



The Cauldron

NO. 12

A Newsletter of the Craft
& The Old Religion

HALLOWEEN 1978

SAMHAIN was the ancient Celtic fire festival on November 1st marking the beginning of winter and the New Year. On Samhain Eve the gates of the Underworld opened and the goblin folk, faeries, Shining Ones and the Old Gods rode out of the hollow hills. On this night the wise ones of the tribe communicated with the spirits of the dead at burial mounds and divined for the portents of the coming year by scrying in bowls of water or casting runes carved on bones.

ABORIGINAL HEALING IN AUSTRALIA. The following contribution will be of interest to TC readers both as an example of ethnic pagan practices and by the way it reveals similarities between Australasian shamanism and European witchcraft:

Most of what is written about magic in the Australian aboriginal community concerns itself purely with kuyier-pugani (bad magic), that form of black magic (Erati) of which bone pointing is the most common practice. But as of old when European witches were seen only as malevolent, the "Witch Doctor", or Wirinun, concentrates more on the curing of disease and the guarding of tribal lore than on the negative aspects.

The Wirinun is in the field of healing a formidable encyclopedia of herbal remedies, bush first aid and psychological techniques. His training, under both the Great Spirit Baiame during his shamanistic initiation and an older college in his or a neighbouring tribe, teaches him that the mind and body are integral and both must be treated concurrently to achieve the best results. Everyday complaints are usually dealt with by local herbs, heat from fires or peppercorns are used to heal pain. Fractures of bones are immobilized in mud casts bound with kangaroo hide thongs. He is taught that the energies of his body, like that of the Dreamtime ancestors, can pass through his hands to alter the life force, or electromagnetic energies, of the patient's body.

This electromagnetic energy, or Tumpinyeri Moorop as it is sometimes called, corresponds to the energies used by Hermeticists of the European tradition. The energies which flow from the right hand of a right handed person are electrical and tend to concentrate the nerve currents in the patient's body and, as a concentration of electrical current tends to increase blood flow to the area, placing the right hand over an inflamed boil and the left hand immediately opposite on the other part of the body produces a drawing effect which causes the boil to come to a head. Alternatively, the left hand (of a right handed person), being magnetically polarized, can be brought into action to scatter the pus throughout the body for voiding by natural processes, if this be the more desired approach.

To determine which is the best means for treatment, the Wirinun asks the body of his patient for advice, for he believes that the Great Spirit implanted in every living thing has a certain amount of intelligence, so each part of the body can answer him. It may even be that a certain organ is only sluggish in its action and that is causing the problem. The Wirinun will then explain to this organ that it is necessary to increase its activity to restore the body's balance. Techniques of suggestion are also used by the Wirinun who will inform the patient that he or she will soon be well and actions such as the removal of balls of hair and pieces of pointed bone, seemingly from within the patient, will reinforce the idea that the "badness is gone".

To the white man's doctor, these techniques of healing will seem like so much quackery but thousands of case histories show that the Wirinun's magical healing methods work and they are techniques used by occult and Craft groups throughout the world.

As many enlightened scientists are beginning to research the old European remedies to find, and are finding, the essence of the remedy which works equally as well, but in a much safe way, than the methods of this century we will most surely find an equally worthwhile search amongst the methods employed by the Australian aboriginal medicine man.

Simon Goodman

AGE LIMITS. In October a Dundee "White Witch" was jailed for two years after admitting "lewd, indecent and libidinous behaviour" towards three schoolgirls he had initiated into his coven.

This incident highlights the risks faced by those foolishly and criminally introducing minors to the more sexually orientated versions of the Craft. It is an unwritten law, adhered to by most responsible witches, that candidates for initiation should be at least 18 years old and preferably have reached their majority age of 21. The Scottish "Witch" broke this rule by initiating a fifteen year old girl as high high priestess (?) and has paid the penalty demanded by the laws of this country passed to protect children from moral corruption. In doing so he has also tarnished the public image of the Craft and played into the hands of our critics who are always ready to find new mud to fling.

Unfortunately this is not the first case of its kind to come to our attention in recent years, but, for the sake of the Craft, we hope most sincerely that it will be the last.

