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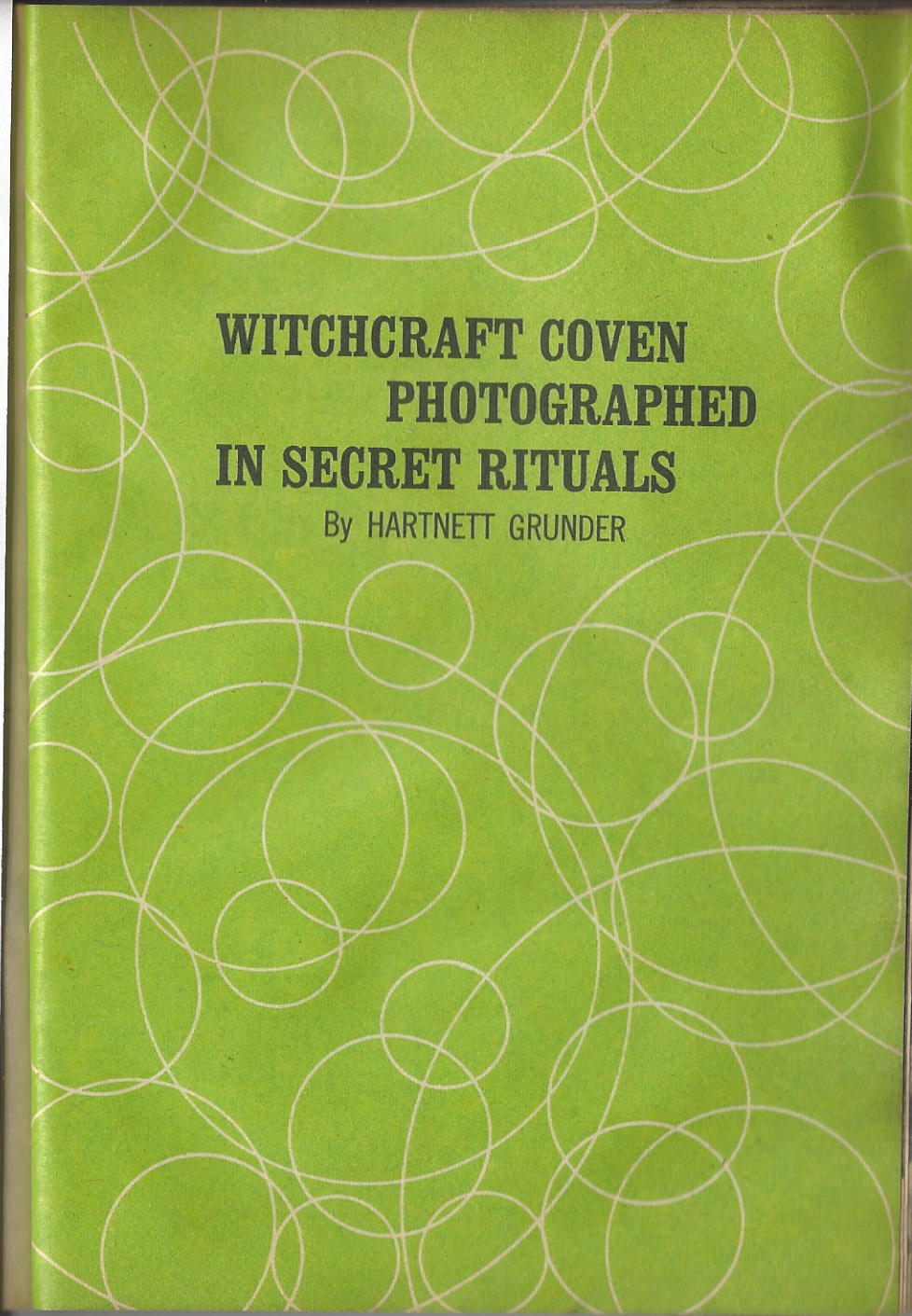


