

# World's Only MUSEUM of WITCHCRAFT . . .

. . . houses more than quaint relics of bygone day. On the Isle of Man "The Wise Ones" maintain active influential headquarters.

By Walter J. McGraw

Lady Olwen (Monique Marie Wilson) and her husband, Campbell Crozier Wilson, Wica's high priestess and priest, manage museum and their coven, also establish new covens.



"OURS IS the religion of true love . . . and I don't mean, love-ins like the hippies have . . . Christianity is on the way out. The Wica will again take its place," says a self-styled Queen of the Witches who was talking about witchcraft which she prefers to call by its Anglo-Saxon name, the *Wica*.

On the morning of my first day in London last spring, in 1968, I dropped into a news dealer's shop and saw a copy of the English edition of *FATE*. Compiled and printed on the Isle of Man, it is different in format from the American version although it does reprint many articles from the parent magazine along with Curtis Fuller's "I See by the Papers." And it startled me to see



The museum is the three-story building on right of approach to Witches' Mill.

my own name featured, not once but twice on the front cover. Two of my pieces from 1967 issues of the United States *FATE* were printed back to back. This as much as anything else persuaded me to give in to a yen I had had for years to visit the Isle of Man.

The Isle of Man is in the Irish Sea and boasts a mountain from which on a clear day one can see England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The island is only 33 miles long and 12½ miles wide. Fifty thousand people occupy this 227 square miles of land and all 50,000 of them are fiercely independent and resentful of what they refer to as the "adjacent island" — England. Mann is part of the United Kingdom but

is self-governing. Neither the Manx radio nor any of its newspapers disseminate any news unless it has to do with the Isle of Man. I was told that only if the first man to step on the moon happens to be Manx will the news media of this island mention the lunar landing.

Belief in the occult and the strange is part of Manx tradition and James Dor, who publishes the English edition of *FATE*, is an expert on the subject and regaled us with stories as he drove us around the magnificent countryside showing us among other things what is advertised as "the only museum in the world devoted to the subject of magic, superstition and witchcraft." This is a three-story building along-





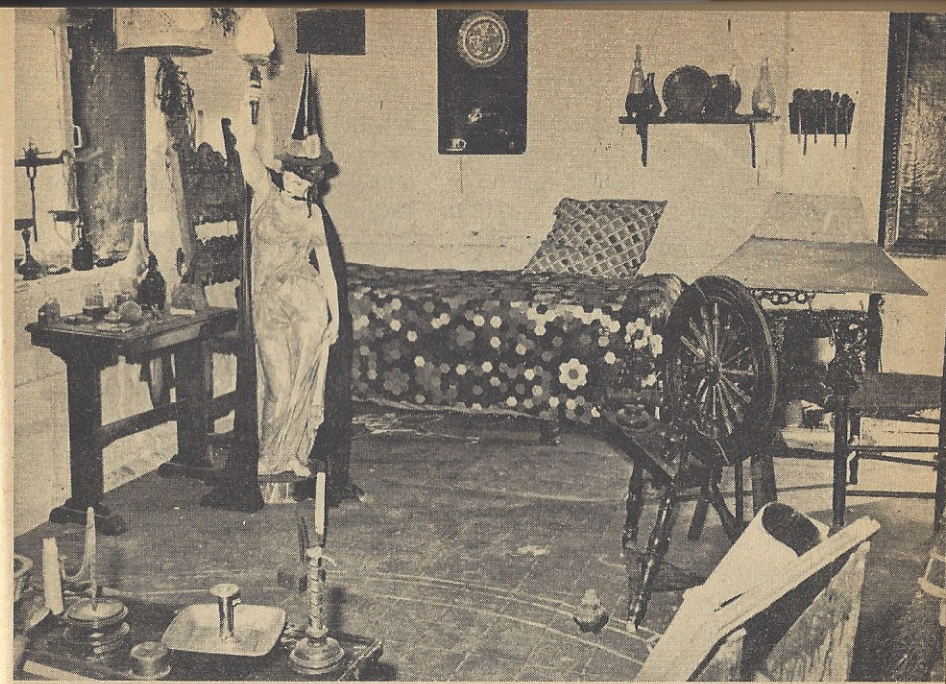
Exhibits of tools of witchcraft and magic are among attractions.

side the stone structure from which the complex gets its name: The Witches' Mill.

