

# Old Magic, New Witchcraft

*'No student of occultism can fail to be struck with the close resemblance of the constitutions of nearly all the mystical fellowships of the middle ages, and the resemblance of the verbiage employed by their founders and protagonists.'* – Lewis Spence

It is now generally accepted that Gardner's Witchcraft, is not a product of the survival of some ancient Pagan religion. Whilst there is fairly good evidence to support the idea that Gardner was initiated in 1939, into some sort of magical group in the New Forest, by his own account, the rituals and workings that he received from them were fragmentary and largely unworkable. Gardner was in need of a vehicle through which the magical current passed to him at his own initiation, could continue.

In Order to flesh out the 'Witch Cult', as Gardner liked to call it he felt compelled to turn to existing magical material and historical writings about Witchcraft. Research readily shows that Gardner, aided by Doreen Valiente and others, effectively devised, collected and cobbled together many of the writings that collectively, have come to be known as the 'Gardnerian Book of Shadows.'

Much of the source material for this endeavour came from the old Magical Grimoires, particularly the ones that had by then, been translated into English by MacGregor Mathers', as well as newer esoteric material by Crowley and Regardie, both of whom had spent time working the Golden Dawn system of Magic. Inspiration also came from the works of folklorist Margaret Murray, Charles Leland's *Aradia - The Gospel of the Witches*, Masonry (including Co-Masonry), the revivalist druid movement and naturism.

This process is comparable to what Mathers', Westcott and Woodman had done over half a century earlier, when they formed the Golden Dawn based on the mysterious CIPHER manuscripts which they embellished with even more hermeticism by utilising older magical writings by people such as Eliphas Levi. The subsequent success of this Magical Order, with its rich hermetic knowledge, combined with the fact that it spawned some

notorious and highly-influential esoteric characters, has assured its place in history and so to it seems has Gardnerian Witchcraft.

Modern Witchcraft's syncretic origin is of little import. Gardner's vision has directly influenced a major resurgence of interest in nature religions and Pagan paths. What he, Doreen Valiente and others were doing was exactly what so many magically-minded people had done before them; they were drawing upon older arcane knowledge and material and recreating a magical and spiritual path that was better able to more specifically meet the needs of the mid-twentieth century British person.

Gardner's Witchcraft is a blend of both hermetic ideas and the green-ray, nature-orientated Pagan paths. Through the merging of currents associated with Hod and Netzach he brought Witchcraft into the arena of Yesod, the Moon. This is akin to the centre of Lunar Priesthood as envisaged by Dion Fortune and the Fraternity of the Inner Light. Not only did this approach make magic and ritual more accessible, its simpler form meant that magic could become an interest for a much wider sector of society. Previously, the study of occult sciences had been largely confined to the domains of societies wealthier and more affluent members as they were the ones who tended to have both the money and time to pursue such. Gardner's Witchcraft did not require any ornately decorated temples or expensive, elaborate robes and regalia. It allowed everyone a simpler way to use magic for themselves, one that could be achieved in any space, indoors or outdoors, with enough room to cast a small circle. Not only that, in contrast to more traditional religions Gardner's blended approach allowed people a way to directly access divinity through a Priesthood that everyone became a member of, upon initiation.

Doreen Valiente writes in a letter to John Score (founder of the 'Pagan Front'), dated October 21st 1969:

*'...the Craft of the Wise is basically simple - but that doesn't mean that it is not profound, too. There is a big difference between being simple and being simple-minded. The rituals of such sections of the Western tradition as the Golden Dawn are very complicated; they needed a lot of wealthy, cultured, leisured people to work them. They were, in fact, almost a theatrical performance; in which, of course, they were in line with the Ancient Mysteries. However, I feel that people today need a presentation of old truth in a simpler form.'*

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\* Letter preserved in the collection of the Boscastle Witchcraft Museum.

This perspective, this current, is precisely what Gardner appears to have plugged in to. With its roots in the old Western Mystery School traditions but grounded in a more simplistic framework, it allowed the indigenous magical soul of his native land to be reawakened and accessed by modern men and women. Effectively, Gardner was using old ideas, 'Old Magic', in the creation of a 'New Witchcraft.'

It is beyond the scope of this book to examine all of the sources, and people, who served as inspiration for Gardner during the development of the Gardnerian Book of Shadows and this is not to say that Gardner derived his form of Witchcraft from the Golden Dawn, because he did not. But connections to the Golden Dawn and especially the work of some of its more illustrious members are, unsurprisingly, discernable. We shall now turn to look at some of these links and their influence on Gerald Gardner and the 'Witch Cult'.

## Casting the Circle

The creation of a sacred space within which to work magic is nothing new. The circle is a symbol that has been used and recognised by cultures all over the world for thousands of years. From the Neolithic cup and ring marked stones of Britain and Europe, which are thought to have had a spiritual significance, to its current use in various Pagan paths as a way of defining a sacred area; a circle creates an instant 'church' for the practice of Witchcraft.

It is clear that the major influences on the formula used to cast the circle as seen in modern Witchcraft Today, have come from *The Greater Key of Solomon* and the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram. It was Golden Dawn chiefs who were responsible for formulating the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram and the Kabalistic Cross which is often performed with it. These highly influential magical rites appear to draw on an ancient Jewish, children's bedtime prayer, writings by Eliphaz Levi, pertaining to the importance of the symbols of the pentagram and the cross, as well as concepts that can be found in some of the old magical grimoires.

The symbol of the pentagram appears to trace back as far as the Stone Age where its image has been found amongst cave etchings that reputedly date from that era\*. It was certainly in use by 3500BC, where its presence on pot shards found in Mesopotamia, have been found. Later on, it was

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\* For examples of the five-pointed star see R. Heizer & C. Clewlow, *Prehistoric Rock Art of California*. Ramona, 1973

used by people during the Mayan period of Latin America and there is further evidence for its use during the 4th century BC, where its image was again used on pots, sometimes accompanied by the Hebrew word for Jerusalem. Later on it became associated with the Knights Templar and found its way into Masonry.

Throughout this time, the image of the Pentagram has meant different things to different cultures and religions. Early Christians saw it as representing the five wounds of Christ. Hebrews saw the five points as being representative of the Pentateuch. The ancient Greeks used to draw it from five 'A's and its geometric shape drew the attention of Pythagoras who studied it. It is also called the endless knot and demonstrates the principle of the Golden Ratio. Currently, the pentagram is popularly seen as a symbol for Witchcraft and Magic; its geometry depicts the synthesis of the five elements and its inscription in the air forms a vital part of casting the Witches circle.

In Gardner's non-fiction books *Witchcraft Today* (1954) and the *Meaning Of Witchcraft* (1959) he writes the following about the circle used by Witches (who he would often refer to as 'the Wica'):

*"I am also permitted to tell for the first time in print the true reason why the important thing in all their ceremonies is 'Casting the Circle.' They [the Wica] are taught that the circle is 'between the worlds', that is, between this world and the next, the dominion of the gods."*

*"This circle is drawn with the idea of "containing" the "power" which is raised within it, of bringing it to a focus, so to speak, so that some end may be accomplished by raising it. This focusing of force is called "The Cone of Power." †*

Today, casting a circle in Order to create sacred space is used not only by Covens, but by many modern Pagan paths that have been influenced by the revival of interest in Witchcraft; a revival that Gardner played an instrumental part in. It is then perhaps slightly surprising that Gardner's technique for casting a circle appears to have far more in common with the techniques of High Magic, given in old grimoires, than it does with extant folklore concerning the practices of late medieval Witchcraft.

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\* Gerald Gardner, *Witchcraft Today*. p28 Arrow 1970.

† Gerald Gardner, *The Meaning of Witchcraft*. p17 Magickal Child 1991.

## Ye Bok of Ye Art Magical

If we look at Gardner's extant personal notebooks, the earliest method of casting a circle that would be recognisable to a modern Gardnerian Witch, can be found in *Ye Bok of Ye Art Magical*. This book is generally thought to have been written by Gardner during the 1940s and is derived in the main, from Mather's well-known translations of various magical grimoires, plus extracts from the King James Bible, The Talmud, and the works of Regardie and Crowley, alongside material that is now uniquely identified with Gardnerian Witchcraft. The cover bears a fire triangle surmounted pentagram, with a water triangle penetrated by the tau cross in its middle; an image which encapsulates much magical symbolism and meaning.

The circle-casting formula Gardner gives therein, consists of; drawing a circle with a Magic Sword or Athame, purification by water, fire exorcism, gathering in the circle which is then sealed, performance of the Kabbalistic Cross followed by the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram, circumambulation and the summoning of the 'Mighty Ones' accompanied by an earth-invoking pentagram.

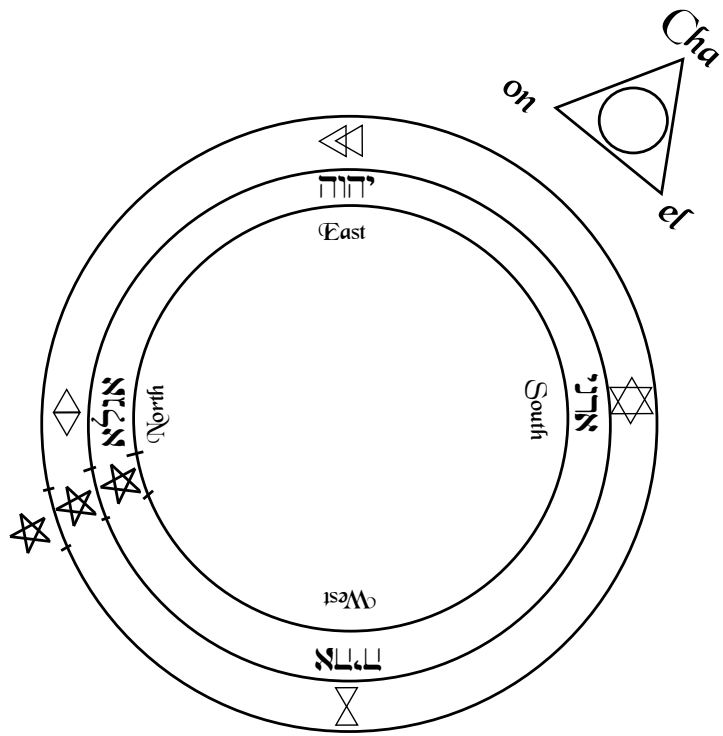
The wording of the Kabbalistic Cross, uses the Askenazic dialect of Hebrew. For example 'Malkus' is used instead of 'Malkuth'. Israel Regardie in his early books, used to prefer this dialect over the more popular (hermetically speaking) Sephardic form. Other textual evidence from *Ye Bok* definitively confirms that it was from Regardie's *Tree of Life*, first published in 1932, that Gardner (who had an extensive and varied magical library) copied this particular version of the Kabbalistic Cross.

The consecration of the water and the exorcism of fire prayer, seen in *Ye Bok*, are near-verbatim from MacGregor Mather's translation of *The Greater Key of Solomon* (1888). The Key is also where the majority of the incantations and procedures found in this early magical notebook of Gardner's, can be found and it seems to have served as a major source for him during this time, when what was to become Gardnerian Witchcraft, was still in its protoplasmic stage.

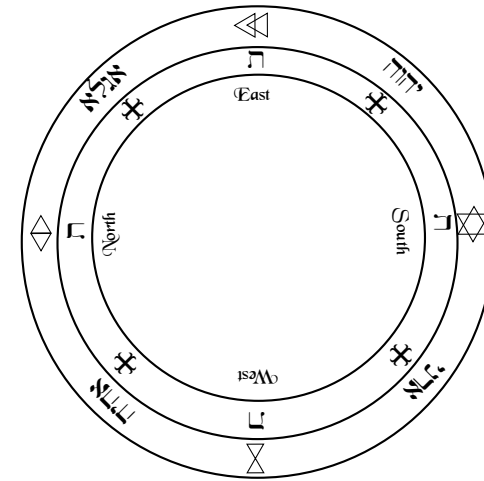
Gardner also depicts a circle diagram, alongside a small piece about how to construct the circle using a 'Witches Athame'. This passage is paraphrased from a section in *The Greater Key of Solomon* entitled 'Of the

\*Now privately owned by Richard and Tamarra Jates of the 'Wiccan Church of Canada'

Formation of the Circle'. The diagram is also based on one of the circle diagrams found in *The Greater Key*.



