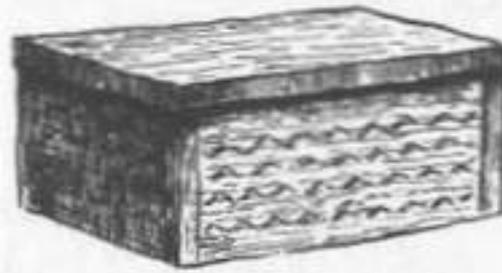


# A Practical Guide to Witchcraft and Magic Spells

By  
Cassandra Eason



## Contents:

Book Cover ([Front](#))

[Scan / Edit Notes](#)

Introduction - [The Power of White Witchcraft](#)

- 1 - [The Origins and Practice of Witchcraft](#)
- 2 - [Creating Spells and Rituals](#)
- 3 - [Beginning Magick](#)
- 4 - [Gods and Goddesses](#)
- 5 - [Candles, Colours and the Zodiac](#)
- 6 - [Herbs in Magick](#)
- 7 - [Oils and Incenses in Magick](#)
- 8 - [Crystals and Protective Magick](#)
- 9 - [Healing Magick](#)
- 10 - [Ritual Magick](#)
- 11 - [Moon Magick](#)
- 12 - [Planets and Angels](#)
- 13 - [Seasons and Festivals](#)
- 14 - [Magick for You](#)

[Spell Template](#)

[Glossary](#)

Further Reading (Removed)

Useful Contacts (Removed)

Index of Spells (Removed)

Index (Removed)

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO  
— WITCHCRAFT —  
AND  
MAGICK SPELLS



*Take advantage of the natural forces of life*

— CASSANDRA EASON —

## Scan / Edit Notes

Versions available and duly posted:

Format: v1.0 (Text)

Format: v1.0 (PDB - open format)

Format: v1.5 (HTML)

Format: v1.5 (PDF - no security)

Format: v1.5 (PRC - for MobiPocket Reader - pictures included)

Genera: Wicca / Wiccan / Witchcraft

Extra's: Pictures Included (for all versions)