The age of the mill is unknown

but it has been established that it was in existence in 1611 because there is a court record attesting that in that year the miller's son was tried and convicted of being a draft-dodger. He was fined two shillings (24c) for not turning out for the "watch and guard." In 1848 the then miller burnt out the inside of the mill as a protest against the corn tax. Shortly thereafter a local coven of witches is alleged to have taken it over. Being round, it was perfect for a witches' circle; being sheltered, it provided protection to the nude dancers from the

Museum includes "Magician's Circle," for witchcraft was magic of and for peasants.



Another main attraction is authentically furnished and equipped Witch's Cottage.

cold Isle of Man nights.

In 1951 the mill and the barn were refurbished and opened as the Witches' Kitchen, primarily a restaurant featuring, as a sideline, a Folklore Center of Superstition and Witchcraft. When the restaurant failed one of the partners, Dr. Gerald Brousseau Gardner, took over the entire operation and built it into the Witches' Museum which since has become one of Mann's most popular tourist attractions.

Set on four acres of ground (providing what the advertisements call "a large car park"), the mill and the building are

both built of such solid gray stone that it is evident they still will be in use during the next 300 to 400 years. Most of the first story is given over to a small restaurant operation and it is claimed that many of the museum's thousands of visitors fly over from the mainland only to see the museum, arriving there in the morning, having their lunch on the spot and flying back that afternoon. During the tourist season, for those who are not licensed to fly brooms, there are enough commercial plane flights to make that feasible if you happen to be in England's west



country. The taxi trip from the airport takes only five minutes.

The late Dr. Gardner, a former British colonial official, called himself a "white witch" and was said to be the high priest of the Southern Coven of British Witches. In his writings and in the Museum itself, he argued with the Montague Summers school of thought and claimed that Witchcraft was the original religion of the people, going back to the stone age. As people progressed to becoming herdsmen and farmers they came to rely on "The Wise Ones" or *Wica* who had been taught magic by their predecessors and who passed it on by word of mouth to their successors. This magic, however, he said is not to be confused with Ceremonial or Black Magic. It is earthy, having to do with fertility rites for both crops and herds, poison to ward off wild animals, herbs to cure the sick and spells to influence the weather. Ceremonial magic called for knowledge of Latin, Greek and Hebrew along with expensive equipment, so it was limited to the rich and the educated. Witchcraft was the magic for and of the peasant. This difference was the reason High Magic (some of it White and some of it Black) never was persecuted as was Witchcraft, most of it, in his opinion, white.

Gardner claimed that for centuries the believers in Witchcraft and Christianity had lived peacefully side by side. Then came the time of the persecution. In its fight for power the Church drove the pagans underground and although some authorities have put the figure at up to 30 million Gardner says that some nine million accused witches were put to death in Europe and the Americas.

Gardner seemed to feel that Mann was rather more tolerant of witches than other places. He cites the fact that only one execution for witchcraft ever was recorded on the island. This was the burning of one Margaret Ine Quane and her young son in 1617. He says of the other trials of alleged witches that the favorite verdict was "Not guilty, but don't do it again." This rather ignores the fact that according to Mann tradition in early days if a woman was accused of being a witch her trial consisted of being stuffed into a barrel into which long spikes had been driven. The barrel then was rolled down the side of Mt. Snaefell. If the accused was alive by the time she reached the bottom this proved that she was guilty since only a witch could survive this ordeal. She was then beaten to death. If, as is more likely, she died en route, she was not guilty and

most certainly was not able to "do it again."

There is a memorial to Margaret Ine Quane in the Museum, along with a full-scale interior of a one-room Witches' Cottage showing the mystic circle which could be disguised and hidden at the first warning of danger. Next to this is a full scale Magician's Study incorporating what Gardner said is a copy of the Magic Circle of Dr. Dee used on Queen Elizabeth I's orders to destroy the Spanish Armada. These two rooms dramatize Gardner's point about the differences in the two approaches.

The other displays are a curious mixture of fascinating and authentic objects dealing with not only witches but with astrology, alchemy, necromancy and satanism. Unfortunately these are crowded in with pure junk, bad art and some rather anachronistic books. One trembles to think of his reaction if Dr. J. B. Rhine should go there and see a copy of his book *Extrasensory Perception* crowded into a display of mail-order pamphlets on how to tell fortunes. For reasons I could not fathom old copies of the United States *FATE* were in the display cases.\*

\*Gerald Gardner collected articles on present-day witch burnings and corresponded with the *FATE* editorial department for a number of years before his death.

