



A real demon might tear an erring magician to bits, according to legend. Fortunately this one is a phony.





In earlier days, every respectable witch rode a "broomstick" (below the ritual sword), which had one end carved into a phallic symbol.

WITCHCRAFT'S INNER SANCTUM

With the hocus-pocus of witchcraft booming, Britons are trying to lay low nasty neighbors, ward off H-bombs, and have a hell of a good time

ISLE OF MAN

Mrs. Sarah Jackson had met the man a few times at neighborhood social functions in the east end of London, and she was pleased when he finally asked her out to dinner. A few months before, Mrs. Jackson's husband had run off with another woman, so it was pleasant to know she could still attract masculine attention. In the restaurant that evening she poured out her troubles to her new found friend, and he nodded sympathetically.

"Yet this may be the beginning of a new life for you," he assured her. "A small group of initiates have discovered a strange power known to the ancients but almost forgotten for many centuries. Come with me and I'll take you into a world you never dreamed existed."

Mrs. Jackson went with him. He led her to an obscure section of London and into an old house hidden away in one corner of a tiny courtyard. There she was introduced to a group of men and women who informed her they were witches.

Mrs. Jackson thought they were crazy, until they decided to let her witness a magical ceremony. Mysterious signs were drawn on the floor with chalk, narcotic herbs were burned, which filled the room with smoke, and whisky was poured into [Continued on page 77]

By **DANIEL P. MANNIX**

Photographed for TRUE by the Author



Beside this spook-ridden ruin on the Isle of Man, once the home of a coven of black-artered hags, lies the Witches' Museum.

Dr. Gardner, museum's owner, poses in magician's robes as he chants incantation summoning up demons.

Witchcraft's Inner Sanctum

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a silver church chalice and passed around. Soon both men and women began to strip off their clothes and dance naked around the chalk circle chanting songs that were parodies of well-known hymns. Several of them grabbed Mrs. Jackson, pulled off her clothes, and forced her to join them. Half stupefied by the narcotic fumes and the strong liquor, she offered little resistance.

Then the cry went up: "To the churchyard!" Throwing coats and blankets over their naked bodies, the crowd rushed to their cars and drove to a churchyard. They ran about until they came to a new grave. Falling to their knees, they collected handfuls of earth, rubbing the fresh soil on their hair and faces and screaming, "Satan, come and take my soul!" Suddenly a man acting as a scout ran up with the warning that the police were coming. At once the whole group broke and ran, leaping into their cars and driving off at full speed.

"I was shocked and disgusted," Mrs. Jackson later declared, "but the whole affair had an indescribable fascination for me." She attended meeting after meeting. She was initiated into the society, making her thumbprint in blood on a strip of parchment bearing the terrible curse to befall anyone revealing the secrets of the group. She was taught how to use a "magic mirror"—a concave lens with the reverse side blackened so that it concentrated light into one small glowing pinpoint. By staring into this mirror, Mrs. Jackson learned how to put herself into a trancelike sleep in which she dreamed that she was young and beautiful, desired by handsome men, an heirress to a great fortune. She also learned to take part in the naked dances with as much abandon as the rest of the cult.

"I derived a terrific strength from these ceremonies," she subsequently confessed. "The group met every evening, and finally I found that I couldn't go a day without the excitement of having taken part in their orgies. The next morning I was totally exhausted and I dragged myself around all day, counting the minutes until nightfall."

At last Mrs. Jackson became alarmed not only for her health but for her sanity. She went to a doctor, who reported the business to the police. At their suggestion she agreed to take them to the house in the courtyard where the meetings were held. But Mrs. Jackson was being watched, and the witches telephoned warnings to one another. A group in a graveyard was alerted by walkie-talkie and managed to escape just as the police cars were pulling up. A few days later Mrs. Jackson was beaten up by a gang of masked men, and her head was shaved. She left London promptly. With their star witness gone, the police decided to drop the investigation.

The Jackson case was a major sensation in the English press during the spring of 1955, but it soon became apparent that there were scores of other

witch groups—known as "covens" by their members—scattered over the British Isles. When the Rev. F. H. Micklewright, Bishop of Exeter, denounced the cults, he received so many threatening letters and phone calls that he had to ask for police protection. A few weeks later Mrs. Sharrin Jones, a 42-year-old woman who had joined a coven in southern England, tried to resign from her group. The following morning she found a circle drawn in chalk and containing nine pebbles on her doorstep. Mrs. Jones ignored the warning. Shortly thereafter she was attacked and nearly scalped by a gang of masked men. Next, one George Lecomte, living in a small Yorkshire village, shot a Mrs. Bouvry, whom he accused of being the leader of a witches' coven that had tried to convert his wife. In this case the court found for Mrs. Bouvry and awarded her \$1,260 compensation, pointing out that she had done nothing illegal.

