



Dr. Gerald Brosseau Gardner points to exhibits in the witchcraft museum at Witches' Mill, Castletown.

YES,

CASTLETOWN.

Wednesday Night.

IN my time I've met quite a few witches. Gold diggers and double-crossers and heart-breakers. Now I have talked with a self-professed witch—a MAN, at that.

It was a strange experience. I shall never forget his angular face, nor his piercing blue eyes. Nor the setting of the interview.

Mankland is rich in folklore about fairies and "little people" in the glens and witches. But no 20th century human being has dared to admit: "I am a witch." No one except **GERALD BROSSÉAU GARDNER**. He says he is a Doctor of Philosophy, an honorary degree conferred on him by Singapore University 20 years ago.

The sun had gone down and it was a cold evening when I drove through the countryside, to halt at a four-roomed cottage in a narrow street here.

Wica

To the door came a six-footer. He looked like a benevolent grandee. He has a shock of white hair and a Van Dyck beard. He wore a green pull-over, open-neck shirt, check trousers and brown shoes. I said: "Dr. Gardner, I presume?" "Come in," he invited. His voice was gentle, his manner warm.

He sank back into an armchair and gripped its sides. I could not help noticing his deep-set, piercing eyes. On the third finger of each hand was a heavy ring; a bronze bracelet rested on his wrist. I asked whether he had any other adornments. He showed his tattooed arms—a snake, an anchor, a dragon and a dagger. Here we were, in his kitchen. Big logs lay unburned in the fireplace. Daggers, spears, and other weapons hung on the walls.

Straight away I began: "Are

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I AM A WITCH

Says the gentle-voiced old doctor of Castletown

you a witch?" He said: "Yes, I am." He quickly added his witch name was "Scire," and explained that there are men and woman witches. Each is called a *wicca*.

All very interesting. I remarked, but I was not a greenhorn and I had come across countless characters. Would he object to searching questions; a provocative quiz? No, he didn't mind.

He said he was born in Scotland 70 years ago and came to live in the island four years ago. He had been a rubber and tea planter and had worked for the Johore Government as principal Customs officer.

written books on witchcraft, and showed a letter from a reputable London publisher who had accepted his work.

How many witches in England? For a moment or two the witch paused. "I really don't know," he said, "but I can tell you that no witch ever flew through the air—until aero-

would dare to cast an evil spell. He or she would "have all the other witches down on him or her."

He went on: "Witchcraft is really long-range hypnotism. We only want to help people."

At which point I thought of the approaching Soccer season. Could the witch help anyone to win £75,000 on the pools?

His reply: "Oh no, we can't cast a spell to do a material act, though in the old days the witches in every community were able to provide good fishing, good hunting and fertility of crops."

It was time to get to the lighter side of this business.

Are there any beautiful witches?—Many, from 16 onwards.

Do they have dates with young men?—Yes.

Do they allow themselves to be kissed good-night?—Of course, if they like a man.

Can they cast a spell to make men adore them?—Yes.

Do they tell escorts they are witches?—Oh, dear, no!

Think of it, you menfolk, you

might have been out with a real witch!

I stood up to leave but Scire the witch invited me to an upstairs room. It had been part of a barn. In it were a table with two pedestals on which had been placed candlesticks. The witch agreed it was an improvised altar.

Gaily-coloured curtains covered a window set in 3ft-thick stone walls. "Do you operate here?" I pressed. Again the witch laughed. Again he replied: "I can't say anything about that."

Suddenly I saw a dagger protruding from his back pocket. He took it out, slowly. He explained it was used for drawing a circle. He walked a few inches from the "altar." I followed. He showed a circle on the floor.

Witches' Mill

Just one more question to the witch. How do you live? He did not hesitate. "I get a pension from the Johore Government and have investments." He is also the owner of the Witches' Mill, to which holidaymakers go.

I bade the witch good-night. He smiled. He said he hoped I had enjoyed an interesting evening. I stepped out. The air had become nipper. The skies were dark.

I wasn't bothered nor bewildered. And certainly not bewitched!

TOMORROW

Arnold Field will be judging a bathing beauty contest today. And tomorrow he will be telling you about the glamour girls who come to Holiday Island.

I'm a Witch & I believe that if I used any of the power to do anything evil I would have all the rest of the Witches down on me.
G. B. Gardner
My Witch name is Scire

Dr. Gardner wrote this in a page of Arnold Field's note-book.

planes came." Quite a sense of humour, this witch has. "And they don't use bedrooms, either," he added.

Into the kitchen came a pleasant-faced woman of medium height and greying hair. She is Mrs. DOROTHEA FRANCES GARDNER, the witch's wife. They have been married for 26 years.

She sat down on a monk's bench and began to do her knitting. "Are you a witch?" I asked. "Dear me, no," she replied. "I'm comfortable as I am. I've never wanted to be a witch, though I've met many."

Like hypnotism

She assured me that she is not afraid, though her husband is a witch. "How could I be frightened by those kindly blue eyes?"

I resumed my talk with the witch. I wanted to know whether I could become one. What were the qualifications? "Only that we'd have to like you," the witch said, eyeing me.

No, he could not cast a spell by himself. He'd need another witch with him. No, no witch

Danced in circle

On with the quiz. First answer: "I was initiated as a witch in 1939. I went to a coven in England. Fifteen other witches were there. We danced in the circle which gives us power to cast spells."

How many covens in England? "Three," the witch replied. "We meet in houses or other places." Other forms of ritual? "I can't say anything about that." Are there any other witches in the Isle of Man? "I can't say anything about that, either. How do we communicate? By letter or telephone."

"How do we dress when we meet?" Now the witch laughed. A very human laugh, the kind you can hear from the holiday crowds parading hilariously along the prom. "Well," I persisted, "how do you dress?"

Written books

The witch tugged at his beard. The laughter subsided. "There's a similarity," came the reply, still gentle. Was it in the rude? "I can't say anything about that," he said.

The witch told me he had