



The Moonlight Post



THE WITCH
TRIALS

HISTORY
OF THE
PENTACLE

WITCHCRAFT IN HISTORY

THE VERY
FIRST WITCH

THE FATHER
OF MODERN
WICCA



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Moonlight Post



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Part of a spiritual journey always involves going back to the past...

It's not about the inability to move on, but as a way to learn from what has happened and gain a perspective that only looking into the past offers.

Doing so will give you a deeper understanding of yourself and allows you to gain wisdom.

If you've ever wondered how Wicca started or where the pentagram or the witch's broom came from... it's perfectly natural!

It really helps to understand where it all began -- the witchcraft symbols, the trials, the very first person wrongly accused of witchcraft...

I hope this issue touches your heart and makes you proud to be a witch!

Blessed be!

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The very first witch in history would be our ancestors. Those who practiced witchcraft prior to the Christianization of Rome.

But the very first person accused of witchcraft would be Alice Kyteler and her servant. Dame Alice de Kyteler or Kettle was born in Kilkenny at Kyteler's Inn in 1280.

She was the only child of a prominent Hiberno-Norman family. Kettle was a noblewoman; and together with her servant Petronella, were victims of the world's earliest recorded witch trial.

Dame de Kyteler was married four times. And she outlived all her four husbands. The last of the husbands, John le Poer became sick in 1324.

When he realized he was dying, he changed his will to make sure his wife would be well-compensated after his death. Le Poer's children from his previous marriage lost their inheritance at the rewriting of the will.

His children were enraged, and together with their mothers and their husbands, accused Dame de Kyteler of poisoning their father and casting evil spells on them. They also accused her of running a brothel and dismembering animals.



THE VERY FIRST WITCH

DAME ALICE DE KYTELER

IN RECORDED HISTORY

They all brought their complaints to the Bishop of Ossory. Richard de Ledrede convened a Court of Inquisition to review the facts of the case.

But bishop de Ledrede had an ulterior motive. He believed that the wealthy city of Kilkenny were becoming increasingly secularised. He wished to reinstate the church's power in the city.

You can guess the outcome of the evaluation. The inquisition concluded that there was a coven of witches or sorcerers operating in the city headed by Dame de Kyteler.

