

Jack Bracelin

The High Priest of the Bricket Wood coven
and proprietor of the
Five Acres Naturist Club



William Wallworth

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Researched and compiled
by William Wallworth

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Jack Leon Bracelin (1926-1981)

High Priest of the Bricket Wood coven



1. **JACK LEON BRACELIN** was born 2 June 1926 at 14 Bloomfield Road in the Hornsey part of London, England

Father: Leon Enrique Bracelin

Mother: Gertrude Alice Bunyard

~ 1926

From the England & Wales, Birth Index:

Name / Date / Registration District / County / Mother's Maiden Name / Vol. / Page

Jack L Bracelin / Jul-Aug-Sep 1926 / Edmonton / Essex / Bunyard / 3a / 721

From the Birth certificate:

Registration District - Edmonton

1926 Birth in the Sub-district of Hornsey in the County of Middlesex

*No. / When and where born / Name / Sex / Name of father / Name of mother /
Occupation of father / Informant / When registered / Registrar*

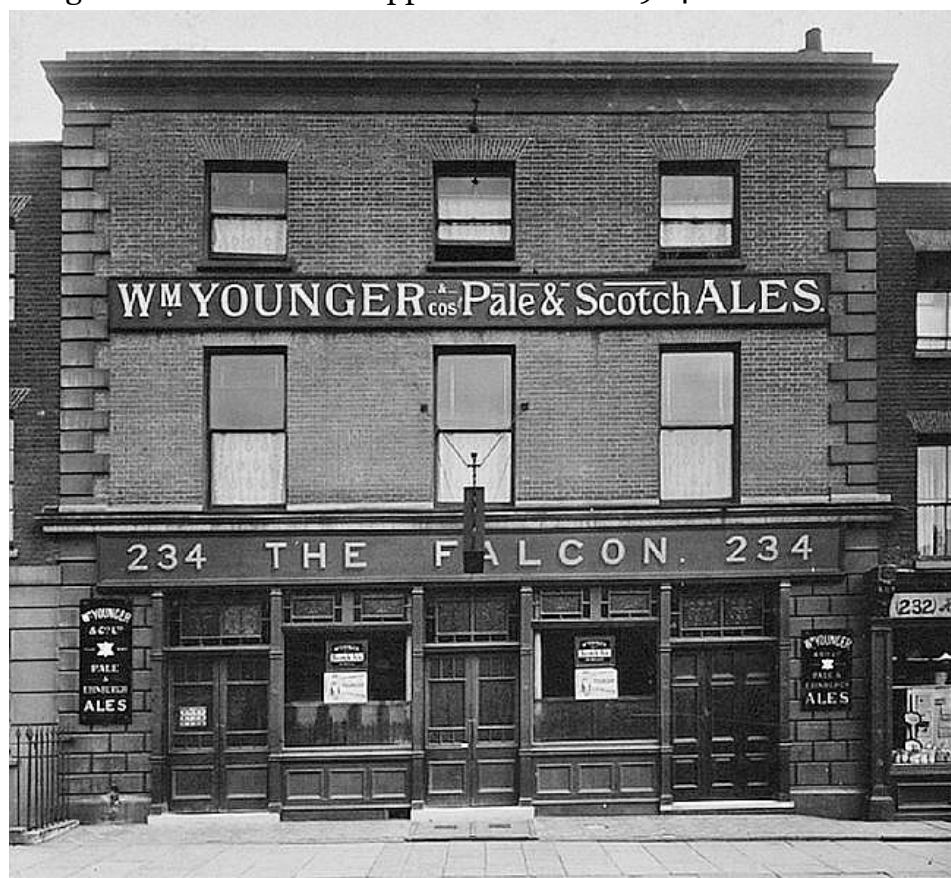
341 / Second June 1926. 14 Bloomfield Road. U. D. / Jack Leon / Boy / Leon Enrique
Bracelin / Gertrude Alice Bracelin formerly Bunyard / Licensed Victualler of 234 Great
College Street. St Pancras. / L. E. Bracelin. Father. 24 Camden Square. Camden Town. /
Seventh July 1926. / C. G. Parkin

Image from Google maps, street view of the house at 14 Bloomsfield Road where Jack
Bracelin was born in 1926, as it appears today:



On the birth certificate, it mentioned that the father, Leon E. Bracelin, was a licensed
Victualller of the pub at 234 Great College Street in St. Pancras, London in 1926.
That would be the pub called The Falcon.

Image of The Falcon as it appeared in June 1924:



Jack Leon Bracelin was known in everyday life and in the books that mentioned him, as "Jack Bracelin".

~ more about the parents

His parents, Leon Enrique Bracelin and Gertrude Alice Bunyard were married on 11 February 1922 in St. Mark's Church in Peckham, Surrey (Southwark).

From the London, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns:

Page 154

1922. Marriage solemnized at St. Mark's Church in the Parish of Peckham in the County of Surrey

No. 307

When Married. Feb: 11th 1922

Name. / Age. / Condition. / Profession. / Residence at the time of Marriage. / Father's Name. / Father's Profession.

Leon Enrique Bracelin / 34 / Bachelor / Engineer / 113 Brayard Road / William Bracelin (deceased) / Builder

Gertrude Alice Bunyard / 24 / Spinster / ----- / 113 Brayard Road / Sidney Bunyard (deceased) / Clerk

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church after Banns by me Frederic Weminck - Vicar

The Marriage was solemnized between us,

Leon Enrique Bracelin

Gertrude Alice Bunyard

in the Presence of us,

Mary Ann Johanna Bracelin

Samuel Kerr

Richard Henry Tarr

Leon Enrique Bracelin, was in the Royal Navy during World War I, he served from 1 December 1914 to 15 March 1919.

From the UK, Royal Navy Registers of Seamen's Services:

Name / Gender / Birth Date / Birth Place / First Service Date / First Ship Served On / Last Service Date / Last Ship Served On / Service Number

Leon Enrique Bracelin / Male / 8 Apr 1885 / North Kensington London / 1 Dec 1914 / Pembroke III / 15 Mar 1919 / President V / F2439

The Bracelin family originally came from Ireland.

One family tree on Ancestry.com has what would be Jack Bracelin's Great Great Grandfather, a William Bracelin being born in 1791 Ireland and died in 1861 in Cockermouth, Cumberland, England (Information not verified by me yet).

~ 1930

Jack Bracelin, as a kid, may have been seen at this location in London with his parents in 1930.

From the Post Office London Directory, 1930:

Page 1442

Bracelin Leon, 'Queen's Arms' P. H. 30 Queen's gate mews SW7 --- T N Kelvin 8577

Jack's father was probably running this pub for a while. It is not known if they lived at the location.

An image of the Queen's Arms at 30 Queen's Gate as it appeared in 2013:



~ 1933

Jack Bracelin was living at this location in London with his parents in 1933.

From the London, England, Electoral Registers for 1933:

Page 18

35 Hereford Road - Paddington, Westminster

930 / R / O / Bracelin, Leon

931 / Rw / Dw / Bracelin, Gertrude

~ 1935

Jack Bracelin was living at this location in London with his parents in 1935.

From the London, England, Electoral Registers for 1935:

Page 76

106 Finchley Road - Hampstead, Camden

4088 / Rw / ---- / Bracelin, Gertrude

4089 / R / O / Bracelin, Leon

4090 / Rw / Dw / Bracelin, Myra

~ 1936, 1937, & 1938

Jack Bracelin was living at this location in London with his parents in 1936.

From the London, England, Electoral Registers for 1936:

Page 15

102 Alexandra Road - Hampstead, Camden

747 / R / ---- / Bracelin, Leon

748 / Rw / ---- / Bracelin, Gertrude

They were also living at this address in 1937 and 1938.

~ 1939

Jack Bracelin's parents, Leon and Alice, were living at 18 Crossfield Road in Hampstead, Camden, London.

But according to the 1939 Register, there were no children listed with the parents.

1939 was the beginning of World War II. The parents had Jack Bracelin living with some relatives or at a school away from London.

From the London, England, Electoral Registers for 1939:

Page 35

18 Crossfield Road - Hampstead, Camden.

1824 / Rw / Dw / Bracelin, Gertrude

1825 / R / O / Bracelin, Leon

From the 1939 Register of Hampstead:

Borough of Hampstead

No. of Schedule - 109

18 Crossfield Road

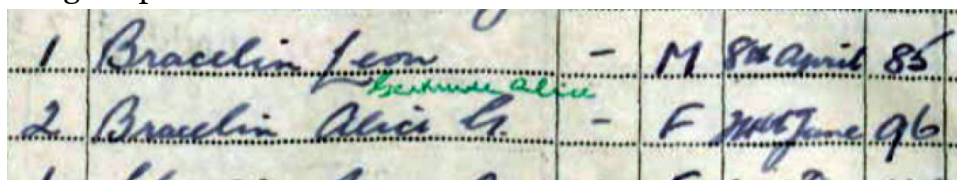
Sub. No. / Names / Sex / Birth Date - Year / Marital status / Personal Occupation

1 / Bracelin Leon / M / 8th April - 85 / M / Metal Wind---- (stained can't read the rest)

2 / Bracelin Alice G / F / 24th June - 96 / M / Lacemaide --- (" " " " ")

(written later in green ink) Gertrude Alice

Image of part of the record:



~ 1945

Jack Bracelin's father died in the 3rd quarter (Jul-Aug-Sep) of 1945 in the Hampstead registration district of London and was buried 31 August 1945 in Camden, London.

