1969, with new preface).

7. *Ibid.,* pp. 9-10.
8. George Bishop, C.C.C.S. Archivist, personal communication, 2000.
9. "The Cereologist", no. 1, Summer 1990, "Flattened Corn Sold to Aeronauts", Christine Rhone, pp. 12-13.
10. *He Who Saw Everything: A Verse Translation of The Epic of Gilgamesh,* Robert Temple, Rider, London, 1991, pp. 120-121, note 3 p. 132.
11. *Voices of the Winds: Native American Legends,* Margot Edmonds and Ella C. Clark, Facts on File, 1989, pp. 139-140.
12. *Magic in History: Ritual Magic,* Elizabeth M. Butler, Sutton, 1998 (reprint of first ed., 1949, Cambridge University Press), pp. 6-9.
13. *The Hermetic and Alchemical Writings of Aureolus Philippus Theophrastus Bombast of Hohenheim, called Paracelsus the Great,* vol. 1, ed. Arthur Edward Waite, James Elliott and Co., London, 1894, pp. 219-221. (*Archidoxis Magica* is attributed to Paracelsus but may have been written by Gerhard Dorn *ca.* 1570).
14. *Land of the Spotted Eagle,* Luther Standing Bear, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston & New York, 1933, pp. 206-207.

Christine Rhone is the author, with John Michell, of Twelve Tribe Nations *(Thames & Hudson, 1991), the translator of Jean Richer's* Sacred Geography of the Ancient Greeks *(SUNY Press, 1994), and the translator of Antoine Faivre's* Theosphy, Imagination, Tradition *(SUNY Press, 2000). She is a contributor to many small press magazines and journals in the UK and the US and a priestess in the Fellowship of Isis. She resides in London, and may be reached at <christine@rhone.abel.uk>.*

BOOK REVIEWS:

WICCAN ROOTS: GERALD GARDNER AND THE MODERN WICCAN REVIVAL

by Philip Heselton. Capal Bann Publishing: Chieveley Berks, 2000
ISBN 186163 1103. £14.95

Reviewed by Juliette Wood
The Folklore Society

The book, in the author's words, attempts to explore 'the historical dimension of modern Witchcraft', and where better to start than with the pivotal figure of Gerald Gardner. Heselton's book considers every source possible—books, articles, newspapers, interview material, hearsay, even the occasional flash of Wiccan intuition—in an attempt to throw light on the events surrounding Gardner's initiation into Witchcraft in 1939. Since the time Gardner 'went public' with his announcement that an ancient Witch cult had survived in England, a number of scholars from both historical and folkloric fields have taken issue with all, or parts, of his theory. Much of what Gardner described did not fit in with Witchcraft beliefs and practices that were known, and there were practical difficulties with the notion that the religion represented a continuity from prehistoric times. Current Wiccan thinking concentrates less on ancient continuities and more on the beliefs themselves. Thus the suggestion that

Gardner got his material from comparatively modern sources, such as Rosicruscianism, Masonism, Aleister Crowley's writings and even fantasy fiction or poetry, seems less an attack on the authenticity of religious belief, and more the workings of a dynamic, vital syncretism. Some scholars, such as Jeffrey Russell, a respected historian of Witchcraft, dismissed Gardner's work and assumed that he made the whole thing up. Thanks to the work of Gardner's friend and pupil, Doreen Valiente, the existence of at least one person mentioned by him 'Old Dorothy' (Dorothy Clutterbuck) has been verified. Heselton's book identifies even more people with an interest in spiritual matters who knew Gardner and much of this book is an attempt to clarify their role.

The main question still remains: how much of the tradition was *in vivo* when Gardner discovered it, and how much did he add himself? This book is a balanced attempt to answer that question, supplying information where it is available and using intuition, perfectly understandable in a writer who writes from a Wiccan perspective, to further his arguments. Information is primary in dealing with the people Gardner met while living in Highcliffe. Heselton clearly feels that Gardner did discover a 'surviving Witchcraft tradition' and that Dorothy Clutterbuck, the Mason family and Edith Woodford-Grimes (Dafo) were all members. Gardner attended meetings of a local Rosicrusian group known as the Crotona Fellowship where he met a group of people who recognised him as 'of the blood'. Heselton identifies them as members of the Mason family, and provides evidence that they were involved in theosophy, co-masonry and Rosicrusiansim. However, whether they were hereditary Witches with an independent tradition of their own (and not just participating in the ongoing evolution with Gardner himself) is more difficult to establish. Although interesting, the material suggesting they were Witches (pp.110-115), depends on hearsay and written hints that date to the 1950's at the earliest, the period when Gardner was busy publicising his system and creating a suitable history for it.

The chapter on Dafo, the Witch who initiated Gardner into the Craft, establishes a possible connection with the Mason family, and a more certain connection with Gardner. It also illustrates both the strength and weakness of Heselton's approach. He suggests (p. 120) that Edith Woodford-Grimes added a hyphen to create a more aristocratic sounding name because of its similarity to a composer called Amy Woodforde-Finden about whom she might have known. There follows a short biography of a composer not connected in any way with Gardner's movement. The amount of information given is commendable, but it can be distracting and tangential. There are a number of contradictory accounts of Gardner's meeting with Dafo, but again the question is whether she was instructing him in an independent tradition or close to him during the period when he himself was weaving the fabric of Wicca from multiple sources. She clearly retired from the proceedings when Gardner began to publicise his material for reasons which are not entirely clear. In his study, *The Triumph of the Moon,* Professor Ronald Hutton suggests that she is the actual person behind the persona of Old Dorothy.

