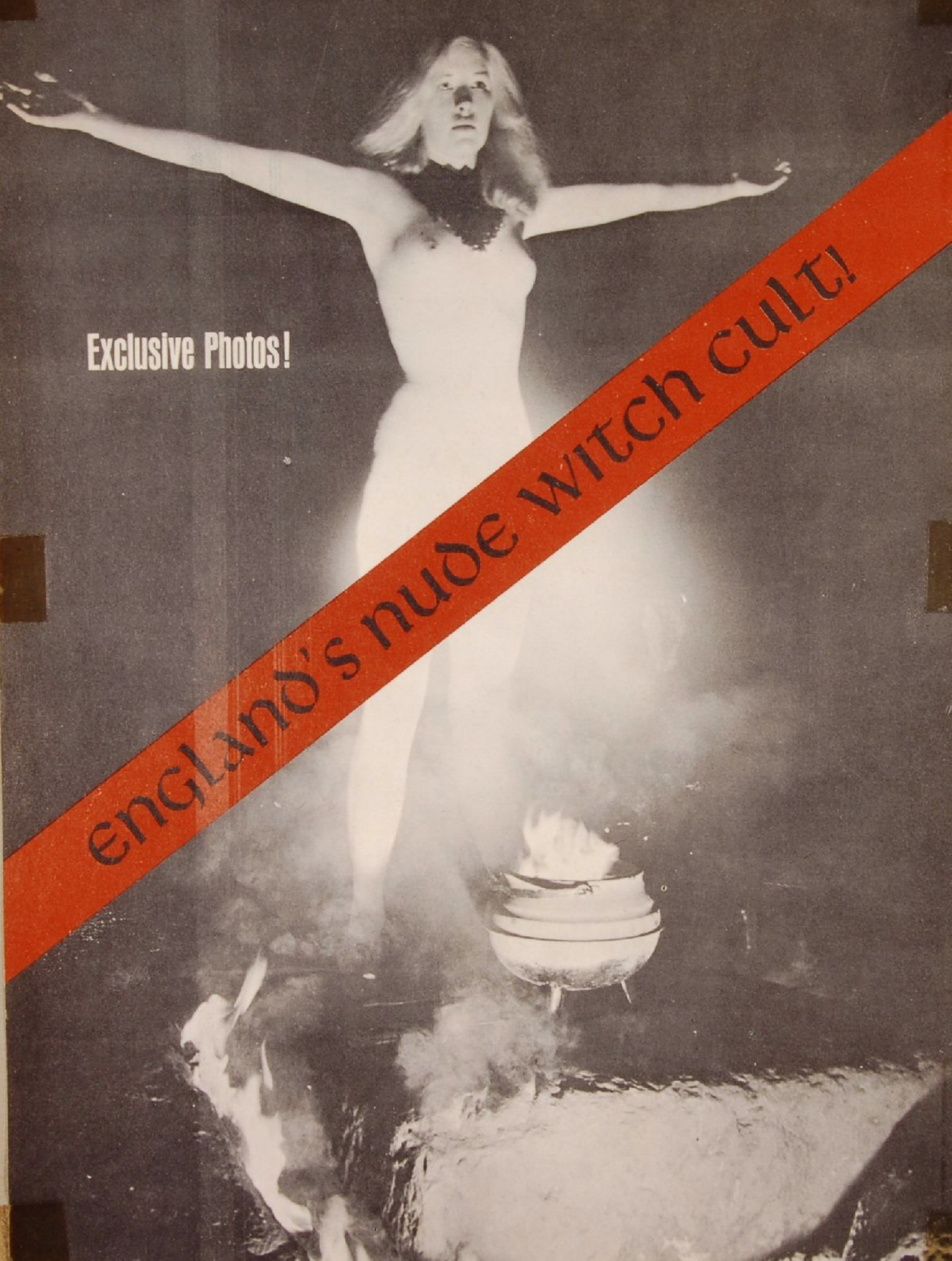


Exclusive Photos!

England's nude witch cult!





Above the Wizard's Rock, Maxine Morris stands in what is called the Pentacle Position, calling down the moon with other members of the coven. Below: An "Initiate" is blindfolded before the induction ceremony.



Here's the real story behind recent newspaper headlines, with exclusive photos of a growing cult that harkens back to Europe's Dark Ages!

written and photographed by **WILCOCK WOODWARD**

*"Swank" (U.S.A.)
March, 1966.*

FROM TIME immemorial there have been witches, or "the People of the Wica." And there will be witches for as long as the world will spin on its axis. The cult of the Wica is a genuine prehistoric religion which has its origins in the mists of time and antiquity. Wica did not originate as a result of Christianity; indeed it was practised long before the birth of Jesus Christ, as witnessed by the signs and symbols to be seen in the cave drawings in southern France and Spain made by prehistoric man. Evidence of the rites and ceremonies of the cult can be found in the remains and excavations of all the past pre-Christian civilizations, where the Mother Goddess forms the main figure of worship.