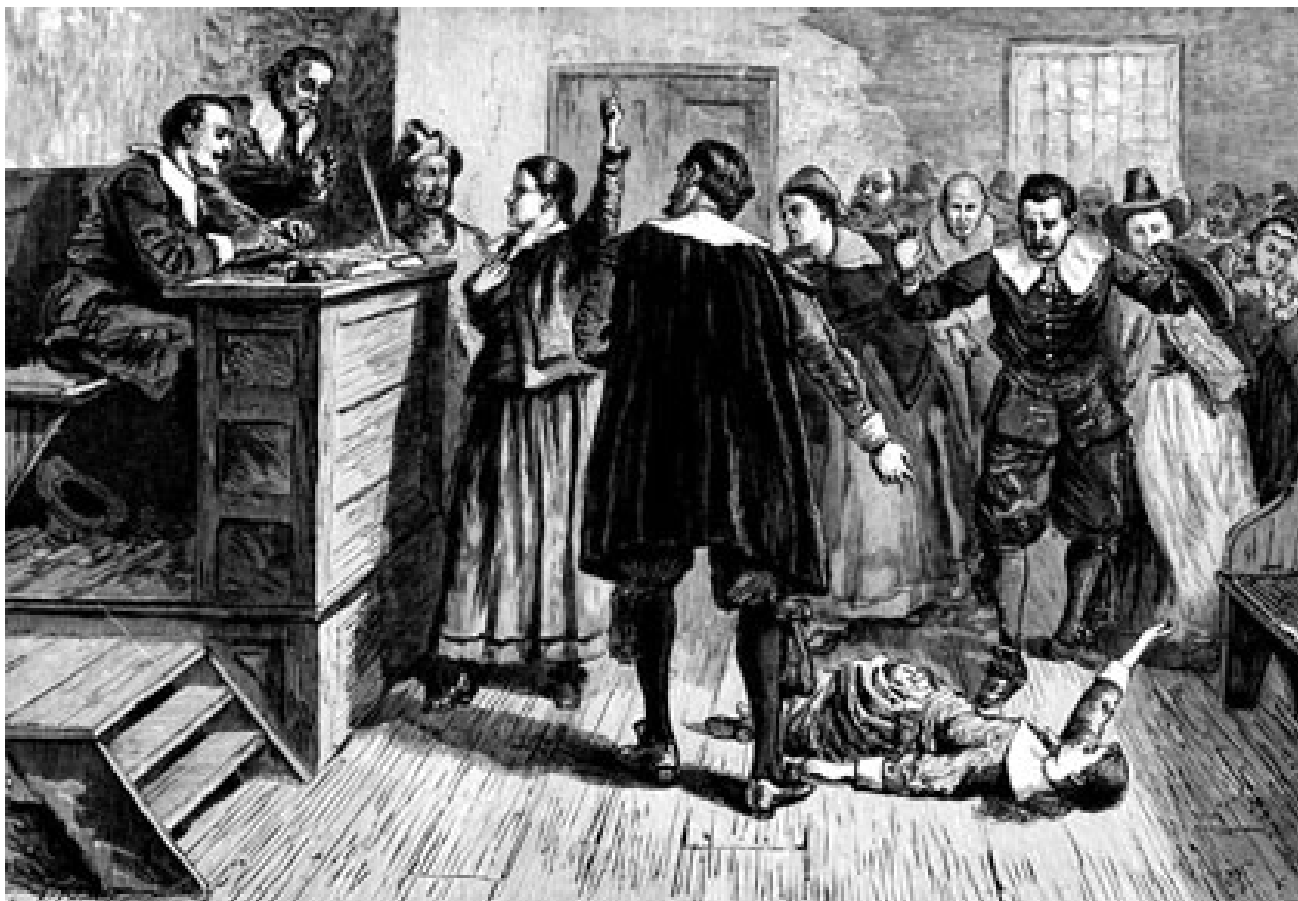
The bishop had the Dame arrested and the bishop himself was also arrested eventually and imprisoned for 17 days. This only made de Ledrede angry and set out to pursue the Dame and her followers.

He had many of her servants jailed and made them confess to sorcery. On learning of these alleged confessions, Dame Kettler left. There were no records of her after 1324.

The bishop and his inquisition searched her house and publicly burned items they claimed to find there like ointments, powders, the fat of murdered infants, dead animals, men's fingernails, and various tools for witchcraft.

Petronella was tortured under false accusations of heresy and she eventually confessed to witchcraft. Acting on her confession, the bishop had her flogged and burned at the stake.

Petronella was one of the first people to be charged with witchcraft in Europe. She was also the first person in Ireland to be burned at the stake.



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WITCHCRAFT IN ANCIENT EGYPT





The ancient Egyptians were known to practice various forms of witchcraft with a mathematical precision. The ancient Egyptians were not feared and were viewed with reverence.

Egyptians thought witches were an important part of society, because a witch in ancient Egypt could be called upon to solve any number of problems.

PHARAONIC EGYPT

In Pharaonic Egypt, the priests controlled magic. They were the guardians of the knowledge bestowed upon humans by the gods. It was magic that could ward off the negative outcomes.

The lector priests could read the ancient magic texts which possessed the highest form of magic. Lector priests were responsible for guiding the dead on their path to rebirth.

The healing priests were responsible for warding off plagues. The lower priests were

responsible for ridding the city of reptiles and insects.

BC

By the first millennium BC, magic was no longer only in the hands of the priests. The magicians and the witches could use magic to help the people. The Egyptians used spells and amulets for every purpose.

Midwives and nurses used magic to help the sick and women in childbirth. Witches were also consulted when evil spirits were causing a disturbance.

THE BOOK OF THE DEAD

The now very famous Book of the Dead had a wide range of spells that could change the fate of those who sought the help of the priest or the magician.

Most Egyptians would have a public name and a private name to protect themselves from bad magic. Because the only way you could perform a spell against another person was if they knew the other person's private name.

WITCHES IN HISTORY

□ Laurie Cabot

Laurie Cabot was one of the people who popularized witchcraft in the United States.