This figure is quite rightly described as

... THE MATERIAL SUGGESTING [MEMBERS OF THE CROTONA FELLOWSHIP] WERE WITCHES DEPENDS ON HEARSAY AND WRITTEN HINTS THAT DATE TO THE 1950'S AT THE EARLIEST, THE PERIOD WHEN GARDNER WAS BUSY PUBLICISING HIS SYSTEM AND CREATING A SUITABLE HISTORY FOR IT.

'a character who looms large in Wiccan folklore'. Heselton is convinced, on the strength of her diaries (actually day books mostly in verse) that she was an important member of the New Forest Witch coven with whom Gardner and his friends from the Rosicrusian society joined up. This reviewer did not find the argument convincing. Heselton tries very hard to find pagan references in the rather conventional nature imagery in Dorothy's diary. He claims, for example, that Dorothy referred to 'a nameless being whom we can only identify with the Goddess'. The issue surely is whether Dorothy identified this being with the Goddess. That Wiccans might do so, only creates a circularity in the argument. A second suggestion, that her use of nature constitutes 'strong and deeply felt pagan expression', is highly subjective (pp.164-65). The same intense nature imagery, and lack of obvious orthodox Christian reference, could be found in other writers, the poet Swinburne for example, but this does not a practising Witch make. And to suggest that because Dorothy liked fairies, the 'wicked fairy' in one of her entries was a coded term for 'Witch', does take speculation a little too far (p.200). However, it is good to have the extracts and the information on Dorothy, and Heselton himself admits that the case for Dorothy's involvement is far from proved.

Factual information is less readily available regarding the circumstances of Gardner's initiation, namely whether a coven existed in the New Forest and the details of a ritual performed to stop Hitler's invasion. All the sources and their variations are assembled and assessed. However the real problem again is not whether an initiation or anti-invasion ritual took place, but whether these rituals belonged to a pre-existing tradition of Witchcraft or to a new one with Gardner himself as catalyst.

The author treats as reasonable the idea that Witches attempted to stop Hitler's invasion and assesses the likelihood of two earlier anti-invasion stories linked with the Napoleonic Wars and the Spanish Armada. He is personally sympathetic, in the context of the New Forest background, to the notion that William Rufus had some connection with a magical fraternity. If there were supporting evidence for these things, then yes the likelihood of a Wiccan tradition going back at least to the 16th century (the original date given by Gardner for his

Book of Shadows) would be a possibility. One cannot accuse the author of slapdash research, and he admits (p.215) that the evidence for a New Forest coven is not proven. The difficulty is that the author relies heavily in this context on the hearsay/survivalist 'what if' kind of arguments that are most likely to be questioned. Anti-invasion folklore is not unknown, and often, like the women in red petticoats convincing the French that they are soldiers, has an element of credibility and a great deal of narrative embellishment. It is equally possible that these stories are simply a re-working by Gardner (or someone) of the Berwick Witches incident in order to cast his Craft as a positive force for good. The suggestion that the Rufus stone was a focus for Witchcraft (p. 232) is a good example of just the sort of tradition Gardner set in motion. Rufus as Witch leader and sacrifice is found in Margaret Murray's writing. More contemporary documents, for example Walter Map (friend and confidant of Henry II), record prophetic dreams before Rufus's death, but nothing of magic.

What does come across in the more speculative ways in which the author handles evidence is the importance of intuition and belief in reincarnation in Wiccan thinking. In this context, a strict historical time-scale would be less important. While Gardner did not fabricate the events, he was a prime mover in creating rituals in which folk tradition forms the least important element in comparison with various occult traditions. It is difficult to reconcile Gardner's highly organised, hereditary, overwhelmingly positive and ritualised Craft with Witchcraft material from southern Britain or indeed anywhere. Instances of Witch families are recorded in the trials and many practitioners of magic attribute their material to forbears, but this is not quite the multigenerational, carefully nurtured lines necessary to Gardner's view. Witches working in groups are comparatively rare (except in the trial records and this may very well be slanted), and there is little evidence for books and complex rituals. In addition, the actions of Witches tend to have a domestic focus (and often involve cursing), with little evidence for attempts to alter the course of history as Gardner claimed his Witch coven had done in defending Britain against invaders. (It is worth noting that the Berwick Witches were accused of trying to kill the king, not protect the country). If anything, Gardner's material shows some similarity to the work of cunning men and women, but even here, the tight organisations and the concern with world events is lacking. However there are striking parallels (and this has been pointed out by other scholars, notably Aidan Kelly and Ronald Hutton) with the revival of ritual magic in the 18th and 19th centuries. It does seem, on present knowledge, that Gardner fused the idea that the Witch cult had survived as a secret religion (as argued in Murray and Leland) with principles of Rosicrucianism and Masonism as mediated by Crowley's OTO and other organisations. What Heselton's book does suggest is that the input for this process was probably more complex than anyone realised (or Gardner himself let on). If it has not furthered the argument about organised Witchcraft prior to Gardner, it has certainly illuminated and clarified the contemporary context.