

BRITISH WITCHES ARE FLYING HIGH!

BY ROY STEMMAN

A WARM sun and a fresh set breeze reminded me that I was far away from London's psychic bustle. But, a pebble's throw from the legendary ruins of King Arthur's Castle and the mystic aura of Merlin's Cave at Tintagel, N. Cornwall, I stumbled across a psychic story. I found myself at the centre of a countrywide witchcraft network.

Visiting the nearby picturesque harbour of Boscastle I came across the Witches House. Like many other holidaymakers I went in—expecting to find a fun-fair attempt at portraying witchcraft. I was pleasantly (if that word can be used when writing about some of the sinister exhibits) surprised.

The Witches' House is a museum of witchcraft. It houses what must be one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of witches' paraphernalia—both black and white—in the world. Many of the articles were personally captioned by the museum's proprietor, making it evident that he was a witch, or very close to being one.

Death is the key

The museum also emphasised the part the spirit world, and spiritual forces, play in the witches' work. Communication with the dead was listed as one of the qualities a fully-fledged witch has to possess. Another caption said, "The key to understanding witchcraft is death."

Many of the exhibits were innocuous. Others, frankly, were sinister. Decapitated right feet and left hands, burnt and shrivelled, were said to possess "fetish power". Dead birds—some preserved, others stuffed—were also said to have latent powers of use to practising witches.

Perhaps the most grisly object was the skeleton of a 16th century psychic, Ursula Kemp. She was executed at Chelmsford in July 1589. Records of her trial

vet-lined coffin. Keeping her company is the stake which was driven through her body, at burial, to prevent her spirit from haunting the neighbourhood!

The museum's proprietor was given permission to dig up the body from its burial place at St. Osyth, Essex, in 1963. The exhumation was televised.

Dominating thousands of other, less morbid, exhibits in the Boscastle collection are numerous drawings showing nude witches taking part in a variety of rather dubious-looking secret rites.

Museum owner

It was obvious that a collection of this nature could only have been compiled by someone with intimate knowledge of the ancient "craft" and its present-day adherents. It was equally plain that this "witch" had an extensive knowledge of mediumship and spirit power.

Cecil H. Williamson confirmed both facts when I met him in Tintagel. A *Psychic News* reader "since its early days," he was happy to discuss witchcraft with me.

A strongly built, fair-haired business man, Williamson is proprietor of five other museums. He founded the famous Isle of Man museum in 1949. As a boy he began collecting instruments of torture used throughout the ages.

Wartime psychics

In his research he soon realised that the people who always seemed to be on the receiving end of these weapons were witches or similar, dignified, and

633 in network of 53 covens

realise that Germany had many occultists.

A list of German mediums was compiled for the Foreign Office and it was decided to infiltrate their circles in an effort to feed Hitler with wrong information about the nature of the war, says Williamson.

It was already known that the German dictator was interested in the occult and sought much guidance from this quarter. What was uncanny, Williamson told me, was that, although the war appeared to be going badly for England at this time, medium after medium told Hitler that he would lose the war.

The infiltration of these circles didn't help Hitler either. But at one stage a circle leader broke down under questioning and admitted what was happening. All mediums were immediately imprisoned. Later, when Italy fell, Himmler was ordered to release them, says Williamson.

Governmental survey

He added: "They remained useful to the underground movement to the end of the war. For a time, of course, their psychic purposes were submerged for political means."

The museum proprietor claims that the facts behind this remarkable story are partly confirmed in Sir Winston Churchill's history of the war.

When there was a strong demand for a repeal of the ancient Witchcraft Act in the early 1950s, a government department asked Williamson—who was still a civil servant—to do a survey of witchcraft in the British Isles.

As a result of his report, which informed the government that witchcraft was virtually

ing council of the 53rd coven.

The "Daughters of Death" has taken 15 years to organise to its present efficient level. It has its own printing outfit, banking service and transport, says Williamson, and its members receive financial benefit out of its income.

The organisation owns a great deal of property, in which are housed the various temples, all of which are underground. Many of the covens are extremely wealthy. Despite the impressive way the organisation is run, Williamson says it considers itself to be small and makes no claims to being a pacesetter in present-day witchcraft.