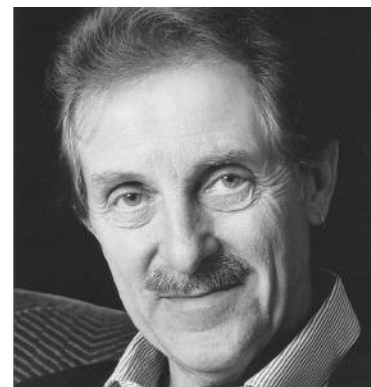
Her interest in the magical arts led her to New England (she's from California).

After years of studying the craft, she set up shop in Salem, Massachusetts.

She was careful not to declare herself a witch. Even though the year was 1970, the word "witch" was still not accepted in Salem.

When Laurie came out of the broom closet (due to her cat familiar), she became a national celebrity.

She set up a coven and a witchcraft shop, both became very well-known and popular. The shop even became a tourist destination.



Laurie Cabot rapidly became one of the most high-profile witches in the world and she is also participates in community activities.

The governor of Massachusetts himself, Michael Dukakis, declared her the official “Witch of Salem” thanks to her influence and good work in the community.

Laurie never performs dark magick because she believes that any curse will come back to haunt you.

According to her, witchcraft is magic, astrology, and environmentalism combined in a scientific manner. She is the author of many books on her practice.

And although Laurie Cabot is hailed as the High Priestess of Wicca, she says she does not actually practice Wicca...

...because she was already doing it long before Gerald Gardner Introduced Wicca to the world.

□ *Raymond Buckland*

Raymond Buckland is regarded as “The Father of American Wicca.”

Buckland’s family immigrated to the United States and settled in Brentwood, Long Island, New York.

His interest in the occult was strong but he was still without a religion and felt there was something missing in his life.

Shortly after his arrival in the States two books came into his possession: *The Witch-Cult In Western Europe* by Margaret A. Murray and *Witchcraft Today* by Gerald B. Gardner.

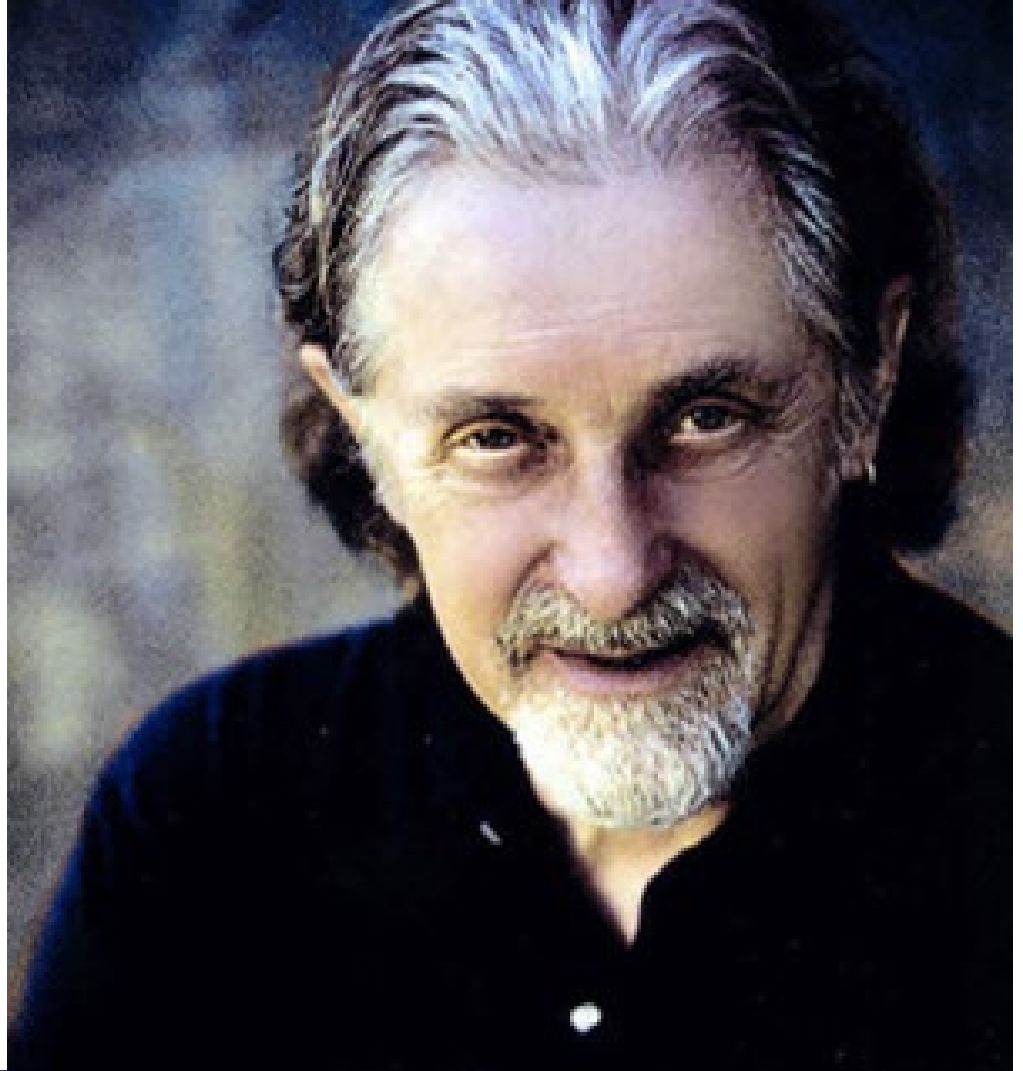
He was deeply influenced by Gerald Gardner’s book. So much so that he took Gerald Gardner’s teachings and created his own variation called Seax-Wicca.