These mother goddesses have been known by different names in the different parts of the world where Wica was practised—Kerridwen of the Ancient Britons, Bride of the Celts, Isis of the Egyptians, Diana of the Romans, Astarte of the Babylonians etc. The creed of the Wica also, called "The Hidden Children of the Goddess," begins "Listen to the words of the Great Mother, who was of old also called among men, Isis, Diana, Kerridwen, Aphrodite, Bride and many other names."

During the middle ages a great wave of persecution under the Inquisition resulted in the deaths of an estimated nine million men women and children who were charged with witchcraft. Most of the deaths took place in France and Germany but there were others wherever the Pope ruled. The deaths were usually violent and cruel, attended by tortures, because the old gods that the witches worshipped were regarded as devils and devil spirits by the followers of the new religions.

NUDE WITCH CULT

Contrary to popular belief the word witch can be applied to both men and women. It stems from the Ancient Saxon Wica, meaning Wise One. The religion is based on the laws of nature, since primitive people were only concerned with rural occupations such as hunting and agriculture.

Briefly, the beliefs of the Witches are that everything in nature has a positive and a negative force. Hence the God is always thought of as wearing horns on his head to represent the virile and productive force in nature. The Goddess is thought of as the passive, or negative force and is the Eternal Mother, the Womb of Nature from whence all life springs and to which all life must return, even to the end of time.

Wica is a Matriarchal cult, woman being identified with the moon and its twenty-eight day cycle. As the Moon's power waxes and wanes so does the fertility cycle of woman wax and wane. The Goddess wears the symbol of the moon upon her brow. She was also known as the Queen of Heaven which is one of the titles of the Virgin Mary of

Christianity. This may be one of the reasons why Christians who become interested in Wica find it easy to accept the religion. They are also not required to sever their connections with the Christian faith. And they may leave Wica at any time since nothing is done to prevent them, and no pressures are brought to bear.

Today witchcraft is not illegal in England. Unfortunately the religion had to be practised in great secrecy to prevent persecution. This has caused many stories of sex orgies, Voodoo satanism and black magic to be spread abroad. But perversions such as these are not encouraged by Wica which takes the same stand as Catholics, Protestants and Jews in this matter. As a matter of fact, a witch carries out the same function as a priest or a rabbi when he is invested with power and authority at his ordination. The Goddess says in Her 'Charge': "And mine also is joy on earth for my law is Love unto all beings." Jesus Christ says the same thing in different words: "Love Thy Neighbor."

