

HISTORY OF WICCA IN ENGLAND: 1939 - present day

This talk was given by Julia Phillips at the Wiccan Conference in Canberra, 1991. It is mainly about the early days of the Wicca in England; specifically what we now call Gardnerian and Alexandrian traditions. The text remains "as given", so please remember when you read it that it was never intended to be "read", but "heard" and debated.

There are three main strands I intend to examine: one, Gardner's claim of traditional initiation, and its subsequent development; two, magical traditions to which Gardner would have had access; and three, literary sources.

As we look at these three main threads, it is important to bear in mind that Gardner was 55 years old at the time of his claimed initiation; that he had spent many years in Malaya, and had an enormous interest in magic, Folklore and Mythology. By the time he published High Magic's Aid, he was 65, and 75 when "The Meaning of Witchcraft" appeared. He died in 1964, at the age of 80.

Gardner was born in 1884, and spent most of his working adult life in Malaya. He retired, and returned to the UK in 1936. He joined the Folklore Society, and in June 1938, also joined the newly opened Rosicrucian Theatre at Christchurch where it is said he met Old Dorothy Clutterbuck.

I chose 1939 as my arbitrary starting point as that was the year that Gerald Gardner claims he was initiated by Old Dorothy into a practising coven of the Old Religion, that met in the New Forest area of Britain. In his own words,

"I realised that I had stumbled upon something interesting; but I was half-initiated before the word, "Wica" which they used hit me like a thunderbolt, and I knew where I was, and that the Old Religion still existed. And so I found myself in the Circle, and there took the usual oath of secrecy, which bound me not to reveal certain things." This quote is taken from The Meaning of Witchcraft, which was published in 1959.

It is interesting that in this quote, Gardner spells Wicca with only one "c"; in the earlier "Witchcraft Today" (1954) and "High Magic's Aid" (1949), the word Wicca is not even used. His own derivation for the word, given in "The Meaning of Witchcraft", is as follows:

"As they (the Dane and Saxon invaders of England) had no witches of their own they had no special name for them; however, they made one up from "wig" an idol, and "laer," learning, "wiglaer" which they shortened into "Wicca."

"It is a curious fact that when the witches became English-speaking they adopted their Saxon name, "Wica"."

In "An ABC of Witchcraft Past and Present", Doreen Valiente

does not have an entry for Wicca, but when discussing Witchcraft, does mention the Saxon derivation from the word Wicca or Wicce. In the more recently published *The Rebirth Of Witchcraft*, however, she rejects this Saxon theory in favour of Prof. Russell's derivation from the Indo-European root "Weik", which relates to things connected with magic and religion.

Doreen Valiente strongly supports Gardner's claim of traditional initiation, and published the results of her successful attempt to prove the existence of Dorothy Clutterbuck in an appendix to "The Witches' Way" by Janet and Stewart Farrar. It is a marvellous piece of investigation, but proving that Old Dorothy existed does nothing to support Gardner's claims that she initiated him.

In his book, "Ritual Magic in England", occultist Francis King does offer some anecdotal evidence in support of Gardner's claims. However, it is only fair to point out that in the same book, he virtually accuses Moina Mathers of murder, based upon a misunderstanding of a story told by Dion Fortune! With that caveat, I'll recount the tale in full:

King relates that in 1953, he became acquainted with Louis Wilkinson, who wrote under the pen-name of Louis Marlow, and had contributed essays to Crowley's *Equinox*. He later became one of Crowley's literary executors. King says that in conversation, Wilkinson told him that Crowley had claimed to have been offered initiation into a witch coven, but that he refused, as he didn't want to be bossed around by a bunch of women. (This story is well-known, and could have been picked up anywhere).

Wilkinson then proceeded to tell King that he had himself become friendly with members of a coven operating in the New Forest area, and he thought that whilst it was possible that they derived their existence from Murray's "Witch Cult in Western Europe", he felt that they were rather older.

King draws the obvious conclusion; that these witches were the very same as those who initiated Gardner. King claims that the conversation with Wilkinson took place in 1953, although "Ritual Magic in England" was not published - or presumably written - until 1970. However, on September 27 1952, "Illustrated" magazine published a feature by Allen Andrews, which included details of a working by, "the Southern Coven of British Witches", where 17 men and women met in the New Forest to repel an invasion by Hitler. Wilkinson had told King of this working during their conversation, which King believes to be proof that such a coven existed; there are some differences in the two stories, and so it is possible that two sources are reporting the same event, but as Wilkinson's conversation with King came after the magazine article, we shall never know.

