of the family.

Despite this, Gardner continued to cultivate his Scottish connections, possibly for romantic reasons, and in the 1950s he initiated Charles Clark, who lived at Saltcoats in the west of Scotland, and Monique Wilson, who lived in Perth. Although Clark gave up his activities in the Craft, Wilson became recognized as the High Priestess of Gardnerian Wicca in the late 1950s and early 1960s. When Gardner died in February 1964, she inherited his witchcraft museum on the Isle of Man, but lost her position as Wicca's chief witch.

In fact, the Gardner family legitimately traced its descent from Simon le Gardiner, who lived in the fourteenth century. Another illustrious ancestor was Alan Gardner, who served

in the Royal Navy in the eighteenth century, was promoted to Vice Admiral, became a Member of the British Parliament, and was finally given the title of Baron Uttoxeter. In 1807, he was appointed as the commander-in-chief of the Channel Fleet and in that position had the task of defending England from invasion by Napoleon and his French army. Several forebears of Gardner served the monarch and country in the Navy or the Customs Service, as did Gerald Gardner later in his life when he lived in the Far East.

As well as his alleged family connections with Scotland, Gardner also claimed more colorful and exotic links with India and the British Raj. A nephew of Baron Uttoxeter belonged to Gardner's Horse Regiment, an irregular cavalry unit set up by the East India Company, and he also served in a military role for the Maharaja Holkar of Marhatta. He married an Indian princess who was supposed to have been descended from Genghis Khan. Unfortunately the Maharaja did not approve of the match and accused the British officer of treachery. He only escaped execution by leaping off a forty-foot cliff into a stream and then disguising himself as a native to reach a British Army camp.

As a child Gardner suffered from asthma, which has been described as "the occultist's disease." His childhood was

dominated by the presence of nursemaids who looked after him, and the last of these, an Irish woman named Josephine "Com" McCombie, was to have a major influence on his life. Gardner's education as a child was elementary and, helped by Com, he taught himself to read using back issues of the Strand magazine. In later years, Gardner used the title of Doctor, and told journalists he had received his doctorate from Singapore University. He said it had been given to him in 1934 and he also had a doctorate in literature from the University of Toulouse in France. When he joined the Folklore Society in 1939, he added a master of arts degree to his educational credentials. Doreen Valiente investigated these claims and has said that the University of Singapore did not exist in 1934 and the University of Toulouse had never heard of Gardner. Valiente suggests, jokingly, that the M.A. may have stood for "Magical Adept" (1989: 41-42).

At the time that Gardner claimed he received his doctorate in Singapore, he was contributing articles to the Malayan edition of the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, and in 1936 his influential book *Kris and Other Malay Weapons* was published. Doreen Valiente suggested that the publisher might not have wanted to take the book because Gardner did not have a suitable academic background. Therefore he invented the Singapore doctorate to give himself some local

credibility (letter from DV to Dr. Alan Greenfield, November 29,1993, in the Museum of Witchcraft archive at Boscastle, Cornwall).

Because of Gardner's ongoing health problems, Com persuaded his parents that short trips to foreign climates would be beneficial for their young son. From 1888 to 1898, the nurse and her charge took a series of holidays together in Nice, the Canary Islands, Madeira, and Accra in West Africa. It was in Madeira that Com met David Elkington, a young man who was en route to South Africa. Elkington fell in love with the Irish nurse and this was to change both her life and Gerald Gardner's. The young man asked Com to marry him and live on a tea plantation in Ceylon (modern Sri Lanka) that he owned. Somehow Com persuaded Gardner's parents that a tropical climate would be a cure for his asthma. Elkington offered him a job on the plantation and in 1900 the three of them moved to the tea estate on the island. Interestingly enough, it has been claimed that in that year the English occultists Allan Bennett and Aleister Crowley were also staying at a bungalow nearby. In 1902, Gardner and Elkington had a row and he took a new job on a rubber plantation. He also joined the local militia known as the Planter's Rifle Corp, which probably triggered his lifelong interest in weaponry.

The biography of Gerald Gardner, written by the Sufi master Idries Shah, but credited to Jack Bracelin, states that Gardner became a Freemason while he was working in Ceylon (1960: 32-33). The date given is 1908, but according to the archives of the Grand Lodge at Freemasons' Hall in London, he was initiated into the first degree as an Entered Apprentice in the Sphinx Lodge in Colombo on May 23, 1910. He was then raised to the second degree on June 20, 1910, and became a Master Mason a week later on June 27. According to the lodge's records, he resigned shortly afterwards.

When Gardner met Aleister Crowley in 1947, he told him that he held the high degree of a Royal Arch Mason. It is also possible that he was also a Co-Mason and the Bracelin biography says he "had a soft spot for the [Masonic] Craft, and nowadays feels that there are close similarities in the craft of the Witches; in fact he goes so far as to say that Witchcraft is the original lodge" (Ibid., 33). Of course Gardner's critics merely said that he was influenced by Freemasonry when he created the three degrees of initiation into Wicca.

In 1908, Gardner answered an advertisement in a local newspaper seeking planters to work in Borneo. He instantly

became interested in the local fauna and flora and also managed to get acquainted with a local tribe of headhunters called the Dyaks who usually shunned Europeans. He was particularly interested in their religious beliefs, and was given the rare privilege (for a white man) to be allowed to attend some of their rituals. Gardner became friendly with the family of one of the tribe's female mediums, and the pawong, or witch-doctor to whom she was related. We can surmise that this was Gardner's first encounter with the supernatural and the spirit world. Through his experiences with the Dyaks, he said he had "learned to adopt their belief in the naturalness of the occult" (Ibid., 49).

Gardner left Borneo in 1911 and traveled to Singapore to catch a boat to Ceylon, where he was hoping to find suitable work. Instead he was offered a new position on a rubber plantation in central Malaya. There he met an American called Cornwall, who was responsible for building railway lines and factories in the jungle. Cornwall had lived in the country for many years and had gone native. He wore the ethnic costume, had converted to Islam, and married several Malay women. Even more interesting, as far as Gardner was concerned, the American knew a lot about the local magical practices and voodoo. Gardner told him the story about his witch grandfather, and they spent long evenings discussing

the native religious beliefs and the practice of the occult in Europe and the United States.

In the next few years Gardner worked on several rubber plantations before he returned to England on leave in 1916. He wanted to join the Army fighting in France but failed the physical test. This was partly due to his asthma and also because he had suffered from blackwater fever and malaria while in Malaya. Instead he became an orderly in a hospital in Liverpool where he helped to treat survivors of the Battle of the Somme. At the end of World War I in 1918, Gardner went back to Malaya, but discovered that in his absence the price of rubber had fallen. When he returned in 1920, after another period of leave, he was made redundant. He took up a new job as a plantation inspector, and then in 1923 became a Customs officer, checking on the rubber dealers and hunting down opium smugglers. Bracelin's biography features a photograph of Gardner standing on his Customs motor launch with a revolver in a holster strapped to his belt.

While he was a Customs officer, Gardner continued to study the local magical beliefs of the Malay people, especially those of the Sakis, a little-known tribe of small people who lived deep in the jungle. The Chinese Malay feared them as wild people who used spears of fire-hardened

bamboo and blowpipes that shot arrows tipped with a deadly poison from a local tree. Gardner managed to locate the tribe and learned their magical techniques. These involved their women dancing around a fire, throwing narcotic plants on the flames, and working themselves into an orgiastic frenzy. The Sakis believed that illnesses and diseases were caused by demons possessing the sick person, and these spirits could only be driven out by the use of spells and rites of exorcism.

Gardner had also become fascinated by the kris or keris—a curved Malay dagger with a wavy blade that was sometimes used in rituals and for magical purposes. He discovered that the keris featured in a cursing rite that was similar to the "pointing of the bone" ritual practiced by the Australian aborigines. The Malay magicians believed that every keris was inhabited by a spirit or spirit force and this could be used against an enemy. The daggers were believed to protect their owners against physical harm, and allegedly made them invulnerable to bullets. Gardner became an expert on the keris and, as we have seen, wrote a book on the subject that is still regarded as the classic reference work.

In the 1930s, Gardner became interested in archaeology. He took part in several excavations in Malaya, Egypt,

Jordan, Palestine (modern Israel), France, Cyprus, and China. During visits back to England he also participated in digs in Devon and Wiltshire. In January 1936, Gardner worked on an archeological site about twenty-five miles from Jerusalem. This expedition revealed the existence of an ancient temple dedicated to both the Hebrew tribal god, Yahweh, and the Canaanite fertility goddess, As-taroth. She was worshipped as the "Queen of the Heaven," with sacrificial offerings of incense and cakes at stone altars set up in sacred groves on the hills around Jerusalem. This was at a time when the Hebrews were supposed to be monotheists. This important find revolutionized Middle Eastern history, as it indicated that after their exodus from Egypt the children of Israel had adopted the worship of native deities in Canaan-the so-called "Promised Land" of Moses-in addition to their worship of the one God.

Gardner had returned to England from the Far East on leave from the Customs Service in 1927. While visiting relatives in Liverpool, out of curiosity he attended the local Spiritualist church. After a short Christian service, a medium took the stage, went into a trance and began to communicate messages from the spirits on the "other side" to the audience. Gardner was not impressed by the quality of the messages, however his interest in psychic matters

continued, and he was told that the best mediums could be found working in London. His former nurse Com and her husband David Elkington were now living in retirement in Hereford, and Gardner spent two days with them before traveling on to the capital city.

Once there, Gardner made appointments to see several well-known mediums, but again he was disappointed with the results. Then he visited one who used automatic writing to contact the spirits. She correctly described the house he had been born in and gave him the names of his brothers, their wives and children, and his first nurse as a child. However, despite this factual evidence, Gardner was not convinced that spirits were actually giving the woman messages. He dismissed the reading as telepathy, in itself evidence of the use of psychic powers.

When Gardner visited the Spiritualist Alliance headquarters in London, the medium he saw gave him evidence about his family that convinced him she was genuine. A spirit spoke through the medium, claiming to be Gardner's cousin, and he felt her as a tangible presence in the room. She told him that something nice would happen to him shortly, and that as a result his return to Malaya would be delayed. A few days later Gardner was introduced to a

vicar's daughter, Dorothea Frances Rosedale, known to everyone as Donna, who worked as a nursing sister at St. Thomas' Hospital. Shortly afterwards they were married by the bishop of London, and Gardner was given permission to extend his leave for two months for a honeymoon in France and Spain.

In 1936, at the age of fifty-two, Gerald Gardner took early retirement from the Customs Service and returned to England permanently. He and Donna took an apartment on the Charing Cross Road, a Central London street renowned for its many secondhand and antiquarian bookshops. Unfortunately, the cold British weather affected Gardner's fragile health and he caught a cold that he could not get rid of. When he had been on leave in 1932, a doctor had recommended the healthy benefits of naturism, as it exposed the naked body to sunshine. Gardner inquired about the existence of naturist clubs, and in 1936 finally was able to find one in Finchley, North London. It was situated in a large house with a gymnasium, a ballroom, and a clubroom, and was run under the auspices of the Sub Bathing Society (Heselton 2000: 25). It was at this club that Gardner met people who "had a faint occult interest" in fortunetelling, astrology, palmistry, and Spiritualism, as well as naturism (Bracelin 1960: 142).

In March 1939, Gardner applied to join the Folklore Society where he met the Egyptologist and anthropologist Dr. Margaret Murray (1863-1963). She was the author of two books on witchcraft, *The Witch Cult in Western Europe* (1921) and *The God of the Witches* (1931). In her groundbreaking books, Dr. Murray put forward the controversial theory that historical witchcraft was the survival of a prehistoric fertility cult. This meeting may have been significant to the development of Gardner's later ideas about witchcraft. The two stayed in contact, and in 1954 Dr. Murray wrote an introduction to Gardner's first nonfiction book, *Witchcraft Today*.

Gardner's relationship with the Folklore Society was apparently a very difficult one and is still remembered. One leading member of the Society, the folklorist Christina Hole, described Gardner as having a "curious personality." He did not inspire confidence in the other members who also had an interest in witchcraft, and his theories on the subject were generally regarded as "somewhat peculiar." Writing in the *Folklore Society News* (July 1992), Jacqueline Simpson, a former president of the FLS, said that Gardner was seen as "flamboyant and sinister." At one meeting, the ruling council even discussed whether his membership was advantageous to the Society and if he should be asked to resign. When

Witchcraft Today was published and Gardner publicly came out of the broom closet as a witch, the FLS distanced itself from him. In fact, when he died, an obituary was significantly not published in the Folklore journal.

In June 1939, Gardner contributed an article to the journal about a wooden box he had obtained that allegedly contained items once belonging to the infamous seventeenth-century "Witch-finder General" Matthew Hopkins. In the same issue was an article by Lady Raglan in which she first used the term "Green Man" to describe the foliate masks found in pre-Reformation churches. The objects in the box as described by Gardner in his article had been given to him by an unknown benefactor who must have been aware of his interest in witchcraft. The box had a nineteenth-century label on it that read: "This talisman [sic] made and sold by Matthew Hopkins ... was given to my father, Joseph Carter of Home Farm, Hill Top, nr Marlborough [Wiltshire] and contains the finger of Mary Holt, the notorious Wiltshire witch. [signed] S. Carter."

The objects in the box included some dried flowers, a twig shaped like a cockerel's claw, some pieces of tree bark, a hawthorn twig covered in moss, a (human?) bone with skin attached, an unidentified bird claw, a scrap of parchment

with the words "Matthew Hopkins talisman against all witch-crafts" written on it in modern lettering, a small wax head with hair attached and affixed with a rusty pin, a Seal of Solomon (six-pointed star) made from lead, and a human finger bone that presumably belonged to the aforementioned Wiltshire witch.

Gardner had also acquired several other objects that he said were connected with the practice of witchcraft. These objects included a small baton or wand measuring twelve and a half inches in length and surmounted by a cross made of (human?) bone. Attached to it was a tattered label stating that the object was "Matthew Hopkins' scepter or tutti stick," and it had been used by the witch-hunter "during his travels in the south of England, finding and exposing witches." Although the article said that the objects had been examined by Dr. Margaret Murray and Gardner's friend Father Ward of the Abbey Park Folk Museum, who believed they were genuine, there was no evidence that they ever belonged to Hopkins. In fact it is difficult to see how anyone could have verified they were authentic. It is possible that Hopkins confiscated them from the witches he had persecuted and, although he was supposed to have died from consumption, there is a legend that he was swam as a witch himself and drowned. In some cases cunning men or

folk magicians acted as witch-finders-it is possible Hopkins was one of these and had a profitable sideline in anti-witchcraft charms.

Another strange object associated with witchcraft that was in Gardner's possession at the time was also mentioned in the article. This was described as a "Witches' Moon Dial," and resembled a standard sundial, except it was carved with what looked like some kind of runic letters. The piece of paper that accompanied it stated it was a "Witches Moon Dial used by them at midnight. Made of human bone with only seven sections, the seven hours of dread. Found near Wayland the Smith's cave on the borders of Wiltshire and Berkshire." The cave referred to is actually a prehistoric burial mound on the Ridgeway near the White Horse hill figure at Uffington. Philip Heselton has speculated that Gardner may have been involved in the excavation of this site during one of his visits to England in 1932 (2000: 27).

Through his visits to Cyprus, Gardner had met Father John Sebastian Marlow Ward. Gardner visited the island in 1938, and went to the museum in Nicosia. He got into a conversation with the curator about how the Bronze Age inhabitants had manufactured their swords. The museum authorities could not work out how it was done and Gardner

borrowed an ancient sword blade, took it away, and managed to fix a haft or handle to it. From this experience and dreams he had about Cyprus before he visited it, Gardner became convinced he had been incarnated there in ancient times as a sword maker. He even recognized some of the places he visited from his dreams. As a result he wrote his first novel, *A Goddess Arrives*, which is set on the island in pagan times.

On a return visit to Cyprus in 1939, Gardner met Father Ward and purchased a piece of land that he owned on the island. It was one of the many places that Gardner claimed he had seen in his dreams. His plan was to build a holiday home on it for his winter visits, but World War II intervened and he had to abandon the plan. Cecil Williamson told me that Gardner's original idea was to erect a temple dedicated to Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Unfortunately the locals objected and the Cyprian government refused to grant planning permission.

Bracelin's biography is unclear as to whether Gardner and Father Ward knew each other before their meeting in 1939. Certainly Ward worked in Burma as a Customs officer, and the two men shared common interests. Ward was a senior Freemason and wrote books about its history and esoteric

symbolism, linking it to the ancient mystery cults of paganism. He was also an expert on Chinese secret societies such as the Triads, and co-authored a book on the subject that was used as a standard reference work by police forces all over the world fighting organized crime.

In Burma, Ward also worked as the headmaster of a Church of England school and from 1918 to 1930 was the director of the intelligence unit of the Federation of British Industries. On his return to England in 1929, Ward and his second wife began to experience visions telling them to prepare for the imminent Second Coming of Christ. Guided by their visions and a guardian angel, the Wards bought a large piece of land at New Barnet in Hertfordshire and founded a group called the Confraternity of Christ the King. Its members gave up their previous lives when they joined the community, changed their names and swore vows of poverty, obedience, and self-sacrifice.

A fifteenth-century half-timbered tithe barn was purchased and re-erected on the site to serve as the sect's chapel. The building was consecrated on St. Valentine's Day, 1931, by the Anglo-Catholic bishop of the nearby town of St. Albans (named after the first Christian martyr), and the bishop appointed a vicar to act as the chaplain to the new

community. A school called St. Michael's College was also founded, teaching such unorthodox subjects as reincarnation, the feminine nature of the Holy Spirit, and that Christ was the son of God, the Father, and God, the Mother. When news of this reached the bishop he refused to approve the renewal of the license for the community's chaplain. Father Ward, as he was now calling himself, responded by launching a verbal attack questioning the validity and authority of the Anglican bishops and the priesthood.

In 1935, Ward severed his connection completely with the Anglican Church and instead he and his wife were ordained in the Orthodox Catholic Church or the Orthodox Keltic Church, a heterodoxical antipapal Christian sect. The Bracelin biography also says that Ward approached a friend of his who was the patriarch of Antioch and became a priest and a bishop in the Greek Orthodox Church. At first Gardner was dismissive of these pseudo-clerical activities by the Wards and rather ironically said: "I do not doubt for a moment their sincerity but it did seem to me that they fancied themselves as the Abbot and Lady Abbess. Ward wanted a secret society, and liked to indulge his hobbies" (Bracelin 1960: 143).

Despite his opinion of the Wards, in 1946 Gardner himself was ordained into the Ancient British Church. Philip Heselton refers to a diploma found among the books in Gardner's library after his death that says he was made a priest of the Church, which was also known as the Fellowship of the Holy Grail (2003: 140-141). There is a story that Gardner was a regular visitor to Ward's Abbey, and frequently appeared wearing a clerical collar. When Gardner legally registered his covenstead at Brickett Wood as a place for worship, he used the name of the Ancient British Church as a cover to give it some respectability. Heselton thinks that Gardner was only ordained as a status symbol, perhaps compensating for his lack of academic qualifications. He does not believe he ever took an active part in either Ward's Orthodox Catholic Church or the Ancient British Church.

Dr. Joanne Pearson believes that Gardner's membership in these heretical Christian sects was in keeping with his "predilections for joining little-known secret societies." Gardner was also a member of the Ancient Druid Order and as there were links between the Ancient British Church and neo-druidism this may have been part of its attraction (2007: 55). Like many occultists of his generation, even professed pagan ones, Gardner always made a distinction between Celtic Christianity, as promoted by the Ancient British

Church, and Roman Catholicism. He even suggested that the historical witches had been sympathetic to the Celtic Christians, who allegedly had adopted Celtic pagan beliefs and practices, but disliked the Roman Church introduced into Anglo-Saxon England by the missionary St. Augustine in the early seventh century CE. Unlike most modern Wiccans, Gardner had a liberal view of Christianity and, while a narrow-minded Christian could not belong to the Craft, he believed a person could be a witch and also follow any other religion. This was because the mystical nature of Wicca transcended the superficialities of ordinary religious worship.

When Gardner referred to Ward liking "to indulge his hobbies," he was talking about the extension of the religious community in the New Forest into the Abbey Folk Park. Gardner said that when Ward heard "that the local council was going to tear down some nice old building he would rush up with motor-lorries and a gang of monks. They had rescued some marvelous examples of ancient buildings for the Folk Park" (Bracelin 1960: 143). In fact, Ward had built up "an extensive collection of remarkable objects illustrating the history of this country for countless generations" (Ibid.).

Ward created the Abbey Folk Park as an educational

open-air museum, to show the everyday life of ordinary people through the ages, and in that respect it was far ahead of its time. It included many historic buildings that had been rescued from demolition, dismantled and then re-erected on the New Barnet site. Unfortunately, in 1945 Ward was accused of enticing a young girl away from her family to join his community at the Abbey. Her father took Ward to court and he was found guilty. The judge issued an injunction against Ward and his wife, forbidding them to contact the girl. He was also fined five hundred pounds sterling in damages that had to be paid to the family. As a result of the case, Ward was declared bankrupt and the Abbey and its contents had to be sold to pay the fine.

Disillusioned and penniless, Ward wanted to leave England and emigrate to Canada, but the current immigration restrictions prevented him from taking this action. He then decided that as a member of the Greek Orthodox Church he would instead try to go to Cyprus. Gardner decided to help him achieve this aim by gifting the piece of land he owned there to his friend. This gave him the legal right to live on the island, as he owned property there (Bracelin 1960: 144). Ward died in 1949, and his wife, calling herself the Reverend Mother Ward, kept the community going until the Cypriot government began to cause problems for it. Eventually the

community re-located to Queensland in Australia where its elderly survivors still lived until the 1970s. Items from the Abbey Folk Park had been retained by the Australian community, and in 1986 the Abbey Museum of Art and Archeology was opened as an educational center (Heselton 2003: 152).



Chapter Two

Into the Witch Cult

Despite the infamous meeting in 1938 between the British prime minister Neville Chamberlain and the German chancellor Adolph Hitler, at which "peace in our time" was declared, most realists believed that a war with Nazi Germany would soon begin. Gerald Gardner had returned from Cyprus, and he and Donna were living in an apartment near Victoria railway station in London. The authorities were already preparing civil defense precautions, and plans had been drawn up to evacuate every house within a mile of railway stations and depots. The world had already witnessed the German Luftwaffe bombing towns during the recent Spanish Civil War, and it was known that British railway stations would be prime targets if war broke out. Apparently the Gardners already had friends living in the

New Forest area of Hampshire on the south coast of England and that is where they decided to move to escape the danger of bombing. It has been speculated that these friends were fellow naturists and possibly members of a local naturist club on the fringes of the Forest (Heselton 2000: 28).

Gerald and Donna Gardner moved into a house in a village on the outskirts of the New Forest called Highcliffe, near Christchurch. The local people seemed to have regarded Gardner as a rather eccentric and odd figure. In later years he was to dress in heavy tweed suits and a duffle coat, but when Gardner first moved to Highcliffe he was always seen out and about in all weathers in shorts and sandals. The village children regarded him as a figure of fear and used to cross the road to avoid him (Ibid., 39). Interestingly, when Gardner attended the International Congress on Maritime Folklore and Ethnology in Naples in the 1950s to give a talk on Manx fishing craft, a fellow delegate described him as "a strange man with a copper snake bracelet on his arm." When Gardner went to the bus stop on the harbor, the local fishermen crossed themselves and made the sign against the Evil Eye.

Gardner certainly seems to have had a powerful presence, and I was once told by the owner of Sexton's antiquarian

bookshop in Brighton, Sussex, of the day he came in to look at some occult books. The owner said that Gardner's aura was "so powerful that it could be felt by people standing outside the shop." He said that Gardner was carrying a mountaineer's hammer as a walking stick and had one fingernail on his left hand longer than the others. This was allegedly so he could make the "Devil's Mark" on his initiates.

Today Gardner is still remembered in Highcliffe. In 2001, a local artist was commissioned by the Highcliffe Castle visitors' center and tea-rooms to paint a portrait of Gardner from an old photograph. The finished painting was a central feature of an exhibition at the center called "Myths and Magick" that attracted many visitors and media interest. In 2005, the artist donated the painting to the Museum of Witchcraft at Boscastle, Cornwall, where it is still on display.

According to the Bracelin biography, shortly after Gardner moved to Highcliffe he was out cycling one day when he came across a building in Christchurch that had an inscription carved on its stone frontage that declared it was "The First Rosicrucian Theatre in England." This discovery was to eventually lead to Gardner being invited to join a local witch coven (1960: 145). Philip Heselton, however,

believes this account is not strictly true and in fact Gardner was introduced to the theater through his contacts in the local naturist club who were members (2003: 20). The Rosicrucian Theatre had been started by an esoteric group known as the Rosicrucian Order Crotona Fellowship (ROCF) that modeled itself on the original medieval Order of the Rosy Cross. In fact, the group had been founded in 1920 by an amateur playwright and actor called George Alexander Sullivan and had a link with the Order of the Temple of the Rosy Cross started eight years earlier by the occultist Annie Besant (1847-1933).

Besant came from a middle-class social background and was originally an atheist and leading member of the humanist National Secular Society. In the 1880s, she was active as a socialist and pacifist involved in the suffragette movement, trade unions, and campaigns in support of birth control, workers' rights, and home rule for India. In 1888 she abandoned atheism to join the Theosophist Society and on the death of its founder, the Russian mystic Madame Helena Blavatsky, she became its co-leader. In 1926, George Sullivan announced to the world in a privately printed pamphlet that he was the founder and head of the ROCF and the "Rite of the Egyptian Mysteries," which incorporated both Western and Eastern occult teachings. He further claimed to have

founded "the Order of Twelve" in 1911, which suggests a link with Besant's original Rosicrucian Order founded around that time.

From 1925 to 1928, Sullivan published a magazine called *The Rosicrucian Gazette*, and by the 1930s the ROCF was fully operational, practicing a mixture of Theosophy, Rosicrucianism, and Freemasonry. Annie Besant's daughter, Mabel Besant-Scott (1870-1952), who was then the head of the Co-Masonic movement, joined Sullivan's group in 1935, bringing with her several fellow Co-Masons. As its name suggests, Co-Masonry was open to both men and women, and it had been founded in France at the end of the nineteenth century. Gardner described Mrs. Besant-Scott as a "rather pleasant, sometimes uncertain old lady," who claimed to have been an incarnation of Queen Elizabeth I (Bracelin 1960: 149). As the so-called High Priestess of the Order claimed to have been Mary, Queen of Scots, that must have led to some interesting conversations between the two women. Another prominent member was Peter Caddy who, with his wife Eileen, was later to found the famous New Age community of Findhorn in Scotland.

George Sullivan was also an eccentric character who used the occult name of "Aurelius" as the High Priest of the Order

and believed that in his previous incarnations he had been the Greek philosopher Pythagoras, the medieval magician Cornelius Agrippa (also shared with Aleister Crowley), and Francis Bacon, when he had written the Shakespeare plays. Sullivan confided in Gardner that an old lamp hanging by chains from the ceiling of the Order's temple was in fact nothing less than the Holy Grail. He also claimed to be immortal, but sadly this illusion was shattered for his devoted followers when he died.

In 1938, Mrs. Besant-Scott and George Sullivan had founded the Rosicrucian Theatre. Sullivan had aspirations to become a Shakespearean actor, having written his plays in a past life, and his role was the traditional Victorian one as an actor-manager. As well as putting on plays on druidism and Pythagoras, the Rosicrucian Theatre also held lectures on hypnotism, practical occultism, and esoteric Christianity that were open to the general public. This heady occult mixture seems to have attracted Gardner's curiosity and that of other people living in the area around the theater who were also interested in esoteric and arcane matters. Gardner attended several of the plays at the theater put on by Sullivan and his followers, and it has been suggested that he even performed in one. A photograph taken of the cast of one of the plays features someone who, while disguised in a false beard,

looks suspiciously like the normally clean-shaven Gardner of the period.

There was a small sub-group in the ROCF who kept to themselves, but seemed to be quite interesting. Unlike the other members, they were genuinely interested in the occult and had read widely on the subject. Gardner began to mix with them socially, and around the time his first book, *A Goddess Arrives*, was published, one of them said to him: "You belonged to us in the past-why don't you come back to us?" (Bracelin 1960: 150). In *The Meaning of Witchcraft* (1959), Gardner says that his new friends were very interested to hear that one of his ancestors had allegedly been burnt as a witch. As the comment above suggests, they also believed they had known Gardner in past lives and added, "You are of the [witch] blood. Come back to where you belong."

Gardner realized he had stumbled on something interesting, but it was only when he was half-initiated, and heard them use the word "Wica" [sic] that he realized the Old Religion still existed. He says he also discovered the inner meaning of the words of Fiona McLeod (aka William Sharp) that "The Old Gods are not dead. They think we are" (1959: 11). He was to discover that the people he had met

were members of a witch coven that consisted of an odd mixture of the local New Forest people and the Co-Masons who had followed Mabel Scott-Besant. Once in the New Forest they had discovered that an old coven still operated in the area.

According to Gardner's own account, a few days after war was declared in September 1939, he was taken to a large house that belonged to "Old Dorothy," who he described as "a lady of note in the district [county] and very well-to-do." Her high social status was indicated, as far as Gardner was concerned, by the fact that she always wore an expensive pearl necklace. He was initiated into the Craft in this lady's house and found out that Old Dorothy and some like her, plus a number of locals "had kept the light shining." He added that "it was, I think, the most wonderful night of my life. In true witch fashion we had a dance afterwards and kept it up until dawn" (Bracelin 1960: 150-151).

Not everyone believed Gardner's account of his initiation into modern witchcraft. In 1980, Professor Jeffrey B. Russell boldly stated that "In fact there is no evidence that 'Old Dorothy' ever existed..." (1980: 153). Aidan Kelly has also said that Gardner and others invented modern witchcraft in September 1939 (1991:30), and in some quarters this claim

has now become an accepted fact. Unfortunately for these critics, in the 1980s Doreen Valiente established from her own personal research that Old Dorothy existed and was a real person. She also identified the house in the New Forest she owned, where Gardner claimed he had been initiated (The Farrars, 1984).

Old Dorothy was a widow named Dorothy Clutterbuck-Fordham (1880-1951). As Gardner said, she was a well-known figure in the area, with a high social standing. Her father had served in the British Army in India and she had been born in that country. She moved to Highcliffe in the 1930s and was a High Anglican churchgoer, friend of the local vicar, and a loyal Tory. Her local social connections included membership and support for the Conservative Association, the Horticultural Society, the Beekeepers' Association, the British Legion, the Girl Guides, the Boy Scouts, the Seamen's Mission, and other charitable groups. A photograph taken in 1950 shows her standing next to the mayor of Highcliffe at a social function. The fact that Dorothy Clutterbuck was a churchgoer has led some biased writers to reject the idea that she was a witch. However, in *Witchcraft Today*, Gardner commented that he knew a witch who went to church at times, although he adds that she was at best only an occasional conformist (1956: 38).

Dorothy Clutterbuck's wide range of social activities and connections led Professor Ronald Hutton to comment that she "must have lived one of the most incredible double lives in human history; a pillar of conservatism and respectability who was also the leader of a witch coven... " (1999: 210). Philip Heselton, however, has revealed that Old Dorothy was not so conservative or respectable as her public image suggested. In 1935 she married Rupert Fordham, who was killed in a car crash only four years later. It turns out that the marriage was not legal, as Fordham's first wife was still alive and did not die until 1955 (2003: 23). So Dorothy Clutterbuck-Fordham was therefore a bigamist. Heselton also refers to her diaries, which were found in the cupboard of a firm of lawyers after her death, and were illustrated in watercolors by her friend Christine Wells. The diaries are a mixture of poetry and prose about the seasons, nature, and fairies. According to Heselton, they prove that she was "a pagan in all but name," and indicate that her "deepest spiritual experiences came from nature" (Ibid.).

From the description that Gardner gives of his initiation, Heselton does not believe that Old Dorothy was actually present when he entered the witch cult (2000: 179, and 2003: 24). One suggestion is that while Clutterbuck was not a member of the New Forest Coven, she did allow her house to

be used while she was not there for its meetings and rituals. Alternatively she was a member and was just not present for some reason on that night. In her first autobiography, Patricia Crowther, a later initiate of Gardner's, says he told her he was taken to "Old Dorothy's house and that she was the 'High Priestess' of the coven." The following night he went back to the house and was initiated into the Craft (1974). As Heselton has pointed out, it seems that Gardner was first taken to see Dorothy Clutterbuck to be introduced to her. Then on the second occasion he was initiated while she was not there by another member of the coven.

If Old Dorothy did not initiate Gardner, then who presided over the ceremony? The most likely candidate is a known member of the coven, Edith Rose Woodford-Grimes (1887-1975). Her Craft name was "Dafo," and she has been identified as the "Maiden" of the New Forest Coven (Frederick Lamond, in Kelly 2007: 26). Gardner probably met her around 1938 or 1939-a photograph exists showing him attending her daughter's wedding and actually giving the bride away. Woodford-Grimes was a private music teacher in the nearby town of Christchurch, and a leading member of the Rosicrucian Theatre. When Dorothy Clutterbuck died in 1951, Dafo allegedly replaced her as the High Priestess of the coven (Ibid.). She features in a list of shareholders of the

company, Ancient Crafts Ltd., that Gardner set up in the late 1940s, and she was involved in the negotiations to purchase the witchcraft museum on the Isle of Man from Cecil Williamson in the 1950s. She was also present when Gardner initiated Doreen Valiente in 1953, and when he was recovering from an illness in 1961, he went to stay with her for several days. However, by that time she had ceased to be active in the Craft, and when my friend Deric James visited her in the 1960s, she denied all knowledge of being ever involved in witchcraft.

What of the other members of the New Forest Coven? Aidan Kelly produced a highly speculative and fantastical list of possible members that included Sylvia Royals (aka Dolores North and Madeline Montalban); George Watson McGregor, the chief druid of the Ancient Order of Druids; Father J. S. M. Ward; Christine Hartley, a member of Dion Fortune's Fraternity of the Inner Light; her magical colleague and partner, Colonel Charles "Kim" Seymour; Mrs. Mabel Besant-Scott from the Rosicrucian Theatre; and the novelist Louis Wilkinson (1991: 31-32).

The evidence provided by Kelly to support his claims that these people belonged to the coven is flimsy and circumstantial. It largely rests on the fact that all of them,

except for Hartley and Seymour, either knew Gardner (North, McGregor Reid, Ward, and Besant-Scott) or knew of the New Forest Coven (Wilkinson). As we shall see later, Gardner was a friend of Madeline Montalban, but he told Doreen Valiente he first met her during the war when she was in the Royal Navy, which would have been after he was initiated (Valiente 1989: 49-50). Gardner was also a member of the Druid Order, and it is a fact that a sword owned by Dorothy Clutterbuck was used by the druids at their summer solstice ceremony at Stonehenge (Ibid., 40). The wording of the reference is ambiguous as, while the sword was allegedly owned by Old Dorothy, it was taken by Gardner to the druid ceremony in the 1950s after she had died. In that case it would have been McGregor Reid's son, Robert, who was the chief druid then as he succeeded to the title after his father's death in 1946.

This famous sword is still in existence and is owned by the North London coven that is the direct descendant of the one founded at Brickett Wood by Gardner in the late 1940s. The design of the sword comes directly from a description given in the Key of Solomon, a grimoire that both Gardner and the New Forest Coven were familiar with. According to the story told to Philip Heselton by the leaders of the modern coven, the sword had belonged to Dafo, and not to

Dorothy Clutterbuck (2003: 90). The sword has a hilt of brass and horn and the blade, according to Heselton, probably came from a nineteenth-century officer's weapon. It has a guard composed of two crescent moons and it is engraved with magical Hebrew names and Wiccan symbols. Coincidentally, when I knew her in the 1960s, Madeline Montalban owned an almost identical sword, and she used it in cursing rituals.

The most unlikely members of the New Forest Coven named by Aidan Kelly are Christine Hartley and Colonel Seymour. Both were, like many occultists of the time, sympathetic to paganism, and Seymour wrote some very evocative and inspiring essays on what he called the Old Religion. I met Christine Hartley in the 1970s and she sponsored my induction into an Egyptian lodge of Co-Masonry that she belonged to in London. Christine was a liberal Catholic, an unorthodox Christian offshoot of the Theosophical Society, and had her own private chapel in her country house in Hampshire, where a liberal Catholic priest used to celebrate Mass. This priest, who also held Anglican orders, had expressed to me an interest in being initiated into Wicca, although nothing came of it. Some years later he knew Maxine Sanders, the so-called "Queen of the Witches," when she became interested in the liberal Catholic

Church.

When we first met, Christine Hartley knew of my own involvement in the Craft and she was sympathetic to witchcraft. She hinted in one of our conversations around the log fire in the sitting room of her country house that she had also been involved in the past. I have since learned that in the 1960s or 1970s she attended a meeting organized by some ex-members of Robert Cochrane's coven (pers. comm. from Alan Richardson). Despite these contacts, there is no evidence or reason to believe that she knew Gerald Gardner, or that she was ever a member of the New Forest Coven. As Christine knew I was a Gardnerian initiate, she would have surely mentioned it during our conversations.

While still speculative, Philip Heselton claims to have identified several local people who he thinks might have belonged to the New Forest Coven. Apart from Woodford-Grimes and Clutterbuck, he has identified a family from nearby Southampton called the Masons, who also belonged to the Crotona Fellowship and the Rosicrucian Theatre. This family was Susie Mary Mason, her brother Ernest "Ernie" William Mason, and their sister Rosetta. A friend of Ernie Mason told Heselton that the whole family were witches and "mind control people," but had given up witchcraft because

the rituals were too serious (2000: 101-102).

Ernie Mason was an amateur astronomer, photographer, and chemist who Heselton says fitted the typical image of an eccentric inventor. He also enjoyed mental exercises and he had been taught these by George Sullivan. This would explain the odd comment by his friend that the family were "mind control people." A large room in the house shared by Ernie and Susan Mason in Southampton was converted into a Rosicrucian temple and Heselton has printed a photograph of Ernie Mason taken in 1935 wearing a ritualistic hooded robe (2000: 109).

Another possible candidate for membership in the coven, as identified by Heselton, was a well-known children's writer named Katherine Oldmeadow. She also lived in the village of Highcliffe, in a house about a quarter of a mile from Dorothy Clutterbuck's home. From 1919 to 1958 Oldmeadow wrote thirty fictional books for children as well as a factual book called *The Folklore of Herbs* (1946). It was rumored that her extensive knowledge of herbs had been gained by studying with the New Forest gypsies. As with Dorothy Clutterbuck's diaries, many of Oldmeadow's books contained what Heselton calls "a rich awareness of nature," and the enchanted landscape of the English countryside (2002).

They also have frequent references to nature spirits, fairies, witches, and classical gods like Pan and Mercury. Rituals involving dancing barefooted, and the use of knives, wands, candles, and crystals are also mentioned.

In her nonfiction book on herbal lore, Oldmeadow specifically refers to the existence of white and black witches, and comments that the modern witch "still holds queer beliefs..." (Heselton 2003: 48-51). In one of her children's books she describes white witches as "wise old women" who "know all about herbs that heal" (Ibid., 61). Of course it is possible, as Professor Hutton has pointed out, that the classical pagan and folkloric references in Katherine Oldmeadow's novels merely reflected an early-twentieth-century interest in such subjects and had nothing to do with the actual practice of witchcraft. The fact that she was living in the same village as Gerald Gardner and in the alleged vicinity of a practicing witch coven is, however, rather coincidental.

Doreen Valiente identified another possible member of the New Forest Coven in her personal copy of Bracelin's biography, Gerald Gardner: Witch. Beside a reference in the text to Old Dorothy and the local New Forest people Valiente had written the two words "Mother Sabine" Philip Heselton

claims to have identified this person as Rosamund Isabella Charlotte Sabine, who coincidentally lived in the same road in Highcliffe as Edith Woodford-Grimes. Her husband was also a member of the local Home Guard unit during World War II, and would have known Gardner, who was also a leading member. Heselton says that in 1905 Rosamund Sabine applied to join a surviving offshoot of the magical group, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. This was the Order of the Red Rose and the Cross of Gold run by Arthur Edward Waite (Heselton, November 2002). The name of the Order is a clear reference to Rosicrucian symbolism (Ibid.).

In a letter, Gerald Gardner wrote to his then business partner Cecil Williamson in December 1953, he told him that Old Mother Sabine had recently died. He says she left a "nice little cabinet full of draws [sic] " that contained dried herbs and a 1684 copy of Nicholas Culpeper's famous herbal. The evidence is that, like Katherine Old-meadow, Sabine had a serious interest in herbalism. Her involvement with a Rosicrucian Order associated with the Golden Dawn would also suggest she may have been a member of George Sullivan's Order of Twelve and/or the Crotona Fellowship (Heselton, 2003: 78).

While he was living in London, Gardner had volunteered

to be an air-raid warden and had helped to dig trenches for bomb shelters in Hyde Park. From his past experiences in the Planters' Rifle Corp in Malaya and later in a private militia in Liverpool during World War I, Gardner became convinced that an armed civilian organization was needed to defend the country from a German invasion. In early 1940 he wrote to the Daily Mail newspaper, saying that in such an event the civilian population should be trained to use delaying tactics. He claimed that, under the terms of the Magna Carta, every freeborn Englishman had the right to take up arms and defend himself and his household from attack.

This patriotic letter aimed at his fellow countrymen and politicians was answered in May 1940 when the secretary of state for war, Anthony Eden, made a radio broadcast asking for volunteers who knew how to use firearms to report to their local police station. Thousands eagerly answered the call to arms and the Local Defence Volunteers, later called the Home Guard and known popularly and affectionately as "Dad's Army," was formed. The background to its formation was the widespread public panic about fifth columnists, spies, and saboteurs, and rumors of enemy paratroopers, some allegedly disguised as nuns, landing in the English countryside at night. With France about to fall to the Nazis, the British government knew that Britain could be next.

The job of the LDV, or Home Guard, was to support the police by setting up road blocks, checking identity cards, and guarding important installations such as power stations that might be a target for sabotage. In the event of a German invasion they would have fought street by street with regular Army units in a rearguard action. A special elite force was also recruited from Home Guard members with past military experience. Their task was to form an underground resistance movement if Britain had been occupied by the Nazis. Caches of weapons were hidden at secret locations in the countryside, and underground bunkers stocked with food and ammunition were built to accommodate the resistance fighters.

Gerald Gardner was an ideal recruit to the Home Guard because of his past experience in private militias and his expertise with weapons. He applied to join the local Highcliffe unit, not without some difficulty as he was already an air-raid warden and was told civil defence personnel could not join. In its early days as the LDV, the Home Guards had no uniforms and wore ordinary civilian clothes with just armbands to identify themselves. Firearms were also scarce, so they had to arm themselves with privately owned shotguns, old pistols, and rifles owned as souvenirs left over from World War I, and improvised weapons such as

bayonets or kitchen knives tied to broom handles.

Gardner decided he would arm his air-raid wardens with coshes, swords, and pikes from his private collection of medieval weapons. He took to carrying, ironically, a German Luger machine-pistol and a revolver owned by his wife, Donna. When a new commander took over the Highcliffe Home Guard unit, Gardner persuaded him that he could take on technical staff without headquarters' permission. He was duly enrolled as the unit's armourer, with the rank of lance-corporal, and the other wardens were also allowed to join if they wanted to. They did their usual job during German bombing raids and then became Home Guards in the periods of "all clear" (Bracelin 1960: 145-148).

After the fall of France in June 1940, it was widely believed that within a few weeks the Germans would launch Operation Sealion-the invasion of Britain. In fact, invasion barges full of Nazi stormtroopers were ready at French ports to be sent across the Channel to the beaches of southern England. The only obstacle in the way of a full-scale invasion during the summer of 1940 was the Royal Air Force. Plans were ready for the Luftwaffe to destroy British planes on the ground by bombing airfields and shooting them out of the sky over southeastern England. This campaign

culminated in the famous Battle of Britain in early September, which was a turning point in the war. When the Luftwaffe was defeated by "the Few," Hitler decided to abandon his invasion plans and turn eastward to the Soviet Union instead.

Evidently the New Forest Coven decided that something had to be done on a magical level to stop the expected German invasion. Philip Heselton has claimed that the Mason family instigated this action. As alleged hereditary witches, they had a strong family tradition that their ancestors had carried out magical rituals to stop the proposed French invasion in Napoleonic times, and even earlier had worked against the Spanish Armada in 1588. (Heselton 2000). Certainly the Mason family had ancestors who lived in the ports of Southampton and Portsmouth in the nineteenth century.

Heselton says that Gardner told his friend Ross Nichols that, in August 1805, witches in Sussex had worked weather magic to stop Napoleon's fleet from leaving the French port of Bologne. They had allegedly called up a southwesterly wind that had prevented the invasion being launched. Gardner also said that members of the New Forest Coven had told him their great-grandparents had projected the idea

into Napoleon's mind that he could not invade England. It is true that the invasion force was prepared to sail, but a combination of bad weather and poor communications resulted in its cancellation. A similar ritual was supposed to have been performed by the witches to stop the Spanish Armada by sending the thought: "You cannot land. Go on, go on." Again the invasion was foiled by a combination of a great storm that wrecked the fleet and the bravery of Sir Francis Drake's sailors with their secret weapon of fire-ships (August 2000).

A description of the 1940 ritual, called "Operation Cone of Power," is given in the Bracelin biography (1960). It allegedly took place at Lammas (August 1) or possibly as early as May Eve. Gardner told Doreen Valiente that in fact several rituals were performed over the summer. She speculated that these were held at the full moons in May, June, and July, and at Lammas (1989: 45). Gardner told one of his other initiates, Patricia Crowther, that the ritual took place on Lammas Eve because the moon was in its last days, or waning, and the purpose of the ritual was a banishing. He told Bracelin that several covens were involved and that Old Dorothy had called up "covens right and left, although by witch law they should not be known to each other" (Bracelin 1960: 152). It is not clear if these other covens were also located in the New

Forest or came from farther afield. If this is true, however, then it does indicate that the New Forest witches were not the only witches in southern England at the time.

There were seventeen people present at the ritual, including airraid wardens and members of the Home Guard. Gardner said, "We were taken at night to a place in the forest where the Great Circle was erected." Heselton has speculated that this may have been near the Rufus Stone, a memorial erected to King William II, who was killed in a hunting accident in the New Forest in 1100 CE. Dr. Margaret Murray claimed William Rufus was secretly the leader of the witch cult. His death was allegedly a ritual sacrifice as he took the role of the divine king who dies so his blood can fertilize the land. An alternative site for the ritual could have been The Naked Man, the withered remains of an old oak tree at Wilverley Post, near Lyndhurst. Local folklore said it was a witches' meeting place and Gardner told Doreen Valiente it was used as an assembly point by the New Forest Coven where the members met up before going to their working site deeper in the forest.

Gardner also told Valiente that the circle had been marked out with brushwood and the witches were stationed around it to "whip up the dancers." A fire was lit in the circle with

candles in lanterns positioned in the direction where the object of the rite (i.e., Hitler) was supposed to be. The witches then danced around the circle until they felt enough power had been raised. Dancing began in a deosil (clockwise) direction and ended in a widdershins (anti-clockwise) direction to banish the power. The witches formed a line, linked hands, and rushed inward towards the fire, shouting or chanting what they wanted to achieve. The Great Cone of Power was directed in the general direction of Germany, Hitler, and the German High Command. The command was projected telepathically: "You cannot cross the sea. You cannot cross the sea. You cannot come. You cannot come."

Gardner said that the witches kept this up until they were exhausted, or somebody blacked out from the exertion. This was seen as a sign that the spell had worked and only then was the ritual brought to its traditional close. He added that during the rite, "Mighty forces were used, of which I may not speak," but it is known that the life force of the participants was utilized. This apparently caused lethal effects as Gardner reported that his asthma (which had been cured since he had returned from the Far East) returned and was to remain with him for the rest of his life. He also said, "Many of us died a few days after we did this." He quotes

the Elders of the coven, saying, "We feel we have stopped him [Hitler]. We must not kill too many of our people. Keep them until we need them" (Bracelin 1960: 52). This may have been an exaggeration on Gardner's part as he always had a flair for the melodramatic.

Philip Heselton has speculated that the editor of the local newspaper, who coincidentally died in August 1940, may have been one of these sacrifices. He was interested in witchcraft, was supportive of the Rosicrucian Theatre, favorably reviewed Gardner's novel *A Goddess Arrives*, and lived just around the corner from him. The blacksmith in Highcliffe died in August, as well, and Heselton believes he may have also been one of the participants in the ritual (August 2000). Traditionally blacksmiths were often regarded in folklore as wizards and magicians.

Nobody will ever know if the Lammas ritual prevented the Germans invading Britain, but not everyone accepted the story as factual. One of Gardner's later initiates and the High Priestess of the Brickett Wood after his death, Lois Bourne (Pearson) dismissed it to me as "just one of Gerald's fairy tales" (pers. comm.). However Eleanor Bone claimed that Edith Woodford-Grimes had told her that she had been present at the Lammas ritual in the New Forest with both

Gardner and Dorothy Clutterbuck (Rabinovitch and Lewis 2002: 24).

The witches of the New Forest were not the only ones working magic against the Nazi threat. Many occultists in London gathered together during the war on a regular basis to prevent a German victory. They included Dion Fortune and her magical group, the Fraternity of the Inner Light, who performed weekly rituals invoking the angelic guardians of the British Isles for their protection. Phillip Heselton has referred to other anti-Nazi rituals performed by groups in Kent, on the Sussex Downs, and at Alderley Edge in Cheshire (August 2000). Another ritual was allegedly performed in the winter of 1940 by a coven in the Chiltern Hills. Its purpose was to call on Holda, the Germanic goddess of winter, darkness, and death, and petition her to stop the German bombing during the Blitz (letter to Cecil Williamson from Geoffrey Stuart Dearne dated February 15, 1982, in the MOW archive doc. 18/ref 20).

Cecil Williamson, Gardner's business partner in the 1950s, claimed that he had based his story of the Lammas ritual on a wartime military exercise called "Operation Mistletoe" performed in Ashdown Forest in Sussex by the British Security Service. M15. A ritual was organized by Williamson

on a private estate in the forest between Surrey and Sussex. He did not talk about this in public until 1992, because he had signed the Official Secrets Act during his wartime work with M16 (the Secret Intelligence Service), PWE (the Political Warfare Executive), and the SOE (Special Operations Executive). Williamson told me he had been recruited into M16 in 1938 by a family friend, Major Edward "Ted" Maltby, who belonged to a magical lodge run by Christine Hartley and her magical partner Colonel Charles Seymour, who also worked for M16 and became head of the Dutch section of SOE.

Major Maltby recruited Williamson because of his occult knowledge to travel to Germany as an undercover agent posing as a folklorist to gather information on the occult interests of Nazi Party members and investigate possible links with British magical groups. When war broke out Williamson was employed by the PWE to run secret radio stations broadcasting black propaganda and disinformation to the German U-boats operating in the Atlantic and the North Sea. Several static and mobile radio transmitters, secretly supplied by the Americans, were established across southern England and were under his command. He also worked as an undercover agent behind the lines in occupied France for the SOE.

Originally Williamson was sent to Ashdown Forest, which was under the control of a Canadian Army unit, to locate a site for a radio transmitter. Shortly after he arrived, a message came from a brigadier in M15, informing him they were "getting together a whole group of people to have a sort of pantomime set-up whereby the wizards of England [sic] were going to curse Hitler and the Nazi regime" (Williamson, Winter 1992). It had to be near the south coast of England because at the time two high-ranking officials from the Vatican were visiting the Duke of Norfolk at his family home at Arundel Castle in Hampshire. M15 knew these officials had contacts with the German High Command and they would be leaked details of the ritual. It was believed that those in the Nazi leadership who were interested in the occult would be intimidated by the idea that powerful magicians were working against them.

Williamson persuaded the owner of a private estate in Ashdown Forest to let him use the land for the operation. About forty Canadian soldiers were recruited and were dressed up in robes made from gray army blankets decorated with magical symbols from the Key of Solomon. Occultists and witches from the south coast were also invited to attend and a phony cursing ritual was then performed at a church on the estate. A dummy representing Hitler was raised in a

cradle to the top of its tower, set on fire and then lowered to the ground on a rope. Unfortunately when it hit the ground the blazing image set fire to some bushes and the local fire brigade had to be called to extinguish the flames. Williamson said that he told Gerald Gardner about this ritual and he then invented the story of a similar one performed by the New Forest Coven.

Apart from Edith Woodford-Grime's comments to Eleanor Bone, independent evidence for the Lammas ritual was provided by the novelist Louis Umfraville Wilkinson (aka Louis Marlow). He had been a friend of Aleister Crowley, contributed articles to his magazine *The Equinox*, was one of his executors, and officiated at his funeral service in December 1947. In 1953, Wilkinson met the occult writer and historian Francis King, and the subject of the survival of witchcraft into modern times was raised. Wilkinson said that in the late 1930s and early 1940s he had become friendly with the members of a witch coven in the New Forest (King 1970: 141-142).

Wilkinson said that the membership of the coven was composed of "a peculiar amalgam of middle-class intellectuals with the local peasantry" (King 1970: 141). From his description it sounds like the same coven that Gardner

had encountered in 1939. Although he personally believed that the group's foundation only dated from the publication of Dr. Margaret Murray's book *The Witch Cult in Western Europe* in 1921, Wilkinson was reasonably convinced that it was a genuine fusion of a surviving folk tradition with a more intellectual form of occultism. The proof of this was that the coven used a flying ointment made of bear's fat, very similar to the type of grease used by cross-Channel swimmers to keep warm. Its purpose was to protect their naked bodies from the cold during outdoor rituals. They also used the hallucinogenic toadstool fly agaric or *amanita muscaria* in their rituals. This red-capped, white spotted fungi has always had magical significance and is frequently found illustrating books of fairy tales.

Louis Wilkinson added that "on one occasion the Hampshire witches indulged in human sacrifice-but done in such a way there could not possibly be any legal unpleasantness" (Ibid.). He told Francis King that this happened in May 1940, when a German invasion was expected at any time. The witches decided to perform a ritual to deter the Germans and its central point was the voluntary death of a sacrificial victim. According to Wilkinson's account, the oldest and frailest member of the coven volunteered to take this role. He left off his protective

covering of flying ointment so that he would die of hypothermia and exposure. Unfortunately the plan went wrong, as it turned out to be the coldest night in May for many years. As a result, apart from the original volunteer, several other elderly participants involved in the ritual also died within a fortnight of its performance (Ibid., 142).



Chapter Three

The Pickingill Connection

In his discussion of the Lammas ritual in 1940, Philip Heselton suggested that the Mason family, who he believed were hereditary witches and members of the New Forest Coven, had ancestors who performed a similar magical ceremony at the time of the Napoleonic Wars. In his writings about the coven and its practices, Gerald Gardner always emphasized the antiquity of the modern witch cult and made references attempting to link it with older beliefs. For instance, he said that "in the old days sometimes when the High Priest was not present, a skull and crossbones was used to represent the god, death, and resurrection [or

reincarnation]" (1954: 28-29). The witches also told Gardner that "in the old days, the 'prettiest girl' was selected and given the title of the Maiden." He says she was made the acting High Priestess and was the hostess when distinguished visitors such as the Devil (Man in Black) turned up. Often the young woman who took this role was the daughter of the High Priestess of the coven and in time would inherit her title (Ibid., 136).

Gardner even suggested that the witch cult dated back to "a Stone Age cult of the matriarchal times" (Ibid., 48). He also devoted a whole chapter of his second book *The Meaning of Witchcraft* to this theory (1959: 40-50), and it is an idea that is still promoted by some presentday Wiccans. When Eleanor Bone met Dafo, she was told that the New Forest Coven could trace its history back to King William Rufus in the eleventh century. Gardner said that members of the coven had told him "They knew that their fathers and grandfathers belonged [to the Craft] and had spoken to them about meetings about the time of [the Battle of] Waterloo [1815], when it was then an old cult, thought to exist from all time" (Ibid., 51).

During the 1970s, information surfaced into public view that appeared to support the claims by Gardner and Dafo

that the New Forest Coven had an ancient history, or at least was connected with a Craft tradition that did. In 1971 the late John Score, founder of the Pagan Front and editor of The Wiccan newsletter (now the Pagan Federation and Pagan Dawn magazine) received a letter from correspondent E. W. "Bill" Liddell, living in Auckland, New Zealand. He said he had been born in Essex, England, and had emigrated in 1959 or 1960. Liddell added that as a young man he had been inducted into his family's traditional form of witchcraft on May Eve, 1950. This Craft tradition had allegedly been founded by "Old George" Pickingill (1816-1909), who lived his last years in the remote Essex village of Canewdon.

From 1974 to 1977, The Wiccan published a series of articles based on the letters Liddell sent to John Score, using at first the by-line "a well-wisher," and then the pen name of "Lugh," the Irish god of light. These articles were later published in book form in the 1990s. They contained sensational and controversial claims about George Pickingill and his alleged influence on nineteenth-century occultism and the twentieth-century witchcraft revival. It was also claimed that Aleister Crowley, as a young man, had been inducted into a coven in Norfolk founded by Pickingill. The articles also said that the Rosicrucian writer and researcher Hargrave Jennings had compiled ritual material with the

witch master that later formed the basis of the teaching papers of the Victorian magical group, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. A link was also established between the New Forest Coven that Gardner had been initiated into in 1939, and the Pickingill Craft (Liddell 1994: 1).

Bill Liddell claimed that his Craft Elders and other interested parties had told him to write the letters and send them to the editor of *The Wiccan* for publication. They were reacting to the negative publicity generated, first by Gerald Gardner, and then by the self-styled King of the Witches, Alex Sanders, as they believed it had brought the Craft into disrepute. Their primary aim was to disseminate information using a public platform to counter the false claims made by Gardner and Sanders, and show that modern Wicca had nothing to do with the older, more traditional forms of witchcraft. The secondary consideration was to "stress the baleful influence" of both Crowley and George Pickingill on the history of the modern Craft revival (Ibid., 16).

Liddell's brethren were encouraged to draft articles that could not be traced back to them, and he was used as a suitable middleman to deliver these for publication. Several different Craft traditions contributed information for the articles, putting forward their individual points of view.

Liddell's Elders were alarmed by inner plane or spirit advice they had received telling them that Gardner had been the instrument to restore the Old Religion in modern times. Other hereditary witches from East Anglia wanted to counter the Wiccan heresy, and the Pickingill Crafters wanted to promote their radical concepts of Goddess worship and female leadership. Unlike the others, they were not anti-Wiccan and were convinced by their spirit contacts that Gardner's version of neopagan witchcraft was the channel for the goddess worship that would be the predominant religion of the Aquarian Age.

Each of the writers who contributed material to the articles therefore had their own individual agendas and this led to some confusion in their content. None of the informants was willing to reveal their identities publicly, so they chose Bill Liddell as the front man. They forwarded the material to him that they wanted published, and he then drafted articles in his own handwriting from this information. Once compiled, the articles were then returned by Liddell to their respective authors in England for checking before being submitted for publication. From 1974 to 1977 these articles were published in *The Wiccan* (TW) and then from 1977 to 1988 in my own magazine *The Cauldron* (TC), until Liddell's brethren apparently decided that the work had been completed. In

1988, Liddell also felt that his obligation to his Elders was over and since then he has continued contributing articles to TC under his own name and authorship.

When Bill Liddell began to write to me in 1977, he said his Elders had instructed him to offer future articles to The Cauldron because, despite the fact I had a Gardnerian initiation, the magazine was considered less pro-Gardnerian than The Wiccan. It was also regarded as more sympathetic to the traditional and hereditary Old Craft. The new articles submitted covered considerably more ground than the ones previously published. They described the differences between the old-style covens and modern Wicca, the supposed connections between Celtic druidism, medieval French witchcraft, and Freemasonry, and the alleged influence on the witch cult of the Cathar heresy, and Saracen beliefs and practices from North Africa and the Middle East.

These new articles offered a radical and alternative view of modern witchcraft that was very different from Wicca. It was therefore predictable that they would cause controversy and skepticism. The previous contributions by Liddell to TW had already been dismissed by critics because of their grandiose claims about George Pickingill's alleged influence on the Golden Dawn. Unfortunately, at the time, these critics

were unaware that Liddell was merely passing on information provided by other sources. He also failed to inform his readers that some of the more controversial elements and claims in the articles were in the nature of Craft legends passed down by his Elders and others. These may or may not have been based on historical facts.

During our lengthy correspondence, which has lasted off and on for over thirty years, Bill Liddell has always claimed that the information in the early articles in TW and TC came directly from his Elders and other Craft brethren, and that he has also had some doubts about its veracity. He has also been very open about his later contacts with and initiations into Gardnerian and Alexandrian Wicca, even though this has also caused further controversy. He has said that his common-law wife, whom he met in New Zealand after she emigrated from England in the 1960s, was present when Alex Sanders received his first-degree initiation into Gardnerian Wicca. As we shall see in a later chapter, this has been confirmed by an independent source who was also present.

The earliest published references to Old George Pickingill or Pick- ingale (there are several local variations on the surname) that I am aware of are the articles written by the amateur folklorist Eric Maple for the Folklore journal. The

first was published in December 1960 and was called "The Witches of Canewdon." It was followed up in autumn 1962 by "The Witches of Dengle," in autumn 1965 by "Witchcraft and Magic in the Rochford Hundred," and a chapter in Maple's book *The Dark World of the Witches*, published in 1962. A more sensational account of Pickingill's life was written by Charles Lefebure in his book *Witness to Witchcraft*, published in the United States in 1970, but probably written about 1967.

Eric Maple had first visited the Essex witch village of Canewdon in 1959 while staying in the area to recover from an illness. Having an interest in the local folklore he heard tales from the older villagers about the witches who lived there fifty or sixty years before. The earliest historical reference to witchcraft in Canewdon was in 1580 when the Grand Jury from the Lent Assizes in nearby Colchester charged Rose Pye, a spinster from the village who was described in court as "notoriously living as a witch." She was accused of bewitching to death the twelve-month-old child of Johanne Snowe of Scaldhurst Farm, Canewdon. Pye pleaded not guilty and was formally acquitted of the charge. However, for some unknown reason, she was not released from prison and died there a few months later. In 1585, another Canewdon woman, Cicely Makin, was unable to find

the necessary five people to testify on her behalf that she was innocent of a charge of practicing witchcraft. She was found guilty and sentenced to undergo a public penance in church, confess her sins, and promise to live a religious life. Unfortunately she refused to mend her wicked ways and five years later was excommunicated (Webster 2005: 169-170).

When Eric Maple investigated the folk traditions of Canewdon in the winter of 1959-1960 he found stories about the witches living in and around the village in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had survived among the local farming community. One tradition that had survived into the 1950s was that if ever the tower of the village church, St. Nicholas, fell down, then the last witch would die. As long as the tower stood there would always be at least six witches living in the village. One would be the minister's wife, another the baker's wife, and a third would be the butcher's wife. Every time a stone fell from the church tower, a witch died and another took her place. The village children used to dance around the churchyard as a charm against being bewitched. It was also said that if you walked around the church seven times you would see one of the Canewdon witches. An alternate version said that if you did the same around a large tombstone in the graveyard, the Devil would appear.

Another popular local tradition was that there were "as many witches in silk as in cotton" living in the village. In 1959, a reporter from The Times newspaper interviewed Arthur Dawes, one of the oldest inhabitants of the village, about the witchcraft stories. He said that as a child his parents told him that the most prominent of the witches was the minister's wife, as in the legend, and an aristocrat named Lady Lodwick. In fact, the two women were sisters whose family name was Kesterman, and one, Mary Ann, had married the local minister, the Reverend Atkinson. A story was told that the famous Essex cunning man or male witch, James Murrell, had asked the minister's permission to put a spell on the Canewdon witches so they would be forced to go to the churchyard and be exposed in public. The Reverend Atkinson refused the offer because he knew his wife was a member of the local coven (Ibid., 172-173).

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the witches and their powers were regarded as a menace and a threat to the village. It was said there were between six and nine witches, and they had the power to "shimmer," or shapeshift, into the form of mice and white rabbits. For that reason, many superstitious people avoided these animals. In Canewdon, rabbits were never kept as a food source, and one foolish man who tried to catch one was taken ill

afterwards, because it was believed to be a witch in disguise. The witches were also feared because they could inflict plagues of lice on their enemies, bewitch the wheels off farm wagons and pony traps so they could not move, and paralyze people with the malefic glance of the Evil Eye.

Although the witches were solitary practitioners, they were believed to be subject to the power of a mysterious individual known as the "Master of Witches," or witch master in the late nineteenth century. In Canewdon, this position was held by Old George Pickingill, whom Eric Maple described as "the last and perhaps greatest of the [Essex] wizards." He was born in Hockley, Essex, in 1816, and in the latter years of his life lived and worked as a farm laborer in Canewdon. Pickingill was a widower with two sons. He lived in a cottage in the High Street and later in the lane near the Anchor Inn leading up to the church. Maple described him as a tall and unkempt man, with long fingernails and intense eyes. He was solitary and uncommunicative, and practiced openly as a wizard or cunning man. He could find lost or stolen property, cure warts and other ailments by "muttering charms and making mysterious passes," and could talk to and control animals. The cunning man cured one woman of her rheumatism by transferring it to her father.

