

A Manx Legacy

Melissa Seims

Imagine the mist-enshrouded shores of the Isle of Man, with the whispering of the fae lost in the crash of the sea. This feels an appropriate metaphor for our current knowledge of Witchcraft on the Island in the 1950s and 60s, during Gardner's time there. Continuing from my last article,¹ I want to tell you more of the story of the Manx line Old Order Witches, as revealed through an intriguing collection of Witchcraft artefacts owned by them.

This collection first came to public awareness In May 2014, when an article appeared in *The Cauldron* entitled 'The Davies-Trombley Collection of Manx Witchcraft Artefacts,' by Manxwytch.² Their article gave us a brief tour focussing on a few of the items with only a couple of images. This collection was named after Jane Trombley and Jim Davies. By this time, both had passed on to the West and the collection was given its name in tribute.

The Davies-Trombley collection of Witchcraft artefacts consists of over 30 items. They include an Ash and Elm charm from 1895, several pentacles, a fine Key of Solomon style sword, four wands, a chalice, bell, censer, a selection of hag-stones and several others bits and pieces.

I would like to share some previously unseen images of items from this collection and talk about what they are, where they came from and who made some of them.

It is evident that parts of this collection were made by Jim Davies, Johnny Harrison and Angus Macleod, so let us start by taking a look at these individuals. Then we shall look at various items, including 'The One Sword to Rule Them All' (my term).

Finally, I invite you on a quest for a long-lost, treasured item with much meaning for the Manx line of Witches, 'The Arbory Sword'.

Jim Davies, Johnny Harrison and Angus Macleod.

Jim Davies

I wrote quite a lot about Jim (Fig 1) in my last article.³ After Gardner died, he left the island, emigrating to Canada in 1965. He was without doubt a highly skilled toolmaker and a talented custom machinist with a special ability to create some amazing Craft tools. Seeing his talent, older Manx Witches and magicians took him under their wing in the 1950s, as an apprentice when Jim was still a teenager. He was involved in the manufacture of some of the Davies-Trombley Collection and largely responsible for its preservation.

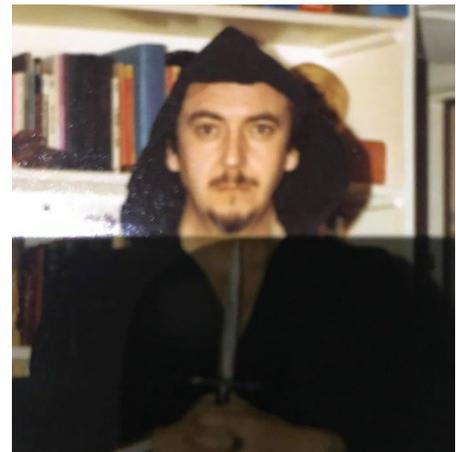


Fig 1: Jim Davies

Johnny Harrison

I introduced Johnny Harrison in my previous article about this Manx jigsaw. Johnny spent time living in St Johns, Jurby and Onchan on the Isle of Man but doesn't seem to have been born there. He was a bus driver on the island and an avid short-wave radio ham, building his own setup and spending much time talking to other radio enthusiasts (Fig 2). For a time, he was also part-owner of 'Jurby Junk' a well-known Aladdin's cave on the island. First opened in 1976, it sadly closed down in 2018.

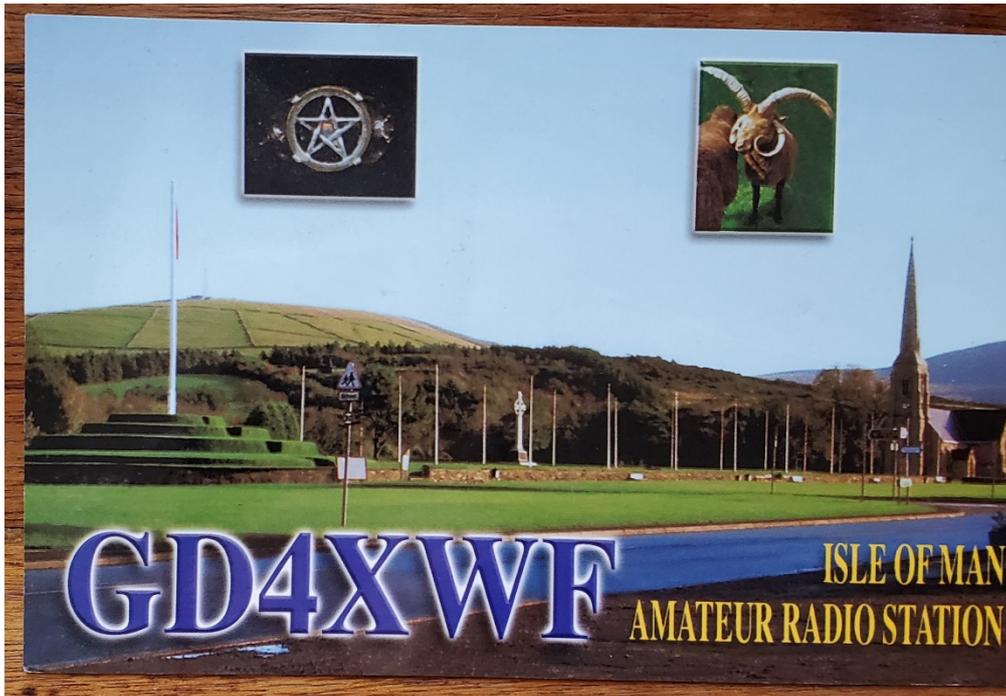


Fig 2: Johnny Harrison's shortwave radio calling card – note the pentagram!

Johnny passed away on the 9th of February 2011 in Douglas on the Isle of Man, aged 82. It was intended for his ashes to be sprinkled on the hill known as South Barrule. This is the highest hill in the southern part of the Island and is said to be a stronghold for the Manx Faeries (Mooinjer veggey). It has the remains of an Iron Age hill fort on the top and is traditionally thought to be the home of the Manx God of the sea, Manannan. To add to this palpable air of legend, there is also a Bronze Age burial cairn, enigmatically referred to as 'The Round Table'. This hill, is one of several sites considered sacred to the Manx line. Unfortunately, following his passing the immediate family had a change of heart and made other plans for Johnny's final resting place.