It is not against English law to be a witch. But witches, like all other residents of the country, must not violate the police statutes. When I was in England, one coven in Yorkshire had a weekly broadcast over the BBC, explaining its philosophy and asking for converts.

This interest in witchcraft has cropped up only since the war. It would seem that every war brings a passion for the occult. After World War I, the ouija board became an international fad, there was a boom in spiritualism, and men the caliber of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle believed in elves and fairies.

The most striking example of the current passion for the uncanny is the Witches' Museum near Castletown on the Isle of Man. The island, lying in the Irish Sea midway between England and Northern Ireland, up to now has been most famed for its tailless Manx cats. But the museum has already overtaken them as a tourist target. It contains what is probably the finest collection of articles connected with magic, witchcraft and necromancy ever assembled under one roof.

I drove up to it along narrow winding roads spotted here and there with weathered stone buildings dating back for centuries. On a moonless windy night any of them could have been a haven for witches. But when I saw the site of the museum loom up I realized that this could qualify as a convention ground for all the witches of England. Standing sentinel over the group of buildings around it and attached to it is an ivy-covered deserted stone mill that goes back to 1611, when witches, it must be admitted, had somewhat more standing than they do now. It seemed an ideal witch warren, even on a bright sunny day.

Despite the setting, I wasn't prepared for the kind of museum I found. Although occultism has been a hobby of mine for the last 30 years, I'd never seen anything like this place. Founded in 1950, it is the creation of Dr. G. B. Gardner, an alert, energetic old gentleman of 75 with a bushy mane of snow-white hair and a short, pointed beard. Dr. Gardner, himself an enthusiastic male witch ("Be sure not to call me a

wizard, as that implies black magic"), showed me around. The museum is in a long, low building adjoining the mill—which, Dr. Gardner assured me, had been used by an earlier group of witches, known as the Arbury coven, for their ceremonies after fire gutted it in 1848.

"We still have our own coven here on the island," Dr. Gardner told me as we ascended the hand-hewn wooden stairs to the first floor of the museum (the ground floor is used as a restaurant and novelty shop where books on witchcraft and pictures of the collection are sold). "We meet on midsummer's eve, October 31, and a few other sacred dates. The movement is growing, and so far we've been able to escape any religious persecution."

The doctor explained to me the theory behind his form of witchcraft. He stressed that it has nothing to do with an orgiastic cult like the group with which Mrs. Jackson became involved. "True witchcraft is a religion, and we can trace it directly back to the Stone Age," he assured me proudly. "In our 'welfare state,' life has become too cut-and-dried. The revolt of the 'angry young men' is a reflection of popular frustration. Witchcraft offers people a badly needed escape from the monotony of daily existence."

The witches worship a horned deity who is the personification of nature. Dr. Gardner showed me a picture of a prehistoric painting from the Trois Frères cave in France depicting a man wearing antlers and wrapped in a deer skin. The painting is generally believed to represent a priest performing a ceremony to insure success in hunting, but Dr. Gardner believes it to show the horned god himself. By some process of logic which I couldn't quite follow, the doctor also identifies this deity not only with the Greek Pan, but also with the Mother Goddess of Crete, the English Puck, and the Babylonian love goddess, Ishtar.

"One of our covens has a clay image of Ishtar over 3,000 years old, which they keep in an ivory shrine," he said. Because Satan is also popularly represented as having horns, the witches are accused of devil worship, but Dr. Gardner assured me that this is not so.

"By the use of certain incantations which the horned deity has revealed to his followers and which have come down to us through the ages, we have at our command almost unlimited power," he explained. "For example, during the last war it was our spells that prevented Hitler from invading England, just as in 1588 the witches caused the storm that destroyed the Spanish Armada. Now that the British Isles are at the mercy of guided missiles, the need to develop this power is greater than ever."

About the only custom the witches have which might not meet with popular approval is their habit of dancing naked around a magic circle in order to create power for their incantations. "In the dance we generate an aura from our bodies which gives us power to work our incantations," the doctor declared. "Clothes interfere with the release of this aura."

Although proper witches do not go in

for black magic, Dr. Gardner has a number of exhibits in the museum illustrating sorcery (devices to foretell the future), ritual magic (used to invoke demons), necromancy (calling up the spirits of the dead), and devil worship and the black mass. "The museum is intended to show the whole scope of occultism," he commented.