As with most of the witches and cunning folk of the past, there was a dark side to Pickingill's magical arts. The villagers were fearful of his powers and if he wanted to draw water from the village pump the local boys would run to do it for him. People believed he could make someone ill merely by staring hard at them, and they would not recover until he decided to lift the spell. He also carried a blackthorn walking stick and used this as a "blasting rod." If he touched a person with it they would be paralyzed and unable to move. They would only regain their senses and the movement of their limbs when the old wizard touched them again with his stick.

At harvest time, Pickingill wandered around the fields threatening to bewitch the farm machinery or the horses that drew the hay wagons. For this reason the local farmers bribed him with beer and food, and his landlord allowed him to live rent-free in his cottage. However, when he was in a good mood, the wizard could cut a whole field of corn in half an hour. He achieved this feat by using his imps or familiar spirits to do the job, while he sat in the hedgerow smoking his clay pipe. One of his alleged powers was that as the witch master he could summon and control all the local witches by blowing on a wooden whistle. This forced them to reveal themselves and Pickingill would then make them

dance in the churchyard. This suggests he was regarded as the leader of the local coven.

Eric Maple says that, in his old age, visitors "came from great distances" to seek the advice of "the wise man of Canewdon," as he was known. Brave souls who ventured out after dark and dared to peep through the grimy cobwebbed windows of his cottage saw the wizard dancing with his imps. It was like a scene from The Sorcerer's Apprentice sequence in the Walt Disney movie Fantasia with the clock, ornaments, crockery, and furniture joining in the merry dance.

A woman who visited Pickingill shortly before his death saw him lying in on the bed "like a skeleton," with his familiars in the shape of mice scurrying over the covers. When he died in April 1909, the old cunning man was buried in unconsecrated ground in the churchyard. As a last act of defiance, he told the villagers that he would even demonstrate his magical powers at his own funeral. Allegedly, when the horse-drawn hearse drew up to the church gate, the animals stepped out of their harnesses and trotted away down the lane.

The account given by Charles Lefebure in his 1970 book promotes a more sensational and satanic image of Pickingill.

However, it is interesting, as it confirms the version of him as the Master of Witches in Bill Liddell's articles. Lefebure said, perhaps significantly, that Pickingill still had the same status as Crowley and Gerald Gardner in occult circles. He described him as "the Devil incarnate," who had discovered the famed Elixir of Life and eternal youth. Apparently the whole Pickingill family had been feared all over eastern England for generations as "a race apart" of witches, wizards, and warlocks, with a pedigree dating back to the days of Merlin.

According to Lefebure, the cunning man was popularly believed to have sold his soul to the Devil in exchange for his remarkable magical powers, and he held nocturnal rites in the churchyard with his Romany kin. Pickingill terrified the locals with his supernatural powers and anyone who dared cross him fell ill immediately. His reputation spread far and wide and he became so infamous as a wizard that black magicians [sic] from all over Europe traveled to the remote Essex village to consult him and receive instruction in the Black Art.

Charles Lefebure was right to think that the Pickingills were well known all over eastern England. Sybil Webster, who lived in Canewdon in the 1960s and studied the local

history, found numerous references to them in church registers and census records. The family was variously known as Pickingale, Pippingale, Pettingale, and Piten-gale, as well as Pickingill, and this has led to some confusion. George Pickingill was baptized in Hockley on May 25, 1816, and in 1908 an article in the local Southend Standard and Essex Advertiser newspaper described him as the oldest man in the country, but this was incorrect. The reporter took Pickingill for a ride in the first car seen in the village, and a photograph of the event was published in the newspaper (Webster 2005: 178). Pickingill said he had never been to London on the train, but Sybil Webster told me that he was supposed to have traveled to Norfolk regularly in a pony and trap. This was probably to see his relatives in Castle Rising, a village that, like Canewdon, has a reputation for witchcraft (letter dated January 16, 2008).

The version of George Pickingill's life and activities described in Bill Liddell's articles contrasts with the folk traditions collected by Eric Maple. Liddell said that he was not an illiterate drunken old man, but came from an established line of hereditary witches who had been priests of the Horned God since Saxon times. The Craft that Pickingill allegedly practiced a unique amalgam of Danish paganism, Arabic mysticism, Christian heresy, and French

Witchcraft. Danish Viking invaders had settled in East Anglia, and in fact Canewdon was founded by the Danish king Cnut, who also became the king of England. A later influx of French and Flemish weavers into this area in the Middle Ages allegedly introduced elements of French witchcraft and the heretical beliefs of the Cathars (Liddell 1994: 24).

Pickingill, it was said in the articles, was a radical reformer and modernizer within the Old Craft, and he introduced goddess worship, female-led covens, and working skylad, or naked, in the circle. This horrified his peers as traditionally the "robed covens" of the traditional and hereditary Craft were led by a Magister or witch master who initiated both men and women. Liddell said that in his later years Pickingill, who was of Romany descent, was a horse dealer and in that profession he traveled around southern England. While doing this, he recruited women he believed had the witch blood. Under his guidance they formed nine autonomous covens in Hampshire, Sussex, Hertfordshire, Essex, and Norfolk.

In his articles, Liddell claimed that the Hampshire coven of the nine covens, founded by George Pickingill, was the same one as the group in the New Forest into which Gerald

Gardner was initiated in 1939. It stopped convening during World War I, but several of its elderly members attempted to revive it in the 1920s. This revival met with limited success until several hereditary witches and solitary practitioners joined. During the 1930s there was an influx of middle-class intellectuals drawn from the ranks of the Crotona Fellowship.

The Hampshire coven had retained some of Pickingill's reforms, including the ranks of High Priestess and her female deputy known as the Maiden taking precedence over the male leader, skyclad rituals, and more reverence given to the Goddess than the God. They had also been influenced by the theories put forward by Dr. Margaret Murray in her book *The Witch Cult in Western Europe* and kept some of the traditional aspects of the historical Craft. This included the use of the French name Janicot for the witch-god, a Black Book of the Devil's Art, the use of material from medieval grimoires such as the Key of Solomon, sexual congress as part of the induction rite, the diablo stigmata or Devil's mark, the taking of a new witch name by initiates, a dance and drop technique to raise power in the circle, and the use of a flying ointment (1994: 150-151 and May 2000).

Liddell further claimed that his initiation into the New Forest Coven was not the only contact that Gerald Gardner

had with what he calls "the true persuasion." He said his Elders told him that Gardner did not advance very far with his parent coven. However he did contact a hereditary group of witches in Hertfordshire in 1945 and they were also a surviving remnant of one of Pickingill's Nine Covens. Gardner contacted this coven after being sponsored into a Co-Masonic lodge by Madeline Montalban, where he met one of its members. Liddell described this lodge as being similar to the Rosicrucian Theatre because it was being used as a recruiting ground for various occult groups. Gardner also advanced to the third grade of the Hereditary Craft in another surviving coven of the Nine in Norfolk and is supposed to have held the rank of Magister in the Pickingill Craft through induction into a coven in Essex (1994: 83, 103, 153, and 158).

Before he founded his coven at Brickett Wood in Hertfordshire in the late 1940s, several writers have claimed that Gardner was already associated with witchcraft activities in the area. Francis King referred to the existence of a pre-Gardnerian coven in St. Albans, near Brickett Wood, but stated he did not believe its origins went back before 1900. He speculated that it might have been founded after the publication of Dr. Margaret Murray's book in 1921 (1971: 11-12). Robert Graves also associated Gardner with an earlier

Hertfordshire coven in an essay on modern witchcraft published in an anthology in 1969.

Tony Steele has also claimed he made contact with the owners of narrow boats or barges that used to carry cargo on Britain's canals and were so-called water witches practicing a form of traditional witchcraft. One of the most influential of these witch families, Steele claims, was founded in Hertfordshire in the 1880s by Edward "Grandad" King, nicknamed the "King of the Witches" by the canal people. He had inherited a form of witchcraft from his ancestors, who came from Lincolnshire and were of Dutch extraction.

Steele was told by his contacts that in 1945 Gerald Gardner was inducted into his family coven. Prior to this, no outsider ever joined, but after King's death the family were free to act as they wanted and relaxed the rules. Allegedly, Gardner's interest in folklore had led him to make contact with the narrow-boat people. The water witches were flattered by the attentions of an upper-middle-class and wealthy man like Gardner, and welcomed him into their ranks with open arms (1998: 10-12).

In 1941, Gardner had also been sponsored by a colleague in the New Forest Coven to join a so-called "cunning lodge." This was a quasiMasonic group that combined the

practice of Freemasonry, ceremonial magic, paganism, and traditional witchcraft. The lodge emphasized the worship of the Horned God, was led by a male Magus (magician), and cast the circle using passages from the Key of Solomon (Ibid., 158-159). This type of cunning lodge had a membership made up of witch masters who were either wealthy farmers or landowners. Socially, they inhabited both the world of the landed gentry and the peasantry, who included rural cunning folk. Many of the lodge members were Freemasons or, like George Pickingill, belonged to quasi-Masonic groups such as the Order of Ancient Woodsman or the Society of the Horseman's Word. They mixed freely with occultists and Rosicrucians, and also had links to neopagan magical groups attempting to revive the classical Mysteries of Eleusis and Hellfire Club-type organizations practicing devil worship and sexual rites (Ibid., 170).

Bill Liddell said that his Craft Elders told him that George Pickingill disbanded the Canewdon Coven several years prior to his death, probably about 1899, which is a significant date, as we shall see later. The coven was composed of seven female witches, with Pickingill as the male leader, or Devil. Liddell has claimed that it was the use of this archaic title for a witch master that led to the

accusations by more conservative members of the Craft that the cunning man was a Satanist, and had sold his soul to the Devil (1994: 89).

The tradition passed down in the Pickingill Craft was that the coven had been formed in the fifteenth century by a local landowner after he returned from fighting in a war between France and England. He had been inducted into witchcraft while he was abroad. The church tower in Canewdon featured in the witch legends of the village because it dates from the fifteenth century and was built by the landowner to celebrate the English victory at the Battle of Agincourt. On the outside of the tower are carved the heraldic arms of France and England (Ibid.: 8 and 88).

Bill Liddell's articles in *The Wiccan* and *The Cauldron* were initially greeted with a delight by Gardnerian Wiccans. They seemed to provide evidence of an authenticity and legitimacy for modern Wicca, linking it with a surviving tradition of historical witchcraft that did not previously exist. In letters to his correspondents, John Score quoted from the "Lugh" material as evidence that Gardnerian Wicca was descended from George Pickingill, and the New Forest group was one of his Nine Covens. In her book *Witchcraft for Tomorrow*, Doreen Valiente referred to "some new and

curious information" originating from a correspondent to The Wiccan whom she describes as "my East Anglian source, [and] my informant," although she never knew Bill Liddell. At the time, she was happy to accept the Lugh material at face value and asserted that George Pickingill had played an important part in the present-day revival of witchcraft (1978: 20).

However, by the time she had written *The Rebirth of Witchcraft* ten years later, Valiente had changed her mind about Pickingill's significance and the authenticity of the material. She spent eight pages analyzing and criticizing the articles by Bill Liddell before concluding he was either a genuine holder of secrets or a dreamer providing his readers with disinformation. Likewise the Alexandrian initiate, Vivianne Crowley, mentions the articles in the first edition of her influential book *Wicca: The Old Religion In a New Age*, but this section is strangely missing from later editions.

Not all modern witches had a high opinion of George Pickingill. In a letter written to one of his Australian students, Simon Goodman, Alex Sanders said in reference to the wise man of Canewdon that he might well have moved farm machinery by his magical power. However, "[so what] to me that is not Wicca ... the Wicca is the worship of the

Great Mother and the Mighty One who grants her the power." Sanders ends the letter by using a four-letter word referring to the female genitals to describe Goodman for believing in Pickingill (letter dated September 5, 1983, in the MOW archive).

In his book *Crafting the Art of Magic* (1991), Aidan Kelly claimed that Bill Liddell (or Lugh, as he calls him) was "purposely creating a phony history in order to throw researchers off the trail." In fact, according to Kelly, his articles represented "a purposeful policy of disinformation instigated by Gardner and carried out by some of his successors in the leadership of the Craft movement." He added that Liddell "was pursuing a course built on foundations laid by Gerald [Gardner]."

Bill Liddell refuted this alleged pro-Gardnerian conspiracy in his book *The Pickingill Papers* (1994). He dismissed Kelly's "erroneous allegations and wild speculations," and said he had a problem distinguishing guesswork from history. This was a direct reference to the highly speculative membership list of the New Forest Coven that Kelly had published in his book. On the Pagan Network forum on the Internet, Bill Liddell has said: "My Elders believed totally in the material they gave me. I also believed it at the time of

publication. There was never any question on my part, or on others, of distributing false information" (August 22, 2006).

One of the most controversial claims made in the original Lugh material published in *The Wiccan* was that George Pickingill had cooperated with various ceremonial magicians and occultists, and influenced the formation of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. This has caused confusion and misunderstanding, and led to statements such as Pickingill "organising rituals for the Golden Dawn and also writing their Book of Shadows [sic]" (Webster 2005: 175). In fact, on his own website, Bill Liddell has said that the information about Pickingill and the GD had been supplied to him only by "three Pickingill [Craft] ladies," and they had been told the story when they were young women.

They said that what had happened was that one of Pickingill's students was the Rosicrucian writer and researcher Hargrave Jennings. He had allegedly copied out some of the notes made by Pickingill about the Cabbalistic Tree of Life, astrology, and geomancy. These ended up in the library of the Rosicrucian Society in England in London and were later read by Samuel MacGregor Mathers, who then incorporated them into the GD teaching papers. This is not so fanciful as it seems. Francis King mentioned a

Lincolnshire cunning man called John Parkin. He was a student in London of both the astrologer Ebenezer Sibly, and of Francis Barrett, the author of the modern grimoire *The Magus* (1801). Parkin used his own system of geomantic divination-eighty years later this was being taught to the students of the Golden Dawn (King 1992).

Another contentious claim is that George Pickingill was visited by occultists who sought his advice and instruction in the magical arts. We have already seen that both Eric Maple and Charles Lefebure also made that claim. Pickingill's obituary, published in a local newspaper in 1909, said "the deceased had received many visitors and was the recipient of various kind and thoughtful gifts." In the stories about the other famous Essex cunning man James Murrell, it was said he had clients who visited him from far and wide. Essex girls often got jobs as servants in London and told their employers about Murrell. As a result, wealthy women visited the cunning man, wanting to consult him about their domestic problems and hoping he could foretell their futures.

In October 1977, a few days before Hallowe'en, I decided to visit Canewdon in the hope of finding out more about Pickingill and paying my respect at his graveside. When I

arrived and made inquiries in the village I was told that the wizard's home had been demolished many years ago. Attempts to find his burial place in the churchyard of St. Nicholas, now protected by CCTV due to unruly scenes each Hallowe'en, were also fruitless. I called at the vicarage and asked the aged minister if he could help me in my quest. He had been the incumbent for many years and said he had never come across Pickingill's grave, which if it were in unconsecrated ground would have been unmarked anyway. However, he kindly suggested that an elderly lady called Granny Garner might be able to help me, and he directed me to her cottage in the lane leading up to the church. Apparently she had been Eric Maple's chief informant in the village and he had described her as the last white witch in Canewdon.

Lillian Garner was eighty-seven years old when I met her, but her mind was, as they say, "as bright as a button." She invited me in for tea, and told me that she remembered George Pickingill from her childhood as a village character and eccentric old gentleman. She recollected when the first car came to the village that he had his photograph taken beside it. She also revealed that her own mother had told her that Mr. Pickingill was the leader of a local coven of witches. Apparently her mother was actually a member of the coven

and said that the witch master had "many visitors" from outside the village who came seeking his occult knowledge. Before I left, Lillian gave me the original of the photograph of George Pickingill that was published in Eric Maple's book *Dark World of the Witches*. A photograph of Granny Garner herself standing at the door of her cottage was reproduced with Maple's article on the Canewdon witches published in the encyclopedic work *Man, Myth and Magic* in the 1970s.

One of the problems, as far as academics are concerned, is the lack of documentary evidence or independent testimony to back up the claims made by Bill Liddell and his Elders. Liddell has told me that there are still at least two Pickingill covens operating in East Anglia today. When I asked him for proof of this claim and inquired as to the possibility of being put in contact with them there was no response. There may have been good reasons for his reluctance to expose them, even though I gave assurances that I would not publicly reveal anything about them. In the 1970s, I met a man of Romany descent named George Wells. He also claimed to know practitioners of the Pickingill Craft. He told me they still convened on the outskirts of the New Forest and at Brandon on the border between Suffolk and Essex. I mentioned this to Liddell, but he said he knew nothing about these alleged covens.

In 2005, Ralph Harvey, the owner of a theatrical company providing replica weapons to film and television companies and the founder of the Order of Artemis in 1959, announced publicly that he had been initiated into a coven that had links with George Pickingill. Harvey says that after the old Witchcraft Act was repealed in 1951 (The Last Bastion, 2005: 31-39), he was desperate to preserve the traditional ways of the Craft that "with the upsurge of Gardnerianism" were dying. At that time he knew of only five hereditary witch families left, and a handful of solitary witches. However, as time passed he found out there were more witches in existence than he had realized, especially in Devon, Cornwall, and the Isle of Man.

Harvey says that attempts were made to try to trace the surviving remnants of Pickingill's Nine Covens. This search was concentrated on Sussex as allegedly, "It had been the last bastion in resisting the witch-finders, [and the] last county in Britain outwardly to accept Xtianity [sic]" One day Harvey saw an advertisement in the personal column of a local newspaper that said, "Witch wanted to remove family curse." When he answered it, he found that, by coincidence, it had been placed by an old family friend and distant relative of his, the Duke of Leinster. The duke told Harvey a local witch had responded and within weeks contact was

made with this person who was living in the Sussex village of Storrington. This is not far from the Iron Age hill-fort of Chanctonbury Ring that has an ancient connection with witchcraft. It was believed to have been used for many years as a meeting place by an old coven that exists in the area.

Subsequent enquiries revealed that there were two covens allegedly descended from Pickingill's Nine operating in Sussex with different names, but in reality they were one and the same groups working at two sites. Ralph Harvey says all the members of the Storrington Coven were elderly. When he later made contact with another group called the Willingdon Coven, he discovered they were also elderly-their High Priestess was seventy-two years old. He said that the covens had not initiated anyone since before World War II, and were in danger of literally dying out. Harvey says they decided to take him in so that the tradition would survive. After the traditional "year and a day" probationary period, Harvey was duly inducted into the Storrington Coven.

The two covens combined to help the Duke of Leinster with his family problems, although they were unable to assist with the legal matters relating to his estate. Harvey said that the High Priestess of the Storrington Coven died in

her nineties in 1977, and left her magical artifacts to his Order of Artemis, a group that combined traditional witchcraft with modern Wicca. Harvey claims he was told that the coven that Gardner was initiated into in the New Forest was one of the surviving remnants of the Nine founded by George Pickingill in the nineteenth century. He also mentions Rosamund (Sabine), who died in 1948, and was either the High Priestess or Maiden of the coven. He added, "By all accounts she had a position of some authority within the coven, and was certainly an Elder" (2005: 33).

Harvey further claimed that the High Priestess and High Priest of the Storrington Coven had actually met Pickingill. He says from his own research that he is confident that the Essex cunning man "never, ever founded a single coven in his life," but he was the mentor of at least seven covens, including the one in the New Forest. Harvey says that the High Priestess of the Willingdon Coven was in contact with a coven in the New Forest during World War II, and presumes this was the same one Gardner belonged to. She is also supposed to have known two other independent groups in the West Country that Pickingill had been associated with.



PART TWO

Development 1941- 1953



Chapter Four

Gerald Gardner and the Great Beast

The Bracelin biography of Gerald Gardner is strangely silent about the period from 1940 to 1946, when it says he met the so-called Great Beast 666, Aleister Crowley. In fact, this date is wrong-the two men met in the spring of 1947. It is possible that as it was wartime Gardner kept a low profile during these years. A fellow member of the Folklore Society, Ralph Merrifield, once deputy-director of the Museum of London and author of the classic book *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic*, asked Gardner how he became interested in witchcraft. He received the odd reply that Gardner, as an air-raid warden, had fallen in love with a witch while fire-watching during the war.

Philip Heselton has identified this witch as Dafo, or Edith Woodford-Grimes. We have seen that Gardner attended her daughter's wedding in 1940 and gave the bride away. Woodford-Grime's husband did not attend the wedding, and the suggestion is that her marriage had broken down and they had separated (Heselton 2000: 266). It has also been suggested that Gardner and Dafo had an extra-marital affair. The theory is that the New Forest Coven never existed and that Gardner invented it and created Wicca so he would have an excuse for the affair if his wife ever found out! An alternative version put forward by Philip Heselton is that Gardner first met Dafo when they were both working as volunteers filling sandbags to protect Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament from possible bomb damage. They began chatting and discovered they were both naturists. Woodford-Grimes in fact belonged to the New Forest Naturist Club and that is why Gardner and his wife moved to Hampshire (Ibid., 263).

Cecil Williamson told me that Gardner had met several other witches apart from those who belonged to the New Forest Coven. He claimed Gardner had spoken to him about an encounter with the High Priestess of a coven in Epsom in Surrey. They had met while Gardner was an air-raid warden in London and he was filling sandbags in Parliament Square

(letter dated May 22, 1984, in MOW archive doc.398.ref 419). Gardner is also supposed to have told Williamson that he knew of other covens in the New Forest and others in Highgate, North London, and Leeds in Yorkshire.

If one account is to be believed, wartime London was teeming with witches. Rollo Nordic, a tarot card designer and occultist claimed that "During the war there were two hundred of us [witches] and we met every Tuesday in a certain place in London and always sat in the same place, and we sent out rays to where was the worst fighting. And we could see by the newspapers it would slacken off" (Enchante magazine 1992). It is very hard to believe there were actually two hundred witches in London and they all met once a week together without attracting some attention to their activities.

Rollo Nordic also said she was a student of the taromancer, astrologer, and magician, Madeline Montalban (1910-1982). As we have already seen, Bill Liddell has claimed that she sponsored Gardner's entry into a Co-Masonic lodge in 1945. Gardner told Doreen Valiente that he first met Montalban during the war and "she had been wearing the uniform of an officer in the WRNS [Wrens or Women's Royal Navy Service]" This, however, was just a

cover-she was secretly working for Lord Louis Mountbatten, the great-uncle of Prince Charles, Admiral of the Fleet, and, after the war, the last vice-royal in India before its independence from the British Empire. Lord Mountbatten, who, it is rumored, was interested in occult matters, had allegedly retained her as his personal clairvoyant and psychic advisor (Valiente 1989: 49-50). However, Madeline Montalban could not have been a member of the New Forest Coven in 1939 as claimed by Aidan Kelly, as Gardner did not meet her until later in the war.

I first met Madeline Montalban during the famous hippie "summer of love" in August 1967. I had read one of the many articles she contributed to the monthly magazine *Prediction*, and wrote to her. We met at her large apartment in a Gothic-style building at 3 Grape Street, St. Giles, London WC1, which is just behind the Shaftesbury Theatre. At the time the theatre was showing the controversial hippie musical *Hair* with its scenes of full-frontal nudity. Grape Street was only a few hundred yards from the British Museum and the Atlantis occult bookshop, and only a short walk from the Watkins occult bookshop in Cecil Court, off Charing Cross Road. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, St. Giles had been the site of a notorious slum

called "The Rookeries" that was the haunt of prostitutes, thieves, beggars, astrologers, herbalists, quack-doctors, and fortunetellers. It is also adjacent to the Bloomsbury district with its historical associations with the Theosophical Society and the Order of the Golden Dawn.

With its turrets, balconies, and bow windows with leaded windowpanes, Madeline's apartment seemed totally out of place in modern London. It perched over the street like a fairytale tower or a sorcerer's eyrie, which is, in fact, what it was. Inside, this otherworldly effect was heightened by the apartment's antique furnishings and glass-fronted cabinets full of occult curios and first editions of arcane books such as Cornelius Agrippa's *Occult Philosophy* and the *Key of Solomon*. Candles, votary lamps, and incense were continually burning to add to the atmosphere, and it was the most haunted place I have ever known. This was because Madeline refused to banish any of the spirits she conjured up during her magical rituals.

On our first meeting, Madeline cast my horoscope, casually mentioned we had known each other in a past life as priests in ancient Egypt, and told me that I bore the Mark of Cain. As a callow youth, I was suitably impressed, even though it took another thirty years before I fully understood

her last remark. She invited me to become a student of her magical group, the Order of the Morning Star, founded in the 1950s with her partner Nicholas Heron (aka Nicholas Breach), who had been a reporter on a local newspaper in Brighton, Sussex, and was a skilled talisman maker. The OMS was based on a mixture of astrology, tarot, angelic magic, and Luciferianism. Madeline ran a correspondence course on these subjects that acted as an outer court for the Order.

Madeline told me a romantic story of how she became involved in the occult world. As a child she had been difficult and rebellious, and her father decided to put her on a train to London from their home town of Blackpool in Lancashire. He gave her a large cheque and the address of the magician Aleister Crowley. The money was supposed to induce the Great Beast to take her on as his sorcerer's apprentice. She later told me she arrived at Crowley's lodgings in Half Moon Street and was greeted at the door by his latest vampire-like Scarlet Woman, or magical partner. She was told Crowley was upstairs having an asthma attack in the bath. As either Madeline or one of her relatives suffered from the complaint, she was able to help him recover and he was eternally grateful for her help.

Madeline also claimed that she attended Crowley's infamous Abbey of Thelema on Sicily in 1922, when she would have been only twelve years old. In fact Madeline met Crowley in the 1930s while she was working as a journalist for the Daily Express national newspaper and was sent to interview him. He was living in Half Moon Street at that time, and invited her for lunch at the Cafe Royal restaurant in Regent Street. At the end of the meal, Crowley suddenly discovered he had no money to pay for it and Madeline had to foot the bill. She told me that Crowley used her as his "Moonchild," and she acted as a seer during his magical ceremonies. A fellow member of the OMS told me that she had a full set of magical robes from the AA, or Order of the Silver Star, Crowley's magical group, in a chest in her apartment. During World War II, Madeline enlisted in the Royal Navy and she confirmed the story Gardner had told Doreen Valiente that she had served on Lord Mountbatten's personal staff. She also said her rank in the Wrens was a cover to hide the fact from outsiders that she was really his seer. In her apartment I saw a silver-framed photograph of Mountbatten that he had signed for her.

Before 1951 and the repeal of the Witchcraft Act, in common with her contemporaries, Madeline Montalban kept a low profile. They disguised their studies as research into

folklore, as that was regarded as a respectable and acceptable hobby. Despite this, Madeline seems to have been active in the esoteric scene in London, and knew people like Gerald Gardner, the Jewish-German refugee Michael Juste (aka Michael Houghton), who had founded the Atlantis bookshop in 1922, and Kenneth Grant, a disciple of Crowley and founder of the Tyhonian OTO (Ordo Templis Orientis or Order of the Temple of the East) and the Nu-Isis Lodge. Grant had met Crowley in the autumn of 1944 and subsequently moved into a cottage on the grounds of the Netherwood Hotel in Hastings, Sussex, where the Great Beast was living. He became Crowley's secretary-personal assistant and worked without pay in exchange for magical instruction. However the relationship was short-lived, and Grant left Crowley's employment only a year later in June 1945, as he needed to take up paid work to support his family. When he first met Gardner, Grant said that he "could not understand his remarks, he knows little and talks much" (letter to Cecil Williamson dated April 29, 1951, in the MOW archive).

In the late 1940s, Madeline Montalban was living in an apartment house on the present site of the Centre Point office block at St. Giles Circus. One of her stories was that she had cursed the building because her home had been

demolished to make way for it. That is why, she claimed, it was empty for so long after it had been constructed and the company who owned it could not get any tenants to occupy it. Madeline also worked at the Atlantis bookshop for a time. Both she and Gardner applied to join Michael Juste's occult group, the Order of Hidden Masters, which met in a temple in the shop's basement, but he rejected their applications. Actual members of the Order included Gerard Yorke, a friend of Crowley, and John Symonds, who was later the Great Beast's literary executor and first biographer. According to an entry in Doreen Valiente's personal notebooks, the OHM practiced Golden Dawn-type rituals, and worshipped a dog-headed Sumerian god (MOW archive). Another source described the Order's members as "sinister occultists," who used magical rituals to get power over people in high places (Heselton 2003: 244).

Kenneth Grant has claimed that Madeline Montalban and Gerald Gardner worked magical rituals together at this time. In fact, Gardner was living in an apartment in Ridgemount Gardens, just off Tottenham Court Road and near Madeline's apartment at what is now Centre Point. Grant told me that Gardner introduced him to "Mrs. North" in the late 1940s after he challenged him to show him a real witch (letter dated December 20, 1993). In Grant's book *Nightshade of*

Eden (1977), there is a curiously inaccurate account of a ritual performed by Gardner and Montalban, who is called "Mrs. South." Grant says that she was a procuress and whore [sic] who spiced her activities with an "occult flavour calculated to appeal to a certain type of clientele" (122).

The ritual had been instigated by Gardner and its purpose was to demonstrate, presumably to Grant and his wife Steffi, who were also present, his ability to "bring down the power." The intention was to raise a current of magical energy and contact "certain extraterrestrial intelligences" that Grant was in almost constant rapport with at the time. This was at a period when Grant was in the formative stage of creating his own OTO lodge. The rite consisted of the five participants (Gardner, Montalban, Kenneth and Steffi Grant, and a "young lady who was 'well-versed' in the deeper aspects of witchcraft" [Ibid., 123]), circling around a sigil inscribed on a consecrated piece of parchment.

Grant had asked his friend and fellow magical practitioner Austin Osman Spare to design the sigil as he was engaged in similar spirit contact work. At the climax of the ritual the parchment would be consumed in the flame of a candle standing on the altar in the north quadrant of Madeline Montalban's apartment. Grant says that, apart from the

magical equipment, the room contained only two or three shelves of books on witchcraft and the occult. These, he claimed, were merely props to add a little authenticity to her "more usual pursuits."

The participants circled the altar in a deosil (clockwise) direction with an ever-increasing pace in a diminishing circle. Before the invocation could be said, the proceedings were interrupted by the loud ringing of the doorbell on the front door of the building. The unwelcome caller was "the proprietor of an 'occult' bookshop" situated near "Mrs. South's" apartment (Ibid., 123). This was in fact Madeline's employer, Michael Juste, from the nearby Atlantis bookshop. When Juste learned that Grant was present, he decided not to come in. He knew that Grant had been one of Crowley's disciples, and disapproved of the Great Beast, his activities, and his associates. Having been disturbed, the practitioners decided to abandon the rite.

Grant said that the abortive ritual was designed to call up a "particularly potent spirit," which would undoubtedly have been described by Gardner and Mrs. South as "phallic" (Ibid., 124). He says that this was important, as the sudden and abrupt ending of the ritual allegedly had unfortunate consequences. "Mrs. South died under mysterious

circumstances," and Gerald Gardner "was not long following suit," the bookshop owner's marriage broke up, and he also died shortly afterwards. In fact, Michael Juste died at age sixty-four in 1961, Gardner of a heart attack in 1964 at age eighty, and Madeline in 1982 at age seventy-two, from lung cancer.

According to Rollo Nordic [op cit], Madeline Montalban was quite happy to adopt the persona of a witch when she knew her. However, in the 1960s when I met her, she denounced Gardner as "a fraud and a pervert." This description was based on a ritual she had attended where Gardner was tied up skyclad and his genitals were tickled with a feather-duster by a female witch. Gardner's liking of sadomasochistic scenarios has been confirmed by others who knew him. It is claimed that in his old age Gardner was impotent, and this was the only way he could get sexually aroused.

Any discussion of Wicca in Madeline's presence when I knew her was forbidden and likely to bring on one of her infamous mood swings when she would get in a rage and throw everyone out. She had a real dislike of the "media witches" who appeared in the newspapers, although she seems to have mellowed with age. In the late 1970s, she did

meet Maxine Sanders, the Queen of the Witches (2008: 237-239). However, I remember that when Madeline was interviewed in *Man, Myth and Magic*, and was described as the "Witch of St. Giles," she went crazy and threatened to sue them for libel.

When we met in 1967, Madeline was aware of my interest in the Craft and I made no effort to hide it from her. She seemed to tolerate it to a point, as she realized that I was mainly interested in the folkloric and historic aspects and traditional forms of witchcraft. In fact, I had considered writing a book on the subject called *The Cult of the Witch*. She used her skills as a journalist and author to help me with the project. Oddly, Madeline seemed to always have a young man in her social circle interested in traditional witchcraft and folklore. Her lover, Nicholas Heron, took this role in the 1950s and, although my relationship with her was platonic, I had that position for a short while.

Things came to a head in December 1968, when I met a woman named Rosina Bishop, who was visiting Madeline with her friend Deric James, editor of *Insight* magazine. Rosina was a Wiccan and had been initiated by a man who had received his own initiation from one of Gardner's later priestesses, Celia Penny (witch name "Francesca"). We

became friendly, and in January 1969, Rosina offered to initiate me into Gardnerian Wicca. Madeline was not happy about this turn of events, and for a while we parted company. She never forgave me for what she regarded as an act of treachery, and our relationship was never the same again.

At Beltane, or May Day, 1947, Gerald Gardner met Aleister Crowley. Officially this was their first meeting, although there have always been persistent rumors they knew each other before that date. Francis King said they actually met first in either 1943 or 1944 (1971: 12). In the 1980s, I was in correspondence with Colonel Lawrence, who ran a witchcraft museum in the United States, and he told me that Gardner had known Crowley before the war. He claimed to have in his possession a silver cigarette case that allegedly included a note in Crowley's writing saying: "Gift to GBG 1936."

It certainly appears odd that Gardner should have been back in England for ten years and involved in the London occult scene without meeting Crowley before. Especially as Gardner and Madeline Montalban were friends and magical working partners, and she knew Crowley and was a member of his Order. Cecil Williamson claimed that Gardner and

Crowley met each other after he came back from the Far East and Gardner was "running around like Wee Willie Winkie trying to dredge up anyone or anybody who had got anything to do with magic." Williamson said that the two fell out, and in 1947, Gardner asked him to drive him down to Netherwood to make it up with him. Crowley apparently was not forgiving in nature and was just polite. When Gardner went outside, Crowley told Williamson: "You want to watch him." He also described Gardner as a "wily old humbug," and somebody that could not be trusted (Winter 1992). In return Gardner belittled Crowley's work and according to Doreen Valiente regarded the so-called Great Beast as "a bit of a joke" (letter to John Score September 18, 1970, in MOW archive).

Gardner and Crowley's relationship was certainly ambiguous. In the Bracelin biography, Gardner is quoted as saying that Crowley "wasted money like water," and as a result he tried to get money out of people. Gardner also said that he had no proof that the Great Beast had any magical powers except for his hypnotic gaze, and he used it to get things out of people. Gardner added that Crowley shared another mark of the charlatan and that was "the all-pervading, almost overpowering, personal charm which brought him so many dupes" (1960: 156).

The official version of how Crowley and Gardner met in 1947 is that they were introduced by Arnold Crowther (1909-1974), later the High Priest of the Sheffield Coven. He was a ventriloquist, stage magician, and puppeteer who had known Gardner since before the war. They had met in 1939 at a lecture on folklore given by Christina Hole (Heselton 2003: 180). Crowther had only recently contacted Crowley after a woman had approached him at the end of one of his performances in April 1947. She said she knew a real magician with a similar name to his and gave him Crowley's address at Netherwoods. Crowther wrote to the Great Beast and when he was invited to tea, took Gardner along (Ibid., 182). This event was also recorded by Crowley in his diary.

The most controversial aspect of this meeting between Crowley and Gardner is the Great Beast's claim that as a young man he had been involved in witchcraft. Bracelin states: "At Oxford [sic], Crowley said, he had been on the edge of witchcraft." In fact this was either Gardner's memory failing him or a typing error, because Crowley was a student at Cambridge University, not Oxford. He told Gardner he had not "followed the way of the witches [because he] refused to be bossed around by any damned woman" (1960: 158). Although Crowley was a bisexual sadomasochist, he also had a misogynistic attitude, so this comment has a ring of

truth about it. Gerald Yorke, Crowley's friend and one of his executors, commented that this remark was "in character" (Heselton 2003: 191).

Cambridge was supposed to have been a center for occult activities and, according to the Catholic demonologist Montague Summers, Francis Barrett, author of *The Magus*, founded a magical group in the city. He said: "I have been told that Francis Barrett actually founded a small sodality of students of these dark and deep mysteries and that under his tuition ... some advanced upon the path of transcendental wisdom. One at least was a Cambridge man, of what status-whether an undergraduate or a fellow of the college-I do not know, but there is every reason to believe that he initiated others and until quite recent years-it perhaps even persists today-the Barrett tradition was maintained at Cambridge, but very privately, and his teaching has been handed on to promising subjects" (Summers 1946).

The Lugh material compiled by Bill Liddell says that a coterie of academics at Cambridge University formed a pseudo-coven in the first decade of the nineteenth century. This group was allegedly operative by 1810, and based upon Barrett's *The Magus* and the pagan rites of the classical

Mysteries of ancient Greece and Rome. It is claimed George Pickingill was shown a copy of the so-called Cambridge Rituals during a lodge meeting of the Order of Woodsmen, and adopted them for his version of witchcraft. Liddell also said that there were two magical fraternities associated with the university. One had Rosicrucian-Masonic rituals based on the classical Mysteries and the other practiced sex rites and devil worship of the type associated with the eighteenth-century Hellfire Clubs. Both are supposed to be still active today (Liddell 1994: 107). One is reminded of the possibly apocryphal story that, while he was a student at Cambridge, Crowley fell out with one of his tutors. He made a wax image of the man and pricked it in the leg with a pin. Shortly afterwards the teacher suffered a nasty fall and broke his leg (Wheatley 1981).

When the writer Francis King met the novelist Louis Umfreville Wilkinson in 1953, the latter confirmed that Crowley had been "offered initiation into the witch cult" as a young man. Crowley told Wilkinson he had refused because he "didn't want to be bossed around by a woman." King was skeptical, but Wilkinson assured him that, while Crowley did indulge in leg-pulling jokes, he believed that on this occasion he was telling the truth. Francis King said that after meeting Wilkinson he was told by two other independent

sources who knew Crowley that he had made the same claim to them (King 1970: 140-141).

Kenneth Grant told me that there was also a possible link between Crowley and an old coven known to Austin Osman Spare. This group was run in Essex by a witch sister of Spare's own teacher and witch mother, Mrs. Paterson. Grant believed that Allan Bennett might have made contact with this coven, which was "one of the very few manifestations of the genuine witch cult to survive into the twentieth century" Grant added that it was "therefore likely that Crowley also knew about the Essex coven and may even ... have been initiated into it" (letter dated December 17, 1975).

In a letter dated February 8, 1950, Gardner wrote about Crowley's admission that he had been involved in the witch cult that is lodged in the Museum of Witchcraft archive in Boscastle. He says, "By the way, Aleister Crowley was in the cult, but left in disgust. He could not stand a High Priestess having a superior position or having to kneel to her, and while he approved of the Great Rite [ritual sexual intercourse between the High Priest and Priestess], he was shocked at nudity. Queer man, he approved of being nude in a dirty way, but highly disapproved of it in a clean and healthy way. Also he disapproved of the use of the scourge

[scourge] to release power ... But he didn't saimply [simply] pinch lots of witches rituals and incorporate it [sic] in his works. He claimed that the remote rituals for them [sic] but I doubt this."

In this letter, Gardner says that, despite Crowley thinking witchcraft was "too tame" (Illes 2005: 723), the Great Beast took some of the witchcraft rituals he had learned and used them himself. In his book *Witchcraft Today*, Gardner speculated that Crowley might have invented the rites of the witch cult. He concluded that he may have "borrowed things from the cult writings, or more likely someone may have borrowed expressions from him" (Gardner 1954: 47). Some critics have said that this was Gardner being his usual tricky self and trying to disguise the fact that when he wrote the rituals of Wicca in the 1940s he borrowed heavily from Crowley.

There is an alternative explanation provided by Bill Liddell in his early articles in *The Wiccan*. He claimed that in 1899 or 1900 Crowley had "a fleeting acquaintance with the Craft" when he was inducted into one of Pickingill's Nine Covens in Norfolk. His introduction came from Allan Bennett (1872-1973), his magical mentor and tutor in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and allegedly also George Pickingill's star

pupil. Crowley was initiated into the Isis-Urania Temple of the GD in London in 1898 and was responsible for the rifts that split the Order a few years later. Liddell said that weird stories circulated in occult circles about Allan Bennett's supernatural powers and his "blasting rod," which had not come from his membership of the Theosophical Society or the GD. (The Wiccan #40 and #41, 1974). In 1900, Bennett gave up the magical path and went to Ceylon to become a Buddhist monk. He became an accredited Buddhist teacher, adopted the name Ananda Metteya, and set up a study group on Buddhism when he returned to England.

In 1899, Crowley rented an apartment in Chancery Lane, London, and furnished it as a magical temple. There he and Bennett evoked spirits using material gleaned from medieval grimoires. Doreen Valiente said that in a copy of Crowley's magazine, The Equinox, there is a rite by Allan Bennett called "The Ritual for the Evocation Into Visible Appearance of the Great Spirit Taphhartharah." This was a spirit associated with the planet Mercury, and the aim of the magical operation was to conjure it into physical manifestation. It could then be questioned and "the secrets of the magical art and occult wisdom" obtained.

Valiente said that this ritual contains features that are not

included in the standard GD rites and are more similar to those in witchcraft. For instance, a small cauldron was placed in the center of a circle over a burning lamp fueled by methylated spirits. The cauldron contained what the article evocatively described as "hell broth" and Bennett took charge of it in his role as "assistant magus of the Art" The purpose of the potion in the cauldron was to provide the material substance that allowed a spirit to manifest, presumably in the steam or smoke arising from it (Valiente 1978: 18).

In his articles in *The Wiccan*, Bill Liddell went on to claim that his people owned a photograph that shows George Pickingill with some of his pupils. Allegedly Allan Bennett can be easily recognized and, Liddell said, a young man beside him "is remarkably like a young Crowley." When asked in 1977 if there was any possibility of getting hold of a copy of this extraordinary photograph to be published with his articles in *The Cauldron*, Liddell told me it was not available. When Leonora James (aka Prudence Jones) asked the same question in 1983, he replied: "It is highly unlikely that the photograph ... will ever be exhibited for view. Its custodian was an old lady who died a few years ago. Several interested parties have purloined this photograph."

According to Liddell, his great-grandmother was present on three occasions when Bennett and Crowley sought an audience with Pickingill. A possible confirmation of this relationship between Crowley and Old George came in my correspondence with Colonel Lawrence, mentioned before. He said his family had originally emigrated to the States from Scotland, and his great-great-grandmother, Lydia Lawrence, had founded the Unicorn Coven in Galveston around 1900. The coven's rituals were inspired by a vacation Lydia had in Italy. They were neo-classical in nature, and the coven worshipped Diana, the Roman goddess of the moon and hunting.

On her wayback to the States, Lydia visited some of her relatives living in England, and while she was there said she met Aleister Crowley. This meeting was supposed to have taken place in Canewdon where she was studying with George Pickingill, and Crowley was visiting his Craft mentor at the same time. She allegedly brought back to America a blackthorn walking stick that had belonged to the Essex witch master and which was given to her as a parting gift. It was displayed in Colonel Lawrence's museum, but when it closed down some years ago and its collection was sold off, an American Wiccan couple managed to buy this famous example of a blasting rod.

Crowley apparently did not last long in the Craft—he was expelled from the Norfolk Coven because he would not convene regularly and also because he was a sexual pervert. Liddell claims that his masochistic tendencies meant that he enjoyed being punished (scourged?) by the coven's High Priestess. As a result she denounced him as a "dirty minded, evilly disposed, vicious little monster," and he was forced to leave. Liddell said that in fact Crowley was not really interested in the Craft per se, as he was too occupied with "awakening magical powers" (1994: 21-22). His attraction to the Craft and the reason for joining it was Pickingill and Bennett, and their occult abilities.

When Crowley and Gardner met in 1947 and discussed witchcraft, it is claimed, the two men realized they had been brethren in the same Craft tradition. Liddell said that while Crowley had difficulty in recollecting the rites of the Norfolk Coven, his magical papers did contain material from the Pickingill Craft. He therefore volunteered to use a technique of magical recall to obtain the original rituals he had been taught. Francis King claimed that Gardner had paid Crowley "a large fee" to write the rituals of Wicca. There were originally four of these for the celebration of the vernal equinox on March 21, or May Eve (April 30), and three initiation rituals, presumably one for each degree (1971: 12).

This claim by King seems to have been due to a confusion with the fee Gardner paid to the Great Beast for some OTO material, including the charter to start a lodge and the various teaching papers. Cecil Williamson said that Crowley told Gardner he could join the Order providing he paid the going rate for each installment (Winter 1992). When Doreen Valiente met Gerald Yorke, he told her: "Well, Gerald Gardner paid Old Crowley about £300 or so for that [the OTO charter]" (letter to Dr. Allen Greenfield August 28, 1986, MOW archive).

The OTO charter sold to Gardner was displayed in the Museum of Witchcraft and Magic at Castletown on the Isle of Man. Crowley signed it with his magical name "Baphomet," and described himself as the OTO "Sovereign Grand Master," with jurisdiction over "all English-speaking countries." The charter authorized his "'beloved son Scire [Dr. G. B. Gardner]" as a "Prince of Jerusalem" in the Order to constitute a "camp" (or lodge) of the OTO in "the degree Minerva." This gave Gardner the authority to initiate people. The charter was written on the back of a piece of parchment that was a land deed for the county of Surrey in 1875, coincidentally the year Crowley was born. It had been written out by Gardner, but was signed by Crowley using his magical name.

In the Bracelin biography, it says that when Gardner met Crowley he was eager to revive the English branch of the OTO. It had "fell under a cloud" during World War I when Crowley, who was secretly working undercover for British Intelligence in the USA, was falsely accused of being pro-German, and the police raided his London temple. Following Crowley's death in December 1947, Gardner wrote to the owner of the Netherwood's boarding house asking if he knew who "Alister's" [sic] executors were. He wanted to contact them to obtain some papers Crowley owned of "typescript rituals," which he was willing to buy at a reasonable price. He mentioned in the letter that Crowley had given him "a charter making me head of the OTO in Europe" (letter dated December 24, 1947, in the MOW archive). Gardner also wrote to Crowley's solicitor and said that as the head of the OTO in Britain he was entitled to the Great Beast's goods and papers (Heselton 2003: 208).

In another letter to John Symonds, Gardner said that after Crowley's death word was sent to the head of the OTO in the USA, Karl Germer, telling him that Gardner was the European head of the Order. The message was sent by Lady Frieda Harris, the illustrator of Crowley's Thoth Tarot. Gardner said: "But owing to ill-health I so far haven't [sic] been able to get anything going. I had some people

interested, but some of them were sent to Germany with the Army of Occupation [BOAR or the British Occupation Army of the Rhine]." He adds that he did not have all the OTO rituals, as presumably he had not paid Crowley for all of them, but he did hold "the grades up to Prince of Jerusalem" (letter dated July 12, 1950, in the Warburg Institute, London).

Bill Liddell claimed that after Crowley's death Gardner's correspondence with him about the witchcraft rituals and the drafts written by Crowley were discovered by his executors John Symonds and Louis Wilkinson. Francis King had also seen them and he recognized the similarities between some of the rituals and a published version of the Gardnerian Book of Shadows. King immediately jumped to the conclusion that Gardner paid Crowley to write these rituals.

When Crowley wrote the ceremonies for the English branch of the OTO in 1912, Liddell claims he drew heavily on the Pickingill Craft rituals. Some modern Thelemites have in fact recognized Wicca as being an outer court of the OTO. Crowley was certainly eager to promote paganism as the religion of the new age of Aquarius, or, as he called it, the Aeon of Horus. As early as 1914, Crowley wrote to his American disciple Frater Achad (aka Charles Stansfield Jones, 1886-1950) suggesting the formation of a natural

religion. This would be dedicated to sun worship and the Great Mother Goddess, and celebrate rites at the equinoxes and solstices (Symonds 1971: 194). It is possible that when Crowley met Gardner he finally saw his chance to achieve this long-held ambition.

Bill Liddell confirms this idea, as he said that Crowley was intrigued to learn that one of George Pickingill's Nine Covens was still operating in the New Forest. He decided to assist Gardner in launching a new nature religion for the masses that would one day replace Christianity. As well as attempting to remember the rituals of the Norfolk Coven, Liddell said Crowley supplied Gardner with a Black Book of rituals belonging to a deceased Scottish witch. He had allegedly acquired this document while living at Boleskine House on the shores of Loch Ness in Scotland in the 1900s. In return Gardner was quite happy to borrow elements from Crowley's writings and magical rituals such as the Gnostic Mass, which became the basis for the Wiccan Great Rite. In fact, parts of the Mass, Liddell's Elders had claimed, had been derived in turn from the rituals of the Pickingill Craft (1994).

It was Doreen Valiente's opinion that Gardner "fell under Crowley's spell for a while ... and incorporated much OTO

material into the 'Book of Shadows,' possibly displacing other older rituals" (letter to Dr. Allen Greenfield dated August 8, 1986). Valiente always believed that the rituals Gardner obtained from the New Forest Coven were fragmentary and to turn them into a usable system he added extra material from other sources. As Dr. Dave Evans has noted, the rituals of Wicca were "an eclectic mixture of material drawn from [Dr. Margaret] Murray's researches, OTO material, reconstructed Druidic rites and Co-Masonic sources (among others) with a scattering of nudity and sado-masochism (these being Gardner's personal tastes)..." (2007b: 233). Professor Diane Purkiss has said that in modern witchcraft there is "a unique opportunity to see a religion being made from readings and re-readings of texts and histories" (1996: 52).

The Wiccan Book of Shadows also contained material taken from Charles Godfrey Leland's book *Aradia: Gospel of the Witches* (1899), the Key of Solomon, and even an extract from a poem by Rudyard Kipling that was used in the May Eve celebration. Having read widely, I recognized many of these elements and their sources when Rosina Bishop initiated me into Gardnerian Wicca in 1969. However many Gardnerians, especially American ones, seem to have been unaware of the sources of the BoS. Many were apparently

quite shocked when Professor Ronald Hutton's book *The Triumph of the Moon* (1999) revealed where they had come from.



Chapter Five

A Magical Book of Shadows



One of the reasons why Gerald Gardner did not pursue the idea of reviving the OTO was that he became ill in the summer of 1947. It was possibly a recurrence of the asthma that had plagued him since the Lammas ritual in 1940, and his doctor suggested he take a vacation to recover his health. He decided to go to America and visit his younger brother, Francis Douglas Gardner, and his wife, Miriam Fleming Gardner, in Memphis, Tennessee. They had emigrated to the USA in 1916 and were running a branch of the family timber business. When Douglas Gardner died, aged seventy-one, a newspaper obituary praised him as a retired timberman and well-known local sportsman who played golf and tennis. It said he had been educated at Merchant Taylors College in London and at the universities of Geneva in Switzerland and Dresden in Germany.

Gardner stayed with his relatives for six months, from November 1947 to March 1948 (Heselton 2003: 205). Their daughter Mimi, who died in 1953, remembered Uncle Gerald as a "funny and eccentric old gentleman" (even though he was only sixty-three at the time!). He used to entertain her and the family with colorful stories about ghosts, witches, and his exotic life in the Far East. While he was staying in America, Gardner traveled to California where he met Jack Parsons, the young rocket scientist who was running the Agape Lodge and had an interest in witchcraft. He also went to New York to see the head of the OTO, Karl Germer, or as he was known to his disciples, Frater Saturnus. Doreen Valiente said that Gardner and Saturnus got on quite well together.

The Bracelin biography says that while he was in America many people came to regard Gardner as Crowley's successor. In another letter to John Symonds, Gardner claimed that Germer had acknowledged his rank in the OTO (letter dated July 12, 1950, in the Warburg Institute). However, he told Bracelin that he did not have the money, energy, or time to revive the Order (1960: 171). When Germer found out that Gardner had no intention of forming an English lodge, he issued a charter to Kenneth Grant, allowing him to work the first three degrees of the OTO (Heselton 2003: 209).

While he was in the States, Gardner also met Tamara Bourkon, an associate of Dr. Israel Regardie. I also met this Russian-born occultist and magician when she later moved to England. She was running her own magical group called the Order of the Pyramid and the Sphinx in Hampstead, North London. This group practiced Enochian magic and Golden Dawn-type rituals. Its membership was limited to Freemasons or Co-Masons who had to be teetotalers, celibate, and vegans or vegetarians. Over a cup of Earl Grey tea and cucumber sandwiches, Tamara invited me to join her Order. While I was a Co-Mason, I did not fit the other criteria so I had to refuse her kind offer. It would be interesting to know what she and Gardner discussed during their own meeting.

While Gardner was staying with his relatives in the States he visited New Orleans, where another of his brothers lived. He managed to locate some occult experts who tried to warn him off investigating voodoo by either saying it did not really exist or people who had tried had died of mysterious fevers. Gardner eventually discovered that many white people actually belonged to the cult, and he had heard of meetings attended by up to a thousand participants, including many of the city's police officers. He noted many similarities between voodoo rites and European witchcraft

even though their methods for raising power were different. He could see elements of African magic and religion in voodoo and this confirmed his belief there was a past connection between them and the fertility principle worshipped by witches.

In *Witchcraft Today*, Gardner speculated that voodoo had originated in Egypt in ancient times and had been passed to the West African tribes. He also believed some of the witch practices had come from the same original source to southern Europe, possibly through the Roman and Greek Mysteries (Bracelin 1960: 111). He told one of his later initiates, Lois Bourne, that he thought Western magic and witchcraft had originated in the African lunar and stellar cults, especially those of Egypt and North Africa (Bourne 1998: 61). Incidentally, this idea has also been promoted by Kenneth Grant in his books, and is also found in the legends of the Pickingill Craft.

In the period from when he met Crowley in 1946, and 1948 when Old Mother Sabine died, Gardner seems to have parted company with his friends in the New Forest Coven, or at least drifted apart from them. This may have been due to Gardner's desire to publicize what he had found, and their resistance to the idea. In *Witchcraft Today* he says the

witches in England told him: "Write and tell people we are not perverts. We are decent people, we only want to be left alone, but there are certain secrets that you mustn't give away." Further on in the book he says that the witches did not want publicity.

Despite these protestations, Gardner was determined to go public because he believed witchcraft was "a dying cult," and was in need of reviving. In the end, he says that his witch friends agreed to him writing something of what they did and believed in, providing it was only in the form of a novel. Gardner wrote this in 1946, but it was not until three years later that it was published by Michael Houghton (Juste) of the Atlantis bookshop. In a letter to John Symonds, Gardner said he had shown the draft manuscript of the novel, called *High Magic's Aid*, to Aleister Crowley. Crowley wanted him "to put the witch part in full," but Gardner rejected his advice as the New Forest Coven had only given him permission to put in a few things (letter dated July 12, 1950 in Warburg Institute).

Because whoever was now the leader of the New Forest Coven, either Dorothy Clutterbuck or Edith Woodford-Grimes, had told Gardner not to include any witch magic in the novel, he padded it out with what he called "Jewish ritual

magic." This was derived from medieval grimoires such as the Key of Solomon. Philip Heselton has said that Gardner only obtained a copy of the Key from Gerald Yorke in June 1947. Bill Liddell, however, claims that the New Forest Coven was already using it as a basis for some of their rituals when Gardner was initiated. He added that many English covens had been using it since the early 1900s, and one presumes this was the new translation by Samuel MacGregor Mathers (Liddell 1994: 158).

High Magic's Aid was basically an adventure story, and one critic described it as an inferior pastiche of Sir Walter Scott's novel *Ivanhoe*. Today the book seems rather tame and, if any publisher accepted it, would probably be marketed for older children. It is a tale of magic and witchcraft in an imaginary medieval England shortly after the Norman Conquest of 1066. Its central character, Vanda Morven, belongs to the witch cult, described in the book by its traditional title of "The Brotherhood" The two leading male characters get involved in magic and, using a ritual from the Key of Solomon, are given a spirit message to seek out someone named Vanda. She initiates them into the Craft and, although Gardner said the New Forest Coven would not let him reveal any of their secrets, the ritual used is very similar to later ones included in the *Book of Shadows*.

Because Gardner was dyslexic and had problems with spelling, he needed someone else to edit his books. Michael Houghton suggested that Madeline Montalban, who was working at the bookshop, could help him out, as she had been a journalist before the war. Madeline told me that she used her skills to edit the draft manuscript of High Magic's Aid, and she also typed the finished copy submitted for publication. Gardner confirmed this in a letter written to Cecil Williamson in May 1952 where he said, "It's very funny. Mrs. North is Delores [sic] . She used to work at the Atlantis Bookshop, and she typed and put the spelling right in High Magic's Aid. She made a living at astrology and love philtres. I know she claimed to be a witch but got everything wrong. But she knows High Magic's Aid and has a lively imagination" (letter in MOW archives).

It has been suggested to me by those in the know that Gardner wrote his novel as a "butterfly net." His real aim was to write something that would attract the attention of other followers of the Craft. That way he could increase his knowledge and enlist their help in launching a revival of witchcraft. It has also been suggested that he was deliberately linking ceremonial magic, Freemasonry, and Rosicrucianism to witchcraft. Possibly in attempting to make that connection he was following in the footsteps of George

Pickingill.

In later years, Gardner used High Magic's Aid to test new recruits to his coven. Doreen Valiente told how, when she first met Gardner in 1953, he gave her a parting gift of a copy of the novel. He told her to read it carefully, as it would tell her a great deal about the witch cult and how it had been misrepresented by centuries of persecution. She later discovered he gave a copy to each of his new initiates. This is because he wanted to test their reaction to its account of an initiation ritual involving ritual nudity and flagellation. If they objected in any way, then the process of recruitment would go no further. Valiente said this gave a lie to the newspaper allegations that Gardner lured innocent young women into the Craft (1989: 39-40). This story has also been confirmed by Patricia Crowther and Lois Bourne, who said Gardner gave her a copy of his novel to "test my resolve" (1998: 19).

The publication of High Magic's Aid seems to have upset the Elders of the New Forest Coven. Justine Glass (aka Enid Carroll) said that after a relatively short time Gardner parted company from his coven. The reason was his continuing urge to publicize the Craft (1965: 131). However, while Gardner had been writing the book, he had also continued

searching for esoteric organizations to join. In May 1946, he became a member of the Society for Psychical Research and attempted to get one of his fellow witches to take part in their parapsychological experiments (Gardner 1954: 139). As we have already seen, Gardner was also active in the Ancient British Church, the Folklore Society, the OTO, and with naturism.

In 1946, Gardner also became involved in the Ancient Order of Druids, and met Ross Nichols (1902-1975) at the Spielplatz naturist camp in the 1940s. Nichols was a member of the AOD and in 1964, when he split from the Order, he founded his own Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids (OBOD). Nichols was also a friend of Madeline Montalban, and she told me he asked her to write some of the rituals of the new OBOD. Philip Heselton has speculated that it was Ross Nichols who introduced Gardner to neo-druidism (2003: 127). He owned a piece of woodland with a chalet on it in the countryside outside London that was used by Gardnerian Wiccans and traditional witches, such as Robert Cochrane, for rituals in the 1960s.

Gardner was present at the AOD meeting held at the winter solstice of 1946 when the former Chief Druid's son, Robert McGregor Reid, was installed as its new head. When

the annual summer solstice rituals resumed after World War II at Stonehenge, Gardner attended most of them. In 1948, he wrote a document called *The Rites, Ceremonies and Services of the Druid Order* that was never published (Evans 2007a: 71). During the Festival of Britain in 1951, a souvenir brochure was printed about the megalithic circle and its alleged association with the historical druids. It described the midsummer ceremony and mentioned that a "Dr. C. Gardner [sic]" attended it. He was accompanied by other delegates from the Isle of Man, wore Scottish costume and an oak leaf crown he had made himself and carried an ancient sword, presumably the one once owned by Dorothy Clutterbuck and used by the New Forest Coven.

In 1947, Gardner was still in close contact with Mrs. Woodford Grimes, and they set up a company together called Ancient Crafts Ltd. The idea behind this venture was to raise money to buy the Five Acres Country and Naturist Club at Brickett Wood. Gardner had already bought a plot of land adjacent to the club's grounds in 1946, and wanted to buy the rest of it for use as a center for folklore studies. Because the Witchcraft Act was still in force, this was probably a cover. He really wanted to use the land as a meeting place for the new coven he planned to form. Gardner was a director of the naturist club and both he and

Woodford-Grimes already had a financial commitment to it (Heselton 2003: 157-158).

Cecil Williamson said that Gardner set up his new coven on his land at Brickett Wood around 1947. At first it had to meet in a converted chicken shed, which Gardner was also using as living quarters when he visited Five Acres. The centerpiece however was the Elizabethan witch's cottage that Gardner had bought from Father Ward when he sold the Abbey Museum and Folk Park in 1945. It was a one-room building dating from the sixteenth century, had wattle and daub, black and white timbered walls, and a thatched roof made from reeds. At the Abbey Folk Park it had been furnished with the equipment of a medieval witch, possibly with Gardner's advice. A stuffed crocodile hung from the ceiling beams, there was a human skull, and a "sword of exorcism," and a magical circle was drawn on the floor. When Gardner transferred it from St. Albans to Brickett Wood he had the outside walls rendered with cement, whitewashed the interior walls, and replaced the thatch with tiles, as it was deemed to be a fire hazard (Heselton 2003: 163).

Inside, the floor was covered by a new black surface on which a double magical circle was drawn in white paint. The

inner one was the traditional nine feet in diameter and between the circles were inscribed Cabbalistic symbols. In one quarter of the room was a wooden chest used as an altar (Ibid., 166). There was also a four-poster bed on which the coven left their clothes when they got undressed for their skylad rituals. Cecil Williamson claims an old wartime Anderson air-raid shelter was used as an altar. He says it was covered in several ex-Army mattresses and was utilized by the coven for the Great Rite (Winter 1992). According to an entry in Doreen Valiente's personal notebooks, the signs of the planetary spirits were painted on the walls of the cottage. In the 1950s, when descriptions of the inside of the cottage were published in sensational newspaper stories about Gardner and his coven, these sigils were inaccurately described as "satanic symbols."

Williamson claimed that Gardner tried to convince him that the cottage had once been George Pickingill's in Canewdon. Apparently when Gardner met Crowley the latter was "very interested" in a photograph of the witch's cottage for that reason. Williamson checked with the local council in Essex and found out that Pickingill's cottage had been demolished before the war. In fact the witch's cottage had originally been located in Herefordshire, where it had been used to store apples. Father Ward had rescued it for the Folk Park when he

heard it was going to be knocked down.

Somebody who saw the cottage in 1991 reported it had been moved because Gardner's plot of land at Brickett Wood had been sold to a property developer for a new housing development. The magical symbols had vanished from the walls, but part of the magical circle on the floor was still visible. It was then put up for sale with an asking price of £5000, and the wife and son of Jack Bracelin, the manager of Five Acres, and High Priest of the Brickett Wood Coven, were said to have been trying to buy it. It was never sold, and Philip Heselton said in 2003 the cottage was being used as a store by the club's groundsman. It was in a poor state with the tiled roof replaced by felt and new timbers replacing some of the original old ones (Ibid., 166-167).

Among the early recorded members of the Brickett Wood Coven was a major who used to be a judge in India. Because of his experience, he was often called in as an expert on criminal matters by Scotland Yard. In an interview with the Sunday Pictorial newspaper about the opening of his Museum of Witchcraft and Magic on the Isle of Man, Cecil Williamson referred to a coven of witches he knew in southern England. He said that one of their members was a civil servant and another was a schoolteacher. Although

some of the members were quite old, he says there was a "very attractive girl" he knew who belonged to the coven. He added that they practiced fertility rites that involved dancing in the nude. Williamson may have been talking about the New Forest Coven, but the newspaper followed up the interview with a story about a nudist camp near London where "nude devotees of both sexes [performed] midnight rites (The People 31.10.1951).

Doreen Valiente told me that when she first joined Gardner's coven in 1953, there was a "pretty blonde girl" who attended some of the rituals called Barbara Vickers (d. 1973) (letter dated March 24, 1997). She was told Vickers and her husband were members of a coven in Cheshire. In 1950 or 1951, Barbara Vickers was apparently willing to initiate Cecil Williamson into Wicca, but he declined the offer on the rather wimpish grounds that his wife would not approve (Heselton 2003: 253).

At the time I was under the mistaken impression that Vickers belonged to a traditional pre-Gardnerian coven. However subsequent investigations by Philip Heselton have established that this was not true. In fact, Heselton believes Barbara Vickers first met Gardner in the late 1940s, and was possibly introduced to him through her membership in a

naturist club where she was living in Cheshire. Heselton says that by November 1950 Gardner had initiated her into Wicca as photographs of her at that date exist showing her skyclad, holding ritual tools. Alternatively she used to visit her parents in London and Heselton speculated her interest in Spiritualism and the occult may have led her to the Atlantis bookshop and a possible meeting with Gardner (May 2008).

In one of the photographs mentioned above, Barbara Vickers is sitting on the edge of a single bed. Her arms are crossed over her chest, in her right hand she is holding what looks like a wand, and in her left is a scourge. On the bed is a small book that appears to be handwritten, and could be an early version of the Gardnerian Book of Shadows. She is wearing a silver witch bracelet, engraved with symbols and writing in the Theban magical alphabet of the type Gardner used to make for his initiates. In the second photograph, Vickers is standing before a magical "dark mirror" with the names of the four archangels painted on its frame. In her hands she is holding a two-handled metal cup.