Jane informed me that Johnny was one of the 'originals' who used to circle at times with Gardner and the Mill Coven on the island. He was also friends with Angus MacLeod and assisted him in the creation of a set of swords, commissioned by Gardner. More on this shortly.

Angus MacLeod

Angus MacLeod (Fig 3) was born in 1920 and moved to the Isle of Man in 1949 from Bolton. He had a background in engineering and worked for a while at 'Castletown Thermostats' on the Island. Jane Trombley wrote of Angus: *'All who met him were struck by his warm smile, his quick wit and stimulating conversation'*.⁴

Angus felt stifled by a conventional 9 to 5 job and considered himself to have the soul and spirit of an artist. Like many artists, they leave us with beautiful things that capture some of their creator's essence.

Angus was a well-known, popular and trusted figure on the island and for a while was the landlord of the 'Central Pub' at Peel and possibly also 'The Union' in Castletown. At some point, presumably in the early to mid-1950s, he ran a small zoo at Glen Helen⁵ from which the monkeys in cages at the Isle of Man Witchcraft museum came. These would rattle their bars at tourists coming in the doors!⁶

Angus was known to be a good friend of Gerald Gardner's and occasionally helped to manage the museum. He was also involved with the Mill Coven.⁷

Around 1950, Angus set up 'Mannin Craft Products'. He produced a line of Manx cats, plaques, ashtrays and ornaments, some of which were brass and beaten by his own fair hand.⁸ He is also responsible for making many of the Witches cuffs, as well as other ritual tools for Gardner. A picture of a copper cuff made by Angus, from the Davies-Trombley Collection is pictured here (Fig 4).

Angus was known to be good friends with Johnny Harrison and in 1961 and 1962 they were both together on the crew of the Viking long boat the 'Sea Dragon' for the annual Manx Viking festival which Angus helped organise.⁹ We also see their mutual acquaintance referred to by Manxwytch in their 2014 article¹⁰:

"The most famous example of this workmanship were the Solomonian swords made for Gardner by Johnny Harrison and Angus MacLeod based on designs in the Key of Solomon grimoire."

Angus's name crops up in other areas of Craft history. For example, in connection with the story of a Book of Shadows now owned by Richard and Tamarra James of the Wiccan Church of Canada.



Fig 3: Angus MacLeod with his black Labrador, 'Ivan'. (Many thanks to John Callow.)



Fig 4: A copper cuff made by Angus MacLeod from the Davies-Trombley Collection

When Angus died in 1996, the executor of his estate, found a Book of Shadows along with an athame and scourge in a box. This box was reputedly something left with Angus, by Gardner before the latter's final voyage upon which his turn to travel West came. That said, the ritual tools were Angus's and not Gerald's. It is thought that Angus's executor was not of the Craft and contemplated destroying them. Then, suspecting they may have value, he took the time to do a little research and contacted the James' in Toronto. They had previously bought a chunk of Gardner's Museum of Magic and Witchcraft from Ripley's in 1987. The James' decided to purchase the book and the knife. By this time, the scourge and the box had found another home.

This Book of Shadows is often referred to as 'Text D' or the 'Angus Book'. The writing is definitely that of Gardner's and appears to show a book undergoing tweaking with changes and additions in a different ink. Without going into detail here, I believe that Charles Clark copied some things from this book and along with other clues it contains, I think it dates back to the early to mid-1950s.

Later in life, Angus bought a cottage at Scarlett Point on the Isle and made a living as an artist under the name 'Scarlio'.

In 2019 I visited Angus's home at Scarlett Point and there is a very unusual image (Fig 5) still present above the fireplace of a now sadly-defaced Horned God, reminiscent of the Manx Loaghtan sheep seen on Johnny's radio calling card (Fig 2). I am assured that this dates from Angus's time in the cottage.



Fig 5: Picture of Horned God at Angus MacLeod's house at Scarlett Point. (authors image)

Angus went West on the 1st June 1996, aged 76.

His ashes were scattered at his beloved Scarlett Point on Sunday July 28th, 1996 (Fig 6).



Fig 6: Angus MacLeod's memorial stone on the wall outside his home at Scarlett Point. (authors image)

The Davies-Trombley Collection

This unique collection consists of items connected to Witchcraft on the Isle of Man and items added later by Old Order Manx line initiates. Plus, items belonging to Gerald Gardner or on loan to him, that were retrieved from the museum by Manx Witches before Monique Wilson got to the Island.

In Manxwytch's 2014 article describing this collection they write:

There are tools and objects that have been handed down through Manx Craft lines, and are documented as predating the modern development of neo-pagan Wicca, as well as others made by Manx witches in the past six decades, both on the island and off it.¹¹

I first want to look at a very special sword whose story captivated me and which seemed to take on a life of its own. So much so, I gave it the name 'The One Sword to Rule them All'.

The One Sword to Rule Them All



Fig 7: The 'One Sword to Rule Them All' from the Davies Trombley Collection

This sword (Fig's 7 & 8), used by Gardner, was based on a design that he chose from *The Key of Solomon*. It is the first 'prototype' which Gerald commissioned Angus MacLeod and Johnny Harrison to make, likely aided by apprentice Jim Davies. It is said they went on to fabricate seven further brass sets; this being a material that Angus was known to be especially proficient at using.

It is thought that not all of the castings were used to create full swords; the blades and grips for those that were finished, were repurposed from pre-existing swords. A few unfinished sets still existed in the 1960s, comprised of just the brass cross-guard and pentagram pommel.

These swords' distinguishing handmade features are the Solomonic-style brass cross-guard (also known as a quillon) and pentagram decorated pommel with a flared base.