From the England & Wales, Death Index:

Name / Age / Date of Death / Registration District / County / Vol. / Page

Leon E Bracelin / 60 / Jul-Aug-Sep 1945 / Hampstead / London / 1a / 401

From the UK, Burial and Cremation Index:

Name / Register Type / Death Date / Burial Date / Burial Place

Leon Enrique Bracelin / Burial / 1945 / 31 Aug 1945 / Camden, London, England

~ 1946

It appears that Jack Leon Bracelin somehow thought that he was a heir and a descendant of Thomas Selby who died in 1772. According to this newspaper article from 1946, he tried to claim the Whaddon estate in Buckinghamshire.

From the newspaper, Buckingham Advertiser and Free Press, Saturday 06 April 1946:

Defies Death Curse

Strange Story of Whaddon Estate

A Sunday newspaper revealed this week that Jack Leon Bracelin, 20 year-old builder, of Hempstead, London, undaunted by a death prophecy, is claiming the 2,000-acre estate of Whaddon Hall, Buckinghamshire, and the millions of pounds which he believes go with it.

Win or lose, states the "Sunday Dispatch," he will probably be the last of a long line of claimants who have spent thousands trying to get possession since the Selby-Lowndes family inherited in 1783.

The article continues: "The story began when Thomas Selby died in 1772, leaving a will which ordered that his heirs should be advertized for and that, failing their discovery, Whaddon was to go to his neighbor, William Lowndes, of Winslow. Thomas Selby's son was rumoured to have been lost in a shipwreck, but his 'descendants' have claimed that he survived and married abroad.

Years of Free Beer

"In the Lowndes Arms inn, Whaddon, old men who have lived in the village all their lives talk of the of the days when claimants used to appear out of the blue ... showering hospitality on the villagers in efforts to get information."

Over a tankard of beer, 85 year-old George Missenden, J. P., one-time timber agent of the estate, is reported as describing the excitement in the village when the word went round that a new claimant had appeared.

"They used to come in droves," he is stated to have said. "Hardly a month passed without someone would arrive with friends to inspect their 'property.'

Usually they stayed or a fortnight, making friends with the villagers and buying drinks all round."

Mr. Missenden told of a Gloucestershire coach-builder named Thomas who stayed in Whaddon for weeks and lost a fortune in his bid for the estate.

Decoy Dance

Mr. Marshall, of Bletchley, oneo-time Whaddon schoolmaster, is stated to have referred to a time when three men took over the estate while the owners were away, cut down timber and removed turf, calling themselves lords of the manor.

The villagers organized a dance, to which the invaders were invited, and while the festivities were going on, closed the estate, amounted guard, and prevented their return.

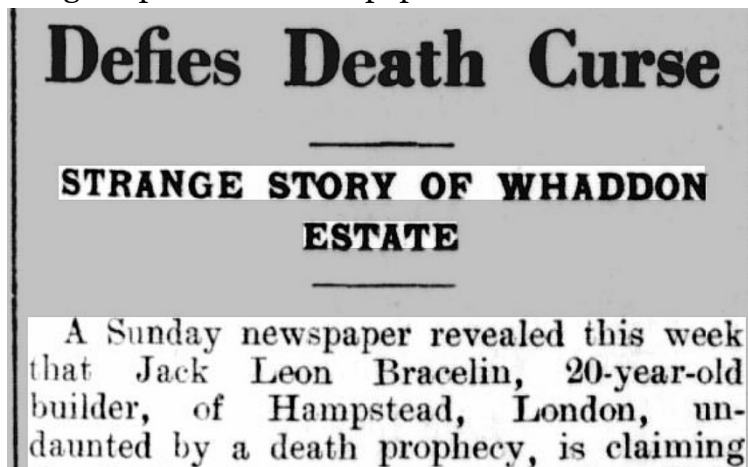
The last claimants were two women who stayed for a few days a year ago, but they disappeared and were never heard of again.

Colonel Selby-Lowndes, who lives at Winslow, is reported as having said: "So far as I am concerned, the matter ended in 1901, when the High Court ruled that the claim of a man called Jenkins was vexations and frivolous, and decided that no claim to Whaddon was to be heard again in an English court."

Mr. Bracelin believes that, with the fresh evidence which his solicitors are investigating, he stands a good chance, He believes that the will come into a fortune of between £4,000,000 and £6,000,000.

He scorns the legend in his family that death strikes at any member who tries to prove his claim.

Image of part of the newspaper article:



~ **1947**

J. L. Bracelin was in the Palestine Police department for the period of 19 February 1947 to 16 November 1947 and was awarded a medal for the service.

This was shortly before the end of the British Mandate in Palestine.

From the UK, Military Campaign Medal and Award Rolls:

Page 120

Name of Department - Police. Roll Original

Number. / Rank. / Names. / Full period of Qualifying service in Palestine. --- From. / - -- To.

1475 / B-Const / Bracelin J. L. / 19.2.47 / 16.11.47.

Image of the record:

1475	"	Bracelin, J.L.	19.2.47	16.11.47.
------	---	----------------	---------	-----------

~ **1948 to 1965**

Jack L. Bracelin and his mother, Gertrude A. Bracelin, were listed as living at 18 Crossfield Road in Hampstead in London in the Electoral Register.

From the London, England, Electoral Registers:

1948

18 Crossfield Road

2098 Bracelin, Gertrude A.

2099 Bracelin, Jack L.

Both, Jack L. and Gertrude A. Bracelin, were listed at the same address in the Electoral Registers for the years - 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1952, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1959, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, and 1965.

This is the address that Jack Bracelin list as his home in the Electoral Register. Jack could be living elsewhere sometimes as it is shown in the 1959 newspaper article.

~ 3 March 1949

Jack Leon Bracelin was arrested and gaoled for stealing lead from a house in Hampstead, London.

From the newspaper, Hampstead News, Thursday 3 March 1949:

WALKED INTO TRAP

Two men arrested in a requisitioned house at Fitzjohn's Avenue, Hampstead, by police officers, who had kept watch from a back bedroom, were gaoled by the Marylebone magistrate for stealing lead.

They were: Alexander Dykes, 24, driver, of Belsize Lane, sentenced to three months, and Jack Leon Bracelin, 22, builder, of Crossfield Road, sentenced to two months.

Dykes, who was said to have two previous convictions, remarked when arrested, "Can I walk? I don't like a police van."

Image of the article:



~ 24 March 1956

Jack Bracelin was initiated on 24 March 1956 on the Saturday before the Full Moon of March.

From the book, *Witchfather Vol. II*, by Philip Heselton, 2012:

Page 520

"One of those who read the article was a 28-year-old sales representative for a paint wholesaler living in Crossfield Road, Swiss Cottage, named Jack Leon Bracelin, a name now remembered as author of the biography *Gerald Gardner Witch*, though his other contributions to the history of the Craft have been largely ignored. In his earlier years he had been a member of the Palestine Police Force and had been interested in ceremonial magic for some years..."

"Lois Bourne describes him thus: ... *about 5' 9", slim-built with light brown hair, blue eyes and a small moustache which gave him a military air. He appeared to have a degree of suppressed nervous energy. I felt he would be a good judge of character, he spoke in a very direct manner and gave the impression of honesty and integrity.*"

Pages 521-522

"So, probably on the Saturday before the March Full Moon, 24th March 1956, four people gathered for the initiation which took place at Gerald's flat at 145 Holland Road. As well as Jack, his girl-friend and Gerald, there was a woman they had not met before called Barbara. Barbara Vickers had ceased working regularly with Gerald some time before, and I think this was probably the last time she did work with him."

~ Chris Selwood --- The Kid who grew up among the Naked people, the Witches and survived the Counterculture years

Some information about the person who we are grateful that he is sharing with us his memories of the time...

From the Conversations with Chris Selwood:

Concerning Chris Selwood's time at Five Acres Sun Club:

Wow, your note has certainly triggered some memories! Hmmmmm.

Yes, I am still around! In my 70's now (and remembering when I thought folk in their 40's were 'old'!)

Indeed, what interesting times they were. It is said that if you remembered them you probably weren't there - which is probably true to some extent. The (establishment) culture and counterculture scenes had some interesting overlaps. Socialites would frequent the alt. club scene such as UFO, Earth Garden, Happening 44 etc. Jack also had an interest in a club in Litchfield St. (Cottage Club?) just off Charing X Road. Talking of interests, we 5ALx helped with the Technicolour Dream at Ally Pally and there were probably others we did with Hoppy.

I usually attended 5s [Five Acres Sun Club] with John and Doreen Hayes of Ferndale Road SW4. My adoptive people were members of Spielplatz (or was it Gardenia?) There were three naturist clubs in close proximity.

Many of the adults attended each other's clubs as guests and as a consequence there were of a pack of kids who migrated across the fields between the three clubs according to whether there was anything interesting going on.

Jack gave us Luana's as our own clubhouse so he could keep an eye on us. My people died when I was a teenager so I may have a Fiveacres membership record in my own right, but as that would have involved paying subs, I may have just worked my passage. I do recall I was a founder member of the Watford Naturist Swimming Club, they needed a 10th signatory - I was probably 17 at that time.

[On why he had problems with his adoptive parents]

Not that much to tell really - I'm trying to think who started it. Doreen (Sean's mum) may have had something to do with it. They (John and Doreen) took me in at a difficult time in my life and I progressed to a small flat above their dry cleaning business when I was a bit older.

Fred Lamond's book '50 years of Wicca' has some interesting stuff about the politics of Fiveacres and its place in the nudist world. I wish I had paid more attention at the time as things got more interesting in later years.