In the recently published "Crafting the Art of Magic", Aidan Kelly uses this same source to "prove" (and I use the word advisedly - the book "proves" nothing) that Gardner, Dorothy, et al created Wicca one night following a social get together! Of one thing we can be certain though: whatever its origin, modern Wicca derives from Gardner. There may of course be other traditional, hereditary witches, but even if they are

genuine, then it is unlikely that they would have been able to "go public" had it not been for Gardner.

There have been many claims of "hereditary" origin (other than Gardner's own!) One of the most famous post-Gardner claimants to "hereditary" status was actress Ruth Wynn-Owen, who fooled many people for a very long time before being exposed. Roy Bowers, who used the pseudonym Robert Cochrane, was another: Doreen Valiente describes her association with him in "The Rebirth of Witchcraft", and The Roebuck, which is still active in the USA today, derives directly from Cochrane, via Joe Wilson. "Witchcraft: A Tradition Renewed" by Evan John Jones with Doreen Valiente describes a tradition derived from Robert Cochrane. Alex Sanders, of course is another who claimed hereditary lineage, and like Cochrane, deserves his own place in this history, and we'll get to both of them later.

Many people have been suspicious of Gardner's claims, and have accused him of making the whole thing up. They suggest that the Wicca is no more than the fantasy of an old man coloured by a romantic imagination. One particularly virulent attack upon Gardner came from Charles Cardell, writing under the pseudonym of Rex Nemorensis.

One of Gardner's initiates who is still active in the Wicca today has an interesting tale to tell about Cardell, whom he knew:

"Cardell claimed to be a Witch, but from a different tradition to Gardner's. Cardell was a psychopathic rat, with malevolent intent toward all and sundry. He managed to get a woman called Olive Green (Florannis) into Gardner's coven, and told her to copy out the Book of Shadows so that Cardell could publish it, and destroy Gardner. He also contacted a London paper, and told them when and where the coven meetings were held, and of course the paper got quite a scoop. Cardell led people in the coven to believe that it was Doreen Valiente who had informed on them.

Doreen had just left Gardner in a bit of a huff after a disagreement; another coven member, Ned Grove, left with her. Anyway, the day the paper printed the exposure, Cardell sent Gardner a telegram saying, "Remember Ameth tonight". (Ameth was Doreen's Craft name, and as it has now been published, I see no reason not to use it here".)

My informant also said that Olive Green was associated with Michael Houghton, owner of Atlantis book shop in Museum Street, who was the publisher of High Magic's Aid. Through this association, she also encountered Kenneth Grant of the OTO, although their association was not friendly.

Cecil Williamson, the original owner of the witchcraft museum on the Isle of Man, and present owner of the Witchcraft Museum in Boscastle, has also published a number of articles where he states quite categorically that Gardner was an utter fraud; but, he offers only anecdotes to support these allegations.

Although Gardner claimed his initiation occurred in 1939, we don't really hear anything about him until 1949, when "High Magic's Aid" was published by Michael Houghton.

This book has very strong Solomonic leanings, but like Gardner's own religious beliefs, combined the more natural forms of magic with high ceremonial. In his introduction to the book, Gardner says that: "The Magical rituals are authentic, partly from the Key of Solomon (MacGregor Mathers' translation) and partly from magical MSS in my possession". (Gardner did indeed have a large collection of MSS, which passed with the rest of his goods to Ripleys in Toronto after his death.

Scire (pseudonym) was the name Gardner took as a member of Crowley's branch of the OTO; although it is generally agreed that his membership was purely nominal, he was certainly in contact with people like Kenneth Grant and Madeline Montalban)founder of the Order of the Morning Star.(

Gardner was given his OTO degree and Charter by Aleister Crowley, to whom he was introduced in 1946 by Arnold Crowther. As Crowley died in 1947, their association was not long-lived, but Crowther confirms that the two men enjoyed each other's company.

So, after that brief introduction we can have a look at the first of the strands I mentioned.

In 1888, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was born, beginning a renaissance of interest in the occult that has continued to the present day. It is impossible to overstate the importance of the GD to modern occultists; not only in its rituals, but also in its personalities; and of course, through making available a large body of occult lore that would otherwise have remained unknown, or hidden in obscurity.

I will be looking at this body of occult lore with other literary influences later, and will here concentrate on the rituals and personalities that have influenced Wicca.

We cannot look at the GD in isolation from its own origins. It is descended from a myriad of esoteric traditions including Rosicrucianism, Theosophy, and Freemasonry. The latter in its own right, as well as via the SRIA - a scholarly and ceremonial association open to Master Masons only.

Whether the German Lodge or Fraulein Sprengel actually existed is a matter still under debate; but either in fact or in spirit, this is the source for the "Cypher Manuscripts" which were used to found the Isis-Urania Lodge in 1888.