Buckland's Long Island Coven would become one of the great incubators of American Paganism.

The "The Long Island Line" of Gardnerian Witchcraft would evolve from it. Most well-known witches of the 20th and 21st century are Long Island Line Witches who can all be traced back to Buckland.

He is a Wiccan priest and a revered expert in all things neo-pagan. He spent decades as the most recognizable spokesman and the foremost expert of the craft.



□ *Agnes Sampson*

Agnes Sampson was a Scottish midwife and healer.

King James VI of Scotland married Anne of Denmark-Norway, who was very fearful and bewildered by the subject of dark magic.

The Queen's fears affected the king and after they experienced dangerously treacherous storms sailing back to Scotland, James VI launched a campaign against witches.

His wife's influence was so evident that he came to the conclusion that witches had cast a spell on Mother Nature and started the horrendous storm.

Agnes Sampson was one of the 70 people accused of being witches in the North Berwick.

People confessed to witchcraft by torture and the questioning often times came from the King himself.

Agnes doggedly denied the charges against her (she was charged with attending a witches' coven on Halloween night to help create the storm that plagued the King and Queen's voyage.)

Unfortunately, the torture became too much for her take and



it broke her spirit. Sleep deprived and exhausted by being bound in a witch's bridle (an instrument that inserted four prongs in the mouth and was attached to a wall), she confessed to being allies with Satan and conspiring to kill the King.

She was strangled and burned to death.

□ *Dion Fortune*

Dion Fortune was a British occultist and author who wrote prolifically about the occult and used her magickal prowess to help people during the Second World War.

In 1924, she founded the Fraternity of the Inner Light, a magickal society dealing with religious philosophy and alternative realities.

During the Second World War she organized her own contribution to the war effort on a magical level.

With her meditation group, she operated in the midst of the Blitz despite a bomb bringing down the roof of her headquarters in 1940.

This period was well covered by a series of weekly publications and letters. They were later published as Dion Fortune's *Magical Battle of Britain*.

She died of leukemia in 1946, leaving behind her magical society, which has survived to this day.

In the book, "The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft," Dion is considered as "the foremost female figure" of early 1900s British occultism.

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THE WITCH TRIALS WE FORGET TO TALK ABOUT

When you think of witchcraft trials in America, you'd automatically think of Salem, Massachusetts.

Bet you didn't know that by the time Salem's witch trials started in 1692, Connecticut -- the only colonial American place other than Salem -- was already winding down its half-century of witch trials and executions.

In 1647, five years after Connecticut made witchcraft a crime punishable by death, Hartford saw

the first witch-related execution. Also Young was sent to the gallows for an epidemic in a nearby community.

Puritan settlers

Life was bleak for these colonial settlers. When they weren't busy defending themselves from the natives, they had to deal with hunger, the cold and the illnesses.

Of course, they thought someone was to blame

for all this. The settlers were Puritans and therefore, the presence of Satan was a daily reality.