LEYS, STONE CIRCLES & THE SERPENT POWER. The oldest standing stones in Britain were erected by a pre-Druidic people. Many stones in the existing circles have a high quartz content. The quartz was activated at a specific lunar phase. The pre-Druidic adepts used this natural phenomenon to boost "ley energy" and believed that this "serpent's egg" naturally conferred the supreme initiation on a worthy candidate within the circle.

Pliny, in his "Natural History" has quite unknowingly revealed the true secret of the anquinum or "Druid's egg". He states: "There is, besides, a kind of egg held in high esteem by the inhabitants of Gaul unnoticed by the Greek writers. It is called the "serpent's egg" and, as the magi are very cunning and artful in concealing their frauds, they pretend that this egg can only be obtained at a certain time of the Moon".

Pliny appears to have been ignorant of the true application of this statement. The "serpent's egg" was a natural phenomenon coincident with a phase of the Moon. It was never an inanimate object! Much nonsense has been written about the "serpent's egg" and the British Druids are largely responsible for this confusion. British Druidism was largely solar orientated whereas its Gallic counterpart was influenced by the lunar magic of the pre-Druidic adepts. The British Druids used beads and glass baubles as badges and passports that the bearer was initiated. Many of these "Druid's eggs" were specially concentrated beads and amulets. The anquinum was not known in Ireland. The reason given by Llwyd the antiquarian was as follows:

"The Druid doctrine about the Glain Heidr obtains very much throughout Scotland, as well as lowlands and highlands, but there is not a word of it in this kingdom (i.e. Ireland) where as there are no snakes they could not propagate it. Besides snake stones, the highlanders have their small snail stones, paddock stones, etc. to which they attribute their special virtues and wear them as amulets".

The 15th Century miniature on Page 95 of Venetia Newall's "Encyclopedia of Witchcraft & Magic" suggests that the medieval French Craft has been influenced by the tenets of Gallic Druidism. Patrick Kennedy in his "Fiction of the Irish Celts" relates how the Chief Druid of Ireland went to investigate a sacred fire kindled by the first Christian monks. "What mean these incantations?" cried the Druid, curiously looking at the books, so unlike their wooden staves and tablets." One stresses that many Hereditary and Traditional covens still delineate their boundaries with wooden staves!

The 15th century miniature also suggests that medieval French Crafters still knew the secret of the "serpent's egg". The quartz spheres near the feet of the kneeling candidate were intended to boost the "ley energy" available. The French clergy brutally attempted to discourage the peasantry from covening at the traditional ley centres and many stone circles were demolished with villages built on the sacred sites. The terrain in the miniature clearly indicates that the Crafters have convened at an old ley centre. The quartz spheres replace the quartz in the old standing stones! The admission ceremony is conducted at night and one suggests that the consciousness of the candidate would have been transfigured by the "Serpent's egg".

Even the eminent Dudley Wright failed to understand the true import of the "serpent's egg". He states on page 100 of "Druidism: the Ancient Faith of Britain" the following: "The Druids themselves were called Madredd or snakes by the Welsh bards and the whole of the tale mentioned by Pliny has a mystical reference to the difficulty of attaining Druidical secrets and the danger of disclosing them. There is, of course, no doubt that the object of Druidic superstition was merely artificial".

The Druids were rightly termed "snakes" because they were the priests of the Solar Force. The coiled serpent was the symbol for both the Solar Force and /.....what is termed today....

what is termed today "ley energy". The "Serpent's egg" was prized as the supreme knowledge of the Druidic Mysteries. The worthiest candidate for the Mysteries became "more than human" when the outpouring coincident with a specific phase of the Moon imparted the ultimate initiation.

LUGH

GODDESS SYMBOLS. The latest publication by Lord Strathloch, the Rev. Lawrence Durdin-Robertson, is a useful reference book on "The Symbolism of Temple Architecture" and is available from the author at Huntington Castle, Colegal, Enniscorthy, Eire at £1.25. Of special interest is the opening suggestion that the temples of the Goddess evolved from the basic premise of a naked woman who acted as the living altar and personified the Life Force. In ancient times it was the priestess of the Goddess, or rather her sexual parts, which were the object of adoration and worship. The principle is exemplified by the figurines of the Great Mother with breasts and pudenda exaggerated found in neolithic caves, the Sheela-na-gig images with grotesquely displayed cunnis, often found in medieval Christian churches, and the statues of the Goddess with yoni exposed for worship by her devotees featured in the Tantric art of ancient and modern India.