On the first floor is a room set up to represent a magician's study for the use of ritual magic. In it stands a life-sized wax dummy of a magician dressed in robes and peaked hat performing an incantation. Dr. Gardner posed as model for the figure. Around it are an altar and the magical paraphernalia used for invoking demons, a consecrated sword, a bell, four iron disks purified by fire, a wand made of witch hazel wood, candlesticks for burning mystic candles, incense burners for magical herbs, and a book of incantations dating from the early 17th century. On the floor is drawn the Great Circle of Protection, within which the magician must stand or run the risk of being destroyed by the very demons he is summoning.

"The circle is very important, and I spent a great deal of time on it," the doctor told me. Witches, he added, as distinguished from magicians, also use a circle, but it is of simpler design. Dr. Gardner's circle was indeed a work of art, carefully inscribed with the Hebrew names of four outstanding demons and with curlicues at the four quarters to show where the candles should be placed. "There was a most tragic occurrence about a hundred years ago," the doctor went on. "A man named Bokum and his wife were invoking demons on the island, and when nothing seemed to happen they stepped outside the circle. Both were instantly torn to pieces by the demons. If you are going to practice ritual magic, you must be very careful of the details."

I asked Dr. Gardner if he would put on the magician's robes and pose for me in the circle. With considerable reluctance he consented. "I'm not a ceremonial magician," he reminded me. "As a witch, I should be naked."

Unfortunately we didn't have all the ingredients necessary to summon up a demon (we lacked some water from a well in which an unbaptized child had drowned), but at the correct moment in the incantation the doctor set up a papier-mâché demon which he assured me was an exact duplicate of the real thing. He placed the demon beside the two "columns of light," where a real demon might be expected to appear if properly invoked. The fake demon did not budge, and when Dr. Gardner stepped outside the circle without being torn to pieces, I gathered we hadn't acquired any unseen company.

We went on to the next room, which was designed to show a witch's cottage of about 200 years ago. The room was furnished with antiques from the island and, apart from its magical significance, was an antiquarian's dream. There was a circle drawn on the floor, but the doctor told me that most witches didn't find a drawn circle necessary. "They usually made the circle of ordinary household articles like shoes, pots, pans and brushes.

Then in case of a raid they could kick the stuff aside and there wouldn't be any evidence."

There was a young married couple in the museum, and I asked the girl if she would dress up in a witch's robe and hat for a joke. Amusedly she agreed. In the room was a complete collection of the jars, crucibles and bronze trays actually used by a 17th-century witch before she was burned at the stake. The girl used these to prepare the magical unguent with which witches coated themselves before flying up the chimney on their broomsticks.

"Of course, you should be naked when you coat yourself with the mixture," Dr. Gardner told her anxiously.

"No fear!" she said decidedly, and contented herself, if not us, with putting the ointment on her leg.

The doctor showed me the formula for the ointment. It is composed of such herbs as aconite, monkshood, hemlock, hellebore, and cowbane—all powerful narcotics. Such ointments have been used

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DEVIL'S ISLAND

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throughout the history of witchcraft. In the 12th century, for example two inquisitors threatened a witch with torture if she did not show them how she could fly through the air. The witch stripped and danced wildly before a hot fire until she was sweating profusely and her pores were open, then coated her body with the ointment. In a few minutes she fell into a deep sleep, muttering and writhing about on the floor. After an hour or so she came out of the trance and told how she had flown up the chimney, attended a sabbat (an assembly of devilish creatures) where she had had intercourse with a handsome young demon, and then flown back. The inquisitors reported that in their opinion witchcraft was merely a delusion induced by drugs. For this verdict they were accused of heresy, and hurriedly had to write another report that they had been deceived by the devil into thinking the witch was lying in a trance, while actually she had been flying up the chimney.

In a glass case outside the room, Dr. Gardner showed me a witch's "broom" that was some 250 years old. The broom was a stick about five feet long, one end of which was carved into a phallic symbol. "Witches used to ride these sticks, the way a child rides a hobby horse, across fields at night as a fertility rite to make the crops grow," he said. "Because the witches were naked and cov-

ered with the ointment, which is a black, sooty stuff, they naturally got the sticks dirty. Consequently, for anyone to have such a blackened stick was considered proof of being a witch, and that justified a death sentence. So the witches took to using broomsticks, which were often used to clean out chimney places and might be expected to be dirty."

