

# The History of Important Pagans



## A Unit Study from Little Pagan Acorns

The purpose of this unit study is to give kids a sense of history about the who's who in modern Paganism but clearly this doesn't include every single person who has made a contribution.

I have included book lists along with each person as separate pages so you can skip printing them if you want. If you plan on doing further studies into each person's contributions to Paganism, I figured they would come in handy but they're less important than the actual bio pages.

This package includes a one-page biography for 9 notable people, a list of others who had their own smaller contributions, as well as some question sheets at the end. There is also a page of quotes that could be used for memory work or even some handwriting practice.

Geared towards older children, this is more of a reading/writing unit without the coloring sheets and puzzles that are my usual style.

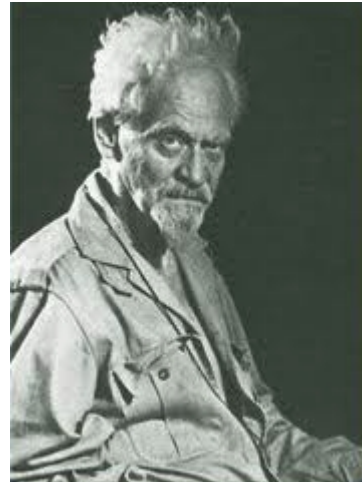
# Gerald Gardner

Born: 1884 in Blundellands, England

Died: 1964 at sea, off the coast of Africa (aged 79)

## Why is he important?

Gerald Gardner is one of the most important people in Wicca because he is the man who basically created it. Even today, people follow his exact teachings, passed from coven to coven, in a tradition named for him: the Gardnerian Tradition.



## His life and story

He spend a very exciting life while he was young, doing a lot of travelling and seeing all the exciting things the world has to offer. It's what led him to seek out new ideas when he came back to England.

Before finding witchcraft, he was involved in Rosicrucian studies and was part of a group called the Crotona Fellowship. His work in witchcraft didn't really start until 1939 when he met a woman named Old Dorothy Clutterbuck. She was the High Priestess of the New Forest Coven, and claimed to be part of a long line of witches. Gardner was initiated into the group and began his studies into witchcraft and their term for it, Wicca.

His studies didn't stop there. Over the years, he became a priest of the Ancient British Church, and he also joined the Druid Order. He was also friends with Aleister Crowley, who introduced him to ceremonial magick and the Ordo Templi Orientis.

By 1949, Gardner felt it was time to share what he was discovering, particularly the rites and rituals of his coven. But witchcraft was actually against the law, so he had to be careful. He was sneaky, and wrote a novel called "High Magic's Aid" instead. Presented as fiction, he actually wrote many real facts into the book. He called himself Scire as the author. And in 1951, England cancelled those old laws and Gardner went more public with his teachings.

Gardner didn't only publish books to help educate people about Wicca. He also worked with a friend of his to open the Folklore Center of Superstition and Witchcraft as a museum and learning center in 1951. It was around this time that he formed his own coven, named for the town he was living in: Bricket Wood Coven. Doreen Valiente was an acquaintance of his, and she eventually became High Priestess in the coven. Her books also created part of this early history of Wicca.

Blending what he had learned about Wicca over the years with his additional studies of ceremonial magick, he created his own style of Wicca and presented it in the book "Witchcraft Today". The topic was pretty unusual for the time, and he became famous around Britain as the "Chief Witch" of England. His next book continued his thoughts on Wicca.

Members of his coven eventually spread out, and formed their own groups. Their training under Gardner is maintained in covens today as the Gardnerian Tradition.

# Gerald Gardner's Book List

For someone so important to Wicca and Paganism, Gardner really didn't write that many books.

- A Goddess Arrives (fiction)
- High Magic's Aid (fiction)
- Witchcraft Today
- Meaning of Witchcraft

Additional biographies about Gerald Gardner have been written, including "Gerald Gardner, Witch" and "Witchfather, the life of Gerald Gardner".

# Alex Sanders

Born: June 6, 1926 in Birkenhead, England  
Died: April 30 1988 in Sussex, England(aged 61)

## Why is he important?

Alex Sanders is usually ranked up with Gardner as one of the creators of Wicca, though he did take a bit of a different path. Unfortunately, he was a showman, and many parts of his life story are hard to tell fact from fiction.