When the temple structures became more sophisticated in Greece, Rome, Egypt and Chaldea their sexual symbolism was also modified to suit the new ideas. The gateway to the temple represented the labium, the passage was the vagina and the "holy of holies", where the rites of the Mysteries were celebrated often in an underground crypt, symbolised the womb of the Great Mother Goddess.

Consciously or subconsciously, prehistoric monuments such as Stonehenge and Avebury (together with some burial mounds like New Grange in Eire which were originally used for initiation rites) with their avenues of stones (vagina) and circles of standing stones (womb) expressed in different terms the same erotic symbolism based on the worship of Life and its primary source.

Despite these sublimations the temples of the Goddess are still recognizable as sacred glyphs of the female body representing the creative power of the feminine principle known as the Great Mother.

M.H.

MYSTERY MAN. Most readers of TC will have heard the name Carlos Castaneda and many will be familiar with his books describing a magical apprenticeship to a Yaqui Indian sorcerer, Don Juan. The authenticity of these events has recently been challenged in the States by critics who claim that Juan is a figment of the imagination of Castaneda. Even if this is true it hardly deters from the impact of the teachings given in the books which describe other levels of reality and spiritual perception achieved through the use of natural psychedelic agents such as peyote and the sacred mushroom. Despite extensive publicity Castaneda himself remains a mysterious figure. The elusive element to his character was recently highlighted by Stephen Reno of Leicester University who wrote an article on Castaneda for the BBC periodical "The Listener" in April this year. A drawing of the subject of the article (he avoids photographers like the plague) was reproduced alongside the text but unfortunately, due to the printer's error half the face of the sketch was accidentally (?) erased. Reno links this odd happening with a similar experience reported by a Professor friend of his in the States who attempted, none too successfully as it transpired, to tape a lecture given by Castaneda. When he returned home and played back the tape he found the introduction to the talk, by another speaker, was intact but the following thirty minutes, which featured the sorcerer's apprentice was mysteriously wiped clean!

ADULT EDUCATIONAL ENLIGHTENMENT? We were interested to note that local adult evening classes on Comparative Religion include such studies as Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and Witchcraft! Ironically, the classes are being held in a community centre owned by the local Roman Catholic Church which is either a sign of broadminded tolerance or completely blissful ignorance. We hope the former applies.

HERCULES & HERIES. Anthony Roberts' latest book "Sowers of Thunder: Giants in Myth & History" (Rider & Co.) features a photograph of a Breton standing stone carved with two figures he identifies as Celtic versions of Hermes and Hercules. The latter is almost identical with the famous Cerne Abbas giant and holds aloft a club. However, not mentioned by Roberts, is the left arm of Hercules which is symbolically deformed and hangs so low the fingers of the hand touch the feet of the figure! One possible explanation for this oddity is that the club or wand held by Hercules in his right hand is drawing down energy from the sky which is earthed by the left hand touching the ground. Alternatively the figure may represent the charging of the magical wand with earth energy. The Serpent coiling down between the two figures on the stone offers further evidence that

/....this is a symbol

this is a symbol of the prehistoric Old Religion, whose ancient priest-magicians were adepts of the ancient Earth Mysteries. We look forward with anticipation to Anthony Roberts' next book "Shadows of Heaven. A Study of British Mythological Patterns" which promises to be a definitive study of geomancy and the megalithic sciences.

M.H.

READERS SERVICES. The following services are available from TC free in exchange for a stamped addressed envelope or I.R.C.: Pagan Moon Ritual - designed for people who do not have access to cover or group workings. (Please note this is not a "self initiation" rite or anything to do with D.I.Y. witchcraft courses!). Reading List a concise listing of recommended books on the Old Religion, available either in cheap paperback editions or from your local library. Festival Flora - a illustrated list of flowers & plants sacred to the eight pagan celebrations and last but most important as far as we are concerned, Healing: is offered free to T.C. readers, their friends and relatives. Just send us the name and address of the person concerned and we will place them on our daily healing list.