The displays are still just as they were set up by Gardner from his own world-wide collection of curios and from others which were left or loaned to him by other witches. Case number one, in fact, is filled entirely with the possessions of a late witch whose family requested she remain anonymous. Here can be seen a ritual sword which once was lent regularly to the Druid Order which holds ceremonies each summer at Stonehenge. Several other cases hold objects on loan from various covens.

For those interested in Aleister Crowley, who was a personal friend of Gardner's, there is a great deal of material ranging from a complete collection of the secret manuscripts of the Order of the Golden Dawn, a magical fraternity from which Crowley broke, to the form of the religious service used at his funeral in 1947. When it was found that the "Wickedest Man in the World" had specified that this form should be used, it was denounced as a black mass. One display case is given over entirely to Crowley and includes a charter granted Gardner by Crowley to set up his own branch of the *Ordo Templi Orientis*, a fraternity set up by Crowley after his break with the Order of the Golden Dawn. Gardner always made it clear, however,



that he never exercised that right.

Crowley's cultural ancestors, the members of the Hell-Fire Club, also are represented by a magic lamp alleged to have been used by them. Other displays are of talismans for both good and evil, of torture instruments used on witches during "the time of the persecution," of manuscripts used in casting both spells and horoscopes, and of a number of devices used in fortune-telling. Perhaps the most interesting of these latter is a large round, black, convex mirror said to have been used once by a practicing magician. Presumably it might still work but it is suggested that anyone who wishes to try it out should go to the Museum during its less crowded hours. Like so many of the witches' ceremonies, we are told, this too will work only if the practitioner is nude.

In 1964 Gardner died leaving, according to the *New York Times*, the title "Queen of the Witches," some \$70,000, the Museum and a broomstick to Lady Olwen, one of his disciples. Mrs. Monique Marie Mauricette Wilson, to give her legal name, is of French descent although she was born in the Far East. Gardner was a distant cousin of her father and she first met "Uncle Gerald" in Hong Kong when she

was seven or eight. She then lost track of him until many years later after she had been married to Campbell Crozier Wilson and moved with him to Perth, Scotland.

Stumbling onto some of Gardner's books, she wondered if this was the same Gerald Gardner she remembered. She contacted him and this was the beginning of a close relationship between the Wilsons and Gardner that lasted until his death and included his converting them to the *Wica*, making them into high priest and priestess. This, according to Mrs. Wilson, came very naturally to her since both her grandmothers were witches. She believes, incidentally, that one of Gardner's ancestresses, Griselda Gardner, was burnt at the stake in the time of the persecution.

Since 1964 the Wilsons have carried on Gardner's work of trying to change the world's image of the *Wica*. Little if anything has been changed in the museum. Lady Olwen has taken over the coven and has been active in the establishment of other covens, not only on the Isle of Man but on the adjacent island and in the United States. She was most reluctant to give figures since secrecy is still one of the main tenets of the *Wica*. She did claim, however, that to

her knowledge people from all walks of life including members of Parliament, doctors, policemen and many others had joined covens in recent years. She is most interested in recruiting young people. She feels that as they take over the world they can make the *Wica* the way of life in the future.

Interviewing the Wilsons is interesting if only because of their accents. Hers is softly musical and French; his is Scottish. Both have outstanding speaking voices. Together they explained the theory of Witchcraft as they understand and practice it. God, or the godhead, is both male and female; witchcraft believes in a god and a goddess since it takes both sexes to create.

"It's like the Ying and the Yang," Wilson pointed out. "And Christians profess to believe in Jesus but they also had to make Mary sacred. Mankind cannot accept a male god — or a goddess — giving birth to the world alone. Both male and female are needed."

"But we are not here to serve them," Mrs. Wilson added. "They serve us. The reason for the witches' circle is to provide a sort of door for them so they can help us when we need it."

She feels much knowledge was lost at the time of the persecution since communication be-

tween witches was difficult. Slowly covens are trying to regain that lost knowledge, bits and pieces of which may have been preserved in various parts of the world. She feels that very few actual witches were killed at the time of the burning, since they would have the knowledge and means to save themselves, but they were driven underground. She also emphasizes that devil worship has no part in authentic witchcraft.