## His life and story

Alex was involved in a Spiritualist church as a little boy and that gave him a keen interest in many occult practices as he was growing up. He may even have learned some ancient family magick from his Welsh grandmother, though no one is positive about that.

He didn't start out on a Wiccan path once he was an adult. He actually spent a period of years practising a left-hand path of Satanic magick as well as studying various forms of ceremonial magick before discovering Wicca. In the early 1960's, Sanders met Patricia Crowther, who was one of the High Priestesses trained by Gardner. She introduced Sanders to the Wiccan path.

But Patricia didn't really like Alex because he was too wild for her taste. Even so, he found another Priestess to initiate him and his path in Wicca got started. Over the years, he worked with several different covens and was eventually the High Priest of his own. Supposedly, he initiated thousands of people and was given the title "King of the Witches".

Though he was trained in the Gardnerian tradition to start with, Alex made many changes to his own Book of Shadows to include a lot of the ceremonial rituals that he had previously worked with. This new form of Wicca became the Alexandrian tradition still practised today.

He made quite a few outrageous claims during his time, including a number of healing miracles as well as creating a spirit baby that would become his personal familiar. Wicca wasn't his only spiritual path either. During the years that he was a High Priest, he also was involved with the Knights Templar, the Order of Saint Michael and the Ordine Della Luna. In a publicity stunt, he even attempted to raise a man from the dead.

There is even more to Alex's story after his death. He died of lung cancer in 1988, but contact was made with his spirit in 1998. A full account of these channelling sessions has been published in "A Voice in the Forest" if you want to hear more about it.

There is a complete biography about Alex Sanders titled "King of the Witches" where you can find out more about his life. Unlike the other Pagans in this unit, he didn't actually publish any books of his own, so there is no book list for Alex Sanders.

# Doreen Valiente

Born: January 4, 1922

Died: September 1, 1999

## Why is she important?

She was one of the first High Priestesses in Wicca, as part of Gerald Gardner's original coven (which we already talked about in *his* bio). Her books formed the foundation of modern Wicca in much the same way.



## Her life and story

As a child, Doreen was interested in otherworldly things and had a number of her own personal psychic experiences. Shunned by her religious family, her pursuit of esoteric knowledge continued into adulthood.

After reading an article that mentioned Gardner's New Forest Coven, and she got in touch with him about it since she was living in the area. She soon was initiated into the group by Gardner, and she took the Craft name of Ameth. While she was in his Bricket Wood Coven, she worked closely with Gardner as High Priestess and helped him finish writing his Book of Shadows. It was Doreen who helped him get rid of some bits and pieces of material picked up from Aleister Crowley because it didn't fit with the original witchcraft material.

Eventually they started to have different opinions on how to run the group, and Doreen left to start her own coven in the early 1960s. Over the next few years, she also studied with the Coven of Atho and the Clan of Tubal Cain. The Clan of Tubal Cain was run by Robert Cochrane, who claimed to have a family tradition that he called "1734".

In 1966, she left that group to focus more on her own studies and writing. As her books were published, more and more people came to her for advice. Though she only wrote a small handful of books, her various talks and lectures helped to spread knowledge of old Pagan ways for many years as she got older. She was a regular speaker at the many conventions put on by the Pagan Federation.

Her last High Priest, John Belham-Payne, founded the Center for Pagan Studies in 1995, and Doreen was made their Patron. When she died of cancer in 1999, she left her large library of books, writings and tools to John. The Doreen Valiente Foundation has been created to help manage and preserve her amazing collection.

# Doreen Valiente's Book List

- Where Witchcraft Lives
- An ABC of Witchcraft
- Natural Magic
- Witchcraft for Tomorrow
- The Rebirth of Witchcraft (her autobiography)
- Charge of the Goddess (poetry, published after her death)

# Stewart & Janet Farrar

*These two are best known in the Pagan world as a couple, so I am going to cover them together.*

Stewart

Born: June 28, 1916 in Essex, England

Died: February 7, 2000 (aged 79)

Janet

Born: June 24, 1950 in Clapham, England

Janet is still living (age 63)

## **Why are they important?**

They were influential writers during the early years of Wicca, and their books created an important foundation for the next several decades of teachings.