I became a trustee of the British Naturism Headquarters Trust and as the national youth liaison officer ran the European Nudist Youth Congress in (1977(ish)). I am reminded of this because apparently my television interview at the time has been captured in the British Film Archive. That came to light by a researcher looking for the (1969?) BBC TV documentary on the Roman spa in the city of Bath in the west of England as some of us were paid to be part of the documentary by gracing the baths in the costume of Roman times.

About Jack Bracelin:

Jack often sailed close to the wind driving back to the 'wood' from one of his fave restaurants on Finchley Road or Swiss Cottage - He got caught DUI in '69(?) and I became his driver for a year. We lost Jack in what? 1980? I don't think he got over Rosemary leaving him for Eric Brown (who's daughter was one of my, shall we say, contemporaries). You have got me thinking now as there was someone who popped up claiming to be Jack's son - thinking thinking...

Q: When and how did you meet Jack ?

CS: As a kid my adoptive family would spend weekends at Fiveacres. Uninterested in adult stuff I would involve myself in anything that would pass the time - cleaning, painting, odd jobs etc.etc.

Gerald often had something for me to do as did Jack. Gerald would have me clean the cottage and get me to help set up for rituals.

Jack would find me odd jobs. As I got older we started a youth group (I still have my membership card!) and Jack let us use Luana's as a sort of club house.

We covered the windows and painted the whole of the inside - floors ceilings, walls - white and experimented with wet light shows which led to Luana's becoming a venue for Jack's private parties.

CS: I have some pix somewhere - exteriors of AC and Witch Cottage. I was Temple Boy charged with keeping the place tidy etc. I would never have chucked them out!

- Q: Did you know him through the London night club scene or the Bricket Wood coven or the Five Acres Club ?
- CS: All of the above in reverse order! As just mentioned 5acres came first and that led to involvement with the Craft. GBG died when I was 15 or so (winter of 64?). I was in a boys home in London (it was a particularly difficult time for me). I helped Jack with stage tech.
- His mate Harry mentored me with electronics which had always been a fascination and I would make sure sound and light was working in various venues of the West End night club scene and would help out folk like Hoppy 'organise' his (usually) chaotic happenings.
- Q: You mentioned that Jack was devastated when his first wife left him, was it because he had a relationship with the woman who had his son?
- CS: No, it more that Rosemary had other love interests. The first I knew about the son was when he popped up looking for information.
- Q: Did Jack ever lived in Greece ?
- CS: I do remember there was some connection with Greece and recall he would make regular visits - I have no knowledge of 'living' there although there were stories from Palestine which may have been related.
- Q: Somewhere it was mentioned that Jack left the Coven because he feel the BOS didn't fill in the void he was feeling?
- CS: That story doesn't sit well with me because every initiate is encouraged to write their own Book of Shadows. And anyway, 'leaving' suggests a distinct time and place where someone puts on their coat picks up their bag and, well, leaves.
- In my recollection it was more a case of drifting apart. He got a flat just off Grays Inn Road which meant he spent less time at the Wood.
- Q: Also was Jack still a practicing Wiccan after resigning as HP?
- CS: What does it mean to be practicing? He would usually come to Sabbats.
- Q: Heard that Jack had a small van ?
- CS: I drove him around in my small van after he lost his licence 1968(?). It was an ex telephone engineers van, but it still looked like a telephone engineers van so I got away with parking it anywhere I liked! - very handy in central London.

- Q: Did Jack mentioned any stories about his time in Palestine?
- CS: Not really, but I recall he said they were times best forgotten.
- Q: It is noted in Doreen Valiente's notebooks for 24 December 1962
Avoca Hotel, 43 Belsize Park, London N.W.3
(Jack Bracelin is pally with the management).
Heard about that place?
- CS: Yeah...maybe - I will need to do some research but when the troubles with the CCBN ('69 ish?) were going on there was a SGM of that association held in an obscure hotel up that way. Jack was trying to get me involved in the politics but I had little history - in retrospect I think I was his mouthpiece.
- Q: Is there stuff you can what Jack was like?
- CS: I got on well with Jack. He would talk a lot about (West End) club life - and he swore a lot .

Concerning Gerald B. Gardner:

- Q: I assume that you see him as he is in the pictures with the hair long and wild?
- CS: Never considered him wild - There were a lot of characters around that would be considered 'different' by today's standards.
- Q: Did he wore those copper or brass bracelets, did he mentioned where he got them? Any fancy rings ?
- CS: Nothing that stands out.
- Q: What was he like around people. Was he a serious type or he likes telling stories or tell jokes and make people laugh?
- CS: I would say something in the middle - He was consistent, mild mannered even and although he would have quite intense conversations with people, he was not without humour and would often chuckle and smile. As a kid I was pretty much left to my own devices and while there were some folk who made me wary, I don't recall ever feeling uncomfortable in his presence.
- Q: What kind of drinks he like?

CS: No idea - I was a kid.

Q: Do you see him sitting and staring into the distance with his mind thinking a lot?

CS: I would describe him as often thoughtful and contemplative.

Q: Did he read a lot books or newspapers etc ?

CS: Often had books. Seemed to read a lot.

Q: Did he smoke cigars or cigarette?

CS: Nothing comes to mind - It was very common for adults to smoke - although thinking about it he may have had a pipe.

Q: What kind of car he drove ?

CS: Did he even drive? Can't recall him having his own wheels

Q: Any stories you can share about him?

CS: Strangely there is one thing I remember quite vividly. One day, I asked him how he was and he replied "as well as can be expected for one who is three quarters of the way between the incubator and the crematorium".

It felt like a strange reply but on reflection it would not have been usual to ask such a question of an adult. We were stood by the pool and I may have felt a need to break what I perceived to be an awkward silence?

Q: Do you remember how you found out the news of Gerald Gardner's death and what was the mood at the Five Acres etc. ?

CS: Jack (or Fay) would have told me.

I don't recall much reaction from the Membership.

Q: Do you remember about Jack Bracelin and Eleanor Bone's trip to IOM in March 1964 ?

CS: No, I think it was a few years later that Jack and Fay took the trip - Bad weather diverted the plane to Speake (Liverpool).

Concerning other Wiccans and Witches:

Q: Did the following names ring a bell from back then?

... Sylvia Tatham or Camm ?

CS: no bells

Q: ... Pat or Patricia Kopinski ?

CS: no bells

Q: ... Beryl (or something like that) Howard ?

CS: Yes, there was a Beryl! - but that's where that thought trail ends.....

Q: Did Jack ever mentioned Monica English or Andrew Fountaine ?

CS: The name Monica rings a bell

CS: Sorry, the only thing that rings any bells at all was that Lois had a friend who may have been called Monica who would come to visit occasionally.

Q: You seen her with Lois most of the time?

CS: I have vague memories of Lois looking forward to her friend Monica's visit. I don't know if this friend lived in Norfolk, but she lived far enough away for a visit to be a special occasion.

Q: Did the name of Alex Sanders pop up in conversations at Five Acres? And what was said about him ?

CS: No, I later learned about Wiccan politics, but not then. Nudist politics, well, that was a different matter.

Q: Did you heard any stories about the Alexandrians using Astral Initiations to add numbers to their group?

CS: There was always stories (petty rivalries in my view) I don't remember it ever being a numbers game for us.

Q: Don't know how far back you go being at Five Acres, Do you remember Thelma Capel? She left in 1959.

CS: The name triggers warm memories, but again I was a kid, a curious kid always asking questions, but a just kid. Fay often talked about Thelma.

- Q Did Arnold Crowther ever perform magic shows at Five Acres ?
- CS: Not that I recall. But there were often shenanigans on the old club house.
- Q: Did Idries Shah show up there?
- CS: He may have done, but I remember him as one of Jack's Friday gang who met at the Calcutta restaurant on the Finchley Road.

Concerning the Five Acres Sun Club:

- Q: Any fights break out at Five Acres ? people had to be kicked out?
- CS: I don't recall fights but there were definitely those who were told that they were no longer welcome (usually creepy folk in the first place)
- Q: Did they have Bon Fire night parties each year?
- CS: Yes, there was usually a bonfire night party on the nearest Saturday to Nov 5th (Unless it fell on 11th).
- Q: Did they decorate the Five Acres for Christmas season?
- CS: There was usually an Xmas party but decs didn't stay up for long - it was about the party not the season
- Q: Did the Five Acres have a main lobby or hang out place?
A Tiki bar or bar lounge there ?
- CS: Prior to the mid 1960s things were quire basic. The (old) clubhouse was basically a barn with some cooking facilities (and an urn that always seemed to run dry). Members and guests would pretty much self-cater.
Certainly there was no bar as such - folk would bring their own alcohol to parties.
We built a new clubhouse in the mid 60s. a prefabricated affair from eastern Europe. A lot of the prefab panels had stuck together in transit and got damaged when prised apart. The new building had a hall with a projection room (which became my domain) and stage and a proper licenced bar, restaurant, terrace, offices etc.
- Q: Any obnoxious loud mouth people at the 5 Acres?

