

Photonews

Witchcraft: What real

AN EXPRESS INQUIRY INTO THE INNER SECRETS OF A REMARKABLE CULT

DR GERALD GARDNER was a widower . . . author of books on witchcraft, who died at sea. In his will, he left Mrs Monique Marl Wilson, of Nemmo-avenue, Perth, the contents of a museum of witchcraft, £1,500, and the residue of a £22,000 fortune. Mrs Wilson, high priestess of a coven of witches, flew yesterday to the Isle of Man to seek her inheritance. Here, a closely reasoned survey of witchcraft in Britain by . . .

Merrick Winn

THEY say they are the survivors of a Stone Age religion, a moon cult, which worshipped the moon-goddess and the old horned god of hunting . . . A matriarchal religion, with the moon goddess now represented nationally by a high priestess in Scotland, and locally by the high priestess at each coven . . .

These are the witches.

No one knows how many there are in Britain, but I know for certain that there are seven covens in Scotland, one in the Isle of Arran; six in the North; one in the Isle of Man; one in Lincolnshire; one in Buckinghamshire; three in London; two on the South Coast; possibly two in the New Forest.

The ideal coven is supposed to have 13 members—six men, six women, the high priestess.

Knives

One of the ceremonies is that of "The Dance of the Wheel" or "The Cauldron of Regeneration." Its purpose: The rebirth of the sun.

The first part is routine: The laying-out of the altar with incense burners, candles, statuette of mother-goddess, white-handled knife and black-handled knife, magic wand, and scourge.

The witches must be bathed and purified with the ceremonial sprinkling of salt water. Then "The Dance of the Wheel." The high priestess and her chosen high priest stand either

side of a cauldron inside a circle nine feet across.

The high priestess pours spirit into the cauldron and lights it. The other witches light their torches at the blaze and all dance around together in the clock-wise circle of the sun, chanting: "Blessed be the Great Goddess, Without beginning, without end, Everlasting to eternity, I.O. EVO. HE Blessed Be."

I met, in London, a woman with the witch-name of Francesca. A singer, not unknown. She had just been made high priestess of the London witch coven.

Warning

As she was making us coffee in soup bowls in her West End flat, a long-distance call came from Scotland; a friendly call, but a warning.

Francesca listened, argued, laughed. Then gave the parting witch words: Blessed Be.

"That was Owen," she said (Mrs Wilson's witch name is Lady Owen). I had met her in the Highlands. This high priestess of all the witches.

Francesca and Owen are said to be "psychics," with healing powers. I would say they are alike in being intelligent, earnest, worrying; governed by primitive superstitions which, all the same, go naturally with honesty.

They say, when you guess their age at 25, "I am 32," or whatever. They say it with the dark dignity that looks its best in black.

Francesca, in black, went on: "Someone's attacking me, and Owen's insisting I take it seriously. But I can't. It's so silly."

"I know they can't hurt me," she told me about the attacks. "The first was five nights ago. I was just falling asleep when I felt three shocks like explosions in my head.

The night before last it

happened again. The three explosions, and I was so cold I had to get a hot water bottle.

"Then I knew someone was attacking me. It's a well-known way. The third time, they intend me to become very ill. Perhaps to die."

I asked her how she could believe this and she said: "It happens. White doctors often can't save Australian aboriginals if they believe they've had the bones pointed at them."

Francesca, who is not an Australian aboriginal, would not say who she believed was attacking her. But I know.

On the night of Friday, November 3 last year the leading witch covens in the North and Scotland held one of their most solemn rituals.

They called upon their goddess, the moon goddess, and upon the old horned god of hunting, to take away power from the London high priestess.

They believed her guilty of the worst witch crime—betrayal. They said she named witches to non-witches.

No power

Francesca told me: "This high priestess may try to carry on, but she has no power."

"That's why I have been made a high priestess, much sooner than I would have been. I have been a witch of the third degree (the highest) for only two months."

Francesca decided to become a witch in 1961 when she went on holiday to the Isle of Man and met Dr Gardner.

I had stayed with Dr Gardner three days and we fed ourselves out of tins and stopped up talking till two in the morning. Disagreeing about almost everything.

He was the same strange mixture of superstitiousness and honesty. "I'm not a doctor really," he said. "Just an honorary—for a book I wrote in Malaya."

Perhaps the witches believe too readily they descend directly from some religion of the Stone Age.

These I met descended directly from Dr Gerald Gardner, Isle of Man; and through him, from Dr Barbara Murray, the anthropologist who also died recently. She was the first with the "Stone Age—Witchcraft" theory.

Rituals

Chief work is the work of healing through allegedly magical rituals. The witches believe they have this special power, which they must use only to do good, never for gain.

They believe if they disclose the secrets of their power they will lose the power. High priestesses Dellah has learned from Samson's mistake.

I believe witches are intelligent people who have gone back to save themselves. They have surely gone the wrong way.

They strive to love, and not to hate, but they are split now with even greater hate. They try and fail, like the rest of us. And for this alone we might say to them: blessed be.



MRS MONIQUE WILSON in the Isle of Man with her husband, Campbell, and seven-year-old Her new home: a 450-year-old grey-stone co doors locked to strangers. Pictured behind her: museum on wito

What really goes on?



MRS MONIQUE WILSON in the Isle of Man yesterday. She had flown there from Glasgow with her husband, Campbell, and seven-year-old daughter to claim her broomstick fortune. Her new home: a 450-year-old grey-stone cottage. Yesterday the windows were veiled and doors locked to strangers. Pictured behind her: the renovated corn mill around which the museum on witchcraft was built.

M6 SKY PATROL WON'T CHASE CARS

by DENYS AINSWORTH

WHEN helicopter pilot Captain Derek Graham takes his Bell 47 "three-seater" up alongside the M6 on Monday, he will start a £10,000 experiment that could save lives and expense.

It has been ordered to see if traffic can be controlled from an airborne platform. If it is successful it will be applied to their important road links. The helicopter is a vital part of the new "highway patrol" of the M6 that is being provided by the county police forces of Lancashire, Cheshire and Staffordshire.

Object

Alongside 30-year-old Captain Graham as he chops from Stafford to Preston on a twice a day "beat" will be a police patrolman.

Their object will be to keep traffic flowing. And they hope their radio link with a newly built police post at Knutsford service centre will iron out bottlenecks.

One thing they will not do, and that is to chase a traffic offender.

Says Captain Graham: "I've no intention of trying to put the Bell down in front of the radiator of a speeding, weaving car."

From a speed viewpoint it would not be feasible anyway, for the Bell can manage only 80 miles an hour.

But if the helicopter men spot a car behaving dangerously they can call up the motor patrolmen on the radio.

Charge

Captain Graham has instructions to keep to one side of the road, because the distraction to a car driver of seeing a helicopter just above him could be disastrous.

The M6 experiment will last for 16 weeks and for each of those weeks the helicopter will fly for about five days.

The normal charge for a machine of this sort is about £20 an hour, but I understand that because of the long-term hooking, B.E.A. has agreed to charge the Home Office about £35 an hour whilst the helicopter is airborne.