The 'One Sword', has a grip painted black with a longer blade than its subsequent offspring. The shorter blades being a refinement on this first prototype which made the later ones easier to wield in the circle.

The 'One Sword' is still in its original form as crafted by Angus, Johnny and Jim. It spent part of its life in the Witchcraft museum. Following Gardner's death, it was one of many items reclaimed by people on the Island, eventually finding its way into the Davies-Trombley collection via the hands of Jim Davies. Jane Trombley used this sword up until her time came to go West. Following her passing and as part of her requiem, this sword was gifted to another Old Order Manx line couple practicing in Canada, who still use it today.

Now, it seems strange that Gardner with his large collection of swords, chose to have a new one specially commissioned. I think this would have come about due to the fact that Gardner had become good friends with Angus MacLeod and I suspect Gardner just fancied having his very own, handmade Key of Solomon style sword.



Fig 8: The 'One Sword to Rule Them All' from the Davies Trombley Collection

The Key of Solomon is a work thought to date back to the 14th or 15th century and like many grimoires attributed to King Solomon, draws upon even earlier material from Jewish Kabbalists and Arab magicians. It has always held an attraction for occultists and Samuel Liddell 'MacGregor' Mathers of Hermetic Order of Golden Dawn fame, spent a long time compiling it from manuscripts housed at the British Museum and translating it into English. Mathers' translated edition was first published in 1889 by George Redway of London and a copy of this first edition, was in Gardner's library. Key of Solomon style swords are often seen in various magical orders due to this book's reputation and status.¹²

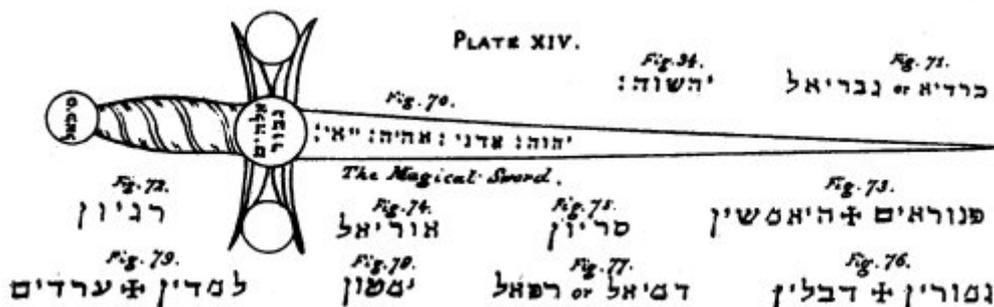


Fig 9: Sword image from the 1889 version of *The Key of Solomon*

Another complete sword exhibiting identical cross-guard and pommel as seen in the 'One Sword,' is also part of the Davies-Trombley collection. This one has an unusually wide blade, probably made by Jim Davies and a high-gloss handmade ebony grip. This spent many years with an Alexandrian coven in Canada to whom Jim had gifted it. After the passing of that coven's High Priest and High Priestess, it was given back to the Manx line in Canada.

I embarked on a Hobbit-style quest to try and locate more of the swords, both made and unmade, using the distinguishing feature of the brass pentagram decorated pommel with a flared base. I believe I may have found the possible locations of most of them, though there are some significant caveats.

Having thus far identified two of the eight made, it appears that a further two (or possibly more) of the swords show that the brass metalwork was further worked and hammered and display a dimpled texture on the cross-guards and 'moon' discs.

One such completed sword was given to Raymond Buckland by Monique Wilson. This photo (Fig 10), taken in the late 1960s, shows that it has a textured, hammered cross-guard. This sword is likely to have been given to Raymond on his and Rosemary's first visit to the Isle of Man in the mid-1960s. At that time, he was also given two additional sets of cross-guard and pommel with instructions for Ray's initiates to make up their own full swords. I understand this was never done.



Fig 10: Raymond Buckland's sword. Photo is from the late 1960s. (Thanks to the Buckland Museum of Witchcraft).

The Buckland Museum still have two pommels but only one of the cross-guards. The other disappeared whilst a major part of the Buckland Museums collection was out on loan in New Orleans during the 1990s.

It appears that close copies of Ray's sword, most likely created from one of his unmade brass sets, were produced in 1974 by Herman Slater, owner of the then-named *The Warlock Shop*, in Brooklyn, New York. In 1976 this shop moved to Manhattan and was renamed *Magickal Child*.

Michael G Lloyds book *The Bull of Heaven* gives us a bit more on this story:

*As Raymond tells it, "Herman ... (in his inimitable style) ... talked me into letting him have an original Gardnerian sword hilt [I assume Ray means pommel here] and cross-guard, made by Gerald. I gave it to him on the understanding that it was for the use of his own coven, and not to be duplicated. Needless to say, in less than a month Herman was selling them at the store and from his catalog! Ah, well — that was Herman."*¹³

These replicas, were advertised in Slater's *Earth Religion News* in 1974 with the eye-catching title "Sword Designed By The Late Dr. Brousseau Gardner – Castings of Sword. Hand cast by the late Gerald Gardner

on the Isle of Man, are now available commercially.” These were sold for \$55 including blade and sheath, or \$25 for just the cross-guard and pentagram pommel.

I have no idea how many of these reproductions are out there. I have been able to see photos of two of them. They have plain untextured cross-guards and the round ‘moons’ are more misshapen than those seen on the ‘One Sword,’ or as seen in an original casting set (Fig 11). There also appears to have been some further texturing added to the background of Slaters pentagram pommels.



Fig 11: Picture of one the original cast sets for a sword that was never made. (Thanks to the Buckland Museum of Witchcraft.)