Copyright: 2001

First Scanned: 2002

Posted to: alt.binaries.e-book

### Note:

1. The Html, Text and Pdb versions are bundled together in one zip file.
2. The Pdf and Prc files are sent as single zips (and naturally don't have the file structure below)

~~~~

Structure: (Folder and Sub Folders)

{Main Folder} - HTML Files

|

|- {Nav} - Navigation Files

|

|- {PDB}

|

|- {Pic} - Graphic files

|

|- {Text} - Text File

-Salmun

## Introduction - The Power of White Witchcraft



*'Merlin, give me the strength to carry on.'*

I found this prayer not in some medieval book or carved on the wall of an ancient castle but written in ballpoint pen on a page torn from a diary and left - along with scores of similar pleas - on an ancient pile of stones in the Forest of Broceliande in Brittany.

Archaeologists say that this is the grave of a Neolithic hunter, but local tradition says that in this forest dwelled Vivien, the Lady of the Lake of Arthurian legend, and that here, having seduced Merlin in order to learn his secrets, she ensnared him with his own spells. The stone pile is known as Merlin's tomb, and each year hundreds visit the site to thank the wizard or to ask for his aid. When I visited the tomb, prayers - written on scraps of paper or card - were squeezed into gaps in the stones or pinned to the tree that shelters the tomb.

Whatever the origins of the tomb, it has been transformed into a source of power. For this badly signposted spot, a short walk up a muddy track from a cramped, rough car park, had a tranquil, spiritual air that you might expect at a great cathedral or far more impressive stone circles. Such spots unleash the magick inside us. But even if you never visit Brittany or Stonehenge at sunrise on Midsummer's Day, you can still make use of your own magick.

This is a book about white magick and witchcraft as sources of wisdom, healing and positivity. Like Native American spirituality, to which true witchcraft is akin (some say both were carried by the people of Atlantis), the practice of white magick is based on the belief that that all life is sacred and interconnected in an unbroken circle. For example, every fully grown birch tree - defined in magick as a tree of new beginnings and regeneration - breathes out enough oxygen for a family of four and absorbs the carbon dioxide that we exhale, transforming it again to life-giving oxygen. And this sacred spark of a common source of divinity is contained not only by trees, but also the stones, the animals, the people and everything else on the Earth and in the waters and the sky.

Our higher selves, our souls, are influenced by the cycles of the Sun, the Moon, the stars and the natural world on a deep spiritual level. We can draw down their energies into ourselves to amplify and replenish our own, like tapping into a cosmic energy supply rather than having to recharge our powers from our own, separate dynamos. Through them and through us courses the universal life force, known as ch'i to the Chinese, and prana in Hindu philosophy. It is a source upon which we can draw not only nor primarily for specific needs, but also for energy, harmony and connection with others, the world and the cosmos. It is an energy that can permeate every aspect of our being.

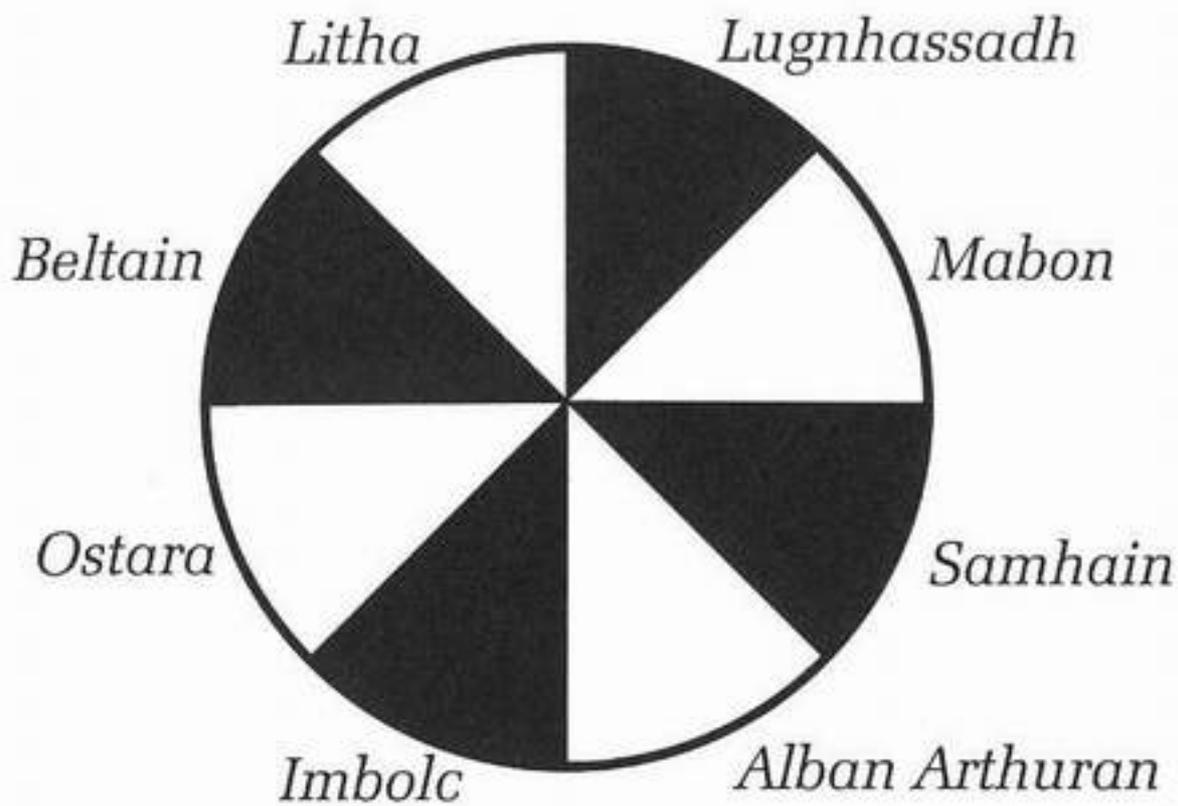
## **A Very Special Spirituality**

Witchcraft and Wicca (one of the major forms of witchcraft) both derive their names from the Anglo-Saxon words for wisdom; 'witch' is from the old English word wita, meaning 'wise' and the Wicca were the wise ones. Witchcraft is said to be the oldest religion in the world. It is the indigenous shamanistic religion of Europe that has, in spite of ferocious persecution from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, survived in the folk tradition of many lands and through families who kept alive the old beliefs and worship of the Earth and the Moon Mother.

Not so many centuries ago, our ancestors burned yule logs at Christmas as a symbolic gesture to bring light and warmth back to the world on the mid-winter solstice at the darkest time. They danced around the maypole on May morning, the beginning of the old Celtic summer, to stir into life the Earth energies in a sacred spiral pattern. These rituals go back into the mists of time and appear in similar forms in many different cultures and ages. Today, however, too many modern societies have lost the sacred connection and scorn such gestures as superstition, treating the skies, the Earth and the seas merely as a larder, fuel store and garbage can. Once, things were very different, as Black Elk, the Sioux shaman, explained:

'In the old days when we were a strong and happy people, all our power came from the sacred hoop of the nation and, so long as the hoop was unbroken, the people flourished. The flowering tree was the living centre of the hoop and the circle of the four quarters nourished it. The East gave peace and light, the South gave warmth; in the West, thunder beings gave rain and the North with its cold and mighty wind gave strength and endurance.'

And so the Earth was respected as the sacred mother, giver of life and crops, to whose womb the dead returned. It is no accident that the Sioux Medicine Wheel and the Celtic Wheel of the Year are so similar in formation and purpose, linking all life to the cycles of nature. So if we are to use magick in a positive way, we must remember that it brings responsibility along with benefits.



## **Magick And Knowledge**

White witchcraft is essentially the process of drawing on ancient wisdom and powers via the collective mind that we as individuals can spontaneously but unconsciously access in our dreams and visions. In magick, we can use rituals and altered states of consciousness to access this cosmic memory bank at will and in doing so, some believe, draw on the accumulated powers of many generations, especially in healing magick.

This cosmic consciousness - or Great Mind or akashic record, as theosophists call it - is perhaps what made it possible for pyramids to be built at almost the same time in lands as far apart as Egypt and South America, and for shamanism to follow similar patterns in unconnected continents. By accessing this source of power, we may create a ritual or use certain crystals without consciously knowing their significance, only to find out that our invented spell closely resembles one from another time or culture; we know how to heal without being taught.

Gaining such knowledge has been described as 'inner-plane' teaching and if you can trust your own deep intuitions, you need very little formal teaching about magick. If you scry at the full moon or during one of the ancient festivals, by looking into water and letting images form, this deep wisdom will offer solutions to seemingly impossible dilemmas.