Philip Heselton has suggested that Barbara Vickers initially attended some of the rituals at the Brickett Wood covenstead and later at Gardner's London apartment in

Holland Park, where Doreen Valiente first met her in 1953. Heselton believes she stopped attending in 1956, and the last ritual she went to was the initiation of Jack Bracelin and Thelma Capel (witch name "Dayonis") at the full moon in March of that year. In later years, she took a stand against witchcraft and, following an incident in 1959 when she saw an apparition of Gardner appear at the end of her bed, threw all her witch regalia away with the garbage.

Heselton believes that the book displayed in the photograph featuring Vickers was her personal copy of the BoS. Initiates into Gardnerian Wicca were required to write out in longhand their own copy, using their initiator's copy as a master. Obviously once the basic rituals of the three degrees of initiation and the seasonal festivals had been transcribed, the new initiate was at liberty to add their own material. Although this had never been much of a problem for British Gardnerians, in the United States stories circulate of initiates having to show new entries in their copies of the BoS to the High Priestess of the coven for approval and having to sign and date any additions or alterations.

There has been a fair amount of speculation over the years regarding the origin of the actual term "Book of Shadows." It is a term that cannot be found in any of the

historical records or folkloric accounts of witchcraft. A "Black Book" is mentioned, but this seems to have been more of a coven record listing the names of members and details of their induction into the witch cult. Individual witches and cunning folk also kept their own personal books of recipes, spells, and charms, and these were passed down to their apprentices or through families. However, the term "Book of Shadows" seems to be unique to twentieth-century witchcraft and to have originated with Gerald Gardner.

Gardner may have got the term from a Scottish children's author called Helen Douglas Adams (1909-1993). Her book *Charms and Dreams from the Elfin Pedlar's Pack* (Hodder & Stoughton 1924) was divided into three sections and entitled the *Book of Shadows*, the *Second Book of Shadows*, and the *Third Book of Shadows*. Douglas Adams went to the United States in 1939 and eventually she became involved with a group of beat poets in San Francisco. Among them she had a reputation of being a witch who followed the Old Religion, read tarot cards, and cursed people who crossed her. At the time, much of her poetry was influenced by folklore, witchcraft, and magic (Ash: August 2004).

An alternative and more widely accepted theory was

given by Doreen Valiente. While browsing in the Quinto bookshop in Brighton, she found some back issues of a magazine called *The Occult Observer* published in the 1940s by Michael Juste of the Atlantis bookshop. In a copy dated 1949 were two articles by the famous Indian palmist Mir Bashir. One of the articles told of an ancient manuscript written in Sanskrit called *The Book of Shadows* that Bashir had heard about in India in 1941. It was supposed to be thousands of years old and described a method of Hindu divination involving the measuring of a person's shadow. Bashir eventually found a holy man who had a copy of the book and he gave him a very accurate life reading (Valiente 1989: 51-52, and letter to Dr. Allen Greenfield dated August 28, 1988, in MOW archive).

Bill Liddell claimed in his articles that there was a prototype *Book of Shadows* in Aleister Crowley's handwriting exhibited in the witchcraft museum on the Isle of Man by Gardner, and that Raymond Buckland, his first American initiate, had referred to it (1994: 29). The alleged existence of this document has caused considerable controversy and speculation, especially as Buckland's statement cannot be verified. Liddell is adamant that Campbell "Scotty" Wilson, husband of Monique Wilson who inherited the museum from Gardner, showed this elusive

manuscript to Liddell's common-law wife, Sylvia Tatham. She gave it only a cursory glance, but told him she saw some OTO rites and Gardnerian Wiccan rites in it (Ibid., 161).

Cecil Williamson told me that when Gardner was playing the role of resident witch at the museum when he still owned it, he had his own personal BoS and carried it with him everywhere. Tucked into it were two carefully folded sheets of thin airmail-type paper. This was covered from top to bottom in handwriting executed using a pen with a fine steel nib. One of these sheets had Crowley's personal symbol on the bottom, which he often used as his signature. One Friday afternoon, Gardner was having lunch with some visiting French women. He took them to see a display cabinet containing some magical artifacts that had been loaned to the museum by the New Forest Coven. Gardner accidentally left his personal BoS with its enclosures on the table. When he returned he found it was gone and, according to Williamson, was distraught (letter dated 1982 in MOW archive doc.401/423).

There seem to have been several early versions of the BoS in existence. The writer and researcher Aidan Kelly has said he discovered an early version in 1974. Shortly after Kelly had begun his studies for a Ph.D. at the Graduate

Theological Union in Berkeley, California, he mentioned to his friend Isaac Bonewits that he was writing an essay on the so-called "Craft Laws" in the Gardnerian BoS. Bonewits was just about to take a position as the editor of the esoteric magazine *Gnostica* published by Llewellyn. He asked Kelly to submit the essay for publication and also mentioned it to Llewellyn's founder and president Carl L. Weschcke. This reminded him of a file he had of Gardnerian material and Weschcke sent photocopies of it to Kelly for his interest.

These documents consisted of thirty-eight typed pages of ritual material, including all the eight Sabbats, the "Old Craft Laws," three methods for casting the circle, a ritual to "Gain the Sight," "The Eightfold Way," the three degrees of initiation, consecrations, and several versions of the Charge of the Goddess and the Witches' Rune. Weschcke told Kelly this file had been sent to him by a man who had been initiated in 1960. Gardnerian Craft historian and researcher Melissa Seims has said that they were sent to Weschcke by one of Gardner's initiates, Charles Clark, in April 1969 (Seims May 2006). The document had several handwritten amendments in Gardner's hand and Seims identified one called "All Are Purified" as the oldest, possibly derived from the famous *Ye Bok of Ye Arte Magical* compiled by Gardner in the 1940s. From an examination of the rituals in this

document, Aidan Kelly came to the conclusion that he was looking at one of the earliest copies of the Gardnerian BoS. He was able to identify the sources of much of the material it contained. These included Crowley's *Magick in Theory and Practice*, Leland's *Aradia*, MacGregor Mathers' translation of the *Key of Solomon*, Dr. Murray's books, and Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1900) (Kelly 1991: xv-xvii).

In 1975, Aidan Kelly visited the headquarters of Ripley International in Toronto, the company that purchased the museum collection from the Isle of Man when Monique Wilson put it up for sale three years earlier. Kelly was told by Ripley's vice-president for research and development, Derek Copplethwaite, that the only document in the collection that resembled anything like a BoS was a manuscript they had found hidden in the back of one of the display cabinets from the museum. This document was entitled *Ye Bok of Ye Art Magical* (BAM) and Kelly believes that it represents a prototype BoS put together by Gardner in the 1940s.

From the BAM, Kelly asserts Gardner created his first edition of the BoS, which Kelly calls Text A, and he gave a copy of it to Doreen Valiente when she was initiated in 1953. She also had in her possession a copy of another version, known as Text B, which was an expanded version of A. Kelly

claims that when the Brickett Wood group split in 1957, Gardner rewrote the BoS, and this third version was given to Monique Wilson when he initiated her.

The BAM consisted of 150 large sheets folded and sewn into signatures slightly larger than a modern standard C4 or A4 English paper size. These had then been hand-bound into a leather cover inscribed with the title of the manuscript and the symbol for the third degree initiation surrounded by a triangle. The contents included watercolour drawings of Cabbalistic talismans, seals and sigils, biblical quotations, instructions on making and consecrating magical tools, a cakes and wine ritual, details of magical robes, the casting of the circle, a painting of The Devil card from Crowley's Thoth Tarot, another of the Rosy Cross symbol of the Rosicrucian Order, various extracts from the writings of Crowley, and rituals from the Grand Sabbats. One conjuration in the BAM was written in the Theban magical alphabet from Agrippa's sixteenth-century work *Occult Philosophy* and this is still widely used in Wiccan circles (Kelly 2007: 95-98).

A considerable amount of the material in the BAM originated with the Key of Solomon. As we know, Gerald Yorke loaned a copy to Gardner in the 1940s. The American Gardnerian and researcher Don Hudson Frew has claimed

Gardner was already aware of the Key, as he had access to a manuscript of it that was partly descended from MacGregor Mathers' translation. Roger Dearnley has speculated this manuscript had been in the possession of a member of the New Forest Coven and they passed it to Gardner. Dearnley has examined the copy of the BAM, which is currently in the possession of Richard and Tamara James of the Wicca Church of Canada in Toronto, and believes it contains textual errors that can be explained by it being copied from an original handwritten source.

An alternative story about the origin of the BAM put forward by the late Jim Davies was published in an article in the Canadian Wiccan Candle magazine (Beltane 1993). Davies was the Magister of a traditional coven and had emigrated to Canada from the Isle of Man. There he had known Monique Wilson, and also been in contact with the robed covens on the island. He also claimed Gardner knew these groups. In his article Davies claimed that the BAM was "... crafted by Gerald as a public display for the museum ... It's what would be known in the film business as a 'prop' And, like everything else in the museum, it was made to look and be as authentic as possible to show to the visitors." A photograph from the Bracelin biography accompanied the article, allegedly showing Ye Bok on display in the museum.

It is certainly known that Gardner made items for display in the museum. When he purchased it from Cecil Williamson he only bought the buildings and not the actual collection. Gardner borrowed some objects from Williamson and also hired people to make some of the other exhibits. Doreen Valiente confirmed to me that she had helped Gardner make some of the things for the museum including ancient magical manuscripts with sigils in colored inks (letter dated November 29, 1995, in MOW archive). Arnold Crowther also employed his puppetry expertise to make a model of a demon from papier-mache and this sat in a magical triangle in the museum (Crowther 1998: 27). It seems unlikely, however, that Gardner would have gone to all the trouble of producing a book with over a hundred pages as a prop for his exhibition.

In the BAM, the procedure for casting the circle calls for the use of a scimitar or sickle, a "Magic Sword," or a "Witch's Athame" to draw it. The word "athame" comes directly from the Key of Solomon and is the name for the magician's ritual dagger. In both the BAM and the later "All Are Purified" text in the Clark documents, the circle is cast by the Magus, as opposed to the later use of High Priest as a male coven leader, and not by the High Priestess, as in later versions of the BoS. Melissa Seims has said that the fact that the Magus draws and consecrates the circle and

summons the Mighty Ones at the four quarters (described as the "Dread Lords of the Outer Spaces") in the BAM and in the rituals in High Magic's Aid may support Bill Liddell's claims. Liddell has said that Gardner was inducted into a cunning lodge led by a male leader that combined the worship of the Horned God with ceremonial magic, Freemasonry, and paganism (May 2000).

The references to the Magus casting the circle, the use of magical robes and hints of male-to-male initiations, which are not orthodox Wiccan traditions, would suggest the influence of pre-Gardnerian practices. In a 1952 letter Gerald Gardner wrote to a Mr. Blackwell, who had sought his advice, he recommended making a charm. He was advised to take a knife and stand naked in the east while drawing a triple circle on the ground, saying: "Athor Malaus ve Guverah, Vē Gudular, he Olam." Blackwell then had to copy these words onto two pieces of parchment and he and his wife had to wear these in a bag around their necks. Gardner signed the letter with his magical name in the OTO "Scire" (letter dated January 14, 1952, in MOW archive). Again this ritual does not sound like a typically Wiccan one.

We have seen that the ritual that Kenneth Grant attended with Gardner in 1949 involved the summoning of a spirit into

physical manifestation. One of the current exhibits in the Museum of Witchcraft at Boscastle is the incense burner and stand depicted on the front cover of High Magic's Aid. The description with it says that Cecil Williamson and Gerald Gardner used it in a ritual to summon up a spirit. However, Williamson claimed that when Gardner saw the shadowy hooded figure of the spirit materialize in the incense smoke he ran away (Winter 1992). All this suggests that before the arrival of Doreen Valiente on the scene in 1953, and her rewriting of the BoS, what Gardner was practicing was based on a ceremonial magic and a more traditional form of witchcraft.

Sorita d'Este and David Rankin have concluded from their extensive research into the origins of the rituals of Wicca that they were based on a medieval tradition of grimoire magic supplemented with material from the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and the OTO. This supplementation, they believe, was either by persons unknown before Gardner's initiation in 1939, or later by Gardner and his associates. They claim that when the GD and Crowley material is removed from the BoS what is actually left is "a bedrock of grimoire materials with fragments of folk practices which would fit in with idea of a continuation of a genuine tradition" (2008).



Chapter Six

The Museum of Witchcraft

Cecil Williamson (1909-1999) was a colorful, flamboyant, larger-than-life, and controversial character, and he had an important behind-the-scenes influence on Wicca and the modern witchcraft revival through his relationship with Gerald Gardner. Sadly, it was a relationship that was to end in legal disputes, recriminations, and mutual hatred. This was largely caused by their financial partnership in the Museum of Witchcraft and Magic opened by Williamson in Castletown on the Isle of Man in 1951 and later sold to Gardner.

Williamson was born in Devon of upper middle-class

parents and his father was a high-ranking officer in the Royal Navy. During World War I, the young Cecil spent his summer vacations with his uncle, the Reverend Russell Fox, the vicar of the village of North Bovey on the edge of Dartmoor. One day Williamson went into the kitchen garden of the vicarage to pick some gooseberries for tea. His attention was distracted by an uproar going on over the garden wall on the village green. He went to investigate and found a gang of farm workers attacking an elderly woman known locally as "Aunty," and stripping her naked. Williamson intervened and was only saved from a beating himself by the intervention of his uncle who dispersed the mob. He later found out that the woman's attackers believed she was a witch and had cursed their cattle. They were removing her clothes to search for evidence of the witch's teat she used to suckle her familiars. As a result of this incident Williamson got to know Aunty quite well, and she taught him "a little about witches" and what they did, and also how to "tickle" trout.

In the 1920s, Williamson did voluntary work in the slums of the East End of London among the poor. There he encountered the "wise women" of the docklands area, who offered their clients fortunetelling, herbal cures, and even abortions. When the war ended, Williamson's father got a

position in the Admiralty in London and the family moved to a town house in fashionable Curzon Street in Mayfair. Through the person who introduced him to voluntary work in the East End, Williamson met a society fortuneteller, Madame De Hoye. She took him on as her assistant, called the "boy in white," and dressed him up in a white suit with white shoes and white gloves. At the appropriate moment in a reading with a client she asked him questions and he gave answers that were supposed to come from the spirit world.

As a young man, Williamson went to work on a tobacco farm in Rhodesia (now divided into Zambia and Zimbabwe). He became friendly with a local witch-doctor and was taught the secrets of juju. On his return to England he worked for Radio Luxembourg and then became a producer and director in the film industry working for Paramount, Ealing Studios, and British International. In 1933 he met and married Gwen Wilcox, the daughter of the film producer Charles Wilcox, who was working for Max Factor in Hollywood as a make-up artist. During the 1930s he was active in the London occult scene and knew Aleister Crowley, Montague Summers, the Egyptologist Dr. Wallis Budge, the psychic researcher and "ghost hunter" Harry Price, and Dr. Margaret Murray. He was also busy investigating rural witchcraft and found many village witches still practicing their art-healing the sick using

herbal remedies, and dealing in love potions, spells, charms, and curses.

After his wartime service for king and country in M16 and SOE, Williamson decided not to go back to the film industry and instead become self-employed. He had accumulated a large collection of items relating to witchcraft and folk magic and wanted to open up a small museum exhibiting these commercially to the public. In 1947 he went to Stratford-on-Avon because of its association with Shakespeare and his Scottish play with the three witches on the blasted heath. He knew a doctor in the town through his hobby of collecting antique apothecary jars. During the war, the local fire brigade requisitioned the doctor's large garden and built a garage on it for their engines. He offered this to Williamson to exhibit his collection, but although the tourist board was supportive the locals were not, and Williamson was, quite literally, run out of town.

Williamson was still determined to set up his museum and in 1948 he decided to go to the isle of Man and try there. He found a group of derelict buildings with a ruined windmill, two cottages, and an enormous barn with room for both his collection and a restaurant that he called the "Witches' Kitchen." Before Williamson had bought the place it was

known locally as the "Witches' Mill," and got its name because a famous coven of witches lived nearby. When the mill burnt down in 1848, they allegedly used its ruins for their rituals and as a "dancing ground" (Heselton 2001: 41). The mill dated back at least to the seventeenth century, and there is a court record in 1611 when its owner was fined two sheep for not turning out the "watch and ward" (the local defense militia) (Gardner 1964).

Although Williamson had faced problems in Stratford-on-Avon, the Manx authorities went out of their way to welcome the arrival of a new tourist attraction to the island. Both the board of commissioners and the chief executive officer of the tourist board offered their assistance and the necessary permits were granted. As a result the work of reconstructing the mill began in the spring of 1951. It is presumed this date was chosen as it was the year in which the old Witchcraft Act of 1735 was repealed. Previously the problem was that the Craft was still officially illegal. In 1944, the Spiritualist medium Helen Duncan had actually been prosecuted under the old act.

The museum was finally opened in July 1951. At first it was called "The Folklore Center of Superstition and Magic," although by the time Gerald Gardner purchased it some

years later, the name had been changed to "The Museum of Witchcraft and Magic." In the brochure he printed to advertise the exhibition, Williamson said it was impossible to cover all aspects of folklore, so he had decided to focus on superstition and witchcraft. This meant the exhibits also included related and kindred subjects such as magic, spells, charms, amulets, faeries, luck, and omens. Williamson actually told Gerald Yorke that he had opened the museum as a "shop window," to attract contact with other witches, as well as making him a living (letter dated August 7, 1952, in the Gerald Yorke Collection at the Warburg Institute).

The activities at the museum came under three headings: the exhibition of objects to the public relating to witchcraft and folklore, a visitors' restaurant, and a membership scheme. Interested visitors were invited to become members of the Folklore Center and in return for their subscriptions they received a journal with views about the museum, articles written by members and non-members, and answers to correspondence queries. In addition the members had access to the museum's library, were encouraged to collect and donate objects for display, and could join a study group to discuss the practical aspects of magic.

The Witches' Kitchen was set up to offer refreshments to

museum visitors and was also an additional money-making enterprise. It offered meals that were themed to reflect the seasonal festivals of the folk calendar and emphasis was placed on using locally sourced food. In this respect it was quite innovative and forward looking for the time, which was a post-war period when rationing and food shortages were still a depressing feature of daily life.

According to the information printed in the brochure, the museum exhibitions consisted of a large and varied range of display cabinets containing objects relating to the history and practice of witchcraft, ancient and modern. They included the set piece reconstruction of a "medieval sorcerer's temple for the working of art magic" based on one that might have been used by the Elizabethan astrologer and magician Dr. John Dee. Other planned reconstructions would feature a witch's kitchen, an alchemist's den, and a modern African witch doctor's hut. There was also a replica of a Golden Dawn temple designed and constructed by Kenneth Grant's artist wife, Steffi. In a series of letters written in the spring of 1951, she kept Williamson informed of the progress with the making of a GD lotus wand, the candlesticks, and the altar. She offered to visit the Isle of Man and help set the exhibit up (letters dated April and May 1951 ref. 96/111, 97/112 and 100/115 in MOW archive). Williamson also

employed students from the Douglas School of Art to make some of the items displayed in the temple (Heselton 2003: 339).

Shortly after he had opened the museum, Williamson has said that unexpectedly Gerald Gardner turned up on his doorstep. According to this account, a member of the staff told Williamson there was a gentleman to see him. When he went to see who it was, he found the "pathetic sight of Dr. G. Gardner with a music case that had his pyjamas and a toothbrush in it." Allegedly Gardner was having financial problems with a family trust and had fallen out with his brother over it. There were also apparently problems with the Brickett Wood Coven and because of this and a shortage of money Gardner had decided to come to the Isle of Man for a vacation. In fact he stayed with Williamson and his wife for three months until the lawyers sorted out the outstanding financial matters.

This account is not strictly true, as Gardner had already been in contact with Williamson before the museum had opened. They had first met at the Atlantis Bookshop in 1947. As early as February 1951 Gardner wrote to him expressing his paranoid concern that the Church of England might stop the museum from opening. He was afraid they could obtain a

court injunction and the contents would be confiscated and destroyed (letter dated February 8, 1951). Philip Heselton has suggested that Gardner may even have visited Williamson in March 1951 (2003: 334) and had given Williamson his own private collection of magical objects on loan for display in the museum. An article published in the Isle of Man Examiner newspaper dated July 29, 1951 mentioned Gardner, and says he was to perform the museum's opening ceremony the next day. He stood in a magical circle drawn on the ground and read part of a ritual from his grimoire [sic] while holding a ceremonial dagger.

It has been suggested to me that Gardner may have had some contact with the Isle of Man before Williamson decided to base his museum there. There was a long history of witchcraft on the island and in his book *The Meaning of Witchcraft*, Gardner published a drawing of Margaret Ine Quane and her son being burned to death as witches in Castletown in 1617. They had been accused of riding around the fields astride broomsticks to encourage the crops to grow. In his *A Second Manx Scrapbook* (1932), the folklorist Walter W. Gill referred to a folk dance performed by Manx women to obtain a husband. He said the real reason for its performance was to become an initiate of the witch cult and the husband was the Devil. Gill mentions a woman on the

island known as "Queen of the Witches," and of witches being initiated into the "high degrees of witchcraft." Gardner himself talked of hereditary witch traditions on the Isle of Man, and one family known to have been "white witches for five generations" (1964).

It has been claimed that Gardner visited the Isle of Man several times in the 1940s and made contact with the local robed covens (Asphodel Summer 1993). It was these Old Crafters who encouraged Gardner to go public and write *High Magic's Aid*. The purpose was to make contact with other surviving witch covens and traditions. On Midsummer's Day, June 24, 1951, Cecil Williamson held a Witches' Convention on the island. He remarked that Gardner had found himself at odds with the other delegates because of differences of opinion about his form of witchcraft. It is possible some of these were locals. Charles Clark also firmly believed that Gardner had received an initiation into witchcraft on the Isle of Man (e-mail to Michael Howard from Melissa Seims dated November 17, 2005).

If we accept Cecil Williamson's account, when Gardner arrived at the museum he asked if he could sell copies of *High Magic's Aid*. He had paid Michael Juste to print it and

the book was not selling well. Juste was storing "so many thousand copies" and wanted them out of the way. Williamson agreed to store this stock and also provided Gardner with a large elm table at the museum he could use to try and sell them. In return he took a commission on each sale (Williamson Winter 1992). Gardner acted as a "resident witch" in these early days at the museum. During the summer season he entertained visitors to the teashop with tales of life in the Far East and provided an extra (living) attraction to the exhibition. He also used his position to recruit new members to the Craft. In 1953, Gardner wrote to Williamson, complaining that he was not passing on enquiries about modern witchcraft to him. He concluded that Williamson was deliberately withholding information about prospective members (letter in MOW archive).

Gardner's presence on the isle of Man and at the museum became more permanent when Williamson found him and Donna an old house to live in at 77 Malew Street, Castletown. It had originally been a smithy with a stables attached. When the Gardners moved in, the study was decorated with spears, Saracen scimitars, daggers, medieval pikes, Toledo rapiers, and Malayan keris. Hundreds of books lined the shelves from floor to ceiling and stood in piles on the carpet. Their subjects covered psychic research, secret

societies, archaeology, and weapons (Bourne 1998: 32). A bathroom door connected to a two-story building next door with rough stone walls. The top floor was converted into a temple, complete with incense burners, antique lamps, an old oak table as an altar, and a magical circle on the floor. It was in this converted room that meetings of the Isle of Man Coven were held in the 1950s and initiations took place (Crowther 2002: 142).

Cecil Williamson claimed that Gardner's appearance at the witchcraft museum was not as straightforward as it seemed. In fact he "coveted the museum [and] was up to all sorts of tricks to get me out" (Autumn 1992). Because of his lifelong interest in collecting weaponry and in archaeology Gardner was a great supporter of museums. In 1944, he gave a talk in Christchurch in which he strongly argued for the establishment of a local museum. Unfortunately he was before his time as he advocated the use of models and exhibits to educate people as well as static displays in cabinets (Heselton 2001). He had probably got this idea from Father Ward and his Abbey Folk Park museum.

Gardner introduced Williamson to Edith Woodford-Grimes (Dafo), and described her as the "High Priestess of the Southern Coven." In fact, Williamson claimed that this was

not their first meeting. He had encountered her previously during the war when he was setting up a secret radio station in the New Forest to broadcast propaganda to the German U-boat crews. She was introduced to him as "the leading witch of one of the New Forest covens" (Autumn 1992). Williamson described Woodford-Grimes as a typical English lady wearing "a good tweed skirt and jacket, a string of pearls and sensible shoes" ("Witchcraft in the New Forest" doc.113/ref. 134 in the MOW archives).

Using Gardner as her middleman, Dafo offered to loan some artifacts belonging to the New Forest Coven for exhibition in the museum. They eventually arrived in several cardboard boxes and Williamson told me they were "the sort of stuff produced by an arty-crafty house potter." They included pots, bowls, and various bottles made from glazed earthenware of a darkish brown or gray color. Many had runictype (Theban?) symbols on them. There were also several black- and white-handled knives, a scourge, handmade wands, necklaces made of beads, twigs strung on leather thongs, small boxes carved from tree branches, sheets of old parchment covered in magical sigils, antique wooden spoons, and three-pronged forks. This "junk," as Williamson called it, was evidently some of the ritual-working equipment that was being used by the New Forest

witches.

These objects were put on show in a special display cabinet for six or seven weeks. Then Gardner told Williamson that Dafo was upset that he "was not into paganism," and she wanted them returned. Gardner showed Williamson a letter that he said was from WoodfordGrimes written in the runic script that was on some of the exhibits and said he had offended her. Williamson removed the collection from display and when Gardner arrived next at the museum he was surprised to find them packed up on the table he used to sell his books (Autumn 1992). Evidently they never found their way back to the New Forest coven, as when I first visited the Boscastle museum in 1967, I remember seeing them on display. What happened to them when Williamson sold the museum in the 1990s is not known.

Despite Williamson's suspicions that Gardner was trying to take over the museum, in 1952 the two men became business partners. The business was running into financial difficulties and Williamson borrowed money to pay the rent owed to the landlord of Old Windmill Farm. Gardner also offered to buy the museum buildings and then offered them back to Williamson on a mortgage (Heselton 2003: 350).

However, after about two years of this partnership, the two men fell out over the financial arrangements. Williamson accused Gardner of "wicked double-dealing ways," and from 1952 to 1954 letters were exchanged between their lawyers. One from a legal firm in Douglas, written to Williamson in 1954, informed him that the notice requiring the repayment of Dr. Gardner's mortgage was due to expire in two days. It asked him to confirm he could repay it by that date. The letter also mentioned that Mrs. Woodford-Grimes had offered to take over the property with vacant possession for a sum equal to the amount owed to Gardner (letter ref. 39/111 in MOW archive).

Williamson eventually decided to sell the museum buildings to Gardner and return to the mainland. This, however, was also not without its problems, due to the alleged intervention of Mrs. Woodford-Grimes. Gardner told him that before he could make an offer she would have to come to the Isle of Man and inspect the place. When she arrived at the airport Williamson offered to collect her to save Gardner having to pay the costs of a taxi. He was adamant, however, that he would meet her at the plane and bring her back to the museum. Williamson claimed that when Mrs. Woodford-Grimes turned up he immediately recognized her as Mrs. Soames, the owner of a local boarding house

(Autumn 1992). Why Gardner should have attempted this subterfuge, if he actually did, is unknown as Dafo had already visited the museum shortly after it had opened (Heselton 2003: 350). Perhaps Williamson was being "economical with the truth" again.

Terms were finally agreed on, and Gardner paid the full asking price for the museum. For that, he got all the buildings, the box office, the restaurant, and the ruined tower of the windmill-without its sails. However, Williamson said he refused to pay for any of the exhibits, so they were not included in the sale. Previously Williamson had purchased most of the collection that had originally been loaned to him by Gardner. After some discussion, however, Williamson agreed to lend him some of the exhibits. There was also a petty disagreement about the special cups and saucers used in the Witches' Kitchen. They were functional white china, but Williamson had some special transfers of a witch sitting on a broomstick printed on every cup and plate. Gardner was not willing to pay for these either, so all the stickers were removed, leaving the china plain. When Gardner visited the restaurant the next day he found what had happened and, Williamson claims, was so angry he tried to stab him with his athame (Ibid.). Again this story may have been Williamson dramatizing the situation and trying to

defame Gardner.

After the sale, Cecil Williamson returned to England, where he founded a new witchcraft museum in Windsor, not far from the castle. After a short while he had a visit from two men in suits intimating they were representatives of the royal family. They politely told him to move on. He then opened the museum up again at Bourton-on-the-Water in Gloucestershire, but was forced to close it down after arson attacks, being denounced in the pulpit by the local minister, and demonstrations by fanatical Christians. Finally, in 1960, he opened the museum in the former fishing village of Boscastle in North Cornwall. He retired in the late 1990s and sold the museum building and its contents to a Hampshire businessman and Wiccan, Graham King, who is still running it successfully today.

When Gerald Gardner took over the Witches' Mill museum he changed its name and added suits of armor and weapons from his private collection to the exhibits, together with amulets and charms he had found on his travels. A visitor to the museum in the 1950s described Gardner as being about 5' 6" tall and stocky with snow-white hair and a goatee. He wore a tweed suit, a homespun wool jumper, and sandals on bare feet. His reading glasses hung in a case from a cord

around his neck, and his fingers were covered in magical rings. Along with a nervous twitching of his hands and eyelids, his speech was reported as being rather jerky.

In the brochure produced by Gardner to advertise the museum there is no mention of Cecil Williamson's previous ownership. In fact, most of the books and articles written later by Wiccans and others say Gardner founded the museum himself. The Bracelin biography of Gardner states that, due to bureaucratic difficulties in establishing a witchcraft museum on the English mainland, Gardner found some dilapidated buildings on the Isle of Man. They needed a great deal of restoration work before they were ready to house his collection (1960: 166). Gardner described himself as the museum's director and said its policy was to "show what people have believed in the past, and still do believe, about magic and witchcraft, and what they have done, and still do, as a result of these beliefs." He added that the director does not necessarily share these beliefs himself, although he went on to say that he had been initiated into a British witch coven.

On the first floor of the museum Gardner said there were two rooms with one representing a seventeenth -century "magician 's study" containing all the equipment used for

practicing ritual magic. On the floor was a magical circle, and there was an altar flanked with two pillars with lights on the top in the style of a Golden Dawn or Masonic temple. The second room was fitted out as a "witch's cottage," again with a circle and altar, but it was less elaborate than the magical temple. The altar was a simple wooden chest, and the circle a single chalk line on the floor. Gardner said that the altar was set up for an initiation ceremony and on it was a necklace, which is the only "ceremonial garment" required by a witch. Both these exhibits were already in the museum when Gardner took it over and so he must have borrowed them from Williamson.

In the first gallery were objects connected with magic and witchcraft, including some belonging to a "witch who died in 1951," presumably Dorothy Clutterbuck, or possibly Old Mother Sabine. These items had allegedly been in the owner's family for generations, and had been used to make herbal remedies. Patricia Crowther has referred to a large wooden box displayed in the museum that belonged to the same person. She said it contained phials, charms, talismans, and knives (1998: 27).

In other display cases were a collection of magical rings, assorted occult and astrological jewels, and amulets to ward

off the Evil Eye. There were also various magical objects used by witches, such as a riding staff that Gardner said was ridden like a hobby-horse in fertility rituals, crystal balls, black mirrors for scrying, and a flask of anointing oil after the sale. The Matthew Hopkins relics mentioned before were also on display, alongside items still used by an existing coven of witches. There were also a collection of talismans made, probably by Gardner, from instructions in the Key of Solomon, some Arabic and Italian charms, and a complete set of secret manuscripts from the Golden Dawn and other magical Orders claiming descent from the Rosicrucians. Other display cabinets in this part of the museum contained packs of different tarot cards, reproductions of pacts made with the Devil, copies of court records of Manx witchcraft trials, books on magic and witchcraft, an Australian Aborigine "pointing bone," a Malay keris used for cursing, and modern instruments for dowsing and detecting and studying the human aura.

In the upper gallery of the museum there were magical objects from Africa and Tibet, books, letters and personal relics belonging to the "Wickedest Man in the World" and the "Logos of the Aeon of Horus," Aleister Crowley. These included a copy of the OTO charter given to Gardner by the Great Beast in 1947, although a label accompanying it said

he had never actually used it to start a lodge and had no intention of ever doing so. There were also some items loaned by another witches' coven. This may have been the Cheshire one run by Barbara Vickers and her husband. They included a horned helmet "as used by the male leader in certain rites," and a foliate mask representing "the old god of the witches as the Green Man or King of the Woods."

Another case contained objects associated with Satanism and black magic and, in contrast, some items lent by a fraternity of "white magicians" such as a chalice used to perform the Mass for magical purposes. There were also a death-spell or curse prepared by the modern psychic artist and magician Austin Osman Spare and a lamp that had allegedly belonged to the eighteenth-century Hellfire Club. Other cases contained more talismans and charms, and on the wall was a large magical mirror that may have been the same one featured in the photographs of Barbara Vickers mentioned before.

Running the museum came with its own problems, as Gardner was to soon find out. In the first year under his ownership there were 18,000 visitors and they each paid an entrance fee of 1 shilling 6 pence. That provided an annual income of £1,350, which was quite a lot of money in those

days. However, Gardner lamented that "the Bastards wont [sic] give us an [alcohol] licence" (letter to Cecil Williamson undated in MOW archive). He complained that other businesses on the island had been granted them and wondered why the museum had been excluded.

In September 1952, an article was published in the Illustrated magazine that was to change the face of Wicca. It was titled "Witchcraft in Britain," and was written by Allen Greenfield. He had been in contact with Williamson when the Isle of Man museum was opened a year earlier and had written about it then. Greenfield called Williamson a "witchcraft consultant" and described a cursing ritual performed by Williamson involving the making of a poppet, or wax image, for one of his many clients. The article was illustrated with atmospheric photographs of the cunning man, dressed in black robes and working magically in a churchyard.

The article goes on to mention a summons that was sent out to members of "the Southern Coven of witches" on August 1, 1940, when a German invasion of Britain was expected. It goes on to describe the Lammas ritual and adds that "older members of the coven, those who came from a generation when magic enjoyed a matter of fact acceptance

in some households, could remember family talk of a similar rite against 'Bonet' [Napoleon Bonaparte] at the time of the threatened Napoleonic invasion."

Obviously referring to the New Forest Coven, the article said: "Hereditary witches, who have the lore handed down to them, form a proportion of the covens [sic], whose average ages are rather high." They make up their numbers by inviting others to join them who have made a wider study of the occult than the local people and constitute the "intellectual wing" of the coven. It goes on to say that nowadays the coven is led by a woman because of a shift in emphasis away from the "lord of death" to "life-goddess". Their rituals are based on instructions from the elders "eked out with the Clavicles [Keys] of Solomon." This seems to confirm the descriptions by Louis Wilkinson and E. W. Liddell of the membership of the New Forest Coven being made up of local country folk and middle-class occultists. It also suggests the use of the Key of Solomon in its rituals and a move to Goddess worship, and away from a devotion to a Horned God, as practiced in traditional witchcraft.

One of the readers of the article in *Illustrated* magazine was a young woman named Doreen Edith Valiente (1922-1999). She had been born in Mitcham, Surrey, although her

habit of speaking in a pseudo-rural accent led some people to believe she came from the West Country. Valiente married a Greek man called Joannis Vlechpoulos, who died in 1941. In the Museum of Witchcraft archive at Boscastle are photocopies of her wartime identity card and other documents about her registration as an alien, presumably because she had married a foreign national. She then married a Spanish chef called Casimo "Cassie" Valiente, who had fought in the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s and later for the Free French Forces in World War II.

Before she had read the article, Doreen Valiente had already been interested in Spiritualism, Theosophy, and the occult. She had read Dion Fortune's book *The Mystical Qabalah*, John Symond's biography of Aleister Crowley, and had obtained a copy of the *Great Beast's Magick in Theory and Practice* through the local library in Bournemouth, where she was living at the time. She had also read Charles Godfrey Leland's *Aradia*, Robert Graves' *The White Goddess* (1948), and Dr. Margaret Murray's books.

In her book *Rebirth of Witchcraft* (1989), when she was discussing the claims in the Lugh material about George Pickingill's alleged influence on the Golden Dawn, Valiente said she was interested in the Order's magical system before

she met Gerald Gardner (1989: 200). Melissa Seims investigated this claim and, while Valiente was never a member of any of the surviving GD lodges, discovered that she did own several notebooks that had belonged to members (Seims May 2007). One was Dr. Edward BurrIDGE, a member of the Isis-Urania lodge in London, and another was Henry David Kelf, who was a member of another lodge and died in Bournemouth in 1951.

The notebooks were pocket-sized and dated from 1902 to 1908. One had a label saying it belonged to the "Hermetic Order of the A.O.," or Alpha Omega lodge, a GD group founded after the schism in 1900 caused by disagreements between Mathers and Crowley. The notebooks contained the initiation rituals for various grades of the Order as well as other rituals, teachings, lecture notes, and examination answers. According to Seims, the books also contained handwritten notes in pencil executed by Doreen Valiente. She also copied some of the material from Edward BurrIDGE's into her personal Book of Shadows and used Hebrew script in her own notebooks and diaries as taught in the first grade of the Golden Dawn.

In a letter written to Dr. Allen Greenfield in August 1986, discussing the provenance of Gardner's Ye Book of Ye Art

Magical, Valiente asked him: "By the way, has Ripley's got my Golden Dawn [A.O.] mss, which were in Gerald's museum? Because if so, I'd jolly well like to have them back" (they belonged to Frater "Nisi Dominus Frustraria" [Henry Kelf]) (letter dated August 8, 1986 in MOW archive). The story of how Doreen Valiente acquired these magical Golden Dawn notebooks that ended up in the witchcraft museum on the Isle of Man is actually told in the Bracelin biography of Gardner, although her name is not mentioned.

It says that "one of the most important members of the Craft" (i.e., Valiente) was talking one day to her bank manager. He collected rare books and knew she had an interest in ones on magic. However he was unaware she was a witch. He mentioned that he had been handling the affairs of an elderly doctor who had recently died, and he had purchased some of his books from the widow. She also had a number of magical manuscripts owned by her late husband that she was planning to burn. He had tried to buy them, but the woman was allegedly afraid of their contents and was determined to destroy them.

Valiente managed to find out the area of Bournemouth where the doctor's wife lived and went there by bus. Her enquiries in the neighborhood led her to a semi-detached

house with pebble-dashed walls owned by the doctor's widow. She knocked on the door and got no answer. Then she noticed a pebble had fallen from the wall onto the ground. She picked it up, took it home and used it in a ritual with some friends for the purpose of retrieving the manuscripts. That night in bed she awoke and felt she had projected out of her body. She found herself standing in front of the widow's house and willed herself inside. She could see a green satin divan on which were a number of small, dark-colored books.

The next day she received a telephone call from the bank manager saying he had been contacted by the widow who was "in a strange state" She told him she knew he had a lady friend who would take away the magical manuscripts they had discussed. Valiente arranged with the bank manager to visit the woman that afternoon. There, on a green-covered divan, were the notebooks. The widow said she had tried to burn them, but something had kept her from doing it. She was now very frightened and asked Valiente if she would take them away with her (1960: 162-164).

There were twenty-eight notebooks, two ceremonial swords, and two pentacles. Presumably after reading and annotating them, Valiente donated or loaned the notebooks

to the museum, where they were displayed in the GD temple designed by Steffi Grant, and she kept the swords and the pentacles. When Gardner died in 1964, the notebooks were inherited by Monique Wilson and were subsequently included among the collection sold to Ripley's in 1973. They were then purchased in 1987, along with other documents and correspondence from the museum, by Tamara and Richard James of the Church of Wicca in Toronto, and they still own them.

Because she was living in Bournemouth when she read the article in *Illustrated* and it mentioned a witches' coven in the nearby New Forest, Doreen Valiente decided to write to Cecil Williamson at the Isle of Man museum and ask if he would put her in touch with the coven. He passed the letter on to Gerald Gardner, who replied that he had a friend named Dafo living near Bournemouth at Christchurch whom he often visited. An appointment was made for Valiente and Gardner to meet at Dafo's house for tea.

This significant meeting took place in the autumn of 1952, and Dafo immediately told her that due to social reasons and poor health she was no longer actively involved in the Craft. As soon as Valiente met Gardner she liked him and realized he was not just a pretender to occult knowledge, like the

people she had previously met at Spiritualist meetings and lectures at the local branch of the Theosophy Society. She described him as somebody with a sense of humor and a youthfulness in spite of having white hair. This was the Peter Pan quality she associated with all natives of the astrological sign of Gemini.

Strangely, Valiente says he was clean-shaven and "did not have the beard he grew later." His clothes were informal but made from good quality Harris Tweed cloth. He wore a large silver ring with "strange signs" on it, which he told her spelled out his magical name "Scire" from the OTO in the letters of the Theban alphabet. On his right wrist was a heavy bronze bracelet with symbols on it representing the three degrees of initiation into Wicca (Ibid., 38).

Gardner told Valiente how he moved to the New Forest before the war and joined the Rosicrucian Theatre, where he had met members of a surviving witches' coven. He was introduced to a woman living locally called Mrs. Clutterbuck and known to the coven as Old Dorothy. It was in her large house that he was initiated into the Craft. As Valiente was leaving, Gardner handed her a copy of High Magic's Aid to read. She said that he made no attempt during their first meeting to persuade her to join the witch cult. In fact it was

not for several months that her actual initiation took place.

This took place at Dafo's house in Christchurch in June 1953, when Gardner was visiting her to attend the annual midsummer solstice ritual held by the druids at Stonehenge. Doreen and Dafo accompanied Gardner to the ceremony, which Valiente used as a cover story for her husband and her mother, a strict chapel-goer who opposed anything relating to the occult. Gardner brought with him from the museum the famous sword once owned by Old Dorothy, and he loaned it to the Druid Order for the ceremony.

Valiente was duly initiated into Wicca by Gardner and evocatively describes him standing in the circle by an improvised altar in Dafo's candlelit sitting room. He was "tall, stark naked, with wild white hair, a suntanned body, and arms which bore tattoos and a heavy bronze bracelet." In one hand he brandished Dorothy Clutterbuck's sword, while in the other he held a handwritten copy of the Book of Shadows as he read the ritual by which she was made "a priestess and a witch" (Ibid., 47). Valiente noted that the ritual was very similar to the one described in High Magic's Aid. However, Gardner also read aloud something called "The Charge [to] the Goddess," and she instantly recognized bits in it that came from Leland's Aradia.

As all new initiates into Wicca had to do, Valiente dutifully copied out the BoS from her initiator's copy. In doing this she soon realized from her earlier reading of occult books that a lot of the material in it originated in Crowley's writings, the Key of Solomon, and Freemasonry. In the ritual for celebrating May Eve she even recognized a verse from a poem by Rudyard Kipling that she had read as a child. When she queried this with Gardner he told her about the OTO charter given to him by Crowley and said this meant he was entitled to use his writings in the rituals. He also said that the original rites he had been given by the old coven were not complete and he had to add other material. He had used a lot of Crowley's writings because they represented "the very spirit of paganism.." (Ibid., 57). She accepted this explanation and firmly believed that the "ancient rituals" had been in the hands of the elderly members of the coven. Gardner, with his wide knowledge of the occult and magic, had managed to piece these together and then added other material to make them workable.

Valiente specifically noticed that the Great Rite ceremony forming the third-degree initiation was based on the sixth-degree ritual of the OTO. In this, a female cup-bearer represents the "Lady Babalon" mentioned in Revelations, and a male officer takes the role of Baphomet, the goat-

headed god worshipped by the heretical Knights Templar. In fact, Bill Liddell's Elders claimed this was one of the rituals adopted by Crowley from the rites of the Pickingill coven in Norfolk, which he had joined in the 1880s (1994).

However, Valiente was not so "be-glamoured" by Crowley as Gardner seemed to have been and did her "best to sling his stuff out again..." (letter to Dr. Allen Greenfield dated August 8, 1986, in MOW archive). Although she admired Crowley as a brilliant writer and poet, as a person she regarded him as "a nasty piece of work." His great importance, in her opinion, was that he had opened up the "treasure chest in which the Order of the Golden Dawn had locked up the secret knowledge of the Western Mystery Tradition, and had invited all to share the treasure" (1989: 61).

Unconsciously echoing and anticipating the belief of Bill Liddell's Old Craft brethren, she told Gardner that she did not believe the witch cult would ever be publicly accepted, which was his primary desire, if it was so closely associated with Crowley. This was because of his popular image as a black magician and Satanist. Gardner saw the wisdom of this statement and agreed. He gave Valiente the go-ahead to revise the existing Book of Shadows and remove as much of

the Crowley material as was practical. Her first task was to create a new version of "The Charge of the Goddess," and she used Leland's more acceptable material as the template. Valiente said that in the original Charge there was "a little out of Aradia and the rest was purely Crowley" (letter to Michael Howard dated August 26, 1998).

However, in her analysis of the rituals passed on to her by Gardner, Doreen had also concluded there was a basic structure that was not derived from Crowley, Leland, or the Golden Dawn. She said that the oldest and purest form of the BoS rituals had been published in High Magic's Aid. She noted that the novel was published while Old Dorothy was still alive and Gardner told her it was only published with her permission. Valiente said that there was no material derived from Crowley in it except for the ritual password "Perfect Love and Perfect Trust." This was taken from an essay Crowley had written in the German magazine *The International* during World War I, when he was working undercover for the British Secret Service. There are also references to the Lords of the Watchtowers taken from the magical work of Dr. John Dee and the rituals of the Golden Dawn published by Crowley in *The Equinox*, except they are given the unique title of the "Dread Lords of the Outer Spaces" (Ibid., 63-64).

An interesting sidelight was cast on Gardner's comments about only inheriting fragmentary rites from his parent coven by an article written by Bill Love and published in Prediction magazine in 1988. Love first came across witchcraft as a university student in Scotland at the beginning of World War II. A friendship with a fellow student led him to the discovery that the Craft was still being practiced in the 1940s. After he left the RAF at the end of the war, Love was initiated into a coven in Essex that had been practicing since the early 1930s. Subsequently he met a woman who belonged to another old coven in a village near Rye in East Sussex. Although there was no contact between the two covens, Love says they shared the same organization and similar rites.

In 1955, Bill Love met Gerald Gardner, and they naturally discussed their respective Craft backgrounds. Love was surprised to find out that the type of witchcraft Gardner was practicing in the 1950s was very different from that of the two covens he knew in Essex and Sussex. However, Love said, "Gardner certainly appeared to have knowledge of the rites and practices of the coven to which I belonged and, from the information I gleaned from him, I formed the opinion that the New Forest coven into which he had been initiated was more akin to my own in its rites than to the system he

was now practicing" (Prediction, n.d.).



PART THREE

Expansion.- 1914- 1963



Chapter Seven

Witchcraft Today

After Doreen Valiente's private initiation in June 1953 at Dafo's house in Christchurch, later that year Gerald Gardner invited her to his London apartment to meet the other members of his coven. There were about eight or ten of them, most belonging to the Five Acres Naturist Club at Brickett Wood. The next meeting she attended was a celebration at midwinter and the coven had lunch together before the ritual in the evening. After the meal had finished, Gardner suddenly announced that he wanted Valiente to write an invocation for the forthcoming Yule ceremony. She searched through his books in the apartment and found a copy of a book of Gaelic Christian prayers from the Hebrides called *Carmina Gadelica* by Alexander Carmichael. She took from it part of one of the prayers to St. Brigid and produced

a suitable invocation of the witch goddess as the "Queen of the Moon, Queen of Stars." Later she also used her poetic skills to add material to some of the short seasonal rites used by the coven, including the summer solstice and the vernal and autumnal equinoxes. Valiente and Gardner also cooperated to write a circle chant for raising power, and between them they created the famous "Witches' Rune" (Hutton 1999: 246-247).

In September 1954, Kenneth Grant introduced Gardner to the psychic artist, medium, and magician Austin Osman Spare (1888-1956). The son of a London policeman, Spare was a talented artist, and as a young man he had several private exhibitions at leading London art galleries. He was also employed as a war artist during World War I. Many of Spare's drawings and paintings had an explicit sexual content that shocked and offended the art establishment. Galleries refused to stage any more exhibitions of these erotic works, and Spare, a maverick who despised convention, responded by turning his back on fame. After his apartment in the slums of South London was bombed during the Blitz in 1940, and he lost all his possessions and most of his artwork, Spare became a recluse. He lived in poverty, making a meager living from drawing portraits in public houses of local characters, and making and selling

talismans to fellow occult practitioners.

Austin Spare's unique artwork illustrated the twilight world that he knew existed beyond the normal range of the physical senses. His inspiration was an elderly lady called Mrs. Paterson, whom he called his "witch mother." She claimed to be a hereditary witch, descended from a family lineage in Salem, Massachusetts. She earned a living by using playing cards to tell fortunes and, like George Pickingill, had the ability to summon up spirits and elementals and materialize thought forms into physical form. She would tell her clients to think about their desires, and they would see symbolic images of them appear in a shadowy corner of the room as conjured up by the old witch. Inspired by his initiator into the witch cult, Spare evoked with pen and pencil the weird denizens of the elemental realm and the grotesque participants, human and nonhuman, of the Witches' Sabbath. Strange entities, half-human and half-animal, writhed across the pages of his drawing book, and demons and devils danced in wild abandonment with naked hags at forbidden nocturnal rites. These crones were then transformed into beautiful young sirens as the magical glamour of ancient witch magic blurred the edges of reality.

Spare was a skilled psychic artist and he used automatic writing to receive messages from his spirit guide, Black Eagle, a Native American. Spare was highly regarded in the Spiritualist movement for his skill. One of his friends was the late Hannan Swaffer, a well-known Fleet Street newspaper reporter, medium, and editor of the Spiritualist newspaper *Psychic News*. A few years ago, when an exhibition of Spare's original paintings and drawings were put on show in a West London art gallery, *Psychic News* devoted several pages to a review of his artwork and life.

As a young man, Spare had known Aleister Crowley and for a short time belonged to his magical group, the A.A., or Order of the Silver Star. The two occultists parted company on bad terms when Crowley, perhaps a little ironically, accused the artist of being a "Black Brother" or "black magician." It has been speculated that the real reason for the disagreement was that Spare had resisted the bisexual Crowley's advances (Beskin and Bonner 1999). Despite their differences, Crowley exerted a tremendous influence on the developing psyche of Spare as both a magus and an occult artist. Both men shared the belief that sexual energy was fundamental to any real and potent form of magical practice. In his book *The Focus of Life*, Spare said: "There is only one sense and that is sexual." Because he was heterosexual,

unlike Crowley, Spare did not indulge in homosexual magical acts. However, like his former guru, Spare associated with prostitutes and neurotic women, but claimed he channeled the orgasms from these brief encounters as ways to communicate with the spirit world, obtain psychic visions, or raise magical energy.

After he left Crowley's order, Spare began to work on his own magical system known as "the alphabet of desire." He based this on symbols or sigils that had arisen from his subconscious mind. They were either interlaced letters signifying the capital letters of a phrase such as "I wish to be rich and famous" or an abstract symbol of his own creation representing either a psychic force or his inner desires. Spare made a pack of cards painted with some of these sigils and carried them in his pocket at all times. His theory was that the magician could visualize the symbol on the card and concentrate on it to awaken his subconscious. He could then attract his desires (sex, wealth, power, etc.) and bring them into manifestation in the material world. He called this magical technique "atavistic resurgence," and claimed that, like Mrs. Paterson, an advanced practitioner could externalize the image of his or her desires as a projected thought form that could be seen by others and even impregnated into the mind of another receptive person.

His "witch mother" had also taught Spare to summon elemental spirits into physical form. One day two dabblers in the occult turned up at the artist's basement apartment in a Victorian terraced house in South London. They insisted that Spare prove his magical powers to them by calling up an elemental. He was reluctant to do so, knowing such actions could have unpleasant consequences for all concerned. At first he refused, but they were so persistent in their desire to see a spirit that he finally conceded to their request. Spare used one of his special sigils to evoke the entity, and after a few minutes a pungent fishy smell permeated the room and it began to fill up with a greenish mist. As the two men watched, paralyzed with fear, a long pointed face with demonic features began to form from the swirling mist. Eyes like pinpoints of fire glowed from slanted slits in the face, and the terrified occult dabblers began to plead with Spare to banish the terrifying elemental. The magus complied with their request and the face began to fade away, leaving behind an odor of rotting fish. Within a few days one of Spare's visitors died suddenly, and the other was committed to a mental hospital.

Spare made an additional living in the early 1950s by manufacturing talismans and amulets and doing spells for other practitioners of the magical arts. This was how he met

Gerald Gardner. Kenneth and Steffi Grant had met Spare in 1949 after buying a copy of one of his books from Michael Houghton at the Atlantis bookshop and writing to him. Before Gardner and Spare actually met, Spare was already making overtures to him using an emissary. In a letter dated August 25, 1954, Spare wrote to Kenneth Grant, saying: "Dr. Gardner of the Isle of Man sent along his deputy, a myopic stalky nymph [Diana Walden who at the time was the High Priestess of the Brickett Wood Coven] ... with two magical [sic] knives that she insisted on showing me. Harmless and a little tiresome ... what she was really interested in I don't think she herself knew. She believed the Witches' Sabbath was a sort of folk dance of pretty young things ... I agreed that a Maypole may have symbolism" (The Grants 1998: 86).

In September 1954, Kenneth Grant took Spare to see Gardner at the apartment he had in Shepherd's Bush, West London. At first they did not get on and argued over the meaning of the Witches' Sabbath, a gathering Spare said he had attended many times on the astral plane while in a trance state. Obviously attempting to play a game of one-upmanship, Gardner showed Spare his athames, including his ritual black-handled knife with the witch symbols carved on the hilt. Spare was not impressed and told Gardner he knew "all the symbols and more." He told Gardner it was possible

to kill somebody just using the power of suggestion. Despite their disagreements on almost everything they discussed, Gardner purchased one of Spare's famous talismans, jokingly known as flying saucers, because they were made from an ordinary dinner plate that had been painted with magical sigils. (I once saw Madeline Montalban make and use one of these for a cursing ritual that involved her smashing it to pieces with a ceremonial sword.) After the meeting Spare told Grant that he did not think Gardner had ever met a real witch. Grant has described the encounter between the two men as a "screamingly funny interview" (Ibid., 95 and 215).

A few days after their meeting, however, Spare seems to have changed his mind about Gardner. He sent Kenneth Grant a gift to pass on to "the Old Boy," as he called Gardner. It was a magical stele that had been charged to repel evil and return it to the sender threefold. One wonders if this is where Gardner got the idea for his "Wiccan Rede" and the "Law of Threefold Return"? Spare, who like many occultists was a fanatical cat lover, said that the stele needed a token sacrifice. He therefore suggested that in return for the stele, Gardner send a check for ten shillings to the RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) (Ibid., 98).

In 1955, one of the female members of Gardner's coven whose witch name was "Clanda" decided to leave and join Grant's Nu-Isis Lodge. Grant described her as a "tall woman ... with a squameous appearance ... with long wavy hair that clung to her like seaweed," and made her resemble a mermaid. Because of the way she looked in the lodge, Clanda took the role of the "priestess of the sea and moon" Gardner was not very happy that she had deserted him and directed a baleful current against the group and its leader. He also consulted Austin Spare in an attempt to get her back. Spare was totally ignorant of the situation and the real reason why he was being consulted by Gardner. He had just been asked to provide a talisman that would "restore that which has been taken from its rightful place." He dutifully completed the commission and made a talisman using sigils from his magical alphabet to bind the spell (Man, Myth and Magic 1970).

A few days later a ritual was held in the Nu-Isis Lodge to invoke the goddess Black Isis to possess the body of a priestess and speak through her. Clanda was selected as the priestess and in the candlelit temple she lay on an altar surrounded by a circle of violet-robed and hooded lodge members. The air was thick with a specially made incense composed of galbanum, storax, olibanum, and "moon juice"

(i.e., menstrual blood). Each of the windows in the room had been covered in black-out curtains left over from the air raids during the war.

The ritual commenced and, in the middle of the invocation to the Egyptian goddess, the young woman lying on the altar suddenly sat upright, her skin glistening with sweat and her eyes staring wildly at the window. A cold wind swept through the temple, and afterward Clanda told the others she had seen a vision of a monstrous, bird-like creature flying through the closed window into the room. It seemed to seize her in its huge webbed claws and carry her out of the window and up above the snow-covered roofs of the houses in the street. Eventually the giant bird entity returned to the room, released her from its taloned grip, and she dropped back onto the altar.

Examination of the window after the ritual ended showed that etched in one of the frost-covered panes was the unmistakable print of a very large bird's claws. On the windowsill below it was a lump of gelatinous slime. This substance slowly dissolved away in the warmth of the room, leaving behind a strong smell of seawater. Grant said that shortly after this event Clanda decided to emigrate to New Zealand. On the way, the ship she was traveling on sank at

sea, and she was drowned.

Kenneth Grant heard that Gardner had commissioned Spare and asked the magus if he had made a talisman for the witch and, as was his usual practice, bound an elemental spirit into it? Spare replied that he had been consulted by Gardner and had conjured up a spirit force to charge the talisman. When pressed for a description of the entity, Spare replied; "It was a sort of amphibious owl with bat wings and the talons of an eagle." This was an almost identical description of the strange creature that had psychically attacked Clanda during the Isis rite (article in the occult encyclopedic part-work *Man, Myth and Magic* [c. 1970s] by Kenneth Grant 2003: 31-33).

In the same year that Gardner officially took over the witchcraft museum on the Isle of Man from Cecil Williamson and met Austin Osman Spare, his first nonfiction book on the Craft, *Witchcraft Today*, was published by Rider & Co. The manuscript was first called *New Light on Witchcraft*. In 1975, Aidan Kelly found an unedited carbon copy with that title among Gardner's papers owned by Ripley International (Kelly 1991: xviii). It seems that when Gardner submitted the book, Rider persuaded him to change and shorten the title (Heselton 2003: 378).

The story told by Gardner about the writing of the book is that allegedly the New Forest Coven members were angry when a writer called Pennethorne Hughes, a former schoolteacher and employee of the BBC, wrote a historical book in 1952 about witchcraft. The coven members believed he had presented a distorted view of the subject and they therefore supported Gardner in his desire to write a factual book telling the truth, as they saw it, about witchcraft (The Meaning of Witchcraft, Gardner 1959: 12). The witches wanted their public representative to tell the world they were not sexual perverts, but decent people who just wanted to be left alone to follow their beliefs. While they wanted Gardner to write the book, they also warned him not to give away certain secrets (1954: 26). Having said that, he was allowed to reveal in public for the first time information about their beliefs and rituals that had never been previously known to cowans, or outsiders.

Witchcraft Today is what is known in the publishing business as a bit of a scissors-and-paste job, even though it was supposed to have been edited by "an occult scholar of distinction [who] managed to blue-pencil [remove] most of the more rubbishy passages" (King 1970: 180). This occult scholar was probably Gardner's old naturist friend Ross Nichols of the Druid Order, who at the time was the editor of

The Occult Observer, the magazine produced by Michael Juste of the Atlantis bookshop. In his foreword to *Witchcraft Today*, Gardner thanked Nichols for "supplying me with supplementary information [and for his] many useful suggestions and comments." Gardner had submitted a draft of the manuscript to Gerald Yorke for his expert comment as well. Philip Heselton believes that the book was structured as it was because in his contact with the New Forest witches he had not actually received any formal teaching or training from them. Instead he was told things on an ad hoc basis over a period of time. When Gardner came to write the book around 1952-1953, he did not remember all that he had been told years earlier (Heselton 2003: 379-380).

In the publisher's blurb for the later Arrow Books paperback edition reprinted in 1966, it boldly and rather fantastically says that "G. B. Gardner, until his recent death, was a member of one of the few covens surviving in England with an unbroken oral tradition that goes back to pre-Christian days." It added that the witch cult worshipped a Horned God, representing death, and a Moon Goddess, representing rebirth and fertility. The male priest in the role of the God presides at the Hallowe'en and February Eve Sabbats, while the priestess conducts the May Eve and August Eve Sabbats.

Somehow Gardner managed to persuade Dr. Margaret Murray to write an introduction to *Witchcraft Today*, giving the book a degree of academic authority because it described her as "formerly Assistant Professor of Egyptology at University College, London." Despite the peer criticism that had greeted her two books on witchcraft, she was still highly respected in that field. Gardner had met Dr. Murray at the meetings of the Folklore Society and, although she agreed to write the introduction, she privately referred to him as "a dangerous fool" (pers. comm. to the author from Cecil Williamson). When talking to other people about Gardner she seems to have had little time for him or his witchcraft beliefs.

Despite this, her introduction said that "Dr. [sic] Gardner states that he found in various parts of England groups of people who still practise the same rites as the so-called witches of the Middle Ages, and that the rites are a true survival and not a mere revival copied out of books." This statement may have been partially true as far as the New Forest Coven had been concerned. However by the time the book was published Gardner, assisted by Doreen Valiente, had created his own version of modern neopagan witchcraft. This bore very little resemblance to the historical or traditional forms of the Craft referred to by Dr. Murray in her

introduction.

Witchcraft Today began with a description of how the "witch power" exudes from the human body so as to justify the practice of ritual nudity in modern witchcraft rites. It also refuted Pennethorne Hughes' view that the Craft was "an evil cult" and modern witches were sex perverts. Other chapters dealt with the history of witchcraft, the Knights Templar, the classical Mysteries, voodoo, Ancient Egyptian religion, witches in Ireland, the Inquisition, the Lammas ritual in 1940, the witches' circle and working tools, and the true identity of the "Devil" who presided over witch meetings (i.e., the pagan horned god). The book ended with a miscellaneous chapter that covered blood sacrifice (not practiced by modern witches), the Sabbats, love charms, and witch marks.

One of the oddest chapters discussed how old the witch cult was. It is odd because in a previous chapter Gardner, following the theories of Dr. Margaret Murray, had already attempted to trace the origins of the Craft back to the primitive magic of the Stone Age. He said that he knew of surviving witch families whose fathers and grandfathers had been practitioners and had spoken to them of meetings "about the time of Waterloo" (1815). Then they believed "it

was an old cult, thought to exist from all time" (1954:51). Strangely, Gardner then goes on to say that the only person who could have invented modern witchcraft was Aleister Crowley, and mentions that the Great Beast told him he had been "inside when he was very young." Without any apparent sense of irony, Gardner says that "there are indeed expressions and certain words used that smack of Crowley; possibly he borrowed from the cult writings, or more likely someone may have borrowed expressions from him." He adds that the only other people he could think might have written the modern rituals were Rudyard Kipling, the members of the Order of the Golden Dawn, Hargrave Jennings, Francis Barrett, or Sir Francis Dashwood of the eighteenth-century Hellfire Club (Ibid., 52-53).

Taken at face value, these comments can be seen as a blatant attempt to explain the material in the Book of Shadows that was derived from the sources Gardner quoted in his book. However, Bill Liddell told me he believed what Gardner was actually doing was offering his readers clues or pointers to the different influences that had formed the Craft in the last two hundred years. As described in the Lugh material (1982), they included people such as Hargrave Jennings, George Pickingill, and Crowley. The inclusion in the book of the Templars, suppressed by the Roman Church

in the fourteenth century for heresy, devil worship, sorcery, and making secret deals with their Saracen enemies, was according to Liddell a coded reference to how the medieval witch cult was influenced by Arabic beliefs. These had allegedly been introduced into Europe through Moorish Spain and southern France by knights returning from the Crusades in the Holy Land (Liddell 1994: 78-81 and 130-138).

When discussing the rituals practiced by modern witches, Gardner was far from honest as to their origins. In *Witchcraft Today* he described a Yule rite he had seen his witch friends perform. He said that it was an interesting ritual called "The Cauldron of Regeneration and the Dance of the Wheel." This involved lighting a fire in a cauldron and then dancing around it, and he says: "The chant I heard was as follows..." and then proceeds to quote from the Yule ritual in the *BoS* circa 1954. Unfortunately it is not possible, as Gardner suggested, that he heard this chant in the context of some age-old ritual passed down from his parent coven in the New Forest. In fact, as we have seen, Doreen Valiente wrote this chant at his request one December afternoon only a year before the book was published.

Today the term "Wiccan" is universally used to describe modern witchcraft, especially its Gardnerian form, but the

fact is that Gardner never used it, or at least not with that specific spelling. In chapter ten of *Witchcraft Today* he said that witches are "the people who call themselves the Wica [sic], the wise people, who practise the age-old rites and who have, along with much superstition and herbal knowledge, preserved an occult teaching and working processes which they themselves think to be magic or witchcraft." A few lines further on he said "These Wica generally work for good purposes and help those in trouble to the best of their ability" (1954: 121).

Wicca or Wica is linguistically derived from the Anglo-Saxon *wicca*, meaning a male witch, sorcerer, or magician and *wicce*, a female witch or sorceress. Although it is a common belief in modern witchcraft circles that it is a word that comes from "wise" or "wisdom" and means the "Wise One," in fact, its derivation comes from "prophet" or "diviner." As Melissa Seims has noted, the word "Wica" appears only three times in *Witchcraft Today*, but seventeen times in Gardner's second nonfiction book *The Meaning of Witchcraft* (1959). Wicca is also used and appears five times in discussions of the etymological origin of the word. However, in the Bracelin biography published a year later, it is the Wica spelling that appears twenty-one times without any reference to the alternative of Wicca (Seims August

2008).