An image in Margot Adler’s 1979 book *Drawing Down The Moon* shows the High Priestess Theos, wielding a sword of this type. This is *almost* certainly the sword given to Ray by Monique Wilson as it is known that Ray’s sword was left with Rosemary Buckland following their separation. This was then presented to Theos, by Rosemary at Samhain in 1972 when she stepped down as High Priestess and handed the role over. Contradictorily, there is another story that Theos sword **was not** the Buckland sword, but one of the copies made by Herman Slater. There may even have been a switcheroo! This is an implication that can be seen in an interview with Roger Pratt, who circled regularly with Theos and Phoenix. Roger says:

Eventually, an evening was planned where Rowen (Rosemary Buckland) would officially ‘pass on the Sword,’ to Theos and make her the reigning Witch Queen, The Sword cast from Gardner’s own, had somehow been delivered by mistake to a store, The Magical Child, owned by Herman Slater.¹⁴

I do find it rather strange that Buckland’s sword was delivered to Herman Slaters shop ‘by mistake’.

Roger continues with a further intriguing and somewhat amusing account:

One of Herman’s drug addled cashiers named Kevin was charged with bringing it out to Long Island. One of Kevin’s friends drove, but the two of them got into a fight on the Long Island Expressway and pulled over to the side. Somehow Kevin got stabbed by the Sword. One of Theos’ High Priestesses, Lady Gillis, was luckily married to a policeman, and he managed to get to the scene first, clean up the wound and get Kevin to hospital. He was fine! The Sword arrived at the covenstead just an hour late.”¹⁵

Someone else involved in the New York Craft scene in the 1970s, sent me the following information:

“I love the story about Robot’s sword! I’ve not heard it before, thought parts of it are certainly verifiable. I do recall a rather drunken/drugged employee of Herman’s named Kevin; there is a Lady Gillis, though now

inactive, who was married to a police officer, who was downline from Lady Theos. So the entire story has the ring of...urban truth, to coin a phrase?"¹⁶

Toni Rotonda and Tara Buckland who are connected with the Buckland Museum, commented on this stabbing story by saying they had never heard it before and found it quite hysterical. Tara Buckland said:

"I don't know all the stories from the "old days" before Ray and I met. I certainly never heard about any stabbing although I cannot say for certain that I would have heard about it. Ray was never one to talk about people in a negative way - not even privately to me."¹⁷

There was one of this set of eight with Monique Wilson, though it seems probable this is the same one she gave to Buckland in the mid-1960s. The twisting design just about visible on the grip of Monique's sword here (Fig 12) does appear extremely similar to the grip on the sword seen in the image from Adler's *Drawing Down The Moon*, held by the High Priestess Theos. Thus, despite the implication, I think it likely that there was no switcheroo performed at Slater's shop. I have been unable to find what became of Theos' sword, but locating it would certainly solve this little enigma.

In an interview, Ray says of his sword:

"Although ancient items, such as knives, were appealing I thought it best to start with everything new, so that it did not bring in any unknown and unwanted vibrations. The only exception, I guess, was the coven sword, since it was a blade given to me by Olwen, which she had in turn received from Gerald."¹⁸

This further suggests that they may indeed be one and the same, though it is possible and we should still entertain the idea, that Monique may have had two complete swords from the original set of eight as well as some unfinished castings.

Another completed sword from this set, went to Ripley's after they bought the contents of the Isle of Man Museum of Witchcraft and Magic, from Monique in 1973. This was subsequently bought in the mid-1980s by a High Priestess in the USA, Lady Cara, who still uses it together with her downlines on special occasions (Fig 13).



Fig 12: Monique Wilson showing the Sword. (Thanks to the Miami Beach Gardnerian photo Archives).



Fig 13: Lady Cara's sword purchased from Ripley's in the mid-1980s

There is also a sword at the Boscastle Museum of Witchcraft, which has a similar cross-guard but has no brass pentagram pommel. Manxwytch makes the assertion that this belongs to the set.¹⁹ However, there appear to be differences in the cross-guard, with wider crescents and no raised central 'quillon block' evident in photos of it and I have a mental question mark over it.

I also want to briefly mention another Solomonic sword, held by a North London coven. The 'Sword of Nuada' is seen in Philip Heselton's book, *Gerald Gardner and the Cauldron of inspiration*.²⁰

At first glance it seems like it may be connected to this set. However, in 2006, Jane Trombley checked this out by sending a photo of it to someone on the Island. This would almost certainly have been Johnny Harrison. He assured Jane that it was not one made by him and Angus.

I feel it's likely that six of the set of eight have been found, leaving one or possibly two more out there somewhere.

I am not in any way a sword expert and tracking these down has been taxing so if anyone can offer further clarification do please get in touch.

Let us now turn our attention to some of the other items in this unusual collection.

The Ivory Chalice and Gardner's Drinking Horn

This heavily hand-carved chalice is extraordinary and made from Ivory (Fig 14). Photographs of it were sent for dating purposes to the Royal Ontario Museum in Canada. They said it was comparable to late 17th century German designs and workmanship but could not be certain based solely on images.

It appears to depict a Bacchanalian scene with mythical sea creatures entwining the base, spreading up, intruding onto the cups bowl and into the scene of naked revelment.

This chalice was used as the ritual cup in one of the Manx covens up until the early 1960s, when it was broken. Jim Davies was entrusted with its repair. He pieced it back together but it was never again used in ritual for it was no longer water-tight and wine would have stained the cracks in it.



Fig 14: Ivory cup from the Davies-Trombley Collection



Another 'cup' in the collection is a lovely drinking horn, made from a real horn. It has a copper band, inscribed in Theban with the humorous phrase 'This too shall pass'. It is said to be one that Gerald used (Fig 15).

Fig 15: Gardner's drinking horn from the Davies-Trombley Collection.

Natural Charms

There are several charms in the collection (Fig 16), including Ash and Elm sticks attached to a card and dated 1895, a piece of coal given for Good Luck by a 'Miss Devean' and various hag and phallic stones. One of which is documented as belonging to a coven in 1910. Most of these were on display at Gardner's Museum and formed part of its herbal/folklore collection.

An Ash leaf charm has the following rhyme written on it:

Even leaved Ash

Four leaved Clover

Share to see your own true love

Before the day is over

Reference to this rhyme can be found in the recently published book *Games, Rhymes, and Wordplay of London Children* by Janet E Alton and J. D. A. Widdowson. Much of their information came from inner city London children between 1966 and 1984. The rhymes in it could easily have been much older. Today, my own daughter comes back with rhymes that I recall from my own schooling in the 1970s and 80s.