The practice of witchcraft demands great responsibility, for you are handling very potent material when you deal with magick. The benefit is that by focusing and directing your own inner powers and natural energies you can give form to your thoughts and needs and desires and bring them into actuality. The more positive and altruistic these focuses are, the more abundance, joy and harmony will be reflected in your own world.

## **Magick And Giving**

It is said that if you smile in London in the morning, the smile will have reached Tokyo by evening. This principle, which lies behind all white magick, has been named morphic resonance, and has been investigated for several years by the Cambridge biologist Dr Rupert Sheldrake, author of a number of excellent books based on his extensive research into psychic phenomena. Dr Sheldrake suggests that as animals of a given species learn a new pattern of behaviour, other similar animals will subsequently tend to learn the same thing more readily all over the world; the more that learn it, the easier it should become for others.

So if we carry out positive magick and spread goodwill, then we really can increase the benign energies of the Earth and cosmos. Even banishing or binding magick can have a creative focus, diverting or transforming redundant or negative energy, for example by burying a symbol of the negativity or casting herbs to the four winds.

## **Magick And Responsibility**

True magick is not like a cake in which everybody must vie for a slice or be left with none: it is more akin to a never-emptying pot. Like the legendary Cauldron of Undry in Celtic myth, the more goodness that is put in, the more the mixture increases in richness and quantity. The Cauldron of Undry, one of the four main Celtic treasures, provided an endless supply of nourishment, had great healing powers and could restore the dead to life, in either their former existence or a new life form.

Located on the Isle of Arran, it could be accessed by magical means or through spiritual quests, and many scholars believe it was the inspiration for the Holy Grail. But when using magick, you should take only as much as you need and perhaps a little more; you should not demand riches, perfect love, eternal beauty, youth, a fabulous job and a lottery win or two.

So, magick does not provide a help-yourself time in the sweetshop. The results could be like eating three times more chocolate than you really want and then feeling very sick. You cannot give the gods or goddesses your shopping list and then sit back and wait for Christmas: the divinity is within you to be kindled, and so you need to demand of yourself far higher standards than someone who believes in the forgiveness of sins.

If you do wrong, you cannot just say sorry to the godhead and carry on without putting right the mistakes or at least learning from them. Confession may be good for the soul, but magick demands more than that: you've got to live with the consequences of your deeds, words and thoughts because the power of a blessing or curse may be even greater on the sender than on the intended recipient. You must also ensure that you cannot harm anyone in the process of getting what you want. If you do spells for revenge, then the effects will rebound on you threefold.

## **Effort And Will-Power**

Magick is not like the magic a conjuror uses to bring a rabbit out of a hat: that kind of magic is just a trick, which relies merely on the art of illusion. White magick is much more than that. It is intensely

exciting because it means that we can extend the boundaries of possibility, recalling the psychic powers of childhood when we could span dimensions as easily as jumping across a puddle. We can increase our personal magnetism to attract love and luck and regenerate the innate healing abilities both of the human body and the planet.

What magick does not do is provide quick fixes with a twinkling of Stardust. It does not produce a faerie godmother, who turns up with a shimmering frock and a platinum credit card to pay the taxi fare home if the handsome prince is short of money and the faerie coach has crumpled into a pumpkin.

After the candles and incense have burned through and we sit, exhausted but exhilarated after sending our wishes to the cosmos through dancing or chanting, we then have to use every effort, every talent at our disposal, to make those wishes come true on the earthly plane. The psychic kick-start provided by the magick must be used to translate the magical thoughts into actuality. So we must work overtime with new enthusiasm and inspiration to get that project finished, send off to the publisher that typescript that has been gathering dust, do whatever it takes to help ourselves to get the results we desire.

My late mother would always say if I asked for extra funds, 'Money doesn't grow on trees'; and this holds true even in the magical world. Money, success and opportunities have to be generated and earned. We need to add our own will-power to the power we have drawn on.

What is more, under the cosmic profit-and-loss scheme, if we ask for a psychic overdraft, we must give back, if not immediately, then at a later date. So when your finances are better or your immediate troubles are passed, you should make a small donation or give time to a worthwhile cause connected with the area of the spell. This balances up the account whose cosmic energies you tapped into.

Many shamans or witches demand some sort of payment for services, and this is not from avarice, but because all too often if something is not paid for, it is not valued. So be sure that you pay the shaman - especially the cosmic one. This is grass roots magick, but it works.

## **Magick For Your Needs**

'Enough for my needs and a little more' is another of the maxims of this incredibly moral craft, as I mentioned earlier. You would be amazed the number of times I am asked: 'Okay, if you are a witch, how come you can't predict the lottery numbers?' The answer is that it all comes down to need: and do I need a million pounds? True, like any mother of five children I lurch from one financial crisis to the next and when things get really dire, perhaps I could magically bring forward an anticipated payment or attract an unexpected windfall from abroad. But I don't really need a million pounds. And what about the negative effects? If I became incredibly rich, I would almost certainly lose the incentive to write. Credit card bills are a powerful focus for creativity. And, of course, my kids would never get out of their satin-sheeted beds.

Lotteries are generated by human hands primarily for the purpose of making money for their creators. They really are random affairs and so it often happens that it is the wealthy people who win even