- CS: There were certainly those I avoided or was otherwise wary of, but on the whole a pretty cruisy bunch of people.
- Q: I think there was the later dispute (1970's) where Lois didn't want to share the electric bill and abandoned the place.
- CS: Many of the members occupied chalets in the Fiveacres grounds for which there would have been a site use agreement obligating members to account for their share the expenses.
- I do recall an argument, (it was me who read the meters) and a shitfight over electricity usage. It was claimed meter was faulty, but a more likely scenario was that someone had left a heater running while the place was unoccupied - after all, it was unlikely the master meter was also faulty!
- Q: Did Jack continue to hold Light Shows at Five Acres after the heavies demolished the 44 Happenings club?
- CS: The two were not really related - it was a very different crowd. Anyway I never believed the 'unpleasantness' was directed at us - another club was the main tenant of the premises at 44 Gerard St. Happening was really only weekends and easily transferred to Covent Garden. The Fiveacres events certainly continued but they were more by invitation.
- Q: You mentioned on that page that you seen very notable people visiting the Five Acres, or the Coven, or 44 Happenings ?
- CS: Happening was public. The comment was more in the context of the light shows and private parties at the Wood, Look up Technicolour Dream for the in-crowd of the day.
- Q: Did the Five Acres have Halloween parties and any stories out of it?
(this is about the 5A not the stuff that was associated with the Witch Cottage)
- CS: Not that I recall - Halloween (All Hallows) never used to be celebrated in popular culture - a U.S. import from more recent times.
- Q: Any stories can be said about the Witch cottage when they did the rituals?
- CS: It was very small - sometimes they worked outside and sometimes in Luana's.
- Q: Do you have any pictures that you can share for the history on the Five Aces, the people Witch or not, and the van that you had ?

CS: I expect so - I certainly have a pic of the inside of (Lamond's) van, and an early pic of the Sunlanders with Jack.

Thanks Bill - you've stirred up many memories! This stuff is almost 60 years old! a sobering thought!

C

~ 4 May 1958

Fay and Don Brumwell became members of the Five Acres.

From the Five Acres Naturist Club membership list:

Mr and Mrs G.T. Brumwell, (Fay and Jon? or Ian? or Don?) of 84 Dunstable Road, Luton, Bedfordshire (Tel. Luton 1795) were members of Five Acres Naturist Club. They joined on 4th May 1958.

~ 11 January 1959

A newspaper article exposing the Gardnerian coven and some its members. It mentioned Jack Bracelin.

From the newspaper, The People, Sunday 11 January 1959:



.... Left, Jack Bracelin and Thelma Capel, the "high priest" and "high priestess."



Lois Pearson: "My grandmother was a witch. So am I."

Page 1

**'Now I will lose my job'
says girl who revels in nude rites**

By Peter Bishop

Outside a tumbledown cottage in a wood near Watford, in Hertfordshire, I challenged a 27 year old girl to admit that she is a witch.

"Oh, I'll lose my job over this," Thelma Capel blurted out.

"Don't you use this cottage as a temple in which to practice pagan rites?" I insisted.

"Isn't it a fact that you and 30 other men and women dance in the nude when you meet to worship the god and goddess of fertility?"

"Yes," she said at last. "It's all true. I am a witch, I have practiced witchcraft for many years."

And then this slender, attractive girl, who is private secretary to the managing director of a Watford firm, made a confession that brought to an end my investigation into the strange and scandalous affair of the witches of Hertfordshire.

Their names

I can name three other members of this repulsive sect where "religion" permits free love and which recognizes the sex act as a form of worship.

There is the "high priest," Jack Bracelin, a 32-year-old sales representative who lives at Eton Avenue, Swiss Cottage, London.

There is 27-year-old Fred Lamont, a market research worker, who shares a flat with Bracelin.

And there is Tanith the "witch maiden," whose real name is Lois Pearson. She is 29 years old and she lives at Ampthill, near Bedford.

Thelma Capel is known to the members of her witches group, or coven, as Dayonis, the "high priestess."

She lives in a bungalow alongside the cottage in Oakwood Road, Bricket Wood.

The cottages and the bungalow are both owned by Ancient Crafts, Ltd., a company incorporated a year ago.

On the surface this company appears to be an ordinary commercial concern no different from tens of thousands of others registered at Bush House, London.

In fact its main function is to administer the witches' temple. And two of its directors are Thelma Capel and Jack Bracelin.

There are two other directors. But they, it seems, take no active part in the rites of the sect.

Mr. Bracelin confessed to me that last week that he, too, is a practicing witch. He has taken part in pagan ceremonies for the last ten years.

He claimed that the company was registered "in the case we wanted to publish any of our research work into pagan religion and witchcraft."

So far no such "research work" has seen the light of day.

Indeed, the witches of Watford have been careful to keep their pagan ceremonies a close secret.

"For hundreds of years witches have been hounded and persecuted," said Thelma Capel.

'We are shy'

"A witch was burned at the stake in Mexico as recently as 1955 Can you wonder that we shy away from publicity?"

Yet they dare to call their heathen cult "religion."

And they have had the effrontery to register their temple as a

Turn to Page 7

Continued from Page 1

place of worship. I have seen the form sent to the local Registrar in St. Albans.

It describes the cottage in Bricket Wood as "The Ancient British Church" and the "congregation" as "undenominational."

It was in the bungalow alongside the witches' den that Thelma Capel made her full confession to me.

First she showed me a tiny figure, moulded in clay, of a naked goddess.

"This is 4,000 years old." She said. "It comes from Cyprus. The ancient witches there worshipped it as a symbol of fertility. So do we."

Then she explained how the members of the Hertfordshire coven carry out their fertility worship.

In the one stone-flagged room of the cottage the members first strip off all their clothes. Candles are lit. Thelma Capel, as high priestess, then grasps a black-handled knife and draws an imaginary circle on the floor.

Inside the circle the witches chant and dance. Incense is burned to excite the dancers into frenzy.

At the centre of the circle stands a table as an "altar." On it for the ceremony are laid knives, jars of oil and braided silk cord.

The "high priestess" refused to say what exactly is done with these objects during the nude ceremonial dancing.

"That is a secret that has been guarded for centuries," she said.

"All I can tell you is that we witches worship the life force. We conjure up power at our Ceremonies.

"The powers emanate from our bodies. That is why we are unclothed. Clothes would stifle our emanations."

It was Jack Bracelin who made the further admission that the witchcraft "code" permits couples to pair off as an act of worship at the end of the monthly ceremony, though it rarely happened.

I went out to survey the witches' temple. In the cottage a white circle is painted on the floor to guide the members when they form up for their ceremonies.

Outside the cottage there is a paved square, the centre of which is charred where countless fires have been lit.

A wooden frame over this spot supports a metal hook on which there hangs a huge cauldron.

For in summer the witches perform their secret ceremonies in the open.

From the cottage I travelled to Ampthill, near Bedford, to confront Lois Pearson.

'Never so happy'

"My Spanish grandmother was a witch," she said. And defiantly she added, "So am I. I have never been so happy since I discovered the coven and became a member."

As a witch she said she did not recognize the sanctity of marriage. She believes, like they, that she has powers brought into play by pagan ceremonies.

Each member of the coven whom I traced and interviewed showed every sign of believing in this disgraceful rubbish about gods of fertility, the supposed virtues of dancing naked and the worship of sex.

I only hope that Jack Bracelin was wrong when he claimed that there are 400 practising witches in Britain.

~ 1959

A letter written after 11 January 1959 and before 28 October 1959.

It appears to be a letter that Gerald Gardner wrote to Thelma. This is probably when Thelma broke up with Jack Bracelin to marry another guy and planning to leave England.

The letter was not signed, so it could be that Gerald never mailed it or a copy of it.

From the letters at the Wiccan Church of Canada:

77 Malew St
Castletown
Isle of Man

My dear Thelma

I got your letter at midday. well it has been an awful shock, after what you said to me a few days ago. I am still trembling and its past six. and poor Jack was crying when he wrote to me.

I suppose thers [sic] some reason for what you are doing. I mean, what you have said. Looking at your letter again. I se [sic] that you want to speak to me sometime. Well, I know, you can say things, which its impossible to put on paper. I am trying to get a flight down. but theyre all booked up. but there is a possibility of something being cancelled. You see dear. If you had only said it and given us a chance to make some arrangments [sic]. well thers [sic] no use saying anything.

Well, you know I have always been very fond of you in a father way. and I do hope that you will be very happy in your new life.

And as I said before, May all your troubles be little ones With all my love to you both.

Yours sincerely

~ 28 October 1959

Jack Bracelin gained control of Five Acres after Thelma gave her shares to him.

From the Transcriptions of Doreen Valiente's Notebook, Part 1, 1959 to 1966:

Page 10

23) ----- [28/10/1959 (28 October 1959)]

Thelma gave all her shares 5 acres to Jack, who is now in control of the property.

~ 3 November 1959

Jack Bracelin wrote a letter to Gerald Gardner about the press reporters raid at Five Acres.

From the letters at the Wiccan Church of Canada:

Fiveacres Letterhead

3rd November 1959.

Dear Gerald,

Many thanks for your letter and Telegram. Lois dropped you a line yesterday telling you briefly [sic] what happened on Sat. We did not do to badly and managed to hold the fort very well. There semed [sic] to be several papers involved in the 'raid' which ones I don't know aprt [sic] form [sic] the 'Mirror' they even brought up a floodlight and mounted it up on the top of a car to floodlight the car park to see if they could see anything. Anyway they were all fought off successfully [sic] and when the police arrived they had all hopped it. Well theres not much more to it than that, any other bits I think that Lois has covered.

Well I think that that's [sic] about all for this letter so I will close now as I have a lot of other stuff to do. Will writ [sic] again later in the week.

Blessed be,

Jack

~ January to February 1960

Gerald Gardner's wife Donna died on 30 January 1960 in the Isle of Man. Jack Bracelin and Lois Pearson went up there.

From the book, Witchfather Vol. II, by Philip Heselton, 2012:

Page 618

"Gerald did not winter abroad in 1959/60 because, as already mentioned, Donna, his wife for over 30 years, died in Nobles Hospital, Douglas on 30th January 1960. She has been painfully afflicted with osteoporosis for several years.

Jack Bracelin and Lois Pearson immediately flew over to be with Gerald and to try and find a housekeeper for him. This was eventually achieved...."