ANCIENT EGYPTIAN CURSE
THREATENS NEW YORK MUSEUM



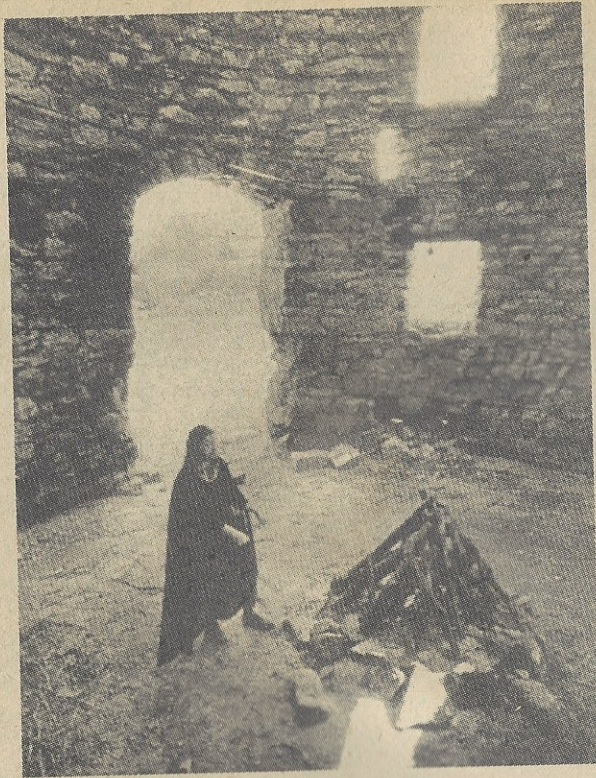
SECRET PHOTOGRAPHS OF
WITCHCRAFT RITUALS





**WITCHCRAFT COVEN
PHOTOGRAPHED
IN SECRET RITUALS**

By HARTNETT GRUNDER



Olwin, High Priestess of a Witchcraft "coven" on the Isle of Man, worships fire and light in a 600-year-old ruin used by witches and sorcerers for centuries.

It is no secret, even to those who are relatively uninformed regarding the occult, that the practice of witchcraft continues to exist in the twentieth century. Hidden away in secret places, far from the prying eyes of outsiders, the age-old rituals are performed in all their dark significance by men and women of fanatic dedication.

Because of this very secrecy—a secrecy which has grown ever

more deep since the beginning of Christianity and its hostility to witchcraft and sorcery—detailed descriptions of the rites and practices of witchcraft are rare. The practitioners themselves are reluctant to expose themselves and their rites, and outsiders can't get close enough to investigate in depth.

It is all the more valuable, therefore, when some of the High Priestesses and High Priests of



After drawing a "magic circle" to attract the Dark Gods, Olwin stands in front of the altar, raising her arms in worship of a statue representing fertility.

the Black Arts agree to discuss their activities openly. This rare opportunity arose in Britain recently—when a coven of witches not only agreed to admit an observer from “Beyond” to its most secret rituals, but actually allowed him to take photographs.

To accomplish this unprecedented entry into the secret worlds of the occult, this “Beyond” reporter traveled to the Isle of Man, a small British island halfway between England and Ireland in the Irish Sea. Here, he was greeted by Mrs. Monique Wilson, leader of a “coven” or “wicca” numbering from eight to twelve witches of both sexes.

After the traditional witches greeting “Blessed Be,” Mrs. Wilson explained that on the next morning she would begin some of the most sacred rites of the year. She invited the reporter to accompany her, but warned him that from the moment the dawn broke, she would no longer be Monique Wilson, but the High Priestess Olwin, and must be addressed as such.

“All witches,” Mrs. Wilson said, “have two names: their ordinary baptismal names, and their ‘witches’ names. The latter must be used at all times during magic ceremonies, since if the common baptismal name is used the ‘force’ inhabiting the witch is driven out.”

It was six o’clock the next morning when our reporter accompanied Olwin to an ancient, ruined mill, several miles outside of the town of Castletown. This mill, built in the early part of the thirteenth century, is for witches a “con-

secrated” place, since ceremonies of magic and sorcery dedicated to the Black Arts have been held here for centuries.