**Figure 1: Gardner's drawing of the Circle from *Ye Bok of Ye Art Magical*.**



**Figure 2 Detail of a magical Circle from *Mather's version of the Greater Key of Solomon*.**

By comparing Figure 1 and Figure 2 it can be seen that the outer circle is protected by images composed from triangles, much like those used in the Golden Dawn's, Lesser Ritual of the Hexagram. In comparison, however, the Greater Key's version has the images for the North and West swapped around, as too does Gardner's version, thereby revealing his source. Gardner has also placed the opening for the circle in the NNW and not in the NE as traditionally seen in modern Witchcraft. This is probably because the description of where to place the opening as given in the *Greater Key's* 'Of the Formation of the Circle' says simply; '...leaving an open space therein towards the North whereby thou mayest enter and depart the Circle of Art.' Additionally, in Gardner's diagram, he has not added the Hebrew names as shown in Figure 2, but instead has used the Hebrew names as given in the Golden Dawn's Ritual of the Pentagram, those being, YHVH in the East, ADNI in the South, EHIH in the West and AGLA in the North.

Gardner has also added a triangle of evocation with a small central circle, surrounded by El, Cha[i] and On, three of the many names for God given in the KoS. This concept is not seen in the *Greater Key*, but forms the basis of the practices given in the *Lesser Key*. Gardner's diagram in *Ye Bok* (Figure 1) and seems to indicate that he is merging and blending magical techniques which in this instance are drawn from two separate grimoires, thereby creating his own interpretation. This approach also

helps to explain why the traditional ceremonial circle which was designed to keep out unwanted entities, was in Gardner's eyes also something that can *contain* power. In a subject such as Magic, rich in symbolism and correspondences, such a personal approach is often tempting and many experienced occultists will tell you, if certain symbols and ideas feel more applicable to you than other more traditional viewpoints, use them. Unless of course your aim is to carefully follow and train the architecture of your mind to understand and experience a particular traditions symbolic language.

## 'Text A'

Whilst *Ye Bok*, is generally considered to be an early Book of Shadows, it could also be considered a magical notebook of Gardner's, one in which he was experimenting with ideas which later formed the basis of his fictional book *High Magic's Aid* (1949), which we shall look at shortly. There is, however, another extant magical notebook of Gardner's, dating from the same time period, which also gives pretty much the same formula as *Ye Bok* for casting the circle (though in this case, there is no diagram). This is the Book of Shadows that Gardner was using when he initiated Doreen Valiente in 1953. This book is often referred to by Craft historians as Text A.\*

In *The Witches' Way* (Hale 1984) by Janet and Stewart Farrar a description of it is given:

*'Gardner's original rituals as copied down from the New Forest coven which initiated him, and amended, expanded or annotated by himself.'*

Text A is a pastiche of material and like *Ye Bok*, is derived in the main from published esoteric works, Masonic rites, poetry and folk songs and lore. Roughly one third has been copied from books by authors who share the common connection of having been members of the Golden Dawn, or one of its offshoot temples. They include Dion Fortune, Aleister Crowley, A.E. Waite, Fiona Macleod/William Sharp and of course McGregor Mathers' who transcribed the *'Key of Solomon'*, *The Goetia*, as well as *The Grimoire of Armadel* and *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage*. This latter book has a particularly hazardous reputation, reportedly causing

much trouble for Crowley at Boleskin, when, following the observance of the Abra Melin Operation, Ashtaroth and a host of demons 'escaped'. This resulted in a butcher meeting with a fatal accident at the hands of one of his own knives and tales of a workman on Boleskin's estate, who went mad and tried to kill Crowley. This is, however, perhaps unsurprising as Crowley's philandering and drug taking, combined with his strokes of pure unmitigated genius, would probably have incited many normal people to want to kill him.

Text A's patchwork of content reinforces the fact that Gardner really did have very little in the way of authentic Witch material passed to him by the New Forest group. From what he did receive, he recognised the possibility that the Golden Dawn could have been responsible for much of it, as he writes in his book *Witchcraft Today* (1954):

*'The people who certainly would have had the knowledge and ability to invent them [the Witches rites] were the people who formed the Order of the Golden Dawn about seventy years ago, but knowing their aims and objects I think it is about the last thing they would have done. Hargrave Jennings might have had a hand in them, but his writings are so involved that I hardly think he could have devised anything so simple and clear-cut.\*'*

This statement of Gardner's could be interpreted in a couple of different ways. On the one hand, it would seem to be almost agreeing with what Bill Liddell wrote in *The Pickingill Papers*† about Hargrave Jennings having been a pupil of a Cunning Man known as Old George Pickingill. Liddell asserts that Jennings took the Witch material he had learnt under Pickingill and from that, developed the Golden Dawn system; thereby arguing that the Golden Dawn came out of Witchcraft. Additionally, Liddell states that it was into one of Pickingill's Covens that Gerald was initiated thus explaining the similarities between Gardner's Witchcraft and the Golden Dawn system of Magic. Similarities which led the author Aidan Kelly, to form the New Reformed Orthodox Order of the Golden Dawn, a system of Witchcraft which acknowledges Golden Dawn roots. Liddell's hypothesis, some of which are quite tantalizing, are currently out of favour due to lack of confirmatory evidence. Though it should be noted that some anthropologists acknowledge that ceremonial magic and some

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\* Gerald Gardner, *Witchcraft Today*. p53 Arrow 1970

† W Liddell and Michael Howard, *The Pickingill Papers*. Capall Bann 1994.

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\* Now owned by John Belham-Payne.

forms of traditional folk magic influenced each other. Alternatively this could be one of Gardner's 'reveal-conceal' statements, where he alludes to something as a possibility where in fact it is a veiled way of indicating where the concept actually came from and his use of the word 'invent' is revealing.

Another example of Gardner 'revealing' something about the source of his Craft material can be seen in *Witchcraft Today*, Gardner tells us:

*"The only man I can think of who could have invented the rites was the late Aleister Crowley. When I met him he was most interested to hear that I was a member [of the Witch Cult], and said he had been inside when he was very young, but would not say whether he had rewritten anything or not. But the witch practices are entirely different in method from any kind of magic he wrote about, and he described very many kinds. There are indeed certain expressions and certain words used which smack of Crowley; possibly he borrowed things from the cult writings, or **more likely someone may have borrowed expressions from him.**"*

Crowley does appear to have had an interest in Witchcraft and it has been suggested that one of the motives for Crowley going to the Abbey of Thelema in Italy was so that he could study Italian Witchcraft. Gardner certainly appears to have believed that Crowley was involved with the Witch Cult when he was younger, for in a letter to Cecil Williamson, in 1950, Gardner writes:

*"By the way Aleister Crowley was in the Cult, but left it in disgust. He could not stand a High Priestess having a superior position & having to kneel to Her & while he highly approved of the Great Rite, he was very shocked at the nudity. Queer man, he approved of being nude in a dirty way, but highly disapproved of it in a clean and healthful way. Also he disapproved of the use of the scourge to release power for the practiced reason if you teach a pupil the use of the scourge, he can get a mate & do it on his own."*

It is no secret that there are certain passages in the *Book of Shadows* that have obviously been derived from writings of Aleister Crowley. Indeed, Doreen Valiente in her book *Rebirth of Witchcraft* writes:

*"It became obvious to me as soon as I had been given Gerald's 'Book of Shadows' to copy that it owed a good deal to the works of Aleister Crowley...."*

Doreen was quite an admirer of Crowley's writings and during her first encounter in the local library with Crowley's *Magick in Theory and Practise*, she had hastily copied down many of the magical correspondences given therein following which she:

*'... rode home on the bus glowing with triumph. I remember looking at the sunset clouds in their glory and knowing that I was destined for a career in magic... After reading through volumes of platitudinous piffle written by those who had pretended knowledge, I had seen among the rubbish the gleam of gold.'*

Despite her admiration for Crowley she did not feel that his writings were pertinent to the spirit of the Witch Cult and writes:

*"Gerald began to realise that he had a real chance of reviving the Old Religion, and he wanted to gain popular acceptance for it. I pointed out to him that in my opinion he would never succeed in doing this so long as the influence of the late Aleister Crowley was so prevalent and obvious within the cult... Gerald's reaction was, 'Well if you think you can do any better, go ahead.' I accepted the challenge and set out to rewrite the 'Book of Shadows', cutting out the Crowleyanity as much as I could and trying to bring it back to what I felt it was..."*

Gardner's air of resignation would seem to suggest that he had played more than a small part in the original inclusion of the Crowley material in the *Book of Shadows* and whilst Doreen did remove and rewrite parts, Crowley's hallmark is still readily found.

Coming from a different perspective, Francis King, in his book, *Ritual Magic in England* (Spearman 1970), goes a step further and tells us that Gardner actually paid Crowley to write the Witchcraft rituals for him. Generally speaking, most of the Crowley material in the various Books of Shadows of Gardner's date from Crowley's earlier works which means

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\* Valiente *The Rebirth of Witchcraft* Phoenix p54

† Valiente *The Rebirth of Witchcraft* Phoenix p36

‡ Valiente *The Rebirth of Witchcraft* Phoenix p61

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\* Gerald Gardner, *Witchcraft Today*. p52 Arrow 1970. Emphasis ours.

† Letter preserved in the collection of the Boscastle Witchcraft Museum

that if this is true, all that Crowley did was rehash some of his own, old material as opposed to writing something new.

The debate about whether Crowley knowingly had a hand in the inclusion of some of his writings into the Book of Shadows, is likely to continue running for a while yet. Analysis by Craft historians such as Roger Dearnaley, appears to show that nothing of Crowley's was included that had not been printed at some time, thereby leaving the possibility that Gardner had just taken it from published sources. We should not, however, forget that Gardner did actually meet Crowley, in 1947, in the final months of the Great Beasts earthly life.

Returning now to Text A, the formula given for casting the circle, is near-identical to that given in *Ye Bok*; it still includes the *Key of Solomon* material as well as the Kabbalistic Cross and Ritual of the Pentagram. In the latter, however, Gardner has replaced the inscribing of the banishing pentagram with that of the generic invoking pentagram which is also attributed to the element of earth, so it would be more correct to call this the Lesser Invoking Ritual of the Pentagram. Magically speaking, this small change is significant and would seem to indicate that Gardner was actively blending and revising things to suit his to suit his own magical ideas.

## High Magic's Aid

Moving on to 1949, we find Gardner officially publishing *High Magic's Aid*. It was edited by Madeline Montalban (AKA Dolores North) who at that time was an acquaintance of Gardner's having met him some years earlier, during the War.

Gardner, in his idiosyncratic way, writes about her in a 1952 letter to Cecil Williamson:

*It's very funny. Mrs North is "Delorres".  
She used to work at the Atlantis  
Book Shop & she typed & put the  
spelling right in High Magic's Aid.  
She makes a living at Astrology & Love  
Philtres on the quiet. I know she claimed  
to be a witch, but got everything wrong.  
But she knows High Magic's Aid & has a lively imagination.\**

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\* Gardner to Williamson, May 1952.

Madeline was relatively unimpressed by Witchcraft despite her spurious title of the 'Witch of St. Giles'. Much more the gifted ceremonial magician, writer and founder of the hermetically inspired 'Order of the Morning Star', it is her work in these areas, that she is better known for.

*High Magic's Aid* was first printed, probably at Gardner's own cost, by Michael Houghton, then-owner of the Atlantis bookshop in London. It tells the story of Jan and Olaf; two young, disenfranchised men who embark on a mission to restore their families lost status using magical power. They are taken under the wing of an old man, a Magus, called Thur and a younger female Witch, Morven. One can't help but wonder if these two characters are personifications of Gardner's interest in both hermetic and folk Magic, However, other textual clues seem to indicate that Gardner was simply trying to recreate the disciple and Mage relationship as suggested in *The Key of Solomon*.

Together, these four characters have various adventures and fight magical battles against powers which seem to personify the traditional, organised religions that were around in England, in the Middle Ages.