more money - although that does not necessarily bring happiness.

Casting your needs into the cosmos and trusting they will be met does work, but not if you are expecting magick to compensate for an unnecessary shopping binge. Nor, after a period of overeating and no exercise, can you expect a miracle diet to work so that you shed a stone in two days while still eating chocolate. Spells tend to work best when there is a genuine need, generated by real emotion and linked to determination on a practical level.

## **The Rules Of Magick**

Magick is not beyond or above life, but a natural though special part of your world. It is about not leaving fate, your fate, to any guru or deity, but shaping it with your own innate power, the power that emanates from some higher being, goddess or god, energy source, what you will - the divine spark within us all. There are no absolutes in magick, there is only what works for you and enhances your innate wisdom and spirituality. You should use this book as you would any other DIY guide and adapt its suggestions to suit what is right for you. Choose whatever you feel are the most appropriate herbs, crystals or even entire rituals for your specific purpose.

There are provisos, however. You must always remember that the form, the words and even ultimately the associations of particular oils, incenses and planetary hours are not what really matters. The truly important thing is that you should keep to the basic rules of witchcraft that are quite as strict and twice as hard as any conventional religion. These are rooted in wisdom, compassion, honesty, honour and common sense and are summed up in one short phrase: 'An ye harm none, do what ye will'. Put in modern-day language, this means, quite simply:

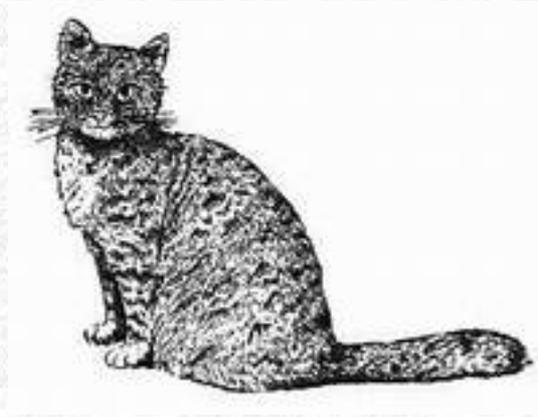
*'Do whatever you like as long as you don't hurt anyone.'*

Simple, did I say? It is in practice incredibly hard to harm none, especially if you are seeking promotion, fighting against an injustice or struggling to survive. But it may help you if you remember the other equally vital law of witchcraft, the Threefold Law. This states that everything you do to others, both good and bad, will be sent back to act on you with three times its intensity and strength. So, if you act always and only with positive intent to help and heal, you will automatically receive all manner of good things and you should become truly wise and happy.

According to the rules of magick, as I said earlier, you cannot be angry, mean or cruel and then expect to say sorry to a deity and have the slate wiped clean. Magick is about taking responsibility for your own actions all the time and that is incredibly onerous. But, on the positive side, the results are equally potent, and if you can learn to tap into the source of light and life and joy, you will amaze yourself and others by what is possible. Thus will your psychic powers also spontaneously unfold and guide you in your everyday world, increasing your spiritual power and wisdom.

The magick is within you, so let it flow and make the world a better place.

## 1 - The Origins and Practice of Witchcraft



### A History Of Witchcraft

Witchcraft probably originated about 25,000 years ago in the Palaeolithic era. At that time, humankind and nature were seen as inextricably linked. People acknowledged every rock, tree and stream as deities in the life force, and the Earth as mother, offering both womb and tomb.

### Prehistoric Witchcraft

Early man used sympathetic, or attracting, magick - in the form of dances, chants and cave paintings of animals - to attract the herds of animals that provided for the needs of the group, and to bring fertility to humans and animals alike. Hunters would re-enact the successful outcome of a hunt and would carry these energies into the everyday world. Offerings were made to the Mistress of the Herds and later to the Horned God, who was depicted wearing horns or antlers to display his sovereignty over the herds. Animal bones would be buried so that they, like humankind, would enjoy rebirth from the Earth Mother's womb.

Where hunter-gatherers today continue the unbroken tradition that stretches back thousands of years - for example, among the Lapps in the far North of Scandinavia and the Inuits - these rites continue, led by a shaman, or magick man, who negotiates with the Mistress of the Herds or Fish in a trance for the release of the animals.

One of the earliest recorded examples of shamanism is the Dancing Sorcerer. Painted in black on the cave walls of Les Trois Freres in the French Pyrenees, this shamanic figure, which portrays a man in animal skins, dates from about 14000 BC and stands high above the animals that are depicted on the lower walls. Only his feet are human and he possesses the large, round eyes of an owl, the antlers and ears of a stag, the front paws of a lion or bear, the genitals of a wild cat and the tail of a horse or wolf.

By the Neolithic period, which began around 7500 BC and lasted until about 5500 BC, the hunter-gatherer culture had given way to the development of agriculture, and the god evolved into the son-consort of the Earth Mother. He was the god of vegetation, corn, winter and death, who offered himself as a sacrifice each year with the cutting down of the corn, and was reborn at the mid-winter solstice, as the Sun God.

The Neolithic period also saw the development of shrines to the Triple Goddess who became associated with the three phases of the Moon: waxing, full and waning. The Moon provided one of the earliest ways by which people calculated time. Since its cycles coincided with the female menstrual cycle, which ceased for nine moons if a woman was pregnant, the Moon became linked with the mysteries first of birth, then of death as it waned, and finally with new life on the crescent. Because the Moon was reborn each month or, as it was thought, gave birth to her daughter each month, it was assumed that human existence followed the same pattern and that the full moon mirrored the mother with her womb full with child.

The full moon was also associated in later ages with romance and passion, originally because this coincided with peak female fertility. Moon magick for the increase of love and fertility is still practised under the auspices of the waxing moon. It was not until about 3,000 years ago that the male role in conception was fully understood in the West, and only then were the Sky Father deities able to usurp the mysteries of the Divine Mother.

A trinity of huge, carved stone goddesses, representing the three main cycles of the Moon, and dating from between 13000 and 11000 BC, was found in France in a cave at the Abri du Roc aux Sorciers at Angles-sur-l'Anglin. This motif continued right through to the Triple Goddess of the Celts, reflecting the lunar cycles as maiden, mother and crone, an image that also appeared throughout the classical world.