In an interview given by Gardner to the Daily Dispatch in August 1954, three months before *Witchcraft Today* was published, he told the newspaper: "There are men and women witches. Each is called a wica." In a letter written to The Observer in December 1955, Gardner described witches as followers of "a religion of nature and fertility [that] held regular festivals at which the concept of cosmic fertility was worshipped." He added that the priests and priestesses who directed these festivals also had the function of surgeons, doctors, midwives, and psychiatrists. It was these people and their followers who came to be popularly called witches. In another letter to The Observer a year later, in December 1955, after his book was reviewed in the newspaper, Gardner described the priesthood of the Wica as "the Wise Ones."

Melissa Seims has said that Gardner used the term "a wica" to describe an individual witch of either gender and "the Wica" as a collective term for several witches or the Craft as a whole. Arnold Crowther also used the word Wica when writing to Gardner about his investigation into the publicity activities of the King of the Witches, Alex Sanders. Bizarrely, Crowther's letterhead read "The Wica Detective Agency," which under the circumstances may have been a

joke on his part (letter in the Church of Wicca collection in Toronto quoted in Seims August 2008).

In 1964, an advertisement also appeared in the UK edition of the American magazine *Fate* (coincidentally published by Athol Publications based in Douglas, Isle of Man) from the Wica Perthshire Circle, seeking new members. Melissa Seims believes Monique and Scotty Wilson placed this notice because they were living in that area at the time. Another advertisement in the same issue for a coven in Cardiff, Wales, described it as "Wicca-Dianic and Aradian." Seims speculates this was connected with Gardner's arch-rivals Charles and Mary Cardell, who we shall be discussing later in this book. She believes that Gardnerians like Doreen Valiente decided to use "Wicca" instead of "Wica" as a reaction to the Cardells' use of the latter term.

By the 1960s, both writers and practitioners were widely referring to Wicca, and Wica had become a historical curiosity used only by a few of Gardner's original initiates. Melissa Seims points out in her discussion of Wica and Wicca that words have power. She says that the transformation from one word to the other to describe neopagan witchcraft "tells us a story about a period of Craft history that helped shape what we [Wiccans] are today"

(August 2008).

In *Witchcraft Today*, Gardner referred to Pennethorne Hughes' belief that magic evolved in ancient Egypt. Hughes said it had then divided into two cultural streams with one branch of occult knowledge migrating northwards to southern Europe and becoming the witch cult and the other, possibly following the route of the River Nile, going south into Central and West Africa to form the roots of obeah, juju, and voodoo (Gardner 1954: 183). This was a theory Gardner was willing to accept. When he had visited Pompeii in Italy and viewed the frescoes in the Villa of the Mysteries he realized there was a close connection between Greek religious rituals and witchcraft, e.g., scourging and ritual nudity in their respective initiation rites. He believed a "stream of teachings" had come out of Egypt and influenced the classical Mysteries of Greece and Rome. This was confirmed by the existence of witch tradition, as he had been told by his Elders in the New Forest Coven that the cultus had originally come from the Summerland in the East.

In the winters of 1952, 1953, and 1954, Gardner escaped the cold weather in England to stay on the Gold Coast in West Africa (modern Ghana and Nigeria). He wanted to find out about witchcraft as it was practiced in what was still

regarded by many ex-colonial Europeans as the Dark Continent. During his visits to Africa, Gardner stayed with a friend of his in Accra who was the curator of the museum there and a member of the Brickett Wood coven. Gardner was well respected and even feared by the local inhabitants. One day they asked Gardner's friend who the "white master" was who had stayed with him the year before. When he asked why they were interested, they said they were wondering because he never slept. Instead, they said, they had watched him as he "sat up all night talking to devils" (Bourne 1998: 87).

In January 1954, Gardner gave a lecture at the YMCA in Accra, and this was followed by a radio talk. As a result, he and his friend were contacted and taken to a house in the city where manifestations were occurring. It was made up of several wooden huts joined together and covered with a corrugated iron roof. All the windows were permanently closed, and in the backyard were a number of stones and half-bricks and some native-made stools. Gardner and his friend were told the stones and bricks had been deposited in the yard by a spirit similar to the European poltergeist. The occupants of the house said the stones would come into the house through the wooden walls and closed windows. Apparently the manifestations had begun after a young

servant girl was dismissed. In Europe such ghostly activities are often associated with pubescent teenagers and their emotional moods.

In the late 1950s, Gardner consolidated his new version of witchcraft. By the end of the decade the earlier policy of making neophytes serve the probationary period of the traditional year and a day had largely been abandoned. This was due to Gardner's increasing impatience at the slow growth of Wicca and his fear the witch cult would die out in modern times due to a lack of interest. People began to be initiated within a short time of Gardner meeting them. In one case he allegedly took a young female enquirer through all the three degrees in a month and then installed her as a High Priestess. When challenged about this, he responded that it was essential the Craft survive and be passed on to the future generation. Doreen Valiente said that when she first met Gardner he believed a call should be sent out to young people who were witches at heart and had been in the Craft in previous lives.

Gardner was in his seventies by then and not in the best of health. He knew his time was limited and wanted to make sure his legacy survived his death. Considering the evidence for the existence of the preGardnerian robed

covens and hereditary witch families in the 1940s and 1950s, Gardner's worries about the imminent demise of the Craft seems to have been exaggerated. However, they were also losing members as the older ones died off. Also, as an elderly man with health problems, Gardner was desperate to promote his own version of witchcraft and establish it as a popular neopagan religion.

It is difficult to tell how the publication of *Witchcraft Today* influenced the general public's perception of witches. It certainly increased media interest in witchcraft and, as we shall see, this had unpleasant consequences for Gardner and his followers. Reviews of the book were generally negative or at best lukewarm. Even the *Folklore* journal called it "an apology for witchcraft," and said it could not be regarded as a serious contribution to the subject (Vol. LXVI #2, June 1955). Other critics were less polite, dismissing Gardner's theories as fantasies, and casting doubt on the claim that he had actually encountered a real coven of witches. These criticisms are still being made today.

It was a double-edged sword because, although the book presented a positive image of the Craft in a public arena, the storm clouds were gathering, as it also caused tensions to develop within Gardner's coven. This was caused in part by

Gardner's lust for self-publicity. While some members of the coven supported him, others were opposed. Outsiders also came out of the woodwork claiming to be real witches. They either dismissed Gardner as a fake or sought to challenge his position as the chief spokesman for modern witchcraft.

The Bracelin biography observed: "Some self-styled magicians, enraged beyond measure at the prominence which his books and Witchcraft Museum have brought Gardner, have attacked him. Few of them have bothered to realize that he is not in the same business, so to speak. They seem to think he will steal their thunder. Others-and these are the real lunatic fringe-have tried to set themselves up as witch kings or the like, sensing in this a possibility of personal prominence. None of them has been able to sustain the part for very long" (1960). In 1955, however, the disagreements within the Brickett Wood Coven were temporarily put on hold when it was forced to confront an outside threat that jeopardized the future of Wicca.



Chapter Eight

Enemies Within and Without

As early as 1951, the British media, especially the tabloid Sunday newspapers that specialized in titillating their working-class readership with scandals and sensationalism, had taken an interest in witchcraft. Cecil Williamson had cleverly used his contacts in the press to get positive publicity when he opened the witchcraft museum on the Isle of Man. Despite this, at Hallowe'en 1951, a time of the year when newspapers always feature stories about witches, the Sunday Pictorial published a piece about a "nudist [naturalist] camp [where] midnight rites" were performed by "nude devotees of both sexes."

Doreen Valiente claimed that she had discovered that a man who used the pseudonym "Michael Glenister" provided the information for the story to the newspaper. Subsequent

enquiries revealed he was a friend of Madeline Montalban (1989: 49). His real name was Paul Le Cornu, and he worked as a clairvoyant in Kensington Market in London. He died in the 1990s in a nursing home in Lampeter, West Wales, and a collection of his magical objets d'art and occult books was sold at a local village hall. I was living nearby and attended the auction, which was packed. In one of his books I noticed a note saying he had done a healing ritual for Doreen Valiente.

The reference in the Pictorial to a nudist camp could have only been directed to the Five Acres Club. Professor Ronald Hutton has said it was the publication of this story that led Edith Woodford-Grimes to resign as the High Priestess of the New Forest Coven and which, with the death of Mother Sabine in 1948 and Dorothy Clutterbuck three years later, led to the coven's demise (Hutton 1999: 243). The article was followed by another, a year later, claiming to have exposed modern witches practicing devil worship in London. It said there were covens in the capital engaged in "sex rites in secret temples." These sensational newspaper exposes followed a stereotyped pattern that was repeated at frequent intervals from the 1950s to the 1970s.

Usually they began by informing their readers that "the

evil cult of witchcraft" was spreading across Britain, bringing moral degradation in its wake and corrupting the nation's young people. The witches, who were usually described as devil worshippers who practiced naked fertility rites, were supposed to be busy recruiting the younger generation into their cult. There were always references to mysterious dossiers compiled by reporters from their investigation and passed to Scotland Yard for action-although none was ever taken. These dossiers of evidence were supposed to contain details of wealthy people with important positions in society who were involved. Stock photographs from the newspaper's photo library illustrated these articles and were recycled time after time.

Some of the articles featured known Satanists or magical practitioners who were described as witches, but most of them in the 1950s and 1960s focused on the (alleged) activities of Gerald Gardner and his coven. In the 1970s, it was Alex and Maxine Sanders who received most of the publicity. It is not a coincidence that these newspaper exposes began when the old Witchcraft Act of 1735 was repealed. Doreen Valiente quoted an article in October 1953, again coinciding with Hallowe'en, about "Black Magic in Britain." It said clergymen had issued warnings before the Witchcraft Act was repealed that its abolition would

unleash an explosion of occult practices that were "undesirable" and "that is exactly what has happened."

The most serious of these newspaper stories was published in May 1955 by the Sunday Pictorial. It featured the usual claims that its investigative reporters had uncovered a network of covens across the country, practicing sex orgies and animal sacrifices, whose members included famous people. One of the reporters involved in the investigation went to the Isle of Man and interviewed Gerald Gardner. He asked for his reaction to the allegations, and Gardner told him modern witches did not worship the Devil or perform animal sacrifices. Either the reporter was not listening or had already made up his mind, as he went back to London and wrote an article titled "No Witchcraft is Fun." In it, he called Gardner "a whitewasher of witchcraft," and accused him of participating in fertility rites where naked men and women danced together and worshipped a pagan horned god. The reporter also called High Magic's Aid a "foul bait" to lure young girls into Gardner's coven. He was particularly interested in a description in the novel of a historical witchcraft ceremony where the altar was the naked body of a priestess. Presumably this was because it sounded like the popular description of a so-called "Black Mass" (Gardner 1959: 225-228 and Valiente 1989: 67).

The reason why the newspaper had become interested in Gardner was because their informant in the "black magic cult" had mentioned his name. This was a woman of ethnic origin living in Birmingham. She told the paper she had been the High Priestess of a local witches' coven and attended nocturnal gatherings held in graveyards. She had also been to indoor meetings in a satanic temple where "frenzied dancing" took place, chickens were sacrificed, and the participants drank their blood.

This woman was, in fact, a well-known police informant known as "Mrs. Jones," and was regarded by her employers as mentally unstable. She claimed she had been introduced to an "occult society" in the city by her husband, who was an astrologer. He took her to a meeting in the 1940s where she met the head of the group, a former Roman Catholic priest. The priest lent her some books on the occult and began to teach her "strange religious theories." A relationship of teacher and pupil developed and he telephoned her every day to give her lessons that lasted for about an hour every time. Her occult teacher allegedly told her how to conjure up elemental spirits, use magical power to enslave any man she wanted, "build a temple in her mind," and pray to the Devil (Ibid., 219 and Newman 2006: 103).

In the article in the Sunday Pictorial, Mrs. Jones said she was finally initiated into witchcraft in February 1948. However, a different source says she was already attending rituals in 1947 in an apartment at King's Hall, Birmingham, where there were "witchcraft signs on the floor," and everyone present wore cloaks. During her initiation in 1948 a cockerel was sacrificed and the new members of the group had to drink its blood from a glass. They were then told they had drunk the blood of the Devil himself. At other rituals she acted as a High Priestess, wearing a veil and a robe while the others present were "cowled and masked." She also claimed that among those who were present at these rites was a "Dr. Gardner."

Nearly a year passed and another newspaper published further allegations made by a "terrified woman, driven grey-haired by some of the most evil men in Britain." She had contacted the paper to tell them who was responsible for a famous murder in the village of Lower Quinton in Warwickshire on St. Valentine's Day, 1945. The mutilated body of an elderly farm laborer named Charles Walton had been found in a field where he had been cutting a hedge for a local farmer. His throat was cut, his arms and chest had been slashed with his own billhook, and his body was impaled to the ground with a pitchfork.

There were rumors that the killing was a ritual murder, and the local police called in detectives from Scotland Yard to investigate the case. Even Dr. Margaret Murray got involved as she anonymously visited the village disguised as a tourist on a painting holiday to try and find what had happened. She concluded that a human sacrifice had taken place to bring fertility to the land, which seems unlikely considering the victim's advanced age. In fact, Walton was well known as a "cunning man," and the local theory was that he had either been murdered by someone who feared his powers and believed the old man had cursed them, or in a violent argument over money owed to him by his employer.

The newspaper's informant for this new article lived in Wolverhampton in the West Midlands, and claimed to belong to a witches' coven that met in Birmingham and London. The woman said the people who had murdered Charles Walton had been brought to Lower Quinton by car from another part of the country. Either three or thirteen people took part in the ritual-she seemed confused about the exact number. Walton was struck down, his body was mutilated, his robes were soaked in his own blood, and the participants then danced around the body. She claimed one of those present was "the leader of the London branch of the cult," and the Midlands leader had told her he wanted

him out of the way so he could gain control of the cult nationally (Gardner 1959: 237).

It transpired that the newspaper's informant was the same Mrs. Jones who had supplied the information for the previous expose. She had reported the details of the killing to Detective-Superintendent Alec Spooner, the head of Warwickshire's Criminal Investigation Department, who had originally led the murder investigation before Scotland Yard was called in. She said a woman called "Mrs. Crowley, the widow of Aleister Crowley," living in Cornwall, had been responsible for the Walton murder. She added that the ex-Roman Catholic priest who initiated her into the witch cult was the "leader from the Midlands," and the one in London was "Dr. Gardner." Allegedly, Gardner had organized the killing and had encouraged "Crowley's widow" to carry it out (Newman 2006: 103). A few days after she was told the story, a "circle of silence," made of twigs and graveyard chippings, was placed on her doorstep. This was a warning to keep quiet about what she had been told. When she said she was going to the police, she was attacked with a doctor's scalpel and some hair and skin was removed from her head (Gardner 1959: 239).

"Mrs. Crowley" was actually Pat Doherty (aka Deirdre

McAlpine), who had had an affair with the Great Beast, encountering him when he was involved in a libel case in 1934. She had accosted Crowley outside the courtroom and asked him if she could be the mother of his child. Subsequently she bore a son. In the late 1930s, Crowley was supposed to have stayed briefly in Cornwall where Pat Doherty was living. There were local rumors that during his visit he attended drug-fueled orgies at country houses and performed magical rituals with fellow occultists at stone circles. It is alleged that some reels of 35mm film taken of these rites may still exist.

Det. Supt. Spooner was naturally skeptical about the fantastic claims made by Mrs. Jones, but he was also determined to solve the Walton murder that had overshadowed his career. He was therefore willing to follow up any new lead, however unlikely it might seem. He contacted his colleagues in the Cornish police and asked them for any intelligence they had on Pat Doherty and her associates. A report came back saying that, according to their files, in 1932 Doherty had met a man who had moved into a converted barn near where she lived. He knew Alister Crawley [sic] and was acting as his "right-hand man" in Cornwall. His task was to recruit local people who wanted to practice black magic, and Doherty and several others

belonging to the "county set" in the area joined his group.

One of these new members was supposed to have been an outsider described as coming from "a very wealthy family in the Midlands." Paul Newman has identified this person as Crowley's friend Gerald Yorke, an old Etonian descended from the Earls of Hardwicke (2006: 108). Presumably he was supposed to be the head of the witch cult in the Midlands mentioned in Mrs. Jones' fairy tale. According to the Cornish police report, the group that Pat Doherty belonged to held rituals in a local wood at full moon using a pile of stones as an altar on which small birds were sacrificed (Ibid., 104). Spooner does not seem to have followed up the report. In fact the whole business appears to have been a classic example of rumors and gossip combined with the imaginings of a mentally deranged person. The media used this to justify their fantasy stories that well-known occultists engaged in devil worship, blood sacrifices, sexual orgies, and even ritual murder.

An interesting postscript to the lurid confessions made by Mrs. Jones is a possible connection with Gardner's friend and magical working partner, Madeline Montalban. She once told me that she knew a defrocked Roman Catholic priest in Birmingham who organized performances of the Black Mass

on a commercial basis. Paul Newman has told me privately that Mrs. Jones claimed to have known Madeline by the pseudonym of "Mrs. Montfort." Professionally, she used many names as an author of romance novels and books on astrology, as a journalist, and in her private life.

In November 1956, Madeline Montalban wrote an article for the astrological magazine Prediction on the effects of karma. She gave the example of a journalist she knew who had written a series of articles on "black magic" for a newspaper. He had drawn a small amount of his material from factual sources and a great deal from hearsay and his imagination to produce a semi-fictional "smear and scare" story. This sounded like the recent articles about Mrs. Jones and the Birmingham witch coven. Montalban warned the man that by creating an interest that did not previously exist and making a profit from exploiting the weak-minded, he would suffer.

Shortly afterwards his editor found out the journalist's stories were not true and lost confidence in him. He also suffered a series of misfortunes from which he never fully recovered. The last time Montalban saw the journalist he was bemoaning his fate and protesting at the injustice of his situation. He claimed he only wanted to expose the alleged

"black magicians." In her article Montalban observed that accusing others of practicing black magic always brings the accuser karmic problems.

After the newspaper stories were published, Doreen Valiente said that Gerald Gardner at first treated the whole affair lightly. He reportedly told her the publicity he had received would have cost thousands of pounds if he had paid for it. Donna Gardner did not agree, and was unhappy about the business. The impression Valiente got was that the couple had lost some non-Craft friends because of the stories. Several people who had recently joined the Brickett Wood Coven were also panicked by the expose and the investigation carried out by the reporters. There were rumors the telephones of coven members had been tapped and their mail was being interfered with, either by private detectives working for the newspapers or by the police. Later, in the 1960s, I was in contact with one of the reporters involved in a News of the World expose of witchcraft in 1963, and he confirmed private detective agencies were employed during the investigations.

Valiente advised Gardner to destroy any of his private papers and correspondence that might "fall into unfriendly hands," and he agreed. He also considered fleeing abroad

until the whole thing blew over. It was feared there might be an imminent police investigation, and that made sense considering the seriousness of Mrs. Jones' allegations. In the end nothing happened, probably because the police informant was unstable and unreliable. Valiente spent a year investigating and debunking the various media stories. The results of this research were eventually published as an appendix to Gardner's book *The Meaning of Witchcraft* (1959).

In 1957, the pressures of the negative publicity that Gardner, and Wicca in general, were receiving in the press, and his increasingly autocratic style caused tensions to develop within the Brickett Wood Coven. According to Doreen Valiente's version of events, two different and differing factions had begun to form in the group. She described these as being pro-publicity, led by Gardner and newer members such as Jack Bracelin and his girl friend Amanda, and anti-publicity, led by herself and several other disgruntled older members (1989: 69). Bracelin (who died in 1981) was an ex-member of the police force in British-occupied Palestine (modern Israel). In the 1950s he worked for a paint wholesaler and as the administrator of the Five Acres Naturist Club. He was initiated into the coven in March 1956. He was tall, of slim build with light brown hair,

blue eyes, and a small moustache that gave him a military look (Bourne 1998: 20). Bracelin was a close friend of the Sufi master and Grand Sheik, of the Sufi Order in the United Kingdom, Idries Shah. It was Shah who wrote the biography of Gardner published in 1960. Jack Bracelin put his name to it as the author because the Sufi did not want to be publicly associated with witchcraft.

Other members of the Brickett Wood Coven when the split happened between the two groups in 1957 included Frederick "Fred" Lamond (born 1931), an Austrian-born graduate of Clare College, Cambridge, working for the Economic Intelligence Unit and now an international computer consultant. Another leading member was Edward "Ned" Grove (died in 1966), a retired colonel in the Indian Army and city banker, who sided with Doreen Valiente. There were also a couple of housewives, a nurse, a sales executive, and a secretary (Hughes and Akhtov 1999).

Things came to a head in the coven when Doreen Valiente gave Gardner an ultimatum. She told him his "silly publicity seeking" was only adding to the new witch hunt by the press. She demanded that before Gardner gave any more interviews to the newspapers he first checked with the senior members of the coven. Valiente seems to have been

independently supported in this position by Edith Woodford-Grimes. After Gardner's wife, Donna, died in 1960, he asked Lois Bourne to sort out some of his papers. She came across correspondence from Dafo written in a very stern style and castigating Gardner for his "blatant publicity tendencies" (Bourne 1998: 58).

The ultimatum, however, was rejected and the pro-publicity faction led by Jack Bracelin encouraged Gardner to ignore any attempts by the opposing group to curb his publicity efforts on behalf of the Craft. In October 1957, Bracelin and Amanda were even persuaded by a reporter from The People Sunday newspaper to put on a ritual at a house in Finchley, Northwest London, for his benefit. A photograph was published to accompany the article, showing four naked witches sitting around an improvised altar on which were laid out an athame, some cords, a pentacle, and two lighted candles in candlesticks. The text described how the reporter witnessed "a nude priestess" perform a "wild ritual dance," wearing nothing but a lapis lazuli necklace, a silver bracelet, and a garter. Doreen Valiente was horrified to find out that the original plan was to take the reporter to the witch's cottage at Brickett Wood, but inclement weather had prevented this and an indoor ritual was hastily arranged in London instead.

Gardner was still busy seeking his own personal publicity. The final straw for the older members of the coven was when he posed for a magazine article on witchcraft, sitting cross-legged in a magical circle in the Isle of Man museum. He was holding a ceremonial sword and pointing at what the magazine described as "the weird image of a batwinged demon." When Valiente protested about this fiasco Gardner rather lamely blamed it on his publisher. He said Rider & Company had forced him to do the interview, against his wishes, to publicize his book *Witchcraft Today*.

It was at this stage that Doreen Valiente and her supporters in the anti-publicity faction decided to take action to save the coven from splitting in two. They drew up what they called "Proposed Rules for the Craft," and their purpose was to ensure the oath of secrecy taken at initiations was kept. They presented these rules to Gardner, but he astonished them by responding they were not needed, as an archaic set of "Craft Laws" already existed. He sent Valiente a copy of these from the Isle of Man, and they were "full of obscure and archaic styl-ishes presumably to lend a sense of authenticity and dignity..." (Rabinovich and Lewis 2002: 197). Valiente said the Laws were "couched in mock archaic language and ornamented with awesome threats ... and invocations of 'the Curse of the Goddess' "

upon anyone who dared transgress them" (1989: 70).

Valiente seems to have objected strongly to several of these so-called "Laws of the Craft" because she regarded them as sexist. One stated: "The Gods love the brethren of the Wicca as a man loveth a woman, by mastering her." Another claimed that the High Priestess received all her power from the Horned God and was only lent it by him. The third, and most significant, ruled that the High Priestess must be a young woman and should "gracefully retire in favour of a younger woman should the coven so decide in council." Doreen Valiente objected to this because Old Dorothy, allegedly the High Priestess of the New Forest Coven, had remained in that position when she was an elderly woman. Also, no similar demand was made of the High Priest that he should stand aside for a younger man when he got old. Reading between the lines, one can surmise Valiente thought this law undermined and threatened her own position within the coven.

Ned Grove had been responsible with Valiente for drawing up the original "Proposed Rules" and he wrote back to Gardner accusing him of inventing his "Craft Laws." The anti-publicity faction actually believed Jack Bracelin had helped write them. There followed, said Valiente, a heated

exchange of correspondence between Grove and Gardner. At the end of it, nothing had been resolved. As a result of this lack of agreement, and Gardner's continued love of self-publicity, Valiente, Grove, and several others made the reluctant decision to go their own way. In the frequent absence of Gardner on the Isle of Man, Jack Bracelin and Amanda were left to take over the remainder of the Brickett Wood Coven as its new High Priest and High Priestess.

If the split in the Brickett Wood Coven was a blow to Gardner and his authority, another threat emerged from within the Craft itself. The Bracelin biography says that this was a "certain self-styled witch who claimed to have inherited certain witch relics, and who wanted to gain control of the Museum." He approached Gardner and tried to get him to agree to moving the museum collection from Castletown to London. He even offered the use of a building so the collection could be displayed to a larger public audience. Gardner was reluctant to have anything to do with this person, regarding him as a newcomer who wanted to become the leader of the witch cult (1960: 176). In another reference to the same person, the biography said the imposter had tried to find out from his initiates about the rituals practiced by Gardner. He did this by claiming they had already been published in a book and that was where

Gardner had copied them from. However, he also said Gardner owned only part of the book-the rituals were therefore incomplete and only he had the complete copy (Ibid., 162).

This rival to Gardner was Charles "Charlie" Cardell (aka Major Charles Maynard) who lived with his "sister" Mary Cardell (aka Mary Edwards) in a London apartment and on a large forty-acre country estate called Dumbledene in the village of Charlwood in Surrey (now near Gatwick Airport). Mary Cardell was the daughter of a Cornish preacher and had inherited money from wealthy relatives. Charles Cardell had served in the British Army in India, and on his return to England earned a living as a stage magician. Sometime in the 1950s he set himself up as a psychologist operating from consulting rooms in Queens Gate, Central London. From their estate in Surrey, the Cardells, posing as brother and sister, also ran a company called Dumblecott Magick Productions, offering for sale such cosmetic products as "Moon Magick Beauty Balm."

Charles Cardell came to public notice in 1958 when he wrote an article for the Spiritualist magazine *Light*. In it he announced that he and his sister were "Wiccens," and they invited any genuine witches to contact them. Cardell was

heavily involved with the College of Psychic Science (later the College for Psychic Studies), which published the magazine, and with the Spiritualist movement in general. In December 1959, he gave a talk on "Magic" to the Marylebone Spiritualist Association. Unfortunately some members of the college were unhappy about an article promoting witchcraft being published in *Light*. One of its leading members, Brigadier General Firebrace, said privately that he believed Cardell was "crazy" (Doreen Valiente's notebooks; entry dated July 20, 1983 in MOW archive).

Despite saying he was a witch, as a practicing psychologist, Charles Cardell said he worked to expose the many charlatans in the occult world preying on the gullible, and in public he presented himself as a skeptic in such matters. He offered £5,000 to any witch, magician, or occultist who could publicly prove they had magical or psychic powers. One occultist, Charles Montague Pace, accepted the challenge. Pace was an old friend of Gerald Gardner, a self-styled "Setanist," Luciferian, and "Priest of Anubis" who worked as a mortuary attendant. He later became Eleanor Bone's lodger and the High Priest of her Streatham coven. Pace was also an accomplished artist. In the 1970s, Jimmy Page of Led Zeppelin employed him to paint occult murals on the walls of Boleskine House,

Crowley's former home in Scotland, which the rock star had bought. Charles Pace was also involved as an informant in several major newspaper exposes of witchcraft and Satanism.

Pace wrote to Charles Cardell, challenging him to a meeting at Stonehenge on Walpurgis Night, April 30, 1965. There he would allegedly witness "the dreaded fire ritual of the Black Peacock Angel [Lucifer]" The Setanist invited Life magazine to report on the event, and told Cecil Williamson they were interested. He had also invited members of the press and a television crew, but the demonstration seems not to have happened. Cardell must have been interested as he had apparently offered to donate the £5,000 to charity, and Charles Pace nominated the Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (letter from Pace to Cecil Williamson dated May 30, 1964, doc. 156/ref. 176 in MOW archive).

Charles Cardell claimed he had inherited his form of witchcraft from his mother, Lilla Maynard, a circus artiste and tightrope walker. Allegedly she had passed on to her son her personal arthame [sic] and "witch bracelet" Gardner however was convinced that Cardell was not genuine and only wanted to take over the Isle of Man museum and entice away members of his coven. Certainly, according to a letter

in the archives of the Church of Wicca in Toronto, those members of Brickett Wood who had broken away were interested in Cardell's article in *Light*. In July 1958, Doreen Valiente wrote to Dafo, enclosing a copy of the magazine, and said that she and Ned Grove had met Cardell and had "long talks with him." This letter is interesting in itself because it shows that despite Valiente's break with Gardner and the Brickett Wood Coven, she was still in contact with Edith Woodford-Grimes. Valiente concluded her letter by telling Dafo the "rebels [had] a good meeting place" and their plan was "to get together with Cardell and pool our respective traditions." Despite Gardner's skepticism, from his own experience in the occult, Ned Groves believed Cardell was the genuine article (Kelly 2007: 87-89).

In fact, Doreen Valiente subsequently did join Cardell's group, the Coven of Atho, but it is not known if any of the other ex-members of Brickett Wood followed her example. The coven took its name from a large wooden head depicting Atho, "the horned god of witchcraft," owned by the Cardells' handyman, Ray Howard. He claimed that when he was a young boy in Norfolk in the 1930s it been left to him in the will of an old Romany woman named Alicia French. She had also taught him a version of traditional witchcraft. Doreen Valiente believed the word "Atho" was an

English corruption of the Welsh "Arddu" or "Dark One," and was somehow linked to Charles Cardell's family roots in Wales. The coven also worshipped the goddess Andraste, the name engraved on the "witch bracelet" Cardell inherited from his mother, and Diana, the Roman goddess of the moon and hunting. In her book *Witchcraft for Tomorrow* (1978) Valiente published a copy of the Runes of Andred (Andraste) that she said had been given to her by a coven in Sussex. She claimed the Celts and Saxons worshipped this goddess in an ancient forest called Coed Andred ("the wood of Andred" in Welsh) that once covered southern England. The worship of Diana by the Coven of Atho she thought had been derived directly from Charles Godfrey Leland's *Aradia: The Gospel of the Witches* (entry in DV notebooks dated July 20, 1983, in MOW archive).

The head of Atho was carved from a solid piece of dark-colored oak that was allegedly over two thousand years old. It was adorned with two bull's horns and inset with silver and jewels. The horns were decorated with the signs of the zodiac and on the forehead were what Doreen Valiente described as "the five rings of witchcraft." The nose was in the form of a crescent-shaped chalice or wine cup and had a pentagram or five-pointed star on it. The mouth was shaped like a bird, the messenger of the elemental power of air, and

the chin was in the form of the triangle of magical art (Valiente 1973: 25-26). When a small crucible of water with a lighted candle under it was placed in the back of the head its red glass eyes lit up and steam came out of the ends of the horns (Seims November 2007).

The meetings of the Coven of Atho were held at Dumbledene-it was rumored in a secret underground temple on the grounds converted from a wartime air-raid shelter (Ibid.). Most of the rituals, however, were performed in a woodland glade where an altar was set near an ancient tree. One ritual that was held indoors was known as the "Man, Maid, and Pupil" ceremony. This involved a magical circle being drawn on the floor around a chair and a small table. Pots containing earth, fire and water were placed around the circle. The pupil sat on the chair while the man directed the rite and the maid gave her "power" to it. Then the pupil went into a light trance and concentrated on healing or whatever the purpose of the rite was (entry dated 1970 in DV notebook in MOW archive).

Doreen Valiente claimed the Coven of Atho had members who included several well-known occultists. These she named as Margaret Bruce, a renowned herbalist, student of Madeline Montalban, and transsexual whose previous

gender identity was a Merchant Navy seaman called Maurice Bruce; Jacqueline Murray, co-founder of the Atlantean Society; and Stella Truman, a witch who wrote for Prediction magazine. More controversially, Valiente said that the water and land speed racer Donald Campbell and his wife were members. It was alleged he used to touch the Head of Atho "for luck" before attempting his speed records. Ray Howard acted as the coven's seer or clairvoyant, and it is possible Madeline Montalban was also involved. It is said that she and her magical partner and lover, Nicholas Heron, visited Cardell's consulting rooms in London and took part in rituals in his temple (Ibid.).

Although Charles Cardell taught his initiates that the teachings of the Coven of Atho originated in the "Water City" (Atlantis) thousands of years before, in Doreen Valiente's opinion they were derived from several modern esoteric sources. These included Dion Fortune's occult novel *The Sea Priestess*, Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, Lewis Spence's books on Atlantis, the American occultist Manly Palmer Hall's *Secret Teachings of All Ages* (1962), the writings of the Ancient Mystical Order of Rosicrucians (AMORC) in the United States, to which Charles Cardell may have belonged, and Charles Godfrey Leland's *Aradia*. In fact, Cardell had reprinted Leland's book,

and it is said Gerald Gardner went around buying up as many copies as he could find and burning them (DV notebooks dated February 27, 1968, in MOW archive).

Charles Cardell was Gerald Gardner's greatest rival and it is even said he informed the newspapers of the location of the Brickett Wood Coven. In a policy of "divide and conquer," he then told Gardner it was Doreen Valiente who was responsible for leaking the information. When one expose was printed, Cardell sent Gardner a telegram saying: "Remember Ameth [Doreen Valiente's witch name] tonight." Although Cardell told people he was a hereditary witch and the "guardian of an ancient Celtic tradition," he was still desperate to find out what rituals the Gardnerians practiced. He told Doreen Valiente that Gardner's "star pupil," a young woman named Olive Greene, was in fact working as a spy for him (DV notebook March 1959, in MOW archive).

Olive Greene (aka Olwen Armstrong Maddocks) was the wife of the chairman of the Brazilian Chamber of Commerce in the UK. In 1959, she became friendly with Gardner and persuaded him, without much effort, to privately initiate her into Wicca at his apartment in London. The Brickett Wood Coven had already rejected her because she was well educated and had a "superior attitude." She was described

as "young, pretty, well spoken, and had connections in the medical world" (Bourne 1998: 98). Gardner had decided to initiate her anyway despite the coven's objections.

The coven's rejection of her was justified, even if their reasons were not, as it turned out she was working secretly for Charles Cardell. When Greene became disillusioned with Gardner and turned against him, she went over to the other side and joined the Cardells. After Gardner fell ill and was taken into hospital, she obtained the key to his apartment and had access to his private papers. Greene copied and passed these on to Charles Cardell together with secretly taped recordings of Wiccan rituals and her own personal copy of the Book of Shadows. At first Cardell planned to send a copy of the BoS to the newspapers, but in the end he only published it after Gardner's death in 1964. This was under the title *Witch* and using the symbolic pen name of "Rex Nemorensis" or "King of the Woods," his title as the High Priest of the Coven of Atho.

Unfortunately for the Cardells, in 1960 they fell out with their handyman and initiate, Ray Howard. He left his wife shortly afterwards and Mary Cardell gave evidence in court against Howard during the divorce case. In March 1961, Ray Howard took his revenge by taking a reporter from the

London Evening News to spy on one of the rituals held on the Dumblecott estate. Two articles were published headlined "Witchcraft in Wood" and "Devil Worshipper by Night in Surrey Wood." They described a two-hour ritual featuring "Beth, the Witch Maiden" (Mary Cardell) wearing a red cloak, and "Rex Nemorensis" wearing a black cloak decorated with a silver pentagram.

The reporter described seeing a group of people wearing hooded cloaks gather in a clearing in a wood. One was carrying a lantern on a pole, and its leader (Charles Cardell) drew a circle on the ground around a fire with a sword. On an altar were some bones (human or animal), a toy spider, a crystal ball, a bowl of water, and a shrunken head. As the group chanted, the High Priest took up a hunting horn and blew four blasts in the four directions of the compass around the circle. Mary Cardell, sitting in the fork of a tree, went into a trance to "communicate with the spirits of the dead." At the end of the ritual, Cardell closed the circle by firing an arrow from a longbow into the trees near where Ray Howard and the reporter were hiding (London Evening News March 7, 1961).

Charles Cardell reacted badly to this betrayal by his former initiate and employee, as he believed it had adversely

affected his status as a psychologist. He invited various journalists to Dumblecott for a press conference as a damage limitation exercise. Only the reporter who had written the articles and one from a local newspaper bothered to show up. Afterwards, the Evening News man told his colleagues that Cardell had tried to hypnotize him. A few weeks later Cardell appeared in court charged with threatening Ray Howard by sending him an effigy pierced with a needle (Seims November 2007, quoting unknown newspaper report dated May 4,1961). After the court case, Ray Howard decided to move from Surrey and opened an antique shop in Norfolk. He took the Head of Atho with him and for a while displayed it in the shop. A photograph of Howard standing by it was published in a local newspaper. He later said it had been stolen during a burglary, although it is also claimed this was only a copy and the original still exists somewhere in Devon.

Ray Howard also owned an old mill in Cornwall for a time, and Lois Bourne visited it on a holiday in the 1960s. She described it as semiderelict with walls decorated with "semi-occult" pictures of the Horned God and the Moon Goddess, and many implements and symbols of witchcraft (1979: 33). She also said it contained a "large carved wooden head, decorated... with semi-precious stones" (1998:29). However,

Doreen Valiente recorded in one of her personal notebooks that Eleanor Bone, who knew Ray Howard, had talked to the owner of the garage in Charlwood where the Cardells lived. A friend of his had told him Howard's son had seen his father making the Head of Atho (entry dated February 27, 1968). Gary Nottingham, editor of the magazine *Verdelet* and organizer of the Esoteric Conference and Occult Fair at Ludlow in Shropshire, also told me that somebody who knew Ray Howard's son today had told him the same story. It does not really matter if the Head of Atho was thousands of years old or had been made sixty years ago. It was obviously a powerful magical object and was revered as such by the Coven of Atho-esoterically that is all that matters.

Mary Cardell decided, in hindsight unwisely, to sue the London Evening News for libel because of their article about the alleged ritual at Dumbledene. The case finally came to court in 1967 and when giving evidence she denied ever taking part in any witchcraft rituals. Under oath, she said their company, Dumblecott Magick Productions, was set up as a front to attract members of Gardner's Wicca movement and gain information about their activities. They could then publicly reveal what Gardner and his followers were doing, as they regarded him as a threat to vulnerable young people.

Her "brother" also used his professional skills as a psychologist to treat people suffering from mental problems after becoming involved in witchcraft and the occult, and expose bogus clairvoyants preying on the bereaved.

The jury did not accept this explanation, and as a result the Cardells lost the case and were forced to pay all the costs. In 1968, Charles Cardell was back in court, where he was found guilty of circulating defamatory statements about the firm of lawyers who had defended the Evening News and its reporter. As a result, he was declared bankrupt and the Cardells had to sell off some of the land and the house at Dumbledene. In 1970, Doreen Valiente reported that Mary Cardell was reduced to living in a caravan on the grounds of their former estate. Although she was still loyal to her "brother" she was also a "very unhappy woman." In September 1972, Valiente took a bus from her home in Brighton and made a secret trip to Dumbledene. In her notebook she wrote that she saw Charles Cardell in a shed near the house, chopping wood. The house itself looked "neglected, and in need of a coat of paint."

Doreen Valiente is supposed to have owned a copy of The Book of Atho, which was Cardell's equivalent of the Gardnerian Book of Shadows. On the front cover was a

trident, the symbol of the first witches' coven founded in the Water City, or the lost continent of Atlantis. Other symbols in the book included the Witches' Pyramid and the Eight Paths of Magick, possibly borrowed from Gardner's BoS. These were represented as a crescent moon, a bell, an alchemical sigil, a chalice, a trident, a spoon, a scourge, and a Hand of Glory (a candlestick made from the mummified hand of an executed criminal). These eight symbols were also associated with a secret handshake and password used in the coven. Other symbols used in the Atho tradition were a key, a lantern, the sun, the waxing and waning moon, a star, and a crown.

When I was initiated into Gardnerian Wicca in 1969, the general consensus was that Charles Cardell was a complete fake who made up the story about his mother being a witch. However, the account of the famous ritual in the wood does sound like a traditional form of witchcraft. Recently someone associated with a surviving group practicing the Atho tradition claimed it originated with Ray Howard. He then passed it on to the Cardells. Ironically some of the Coven of Atho material is supposed to have entered Gardnerian Wicca. This was possibly through Doreen Valiente or Stella Truman, or direct from Ray Howard to Eleanor Bone, as her BoS contained some of its rituals. These were passed to her

initiates Madge Worthington and Arthur Eaglen of the Whitecroft Gardnerian tradition. They appeared in their BoS under the title of "The Rites of Atho" (pers. comm. to author).



Chapter Nine

New Witch Blood

Following the adverse publicity the Brickett Wood Coven received in 1957, and the split from it by the breakaway group led by Doreen Valiente and Ned Grove, matters became even worse. In January 1957, The People newspaper continued its attack on Wicca. An article was published that not only named several of the coven's members, but also gave their addresses and occupations. It also revealed the location of the covenstead at the witches' cottage at Five Acres, with accompanying photographs. The article said that the building was registered as the "Ancient British Church." In fact it was being used for witch meetings involving "dancing naked and the worship of sex." The article added that all the people interviewed by the newspaper who belonged to the cult "showed every sign of

believing in this disgraceful rubbish about gods of fertility."

As a result of this latest expose, Thelma Capel lost her job as a secretary after reporters from other papers following up the original story besieged her office. Both she and another woman named in the expose were forced into hiding, leaving Jack Bracelin to fend off the media pack. Although Gardner had not been named or mentioned in the article, he decided to leave the country for a while. The continuing interest in the coven by various newspapers meant that the witches' cottage was temporarily abandoned as a meeting place. On Hallowe'en 1959, three cars full of reporters turned up with a large mobile searchlight mounted on a lorry, "looking for the witches." The police had to be called by the coven to get rid of them (Valiente 1989: 74-75).

When Thelma Capel eventually emerged from hiding and Gardner decided it was safe enough to return to England, he began passing on the letters he was receiving at the witchcraft museum from interested enquirers. He told her to initiate as many people as possible because, despite all the publicity the Craft had received and the public interest in it, he still believed it might die out. Gardner also decided to initiate some of the enquirers himself, some of whom, like Olive Greene, the Brickett Wood Coven had already rejected

as they thought they were unsuitable. As a result, several High Priestesses and at least three High Priests became Wiccans in the late 1950s and early 1960s. New covens were also established in Scotland, Yorkshire, South London, and eventually in the United States.

Professor Ronald Hutton has claimed that the instigation of this new policy meant that the emerging Wiccan movement became chaotic and confused. He says even Gardner's closest associates lost track of the number of new initiates he was introducing into the Craft. Professor Hutton quotes a letter in the Wiccan Church of Canada's collection in Toronto written in 1962, possibly by Lois Bourne, criticizing Gardner for starting new covens across the country "in the hope they would turn out well, without real monitoring or support of the results." The letter writer said that half of these had either disbanded or she had lost contact with them and there were others she knew nothing about (Hutton 1999: 251).

The Aquarian Press published Gerald Gardner's second nonfiction book, *The Meaning of Witchcraft*, in February 1959. Basically it was a sequel to *Witchcraft Today* and used some of the material that, due to space reasons, had not been included in the earlier book. Philip He selton summed it

up by saying: "... the amount of material that Gardner claims came directly from the witches is severely limited, and the bulk of the book is compiled from the wealth of information that he had been collecting, albeit in a disorganized way, about the history of witchcraft." Heselton described it as "more of the same," and for that reason it did not achieve the same sales as *Witchcraft Today*. However, he added that the new book did provide insights into the witch cult that were still worth reading fifty years on, and for that reason it was of historical interest (February 2009).

The Meaning of Witchcraft was heavily influenced by the now widely discredited theories of Dr. Margaret Murray. It featured chapters on the alleged Stone Age origins of witchcraft, druidism, and the "Aryan Celts," witchcraft in Roman and Anglo-Saxon times, and the Old Gods of Britain. These chapters were evidently designed to give some kind of historical background to modern Wicca, which by the late 1950s and its divorce from the now defunct New Forest Coven was sadly lacking. There was also a chapter in the book on the Black Mass, and three chapters dealing with the allegations about Gardner and Wicca in the newspapers. These chapters had been compiled by Doreen Valiente and were written in 1955 and 1956. Valiente said she collaborated on *The Meaning of Witchcraft* with Gardner before she left

the Brickett Wood Coven in 1957. She persuaded him to include the chapters debunking the newspaper stories so that his side of the story could be told.

Philip Heselton has suggested that Gardner may have at first submitted the finished manuscript of *The Meaning of Witchcraft* to Rider & Co. (pub. February 1959). This would seem logical as it is common practice in British publishing for authors to be contractually obliged to offer any new work to their existing publisher. Heselton has said that Gerald Yorke was an editorial advisor at Rider in 1954 and he had dismissed *Witchcraft Today* as "a thoroughly bad book" (letter to Cecil Williamson dated April 11, 1958, in the MOW archive). Perhaps he was the editor at Rider who was responsible for rejecting the new manuscript from Gardner, and this time they took notice of his advice.

One of Gardner's new male initiates in the late 1950s was Charles Clark (1930-2002). He was a former Anglo-Catholic who worked as a linesman for the GPO (General Post Office) in Saltcoats, Ayrshire, on the west coast of Scotland. When they met in the 1990s, Clark told Melissa Seims that he was initiated by Gardner and his wife Donna (even though it has always been said she was not involved in the Craft) at their house in Malew Street, Castletown (Seims May 2005).

However, Clark also claimed that his grandfather had practiced witchcraft.

After his initiation, Clark started his own coven with Gardner's blessing. Its members included a library assistant, several students from Glasgow University, a butcher, an artist, and a nurse. Meetings were held when Clark's wife was out of the house, as she did not take part. He told her that he was having a Masonic meeting and she would go out with their two children. Gardner sometimes attended these witch meetings when he came over from the Isle of Man. Because there were no commercial suppliers of witch tools, Gardner made them for the coven (Seims August 2006).

Charles Clark took on the role of secretary for Gardner answering some of the enquiries received at the museum from people wanting to know more about Wicca or join covens. At one stage he was getting over a hundred letters a week to answer. Oddly, considering her estrangement from the Brickett Wood Coven, Clark was also in correspondence with Doreen Valiente, as she wrote to him after Gardner's death in 1964 when Charles Cardell published his book *Witch*. As we have seen, he was also in contact with Llewellyn Publications and sent them copies of the ritual

documents written by Gardner.

Another of his correspondents was Anton Miles, an ex-member of the Brickett Wood Coven. He had been initiated in 1959 and then emigrated to Australia. Miles appears to have inherited his parent coven's flair for publicity, and in 1961 gave an interview to a newspaper in Sydney. In it he was described as "the head witch of Australia." He told the paper he had arrived in the country after traveling through the Middle East and Asia, where he had studied magic and the occult, and become a Buddhist monk. The newspaper article described how his Australian coven danced nude around an altar to the accompaniment of music from a record-player while incense burned. They also practiced a type of pagan marriage where the couple had to jump naked over a broomstick. According to Miles, the Sydney witches worshipped the Greek goat god Pan and the Roman moon goddess Diana.

At the time, Australia had its own homegrown form of traditional witchcraft as practiced by the controversial bohemian artist Rosaleen "Roi" Norton (1917-1979), and allegedly introduced by early British colonists. She was an eccentric and colorful character who wore skintight leopard skin trousers and earrings in the shape of bats. She was

physically striking to look at, as her hair was cut short, and she had slanted eyes, pointed ears, and prominent teeth. Norton told people she possessed two small blue dots on the skin behind her left knee. These were the "Devil's mark," and she could also see in the dark like a cat (Valiente 1973: 25). Because of their occult and erotic content Rosaleen Norton's paintings often attracted the attention of the authorities. The police vice-squad raided her exhibitions several times and she found herself in court charged with displaying obscene items.

In 1958, a Sydney newspaper published an interview with Gerald Gardner at his apartment in Shepherd's Bush, West London. The article described him as "the boss of witches," and said he had been corresponding with Rosaleen Norton. Gardner was quoted as saying: "During her trial-for obscenity, I think they called it-Witch Norton wrote and implored us to keep her from prison. Through magical means witches all over Britain came to her aid. Prayers and dances were held almost nightly. Finally the trial verdict in Sydney was known. Witch Norton escaped from prison" (The People March 5, 1958).

Doreen Valiente told her friend Leslie Roberts, an ex-gossip columnist for a British national newspaper and a

private investigator, about Gardner's contact with Rosaleen Norton and that she had sent him a copy of one of her books of artwork. Roberts loved traveling and in 1959 got a job as a waiter on a cruise liner. The ship stopped at Sydney, where Roberts visited Norton and was initiated into her coven. Roberts said the rituals they practiced were similar in some ways to Wicca, but also different in many ways. They used the word "consurier" for a first degree initiate, which Valiente claimed was derived from an old Welsh word for a "wise woman" or "cunning man," although it sounds more like French. Norton also gave her British initiate a copy of an address to the candidate used during the initiation ritual. On his return to England, Roberts passed this on to Valiente. She gave a copy to a Gardnerian High Priestess and so it found its way into Wicca (1989: 154-157).

In 1961, Charles Clark wrote to Gerald Gardner to tell him he had helped to establish new covens in Glasgow, Perth, and Saltcoats. He also planned to start up others in Fife and Edinburgh, although Melissa Seims does not believe this ever happened. Clark was supposed to have resigned from Wicca around 1961, and wrote to Charles Cardell asking to join his Coven of Atho, although Seims says his involvement did not actually end until the 1970s. Clark told Seims he had become disillusioned with Wicca as things had

changed, people had become obsessed with fame and fortune, and the old loyalties to each other (which in reality probably never existed) had been disappearing. He was concerned that the Wica (as he spelled it) were losing sight of their original goals and their unity of purpose, and this was causing the movement to fragment (Seims May 2005). However, he was still in contact with both Gardner and his new initiate Lois Bourne. They visited Glasgow and carried out the initiation of new members, who would then be sent rituals by post (letter from Lois Bourne to Gardner dated April 11, 1961, in the MOW archive).

In 1959, a futile attempt was made to heal the rift between the Brickett Wood Coven and the rebels who had split away from it over the publicity issue and the Craft Laws. It was arranged that those who had left would meet up with the members of the current coven for a joint midsummer ritual. This was to be held outdoors at the Rollright stone circle on the border of Warwickshire and Oxfordshire. Unfortunately this attempt at reconciliation did not go as planned and it led to them all falling out again (letter from Lois Bourne to Gerald Gardner dated June 29, 1959, in MOW archive).

The High Priestess of the Brickett Wood Coven fell in love with a member of the Five Acres Naturist Club, and they

then relocated to the United States. Lois Bourne (nee Pearson) had written to Gerald Gardner, along with hundreds of other enquirers, at the museum. However, unlike the others, she was invited to meet him at his London apartment. She described him as looking "unruly" (with "startlingly white hair, piercing blue, twinkling eyes and a grey goatee beard"). He had "the faint tan of someone who had spent years in the tropics, but his skin was strangely unlined for someone of his mature years." His face, however, was thin, and his cheeks looked sunken. There were several rings on his fingers engraved with magical sigils and a bracelet on his wrist. He was wearing a baggy suit made of green-flecked tweed, and carpet slippers (Bourne 1998: 17-18).

In October 1958, the famous television presenter John Freeman interviewed Gerald Gardner on the BBC current affairs program Panorama. It was a few days before Hallowe'en when the British media traditionally become interested in witchcraft and modern witches. Freeman did not take the subject seriously and asked Gardner if he performed Black Masses and took part in sex orgies. A female witch named "Tanith" was also interviewed on the program. She sat in shadow with a thick veil covering her head and face. This was in fact Gardner's new initiate Lois Bourne. In 1960, the Sunday Express newspaper described

her as a twenty-nine-year-old housewife, and a member of a secret cult that met to worship a god and goddess of fertility.

Lois Bourne later left the Brickett Wood Coven after becoming friendly with another member, Monica English, who belonged to a traditional pre-Gardnerian "old coven" in Norfolk. English had joined the Hertfordshire coven, like several other traditional witches, to find out what Gardner and his followers were doing. She did not have a very high opinion of Wicca and believed that Gardner knew nothing about the real secrets of the Craft. Bourne has described how Monica English would participate in rituals at the witches cottage, and her wild calls attracted owls from miles away who came and settled on the roof. Subsequently Bourne left Brickett Wood and for a short period joined English's Norfolk coven. She also started her own occult mailorder service called "Magistra" with her husband Wilf, and it is still going strong today.

Another of Gardner's new initiates was Eleanor "Ray" Bone (1910-2001), and she became the High Priestess of a new Gardnerian coven in Streatham, South London. Bone was the owner and matron of a private nursing home for the elderly in Tooting, and claimed she had been previously initiated into the Craft in Keswick, Cumbria. This was while

she was on military service during World War II. This preGardnerian coven worked robed, had different colored cords around their waists to indicate their rank, and wore amber necklaces. They always worked outdoors and white, red, and blue candles were placed in lanterns around the circle when they danced to raise the power. Their working tools were a wand, a staff, a chalice, a black-handled knife, and a sword (Doreen Valiente notebooks dated July 18, 1964, in MOW archive). When she retired in 1972, Bone turned her back on Wicca and went to live in Cumbria. Shortly before her death she was offered honorary membership in the UK Pagan Federation (PF). She refused because she said she did not recognize the validity of many of the traditions it represented.

Ray Bone's disillusionment with Wicca is evident as early as 1962 when she wrote to Gerald Gardner, saying she was considering appearing on a television program (letter dated September 24, 1962, in MOW archive). She said this was because Lois Bourne and other new Wiccan initiates had already done so. Bone referred specifically to Patricia and Arnold Crowther and said they did it "as it obviously helps them to eke out a living." Bone did get her fifteen minutes of fame in June 1964, when she was interviewed by the popular weekly magazine Tit-Bits. In it she said that by day, as a

matron of her nursing home, she dressed in a tweed suit, thick stockings, and brogues, but at night danced naked in a witches' circle with only a garter on her thigh. She said that the GLC (Greater London Council), who licensed her house as a nursing home, knew she was a practicing witch and they had no objection. Her elderly residents also trusted her and had left her money in their wills as well as antique silver objects and an ancient Egyptian ring she used in her witchcraft ceremonies. She justified the witches performing naked rituals by making the odd claim that "a speck of dust from our everyday clothes might spoil our magic."

In her letter to Gardner, Bone said that while she knew witches were persecuted in the past, she did not expect to be persecuted today by fellow members of the Craft. In another letter dated July 28, 1962, to another of Gardner's new initiates, Monique Wilson, who became his premier High Priestess, Bone said she intended to form her own coven in Streatham. However she was not happy, as she was getting resistance from the members of the Brickett Wood Coven to the idea. Evidently she must have ignored this and received authority to go ahead from either Monique Wilson or Gardner.

Ray Bone had mentioned Patricia Crowther in her letter. In

1955, Patricia Dawson, who worked in the theatrical profession as a dancer and a principle boy in pantomime, met Arnold Crowther, who had introduced Gerald Gardner to Aleister Crowley in 1947. Patricia Dawson also claimed her grandmother had been a Breton wise-woman, and because of this alleged Craft heritage eventually Crowther decided to take her to see his old friend Gardner on the Isle of Man. As a result ,she was initiated into Wicca in June 1960. Gardner presented her with a silver bracelet engraved with magical symbols, and a silver crown surmounted by a crescent moon that he had made himself. He also bestowed upon her the archaic title "Queen of the Sabbat" once used in medieval French witchcraft.

Gardner gave Patricia Crowther the second degree in October 1961 and a few days later took her through the third-degree initiation with its symbolic Great Rite. She then brought her husband into the Craft and in December 1961, as a High Priestess and High Priest, they founded the Sheffield Coven (Crowther 1998). Before they got married in a registry office in November 1960, with the bride wearing black and carrying a handbag decorated with a pentagram, Gardner performed a Wiccan handfasting for the couple with the press in attendance. A photograph appeared in the Daily Mirror newspaper showing Gardner dressed in a duffle coat

and waving a phallic-tipped wand over the happy couple in a "witches' blessing"

The Crowthers shared Gardner's love of publicity and became well known in the 1960s as media witches, giving radio, television, newspaper and magazine interviews and talks to groups like the Women's Institute. Unfortunately, this led Patricia Crowther to make an astonishing claim (in her first autobiography *Witch Blood*, and in an article in *Prediction* magazine in the 1970s) that her husband had introduced her to Aleister Crowley. She also wrote to John Score, founder of the Pagan Front (now the Pagan Federation), claiming: "My husband and I took Gardner to meet Crowley in Hastings the year before he died [1946] ..." (letter dated October 6, 1970, in the MOW archive). As she did not meet Arnold Crowther, by her own admission, until 1955, many people wondered how he had introduced her to Crowley, since the Great Beast had died eight years earlier.

In an interview with Professor Ronald Hutton in 2002, Patricia Crowther finally admitted the story was not true. She told him *Witch Blood* had been ghost-written by Arnold, and he wanted to include in it an account of how he introduced Gardner to Crowley. Apparently he thought that if he included his wife in the scene it would be good for her

image, and thus provide her with some credibility. In fact, it was so blatantly untrue that it had the opposite effect. Crowther told Professor Hutton she was not happy about this, but was overruled by her husband and her US agent, the Italian-American strega (male witch), Dr. Louis Leo Martello, whom she had initiated into Gardnerian Wicca (Hutton Samhain 2002).

Patricia Crowther has also claimed that she was contacted in the early 1960s by a Scottish witch named Jean McDonald, who coincidentally was also known to Charles Clark. McDonald had seen the Crowthers on a local Tyne Tees television program while staying in County Durham, and had been interested in the type of witchcraft she practiced. This was because in many ways it resembled the family tradition she had inherited that predated Gardner and allegedly originated in the days of the historical witch-hunts. McDonald sent Patricia Crowther the athame she had been left by her grandmother (1998: 50-56). Doreen Valiente was shown it and she described it as having a black handle in the shape of a phallus. This handle was carved with magical symbols from the Key of Solomon (DV notebooks dated June 5, 1965, in MOW archive).

Unfortunately, because of her false claim of meeting

Crowley, some people did not believe this story, even though Patricia Crowther offered to show anyone who visited her Sheffield home copies of the letters from Jean McDonald and the rituals used by her family. However, she would not allow them to be photocopied or allowed out of her sight. Melissa Seims has told me that she has seen these documents, and the rituals are very similar to those of Gardnerian Wicca (pers.comm.). Professor Ronald Hutton has stated that Patricia Crowther's retrospective testimony is not sufficient to prove her claim, as there is no documentary evidence to support it from before 1950 (Samhain 2002).

According to Melissa Seims, one of Charles Clark's initiates in Scotland was Monique Mauricette Arnoux (1923-1982), better known in Wiccan circles as Monique "Nikki" Wilson. She and her husband, Campbell Crozier "Scotty" Wilson, who had worked for the Inland Revenue Service and the Gas Board, lived in a prefabricated house in Nemo Road, Perth. Monique Wilson's family came from France originally, and she was born in French Indo-China (modern Vietnam). She claimed to be a hereditary witch and that both her parents "had the power." Monique met Scotty Wilson in Hong Kong after the war, when he was serving as a bomber pilot with the Royal Air Force. Wilson used to still wear his RAF winged badge on the lapel of his jacket. One journalist,

who must have been shortsighted, described it in an article as the magical symbol of a winged phallus.

When Charles Clark initiated Monique Wilson she took the witch name "Olwen." Later, when she achieved the rank of High Priestess, she began to call herself "Lady Olwen," and it is popularly believed this is why American Gardnerians adopted that title. As has been pointed out, unless you are a witch and also belong to the British aristocracy, the only "Lord" and "Lady" in the Craft are the witch god and goddess. Clark quickly elevated Monique Wilson to the third degree rank of High Priestess, and she initiated Scotty, who took the witch name "Loic." The couple then established a coven together in Perth.

After Charles Clark withdrew publicly from Wiccan activities, Monique Wilson contacted Gerald Gardner on the Isle of Man and asked if he would be willing to re-initiate her. After this, the Wilsons began to help Gardner at the museum, and Monique took up Clark's old job of answering correspondence from enquirers (Seims August 2006). She was also soon being referred to as "the Witch Queen of Perth, Glasgow, the Isle of Man and London." The term "witch queen" was one that was introduced into Wicca to describe a High Priestess who had formed or controlled

several covens. When witches "hived off" to form their own covens, they often still regarded their initiators and the High Priestess of their parent or mother coven as having authority over them. However, the term did not mean that the designated person was the actual "Queen of the Witches," as no such title ever existed.

Although it was claimed that Monique Wilson was Gardner's niece, possibly to justify her sudden elevation to a high position of authority in the Wiccan movement, there is no evidence they were related in any way. By 1962, when Ray Bone wrote to her, it seems Gardner's other initiates accepted Wilson as the chief High Priestess of the whole Wiccan movement, although with some reservations. The letter was addressed "My dear Olwen," and in it Bone said: "It is neither practical or logical to have a HP [High Priestess] living as far away as you." Ray Bone went on to say that she thought she should have her own coven in Streatham, as had been suggested by both Gerald Gardner and Jack Bracelin. Monique Wilson had told her that if she initiated anyone, they had to undergo a probationary period of the traditional year and a day. In response, Bone says this was something invented by Gardner in 1958 "to cover a certain tricky situation." She saw no reason to have to do it when the Wilsons and others had gone through the three

degrees of initiation in three months (letter to Monique Wilson dated July 28, 1962, in MOW archives ref. 572). Bone was obviously unaware of the historical precedent and significance of the year-and-a-day rule in the Craft.

In another letter, Ray Bone expressed some concern that the Wilsons had initiated their young daughter into witchcraft and were allowing her to attend rituals. Bone described this as "a danger to the Craft," especially as one of their older children had already been put into care. Her fears were justified, as a few years later a Sunday newspaper reported that the Social Services were investigating the involvement of the Wilson's daughter in Wiccan rites. It is not known if Gardner knew about this, but he would certainly not have approved. He had a strict rule that minors were not allowed to be initiated or participate in rituals in the circle.

In the winter of 1960, Gerald Gardner went to Majorca with the Sufi master Idries Shah, who was visiting the poet Robert Graves, author of *The White Goddess*. In early March Gardner asked Lois Bourne to fly over and join them. From the Mediterranean island, Gardner, Shah, and Bourne flew to Spain where they met up with Graves. They met the Hollywood movie star Ava Gardner, who was a friend of

Graves, and visited Toledo, the city renowned in the Middle Ages as a center for Arabic and Jewish Cabbalists (Bourne 1998: 74-75). Idries Shah had been corresponding with Robert Graves, and had told him he was carrying out experiments with a British coven of witches into the visionary properties of the sacred mushroom. Graves was already interested in the hallucinogenic toadstool fly agaric and its uses, and as a result of this correspondence he had invited Shah and Gardner for a visit (Richard Perceval Graves 1995: 326). It is known from Louis Wilkinson's account that the old New Forest Coven had used fly agaric in their rituals.

Gardner's wife Donna died on July 30, 1960, and was buried in a cemetery on the Isle of Man, with a headstone carved with a pentagram inside a circle. Friends arranged for a housekeeper called Mrs. Jones to be installed at Gardner's house in Castletown to cook and clean, as by now he was quite frail and in poor health. Olive Green described how his "rheumy grey eyes blinked at me out of a waxy, emaciated face. His hair stood on end in long tufts of grey thistle-down, and above an uncombed goatee beard his lips twitched in a strange nervous smacking sound" (Nemorensis 1964).

Lois Bourne said that as Gardner got older, he became increasingly frail physically, although he remained mentally alert. However, his judgment of friends and potential initiates was not so good. After Donna died his condition deteriorated, leading Jack Bracelin to describe his behavior as "even more bizarre." He believed Donna had been a steadying influence on Gardner and without her "he was like a ship drifting helplessly without a rudder" and was "prey to self-seeking people" (Bourne 1998: 91 and 66). This led to further mutterings within the Brickett Wood Coven as to the quality of people that Gardner was willing to accept into Wicca.

After Donna's death, Lois Bourne claims that Gardner asked her if she would consider taking over the museum when he was gone. As she did not like the Isle of Man, her husband was not willing to move, and her young son was still at school and his education was at a critical stage, she declined the offer. Jack Bracelin was also approached, but he was in a similar situation as the full-time administrator of the Five Acres Naturist Club. He was also not interested in living on the isolated Isle of Man, so he told Gardner he was not interested either (Ibid., 67-68).

In November 1961, Doreen Valiente received a mysterious

letter from Gardner saying he was involved in a cloak-and-dagger "political affair" for the British government that involved "psychological warfare." This would mean he had to go to India in the New Year and attend a secret meeting that, if it went well, would be "good for England." Valiente speculated that this was connected with Gardner's military ancestor who had married an Indian princess. There was also a suggestion that Idries Shah might be involved. Also in 1961 Gardner was admitted to hospital in Watford during a visit to Brickett Wood. After his release he spent some time recuperating in a nursing home before staying for a few days with Edith Woodford-Grimes in Christchurch (entry in DV notebooks in MOW archive).

Despite Gardner's failing health the press was still taking a keen interest in his activities and those of his followers. When Patricia Crowther attended a ritual at Brickett Wood at Samhain 1962 some members of the coven were forced to stand guard among the trees outside the witch's cottage as reporters had gathered outside the naturist club. Trip-wires were also concealed in the undergrowth to prevent the journalists from getting close to the cottage and taking photographs (Crowther 1998: 46).