We moved on to the main body of the museum, which covers two floors and contains hundreds of objects dealing with occultism. I saw a large wooden box looking somewhat like an overgrown vanity case, which was opened to show a miscellany of vials, charms, talismans, and tiny knives with cabalistic signs inscribed on their blades. Below the box was a sign reading: "As a tribute to Aunt Agatha, one of our most outstanding witches, this collection of paraphernalia which she used is affectionately dedicated. Presented by her family in loving memory, 1951."

The doctor added, "Aunt Agatha also had a very fine ritual sword, but we've lent that to the Druid Order for their annual midsummer ceremony at Stonehenge because it fits exactly into the cleft of the Hele Stone." The Hele Stone, he explained, is a great handhewn rock some 30 feet high erected at Stonehenge by prehistoric man to mark the position of sunrise on midsummer morning.

The next two cases contained an enormous collection of magical rings, necklaces, amulets, bracelets and other magical charms designed mainly to protect the wearer against supernatural influences. Among them, the doctor showed me a silver hand from Damascus set with precious and semi-precious stones and calculated to ward off the evil eye. He valued it at about \$5,000. It is the most valuable single object in the collection.

"This case is dedicated to relics of our martyrs," the doctor said, pointing to a grisly group of instruments of torture used by the witch-finders of 200 years ago. There were thumbscrews, pinchers which were once heated red hot, and even long-handled tongs for continuing torture while the victim was being burned alive at the stake. There was also a modern painting of the last witch on the Isle of Man to be burned—in 1617 (although England burned witches until 1716, more than two decades after our own Salem burnings were over). A lamp is kept burning under the picture in tribute to her memory.

"It wasn't until 1851 that the laws against witchcraft were finally changed," the doctor commented as we passed on. "Then the law no longer recognized the existence of witchcraft—but it did prohibit pretending to be a witch for the purposes of fraud or extortion or undue influence. Consequently, as late as 1944 a spiritualist medium named Helen Duncan was given 18 months in jail for 'practicing witchcraft.' The judge felt that she was causing trouble, and he used the old law to have her committed. Our coven protested the sentence and finally got the law removed from the statute books."

One of the most interesting objects was a wax image into which a segment of communion wafer had been kneaded.

This image had been used in 1956 by a witch in the south of England to put curses on people who refused to give her money.

"Her victims had no legal recourse because of the repeal of the laws against witchcraft, so a local coven had to intervene," Dr. Gardner explained, unlocking the cabinet so I could examine the image closely. "The coven made up their own image and inscribed the witch's name on it, then tied the hands and sewed up the mouth. The witch found herself crippled and struck dumb. The coven warned her that unless she turned over her magical image to them they'd let her remain that way. She had no choice but to obey, and now I have her image so it can't be used to harm anyone."

An important ingredient in black magic is a consecrated host. Practitioners of this degenerate art hire unscrupulous individuals to pretend to receive communion, then smuggle out the host in their mouths. About 10 years ago the Catholic Church had to issue a warning against this practice in certain Italian towns. Dr. Gardner showed me several hosts put in locket, which were carried as charms.

Because I had written an article for TRUE sometime ago on Aleister Crowley, the fabulous black magician who called himself "The Great Beast," I was particularly interested in a case that held a complete compilation of manuscripts of the Order of the Golden Dawn, of which Crowley, the poet W. B. Yeats, and other prominent figures were members. With the manuscripts were one of Crowley's magical wands and a ceremonial dagger which he used for his incantations.

"I got hold of this collection in an interesting fashion," Dr. Gardner recalled. "It belonged to a member of the order, and after his death our organization was naturally very eager to secure the lot. The manuscripts contain vitally important magical formulas. Furthermore, it's very difficult nowadays to get hold of a properly consecrated magical dagger, because the consecration has to be done by a properly qualified magician under certain special conditions. We don't use such things ourselves, but they're valuable relics. However, the man's widow refused to allow us to buy the collection. Instead she intended to destroy the lot. This would have been a terrible tragedy, so the coven resolved on strong measures. One of our witches went to the woman's house by night and stole a pebble from her lawn. This was to establish magical contact with her. A strong spell was then thrown on her. Two days later she called begging us to take the whole collection. 'I've been so plagued by ghosts and apparitions that I haven't had a moment's peace,' she told us."

In the next case was a small, portable black mass service formerly owned by a magician named Chatfield. The outfit was complete with stole, altar cloth, communion vessels and surplice, and might have been used for a church service except that the communion vessels were in the shape of devils' heads and calligraphic signs were embroidered on the stole. The entire service could be packed

into a suitcase, and Chatfield used it to celebrate the black mass in private homes.