Another item shows 'Grass blossoms' gathered from along the Ridgeway at White Horse Hill in Oxfordshire in 1918 and has the following sentence written on the card:

Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, rich-man, poor-man, plough-boy, thief, silk, satin, gold, rags.

The roots and variations of this commonly recognised ditty, potentially go back over 500 years.

Another natural charm of a dried pea pod with nine peas in it says the following:

Lucky nine peas in a pod:

This Talisman, made and sold by Matthew Hopkins about 1790 [NB: this is about 150 years too late!], was given to me by my father, Joseph Carter, of Home Farm, Hill Top, near Marlborough.

Philip's book, *Witchfather: Volume 1*, gives us further clues and we learn that the person likely to have given this collection to Gardner was one Sydney Carter, a fellow member of the Folklore Society whom Gerald knew.

Alas, I cannot identify any of the items Gardner mentions in his 1939 article as being the same as any of the ones in the Davies-Trombley collection; but Philip's analysis of the handwriting of Joseph Carter, suggests that there is a correlation and his address at Marlborough ties in rather nicely with the locations for the origin of several of the Davies-Trombley charms.

A final charm I wish to show you is a lovely phallic stone (Fig 17). I do not know who carved it but it is reputed to have belonged to one of the covens on the Isle of Man.



Fig 17: Phallic stone from the Davies-Trombley Collection.

Wizardly Wands

The collection contains four wands. One is a Sufi wand and was a gift to Gardner from Idries Shah, a known Sufi author and teacher. He is considered to be the main writer behind the 1960 book *Gerald Gardner: Witch*. This was attributed to Jack Bracelin, who does appear to have had some input into its writing. Idries chose to forego being shown as the author for he reputedly did not want to confuse his Sufi followers by being associated with a book about Witchcraft.

This wand says 'Di Sita Pur' on the grip, perhaps suggesting that it came from the city of Sitapur in India. Made from a dark reddish-brown unknown wood, it measures 21 inches in length, is tipped with a rough garnet or carnelian and has brass caps either end. There is Latin and Arabic script on the brass handle and the name of a Goddess is engraved on the tip.²³



Fig 18: Gardner's Sufi Wand from the Davies-Trombley Collection.

Another wand made of ivory has a foliate design and seems likely to have once been the handle of a ladies' parasol.

There is also a large ebony wand with a phallic and serpent design. It sounds truly impressive but sadly, I have no images of it.

Another wand (Fig 19) is much plainer and is made of a dowel inscribed with a simple star pentagram and incised bands. This type of basic wand is said to have been made by Gardner for others.



Fig 19: Wand made by Gardner from the Davies-Trombley Collection.

Pentacles

There are several of these in the collection. This first was one used by Gardner and is made of lead with a raised pentacle and rim design (Fig 20).



Fig 20: Gardner's lead pentacle from the Davies-Trombley Collection.

There are two other pentacles (Fig 21). The first (on the left) is made of wood and was a prototype for seven brass ones (on the right). These were made with view to them going to various covens. Their practicality as a pentacle is questionable but the brass one has a real solidity to it and I have been told is quite heavy. It looks to have been constructed from brass rods and shows evidence of brazing on the points.



Fig 21: Wood and Brass pentacles from the Davies-Trombley Collection

Three planetary pentacles also form part of this collection. Made of Brass, Copper and Lead, they respectively represent Jupiter, Venus and Saturn.

Their designs appear to have been engraved, possibly by a motorised tool in the cases of Jupiter (Fig 22) and Venus (Fig 24) with hand-engraving seen on the one for Saturn (Fig 23).



Fig 22: Jupiter Pentacle on Brass from the Davies-Trombley Collection.



Fig 23: Saturn Pentacle on lea from the Davies-Trombley Collection.

The Venusian copper pentacle (Fig 24) shows planetary, angelic, alchemical and astrological symbols associated with Venus.



Fig 24: Copper Venus pentacle from the Davies-Trombley Collection.

We also find two early examples of the traditional Craft pentacle. Both are made from copper, but one has a black patina (Fig 25).



Fig 25: Copper pentacles, one painted black, from the Davies-Trombley collection

This next piece is not a pentacle, but an aluminium scrying mirror over a foot in diameter. It was made by Angus MacLeod and shows the front, scrying side. (Fig 26).



Fig 26: Aluminium mirror made by Angus MacLeod from the Davies-Trombley Collection.

I suspect that it was once more highly polished. There are several mirrors and 'seeing-stones' in the collection and the skill of scrying is one especially lauded by the Manx Witches today.

Witchcraft Museum Trinkets

Several pieces in the collection appear to have probably been made for sale at Gardner's Museum of Witchcraft and Magic. They include aluminium pendants (Fig 27) depicting a witch with a tailless Manx cat which were made by Angus MacLeod. The 'hand' pendant was not made by him and is silver.



Fig 27: Witch Pendants from the Davies-Trombley Collection.

The collection also contains two plaques / paperweights (Fig 28). These look as if they have been made by Angus MacLeod and the designs on them are Gardner's. Most people will be familiar with the Witches Mill and flying Witch design but the other is less seen and I think is rather lovely. It shows three women joined together and astrological symbols around the edge. Interestingly, the stars are six-pointed and not five.



Fig 28: Two Museum plaques from the Davies-Trombley Collection.

Bell, Knife and Thurible.

These items are made of Brass, but were not made by Angus, Johnny or Jim. The bell (Fig 29) shows two Horned God heads back-to-back in a style that makes you think of the two-headed God Janus. Unlike Janus though, both horned Gods appear to be the same with a wide open mouth as if he is emitting the sound of the bell.



Fig 29: The brass bell from the Davies-Trombley Collection.

The brass knife (Fig 30) shows a woman embracing a smiling Horned God and has the makers mark on it 'Jorel'.