## **Their life and story**

They met right around the same time they both discovered Wicca in 1970, so that is a good place to start their story. They were initiated into an Alexandrian coven during that year, by Maxine Sander's herself (Alex Sander's wife). Stewart met the Sanders during a film screening of "Legend of the Witches", and then met Janet at a coven meeting soon after.

Within just a couple of years, they had gotten their third-degree initiation and founded their own coven. They got handfasted and married a little bit after that by 1975. He had already written his first book on Wicca, "What Witches Do" by this time, and the couple went on to publish several more great titles that explained the workings of Wicca to the public.

In 1976, they moved from London to a cottage in Ireland to continue teaching about Wicca. Most of the covens in Ireland today can trace their origins back to the Farrars.

Some of the material in their books is based on their Alexandrian training, but they did write some of the rituals themselves based on other witchcraft studies. Training within the Aquarian Tabernacle Church was also part of this other study.

After Stewart's death from cancer in 2000, Janet has continued to write books with her new husband Gavin Bone.

As with many of the early Wiccan founders, a full biography of Stewart has been published: "Writer on a Broomstick".

# Stewart & Janet Farrar's Book List

Most of their books were written together, but you can see they collaborated with a few other authors over the years.

- What Witches Do (written by Stewart alone)
- Eight Sabbats for Witches
- The Witches' Way
- The Witches' Goddess: The Feminine Principle of Divinity
- The Witches' God: Lord of the Dance
- Spells and How They Work
- A Witches' Bible
- The Pagan Path (written with Gavin Bone)
- The Healing Craft (with G. Bone)
- Magical History of the Horse (with Virginia Russell)
- Complete Dictionary of European Gods and Goddesses (with G. Bone)
- Progressive Witchcraft (written by Janet and Gavin)



# Raymond Buckland

Born: August 31, 1934 in London England

Died: Raymond is still alive (aged 79)

## **Why is he important?**

Wicca began in England with Gerald Gardner, but it was Raymond Buckland who brought it to the United States. With his Gardnerian teachings, he established a line of covens in the USA that are still running today. Also, he wrote a huge number of books to help share his knowledge with the public.



## **His life and story**

After reading one of Gerald Gardner's books in 1962, Raymond started writing to him to learn more about Wicca. He had been interested in spiritual things since his uncle introduced him to the subject when he was just 12. After a year of writing to Gardner, Buckland and his wife took a trip to Britain and were initiated by High Priestess Monique Wilson.

They returned to America and brought their teaching with them, along with a copy of Gardner's Book of Shadows. The next year, the Long Island Coven was born. Almost every single Gardnerian coven in the USA can trace its roots back to them.

A few more years later, Buckland wanted to open a museum like Gardner did, and so started up the First Museum of Witchcraft and Magic in 1968. At the same time, he began to publish books on various topics, not just on witchcraft.

Though he began his life in witchcraft as a Gardnerian, he went on to start his own tradition in 1974 after leaving the Long Island Coven. He called it Seax Wicca and added in ideas from Saxon beliefs (Norse and Germanic). He wrote a book about it titled "The Tree" to share it openly with everyone. He also offered long-distance courses in it, and there are thousands of people following Seax Wicca today.

For years, Buckland moved around the United States and continued to write more books and speak. He also put his museum collection into storage because he couldn't maintain the place anymore. Working in theatre professionally, he even had some small roles in big-screen movies during his life.

Though he was a well-known person in the world of Wicca who gave lectures and workshops all the time, he has recently "retired" and no longer spends much time in the public eye. Interest in getting his museum back up and running has started recently, but it hasn't happened just yet.