As I'm sure everyone knows, Isis-Urania was founded by Dr Wynn-Westcott, Dr Woodman, and MacGregor Mathers. Not only were all three Master Masons; Wynn-Westcott and Mathers were also members of the Theosophical Society. The most important thing though is the fact the these three men were a ruling triumvirate that managed the affairs of the SRIA. This is important, for the SRIA included Hargrave Jennings in its membership, and Jennings is reputed to have been involved with a Pagan group at the end of the 19th century, which drew its inspiration from Apuleius - The Golden Ass.

But back to the GD - whether the Cypher Manuscripts actually

existed, or Wynn-Westcott manufactured them is now irrelevant; Mathers was commissioned to write-up the rituals into a workable shape, and thus the Golden Dawn was born.

Members of the Isis-Urania Lodge at various times also included Allan Bennett, Moina Mathers, Aleister Crowley, Florence Farr, Maud Gonne, Annie Horniman, Arthur Machen, "Fiona Macleod", Arthur Waite and WB Yeats. Also associated were Lady Gregory, and G W Russell, or AE, whose "The Candle of Vision" was included in the bibliography of "The Meaning of Witchcraft". The literary and Celtic influences within the GD were immense.

From the Isis-Urania Lodge sprang all the others, including the so-called Dissident Orders derived through Crowley. It is this line that some commentators trace to modern Wicca, so it is the one upon which we will concentrate.

Aleister Crowley was initiated into the Isis-Urania Lodge on 18 November 1898. As you most probably know, Crowley later quarrelled with MacGregor Mathers, and in 1903 began to create his own Order, the Argenteum Astrum, or Silver Star. In 1912, Crowley was initiated into the OTO, and in 1921, succeeded Theodor Reuss as its Chief.

According to Arnold Crowther's account, it was in 1946, a year before Crowley's death, that Crowley gave Gardner an OTO Charter. Ithell Colquhoun says only that it occurred in the 1940s, and further states that Gardner introduced material from the OTO, and less directly from the GD, into "...the lore of his covens."

As Doreen Valiente also admits, "Indeed, the influence of Crowley was very apparent throughout the (Wiccan) rituals.". This, Gardner explained to her, was because the rituals he received from Old Dorothy's coven were very fragmentary, and in order to make them workable, he had to supplement them with other material.

To give an example of some of the lines by Crowley which are rather familiar to modern Wiccans:

I give unimaginable joys on earth; certainty, not faith, while in life, upon death; peace unutterable, rest, ecstasy; nor do I demand aught in sacrifice.

I am Life, and the giver of Life, yet therefore is the knowledge of me the knowledge of death.

And of course, the Gnostic Mass has been immensely influential.

Not only poetry, but also magical practices in Wicca are often derived from GD sources. For example:

the way of casting the circle: that is, the visualisation of the circle, and the pentagrams at the quarters, are both based upon the standard GD Pentagram Ritual;

both the concept and word "Watchtowers" are of course from the Enochian system of Magic, passed to Wicca via the GD (although

I would like to make it very clear that their use within Wicca bears no relation to the use within Enochia - the only similarity is in the name;(

the Elements and colours generally attributed to the Quarters are those of the GD;

the weapons and their attributions are a combination of GD, Crowley and Key of Solomon.

In "Witchcraft Today", Gardner says, "The people who certainly would have had the knowledge and ability to invent (the Wiccan rites) were the people who formed the Order of the Golden Dawn about seventy years ago."...

The GD is not the only influence upon Gardner; Freemasonry has had a tremendous impact upon the Wicca. Not only were the three founders of Isis-Urania Temple Masons, so too were Crowley and Waite; Gardner and at least one member of the first coven (Daffo) were both Co-Masons. Gardner was also a friend of JSM Ward, who had published a number of books about Masonry.

Doreen describes Ward as a "leading Mason", but Francis King says only that Ward was, "a bogus Bishop... who had written some quite good but far-fetched books on masonry, and who ran a peculiar religious-cum-occult community called The Abbey of Christ the King..." Whether the books were far-fetched or not, we can assume that some of the many similarities between Wicca and Masonry are in some ways due to Ward's influence.

Some of these include:

The Three Degrees
The Craft
So Mote It Be
The Challenge
Properly Prepared
The 1st Degree Oath (in part)
Presentation of the Working Tools at 1st degree

and so on.

It seems to me quite clear that even if Gardner received a traditional set of rituals from his coven, they must have been exceptionally sparse, as the concepts that we know of as Wicca today certainly derive from ceremonial magic and Freemasonry to a very great extent. Indeed, Gardner always claimed that they were sparse.