## **Witchcraft And The Early Christians**

After the formation of the Christian church, the worship of the old deities and the old ways were banned and the nature festivals supplanted by Christian ones. The Christians were pragmatic, however, and Pope Gregory, who sent St Augustine to England in AD 597, acknowledged that it was simpler to graft the Christian festivals on to the existing festivals of the solstices and equinoxes. So, Easter, for example, was celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox, which is where it remains today.

In the same way, the crosses on the hot cross buns that we eat on Good Friday were originally the ancient astrological signs for the Earth, and were eaten to absorb the power and fertility of Mother Earth. Hot cross buns were still thought to retain their magical qualities until the early decades of the nineteenth century and were said to offer protection against drowning. For this reason, hot cross buns were hung from the roofs of coastal churches where their remains can still be seen. The old ways did not die quickly, however, and so for centuries the two religions co-existed as people gradually transferred their allegiance from the Earth Mother, or Mother Goddess, to the Virgin Mary and the female saints.

## **The Persecution Of Witches**

But in medieval times, two largely political issues brought about the persecution of witches, especially women. The religious emphasis on the sin of Eve and the belief in the inferiority of women had existed since the time of St Paul, but with the rise of an organised male medical profession, women healers who had acted as herbalists and midwives became a threat. This was not least because their

skills ensured less painful childbirth, which was considered contrary to the curse of God that the daughters of Eve should bear children in sorrow. So midwives were a prime target for the new persecutions and were often accused of sacrificing babies to the Devil. Given the high rate of infant mortality, this allegation was hard to refute, and a grieving mother might easily blame the midwife for the death of her infant.

At a time of appropriation of common land and the enclosure of smallholdings, especially in Europe, such accusations were a popular way of removing peasants, particularly elderly widows or spinsters, reluctant to give up their land rights, since being found guilty of witchcraft carried the penalty of the seizure of land.

Some researchers have suggested that as late as 1693 in Salem, Massachusetts, the desire to appropriate land was behind at least some of the mass accusations of witchcraft made at the time. One landowner, Giles Corey, was apparently an innocent witness at the trials at first. However, he himself was accused of witchcraft and was pressed to death - a torture in which heavy stones were placed on the victim's chest and which took three days to kill them - rather than confess, for if he had, his property would have been taken from his descendants.

High-ranking practitioners of magick who attempted to conjure demons were usually male, and included both popes and royalty. They generally escaped censure, however. The folk religion of the countryside was an easier target.

In December 1484, the Bull of Pope Innocent VII was published, appointing Heinrich Kramer and Jakob Sprenger as inquisitors against witchcraft and heresy. These two clerics wrote the *Malleus Maleficarum*, the notorious Hammer of the Witches, which described in lurid detail the tortures that could be used to obtain confessions from suspected witches. In it, they adopted the policy that it was better to kill an innocent person who would be rewarded in heaven by God than to allow a guilty person to remain unpunished.

This book became the best-seller of its time and was quoted to justify the atrocities practised against witches in mainland Europe and Scandinavia. Although torture to obtain a confession was not permitted in England except by royal assent, many inquisitors were very cruel even to young victims, who would eventually confess in the hope of having their interrogation brought to an end.

No one really knows how many people have been put to death for witchcraft. The worst period for witch burnings and hangings in Europe was between the mid-fifteenth and late seventeenth centuries, when the number judicially executed as witches during this period is generally accepted to be about a quarter of a million people. In addition, many more were lynched or hanged unofficially by mobs eager to find a scapegoat to blame for bad harvests or dying cattle. This unhappy era came to be known as the Burning Times.

Matthew Hopkins, who died in 1647, brought about the executions of at least 236 accused witches. He styled himself as Witchfinder General and, with four hired assistants, instigated a reign of torture and terror especially in the eastern counties of England, amassing a huge fortune for himself in the process.

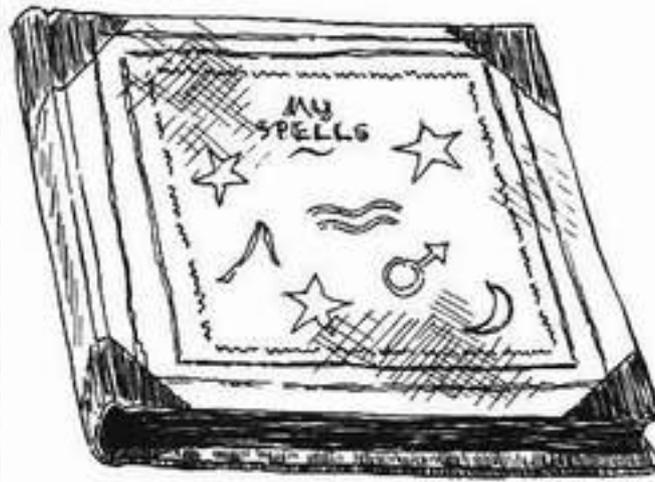
In the colonies of America, the most notorious trials were those at Salem, held between 1692 and 1693. During this period of mass hysteria, 141 people from the town and immediate area were arrested, and 19 were hanged. Even a dog was hanged. Dorcas Good, a four-year-old child, was the youngest victim to be accused of witchcraft and imprisoned. She was released on bail after her mother was hanged, but her younger sibling died in prison. Dorcas was driven insane by her experience.

About three-quarters of all those killed as witches in Europe and Scandinavia were women, mainly lower-class older women, female healers, village herbalists, wise women and midwives. With the death of so many experienced healers and wise women, much knowledge was inevitably lost, and for a time infant mortality increased as male physicians took over the roles of the deposed midwives. But anyone who was different in any way - eccentric, senile or physically deformed - could be accused. Any old woman living alone might be blamed for the deaths of animals, the failure of crops and outbreaks of disease that were in reality caused by poor hygiene and diet, bad weather, human neglect or simply blind Fate.

Of course, this occurred to some extent before the Burning Times. The difference was that now the Church and State were legalising and even encouraging this persecution. Even faeries became associated with witchcraft. The Bean-Tighe, a faerie housekeeper, popular in the mythology of Ireland and Scotland, was said to reside with the village wise woman and assist her with chores; in the worst of the wave of hysteria over witchcraft, if an old woman had an immaculate house, it was claimed she had faerie help - and so by implication was consorting with the Devil.