"The devil is a Christian invention," she says. "We just don't believe in him so how could we worship him?"

"There is no heaven or hell," Wilson added. "We believe in reincarnation. We live life after life so that the young soul can grow and become part of the godhead. We may have to live some lives over and over again because we did not learn the first time but there is no hell."

"Ours is a happy religion," Lady Olwen chimed in. "It is all based on love, on doing things for others. If you asked me to help you I could not say 'no.' But in helping you I could not hurt someone else. If someone were hurting you I could not hurt him in return. I would have to help you in a way that would do no harm to him. That is why it is nonsense to say we practice black magic."



However, she emphasizes that what they do for you must be important. They cannot, for instance, bring on good weather simply because it might make your holiday more pleasant. On the other hand, if your crops and livelihood depended on rain, that they could arrange for.

It is the love for others that the *Wica* instills that she feels is the most valuable aspect in this day of wars, riots and threats of total destruction.

"This has nothing to do with orgies," she hastened to add. "I'm sorry but I've never been to an orgy. Our rituals are not like bers and work with them slowly so that they learn to use the that at all. We take new mem-powers they acquire. Then they are on their own but we are always standing by to pick up the pieces should they get into trouble."

She also emphasized the responsibilities the *Wica* bestows:

"Once I stood way high up and watched people crowding across London Bridge at the rush hour and I thought that this must be the way the gods see people. No one was recognizable and if one of those little ants were to put his hand in someone else's pocket and steal a purse I wouldn't know who it was. But what if that person were wearing a cloak of solid shining gold? If I

were a god I could clobber him right there and then. Once you are in the *Wica* you are wearing a cloak of solid gold. Others may pay for what they do in other lives, maybe a little at a time. In the *Wica* you pay immediately."

She illustrated this with a story of how she had sworn at her daughter at the end of one of those days only the mothers of young children know.

"My daughter was riding her bicycle at the time. Immediately she fell off. There was no bump or stone. Nothing normal could have made her fall and she knew it. She just looked accusingly at me. I turned and right away I tripped over a stool, fell over a chair and banged my nose into a door which should not have been open. That's the way things happen once you've put on the gold cloak of the *Wica*."

But both Mr. and Mrs. Wilson made it clear they feel the benefits of the *Wica* far surpass its responsibilities.

"Ours is a simple religion," Wilson said. "It is a natural religion. It relies on natural forces. It is not filled with *shalt nots*. The Christian religion has had its 2000 years; now nobody bothers with it. People no longer go to church but they are looking for something. The church, the politicians, the leaders are not giving our young people anything.

The *Wica* gives them freedom in this life and shows the promise of future lives.

"The Christians overcame us because we would not hurt them even when they were hurting us," said Lady Olwen. "We could have won. We could have hurt them but we would not. So they overcame. Now, in time, we shall overcome. The oldest religion will be the religion of the future."

How does one become a witch?

It is by invitation only. If you indicate a desire, then a local coven investigates your worthiness. According to Mrs. Wilson this is sometimes done by the police since some officers are also witches. If the investigation is favorable then a high priest or

priestess contacts you.

How does one indicate his interest?

Write to Mrs. Marie Wilson, The Witches' Mill, Castletown, Isle of Man. No matter where you live, she will pass the information on to the coven nearest you and the investigation will begin. The rest will depend on what they find out about you. As a matter of fact, one person "made it" after writing a letter addressed only to "The Witch, England." The letter was delivered to Mrs. Wilson and the process went into motion.

Warning: Do not send your indications of interest to me. I cannot help you. I indicated my interest but no invitation to join a coven has come my way.



#### HE HAD NOTHING ELSE TO DO . . .

FROM BISHOP, Tex., comes word that a 16-year-old high school junior who "didn't have anything else to do this summer" set out to find a new comet. With a home-assembled four-inch telescope, Mark Whitaker started watching the skies in June, 1968, and on the third night, the 14th, he saw the comet. He was not sure whether it was new or periodic but after observing it for two days he reported his find to the Smithsonian Observatory which keeps

track of new celestial sightings.

The new comet is named Whitaker-Thomas, for Mark and Norman G. Thomas, a professional astronomer at Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, Ariz., who confirmed Mark's observations. Thomas saw the mysterious light, which turned out to be the comet, on June 17 on a photographic plate made as part of tracing the asteroid Icarus.

Mark Whitaker is the youngest person in history credited with discovering a comet.