It could be argued that all derive from a common source. That the appearance of a phrase, or technique in one tradition does not automatically suggest that its appearance elsewhere means that the one was taken from the other. However, Gardner admits his sources in many cases, and Doreen confirms them in others, so I think it is safe to presume that the rituals and philosophy used by Wicca descends from the traditions of Freemasonry and Ceremonial magic, rather than from a single common source. However, as Hudson Frew points out in his commentary upon Aidan Kelly's book, the phenomena of the techniques and practices of ceremonial magic influencing folk

magic and traditions is widely recognised by anthropologists, and certainly does not indicate plagiarism. And of course there are many traditional witchcraft aspects in the Wicca.

We have looked at the development of the magical orders which resulted from the British occult revival of the 19th and 20th centuries, and now we can see where this ties in with Wicca, and Gardner's claim of traditional initiation.

I have here a "family tree" of the main branches of British Wicca. It is by no means exhaustive, and is intended to provide an outline, not a definitive history! I have included my own coven lines and development as an indication of the kind of "cross-over" of tradition which often occurs, not to suggest that these are the only active groups! Also, it would not be ethical for me to include details of other covens.

We have two possible "hereditary" sources to the Gardnerian Craft: one, the Horsa Coven of Old Dorothy, and two, the Cumbrian Group which Rae Bone claims to have been initiated into before meeting Gardner. (NB: Doreen Valiente says that the Horsa Coven is not connected with Old Dorothy, but is another group entirely.) There is also sometimes mention of a St Alban's group that pre-dates Gardner, but as far as I know, this is mistaken. The St Albans group was Gardner's own group, which as far as research confirms, did not pre-date him.

To return to Rae Bone: she was one of Gardner's HPSs, and her "line" has been immensely important to the modern Wicca; she was featured in the magazine series, "Man Myth and Magic" if anyone has a copy of that.

In her heyday she ran two covens: one in Cumbria, and one in South London. Rae is still alive, and lives in Cumbria, although her last coven moved to New Zealand many years ago, and she is no longer active. No-one has ever been able to trace the coven in New Zealand.

At this point, I will just mention George Pickingill, although he is not shown on the tree, as I think it extremely dubious that he had any connection with Gardner, or any other modern Wiccan.

Pickingill died in 1909, whilst Gardner was still in Malaya. Eric Maple is largely responsible for the beginnings of the Pickingill myth, which were expanded by Bill Liddell (Lugh) writing in "The Wiccan" and "The Cauldron" throughout the 1970s. Mike Howard still has some of Liddell's material which he has never published, and I have yet to meet anyone within the British Craft who gives credence to Liddell's claims.

In the book, "The Dark World of Witches", published in 1962, Maple tells of a number of village wise women and cunning men, one of whom is George Pickingill. There is a photograph included of an old man with a stick, holding a hat, which Maple describes as Pickingill. This photograph has subsequently been re-used many times in books about witchcraft and Wicca.

Issue number 31 of "Insight" Magazine, dated July 1984, contains a very interesting letter from John Pope:

"The photograph purporting to be Old George Pickingill is in fact a photo of Alf Cavill, a station porter at Ellstree, taken in the early 1960s. Alf is now dead, but he was no witch, and laughed over the photograph when he saw it".

A very respected Craft authority has told me that he believes the photo, which is in his possession, to be of Pickingill, but like so much to do with Craft history, there is no definitive answer to this one.

Many claims were made by Liddell; some obviously from cloud-cuckoo land, others which could, by a stretch of the imagination, be accepted. The very idea of Pickingill, an illiterate farm labourer, co-ordinating and supervising nine covens across the breadth of the UK is staggering. To accept - as Liddell avers - that he had the likes of Alan Bennett and Aleister Crowley as his pupils bends credulity even further.

The infamous photograph which Liddell claims shows Crowley, Bennett and Pickingill together has conveniently disappeared, and no-one admits to ever having seen it. Like most of Liddell's claims, nothing has ever been substantiated, and when pushed, he retreats into the time honoured favourite of, "I can't reveal that - you're not an initiate!"

But to return to the family tree: the names of Doreen Valiente, Pat and Arnold Crowther, Lois Bourne (Hemmings), Jack Bracelin and Monique Wilson will probably be the most familiar to you.