These colonials took to heart Exodus 22:18, with its instruction that, “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.”

Which meant that anyone who didn’t conform in lifestyle, appearance, or demeanor to the rigid Puritan ways risked being persecuted.

Between 1647 and 1697:

Three dozen people were charged with witchcraft in Connecticut.

Eleven were executed by hanging.

Nine of the 11 were women.

The two men executed were hanged along with their wives.

Those who weren’t sentenced to death fled their community.

Many others were banished.

The confession

Connecticut’s second executed witch, Mary Johnson, was sent to the gallows in 1648 after having been detained and tortured for years.

Under duress, she admitted to “familiarity with the Devil” and “uncleanness with men and devils.” Her confession became the very first recorded confession of witchcraft in the American colonies.

Just a single witness was needed to mount a trial and conviction during the trials in Connecticut, which was terrifying because if anyone at all wanted

revenge against you, then they could easily accuse you of witchcraft.

As would later be the case in Salem, mostly women were targeted. Women were also blamed for the misdeeds or recklessness of men.

In one case, after a man accidentally shot and killed another man, a woman named Lydia Gilbert was convicted and sentenced to death for causing the incident through her witchcraft.

Connecticut witch-hunting reached its peak in 1662 with the Hartford Witch Panic that killed three witches within several weeks’ time.

No witch-related executions took place after 1662, according to Connecticut’s Office of Legislative Research. Because a testimony from multiple witnesses was then required in order to obtain a witchcraft conviction.

Connecticut’s colonial governor John Winthrop the Younger had begun to question the “evidence” in the trials. Due to this, many of the accused after 1662 were acquitted and some were even awarded damages for having been slandered.

The Salem Witch Trials

In 1692, when the Salem witch trials began, Fairfield, Conn., saw an outbreak of witchcraft accusations. But none resulted in execution.

Though witchcraft would technically remain a capital crime in Connecticut until the 18th century, the courts there were growing weary of witchcraft trials.

They understood them to be a result of personal feuds.

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History of the Witch's Hat

The word “witch” has become code for a certain manner of dressing. You know what I mean...flowing black robes, black boots, a broomstick, and a pointy and wide-brimmed hat.

It has even been said in books that “the hat makes the witch.”

Ever wondered how this all came about?

Experts aren't sure exactly when pointed lids became associated with sorcery. Medieval depictions of witches often show them nude and bare-headed with their long hair mingling with flames and smoke.

The three “witches of Subeshi” were famous for covering their hair with large funnel-shaped hat-like contraptions of black felt.

POINTED LIKE THE DEVIL'S HORNS

Woodcuts from the 1600s occasionally outfitted spell-casters in bonnets. In the late 1700s, children's books in England began illustrating supernatural tales with crones in peaked hats.

From there, the stereotype caught on quickly. The Western European artists began to modify images of witches from the Middle Ages, lengthening the blunt tips of their caps into devilish spikes.

The pointed cap became a symbol for dark magic.

During the Salem Witch Trials, witnesses reported

seeing the devil as “a large black man with a high, crowned hat.”

MARGINALIZED GROUPS

Here's another possible origin of the pointed hat.

There was a time when Jews were asked to identify themselves by wearing the “Jewish hat” or a “horned skullcap.”

The requirement to wear a certain hat made Jews stand out and made them an easy target for Anti-Semitism. Artists began painting devils muttering curses wearing Jewish crowns.

In 1431, Hungarian legal codes required first-time sorcery offenders to walk in “peaked Jewish caps.”

Medieval representations tying Jews to Satan were nothing new, and by the late 13th century, Jewish attributes become synonymous with unbelievers, hypocrites, heretics, pagans, and demons.

Modern witches don't actually wear the stereotypical witch's hat or flowing robes. We are an eclectic bunch who express our beliefs in the same way people of another religion would.

In fact, there is no telling whether a person is a witch just by looking at them. Wiccans are free to dress in any manner they want and they have a pretty good sense of humor too.

Here's a clue: A balanced, peace-loving, and spiritual person is more likely a witch than a negative and ill-mannered person.



HISTORY OF THE PENTACLE

The Pentagram, at its simplest, means a geometrical figure drawn with five even lines which form five even angles, or points.