It was a year earlier, in 1961, that the Wiccan community

first became aware of a young man named Alex Sanders (Alexander Orrell Carter 1926-1988). A contemporary description of Sanders said he had "gaunt features ... above a tall, narrow forehead, brown hair is brushed forward in a Nero-like fashion ... the hands are long-fingered and sensitive ... the rather sad brown eyes and finely modeled cheek bones give him a totally fragile, vulnerable appearance, an impression which is underlined when he speaks in a soft Lancashire accent" (Smyth 1970: 116).

According to his own account, which he was still telling people only a few days before his death, Sanders was initiated into the Craft by his sixty-six-year-old maternal Welsh grandmother Mary Bibby. She had moved from her birthplace in Bethesda, North Wales to live near her daughter in Chorlton near Manchester. One day in 1933, Sanders visited his grandmother and was astonished to find her standing stark naked in her kitchen in the middle of a circle drawn on the floor around which "curious objects had been placed."

Mary Bibby allegedly commanded the young boy to take off his clothes and join her inside the circle. As Sanders had stumbled upon her secret, he now had to be initiated so he could tell nobody else. The old lady picked up a sickle-

shaped knife and told Sanders that if he ever revealed anything about the Craft she would have to kill him. He was told to bend over and she symbolically nicked him on the scrotum to demonstrate the fate that awaited him if he talked. Bibby told the terrified young man he was now "one of us," and that "all the power of heaven and earth" would strike him if he broke his promise. After the initiation rite, she showed Sanders her athame and her crystal ball and solemnly told him he belonged to a line of hereditary witches dating back to the fifteenth century (Johns 1969: 20-23).

During the following few weeks Mary Bibby instructed her grandson in the Welsh language, taught him the meaning of the witch's tools, regalia, and symbols, how to divine the future in a brass bowl filled with water and darkened with ink, and how to recognize herbs and use them in remedies and potions. She told him that as a young girl she had belonged to a coven in the foothills of Snowdonia in North Wales. Its members were all ardent chapelgoers, as it would have been suspicious not to have attended the Sunday service each week. At night the coven went to a small lake in Snowdonia, passed across some stepping stones and on to an island where they performed rituals by the full moon (Ibid., 26).

Sanders also claimed that his grandmother once took him to London and introduced him to a famous magician she called Mr. Alexander. This was, in fact, Aleister Crowley, and he initiated the young boy into his magical order using a sex rite (Smyth 1970:17). In 1940, Mary Bibby, now aged seventy-four, gave Sanders the third degree initiation into the Craft that included the sexual ritual known as the Great Rite. Shortly afterwards she died, and Sanders inherited her ceremonial sword, crystal ball, brass bowl, and censer. However, following her dying instructions, he chopped up her broomstick, which was carved with phallic symbols, and burnt her copy of the "Book of Shadows" (Ibid., 37).

In the following years Sanders is supposed to have been involved with the Spiritualist movement in Manchester as a medium and to have practiced ceremonial magic. However, in October 1961, he saw a Granada television program featuring witches and one was holding an athame like his grandmother's. He "realised that far from being the last of a dying breed of solitary wise people," he might be one of many "hidden children" (Maxine Sanders 2008: 102). The witches were Patricia and Arnold Crowther of the Sheffield Coven, whose witch names were "Thelema" and "Alistair." On November 9, 1961, Alex Sanders wrote to Patricia Crowther from his address at 390 Colyhurst Road,

Manchester 9. He said in his letter he had seen her on a television program and stated: "To be a 'witch' is something that I have always wanted-and yet I have never been able to contact anybody who could help me." He went on to say that he had always been interested in the occult and had experienced several instances of the Second Sight. He remembered being told as a child by his grandmother that her greatgrandmother had been a well-known wise-woman in Snowdonia (letter in MOW archive doc. 391/ref. 412). He did not mention that Mary Bibby had already initiated him into the Craft.

Patricia Crowther answered the letter and arranged for Sanders to visit her in Sheffield. He arrived in a car driven by a chauffeur and she disliked him on sight (Crowther 1998: 63-68). In contrast, when Sanders met the Crowthers he "took an immediate liking to them" (Maxine Sanders 2008: 102). For some reason a seance took place and Patricia Crowther came to the conclusion that during it Sanders was "putting on an act." On a subsequent visit, another seance was held using a planchette, an instrument to facilitate automatic writing. A spirit claiming to be Aleister Crowley communicated with the sitters. Referring to Sanders, it allegedly wrote the message: "Chuck the bugger out!" (Crowther 1998: 63-68).

In September 1962, Sanders and some of his friends were featured in an article published in the Manchester Evening Chronicle & News performing a "black magic ritual" in the woods at Alderley Edge, outside Manchester, a well-known meeting place for local witches. They "performed their homogenized ritual, the like of which had never been done before nor ever would again," for the reporter. They all wore ritual robes decorated with symbols taken from the Key of Solomon grimoire and the ceremony was half Egyptian magic and half witchcraft, with overtones of the heretical Order of Knights Templar. Sanders had "borrowed" a copy of the Key of Solomon while working at the John Ryland Library in Manchester and as a result of the newspaper story he lost his job (Johns 1969: 72-71). Patricia Crowther read the article and was not impressed. She recognized part of the ritual described in the newspaper as the "Opening the Mouth" ceremony from the ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead.

On his final visit to the Crowther's house in June 1962, Alex Sanders had been introduced to Pat Kopanski, the Maiden of the Sheffield Coven, who had been married to a Polish-American serviceman. Sanders' second wife, Maxine Morris, says he received his initiation into Gardnerian Wicca from Pat Kopanski (whom she calls Kasprzynski). Following this initiation she says Sanders met and worked

with "many covens and magical groups, eventually starting the training group that I was part of." However, in September 1963, Pat Kopanski wrote to Gerald Gardner from her address in Beeston, Nottingham. She said she understood Sanders had been writing to him recently. She went on to say that she had been let down by "those people in Sheffield" (presumably the Crowthers) and all she had got from them was "backbiting, petty jealousy, and intrigue." Kopanski complained she had been falsely accused of being involved in the "black magic" ritual at Alderley Edge with Sanders and that is why she had left the coven (letter dated September 5, 1963, MOW archive ref, 571).

There have been persistent rumors that Alex Sanders also received an initiation at the hands of a mysterious woman, whose witch name was "Medea," although this is also said to have been the secret name used by Mary Bibby. In Greek mythology Medea was the sorceress Circe's niece and a priestess of Hecate, the goddess of the underworld and witchcraft. Her name means "cunning one," and she was a spellcaster, herbalist, and "mistress of potions," who was possibly a goddess represented in human form. Maxine Sanders has confirmed this story of the initiation is true (2008: 103) and Pat Kopanski said Medea was the High Priestess of a coven in Derbyshire. She and her husband

had moved to the area from Shropshire and had been living there since the end of World War II.

Apparently Medea had already initiated Kopanski's friend Sylvia (Tatham), and Kopanski asked her to make her a High Priestess so she could start her own coven in Nottinghamshire. When Medea was told she had been with the Crowthers she at first refused, saying she wanted nothing to do with that "crowd of charlatans." She also said the other witches she knew in other parts of the country would not associate with them either. Kopanski then introduced Alex Sanders to Medea and she agreed to initiate him into the Craft on March 9, 1963, with Kopanski as his sponsor. The next day Medea also raised Kopanski to the rank of High Priestess and made her friend Sylvia the Maiden of the new coven. In her letter to Gardner quoted earlier, Kopanski invited Gardner to come over from the Isle of Man and spend a week with her so he could meet the members of the new coven, including Sanders, but there is no evidence he did. Another member of this interesting little group became a well-known Cabbalistic magician and wrote several books on Elizabethan magic and Dr. John Dee's Enochian system (Liddell pers. comm.).

In an interview with the News of the World newspaper in

April 1965, Pat Kopanski was quoted as saying that the Nottinghamshire coven was a bit "theatrical" and "a waste of time." It had broken up after one of its members (Sylvia Tatham) emigrated to New Zealand. In fact, Bill Liddell told me that the real reason was that both Sylvia, who became his common-law wife in New Zealand, and Pat Kopanski were in love with Alex Sanders and wanted to marry him (pers. comm.). In an interview he had done with a local Manchester paper, Sanders had announced he planned to marry the High Priestess of his coven, who lived in Nottingham. An alternative version says that Kopanski left when Sanders introduced Maxine Morris into the group.

According to Bill Liddell, Sylvia Tatham also received a Gardnerian initiation from Monique and Scotty Wilson on the isle of Man. When she returned to the mainland she raised Alex Sanders to the Gardnerian third degree. After Pat Kopanski left, Tatham became the High Priestess of the Nottingham Coven until Maxine Morris replaced her. Sylvia Tatham told Liddell that she and others were banished from the Isle of Man coven after an argument over the alleged existence of a fourth degree of initiation that Maxine Wilson claimed Gardner only conferred on selected third degree initiates. Pat Crowther has also claimed this existed. In her "girly talks" with Monique Wilson, Tatham said she

confided that Gardner needed stimulation to perform the Great Rite. To achieve this Wilson had to scourge him on the buttocks while he hung suspended by tied wrists from an antique meat hook hanging from a beam in the ceiling (Liddell August 2000). Before Tatham left England for New Zealand she told Liddell that Sanders had appointed her as his "High Priestess of Australasia."

It is not clear whether Medea was of the Wiccan persuasion or not. It is clear, however, that Alex Sanders did not get his copy of the Gardnerian Book of Shadows from his Welsh grandmother Mary Bibby as he claimed, because in the 1930s it did not exist. Patricia Crowther believed that from the comments Gardner had made about Sanders to her, he would not have had anything to do with him, despite Kopanski's claim that the two men corresponded. Crowther was of the opinion that Sanders obtained a copy of the BoS from a man who belonged to the Isle of Man Coven and whose witch name was "Fian" He lent his copy to another witch, and Crowther believed that person passed it on to Sanders so he could copy it out (1998: 69-72). A different version was provided by Doreen Valiente, who claimed Sanders visited Gardner on the Isle of Man and was either given a copy of the BoS or allowed to copy it (1989: 166).

News of these events reached Gardner from another source, as Arnold Crowther wrote to him about Sanders on a letterhead from "The Wica [sic] Detective Agency." Crowther informed Gardner that Sanders had started a coven using a copy of the Gardnerian BoS and material on ritual magic taken from High Magic's Aid. Presumably this was a reference to the material derived from the Key of Solomon that Sanders "liberated" from the John Ryland Library in Manchester while he was working there. Arnold Crowther also told Gardner that he had heard that Pat Kopanski wanted to initiate Sanders as a "Priest of Isis" (undated letter in the MOW archive).

Ironically, considering the Brickett Wood Coven's love of publicity, the Wiccans were worried about the media coverage of Alex Sanders' activities bringing the Craft into disrepute. He had also upset the Wiccans by saying they were "novices," because unlike him they had not learned about witchcraft from a genuine hereditary source. Ray Bone and Jack Bracelin were delegated to drive up to Manchester and confront Sanders on his home territory. They had not made an appointment and spent several hours sitting outside his house awaiting his return. Eventually, when they did manage to talk to him, Sanders was unrepentant. He told them in no uncertain terms that he would continue to give

interviews to the press and was not concerned about any alleged adverse effect this might have on the Craft (Crowther 1998: 72).

This campaign against Sanders and his publicity seeking continued, and in March 1966, the Sun newspaper reported that Ray Bone and Patricia Crowther were protesting to MGM about a movie they were making. This was presumably *The Eye of the Devil*, starring the English actor David Niven. The film company had hired Sanders as a consultant on the witchcraft element in it and Bone claimed he was no expert. She told the newspaper he had no connection with genuine witchcraft (i.e., Wicca) in Britain. In response, Sanders said that while Bone and Crowther followed the modern form of witchcraft, his grandmother had initiated him into "the ancient Craft." Doreen Valiente claimed that the Wiccans could not openly challenge Sanders by saying he was in fact practicing rites that came from their Gardnerian BoS because of the oaths they had taken (1989: 171).

Not everyone agreed with the stance taken by Bone and Bracelin with regard to Sanders being a charlatan and a fraud. Doreen Valiente was of the opinion that the truth lay between "the two extremes of charlatan and magus." She

also believed that if it were not for him the Craft "would not be as strong in adherents as it is today" (Ibid., 177). In a letter to Valiente in 1978, one of Sanders' leading initiates, Stewart Farrar, agreed. He said that Sanders had "power and knowledge, theatricality and dishonesty, and he abused them all outrageously. But he did draw hundreds of people into contact with the Craft" (letter dated March 3, 1978, in MOW archive).

Around the same time as Alex Sanders was being initiated into Gardnerian Wicca, a new initiate was destined to establish the new movement in the United States. In 1962 Gerald Gardner started to correspond with Raymond "Ray" Buckland (born 1924). Buckland was an Englishman of Romany ancestry who had been educated at a private school in London, and in the 1950s served in the Royal Air Force. In the early 1960s, he emigrated to Brentwood, Long Island, New York, and worked in the States for BOAC (British Overseas Airways), now British Airways. After reading books by Dr. Margaret Murray and Gerald Gardner, he wrote to the latter at the witchcraft museum on the Isle of Man.

In November 1963, Buckland flew to Scotland to meet Gardner at the home of Monique and Scotty Wilson in Perth.

Wilson gave Buckland a ten-day "extensive course" in Wicca that culminated in his initiation before he returned to the States. On his return, Buckland then initiated his wife, Rosemary, and they founded the Gardnerian Brentwood Coven (DV notebook entry dated November 28, 1963 in the MOW archive). New initiates to the coven took a ritual bath in salt water before their initiation ritual. At the rite, Buckland presided in the circle as the High Priest, naked except for a horned helmet, which he claimed was "the traditional symbol of his priesthood" (Holzer 1971: 127-128).

Inspired by Gardner's venture on the Isle of Man, Buckland established his own witchcraft museum on Long Island, and began to write a series of books on Wicca and magic as well as screenplays and novels. In 1973, his marriage broke up and his wife briefly took over the coven before passing it to a High Priest and Priestess whose witch names were "Theos" and "Phoenix" This may have been when Buckland turned his back on Gardnerian Wicca, as he was unable to form a new coven without an initiated High Priestess (Waldron 2008: 140).

Ray Buckland moved to New Hampshire and remarried. About the same time he founded a new form of witchcraft based broadly on Anglo-Saxon mythology, which he

called "Seax-Wica" It was very similar to Gardnerian Wicca, except instead of calling on the witch goddess Aradia (borrowed by Gardner from Leland) and the witch god Cernunnos (an Iron Age stag god from Gaul), the Seax-Wicans invoked the Germanic deity Woden and the Norse fertility goddess Freya. They also wore short tunics in the circle instead of going traditionally skyclad.

Buckland said that he founded Seax-Wica because he had "come to the decision that, as beautiful as Gardnerian Wicca, was, and as well as it had served me for the early years, it wasn't totally right for my personal religious requirements." Because there were aspects of Wicca that he did not agree with, and he was fed up with the "ego-tripping" of other witches, he decided to establish his own form of personalized witchcraft (Ibid., x-xi). In a letter to John Score in 1982, Buckland said he had come to the conclusion that Gerald Gardner's research into witchcraft was "lacking in many ways." Although he spent about ten years as a Gardnerian Wiccan, he had been questioning a lot of the things he had been taught by Gardner and Monique Wilson, and had finally decided to leave "that branch of the Craft" (letter dated September 18, 1982, in MOW archive doc. 28/ref. 29).

Although Raymond Buckland has said there were no Wiccan covens in the USA before Gerald Gardner asked him to start one, it has been claimed that a hybrid form of Wicca arrived in the Central Valley near Sacramento in California in 1960. This was allegedly introduced into the area by an English woman married to an American GI. Her witch name was "Lady Morgan" or "Queen Morgan." Originally, Central Valley Wicca (CVW), as it became known, had only three or four members and these individuals formed branches or Orders known as Majestic and Modesto-later changed to the Silver Crescent tradition. In the 1970s, another Order called Kingstone was also formed and all three traditions still exist today.

In the 1970s, CVW seems to have been an eclectic mixture of Wicca, Native American lore, ceremonial magic, European folk magic, and ancient Egyptian, Celtic, and even Mesopotamian rituals. Unlike Wiccan covens, the group wore black silk or linen robes, with cloaks and hoods that covered the face, with eyeholes. The officiating male Elder of the tradition was known as the "Master of the Circle," and his female equivalent was called the "Queen of the Sabbat," an honorary title that Gerald Gardner bestowed on Patricia Crowther at her initiation. Sexual induction was also practiced in the traditional way as it had been in the English

pre-Gardnerian robed covens.

In the mid-1980s, several CVW initiates were accepted into a branch of Ray Buckland's original Long Island Gardnerian tradition. Another member was initiated by Donna Cole into the English Gardnerian Whitecroft tradition that had originated with one of Ray Bone's initiates, Madge Worthington (witch name "Fiona") and her High Priest, Arthur Eaglen. At a Gardnerian meeting in October 1988, a High Priestess who had visited the Wiccan Church in Toronto showed CVW Elder Allyn Wolfe photocopies of several pages from Gardner's *Ye Bok of Ye Magical Art*. Wolfe recognized some of the rituals as being very similar to the ones he had inherited in his tradition.

Wolfe believed that CVW was "a fusion between English and French magisterial traditions and early Gardnerianism." He said that the CVW rituals "display characteristics usually associated with the old Magisterled covens ... I suspect the CVW descended from a traditionalist line which adopted Gardnerian material, rather than being a direct Gardnerian descent" (letter to Eleanor Bone dated February 20, 1989, in MOW archives). He had first thought CVW was merely an offshoot of Gardnerian Wicca, possibly originating from the pre-war New Forest Coven or people who were associated

with it (Red Garters International magazine Vol. 19, Nos. 1-3). Craft historian and researcher D. Hudson Frew has also claimed that the material in Ye Bok and CVW rituals are descended from a common Craft source or tradition.

In 1973, Allyn Wolfe established the New Wicca Church in California to represent the different CVW traditions and covens, which today can be found in the Pacific Northwest, California, New England and the Midwest, as well as Britain, Germany, and New Zealand. In *The Psychic Reporter* (July 1976) Wolfe described a CVW coven meeting attended by a US Army major, a printer, a hospital technician and a university student. The description of the ritual is very similar to Gardnerian Wicca, and in fact a copy of a Kingstone BoS can be found in the Boscastle museum archive that is almost identical to Gardner's version. A CVW coven known as the Coven of the Hawk had passed this copy to Cecil Williamson in 1972 when he still owned the museum.



PART FOUR

Evolution 1964- 1980



Chapter Teti

Pretenders and Rivals

Every winter Gerald Gardner usually went on vacation to a warmer climate to escape the cold and damp British weather. In early February 1964, Gardner departed on a Mediterranean cruise on the SS Scottish Prince to visit Lebanon, where he wanted to explore medieval sites associated with the Knights Templar. Lois Bourne saw him last at a coven meeting in January. He looked pale and drawn, and told her he felt exhausted. Gardner said he had decided to go on the cruise to get some sunshine in the hope his health would improve (Bourne 1998: 92).

On the way back to England, when the ship was off the

North African coast, Gardner had a fatal heart attack during breakfast. He was buried in a cemetery in Tunis, with only the ship's captain in attendance. In the late 1960s, there were plans for the cemetery to be redeveloped and transformed into a park. By coincidence Eleanor Bone learned about the plan while she was on holiday in Tunisia. She managed to raise enough money from fellow Wiccans to have Gardner's remains reburied in another cemetery nearby on the site of the ancient city of Carthage (Rabinovitch and Lewis 2002: 112).

While he was staying in Lebanon, Gardner suddenly decided to visit the British Vice-Consul in Beirut and change his will. Some members of his family were not pleased about this decision or the changes he made. They attempted a legal challenge against the new will, but without success. When the will was published in March 1964, Gardner had left his house at 77 Malew Street, Castletown, "together with all household furniture, silver [and] silver plate linen china pictures books machinery plant works papers articles and manuscripts relating [to] magic and all equipment used in connection therewith ... to Monique Marie Mauricette Wilson." The actual Witches' Mill building was left to the museum's elderly caretaker and manager, William Worrall. This was on the understanding he would continue to exhibit

all the "antique furniture engravings plate silver magical objects and other objets d'art situate[d] therein at the date of my death."

The will stated that if, within five years of Gardner's death, Worrall himself died or ceased to occupy the Mill or was in breach of the conditions of the will, its ownership would automatically pass to Monique Wilson. The actual contents of the museum were left separately to Monique Wilson, with the provision she continued to exhibit them to the public. If she had died before Gardner the museum collection would have passed to Patricia Crowther. In fact, it turned out that William Worrall did not want the responsibility of the Mill, as he was getting old. Under the provisions laid out in the will, he decided to hand it over to Monique Wilson, so she then owned both the building and its contents.

In addition, Gardner left the sum of £1,000 to Jack Bracelin, £1,500 to Mrs. Edith Woodford Grimes, £1,500 to Monique Wilson, £200 to Doreen Valiente, £3,000 to "Mrs. Arnold Crowther," and similar amounts to his housekeeper and sister-in-law. His shares and interest in the company Ancient Crafts Ltd and the Five Acres Naturist Club were left to Mrs. Lois Pearson (Bourne). To his American sister-in-law, Gardner bequeathed his grandfather's dirk, skign dhoo (stock ing

knife), his own kilt and plaid with brooch, and his grandfather's sword with its cross belt.

When the will was published the newspapers reported that Monique Wilson had been left the title of Queen of the Witches, together with the bulk of Gardner's estate worth £25,800. She was described in one article in the Daily Mirror (March 6, 1964) as a "young blackhaired mother" with a seven-year-old daughter, and she had inherited all of Gardner's "magical equipment," including his broomstick. The newspaper said that after a short holiday, Mrs. Wilson planned to move into the witches cottage [sic] in Malew Street. She would then act as a guide at the witchcraft museum during the coming summer season. She was quoted as saying that she and her husband Scotty would carry on Dr. Gardner's work by building up the museum and countering the popular image of witchcraft as an evil cult.

The newspaper story saying Monique Wilson inherited the title of Queen of the Witches was greeted with outrage and derision by Gardner's other High Priestesses. According to Doreen Valiente, shortly after Gardner's death Jack Bracelin and Ray Bone traveled to the Isle of Man. They found Monique Wilson in full possession of the museum and "went away empty-handed" (DV notebook entry dated

June 13, 1964, in MOW archive). Cecil Williamson also tried to get back some "bits and pieces" in the museum collection from the Wilsons. He said these belonged to him and he had only loaned them to Gardner. It is not known if he was successful in his attempt. Ray Bone told the Daily Mirror rather ambiguously, "There is no such [person] as the Queen of the Witches. If there were, we other witches would have to approve the person appointed." There is no evidence that Monique Wilson ever regarded herself in this way and the confusion may have arisen over the use of the term "witch queen" to describe a High Priestess with authority over several covens.

Shortly after Gardner died, several other self-proclaimed and self-styled witches began to make their presence known in public, claiming their traditions predated Wicca. Among the most prominent of these new media witches was an antique dealer and shop-owner living in the New Forest village of Burley. For a brief period in the 1960s, this picturesque tourist trap became the focus for intensive media attention as the haunt of witches and covens. Sybil Leek (1917-1983) owned an antique shop in the village and told reporters she followed an "ancient family tradition of Celtic witchcraft." Allegedly on her mother's side she could trace her family roots back to twelfth-century Ireland and her

father came from a line of Russian occultists associated with the pre-Revolutionary royal court. In addition Leek claimed one of her ancestors was a Staffordshire witch named Molly Leigh, who had died (of natural causes) in 1663.

In one version of her life story, Sybil Leek said she had been born into a wealthy middle-class family in Staffordshire. She was educated by a Russian governess, who had previously been an opera singer, and then she attended a private boarding school (not Hogwarts!). As a child her father taught her yoga and Eastern religions, while her grandmother baked pies decorated with astrological symbols on their crusts. Famous people such as the science-fiction writer H. G. Wells and Aleister Crowley were also regular house guests of her family.

After leaving school, Leek worked part-time as a cub reporter on a local newspaper and also at an art gallery and in a museum. During this period she was receiving instruction from her grandmother in the arts of witchcraft, astrology, herbalism, and healing. She was briefly married to a music teacher until he died suddenly, leaving her a widow at the young age of eighteen. Eventually one of her Russian aunts, who was the High Priestess of a witch coven in France, died, and she was chosen to replace her. Leek said

she was initiated at a place called Gorge de Loupe (Valley of the Wolf) near Nice in southern France. The ritual was presided over by a Chinese antique dealer who was the High Priest of the coven.

Shortly after her initiation into the Craft, Leek moved with her new husband to Lyndhurst in the New Forest. This would have been in the late 1940s (Leek 1964), although in another account she served as a nurse during World War II at the Queen Victoria Military Hospital at Netley in Hampshire. She said she had many friends and relatives already living in the New Forest (Leek 1975: 65), so she must have known the area previous to her move. Her second husband had been badly wounded during the war and as a result suffered ill health. Leek also claimed she had lost several foreign relatives during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s and the Nazi occupation of Europe. At first she and her husband lived in poverty conditions on a small holding until Leek decided to branch out into buying and selling antiques, opening her first shop in the High Street of the New Forest town of Ringwood. In 1962, she and her family moved to a cottage in Burley and opened a new antique shop in the center of the village.

According to Sybil Leek, she joined the Horsa Coven in

the New Forest in the 1940s and was appointed as its High Priestess in 1950. Its name was taken from the semi-mythical chieftain who led the first Saxon settlers to southern England in the early Middle Ages, and the coven was supposed to date back to that period of history. She was also the High Priestess of another New Forest coven called the Three Acres Coven. Leek claimed that in the 1960s there were at least four covens active in the area around Lymington, Lyndhurst, and Brook (Heselton 2000: 299). These covens had their full complement of thirteen members, with each person specializing in a different magical art such as healing, charms, and potions. Leek claimed the locals openly consulted the witches, and wealthy Persian (Iranian) ladies doing their shopping in London came to the New Forest to consult the Witch of Burley about their love affairs. She also had visitors to her cottage who were witches from Brittany in France, Poland, Sicily, and Australia (Leek 1964: 1-4, 105).

Ironically, it was her desire for fame that finally drove Sybil Leek out of her home in the New Forest. Hounded by reporters who were desperate to find the meeting place in the forest of the Horsa Coven, Leek left England and settled in the United States where the press was more sympathetic. Initially she had been invited over for a promotional visit by

the American publishing house that had acquired the US rights to her book about the antiques trade, *A Shop in the High Street*. After living in New York for a while, she relocated to Los Angeles at the height of the hippie "flower-power" period. In later years she commuted between Houston, Texas, and Florida. In the United States, Sybil Leek began a new and successful career as an astrologer and psychic. She had her own syndicated television show, wrote a column for the *Ladies Home Journal*, and designed dresses for a chain of fashion stores. She also wrote several best-selling books on witchcraft, astrology, reincarnation, and the paranormal before her death in the early 1980s.

As with the life stories and back history of so many of the public figures in the modern witchcraft revival, there are many discrepancies in Sybil Leek's colorful childhood and the period when she first came to public notice in 1964. Professor Ronald Hutton has pointed out that there are no references in Aleister Crowley's extensive diaries to any visits to an eccentric family of occultists in Staffordshire. He also noted that even Doreen Valiente, who knew Leek, had remarked that her "hereditary Celtic witchcraft" was suspiciously similar to Gardnerian Wicca (Hutton 1999: 300-301).

In fact, I remember hearing Sybil Leek being interviewed on the radio program Women's Hour on the BBC Home Service in 1964. She told the interviewer she was a hereditary witch and then proceeded to recite the "Charge of the Goddess" from the Gardnerian Book of Shadows as written by Doreen Valiente in the 1950s. Professor Hutton also remarked on the strange fact that while Leek claimed to have been running two covens in the New Forest for over twenty years she had managed to escape media attention and only emerged into public view after Gerald Gardner's death in 1964.

Sybil Leek's claims to have been a hereditary witch born into a family of occultists is not backed up by her own autobiography *A Fool and a Tree*. This was written in 1962 or 1963, and published in 1964, just before she came out of the broom closet as a witch. Her book describes her childhood, early life, and experiences among the Romany people who lived in the New Forest. In it there is no mention of an exotic family background or unusual childhood, no Russian governesses or aunts, or grandmothers who taught her witchcraft. Instead her childhood seems to have been very ordinary, as she lived in Staffordshire in a cottage near a canal and attended a local church school.

The book does have a chapter discussing witchcraft, but Leek does not mention the Chinese high priest of a French coven and omits the fact she was the High Priestess of a local coven. Instead she coyly says: "If there ever was a place most suited for witches to carry on their practices of the Old Religion surely it is the forest." It is always possible that, like Doreen Valiente, who described herself as merely a student of the subject in her 1962 book *Where Witchcraft Lives*, Leek did not want to reveal her involvement in the Craft. However, this does not explain why she was so eager to court publicity after the book was published in 1964.

A Fool and a Tree gives an account of Sybil Leek's move to the New Forest with her sick husband and her wartime service as a military nurse. She met her new husband while working for a canine publication and was sent to report on a dog show. Her prospective husband attended the event with his prize bull terrier, and she interviewed him. However, in her later biography, published in 1975, Leek said when she first moved to Hampshire she stayed at a mansion near Lyndhurst while her mother and grandmother decided which house they would buy in the area. The owner of the mansion was allegedly the daughter of an ex-governor general of Canada and bred pedigree dogs and polo ponies. Leek resisted her attempts to turn her into a socialite and ran off

into the New Forest to live with the gypsies. Eventually she returned to the new house her family had finally purchased. They greeted her "as if I had been away for a long weekend with friends instead of spending nearly a year with the gypsies" (1975: 67, 89).

This romantic tale of running off with the gypsies does not appear in *A Fool and a Tree*. Instead, Leek says she first made contact with some of the Romany folk who lived in the forest after her husband was taken into hospital. She found herself temporarily homeless, having sent her children back to Staffordshire to stay with her mother, and spent some time "living rough." After a few weeks of this existence her parents bought an old Victorian house in the New Forest where she and her children could live (1964: 27-33). Obviously there is something very wrong about these two differing and conflicting accounts.

It is interesting that Philip Heselton, quoting Deric James, the editor of the now defunct occult magazine *Insight* who knew Sybil Leek in the 1960s, says the rituals of the Horsa Coven were largely based on Crowley's writings (Heselton 2000: 300). When she moved from New York to Los Angeles, Sybil Leek made contact with the late Dr. Israel Regardie, and she says they swapped anecdotes about the Great Beast.

"One night we got out all the regalia which had been used at the Crowley rituals. For the first time in twenty-nine years we performed one of the old Golden Dawn rituals." It is not clear from this story if the GD regalia belonged to Dr. Regardie-it probably did, but it is an interesting postscript to the life of the Witch of Burley, whose published life story seems to be a mixture of fact and fantasy (pers. comm.).

Cecil Williamson's family lived at one period at Newlands Manor near Lymington in the New Forest. He was also stationed in the area during the war, probably at first at the Special Operations Executive (SOE) training school and later running one of the secret radio stations broadcasting "black" propaganda to German U-boats. Williamson told me that Sybil Leek did know some genuine witches in the New Forest who lived at Beaulieu, Sway, and Stoney Cross. These, however, were not members of covens but solitary "wise women" (pers. comm.). It is therefore possible that Leek had some contact with genuine survivors of traditional witchcraft in the forest. However, the discrepancies in her different versions of her life story and her sudden public exposure following Gerald Gardner's death cast serious doubts on her own authenticity as a hereditary witch.

While Sybil Leek was establishing her career as a media

witch, another group of witches was busy forming a new organization to represent the modern Craft in public. This group was the Witchcraft Research Association (WRA), founded by a public relations officer from London using the pseudonym of "John Math." In reality, he was the son of the Earl of Gainsborough, had trained as a young man for the Roman Catholic priesthood, and served as a captain in the Royal Marine Commandos during World War II.

The WRA was officially launched in October 1964 at a Hallowe'en dinner held in a London hotel, which was described by the Cabbalistic magician William Gordon "Bill" Gray, who attended it as a "Witches' Banquet." About fifty people attended from places as far away as Derby, Wolverhampton, and Harwich. Doreen Valiente was the guest of honor and star attraction, and she gave a keynote speech after the dinner had finished. Bill Gray claimed that if Gerald Gardner had still been alive, he would have also attended.

Bill Gray said that all the Gardnerian witches sat at one large table and what he called the "independent" or "opposition lot" of (non- Gardnerian) witches were seated at another. Gray had written a special prayer for "grace" before the meal. When this was reported in the WRA official

newsletter *Pentagram*, to Gray's amusement it was falsely described as "a translation of a twelfth-century document of unknown origin." Gray said that the occasion was remarkable for the fact it was one of the worst meals he had ever eaten. "There was a thin soup made from beef stock cubes, a small lump of suspicious substance, which might have been from an unknown animal, flanked by two scoops of reconstituted potato powder and a single heap of boiled dried peas." The pudding was "a thin wedge of cardboard-tasting tart ... drowned by watery custard." Gray added that "you could have got better food in prison" (Richardson and Claridge 2003).

In her keynote talk, Doreen Valiente paid a generous tribute to her initiator Gerald Gardner "for the great contribution he made to the renewal of interest in the survival of the Old Craft of the Wise." She added that while she had not agreed with everything he had said or done, she did recognize his "great equalities of heart and mind, as did all who knew him. He was a personality and a character, and we shall remember him with affection." This tribute reflected that, despite the fact she left the Brickett Wood Coven under acrimonious circumstances, Valiente had remained in contact with Gardner, and over the years until his death they maintained a friendly relationship.

In her talk Doreen Valiente also predicted an aspect of witchcraft that in the next decade would begin to dominate the emerging neopagan movement. She said that what witches seek when they celebrate the seasonal festivals is a "sense of oneness with Nature." This reflected the modern tendency for people to disconnect themselves from "their kinship with the world of living nature [until they felt] just like another cog in a huge, senseless machine" She claimed that it was the reaction against this feeling that was now attracting newcomers to the Craft, as they wanted to get "back to nature, and be human beings again, as she intended them to be."

Valiente said that in modern times the concept of the witch cult as a cult of fertility was not always relevant. Instead witches should be working for the "fertility of the mind, and fertility of the soul." Also, introducing a controversial political element that up to then was missing from Wicca, she evoked the image of millions of people starving all over the world. Valiente recommended that witches invoke the "Ancient Powers" for the fertility of the earth so that people should no longer die of starvation in Third World countries. She told her audience that a ritual for this purpose was regularly performed at witchcraft meetings in Sussex where she now lived.

Later on in the talk, Doreen Valiente expressed her personal hopes for the new organization. She said the WRA was contacting surviving witch traditions and covens that were not in any way connected with Gerald Gardner. It had become clear from these contacts that the Old Craft (i.e., pre-Gardnerian witchcraft) had survived in fragmented form all over the British Isles. These different groups had lost contact during the years of persecution and each had its own version of the tradition, rituals, and practices. She believed the WRA could help to bring together these different groups and traditions in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance and respect. In fact, as it was to turn out, the differences between the older groups and the Wiccan newcomers were to explode into open conflict in the pages of the WRA's newsletter *Pentagram*.

The second issue of the newsletter was published in December 1964 and featured a transcript of Doreen Valiente's talk at the Witches' Banquet, a review of a book on historical witchcraft by a Spanish writer, and an article by a young man using the pen name Robert Cochrane, who claimed to be the descendant of a hereditary witch family. He controversially queried the common Wiccan idea that the Craft was "a simple pagan belief" based upon "an exceedingly simplified concept of the works of Nature," as it seemed to be

described in Valiente's talk. He condemned modern witchcraft (i.e., Wicca) as an attempt by people living in the twentieth century to deny modern living. Instead he presented an alternative and mystical version of the witch as a student of the ancient Mysteries found concealed in folklore, myth, and legend. He claimed the Mysteries went underground with the coming of Christianity and joined forces with the aboriginal beliefs of the masses to create traditional witchcraft.

Although Robert Cochrane claimed to belong to a long line of hereditary witches, he also received a second-degree initiation into Gardnerian Wicca from a couple living in West London. The wife took Cochrane and his wife to Brickett Wood to see Jack Bracelin. While Bracelin liked Cochrane's wife, he thought the young man was a "weirdie". Subsequently Cochrane wrote several letters to Bracelin, who dismissed them as "a load of drivel." Doreen Valiente said that Bracelin was not "impressed favourably" by Cochrane, so "they drifted out" (DV notebook entry dated February 23, 1966, in MOW archive). Cochrane is also said to have met Lois Bourne when she was the High Priestess of the Brickett Wood Coven.

When the third issue of Pentagram was published in

August 1965, it contained an article from a second claimant to an Old Craft tradition. He used the Welsh pen name of "Taliesin," and said he belonged to a group in the West Country owing allegiance to "The Lady." They used the "sacred mushroom" fly agaric in their rites and had an initiation in which the candidate spent a nocturnal vigil in a wood after partaking of a ritual potion. Taliesin was, in fact, the son of a well-known Greekborn composer and bandleader who worked for the BBC in the 1940s and 1950s. He was also a friend of Robert Cochrane and was initiated into the Brickett Wood Coven by Lois Bourne (DV notebook, Ibid.).

The articles written by Cochrane and Taliesin attacking Wicca were not well received by those members of the WRA who were Gardnerians—a term actually coined by Robert Cochrane as a term of abuse. To her credit, Doreen Valiente kept out of the debate that followed in the December 1965 issue of the newsletter. One of the reasons was that she had effectively divorced herself from the Wiccan movement when she left Brickett Wood in 1957, even though she kept in touch with Gerald Gardner and Edith Woodford-Grimes. However, the most important reason was that she had left Charles Cardell's Coven of Atho and joined Robert Cochrane's traditional coven known as the Clan of Tubal

Cain.

By her own account, Doreen Valiente was told about Robert Cochrane by some mutual acquaintances. They had met him at a midnight ceremony held at midsummer on Glastonbury Tor by an esoteric group called the Brotherhood of the Essenes. For some reason, occultists of various types always attended this event, possibly because there was a free buffet in the town hall afterwards, and in 1964 they included Robert Cochrane. As a result, a meeting was arranged in London, and subsequently Valiente was invited to join his group's rituals. At first she was impressed with this charismatic young man, but eventually became disillusioned and, as with Brickett Wood, left his clan. One of the reasons was Cochrane's wild talk about what he called having a "Night of the Long Knives" with the Gardnerians, and Valiente did not approve (Valiente 1989: 117 and 129).

Things came to a head as far as the WRA was concerned with the December 1965 issue of *Pentagram*. It contained a letter defending Gerald Gardner, written by a pseudonymous correspondent claiming to be a hereditary witch and signing himself "Monsieur." He said he was a "humble, consecrated anointed Priest of Wicca" and complained about the use of the term "Gardnerian" in a "somewhat slighting manner" in

the newsletter. He said it was unkind and unfair to Gardner, who "opened the door to many by his writings, radio interviews, etc." and the publicity they engendered. Monsieur claimed that as a result of his efforts, Gardner attracted many "who felt the inborn urge to return to the Faith of their forebears."

Monsieur went on to say that the cord, scourge, and knife used by Wiccans were not "mere Gardnerian theatricalisms, [but] the parts of the Faith and were ever with us and ever will be." He added that Gardner had spent his life collecting information on the Craft "in its many fragmentary facets in widely scattered places." He claimed to have handled the "large black-bound book containing hundreds of pages of notes in his [Gardner's] own hand, fragmentary data collected from dozens of sources in Britain and overseas" This mysterious book, it was claimed, was now in the hands of the "learned High Priestess" who helped Gardner collate, tabulate, and sequence the "magnificent wealth of knowledge he had so patiently amassed over the years." From his own experience as a witch from two family lines in Ireland and Suffolk, Monsieur had found from studying Gardner's notes and writings that his own hereditary tradition, allegedly three hundred years old, was "closely similar and sometimes exactly so."

In the same issue, Taliesin responded to Monsieur's claims by saying Gardner created his own version of witchcraft by starting with Dr. Margaret Murray's ideas that the medieval witch cult contained traces of an ancient fertility religion that worshipped the Great Mother Goddess. Taliesin said she glossed over the fact that the witches' Horned God had unmistakable Middle Eastern characteristics and that they worshipped him exclusively. This idea that historical witchcraft was influenced by Middle Eastern concepts, possibly introduced by crusader knights returning from the Holy Land, had already been put forward by the occultist Rollo Ahmed in the 1930s, and by the Sufi master Idries Shah. It also features in the legends of the Pickingill Craft passed to Bill Liddell by his Elders (see Liddell 1994).

In his reply, Taliesin said that Gardner had taken Dr. Murray's theories as his starting point and then used his "far-from-small intelligence and great imagination" and the works of Aleister Crowley and Charles Godfrey Leland to create modern witchcraft. Taliesin concluded that Gardner demoted the role of the Horned God in historical and traditional witchcraft to second place and replaced him with a European moon goddess. He had borrowed her name, Aridia or Aradia from Leland and used the name of a

"Scandinavian antlered god" [sic], Cern-
nunos, for the Horned God. He concluded by saying that none of the Gardnerians he had met who knew his connection with hereditary witchcraft had expressed any desire for knowledge. This was because they "feel cosy and safe in the little-house-that-GBG-built."

The newsletter also contained a letter from Arnold Crowther, the High Priest of the Sheffield Coven. Since the initiation of Alex Sanders and the publication of the Book of Shadows by Charles Cardell, the Gardnerians had been feeling as if they were under attack. In fact, some covens had even changed the Goddess name given to initiates in the third-degree ritual. Patricia Crowther had, rather unconvincingly, announced that the secret rituals of Wicca had not been revealed in Cardell's book. She hinted there was a fourth-degree ritual of initiation that was only revealed to a chosen few. In these circumstances it was predictable that the Crowthers reacted adversely to the attacks on Wicca by Cochrane and Taliesin.

In his letter, Arnold Crowther said it was about time professed witches stopped criticizing each other in an attempt to prove they were the "chosen ones." Referring to Taliesin's article in the previous issue, he said he was sick

and tired of those who talk about the "Gardnerites" with their cloak-and-dagger initiations and then describe one staged in a wood at night. He reminded those who claimed to be hereditary witches that most Britishers [sic] had "witch blood" inherited from their ancestors. He concluded by attacking people who hid behind pseudonyms, and said he thought the idea behind Pentagram was to bring covens together on friendly terms. Instead he claimed it was "whipping up hatred between different groups by publishing petty insults from nonentities."

The editor of Pentagram, John Math, decided in the interests of fair play and the right-of-reply to invite Taliesin to respond to Arnold Crowther's diatribe. His first comment was that he knew all the rites and rituals of the covens like the one led by the Crowthers, as he had gone through the "three theatrical performances" of the Gardnerian initiation on the orders of his traditional witchcraft clan. He also said Crowther had poured scorn on the traditional witches because they would not "dance gaily into the light of publicity that he and his minions enjoy so much." As examples he gave those of Patricia Crowther writing articles for women's magazines, and having rituals filmed showing her coven "prancing rather self-consciously around to the beating of a drum."

John Math evidently already shared Taliesin's views of the Crowthers and other media witches. In a letter to Cecil Williamson, he said: "... there is a small band of 'Gardnerians' who seem to revel in any publicity which they can obtain for themselves. I am, personally, rather worried that these activities on their part are giving a completely false impression of witchcraft as a whole" (letter dated October 12, 1964, doc. 229/ref. 250 in MOW archive).

It was pretty obvious the WRA could not survive this schism in its ranks and the ongoing bickering between the traditional witches and the Gardnerian Wiccans. Like other similar organizations that followed it, the Witchcraft Research Association was the first casualty of a witch war that simmered on for many years, and still has its skirmishes today. After it ceased to be the official newsletter of the WRA, Pentagram survived for a couple more issues as a glossy magazine featuring articles on a wide range of esoteric topics before finally ceasing publication. Problems with its publication had been going on for some time. In another letter to Cecil Williamson, its editor said he was attempting to continue to publish the magazine despite the personal expense it was incurring. He also said there were attempts to blackmail him and get him fired from his job because he was publishing a witchcraft newsletter (letter

dated December 13, 1964, doc. 232/ref. 253 in MOW archive).

When I met John Math at the apartment of my Gardnerian initiator in Ealing, West London, in 1969, he lamented that it was impossible to produce a proper witchcraft magazine. This was allegedly because there was not enough material available to fill its pages. This did not stop other people from trying, and five years later John Score launched the Pagan Front with its official newsletter *The Wiccan*, later the *Pagan Dawn*. In 1976 I started my own witchcraft newsletter *The Cauldron* and both it and PD are still being published.

The fallout from the witch war between the Wiccans and the traditionalists led to an interesting development in 1966 that, temporarily at least, brought both sides together under the umbrella of a neopagan organization. At midsummer 1966, Robert Cochrane committed suicide after the messy break-up of his marriage following his affair with a woman in his coven. The Clan of Tubal Cain effectively broke up and at Hallowe'en 1966 two of its ex-members, Ronald "Chalky" White and George "Bang-Bang" Stannard Winter, decided to form a neopagan group to continue Cochrane's legacy. It was also a pioneering attempt to create a new tribal religion based on pagan principles, with open rituals enabling ordinary people to participate in a mystical experience.

The Regency, which survived until the late 1970s and still exists as a private closed group today, organized celebrations of the pagan seasonal festivals of the year that were open to the general public. Outdoor ceremonies were held at Queens Wood in Highgate, North London, the Rollright Stones prehistoric circle in Oxfordshire, Runton Woods in Norfolk, and the Stiperstones in Shropshire. Permission to use Queens Wood in Highgate had been granted by the old LCC (London County Council). Interestingly, many of the Regency's outdoor celebrations and the private rituals of its inner circle were attended by many prominent Gardnerian Wiccans. In fact, according to the American writer, paranormal researcher, and ghost-hunter Dr. Hans Holzer, as well as being a member of Robert Cochrane's traditional group, George Stannard Winter was also a Gardnerian initiate.



Chapter Eleven

The King of the Witches



While the media in the 1950s had dubbed Gerald Gardner the "Witch King of Britain" in their stories about Wicca, it was Alex Sanders who was destined to make this nonexistent title a reality. In 1965, Sanders hit the headlines when he and eighteen-year-old Maxine Morris went through a handfasting ceremony. Maxine had quickly advanced from neophyte to the rank of High Priestess in the emerging Alexandrian Craft, and she presided over the rituals at Alderley Edge in Cheshire. However, one of the members of the coven was in contact with journalists working for the local newspapers in Manchester and they

paid him for details of the location of the meetings (Maxine Sanders 2008: 79).

Subsequently, a reporter turned up at an open evening held by the coven for new enquirers and asked a lot of questions about devil worship and sex orgies. Unbeknown to Maxine Sanders, her husband guessed he was a journalist and agreed that he and a photographer should secretly witness the coven's next full moon ceremony at Alderley. Neither Maxine nor the rest of the group were aware of this arrangement, and during the "Drawing Down the Moon" rite she saw a glimpse of lights out of the corner of her eye and heard a clicking sound. The young girl naively believed this was some kind of paranormal manifestation and the sign of an impending spiritual experience.

Two days later Maxine was sadly disillusioned when a banner headline in the local Comet newspaper read "Ex-Convent Girl in Witchcraft Rites." Accompanying the article was a photograph of a naked young woman, whose modesty was only covered by her long blonde hair, and Maxine recognized herself. She has said this was the first of many newspaper stories containing "sensationalised versions of the religious ceremonies I considered sacred" (Ibid., 80). Many years later the editor of the News of the World told

her the "Sanders witches were a godsend when news was thin on the ground." In the 1960s and 1970s, stories about witchcraft always provided a sales boost for the tabloid papers and increased their circulation when they were published.

Maxine felt betrayed by the trick Alex Sanders had played on her and the rest of the coven. As a result of the publicity, her mother nearly had a nervous breakdown and tried to have Maxine exorcised by a Catholic priest, her landlady threatened to evict her, she was questioned by the police, and she lost her job. When she confronted Sanders about the situation, he justified his actions by saying if the Craft was to grow, the public should know it was not an evil cult. It was a religion that did not practice devil worship, but worshipped the Old Gods of Britain. He said there were many people seeking initiation who had no way to find a teacher or a coven. It was therefore essential witchcraft got publicity in the media so it could reach these seekers. Maxine says she was so in love with this charismatic older man at the time she would have forgiven him anything, so she willingly accepted this explanation. Doreen Valiente in fact criticized Sanders for preferring initiates who were young and inexperienced and would believe anything he told them. He often recruited teenagers and departed from

the strict rule laid down by Gerald Gardner, who Valiente claimed would not accept anyone into the Craft who was under twenty-one years old.

The rituals practiced in the Sanders coven mixed Gardnerian Wicca from the Book of Shadows he had obtained with Cabbalistic material (largely drawn from the books of the Hermetic occultist and magician Franz Bardon and the Key of Solomon), and ancient Egyptian rituals from The Book of the Dead. Doreen Valiente suggested that Alexandrian Wicca had this eclectic approach because Sanders possessed a limited knowledge of witchcraft (1989: 170). In fact it is more likely it was because he had practiced as a ceremonial magician before he was initiated into Wicca (see Johns 1969 and Maxine Sanders 2008).

In later years, Sanders added to this exotic mix angelic magic derived from the correspondence course issued by Madeline Montalban and her Order of the Morning Star. It is unclear how he obtained this, although Maxine Sanders says he was sent copies through the mail (2008: 237). An alternative version says Sanders was walking down a street in London one day when a stranger thrust a parcel into his hands and rushed off. When he opened the package he found copies of the OMS angelic magic course in it. Maxine

says that in the 1970s she finally visited Madeline Montalban, and belatedly asked her permission to use the courses in the training of her initiates.

The June Johns biography of Alex Sanders claims that in 1965 he received an invitation to a party from one of the 1,623 witches who belonged to his covens. It is very doubtful that this large number was correct, and traditionally there has always been a tendency among media witches and self-styled leaders of the Craft to exaggerate the number of covens they command. On arrival at the house where the party was to be held, Sanders was led into the drawing room where the members of five covens, totaling sixty-five people, were waiting to greet him. Draped over a chair was a robe of dark blue velvet and Sanders was told it had been made especially for him. When he said he had no need for a new robe, Sanders was told it had been made following a special conference of all the other covens. As a result the "elders" had come to the conclusion that, since he was their founder and the only hereditary witch among their number, they wanted to crown him as the King of the Witches. This would, he was told, be a formal acknowledgment of his position as the foremost authority in the country on witchcraft (Johns 1969: 101).

Apparently, Sanders was not keen to accept the honor being bestowed on him by his own initiates. He saw no reason because in matters of ritual and dogma his authority had never been questioned by his covens. Usually the High Priest of a coven solved most of the problems that might arise and it was only the ones he could not deal with that were passed to Sanders for judgment. It was pointed out that his authority had been challenged. A disgruntled coven member had sent him a written curse because she objected to his references to witchcraft in public and his claim it was compatible with other religions. Only Sanders' confidence in his ability to banish the curse and protect his wife and followers had prevented widespread panic among the covens.

In the end, Johns said, Sanders was reluctantly persuaded to become the king of the covens he had founded. He put on the new robe made for him to wear during the crowning ceremony, which was based on the coronation of the ancient Egyptian pharaohs. The coven elders placed a crown made from brass, copper, silver, and velvet cloth on the witch king's head. They then anointed his bare feet with perfumed oil and sat him on a throne before the altar as the living representative of the Horned God. At the end of the ceremony the crown was thrown into a cauldron containing

a fire so the oath of allegiance Sanders had taken as the King of the Witches would be binding for all of eternity (Ibid., 103).

Maxine Sanders, however, has given a rather different version of the event in one of her autobiographies. She said that one day among the sackfuls of mail the couple received from all over the world was a letter written in "a priestly manner." It said the Craft was in need of a leader to take it from the days of persecution into the New Age of Aquarius. The letter went on to say that the Elders of the Craft had met in council and decided Alex Sanders would be this leader. At first Sanders reacted with pride and then he laughed and dismissed the letter as a hoax. In the days following the receipt of the letter he thought about the offer and decided if it was authentic then the person required would be a better man than he was. Also whoever took the title King of the Witches would become the sacrificial divine king and that role was something he was not willing to take on.

Allegedly, a week later an "odd-looking man" arrived at the Sanders' home. He was in his mid-thirties, ex-public school educated and well dressed, with an overbearing and pompous manner. After he was served tea, he asked to speak to Mr. Sanders alone, and Maxine was annoyed she

had been so summarily dismissed by this stranger. After the man left, Sanders stayed in his room. When he finally emerged he announced to his wife and the curious coven members that the mysterious visitor was a representative of the so-called Council of Craft Elders who had sent the letter. The man had delivered another letter from the group that Sanders had been reading and rereading since he left. It requested Sanders take on the task and honor of accepting the kingship of the Craft.

Sanders was evidently giving the matter some further thought when a smartly dressed woman turned up, claiming to be another messenger from the shadowy Council of Elders. She said she had been sent to ask Sanders a third time if he would accept the crown they were offering and take the official title of King of the Witches. Sanders at first replied he was not worthy and had "broken the laws of the Craft" (Maxine Sanders 2008: 117). Finally he agreed, and the time and place for the coronation ceremony was agreed upon.

It was held two months after this last meeting with a representative of the Council at the house of one of Sanders' witches in Didsbury near Manchester. Two rooms had been cleared of everyday furniture and thirteen throne-like chairs

were placed in a semi-circle around a simple stool. These chairs were for the thirteen "witch queens" of the alleged 127 covens Sanders had founded, including Maxine Sanders, and the stool was for him to sit on during the rite. After a purification ritual Sanders entered the room wearing a plain dark robe. He was anointed with sacred aromatic oils and redressed in a white linen gown. The actual ceremony was performed by an officiating priest, who Maxine Sanders says was in his twenties, so he could hardly have been a member of the Council of Elders. An older woman did the actual crowning of Sanders, consecrating him as King of the Witches, and giving him the new witch name, "Verbuis."

Predictably, the media soon picked up on the title, or were alerted to it by Sanders, and the Gardnerians reacted to it badly. In May 1966, having failed to persuade Sanders to stop his publicity antics, Eleanor Bone joined forces with Patricia Crowther and, with the encouragement of Jack Bracelin, publicly denounced Sanders as an imposter who did not have the proper initiation credentials. Sanders eventually conceded that the title of King of the Witches was an honorary one referring only to his position of authority and leadership over his own covens. It was not meant, as the media had stated, to suggest he had any authority over any other witches who did not belong to

what became known as the Alexandrian Wiccan tradition.

Every seven years from his original coronation as witch king, Sanders organized a ceremony to be re-crowned. This reflected the alleged connection between the role and the ancient concept of the divine king sacrificed after reigning for seven years. His blood was spilled on the land to ensure the continued fertility of the lands and a plentiful harvest. I was invited to one of these re-crowning ceremonies held in the tiny basement apartment in Bayswater, West London, where the couple had moved to from Manchester in 1967. It was a hot summer's day and the place was crowded with members of Sanders' coven and invited guests. The actual ceremony took place out of sight in another room to which the outsiders present were not invited.

At the end of the ritual, which took about an hour as I remember it, although it seemed longer, Alex Sanders made a dramatic entrance into the room where we were patiently waiting. He was dressed in a theatrical costume as an ancient Egyptian pharaoh complete with heavy black eye make-up, a double crown, and what looked like heavy satin robes. He held a scourge and a crooked wand in his hands. The witches present lined up to give their allegiance to the reborn King of the Witches by kissing a ring with a large

stone setting which he wore on a finger. I was invited to follow suit, but refused, as I did not recognize the title or his authority.

Following his original anointing as the King of the Witches, Alex Sanders began to peddle the grandiose fantasy that he was directly descended from real royalty. He claimed that one of his Welsh ancestors was Owain Glyndwr, the medieval rebel prince who led an uprising against the rule of Wales by the English. He also confided in his followers that Glyndwr had been a member of the Craft and a former holder of the title of King of the Witches. Needless to say, there is no historical evidence to support any of these claims.

Not content with claiming his grandmother was a Wiccan, in one of the lectures Sanders gave to his students he told them witchcraft originated on the lost continent of Atlantis. According to Sanders, King Arthur and Merlin came from Lyonesse, or Atlantis, "where the Great White Mother had her power and [which] was the site of the Garden of Eden." With the imminent destruction of Atlantis, the Great Goddess chose a few initiates to transmit the ancient wisdom (Wicca) to "the younger races" of the planet. These "chosen ones" left the island before its destruction and

traveled to Britain, Greece, Egypt, and even the Americas, where they founded mystery schools. The first ships to escape the cataclysm arrived in Britain bearing Arthur, Merlin, and Morgan. They made landfall in Wales and established what is now known as witchcraft (Alex Sanders 1984: 31-36).

In the meantime, while Jack Bracelin had been encouraging Ray Bone and Pat Crowther to challenge Sanders' authenticity in public, he was involved in more material matters behind the scenes. In 1966, he attempted to sell off the land at the Five Acres Naturist Club for building. Two members of the British Parliament, one of whom was allegedly a member of the Craft, promised to help Bracelin in his efforts to sell the property by getting planning permission passed for the land. This would have increased its value and raised the selling price. Apparently Bracelin's grand plan was to use the sale proceeds to launch a new witchcraft magazine to replace *Pentagram* and buy a large house in the fashionable county of Berkshire. The idea was to open the house and grounds as a witchcraft center and a naturist club exclusively for witches (DV notebook entry dated March 30, 1966, in MOW archive). Unfortunately the idea came to nothing.

In 1967, the Sanderses decided to leave Manchester and move to London as caretakers of a large house in Clanricarde Gardens in West London. This was owned by a Greek friend of one of their coven members and was split into individual bedsitters. At the time Maxine Sanders says their coven in Manchester consisted of only six members, but when they arrived in London it was in the middle of the so-called hippie summer of love. When word got out of their arrival, the flower children began to descend on the apartment, seeking spiritual enlightenment and initiation into witchcraft. The front room was turned into a temporary camping site with people in sleeping bags all over the floor (Maxine Sanders 2008: 129).

Every day the small apartment filled up with young people seeking counseling. Many of these were runaways from home or drug addicts-perhaps the reason Doreen Valiente commented that Sanders attracted the younger generation to his coven. However, because of a fear of adverse publicity, no drugs were allowed to be used on the premises. Open meetings were held each Friday evening, during which Sanders taught practical magic, often using techniques derived without credit from Franz Bardon's books. Free food was provided to those who wanted it, using discarded vegetables from a nearby street market. Sanders made pies

decorated with pastry fertility symbols, and pans of vegetarian curry were always ready on the cooker.

Although their relationship had been cemented in a witches' handfasting in Manchester, at Beltane 1968, Maxine and Alex Sanders were legally married in a civil ceremony at Kensington Registry Office. The only people present were the Greek landlord who was their employer and a gardener from the local Kensington Gardens, who both acted as witnesses. Their four-month-old daughter was left with one of the tenants of the boarding house, a Maltese striptease artist with gangland connections. After the wedding ceremony they returned to their apartment for a reception of digestive biscuits washed down with a bottle of champagne donated by their employer (Maxine Sanders 2008: 139).

Although the couple had initially attempted in their dealings with the press to promote a positive image of modern witchcraft, sometimes without success, the Sunday newspapers were still only interested in publishing sensational stories about 'black magic' and devil worship. In 1969, they were given the opportunity again when Charles Pace contacted The News of the World and offered to expose the witches he knew for payment. As the High Priest of Ray Bone's coven in Streatham, South London, Pace

knew everybody in the contemporary Wiccan scene, including the Sanderses. Pace was something of a hypocrite, as in a letter to Cecil Williamson in October 1963 he denounced as "rubbish" a series of sensational articles on witchcraft published the previous month in the News of the World. He said he was going to deal with the reporters concerned, Peter Earle and Noyes Thomas, by challenging them to a "magical battle" at Candlemas 1964 (letter dated October 18, 1963, doc. 172/ref. 193 in MOW archive).

During the 1960s and 1970s, witches were often approached by representatives of national newspapers offering them large sums of money for their stories. While I was working at RCA Records in Curzon Street in Central London in the 1970s, one of my colleagues revealed that he was a member of Sanders' coven. He told me he had been contacted several times by newspapers offering payment for an expose of what happened during coven meetings. They were particularly interested in the possibility that such meetings involved kinky sex orgies. My informant was told that even if they were quite innocent it did not matter, as he could invent the stories and still get paid. Although he was tempted by the considerable amounts being offered, to his credit he declined all their offers, as he did not want to betray his initiators. Others were not so loyal.

The 1969 expose included my own Wiccan "grandmother," Celia Penny (witch name "Francesca"), and the articles were published in the News of the World over several weeks. Over that period the headlines to the articles changed from "Black Magic-an evil exposed" to "Witchcraft-an evil exposed." Because the Sanders held open meetings for newcomers, it was very easy for journalists to infiltrate them. One posing as a multimillionaire chicken farmer aroused Maxine Sanders' suspicions because he kept asking peculiar questions. Her fears were realized when he turned out to be working for the News of the World. In the story he wrote about the coven, it was described as a "satanic witch cult," and edited conversations between the witches were published that had been secretly tape-recorded without their knowledge.

Charles Pace used his extensive contacts with members of the Wiccan movement in London to introduce undercover reporters to the witches he knew. One of these was the late Madge Worthington, High Priestess of the Whitecroft Gardnerian tradition, named after the road in Beckenham, Kent, where her High Priest, the late Arthur Eaglen, lived. Madge received an enquiry from a Roman Catholic priest who wanted to be initiated into Wicca. She had telephoned my Gardnerian initiator, Rosina Bishop, asking for her advice

and was told to have nothing to do with him. Unfortunately she ignored this advice and a meeting was set up in a London hotel with the priest, which was secretly recorded by a reporter. The cleric was not really interested in Wicca, but wanted to attend a Black Mass and deflower virgin girls. The story was published in the News of the World together with a photograph of a surprised Madge Worthington standing on the doorstep of her riverside house in Chiswick, West London. The story claimed that her husband knew nothing about her involvement in witchcraft.

In a strange way, the newspaper stories had a perversely positive effect, despite the damage they did to the private lives of several of those who were exposed in them. Always after such sensational stories appeared in the press the publicly known figures in the Craft received increased mail from enquirers. Most came from people asking how they could join a coven. On the downside, these people often had ulterior motives. Like the Catholic priest who had contacted the Whitecroft Coven, many of them were hoping Wicca rites involved sex orgies. In fact, the Sheffield Coven refused to accept single men for initiation as a method of screening out those just looking for sexual thrills.

Some years earlier, Alex Sanders had acted as a consultant

on the movie *Eye of the Devil* starring David Niven and the young American actress, Sharon Tate. She was the wife of film producer Roman Polanski, who in 1968 produced the classic film *Rosemary's Baby* starring Mia Farrow, about a cult of modern devil worshippers in New York. In August 1969, the media reported a "ritual murder" had taken place in the Hollywood hills. Several people were killed in horrible circumstances, including Sharon Tate, who was eight months pregnant at the time. It was discovered by the police that members of a gang called The Family, led by Charles Manson, an ex-convict and self-styled spiritual guru, had carried out the murders. The group had a commune in the Californian desert and was involved in supplying drugs to wealthy Hollywood movie stars.

There were also unconfirmed allegations in the media that Manson had connections with an OTO lodge in California and a sinister group known as The Process founded by two ex-Scientologists. They had a branch in London with a coffee-bar that was frequented by wellknown occultists in the capital including Madeline Montalban and members of her Order of the Morning Star, and the Sanderses. It has been widely alleged, but often denied, that during his time on the film set of *Eye of the Devil* Alex Sanders actually initiated Sharon Tate into Wicca.

A more positive development in December 1969 was a meeting between Alex Sanders and a journalist named Stewart Farrar (1916-2000), who later went on to write novels, screenplays, and television scripts. Farrar was sent by the popular weekly magazine *Reveille* to attend the press review of an X-rated documentary film called *Legend of the Witches*, starring Alex and Maxine Sanders. It caused controversy, and still does, because it featured Sanders sacrificing a live chicken, performing a Black Mass, and taking part in a mock orgy. In an interview with the UK pagan magazine *Pentacle* in October 2007, Maxine Sanders said she was opposed to the sacrifice, but it went ahead anyway. At the time, the film was denounced by Wiccans, and when a video of it was shown at a private screening at the witchcraft museum in Boscastle a few years ago, some members of the audience protested at its showing.

Following the press review, Stewart Farrar visited the Sanderses' apartment to interview them. He was so intrigued by what they had to say about witchcraft he attended one of their open meetings and was invited to a skyclad circle. In the subsequent article he wrote, Farrar said Sanders had told him there were ten degrees of initiation into Wicca. From the description he gave, they seem to be related to the grades used by the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, and

illustrated Sanders' interest in ritual magic. Sanders also dismissed Gerald Gardner as merely a first-degree witch who had invented his rituals. He added that he regarded the Gardnerians as "mere beginners-genuine witches, but only of the first grade" (Farrar January 10, 1970).

Stewart Farrar had already been interested in the occult through his friendship with the Golden Dawn magician and writer Francis King and his partner Isabel Sutherland, the deputy editor of the encyclopedic part-work *Man, Myth and Magic*, in the 1970s. At Farrar's meeting with the Sanders, he had suddenly realized that Wicca was the spiritual path he wanted to follow. In turn, Alex Sanders had been pleased with the positive angle of the article he had written and as a result asked Farrar to write a book about Alexandrian Wicca. He agreed and this was published in 1971 under the title of *What Witches Do*. Some of its Gardnerian critics waspishly claimed it should really have been entitled *What Some Witches Do*.