HEREDITARY WITCHCRAFT - AN ALTERNATIVE VIEWPOINT. It was both interesting to read the contribution on "Hereditary Witchcraft" in TC10 and yet perturbing to sense the "ex cathedra" spectre hovering over the article. Whether a report is concerned with such things as infant mortality, delinquency, political swing or indeed the subject matter at issue - each and all a factor in human behaviour and/or attitudes - an attempt must be made to produce consistant and logical theories by the proven technique of sociology. Any such study, therefore, makes full use of scientific principles and applies rules and experimental procedures, such as regional/national surveys and statistical interchange with whatever reports are extant, in an endeavour to arrive at the truth or indicate a degree of similarity or magnitude that the system, group or society be better understood.

Unfortunately, nowhere in the article was the extent of Lugh's personal, and I would expect in-depth and lengthy, groundwork documented. That the Hereditary Craft "comprises many disparate factions" is quite understandable. Early society was an amalgam of complex family structures which were essentially parochial and self contained. Families tended to embrace three or more generations vertically and several degrees of kinship horizontally to include in-laws and cousins. Such extended family groups therefore, in terms of religious traditions, remained relatively unaffected by external ideology on account of the parochial and autonomous climate which was a feature of the times when, apart from the self-supporting life style of the group, movement over any great distance was inhibited by the unrefined travel mode of the era. A 30 mile journey on foot would have been a considerable event in the life of a villager.

It is obvious, therefore, that there were many traditions which differed fairly widely in religious practicalities and observances, in the naming of the Deities and to a reasonable extent in other minor concepts. All this being the case there could be and was no regional, let alone national organisation of religion: so we can put aside all concepts of a pagan equivalent of the Roman Church, Anglican or Church of Scotland with standardised daily missal, book of common prayer and book of common order respectively together with stereotyped national "liturgical setting" or uniform ritual procedures. The "several infallible criteria" mentioned in the article in TC10 by Lugh are therefore entirely fallacious and appear to be, although I sincerely hope that this is not the case, another attempt to maintain the supposed authenticity of a select few. My own family tradition and the traditions of another "Hereditary" group stemming from some only 80 miles distance from our point of origin, together with a few "Hereditary" Gaels, all differ fairly widely in many respects; but what is very important is that we agree to differ, recognize the rights of each to differ and consequently interact cordially and maintain constant communication. What is common to these few separate "Hereditary" tradition is the complete absence of sexual induction or indeed sexual rites of any physical nature (We are all concerned about the various degrees of incest which could evolve in such situations, for example where a father deflowers his daughter or an aunt sexually initiates her nephew, etc. This we would find personally abhorrent and, in the present day, criminal!)

Other points of similarity, we found, were the absence of foreign or alien terms and gradal systems - be these latter Continental or Masonic - the absence of a circle in which to worship or work and lastly the fact that none of us had ever thought of ourselves as "Witches" or "Crafters". Our beliefs to us have never been the "Old Religion" or the "Old Faith" but a simple acceptance of that which formed part of our daily existence and could not be separated from it. I speak now for my family alone: The word "coven" is found nowhere in the heritage but what is used is the word "Gwerin" and another which means both /...house or

"House" or "warband". The worship is led by a woman not a man. Our male counterpart - not called a "Magister" or any other Latin term - in assisting in the religious side of family life is the "Kynran". The place of worship is defined by a word which may be translated as "tower" or "Castle", this being erected with the help of the "Yscwyd", to start, and the "Gwayw" to finish". Both of these are weapons, termed two of "the weapons of the Gods", but neither is a blade or wand.

We are taught, in sympathy with Lugh's belief, that being born into such a family does not constitute an "open sesame" to the family Mysteries. Only when one is deemed suitable, by their own observed actions and proven temperament, do they undergo the "Mabuysiad" or adoption ceremony. We are also in agreement with the statements concerning a "Book of Shadows" and rituals. Most information was, and still is, passed from "mouth to ear" and as much of the substance of the rites is woven around family legends, the acting out of these legends and the intent is more important than the spoken word - especially out of doors.

My apologies go to Lugh, who by name is obviously of Gaelic heritage, and to others to whom Middle Welsh is a strange tongue but the above family terms and much more were passed on in this language and we feel it is right to maintain their use. These few points from our tradition corroborate some of Lugh's statements and refute others but this most certainly does not imply that we, are anyone else for that matter, are the guardians of the correct and only system applicable to this country as a whole. In this era of proliferating bureaucracy and increasing constraints on individualization, may the Gods preserve us from yet another standardised or nationalised structure!

