



Witchfather: A Life of Gerald Gardner, Vol 2: From Witch Cult to Wicca

Philip Heselton

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A Life of Gerald Gardner Volume 2. From Witch Cult to Wicca by Philip Heselton From the author of the highly acclaimed "Wiccan Roots", this is the first full-length biography of Gerald Brosseau Gardner (1884-1964) - a very personal tale of the man who single-handedly brought about the revival of witchcraft in England in the mid 20th Century. From Gerald's birth into an old family of wealthy Liverpool merchants, through an unconventional upbringing by his flamboyant governess in the resorts of the Mediterranean and Madeira, it tells how, having taught himself to read, his life was changed by finding a book on spiritualism. During a working life as a tea and rubber planter in Ceylon, Borneo and Malaya, he came to know the native people and was invited to their secret rituals. But it was only on his retirement to England, settling on the edge of the New Forest in Hampshire, that destiny took him firmly by the hand. Through various twists and turns involving naturist clubs and a strange esoteric theatre, he became friends with a group of people who eventually revealed their true identity - they were members of a surviving witch coven. One evening in 1939, as the hounds of war were being unleashed, he was initiated into the 'witch cult' by these people, who called themselves 'the Wica'. Gardner was overwhelmed by the experience and was determined that the 'witch cult' should survive. This book chronicles his efforts over the remaining quarter century of his life to ensure not only that it survived but that it would become the significant player on the world religious stage that it now is - "the only religion that England has ever given the world", in the words of Ronald Hutton, Professor of History at the University of Bristol, who calls it "... a very fine book: humane, intelligent, compassionate, shrewd, and based upon a colossal amount of primary research". Born in 1946, Philip Heselton is a geographer and retired local government officer who has written extensively on Earth Mysteries and our spiritual relationship with the landscape. He has also carried out extensive research into the story of the modern witchcraft revival, chronicled in his books, "Wiccan Roots" and "Gerald Gardner and the Cauldron of Inspiration". Hutton has described him as being "... the most interesting, valuable and enjoyable author who has yet written on what is becoming one of the greatest riddles in the history of modern religion: the origins of pagan witchcraft. ... Nobody has ever done more than Philip Heselton to reveal the world of magic, paganism, naturism and faerie that lay behind the garden gates of inter-war English suburban villas; and perhaps only he could have done it at all."

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