While Alex was researching the book, he and Maxine invited Stewart Farrar to become a witch and be initiated into their coven. He accepted the offer because he believed it would help the writing of the book to have an insider's view. He was duly initiated at the February full moon in 1970.

Shortly afterwards, a young woman named Janet Owen, who was working for A&M Records, joined the Sanderses' coven. Stewart Farrar first met her when Alex Sanders was recording an album called *A Witch is Born*. He was taking the photographs for the sleeve and performing the voiceover on the record while Janet Owen was acting as an initiate on it. Eventually he and Janet were to get married, break away from the Sanderses' coven, form their own, and move from London to rural Ireland.

Whether Stewart Farrar believed Sanders' story that he inherited his Book of Shadows from his Welsh grandmother is not known. However in *What Witches Do* he wrote that while he had never seen one, he believed the Gardnerian version of the BoS was substantially the same as the one used by the Alexandrian covens (Farrar 1971: 34). He also told friends that Sanders was actively bisexual and even had a boyfriend during the time he was married to Maxine, which she did not like (Guerra 2008: 100). This is why they eventually divorced, and another reason why the homophobic Gardnerians were opposed to him. In fact, Stewart and Janet Farrar were among the first prominent Wiccans to say there was nothing wrong with gay people joining covens, although Stewart did have reservations about all male or allfemale covens because of problems with

the gender polarity of Wiccan rites.

The News of the World expose had farcical repercussions when Alex Sanders appeared on a short-lived chat show on London Weekend Television in March 1970 called The Simon Dee Show. During the program he mentioned the newspaper articles and produced a wax image depicting Charles Pace, who Sanders said was the person responsible for the expose and a traitor to the Craft. He then proceeded, on live television, to stab the poppet several times with pins. He boasted that the end result of this cursing ritual would be that Pace would suffer a heart attack. Apparently it did not work and was one of Sanders' publicity stunts, as a few days later the two men were seen happily drinking together in a London public house. Shortly afterwards, the chat show host, Simon Dee, lost his job and vanished into obscurity-blamed by some on the so-called "death ritual."

Doreen Valiente said that as a result of the News of the World articles and Alex Sanders' theatrical performance on television, some people in political power decided legal action should be taken to curb witchcraft activities. Gwilym Roberts, a Labour politician and Member of Parliament, actually raised the matter in the House of Commons in April 1970. He asked the then Home Secretary to introduce new

legislation at the earliest opportunity against anyone who claimed to practice witchcraft. Valiente decided to arrange a meeting with the MP to discuss the matter and he invited her to tea at the Commons. She was surprised to find he was not a religious bigot and was only responding to letters he had received from concerned voters. After a long talk, the politician agreed to drop his call for new legislation to deal with what he now realized was the media-created "evil menace of witchcraft" (Valiente 1989: 80).

Despite his problems with negative publicity, Alex Sanders went out of his way to court it. It was alleged he had an affair with "possibly the most famous rock star in history" (Deutch 1977: 102), and was certainly fascinated by rock groups. In 1968, the manager of the heavy metal band Black Widow contacted him about a joint project. They were rehearsing a musical drama about a magician who summons up the demon Ashtaroth, previously an ancient pagan goddess. One of the members of Sanders' coven volunteered to play the role of the goddess, naked except for body paint depicting a serpent coiled around her body. However, when she fell ill, Sanders volunteered his wife Maxine to play the role instead and invited the press to attend the performance.

When June Johns' biography of the King of the Witches

was published in 1969, a theater producer suggested a stage production featuring witchcraft rites might be an interesting, and presumably commercial, venture. Sanders obtained permission from Black Widow to adapt a version of their show to be performed in front of an audience made up of the paying public. Unfortunately the first performance went awry as the press photographers caused a delay to the start that upset the audience, and the theater manager had to deal with Christians demonstrating outside against the show. The London fire brigade were also standing by because of the risk from burning candles and incense, and Maxine Sanders realized the other participants in the "ritual [were] mumbling, stage-frightened incompetents" (2008: 157).

Despite this initial disaster, the show went on the road and was performed at various public venues all over southern England. Further problems followed, and during one performance in Poole, Dorset, a drunken man climbed on to the stage, as he wanted to get close to one of the female witches. Sanders was forced to push him off the stage using a candlestick with iron prongs, causing the man to bleed profusely (Ibid., 158). At another performance a ritual was performed in a cinema to call up the demon Asmodeus. When he refused to put in an appearance the disgruntled audience besieged the stage demanding their money back.

Ignoring these incidents, the show went on in the true show business tradition and performances were held at night-clubs in Weston-super-Mare in Somerset and at the Civic Center in Barnsley, Yorkshire (Crowther 1998: 73).

In 1971, the Sanderses decided to look for a second home in the countryside outside London. One of their witches lived in the small village of Selmeston in Sussex on the south coast and they managed to rent a cottage there. The house was converted from a pair of farm workers' dwellings, and was large enough for several people to live in. It also had a garden suitable both for outdoor rituals and for growing flowers and vegetables. Maxine Sanders seems to have enjoyed the horticultural opportunities provided by the cottage garden, as she became a "fanatical gardener" during her time living in Selmeston (2008: 165).

Selmeston was a village boasting an ancient Saxon church built on a mound with a circular churchyard, suggesting it was once a pagan site of worship. Alex Sanders later discovered it was once the shrine of a Celtic water goddess. To the south of the churchyard was a paddock where Sanders thought he saw ancient druids walking among the trees. He soon realized the church mound and its burial ground were points of earth energy, connected by a ley line

to the hill figure of the Long Man of Wilmington, which had been used as a ritual working site by Robert Cochrane's coven in the 1960s, an Iron Age hill fort at Mount Caburn, and the famous Pook Hill immortalized by Rudyard Kipling in his famous children's book *Puck of Pook Hill* (Sinha, Samhain 1979). Maxine Sanders claimed the cottage had been built on the site of a

Roman barracks-villagers told her they had seen the ghostly figures of centurions marching down the lane outside it (Maxine Sanders 2008: 165). Alex was busy having his own visions, including one of a "tall, dour looking individual [who came] sailing through the wall" of the cottage. He introduced himself as Cardoc, the "priest and guardian of the ancient dead," and told Sanders the building stood on a high place where in olden times a tower stood watch over the burial ground. When Sanders did some research, he found the local museum in Lewes housed the remains of five Saxon warriors that had been unearthed from the cottage garden, complete with their swords, shields, and helmets (Sinha, Samhain 1979).

The population of Selmeston was made up a few locals with mostly wealthy incomers who commuted to nearby towns or London to work. Maxine Sanders said the village

was divided between Roman Catholics and Church of England Protestants. As soon as the Sanderses moved in, residents united in a discussion of whether they wanted "the witches" living in the village. The older inhabitants accepted the newcomers, and notes were posted through the letterbox of the cottage addressed to "Mrs. Witch," asking for help (Maxine Sanders 2008: 166).

The witches from the Sanders coven who had remained behind in West London attended meetings at the weekends in Sussex and participated in the regular rituals held on the surrounding Sussex Downs. At the same time a new coven was forming around Sanders. This consisted of people who came down from London, and locals from nearby towns such as Brighton and Eastbourne. This new group began working with the ley energies to "wake up the power of the hills," as one member put it.

At first during the winter the coven met in the large sitting room of the cottage, but when spring came they started to convene outside. It seemed like "a scene from a medieval woodcut: the witches' fire, the crude altar with wild flowers, naked bodies through the shadows, lonely flute music, and the little drum" (Sinha, Samhain 1979). Sanders had discovered his primitive self and he "traveled across country

in the tireless lope of the savage. In the Middle Ages this odd gait, stooped forward with arms hanging loosely and knees drawn up to the chest, may have given rise to the werewolf legend, but it covered enormous tracts of ground" (Ibid.).

This romantic description of life at Selmeston hid the fact that trouble was brewing between the Sanderses. Maxine had noticed the level of training was less intense in the new coven and Alex was not so demanding that its members exercise their personal skills. She also noticed an "awkward atmosphere that should not have existed in a healthy coven." The situation came to a head after Sanders brought in a young gay man whom she disliked on sight. To her concern, when the young man was initiated, Sanders invited his mother and her boyfriend to witness the rite.

Because they could not afford to keep two homes running, the Sanderses returned to London, and Maxine decided she no longer wanted to hold the position of "Witch Queen" to the Alexandrian covens. In 1972, she retired from that position and ritually burnt her garters, robe, and the many crowns acquired over years in the role. At about the same time her husband began to treat her in a derogatory and demeaning way. Finally he announced he was in love

with one of the male witches in the coven and wanted him to move in with them. Maxine refused to accept this new situation. After a violent scene, Alex and his new lover moved back to Sussex, leaving Maxine alone in London with their children, and taking solace in alcohol (Maxine Sanders 2008: 166-169).



Chapter Twelve

The Politics of Wicca

In the late 1960s, Laurie Cabot (b. 1933), the "Witch of Salem," represented the public face of witchcraft in the United States. Her father's ancestry was British—he was born on Jersey in the Channel Islands. Cabot, like so many before and after her, claimed she was descended from a long line of hereditary witches. As a child she was psychically aware, and inherited a love of science from her father that she later combined with witchcraft to create a unique version of the Craft. While living in Boston in the 1940s, she studied comparative religion in high school. This meant spending hours doing research in the library. She said that one of the librarians revealed herself as a witch, and as a result the

teenage Cabot was initiated in a ritual that involved her being anointed with oil and dubbed with a sword (Guilley 1989: 48).

After a short career as a dancer, Laurie Cabot married twice and had two daughters. After her second divorce in the late 1960s, she made a vow that from then on she would live openly as a witch and devote the rest of her life to practicing and promoting witchcraft. Part of this vow was to wear only black, outline her eyes in black make-up, and wear a pentagram in public. In this respect she was probably the first goth witch. A friend suggested that if she was going to take on this public role as a witch she should move to Salem, scene of the famous seventeenth-century witch trials. The two women rented a house in the town's historic quarter, and Cabot discovered it had been built in the 1700s by the father of a young woman she believed she had once been after experiencing a past-life regression.

Once in Salem, Cabot began teaching witchcraft courses as a science. She taught adult education classes at Salem State College, gave tarot readings, and offered her psychic assistance to the local police department to solve crimes. She also opened one of the first occult stores in America and established an annual Witches' Ball at Hallowe'en that is

still held today. In 1977, Cabot was made the official "Witch of Salem" by Michael Dukakis, the governor of Massachusetts and an ex-presidential candidate. She also joined the Salem Chamber of Commerce, and in 1986 founded the Witches League of Public Awareness, specifically to protest plans to film the movie *Witches of Eastwick* in the county. The League also took on other civil rights issues relating to witches, including harassment by the police and Christian fundamentalists.

In one of the programs in his BBC television documentary series *Stephen Fry in America* broadcast in 2008, the British comedian, writer, and actor interviewed Laurie Cabot in her shop. Fry was also invited to attend the Witches' Ball at a Salem hotel. He commented it was "a very charming party" in which Cabot-style witches from all over the world dressed up and danced to retro 1970s and 1980s music. At the end they came together in a circle in which "a sword is waved, incantations are made and 'energies' invoked." Fry commented that as far as he was concerned all religions were equally nonsensical, and that how Christians with their "invisible friends, virgin births, immaculate conceptions, and bread turning into flesh could mock people like Laurie Cabot was appalling humbug" (Fry 2008: 34).

Around the same time Laurie Cabot was establishing herself in Salem, the second publication (after Charles Cardell's 1964 book), and the first in America of the Gardnerian Book of Shadows took place. It was published by Lady Sheba (Jessie Wicker Bell, 1920-2002) and she claimed it had been passed to her nearly forty years before. Bell was born in the hills of Knott County, Kentucky, of Irish and Native American (Cherokee) ancestry. She claimed her family had been practicing witchcraft for seven generations, and that as a child her grandmother taught her about Irish faery lore and Cherokee spirit guides. In the late 1930s, Bell was initiated into a local coven and took the witch name "Lady Sheba," a name she'd once had in a previous incarnation.

By 1950, Jessie Bell had moved to Michigan and started her own coven practicing her family's Celtic tradition, now called "American Celtic Wicca." She also founded a more public group called the American Order of the Brotherhood of Wicca (AOBW), which was accepted as a legal religious organization in August 1971. The aim of the AOBW was, like the old Witchcraft Research Association in England, to bring together the different witchcraft traditions in the United States. According to the website PaganWiki on the Internet, American Celtic Wicca practiced rituals that were

very similar to the Gardnerian and Alexandrian ones, but also drew heavily on ceremonial magic.

Following the publication of *The Book of Shadows* and a followup called *The Grimoire of Lady Sheba* in 1972, Jessie Bell became involved in the newly formed American Council of Witches. This group put forward thirteen principles that all Wiccans could adhere to, and that were later incorporated into the US Army's handbook for its chaplains. Unfortunately, not all American witches wanted to sign on to these principles and became suspicious of Lady Sheba when she started referring to herself as "America's Witch Queen." According to an Internet article on "Wicca Fundamentalism" by Ben Gruagach (dated August 11, 2007), Jessie Bell declared she was the leader of all American witches at a WitchMeet gathering in 1974. She also proposed that a single, definitive *Book of Shadows* should be written so everyone could follow it.

Doreen Valiente and other British and American Gardnerian elders criticized Jessie Bell's decision to publish her *Book of Shadows*. Valiente was particularly annoyed because Bell's version of the *BoS* contained one of her poems, reprinted without her permission and infringing her copyright. The Gardnerians said Bell had stolen the *BoS*,

changed some of it, and was guilty of placing oath-bound material into the public domain. It has to be understood this was before Janet and Stewart Farrar had written their books revealing the Wiccan rites, or the many Wicca 101 books that followed. Also, the Gardnerians were still recovering from the betrayal by Charles Cardell. They were less than pleased to see their rituals published in a commercial book from a mainstream occult publisher that became a bestseller.

In her defense, Jessie Bell claimed she was told by the Goddess herself to publish the book. She continued to say she had been initiated in the 1930s and had copied out the coven's BoS and then added other material from Gardnerian, Alexandrian, and other sources. However, faced with a mounting tide of criticism for both her books and her attempt to control the American witchcraft movement, Jessie Bell retired from public life at the end of the 1970s and returned to her native Kentucky. When she died in 2002, her final ironic wish was that her body be cremated with her personal copy of the Book of Shadows. Her ashes were scattered in the Wicker family cemetery in Knott County, Kentucky.

If Jessie Bell did not receive the Book of Shadows when she was initiated into the Craft in the 1930s, where did she get it? I was in correspondence with Jessie Bell in 1969-1970,

when I was living at Harrow-on-the-Hill in Middlesex. At that time she was associated with a Cincinnati coven that combined the practice of Wicca with ceremonial magic. They worshipped the Horned God in the form of the Knights Templar deity Baphomet and invoked the four archangels at the quarters of their circle (see Holzer 1971: 138-150 and 1973: 77-78). Sybil Leek tried to join this hybrid coven, but was rejected. Margot Adler, later the author of the classic *Drawing Down the Moon*, was more successful. The coven sent her letters containing rituals and examination papers, and after a probationary period of a year and a day she was initiated.

During our correspondence, Jessie Bell expressed her desire to be initiated into British Gardnerian Wicca. This was obviously logistically difficult, if not impossible, because of the long distance involved and the fact she could not afford to fly over to England. However, as we have seen, there was a precedent with the Glasgow coven set up by Charles Clark with Gerald Gardner's help, and the initiation of Margot Adler into the Cincinnati coven. Reluctantly, I was persuaded by my own Gardnerian initiator Rosina Bishop to pass on a copy of the version of the Book of Shadows we were using so Bell could be initiated into Wicca by proxy. This is also done in traditional pre-Gardnerian witchcraft

where "the power" can be passed through a written text or a magical object.

However, as was the trend among other Gardnerians, we had made some important changes to the BoS. This included amending the Craft Laws and also adding a poem written by Doreen Valiente originally published in the WRA newsletter Pentagram. We had deleted the last few lines of the poem to make it more suitable for our purposes and were using it as an invocation to the Horned God. As our version of the BoS was for our personal use only, and it was never meant to be published, we did not see the private use of this poem to be a problem. However, as soon as it was published we were embarrassed, as its publication infringed on Doreen's copyright.

One night I received a transatlantic telephone call from Jessie Bell, informing us that she was going to publish the BoS. I pointed out that despite the fact her initiation was long distance by proxy, she was still bound by the oath promising not to reveal the Wiccan rites and rituals to cowans, or outsiders. However, Bell was determined to go ahead, and said the Goddess had told her to publish the book. In her mind, this direct instruction from a divine source overruled any oath she had taken, and she was going

ahead to find a publisher. The rest, as they say, is history.

In 1966, Raymond Buckland contacted Margaret and Eric St. Clair, a couple living in California, and initiated them. One of Margaret St. Clair's friends was Ed Fitch, an ex-trainee of the Virginian MIT Institute. He had joined the US Air Force and served in Japan as a military intelligence officer. When Fitch returned stateside he worked as a technical writer and electronic engineer. Later he served in Vietnam where he studied Buddhism and learned Eastern martial arts. On his return, he joined the aerospace industry as a research and development engineer, working on missile systems. While Fitch was in the USAF, he was stationed in Massachusetts and, knowing his interest in witchcraft, the St. Clairs told him about Raymond Buckland and his coven. He visited the Bucklands on Long Island and was eventually initiated by Rosemary Buckland.

In 1970, Ed Fitch was responsible for the founding of the influential Pagan Way, designed to provide an open forum for beginners wanting to be initiated into covens. He became involved with Joseph B. Wilson, the founder of the American 1734 Tradition based on the teachings of Robert Cochrane and Ruth Wynn Owen of the Plant y Bran, and the British Gardnerian witch John Score. Fitch published a

neopagan magazine called *The Crystal Well*, and the rituals devised for the Pagan Way spread far and wide after they were printed in booklet form. Some of the ritual material in the booklet was written by the late Donna Cole Schutz. She was running her own coven in Chicago and had been initiated by somebody who based their rituals on the ones published by Charles Cardell.

In 1968, Donna and her husband traveled to England, where they made contact with the Wiccan community and stayed for a year. As a result of their contacts, the Coles received a second-degree initiation from Madge Worthington and Arthur Eaglen of the Gardnerian Whitecroft tradition. Donna Cole then received her third degree from Theos and Phoenix in New York State, who had inherited the American Gardnerian tradition from Ray and Rosemary Buckland. In the Whitecroft Coven, the Coles took part in rituals working magic for animal rights, and they did one rite to stop the clubbing of baby seals in the annual cull by Canadian fur traders. During their stay in the United Kingdom, the Coles also met Ruth Wynn Owen, an ex-actress and drama teacher who was a member of The Regency and ran her own neo-Celtic Welsh group known as *Plant y Bran* (The Children of Bran). On their return to the States, the Coles started their own coven, known as the

Temple of the Sacred Stones, in their hometown of Chicago (Donna Cole Schultz, August 2003).

One of those associated with Ed Fitch and the Pagan Way was Herman Slater (1938-1992), owner of the pioneering Warlock Shop in New York, later known as Magickal Childe, with his partner, Ed Buczynski. Raised as a good Jewish boy, Slater was initiated by Buczynski into his coven of Welsh traditionalist witches in 1972. The Welsh Traditionalists were among the first covens to take in gay people at a time when other Craft traditions refused to accept them. They worshipped the Welsh deities Ceridwen, Mabon, Arianrhod, and Blodewedd as described in the medieval legends of the Mabinogion. It was a robed coven and the High Priestess wore a crown made of a copper band surmounted by a silver crescent. The High Priest was known as the "King of the Woods," and he wore a crown of bronze surmounted by a gold disc representing the sun. There were four degrees of initiation and the circle was cast using a wand instead of the athame. It was opened by evoking the elemental spirits of earth, air, and water, and closed by calling on the spirit of fire (Holzer 1971: 37-38). In 1974, Herman Slater was initiated into Gardnerian Wicca. Following this, the Welsh Traditionalists changed their name to the Earthstar Coven, practicing a mixture of Gardnerian Wicca and Celtic paganism.

Another leading American pagan and witch in the 1970s was the controversial Philip Isaac Bonewits (b. 1949), widely credited with the invention of the term "Burning Times" to describe the medieval witchhunt. He attended the University of Berkeley in 1966 and was inducted into Reformed Druids of North America. He also spent eight months as a member of Anton LaVey's Church of Satan in San Francisco. In 1970, he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in magic. Bonewits was the first person to be granted such a degree by a university anywhere in the world. Unfortunately the university authorities were so embarrassed by the ensuing publicity they banned the study of witchcraft and the magical arts from the curriculum. As a result of his degree, Bonewits was offered a publishing contract, and his first book, *Real Magic*, appeared in print in 1971.

Isaac Bonewits went on to start the Aquarian Anti-Defamation League (AADL) promoting the civil rights of followers of alternative spiritualities such as witches, neopagans, Rosicrucians, and Theosophists. In 1973 he was the first insider to publicly state that the claims for antiquity put forward by Wiccans were "hogwash" He said that modern witchcraft only dated back to the 1950s and was the product of a collaboration between Gerald Gardner and Doreen Valiente. For the many Gardnerians who still clung

tenaciously to the belief that Wicca was the genuine survival of a Stone Age fertility religion, this statement was heresy, and his views were dismissed out of hand.

In the early 1980s, Bonewits upset many Wiccans and neopagans again by recommending the setting up of a specialist social services network to deal with the problems of drug abuse and domestic dysfunction in the pagan movement. He claimed 80 percent of neopagans came from nonfunctional or dysfunctional family backgrounds. At the same time, he was the first person to call for the establishment of a professional, paid neopagan priesthood. Again he was far ahead of his time, and the idea was rejected by his peers. In the 1990s, groups like Circle Sanctuary, founded by Selena Fox and Dennis Carpenter, and the Pagan Federation UK were actively supporting and promoting the concept.

Professor Chas S. Clifton of Colorado University has said that "When the new Pagan religion of Wicca arrived in the United States from England in the 1960s, it presented itself as the Old Religion, the ancestral Paganism of the British Isles, and as a mystery cult of both fertility and magic" (2006: 41). However, in the 1970s it changed from a magically based religion into a nature-based neopagan one concerned

with environmental matters, feminism, "Goddess spirituality," and the legal rights of its followers. It was the birth of "ecofeminist neopaganism," and this was to have a dramatic and important influence on the future of Wicca. In fact, American Wicca "evolved from its British Wicca roots through the influence of four factors: (1) a ritual style developed by large outdoor gatherings or pagan festivals, (2) the presence of workshops on shamanic techniques, (3) the concept of Gaia or the Earth as a divine living organism or goddess, (4) the presence of a psychotherapy model and its application to political activism" (Orion 1995).

These developments that influenced the evolution of American Wicca, and later the British variety, arose out of the alternative counter-culture of the late 1960s. As early as 1968, a radical political group had formed called the Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy (WITCH). It was created by a collective of feminist revolutionary guerilla fighters dedicated to opposing, by violence if necessary, what they saw as a patriarchal society. Its membership was mostly drawn from female college and university students wearing black cloaks, witches' pointed hats, and crone masks. They famously marched on Wall Street in New York's financial district to confront the "imperialist phallic society" ruled by men, with the "ancient magics" of the female witches. They

danced outside the Federal Reserve Bank bearing the papier-mache head of a pig on a silver platter (representing a capitalist banker) and also demonstrated outside the Stock Exchange. They told the security guards at the door they had an appointment inside with "Satan," i.e., the Exchange's CEO. The witches also demonstrated outside night-clubs and "girl bars," chanting the magical mantra: "We are Witch. We are liberation. We are one [and] nine million women burned as witches," and calling for a matriarchal insurrection and revolution (Morgan 1978: 70-79).

It is difficult to know how serious the WITCH was supposed to be. It has been described as "a combination of the put-on, the serious, the deliberately comic, and the profanely agonized, of the bizarre and the holy" (quoted in Guilley 1989: 367). Its leaders taught its members they did not need to be initiated into a coven to be a witch, and this was subversive in itself. All they had to do was repeat the self-empowering magical words "I am a witch," and they became one. They also taught the concept of the Burning Times, during which allegedly nine million innocent women were burnt as witches in a patriarchal conspiracy instigated by the Roman Catholic Church.

In fact, this imaginary figure of nine million victims was

invented by the nineteenth-century pioneering American feminist writer, Matilda Joslyn Gage. She had been in the campaigns to abolish slavery during the Civil War, women's suffrage, and improved conditions for the Native Americans living on government reservations. In the 1880s, Gage became interested in Theosophy, Spiritualism, and witchcraft, and published her major work *Woman, State and Church* in 1890. In it, she argued the witches executed during the witch-hunt were murdered because they were militant feminists. In her view they were also early scientists, mesmerists, and workers with plant extracts, elemental spirits, and psychic forces (Gibson 2007: 112-117).

In the 1950s, Cecil Williamson used Gage's nine-million figure in media interviews, and set up a memorial plaque at his Isle of Man museum to these victims of the witch craze. As a result, it entered Wiccan mythology along with the term "the Burning Times," and is still repeated today in popular Wicca 101 books. It was widely circulated because it compared favorably with the six million Jews killed during the wartime Holocaust and reinforced the ghetto mentality and persecuted victim syndrome prevalent in early Wicca. In fact, the real figure of men, women, and children executed for allegedly practicing witchcraft as been put by modern researchers at about 100,000.

As late as 1990, a documentary called *The Burning Times* was produced by the National Film Board of Canada. It traced the roots of the historical witch-hunt and included interviews with prominent neopagan Wiccan feminists such as Margot Adler and Starhawk (Miriam Simos). The term "Burning Time," is a misnomer as it was only on the Continent and in Ireland and Scotland that suspected witches were burned at the stake if they were found guilty. In some European countries they were beheaded instead. In England, and later the American colonies, convicted witches were hanged. The only possible exception to the rule was in the rare cases where a wife was found guilty of bewitching to death her husband. This was legally classed as "petty treason," and the punishment for that was burning.

The new feminist movement that was emerging in the 1970s possessed a radical Marxist political base. Many of the first feminists adopted a materialist approach to religion in general and they rejected both the patriarchal misogynistic Christian Church and witchcraft and paganism. However, some of those who had rejected Christianity were looking for an alternative spiritual viewpoint compatible with their new feminist outlook. Some of these seekers found what they were looking for in Wicca with its worship of a female deity. However they also discovered that Wicca

could be both patriarchal and misogynistic, and they set about changing and adapting it to suit their politics and world-view.

Although Wiccans worshipped a goddess, and women played a prominent part in its rites, Doreen Valiente said in 1989, "... it has only been in recent years that witchcraft has become feminist; and not all witchcraft by any means comes into that category." She went on to say that although modern Wicca has priestesses, this was a role Gerald Gardner had designed for women to play within the Craft. Valiente said: "We were allowed to call ourselves High Priestess, Witch Queen, and similar fancy titles; but we were still in the position of having men running things and women doing as men directed. As soon as the women started seeking real power, trouble was brewing." This was possibly a reference to the problems when she left the Brickett Wood Coven in 1957. Women in Wicca were told: "You may not be a witch alone." Therefore, as a woman in Gardnerian Wicca, you have to have a man initiate you before you could call yourself a witch. Also you were required to find a man to work magically with before you could practice the Craft (1989: 182-183).

Oddly enough, it was a man who had the greatest impact

on the emerging Goddess spirituality and feminist Wicca in the United States-the poet and writer Robert Graves, author of *The White Goddess* (1948). In 1973, Elizabeth Gould Davis, the feminist author of the classic *The First Sex*, wrote to Graves, hailing him as the "god" of the new women's spirituality movement. She said it had many names because it was not coordinated yet. However, she told the poet, small groups of dedicated goddess worshippers were forming across the country from New York to California. These groups were rejecting Christianity and honoring the feminine principle in an attempt to bring back the ancient religion of the Great Goddess (Richard Perceval Graves 1995: 481).

One anthropologist who has studied modern Wiccan groups said: "The basis of much feminist witchcraft ritual is about re-connecting with an idealized previous state of existence, and healing the wounds of patriarchy" (Greenwood 2000: 109). This concept was reinforced by several influential books written in the 1970s and 1980s by a new breed of radical revisionist feminist historians. Books such as Merlin Stone's *When God Was A Woman* (1976) and *The Paradise Papers* (1979), Monica Sjoo's *The Ancient Religion of the Great Cosmic Mother of All* (1982), and the writings of the Lithuanian anthropologist Marija Gimbutas, claiming Neolithic society was a pacifist Goddess-

worshipping matriarchy destroyed by patriarchal invaders, inspired neopagan feminists. Feminist historians such as Mary Daly and Andrea Dworkin interpreted the witch-hunt as a patriarchal conspiracy aimed at suppressing survival of the old pagan worship of the Goddess, and the social role of women as healers. They overlooked the fact that accusations of witchcraft were often made by women against women, and were often the result of neighborhood feuds, family disagreements, and social tensions.

In 1978, a Goddess conference was held at the University of California in Santa Cruz. Five hundred people listened to a talk by a feminist Christian theologian from Yale University with the unlikely name of Carol Christ. She argued that the divine should not be exclusively represented as male in nature, but must also be symbolized in a feminine form. Another speaker, Naomi Goldenberg, even coined the term "thealogy" to denote the teachings of female-based religions and the role taken by women in spirituality. She later taught classes in the new academic discipline of Goddess spirituality studies in the Department of Religious Studies at a Michigan University, and a graduate program at the University of Ottawa in Canada with Carol Christ and Starhawk (Rabinovitch and Lewis 2003: 117)

In his own study of the development of American neopagan witchcraft, Professor Chas S. Clifton has seen the celebration of the new environmental Earth Day as a turning point in the transformation of Wicca from a magical religion to a nature religion. He quotes Susan Roberts, author of *Witches USA* (1970), describing how a witch friend of hers was caught up in a traffic jam in New York on Earth Day. Afterwards her friend told her: "Now, no one loves the Earth and the purity of our air more than a witch," and she did not feel the need to explain this comment further (Clifton 2006: 43).

However, not everyone shared these fashionable left-wing views, and it has to be remembered that the Wiccan old guard were often socially conservative ex-colonials who came from middle-class or uppermiddle-class backgrounds. Many of these held private political views that leaned towards the right and they did not approve of their beliefs being politicized. Referring to the American neopagan magazine *Green Egg*, one prominent British Wiccan said its editors were trying to turn the Craft into an anti-establishment and anti-social movement with left-wing political overtones advocating drug use and sexual militancy (Holzer 1973: 188).

One of the leading figures in this process of the political radicalization of Wicca in the early 1970s was Dr. Leo Louis Martello (1930-2000), a homosexual Italian-American who said he had been initiated into a hereditary Sicilian witch tradition. He had also received a Gardnerian initiation from Patricia Crowther. In 1970 Martello founded the Witches' Liberation Movement (WLM) and at Samhain that year organized a "witch-in" in Central Park in New York. He was refused a permit to hold the gathering by the city parks department, and with the support of the New York Civil Liberties Union threatened to sue them for religious discrimination. Later he founded other pressure groups such as the Witches Anti-Defamation League (WADL) and the Witches International Craft Association (WICA), dedicated to campaigning for the religious rights of witches. He condemned the Roman Church for its historical persecution of alleged witches and issued a lawsuit against the Vatican claiming \$500 million in compensation. He also threatened to sue the Salem Town Council for another \$100 million.

Another radical crusader for the civil rights of witches, especially female ones, was a Hungarian emigre named Zsuzanna Mokcsay, who used the pseudonym of Z. Budapest, after her home country's capital. She claimed her grandmother had been a herbalist and healer, and her mother

was an artist who made nude statues of pagan goddesses. The family fled Hungary after the 1956 popular uprising against the Soviet Red Army, arriving in the United States in 1959. Z. Budapest enrolled at the University of Chicago and married an American citizen. After her marriage broke down and she moved from Chicago to California in the 1970s, Budapest saw the need for a feminine-centered spiritual theology and rebelled against the Marxist elements in the so-called "women's liberation" movement, as it was dubbed by the media.

In 1971, Z. Budapest founded the Susan B. Anthony Coven, named after a leader of the American suffragette movement who had campaigned for women's right to vote. The coven practiced Dianic Wicca, founded by Morgan MacFarland and Mark Roberts in Dallas, Texas, in the 1960s, and based on matriarchal lunar worship. Budapest also opened a shop called The Feminist Wicca and was arrested in 1975 by an undercover policewoman for illegally "foretelling [the future] for a fee" during a tarot reading under an archaic Californian statute. In the same year, she published *The Feminist Book of Shadows*, which was followed shortly afterwards by *The Holy Book of Women's Mysteries*.

One of Z. Budapest's initiates was Ruth Barratt (b. 1954). She went on to found the Moon Birch Grove and the Circle of Aradia, the largest organization of Dianic Wiccans, whose open meetings in Los Angeles were attended by from fifteen to two hundred women. Budapest's most famous student, however, was a Jewish woman called Miriam Simos (b. 1951), who adopted the pseudonym of "Starhawk". She went on to form her own group known as the Compost Coven, and recruited its members from the women attending a class on witchcraft she taught at the Bay Area Center for Alternative Education in San Francisco.

Starhawk also formed another all-female group called the Honeysuckle Coven, and she was initiated into Gardnerian Wicca and Victor Anderson's Feri witch tradition, dating back to the 1920s. After achieving a master of art degree in psychology at Antioch University in 1983, Starhawk became a member of the faculty of the Institute of Creation Spirituality. This institute was founded by the heretical Catholic priest Father Matthew Fox, and it had moved from Chicago to Holy Names College at Oakland, California.

Along with other feminist witches in the 1970s, Starhawk thought "the Goddess does not rule the world. She is the world." Many neopagans believed this statement had a

scientific basis-this was proved when, in 1979, the British scientist Dr. James Lovelock published his groundbreaking and highly controversial treatise, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth*. In it, he put forward the theory that the Earth was a self-regulating, living organic entity, and he called it Gaia, after the Greek earth goddess. Dr. Lovelock never believed there was a spiritual or religious dimension to what was a scientific theory. When neopagan witches and followers of the emergent New Age movement eagerly took on board his concept, it was to his amusement and sometimes consternation. In fact he was embarrassed that environmentalists and the new nature religionists had hijacked his Gaian idea.

In the same year Dr. Lovelock's book was published, Starhawk's *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Goddess* also appeared, and it was destined to become a best-selling classic. Professor Ronald Hutton has described Starhawk as "a writer of remarkable talent." He praised her book, saying it was impossible to make notes from it without copying out whole sentences, "so perfectly are her thoughts expressed and so marked is her genius for aphorism." He says that her prose is enhanced "by an underlying passion of feeling," so that it "seems to heave with emotion" (Hutton 1999: 345-346). He thinks the virtue of

Starhawk's book is that it reworked the image of witchcraft, re-presenting the old coven concept as a modern training group. In this, women could be liberated from patriarchy, men could be educated about the feminine, and new forms of human relationship, free from gender stereotyping and power structures, could be established. She has even suggested that new covens of this type were capable of helping the transformation of society for the better.

Starhawk followed up her first book with *Dreaming the Dark*, in 1982, which applied her new image and concept of modern witchcraft to direct political action. This view may have been influenced by the anti-Vietnam demonstrations she took part in while at high school. She believed that magic was "the art of evoking power from within" to transform the individual, the community, and culture. This belief led her into advocating and taking direct action against the patriarchal system and manifested in a series of demonstrations at nuclear power plants, military bases, and atomic weapon sites. As a result, she and her fellow demonstrators were arrested several times and thrown into prison.

Starhawk believed passionately that witches should not be politically passive, but get involved in agitprop against

the use of nuclear power to produce electricity and the international arms trade. She was arrested once outside the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant in California, which had been constructed over a known earthquake fault. During her imprisonment, Starhawk organized a skyclad ritual with two hundred female inmates and they danced in a circle to the improvised beat of a drum and a guitar. The women had been strip-searched, handcuffed, and herded into a gym used as a temporary prison, with only a blanket and a mat to sleep on. The idea behind the ritual was to prove to the (male) guards and those who had ordered their imprisonment that even in that situation the women were still empowered.

The Reclaiming Collective was founded by Starhawk in 1980 and still exists today. It arose from a teaching course she did with a colleague, Diane Baker, and was based on her experiences as a student of Z. Budapest and Victor Anderson. It was titled "Elements of Magic," and consisted of a six-week series of workshops teaching women Goddess spirituality and basic magical practice such as casting a circle, trancework, and spellcasting. This initial course extended into several others and then finally led to the establishment of the Reclaiming Collective with workshops and public rituals open to all comers. It was a radical departure from the old coven system where members had to

be vetted and then initiated before they could be trained and participate in rituals.

In 1985, the Reclaiming Collective held an extensive apprenticeship course for a week in the homes of members or in public parks. Students traveled from all over the States to attend and Reclaiming members in San Francisco provided their accommodation. Because of the success of this new venture, the next year a farm was rented as a country retreat with a series of training sessions for both the Reclaiming teachers and their students. Known as WitchCamps, these events have now become a regular occurrence with an international scope. Today they are held in Canada, England, Germany, and Norway. The English camps are held at the New Age capital of Glastonbury in Somerset and have proved very successful.

The key elements of the Reclaiming tradition, distinguishing it from orthodox old-style Wicca, is its emphasis on non-hierarchical groups that have no specific pantheon. There is no formal requirement for initiation into these groups and no set ritual liturgy. In addition, political activism related to the environment, feminism, sexual equality, pacifism, and social responsibility is encouraged. At a philosophical and ritual level, Reclaiming members are

expected to cultivate self-experiment, self-discovery, and their own innate creativity. In the few rules it has, there is a focus on the achievement of ecstatic states of altered consciousness. This is achieved without the use of narcotics and through the traditional magical techniques of chanting, deep breathing, and dancing.

One of Starhawk's closest associates in her environmental activism was the late Tom DeLong (1946-1982), known by the Welsh pseudonym Gwydion Pendderwen. At the age of thirteen, he got in a fight with a fellow schoolboy who was the son of his neighbor Victor Anderson (1917-2001). As a result of this violent encounter he became friendly with Anderson and his wife Cora. Victor Anderson claimed he had been inducted into the pre-war Harpy Coven, and in the 1950s had founded his own Feri (Faery) tradition. Pendderwen attended California State University studying theater, obtained a bachelor of arts degree, and became an actor. He also learned Welsh by corresponding with a pen pal in Wales, and later visited the country, where he was inducted into a secular order of bardic druids. He also visited England in the 1970s, and met Alex Sanders and Stewart Farrar. He was initiated into Alexandrian Wicca, and on his return to the States incorporated elements of it into the Feri tradition.

In 1970, with his fellow Feri initiate Alison Harlow, Pendderwen founded an environmental group called Nemeton. The name was taken from the Celtic term for a sacred grove, and its aim was to preserve the surviving remnants of America's ancient forests. Seven years later he founded a similar group called Forever Forests with the task of planting new trees across the country to replace those cut down by logging operations or killed by disease. Forever Forests survived his premature death in an automobile accident in 1982, and its work now continues under the auspices of the neopagan Church of the All Worlds. Pendderwen was also politically active with Starhawk at a demonstration outside the Lawrence Livermore Weapons Laboratory in California shortly before his death.

In the same year that Starhawk's *The Spiral Dance* was published, Margot Adler produced her classic guide *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers and Other Pagans in America*. Adler had been a radio producer and journalist since 1968 and pioneered talk shows discussing religion, politics, women's issues, and ecology. She went on to be the New York bureau chief for National Public Radio and the host of *Justice Talking*, a radio program dedicated to constitutional issues.

Margot Adler was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, in the so-called Deep South of the United States, but grew up in the metropolis of New York. From 1964 to 1968, she was involved in the civil rights movement and the infamous demonstrations at the Democratic Party Convention in Chicago. While visiting England, Adler read a copy of *The Waxing Moon*, a magazine produced by Joe Wilson and Tony Kelly of the Pagan Movement. She then joined the Welsh Traditionalists' coven in New York and in 1973 was initiated into Gardnerian Wicca. In 1988, she was married Wiccan-style in a handfasting ceremony conducted by Selena Fox of Circle Sanctuary. This was favorably reported in the *New York Times*.

Basically, Margot Adler wanted to write a book "which treats the resurgence of the Craft and Paganism as a response to a planet in crisis." She planned to "talk at length about the relationship of the Craft to our environment, the technology, the ecological theory, to society and even politics" (letter to John Score of the Pagan Front dated December 11, 1975, in the MOW archive). In a sense, this reflected the current developments in Wicca and its transition in the United States from a magical mystery cult to an environmentally friendly nature religion.

When Margot Adler began researching her book in the early 1970s by meeting and studying neopagan groups and Wiccan covens, she came across the term "nature religion" in use for the first time to describe these organizations. She also read an article in the Earth Religion News magazine, founded by Herman Slater in 1974, that referred to "pre-Christian nature religions." Around the same time, Tim Zell of the pantheistic Church of All Worlds published a pamphlet describing modern paganism as a "natural religion." Under this heading Zell included witchcraft, animism, pantheism, the pre-Christian old religions of the ancient Britons, Irish, Gauls, Germans, and Norse people. He also added the indigenous religious beliefs of the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Australasia (Rabinovitch and Lewis 2002: 166-167). While this was to define how neopagan witchcraft was to be seen and experienced in the coming decades, Margot Adler was also surprised that some of the Wiccans she encountered, especially the older ones, were not interested in environmental matters at all.



Chapter Thirteen

The Pagan Federation Emerges

In 1973, the Gardnerian Wiccan community suffered yet another shock when Monique and Scotty Wilson decided to sell the contents of the Museum of Witchcraft and Magic on the Isle of Man. Part of the reason was that, following the News of the World revelations in 1969 that they were letting their daughter attend Wiccan rites, they were excluded by the more conservative members of the Craft. Monique Wilson was also experiencing bad health and the couple were in financial difficulties. As early as 1968, Doreen Valiente heard the Wilsons were sent writs by staff at the museum because they had not been paid. At the time the

couple were supposed to be "virtually broke" (DV notebook entry February 27, 1968, in MOW archive).

The Wilsons sold the museum collection to the Ripley's "Believe It or Not" organization based in Canada. The company was founded by Robert Ripley, a cartoonist and adventurer who was born in 1890. He started his exhibition of the weird and wonderful with a collection of shrunken heads obtained while traveling in Ecuador. Ripley was an eccentric character, as well as an excellent businessman. He owned a pet boa constrictor and chipmunks and squirrels who played around him as he drew his cartoons. Ripley traveled the world, collecting the most bizarre artifacts he could find, and made a living displaying these to the public.

Ripley's paid £120,000 for the ten thousand items in the museum collection, three thousand books from Gerald Gardner's library, and his personal ritual tools, including a silver chalice, an ivory wand, and his altar. An old friend of Gardner, Angus McLeod, burned most of his remaining private papers and destroyed the items left over from the sale. Ripley's shipped the collection to the United States and it formed the core of the display in their Museum of Witchcraft and Black Magic at the popular tourist attraction of Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco ("Witches Treasure

Will Go To America," *TheManx Star*, January 15, 1973).

The Witches Mill was sold separately and changed hands several times in the following years. It was finally purchased by a property developer in 1995 for £225,000 and completely restored at a cost of £1 million. The ruined tower of the original windmill without its sails was converted into a three-bedroom dwelling complete with a Victorian spiral staircase. The adjoining granary was made into luxury apartments, and the former farmhouse, office, and workshop from Gardner's day were turned into two-bedroom cottages. In 2000, the whole site was being offered for either sale or lease.

Once the sale of the museum collection had been completed in 1973, the Wilsons moved to Torremolinos, near Malaga in Spain. This resort on the Spanish coast was popular with British tourists and the couple bought and ran a cafe in the town. Monique Wilson continued practicing witchcraft after she left the Isle of Man and founded a coven in Germany. She is reported to have died nine years after selling the museum collection, possibly in an automobile accident. Scotty Wilson was rumored to have moved to either the United States or Australia after her death, and in 2004 was reported to be still alive and a member of a coven (pers. comm. from Julia Phillips).

The Museum of Witchcraft and Black Magic in San Francisco closed down in the late 1970s and the Gardner collection was transferred to another Ripley museum in St. Augustine, Florida. It stayed on view until the 1980s, when it was then placed in storage. From then onwards, items from the collection were gradually sold off or auctioned to the public in small lots. When Dr. Allen Greenfield visited the museum in Florida, he even found several magical artifacts from the collection for sale in its souvenir shop. In 1986, he negotiated with Ripley's to buy the famous OTO charter given to Gardner by Crowley, and the original manuscript of *Ye Bok of Ye Magical Art*. The next year Richard and Tamara James of the Church of Wicca in Toronto managed to purchase the bulk of Gardner's manuscripts, books, and his personal correspondence with his various High Priestesses.

Another (unknown) person representing a company called A & B Trading purchased a large quantity of items from the collection and then offered them for sale by mail-order through placing advertisements in occult magazines. In 1998, some of the collection consisting of lucky charms, amulets, talismans, and magical pendants, bracelets, brooches, necklaces, and rings, was offered for sale on the Internet by an American collector. The prices for the items ranged from \$100 for a small amulet to \$95,000 for an ancient Egyptian

necklace. Among the more out-of-the-ordinary items were a witch's poppet, a nineteenth-century ceremonial dagger, a fourteenth-century moon amulet, Lady Olwen's (Monique Wilson) personal seal insignia, a sixteen-inch-long animal tail (allegedly worn by a Wiccan High Priest in rituals), and an instrument used for "pricking" suspected witches once owned by the seventeenth-century Witchfinder-General, Matthew Hopkins.

In 2005, more items from the Gardner collection, including an antique kilt pin for \$249, a hairpin for \$4,449, the image of a imp or devil for the same price, a genuine shell rattle for \$325, a brooch depicting the Roman moon goddess Diana for \$850, a medieval crusader's ring for \$559, a pentacle for \$700, plus a silver potion bottle, a bottle of Holy Water that once belonged to an exorcist-priest, a ceremonial agate ring, a glass bead amulet, a carved bear head and claw, and various magical charms and amulets were offered for general sale.

Meanwhile, if the politicization of Wicca was happening in the United States in the early 1970s, in Britain the movement was being led as early as 1968 by a Gardnerian Wiccan High Priest called John Score (1914-1979). Like many other early Gardnerians, he had a military background and served with

the Royal Air Force in the Second World War. He joined up in 1931 and became a flight lieutenant in the Signals Intelligence Branch. When Score left the RAF in 1946, he organized the telecommunications for the Olympic Games when they were held in London two years later.

He then settled in his hometown of Poole in Dorset and married his wife, Jean, the daughter of a colonel in the Army Medical Corp who was working at the local hospital as an almoner. Between them they were later to run the Acorn Coven. Score retired from work in 1963 due to ill health, and at first devoted his spare time to constructing a transmitter/receiver device for communicating with the dead. However, in July 1968, he published the first two-page edition of a witchcraft newsletter called *The Wiccan*, with an initial mailing list of only eight subscribers.

Score later claimed he was descended from a hereditary branch of witchcraft and said he owned a male ancestor's serpent staff presented to him in 1928 (letter to Richard Coward September 13, 1976, in MOW archive). Whether this was true or not, in 1961 John Score wrote to Gerald Gardner on the subject of reincarnation. Three years later he joined the newly formed Witchcraft Research Association and also attended some of the public meetings of The Regency. The

editor of the WRA's newsletter, Pentagram, put Score in touch with Eleanor Bone, the High Priestess of the Gardnerian Streatham Coven. Score wrote to her and said he had some psychic abilities, including telepathy, "traveling clairvoyance" (now known as remote viewing), and the recognition of past lives. In 1946, he told Bone, he was involved with a group operating on the "inner planes" to eradicate some black magicians during an out-of-body experience. He said it took him about a year to recover from this incident.

Whether or not Ray Bone found this admission odd is not recorded, but evidently their correspondence did not continue. In 1965 Score gave an interview to a local newspaper and in it he was described as an expert in witchcraft. The following year he gave a talk to the English-Speaking Union and was described in the Poole and Dorset Herald (December 30, 1965) as a nuclear disarmament (he was a member of CND, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament), an extrasensory parapsychologist, "a man about town extraordinary," a believer in UFOs, and, by his own admission, a warlock, or male witch.

After this interview was published, Score wrote again to Ray Bone and told her the publicity had generated several

enquirers wanting to know about witchcraft. He said he had sent the enquiries on to the WRA postbox in London and she replied, congratulating him on his public defense of the Craft. Bone also put him in touch with Madge Worthington of the Whitecroft tradition, whom she described as her deputy. Score finally met Worthington in February 1967 at one of her weekly tea parties and was initiated by her soon afterwards. Jean Score was also initiated, and John Score received his second degree in September 1967. They then started their own coven in Poole, known rather grandly as the Order of the Golden Acorn (OGA).

The early issues of The Wiccan newsletter were mainly concerned with the recent newspaper exposes of prominent Wiccans, including Score's own initiator Madge Worthington, and Alex and Maxine Sanders, and focused on religious freedom and the right to privacy. Score was fond of invoking Article 18 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights that said: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or commonly with others in public and private, to manifest his religion and belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance." This became the mantra Score regularly repeated in his dealings with the media and the British

government in the following years, even though at the time neither witchcraft nor neopaganism were officially or legally accepted by the authorities as an authentic and legitimate religious belief under the terms of the UN human rights charter.

Some of John Score's varied and idiosyncratic interests and political views can be gauged by the type of advertisements he published for free in *The Wiccan*. These included environmental organizations such as the National Society for Clean Air, the National Pure Water Association, the Soil Association (for organic farmers and smallholders), and *The Ecologist* magazine. His support for feminism and human rights was also demonstrated by advertising for the Women's Liberation Workshop and the National Council for Civil Liberties. Score's personal interest in health foods and alternative therapies was illustrated by an advertisement for the Vegetarian Society and a recipe in the newsletter for yogurt made from goat's milk. On the other hand, his political views also included support for capital punishment, opposition to abortion, and the repeal of the law legalizing the practice of homosexuality.

In 1970, John Score began a campaign in *The Wiccan* against Alex Sanders for lying about his initiation into the

Craft, for betraying its secrets, allegedly practicing black magic, and calling himself by the false title of "King of the Witches." This reflected the general hostility against Sanders and his activities by senior Gardnerians such as Ray Bone, Patricia and Arnold Crowther, and Jack Bracelin. However, it would be incorrect to see Score and The Wiccan as their mouthpiece in this matter.

In other issues of The Wiccan, John Score turned his sarcastic brand of criticism on another pagan magazine called The Waxing Moon, published and edited by the late Joe Wilson in the United States. This was not because Score was anti-American, as Fred Adams of the neopagan group Ferafaria was favorably mentioned in the newsletter. In fact, in June 1970 The Wiccan was affiliated with the American Council of Themis, representing nature religions worldwide, and Score also publicized Earth Day in 1971.

After the problems in 1970 with the aborted attempt to introduce new legislation in the British Parliament against witchcraft, Score and some other prominent witches, including Doreen Valiente, decided some kind of new organization should be set up to counter any future persecution. Score was also worried about the recent formation of a neopagan organization in Wales known as the

Pagan Movement by Tony Kelly. One of its leading members was Joe Wilson, who had come in contact with Kelly after advertising *The Waxing Moon* in the British edition of the American magazine *Fate* in 1969. Tony Kelly's brother passed him a copy and he wrote to Wilson. A lengthy correspondence began and was extended to include Ed Fitch and Gwydion Pendderwen. This led to the formation of the Pagan Movement of Britain and Ireland (Harrison August 2004).

Joe Wilson was a staff sergeant in the USAF, and in 1970 was transferred to England, where he was based at RAF Upper Heyford in Oxfordshire. This was a joint Anglo-American base where, at the height of the Cold War, B-52 bombers and F-111 fighters were stored in concrete bunkers in preparation for war with the Soviet Union. Wilson held open meetings at his rented house in Bicester near the base for pagans and witches and interested enquirers. He also transferred the printing and publication of his magazine to the United Kingdom, and it eventually became the official journal of the Pagan Movement in Wales.

Before he left the States, Joe Wilson had already been in contact with Ruth Wynn Owen of the Plant y Bran and as soon as he arrived in England he telephoned her at her

apartment in Ealing, West London. She invited him to visit her at her home where he met a male Gardnerian witch he had also been corresponding with, and Madge Worthington and Arthur Eaglen. Wilson was later introduced to a woman "in the north" whom he called "Lady Alice" (possibly Patricia Crowther) and received the second- and third-degree Gardnerian initiations from her. He also attended full moon rituals with the Whitecroft Coven (Wilson, February and May 2005).

While he was stationed in England, Joe Wilson became involved in a sensationalized court martial involving several USAF servicemen at Upper Heyford who were actively campaigning against the Vietnam war. During the trial it was disclosed that Wilson was recruited by military intelligence as an undercover agent to spy on the defendants. The British newspapers picked up on the story when he gave evidence, because Wilson refused to swear an oath on the Bible, on grounds he was a witch. Many English Gardnerian Wiccans, including John Score, regarded Wilson's activities as a betrayal of the Craft and publicly denounced him.

The meeting to set up the Pagan Front, as the new organization was called at first, was held at Madge Worthington's London house. It was attended by John

Score, Doreen Valiente, and "the High Priestess of a Hereditary Coven from Walsingham [Norfolk]" (Pengelly, Hall and Dowse 1997: 4). It was agreed the Pagan Front would adopt the Ancient Egyptian symbol of a crux ansata, or ankh, as its emblem or logo. The recognition of the Goddess, the feminine principle in religion, and the importance of women was central to the new organization. In fact the dual divinity of the God and Goddess in Wicca was seen in terms of the new Aquarian Age concept of sexual equality. Score and other Wiccans believed that witchcraft was going to be the religion of the New Age. Idries Shah had allegedly received a message to that effect from the "inner planes" in the 1950s, although he refused to believe it, and George Pickingill was of the same opinion in the nineteenth century (see Liddell 1994).

The PF meeting was opened by a social pagan dance of Native American origin, followed by a keynote address by Doreen Valiente, just as she had done at the WRA dinner. She expressed her wish that the past problems with Kelly and Wilson's Pagan Movement would be resolved and people on both sides could recognize they were unwise and unnecessary. Valiente went on to say there was unity in strength and welcomed all "sincere people of goodwill who follow the pagan path," even if they did not agree with each

other.

During the meeting it was proposed The Wiccan should become the official newsletter of the PF. Eventually the following wording was displayed at the beginning of each issue: "The Wiccan is the newsletter of the Pagan Federation, a national and international free association of pagans and crafters, devised in 1970 and ratified in 1971 (as the Pagan Front) at a meeting attended by a variety of branches of the Old Religion of Wisecraft (White Witchcraft). The Pagan Federation is a focus for contact between the Craft of the Wise and those who might find rapport with the Old Ways. It is a forum for discussion between various branches of the Craft and it serves to promote the united face of Paganism against the calumny of the media." After John Score's death, when The Wiccan was renamed Pagan Dawn, this statement was dropped because the organization had become more diverse and was not exclusively Wiccan (Pengelly, Hall, and Dowse 1997: 37).

Unfortunately, Joe Wilson got to see a leaked report of the PF meeting. He wrote to John Score, complaining it was "intellectually misleading, if not libelous towards both myself and towards the Pagan Movement." Wilson asked for a public apology for the comments made during the meeting

and told Score that in the future he would not advertise the Pagan Front or The Wiccan in The Waxing Moon (letter dated June 9, 1971, in the MOW archive). This letter was apparently a response to comments made by Score during the meeting about Wilson's spying activities in the USAF.

Membership of the PF was open to all people of goodwill, whatever their occult [sic] commitments may be (or not), providing they accepted the concept of a nature religion complementary to the male and female principles. Respective members were also required to sign on to the Three Principles that formed the PF's official creed. These principles were evidently dreamed up by Doreen Valiente, as she mentioned it during her correspondence with John Score about creating the PF (letter dated October 2, 1970, in MOW archive). The Three Principles were: (1) The Pagan Ethic "Do what you will, so long as it harms no one" (based on the Wiccan Rede invented by Gerald Gardner and based on Crowley's maxim "Do What Thou Wilt"); (2) Reincarnation, with its implication of survival of bodily death, and karma (personal fate), which we make ourselves (Score was a firm believer in reincarnation and knew he had been an Atlantean, ancient Egyptian, and Native American in past lives); (3) Love and Kinship with nature, which reflected the emerging new belief that Wicca was a nature religion.

By the 1990s, the Three Principles of the Pagan Federation had been changed to the following: (1) Love and Kinship of Nature, reverence for the Life Force, and the continuing renewing cycle of life and death; (2) the Pagan Ethic "Do what thou wilt, but harm none"; this is a positive morality, not a list of thou-shalt-nots-each person is responsible for discovering his or her own true nature and developing it fully in harmony with the world around them; (3) Acceptance of the polarity of deity, the reality of both God and Goddess; active participation in the cosmic dance of God and Goddess, female and male, rather than the suppression of either the male or female principle.

Not all PF members and prospective members agreed with these principles, especially the last one, because they followed traditions that were mythically polytheistic or even monotheistic in nature.

A private initiation ritual was introduced for new members, as a way of binding their commitment to the PF and the Three Principles. The new member was obliged to do the rite at the full moon by lighting a candle and burning some sandalwood incense in the form of joss sticks. They then had to link up with the "Powers of Life, Light, and Love" while meditating on the PF's ideals and the reality of being

joined in brotherhood and sisterhood with the "inner planes of Being" and sincere pagans everywhere. Instructions were given on opening and closing the ritual by drawing the sign of the PF's logo, the ankh, in the air. Not surprisingly perhaps, this initiation ritual was not widely accepted or used. In fact, it was discontinued after John Score died in 1979.

Although Score had liberal ideas about vegetarianism, feminism, alternative therapies, and religious freedoms, he also held strong and conservative views on other subjects. For instance, he opposed the social-cultural trends towards Britain becoming a multi-racial society (The Wiccan #10 May 1970). He also had a serious problem with homosexuals, bisexuals, and lesbians, and believed they should not be initiated into Wicca. In this respect, Score mirrored the attitude of Gerald Gardner, who was also homophobic. During a conversation with Jack Bracelin, an acquaintance of his was mentioned who had expressed an interest in joining the Brickett Wood Coven. When Gardner discovered this person was gay, he became angry and said: "There are no homosexual witches, and it is not possible to be a homosexual and a witch."

Although this may not be a politically correct attitude

today, and regarded as a bigoted response, Gardner and his contemporaries were a product of the zeitgeist. To most heterosexual alpha males of their generation, especially those like Gardner who were politically rightwing, homosexuality was not morally or socially acceptable, and they regarded it as an "unmanly vice." There was also the other factor that during most of their lifetime homosexuality was still illegal in Britain. Lois Bourne has confirmed that Gardner was homophobic and he personally regarded homosexuality as "a disgusting perversion and a flagrant transgression of natural law, negating the life force and the fertility aspect represented by the God and Goddess." Ray Bone agreed with him and said she had never met or recognized any homosexual witches by the particular aura possessed by all witches (Bourne 1998: 38).

These prejudiced views reflected the official policy regarding homosexuality in Gardnerian Wicca before the 1970s. It was, however, also to be found in traditional witchcraft such as the Pickingill Craft (see Liddell 1994). The traditional witch Bob Clay Egerton, who knew both Gerald Gardner and Alex Sanders, and was initiated into the Old Craft in 1940, was taught that anyone who started to practice witchcraft could be accepted as a witch. He took this to imply a witch could be homosexual. However, in practice, a

gay man or woman who attempted to join a traditional coven would find obstacles placed in his or her path. His personal opinion was that they would find it easier to join a magical group or lodge (pers. comm.).

Not all the Gardnerians agreed with the stance against homosexuals, and by the 1980s were changing their views. Doreen Valiente said that when reports of all-female covens first started to filter through from the United States there was an adverse reaction from some (male) Gardnerian witches. One (unnamed) said: "We don't want to have anything to do with them. They're a load of lesbians." (Valiente 1989: 183). Valiente was told homosexuality was "abhorrent to the Goddess," and her curse would be on people of the same sex who practiced the Craft together. She believed this for a long time and then in the 1980s came to question it. She could not understand how people could be "abhorrent to the Goddess" just because they were born with a particular sexual orientation (Ibid.).

Writing in the revised version of her classic book, *The Spiral Dance*, in 1989, the feminist ecowitch Starhawk said modern witches should no longer describe the energy that flows through the universe represented symbolically as the God and Goddess as exclusively a male/female polarity. She

claimed that doing this created a stereotypical form that enshrined heterosexual relationships as the norm and the basic pattern of sexuality (which of course they are), and branded any other form of sexual relationship as deviant. This idea had some logic at a mythic level, as many of the deities of classical paganism exhibited bisexual attributes and indulged in same-sex relationships. However, such a liberal view of pagan gods and goddesses is not found in historical witchcraft or in modern Gardnerian Wicca before the 1970s.

John Score took the stance that the Craft was specifically and exclusively heterosexual. For that reason "no single male should be initiated without good evidence of heterosexual attainment." Any coven that contained homosexuals or lesbians would be regarded by other witches as an "abomination" (letter to Dr. Leo Martello dated June 26, 1970, in MOW archive). Score also disagreed with Ruth Wynn Owen about the status (if any) of gay people in the Craft, and this is probably one of the reasons why she divorced herself from the Pagan Front. Evoking Score's professed support for religious freedom, she had apparently claimed everyone "has the right to worship as they will" (letter from Score to Wynn Owen, December 2, 1976, in MOW archive).

In the United States there was a far more relaxed attitude on the subject in Craft circles. In an interview with the National Insider magazine in July 1970, Louise Hubner, the self-styled "Official Witch of Los Angeles," said it was essential male witches had homosexual tendencies. This was because witchcraft is closer to women's natures and for that reason heterosexual men cannot practice "the dark arts [sic]" In modern terms she was probably saying that male witches should be metrosexual, or in touch with their feminine side.

As we have seen, Dr. Leo Martello was gay, although that did not stop Patricia Crowther from initiating him. Score must have discovered Martello was a homosexual as he began referring to him sarcastically in the pages of *The Wiccan* by the nickname "Marshmallow." Ed Buczynski of the Welsh Traditionalist coven in New York joined together with other gay men and women in 1975 to create the new Minoan tradition. Its members worshipped the Cretan snake goddess and the bull god, while ironically still basing their rituals on Gardnerian Wicca. Other early pioneers of the initiation of gays were the Radical Faeries, who produced a magazine advocating "queer" activism. In 1970, Arthur Evans' book *Witchcraft and the Gay Counterculture* became the bible of gay witches, but it was not until 1987 that an openly gay Gardnerian High Priest, Michael Thorn, was elected as the

first officer of the Covenant of the Goddess organization.

John Score's targets over the years often included his fellow Crafters as he promoted his idiosyncratic views on a wide range of subjects. These included such oddities as his opposition to the American custom of printing the month before the date of the day in correspondence. In TW #10 (May 1970) he launched an attack on witches who claimed the title of king or queen. He said that (in Gardnerian Wicca) the term "witch queen" was sometimes used, but only applied to a High Priestess controlling more than one coven. In a later issue, he attacked those who followed the so-called "Left hand path" of occultism, and warned "we now have the Inner Plane Contacts and Organisation able to deal effectively with them should there be any attempt to expose or interfere" (TW#13, September 1970). He also chastised Herman Slater for offering a "Gardnerian Coven Sword" for sale in his Warlock Shop in Manhattan. His comment was, "There ain't no such animal" (Pengelly, Hall and Dowse 1997), which is an odd remark, as most Gardnerians of the time used a sword in their rituals. Gerald Gardner certainly always used to do so.

Score also attempted to rewrite some of the dogma of Wicca using his own theosophical occult ideas, and in

TW#45 (October 1975) tackled the thorny issue of the Law of Threefold Return. This says that if a witch practices an act of negative magic such as a curse, the energy he or she sends out will rebound and come back to them threefold. Score said that for some time he had considered this law was in conflict with the purpose behind reincarnation, i.e., the evolution of the human soul. He had therefore "passed the problem back [to] 'Old Gerald' for consideration," and apparently he agreed this law did conflict with it. Score said he was asked to make an announcement in the newsletter that the law was to be abandoned. This was because as long as it was retained "the Wheel of Rebirth cannot be 'broken' with release from the need to reincarnate."

When I launched my own witchcraft newsletter The Cauldron in 1976, John Score greeted it with some derision and was suspicious of my motives. He also thought it was a deliberate and blatant attempt to copy The Wiccan. This was partly because both our publications were printed on electric Roneo duplicators, cutting-edge technology back then, in a foolscap newsletter format stapled at the left-hand corner. That was as far as the similarities went, as TC was not political, we were not really interested in campaigning for the human rights or religious freedom of our readers by taking on the media and the government, and it was not the official

publication of an organization. Instead our initial purpose was to bring together witches from different traditions and provide an independent forum for discussion. In that respect, we took our lead from the Witchcraft Research Association.

Although John Score seemed paranoid about the appearance of TC, ironically it was his Gardnerian initiator, Madge Worthington, who first suggested the idea and encouraged its creation. In the autumn of 1975, she voiced her opinion to me that there was the need for another witchcraft publication as a non-political alternative to The Wiccan. At the time I was not that interested, as I was already editing and publishing a general occult magazine called Spectrum, which lasted for ten issues. However, after giving the matter some thought, I decided the idea had legs, as they say.