~ September 1960



The Cosmo Restaurant at Finchley Road, London



A picture of Idries Shah

The book ***Gerald Gardner Witch*** had a launch date of September 1960. The following is from Philip Heselton's book, *Witchfather*, and it shows how Jack Bracelin met Idries Shah and about the making of that book.

From the book, *Witchfather Vol. II*, by Philip Heselton, 2012:

Pages 607

"One individual who had major influence on Gerald Gardner was Sayed Idries Shah. He was born in Simla, India on 16th June 1924..."

"His father was Sirdar Ikbāl Ali Shah, who while a medical student in Edinburgh, met and married a Scotswoman."

Page 608

It was almost certain through Jack Bracelin that Gerald Gardner got to know Shah and it is likely Jack met him at a restaurant in Swiss Cottage, north west London, known as 'The Cosmo'. This was situated on Northways Parade, on the east side of Finchley Road and is now occupied by the Eriki Indian Restaurant. 'The Cosmo' had a very distinctive atmosphere.

Page 609

"The Cosmo was a meeting-place for the literary and intellectual inhabitants of that part of post-war London, particularly refugees. One phrase repeats itself in several accounts of the place, and that is "holding court"."

"One such individual 'holding court' every Tuesday evening in the late 1950s was Idries Shah and one interested listener was Jack Bracelin. Jack had developed a keen interest in ceremonial magic and was much taken with Sufism, which Shah was expounding."

Page 610

"Whilst there is really no doubt that Shah wrote substantial parts of the book which became *Gerald Gardner, Witch*, it is undoubtedly equally true that Jack Bracelin did a lot more than just put his name to it, as I shall show.

I am sure that in practice the decision to write the biography was not quite as quick or one-sided as that seemed to imply. Anyway, the meeting took place, probably in early 1959."

"Also Jack asked the members of the coven to try to remember any events connected with Gerald and to write it all down. He ordinate this and collected all the material together."

Page 614

"I think what probably happened is that, as Lamond indicates, Shah began to have doubts about his involvement with the whole project. He was moving towards Sufism and he didn't think it would really help where he wanted to go to if his name appeared as the author of a book about witchcraft."

"He handed his notes over to Gerald, who had to find someone to complete it. Jack was the obvious choice."

"So Jack and Gerald between them were able to finish the project, albeit with considerable editorial help, for neither were good at spelling."

Page 616

"It is clear that Shah did not abandon the project completely, as he arranged for the book to be published by the newly-established Octagon Press, which was an enterprise run by Shah and, I understand, his sister. In fact, *Gerald Gardner Witch* was the very first book they published and it may even be that Octagon Press was set up specifically to publish the book..."

"The book, the title of which was settled on as being *Gerald Gardner Witch*, was, to be honest, rather amateurish. The pages look as if they have been produced by an electric typewriter rather than properly typeset, and the proof-reading leaves much to be desired. The reproduction of the photographs is also rather poor. However, the book was nicely bounded in red cloth and it had quite a striking dust-jacket in black, red and white. The book was demy 8vo size (pages roughly 8ins x 5ins), 232 pages long and contained 17 illustrations. It was for sale at 25/- per copy."

(25/- = 25 shillings/ 0 Pence)

"There was a book launch in September 1960. Where the launch took place, I really do not know, although it could well have been at Atlantis Bookshop.

~ **December 1960**

Doreen Valiente recorded that Jack Bracelin was planning to marry a Gladys ---?---

From the Transcriptions of Doreen Valiente's Notebook, Part 1, 1959 to 1966:

Page 20

45)

14/12/60 ----- [Under 4/12/60. (4 December 1960)]

Jack Bracelin, planning to marry in March, and live in 'Suntan' Girls name is Gladys.

~ **Undated**

Jack Bracelin wrote a letter to Gerald Gardner about the feud between Ray [Bone] and Lois [Pearson].

From the letters at the Wiccan Church of Canada:

Bricket Wood.

Tuesday.

Dear Gerald,

Thanks for yours. Now I don't want to rehash this whole business of Ray I am getting sick of it and I expect that you are to. You seem to be right – that she has been subject to wishful thinking. Frankly between you and me it's been driving me up the wall, first Ray then Lois etc. Anyway it is bloody certain the L and R will never get on together and I do think Ray is out after Lois on a personal level [sic]. The [sic] whole thing seems to have developed [sic] into a slash of personalities more than anything and Ray seems to

realise this and last weekend mentioned the possibility of her having a coven in Streatham at her place. I think I must point [sic] out here that I am not bad friends with Ray at all and in fact the opposite and my only criticism [sic] is that she is inclined to yak too much and people get a bit put out. Still everyone seems to do this at one time or another. With regard to this idea of a Streatham coven, what do you think? I myself think that this would be a good solution Ray seems happy about it, I won't object, in fact I have indicated [sic] to Ray that I will give her a bit of a hand. I don't think Lois will say much, I don't really know about the others but if it is carefully done I think it will be O.K. Anyway she would be over three miles from here. Let me know what you think. I got a stack of work, By the way Sid & Millie came up with a price for their land over the weekend. £350. P.T.O.

p. 2

I think they will accept £300 – 325. He tells me that the chap – John who wants it is prepared to pay £500 as a chance that he might build there. I don't know what to say about it, I think the price is high but I did expect Sid to ask £400.

All the best, don't go Pop in the night. You are not Monica Hill.

Blessed be,

Jack

~ 6 September 1961

A naked thief steals wallets from members of the Five Acres Sun Club and Spielplatz Nudist Centre in Bricket Wood.

From the newspaper, Daily Mirror - Wednesday, 6 September 1961:

Which nudist is a bare-faced thief?

MEMBERS of two "sun clubs" are wondering which nudist is stealing wallets from their changing rooms.

As they undress in the rooms at Bricket Wood, near St. Albans, Herts, they are warned by officials: "Hold on to your cash."

A fortnight ago a wallet and cash were stolen from the changing room at the Five Acres Sun Club, which has 600 members.

Stolen

And yesterday officials at the Spielplatz Nudist Centre close by reported that an airman visiting the club had his wallet and documents stolen.

Detectives have questioned nudists at both clubs. An official at the Five Acres Club said: "We have no place where members can leave cash or valuables apart from the changing room."

Mr. Charles Macaskie, owner of Spielplatz, said: "We urge members to leave cash and valuables with us, but some don't"

From the Conversations with Chris Selwood:

There was also the article about thefts from the changing rooms - the consensus at the time put that down to intruders, but it was rare. That it happened at Spielplatz was a coincidence. I might have mentioned that the teenagers from Fives, Spiel, Sunfolk and (the other one! more blanks) had the run of all four clubs. (My mate Nigel Lacy lived at SP)

Got it - Gardenia was the other club - run by Lock Ashcroft.

~ 30 October 1961

Doreen Valiente recorded Jack Bracelin's contact information.

From the Transcriptions of Doreen Valiente's Notebook, Part 1, 1959 to 1966:

Page 36

84) [Under 30/10/61. (30 October 1961)]

Jack Bracelin, 18 Crossfield Road, London, N.W. 3

Tel Primrose 2980.

~ 25 January 1962

Doreen Valiente recorded Jack Bracelin's contact information.

From the Transcriptions of Doreen Valiente's Notebook, Part 1, 1959 to 1966:

Page 39

94)

25/1/61 [62] [25 January 1961 actually 1962]

Suggested contacts re Cardell:-

Jack Bracelin c/o Five acres Sun Club. (Author of 'Gerald Gardner Witch') Garston
3073

~ 7 October 1962

Fay [Brumwell] wrote a letter to Gerald Gardner concerning an issue at the Five Acres club.

From the letters at the Wiccan Church of Canada:

Fiveacres Letterhead

7th October 1962

Dear Gerald,

The enclosed cutting was handed to Jack today at the Club by one of the clubmembers after it had been handed all around the club house. Ray was immediately recognised as one of the tenants and a certain amount of surreptitious comments and questions have been going about. In view of the amalgamation between the B.S.B.A. and the F.B.S.C. Jack is very worried as to unfortunate publicity [sic] at this stage but this had strengthened his previously expressed opinion that it is becoming very difficult to keep Ray on as a Club member, although he agrees with you that to antagonise Ray could be dangerous. Jack has not taken any action [sic] yet but feels he may have to within the next few days. Do note that there is a picture on the front of the cutting and a column on the back. Jack will be writing to you himself during the next few days but he felt that you ought to have this as soon as possible.

Love,
Fay

From the Conversations with Chris Selwood:

Letter of Fay Brumwell

... I know the subject matter (even though I was only in my teens) Simply put it was just nudist politics.

A lot shit went down between FBSC (Federation of British Sun Clubs) and the BSBA (British Sun Bathing Association) which rumbled on for years.

Fiveacres was active in that space with great rivalry between us and North Kent. The Sunday papers stirred up trouble (just as they did for the UFO club). So that must have been the start of it!

What it does show is that Gerald G was keenly aware of what was going on.

~ More about Fay and Don Brumwell

Their names were Phyllis and Gordon T. Brumwell, they were called Fay and Don.

Phyllis "Fay" Brumwell was an initiate of Wicca and was Jack Bracelin's personal assistant for several years.

From the Conversations with Chris Selwood:

You mentioned Fay, We hold fond memories but lost her in 2003. Such a pity because as Jack's defacto PA for some years she would have been an absolute mine of information from those times. Fay's circle included many from the days of AC (Ancient Crafts) Lois? Thelma? Rae Bone? - but I'm racking my brain for 'street' names, but I do remember Jack introducing me to the academic Ross N, and it was he who encouraged me to study, and my own BoS dates from those times. Oh, and lets not forget the adventures on the Isle of Man!