Each simply possesses that which was gifted by his or her forbears and which is right for that family alone. Viewed in this light "disparate factions" of the "Hereditary Craft" would seldom not recognize one another and many vibrant colours would again shine from the present pathetic little picture that it be worthier of the appreciation of the High Ones.

Athronydd

LUGH REPLIES: I enjoyed Athronydd's reply to my article in TC10. However, Hereditary covens cannot be tabulated by the proposed sociological instrumentation. Sociology is concerned with demonstrable facts. Nothing which can be predicted about the Hereditary Craft is demonstrable. Its objective existence is disputed. No "Hereditary" coven can substantiate its pretensions. It is pertinent that Athronydd cited no social documentation to corroborate the claims advanced!

Athronydd is surely the only Hereditary Crafter who would welcome a sociological survey of the Craft. No Hereditary coven in England would countenance such an ill-advised proposal. There have been earlier advocates of such an undertaking, but these misguided men believed themselves to be Christians. Pope Innocent VIII authorised the first major sociological survey of witchcraft. Kramer and Sprenger, two very zealous sociological field workers, jointly compiled the definite textbook on the subject. This "Malleus Maleficarum", or "The Hammer of Witches", has undoubtedly influenced more court verdicts than the combined literary endeavours of most other sociologists. Many Crafters may be amused by the marked Hereditary penchant for secrecy. However, the Pentagon Probe report on Page 5 of TC11 may incline them to accept that "Hereditary" covens are not paranoid for stressing the need for secrecy. Hereditary Crafters have always equated secrecy with survival!

Athronydd is a singularly apt non-de-plume for one who eschews sexual induction. The gender is indeterminable! The non-de-plume means "I am the Teacher". I apologise to Athronydd for my levity. My failure to cite social documentation to vindicate the opinions expressed in TC10 certainly deserved a rebuke.

It is significant that the "Malleus Maleficarum" makes no mention of a Book of Shadows or Kabbalistic weapons! William Woods has given us a superb summary of the "working tools" of the 15th century witches on page 177-178 of "A History of the Devil", which is quoted below.

"According to the "Malleus", as soon as a suspect has been arrested his house had to be searched and any articles usable for Witchcraft taken away. A cat, a powderbox, a pot of salve, thread, bits of wax, hair collected in a comb and nail parings, these were evidence of evil intent".

It is nonsensical to argue that men of the calibre of Kramer and Sprenger did not know what they were seeking as evidence of witchcraft. Gerald Gardner's puerile attempts to explain away the lack of documentation for the "Athame" and the "sword" should decieve nobody.

The 15th century French miniature, discussed by me in TC11, can also be cited as "social documentation". This painting is the most accurate portrayal of the rites of the medieval Witch Cult. One looks in vain for any Book of Shadows or Kabbalistic weapons! The conspicuous absence of a Book and metal tools is extraordinary to say the least.

/....This French female orientated....

This French female orientated Cult was the principal forerunner of the Gardnerian persuasion!

Cynical Crafters may choose to believe that Messrs. Gardner and Crowley were unduly influenced by the Scottish Craft. Many Hereditary witches in Scotland use the black hilted "scean dhu" when casting spells and directing their magical will. This practice never obtained in England. One recalls that both Gardner and Aleister Crowley sported a "scean Dhu" when attired in full Highland regalia! Frank Smyth has pertinently observed that Gardner was busy collecting knives and swords from early childhood. (vide Smythe's "Modern Witchcraft"). Interested Crafters may care to examine the plates in "The Key of Solomon" to verify from whence Gardner derived the sigils for the athame. An "obscure weapon" featured on one of these plates has the "Gardnerian" sigils engraved on the hilt! One can but wonder how Alex Sanders obtained the sigils on the "Alexandrian" athame? The published statement that he claimed to recognize his Welsh grandmother's rituals in "The Key of Solomon" may not be without foundation. (vide June John's "King of the Witches").

It is appropriate at this stage to comment on the remarkable uniformity of wording in both the "Gardnerian" and "Alexandrian" Book of Shadows! One states categorically that the English Hereditary Craft never used any Book of Shadows. It is pertinent that both Gardner and Crowley had a penchant for all things Scottish. Scottish covens did keep a Black Book of Rites and Rules. It is also significant that both Gardner and Crowley had been admitted into surviving remnants of the Nine Covens founded by "Old" George Pickingill.