Fig 30: The brass knife from the Davies-Trombley Collection.

This final piece is a brass thurible (Fig 31). It has three goat heads around the bowl and lovely detailing with the cloven hooves at the bottom.



Fig 31 The brass thurible from the Davies-Trombley Collection.

The Darker Side of Witchcraft

Manxwytch's 2014 article about this collection, states:

*Of particular interest are early examples and prototypes of tools that have now become commonly seen in modern witchcraft and magical practices, thus demonstrating the influence of Manx Craft on those varieties that have followed. Also represented are examples of the darker shades of the Craft that have fallen out of modern Wicca practice but still remain in the teachings of traditional Manx witchcraft.*²⁴

We learn that there is a small poppet in the collection. Carved from a nightshade root and pierced with many pins, it is dried and blackened with age. Housed in a small, hinged coffin-shaped box especially made for it as part of the spell in which it was used. There is also a pouch of small bones for casting in a divinatory rite and several are apparently recognisable as human in origin. I do not have images of these items.

Manx Witchcraft seems to be a bridge between older traditions of magic and modern Witchcraft. Not only do they still practice 'darker shades' of the Craft, they also do not consider you adept at the Arte unless you can summon definite and specific manifestations. They utilise elements of the Kabbala, planetary and elemental sigils and correspondences, as well as Apocryphal figures.²⁵

The ability to both curse and cure are equally mastered and Manx Witchcraft includes a repertoire of highly effective curses, and a ready willingness to wield them. They don't subscribe to an idea of threefold return, nor did they adopt the, 'harm none, do what you will' approach of neopagan belief. They consider themselves close kin to the Manx faeries, with all of the magic, the same capriciousness and potential vindictiveness of their kind. As such, there were elements of the Manx fairy lore and belief that survived in some of the materials and methods of making magic which are unique to the Isle, along with angelic work imported from continental grimoires.

The darker side of magic is an area rarely mentioned in Gardnerian Witchcraft, which I feel is a bit of a shame. I think it is important to have a relationship with darker aspects, including those within ourselves. Without such, how can one fully appreciate the light or know where the Middle Pillar is? I do however think that such an area is best left to those with the fundamental understanding of knowing when the right time is to wield such power. That in itself is part and parcel of having true magical responsibility.

A Quest for 'The Arbory Sword'

This sword is not part of the Davies-Trombley Collection but its whereabouts to the Manx line has been a long-term quest for some.

At the very beginning of the Museum of Witchcraft and Magic pamphlet, Gardner makes reference to the 'Famous Arbory Witches' by saying:

*The exact age of the old windmill at Castletown, Isle of Man, known as "The Witches Mill," is uncertain; but we know that it was there in 1611, as it is mentioned in a court record of that date. The mill got its name because the famous Arbory witches lived close there, and the story goes that when the old mill was burned out in 1848 they used the ruins as a dancing ground, for which, as visitors may see, it was eminently suited; being round inside to accommodate the witches circle, while the remains of the stone walls screened them from the wind and from prying eyes.*²⁶

Gardner seems to have been unaware of its full history and the Mill he mentions as having been referenced in 1611, is actually about an old and unrelated water mill. In an article by J. Davis (not connected with 'our' Jim Davies) about the Witches Mill, we are told that it was actually first constructed in 1828. Its opening was celebrated by its 'spirited proprietors' giving an excellent dinner in testament to the mechanics but this was somewhat marred by the sail arms being blown off!²⁷ This major malfunction

of the sails, happened again a few months later in 1829.²⁸ The tragic, devastating and final blow came on February the 25th 1848 when the Mill's tower was badly burnt and fell into ruin.²⁹ Adjoining buildings including 'Windmill House' continued to be occupied and used.

As to Gardner's assertion about the 'famous Arbory Witches,' this is something for which there is no historical evidence. Ronald Hutton writes:

*It may be noted here that no work on nineteenth-century Manx folklore makes any reference to the 'Arbory witches', whom Gardner had breezily termed notorious. Instead, they feature in seventeenth-century records as a series of three women from the parish of Kirk Arbory who were presented to the ecclesiastical court for alleged acts of magic during the 1660s. One was certainly a cunning woman who was acquitted of witchcraft but made to do penance for her trade; the results of the other two cases are not known, but they seem to have been even less serious.*³⁰

Whilst the Arbory Witches as described by Gardner do not seem to have existed, there were two covens on the Isle of Man in the 1950s. It remains unclear how long they had been running. We have a clue that strongly suggests that some Manx Witches were known to Gardner in 1954. On the 5th of August that year, a news article in the *Daily Dispatch* printed an interview with him. Gardner is asked if there are any other Witches on the Isle of Man. To which he replied "I can't say anything about that." I feel this is very likely to be a veiled admission of Gardner's. Especially so as later in the same article, the reporter is taken to the barn and Gardner shows him an altar. The reporter asks him 'Do you operate here?' and Gardner laughingly retorts, no doubt with that twinkle in his eye: "I can't say anything about that".

A few years later in the *Isle of Man Examiner*, August 27th 1959, we find a writer amongst a party of people that spent an hour and half engaged in conversation with Gardner. The writer comments: "One subject he [Gardner] would not get on to was witches on the Island. Every time we brought the subject up, he would quietly reply that he could not talk about it because the island was such a small place."

It is known that Gardner often borrowed a sword from the Arbory Coven on the Island and there was a practice of lending ritual tools for important rites. This coven, located in the parish of the same name, was one of two on the island, the other being the Mill Coven in the parish of Malew.

The Arbory Coven was run by a High Priest and High Priestess. I have been told that their names were Bill (William?) and Paula. They were not a couple in real life. Paula was thought to be still alive in 2010 and there are three pertinent entries in the online database of Manx deaths that could give us her full name.³¹

Bill appears to have owned a pub (though there is also a suggestion it was a shop). When the Arbory sword was not in use, it was nonchalantly placed on public display on a lintel dividing two rooms. There is a story of how Jim Davies, on one of his numerous trips back to the Island, walked into the pub (or shop) and immediately recognised it; presumably from having circled with Gardner in the late 1950s. Jim told Bill that he knew this sword and was subsequently introduced to the Arbory Coven on the Island. Both the Mill and Arbory Coven seem to have existed with an awareness of, but largely independently from each other.