CS: Fay looked after me - tried to keep me out of trouble. Good people.

Q: Do you know who initiated Fay and was her husband initiated too?

CS: I don't - The whole concept of lineage so popular now wasn't really a thing in those days. Sadly my resurgent interest in these matters came too late to have meaningful conversations. Fay and Don moved to the New Forest, I moved to Norfolk (which was in the opposite direction) then in the late 80's Fays youngest daughter and I moved to Australia. I regret that we have lost all their knowledge and memories.

Q: Did Fay Brumwell go to the 2nd and 3rd degrees?

CS: Again I was very young in this context but I believe so.

Q: Was Don Brumwell an initiate too ?

CS: As above.

Q: Do you remember about Jack Bracelin and Eleanor Bone's trip to IOM in March 1964 ?

CS: No, I think it was a few years later that Jack and Fay took the trip - Bad weather diverted the plain to Speake (Liverpool).

From the Five Acres Naturist Club membership list:

Mr and Mrs G.T. Brumwell, (Fay and Jon? or Ian? or Don?) of 84 Dunstable Road, Luton, Bedfordshire (Tel. Luton 1795) were members of Five Acres Naturist Club. They joined on 4th May 1958.

From looking at the Electoral Registers:

Gordon T. and Phyllis Brumwell were living in

Uxbridge, Middlesex from the 1940's to 1957

Luton, Bedfordshire from 1958 to 1980

Landford, Wiltshire from after 1980 to the 1987 death of Gordon Brumwell and the 2003 death of Phyllis Brumwell

Landford is in the New Forest.

~ 24 December 1962

Doreen Valiente mentioned Jack Bracelin in connection with the Acona Hotel.

From the Transcriptions of Doreen Valiente's Notebook, Part 1, 1959 to 1966:

Page 50

118) ----- [Under 24/12/62. (24 December 1962)]

Avoca Hotel, 43 Belsize Park, London N.W.3

(Jack Bracelin is pally with the management).

~ 1963

In a newspaper article dated 27 October 1963, Jack Bracelin, the High priest, was mentioned in an article about the Witches coming out for Hallowe'en

From the Sunday Times, October 27, 1963 article in Doreen Valiente's Scrapbook:

Hallowe'en - and the witches gather in force

By Hunter Davies

"Britain's 400 practicing witches will be out in force next Thursday evening for Hallowe'en, one of their four big festivals of the year. In a wood near Watford I met some witches from the St. Albans coven. This is one of the strongest in the country, drawing most of its 30 members from the London area.

The other main covens are in Brighton, Folkestone, Warwickshire, Norfolk, Yorkshire, Sheffield and Glasgow. Mr Jack Bracelin, high priest of the St. Albans coven, said there may be others, but since medieval times (or the "burning days" as they call them) witches tend not to know the details of other covens, just in case the information should be forced out of them.

Pagan gods

Mr Bracelin, who was formerly in the Palestine police and is now a representative of a paint firm, has been a witch for many years. He soon corrects anyone who calls him a warlock. "Witches can be male or female," he says. "The word witch comes from the Anglo-Saxon 'wica,' meaning the wise ones."

But witches are matriarchs and it is always the high priestess who conducts the ceremonies. The St. Albans high priestess did not want her name mentioned. She was not ashamed of being a witch, but her husband was a pillar of her local Anglican church and for his sake she did not want publicity.

She explained that witchcraft is just another religion, a minority one, so they are used to some sort of persecution. They worship pagan gods like Hern the Hunter and the Earth Mother. "We are not anti-Christian," she says, "We just have another means of spiritual satisfaction."

The St. Albans witches include a doctor, an economist, a factory foreman, a university lecturer, two school teachers, a retired Army officer and a man of independent means who travels to meetings from Ireland. He does not travel by broomstick, as this is considered a bit old-fashioned. The high priestess keeps a broomstick on the front porch of her house, but this is more to amuse the neighbours than anything else.

The coven meets once a month. Every witch takes an oath not to reveal the rites, but a typical meeting begins with the high priestess describing a 9 ft. wide circle in the woods with her "athame," the ceremonial black knife which all witches are always supposed to carry.

When she has consecrated it she divides it into four quarters. In each there is a candle. In the middle is another candle on top of an altar. Also on the altar are the ceremonial sword, salt, water, a wand, a white-handled knife, and an incense burner. She "purifies" each member with her knife, then brings them into the circle.

The rules for these rituals are laid down in a rule book. This goes back thousands of years, but has never been printed, only copied out by hand by each witch as he or she passes through the stage of probationary, or apprentice, witch to first, then second, then third class witch.

Good people

Mr. Bracelin dislikes people trying to sensationalise witches, accusing them of black magic or casting evil spells. He says witches are good people, they take part in nothing evil. The high priestess adds that as you get good and bad Christians, so you can get good and bad witches, which means that some might have ritual killings and blood-letting, though she has never heard of them.

Neither minds being known as a witch, in fact they are rather proud of it. Both feel it is iniquitous that there is still intolerance, though it is less than in medieval times.

All covens get hundreds of applications from people wanting to be witches, but most are from men with some furtive sexual motive. Although witches are naked (women wear beads), there is no sexual aspect to the ritual.

~ 12 February 1964

Gerald Brosseau Gardner, the leader of Gardnerian Wicca, died on 12 February 1964.

He wrote a will and gave Jack Bracelin £1,000.

From the newspaper, Birmingham Daily Post, Tuesday 22 September 1964:

LEADER OF WITCHES LEFT £21,688

Dr. Gerald Brosseau Gardner, of Malew Street, Castletown, Isle of Man, who claimed to be the leader of Britain's witches and was known as the "white witch of the Isle of Man," left estate in England valued at £21,888. He died on February 12, aged 80.

He left £ 3,000 to Mrs. Arnold Crowther, of City Road, Sheffield; £1,500 to Mrs. E. Woodford Grimes, of Avenue Road, Highcliffe, Hampshire; his shares and interest in Ancient Crafts Ltd. and £1,000 to Mrs. Lois Pearson, of Carlyle Avenue, St. Albans, and £1,000 to Jack Bracelin, of Crossfield Road, London, N.W.3.

After various other bequests, he left the remainder of his property to Monique Marie Mauricette Wilson, of Perth, Scotland, the high priestess of a Scottish coven of witches.

~ 13 March 1964

Doreen Valiente recorded that Jack Bracelin and Ray Bone went to Isle of Man following Gerald Gardner's death.

From the Transcriptions of Doreen Valiente's Notebook, Part 1, 1959 to 1966:

Page 54

127)

March 13th 1964

Bracelin and Ray Bone went to I.O.M. on Gardner's death, found Monique Wilson in possession. She claimed to have inherited the house and Gardner's MSS.

~ Also in 1964

In 1964, photographs were taken by Terence Spencer. Some of his pictures appeared in an article "Real Witches at Work" in LIFE magazine, November 13, 1964.

1st: Jack Bracelin, at the door of the Witch Cottage in Bricket Wood.

[2nd: A picture dated 1 May 2006 of the door of the Witch Cottage to verify the location of the 1st picture]

3rd: Jack Bracelin, Eleanor Ray Bone and William Worrell in the Witch Museum at Castletown, I.O.M, probably in March 1964.





~ 21 June 1964

Jack Bracelin mentioned in a newspaper article on the witches going to celebrate Midsummer.

From the newspaper, The Observer, Sunday, June 21, 1964:

Peak hour for the covens

by a Staff Reporter

BRITISH WITCHES will be out this weekend celebrating Midsummer, one of the four major festivals of their year.

This year they have had an unusual amount of publicity, but the Midsummer ceremonies will remain secret --- as traditionally they always are.

In the past there were two reasons for secrecy: fear of persecution and the desire of any group which shares a mystery accessible only by initiation to preserve that mystery.

These days, obviously, only the second applies.

This weekend's ceremonies are dedicated to the goddess whose name the covens keep secret. The emphasis of the ritual is to put to flight the powers of darkness, and it is based on old rituals of fertility and the soil. During this weekend several initiates will have been received into the covens.

Autonomous

The publicity that witches have had in the past 12 months arose out of the death of their spokesman, Gerald Gardner. Witch covens are autonomous groups and witchcraft has no official leadership; Gardner's place was acknowledged by agreement. At his death, however, he left property, including his witchcraft museum on the Isle of Man, to a witch in Perth who subsequently claimed the title "Queen of the witches."

Other covens in the country refused to acknowledge the title as having any meaning, and their differences broke into the Press. Since then a "witches convention" has been formed to deal with Press and public inquiries.

English witches according to anthropologist Joan Westcott, writing in the magazine *Life*, worship both a male and a female deity. But this is a matriarchal religion, and it is the secret goddess who is the focal point of worship.

Great Mother

"The goddess of the witches is a Great Mother who in the liturgy and ritual of the craft is clearly identified with the life force and the power of love," Miss Westcott says.

She told *THE OBSERVER*: "Although all the rituals were originally fertility ones, some covens today are not as literal minded as others about this. They use the same rites but emphasise the growth of spirit and the imagination."

The craft may not be as widespread as many people think. Jack Bracelin, high priest of a coven near London, told me this week: "Probably no more than 400 people in the whole of the British Isles are coven members. There are only approximately two full covens numbering the traditional, but unnecessary, 13 --- the other groups have smaller memberships."

But some other informants have put the number of coven members as high as 6,000.

~ 19 September 1964

An article mentioning some of the witches. Monique Wilson inheriting the Castletown Witchcraft Museum and others getting cash.