We were already running a column in Spectrum called "Ceridwen's Cauldron" so I dropped the Ceridwen bit and used it for the name of the new publication. It was launched at Candlemas 1976 with a first print-run of one hundred copies. Twenty of those were sold through the Atlantis bookshop in London. Because I could not run two magazines side by side, I closed down Spectrum and

transferred the outstanding subscriptions to the newsletter. Today TC is a professionally printed A4 magazine with fifty-two pages, and we have published over 130 issues since 1976. We have a wide readership in the United Kingdom, Europe, the USA, Canada, and Australasia. There is also an electronic version published on the Internet from Brazil in Portuguese, under the editorship of Nicholaj de Mattos Frisvold.

However, when he was not busy criticizing his fellow witches, Score continued to attack what he called "the gutter press" and their gross misrepresentations of the Craft. He reported with satisfaction that since the 1969 expose, there had been one premature death among the staff of The News of the World, an abduction, a murder, and the editor at the time had been sacked (TW#7 March 1970). Seven years later, he reported there had been a fire on the newspaper's premises, which he had apparently predicted several issues earlier. He claimed this was in "line with the sort of incidents that have followed excursions by this newspaper against the Children of the Goddess." He was hopeful The News of the World would now stop the "misreporting and sensationalizing of our entirely legitimate religion" (TW#62 July 1978 quoted in Pengelly, Hall and Dowse 1997:31 with the added comment: "But they didn't learn did they? And we

doubt very much if they ever will").

John Score's wrath was also aimed at popular entertainment when he believed it was misrepresenting or defaming the "Craft of the Wise." One of his targets was an episode of the American science-fiction television series Star Trek, broadcast by the BBC. This episode featured aliens disguised as human witches, and Score claimed this was an example of anti-witchcraft propaganda. Oddly, he blamed the BBC's alleged domination by their (then only Christian) Religious Advisory Committee. In 1972, he also wrote to the Home Secretary to complain about a new glossy magazine called Witchcraft associated with Alex Sanders. Rather melodramatically and inaccurately he described it as "pornographic" and "salacious filth," although by modern standards it was pretty tame. The Home Office replied by saying that it was for the courts to take action against any magazine that contravened the Obscene Publications Act. Score was advised to report the matter to his local police station and give them the address of the magazine's publisher. Ironically, Doreen Valiente had considered writing an article for a similar exoteric magazine on "Naked Magic: Ritual Nudity Through the Ages" (DV notebooks in MOW archive).

Despite his devotion to alternative therapies, health foods, herbalism, and vegetarianism, John Score suffered from ill health for a long time and had an ongoing heart condition. In 1979, he finally succumbed to abdominal cancer and died on November 30. Doreen Valiente presided at his funeral service and also wrote an obituary for the popular occult magazine *Prediction*. Those who started the Pagan Front nearly ten years earlier were determined it would survive the passing of its primary founder. After a short hiatus, in October 1981 the PF was taken over by a leading Wiccan High Priestess and Cambridge University graduate, Leonora James (aka Prudence Jones). The name of the organization was immediately changed from the Pagan Front to the Pagan Federation. This was to avoid any possible association with the neo-Nazi National Front political party that had become prominent in British politics in the 1970s.

In 1985, the quango English Heritage obtained a court order banning all visitors to Stonehenge at the summer solstice. This was primarily to prevent the annual rock festival that had developed in recent years adjacent to the stone circle. An exclusion zone was created around the area with razor-wire, road blocks, and a cordon of riot police to keep out unwanted intruders. The Pagan Federation, under

its new leadership, decided this interfered with the religious rights of the Druid Order because they had been allowed to celebrate the solstice at Stonehenge since 1902. It was considered the druids were just the type of people the PF was set up to support and defend, as they were classified as pagans following "an ancestral Nature-revering religion of Europe." This was a departure from PF policy, as John Score always regarded the organization as exclusively representing followers of the Craft of the Wise (Wiccans).

Before she became the PF's leader, Prudence Jones had run an affiliated group called the Pagan Anti-Defamation League (PADL) with a friend of hers, the Earth Mysteries writer and researcher Nigel Pennick. It used the same London postbox as the PF and was to provide the public face of the organization. The PADL began a campaign of letter writing and radio and television interviews in an attempt to persuade English Heritage to allow limited access to Stonehenge at the summer solstice for religious celebrations. Representatives from the PADL also attended meetings with English Heritage to mediate between the authorities, the druids, and the "New Age travelers" who wanted to resurrect the free festival at the stones. Even though they failed at the time and the PADL was disbanded in 1989, its activities changed the face of the Pagan

Federation forever (Prudence Jones in Pengelly, Hall, and Dowse 1997: 23).

In the 1980s, Christian fundamentalists began to spread propaganda imported from the United States about so-called "satanic ritual abuse" (SRA). There were several high-profile cases where children were seized from their parents in dawn raids by the police and social services, and put into foster care. The PF got involved in supporting and helping families who were the victims of this campaign, even though nearly all of them were not pagans or witches. Supported by the Christian Reachout Trust, a Member of Parliament, the late Geoffrey Dickens, made another attempt to reintroduce anti-witchcraft legislation. He claimed that this was necessary because witches were involved in child abuse and human sacrifice. Dickens was not regarded as a serious person by his fellow MPs and had demeaned his position by appearing in a music video with an all-female pop group. For this reason, his attempt to introduce a law licensing occult practitioners and limiting their public activities was laughed out of the House of Commons.

Geoffrey Dickens also blamed the current high levels of unemployment in Britain on witchcraft. He said people with no jobs got bored and with too much time on their hands

"the Devil made work for idle hands." The MP seems to have become quite paranoid and began to claim he was being victimized by the witches. He alleged a dossier on witchcraft he had compiled mysteriously got lost in the post, as things sometimes do. He blamed the witches who were campaigning against his proposed legislation for intercepting it before it reached its destination.

During the 1980s, the main political work undertaken by the PF was concerned with the problems arising from the allegations about SRA. This included the organization providing information to the (nonpagan) parents of children on Orkney in Scotland. Their children were taken into care following unfounded allegations of a satanic group operating on the island. The group was allegedly practicing ritual child abuse and animal sacrifice. One of the chief suspects was the local minister, and police seized a clerical garment from his home, claiming it was used in black magic rites. In 1990, the PF produced a booklet for police officers and social workers entitled *Something Out of Nothing*, attacking the concept of SRA. This coincided with the introduction of a "pagan parenting" feature in the PF's magazine *Pagan Dawn*, which had replaced *The Wiccan*.

In May 1988, the first Pagan Federation Committee was set

up at a meeting held in the London house of the Wiccan writer and psychologist, Vivianne Crowley. A new editor was chosen for The Wiccan and a constitution was drafted, a bank account was opened, and the first PF information pack was written. This was based on a leaflet for Hallowe'en already produced for the media by the PADL and written by Prudence Jones and Nigel Pennick. The format of The Wiccan was also changed from a duplicated newsletter to a printed magazine. As a result of this important meeting, the PF also announced its attention to form a dialogue with other non-Wiccan neopagan religious groups such as druids, followers of Asatru, and urban shamans. It also said it would forge links with surviving indigenous religions in North America, Japan, and Africa.

The first annual Pagan Federation Conference was held at the Linkup event in Leicester. This was organized by another organization called Pagan Link, founded by Richard and Kate Westwood, and the newly formed Pagan Council of Elders (not to be confused with the Alexandrian Council of Elders). The PF also sent representatives to the Festival of Faith and the Environment held in Canterbury Cathedral in Kent, the site of the first Roman Catholic church in Britain in the fifth century CE. Vivianne Crowley led a pagan ceremony at the event, which was the beginning of the PF's

involvement in the new interfaith movement, designed to bring together followers of different religions in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance. In the same year, local PF groups from all over the country celebrated Earth Healing Day (formerly Earth Day) and this has now become an annual event. Two years later the first democratic elections were held, and rank and file members were allowed to elect candidates to the organization's committee.

The fundamental changes to the Pagan Federation in the 1980s were based on Prudence Jones' realization that "Paganism, as the ancestral tradition of Europe, took many other forms besides Wicca..." (in Pengelly, Hall, and Dowse 1997: 23). This led to a broadening of the appeal of the PF to include non-Wiccans in an attempt to live up to its new name as a broad federation of all pagan beliefs. As a direct result of this new policy, membership increased considerably in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1992 the PF had twelve hundred full members and an equal number of associate members. Five years later, the number of advance tickets for its annual conference had doubled from 850 the previous year to 1,500. With people also buying tickets at the door, this figure increased to about 2,000 attendees. In 2001 it was claimed there were 4,500 PF members and subscribers to Pagan Dawn.

In 1990, Prudence Jones decided to resign as the president of PF. Her place was taken by Elen Williams, the High Priestess of Gardner's old coven at Brickett Wood, now based in North London. In recent years membership has decreased due partly to competition from rival organizations such as the Children of Artemis. Some members also became unhappy at the PF's increased political role and activities. These included trying to get official state recognition of Wicca and paganism as legitimate religious beliefs, the appointment of pagan chaplains to hospitals and prisons, its continued support for interfaith, and a perceived lack of democracy. Some members left when the PF's database of members was passed to the printing company producing Pagan Dawn and copies of the magazine were posted in transparent plastic envelopes. However the strength of the PF today for many members still lies in its original contact and networking capabilities, which include national, regional, and now international conferences, local groups, and meets.

Despite the apparent setbacks the Pagan Federation experienced in recent years it continues to provide a service to newcomers and the more experienced. Its mission remains to "make Paganism accessible to people genuinely seeking a nature-based spirituality" (Pagan Dawn #169, Samhain-Yule

2008). Now headed by a fully elected committee and administrative officers, the PF has over sixty regional coordinators who stay in contact with members, provide information and answer queries, organize local events, and produce newsletters. The PF also organizes and hosts seasonal rituals for all comers, workshops, and camps. Annually, they still celebrate Earth Healing Day with members from all over the world assembling on that day to perform rituals to heal Mother Earth.

In addition, the PF works politically for the religious rights of pagans and Wiccans so they can worship and hold jobs without fear of discrimination or persecution. It liaises with the Home Office, Members of Parliament, the civil service, hospitals and prisons, the police, social services, and interfaith groups to promote a positive image of Wicca and neopaganism. It also provides expert witnesses in court cases and industrial tribunals to assist pagans and Wiccans who have been discriminated against in their employment or child custody issues. As a media resource it provides information and handles over a thousand enquiries each year from radio, television, newspapers, and magazines. It also produces educational information leaflets for distribution to academic libraries, teachers, social workers and the police. In this respect it has come a long way in the

last thirty years since it was founded as a contact network for Wiccans.



PART FIVE

The Future Ig8I- 2008



Chapter Fourteen

,Wicca International

I

n the early 1980s, the political aspects of Wicca and neopaganism as they had emerged in the previous decade were still evident. The Cold War was at its height in the Reagan-Thatcher years with NATO and the Warsaw Pact nations indulging in nuclear saber rattling and brinksmanship. One part of this was the controversial decision taken by the UK government to accept the basing of US cruise missiles at RAF Greenham Common in Berkshire. This led to demonstrations and the setting up of a peace camp outside the base's perimeter fence. The demonstrators were mostly made up of women who each day had to endure obscene misogynistic insults from the military police and private security guards.

Many of these thirty thousand women demonstrators were witches, and Doreen Valiente commented: "In spite of the derision of the media, it has become apparent that many of the actions of the women who gathered there were ritual actions. Their protest was often a magical protest, and feminist witches from the USA were among those who joined in to support them" (1989: 191). In an interview in the magazine *Northern Earth Mysteries* in 1982, one of these women, Hilary Byers, said: "We were all taking part in a sort of spiritual experience in which the concentrated devotion of all these people had somehow been able to neutralize whatever nasty things might be happening or being planned at the base" (NEM #20, Winter Solstice 1982).

In the early 1980s, other witches were also getting involved with anti-nuclear and environmental groups such as Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, and the Ecology Party (now the Green Party). An antinuclear power and anti-nuclear weapons pressure group specifically set up by witches was Pagans Against Nukes (PAN). This was founded by Phillip and Kate Cozens in Reading. They were originally members of the Gardnerian Whitecroft tradition. Later Philip Cozens changed his name to Rufus, and continued PAN in West Wales with his new partner, Nicola Beechsquirrel. PAN campaigned throughout the 1980s,

using magical rituals in an attempt to close down nuclear power plants and neutralize nuclear missile systems.

PAN's manifesto said it had been formed as an activist group dedicated to banishing all nuclear technology from Earth and creating a culture in harmony with nature. A gathering of about a hundred people was held in 1984 in Sherwood Forest at the summer solstice, probably because of its past associations with Robin Hood, regarded by some neopagans as a human version of the witch god. In London, meetings of local branches of PAN took place in public parks and involved Wiccan-type rituals that were closely monitored by the police (Luhmann 1989: 80-81). Oddly, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War at the end of the 1980s, PAN was suddenly disbanded, despite the fact nuclear power still existed and the USA and Russia held huge stocks of nuclear weapons.

A group similar to PAN was formed in Canada in 1984 by Samuel Wager. At university he had become a feminist and anarchist, joined the Trotskyist League for Social Action, and was involved in political protests. In 1982, Wager experienced a revelation about the Goddess after attending a friend's funeral, and he applied to join the Wiccan Church of Canada. Following this, he joined forces with a fellow Wic

can, Bill Lewis, and together they founded Pagans For Peace (PFP). This brought together pacifists with politically left-wing Wiccans and neopagans to protest against the international arms trade and nuclear weapons.

An anarchist commune was set up on a farm in Ontario and this was followed in 1986 by the formation of a coven run by Wager, based on Alexandrian Wicca and Starhawk's feminist Reclaiming tradition. PFP also published a newsletter with a readership of just over 250 people. Strangely for a radical political group its contents were mostly on general Wiccan subjects. A typical issue featured articles on "Ethics and the Wiccan Rede," "A Wiccan Funeral Rite," "What are the Wiccan Mysteries?" "The Triple Goddess," "A Christian Speaks on Faith and the Path of Wicca," and "Charging Money for Wicca." In 1994, Wager decided to go politically mainstream and applied to be a candidate for the New Democratic Party in the Canadian Parliament. When the party found out he was a practicing witch they rejected him. Wager filed a complaint with the Human Rights Commission and eventually the case was settled out of court in his favor (Rabinovitch and Lewis 2003: 280-281).

Similar cases of religious discrimination against Wiccans

and neopagans occurred in the 1980s as the new laws supporting human rights were tested in the US courts. In March 1985, Pete C. Davies of the Aquarian Tabernacle Church, an initiate of Wicca and the Kingstone tradition, was retained as an expert witness by the Washington State attorney general in a federal court case about the right of a Wiccan convict to practice his religion in prison. As a result of the outcome of this case, the Washington State Department of Corrections recognized that Wicca was a legitimate religious belief worthy of respect like any other faith. It was accepted that Wiccan rites could be openly practiced by the inmates in the state's prisons. Wicca was also included as a genuine religion in the department's Handbook for Religious Beliefs and Practices issued to all Christian prison chaplains.

While these human rights issues were being contested, Wicca was also spreading and expanding beyond Britain and the USA to other countries worldwide. We have already seen how it arrived in Australia in the early 1960s with Anton Miles, an ex-member of Gardner's Brickett Wood Coven. In 1971, Stewart Farrar's book *What Witches Do* and Jessie Bell's *Grimoire of Lady Sheba* were published in Australia, leading to a new interest in witchcraft, mostly by the younger generation. This was despite the fact that in

some Australian states anti-witchcraft laws still existed. For instance, the old 1735 Witchcraft Law in New South Wales was not repealed until as late as 1967. In South Australia, the Vagrancy Law of 1958 still outlawed anyone who "exercised any kind [of] witchcraft, sorcery, enchantment or conjuration," and was not removed from the statute book until 2005.

In the 1980s, one of the leading Wiccans in Australia was Simon Goodman (aka Ian Watts). He was an Alexandrian initiate, and had studied with Maxine and Alex Sanders when they lived together in Sussex. The so-called "Council of Grand Elders" of Alexandrian Wicca gave Goodman a charter to found covens when he returned to Australia. He also met Patricia Crowther when he was in England, but it is not known if she gave him a Gardnerian initiation. Goodman was associated with the pagan magazine *Panthology*, and in 1983 founded the Australian Pagan Information Centre in Perth as a historical archive of the history of witchcraft in Australia. In 1999, its database held four thousand news cuttings dating back to the 1950s, as well as photographs, audio recordings, and videos.

Simon Goodman had already been associated with an earlier Alexandrian coven established in Australia in the

early 1970s by Damian Paltridge (aka "Jesse"). Goodman is also supposed to have been in contact with Doreen Valiente around this time. In 1965, it is claimed, he was inducted into the traditionalist Sussex Craft. This tradition got its name from the fact it originated from a coven in the village of Etchingham in Sussex and came to Australia through Peter Barwick. Goodman became a member of a traditional coven of the Sussex Craft called Corventus Quercus and its Magister (Master) initiated both men and women. They worshipped the Horned God, whom they called "the Devil," and used ritual tools that included a stang (forked staff), cauldron, besom, and a human skull. Simon Goodman met Bill Liddell and Bill told me that he believed the Etchingham coven might have been connected with Old George Pickingill (pers. comm.).

Simon Goodman was also the High Priest of the Boucca Coven in New Zealand, a group associated with a Golden Dawn lodge, known as the Society of Guardians, and led by the late Michael Freedman. The Boucca Coven was started by an Alexandrian initiate belonging to a magical order called Ordine Della Luna. This order was founded by Alex Sanders and his lover Derek Taylor. The coven also had links with an Alexandrian couple in Shropshire, England who had visited New Zealand. The couple held the ranks of Priest

and Priestess.

If you google "Australian Wicca" today, you will find yourself with a choice of from one to six million websites. In 2006, just over 8,200 people declared themselves as Wiccans on the national census (source: Australian Bureau of National Statistics). Two years later the ABNS acknowledged Wicca as the fastest-growing religion in the country. It was also reported that the glossy magazine Witchcraft had a monthly print-run of 16,000 copies. In 1989, the Church of Wicca Australia had been registered as the first legal neopagan and Wiccan church in the country. It was run by Tamara Von Forslin, who claimed to have been initiated into witchcraft in 1972. In 1991, a British-born Alexandrian and Gardnerian High Priestess, Julia Philips, founded the Pan-Pacific Pagan Alliance (now known as the Pagan Alliance). She had emigrated from England some years earlier, after working for the Australian Tourist Board. In London she had run a coven and a magical lodge, was a member of the Pagan Federation and Pagan AntiDefamation League, and a friend of Prudence Jones.

Philips started the PPPA after watching a television news report about the satanic ritual abuse scare in Britain and the USA. She found that Australian Wiccans were totally

ignorant of the threat to their religious rights and freedom posed by Christian fundamentalists. Philips spoke to Prudence Jones about setting up an Australian organization similar to the PF in the United Kingdom. During the winter of 1991, the basic structure of the new group was drafted and it was launched at the national Wiccan Conference in the spring. Its structure was loosely modeled on PFUK, and it adopted the Three Principles created by Doreen Valiente, but with the motto "Strength Through Diversity" signifying it was inclusive of both Wiccan traditions and neopagan belief systems. It also published general information booklets and leaflets designed to inform the media, government agencies, and the general public. A public relations officer and a media officer were also appointed.

A newsletter called Pagan Times was produced that is now printed in a magazine format. Each state had its own semi-autonomous organization-the plan was to have three coordinators representing three different Wiccan and neopagan traditions. In practice this was not possible, as it was difficult enough to find even one person willing to volunteer for these positions. A central coordinator was based in Sydney, where Julia Philips was living at the time. The late Michael Freedman of the Boucca Coven and Society of Guardians became the PPPA representative for

New Zealand.

A year after the PPPA was launched, the Church of All Worlds (Australia) in Canberra was officially recognized as a pagan church by the state government. As well as Wicca, it also incorporated other neopagan traditions, including Celtic and Norse, voodoo, and shamanism. In 1997, the Pagan Awareness Network (PAN) was founded as a nonprofit-making educational organization by Australian members of the US-based Witches League for Public Awareness in Salem. Pagan Awareness Network was heavily involved in lobbying for a change in the existing laws against the practice of witchcraft, and defended the rights of Wiccans under the Religious Discrimination Act. They also ran a campaign to enlighten the public about Wicca, and correct misinformation in the media and disinformation spread by Christian churches.

One of the most prominent media witches in Australia with a high and controversial public profile was Fiona Horne (b. 1966). She was a self-initiate who came out of the broom closet in an article she wrote for the US music magazine Rolling Stone. Before her revelation she had been the co-founder and lead singer of the Australian rock group DEF FX. After it disbanded, Horne worked for the women's

magazine Marie Claire, as a music journalist on radio and television, and presented her own show on the Nine Network. In 1998, she caused a stir in Wiccan circles by posing nude for the centerfold of Playboy with snakes coiled around her body. Displaying her feminist credentials, she has also starred in The Vagina Monologues on the stage.

One of the practical problems facing Wiccan practitioners in Australia is the fact the country is in the Southern Hemisphere, so the seasonal calendar is opposite the Northern Hemisphere. In practice, this means that if the British (Irish) date sequence of Sabbats is followed, Samhain is in the spring, the winter solstice is at midsummer, Imbolc is a summer festival, Beltane is in the autumn, and Lughnasadh is a winter celebration. When Wicca first arrived in Australia in the 1970s, the British dates were followed slavishly, just as the Christian calendar is by non-Wiccans who celebrate Christmas in June with barbecues on the beach. It is only comparatively recently that Australian Wiccans have started to celebrate the Sabbats at the correct season, which means the summer solstice is on December 21.

Australian Wiccans also encounter problems when it comes to casting a magical circle, if they follow the Western

tradition practiced in the Northern Hemisphere and based on the position in the sky of the rising and setting sun. In the Northern Hemisphere, the sun appears to move clockwise across the sky, but in Australia it appears to move anticlockwise. When she visited Australia, the English High Priestess Vivianne Crowley said: "... I found it impossible to cast a clockwise circle in Australia and to me the flow of power seemed to be definitely anticlockwise, the Australian direction of the sun" (Crowley 2003: 39).

In Europe, Gardnerian Wicca was imported into the Netherlands in the 1970s through an English-Dutch couple known as Morgana and Merlin. They were initiated into a coven in England and began the Silver Circle Coven and the magazine *Wiccan Rede* in 1979. In 1999 they went public by starting the first "witches' café" in the country. Morgana, who was born in Wales and brought up near the historical witchcraft center of Pendle Hill in Lancashire, became the Dutch representative for Pagan Federation International. Today Wicca is well established in the country, and in 2008 Isaac Bonewits from the United States, the "village witch" Marian Green (editor of the UK esoteric magazine *Quest*), and Janet Farrar and Gavin Bone (no relation to Ray Bone) from Ireland attended Dutch conferences as guest speakers or led workshops and taught courses in the country.

The Zenit Daily Despatch issued by the Zenit International Press Agency reported in November 2005 that "witchcraft had moved into the mainstream," when a Dutch court ruled that the costs of lessons in Wicca could be tax-deductible. The Leeuwarden District Court confirmed the legal right to claim the costs of witchcraft courses and lessons against tax bills owed to the national government. Margaville Rougan, of the Witches Homestead organization, said her workshops cost \$200 for a weekend of training in the Craft and \$2,600 for the full course of lessons. She claimed to have trained 150 students since 1995, and was pleased that future applicants could now claim their expenses against their taxes.

An example of how Wicca has developed in the Netherlands in recent years was provided by a report on the Pagan Federation Netherlands Conference held in 2008. The proceedings commenced with a Zoroastrian-Mithraic ritual that included an Arabic dervish dance. Workshops and talks followed on a range of subjects, such as using the tarot, the craft of the village wise woman, and using healing plants. The conference ended with a closing ceremony performed by the Temple of Starlight based on the resurrection of the ancient Egyptian god Osiris. The eclectic nature of this event not only reflects how Dutch Wicca has developed, but

also how the modern neopagan movement has influenced Wicca in general.

Gardnerian Wicca spread to Germany through the founding of a coven there by Monique Wilson in the 1970s, by the influence of American troops stationed in the country during the Cold War who had been initiated into the Craft in the USA, and through individual contacts with covens in England run by well-known Wiccan writers and media witches. In the 1980s, Alexandrian Wicca became established in Germany through a series of lectures given by Alex Sanders. When Starhawk's book *The Spiral Dance* was published in a German translation in 1983, it led to many feminist Wiccan groups being founded based on her Reclaiming tradition.

In France, which has a long history of occultism, in the 1980s there used to be a group known as "Francais Wicca." Contacts were established between them and several British Wiccans, including a senior member of the Brickett Wood Coven, Frederick Lamond, initiated in 1957. He was shocked to find out the French Wiccans worshipped the witch god and goddess as Lucifer and Lilith. His surprise is rather odd, considering that when he was initiated the goddess name used in Gardnerian Wicca was Aradia. This name came from

Charles Godfrey Leland's book on the nineteenth-century Tuscany witches that had greatly influenced Gerald Gardner. Aradia, of course, was the daughter of the sun god Lucifer and the moon goddess Diana. Unfortunately the High Priestess of the French coven committed suicide and the group disbanded. This confirmed Fred Lamond's worst fears about them and their apparently foolish dabbling with Luciferianism.

Not all senior Gardnerian Wiccans agreed with Fred Lamond's rather narrow and prejudiced view. For instance, shortly before her death Doreen Valiente told me she had been receiving psychic communications following a magical experiment to contact "the Lucifer current" [sic] and achieved "helpful and encouraging results." These indicated to her that Lucifer was "the true name of the god of the Old Religion" (letters dated August 26, 1998, and September 11, 1998, in the MOW archive). This experiment by Valiente was inspired by reading a new translation of Leland's book published in the United States. Twenty years earlier, Doreen had told me she "had no problem [with Lucifer] as a name for the old [witch] god" (letter dated September 6, 1977, in MOW archive).

Although the country has always had its own traditional

witchcraft and folk magic dating back to pagan times, Wicca arrived late in Italy. Interest in the subject was first sparked around 1999 when translations of American books by Scott Cunningham and Phyllis Curott were first published. Curott's fictional book *Book of Shadows: A Modern Woman's Journey into the Wisdom of Magic*, describing her initiation into the Craft, and her *Magic of the Goddess* were especially influential in introducing Italians to Wicca. She visited the country in 2001 and did a series of workshops and talks that are regarded as jump-starting the neopagan movement in Italy. However, it was not until 2007 that the first book on Wicca was actually produced by an Italian writer. This was *Wicca-Le Nouva Era della Vecchia Religione* or, in English, *Wicca-The New Era of an Old Religion*, by Cronos (aka Davide Marre).

In the early 2000s other popular American books by Starhawk and Silver RavenWolf began to be translated into Italian. To date, none of the well-known British authors such as the Farrars or Vivianne Crowley have been translated, although Janet Farrar and Gavin Bone have given talks in the country. Recently magazines have been published, groups founded, and conferences and workshops organized. Many of those attracted to Wicca in Italy are feminists or are involved in the green movement. Most are in the twenty-five

to thirty-five age group and are well educated and middle class in social status. At least 60-80 percent of those involved or interested are women, and most are attracted to the type of Wiccan group represented by Starhawk's Reclaiming tradition (Howell 2008).

Wicca has also spread from Europe and the United States to South American countries such as Brazil. The Wiccans in that country are mainly concentrated in the cities and the urban areas. They base their beliefs and practices on the available books by Gardner, Valiente, the Farrars, Laurie Cabot, Z. Budapest, Scott Cunningham, and Starhawk that have been translated into Portuguese in the last twenty years. There is even a Wiccan commune or witches' village called the Temple da Deusa, or the Temple of the Goddess. This features a training school for Wiccan High Priests and Priestesses, and covers an area of fifty acres in the countryside. Members of this community are expected to carry out domestic duties such as cooking, child minding, washing the laundry, gardening, and driving transport. They grow about 20 percent of their own food, and membership in the commune is open to heterosexuals, homosexuals, lesbians, and transgenders.

In 1996, the Pagan Federation of South Africa was

founded as a result of a change in the laws that granted freedom of religious expression after generations of white-only rule. Almost all the South African neopagans identify themselves as Wiccans, and other pagan traditions are marginalized (Wallace 2008). Despite the new legislation, it has been difficult for Wiccans in South Africa to get recognition by the new national government as followers of a legitimate religion, although some advances have been made in that direction. Even after the end of exclusive white rule, Christianity in the country has remained largely conservative. This is illustrated by the African Church's attitude toward contentious moral issues such as homosexuality. These hard-line attitudes are also reflected in the approach to witchcraft-it is categorized by South African Christians as a satanic belief and practice.

Practitioners of Wicca in modern South Africa are mostly drawn from the white population, because indigenous Africans have their own distinctive form of witchcraft, with an estimated 200,000 traditional healers operating in the country. Unlike Wicca with its maxim of "Harm no one" the belief in African witchcraft includes the use of magic to cause physical injury and even death. Possibly because of this factor and the racial element, "very little African practice has found its way into [European] Pagan ritual and practices

but [they] remain almost exclusively based on British and American models" (Ibid.).

This cultural clash was emphasized in 2007 when the provincial government of Mpumalanga put forward a draft proposal for a new anti-witchcraft law to reinforce the existing Witchcraft Suppression Act of 1957. This legislation mostly defined witchcraft specifically within a black African context as "the secret use of muti [the mutilation of human bodies for body parts used in magic], zombies, spells, spirits, magic powders, water mixtures, and so forth, by any person with the purpose of causing harm, damage, sickness to others or their property" (Wallace 2008). This proposed legislation did not directly affect Wiccans, who do not follow such native magical practices. Many, rightly or wrongly, saw it as an attack on their democratic right of freedom of religious expression, because the law specifically categorized witchcraft per se as a cruel and evil practice.

It was evident that those who had drawn up the legislation did not consider or foresee the impact it would have on the Wiccan community. In June 2007, Luke Martin, the convener of the South African Pagan Council (SAPC), met with the Mpumalanga government to discuss the issue. As a result, another meeting was held with the SAPC at

which representatives of the Traditional Healers Organisation (THO) were also present. The government agreed to freeze the bill and called for the Wiccan and THO representatives to make themselves available for further discussions on the matter. A copy of the draft bill was widely circulated on the Internet by the South African Pagan Rights Alliance (SAPRA), formed in 2004, and the SAPC, and a conference was called to elect the required representatives to negotiate with the government.

In September 2007, the first National Pagan Conference was held under the auspices of the SAPC and attended by sixty-one delegates. This group agreed a united approach should be adopted between the Wiccans and the traditional healers. Then SAPRA submitted an alternative draft called the "Witchcraft Protection Bill." This defined witchcraft in a more European and Wiccan way. The THO opposed this new bill because they believed its definition of African witchcraft falsely labeled its members as practitioners of harmful magic. Overall the combined opposition to the new legislation only served to highlight the differences between European Wicca and African witchcraft that had not previously been considered by either of the parties.

An added complication was the issuing of a statement by

Adrian Williams, the provincial deputy secretary of the South African Communist Party and High Priest of the Wiccan Coven of the Silver Sickle. He proposed "in the interest of cultural and spiritual unity," that the Wiccan community should compromise and stop using the words "witch" and "witchcraft" to describe themselves and their activities (Ibid.). This was because of the negative connotations these emotive words had in the minds of the black African majority. Williams also called on the Mpumalanga government to assist Wiccans by issuing free licenses allowing them to practice divination using the tarot and healing legally under the new law. This statement immediately began a heated debate among Wiccans as to whether or not they should call themselves witches anymore and accept government control over their activities.

At the National Pagan Conference, the Wiccan contingent voted to reject any form of legislation against witchcraft on the grounds it would adversely affect the human rights of its practitioners. They pointed out that the new South African Constitution and Bill of Rights guaranteed freedom of religious expression and any new law would contravene them. It was also decided to launch a campaign to promote neopagan witchcraft through the media to specifically clarify the identity of Wicca. A vote was also taken on dropping the

terms "witch" and "witchcraft" to describe Wicca, but was comprehensively defeated. In contrast, several speakers representing traditional healers recommended the proposal should be passed to avoid any confusion between Wicca and African witchcraft.

As a direct result of the differences of opinion that surfaced at the conference, a new Wiccan organization was set up as an alternative to SAPRA and SAPC called the Progressive Pagan Alliance (PPA). Its members supported the idea that the words "witch" and "witchcraft" should no longer be employed, on the grounds they were derogatory terms used in historical times by the Christian Church to label practitioners of the Craft of the Wise as heathens and unbelievers. In the interests of South African pagan unity, the PPA said they would no longer use this outdated terminology that had "contributed to centuries of colonialism and repression for the vast majority of South Africans." They also said they opposed any person or group who refused to compromise on this important linguistic issue and not support legislation that outlawed the use of magic to cause harm.

In response to this ultimatum, the SAPC claimed they were given a mandate at the National Pagan Conference to

challenge both the existing and proposed legislation against witchcraft. In this respect they aligned themselves with the THO and would also resist any attempt to relinquish the words "witch" and "witchcraft" This was because they were in general usage among South African neopagans who overwhelmingly were practitioners of Wicca. Meanwhile the proposed anti-witchcraft legislation had been suspended and in September 2008 a meeting was held by the South African Law Reform Commission to discuss the matter. This was attended by representatives from the SAPC and the THO (Ibid.).

In November 2008, The Times newspaper in London reported that, in a rural district of Tanzania, half of all the reported murders were "witch killings" carried out because people thought the victim had been bewitched. Almost all the victims of this modern witch-hunt were elderly women from poor families. The newspaper quoted Professor Raymond Fisman of Columbia University, USA, who said these epidemics of witch hunting and killing coincided with years when the crops failed. Suspected witches were sought out as scapegoats, as they were in medieval Europe, and the chosen victims were the elderly. The logical motive behind this was that elderly members of the family were the ones consuming the most resources and therefore resources

would go further in times of economic hardship. The quickest and most effective way to deal with the situation was to provide government pensions to elderly women, transforming them from an economic burden to a generator of income for the family (November 24, 2008).

It is understandable how Wicca could have been exported to predominantly English-speaking ex-colonial countries like the United States, Australia, and South Africa with their white European population and cultural links. It also arrived in countries where it seemed more unlikely there would have been an interest or it would have taken root. However, in the Asian countries we are going to examine next it has been largely due to outside influences or their European or American residents. In Hong Kong, for instance, a Wiccan group of Chinese teenagers known as the Celestial Moon Coven, ironically made up of students from a local Roman Catholic school, hold their rituals in Tai tam Country Park. In an interview with the magazine Post (n.d.) its young members used pseudonyms because a previous article had identified them and falsely claimed they practiced satanic devil worship. The interview said for Hong Kong residents there is more of a social stigma attached to practicing Wicca than is found in America.

In Hong Kong, the interest in Wicca among young people was largely generated by the publication of J. K. Rowling's best-selling novels about the boy wizard Harry Potter, even though they presented a fantasy version of witchcraft. In Hong Kong alone, more than five hundred thousand copies were sold. Not everyone was fond of them and a born-again teacher from the Hong Kong International School condemned the books as "spiritual pornography" that lured children on to the "dangerous path" of witchcraft (pers. comm.). However, for the younger generation in Hong Kong, both Chinese and European, the attraction of Wicca is that it is a subversive alternative belief system, in a (communist) society regarded as autocratic, patriarchal, paternalistic, sexist, homophobic, and anti-environment. Ironically, this is also why today Wicca attracts people in democratic countries such as Britain and the United States.

The Japanese have always been fascinated with the occult and a best-selling magazine in Tokyo is *Twilight Zone*, a glossy publication devoted to the supernatural, ceremonial magic, and UFOs. There is also a small Wiccan community, and the Craft was introduced into the country by Americans serving in the armed forces. For instance, Robin Wood was initiated into Wicca in Lexington, Kentucky, in 1978. The following year she married a soldier in the US Army who was

then posted to Japan. There Wood founded and established her own Wiccan tradition before moving back to America and achieving fame as the creator of The Robin Wood Tarot.

In June 2007, the US military's newspaper Stars & Stripes reported on a group of Wiccans at the Misawa USAF base consisting of sailors, air crew, and their partners. Staff Sgt. Katie McDonald was quoted as saying that they still have problems with the 75 percent majority of Christians on the base. Another Wiccan complained she was glared at by a woman at a stall selling cookies on the base for a Christian group. Another overheard a woman in the Army and Navy Services bookstore telling her children that a display of Wiccan and neopagan publications were "bad books."

Not all the Japanese are happy about this foreign spiritual import. On a forum website devoted to Japan on the Internet, one correspondent said the Japanese did not need Wicca at all. This was because they had their own ancient pagan religion practicing the worship of nature gods and ancestral spirits called Shinto. The correspondent described Wicca as "a young upstart Western faith that is, at best, based on fluffy scholarship and, at worst, a make-it-up-as-you-go-along belief system" (pers. comm.).

In India, the acceptable public face of Wicca is

represented by Ipsita Roy Chakraverti, the so-called "Wiccan Queen," as she has been dubbed by the press. In July 2007, the Reuters international press agency reported she had been appointed by the Indian government's National Commission for Minority Educational Institutes. Her job was to help stop the feticide and infanticide of an estimated ten million female babies and young girls every year. In many parts of rural India male children are preferred to females, so females are either aborted or killed shortly after birth. Chakraverti was initiated into Wicca in Canada and claims the religion has made inroads into several rural areas in India.

She has set up a "witches' brigade" to try to stop the persecution and murder of women in remote villages who are accused of being witches. It is estimated that over seven hundred alleged witches have been killed in the states of Assam and Bengal alone since 2003. In one of the most horrific cases, four members of the same family were stoned and then buried alive for allegedly cursing a relative of the village chief. In another attack, the severed heads of two murdered witches were paraded in triumph through the streets. The national government has responded by teaching lessons on witchcraft in primary schools in an effort to debunk superstition. This approach is being

challenged by academics who say that, as in Africa, it is poor economic conditions that create witch-hunts.

Ipsita Roy Chakraverti is also a social activist and campaigns against domestic violence, which is prevalent in Indian households. Despite the reverence for Hindu goddesses, women are still often regarded in the country as second-class citizens. Like her colleagues in the West, Chakraverti is also trying to get Wicca recognized by the Indian government as a legitimate and official religion. She claims her government appointment as an educational advisor was "... a triumph for Wicca, as the establishment was against Wiccans for years" (Ibid.).



Chapter Fifteen

Witches in Cyberspace

D

uring the 1980s, one of the founding fathers of Wicca International, Alex Sanders, was following a rather different path than his contemporaries. In the summer of 1979, he wrote to me in a philosophical mood about the need for unity in the Craft and apologizing for his past behavior. He asked me to publish an extract of his private letter in my magazine *The Cauldron*. It read as follows: "There are many ways to the Inner and many ways to the Outer and I believe that Wicca throughout the ages has been sensible in including the practices and activities of others sects while keeping in harmony with the Great Mother and Her Consort.

It seems, though, that in the British Isles the bone of contention in the Wicca is whether the Gardnerian Book of Shadows or the Alexandrian book is the real one, whilst others say you do not need a book. Understood, and used correctly, both are valid according to the people who made the choice to adhere to one or other sect. And the same applies to followers of the Wicca who do not use a book.

"I have many indoor rites and many designed for out of doors, whether by the sea, in the country, or on a Welsh mountain top. On May Eve I worked on Pook's Hill [in Sussex] to be in harmony with the spiritual insight of the poet who felt the ancient magic of the old mound. It was a spontaneous and simple ritual that progressed itself to natural movement and beauty without the pre-conceived rituals of a book.

"It is such a pity that the Wicca cannot accept the fact that if we were to unite in brotherly love before the face of the Lord and Lady, we could become great again and open and respected in the outer world. But until that day comes we can only do our individual best for the Mother and Her children. I realise while I write this that I am as guilty as the next, but now I am trying to make amends for some of the past hurts that I have given and the many public stupidities

I created and for others of the Craft. As I have said in another letter to you, my house is open for sincere people of whatever belief-and creed" (TC #15, Lammas 1979).

One of the outdoor rituals mentioned in the above letter was carried out by Sanders and his Sussex coven during his stay in Bexhill and was describe in a local newspaper as being a rite of "the Alexian cult." Sanders played the part of the sacrificial Corn King and the ceremony was a symbolic death ritual. The Spring Queen struck the fatal blow and took away his crown. She was played by Betty Scott, the woman who had rented the cottage in Selmeston to the Sanderses. A young boy was also present and was described by the newspaper as "a sorcerer's apprentice." Other fire rituals were held above the Long Man of Wilmington hill figure featuring blazing torches and Sanders wearing an Aztec headdress and mask as the fire god.

Following an acrimonious separation and subsequent divorce from his second wife, Maxine, Sanders had gone back to Sussex as one of his students had offered him an old cottage in Bexhill-on-Sea. Maxine Sanders was still living in their London apartment, where she ran a coven under the name of the Temple of the Mother with her new High Priest, David Goddard. Locally Sanders was regarded as a colorful

character and could be found holding court in the Bell Hotel in Bexhill, telling stories about his witchcraft exploits. When visitors sought him at the hotel, a night of heavy drinking sometimes ended up with them returning to the cottage to be initiated.

Despite the circumstances of their parting, Maxine Sanders still attended rituals in Sussex. In one of her autobiographies she described how at one ritual she was the only female present with eleven male witches, so she automatically took the role of High Priestess. Where there is a shortage of women, the usual practice during the cakes and wine ritual was for the chalice to be placed in the center of the circle as each male witch partook of the ritual communion from it. Traditionally Wicca is based on sexual and gender polarity so the chalice would be passed female to male around the circle. Maxine Sanders observed that instead the chalice was passed around male to male with a kiss. She was aware her ex-husband knew she would be upset by this breach of ritual protocol as she believed that "without the polarity of the sexes interacting and thereby transmuting the potential female energy into witch magic [it] would be difficult" (2008: 211).

Despite his bisexuality and numerous homosexual affairs,

Alex Sanders married his third wife, Gillian, in December 1982, and appointed her as the "Sussex Queen of the Witches." The marriage was short-lived and they divorced a year later. Gillian accused Sanders of squandering her divorce settlement of \$100,000, spending their wedding night with a male lover, and failing to have sex with her (Valiente 1989: 175). The last accusation had also been made by Maxine Sanders during their divorce case. In a newspaper article, Sanders' new ex-wife said he did not have any magical powers and stated: "He's no witch. He's just a clever man with a high I.Q. and a strong desire to have sex with as many men as possible" (The Sunday Pictorial September 14, 1986).

During the 1980s, Derek Leo Taylor (1939-2000), the owner of a property development company in Hasting, Sussex, met Alex Sanders and was initiated into his coven. He subsequently became a member of his magical groups, the Ordine Della Nova and the Hermetic Order of Alexandria, which practiced a mixture of Wicca, angelic magic (based on Madeline Montalban's course), the Cabbala, Rosicrucianism, and the Grail Mysteries. Derek Taylor was a gifted psychic and trance medium, and in the 1980s he and Sanders worked together to contact spirits, both the departed and nonhuman entities. If one can believe the accounts of their mediumistic

sessions, they were also in contact with aliens from outer space. The two men had constructed a device they described as a time machine. This apparatus consisted of copper plates, possibly connected by wires to a battery. These were placed on the floor and either Sanders or Taylor stood in the center and went into trance. The other man acted as the scribe, writing down the messages received from the spirits.

Copies of the written records of these sessions can be found in the archive of the Museum of Witchcraft at Boscastle. They make fascinating, if mind-boggling, reading, and illustrate an aspect of Alexandrian Wicca that is little known. In 1981, for instance, Sanders began receiving messages from the departed spirit of a woman called Mrs. Grieve, who used to live in Eastbourne, and from an ancient Egyptian called Neph Kern. The latter told him President Sadat of Egypt was the incarnation of the heretical pharaoh Ankhenaton, a historical figure who has always been popular with occultists. The ancient Egyptian said the only hope for peace in the Middle East was for Egypt to forge a political and military alliance with the then Soviet Union. Sanders wrote three times to the Egyptian president, informing him of this spirit message, and was concerned none of his letters had been received, as he had no reply! He

also received messages from the Archangel Michael about the then British prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, saying she was destined to become the head of the European Union despite her fierce anti-European stance, and the French president Francois Mitterand, who it is now known was interested in esoteric matters (doc. ref. 1006b in MOW archive).

Later in their spirit communications, Sanders and Taylor were contacted by entities calling themselves the "Sons of God," the "Children of the Stars," or the "Cupbearers of Ganymede." These were allegedly occupants of UFOs from other galaxies stationed in our solar system, specifically on a base on one of Jupiter's moons. The messages received from these extraterrestrial sources reflected those also given to UFO abductees at the time. The two men were advised Earth faced a global disaster in the future. Before it occurred, the human race would be taken to a previously unknown planet in the solar system called Gea that was being prepared by the alien saviors.

In October 1986, an entity called Mentha began communicating from the constellation of Hercules. It claimed to be the commander of two million (space?) ships and was on a mission to Earth to "break down the mental barriers

between the United States of Soviet Russia [sic] and the United States of America." It also said its task was "to protect the Cosmological Empires against the damagement [sic] of the conservation of energies of our Galaxies through the experiments of humanity" (doc. 1012a in MOW archives). Other alien contacts apart from Mentha included an entity saying it was the ruler of Callisto, another Jovian moon.

Most of the messages received by Alex Sanders and Derek Taylor were of a political nature. On one occasion a spirit speaking through Sanders warned that King Juan Carlos of Spain was in imminent danger from left-wing forces plotting to overthrow the monarchy and establish a dictatorship. Sanders was also told of an assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan, the possibility of letter bombs being sent to Members of the British Parliament, and future wars over the supply of oil. Derek Taylor sent a copy of the trance workings to his local MP in May 1984, but there is no record he got a reply. He also wrote to the president of Argentina, warning him of a possible coup.

Meanwhile Maxine Sanders was also taking Alexandrian Wicca in a new direction under the influence of her new High Priest, David Goddard, who was a ceremonial magician

and Cabbalist. She had become interested in the teachings of the Liberal Catholic Church, an unorthodox Christian offshoot of the Theosophical Society, and Goddard had been ordained in its priesthood. Maxine Sanders decided to subscribe to a correspondence course on the Cabbala established by the American occultist Paul Foster Case (1884-1956) and still run by his magic group, the Builders of the Adytum (BOTA). As a result she and Goddard started a ceremonial magic group as an adjunct to the coven. Its members included a retired accountant, the wife of a Cambridge University lecturer, a police officer, and a ladies' hairdresser (Maxine Sanders 2008: 260-261).

Maxine claimed that, despite his letter of public apology published in *The Cauldron*, her ex-husband was still "using his title 'King of the Witches' in a way that offended other witches, craved publicity, and was telling ridiculous stories to satisfy his ego." She claimed that while originally his symbiotic relationship with the press was designed to open up the Craft to a wider audience, it now "served merely to shore up his own desperate monomania." Because the articles that were still appearing in the newspapers about the King of the Witches were undoing the previous good work of the 1960s and 1970s (which seems unlikely considering their content), the mysterious Council of Elders decided to

take drastic action. A meeting was convened of representatives from different covens, and it was decided to undo the rite of kingship granted to Sanders in 1969. He was not informed of this event, although a couple of days later he told Maxine he felt he had been released from a great burden (Ibid., 261).

When Sanders moved to Sussex in the 1970s, he became a serious drinker of the spirit Pernod and then brandy mixed with white wine. He was also a heavy smoker, so it was not really surprising in 1986 when he was diagnosed with cancer. Along with the illness came remorse, and when Sanders realized he was dying he wrote a letter to "Lady Veda," Maxine's witch name, saying he was still a chauvinist pig and would always be one. However, he hoped that, as the representative of the Goddess on Earth, she would continue the ceremonies, and if she did there would be a great future for Wicca. He signed the letter with his full witch name "Verbius Alexander Rex" (Ibid., 262).

By late 1987, Sanders' illness had become worse, forcing him to undergo radiotherapy treatment for the spreading cancer. At first he was looked after by a private nurse arranged by Maxine, and then towards the close of his life he entered a nursing home. Finally he had to be moved to

hospital where he passed to spirit in the early hours of April 30 (Beltane Eve), 1988. He named Maxine as his next-of-kin, which meant she was responsible for the funeral. He had died insolvent, so his friends and coven rallied around to pay for it. At first Maxine wanted David Goddard to officiate at it in his position as a Liberal Catholic priest. Unfortunately his bishop refused permission as he did not want adverse publicity attracted to the Church (Ibid., 280).

In the end, the funeral service was carried out by a priestess of the Craft, Victoria Lester (witch name "Aislynn"), who was also a Christian, and organized by Seldy Bate and Nigel Bourne (no relation to Lois Bourne), two leading Alexandrian witches from South London. Doreen Valiente described it a "dignified and moving ceremony, although some witches found it a curious mingling of pagan, Christian and Qabalistic elements" (1989: 176). It included a reading from the Old Testament Book of Proverbs, which was one of Alex Sanders' favorite biblical passages. Maxine Sanders admitted that the officiant at the service "got carried away," and some of the witches present thought it was far too Christian in tone (2008: 281).

About a hundred witches from all over Britain attended the funeral at Hastings crematorium, where forty-two years

before Aleister Crowley had been cremated following a service inaccurately described by the press as a "Black Mass." In fact it was an extract from Crowley's Gnostic Mass. A national newspaper report before Sanders' funeral claimed witches from all over the world would be attending. In fact, to the relief of many of Alexandrians, the media largely ignored the event. The local paper The Brighton Evening Argus did publish a small report headlined "No Tears as Witch is laid to Rest." The headline was based on a comment made by Maxine Sanders that witches never cry when someone dies because they believe in reincarnation. She was described in the article as the "'Witch Queen Emeritus," and was quoted as saying there would be no "prancing around naked" at the funeral service, which must have been a great relief to the crematorium owners.

The newspaper also picked up on the thorny question of succession within the Alexandrian tradition to the position of witch king, despite the fact the Council of Elders had stripped Sanders of the title before his death so it could not be passed on. Maxine Sanders said that Derek Taylor, whom she described as "a publicity seeker," had already alerted the press to the story. He told the newspapers he favored Alex and Maxine's fifteen-year-old son, Victor, for the role, and this was confirmed by a spirit message. One press report

said the new "King of the Witches" would hold dominion over thousands of witches all over the world," and added other rival candidates were ready and waiting to "throw their pointed hats into the circle" (Ibid.).

Maxine Sanders disagreed with Taylor and did not want her son involved. She told Victor, who was quite excited about the prospect, it would be "an empty title created to satisfy the sycophantic egotists who were close to Alex, and wanted to glory in his faded light" A press statement was eventually issued by Seldy Bate and Nigel Bourne on Maxine's behalf (the Council of Elders having apparently vanished from the scene). This statement announced there would be no King of the Witches appointed in the foreseeable future, and in fact the position has never been filled (2008: 282).

Only a few days before his death, Alex Sanders was visited in his nursing home by a self-styled witch named Kevin Carlyon and his then partner. Drugged on morphine-based painkillers, unable to concentrate or speak properly because he was out of breath, Sanders gave an interview to Carlyon, which he tape-recorded and later sold as an audio cassette for commercial gain. Maxine Sanders described the tapes as "unkind, unedited, and in extremely bad taste." In

her opinion the only reason for selling them was an "act of greed" (Ibid.).

Kevin Carlyon was already a well-known media witch and had set up his own organization called The Covenant of Earth Magic. Like many before him, Carlyon claimed he had hundreds of covens and followers. In the 1980s and 1990s he was involved in a number of high-profile publicity stunts that kept his name in the papers. These included putting a spell on the then British Rail in an attempt to stop them moving the proposed route of the rail link from London to the Channel Tunnel near a prehistoric burial chamber in Kent. In 1990 in another magical working, Carlyon and his coven burned effigies of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, their local MP, and the local mayor. This ritual was carried at a site above the Long Man of Wilmington hill figure, used by many Wiccans and traditional witches and where Maxine Sanders had scattered Alex's ashes. The media eventually tired of Kevin Carlyon's publicity-seeking antics and began to ignore him.

Derek Taylor attempted to prolong his teacher's magical work with trance and spirit communication. He also continued the magical work of the Ordine Della Nova with a small group of friends. Allegedly, he amazed everyone he

met with his extraordinary psychic abilities and was supposed to have been employed by the British Secret Service to take part in "remote viewing" experiments. After his marriage broke up, Taylor became more reclusive, and he eventually committed suicide. The circumstances are shrouded in mystery, but it is supposed to have happened during a ritual on a Sussex beach with a man called Robert Truelove. He told police Taylor had seen a UFO mother ship out at sea and waded into the waves in an attempt to reach it. However the current was too strong, and he was swept away and drowned. The police regarded his death as suspicious, but no charges were ever brought in connection with it.

Oddly enough, Maxine Sanders has described how late one night, while in a depressed state Alex had gone down to the beach in Bexhill. Despite the fact he could not swim, he had walked into the sea. The waters closed over his head and an undercurrent carried him away from shore until he lost consciousness. He came to, lying on the beach at dawn, covered in seaweed and pieces of driftwood. Alex remarked to Maxine: "Even the sea rejected me and spat me out" (2008: 235).

At the end of the 1980s, the first book to examine Wicca in

Britain from an anthropological prospective was published. This was *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: Ritual Magic and Witchcraft in Present-Day England* by Tanya Lurhmann (1989), and it provided a snapshot of the Wiccan community as it was at the time, primarily in the London area, and its overlap with ritual magic and other neopagan traditions. Dr. Lurhmann was an American academic who graduated in 1981 from Harvard and then gained a Master of Philosophy degree at Cambridge University and her PhD in 1989. When she wrote the book she was a senior research fellow at Christ's College, Cambridge.

The roots of the book lay in a doctoral thesis on social anthropology. It was controversial because she had gone undercover, joining various Wiccan covens and magical groups and socializing with their members. She conducted interviews with her subjects, read books, became initiated, learned how to read tarot cards and astrological birth charts, and even led rituals (Lurhmann 1989: 17). However, Dr. Lurhmann upset many practitioners by her unsympathetic approach. She said she was interested in the witchcraft revival and why some people got involved in it rather than others, and the reason that allows them to "accept outlandish, apparently irrational, beliefs" (Ibid., 7). Despite her practical experiences in covens and lodges, she seems to

have remained a skeptic about the reality of the magic.

Although pseudonyms were used throughout the book, anyone involved in the London occult scene or further afield would have instantly recognized those described. Dr. Luhrmann's first contact was Jean Williams (aka Elen Williams) and her partner Zachary Cox, who were described as leading "the oldest coven in England, having inherited it from the man who essentially created witchcraft as it is practiced in this country" (Ibid., 21). Williams and Cox were also involved in a Cabbalistic group practicing the Western Mysteries, ran the Neopantheist Society and the Rainbow Bridge, and organized private performances of Crowley's Gnostic Mass for invited guests. They also published a radical and controversial occult magazine, *Aquarian Arrow*, in the 1970s and 1980s. Williams is still active in the Pagan Federation London branch today. Another of Dr. Luhrmann's early contacts was Freya Aswynn, a Dutch woman. She is now best known for her books on the Norse runes, but in the 1980s she was the High Priestess of a Wiccan coven.

It is obvious from Dr. Luhrmann's research and experiences that at the time there was a considerable overlap between the membership of Wiccan covens and ceremonial magical lodges in the British capital. She also encountered

some covens that "emphasize creativity and collectivity, values commonly found in that political perspective, and their rituals are quite different from those in Gardnerian groups" (Ibid., 52). She described one ritual at a prehistoric burial chamber known as the Coldrum Stones in Kent attended by fifteen women. One of them was delegated to draw up the basic outline of the ritual and admitted she had "cobbled together something from Starhawk and Z. Budapest." This site was also popular with Gardnerian covens, as it was in the countryside within easy reach of the city.

An important aspect of Dr. Luhrmann's anthropological research survey was the social status and personality traits of the modern practitioners of witchcraft and ritual magic she encountered. This was an aspect that was also taken up by later academics exploring the subject. She soon discovered that the claims by some sociologists that people were drawn to marginal groups because of socio-economic factors was not correct in the case of Wicca. However she was able to identify and isolate certain basic emotional tendencies among its practitioners. These included imaginative absorption and a desire for self-control and to dominate and control the world around them. There was also a possible regression to a child-like state involving dreams and fantasy.

One witch whom Dr. Lurhmann met seemed to exist in her own selfcontained imaginative inner world that was a "narcissistic reality distanced from the pragmatics of the world around her" (Ibid., 103-104). However, she did concede that the majority of Wiccans she knew were creative, intelligent people from middle-class social backgrounds who held down responsible jobs.

Although Dr. Tanya Lurhmann's research into Wicca in the 1980s was mostly based on covens, she recognized that the majority of people who described themselves as witches were solitary or solo practitioners. Many of the old-guard Gardnerians firmly believed a witch could only be made by another witch. They rejected the idea of hereditary witches or the controversial issue of so-called self-initiation, or more correctly with self-dedication. Doreen Valiente, as in many things, broke the mold and defied this view when she published her *Liber Umbranum: A Book of Shadows* in 1978. This was a set of rituals specifically designed for the solo witch and included "The Rite of Self-Initiation" (1978: 159-163). Predictably, it was not generally welcomed or accepted by many of the more conservative members of Wicca.

In the United States, the leading exponent of solitary witchcraft in the late 1980s and 1990s was Scott Cunningham

(1956-1993). Cunningham's father, a freelance writer, taught his son the art of writing and helped him make contacts in the publishing world. Before writing his first book on magically related subjects, *Magical Herbalism* (Llewellyn 1982), Cunningham produced romantic novels under a female pen name, Western paperbacks as "Dick Fletcher," and even articles for the Canadian *Forest Industries* magazine. However, it was not until his book *Wicca: A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner* was published that Cunningham became established as a leading writer on the Craft.

Scott Cunningham first encountered witchcraft as a teenager while watching a television movie called *Burn, Witch, Burn*. In high school he met a fellow drama class student, Dorothy Jones, who at fifteen was two years older than him. She told Cunningham she was initiated into a Wiccan tradition at puberty, which seems unlikely, but may have been true. She used the witch name "Morgan," called herself a "moon priestess," and became Cunningham's magical teacher after initiating him into the Craft. However, in an appendix written by Dorothy Jones in a biography of Scott Cunningham published after his death from cancer and complications from AIDS, it was revealed the two high school students only shared an intellectual friendship and an interest in herbs, which they gathered on walks together.

They did not know to call themselves "pagans" until they picked up a book on the occult at a local supermarket check-out counter (Harrington and Regula 1996).

Scott Cunningham was properly initiated into several Craft traditions. In 1973, he was accepted into the Standing Stone tradition, and in 1980 became a member of the Aridian tradition, a mixture of Gardnerian Wicca and Italian witchcraft created by Raven Grimassi. A year later, he received initiation into the Reorganized Traditional Gwyddonic Order of Wicca and the Ancient Pictish Gaelic Tradition, and also became an American Traditionalist witch. He went on to write several books. His most famous book, on solitary Wicca, sold over 500,000 copies between its publication in 1988 and 2003. It has probably been responsible for introducing thousands of people all over the world to modern witchcraft.

In the United Kingdom, the recognition that most witches were solitaires led to the founding in the 1990s of the Association of Hedgewitches, named after the modern concept of a "hedgewitch," as defined by feminist writer Rae Beth. The AHW was founded in response to a perceived need for a contact network for Wiccans and witches who were solitary practitioners, or couples working outside of the

coven system. It gave those who felt isolated and just wanted to meet up with others a chance to meet like-minded individuals. Though it was specifically founded for those who preferred to work alone, as a contact organization it is open to all. Initially people writing to the AHW's post box address in London were directed to their nearest local area coordinator, who was the main contact point for putting members in touch with each other. Some also ran local AHW meets or social get-togethers.

In 1997, it was decided to publish a magazine called The Hedgewytch to act as the public voice of the association. Today the magazine is very much a medium for solitary witches to share personal experiences and "what works for us," rather than acting as a how-to manual. It was and still is aimed at the beginner or novice and all those just finding their way into the Craft. Over the years, as its readership has grown in experience, this caliber of learning has become reflected in its articles. As times and needs change, so has the association. Currently (2008) there are no longer any regional coordinators or specifically AHW meets. It has now downsized to a nationwide contact list open to all subscribers, with a small contacts page in the magazine.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, many Wiccans embraced

the new computer technology, taking their first steps on what was at first called the information superhighway, and entering the strange realm of cyberspace. They began using the Worldwide Web or Internet as a handy means of exchanging information, knowledge, and even gossip. It might be thought that witches and neopagans, as followers of an ancient belief system, would have been resistant to this new form of technology, but not only do they use it, many actually work in the computer industry. The Web is supposed to have originated in the 1970s when US military and intelligence agencies created a computer communications network for their own exclusive use. In fact, as far back as 1962, T. C. Lickinder of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) was appointed to the US Department of Defense's Advanced Research Projects Agency, and put forward the idea of a pan-global computer network for accessing and exchanging data between terminals. Two years later the Rand Corporation published a report on the setting up of a computer network for military use. In the next five years research was carried out at the Stratford Research Institute, MIT, the Universities of California at Berkeley and Santa Barbara, and the University of Utah. This led to the creation of ARPANET, an electronic communications link between scientific, educational, and military establishments. Electronic mail, or e-mail, was

introduced in the early 1970s and this led to "internetworking," or the Internet, so named in 1974, and ultimately to the creation of the Worldwide Web for general use.

Despite the fact that Wiccans belong to a nature religion that honors Mother Earth, and are supposed to be traditionally anti-technology, they eagerly accepted this new form of electronic communication. Possibly this is because many of the early Wiccans were employed in the military-industrial complex and the emergent computer industry. In 1999, referring back to the early Wiccan users of the Internet, the Australian witch Fiona Horne said: "Witchcraft is evolving and one of the most magickal places to go is cyberspace, the ramifications for human communication and education contained therein are astonishing" (from "An Interview with Fiona Horne" in *Panthology* magazine Vol. 13 No. 1, Summer 1999). This view has been confirmed by Macha Nightmare who has said: "Witchcraft is a living, evolving spirituality-it is organic and, like any living thing, it requires nourishment. The Internet provides an endless source of sustenance-for our minds, our souls, and our spirituality" (2001: 17).

In the 1980s, Margot Adler did a survey for the second

edition of her book *Drawing Down the Moon* that revealed many top professionals among Wiccans were computer programmers, systems analysts, and software developers. In her survey, Adler asked these professionals what the link was between computer science and the Craft. She was told that the symbolic way of thinking and patterning used in computer systems was also essential to magical thinking. There was also a belief that computers were in some way the "oracles of the future," and provided the Craft with a new way of communicating knowledge, information, and training. Also many people attracted to Wicca were natural-born rebels, educated and highly intelligent, although often lacking in social skills and the product of dysfunctional families. They were therefore looking for alternatives to ordinary ways of communicating and normal society. The Internet with its virtual reality provided exactly what they were seeking (Adler 2006: 413-414).

Of course the terms "Worldwide Web" and "the Web" have helped Wiccans to accept this new technology more easily than they might have done otherwise. This is because on a metaphorical and symbolic level the WWW can be compared to a spider's web woven by the spider goddess, to the "Web of Wyrd" (fate or destiny), and to the archetypal motif of spinning and weaving associated with the witch

goddess. Subjects discussed on Internet forums or chat rooms also are commonly referred to as "threads"

The concept of an electronic web traversing the planet fits neatly with neopagan beliefs about holism, the unity of humanity with nature, the oneness of spirit and matter, and the Goddess as Gaia, Terra, or Mother Earth. As one witch commented: "This medium [the Internet] is suited to witches because it is truly magical, since it is all energy. Data on a server is only bits of digital code that when sent to another computer via a phone line or satellite in an energy form is translated into something that is pleasing to the eye. What is magic but the transmission of energy from one person or thing to another?" (quoted in Nightmare 2001: 67). The interest in and widespread use of computers by modern Wic-

cans and neopagans has now created the phenomenon known as "Internet pagans" These are a new breed of computer users who are not affiliated with any specific or physical group, coven, or organization in the real world. Instead they have become online Wiccans or neopagans through membership in chat rooms, discussion forums, or as subscribers to e-zines. Some of these armchair witches even hold rituals in virtual reality temples or in cyber-worlds such as Second Life. Obviously such nonphysical activities are a

contradiction of the principles of a nature religion that claim to bring its followers closer in touch with the natural environment.

In the early 2000s, the most popular website on the Internet was The Witches Voice, or Witchvox, and it still holds that position today. In 2001, it was reported the site had over 1.5 million hits and its networking and contacts section listed over 40,000 pagan and Wiccan events, groups, and stores worldwide. TWV was founded in 1996 and originated because its two founders posted three pages on the Internet for Laurie Cabot's Witches' League for Public Awareness. Their aim was to promote tolerance between different and differing traditions and groups and correct the misinformation relating to modern Wicca and neopaganism. In 1997, they moved to Florida where they acquired the Internet domain name Witch.Vox.com and launched the TWV website into cyberspace. Although it was founded to support the human rights and protect the civil liberties of witches, today most of its users are attracted to the site because it provides news, information, and contacts.

Although the most important and widely read Wiccan and neopagan magazines are still published in printed hard copy, the spread of the Internet in the first decade of the twenty-

first century has led to the publication of e-zines, or electronic magazines. Some of the conventionally printed magazines also have electronic versions. In the early 2000s, the Wiccan Pagan Times (WPT) was launched as an online e-zine with a mission statement of promoting the pagan community through art, literature, and music. It was founded by a husband-and-wife team who wanted to create a place on the Internet where pagans and Wiccans could share ideas, express opinions, and disseminate information relating to all paths and traditions.