# Raymond Buckland's Book List

- Pocket Guide to the Supernatural
- Practical Candleburning Rituals
- Witchcraft Ancient and Modern
- Witchcraft from the Inside
- The Tree: Complete Book of Saxon Witchcraft
- Here is the Occult
- Anatomy of the Occult
- The Magick of Chant-o-matics
- Practical Color Magick
- Color Magick: Unleash Your Inner Powers
- Buckland's Complete Book of Witchcraft
- Secrets of Gypsy Fortune Telling
- Secrets of Gypsy Love Magick
- Secrets of Gypsy Dream Reading
- Scottish Witchcraft: History and Magick of the Picts
- Doors to Other Worlds
- The Truth about Spirit Communication
- Ray Buckland's Magic Cauldron
- Advanced Candle Magick
- Gypsy Witchcraft & Magic
- Gypsy Dream Dictionary
- Coin Divination
- Wicca for Life
- The Witch Book
- The Fortune-Telling Book
- Signs, Symbols and Omens
- Cards of Alchemy
- Wicca for One
- Buckland's Book of Spirit Communication
- The Spirit Book
- Mediumship and Spirit Communication
- Face to Face with God?
- Death, Where is Thy Sting?
- Dragons, Shamans & Spiritualists
- Buckland's Doorway to Candle Magic
- Weiser's Field Guide to Ghosts
- Buckland's Book of Gypsy Magic

*To save space, I've left out his novels and works of fiction. Mr. Buckland wrote a lot.*

# Scott Cunningham

Born: June 27, 1956 in Michigan, USA

Died: March 28, 1993 (aged 36)

## Why is he important?

Scott is a very well-known name in the Pagan world, due to all the great books he's written to help people learn about the various magickal arts. And though he wrote on lots of different topics, he was most helpful with 2 books: *Wicca, A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner* and its sequel, *Living Wicca: A Further Guide for the Solitary Practitioner*.



These 2 books brought the secrets of Wicca to the general public for the first time, allowing millions of people to learn about this path without having to train in a coven of their own.

## His life and story:

Scott discovered Wicca in high school from a friend and he spent some time in a coven learning about American Traditionalist Wicca. It wasn't enough for Scott, and started more training under Raven Grimassi (a well-known Pagan in his own right) in his Aridian Tradition.

After that, he moved on to the Reorganized Traditional Gwyddonic Order of Wicca as well as the Ancient Pictish Gaelic Tradition. He really wanted to learn as much as he could from different groups, so he kept moving around.

While he was first starting his Wiccan path, he was at San Diego State University in a creative writing program. When he realized that was already a successful writer, he dropped out and kept writing books anyway.

During all of his time in various traditions, he felt that Wiccan teachings should be more available to everyone, which is what led him to eventually write his best known books (already mentioned above). Though he is most famous for writing about Wicca itself, he really loved herbs and other forms of very natural magick.

Unfortunately, he suffered through cancer and other diseases and died young. Even so, he did what he wanted to do: brought Wicca out to the public.

(A more complete biography of Scott is available in print, titled "Whispers of the Moon: Life and Works of Scott Cunningham")

# Scott Cunningham's Book List:

- Magical Herbalism: The Secret Craft of the Wise
- Earth Power: Techniques of Natural Magic
- Cunningham's Encyclopedia of Magical Herbs
- The Magical Household: Spells and Rituals for the Home
- Cunningham's Encyclopedia of Crystal, Gem and Metal Magic
- The Truth about Witchcraft Today
- Wicca: A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner
- The Complete Book of Incense, Oils and Brews
- Magical Aromatherapy: The Power of Scent
- Earth, Air, Fire and Water: More Techniques of Natural Magic
- The Magic in Food
- Cunningham's Encyclopedia of Wicca in the Kitchen
- Divination for Beginners
- Living Wicca: A Further Guide for the Solitary Practitioner
- Spell Crafts: Creating Magical Objects
- The Truth about Herb Magic
- The Truth about Witchcraft
- Hawaiian Magic and Spirituality
- Pocket Guide to Fortune Telling
- Dreaming the Divine: Techniques for Sacred Sleep
- Cunningham's Book of Shadows

# Starhawk

Born: June 17, 1951 in Minnesota USA

Died: Starhawk is still alive (aged 62)



## **Why is she important?**

Starhawk was very important in reviving the idea of Goddess worship, and she has created a unique movement that mixes religious views with social action.

## **Her life and story**

As a young woman, Starhawk studied fine arts and film at UCLA, and she worked on her writing career after that. She moved back to California and started training with other notable Pagans, Victor Anderson and Zsuzsanna Budapest.

In 1977, she wrote "The Spiral Dance" after becoming more interested in the feminist movement in the Pagan community.

Over the years, she has written a handful of important books but that isn't the only way she's sharing her wisdom. Starhawk also worked on a series of Goddess documentaries for television. Goddess Remembered, The Burning Times and Full Circle are all based on female spirituality and how it's changed through history.