Clad in a long black cape, stitched with intricate designs and cabalistic symbols on its back, and wearing around her neck a metal chain of “magic beads,” Olwin advanced to the center of the mill’s ground floor. Here, a stack of wood had been prepared for a fire, in exactly the position which would be struck with the first shafts of sunlight coming through a window in the mill’s east wall.

Olwin bent to the wood, muttered some words in a language which sounded like Latin, and started the fire. A few moments later, as the flames reached their peak, the sunlight coming through the window struck directly onto the flames, mingling fire and light.

At this point, Olwin raised her arms wide in front of her, lifting her face to the sunlight. Again she chanted words in some sort of mystic invocation. Slowly, she turned to face the North, West, South, and finally the East again. Then she passed her hands over the flames three times.

In older times, Olwin explained later, the other stages of the rites would be held right here, in the mill. Now, however, the place was too public, and chance onlookers could wander in and spoil the sacred aura of the ceremonies. Therefore, she would return to a “consecrated chamber” of her house to perform the rites which were to follow.

As the reporter accompanied her,

Olwin explained that there are basically two kinds of witchcraft, those employing Black Magic, and those employing White Magic. The witches who employ Black Magic call upon the forces of darkness to enter them and give them power to perform evil. They worship evil, and use their powers for evil ends. Often, the basic form of their rituals is a sacrilegious parody of Christian religious ceremonies—the “Black Mass,” for instance, in which the Lord’s Prayer is recited backwards, and sexual obscenities are committed with crosses and rosaries, while obscene acts take the place of prayer and communion.

Those witches who practice White Magic, however, call upon the hidden forces of nature and the universe in order to perform good acts. Their rituals and ceremonies are intended to act as a religious communion with the gods of natural and occult force. Most often, their ceremonies are based on Pagan religions, and worship of nature similar to the Druids of Britain and Gaul, and the humanistic-type Gods of the Norsemen.

Olwin (whose witch-name springs from Norse mythology) stated that her own coven of witches was dedicated to White Magic, and the worship of the gods of hidden and mystic natural force. The ceremony she had just gone through, for instance, was a rite of worship of Fire and Light, and their mystic confluence in the human body and spirit.

(Later, as the rites progressed, it became clear to our reporter that some of Olwin’s ceremonies hung

dangerously poised between the world’s of White and Black Magic, in spite of her statement, and in spite of several members of the coven stating that they were primarily concerned with using witchcraft for healing purposes.)

In her own home in Castletown, Olwin and her husband Loic, High Priest of the coven, have set aside a large stone chamber for the practice of their Sacred Rites. It was here, explained Olwin, that the ceremonies would be held.