From the newspaper, *Evening Standard*, Saturday, September 19, 1964:

TO A TOP WITCH I BEQUEATH ...

By Denise Richards



MRS. WILSON—"First met Dr. Gardner two years ago."

Mrs. Monique Marie Mauricette Wilson, the high priestess of a Scottish coven of witches, has inherited the unique museum of witchcraft in Castletown, Isle of Man, in the will of Dr. Gerald Brossea Gardner, Britain's unofficial leader of witches, who died last February aged 80.

Mrs. Wilson, who lives at Nimmox Avenue, Perth, is in her early 30's.

"Dr. Gardner met her first about 2 years ago when he was attending a witches' meeting," Mr. Jack Bracelin, a friend of Dr. Gardner's, who is also a self-confessed witch, said at his club, Five Acres, Garston, Herts, today.

"She will inherit the museum --- the only one of its kind in the world --- on the death of William Worrall, who is the manager. It has been left on trust to him and he plans to continue running it."

'Retired Witches'

In his will, Dr. Gardner, who lived at Malew Street, Castletown, left estate in England valued at £21,688. Letters of administration with the will annexed have been granted to the Westminster Bank.

Other "witches or retired witches" who benefit under the will are Mr. Bracelin (£1000), Mrs. Lois Pearson, of Carlyle Avenue, St. Albans (£1000 and "his shares and interest in Ancient Crafts Ltd."); Mrs. E. Woodford Grimes, of Avenue Road, Highcliffe, Hants (£1500), Mrs. Doreen Valiente (£200).

"Modern Witchcraft is a form of religion and has nothing to do with black magic," said Mr. Bracelin. "It really is a continuation of a pagan religion."

"Mr. Gardner was not in any way a wicked man. He regretted the recent spate of church desecrations as much as anyone."

~ ca. 1964

Lois Pearson threatened to sue Jack Bracelin.

From the Transcriptions of Doreen Valiente's Notebook, Part 1, 1959 to 1966:

Page 70

Other Notes [Probably 1964 –PH]

[Note – these following two pages are not in Doreen's handwriting. They are actually an extract from the notebooks of Leslie Roberts, who kept similar notebooks to Doreen's – these are also in the possession of John Belham Payne]

Lois Pearson threatening lawsuit against Jack Bracelin claiming Brickett Wood property now belongs to her, in view of Gerald's will.

~ 1965

Jack Leon Bracelin married **ROSEMARY ELLIS** on 18 September 1965 in the Register Office of Sheffield, Yorkshire.

From the England & Wales, Marriage Index:

Name / Name of Spouse / Date / Registration District / County / Vol. / Page

Jack L Bracelin / Rosemary Ellis / Jul-Aug-Sep 1965 / Sheffield / Yorkshire West
Riding / 2d / 440

From the copy of the marriage certificate:

1965. Marriage solemnized at The Register Office in the District of Sheffield in the
County Borough of Sheffield

No. 224

When married Eighteenth September 1965

*Names / Age / Condition / Profession / Residence at the time of marriage / Father's
name / Father's profession*

Jack Leon BRACELIN / 39 Years / Bachelor / Company Director (Country club) / 18,
Crossfield Road, Hampstead, London NW. 3 / Leon BRACELIN (Deceased) / Research
Engineer (Tool Manufacturer)

Rosemary ELLIS / 20 Years / Spinster / College Student / 129, Ridgeway Road,
Sheffield 12 / Lawrence Arthur ELLIS / National Assistance Board (Clerical Office)

Married in the Register Office by Certificate by me, A [Klehayton?] Superintendent
Registrar - M Rigby Registrar

This marriage was solemnized between us,

J. L. Bracelin

Rosemary Ellis.

in the presence of us,

W Burslem

A Walker

Image of part of the marriage certificate:

19 <u>65</u> . Marriage solemnized at <u>7</u>			
District of <u>Sheffield</u>			
Columns —			
No.	1	2	3
	When married	Name and surname	Age
224	<u>Eighteenth</u> <u>September</u> <u>19 65</u>	<u>Jack Leon</u> <u>BRACELIN</u> <u>Rosemary</u> <u>ELLIS</u>	<u>39</u> <u>years</u> <u>20</u> <u>years</u>
Married in the <u>Register Office</u>			
This marriage was solemnized between us, <u>[Signature]</u> <u>Rosemary Ellis.</u>			

~ **30 March 1966**

Doreen Valiente mentioned about Jack Bracelin's plans for releasing lands from Five Acres for building.

From the Transcriptions of Doreen Valiente's Notebook, Part 2, 1966 to 1986:

Page 13

38)

30/3/66 (30 March 1966)

Inf. from J.B. [Jack Bracelin]

He is trying to get Five Acres released for building land. Wimpeys are interested, and have allocated £1000 for counsel's fees for hearing on April 21st. Two MP's, one a member of the Craft, have promised to help an approach to the minister if necessary.

If the deal goes through, it should raise a substantial sum, which will finance a magazine and a London centre.

Jack plans to move to Goring-on-Thames, where he has his eye on a large house in its own grounds, to run as a naturist club and also for Craft purposes. He has some friends at Goring who are forming or have formed a group.

~ 26 June 1966

Five Acres Sun Club's application to sell their property for building was denied by the government.

From the newspaper, Independent, Long Beach, California, Sunday, June 26, 1966:

NUDISTS CHILLED

Apartment Planned to Overlook Their Camp

LONDON (AP) --- A nudist society wants to sell its property in Hertfordshire because they are afraid a seven-story apartment house is about to be built next door. But the government doesn't approve.

"Certain parts of our grounds would be visible from the flats (apartments)," a spokesman for the five acres Sun Club said.

The society applied for permission to sell the land for building, but the St. Alban's [sic] Rural District Council and the Housing Ministry turned down the application. In crowded Britain, owners of land must secure official permission to put up buildings on undeveloped land.

Said a spokesman for the rural council: "There is really no need for the club members to worry unduly about being overlooked. No move to build the flats is being made --- yet.

"Anyhow, arrangements have been made for judicious screening --- such as tree plantings --- if the building does go up."

The nudists said if they could sell their land for building, they might raise enough cash to buy a large acreage in some spot safe for years from Peeping Toms.

~ 4 September 1966

A reporter caught up with a Michael Thorp, a member of Five Acres Naturist Club, on the island of Corsica.

From the newspaper, The Sunday People, Sunday, September 4, 1966:

AGGRESSIVE, THE FRENCH ARE COY - BUT AS FOR THE BRITISH . . champion nudists !

(long article, so only the relevant part is transcribed)

"VIVIENNE'S NEIGHBOUR, Mike, Is the most thoroughly uninhibited nudist here, and the only one we have met who had no objection to being identified.

"Of course you can use my name," he said cheerfully. "Why not? I'm not doing anything to be ashamed of."

His full name Is Michael Thorp, and he is a paper salesman from Watford and a member of the Five Acres Naturist Club there.

Tall, broad-shouldered and magnificently fit, Mike has been a naturist for six years. A former scout, he was a camping enthusiast for years. Then he decided to join the strippers.

Why?

"For one very good reason," he told me. "I just don't like wearing clothes."

This is Mike's first visit to Corsica, and although he has only been on the island for a week he has already got a top-to-toe mahogany tan.

The rule

Mike Thorp, like most British naturists, spends every weekend naked. They strip off their clothes on Friday night, and, except for meal times, don't put them on again until Monday morning. Incidentally, this "dressing for dinner" rule is a strict piece of nudist etiquette that everyone observes."

The turbulent 1960's of the counter-culture in London

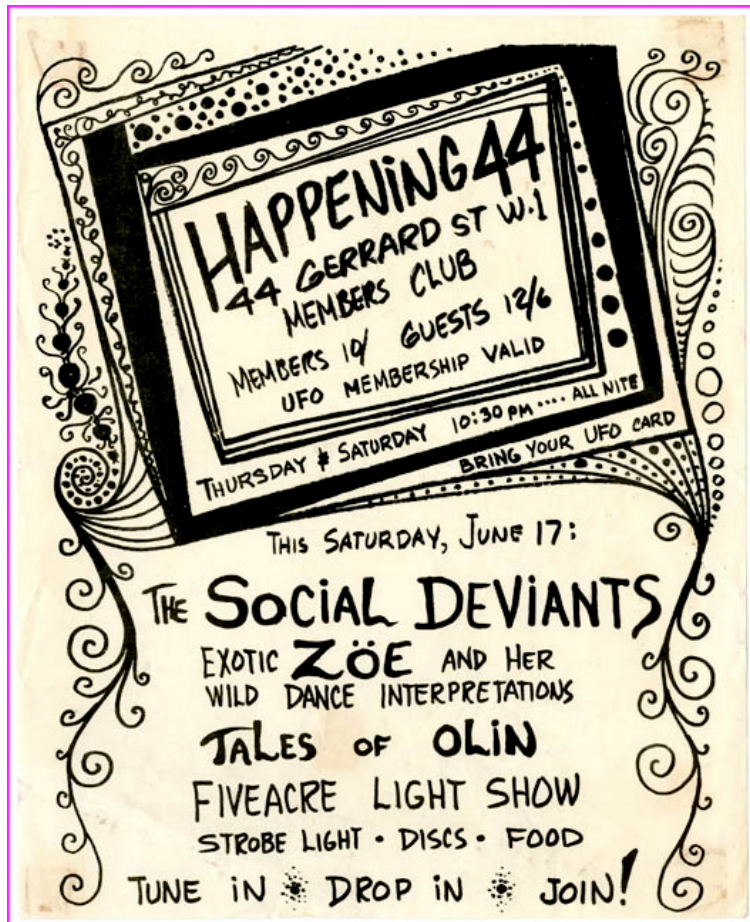


HAPPENING MEMBERS ONLY
44
44 GERRARD ST W1
MEMBERS 10/ GUESTS 12/6
UFO MEMBERS ADMITTED BRING UFO CARD
THURSDAY SATURDAY
10:30 - ALL NITE

THURSDAY
10 AUGUST
CLIFF CHARLES
BLUES
THIS VILLAGE
SOUNDS
HAPPENINGS
COLORS: LIGHT SHOWS

SATURDAY
12 AUGUST
THE
SOCIAL
DEVIANTS
117
THE TRIP
BRING BELLS
FLOWERS
FRIENDS

LOVE





These four cool looking handbills or flyers from 1967, advertizing the Happening 44 club in Gerrard Street and events at the Five Acre club.