With its publication, extracts from what is now known as the 'Book of Shadows', were printed for the first time with Gardner 'hiding' relevant passages amongst *Key of Solomon* material as indicated by his letter to John Symonds in 1950:

*'I enclose a Copy of my book, High Magic's Aid, A.C. [Aleister Crowley] Read part of the M.S. & highly approved, he wanted me to put the Witch part in full. But I was only given permission to publish things as fiction & they [New Forest Coven] could cut out what they liked, I wrote the third degree of the Witch Cult, but they went up in steam, & cut it out entirely, & of course things have been changed a little in the ritual, but I've got it nearly as they do it, to the great scare of the publishers, but no one has objected in the lightest so far. The witchcraft parts are chap xIv Dearlep, & XVII the Witch Cult.'\**

In the chapter entitled 'Making the Great Circle', the circle is already marked out on the floor and needs only to be energised. The method is slightly different to that seen in Text A and *Ye Bok* and commences with the exorcism of the water and blessing of the salt, followed by the purification of those present, exorcism of the fire and censuring, the Kabbalistic Cross,

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\* Letter preserved at the Warburg Institute, Gerald Yorke Collection.

summoning of the Mighty Ones commencing in the east, tracing of circle with the Magic Sword, inscribing of names of power and pentagrams around the circle, and finished off with circumambulation.

In this case, all the various exorcisms, consecrations and conjurations use the relevant passages, near-verbatim, from the *Key of Solomon* and stick closely to the formula for creating the circle, given therein. The parts that are not derived from the *Key of Solomon* are again, the Kabbalistic Cross (which in this case, and unlike *Ye Bok* and Text A, is not followed by the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram) and the traditional Gardnerian phrase used for the summoning the Mighty Ones:

*'I summon, stir, and call thee up, thou mighty ones of the [direction], to guard this circle.'*

The wording of the summoning<sup>\*</sup> is the one spoken piece that has remained a consistent part of Gardnerian circle casting right up to the present day. Though it appears to be loosely based on a convocation to be said after entering the circle, found in the KoS:

*'Hear ye, and be ye ready, in whatever part of the Universe ye may be, to obey the Voice of God the Mighty One, and the Names of the Creator. We let you know by this signal and sound that ye will be convoked hither, wherefore hold ye yourselves in readiness to obey our commands.'*

Moving on to the early 1950s there is another Book of Shadows that is worth a brief look. This is Text C, which is the rather clinical name for Doreen Valiente's first Book of Shadows. This book, according to the Farrar's, was worked upon by both Valiente and Gardner<sup>†</sup>. There is more in the way of instructive articles advising in mental techniques and occult philosophy. These have partly been derived from published books including Agrippa's Occult Philosophy and the works of classical Hellenist Gilbert Murray, the late Victorian occultist and writer William Atkinson and Paschal Beverly Randolph. A significant amount of the Crowley and Mather's material has also been removed in comparison to *Ye Bok* and Text A.

Doreen, being a very attentive person, made notes in Text C about some of the changes that she made, pieces that she removed, and sources

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<sup>\*</sup> At one time the word 'conjure' was used instead of 'summon.

<sup>†</sup> Janet and Stewart Farrar, *The Witches Way*. Introduction, Hale 1984

which she had identified. In the circle casting in Text C, the Kabbalistic Cross was originally included, but, as in *High Magic's Aid*, the LBRP was not. However, the Kabbalistic Cross has at some point been crossed out by hand apparently indicating the decision to remove it from the formula.

When looked at chronologically, these three books, *Ye Bok*, Text A, and *High Magic's Aid*, all dating from the 1940s, appear to reveal Gardner's plans for modern Witchcraft. By simplifying the ceremonial magic way of creating, protecting and charging sacred space, he made it less daunting and more amenable to the western, British mind. No strange vibrations of weird names in alien tongues required. A few years later and by the mid 1950s when the Witch Cult was really gaining momentum, this ongoing process was becoming more refined until finally, the Kabbalistic Cross, the majority of the Solomonic passages and all Hebrew was dispensed with entirely leaving the now-traditional, Gardnerian way of casting the circle which still entails inscribing earth-invoking pentagrams and summoning the 'Mighty Ones' at each quarter. But what, exactly, does it mean to summon the Mighty Ones, who or what are they?

The term 'Mighty Ones', could be considered to be an English translation of the Hebrew divine name Elohim, which is generally considered to be the plural form of powerful beings, Gods. Alternatively, they could be seen as the kerubim, the 'strong ones' who have many purposes including being the angelic hosts of Lunar Yesod. In the Golden Dawn system, the term 'Mighty Ones' is actually used in the title of one of the Major Arcana of the Tarot. The Empress, is 'Daughter of the Mighty Ones.' The Hebrew letter associated with her is Daleth which means door, and her card amongst other things, represents the door to the Inner Mysteries and embodies the notion of Union between the two opposing powers of force and form, fertility and the womb of manifestation. All these concepts are very relevant to Witchcraft, particularly the third degree initiation where the High Priestess becomes the door to the 'secret way, the pathway of intelligence, between the gates of night and day,' (a line from a Gardnerian 3rd degree rites).

The idea of there being four 'Mighty Ones' can be seen in early Christianity. Origen, a third century theologian and early, ante-Nicean, church father was asked why there are four Gospels, why not one, he answered and said because there are four quarters of the Heavens, North, South, East and West and, therefore, four quarters of the human soul. His wise words indicate that people have a direct relationship with 'things' that



exists on a grander scale, very much like the concept of the macroscosm and microcosm being reflections of each other. This gnostic idea, based around the number four, can be extended to many other quartets; i.e. the four elements, the four rivers flowing down the Tree of Life, the four Kerubim, the four sons of Horus and the four Archangels evoked in the Pentagram ritual, with all being component parts of something larger - the four-fold name of God יהוה. The modern mystic, Neville Goddard elaborates further when, in 1956, in a talk on the biblical 'Mighty Ones' he said;

*'...the ladder of consciousness on which the individual descends here to discover his own being - the Four Mighty Ones within him, and when he finds himself completely shut out from that knowledge and he starts the conflict within himself and discovers within himself the cause of all the phenomena of the world, then he starts to ascend, and the same being that is going to ascend is the one that descended in consciousness to the level of complete and utter confusion... There is only one God, expressing himself as Four Mighty Ones within the individual.'*<sup>\*</sup>

In keeping with this viewpoint, in Witchcraft, the summoning of the 'Mighty Ones' could be seen as a way that the participants can summon aspects of their higher self for 'there is no part of us that is not of the Gods'; this being a phrase that hailed from the Egyptian Book of the Dead and came into modern Witchcraft via its use in the Golden Dawn's Adeptus Minor ritual and Crowley's subsequent use of it. Exactly the same can be said of the work done with the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram in the Outer Order of the Golden Dawn. If you look at the symbolism of this ritual, you have a candidate standing in the centre of the universe, with his or her higher self within the heart centre flanked by four archangels and on all sides a symbol of the dominion of spirit (the pentagram). This is sending a powerful message to the unconscious mind that they are a channel for their spiritual selves.

Gardner himself, seems to have his own views on what the Mighty Ones are. In a letter to Gerald Yorke, written in 1952, Gardner's words suggest that the Mighty Ones are independent beings and that there are many of them:

*'As soon as the Circle is cast & purified, they [the Wica] go round, what I call, evoking the Mighty Ones. To attend, to guard the circle & witness*

*the rites, These are meny. they are supposed to stand outside, & watch, seeing all is correct.'*<sup>\*</sup>

In his first non-fiction book about Witchcraft, *Witchcraft Today* (1954) Gardner says of the Mighty Ones:

*'...I am told that in time you may become one of the mighty ones, who are also called the mighty dead. I can learn nothing about them, but they seem to be like demigods -- or one might call them saints.'*<sup>†</sup>

*'One has to be formally introduced to the coven, though in name one is introduced to the Mighty Ones -- the spirits of the dead members of the cult who have not been reincarnated and who are supposed to be present.'*<sup>‡</sup>

In his second non-fiction book about Witchcraft, *The Meaning of Witchcraft* (1959) Gardner reiterates:

*'The modern witches believe that at death the "Mighty Ones", the Old Ones of the cult, come for faithful followers and take them to a favoured place among other initiates who have gone before.'*<sup>§</sup>

Gardner's perceptions are in keeping with the ideas seen in Traditional and Hereditary Witchcraft which have well established methods for working with ancestors and ancestral memories. In contrast, Doreen Valiente in her first Book of Shadows (Text C), draws a direct parallel between the Mighty Ones and the four Archangels of the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram and also states quite clearly:

*'Remember it is you, not the Mighty Ones, who truly come and depart.'*

Doreen's more gnostic perception of the Mighty Ones could certainly have been derived from her study of the Golden Dawn system of magic. Many of its teachings have a gnostic slant, some obvious, with others requiring a shovel to uncover. This is especially true of the Inner Order which draws heavily on Rosicrucianism, itself derived from an early mystical Christianity fused with ancient Egyptian mysteries. Furthermore, Doreen's

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\* Letter preserved in the collection of the Boscastle Witchcraft Museum

† Gerald Gardner, *Witchcraft Today*. P35 Arrow 1970

‡ Gerald Gardner, *Witchcraft Today*. P143 Arrow 1970

§ Gerald Gardner, *The Meaning of Witchcraft*. P49 Magickal Childe 1991

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\* [http://realneville.com/txt/the\\_four\\_mighty\\_ones.htm](http://realneville.com/txt/the_four_mighty_ones.htm)

viewpoint is in keeping with the ideas behind the Qabalistic Cross and the Ritual of the Pentagram, ceremonial magic techniques which were used by Gardner and which subsequently influenced the method of casting a circle as practised by Gardnerian Crafters and by extension, the method used by adherents of Wicca today.

It is not especially surprising that Gardner and Valiente appear to differ in viewpoint; it is well known that if you get a group of witches in a room and ask them about the nature of the Gods, you will get several different answers! Similarly, you wouldn't be hard pushed to find a Traditional Witchcraft practitioner that also views ancestor work as a form of self-gnosis. Such independent and free-thinking attitudes are characteristic of many a modern Witch and the versatile nature of the Craft readily lends itself to a variety of viewpoints. Indeed, such flexibility has helped modern Witchcraft's seemingly effortless and rapid export to many countries over the last 50 years.

In conclusion, from Gerald Gardner's early magical writings it can be seen that Witchcraft's method for casting the circle was notably influenced by material given in the *Key of Solomon*, Mather's translation. Additionally, documentary evidence readily shows that in the 1940's, the Kabalistic Cross and Ritual of the Pentagram were also being utilised by Gardner as part of the circle creation process. Both of these rituals were created for the Golden Dawn system of magic by Mathers (perhaps with other founder members) although he himself largely derived them from older material. These various methods of creating, marking and purifying sacred space could be seen as modern manifestations of much older concepts, born of an older Magic.

## Elements and Cardinal Points

Modern Witchcraft traditionally associates the four elements, earth, air, fire and water, with the four cardinal points. This idea has been around for a long time and can be seen in other spiritual systems such as those of native American Indians and the ancient Egyptians. Modern Witchcraft usually attributes Earth to the North, Air to the East, Water to the West and Fire to the South. These are also the attributes assigned to the four directions in the Golden Dawn system as shown by the arrangement of items on the double cubicle altar of the Universe.

There is the Paten with bread and salt, emblematic of the body, assigned to the North. This is similar in some ways to Witchcraft's pentacle which is usually a round plate or board, often decorated with a pentagram, upon which cakes are often placed and consecrated during the traditional Cake and Wine ritual. Parallels can certainly be made with the partaking of bread and wine as seen in several of the world's major religions. This is just one of many interesting similarities that seem to reveal common threads running through so many spiritual paths, as if there are fundamental truths and perceptions, but time and human perspective has given them various slants leading to the formation and practice of new religions. Yet behind it all, a common human spiritual experience, a truth, is to be found.

Moving on, the East with its airy correspondence is, amongst other things, attributed to the censer of incense in Witchcraft and similarly, by a red scented rose in the Golden Dawn. A bowl or cup of water is representative of the West in both frameworks. Likewise the candle, or some form of fire is attributed to the south.

Magically speaking, the Order of the elements are based on the passage of the Sun (which presumes one is in the Northern Hemisphere), the source of all life and without which, none of us would be. The North is seen as the place of darkness, deepest night. The Sun is never seen there, dawning as it does towards the east, bringing with it the inspiration and creativity associated with the element of air. Continuing in its path, the Sun peaks in the South where it reaches the highest point in the sky giving us the hottest part of the day, noon. Hence we get the element of fire associated with the South. Continuing in its journey, the Sun drops lower, setting below the western horizon; which explains the association between the impending night and death at the western point of the circle. Here, the energy, as at the point of death, is flowing, transforming and changing as light becomes dark. Synonymous with the night, is the Moon, often associated with emotions and of course water due to its daily pull on the Earth's Oceans.