Under torture, even the innocent would admit to the vile deeds suggested by their inquisitors. Many of the confessions now appear to be remarkably uniform and come straight from the pages of the works on demonology, with which the members of the Inquisition would be familiar. Simple village circle dances performed at the time of the full moon and the old rituals performed to bring fertility to both fields and people - with a figure dressed as the Horned God and couples making love in the fields or leaping over a bonfire - became all too easily translatable into evidence of satanic covens. Although the last person executed for witchcraft in England was Alice Molland at Exeter in 1712, it was not until 1951 that the Witchcraft Act of 1736 was repealed and replaced with the Fraudulent Mediums Act.

Those who continued to practise the 'old ways' were usually families who could be trusted not to betray the secrets, although the fires of the Lughnassadh (the first corn harvest) continued in remote areas until well into the late nineteenth century and are being revived by pagans as community celebrations, especially in the USA. The secret family covens would pass the traditions down through the matriarchal line, usually by word of mouth. Those who could write, recorded their spells and rituals in 'Books of Shadows' - so-called partly because of the secrecy required to write and protect them. These were usually buried or burned with the witch on her death, or on rare occasions were handed on to the eldest daughter.



## **Witchcraft In Modern Times**

By the late twentieth century in the USA, witchcraft had been recognised as a valid religion by the American Supreme Court and accepted by the American army, but other countries, including the UK, are not so tolerant. What is more, in many lands, especially among smaller communities, misunderstanding and prejudice still persist. In the UK, for example, Wiccans who practise openly and have children are sometimes regarded with suspicion by some health professionals.

My dear friend Lilian, a white witch and healer, recalls how one woman passing her home would always cross herself and walk on the other side of the street. I myself once volunteered to read the runes at the local school fete to raise much-needed funds. I was told in no uncertain terms by a member of the Parents' Committee that the chairman of the school governors would not have any truck with the occult. I was asked to bake Easter rabbit biscuits instead, but since my domestic skills are far behind my divinatory ones, I declined.

## **My Own Witchery**

People started calling me a witch long before I adopted the title, which I did as a result of a book I wrote in 1996 called *Every Woman a Witch* (though it must be said that men as well as women can harness what are entirely natural powers).

When the book was published, some people in the media joked about my childhood in England's industrial Midlands - not considered a place where magick or spirituality can flourish. It seemed that they could not accept the fact that my spells focused on the mundane issues of how people might obtain the money to mend a leaking roof or find their own inner harmony amidst the clutter and noise of a family, rather than on more ethereal rituals celebrated by fey maidens wafting around in flower-filled gardens.

But, in fact, if I were to make any claim at all to authenticity (not that authenticity matters as much as sincerity of purpose), it would be through those Midland roots, which are connected to what is said to be the most ancient order of witches known. At the turn of the twentieth century, my father's family were canal people and my father grew up at a time when the boats were still a major form of transport for coal and iron. Some of these Midland canal people were known as 'water witches' because they

practised a religion based on the sacredness of Water and Earth. Their symbol was the six-spoked Sun wheel, painted on their boats. This sign was once thought to be a ship's wheel, but this is improbable, since canal boats have large rudders.

Unlike the Romany gypsies, the Midland water witches were descended from the Friesian seafarers of the Netherlands and 1876 a book entitled *Oer Linda* was published, named after the family who had been custodians of the wisdom since the sixth century BC. Some insist the manuscript is a forgery and that the existing version dates only from the thirteenth century. But the authentic water gypsies knew their lore by inheritance rather than from a book, and the similarities are remarkable. Ritual was practised by the canal people within a triple magical square, each square joined by four lines and constructed from wood known as 'the mill'.

Only the women entered the sacred area, under the leadership of a senior female water witch, though the chief male, known as the Master, summoned the entity to assist in the ritual. If you would like to read more about this, you will find some recommended books listed in Further Reading, page 301.

Certainly, I can recall two terrifyingly swarthy aunts who commanded the family, and my father recounted many superstitions and much canal lore when I was young. This included the tale of a terrifying character called Kit Crewbucket, whose ghostly form would appear on a boat or be seen in the water before it went through a dark tunnel. Canal life has a whole mythology, much now lost as the old working boats have been replaced by weekend leisure traffic. You will find more on the details of these old superstitions in my book *Ghost Encounters* (Blandford, 1998).

## **Wicca**

Wicca, as it is performed today, is not modern witchcraft per se, but a contemporary neo-pagan religion. It is, however, one of the major forms of witchcraft. It began in its modern form with the teachings of Gerald Gardner after the repeal of the Witchcraft Act in 1951, though its descent can be traced to the ancient nature religions. This traditional method of Wicca is quite formal, with covens using ritual tools and learned invocations emphasising the Goddess and her representative, the High Priestess, as their head. The Goddess is the archetype or source energy of the ultimate feminine power or principle. All the named goddesses represent aspects of particular qualities of the Goddess in different cultures. Her consort is the Horned God and his representative in the coven is the High Priest. Though each coven is autonomous, formal Wicca follows a system of degrees of learning and does not permit self-initiation. The High Priest initiates the female members and the High Priestess the male. They celebrate eight sabbats, or seasonal celebrations.