Following Gardner's death, if the Arbory Coven's sword had not been with Bill, it would almost certainly have been one of the items reclaimed by their owners. At that same time, some of the locals had a bonfire and burnt many things; a custom that is part of the Manx Witchcraft tradition observed when someone has passed on. There is a suggestion that Angus would have been instrumental in this reclamation and incineration and likely knew where all the important things went.

A reference to the Arbory Sword can be found in *Hands of Apostasy* where Manxwytych writes:

*The sword lent to Gardner by the Manx witches and then loaned by Gardner to the Order of Druids for use in their annual summer solstice ceremony at Stonehenge predated these [Solomonic-style swords]. It was most probably the Arbory Coven Sword, which was older and of a different design. This sword is mentioned by Doreen Valiente in her book 'Rebirth of Witchcraft'... She says Gardner brought it down from the Isle of Man to Dafo's (Mrs Edith Woodford-Grimes) house in the New Forest and it had been on display in the Castletown witchcraft museum. Valiente also describes how Gardner had used the Manx sword in the circle when he initiated her.*³²

In the relevant section of her 1989 book *Rebirth of Witchcraft*, Doreen Valiente tells us that the sword Gardner bought down from the Isle of Man had belonged to 'Old Dorothy' and is referred to in the brochure about the Witches Mill in the Isle of Man as the "*fine ritual sword, which for many years was lent to the Druid Order.*" Doreen goes on to say that she believed it was now with a North London coven. I wonder, could 'Old Dorothy' of Craft history infamy, perhaps have been Dorothy Plunkett³³ on the Island? ³⁴ I will leave this thought here for now.

The North London coven had originally met at Bricket Wood and in 2003, Philip Heselton wrote about this sword and gives its name as the 'Sword of Nuada'.³⁵ There is quite a lot of evidence for it having come from the Isle of Man although I think Manxwytch's comment about it being 'most probably' the Arbory Sword is possibly incorrect. Jane Trombley had quested for this sword's whereabouts whilst still alive. When she saw the picture of the 'Sword of Nuada,' she did not see it as being the long-lost Arbory Sword. Thus, a mystery still remains.

It may be interesting to note that the Bricket Wood Coven had another sword from the Isle of Man which was returned to the island after Gardner's death.³⁶ I do wonder, could this have been the Arbory Sword? Additionally, there is a suggestion that the Arbory Sword may have ended up with Bill's wife after he died. Further research is needed. Please get in touch if you think you may have some information.

The Manx Old Order line still believe that The Arbory Sword's current whereabouts is unknown. I don't have much more information, other than it was not a Solomonic style sword and likely had a scabbard. It is said to have been an understated sword and according to Manx Craft legend it is associated with the year 1918. I have had whimsical thoughts of this sword being akin to 'The Answerer'; the name for Manannan's mythical sword and maybe it will one day arise from the obscuring waves of time.

Ending in The Realm of The Moonjer Veggey³⁷

The Isle of Man and its twentieth century Witchcraft traditions has been the subject of little modern research. It is my hope that by telling the story of Jane, Jim and others, that we are encouraged to think again about this Island, often veiled in obscuring mists. There is no doubt that a very interesting collection of Witchcraft artefacts has been preserved by the Manx line Old Order initiates and I hope to be able to investigate further the stories of the Mill and Arbory Covens.

I have appended this article with the first few stanzas of 'Isadore's Song', a poem by the Manx poet Esther Nelson, written in the early nineteenth century. It reminds us of the Isle of Mans rich history, legends and association with things magical and often unseen, except by those with the vision to see them.

Appendix – 'Isadore's Song' by Esther Nelson

Know'st thou that green spot 'mid billows of ocean,
Whose valleys are wild, and whose mountains are bare,

The shrine of my heart's deep, undying devotion, —
The lone, lovely mist-gem of Mannin Mac Lear?³⁸
Know'st thou where Holm Peel's³⁹ proud ruins rise hoary,
Where ghosts of the princely at dead midnight moan?
Know'st thou where Rushen still frowneth in glory?
Hast thou heard where the death-shot laid low Illiam Dhone?⁴⁰

Know'st thou the glens which the elf race inhabit,
Where brightly their tiny lamps burn as of yore?
Knowest thou "Queunque jeceris stabit"?⁴¹
Or the dread Moddey Doo⁴² of the wild western shore?
Know'st thou the spot where the rose and the thistle,
The leek and the shamrock, are lovelily blent,
Where shrill on the hills is the hollow wind's whistle,
Where fairies by moonlight dance over the bent?

'Tis Mona the lone! where the silver mist gathers —
Pale shroud whence our Wizard-chief⁴³ watches unseen
O'er the breezy, the bright, the lov'd home of my fathers;
Oh, Mannin, my graih my chree! Mannin veg veen!
'Tis Mona the lone! thro' whose wild curraghs roaming,
I've lingered to list to the oaten pipe's strain; —
Where, enchanted, I've gazed on the rustics at gloaming,
Bedight in dear simple keeir lheeah⁴⁴ and carrane.⁴⁵

'Tis the spot where my spirit exultingly wander'd
'Mid Nature's own solitudes, breezy and bare; —
Where, shrin'd in Glenaldyn's recesses, I've ponder'd,
Enraptured o'er legends of Mannin Mac Lear.
And gentle and kind are its brilliant-eyed daughters —
My vision ne'er brought me one other more fair;
Tho' lovely and noble have come o'er the waters,
Give me the Manks maid with the dark flowing hair.