At this point, it is important to distinguish between the elements and elementals. One of the original members of Gardner's Cult, Fred Lamond, has recently written the book *Fifty Years of Witchcraft*\* in which he suggests that the elemental attributes for the four quarters, can and should be changed depending on one's physical location. For example, if you happen to live somewhere where there is a significant body of water to your East,

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\* 'Frederic Lamond, *Fifty Years of Wicca* p89, Green Magic 2004.

he suggests that you place water there instead of in its traditional location in the West. As far as the nature elementals go this makes complete sense and is a progressive way of viewing and working within the framework of modern Witchcraft with its strong association with nature spirits. However, basing a circle on elementals, as opposed to elements derived from the Solar Cycle, are two quite different things. Elementals are deities specifically associated with the manifestation of the four elements on this physical earthly plane (Malkuth). Elements, in the Golden Dawn tradition, are aspects of ones divine, higher self based on our own, personal Sun (Tiphareth consciousness), as viewed from our physical position, here on the Earth (Malkuth).

In both the Golden Dawn system and that of Witchcraft the North East is seen as a special place. It is the location of the entryway into the circle of death and rebirth, coming as it does from the edge of darkness, just before the rising of the Sun. Similarly, in the Golden Dawn system this is the place from where the Keryx (herald) makes their proclamations and initiates the start of each and every ritual, it is the place where the seed of light waits to unfurl; to realise its full potential.

Witchcraft, Masonry and the Golden Dawn, all place special emphasis on the East. It is a place of beginnings from which the first rays of the Sun's dawning are taken and then drawn out to create a sphere of light. Invocations to the Mighty Ones and consecrations all start in the East.

In Gardner's early Books of Shadows, the circle is cast three times. Similarly, the Dadouchos and Stolistes circumambulate three times around a Golden Dawn temple during its consecration by their fire and water. Three has long been a magical number representative of the two opposing forces, balanced by the third and is also the number attributed to that great spiritual birthing house, Binah. The thrice-cast circle is also seen in the *Key of Solomon*.

Other similarities can be seen in the central placement of the altar. Some modern Covens actually have the altar in the North or the East but originally, Gardner's writings seemed to favour the central placement although he suggests that during the Drawing Down of the Moon, the altar is to be pushed back and symbolically replaced by the High Priestess. There are also practical reasons for moving the altar to the edge for it means that you can have a central fire, the point within the circle, which, along with the outer circle, creates the astrological symbol of the Sun. A

central fire also serves as a good focal point in energy-raising rites and additionally, helps to keep ones skyclad body warm on a cold night!

## Initiation

The first degree initiation in Witchcraft has striking similarities to a Masonic initiation. In 1910, at the age of 26, Gardner had joined a Masonic Lodge (Sphinx Lodge No 107) in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Surprisingly, he had an unusually rapid advancement and went from Entered Apprentice to Master Mason in just over two months and his Grand Lodge certificate was officially issued on the 18th May 1911. Later, he became a member of the Johore Royal Lodge No. 3946, retiring from it in April 1931.

His experiences in the brotherhood may help to explain why it appears to have been such a big influence on the form that the Gardnerian first degree initiation would take. The similarities could also be explained by Gardner's involvement in Co-Masonry, an organisation open to men and women and whose rites are very similar to those of normal Freemasonry. To date there is no hard-evidence for Gardner having been a Co-Mason however, Doreen Valiente, in her book *Rebirth of Witchcraft* asserts that Gardner was. Furthermore, a high-ranking Co-Mason of our acquaintance assures us that Gardner was indeed a Co-Mason, but all documentation and supporting evidence for this has been lost so hard proof remains elusive. A vital part of this jigsaw seems to have been played by an organisation with which Gardner is confirmed as having been associated with, the Crotona Fellowship.

Following his retirement in 1936, at the age of 52, Gardner along with his wife Donna, moved back to England and in 1938, their main home was in the small town of Highcliffe on the Dorset Coast of England. That same year, according to Bracelin/Shah's biography *Gerald Gardner Witch*, whilst on one of his bicycle rambles, Gardner found himself in the nearby town of Christchurch. It was here that he noticed 'The First Rosicrucian Theatre in England', words that would no doubt have piqued his interest. Upon further investigation he discovered that it was the meeting place for the 'Rosicrucian Order Crotona Fellowship' (R.O.C.F.) , a Rosicrucian offshoot organisation conceived and realised by one George Alexander Sullivan, who used the nom-de-plume 'Aureolis', the middle name of Paracelsus who Sullivan believed to have been a Rosicrucian\*. Sullivan

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\* 'Heselton, *Wiccan Roots* Capall Bann p 58.'

believed that he was carrying out instructions, given to him by one of his ancestors, to create an Occult Society within which Rosicrucian teaching could be taught.

This fellowship seems to have been a blend of Rosicrucianism, Masonry and Theosophy. It represented itself by the image of a rose-adorned cruciform cross overlying a five pointed star. This same image is also in *Ye Bok* and suggests that Gardner's early Witchcraft writings were contemporary with his involvement with this Rosicrucian Order. The organisation also had strong ties to the local Co-Masons through Mabel Besant -Scott, daughter of Annie Besant the famed theosophist and when Mabel had joined the Fellowship in 1935, she was the head of Co-Masonry for all of England.

It has been suggested by Gareth Medway\* that it was actually Gardner's friend, Edith Rose Woodford-Grimes (also known as 'Dafo') who introduced Gardner to the Crotona Fellowship. Whether he happened upon it whilst cycling or was introduced to them it is known that shortly after his discovery, Gardner started attending meetings of the Crotona Fellowship and began to notice:

*'...a group of people apart from the rest. They seemed rather brow-beaten by the others, kept themselves to themselves. They were the most interesting element, however. Unlike many of the others, they had to earn their livings, were cheerful and optimistic and had a real interest in the occult. They had carefully read many books on the subject: Unlike the general mass, who were supposed to have read all but seemed to know nothing.*

*Gardner always felt at home with them, was invited to their houses, and had many talks with them. The day came when one said: "I have seen you before". Gardner, interested, asked where. "In a former life". Then all gathered around and agreed that this was so. What made it all remarkable to Gardner was that one of the number proceeded to describe a scene "exactly like one which I [Gardner] had written in A Goddess Arrives, which was due to be published any day then, and which in fact came out the following week".*

*Then someone said, "You belonged to us in the past - why don't you come back to us?"*

*"Now I was really very fond of them, and I knew that they had all sorts of magical beliefs" continues Gardner. "They had been very interested when I told them that an ancestress of mine had been burned alive as a witch at Newborough in Scotland about 1640; although I did not*

*mention Grandfather. And I would have gone through hell and high water even then for any of them".*

*He felt sure that they had some secret, there must be something which allowed them to take the slights at the theatre without really caring. He still thought that they might be mooting Yoga, or something of that nature. He asked them why they were in this community, and whether they believed what Aurelius [sic] had to offer. They explained that they had been co-masons, and had followed Mabs (Mrs. Scott) when she had moved to this place; and added that they enjoyed the companionship.*

*Gardner felt delighted that he was to be let into their secret. Thus it was that, a few days after the war had started, he was taken to a big house in the neighbourhood. This belonged to "Old Dorothy" -a lady of note in the district, "county" and very well-to-do. She invariably wore a pearl necklace, worth some £5,000 at the time.*

*It was in this house that he was initiated into witchcraft."*

Philip Heselton, in his books *Wiccan Roots* and *Gerald Gardner and the Cauldron of Inspiration*, has done an excellent job of researching the Crotona Fellowship, its members and the pivotal role that some of them seemed to have played in Gardner's own inception into Witchcraft. One important character in Gardner's story was played by the aforementioned Edith Woodford-Grimes who was, according to Craft High Priestess Patricia Crowther, the woman who gave Gardner his initiation. Edith was also a Co-Mason and a member of the Crotona Fellowship and is thought to have met Gardner during the War whilst they were both 'fire-watching'. Another woman who played a key role in the activities of this New Forest group, was Rosamund Isabella Charlotte Sabine, known affectionately as 'Mother Sabine'.

Little is known about Rosamund but we can be fairly sure that she had significant esoteric knowledge for in 1930, an article of hers entitled 'Rose of the World', about the Golden Dawn lamen, appeared in 'The Occult Review' (Vol 52 August 1930). Such knowledge can be explained by her membership a quarter of a century earlier, of the Order of the Morgenrothe (also known as the Independent and rectified Order of R.R. et A.C., Rosae Rubae et Aureae Crucis – the Red Rose and the Golden Cross. Or, the Independent and Rectified Rite of the Golden Dawn.) This was the mystical Order formed by A.E. Waite after the original Golden

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\* Gareth Medway *The Origins of Wicca.*

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\* J. L. Bracelin, *Gerald Gardner: Witch.* Pg 164 Octagon 1960.

Dawn Order had splintered into several groups following various schisms around the turn of the 20th century.

'Mother Sabine' certainly appears to have been fairly close to Gardner in the last years of her life for after her death in 1948, Gardner acquired a 'very nice little cabinet', used to store herbs and which had belonged to her.

On reflection, this progression of events in Gardner's life, appears to go a long way towards explaining why a Gardnerian first degree bears structure and wording reminiscent of Masonic sources. This subsidiary group of the Crotona Fellowship, who initiated Gardner, sound more like Occultists than Witches. Nevertheless, the rite must have been very powerful and dramatic and certainly served to give both impetus and purpose to Gardner and his ensuing mission to spread this magical current through the form of a 'Witch Cult.'

Aidan Kelly, in his book *'Inventing Witchcraft'*, goes one step further and opines that the Gardnerian First Degree Initiation is based on Masonry (including Co-Masonry), the Neophyte 0=0 ritual of the Golden Dawn (itself derived from the Mason's Entered Apprentice initiation) as well as the initiation ritual of the Fraternity of the Inner Light. As the Golden Dawn was created by people who were all Masons and as the Inner Light was created by Dion Fortune who had been a member of the Golden Dawn, this Masonic thread is unsurprising. Traditionally, there have always been strong links between Masonry and the Magical Orders.

There are many comparisons that can be made between the Masonic Entered Apprentice initiation, the Golden Dawn Neophyte ritual and a first degree initiation into Witchcraft. In all of them the candidate is hoodwinked (blindfolded). Some sort of cord is used to represent the spiritual restrictiveness of the material plane, in Masonry and Witchcraft it is given the same name, the 'cable-tow' and it is placed around the neck, in the Golden Dawn it is wrapped around the waist. A sharp instrument is placed to the chest, or used in some other way, to threaten the candidate and an oath is sworn which hints at terrible things that will happen if it should be broken. The parallels in the wording of the first degree oath, strongly suggests that the Craft one was derived from the Masonic one. The candidate is given a new name and is presented to the four quarters and in both Masonry and Witchcraft the end of the first initiation culminates in the formal introduction to, and presentation of, the Working Tools.

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\* Aidan Kelly, *Inventing Witchcraft*, Thoth 2007

Aside from Masonry, other influences on the Gardnerian initiation are detectable. In *'High Magic's Aid'*, Jan's initiation into Witchcraft is described, part of it involves introducing him to the Lords of the Watchtowers at the four compass points:

*'Take heed, O lords of the watchtowers of the [direction]. Jan, properly prepared, will be made a priest and witch.'*

Here we find an example of Gardner using magical terminology sourced, in this case, not from Masonry, but from the Golden Dawn's 'Opening by Watchtower' ritual which is derived from the 16th century work of Dr John Dee and Edward Kelley. Dee was the court astrologer to Queen Elizabeth I, a hermeticist, early mathematician, scientist and spy. Together, with the more psychically sensitive Edward Kelley, they wrote about the Enochian system of magic and the power of the four Enochian Elemental Tablets, or Watchtowers. These stand, invisibly, at the four quarters and are the homes for various deities and magical beings. The Enochian system is far from simple but its innate multilayered wisdom resonates strongly with the experienced Magician. This has meant that it has many proponents and it is on the curriculum of study within the higher grades of the Golden Dawn Inner Order system.

Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, the Gardnerian first degree has less in the way of esoteric, philosophical speeches in comparison to the Neophyte Ritual of the Golden Dawn, or indeed that of Masonry. This would appear to be another manifestation of the tendency that Gardner seemed to have of simplifying things, thereby making them more accessible and less daunting. Another idea that Gardner seems to have taken from the Golden Dawn is the position of the Enterer. In *Ye Bok* it is clear that you are to enter the circle using this sign. Again, this was later dropped.

There is less of a comparison to be drawn between the wording of the second degree initiation of Witchcraft and the subsequent grades in both Masonry and the Golden Dawn. A comparison can be drawn, however, between the spiritual idea presented by the second degree of Witchcraft and the Theoricus Grade of the Golden Dawn. Although Theoricus is seen as the third grade in the Outer Order of the Golden Dawn system, it is actually only the second grade as far as working ones way up the Tree of Life is concerned. It is achieved by treading the path of Tau, the Cross, from Malkuth to Yesod. This is known as the 32nd path and is ruled by

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\* Gerald Gardner, *High Magic's Aid* p81 Pentacle Enterprises 1993.

Saturn (planet of the Great Mother Binah) which has a strong connection with the underworld and descent myths. Similarly, the re-enactment of a descent myth plays a central part in the Gardnerian Second Degree.

In Gardnerian Witchcraft, as in Masonry and the Golden Dawn, there are three degrees (although the latter's degrees are made up of various grades). In Witchcraft, the third degree represents union on many levels, physical and spiritual with the former being seen as a physical manifestation, an earth-bound echo, of the latter. It is a time when ego is transcended and union with the divine, one's higher-self, is ideally achieved. The High Priestess lies across a centrally placed altar, her womb in the middle of the circle. She is Nuit the sky Goddess, waiting to be fertilised by the seed of Hadit, 'the flame that burns in every heart of man, and in the core of every star'. Thelemites will immediately recognise correlations between the Gardnerian Third degree and Crowley's Gnostic Mass and it is no secret that the latter was obviously a major source for the wording of the former. The ever astute Doreen Valiente also recognised the connection and subsequently rewrote the verse in the third degree rite, whilst retaining much of the symbolism suggested by Crowley's version.

Ego transcendence can also be said to be one of the aims of the third degree in the Golden Dawn, a degree which is obtained when one takes the Adeptus Minor grade and all the alchemical elements of your Outer Order work have been transmuted and fused into a golden whole.

## The Working Tools

In Witchcraft the implements of the Art are collectively referred to as the 'Working Tools', a term that is again used in Masonry.

In modern Witchcraft there are eight working tools; the Magic Sword, the Athame, the White-Handled Knife, the Wand, the Pentacle, the Censer, the Scourge and the Cords. Curiously, the cauldron and broomstick, items traditionally associated with Witchcraft, are absent from the list. This is not to say that they are not used by modern Witches, for indeed they are, but the Gardnerian Book of Shadows does not list them as one of the eight Working Tools presented to a Witch, following initiation. Instead the tools all bear far more resemblance to those suggested in the *Key of Solomon* with the cords and scourge being the exceptions. In his book *Witchcraft Today*, Gardner explains this curious absence as a deliberate move by the Witches of the burning times, for ownership of the cup

(cauldron) and broomstick, with their sexual attributes would have meant that they would have readily given themselves away. Again, this seems to be Gardner 'retro-fitting' the truth for as we have seen, it makes far more sense that the Witches' elemental tools are the same as those in the *Key of Solomon*, a book whose influence on Gardner is undeniable.

It should also be noted that *The Key* does not use the word 'Athame' but some of the modern French manuscripts do use the term 'Arthane' or 'Arthame' and it is generally considered that it is from these, that Gardner is likely to have conceived of the word 'Athame.'

*The Key* also uses the term 'pentacle', but it is worth noting that in Gardner's aforementioned, early, notebooks, he frequently uses the word 'pantacle' instead. Usage of the former word indicates that Gardner almost certainly acquired it from either the Golden Dawn or Crowley. In Witchcraft, cakes or other offerings are often placed and consecrated on the pentacle, or spells may be 'grounded' by it. The pentacle is also used for calling upon certain spirits though paradoxically, Gardner advises against this in his books.

The flail, another name for the scourge, is associated with the Egyptian God, Osiris, who is often shown with his arms crossed over his heart centre, a flail in one hand and a crook or wand, in the other. The crook represents mastery and dominion and could be likened to the Witches' athame, sword or wand. The flail exemplifies the concept of suffering in Order to learn and was used as a spiritual tool by way of flagellation in the Isis cult of Egypt and later, the Dionysian Cult of Greece. Similarly, in the 13th century, members of a heretical Christian sect, the flagellants, used leather thongs to fervently scourge themselves into a frenzied spiritual state of consciousness, presumably caused by the bodies' reaction to the increased levels of adrenalin and endorphins.

In Golden Dawn iconography the flail or scourge is associated with the martial sephira of Geburah, severity and whose number is five, thus providing one of several explanations for why five knots are traditionally tied on each of the eight strands of a Witches' scourge. Likewise, the wand or crook symbolism is attached to Chesed, mercy.

The 'Osiris position' is used in both the Golden Dawn and Witchcraft, with the former calling it the position of 'Osiris Risen' they are however both identical in that it involves crossing one's arms over the heart centre. In Witchcraft you also hold the athame or wand in the right hand so that it crosses over the scourge being held in your left hand, thereby forming

a human representation of the tree of life and bringing the macrocosm down to ones personal microcosmic level. The High Priestess adopts the Osiris Position during the 'Drawing Down of The Moon', when the divine feminine is invoked into her by the High Priest. Part way through she opens out into the Blessing Position so that the Goddess' energy can be passed to those present. The Blessing Position, in Gardners books, is also referred to as the Pentacle or Life Position and 'Isis Rejoicing'. The latter term is seen in Thelema, though the actual sign is different. The Blessing Position is also reminiscent of the 'Osiris Slain' position, however, in Witchcraft it is seen as a symbol of resurrection rather than death.

The Osiris position is also reminiscent of the skull and crossbones and reminds us that Osiris was a God of death and rebirth. Kabbalistically speaking, this position also indicates the importance of the two forces of severity and mercy, being balanced by the third, middle pillar force, of Tiphareth. For as Regardie recorded in The Golden Dawn:

*"Unbalanced Power is the ebbing away of Life. Unbalanced Mercy is weakness and the fading out of Will. Unbalanced Severity is cruelty and the barrenness of Mind."*

Osiris was a Sun God who was thought to bring the annual inundation of the Nile creating the fertile plains of Kemet. This also makes him a God of vegetation and explains why his skin is often shown as green. Cyclical in nature, his myth tells the story of his death and dismemberment at the hands of his darker brother, Seth, and his subsequent reassembly and rebirth, thanks to his mother, Isis. The story makes Osiris directly comparable to that of the fertile Horned God of Witchcraft, who also travels through a continuous cycle of death and rebirth throughout the wheel of the year.

In Witchcraft the Scourge's use and purpose is revealed through a section in the Book of Shadows referred to as 'Of the Ordeal of the Art Magical' which in part says:

*'So the binding of the initiate's hands increases the mental perception, while the scourge increaseth the inner vision. So the initiate goeth through it proudly, like a princess, knowing it but serves to increase her glory. But this can only be done by the aid of another intelligence and in a circle, to prevent the power thus generated being lost. Priests attempt to do the same with their scourgings and mortifications of the flesh.'*

*But lacking the aid of bonds and their attention being distracted by their scourging themselves and what little power they do produce being dissipated, as they do not usually work within a circle, it is little wonder that they oft fail.'*

Effective binding and flagellation can induce a trance-like, altered state of consciousness and with the scourge's association with Osiris and the fact that suffering so often does seem to be a prerequisite to learning, its use as a spiritual symbol in Witchcraft becomes clearer. Some of Gardner's detractors, however, suggest that the Scourge's inclusion was based on Gardner's inability to achieve the erection necessary for the performance of that ritual involving union on so many levels, The Great Rite. In this there may also be some truth, after all Gerald would have been in his seventies by this time!

The cord is something seen in the neophyte ceremony of the Golden Dawn, symbolic of the path of darkness, it is used to encircle the candidates waist three times and never to bind anyone or anything. The cord is also used in a slightly more intimidating way in Masonry where it is laid around the Cowan's neck and forms a cable-tow. In Witchcraft too, cords are used for binding arms and legs and to form a cable-tow around the postulant's neck. In Gardners early Books fo Shadows, the cable-tow was tied to a ring on an altar, an idea inspired by 'The Devil' Tarot card which depicts people, tied to the altar of materiality and slaves to their baser, nepheshistic instincts.

A section from Aleister Crowley's book *Magick*, has a chapter entitled 'The scourge, the dagger and the chain.' This passage appears in Gardner's notebooks, *Ye Bok* and *Text A*. The athame replaces the dagger and the cords, the chain. Along with the scourge, you thereby have the three alchemical instruments (according to Crowley) representing Mercury, Salt and Sulphur, respectively.

The elemental attributes of the four main tools of the Zelator Adeptus Minor in the Golden Dawn system, are the air dagger, fire wand, water cup and earth pentacle. In Witchcraft these correspond directly with the athame, wand, cup and pentacle and the same elemental associations are used by many Witches. However, the Magic Sword of the Z.A.M., used for banishing and invoking is attributed to fire. In Witchcraft, the sword is often seen as interchangeable with the athame, hence some Witches prefer to swap the attributes round for the wand and athame assigning them to

air and fire respectively. Gardner himself appears to have preferred the fire - sword symbolism as revealed by one of his ritual swords, still used by the oldest Gardnerian Coven in England.

Philip Heselton, biographer of Gerald Gardner, has had the opportunity to study this sword. In his book, *Gerald Gardner and the Cauldron of Inspiration*, he reveals that Hebrew is etched into the Sword blade. One side reads 'Jehovah Adonai Eheieh Jaye' whilst on the other 'Elohim Gibor' is inscribed. The latter phrase is attributed to Geburah on the Tree of Life and its use as an inscription on a sword blade is referred to in the '*Key of Solomon*' where it is said to impart the fiery Geburic qualities of force and control, to the sword.

The Pommel, which appears to have been added later, is based on a design found in the *Key of Solomon* and additionally features a pentagram on one side and the third degree symbol of the pentagram surmounted by a triangle, on the other. There is also a cavity where a jewel of some description was probably once situated. On the end of the sword 'Michael' is written in Hebrew. Michael, who is usually depicted as holding a sword, is the archangel of Hod and provides a direct channel between the martial sephira of Geburah and the earthly sephira of Malkuth. Michael is also the name given to the archangel of fire.

The cross guard is also based on the KoS design given in Mathers' translation, which uniquely, has two disks being held between two crescent shapes. This small detail appears to have been an innovation of Mathers' as the original Solomonic manuscripts do not depict the crossguard in this way. Four pentagrams are also inscribed on the crossguard, one on each side of the two disks. Again this is another detail absent from the original manuscripts, but was something that the Golden Dawn's Zelator Adeptus Minor Sword features and presumably, the idea originated with the Order.

Whilst the sword handle, pommel and crossguard are not bright red in colour, as is traditional for a Zelator Adeptus Minor's sword, its characteristics suggest that this was a function it could have possibly served at some point in its life.

Philip Heselton thinks that Gardner was not responsible for most of the design although one bit he almost certainly was responsible for is the Theban writing that the sword also bears. Theban is the traditional Witches alphabet featured in the Book of Shadows and as mentioned earlier, Gardner would frequently write passages in it and there is even a

whole translation of the *Grimorium Verum*, written by Gardner completely in Theban. In the case of this sword, the Theban appears to translate into Azen Tius with 'Azen' being a word that can be found in *Halliwells Dictionary of Archaic Words*, (which has also proven to be the definitive source for many of the archaic words that can be found in the Book of Shadows) and which means 'again'. Tius is an alternative name for Tyr the Nordic Sky God who is also frequently associated with war. According to the poetic Edda it is said:

*Learn victory runes if thou victory wantest,  
and have them on thy sword's hilt--  
on thy sword's hilt some, on thy sword's guard some,  
and call twice upon Týr.*

This appears to be connected to the rough translation of Azen Tius as 'Again Tius'. It also reveals Gardner's interest in the Nordic tradition and may explain why Gardner saw the North as the place from which power flowed, for in this tradition, North is the home to the Gods. Heselton suggests that this sword may have held the name the 'Sword of Nuada', a name shared with the magical sword in the stories of the Tuatha De Daanan where it is said to be one of the four great treasures of Ireland. Gardner is certainly known to have owned a 'Sword of Nuada' which reputedly once belonged to the Ancient Druid Order (originally called 'The Universal Bond.'). Gardner had a close friendship with George Watson McGregor Reid, who was chief of the Order from 1909 to 1946, following which, George's son, Dr Robert A. F. Reid, was installed as chief with Gardner acting as one of his signatory's.

