

Donna Gardner – Witch ?

There has been quite a bit of discussion over the years as to whether or not Gerald Gardner's wife, Donna, was involved in the early Wica movement. An article by Tof back in 2010 [The Cauldron 136, Pp 11-12], summarised the arguments for and against and reached the provisory conclusion – “Apart from the testimony of Charles Clark, there is no definite proof ... but there are many clues pointing in that direction.” I recently found an apparently positive answer to the conundrum, in a self-published book by a Manx journalist.

In 1973, Arthur Moore issued his *Manx Scene (A Tour Down Memory Lane)* proudly proclaiming on the front cover – “By the well-known Isle of Man Columnist”, “Unique Articles and Pictures!”, “A Collector's Item” and “An Ideal Gift Book”. In the Introduction, Moore wrote –

“During the late 1950sI was the Columnist and Features writer for the *Isle of Man Examiner* and the *Daily and Weekly Times*. Since then many of my old-time jottings have appeared in the *Isle of Man Courier*, and even more recently in *Manx Life* magazine. It is probably due to these memories that prompted many Island readers to suggest – ‘Why don't you write a book?’”

He went on to say –

“So this little new Book is really a nostalgic glimpse of 19th and 20th century Manxland – with occasional flashbacks to earlier epochs. In its pages a Roving Reporter invites you to re-trace our steps down Memory Lane.”

The book has a section on The Castletown Witches, including material relating to The Witches' Mill and Gerald Gardner. Moore had met Gardner, as he described how he went – “ ... one Hallowe'en night many years ago to interview Dr.Gardner” Later in the chapter, Moore wrote –

“ For some part of the winter, Dr.Gardner and his wife (also a Witch), when the Mill was closed to the public, they left the Island to reside in the far from bewitching London district of Shepherd's Bush.”

Although the structure of the sentence is convoluted to say the least, there can be no doubt that Moore having interviewed Gardner, felt able to state without any equivocation that Gardner's wife was “also a Witch”. Obviously this is not definitive proof – one does not believe everything one reads in the press. However, to me it seems rather unlikely that an old-school journalist such as Moore, would assert such a fact without having at least some basis for the point.

Clive Harper

Arthur Moore's

Manx Scene

(A Tour Down Memory Lane)



Loch Promenade, Douglas, in the early 1880's

By the well-known Isle of Man Columnist
UNIQUE ARTICLES AND PICTURES!

A Collector's Item

An Ideal Gift Book