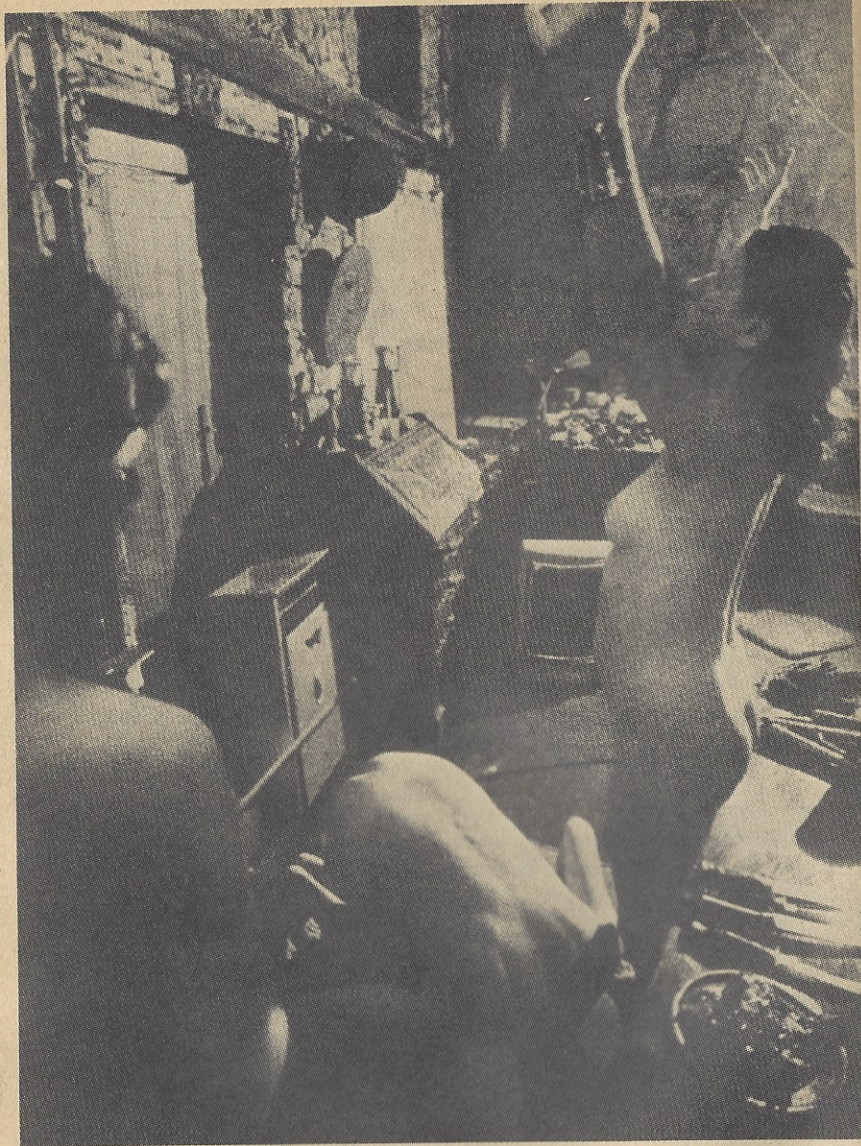
To the reporter’s astonishment, Olwin then introduced the youngest member of her coven: her own eleven-year-old daughter Yvette. Loic (common name, Scottie) said that Yvette had been initiated into the coven when she was only four.

There are three degrees in the Order of Witchcraft practiced by Olwin and Loic. Yvette, so far, had only been through the first degree, but Olwin said that they hoped to bring her through the second during the next year.

Then, by the time Yvette (witch-name, Morven) has reached her eighteenth birthday, Olwin and Loic hope that she will have decided to marry a male witch. If so, she can be put through the Third Degree of the Order.

The Third Degree requires that the initiate, in this case Yvette, have sexual intercourse with the male initiator, during a properly “Consecrated” ceremony with all the coven present.

On this evening, however, Yvette was sent to bed at seven o’clock, and the rites proceeded without her. By ten o’clock, the other mem-



Loic bows to Olwin's feet, as she chants a Latin prayer asking for the blessing of the Dark Gods.

bers of the coven had assembled, and Olwin was ready to begin. "As you see," she said, "we don't wait for twelve o'clock. It's nonsense to think that the Sacred Rites must take place at midnight. Any hour of the night when the sacred rules are observed is

suitable."

The reporter then got his second surprise. In order for him to be permitted to witness a rite, he had to be initiated into the First Degree of the Order. This was done then and there.

"Take off your clothes, as we

Seated on the altar, Olwin says the sacred names of Fire, Light, and Water, as other members drink libations and wait to be anointed by the High Priestess.



do," commanded Olwin. "Only naked flesh, and sacred jewels and symbols, can be worn within the magic circle."

A few moments later, everyone present was naked. The ceremony did not proceed immediately, though. First the reporter was required to withdraw to a large bathroom and bathe himself from head to foot in salt water—a preliminary ritual of purification by contact with "our first mother, the sea."

After this, the coven members entered the Altar Room, with Olwin in the lead. High Priest Loic placed upon his head a helmet with two curved horns pointing out to either side, and slid a metal bracelet around either wrist. Both objects were symbols of fertility, which is considered the most sacred force to witches such as Olwin and her coven.

Olwin herself also placed metal bracelets on her wrist. Around her waist she attached a "consecrated" waistband of gold, and on her head she strapped a headband bearing a crescent moon above her forehead. Just as Loic's horns were symbols of masculine fertility (the bull), so Olwin's girdle circling her womb, was a symbol of female fertility.