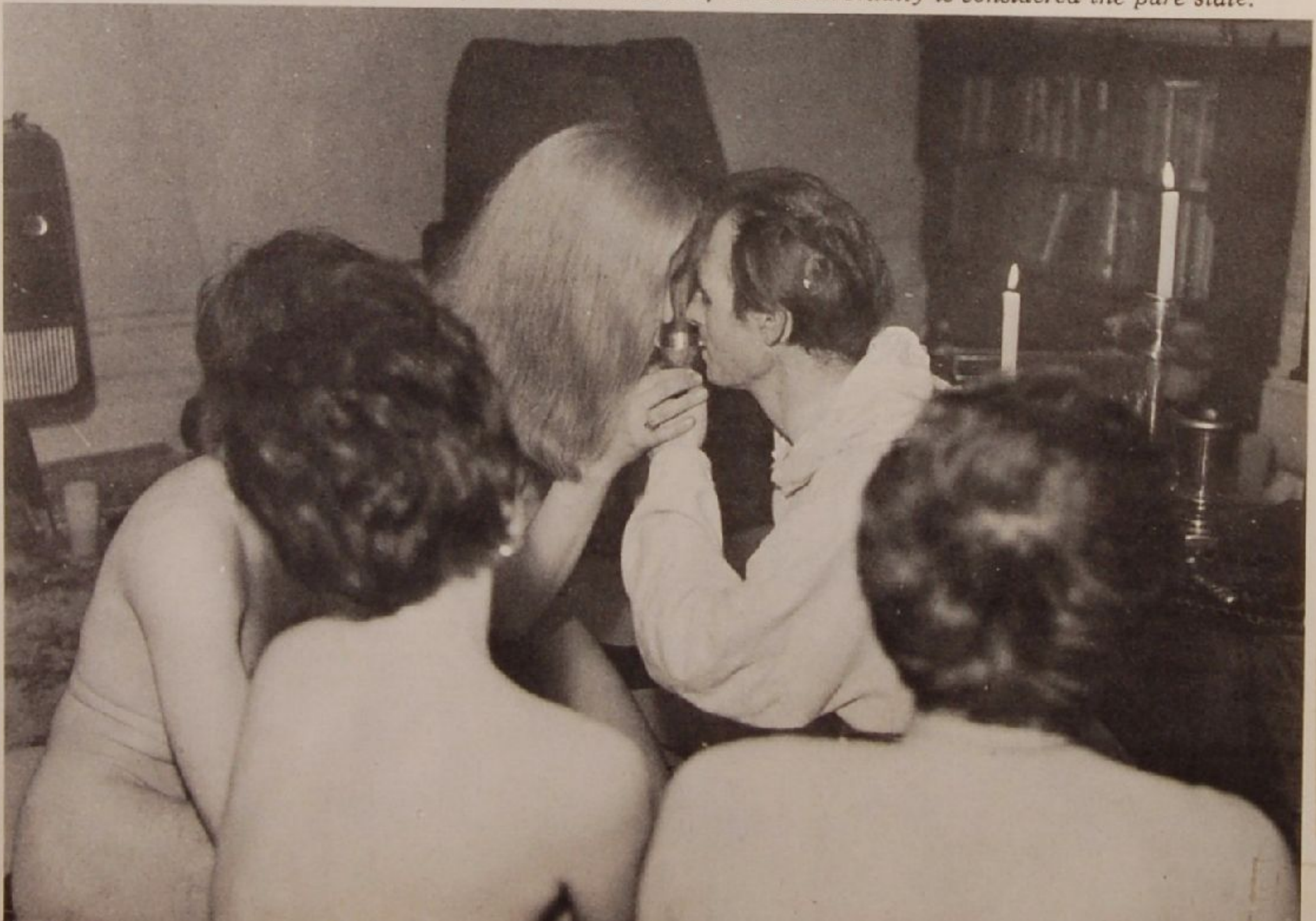
In Manchester there are three

covens of witches. Each coven has thirteen members. They come from all classes of society from the high to the low—working men and women and professional people as well. In one of the covens there are two policemen, and there are several priests of the Christian faith. The Elder of the Wica is a 39-year-old divorcee, Alexander Sanders, who is recognized as the leader of all the witches in the United Kingdom. He was inducted into the religion by his grandmother when he was eight. One day he was told by his mother that she would be out of her home when he came out of school. So he must go to his grandmother and she would call for him when she returned.

Alec went to his grandmother's home and walked in through the back door, unannounced, to find her naked in her living room practising the ancient religion of Wica. She initiated him as soon as he was old enough to understand the meanings. He has been a practising witch ever since.

He married, but his wife could not understand him because she

Visitors come regularly to the flat of "elder" Alex Sanders, some to seek advice, some to join the witches. Here a wine sipping ceremony takes place with members of the coven. Nudity is considered the pure state.





Left: Alex Sanders uses a "Hand of Glory" (human hand cut off a body hanging on the gallows) as a candle base as he casts a spell on a witch-hating neighbor. He made a wax figure of the woman, stuck a pin in her mouth, tied rope around the body. Though actually no hurt was caused, Sanders said the spell worked. Right: Kneeling before "elder" to receive blessing.

was not a member, and they eventually parted. He has amazing powers and told me within a few minutes of meeting, that I had an aura of America about me. He wanted to know if I was an American. I told him that I wasn't, but that I had just returned one week previously from New York.

The High Priest of the Coven that I visited is a magnetic young man called Paul King, a 22-year-old clerk who works for the Dunlop Rubber Company in the Manchester office. I also met Maxine Morris, tall blonde, 19-year-old priestess of the coven who is a shorthand typist, Jeanne Steven, a 19-year-old student, Diane Bradford who is the assistant matron of a nursing home, and Keith Johns, an engineer in his early twenties. They allowed me to photograph some of the rites and ceremonies of witchcraft—first of all at the Wizard's Stone at midnight, high on Alderley Edge, a crag with a knife edge not far from Manchester, a traditional meeting place of witches from the middle ages. Later we went to one of the temples in a house on the outskirts of Manchester and photographed other ceremonies. Certain rituals could not be photographed because I was not a member of Wica, but what I have recorded will give you some idea of the cult of witchcraft as practised in 20th Century Manchester.

Of course, there is still some persecution of witches. For instance, when her landlord found out that

Maxine Morris was a witch, he made her leave her flat at very short notice. Some of the neighbors of Mr. Sanders have reported him and his activities to the police, but on investigation they have reported that there is nothing that they can do, since Mr. Sanders is a very law abiding citizen. Mr. Sanders says that he has now stopped his neighbor from causing any more trouble by a secret Wica method, which he demonstrated to me. He is certain that there will be no more action on her part. He has, however, been kidnapped and taken blindfolded in a car and beaten because of his beliefs. But he was able to use his powers to control his kidnappers and escaped from them.

He demonstrated his amazing powers to me during our visit to Alderley Edge. After the pictures were taken I was packing my equipment. One of the heads of my flash guns was loose. It fell to the ground and bounced towards the fissure which is the opening to the Wizard's Cave. The ground slopes towards the edge of the fissure and as my piece of equipment slithered downwards, I knew I had lost it down the fissure. But it stopped right on the edge. I looked up across the gaping mouth of the fissure and there saw Alexander Sanders staring at the flash head. When he saw me glance up, he said, "I didn't want you to lose that, so I stopped it for you. It's not damaged is it?"

Coincidence? Maybe. And then again, maybe not.

THE END



Maxine Morris in her everyday clothes. Witchcraft isn't illegal, but landlady made Maxine move because of the cult.