Her books made a great foundation for the path of Goddess-worship today, but it has been her activist lifestyle that really made a more public impact on Paganism. After holding a gathering shortly after her book was published in 1979, a group was formed that would eventually be called the Reclaiming Collective.

The group is still going strong today and it led to the growth of a whole new Wiccan tradition that is based on social and political change as well as spiritual ideas. Not only is Reclaiming a popular Wiccan tradition, the group holds regular week-long retreats called Witchcamps.

# *Starhawk's Book List*

- The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess
- Dreaming the Dark
- Truth or Dare
- The Fifth Sacred Thing (novel)
- Walking to Mercury (novel)
- Webs of Power
- The Earth Path
- The Last Wild Witch (novel)
- The Empowerment Manual

# Isaac Bonewits

Born: October 1, 1949, Royal Oak Michigan, USA

Died: August 12, 2010 (aged 60)



## Why is he important?

Isaac was an important figure in the world of Druidry, making him a bit different from the Wiccans we've talked about so far. He's written several good books and also founded the Ár nDraiocht Fein (aka the Druid Fellowship, or ADF)

## His life and story

Isaac wasn't always drawn to Druidry. Though he did join the Reformed Druids of North America in 1966 while going to school at Berkeley, he would get involved with lots of other groups before returning to the Druid path. He even spent some time in the Church of Satan but left because he had some disagreements with Anton LaVey.

With a study program at Berkeley that let students put together their own courses, Isaac graduated with an actual degree in Magic. He gained some fame from that but the university was embarrassed and set new rules about such "unprofessional" subjects. But his name got known in magickal circles, and it led to him publishing his first book in 1972.

He edited the *Gnostica* magazine from Llewellyn Publications for a few years, and began a few more off-shoot Druid groups and a Pagan civil rights group. The Aquarian Anti-Defamation League didn't last too long though. From there, he went back to his Druid roots and became the Archdruid of his original grove back at Berkeley.

Like many others, he didn't just settle into this one path. He was interested in many different magickal ideas, and spent time in the Ordo Templi Orientis, the New Reformed Orthodox Order of the Golden Dawn and traditional Gardnerian Wicca. Isaac was also a member of the Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans for a time.

In 1983, the Ár nDraiocht Fein was born as he tried to create an organized group for Druids as well as people following a mix of other old European faiths. It is still a large and active group today with groves around the world.

Throughout the years, he spent a lot of time teaching and giving lectures around the country on various aspects of modern Neopaganism.

# Isaac Bonewits' Book List

- Real Magic: A Treatise on the Basic Principles of Yellow Magic
- The Druid Chronicles
- Authentic Thaumaturgy
- Rites of Worship: A Neopagan Approach
- Witchcraft: A Concise Guide or Which Witch is Which?
- The Pagan Man: Priests, Warriors, Hunters and Drummers
- Bonewits's Essential Guide to Witchcraft and Wicca
- Bonewits's Essential Guide to Druidism
- Real Energy: Systems, Spirits and Substances to Heal, Change and Grow
- Neopagan Rites: A Guide to Creating Public Rituals that Work



# Selena Fox

Born: October 20 1949, Arlington Virginia USA

Died: Selena is still living (aged 64)



## **Why is she important?**

Selena has been a public speaker about the environment and Pagan spirituality for many years, and she also founded the Circle Sanctuary.

## **Her life and story**

Selena studies through college and university to become a counsellor and therapist, coming to the bigger Pagan stage around 1971 when she started to take part in public rituals. Her particular path leans towards Goddess spirituality and the environment. She was even part of the group that organized the very first Earth Day in 1970.

She founded the well-known Circle Sanctuary in 1974, which has grown to be a major Pagan organization today. It began as a simple public ritual held at Selena's home, and has grown considerably over the years.

Circle's network of services includes a 200-acre nature preserve in Wisconsin, and Circle Magazine (still in print today). The nature preserve hosts a number of public rituals as well as classes and workshops through the year, though it is mainly intended as a true environmental preserve.

And if all this wasn't enough, Selena also started the Pagan Spirit Gathering, which is one of the longest-running festivals for Pagans in the USA. Though the week-long event is sponsored by Circle Sanctuary, it's not held at the preserve.