The pentacle is a pentagram within a circle, which fulfills the symbol of oneness and protection.

Religious groups and other civilizations throughout history have made use of the pentagram, whether the apex is pointing upward or downward. Mesopotamia

The earliest evidence of the use of the pentagram symbol was found on pottery pieces that date back to around 3500 BC in ancient Mesopotamia.

HEBREW

The Hebrews adopted the use of the Pentagram. For them, it symbolized Truth, where all five points represent the Pentateuch (the first of the Hebrew Scriptures). It was also called the seal of Solomon. You will see the image of pentagrams and pentacles pressed into many Hebrew artifacts.

The pentagram also came symbolized the relationship of the head to the four limbs compared to the relationship of the essence of the spirit, to the four traditional elements of matter – earth, water, air and fire.

ANCIENT EGYPT

In Ancient Egypt, the pentagram was a symbol used to represent “the underground womb,” from which everyone is born.

The form of the pentagram also had a

connection to the pyramid form for the Ancient Egyptians.

ANCIENT GREECE

Pythagoras believed that the pentagram was a symbol of perfection. He called it the Pentalpha, because it was comprised of five geometrically perfect A's.

In his world travels, he was able to influence Hindu and Buddhist writings, for they share the same symbolism as Pythagoras.

VENUS ORBIT

Greek astronomers also noted that the path of the planet Venus forms an imperfect pentagram as it orbits the sun when observed from earth. This occurs every eight years.

EARTH'S ORBIT

The Earth also creates a natural pentacle with its orbit around the sun. The Earth's orbit is 360 degrees, in which it has 365 revolutions or days within the orbit. The number 5 is the only number that divides both 360 and 365 without a remainder. This gives the ratio 72 degrees per 73 days. Each of these points marks 1/5 of the orbit. If you connect the dots... it creates a pentacle.

CELTIC DRUIDS

For the Celtic Druids, where much of today's neo-pagan movement is based, the pentagram was a representation of the underground Goddess, Morrigan.



History of the Witch's Besom

The besom is the traditional witch's broom. It is traditionally made of a bundle of twigs tied to a central wooden pole. It is a powerful symbol of fertility and sexuality.

Today, it is still one of the most important tools used in Wicca.

Most witches have at least one besom and there are many who keep broom collections.

Why? Because the besom is also used for cleansing and purifying spaces, negativity-banishing and directing energy.

There is that popular notion that witches fly around in the night on a broomstick. If you've ever wondered how this came about, read on...

THE "FLYING WITCHES" FOLKLORE

The myth of witches flying comes from the Middle Ages, during Pagan fertility rites.

The rites involved women straddling the broom and riding it like a horse around the fields to encourage crop growth.

The witches would prepare a "flying ointment" to aid them in the ritual. The flying ointment had a base of hallucinogens which helped produce visions and encouraged astral projection.

It was part of their ritual to rub the ointment all over the broom handle...

...and use the handle to rub the ointment all over their bodies.

Seeing the witches hallucinating and ecstatically chanting and dancing, people thought they

flying...

...the witches themselves believed they were flying too!

They would mount their broomsticks and leap around the fields to encourage the crops to grow as high as they would hop!

Hallucinating, the witches imagined themselves to have flown a distance, when in fact, they had not!

THE WITCH'S BROOM AS A PROTECTOR

The traditional witch's broom is usually made of all sacred woods. For example, the stave handle would be ash or hazel, and the bristles are from birch twigs that are tied on using thin pieces of willow wood.

The ash stick will provide you with magickal protection while the birch twigs will entangle

malicious spirits.

The besom is used to purify, protect, and ritually cleanse an area before any magick is done.

To do this, you symbolically sweep away any buildup of negative energies and sweep in positive energy.

In covens, the High Priestess or High Priest would walk clockwise, tracing the ritual circle and sweeping with the broom a few inches off the ground.

Some Wiccan traditions believe that a besom must never touch the floor, never be used to actually sweep, and must only be used as a ritual tool.

When an upright pointing besom is placed by the doorway or hung over it, it will protect that place from evil spirits or negative energies. If placed under the bed, it will protect the one sleeping from any harm.