The organisation despises personality cults, and therefore has no overall leader. Membership rules are strict. Members cannot withdraw from the organisation. Their main activity, I was told, "is the exploration of ways and means whereby contact, and a human relationship, can be established with the 'living dead.'"

What struck him in his early research was that witches who went to their death never showed signs of fear. The next world was obviously a reality to them.

New image

Nudity is out. Old-fashioned rituals are out. But Williamson—an ex-film producer—confesses that witchcraft is still a joke to many people because of the antics of some of its present-day adherents. This he hopes to rectify.

Though his Boscastle museum is open to the public, it is not designed for that purpose. It is really a museum of witchcraft for witches. It's a place where they can learn what other wit-



sacrifice to develop the right atmosphere for psychic phenomena to manifest. Their dances and other rituals serve the same purpose.

I asked Williamson if he was a witch. "It all depends what you mean by a witch," he answered. "I'm what is called, in this part of the country, a pellar man—a charmer or a cunning man. I make charms and talismans."

He doesn't like the word "witch" because it has been debased by some publicity-seeking coven members. "We prefer to be known as persons who practise witchcraft," he explains.

Making charms work

Of his own ability to cast spells and make charms to order, he says it requires "the aid and active participation of a spirit force. One can call on good or harmful spirit forces. There are those that can bless and those that can blast and one does not hesitate to use either one as the needs may be."

Inevitably Williamson receives numerous enquiries about witchcraft—many from his museum visitors. His answer to all their queries is the same: "Read *Psychic News*. Go and see a demonstration of clairvoyance. Watch a healer at work. Then, if you're still interested in witchcraft, contact a coven."

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Perhaps the most grisly object was the skeleton of a 16th century psychic, Ursula Kemp. She was executed at Chelmsford in July 1589. Records of her trial can be seen at Lambeth Palace, says the museum.

Ursula's mortal remains are reclining in the comfort of a vel-

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In his research he soon realised that the people who always seemed to be on the receiving end of these weapons were witches or similarly gifted people who were misunderstood by their fellows. This intrigued Williamson and he studied witchcraft.

During World War II two youngsters landed at Harwich from Poland. They carried a transistor and a large tome, and said they were members of the Polish Witchcraft Centre.

This story, in wartime, was understandably suspect. Williamson, working for MI6, was asked to investigate.

The book, Williamson found, was an old and valuable work on witchcraft. The boys were telling the truth. This experience led military intelligence to

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As a result of his report, which informed the government that witchcraft was virtually non-existent, the Fraudulent Mediums' Act replaced the former, obnoxious statute and gave Spiritualists religious freedom.

'Daughters of Death'

Ironically Williamson is now putting witchcraft back on the map. His efforts to unite witches throughout the country have succeeded. There is now a network of witchery which he refers to as "The Daughters of Death".

Reason for this title, says Williamson, is "because there is an after-life." He is disturbed by the fear of death that is inherent in the majority of people. "Let us be friendly with death," he urged.

Each "Daughter of Death" coven consists of 13 persons. There are never more than three males in a group, and a man is not allowed to head the cell. The British Isles has been divided into four areas, each of which supports 13 covens. These are, in fact, 12 different groups with the thirteenth made up from one member of each of the 12, under the leadership of an area controller. He is never identified and is referred to as "the unknown one."

Each area, therefore, has 157 witches—a total of 628 throughout Britain. To this number must be added another five who are part of the overall govern-

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A concerted effort to carry out modern research is now under way. Every newspaper in the country is monitored for news about witches, and a coven meets regularly at the museum.

Williamson believes there is very little difference between witchcraft and Spiritualism. Both deal with psychic forces. He has a tremendous respect for the work done by mediums and healers. But he thinks Spiritualism is just a little too "prim and proper".

Sub-human contacts

It is presented as if psychic power can be turned on and off at will, which isn't so, he says, adding, "I'm very dubious when these Red Indians are always there to talk week after week." He also feels Spiritualists play down the sub-human spirit aspect.

He told me of a number of covens which are producing materialisations. They are not all pleasant. Some are half human and half animal. Their presence can be accompanied by "nasty smells and noises."

Where Spiritualism and witchcraft part company is in their methods of producing phenomena. To a witch there is often nothing wrong in making a blood

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