The WPT publishers said: "... we feel it our right to express our feelings and opinions on and about those things we like or dislike about the current state of affairs within the Wiccan/Pagan community. We will do this in a positive and constructive manner, so that we are fostering growth and learning within our respective communities" (quoted in Nightmare 2001: 125). While these are worthy sentiments, in practice there has always been a downside to the expression of strongly held opinions and feelings on discussion forums and e-zines. The negative aspect of the new medium is so-called flaming, or personal attacks. These have become a new weapon in the armory of the combatants in the so-called "witch wars" raging on the Internet between individuals, groups, and traditions. Another less-than-positive aspect of

the Internet is the amount of misinformation that is circulated, and also the opportunity it gives to pretenders and imposters to promote their cause and spread disinformation to a receptive global audience.



Chapter Sixteen

Wiccans in the 21st Century

Since the 1970s, neopagans had been organizing what American writer M. Macha Nightmare described as "the occasional conclave of Witches and pagans ... [where they became] acquainted with one another, made magic together, shared skills, built trust and solidarity to support one another" (2001: 103). These early events were held in hotels or motels, and later at camps in rural areas. In 1972, more than a hundred and fifty people attended one such gathering organized by Nemeton, the ecopagan group founded by Gwydion Pendderwen of the Feri tradition and Alexandrian Wicca. Another was held four years later under

the auspices of the Midwest Pagan Council in an attempt to bring together the different Wiccan traditions who belonged to it. One of the earliest and most influential, and now long-established, neopagan festivals was the annual Pagan Spirit Gathering run by Selena Fox of Circle Sanctuary.

As Macha Nightmare said: "Pagan gatherings were taking place every weekend from May to October. Some of us created a lifestyle of going from one festival to another, weekend after weekend, all summer long. We had good camping and cooking gear, campers and RVs, and elaborate tents adorned with colorful banners or flags bearing the emblems of our traditions and covens. We erected festive temporary villages, which inspired in us a feeling that we belonged to a tribe" (Ibid., 105).

This sense of a tribal feeling attached to the festivals had a significant impact on the established Wiccan community. In the 1970s, it was still fairly insular and enclosed, even though the books by writers such as Starhawk and Scott Cunningham would later create a new form of "eclectic Wicca," drawing on New Age concepts or based on the solitary practice of witchcraft. One Wiccan told Margot Adler she had been working in a coven where you were forbidden to talk to people from other covens or traditions.

When she went to her first neopagan festival it changed everything. She said, "The kind of gurudom that tries to censor sources of information is totally destroyed by that kind of event" (Adler 2006: 435).

Because chants, songs, magical techniques, and rituals were taught at workshops and shared and discussed at these large gatherings they spread into Wiccan covens and altered their fundamental nature. Added to this trend came the increasing number of Wicca 101 or do-it-yourself books, often based on the Gardnerian Book of Shadows that was now out there. They were largely written by self-initiates or solitary witches who had not been through the closed, often dogmatic, and authoritarian coven system. As the Wiccan quoted above told Margot Adler, "Meetings [of her coven] became more fluid, there was more playfulness ... Our ritual style loosened up. Our ritual garb changed." Traditional aspects such as skyclad working and the use of the scourge for ritual flagellation were also dropped as belonging to the past. In fact, what was happening was the first signs of the sanitation of witchcraft and the creation of what its critics disparagingly described as "fluffy-bunny New Age McWicca."

Another Wiccan High Priestess told Margot Adler the

public pagan festivals were changing the basic structure of covens. She said, "The coven is losing its magic" (1979). This was because the coven was ceasing to be the primary source of training and teaching and the only entry point to the Craft. People could turn up at festivals and participate in rituals and magical practice without having to undergo a formal initiation ceremony, join a coven, or commit themselves to the Craft in any structured or organized way. This eclectic and liberal approach challenged the old structures and strictures of Wicca based on one-to-one training, loyalty to the coven and its fellow members, and group-based activities.

The Wiccan High Priestess said the festivals also undermined the leadership of covens and their authority. The new leaders of the Craft were the media witches and pagan celebrities who facilitated workshops and gave talks at festivals to hundreds of people. Once just names below the title of a book or images on the television screen, now those who attended festivals could actually meet and interact with their heroes. Wicca had always been dominated by strong personalities, but now the cult of personality was creating new faces and reaching out to embrace people who were not Craft initiates. Wicca would never be the same again.

Part of the sea change in Wicca in the 1980s and 1990s was indicated by this rise of the public pagan festival and also the introduction of ideas, concepts, and techniques of the New Age spiritual movement that emerged from the alternative counterculture of the Sixties. Wiccan High Priests and Priestesses trained as Reiki masters, covens practiced crystal healing and balancing chakras, and introduced urban shamanic techniques into their magic making. As one Wiccan told Margot Adler with some surprise "... our group got exposed to new psychic techniques like Bach Flower Remedies." Such developments were either warmly embraced by some of the old-school Wiccans or criticized by many as the slippery slope to witchcraft becoming sanitized and whitewashed. They frowned on the nouveau covens who preferred velvet robes to ritual nudity, and abandoned scourging to raise power as an archaic practice that could lead to abuse.

One aspect of this new approach was an alternative and unconventional way of looking at the God and Goddess in Wicca, based on the theories of the Swiss psychologist, Carl Gustav Jung. When Vivianne Crowley's book *Wicca: The Old Religion In the New Age* was published in 1989, she presented the deities as Jungian archetypes. David Waldron has said, "The entire text ... is replete with references to the

work of Jung and the utilization of Wicca as a manifestation of Jungian analytical psychology in practice" (2008: 149). Dr. Crowley was one of the initiates of Eleanor Bone's coven and she now lectures on the psychology of religion at the University of London. She has written extensively about the group-mind of a witches' coven or "the level of awareness at which human psyches can communicate directly with one another without the intervention of the usual modes of communication" (2003: 71).

Another important aspect of Wicca, according to Dr. Crowley, is Jung's concept of the anima and animus, or the female and male parts of the human psyche, in relation to initiation. This is also described in Robert Bly's classic and groundbreaking book *Iron John: A Book about Men* (1991), which jumpstarted the men's movement. The anima and animus can also be related to the God and Goddess in contemporary Wicca in their roles as archetypal images or symbols of the dual cosmic male-female principle in the universe. In contrast to the sexist and misogynistic attitudes Doreen Valiente experienced in her early days in the Gardnerian movement, Dr. Crowley said in present times in Wicca "... women learn to reject beliefs and philosophies that oppress women and to seek roles through which they can function as whole human beings realizing all and not

just part of their inner qualities" (1989: 147). However, unlike some of the feminist witches, Dr. Crowley also recognized the significance of the Horned God as both a symbol of male sexuality and the animus (the ideal male) within the female psyche.

An Australian Wiccan, Cassandra Carter also commented on the psychological and feminist significance of Wiccan mythology in a talk given to the C. G. Jung Society in November 1992. She said that in Jungian terms the mythical story of the Descent of the Goddess into the underworld in Wicca taught the need for women to journey on a quest to discover their own animus. Instead of waiting for "a knight on a white charger" to rescue them, women need to make their own life choices and confront the Dark Lord, and solve his mysteries. Carter said women could do this by going, of their own free will, deep into the realm of the unconscious mind. Men in Wicca had to enlist the help of the Goddess (psychologically represented by the animus) to explore their own unconscious. Once this has been achieved the male and female witch can be reunited in the underworld of the unconscious (quoted in Waldron 2008: 156).

Because of the influence of Vivianne Crowley's books and the lectures she has given in the United Kingdom, the

Netherlands, Germany, and Australia, this Jungian approach to Wicca has become popular. In 2008, Jean Williams and Zachary Cox, the High Priestess and Priest of Gardner's old coven in Brickett Wood, published a book called *The Gods Within: The Pagan Pathfinders Book of God and Goddess Evocations* (Moondust Books UK). As the title suggests, they now see the God and Goddess in Wicca as archetypal images clothed in symbolic form by the human mind and imagination. The Lord and Lady represent universal forces existing within the human psyche, society, and the natural world. Their book consisted of evocations, as opposed to invocations, of deities from the ancient Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and Celtic pantheons. In the sense they used the word evocations, it was to convey the psychological sense of evoking feelings, images, and ideas from within the psyche.

Another interesting development in the 1990s was the involvement of Wiccans in the new interfaith movement, as mentioned before. This was designed to break down barriers, encourage communication, and end intolerance between the different religions of the world. This was a development welcomed by New Agers who had always followed the Theosophical view that "all religions are one religion," and all paths to God are valid. However it may not

have been seen in exactly the same liberal light by some of the interfaith participants from Christianity and Islam. Considering the ideological gulf between Wicca and orthodox Christianity, the aim of the interfaith movement appeared to be overly simplistic and optimistic. In practice, it meant Wiccans at a local level joining interfaith groups and discussing their beliefs and theological differences with Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists.

In 1993, the Parliament of World Religions was convened in Chicago and was attended by about two hundred Wiccans and neopagans. They represented such public organizations as the Covenant of the Goddess, Circle Sanctuary, the Earth Spirit Community, and the Fellowship of Isis. Additionally pagans dropped by the hospitality suite in the hotel where the assembly was held during the week-long session of the Parliament. Every day there were two to six Wiccan or pagan rituals performed, and one was held at full moon in a local park. At first there were problems with obtaining a permit from the parks department until a Roman Catholic cardinal attending the Parliament intervened on behalf of the Wiccans. Other sessions of the Parliament followed, and in 1998 representatives from the Covenant of the Goddess and Circle Sanctuary were officially invited to join as members. The next year, in South Africa, the

proceedings led to the formation of a new interfaith organization called the United Religions Initiative, with an active pagan component and participation.

The Parliament of World Religions and other interfaith groups and projects tend to attract and reflect the more liberal elements in the established religions seeking contact and dialogue with other spiritual belief systems. However, as is to be expected, the more reactionary majority view is opposed to such developments. In August 1993, The Sunday Telegraph reported the Vatican was worried because allegedly "tens of thousands" of Catholic women were leaving the faith. Many, it claimed, were becoming involved in what it described as "the subterranean cult of neopagan Wiccan worship." Margot Adler was quoted as saying she had recently attended a spring equinox ritual in Philadelphia where masked Catholic nuns had danced in front of an altar decorated with flowers and goddess images.

Other nuns attending the Women's Church Convergence were said to have participated in a Dianic Wiccan ceremony. Catholic orders of nuns in the United States were also reported as having taken part in spirituality sessions where they discussed Jungian psychology and the evils of patriarchy and celebrated the "transcendent through female

images." During a recent visit to the United States, the pope condemned those Catholic women who had left the Roman Church to follow "forms of nature worship and the celebration of myths and symbols usurping the Christian faith." The Vatican ruled that the worship of the "earth goddess" by some American Catholics was "an inappropriate blending of Christianity with the ancient pagan belief of animism."

Despite the apparent progress marked by the active involvement of Wiccans in interfaith activities, in many countries the Craft was still not officially recognized as a legitimate religion by their governments. As we have seen in some countries, such as Australia, archaic laws forbidding the practice of witchcraft remained on the statute books until recent times. Even in some US states, local laws still exist prohibiting fortunetelling, and in Saudi Arabia anyone found guilty of practicing witchcraft (sorcery) is executed by beheading.

In 1987, Wicca was legally accepted in Canada following a discrimination case fought by Charles Arnold, an American Vietnam veteran who moved to the country after leaving the US Army. Arnold was working at the Equine Centre of the College of Applied Arts and Technology, and made a

request to his employer for paid leave to celebrate Beltane and Samhain. The college vice-principal refused and the case was referred to the Ministry of Labour's Arbitration Board. Bizarrely, Arnold had been told his request would only be reconsidered if he could provide a statement from the Canadian Council of Churches that they recognized Wicca as a religion. The college also wanted a letter from the head of Wicca, saying the specified holidays should be observed by its practitioners.

Charles Arnold told the vice-principal he could not provide these statements because the Christian churches did not recognize Wicca and there was no central Wiccan leadership in Canada or anywhere else in the world. Supported by his trade union, Arnold gave evidence to the Arbitration Board about his personal Wiccan beliefs and practices without breaking his oaths of initiation. Testimony was also given on his behalf by the Reverend Donald Evans of the United Church of Canada, a teacher in religious philosophy at the University of Toronto. He told the Board in his personal opinion Wicca met all the criteria required of any religion.

In its defense, the college attempted to deride Arnold's claim by misrepresenting Beltane and Samhain as merely

parties, and not religious festivals. The Board disagreed with this view and ruled instead in favor of Charles Arnold. The members of the Board said it was obvious Wicca was a religion and "... the modern survival of the ancient pagan religions of western Europe." This landmark ruling not only recognized and accepted Wicca as a legitimate religion, but also said Arnold was entitled to take paid leave twice a year so he could celebrate its festivals.

Although this case was successfully settled to the advantage of Wicca, a similar case was heard in the Green County School District of Tennessee twenty years later. Just before Samhain 2007, a school student named Angel Cogdill asked her principal if she could have the day off as it was a religious festival observed by her family. Her request was denied and at a meeting with her mother, Patti, the principal said his reasoning was based on the fact Wicca was not a real religion. Patti Cogdill had several more meetings with the school administrators, asking them to reverse the decision, but they still refused.

A family friend contacted the Lady Liberty League run by Selena Fox of Circle Sanctuary and she spoke to the school authorities in an attempt to persuade them Wicca was a real religion. When this failed, attorneys from the Americans

United for the Separation of Church and State were contacted. Following their intervention, in April 2008, the school finally gave in and said Angel Cogdill could be given an excused absence to celebrate Beltane with her family (news report in Circle magazine #101, Summer 2008 and #102, Fall 2008).

In 1998, a school student in Texas had faced another form of religious discrimination when she was suspended for wearing black clothing and a pentagram around her neck. The school board had tried to say the Wiccan symbol was "gang related," and the student's dark clothing violated the school's dress code. Her parents decided to seek assistance from the American Civil Liberties Union, and once they intervened, the school authorities backed down. They decided to change their policy on what students could wear (Ibid., Fall 2008).

Discrimination against modern Wiccans takes many forms and often affects divorce proceedings where the custody of children is at stake. In 2004 a Wiccan couple in Indianapolis divorced on good terms and then the judge presiding over the case ruled that whoever got the custody of their son could not teach him witchcraft. The boy already attended a private Roman Catholic school and the judge decided

teaching him the Wiccan faith would confuse him. The judge prohibited both parents from teaching their son anything apart from what he described as a "mainstream religion." It was only when the Indiana Civil Liberties Union became involved that the judge's ruling was reversed and the boy was able to participate in public pagan festivals with his parents if he so desired (Ibid.).

Only three years after the Charles Arnold case in Canada in 1987, US Senator Jessie Helms of North Carolina had attempted to introduce a bill removing the tax-exempt status of Wiccan and neopagan organizations. Helms had contacted the then Secretary of the Treasury, James Baker, and asked why such minority groups should be exempted. In his reply, Baker said any religious group that was sincere in its beliefs and conformed to the "clearly defined public policy" was able to claim tax relief or exemption. For that reason the law could not be changed.

Senator Helms was supported in his demand by Representative Robert Walker of Pennsylvania. One of his aides told the press tax exemption should not be applicable to people "praying for horrible things and sticking pins into voodoo dolls." Many American Wiccans were outraged by this throwaway remark and saw the attempt to bring in the

bill as a direct attack on their beliefs by the Christian Right, and an attempt to outlaw witchcraft by the back door. With the support of the American Civil Liberties Union, the proposed bill was actively opposed by various neopagan and Wiccan groups. They claimed the legislation would infringe the First Amendment and was a throwback to the medieval witch-hunt. Following their protests, the bill was not passed.

Operation Desert Storm to liberate Kuwait after the Iraqi invasion in the 1990s, the events of 9/11 leading to the war on terror, and the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan led to another campaign for freedom of religious expression for Wiccans. As we have seen, several of the pioneers in the modern witchcraft revival had military backgrounds. However, from the 1970s onward, with the political changes in society and Wicca, its practitioners were more likely to express pacifist, anti-war sentiments. This was summed up by a surprising voice, Laurie Cabot, who wrote: "Witches must make peace an important goal. We must do magic to seek for a war-free [world] ... We can do binding spells, using white light to neutralize soldiers, their weapons, and especially the military leaders who send them to battle" (1983: 293).

While many Wiccans and neopagans agreed with her, Cabot's views were not so well received by the estimated ten thousand practitioners of Wicca who, according to the Military Pagan Network (MPN), serve in the US armed forces. In 1997, a group of military personnel at Fort Hood was allowed to conduct Wiccan rituals on the base with the approval of the Christian chaplain. Unfortunately the Pentagon disapproved and a local minister condemned the rituals as "satanic" Congressman Bob Barr of Georgia urged the Secretary of the Army to ban the performance of Wiccan rites on all military bases, alleging they involved animal sacrifice. In response the American Forces Chaplains Board ruled the practice of Wicca by military personnel was protected under the First Amendment that guaranteed freedom of religious expression. The Board also pointed out that in 1996 the Department of Defense recognized Wicca as a religion that could be followed by its employees.

Three years earlier, writer Judy Harrow interviewed several Wiccans serving in the armed forces. One, named only as "Paul," said he did not find it difficult to reconcile his beliefs with military service because he worshipped a "hunter-gatherer god." He did admit, however, that several members of his coven were anti-military and anti-war. As a result of her studies into the subject, Harrow concluded that military

service could be a valid initiatory path in the Craft as the way of the "spiritual warrior." Dr. Isaac Bonewits disagreed, saying the Wiccan Rede taught "An ye harm no one," and it was being contravened-he described soldiers as the US government's "hired killers"

Discrimination against Wiccans and pagans in the military also continues after their death. Veterans groups, supported by Circle Sanctuary and the Lady Liberty League, fought a long and protracted campaign to have the pentagram accepted as an official religious symbol on the gravestones of Wiccans and pagans who had served in the Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps in wars from 1941 to the present day. Finally, in April 2003, the US Department of Veterans Affairs agreed to add the pentagram to its list of recognized religious symbols that can be included as official military grave markers (Circle, #101, Summer 2008).

In a separate development concerning freedom of religious expression, prisoners were also campaigning for the right to practice Wicca behind bars. On October 17, 2005, The Times newspaper reported that "pagan priests" (i.e., chaplains) visiting Wiccan prisoners in British jails could now use wands and wine in the rituals they performed on their behalf. Presumably before this ruling wands were seen

as potential deadly weapons, and alcohol is banned in prisons. Under instructions issued to prison governors by the Director of Operations for the Prison Service those inmates who were practicing Wiccans were also allowed to use (hoodless) robes during rituals and own one piece of symbolic religious jewelry. Prisoners would also be allowed to pray, chant, and read Wiccan texts without interference from prison officers.

In October 2008, The Times again reported that paganism was on the rise in the British prison system. In the previous four years the number of inmates claiming to be Wiccans had risen steadily from 138 to 328 in 2007. In the Albany top security prison on the Isle of Wight, the number had increased from twelve to thirty-four in eight months, making Wicca the religion most frequently named in the jail. Wiccan prisoners were allowed to select two days a year from their seasonal calendar of festivals when they can be excused from work duties. If they select Samhain, the Prison Service has decreed it cannot be celebrated with alcohol unless a pagan chaplain is present to administer the ritual. However an apple can be used as an acceptable substitute if the prisoner celebrates the festival alone.

In February 2008, in the United States the Reverend

Patrick McCallum, a member of the Circle Sanctuary and the Lady Liberty League, and the statewide Wiccan chaplain for the Californian Department of Corrections, appeared at a Commission of Rights hearing in Washington DC. This was the first time a Wiccan chaplain had been invited to attend such a hearing, and he spoke about the religious rights of Wiccan inmates in the prison system. McCallum cited cases of discrimination suffered by both Wiccan clergy and prisoners. He called for an end to this, and religious equality that would prevent administrators and Christian chaplains from breaking the law by violating the religious rights of Wiccans (Circle #101, Summer 2008).

Another member of Circle Sanctuary, Jamie Hildebrand, was appointed as a Wiccan chaplain in the Massachusetts prison system in 2008. In a report to a meeting of the Lady Liberty League, she said she was working with eight facilities and was attempting to get Tarot packs approved for use by Wiccan prisoners. Hildebrand had also managed to get the prison authorities to recognize the pentagram as a religious symbol that could be displayed by Wiccan prisoners, the ankh by followers of ancient Egyptian pagan traditions, and Thor's hammer by the adherents of Asatru and Odinism (Circle #102, Fall 2008).

If Wicca is represented in prison it also, of course, has its followers on the other side of the law today. In 1999, Corporal Tricia Mullensky (aka "Lady Kiara") of the Massachusetts Police Department founded "Officers for Avalon" for Wiccan police officers. It is affiliated with neopagan officers in Canada and Britain, and has expanded to include employees of other emergency services. These include firefighters, paramedics, doctors, nurses, and even security guards. In May 2002, the first international meeting of the OA was held and attended by several hundred emergency response professionals (Rabinovitch and Lewis 2002: 195-196).

In the 1990s, a new phenomenon was recorded in the form of "teenage witchcraft" and so-called "teen witches." This was largely the result of the popularity among teenagers, mostly girls, of such television series as *Charmed*, *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and *Angel*; the Hollywood movies *The Craft* and *Practical Magic*; and, to a lesser extent, the best-selling *Harry Potter* books. The interest was so closely linked to the promotion of these series, books, and films that many Wiccan old-timers were doubtful it would survive and they dismissed it as just another teenage fad its devotees would grow out of eventually.

Reaction to this development was mixed because, as with the satanic ritual abuse scare, the introduction of underage children to the Craft was not welcomed. The Pagan Federation UK had restricted its membership to those over eighteen years of age, and attempts to lower this age limit met with resistance. However, until it closed down in 2008, the PF did become associated with a contact network for young people called Minor Arcana set up in the 1990s. The PF also appointed a youth officer to deal with enquiries and give support to young people interested in Wicca and neopaganism.

Others embraced the new trend for teen witches, including Silver RavenWolf, who wrote a book specifically aimed at this new audience. Although she admitted "ninety-nine percent of adult Crafters will not teach WitchCraft [sic] to minors," her book contained love spells, which sadly is what most teenage girls who are attracted to witchcraft are interested in, and a "Back off Baby Spell" to be used when "a romance wrecker comes sniffing at the heels of our loved one" (1998: 141). RavenWolf translated some of the text into so-called "teenspeak," and assured her young readers that "There's nothing scary in the Craft" (Ibid., 19).

During the 1990s and the early years of the new century,

where statistics are available, it seems that the numbers of people either interested in or involved in Wicca is growing. In 1989, the Occult Census organized by the Sorcerer's Apprentice mail order company in Leeds, Yorkshire, using a small sample of one thousand respondents, came up with a rather optimistic figure of 250,000 witches based on the then population of the United Kingdom. About 42 percent of those who completed the census declared they had a committed belief in the Craft. Other estimates of the number of practitioners of witchcraft in Britain in the 1990s ranged from 20,000 to 80,000. Most of the respondents to the Occult Census had been born in the 1960s, 37 percent had received some form of higher education, and another 21 percent possessed university degrees. Only 10 percent were unemployed, and most had responsible jobs in journalism, business management, the computer industry, engineering, and the civil service.

In 1991, the Reverend J. Gordon Melton of the Institute for the Study of American Religion in Santa Barbara, California, estimated the total neopagan population of the USA, including Wiccans, was about 130,000. In 1999, the figure was put at 200,000, and by 2001 this had increased significantly to 750,000. By 2005, a survey by the Covenant of the Goddess revised the figure down to between 150,000

and 200,000. A year later the Pagan Education Network estimated there were between 150,000 and 600,000 neopagan believers in the States, which seems a wide and variable figure. Another, more academically based survey (date unavailable) carried out by the City University of New York put the estimated figure at around 135,000.

Leading neopagan and Wiccan magazines such as PanGaia and SageWoman had a readership of between 7,000 and 20,000 in the 1990s (Lewis 1996: 303). Oberon Zell-Ravenheart (Tim Zell) of the Church of All Worlds claimed that based on the average readership of their magazine Green Egg, there must be at least 500,000 pagans in America. This figure was backed up by the Wiccan Pagan Press Alliance, who estimated between 500,000 and 600,000 based on magazine sales and readership. Certainly sales of neopagan and Wiccan books increased from 4.5 million in 1990 to over 100 million in 2000. In recent years this may have dropped, as in the UK at least, mainstream publishers have switched away from such books toward more general New Age subjects.

In 2001, for the first time, a question was included in the British National Census about religious affiliation. According to the results that were published by the

government, 30,569 people declared their religion as paganism. How many of these were Wiccans or witches is not known. In a largely secular country where less than 10 percent of professed Christians attend church services on a regular basis, this figure ranks paganism as the ninth most-popular religion, behind Roman Catholicism and Spiritualism (The Times, December 14, 2004).

The socio-economic make-up of people who follow Wiccan beliefs was, according to Reverend Melton, "white-collar professionals." Dr. Tanya Luhrmann's research in the 1980s among British Wiccans also indicated they were mostly middle-class. Leo Ruckbie has claimed recent research in the UK indicates Wiccans are "predominantly working to lower middle class," but he gives no source for his information. He also said they "subscribe to attitudes and values usually associated with the middle classes, tending to be more radically and politically left-wing." They are also predominantly white in ethnic origin, and this is also reflected in the racial identity of their American cousins (2004: 163-164).

Writing in 1993, Anthony Kemp said: "[The] majority of witches I have met are in their thirties, and they own homes, and have two children. Both partners are likely to be

employed ... and probably vote for the Green Party" (Kemp 1993: 133). However, he also identified a younger, nonconformist faction of Wiccans and neopagans. They were involved in alternative activities such as rock festivals, agitprop, visiting Glastonbury, and "drinking in the pubs of bed-sitter land." They spent their money on expensive biological soap powder and whole foods (Ibid.).

Today Wicca is dominated by the 1970s concept of witchcraft as a nature religion. The majority of pagan magazines published today devote several pages of each issue to environmental issues, ranging from animal welfare to genetically modified crops and they promote a green agenda and message. In fact many modern followers of paganism firmly, and sometimes almost fanatically, believe it represents the spirituality of the environmental movement and is the only hope for the future of the planet. Not all agree, and senior Wiccan elder Fred Lamond is on record as saying the increased interest in environmental matters among the general population owes more to pressure groups such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace than it does to the influence of pagans (quoted in Greenwood 2000: 112).

Ecopagan groups such as the Dragon Environmental Network (DEN) have emerged from the Wiccan scene to

support the recent anti-road campaigns that threaten the countryside and ancient woodlands. DEN was founded in the 1990s by Adrian Harris, a member of Friends of the Earth. He was an initiate of the "Progressive Wicca" group in London, a mixture of Alexandrian and Gardnerian traditions with a radical outlook. Harris was also involved in interfaith and worked with the Creation Spirituality movement in the United States founded by the Roman Catholic priest Father Matthew Fox.

In the 1990s, many pagans and Wiccans became involved in the struggle to stop the government's road-building plans at Oxlea Wood and Twyford Down in southern England. Protesters dug underground tunnels, chained themselves to trees, lay in front of bulldozers and earth-moving equipment, and fought with the police and private security guards in a failed attempt to stop the destruction of woodland by construction workers.

It is a problem that the vast majority of modern Wiccans are usually urban dwellers who practice their rituals indoors and have very little, if any, experience living in the countryside. For this reason they are likely to have a sentimental "townie" view of nature. The anthropologist Dr. Susan Greenwood, who carried out research into Wiccan

groups in London in the late 1990s, said most of their members were concerned with their own personal inner spiritual development and were not interested in environmental activism. She claimed two of the covens she joined "showed no interest in nature other than as a backdrop for their rituals and imagery for their sense of interconnectedness" (Ibid., 113). Dr. Greenwood quoted one Wiccan who said she did not watch nature documentaries on television because they were "boring". Another refused to go for a walk because it was raining and he might get his feet wet!

In the last ten years, the interest taken in Wicca, its beliefs, practices, and historical background by anthropologists and historians has led some of its modern devotees to reevaluate it. Many of them have begun to question "the gospel according to St. Gerald" concerning witchcraft that has been passed down to modern practitioners by the senior guardians of the tradition. In an interview published in 2007, Janet Farrar and her present partner Gavin Bone said of Wicca,

"... some may claim 'ancient origins,' [but] it is really a new religion, a mystery tradition, which since its conception in the 1950s has created its own theology and ritual practices."

They added that Wicca was only "fifty years young" and, although it had gone "mainstream" and become a more acceptable religious path within modern culture, there was a danger it would now lose its "mystery tradition" aspects ("An Interview with Janet Farrar & Gavin Bone" in *The Cauldron* #125, August 2007).

Apparently, in a last-ditch attempt to preserve this mystery tradition for future generations, Janet Farrar and Gavin Bone have followed in Gerald Gardner's footsteps and created a new form of witchcraft called "Progressive Wicca." Its aim is to give Wiccan beliefs and practices a fresh attitude, looking to the future and discarding those things from the past that are no longer relevant to spiritual growth and the progress of the Craft in the twenty-first century. One aspect where this has manifested in Progressive Wicca is the traditional duotheistic nature of a single God and Goddess as a couple. Instead Farrar and Bone see a much wider belief in the many faces of Deity represented at a practical level as polytheism (Ibid., and 2008: 166). In this sense, Progressive Wicca takes a similar view to many modern traditions of neopaganism who revere many gods and goddesses.

What we have seen over the years since the days of Gerald Gardner and his followers is a gradual movement

away from the rigid dogmas that once existed in Wicca. This has accelerated in recent years due to the corresponding cultural changes in society as a whole. According to Farrar and Bone, such concepts as lineage are becoming less important with a rise in more experiential training and an emphasis on solitary working. They say they have personally moved away from doing just lectures and now prefer workshops where participants can get involved at a practical level. This has extended onto the Internet where they offer courses for solitary practitioners who have been unable to join a coven or do not want to commit themselves to one. The courses run for seven months and are based on working with the elemental forces of fire, earth, air, water, and ether, or spirit. They also include shamanism and other traditions to "give a workable magical system for the twenty-first century."

While progressive Wiccans like Farrar and Bone are interested in reclaiming the modern Craft as a mystery cult, others see its future more in terms of its relationship to the wider neopagan movement and its aspirations to become a future world religion. After all, that seems to have been the reason why Gerald Gardner decided to go public with his version of witchcraft in the 1950s. For instance, from exclusively being "a priesthood without a congregation," as

when a witch was initiated he or she traditionally became a priest or priestess of the Craft, many modern practitioners support the neopagan idea of a professional pagan priesthood or clergy administering to other followers. This is already being put into practice through the Pagan Federation in the UK and the Circle Sanctuary in the USA, who are providing pagan chaplains to prisons, hospitals, and the armed forces to minister to Wiccans.

In 2005, Selena Fox of Circle Sanctuary put forward her hopes for the development of neopaganism as the twenty-first century progresses. These hopes included an increase in the number of pagan study courses in higher education at colleges and universities. She also wanted to see more Wiccans coming out of the broom closet, including prominent ones in the fields of entertainment, sports, science, business, industry, and politics. Another of her wishes was to see the establishment of pagan churches, libraries, research centers, seminaries, schools, and cemeteries, and the general recognition of pagan seasonal festivals by other faiths. Finally, Fox hoped that one day soon paganism would receive recognition as a legitimate world religion (quoted in Adler 2006: 454-455).

No doubt such future developments would be welcomed

by the vast majority of solitary Wiccans who follow a more eclectic path than those within the traditional and established coven system. Even some of those who belong to the Wiccan establishment might also agree. Alan Tickhill (b. 1955) of the Galdraheim Coven in southeastern England was initiated into both Gardnerian and Alexandrian Wicca in the early 1980s. Writing on his website in 2008, he optimistically predicted Wicca was poised to become "a spiritual way that will enrich, inform, and empower the lives of millions." Unfortunately, he also said that, in Britain at least, Wicca suffers from a lack of a reliable communication network, poor support between covens, and the lack of a referral system for new seekers. Part of this problem, Tickhill claims, is that as an initiated tradition, despite its rituals having been published and publicly available, modern Wicca still adheres to secrecy about its beliefs and activities (www.galdraheim.kirion.net).

Toward the end of her life, Doreen Valiente's views on the secrecy and dogma in Wicca changed. She said in the past there was a need for a hierarchy who could impose discipline, as then it was a matter of life and death. For the same reason there was also a clear requirement for secrecy and to punish breaches of it. Now, she said, "the Old Religion of the past is growing and changing into the new

religion of the future." Valiente predicted this neopagan religion would be a happy and constructive one involved with nature and the biosphere. It would also "take its stand against greed, cruelty, and social injustice, and feature rituals with colour, music, and dancing, as well as meditation and healing." She concluded "this new religion will enable every man to be his own High Priest and every woman to be her own High Priestess in the coming Aquarian Age" (1989: 218). We will have to wait to see if either hers or Selena Fox's predictions come true.



Resources and Contacts

Organizations

Australia

Pagan Alliance (PA)

P.O. Box 477

Kyneton, VIC 3444

Alexandrian Wicca Inc.

P.O. Box 653

Ulladulla, NSW 2539

Australian Pagan Information Centre (APIC)

P.O. Box 54

Castlemaine, VIC 3540

Canada

Pagan Federation/Federation Païenne Canada

Box 876 Stn B

Ottawa, ON K1P 5P9

Ireland

Fellowship of Isis (FOI)

Clonegal Castle

Enniscorthy

Co. Wexford

Italy

La Federazione Pagana

c/o Roberto Fattore

Casella Postele 54

Forlì Centro

47100 Forlì

Netherlands

Pagan Federation International (PFI)

Postbus 473

3700 AL Zeist

South Africa

South African Pagan Rights Alliance (SAPRA)

P.O. Box 184

Hoekwil 6538

United Kingdom

Children of Artemis

BM Artemis

London, WC1N 3XX

Dragon Environmental Network (DEN)

% 23B Pepys Road

London, SE14 5SA

Website: www.dragonnetwork.org

Resources and Contacts 321

The Green Circle

Box 280

Maidstone, Kent ME16 0UL

Pagan Federation (PF)

BM Box 7097

London, WC1N 3XX

Website: www.paganfed.org

Pagan Federation (Scotland)

P.O. Box 14251

Anstruther, KY10 3YA

Website: www.scottishpf.org

Pagan Pathfinders

BM Opal

London, WC1N 3XX

Wicca Study Group

BM Deosil

London, WC1N 3XX

Witchcraft Research Centre

Museum of Witchcraft

The Harbour

Boscastle

Cornwall, PL35 0HD

Website: www.museumofwitchcraft.com

United States

Annwfn/Forever Forests

P.O. Box 48

Calpella, CA 95418

Website: www.annwfn.org

Church of All Worlds (CAW)

P.O. Box 785

Cotati, CA 95931

Website: www.caw.org

Circle Sanctuary

P.O. Box 9

Barneveld, WI 53507

Website: www.circlesanctuary.org

Covenant of the Goddess (COG)

P.O. Box 1226

Berkeley, CA 94701

Website: www.cog.org

Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans

8190A Beechmont Avenue, Suite 334

Cincinnati, OH 45255

Lady Liberty League

P.O. Box 9

Barneveld, WI 53507

Website: www.circlesanctuary.org

Military Pagan Network (MPN)

P.O. Box 1225

Columbia, MD 21644

Website: www.milpagan.org

Minoan Tradition

409 East 189th Street

Bronx, New York, NY 10458

New England Covens of Traditionalist Witches (NEWC)
P.O. Box 29182
Providence, RI 02909
Website: www.nectw.org

New Wiccan Church International (NWCI)
P.O. Box 162046
Sacramento, CA 95816

Officers of Avalon
P.O. Box 22
Baraboo, WI 53913

Website: www.officersofavalon.com

Reclaiming

P.O. Box 14404
San Francisco, CA 94114
Website: www.reclaiming.org

Magazines

France

Liberation Painne

BP 2355

Marseilles 13002

Codex 02

(French language)

Netherlands

Wiccan Rede

P.O. Box 473

3705 AL Zeist

Website: www.silvercircle.org/wiccanrede.htm

United Kingdom

The Cauldron

BM Cauldron

London, WC1N 3XX

Website: www.the-cauldron.org.uk

The Hedgewytch

AHW

BM Hedgewytch

London, WC1N 3XX

Merry Meet

51 Prospect Road

Dorchester

Dorset, DT1 2PF

Pagan Dawn

BM 5896

London, WC1N 3XX

Pentacle

78 Hamlet Road

Southend-on-Sea

Essex, SS1 1HH

Website: www.pentaclemagazine.org

The Pomegranate

International Journal of Pagan Studies

Turpin Distribution Services

Stratton Business Park

Biggleswade

Bedfordshire, SG18 8TQ

Website: www.equinoxpub.com

Quest

BCM/SCL Quest

London, WC1N 3XX

Silver Wheel

P.O. Box 12

Earl Shilton

Leicestershire, LE 9 7ZZ

White Dragon

103 Abbotswood Close

Winyates Green

Redditch

Worcestershire, B98 OQR

The Wiccan

17 Brookfield Drive
Rhos-on-Sea
Colwyn Bay, LL28 48W
Wales
(initiates only)

United States

Circle

P.O. Box 9
Barneveld, WI 53507
Website: www.circlesanctuary.org/circle

The Hidden Path

P.O. Box 4216
Hopkins, MN 55343
(Gardnerian initiates only)

New Witch

P.O. Box 687

Forest Grove, OR 97416

Website: www.newwitch.com

PanGaia

P.O. Box 687

Forest Grove, OR 97116

Website: www.pangaia.com

SageWoman

P.O. Box 687

Forest Grove, OR 97116

Website: www.sagewoman.com/share.htm



Bibliography

Adler, Margot. Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess Worshippers and Other Pagans in America. New York: Viking Press, 1979, and Penguin Books, 2006.

Ansell, Robert. Rough Satyr: The Life and Art of Austin Osman Spare. London: Fulgur Press, 2005.

Ansell, Robert, and Kenneth Grant. Images & Oracles of Austin Osman Spare. London: Fulgur Press, 2005.

Ash. "Helen Douglas and the Book of Shadows." The Cauldron, 113 (August 2004).

AstropheL "Manx Witchery." The Wiccan Candle (Summer 1993).

Bell, Jessie (aka "Lady Sheba"). The Book of Shadows. St. Paul: Llewellyn, 1971.

Berger, Helen. A Community of Witches: Contemporary Neo-Paganism and Witchcraft in the United States. Durham, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1997.

Beskin, Geraldine, and John Bonner. Austin Osman Spare: Artist Occultist. London: The Beskin Press, 1999.

Booth, Martin. A Magick Life: A Biography of Aleister Crowley. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2000.

Bourne, Lois. Witch Amongst Us: An Autobiography. London: Satellite Books, 1979.

Dancing With Witches. London: Robert Hale, 1998.

Bracelin, Jack. Gerald Gardner: Witch. London: Octagon Press, 1960.

Buckland, Raymond. The Tree: The Complete Book of Saxon Witchcraft. York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1974.

Buckland's Book of Saxon Witchcraft. Newburyport, MA: Weiser Books, 2005.

Budapest, Z. The Holy Book of Women's Mysteries. Oakland, CA: Wingbow Press, 1989.

Cabot, Laurie. The Power of the Witch. New York: Penguin Books, 1983.

Clifton, Chas S. (ed.). Witchcraft Today: Book One-The

Modern Craft Movement. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1992 and 1996.

"A Candidate for Pagan Sainthood: Scott Cunningham" The Cauldron 89 (August 1998).

Her Hidden Children: The Rise of Wicca and Paganism In America. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2006.

Crowley, Vivianne. Wicca: The Old Religion In the New Age. London: The Aquarian Press, 1989.

Wicca: A Comprehensive Guide to the Old Religion in the Modern World. London: Element, 2003.

Crowther, Patricia. "The Day I Met Aleister Crowley." Prediction (November 1970).

Witch Blood. New York: House of Collectibles, 1974.

One Witch's World. London: Robert Hale, 1998.

From Stagecraft to Witchcraft: The Early Years of a High Priestess. Berkshire: UK: Capall Bann, 2002.

Crowther, Patricia, and Arnold Crowther. The Witches Speak. Douglas, UK: Athol Publications, 1965.

- Cunningham, Scott. *Wicca: A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner*. St. Paul: Llewellyn, 1988.
- D'Este, Sorita, and David Rankine. *Wicca: Magickal Beginnings*. London: Avalonia, 2008.
- Davies, Morgan. "From Man to Witch: Gerald Gardner 1946-1949." www.geraldgardner.com
- Dearneley, Roger. *An Annotated Chronology & Biography of Early Gardnerian Craft*. (1999/2000) Unpublished.
- Deutch, Richard. *The Ecstatic Mother: A Portrait of Maxine Sanders, Witch Queen*. London: Badon and Turner, 1977.
- Drury, Nevill. *Pan's Daughter: The Magical World of Rosaleen Norton*. Melbourne: William Collins, 1988.
- Evans, Arthur. *Witchcraft and the Gay Counter-Culture*. San Francisco: Fag Rag Books, 1970.
- Evans, Dave. *Aleister Crowley and the 20th Century Synthesis of Magic*. Harpenden, UK: Hidden Publishing, 2007.
- The History of British Magick after Aleister Crowley*. Harpenden, UK: Hidden Publishing, 2007.

Ezzy, Dr. Douglas. Practising the Witch's Craft. Melbourne: Allen & Unwin, 2003.

Farrar, Stewart. "I Met Britain's Top Witch." Reveille (January 10, 1970).

What Witches Do. London: Peter Davies, 1971.

Farrar, Stewart, and Janet Farrar. The Witches Way. London: Robert Hale and, 1984.

Fitch, Ed. A Book of Pagan Rituals. York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1978.

Frisvold, Nicholaj. "An Interview with Janet Farrar and Gavin Bone." The Cauldron 125 (August 2007).

Fry, Stephen. Stephen Fry in America. London: Harper Collins, 2008.

Gardner, Gerald. High Magic's Aid. London: Michael Juste, 1949

The Meaning of Witchcraft. London: Aquarian Press, 1959.

Witchcraft Today. London: Rider, 1954.

Gibson, Marion. Witchcraft Myths in American Culture.

London: Routledge, 2007.

Gimbutas, Marija. The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe.
San Francisco: University of California Press, 1982.

Glass, Justine. Witchcraft, The Sixth Sense and Us. Jersey,
UK: Neville Spearman, 1965.

Grant, Kenneth. The Nightshade of Eden. London: Frederick
Muller, 1977.

Zos Speak! Encounters with Austin Osman and Steffi Grant
Spare. London: Fulgur Press, 1998.

Graves, Richard Perceval. Robert Graves and the White
Goddess. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1995.

Graves, Robert. The White Goddess. London: Faber &
Faber, 1948.

The Crane Bag. London: Cassell, 1969.

Greenfield, Dr. Allen. "The Secret History of Modern
Witchcraft" (www.geraldgardner.com1998).

Greenwood, Dr. Susan. Magic, Witchcraft and the
Otherworld: An Anthropology. Oxford, UK: Berg, 2000.

- Greer, Jon Michael. *The New Encyclopedia of the Occult*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 2003.
- Grimassi, Raven. *The Way of the Strega*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1995.
- Encyclopedia of Wicca & Witchcraft*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 2003.
- Guerra, Elizabeth. *Stewart Farrar: Writer on a Broomstick*. London: Arcata: R. J. Stewart Books, 2008.
- Guiley, Rosemary Ellen. *The Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft*. Oxford, UK: Facts on File, 1989.
- Haining, Peter. *Anatomy of Witchcraft*. London: Souvenir Press, 1972.
- Harrington, David, and deTraci Regula. *Whispers of the Moon: The Life and Work of Scott Cunningham*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1996.
- Harrison, Rhiannon. "Tony Kelly and the Pagan Movement." *The Cauldron* 113 (August 2004).
- Harvey, Ralph. *The Last Bastion: The Suppression and Re-Emergence of Witchcraft, the Old Religion*. Plymouth, UK:

Zambezi Publishing, 2005.

Heselton, Philip "The Night GBG was Initiated." The Cauldron 94 (November 1999).

Wiccan Roots: Gerald Gardner and the Modern Witchcraft Revival. Berkshire, UK: Capall Bann, 2000.

"A Look Inside Dorothy Clutterbuck's Diaries." The Cauldron 95 (February 2000).

"Sacrifice in the New Forest 1940." The Cauldron 97 (August 2000).

Gerald Gardner and the Witchcraft Revival. Thame, UK: IHO Books, 2001.

"Katherine Louise Oldmeadow." The Cauldron 104 (May 2002)

"Mother Sabine and the New Forest Coven." The Cauldron 106 (November 2002).

Gerald Gardner and the Cauldron of Inspiration. Berkshire: UK: Cavall Bann. 2003.

"Gerald Gardner and Witchcraft Today." The Cauldron 111

(February 2004).

"Barbara Vickers-Gerald Gardner's First Initiate." *The Cauldron* 128 (May 2008).

"The Meaning of Witchcraft." *The Cauldron* 131 (February 2009).

Holzer, Hans. *The Truth About Witchcraft*. New York: Doubleday & Co, 1969.

The Witchcraft Report. New York: Ace Books, 1973.

Pagans and Witches. New York: Manor Books, 1978.

Horne, Fiona. *Witch: A Personal Journey*. New York: Random House, 1978.

Howell, Francesca. "The Goddess Returns to Italy." *The Pomegranate* Vol. 10.1 (2008).

Hughes, Steve, and Miriam Akhtov. *Far Out. The Dawning of New Age Britain*. London: Samsom & Co., 1999.

Hume, Dr. Lynn. *Witchcraft and Paganism in Australia*. Melbourne: University Press, 1997.

Huson, Paul. *Mastering Witchcraft*. London: Rupert Hart-Davies, 1970.

Hutton, Professor Ronald. *Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999.

"A Dialogue with Patricia Crowther." *Pagan Dawn* (Samhain 2002).

Illes, Judith. *The Element Encyclopedia of Witchcraft*. London: HarperElement, 2005.

James, Deric R. "The Rosicrucian Theatre." *Insight* 34 (n.d.).

Johns, June. *King of the Witches: The World of Alex Sanders*. London: Peter Davies, 1969.

Johnson, Peter, and Gus diZerega. *Beyond the Burning Times: A Pagan and Christian Dialogue*. Oxford, UK: Lion Hudson, 2008.

Kelly, Aidan, A. *Crafting the Art of Magic*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1991.

Inventing Witchcraft: A Case Study in the Creation of a New Religion. Loughborough: Thoth Publications, 2007.

- Kemp, Anthony. Witchcraft and Paganism Today. Philadelphia: TransAtlantic Press, 1993.
- King, Francis. Ritual Magic in England: 1887 to the Present-Day. Jersey, UK: Neville Spearman, 1970.
- Sexuality, Magic and Perversion. Jersey, UK: Neville Spearman, 1971.
- The Flying Sorcerer: Francis Barratt. Mandrake of Oxford, 1992.
- Leek, Sybil. A Fool and a Tree. London: Lombarde Press, 1964.
- Diary of a Witch. London: Leslie Frewin, 1975.
- . The Complete Art of Witchcraft. London: Leslie Frewin, 1975.
- Lefebure, Charles. Witness to Witchcraft. New York: Ace Books, 1970.
- Leland, Charles Godfrey. Aradia or the Gospel of the Witches (1899). Arizona: Phoenix Publishing edition, 1988.
- Lewis, Dr. James R. (ed.) Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft. New York: State University of New York, 1996.

Liddell, E. W. *The Pickingill Papers: Old George Pickingill and the Origins of Modern Wicca*. Berkshire, UK: Capall Bann, 1994.

"Gerald Gardner and the New Forest Coven." *The Cauldron* 96 (May 2000).

The Alex Sanders Story." *The Cauldron* 97 (August 2000).

'Lugh' (E. W. Liddell). *Old George Pickingill and the Roots of Modern Witchcraft*. London: Wiccan Publications, 1982.

Luhrmann, Dr. Tanya. *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: Ritual Magic and Witchcraft in Present-day England*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989.

Maple, Eric. "The Witches of Canewdon" *Folklore* Vol. 71 (December 1960).

Dark World of the Witches. London: Robert Hale, 1962.

The Witches of Dengie." *Folklore* Vol. 73 (Autumn 1962).

"Witchcraft and Magic in the Rochford Hundred." *Folklore* Vol. 76 (Autumn 1965).

Martello, Dr. Leo Louis. *Witchcraft: The Old Religion*. New

York: University Books, 1973.

Morgan, Robin. *Going Too Far: The Personal Chronicle of a Feminist*. New York: Vintage Books, 1978.

Nemorensis, Rex (Charles Cardell). *Witch*. Charlwood, UK: Dumblecott Productions, 1964.

Newman, Paul. *The Tregethan Horror: Aleister Crowley, D. H. Lawrence and Peter Warlock in Cornwall*. London: Abraxas, 2006.

Nightmare, Macha N. *Witchcraft and the Web: Weaving Pagan Traditions Online*. Ontario, CA: ECW Press, 2001.

Orion, Lionette. *Never Again the Burning Times: Paganism Revived*. n.p: Waveland Press, 1995.

Pearson, Dr. Joanne. *Wicca: The Christian Heritage*. Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 2007.

Pengelly, James, (ed.), et al. *We Emerge... The Origins of the Pagan Federation*. London: PF Publications, 1997.

Philips, Julia. "History of Wicca in England 1939 to the Present-day." Talk given to the Australian Wicca Conference in Canberra, 1991.

Purkiss, Dr. Diane. *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth Century Interpretations*. London: Routledge, 1996.

Rabinovitch, Shelley, and Dr. James Lewis. *The Encyclopedia of Modern Witchcraft and Neo-Paganism*. New York: Citadel Press, 2002.

RavenWolf, Silver. *Teen Witch: Wicca for a New Generation*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1998.

Richardson, Alan, and Marcus Claridge. *The Old Sod: The Odd Life and Inner Work of William G. Gray*. London: Ignotus Press, 2003.

Ruckbie, Leo. *Witchcraft from the Shadows: A Complete History*. London: Robert Hale, 2004.

Russell, Professor J. B. *A History of Witchcraft, Sorcerers, Heretics and Pagans*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1980.

Sanders, Alex. *The Alex Sanders Lectures*. New York: Magickal Childe, 1984.

Sanders, Maxine. *Maxine: The Witch Queen*. London: Star Books, 1976.

Firechild: The Life and Magic of Maxine Sanders 'Witch Queen'. Oxford: Mandrake Press, 2008.

Schultz, Donna Cole. "My Quest for Witchcraft in the 1960s." The Cauldron 109 (August 2003).

Seims, Melissa. "Charles Clark: Gardnerian High Priest and Child of Wica." The Cauldron 116 (May 2005).

"Gerald Gardner in the Circle." The Cauldron 120 (May 2006).

"The Scottish Roots of Wica." The Cauldron 121 (August 2006).

. "Doreen Valiente and the Golden Dawn." The Cauldron 124 (May 2007).

The Coven of Atho" The Cauldron 126 (November 2007).

"Wicca or Wica." The Cauldron 129 (August 2008).

Sinha, Indura. "The Sussex Workings of Alex Sanders." The Cauldron 116 (Samhain 1969).

Smyth, Frank. Modern Witchcraft. London: McDonald, 1970.

Spretnick, Charlene. The Politics of Women's Spirituality.

New York: Doubleday & Co., 1982.

Starhawk (Miriam Simos). *The Spiral Dance: Rebirth of the Great Goddess*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982.

Dreaming the Dark. San Francisco: Beacon Press, 1992.

Steele, Tony. *Water Witches*. Berkshire: UK: Capall Bann, 1992.

Stone, Merlin. *When God Was a Woman*. n.p.: Brace, 1976.

Summers, Montague. *Witchcraft and Black Magic*. London: Rider 1946.

Symonds, John. *The Great Beast: The Life and Magic of Aleister Crowley*. London: McDonald, 1971.

Valiente, Doreen. *Where Witchcraft Lives*. London: Aquarian Press, 1962.

ABC of Witchcraft. London: Robert Hale, 1973.

Witchcraft for Tomorrow. London: Robert Hale, 1978.

The Rebirth of Witchcraft. London: Robert Hale, 1989, 1998.

Waldron, Dr. David. *The Sign of the Witch: Modernity and the Pagan Revival*. Columbia, SC: University of South

Carolina Press, 2008.

Wallace, Dole. "Debating the Witch in the South African Context" *The Pomegranate* Vol. 10.1 (2008).

Webster, Sybil. M. Canewdon: The Bewitching History and Tales. Essex: privately published, 2005.

Wheatley, Dennis. *The Time Has Come*. London: Arrow, 1981.

White, Suzanne. "Progressive Magic: An Interview with Janet Farrar and Gavin Bone." *Pagan Dawn* (Lammas 2008).

Williamson, Cecil. "The Witchcraft Museum." *Pentagram*, Candlemas 1967, and *New Dimensions* 1964.

"Aleister Crowley: An Interview with Cecil Williamson." *Talking Stick* 9 (Winter 1992).

Wilson, Joseph B. "Warts & All": Parts 4 and 5, *The Cauldron* 115 (February 2005) and 116 (May 2005).

Books by Michael Howard

Candle Burning: Its Occult Significance. Aquarian, 1975 and 1980.

The Runes & Other Magical Alphabets. Thorsons, 1978.

The Magic of the Runes. Aquarian Press, 1980.

The Wisdom of the Runes. Rider, 1985.

Practical Magic. Javelin, 1986.

Traditional Folk Remedies. Century, 1987.

The Occult Conspiracy. Rider, 1989, and Inner Traditions USA, 1989.

Understanding Runes. Aquarian Press, 1990.

Earth Mysteries. Robert Hale, 1990.

Incense and Candle Burning. Aquarian Press, 1991.

Angels & Goddesses: Celtic Christianity & Paganism in Ancient Britain. Capall Bann, 1994.

The Mysteries of the Runes. Capall Bann, 1994.

Witchcraft & Shamanism (Contributor). Llewellyn Publications, 1994.

The Pickingill Papers: George Pickingill and the Modern Wicca Revival (Editor). Capall Bann, 1994.

The Sacred Ring: The Pagan Origins of British Folk Festivals and Seasonal Customs. Capall Bann, 1995.

Day of the Magus. Capall Bann, 1996.

Finding Your Guardian Angel. Thorsons, 1996.

A-Z of Traditional Herbal Remedies. Senate, 1997.

The Pillars of Tubal Cain, with Nigel Jackson. Capall Bann, 2001.

The Sacred Earth Guide. Capall Bann, 2001.

The Roebuck in the Thicket: An Anthology of the Robert Cochrane Witchcraft Tradition (Editor). Capall Bann, 2002.

The Robert Cochrane Letters: An Insight into Modern Traditional Witchcraft (Editor). Capall Bann, 2003.

The Book of Fallen Angels. Capall Bann, 2004.

Faery Beasts and Animals of Legend. Capall Bann, 2004.

Practical Candle Magic. Ignotus Press, 2004.

Secret Societies: Their Influence and Power From Antiquity to the Present Day. Destiny Books USA, 2008.

Welsh Witches and Wizards. Three Hands Press, 2009.

Forthcoming

Children of Cain: A Study of Modern Traditional Witches,
Scottish Witches and Warlocks. Three Hands Press.

East Anglian Witches and Wizards. Three Hands Press.

Irish Witches and Faeries. Three Hands Press.

North Country and Manx Witches. Three Hands Press.

West Country Witches. Three Hands Press, 2010.

To Write to the Author

If you wish to contact the author or would like more information about this book, please write to the author in care of Llewellyn Worldwide and we will forward your request. Both the author and publisher appreciate hearing from you and learning of your enjoyment of this book and how it has helped you. Llewellyn Worldwide cannot guarantee that every letter written to the author can be answered, but all will be forwarded. Please write to:

Michael Howard
% Llewellyn Worldwide
2143 Wooddale Drive, Dept. 978-0-7387-1588-9
Woodbury, Minnesota 55125-2989, U.S.A.

Please enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope for reply,
or \$1.00 to cover costs. If outside U.S.A., enclose
international postal reply coupon.

Many of Llewellyn's authors have websites with
additional information and resources. For more information,
please visit our website at <http://www.llewellyn.com>

Free Catalog

Get the latest information on our body, mind, and spirit products! To receive a **free** copy of Llewellyn's consumer catalog, *New Worlds of Mind & Spirit*, simply call 1-877-NEW-WRLD or visit our website at www.llewellyn.com and click on *New Worlds*.



LLEWELLYN ORDERING INFORMATION



Order Online:

Visit our website at www.llewellyn.com, select your books, and order them on our secure server.



Order by Phone:

- Call toll-free within the U.S. at 1-877-NEW-WRLD (1-877-639-9753). Call toll-free within Canada at 1-866-NEW-WRLD (1-866-639-9753)
- We accept VISA, MasterCard, and American Express



Order by Mail:

Send the full price of your order (MN residents add 6.875% sales tax) in U.S. funds, plus postage & handling to:

Llewellyn Worldwide
2143 Wooddale Drive, Dept. 978-0-7387-1588-9
Woodbury, MN 55125-2969

Postage & Handling:

Standard (U.S., Mexico & Canada). If your order is:
\$24.99 and under, add \$4.00
\$25.00 and over, FREE STANDARD SHIPPING

AK, HI, PR: \$16.00 for one book plus \$2.00 for each additional book.

International Orders (airmail only):

\$16.00 for one book plus \$3.00 for each additional book

*Orders are processed within 2 business days.
Please allow for normal shipping time. Postage and handling rates subject to change.*



The Book of Shadows

LADY SHEBA

Llewellyn announces the exciting re-release of what many consider the authentic holy book of Wicca! When it made its debut in 1971, Lady Sheba's *The Book of Shadows* was the first and only Book of Shadows ever published. The United States was witnessing the revival of Witchcraft, and her book played a leading role in the initial recognition of Wicca as a religion.

During the time of the persecutions, this holy book was handed down by word of mouth to new initiates. When Lady Sheba was initiated into her first coven, she hand copied *The Book of Shadows*. It was her wish that the publication of *The Book of Shadows* would bring to light the authentic beliefs of Witchcraft and reestablish the respectability of this ancient art.

The Book of Shadows is divided into three sections: (1) "The Law," which outlines the remnants of the old witch laws and the role of the High Priestess and the High Priest; (2) "The Rituals," which provides actual directions for Opening the Magic Circle, Initiation into the Three Degrees, The Charge of the Goddess, and much more; and (3) "The Sabbats," with rituals for each of the eight Sabbats.

978-0-87542-075-2, 192 pp., 5 1/2 x 8

\$12.95

To order, call 1-877-NEW-WRLD

Prices subject to change without notice

Order at Llewellyn.com 24 hours a day, 7 days a week!



Buckland's Complete Book of Witchcraft

RAYMOND BUCKLAND

Here is the most complete resource to the study and practice of modern, nondenominational Wicca. This is a lavishly illustrated, self-study course for the solitary or group. Included are rituals; exercises for developing psychic talents; information on all major "sects" of the Craft; sections on tools, beliefs, dreams, meditations, divination, herbal lore, healing, ritual clothing; and much, much more. This book unites theory and practice into a comprehensive course designed to help you develop into a practicing Witch, one of the "Wise Ones." It is written by Ray Buckland, a very famous and respected authority on Witchcraft who first came public with the Old Religion in the United States. Large format with workbook-type exercises, profusely illustrated and full of music and chants. Takes you from A to Z in the study of Witchcraft.

Never before has so much information on the Craft of the Wise been collected in one place. Traditionally, there are three degrees of advancement in most Wiccan traditions. When you have completed studying this book, you will be the equivalent of a Third-Degree Witch. Even those who have practiced Wicca for years find useful information in this book, and many covens are using this for their textbook. If you want to become a Witch, or if you merely want to find out what Witchcraft is really about, you will find no better book than this.

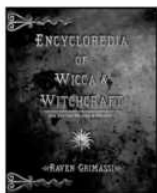
978-0-87542-050-9, 368 pp., 8½ x 11

\$19.9

To order, call 1-877-NEW-WRLD

Prices subject to change without notice

Order at Llewellyn.com 24 hours a day, 7 days a week!



Encyclopedia of Wicca & Witchcraft

RAVEN GRIMASSI

This indispensable reference work provides both a historical and cultural foundation for modern Wicca and Witchcraft, and it is the first to be written by an actual practitioner of the Craft.

Other encyclopedias present a series of surface topics such as tools, sabbats, Witchcraft trials, and various mundane elements. Unique to this encyclopedia is its presentation of Wicca/Witchcraft as a spiritual path, connecting religious concepts and spirituality to a historical background and a modern system of practice. It avoids the inclusion of peripheral entries typically included, and deals only with Wicca/Witchcraft topics, old and new, traditional and eclectic. It also features modern Wiccan expressions, sayings, and terminology. Finally, you will find a storehouse of information on European folklore and Western Occultism as related to modern Wicca/Witchcraft.

978-1-56718-257-6, 528 pp., 8 x 10

\$26.95

To order, call 1-877-NEW-WRLD

Prices subject to change without notice

Order at Llewellyn.com 24 hours a day, 7 days a week!



Make Merry in Step and Song
*A Seasonal Treasury of Music, Mummers' Plays
& Celebrations in the English Folk Tradition*
BRONWEN FORBES

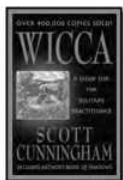
"See the blazing Yule before us..." This is just one of the many ancient British folk songs we all know and love. Other tunes and symbols that tug on our memories have similar historical roots, hearkening back to a shared Pagan past. These dances, songs, and theatrical plays in the English folk tradition are now little known to most of the modern Pagan community. Reviving these vital traditions can bring new life to Renaissance festivals, neopagan rituals, and community events.

Introducing the lively music and homegrown entertainments of times long past, this descriptive how-to is designed for twenty-first-century joviality. The songs, dances, and plays of old are explained in their mythical, seasonal, and historical significance and outlined for easy reenactment. Simple-to-follow instructions detail six dances including the popular Abbots Bromley Horn dance, six full scripts for dramatic performances of Mummers' Plays (folk plays of death and rebirth), and over thirty songs with lyrics and music. Kick up your heels, hold high your skirts, and make merry the year through.

978-0-7387-1500-1, 264 pp., 7½ x 9¼

\$19.95

To order, call 1-877-NEW-WRLD
Prices subject to change without notice
Order at Llewellyn.com 24 hours a day, 7 days a week!



Wicca

A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner (Updated edition)

SCOTT CUNNINGHAM

Cunningham's classic introduction to Wicca is about how to live life magically, spiritually, and wholly attuned with nature. It is a book of sense and common sense, not only about magick, but about religion and one of the most critical issues of today: how to achieve the much needed and wholesome relationship with our Earth. Cunningham presents Wicca as it is today: a gentle, Earth-oriented religion dedicated to the goddess and god. *Wicca* also includes Scott Cunningham's own Book of Shadows and updated appendices of periodicals and occult suppliers.

978-0-87542-118-6, 240 pp., 6 x 9

\$12.95

To order, call 1-877-NEW-WRLD

Prices subject to change without notice

Order at Llewellyn.com 24 hours a day, 7 days a week!



Wiccan Beliefs & Practices
With Rituals for Solitaries & Covens

GARY CANTRELL

Frequently, covens are not formed along traditional Gardnerian or Alexandrian lines, but are created with only a handful of eclectic members. This book is written for them—the members of solitary or nontraditional, small covens.

The rites, rituals, and spells provided will give you a starting point in the development of your own practice, giving you a solid foundation of understanding. Additionally, the book contains a considerable amount of information regarding the definition of Wicca and the ethics of the Craft, crucial to your comprehension of Wiccan philosophy and in developing your own personal goals as you set yourself on this Path. Written by a High Priest of a Wiccan coven.

978-1-56718-112-8, 336 pp, 6 x 9

\$16.95

To order, call 1-877-NEW-WRLD

Prices subject to change without notice

Order at Llewellyn.com 24 hours a day, 7 days a week!

"This is an extremely important book, representing an account of Wiccan history from somebody who has himself been a major actor in it."

—RONALD HUTTON, AUTHOR OF *THE TRIUMPH OF THE MOON*

An insider's look at the history of Witchcraft

The evolution of Wicca is as dynamic and colorful as the Witches who helped shape it. One of the most enigmatic and progressive practitioners of his time, Gerald Gardner was arguably the most instrumental Witch in spreading the Craft around the world.

Drawing on his decades of personal involvement with Wicca, Michael Howard offers an intimate portrait of Gerald Gardner's life and traces the history and development of modern neo-pagan Witchcraft. Howard reveals little-known facts and stories surrounding the men and women who shaped Wicca over the past sixty years, including Aleister Crowley, Alex Sanders, and influential initiates such as Doreen Valiente.

From the Museum of Magic and Witchcraft on the Isle of Man to the origins of the Book of Shadows, *Modern Wicca* tracks the expansion of Wicca as it spread from the United Kingdom to the United States and beyond—and takes you inside the political controversies, behind-the-scenes rivalries, and once-guarded secrets of the Craft of the Wise.

Michael Howard is the editor of *The Cauldron*, a leading magazine on modern Witchcraft and magic. He has been involved in the Craft for over forty years, and is the author of over twenty books on magic, Witchcraft, and folklore. He lives in England.

\$19.95 US
\$22.95 CAN



Llewellyn Worldwide

www.llewellyn.com • www.facebook.com/LlewellynBooks

ISBN 978-0-7387-1588-9



9 780738 715889