However, a uniform list of Rules was appended to the rituals of each of the Nine Covens. The list of rules in the Gardnerian Book of Shadows closely adheres to the Pickingill format. One can but marvel that Alex Sanders Welsh grandmother apparently received an almost identical appendix from her Hereditary forebears in Wales! It is also perplexing that direct quotes from Rudyard Kipling and Crowley appear in the "Alexandrian" Book of Shadows! The mind really boggles when Athronydd assures us that the Welsh Hereditary Craft knows absolutely nothing about the so-called Book of Shadows. I do not need Athronydd's assurance on this issue. My maternal grandmother was Welsh and an Hereditary Crafter to boot! I am perfectly satisfied that no Hereditary coven in Wales ever used a Book of Shadows or Kabbalistic weapons.

I wish to associate myself with the views expressed by Cecil Williamson on page 5 of TC11. It is certain that the lone rural witches know nothing either of the so-called Book of Shadows or Kabbalistic weapons. My own researches on the Hereditary Craft extend over two decades. Williamson should have explained that these lone wise women use certain "objects" to direct their will. These "objects" differ considerably depending on the personal preference of the "witch". Many Cunning Men in East Anglia use a piece of rope to work cures. I have seen one ancient Cunning Man use bird feathers as an adjunct for his spells. Rope, string, thread, straw, feathers, wooden objects, any vegetable matter from trees, or growing crops, staves and walking sticks are but some of the "objects" used. Sceptical Crafters may care to examine the extant illustrations of historical English witches. These crones are frequently depicted with staves or walking sticks. Any observant Crafter should be able to discern a subtle difference between the two walking sticks held by some "witches" in old wood cuts. The handle of the "Blasting" rod is fashioned differently from the handle of the "healing" rod. I stress to add that historical Crafters believed that metal was inimical to "spirit forces".

The chapter on the Essex village of Canewdon in "The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology" suggests the reason why English witches never used a knife with a metal blade. Canewdon villagers are reported to have placed a knife with an iron or steel blade under the mat at the front door to prevent a witch from entering the house. I can testify that superstitious yokels in East Anglia still follow the custom! The belief that a knife with a metal blade could incapacitate a witch is certainly one of the oldest and widespread superstitions to be found in English folklore. Old rustics in virtually every English county will recount that witches and goblins will flee in terror if a knife is pointed at them. The standard method of curing a "bewitched" person in rural England was to hurl a knife over their head! The metal in the blade was reputed to drive away the familiar. It seems odd, to say the least, that Gardner would have us believe that English witches favoured the one safeguard that protected peasants from "Witchcraft"! I suggest that our English yokels know more about historical witchcraft than do our contemporary Revived Crafters, who are often middle class in origin. It is pertinent that few Gardnerians or "Alexandrians" appear to have recruited from farm labourers or other rustics. Simple country people would ridicule the notion that English witches ever played with knives!

...I do not propose to cite ...

I do not propose to cite any documentation to establish that sexual induction was a recognized feature of Craft admission. The literature concerning witchcraft trials abounds with corroborative evidence. This is equally true of trials in England, Scotland and France. I apologize to Athronydd for not explaining how I determined the "several infallible criteria" which distinguish the Hereditary Craft. I relied on a corroborated family tradition and personal experience. Athronydd adopted a similar method.

I believe I have encountered eight "Hereditary" covens which are variously domiciled in Essex, Norfolk, Wiltshire, Somerset and Warwickshire. Their uniformity of belief cannot be coincidental when one considers the geographical distances involved. I would concede that my own family tradition influenced the East Anglian covens. My parent coven was allegedly founded by a paternal forebear in the 18th century. I see no reason to dispute my family tradition. Our origins can be traced to the 11th century and have been adequately documented ever since. My kin are ranked as one of the three principal "Hereditary" families in East Anglia.

LUGH

Further articles by Lugh on the Hereditary Craft and the medieval French witch cult will be published in Issues 13 & 14 of T.C. Ed.