'The Universal Bond' was a vehicle which drew upon many facets of the worlds religious and spiritual approaches including the revivalist druid movement, theosophy, Buddhism and the Golden Dawn system of Magic. George MacGregor Reid was a well-connected person and appears to have personally known (probably through Freemasonry), or respected several of the early members of the Golden Dawn, including Mathers, Brodie-Innes, and Crowley.

It is not clear why the sword was given to Gardner, but in later years, he would loan it back to the Order for their Summer Solstice Rites for it fitted snugly into the cleft on the Hele Stone at Stonehenge.

The 'Sword of Nuada' seems to have led an interesting life. Perhaps used at one point for Golden Dawn style rituals, and later being adapted,



presumably by Gardner himself, to be more in keeping with the rituals and symbols of Witchcraft.



*Sword of Nuada\**

## The Copying of the Book

Traditionally in Witchcraft, ones personal Book of Shadows must be hand copied from that of your initiator and much significance is placed on this procedure. Emphasis is often placed on the fact that every dot and comma must be accurately reproduced. This method of passing on magical knowledge is not restricted to Witchcraft. Crowley also insisted on such with the copying out of his 'divinely dictated' *Book of the Law* and he would have encountered this approach first-hand, during his time in the Golden Dawn.

At the turn of the twentieth century there were obviously no photocopiers, so the rituals and lectures of the Golden Dawn system were all written down, usually by hand. New initiates would be loaned the relevant material to copy for themselves. This would then be carefully checked by the Cancellarius (secretary). As in modern Witchcraft, this was seen as a good

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\* Picture by Philip Heselton

way to preserve secrets and occult knowledge and harks back to the days when knowledge was captured in this way by the careful illumination and reproduction of sacred writings by Monks and other religious adherents. Travelling even further back, this idea can also be seen in the immortalising of knowledge through carvings on buildings and stone tablets.

Gardner tended to have the Book of Shadows open and with him in the circle. In the *Key of Solomon*, one gets the impression that the Magus would have always had his book close to hand, especially with all those complex names and long formulae! As Gardner's early books contain significant passages from *The Key*, its place in the circle, would have greatly facilitated the recital of passages during rituals and had the added advantage of not relying on people to have an amazing memory.

## Other Members of the Golden Dawn and Gardner.

So far in this chapter we have gone through a bit of a tour-de-force analysis looking at some of the connections that exist between the development of the Gardnerian Book of Shadows, the Golden Dawn and the writings of some of its one-time members.

This chapter would not be complete without mention of one or two other one-time Golden Dawn members, who could have inspired Gardner in his quest to establish the Witch Cult.

### J.W. Brodie-Innes

J.W. Brodie Innes was, like Gardner, fascinated with old Scottish tales and Witch trials. Innes researched and wrote about them and his book *Scottish Witchcraft Trials* was published privately in 1891 as a limited edition of 245 copies. Later on, in 1917 an article of his; 'Witchcraft Rituals' was published in the Occult Review. Besides his historical accounts of Witchcraft, Brodie incorporated Witchcraft into several fictional novels with provocative titles such as *The Devils Mistress* and *For the Soul of a Witch*. It seems hard to believe that Murray would not have come across Innes' writings, but he is not mentioned in any of her book's bibliographies or

reference sections. It is known that Gardner had Innes' *Scottish Witchcraft Trials* in his library

In 1893, Innes ultimately became the Emperor of the Cromlech/Amen-Ra Temple in Edinburgh; one of several offshoot Golden Dawn temples that sprang up around the turn of the last century.

## Fraternity of the Inner Light and Gardner

Dion Fortune (Violet Firth), like Gardner, had a somewhat syncretic approach to magic with her blend of Christianity, Hermeticism and Paganism, which she referred to as the Devotional, Hermetic and Elemental Rays.

After leaving the AO, Fortune went on to birth a new organisation, the Fraternity (now Society) of the Inner Light. Whilst Dion Fortune's Fraternity was not based on Golden Dawn teachings, it is difficult to believe that her time in that Order would not have left its mark on her or indeed on her Orders teachings.

Fortune is probably best-known for her excellent literary works. Two of her most well-known books, *The Sea Priestess* (1938) and *Moon Magic* (1956) with their rich lunar symbolism, contain much that is relevant to modern day Witchcraft. It is thought that the Pagan undertones of these two novels, were inspired in part by a series of essays written by her fellow Inner Light member, (who also inspired the Moon Priest character in *The Sea Priestess*) Colonel Charles Seymour who we shall come to presently.

Dion had a reputation for being a dominant and headstrong lady who strongly believed in the magnetism and polarity that could be created between the two sexes. Consequently she did much work on the Inner Planes with this in mind.

*And the lives of a man are strung like pearls,  
On the thread of his spirit;  
And never in all his journey goes he alone,  
For that which is solitary is barren.*

'The Rite of Isis' – DF

We also see this concept of gender polarity in Gardner's Witchcraft but with a significant part of the work between the male and female being carried out in a more physical way, involving dance, sound, scourging, directed sexual energy, or a combination of these. Utilising the concept of 'as above, so below' these physical acts, echo onto the Inner Panes

and the High Priestess thereby becomes an earthly representative of the Goddess, the 'cave in the mountains' wherein dwells the seed of creation and inspiration. The High Priest embodies the fertilising forces of nature and like the two conjoined circles, exemplified by the infinity sign, the ideal aim of a magical working couple is to achieve harmony and balance through the reciprocal giving and receiving of energy.

## Charles Seymour and Christine Hartley

In the early 1930s, Colonel Seymour, a Freemason and an ex-army officer of good-standing, joined Dion Fortune's society. Although he was 10 years older than Dion, they worked closely although their relationship has been described as a love-hate one. This was perhaps due to Dion's belief that in a past life she had been a male priest who had ritually sacrificed Seymour, who, in that incarnation, had been a young and willing female.

Seymour had a characteristically different flavour to his Magic, in comparison to Fortune's. Much of his work revolved around the Old Gods especially Celtic ones, and he had a strong connection with the 'Green' or Elemental Ray. Many of his magical experiments were carried out with his working partner, friend, and fellow Inner Lighter, Christine Hartley.

Prior to Seymour joining the Inner Light, he had also been an initiate of the Golden Dawn and when he finally left the Inner Light, along with Christine Hartley, they joined the Merlin temple, an offshoot of the Stella Matutina.

Seymour was a prolific writer and many of his excellent, Pagan-flavoured essays were published in the Inner Light's Journal in the 1930s. Many of these have more recently been republished in *The Forgotten Mage* (1986) edited by Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki. One particular essay of Seymour's was entitled *The Old Religion* (also printed under the title 'The Elemental Ray' in Charles Fielding and Carr Collins 1985 book *The Story of Dion Fortune*) and, like most of his other Pagan writings, was first published privately in the Society of the Inner Lights journal in the late 1930s just a few years after the publication of Murray's *God of the Witches* in 1931.

In *The Old Religion*, Seymour describes the power of the 'Magna Mater', the Great Mother Goddess and several references to Leland's *Aradia*, a book that is undeniably a source of material and inspiration for the Gardnerian Book of Shadows, can also be found.

Intriguingly, Seymour's *The Old Religion*, contains one line; '... so also this entity, which we call the Great Mother, Great Isis, Dana, and by many other names...'. which is reminiscent of a line found in 'The Charge'; a passage that can be found in every Gardnerian Book Of Shadows.

There are several variations of 'The Charge' but the earliest seems to have had the title 'Leviter Veslis' ('Lifting the Veil') and the line in question goes: 'Listen to the words of the Great Mother, who of old was also called among men, Artemis, Astarte, Dione, Melusine, Aphroditite, and by many other names.'

The form of 'The Charge' often used today is a revamped version which was written by Doreen Valiente after she recognised some of the source material for Leviter Veslis. Indeed, 'The Charge' in the form that it was originally presented to Doreen, was undoubtedly cobbled together, presumably by Gardner, from *Aradia* by Leland, Crowley's *Book of The Law, Liber LXV* and *The Law of Liberty*, as well as one or two other published sources. Could Seymour's essay have been the initial source of inspiration for Gardner?

In her book *Rebirth of Witchcraft*, Doreen Valiente asserts that Gardner was a Co-Mason and therefore it is possible that he met both Charles Seymour and Christine Hartley through this shared activity. It is known that Seymour and Hartley had both become members of the Notting Hill Co-Masonry lodge, in 1941. Unfortunately, there seems to be no official record of Gardner having a connection with Co-Masonry or any of its lodges. However, as mentioned earlier, we have reason to believe that he was. We do know that at that time, Gardner maintained a flat in London and visited the Capital regularly, so it would certainly have been easy for him to attend Co-Masonic meetings.

Another possibility is that a connection could have been formed through the close companion and long-time friend of Gardner's, Edith Woodford-Grimes (also known by the name 'Dafo'). Philip Heselton in his book, *Wiccan Roots* reveals that Edith was definitely involved in Co-Masonry so by extension, this seems to make it very likely that Gardner was too.

A further possibility is that Gardner could have met Seymour when the latter joined the Home Guard in 1939. Gardner too, was involved with the Home Guard during the Second World War. Yet another possibility is that they simply met through many of the Occult soiree's that would have been held in the Capital.

There exists another, enticing avenue through which Gardner may have come into contact with Seymour's work. It could have occurred though Dion Fortune, amongst whose papers, according to Gareth Knight, Seymour's essay on the Old Religion was discovered. Philip Heselton, in his book *Gerald Gardner and the Cauldron of Inspiration* tells us:

*'There is an intriguing possibility that she [Dion Fortune] may have visited naturist clubs in Bricket Wood or even have had a chalet there. Gareth Knight refers to some land which had been acquired by Dion Fortune's Society of the Inner Light in 1948 which "was situated at... Brickett's [sic] Wood, that had been part of a naturist colony and which was now used only as an occasional country retreat for residents of the London headquarters."'* \*

The naturist colony at Bricket Wood referred to, was one that Gardner started to visit in the late 1930s, about 10 years before the Inner Light acquired their plot nearby. Charles Seymour died in 1943 but it may be possible that a Gardner- Fortune connection may have been forged as a result of this apparently shared, Bricket Wood connection. No definitive proof has so far come to light that could prove or disprove either of these possibilities.

Seymour's words resonated strongly with Doreen Valiente who was fascinated by Seymour's essay *The Old Religion*. Shortly after reading it in Gareth Knight's 1968 *New Dimensions Red Book* she writes in a letter to John Score:

*'I don't know if you know it; but in the New Dimensions Red Book, published by the Helios Press, there is an extremely interesting article, written by someone who was an early associate of Dion Fortune, about "the Old Religion" The only clue to this person's identity are the initials 'F.P.D.' presumably those of their magical motto... I've been trying to find out who this writer is; and I think it is either Mrs. Trenchall Hayes or J. W. Brodie-Innes, who was a member of the Golden Dawn.'*

The reason for Doreen's inquiry becomes apparent in the next paragraph:

*'The point is that a lot of the Moon Magic, Dion Fortune wrote about was definitely not taken from the Golden Dawn's teachings (which I have*

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\* Philip Heselton, *Gerald Gardner and the Cauldron of Inspiration*, p131. Capall Bann 2003. '

*studied). Therefore, it must have come from some other source; presumably the anonymous F.P.D. So there is a very interesting link – if we can find it. The paper reproduced in the ‘Red Book’ is, I am told, years old, and was found lying around in some bits and pieces of Dion Fortune’s writings.’*

This was of course written by Doreen prior to the revealing of ‘F.P.D.’s real name (Charles Seymour) by the biographer of Dion Fortune, Alan Richardson, in his 1986 book *Dancers to the Gods*.