History of the Pentacle cont'd

ANCIENT CHRISTIANITY

Christianity used the pentagram, too. It symbolized the five wounds of Christ. And the Feast of the Epiphany commemorating the visit of the Magi to Jesus Christ, was marked with a pentagram.

MEDIEVAL TIMES

In the Medieval times, the pentagram was known as the "Endless Knot." It was used for personal protection against demons. The pentagram would be on windows and doors.

In the Legend of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, he bore a golden shield inscribed with a pentagram, which represented the five virtues: generosity, courtesy, chastity, chivalry and piety.

THE CRUSADES

The Knights Templar, discovered natural formations of pentagons and pentagrams and incorporated that mysticism into their architecture. The graves of the Knights Templar are said to be marked by a pentagram.

King Louis the IX believed they were working

against God and saw them as a threat. The response to this perceived threat started the Inquisition.

It was this time that the Pentagram gained its evil reputation. The Knights of Templar were accused of worshipping "Baphomet."

It was also during this time the attention turned from "Christian devil-worshippers" to the Pagan Witches who knew herb lore and still followed their Old Religion. Horned gods pentagram became equated with the Christian Devil.

The symbol was widely deemed evil for the first time in history. It was called the "Witch's Foot."

MODERN WICCA

In the 1940s, Gerald Gardner adopted the inverted pentagram as a second degree initiation symbol. The upright pentagram symbolized third degree initiation, and with the apex down, it point represented first degree initiation.

The pentagram also symbolized the 3 aspects of the Goddess.

Because of the stigma associated with the inverted pentagram, the neo-pagan movement grew slowly but became more widespread in the 1960s.