Jack Bracelin is the author of Gardner's biography, "Gerald Gardner, Witch", (published 1960) now out of print, although still available 2nd hand, and in libraries. (In *Crafting the Art of Magic*, Kelly claims that this book was actually written by Idries Shah, and simply published under Bracelin's name. As with every other claim, Kelly offers no evidence of this(

I have seen a copy of Bracelin's *Book of Shadows*, which it is claimed dates from 1949, although in *The Rebirth Of Witchcraft*, Doreen says that Bracelin was a "relative newcomer" in the mid-1950s. I have also been told by two different sources that Bracelin helped Gardner write "The Laws". In *The Rebirth Of Witchcraft*, Doreen states that she did not see *The Laws* until the mid 1950s, when she and her partner Ned Grove accused Gardner of concocting them in order to re-assert control over the coven. As Bracelin was in the Gardner camp during the break-up of the group, it seems reasonable that he did in fact help with their composition.)NB: Alex Sanders increased the number of "The Laws" much later - these appeared in June Johns' book, *The King of the Witches*("

Although Doreen claims that the reason for the coven break-up was the fact that Gardner and Bracelin were publicity crazy, there was another reason, which was the instatement of a new lady into the coven, effectively replacing Doreen as HPS. This is also the main reason for Gerald's Law which states that the HPS will, "...gracefully retire in favour of a younger woman, should the coven so decide in council." Needless to say, Doreen was not impressed, and she and Ned left the coven under

very acrimonious circumstances. It was quite some time before Doreen had contact with Gardner again, and they never quite regained the degree of friendship that had previously existed.

Monique and Campbell Wilson are infamous, rather than famous, as Gardner's heirs who sold off his magical equipment and possessions after his death, to Ripleys in the USA.

Monique was the last of his Priestesses, and many Wiccans today still spit when her name is mentioned. Pat Crowther was rather scathing about her recently in an interview, and in *The Rebirth Of Witchcraft*, although Doreen tells of the sale of Gardner's magical possessions to Ripleys, she doesn't ever mention the Wilsons by name. In effect, the Craft closed ranks against them, and they became outcasts.

Eventually, in the face of such opposition they had to sell the Museum in Castletown, and they moved to Torremolinos, where they bought a cafe. Monique died nine years after selling the Museum. It is rumoured that Campbell Wilson moved to the USA, and met with a car accident there: this is only hearsay though - I really do not know for sure what happened to him.

However, Monique was influential in a way that even she could not have imagined, when in 1964 or 5 she initiated Ray Buckland, who with his wife Rosemary (later divorced), was very influential in the development of the Wicca in the USA.

Fortunately, Richard and Tamarra James managed to buy the bulk of Gardner's collection back from Ripleys in 1987, for the princely sum of US\$40,000, and it is now back within the Craft, and available for initiates to consult and view.

D and C S. are probably completely anonymous, and if it were not for the fact that C initiated Robert Cochrane (briefly mentioned earlier) they would probably stay that way!

Cochrane's origins are obscure, but I have been told that he was initiated into the Gardnerian tradition by C S, and met Doreen Valiente through a mutual acquaintance in 1964. When he met Doreen, however, he claimed to be a hereditary witch, from a different tradition to Gardner's, and as Doreen confirms, was contemptuous of what he called "Gardnerian" witches. Indeed, Doreen believes he coined the term, "Gardnerian."

Doreen said she was completely taken in by Cochrane and for a while, worked with him and the "Clan of Tubal-Cain" as he described his tradition, which was also known as "The Royal Windsor Cuveen", or 1734.

The figures "1734" have an interesting history. Doreen gives a rather strange account of them in *The Rebirth Of Witchcraft*, which contradicts what Cochrane himself describes in a letter to Joe Wilson, dated "12th Night 1966", where he says,

..."the order of 1734 is not a date of an event but a grouping of numerals that mean something to a witch.

"One that becomes seven states of wisdom - the Goddess of the Cauldron. Three that are the Queens of the Elements - fire

belonging alone to Man, and the Blacksmith God. Four that are Queens of the Wind Gods.

"The Jewish orthodoxy believe that whomever knows the Holy and Unspeakable name of God has absolute power over the world of form. Very briefly, the name of God spoken as Tetragrammaton ...breaks down in Hebrew to the letters YHVH, or the Adam Kadmon (The Heavenly Man). Adam Kadmon is a composite of all Archangels - in other words a poetic statement of the names of the Elements.

"So what the Jew and the Witch believe alike, is that the man who discovers the secret of the Elements controls the physical world. 1734 is the witch way of saying YHVH." (Cochrane, 1966)

Although Doreen says that Cochrane's group was small, it still proved to be remarkably influential. As well as Cochrane and his wife (whom Doreen refers to as "Jean") and Doreen herself, there were others who are well-known today, and a man called Ronald White, who very much wanted to bring about a new age in England, with the return of King Arthur.

In *The Rebirth Of Witchcraft*, Doreen elaborates upon the circumstances surrounding the death of Cochrane: the bald facts are that he died at the Summer Solstice of 1966 of an overdose. Craft tradition believes that he became in fact, and of his own choice, the male ritual sacrifice which is sometimes symbolically enacted at the height of Summer.