THE SOCIAL IMAGE OF THE WITCH. Our opponents (past and present) have frequently depicted the witch as a social leper and the lowest member of the community in which she or he lived. This type of insidious propaganda is totally false for before the benefits of the Welfare State the village wise-woman or cunning man was the midwife, herbalist and doctor to the rural community tending to both the spiritual and physical needs of their fellow country folk. An example of the valued role played by the witch in the social strata in historical times is given by the portrait of a male witch with his familiar described by Dr. Margaret Murray in one of her many contributions to "Folklore" magazine. The painting dating from the 17th Century depicts a bald, moon faced man clad in a faery green hood, with bells as decorations like a jester's cap, and a russet hued jerkin. He holds in his strong arms a cat, which is the traditional brindle colouring of a witch's feline companion, that is obviously the familiar of the painting's title. The fact that the witch posed for this painting and an artist was commissioned to execute it suggests that the image of witches at this period seems in need of some revision.

Supporting the role of the witch in society is the matter of the special costume worn by some of them to denote their calling. A 13th century example can be found in Scandinavian sources describing the unusual attire of a witch or priestess of the Old Religion. She wore a badger skin cap over a white catskin hood, a cloak edged with semi-precious stones and on the belt, that held together her long tunic, a calf skin pouch containing herbs and amulets. She carried a staff of office carved with runic symbols and topped by a silver orb. Writing in 1584, Reginald Scot, the Kent lawyer and author of "The Discoverie of Witchcraft", mentions a kind of uniform worn by male witches of high rank. Such attire seems to have survived today for as late as 1946 there is a mention in "Folklore" of ceremonial regalia in East Anglia passed on from witch to witch. This consisted of three small skins of weasel, stoat or polecat worn between the breasts and around the neck as a kind of collar. Special costume decorations of this type were apparently worn by some Suffolk witches in the pre-war years.

M.H.

PRIORITIES. For some time now TC has been a voice crying out in the wilderness for the protection of Stonehenge from vandalism. The latest incident, when so-called "animal welfare" protestors daubed the stones with slogans in red paint, has highlighted the urgent need for measures to preserve this very important national heritage. Unfortunately, the authorities in their usual bumbling fashion seem to have over-reacted judging by the horror stories of barbed wire coiled over the stones at the Druid ceremony in June. One hopes this was only a temporary measure pending the erection of some sort of permanent, and ecologically pleasing, enclosure! This point aside, we would like to make the observation that the people who are demonstrating against the preservation of Stonehenge have their priorities wrong. They should be concentrating their energies instead on saving the Callanish stone circle on the Isle of Lewis in Scotland - threatened with demolition by North Sea Oil developers - the ploughing up of the Gog Magog hill figures in Cambridgeshire - or campaigning for the preservation of numerous other ancient monuments threatened by the combined forces of public ignorance, faceless bureaucracy and the demand for agricultural land.

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VATICAN DEMONS. In a recent issue of TC we examined the changing role of the Papacy and predicted various dramatic events. Things have not quite turned out as we thought at the time of writing a politically aware East European Cardinal has been elected to manage the Catholic bureaucracy and the Archbishop of Canterbury has attended the new Pope's induction. This is the first time that such an executive of the Anglican Church has done this since the Reformation. The significance of recent events will become clearer as time passes but in the meantime we will wait and see before commenting further.

However, what are we to make of the recent sensational report claiming that "demonic possession" broke out in the Vatican last year? During the "Satanic" happening nuns levitated, vomited toads and suffered uncontrollable screaming fits. Who says so? Two exorcists who were called in by Pope Paul to deal with the disturbance. It all sounds like a bizarre scenario from an early Ken Russell movie.

YULE CARDS. It is always a problem what to send to pagan friends in the way of Yule greetings. This year an alternative exists in the shape of six "pagan" cards, illustrated with a black & white scene, and with the words of old English carols printed inside, which are restored to their original non-Christian meanings. Sets are available at 75p. from 381 Marine Road, Morecambe, Lancs.

THE VIEWS expressed in the pages of this newsletter reflect a broad spectrum of Craft belief and opinion. They are not necessarily those of the Editor, unless specifically indicated.

TC is a non-profit making venture supported by readers subscriptions and donations from Craft members. It is an independant, unbiased forum for the exchange of news, views and information on witchcraft, folklore and paganism. It is published 4 times a year on the dates of the seasonal festivals. Short articles, interesting news items and book reviews are welcomed for inclusion.

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