I also saw a lamp, on which was engraved a bat with an erect member, which had been used by the 18th-century Hell Fire Club for their demonic rites; a Lucerna lamp with six candles employed by Italian witches to call up the devil; and some vases filled with urine and pins for inflicting curses. There was a baby's caul (a membrane sometimes found upon the head of a newborn child), which is important in certain magical ceremonies, an Australian "pointing bone" (when the bone is pointed in the direction of an enemy, he dies), a metal mask with horns worn by the leader of a witches' coven during the sabbat, a collection from France of magical instruments fashioned from human bones, and an engraved spell prepared in 1954 by a magician named Austin Osman. Osman advertised the charm over the radio as bringing sure death to anyone who offended its possessor.

Nearby were the cover for a black mass missal painted by Aubrey Beardsley, the famous English artist of the 19th century, and a number of wooden plaques decorated in magical designs by a modern British artist. Dr. Gardner told me, "This artist was starving in a garret when one of our covens asked him to design a plaque for use in their sabbats. He did such a good job of it that other covens employed him, and now making these plaques is his main business. The plaques have to be laid out in a certain position to the Great Circle in order to concentrate the forces, and he knows exactly how to do that. He's rather sensitive about making the plaques and doesn't allow his name to be used, because he still hopes to be a recognized artist in his own right."

Among the other exhibits was a crucifix with a dagger concealed in it, on the principle of a sword cane; a fish's backbone with pictures of Christ painted on one side and the devil on the other, used by Greek witches; a strip of parchment with the name of a dead man writ-

ten on one side and that of a living man on the other (the theory is that the dead man calls the living and drags him to the grave); several pacts with the devil written in blood and signed by Satan himself; a sicklelike knife called a "boleen," still employed by witches for collecting magical herbs, but based on a design dating back to the Druids, who used a golden sickle to cut the sacred mistletoe; a mask of the "Green Man"—another name for the horned god—found hidden in an old church; and a number of rabbits' feet from the United States.

"During the war thousands of rabbits' feet were imported by people who used them as a charm to ward off bombs," the doctor commented.

I asked the doctor if he had ever tried out any of these charms himself to see whether they got results. He assured me that he had.

"When I first moved to the island there was a housing shortage, but together with my coven I cast a powerful spell and two days later I found a house for rent," he explained. "Also, we stopped an epidemic among the cattle here by magic and have improved the weather considerably. Naturally, we don't attempt to fly through the air on broomsticks, turn people into rabbits, or transform base metals into gold. All that would come under the heading of black magic, and we're opposed to it."

The doctor has had an interesting life. Born in England in 1883, he was a sickly child who suffered greatly from asthma. At the age of 5 he was sent to stay with an aunt in West Africa, where from the native servants he learned magical incantations which he is convinced cured his illness. Unhappy with his foster mother, he ran away at 14, served as a cabin boy on a ship, worked as assistant to a tea planter in Ceylon, and from Ceylon went to Borneo to open a rubber plantation. He's also worked as a surveyor and an employe of both the land office and the customs department.

"I don't remember much about my parents except that they once told me of an ancestor of mine who was burned

for witchcraft," he said. "That story made a profound impression on me as a youngster. You see, I was being kicked around quite a bit, so I developed considerable sympathy for my ancestor, who had also been ill treated but had struck back at society by magical arts. In every place I went I collected everything I could find on occultism. I'm a bit of an archeologist—I had my own dig in Malaya, and I was with the Welcome Expedition during the dig at Lachish in the Holy Land—and everywhere I found evidence of people who were never given a fair chance, but used strange powers to keep their ends up in a hostile world.

"In 1939 I returned to England and met my first witch. I was astonished to realize that all through the ages a small band of men and women have endured persecution and even martyrdom to keep alive this ancient knowledge. I'm proud to be a member of a group that's always been on the side of the underdog, while church and state united in oppressing the little people. The ordinary person has always been sympathetic to witches, for only through them could he combat the great lords and rich prelates who were trampling on his rights."

Later I met Mrs. Gardner. She and the doctor have been married 32 years and are a most affectionate couple—except that she refuses to enter the museum or have anything to do with witchcraft. "You see, my father was a parson and I've been brought up to consider such things wicked," she told me cheerfully.

After my visit to the museum, I talked to two hard-headed young men from the Isle of Man's chamber of commerce. "To tell you the truth, we were of two minds about allowing such a place to be opened on the island," one of them admitted. "But now it's become one of our main attractions. About 12,000 people a year make a special trip to the island just to see it. Most of them don't take it seriously, but I've never seen anyone yet who laughed at the old gentleman. He believes in it so sincerely himself that you're impressed by his honesty no matter how crazy the whole idea seems to you."—Daniel P. Mannix