The Royal Windsor Cuveen disbanded after Cochrane died, only to be re-born from the ashes at Samhain that year under a new name - The Regency. All of its early members were from the Royal Windsor Cuveen, and they were under the leadership of Ronald White. The Regency proved to be of great importance to the development of the Wicca, although its existence was kept a fairly close secret, and even today, there are relatively few people who have ever heard of it.

Meetings were held in North London, at a place called Queens Wood. As well as Ron White and Doreen Valiente, members included "John Math", founder of the Witchcraft Research Association in 1964, and editor of *Pentagram* magazine, and the founder of the Pagan Movement, Tony Kelly. At its height, there were frequently more than 40 in attendance at rites, which tended to be of the dramatic, pagan kind rather than the ceremonial associated with high ritual magic. The Regency operated fairly consistently for over twelve years, finally disbanding in 1978. The Membership roll reads like a who's who of the British Wicca! Some of the rites have been incorporated into modern Wiccan rituals - in fact, one was used at the Pan European Wiccan Conference 1991 with very great success.

Moving back over to Rae Bone's line, there are a number of influential people here, mainly through her initiates, Madge and Arthur, who probably take the award for the most prolific pair in Wiccandom! Rae, although initiated by Gardner, does of course also claim a hereditary status in her own right.

Madge and Arthur's initiates include:

John and Jean Score

John Score was the partner of Michael Houghton (mentioned earlier), and the founder of the Pagan Federation, which is very active today.

Houghton died under very mysterious circumstances, which is briefly mentioned in "The Sword of Wisdom" by Ithell Colquhoun. My Craft source told me that this was actually a ritual that went badly wrong, and Houghton ended up on the wrong end of some fairly potent energies.

There is an interesting anecdote about Houghton in The Rebirth Of Witchcraft, which is taken from "Nightside of Eden" by Kenneth Grant, and agrees in some respect to a similar story that I was told some years ago. Doreen suggests in The Rebirth Of Witchcraft that the story may relate to a magical working involving Kenneth Grant and his wife, Gardner, Dolores North (Madeline Montalban), and an un-named witch, who was probably Olive Green.

They were all to perform a ritual together, supposedly to contact an extra-terrestrial being. The material basis for the rite, which took place in 1949, was a drawing by AO Spare.

Apparently soon after the rite commenced, a nearby bookseller (Michael Houghton) turned up and interrupted proceedings. On hearing that Kenneth Grant was within, he declined to enter, and wandered off. The rite was disrupted, and the story goes that everyone just went home.

Kenneth Grant claims that as a result of disturbing their working, Houghton's marriage broke up, and that Houghton died in mysterious circumstances. In fact, the Houghton divorce was a cause celebre, with her suing him for cruelty because he boasted of being a Sagittarian while sneering at her because she was only a dingy old Capricorn!

The interrupted ritual could well have taken place. Madeline had a flat near to Atlantis (Houghton's shop), and would certainly have known both Grant and Houghton. I know for a fact that Madeline was acquainted with Gerald, although her opinion of both him and the Wicca was rather poor. One of Madeline's older students told me that she thought Gardner rather a fraud, and ritually inept. She also had a very low opinion of Wiccans, and refused to allow her own students to participate in Wiccan rites. The reason for this lies in an anecdote which Doreen doesn't relate: the story goes that Madeline agreed to participate in a rite with Gerald, which turned out to involve Madeline being tied up and tickled with a feather duster! The great lady was not amused.

Prudence Jones

Prudence was for many years the president of the Pagan Federation, and editor of its newsletter. She inherited her role from John Score, after he passed away. With Nigel Pennick, Prudence also runs the Pagan Anti-Defamation League (PADL), and is an active astrologer and therapist. She has edited a book on astrology, and with Caitlin Matthews, edited "Voices from the Circle", published by Aquarian Press. Although Prudence took her degree in Philosophy, her main

interests lie in the areas of the Grail and troubadour tales, and she has published privately an excellent essay on the Grail and Wicca. She is also a very highly respected astrologer, who lectures extensively in Britain.

Vivianne and Chris Crowley

Vivianne Crowley, is author of "Wicca - The Old Religion in the New Age", and also secretary of the Pagan Federation. She has a PhD in Psychology, and is perhaps the only person to have been a member of both a Gardnerian Coven and an Alexandrian one simultaneously!

Vivianne is very active at the moment, and has initiated people in Germany (having memorised the ritual in German - a language she doesn't speak!), Norway, and - on the astral-Brazil. As a result of her book, she receives many letters from people from all around the world, and organised the first ever pan-European Wiccan conference, held in Germany 1990. The second conference was held in Britain at the June solstice, and the third (1992) in Norway. In 1993, the Conference will be in Scotland.