## Summary

Recent research by scholars such as Philip Heselton, Aidan Kelly and Ronald Hutton, who have written books about Gardner and modern Witchcraft, have illuminated some of the darker historical corners of this now-popular spiritual and religious movement; a movement that has perhaps also gained popularity due to trends in popular fiction.

Whilst it seems clear from documentary evidence that Gardner’s Witchcraft was a ‘work in progress’ throughout the 1940s and 1950s, it doesn’t change the fact that Gardner believed he had a responsibility to pass on a magical stream, a tributary to the river of arcane knowledge. Such things have always tantalised people throughout the aeons and in this day and age, Witchcraft has provided a rich conduit for it.

Extant, personal, magical notebooks of Gardner’s reveal that the protoplasmic form of modern Witchcraft was an eclectic tradition that drew from many sources, not least of which was the writing of several Occultists many of whom had a strong Golden Dawn connection at some point in their life. Whilst Gardner’s collaboration with Valiente and others saw the removal of much of the biblical and grimoire material, it is interesting that Alex Sanders, one of Gardner’s spiritual successors, put a lot of ritual magic back into the Book of Shadows. A move that ultimately meant witches trained by Sanders were given the name ‘Alexandrians’.

Alex and Doreen, in their own way, were doing exactly what Gardner had done and It is perhaps ironic that some advocates of modern day Gardnerian Witchcraft appear to seek to codify it; a move that is counter to Gardner’s original ideas behind his ‘Witch Cult’.

Arguably the biggest influence during the formative years of Gardner’s Craft came via MacGregor Mather’s, with his translations of various, old, magical Grimoires, particularly the *Key of Solomon*.

In the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment of a more esoteric kind, occultists have always tended to influence each other, from MacGregor Mathers being influenced by Eliphas Levi and the unknown author(s) of the *Key of Solomon*, to Doreen Valiente and Gerald Gardner being influenced by Mathers and Crowley. There seems to be a sense of cyclicity about these things; of knowledge being passed down to be inherited and reinterpreted by younger generations. This is perhaps unsurprising for Earth is not the only one to have her Great Wheel. We live in a cyclical Universe where vast galaxies down to the tiniest sub-atomic particles are continually dancing around in their own unique orbits; defined by maths, mechanics and probabilities, embedded in a fabric of space-time, all woven together, as if by Magic!

# Doreen Valiente and the Missing AO documents

**D**oreen Valiente is a name that will forever be linked with the modern Witchcraft revival. This inquisitive, intelligent writer and Witch was born in 1922, in Mitcham, Surrey. Her maiden name, Dominy, later became Vlachopoulos following her marriage in 1941. After becoming widowed, it was her second marriage to Casimiro Valiente in 1944 that gave her the distinctive name, Doreen Valiente.

From an early age, Doreen had a keen interest in folklore, local legends, the Occult and Witchcraft and wrote several books on the latter. She gave numerous interviews and was a well-known figure in Brighton, where she lived for most of her adult life. Always keen to expand her knowledge, she became involved with various Witchcraft traditions including those of Gerald Gardner and Robert Cochrane but ultimately, she walked her own path. In every respect, 'Witch' is the aptest word to describe her, and was a term she would use when referring to herself.

Doreen first met Gardner in 1952. An interview with Cecil Williamson, then-owner of the Isle of Man Witchcraft Museum, appeared in *The Illustrated* showing Williamson collecting various ingredients for a 'poppet'. The article piqued Doreen's interest and she wrote to Williamson who passed her enquiry to Gardner who at that time, was the 'resident Witch' at the museum, but went on to become the owner shortly after.

Gardner was busy working on his seminal and highly influential book *Witchcraft Today* and was exceptionally eager to recruit new people into the 'Witch Cult'. A phrase he often used which was probably inspired by his friend and fellow folklorist, Dr Margaret Murray's book, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (1921). After reading Doreen's letter, Gardner traveled down to the South coast to meet her. His first impressions are revealed through a letter that Gardner subsequently wrote to Cecil Williamson (14th December 1952):

*My Dear Cecil*

*Meny thanks for your letter.*

*First, I went down to the South Coast & saw Mrs Valiente. But it was at the time when the weather & fog was so awfull, so actually she came to see me at Christchurch. What I wanted was to go to her & have a meeting, & see how she worked. But apparently ["they always" crossed out] the only place they can work is at a friend's flat, & he & it was not available when I was here. They have the Golden Dawn Rituals, & a lot of Golden Dawn Instruments. They have been mostly using magnatized Black Mirrors, to get Prophetic Visions, & she claims with success. But she says, the last time they tried it, in the middle the friend suddenly remembered had left something boiling on the kitchen stove. Rushed wildly to take it off, thus breaking the circle, & a locked door violently burst open, & Loud Noises & Almost [unreadable word] Phenomenon occurred, & they've done nothing since. Apparently neither seems to have realised that in that sort of work the Circle is for Protection & it is highly dangerous to break it (if you have succeeded in calling up anything, that is) ...'*

From this letter, it is clear that Doreen at that time was studying and experimenting with the Golden Dawn system of magic. This is in accordance with a statement she makes in her 1989 book, *Rebirth of Witchcraft*:

*'I had been a student of the Golden Dawn system of magic for years, long before I ever met Gerald Gardner.'*<sup>†</sup>

There is no evidence to suggest that Doreen was a member of a Golden Dawn temple, or any of the related offshoot groups, that existed in England in the 1940s and 1950s so it would be easy to conclude that Doreen was probably working from Israel Regardie's *The Golden Dawn* series of books, first published in 1937. However, our research suggests that Doreen's source for the magic of the Golden Dawn was not Regardie, but a complete set of Alpha et Omega manuscripts and tools that she had acquired as the result of a set of quite remarkable, and dare we say magical, circumstances.

These manuscripts are the source of the original AO material that is contained in this book and their origin and subsequent journey both in to and out of Doreen's hands, is the subject of this chapter.

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\* Letter in the collection of the Museum of Witchcraft at Boscastle.

† Doreen Valiente, *Rebirth of Witchcraft* p200 Phoenix 1989

## Doreen's Acquisition

In 1986, Doreen wrote a curious letter to Rev. T. Allen Greenfield, with whom she was corresponding, in which she asks:

*By the way, have Ripley's [the American company that acquires collectible oddities] got my Golden Dawn (A.O.) MSS which were in Gerald's Museum. Because if so, I'd jolly well like to have them back! They belonged to Frater "Nisi Dominus Frustra."\**

Doreen was correct in her suspicions. They had indeed been acquired by Ripley's, in 1973, after they were purchased along with the majority of the contents of Gardner's Witchcraft Museum, from Monique Marie Mauricette Wilson (nee Arnoux) who was bequeathed the collection in Gardner's Will.

Monique Wilson was one of several High Priestesses of the Wica (a term Gardner frequently used to refer to the members of the 'Witch Cult'). Born in 1923 in Haiphong, Vietnam, she met and married, Campbell Crozier Wilson who at that time was a Flight Lieutenant in the R.A.F. By 1957 they had moved to London where their daughter, Yvette Andree, was born. Shortly after, they moved to Scotland and settled in Perth where, amongst other things, they ran a small pea farm.

Monique had first written to Gardner in 1960, after hearing about his books and the Isle of Man Witchcraft Museum. Gardner referred her inquiry to Charles Clark, a Scottish friend and fellow High Priest, who subsequently initiated and began to train Monique and Campbell in the ways of the Craft. The following year, the Wilson's had a disagreement with Charles about a lady that they wanted to initiate into the Coven that he had helped them to establish in Perth. Charles, however, felt that she was unsuitable and could attract unwanted publicity and attention. There was a parting of the ways, and Monique turned to Gardner to whom she had become close, often helping him out with the Museum and the numerous enquiries that he would receive about Witchcraft.

Following Gardner's death, the Wilson's ran the Witchcraft Museum for several years but in the late 1960s, troubles with the Manx authorities concerning their young daughter and her involvement in Witchcraft rituals

had created some scandalous newspaper reports. The museum was also struggling financially and so in 1973, a deal was made to sell most of the Museum's collection to Ripley's following which, the Wilson's emigrated to Spain.

Included in Ripley's purchase was Gardner's infamous O.T.O. Charter, signed by Aleister Crowley and written in Gardner's special calligraphic style of handwriting that he seemed to reserve for his magical writings. Allen H. Greenfield, who among other things was the Secretary for Correspondence of U.S. Grand Lodge of the O.T.O., purchased the charter from Ripley's in 1985. Most of the Witchcraft material was subsequently purchased in 1987 by Richard and Tamarra James of the Wiccan Church of Canada, who had the foresight to raise the funds necessary to acquire it. Most of Doreen's Golden Dawn manuscripts, which had been on display in the museum, were included in their purchase and are still owned by them today.

Original Golden Dawn notebooks are clearly of important historical value. Documents like this can help historians to track any changes that were made. By factoring in other information, such as the personalities involved, and the social and political climate, it becomes easier to understand the oftentimes complex interplay of energies that come together to create History. Other, original, Golden Dawn document collections, can be found in the Warburg Institute and in private collections.

Having established that Doreen had owned some Golden Dawn notebooks which she had loaned to Gardner for use in the Witchcraft museum and which were then inadvertently sold to Ripley's, several questions remained. How, when and from whom did Doreen acquire them?

The answer appears to lie in the story about some Golden Dawn notebooks, recounted in Gardner's 1960 biography *Gerald Gardner: Witch* (Octagon Press). This book, whilst attributed to Jack Bracelin was actually written by the Sufi writer, Idries Shah. Penned whilst Gardner was still alive it could be considered almost autobiographical.

Now Gardner, ever the trickster, was very deft at hiding things in plain sight and like several Occultists before him (and since), was prone to fits of creative exaggeration. It was certainly not unknown for him to give veiled or deliberately misleading accounts of something whilst simultaneously retaining some elements of truth. This was usually in an effort to make a story sound even more interesting, but was also done out of respect for people's privacy. One such example can be seen in an interview he gave in

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\* Letter from Doreen Valiente to Rev. T. Allen Greenfield dated 8th August 1986. Viewable online at [www.geraldgardner.com/archive/valiente/index.php](http://www.geraldgardner.com/archive/valiente/index.php)

the early 1960s to the reporter, Jean Macauley of the Scottish newspaper The Daily Record who wrote of him:

*'This self-confessed, severely-criticised witch told me he was a Scot. It is 72 years since he left the parental home in North Berwick. The skeleton in the family cupboard was his grandfather in North Berwick, who was a witch.'*

This is almost certainly an affectation; Gardner was actually born at the family home in Blundellsands, near Liverpool. However, North Berwick is well known for its association with Witchcraft as it was there, in the 1590s, a group of witches reputedly met and conjured up a storm to destroy the ship carrying King James VI and his bride, back from Denmark. Gardner would certainly have known of this story, and almost certainly used that knowledge to make his story sound more pertinent and interesting.

Those who knew Gardner would often refer to his ability to deliberately mislead people, taking them up the wrong path, and it is amusing to note that in his book, *Witchcraft Today*, Gardner tells us:

*'...for witches are consummate leg-pullers; they are taught it as part of their stock-in-trade.'*

Bearing this mischievous personality trait in mind, let us take a look at what is said in *Gerald Gardner: Witch* about the origin of some Golden Dawn material that he acquired for his museum.