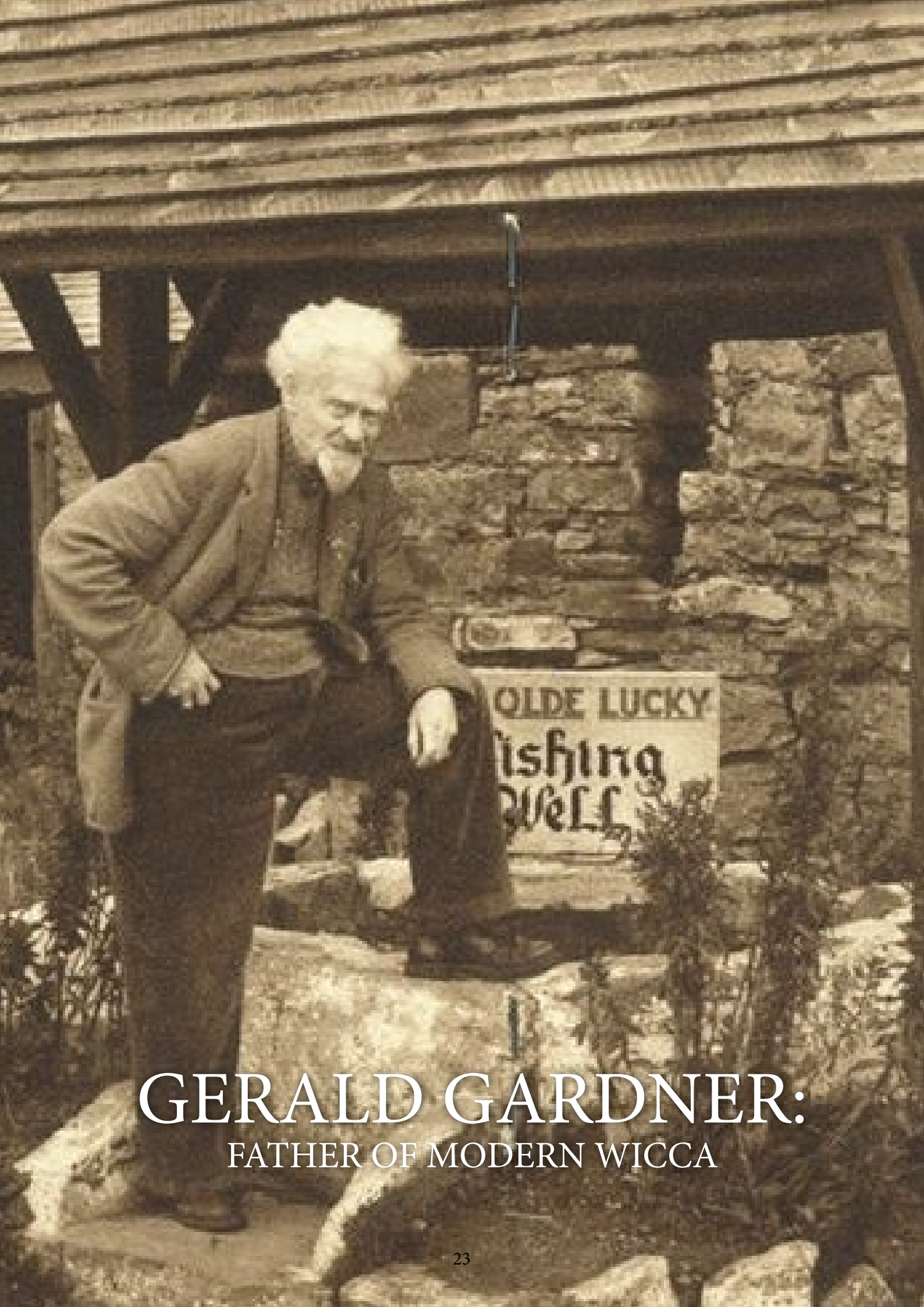
I WAS BORN TO BE A WARRIOR CLOTHING

This shirt is for everyone who lives a life of honour, courage and self reliance.

On the back, it shows the Valknut surrounded by a powerful poem:

"I was born to be a warrior, I do not kneel for anyone. I do not beg my gods for help, I ask them to empower me, so I can help myself. I don't need nor ask the Gods for forgiveness, I was not born into sin. I was born to be a warrior."

Not everyone can wear this, but those who can will bear it with pride and honour.



GERALD GARDNER:

FATHER OF MODERN WICCA

Gerald Gardner is one of the best known figures in modern Wicca.

His contributions to Wicca are very important and guaranteed that anyone, from the beginner to a veteran knows one thing or another about him or read a book by him.

He wrote the books: *Witchcraft Today* and *The Meaning of Witchcraft*, two books that led to the growth and development of the different traditions in modern Wicca throughout the world.

Gerald Gardner was a man who had a vision. He went against the grain and was not afraid to try out anything, even when people thought he was crazy!

MAGICKAL INTERESTS

At an early age, Gerald Gardner was fascinated religious and magical beliefs. He also developed a keen interest in all things occult and had taken a liking to ritual knives and Malay daggers.

After 20 years of research and study, he wrote his first book on the history and folklore of the Malay called "Keris and other Malay Weapons," which was very well-received in academic circles.

Gardner worked as a civil servant for the British government until 1936. The money he made allowed him to indulge his interests, most especially archaeology.

INITIATION

In 1947, Gardner was introduced to Aleister Crowley, a member of one of Old George Pickingill's original Nine Covens in the New Forest.

Gardner was initiated into Crowley's *Ordo Templi Orientis*. Gardner eventually became well-versed in matters of Folklore, Witchcraft, and Magic.

He also collected artifacts and materials on magical procedures and ceremonial magic.

He wanted to write about his learnings and pass on the knowledge, but at that time Witchcraft was still against the law in England. So he avoided writing anything about Witchcraft and Magic.

But Gardner eventually wrote about his learnings in the form of fiction in 1949, a novel called "High Magic's Aid."

The book reflected what would eventually become "Gardnerian Wicca."

GARDNERIAN WICCA

In 1951, the public began showing new interest in the Old Religion when a repeal of the very last witchcraft laws was enforced in England.

Gardner felt that he was finally free to go public and promptly broke away from the New Forest coven.

Gardner began establishing his own Wiccan path.

NEGATIVE RECEPTION

As with many witches nowadays, there are still a lot of people who think Gerald Gardner was a deceitful and manipulative con man who liked to go nude.

Many witches also found it wrong for Gardner to make public what should have been a secret.

Many also shunned publicity thinking it will harm the craft. His egotism and publicity-seeking tried the patience of his own coven members and this made them break off ties with Gardner.

However you may choose to see it, you cannot deny Gerald Gardner's contributions to modern Wicca.

Not a lot of notable Wiccans have an illustrious a past as Gerald Gardner.

And he still is one of the most respected and most appreciated Wiccans in the world of Wicca.



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