Then, as the other members of the coven watched in solemn silence, Olwin picked up a long sword with a wooden handle, and cabalistic figures engraved on the blade. This was the "Athame," with which she would draw the magic circle to call forth the powers of the occult.

Again chanting the rhythmic

phrases in Latin, whose meaning she declined to reveal, Olwin dragged the point of the sword around the room in a large circle. Inside this circle, she drew two triangles. Inside these, she traced the designs of nine—the magic number three times itself—mystic symbols to call forth the Sacred Powers.

"The Circle is now complete. The ground is consecrated," pronounced Olwin. "We are in the presence of the Dark Gods of the Universe. Let us proceed to initiation of the stranger into the First Degree."

Then Olwin's voice took on a more sinister tone: "Remember," she warned, "let no one leave the Circle during the ceremony. The sacrilege would offend the Dark Gods, and remove their presence."

Olwin then approached the altar, and bade the reporter do likewise. On the altar were placed candles in heavy metal holders, ornately-shaped metal bowls, a number of daggers, incense in incense holders, and a small figure of a naked woman—another fertility symbol.

Picking up one of the daggers in her left hand, Olwin passed it three times across her breasts, the point toward her. Then she picked up one of the bowls in her right hand and handed it to the reporter, telling him to take it in both hands.

For a few moments the reporter stood still, holding the bowl, while Olwin passed the dagger over his chest. Then he was told to kneel, face down in front of the altar, still holding the bowl.

As he knelt, Olwin dipped the fingers of her left hand in "annoint-



Daggers in crossed hands, High Priest Loic, Olwin's husband, stands above kneeling Olwin, as she evokes the powers of their magic ritual.

ing oil" and touched the reporter three times in three separate places on his body.

"You are now one with the coven," pronounced Olwin. "The Dark Gods accept you. Rise, and receive the kiss of consecration."

The reporter rose. Olwin pressed her body against his and kissed him on the lips. He had been initiated into the First Degree of the Order, and the ceremony could proceed.

"Now that the Circle is full, and the stranger initiated, we all receive a special power from those whom we worship," intoned Loic. "Remember to behave with dignity and be worthy of it."

Nine candles were lit. The coven stood in silence while Olwin knelt before each and passed a dagger above her head through its flames. Then all the members of the coven joined hands and began to move in a circle about the altar, carrying daggers in their hands.

When the circle stopped moving, two of the female members anointed two of the male members with oil, and then water, and then oil again. They then lit incense burners, and swung them in front of the men's bodies nine times, in a ritual of worship for fire, fertility, and water.

Putting down the incense, the female witches kissed the male witches on the lips. Then, three of them knelt down to receive a ritual whipping, symbolising their subservience to the Dark Gods.

At this point, High Priestess Olwin moved to the altar again, with the High Priest Loic in back

of her. (In witchcraft covens the Priestess is of higher rank than the Priest, since the rituals are primarily matriarchal ones.)

Suddenly, she threw up her arms, calling upon the Dark Gods to bless them all. Still "praying," she turned to face Loic, a hypnotic stare in her eyes. Loic sank to her feet and bowed his head. Then he rose, and Olwin sank to her knees, facing the altar again, while Loic stood in back of her with daggers in both hands and arms crossed.

In this way, the ritual came to an end. It had lasted a total of roughly twenty-five minutes. Olwin insured the reporter that other rituals, especially the one in which a witch was initiated into the Third Degree, took as long as four hours.

"Remember," Olwin pointed out as the "Circle" was broken and the coven members became free to leave, "witchcraft is not a joke, or something to be taken lightly.

"To us, it is a sacred communion with powerful Gods. It is one of the most important things in our lives."

Whether or not, with the emphasis on contact between the nude bodies of males and females, the kissing, and the worshiping of fertility symbols, Olwin's Order of Witchcraft should be considered Black Magic or White, we will leave to the reader's judgment.

One thing is certain though: in Olwin's willingness to make public the secret rites of her coven, she and they have done much toward furthering the world's knowledge of that much-misunderstood subject, witchcraft.