John and Kathy (Caitlin) Matthews, are probably well-known to everyone, but possibly their Gardnerian initiations are not such common knowledge. The story that John Matthews relates in "Voices from the Circle" is essentially the one which he told the HPS who initiated him.

Pat and Arnold Crowther

I have left Pat and Arnold till last, as it is from their line that the infamous Alex Sanders derives! It is no secret anymore that Alex, far from being initiated by his grandmother when he was seven, was in fact turned down by Pat Crowther in 1961 but was later accepted by one of her ex-coven members, Pat Kopanski, and initiated to 1st Degree.

In "The Rebirth of Witchcraft" Doreen says that Alex later met Gardner, and was allowed to copy from the Book of Shadows; Craft tradition is somewhat different! It has always been said (even by Alex's supporters!) that he pinched what he could from Pat Kopanski before being chucked out, and that the main differences between the Alexandrian and Gardnerian Books of Shadows occur where Alex mis-heard, or mis-copied something! There are certainly significant differences between the two Books; some parts of Gardnerian ritual are quite unknown within the Alexandrian tradition, and the ritual techniques are often different. It is usually very easy to spot whether someone is an Alexandrian, or Gardnerian initiate.

Alex needed a HPS, and as we know, chose Maxine Morris for the role. Maxine is a striking Priestess, and made a very good visual focus for the movement which grew in leaps and bounds.

In the late 1960s, Alex and Maxine were prolific initiators, and a number of their initiates have become well known. Some came to Australia, and there are still a number of covens in the UK today whose HP and/or HPS was initiated by Alex or Maxine.

Alex and Maxine's most famous initiates are almost certainly Janet and Stewart Farrar, who left them in 1971 to form their own coven, first in England, then later, in Ireland. Through their books, they have probably had the most influence over the direction that the modern Craft has taken. Certainly in Australia, the publication of "What Witches Do" was an absolute watershed, and with Janet and Stewart's consistent output, their form of Wicca is more likely to become the "standard" than any other type.

Since their early days of undiluted Alexandrianism, they have drifted somewhat towards a more Gardnerian approach, and today, tell everyone that there are no differences between the two traditions. In fact, despite the merging that has been occurring over the last few years, there are very distinct differences between the traditions; some merely external, others of a very significant difference of philosophy.

Seldiy Bate was originally magically trained by Madeline Montalban, and then took an Alexandrian initiation from Maxine and Alex. Her husband, Nigel, was also initiated by Maxine, and they have been "public" witches for a number of years now, often appearing on TV, radio and in the press. Their background in ritual magic is expressed in the type of coven that they run; a combination of Wicca and Ceremonial Magic.

In 1971, Alex and Maxine went their separate ways. David Goddard is a Liberal Catholic Priest, and for many years, he and Maxine worked in the Liberal Catholic faith, and did not run a coven of any kind. Then in 1984, Maxine gathered together a group again, and started practising a combination of Wicca, Qabalah and Liberal Catholicism. She and David separated in 1987, and since then her coven has been exclusively Wiccan. In 1989, she married one of her initiates, Vincent, and they are still running an active coven in London today.

Alex's history after the split was a little more sordid, with one girl he married, Jill, filling the gutter press with stories about Alex being homosexual, and defrauding her of all her money to spend on his boyfriends. Sally Taylor was initiated by Maxine and David, but then transferred to Alex. She was trained by him, and then started her own group.

I'd now like to focus upon the last of the strands which I believe has been influential upon the birth and development of Wicca; that of the literary traditions and sources to which Gardner would have had access. To a certain extent these are contiguous with the magical traditions described earlier, as nowhere is it ever suggested that Gardner did in fact ever work in a magical Lodge, so we must assume that his knowledge came from the written form of the rites, not from the actual practise of them.

From reading Gardner's books, it is quite apparent that Margaret Murray had a tremendous impact upon him. Her book, "The God of the Witches" was published in 1933, and twelve years previously, "The Witch Cult in Western Europe" had appeared. "The God of the Witches" has been tremendously influential on a number of people, and certainly inspired Gardner.

In fact, "Witchcraft Today", published by Gardner in 1954 contained a foreword by Margaret Murray. At this time, remember, Murray's work was still taken seriously, and she remained the contributor on the subject of witchcraft for the Encyclopedia Britannica for a number of years.

Now of course her work has been largely discredited, although she remains a source of inspiration, if not historical accuracy. In Gardner's day, the idea of a continuing worship of the old pagan gods would have been a staggering theory, and in the second article in my series about Murray (published in The Cauldron), I made the point that Murray may have had to pretend scientific veracity in order to get her work published in such times. Don't forget that Dion Fortune had to publish her work privately, as did Gardner with High Magic's Aid. Carlo Ginzburg's excellent book, "Ecstasies", also supports Murray's basic premise; although of course he regrets her historical deceptions.