There are, however, numerous forms of Wicca and of witchcraft, many of which draw on ancient traditions. For example, the feminist Dianic Wicca, founded in the 1970s, is spiritually descended from the nature religion of the Italian witches who worshipped Diana as the Triple Goddess of the Moon from about 500 BC.

Since the 1970s, less formal practices and covens have evolved, which may or may not have a structured learning system, and these create their own spells and ceremonies, rather than using an existing system, such as that recorded in Gardner's own *Book of Shadows*, revised by his High

Priestess Doreen Valiente. These individual ceremonies are recorded in books created to reflect the evolving rituals of each coven and its own emphases. This method is much more conducive to solitary practitioners who can incorporate magick into their domestic and working lives.

## **Wiccan Rituals And Ethics**

Wiccans believe in polarity rather than a single godhead, both in magick and in life. Evil is therefore not a separate demonic force to be eradicated, and the darker aspects of life emanate as a result of alienation from the natural order of things. However, even those things that are bad can act as catalysts for change; death and endings are as much part of the cycle of life as are birth and beginnings. Dark and light, night and day, positive and negative, destruction and creation are two sides of the same coin, a principle that finds expression in Eastern Taoism and underpins the ancient Chinese / Ching (The Book of Changes), often used for divination. Negativity can be transformed into healing energies through positive ritual.

The Goddess is the source of all creation, from whom, in the original virgin birth, her son-consort, the Horned God, came. The Horned God and the Goddess are the creative male and female principles that act and react, not in opposition to each other, but as complementary and necessary parts of a whole. There are variations on this idea within the teachings of Wicca. Some traditions consider the Goddess to be of greater significance than her male counterpart.

Others regard them as equal, assuming different aspects according to the season and ritual: she as the Earth or Moon deity, ruler of the summer months, he as the Sun or Corn God, ruler of winter and Lord of the Underworld after his death.

Along with other nature deities, the Horned God became demonised with the advent of Christianity, and the Goddess was either depicted as a wicked witch or downgraded to the status of a faerie. Thus the Celtic warrior goddess Maeve became the faerie Mab, described thus by Mercutio in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet:

*She is the fairy's midwife, and she comes  
In shape no bigger than an agate-stone  
On the fore-finger of an alderman.*



Contrary to popular belief, Wiccans do not 'hex' (cast curses) or seek revenge, although some Dutch and Pennsylvanian witches consider that it is justifiable to 'bind' those who harm children or animals or actively promote evil or corruption. Wiccans prefer to rely on the principles of natural justice that under karmic principles will redress the balance, either in this lifetime or the next.

The chief moral codes are the Wiccan Rede and the Threefold Law. The Wiccan Rede states simply: 'An it harm none, do what you will'. This deceptively straightforward statement refers to the self as well as others. I have already mentioned the Threefold Law whereby magical intent - and, many believe, actions and thoughts - return to the sender with three times the intensity.

Because people are responsible for their own actions, everyone -witch and non-witch alike - can choose to do good or evil. Many witches and Wiccans believe that they are reincarnated in some form and also that the results of past deeds can follow a person from one life to the next.

You can compare this to the concept of karma found in Hinduism and Buddhism, which says that the thoughts and deeds we accumulate in our lifetime may either progress us towards spiritual perfection - if good - or indicate, if bad, that we need to learn lessons in subsequent lives to right our mistakes or attitudes. Other witches say there is an afterlife, spent on another plane of existence. Known as Summerland, Avalon or Valhalla, and akin to Tir na n'Og, the Celtic Otherworld of eternal youth, it is a place where joy and light are experienced.

Reincarnation, on the other hand, is a form of bodily transformation. Some may choose to be reborn in another body, perhaps as an animal or bird, sometimes to teach or to complete unfinished work. For example, Merlin, the magician, was believed to have been incarnated in several lifetimes and to have entered willing bodies, including the sixth-century bard Taliesin.

Wiccan rituals are held at esbats and sabbats. An esbat is a monthly coven meeting, traditionally held 13 times a year during each full moon. The eight sabbats are described in the chapter Seasons and Festivals (see page 245), and celebrate the eight major divisions of the Celtic year on the solstices, the equinoxes and the old Fire festivals. These festivals mark the coming of early spring, the start of the Celtic summer, the first corn harvest and the start of the Celtic winter.

There are also many lovely ceremonies to mark the transitions in the life cycle, such as handfastings, or weddings, and rites of passage to welcome recently deceased Wiccans to the familiar circle whenever they wish to draw near.

## **Solitary Witchcraft**

There are many reasons for performing witchcraft alone: your personal circumstances or the location of your home may mean that you cannot travel to a group, or you may live in an area where there are few others who share your interests. Many witches like myself choose to practise alone, drawing in my family and close friends to celebrate with me on the festival days. Most solitary witches initiate themselves, though some traditions, such as the Saxon Seat Wicca founded by Raymond Buckland in the USA, do admit solitary witches.

Indeed, solitary practitioners are said by some to have been witches in seven previous lifetimes and to possess within them all they need to know about the Craft. Truth or myth, no one should underestimate the number of private practitioners who do work alone, some coming together occasionally in small, informal groups.

Solitary witches can use ceremonial magick very successfully, but many do follow the less formal folk magick, linked to the land and the seasons, that was practised by our ancestors in their homes. For this reason, some call themselves hedge-witches, from the times when a hedge, often of hawthorn, bounded the witch's home, and it is sometimes said that they are walking on the hedge between two worlds. Such a witch may be in the tradition of the village wise women who knew about herbs and about the cycles of nature and used the implements of their kitchens rather than ceremonial tools.