*'...One day this lady was talking to her bank manager. He was a book collector, and he knew that she was especially interested in magical works. He did not know that she was a witch.*

*"I saw something that would have made you cry the other day", he said.*

*"What?"*

*"I was valuing for probate some things belonging to an old doctor who recently died. He had several books, which I bought from the widow"*

*"Yes, but what would make me cry?"*

*"He had a lot of magical manuscripts, which the widow is going to burn".*

*"But she shouldn't do that".*

*"I know; but it is no use. I tried to buy them, but she is adamant. She hates them, is afraid of them, and she is going to burn them".*

*The witch felt that she could not very well ask the name and address, but managed to bring the subject around to the district where the doctor had lived. She got on a bus and went there. People in the neighbourhood told her how to find the house of the local doctor who had died.*

*"It was a semi-detached house, pebble-dashed. She went up the little path which divided at the house, right or left. She went right. She saw the front door, with a porch over it, at the side of the house. She knocked and rang for some time. There was no answer. She wondered what to do. Then she noticed that a pebble from the wall had fallen onto the grass. She took it to "form the link" and hurried home, for she had work to do.*

*She called in some friends that night, and they did what was necessary, and then she went to sleep".*

*She woke up after a while, and felt that she was out of her body, naked. Her nose seemed to be pressed against something. She was out in the open air, and it was dark. Against the sky she saw the outline of the porch of the front door of the pebble-dashed house...*

*"She willed hard and suddenly she was inside the house. She could see a hand pointing to a green satin divan, with a lot of dark-coloured books lying upon it".*

*A voice seemed to say: "Now are you satisfied?" Then she woke up to find herself in bed.*

*Next morning the bank manager telephoned. "I have had a most curious phone call from that widow I was telling you about. She is in a strange state. She says that I have a lady friend who will take away those magical manuscripts that I told you about. Now, I have not spoken to anyone about them except yourself. Can you explain this? I forget the name... Yes, here it is,... Mrs. Blank. Do you know her?"*

*The witch said she did not know her, but would go to see her if she wished it.*

*That afternoon the witch visited the widow. "You are from the manager of the bank... come in".*

*She was ushered into a room: there was the content of her dream, a green satin-covered divan with a pile of bound manuscripts on it. "Now are you satisfied?" the widow said, "I tried to burn them, and something*

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\* Gerald Gardner, *Witchcraft Today*. Pg 29 Arrow 1970.

*made me take them out of the stove. And I am very frightened. Will you please take them away?’*

*‘There were twenty-eight magical books, two magical swords, two pentacles, and some other things. The manuscripts were those given to initiates into the Golden Dawn - a society started by the magicians MacGregor Mathers and Wynn-Westcott. They should have been learnt by heart and returned to the organization.\* One bore the name of Count MacGregor de Glenstrae, a name used by Mathers. She kept the swords, but gave the MSS. to Gardner, who placed them in his Museum.†*

It would seem that the ‘Witch’ being referred to, is almost certainly Doreen Valiente and that this story does bear some truth about the origins of the Golden Dawn material that Gardner had in his museum. Confirmation of this seems to come from a letter Gardner sent to Cecil Williamson, dated the 16th January 1954, in which he writes:

*‘Have been getting a lot of fresh Crowley and G. D. manuscripts – without having to pay a penny for them.’*

This would seem to tie in very nicely with the fact that Gardner had met Doreen just over a year previously. The story seems to be further confirmed by an undated letter Doreen wrote to Gerald Yorke, collector of magical paraphernalia and Crowley’s archivist, which has been preserved in the Yorke collection, owned by the Warburg institute in London.

*‘Dear Mr. Yorke,*

*My friend Gerald Gardner tells me that you would like to hear from me, and has passed on to me a couple of letters he received from you, about some G.D. manuscripts in my possession. We of the Craft are not, as you know, fond of discussion and publicity, and hence I was frankly somewhat reluctant to enter into correspondence.*

*However, it has come to my knowledge that it has been suggested that I am a mythical personage, a mere figment of Gerald’s imagination.*

*This, of course, is not so. I, and others known to me, have been followers of the Old Gods for many years though we see no reason to make announcement of the fact to the world at large.*

*The story which Gerald tells - rather indiscreetly - of how the manuscripts were obtained is in the main true, though he does not know some of the details. It is not the first time that the Craft has acted to prevent manuscripts and ritual objects from getting into the wrong hands, and I do not expect that it will be the last. The disappearance of the ritual mask commonly known as the Dorset Ooser was another such instance.*

*It is most kind of you to offer to let me see some of your manuscripts, and I shall be pleased to make your acquaintance. However, at the moment I see no likelihood of my coming to London, at least in the near future. Perhaps you would care to communicate with me through Gerald.*

*You need waste no time drawing conclusions as to my whereabouts from the postmark on this letter. It has, in accordance with custom, been sent to another friend in the Craft to be posted.*

*Yours sincerely  
Ameth*

*[Doreen Valiente’s magical name]*

Returning to the story from *Gerald Gardner: Witch*, there are not twenty-eight books in the James’ collection, as suggested by the tale. This may imply that the collection was partially broken up at some point, probably prior to its export to the USA. One of the notebooks in the James collection, in accordance with the story in *Witch*, does bear the name ‘Comte MacGregor de Glenstrae’ and Doreen did own some Golden Dawn magical tools. These are now in the possession of John Belham-Payne, to whom she bequeathed them. There are plans afoot to create a museum where they can be permanently housed and viewed.

## The Golden Dawn Room!

Doreen’s Golden Dawn notebooks were displayed for many years in the ‘Golden Dawn Room’ of Gardner’s Witchcraft museum which, as an interesting aside, was decorated largely by Steffi and Kenneth Grant with assistance from Gerald Yorke shortly before Gardner purchased the museum from Cecil Williamson. There were other Golden Dawn artifacts on display too, many of which have now been sold to various persons by

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\* Gerald gets it wrong here. Each person was given a manuscript to copy, when this was done the copy was checked by a senior official in the Order and they were allowed to keep it. This was on the condition that the copy was returned to the Order on their death. In the earliest years there was also an official copyist, although she never progressed beyond the Neophyte Grade.

† J. L. Bracelin, *Gerald Gardner: Witch*. Pg 179 Octagon 1960.



Ripley's and it is possible that some of these items, may also have come from Doreen's collection.

In the original 1950s Witchcraft Museum's pamphlet and guide we find a small description of the books:

*'Case No. 7. A complete collection of the secret manuscripts of the Order of the Golden Dawn, a famous magical fraternity to which Aleister Crowley, W. B. Yeats, and many other well-known people at one time belonged. It was founded by the late Dr Wynn Westcott and S. L. MacGregor Mathers, and claimed descent from the original Rosicrucians. Aleister Crowley quarreled with the Order and broke away to found his own fraternity. The magical working of the Order of the Golden Dawn is founded upon the Hebrew Cabala, and its Cabalistic knowledge was kept very secret, though some of it has now found its way into print; but most of the contents of this case have never before been available to the public.'*\*

The notebooks in the James' collection consist of a series of small pocket-sized jotters with dates on them that range from 1902 to 1908. They contain the initiations for the five outer Order grades; 0 =0 (Neophyte), 1=10 (Zelator), 2=9 (Theoricus), 3=8 (Practicus), 4=7 (Philosophus), as well as the Portal and Second Order rituals. There are also several 'Flying Rolls', lecture notes, and examination answers and several of them have official printed stickers on the front and are labelled as belonging to the 'Hermetic Order of the A.O.' (Alpha Et Omega). The earliest one, dated 1902, bears Dr Edmund Berridge's signature and is labelled with an even earlier official sticker which reads 'Hermetic Order of the G.D.' with the 'G.D.' crossed out and 'A.O' handwritten over the top.

Berridge whose magical name was 'Resurgam' (I shall rise again), was the Cancellarius (secretary and archivist) of the Isis-Urania temple with Mathers being the Imperator (leader) and Wynn Westcott the Praemonstrator (teacher).

Interestingly, the stickers on the front of many of these books, could possibly reveal another of Dr. Westcott's successors; Westcott's old address of 396 Camden Road, London, has been crossed out and replaced with 'Dr C. Gibbes, 83 Barkston Gardens, Earls Court, London'. Cuthbert Chapman Gibbes is listed in the 1901 census as having been a physician,

and was almost certainly a Mason. As it was usually the Praemonstrators name and address that was given on the front of books, it is possible, but not definite, that in 1902, it was Dr. Gibbes who held this position.

The majority of the notebooks, in accordance with Doreen's statement to Greenfield, have the magical name Nisi Dominus Frustra written inside. This person's real name, as evidenced by the signature written on the front cover of many of them, was H. D. Kelf.

Henry David Kelf, in the 1901 census record, is listed as being a pharmaceutical chemist dispenser living in Camberwell, London. He subsequently became a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons and a Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians, London. Having probably obtained these additional qualifications via the Society of Apothecaries which would then have enabled him to register with the General Medical Council and practice as a doctor without having done a formal medical degree. His magical motto, 'Nisi Dominus Frustra', is the motto of the city of Edinburgh and means 'Except the Lord in Vain'. This is a heraldic contraction of a verse from the 127th Psalm: 'Except the Lord build the house, They labour in vain that build it. Except the Lord keep the city, The watchman waketh but in vain' which is also a key phrase from the Golden Dawn's Zelator ritual.

As a small aside to this, R. A. Gilbert in his book *The Golden Dawn Companion*, mentions that there was a Lucy Margaret Bruce with the magical motto 'Nisi Dominus Frustra'. However, she was initiated in 1907, into the Stellar Matutina, a Golden Dawn offshoot group created by Dr. Robert William Felkin and John William Brodie Innes following one of the Orders schisms. As the name on the front of the notebooks is 'H. D. Kelf' and as these notebooks go back to a time before Lucy's initiation in 1907, it would seem that these two individuals just happened to have the same magical motto. This is not as unlikely as it may at first sound for in the early days of the Golden Dawn, peoples magical mottos were often derived from their families heraldic motto, or those of a city with which they had strong ties.

Death records reveal that Henry David Kelf died on the 25th October 1951, aged 76. He was living on Sandbanks Road in Poole with his wife, Clara Louisa. This was just a short bus journey away from Doreen, who at that time, was living in Bournemouth. It seems almost certain that the 'Doctor' in Gardner's story was Henry and it was his widow, Clara, who

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\* Viewable online at <http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/towns/castltwn/witch.htm>

allowed 'the Witch', Doreen, to take the notebooks and Golden Dawn equipment.

Many of the notebooks also bear Doreen's handwriting. She appears to have gone through them and in pencil, has added her own thoughts and notes on the material. Unsurprisingly, the information in the notebooks appear to have influenced Doreen's thinking, and the course that her own magical path took. In her personal diaries and jotters she often wrote things in Hebrew, the basic magical alphabet of the Golden Dawn, which you are required to learn in the very first grade. Hebrew is not really associated with Witchcraft; where Theban is usually the magical alphabet of choice. As Doreen had these notebooks prior to meeting Gerald Gardner it seems certain that they were responsible for both prompting, and helping her to learn Hebrew whilst she endeavoured to learn and work the Golden Dawn system of magic.

Doreen seems to have had a great respect for some of the ideas and essays that she read in the notebooks. So much so, she copied a large chunk of Flying Roll no. 5, 'Thoughts on Imagination' by Dr Edmond Berridge, into her own, personal Book of Shadows, which she wrote shortly after being initiated by Gerald Gardner, in the Summer of 1953. Whilst Israel Regardie had published a lot of Golden Dawn material by 1940, this particular Flying Roll, was not published until 1972, when it appeared in Francis King's book *Astral Projection, Ritual Magic and Alchemy*, so Doreen's source was almost certainly the notebooks.

Coincidentally, or perhaps by design, Doreen's knowledge of the Golden Dawn came to the rescue of some important Golden Dawn artefacts which had belonged to Maiya Tranchell Hayes, the mentor of Dion Fortune. In 1966 the Daily Telegraph ran a story entitled 'Witch's Box Found on Beach'. The box was found on the beach between Selsey Bill and Bracklesham Bay in Sussex, and contained quarter banners, sceptres, two embroidered stoles and Egyptian style headresses. Doreen's local paper, *The Evening Argus*, picked up the story and she immediately wrote to them to put them straight saying; "These things are not part of a witch's regalia. They are actually part of the regalia of a very famous Order called the Golden Dawn." Doreen then contacted someone she knew in London and facilitated the return of the items to the proper persons, which in this case, was probably Francis King who at that time, was collecting material for his books.

As we have seen, this strange connection between the Golden Dawn and the pioneers of modern Witchcraft did not begin with Doreen Valiente's remarkably coincidental acquisition of a set of AO notebooks and her subsequent work with the Golden Dawn system of Magic. Nor did it begin with the pivotal role she played in ensuring that Tranchell-Hayes' Golden Dawn regalia was returned to the proper persons at a time when the Golden Dawn was largely defunct. The Golden Dawn current, its members, and its system of magic also influenced Gerald Gardner and the early development of what has now come to be known as the 'Gardnerian Book of Shadows'. This book has heavily influenced the resurgence of interest in modern Witchcraft in its many forms and has proven to be a successful spiritual channel for people all over the world today.

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\* 'Evening Argus, October 31st 1966.