

DEVIL WORSHIPPERS BY NIGHT IN SURREY WOOD

By WILLIAM HALL

REIGATE, Tuesday.

DEEP in the dark heart of a remote Surrey wood the unholy medieval practice of witchcraft was revived with satanic ritual.

With two other observers I watched it all.

Six months ago 34-year-old engineer Ray Howard came to *The Evening News* with a story of how he had been unwittingly caught up in a coven of witches, hypnotised, escaped—and finally cursed.

Throughout the autumn and winter colleague Frederick Park and I kept vigil in the wood Mr. Howard alleged was a temple of witchcraft and Black Magic.

The wood itself has all the trappings of a miniature Stonehenge, and more... Altar stones specially built on the banks where two streams meet; mystic symbols nailed to trees; two-foot glass spheres tinted silver, to "receive" spirit messages.

The Scene

To show me the macabre scene Ray Howard braved threats from the sect.

At ten o'clock they came.

Led by the man who calls himself Rex Nemorensis, self-styled "King of the Woods," a dozen shadowy figures crunched through the undergrowth. At the rear was the middle-aged

sister of Nemorensis—in public life a London psychologist.

His sister, known to the sect as Beth, the Witch Maiden, carried a lamp.

A fire was lit, incense was thrown upon the burning wood, and Nemorensis drew a circle round the fire with a long sword.

A Voice

The figures, identified by Howard as six men and six women, were, I was told, attempting to communicate with spirits of their dead brotherhood, and bring the voice of a dead queen of their sect from the mouth of the Witch Maiden as she sat in the "throne" of a five-pronged tree.

Soon the Witch Maiden was sitting rigidly upright. "She's in a trance," whispered Howard.

At last Nemorensis took up a seven-foot long-bow, chanted a few short sentences and fired an arrow up at the night sky.

"He was calling on the devil to guide the shaft; to the heart of the cursed one—and that's me," said Howard grimly.

At midnight it was over. The wood was left to ghosts and silence.