There were of course other sources than Murray. In 1899, "Aradia: Gospel of the Witches" was published. Most of Crowley's work was available during the pre- and post-war years, as were the texts written and translated by MacGregor Mathers and Waite. Also readily available were works such as The Magus, and of course the classics, from which Gardner drew much inspiration.

Of paramount importance would have been "The White Goddess," by Robert Graves, which is still a standard reference book on any British Wiccan's bookshelf. This was published in 1952; three years after High Magic's Aid appeared, and two years before Gardner's first non-fictional book about witchcraft. I would just like to say at this point that Graves has taken some very unfair criticism in respect of this book. The White Goddess was written as a work of poetry, not history, and to criticise it for being historically inaccurate is to miss the point. Unfortunately, I agree that some writers have referred to it as an "authority", and thus led their readers up the garden path. This is not Graves's fault, nor do I believe it was his intention.

Another book which has had a profound influence on many Wiccans, and would undoubtedly have been well known by Gardner is "The Golden Bough"; although the entire book was written based upon purely secondary research, it is an extensive examination of many pagan practices from the Ancient World, and the emphasis of the male sacrifice could certainly have been taken from here equally as well as from Murray. Certain of the Gardnerian ritual practices were almost certainly derived from The Golden Bough, or from Frazer's own sources.

In "Witchcraft Today" Gardner mentions a number of authors when speculating where the Wiccan rites came from. He says that, "The only man I can think of who could have invented the rites was the late Aleister Crowley".

He continues to say, "The only other man I can think of who could have done it is Kipling...". He also mentions that, "Hargrave Jennings might have had a hand in them..." and then suggests that "Barrat (sic) of The Magus, circa 1800, would

have had the ability to invent or resurrect the cult".

It's possible that these references are something of a damage control operation by Gardner, who, according to Doreen, was not too impressed when she kept telling him that she recognised certain passages in the Witch rites! "Witchcraft Today" was published the year after Doreen's initiation, and perhaps by seeming genuinely interested in where the Rites came from, Gardner thought he might give the appearance of innocence of their construction!

As mentioned previously, Gardner also had a large collection of unpublished MSS, which he used extensively, and one has only to read his books to realise that he was a very well-read man, with wide-ranging interests. Exactly the sort of man who would be able to draw together a set of rituals if required.

The extensive bibliography to "The Meaning of Witchcraft" published in 1959, demonstrates this rather well. Gardner includes Magick in Theory and Practice and The Equinox of the Gods by Crowley; The Mystical Qabalah by Dion Fortune; The Goetia; The White Goddess (Graves); Lady Charlotte Guest's translation of The Mabinogion; English Folklore by Christina Hole; The Kabbalah Unveiled and the Abramelin by Mathers; both Margaret Murray's books and Godfrey Leland's Gypsy Sorcery, as well as a myriad of classic texts, from Plato to Bede!

Although this bibliography postdates the creation of Gardnerian Wicca, it certainly indicates from where Gardner draws his inspiration from. There are also several books listed which are either directly, or indirectly, concerned with sex magic, Priapic Cults, or Tantra.

Hargrave Jennings, mentioned earlier, wrote a book called "The Rosicrucians, their Rites and Mysteries", which Francis King describes as a book, "concerned almost exclusively with phallicism and phallic images - Jennings saw the penis everywhere".

As I mentioned earlier, Hargrave Jennings, a member of the SRIA, also belonged to a group, described as a coven, which met in the Cambridge area in the 1870s, and performed rituals based upon the classical traditions - specifically, from The Golden Ass. There is no evidence to support this, except that there are often found references to a "Cambridge Coven" linked to Jennings' name.

Many of the rituals we are familiar with today were of course later additions by Doreen Valiente, and these have been well documented by both her and the Farrars, in a number of books. Doreen admits that she deliberately cut much of the poetry by Aleister Crowley, and substituted either her own work, or poems from other sources, such as the Carmina Gadelica.

Of course we can never really know the truth about the origins of the Wicca. Gardner may have been an utter fraud; he may have actually received a "Traditional" initiation; or, as a number of people have suggested, he may have created the Wicca as a result of a genuine religious experience, drawing upon his extensive literary and magical knowledge to create, or help create, the rites and philosophy.

What I think we can be fairly certain about is that he was sincere in his belief. If there had been no more to the whole thing than an old man's fantasy, then the Wicca would not have grown to be the force that it is today, and we would not all be sitting here in Canberra on a Saturday morning!