Another example of her activism came fairly recently as she worked to allow the pentacle to be added to headstones of military veterans as an officially recognized religious symbol.

# Selena Fox's Book List

Selena hasn't written that many books, but she has worked in many other forms of media to help share her ideas and message.

## **As a contributor:**

- Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America
- Religions of the World
- Encyclopedia of Modern Witchcraft and Neo-Paganism

## **Books:**

- Circle Magick Songs
- Goddess Communion: Rituals and Meditations
- Planetary Healing Rituals

But she has also worked as a writer and editor for the long-running Circle Magazine, and has been doing online podcasts for Circle as well.

# A Few More Folks....

It was hard trying to pick the right group of people to make up this study, because there are dozens (hundreds?) more that all played their parts in making Paganism what it is today.

Most of the people we've looked at so far have added lots of work to the world of Paganism besides just writing a few important books. They founded covens, groups, organizations and generally helped build a community. Here are a few more people that should be mentioned, along with their various contributions, usually the writing of popular books.

**Charles Leland** - A student of folklore in the late 1800s, who wrote "Aradia, Gospel of the Witches" which was a study of Italian traditional witchcraft practices.

**Dion Fortune** - Dion was a member of several esoterical occult groups during the early 1900s, such as the Theosophy Society, and wrote many important books. "The Mystical Qabalah" is one of her best known works, though her fictional novel "The Sea Priestess" had a big impact on Goddess spirituality as well.

**Margot Adler** - Margot wrote "Drawing Down the Moon", a classic book that explored all the types of Paganism in America in 1979. It has been frequently updated over the years and is still a valuable text, especially about the history of modern Pagan paths.

**Silver Ravenwolf** - She has written a number of current books in recent years to help bring witchcraft and Wicca to a younger generation.

**Oberon Zell-Ravenheart** - Oberon has had a mixed impact on Paganism, starting a magazine called "The Green Egg" and founding the Church of All Worlds that focuses on the Gaia concept of Earth spirituality.

**Raven Grimassi** - He has written many books about Wicca, as well as various aspects of Italian witchcraft. His books are very popular, and he is also known as the man who trained Scott Cunningham.

**Christopher Penczak** - His temple series of books on Wicca and witchcraft has brought the practice to a whole new audience since 2002.

**Laurie Cabot** - Laurie gained a lot of popularity as the "Official Witch of Salem", and she brought witchcraft out into the open through a large number of media appearances. She's written a few books, but it's her public presence that has made her the most famous.

# Time for Some Thinking.....

Do you have books by any of these authors in your house? Which ones?

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Based on what you've read, who do you think is the *most* important person? Why do you think so?

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If you could meet one of these people, who would it be? Why?

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Have I missed someone? Who else do you think is an important Pagan?

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# \* Quotes \*

A few gems of wisdom directly from these important folks. Sometimes it's a good idea to pick up some ideas in their own words.

"The magic begins in you. Feel your own energy, and realize similar energy exists within the Earth, stones, plants, water, wind, fire, colors, and animals."

~ *Scott Cunningham*

"The long sleep of Mother Goddess is ended. May She awaken in each of our hearts — Merry meet, merry part, and blessed be."

~ *Starhawk*

"Therefore, let there be beauty and strength, power and compassion, honor and humility, mirth and reverence within you."

~ *Doreen Valiente*

"We should educate people that 'Witch' is not evil but ancient and positive. The first time I called myself a 'Witch' was the most magical moment of my life."

~ *Margot Adler*

"Witchcraft ... is a spiritual path. You walk it for nourishment of the soul, to commune with the life force of the universe, and to thereby better know your own life."

~ *Christopher Penczak*

"A religion without a goddess is halfway to atheism."

~ *Dion Fortune*

"Magic is not always serious or solemn. It is a joyous celebration and merging with the life-force."

~ *Scott Cunningham*



Who founded the Reclaiming Tradition?

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Anything important happen in 1974?

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Who worked with a group called the Clan of  
Tubal Cain?

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Where is the Circle Sanctuary preserve located?

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What was Gerald Gardner's first coven called?

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Who did Janet Farrar write books with after Stewart's death?

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Who founded the Church of All Worlds?

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