Then hail to thee, happy home! — gem of the ocean!
Oh, thine are the youths honest-hearted and free; —
Ever free in each generous soul-felt emotion
As the wing of the eagle or foam of the sea.
Then hail to thee, happy home! land of my fathers! —
Proud nest of famed chieftains! blest isle of the fair! —
The hills, the wild hills, where the fairy mist gathers —
Oh, Mannin, my graih my chree! Mannin Mac Lear!
With the patriot's fire my bosom is beating; —
All my soul's with my lute; — then, wise critic, forbear! —
Deem not your rude minstrel barbaric, unweeting,
But smile on a scion of Mannin Mac Lear.⁴⁶

¹ Melissa Seims, 'A Curious Discourse', Private Publications, Samhain 2020 & Yule 2020.

² 'Manxwytch' is a pseudonym for several people.

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- ³ Melissa Seims, 'A Curious Discourse', Private Publications, Samhain 2020 & Yule 2020.
- ⁴ Private communication between Jane Trombley and Philip Heselton.
- ⁵ Philip Heselton, *Witchfather Volume II*, pp.566 Thoth 2012.
- ⁶ John Callow, 'New Magic at the Old Mill: Gerald Gardner, the Manx Museum of Witchcraft & the fashioning of the Wica' *Isle of Man Studies*, XVI, 2019, pp.93-124.
- ⁷ Philip Heselton, *Witchfather Volume II*, pp 566, Thoth 2012.
- ⁸ *Isle of Man Times*, Saturday, March 27, 1954.
- ⁹ *Isle of Man Daily Times*, Tuesday, June 06, 1961. *Peel City Guardian*, Saturday, June 30, 1962.
- ¹⁰ Manxwytych, 'Traditional Witches of Ellan Vannin', *The Cauldron*, no 151, Feb 2014.
- ¹¹ Manxwytych, 'The Davies-Trombley Collection of Manx Witchcraft Artefacts,' *The Cauldron* no. 152, May 2014.
- ¹² It should be noted that Clive Harper has made a good argument for the sword seen in Eliphaz Levi's *Transcendental Magic*, as another likely influence on the style of magical swords popular today. See 'Levi and the Magic Sword', Private Publication, Yule 2020.
- ¹³ Michael G. Lloyd, *Bull of Heaven*, pp.283. Asphodel Press 2012. In turn cited from Buckland, Raymond. Message to the author. 5 February 2004. Email. & Advertisement "Sword Designed by the Late Dr. Brousseau Gardner!" ERN 1.3 (March 1974) 19. Print.
- ¹⁴ 'An interview with Roger Pratt,' Private Publication, June 2016.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ 'Assange': Private correspondence with author.
- ¹⁷ Private correspondence with author.
- ¹⁸ 'Interview with Raymond Buckland,' Private Publication, March 2015.
- ¹⁹ *Hands of Apostasy, Essays on Traditional Witchcraft*. Edited by Michael Howard and Daniel A Schulke. Three Hands Press 2014.
- ²⁰ Philip Heselton, *Gerald Gardner and the Cauldron of Inspiration*, pp.92. Capall Bann, 2003.
- ²¹ Private correspondence between Jane Trombley and Philip Heselton.
- ²² Gerald Gardner, 'Witchcraft', *Folklore Society Journal*, volume 50, 1939, pp.188-190.
- ²³ Manxwytych, 'The Davies-Trombley Collection of Manx Witchcraft Artefacts,' *The Cauldron* no. 152 May 2014.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ *Hands of Apostasy, Essays on Traditional Witchcraft*. Edited by Michael Howard and Daniel A Schulke. Three Hands Press 2014.
- ²⁶ *Museum of Witchcraft and Magic guide book*, circa 1955.
- ²⁷ J. Davis 'The Witches Mill Today,' pp.30-33 *Isle of Man Family History Soc*, vol XXII no. 1, Feb 2000.
- ²⁸ *Manks Advertiser*, Tuesday, January 06, 1829.
- ²⁹ J. Davis 'The Witches Mill Today,' pp.30-33, *Isle of Man Family History Soc*, vol XXII no. 1, Feb 2000.
- ³⁰ Ronald Hutton, 'The Changing Faces of Manx Witchcraft,' pp153-169, *Cultural and Social History Journal*, Vol 7 Issue 2, 2010.
- ³¹ Paula Lynn Noble died 2009, Paula Diane Owen died in 2012 and Paula Anne Mylchreest (born Manchester, Jamaica), who died 2014. It seems reasonable to think that she may have been one of these three people.
- ³² *Hands of Apostasy, Essays on Traditional Witchcraft*. Edited by Michael Howard and Daniel A. Schulke. Three Hands Press, 2014.
- ³³ The spelling of Dorothy's surname has also been suggested as 'Plunket'. I have put 'Plunkett' as there is evidence for a family of this name on the island. This is not true with 'Plunket'.
- ³⁴ Melissa Seims, 'A Curious Discourse', Private Publications, Samhain 2020 & Yule 2020.
- ³⁵ Philip Heselton, *Gerald Gardner and the Cauldron of Inspiration*, pp89-95. Capall Bann 2003.
- ³⁶ 'An interview with Jean and Zach,' Private Publication, June 2015.
- ³⁷ The Manx for little people, a term used for fairies in Gaelic lore. The equivalent Irish and Scottish Gaelic are Muintir Bheaga and Muinntir Bheaga.
- ³⁸ The Wizard Chieftain of Mann (Mannanan beg Mac y Leear) who, when he feared an invasion of his territory, clothed the Island in a mist.
- ³⁹ Peel Castle.
- ⁴⁰ William Christian, the Martyr, shot by Charles, Earl of Derby, at Hango Hill in 1663.
- ⁴¹ The National motto of Mann: "However circumstances may come, I stand."
- ⁴² The Black Dog of Peel Castle (see Walter Scott's *Peveiril of the Peak*).
- ⁴³ Mannanan beg Mac y Leear.
- ⁴⁴ A home-spun woollen cloth.
- ⁴⁵ Shoes made from the skin of a cow, untanned.

⁴⁶ A version performed at The Manx Bard inauguration in 2017, read by Annie Kissack, can be watched at <https://youtu.be/QfwkGQLJTi4>

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