She may also be gifted in divination, in spell-casting and in astral projection. Usually a woman, but occasionally a man, the solitary witch practises eclectic magick drawn from a variety of traditions. In the Further Reading section on page 301, you will find some suggested books in which you can read about some of these different traditions.

Those expert in brews and potions are also called kitchen witches. Indeed, many of our grandmothers and great-grandmothers who possessed a remarkable intuition, read the tea leaves and made herbal concoctions, were jokingly called witches by their own families - and were just that!

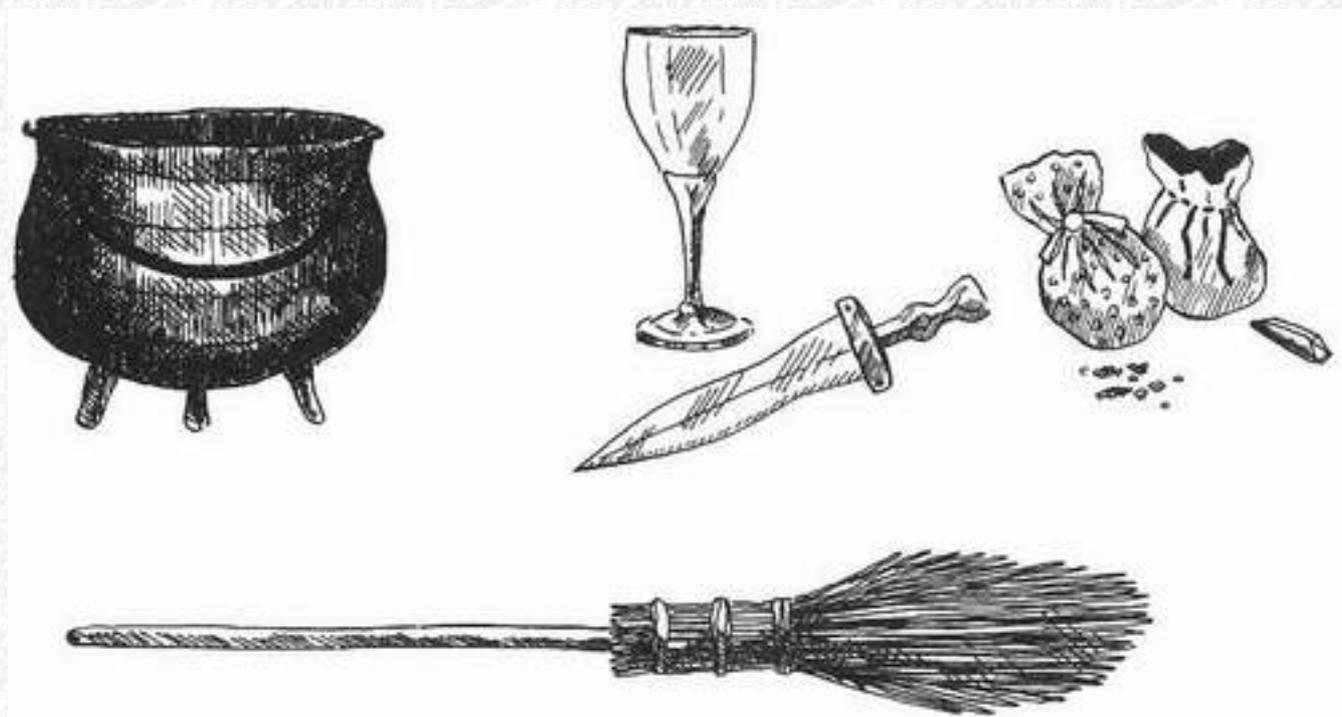
All the rituals in this book can be carried out by a lone witch. You have your choice of groves, stone circles, the ocean shore, your garden or balcony, where you can connect with the powers of nature and work unobtrusively. Whether you are working alone, or in a group, or coven, you will share the same aims and will need much the same equipment.

## **Tools And Treasures**

You will need to collect some basic tools for your spells and rituals. If you are working in a group, these can be kept either by different members or in a safe place and brought out at meetings. They need not be at all expensive. Magick was traditionally carried out with the equipment of the home: the broom for sweeping the magical circle was the besom used for sweeping dirt (and negativity) out of

the door and was stored with its bristles upwards to protect the home.

The cauldron was the iron cooking pot on the black kitchen range that served to heat the home as well as for cooking. Items often can be gathered from around your home: for example, a silver bell, a crystal bowl or a large wine glass. Attractive scarves or throws make ideal altar cloths. Car boot sales are an excellent source of magical equipment. Keep your magical tools separate from your everyday household equipment in a large box or chest, so that you can keep them charged with positive energies for magical and healing work.



Some items, such as the pentacle (see page 189), you can make from clay, and herbs can be grown in pots or in gardens and chopped in a mortar and pestle. Fresh herbs have more immediate energies than dried, though the latter are better in sachets and poppets.

Always bear in mind that the magick is in you, not in your tools, and a wand cut from a fallen hazel or willow branch in the right hands can be more magical than the most elaborate crystal-tipped one purchased from a New Age store.

## Spell Casting

Spell casting is part of some, but by no means all, Wiccan activities. Most spells are carried out with the purpose of changing someone's life for the better or sending healing energies to others. For example, love magick could, if you wish to bring love into your life, be focused on increasing the love in the world, thereby attracting love in its many forms, and not just romance. More specifically, you may wish to attract one special person, to deepen an existing relationship or bring back a straying partner. For this, however, you would need to build into the ritual a proviso that this happening should be right for that person as well as for yourself.

Modern witchcraft is all too aware of the need not to infringe on the free will of others. As I have

mentioned, binding or banishing spells work by lessening a negative influence or by protecting potential victims, rather than by attacking a person, however destructive they may be.

## **A Book of Shadows**

Whether you are working alone or in a coven, you might like to start a Book of Shadows, a record of rituals that have worked well, names of those who need healing and herbal brews and incenses that are especially evocative. In time, this will become a source not only of reference but also of inspiration to you. Books of Shadows are so-called because early witches kept them secret for fear of persecution. They were often burned or buried with witches who died.

You may decide to have two Books of Shadows, one as a permanent record, traditionally copied out by hand, and the other an ongoing working almanac in which you note moon phases for the month. If you are working in a group that includes someone with a mathematical bent, they can calculate and note here the times of the day at which particular planets and angels hold sway (see the tables on pages 235 and 239 for methods of calculation). You can also note the phases of the Moon. I find a diary section of a Filofax serves well, but if this information is kept on computer, then copies can be printed out if required for other members.

Some covens keep a single main Book of Shadows in a safe place. From this, members - especially new ones - can copy rituals and magical lore in their own smaller Books of Shadows, which can then be handed down in future times to any member of their family who shows an interest in such matters as they reach adulthood.

Apart from the suggestions I have made for possible rituals and books you can read, there are countless Books of Shadows on the Internet that can act as inspiration. There are no rules set in stone; rituals carried out in love and even laughter, perhaps when a candle will not light, are far more effective than the most elaborate ceremony in which everyone is so focused on getting it right.

If the ritual rather than the intent is all, the power becomes dissipated and anxiety blocks the innate magick we all experienced as children. Magick works best when we can leave behind our innate demands for precision and order. The more formal and lengthy rituals may act as a powerful aid to focus, but they may, equally, ignore the importance of learning through experience and the heart.

## **Witchcraft Within Covens**

A coven is a group of members of a unit of witchcraft and, in fact, can number anything from two to 13, or even more. The number 13 is traditionally designated by the 13 moon cycles that make up one year, and 13 is the number of the Goddess (hence it became unlucky under Christian influence). Gardenerian covens generally number 13. Some covens are affiliated formally or informally to specific traditions, but they increasingly unite for organisational as well as legal and political strength, particularly in Australia and parts of the USA. On-line covens are also springing up and they are an excellent way for solitary practitioners to gain support and information. Reliable, bona fide covens will offer the same safeguards as any ordinary coven (see page 306), but of course the normal restraints you should show on contacting any Internet site will apply.