From Chris Selwood, posted on Pooters Psychedelic Shack website in 2004.

~ Guy Fawkes night 5th November 1966

Jack Bracelin had the Pink Floyd band playing at the Five Acres club on bonfire night, November 5, 1966.

From an article on a website, Spare Bricks:

THE LIGHT KINGS OF ENGLAND

In search of the fabled Fifth Floyd

by Mike McInnis

"On November 5, the Floyd performed at the clubhouse of a park called Five Acres, which was managed by Jack Bracelin. Bracelin later operated a business called Five Acre Lights, which sometimes provided lighting effects for the Floyd at the All Saints' Hall workshops. The Floyd continued performing at All Saints Hall workshops through late November. Advertisements read "experimentalists welcome", thus attracting more and more like-minded lighting enthusiasts."



Gerrard Street in London Chinatown as it appeared on 3 December 1959 picture from the Flashbak website

~ 1967

In 1967, Jack Bracelin started a second business, a psychedelic night club at 44 Gerrard Street in London's Chinatown called Happening 44. They had bands playing music or records playing and drinks and foods.

He was at that time. described as a 40 year old slightly weird beatnik and he brought his talents of the light shows and experience on running a club to the new venture.

On the advertisements for the Happening 44 club, it mentioned light show events at the Five Acres club. Jack was also using the 2nd club as a venue to draw more people the Five Acres club.

Unfortunately the club was destroyed by some "heavies" a few months after it opened. Jack Bracelin lost a lot of equipments and didn't rebuild after that. He went back to his main business at the Five Acres club.

The following are stuff from various sources that mentioned Jack Bracelin, the Happening 44club and the Five Acre club.

From an article on the website, Flashbak:

Sex, Drugs, Jazz and Gangsters – The Disreputable History of Gerrard Street in London's Chinatown

"In 1967, after becoming a bit of a dingy old strip-joint, 44 Gerrard Street became known as 'Happening 44' – a trendy psychedelic club run by Jack Braceland [sic], a middle-aged, slightly weird beatnik character but one of the earliest light-show artists in the UK. His light shows, featured in the early gigs of Pink Floyd amongst others, used hand-assembled wet slides and Aldis projectors. His company called Five Acre Lights was actually named after a nudist colony he helped run with his wife at Five Acre Woods near Watford – Pink Floyd once played a gig there on Guy Fawkes Night in 1966. If it's your bag the Naturist Five Acres Country Club still exists. For the few months it was around 'Happening 44' featured such bands as the Social Deviants and Soft Machine but also some of the earliest gigs of Fairport Convention."



Another handbill advertisement of the Happening 44 club.
From the Flashbak website.

From an article on History is made at night website:

The politics of dancing and musicking and other dark matters

Monday, December 27, 2010

Happening 44: Groovy Food and Rave Groups 1967

From International Times no.14, 2 June 1967, an advert for Happening 44, a psychedelic club at 44 Gerrard Street in Soho, where basement clubs of one kind or another had been held since the 1930s.

An invitation to:

'Tune in, Drop in, Come to Life, Love, Be-in with The Colour of Sound, The Sounds of Colour, Rave Groups, Exotic Entertainment, Movies, Strobe, Discs, Groovy Food, Fantastic Decorations, The Astounding Slides of Ron Henderson and the Fiveacre Light Show'

All night on Thursdays and Saturdays from 10:30 pm.

From a website, Pooters Psychedelic Shack:

From an article by Chris Selwood, 2004

Happening 44,
Gerrard Street,
London

"What days they were!!! I wonder if anyone remembers the sign that was above the doorway of 44?

It was about two foot wide and said "Erotica 67". It belonged to the people who shared the venue.

My recollection is that Happening 44 finished when it was 'done over' by the heavies - something to do with the (Erotica 67) tenants upsetting someone. I lost a heap of gear. Jack Bracelin (anyone remember him?) lost more. I remember all the records were put on a gas ring (or in a pot?) - v. messy!

When we went to get what was left of the gear I took the sign (for the fluro in it). I never used it but that sign was in my garage in England for years - I think it only got trashed when I moved to Aus in the 80's!"

From a Wikipedia article on the UFO club:

"Jack Bracelin's (Fiveacres Lights) created some of the light shows with equipment that ranged from 16mm projection of early "art house" films (often projected sideways or projected into smoke) or 5 kW 'Pani's' (effects projectors) borrowed from Samuelsons at Pinewood or Elstree film studios (or Strand Electric at Vauxhall) to overhead projectors with transparent trays borrowed from refrigerators and filled with water/indian ink/beer/whatever.[citation needed] A favourite was to use 'Aldis' slide projectors with dual layer 2×2 glass specimen slides with basic designs created with wax crayons (drawn by Lou – the oft naked lady) and then various substances introduced with syringes – Indian inks, snot, semen – in fact anything of imiscible viscosities. Bubbles made by injecting air between the glass plates which were then squeezed (by a pair of long nose pliers – in time to the music) would send folks even further off their heads!"

From a website, Pooters Psychedelic Shack:

An article by Chris Selwood, July 2004

The Pit

"Our show was called 'The Pit' and we often worked with Jack Bracelin (Fiveacres Lights) (and Harry Fowler) he introduced me to the art."

"I remember using Aldis scientific slide projectors (fans and fins removed so the 'gate' got red hot) 2x2 slides, chinagraph wax pencils, syringes with indian inks, oils and substances of varying colours and viscosities from washing-up liquid (Squeezy) food colouring...."

"We would also spend hours making hand coloured loops of 16mm film, and come up with futile attempts to fit home made colour changers to pattern 23 profiles! We would put trays of water on Zeis OHPs - make dreadful 8mm movies and find creative ways to distort the projection of old newsreels."

The more doped up we got the better they looked. We'd hire Panis (when they'd let us) and amazing scenery projectors from Samuelsons, or from Strand Electric's place under the arches at Vauxhall. One day I got hold of a 35mm movie projector with a carbon arc lamphouse - but that was a bit of a disaster in a relatively small venue!"

"Luana's (I said I'd come back to that) Jack owned a country club called 'Fiveacres' at Bricket Wood between Watford and St Albans.

In the grounds of Fiveacres was an old wooden bungalow called Luana's. The one huge main room had all the windows boarded (from inside) and we painted the whole place white - ceiling, walls, floor - everything. which was brilliant to project on.

The only 'furniture' were the mattresses around the edge of the room. We would wear fluorescent body paint and dance naked under black light.

Every once in a while, high society and the glitterati would pay Jack huge money to come and party (I won't drop names).

Jack would bring in a top chef & a whole kitchen brigade just to lay the banquet (in the main clubhouse) and then everyone would come to Louana's and party with us - I wonder now if we were just a bit of a 'free love' floorshow - but I think it was just how things were."

~ 30 January 1967

Jack Bracelin was mentioned at a UFO Club event.

From the newspaper, Evening Standard, Monday, January 30, 1967:

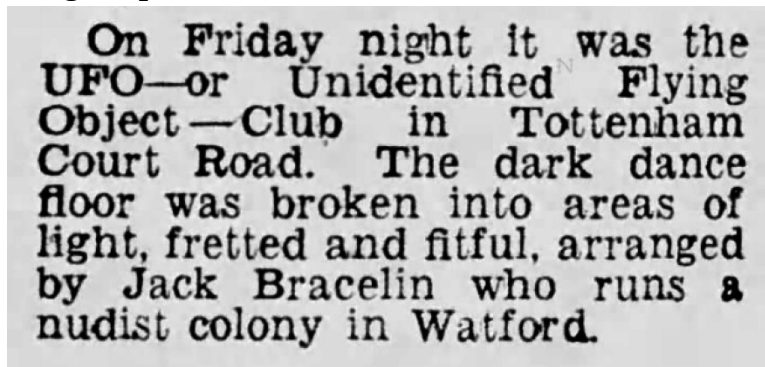
MY LOST PSYCHIDELIC WEEK-END

London Observed: by Anne Sharpley

(long article, only extracted the relevant part)

On Friday night it was the UFO --- or Unidentified Flying Object --- Club in Tottenham Court Road. The dark dance floor was broken into areas of light, fretted and fitful, arranged by Jack Bracelin who runs a nudist colony in Watford.

Image of part of the article:



On Friday night it was the UFO—or Unidentified Flying Object—Club in Tottenham Court Road. The dark dance floor was broken into areas of light, fretted and fitful, arranged by Jack Bracelin who runs a nudist colony in Watford.

~ 4 October 1969

History made on 4 October 1969, the Five Acres nudist club became Britain's first nudist club to have a bar.

From the newspaper, Daily Mirror, Saturday 04 October 1969:

MAUREEN IS THE NUDISTS' BARMAID

PRETTY Maureen Fowler will pull her first pint tonight. And she will be considerably better dressed than her customers.

For Maureen, on the left, will be behind the bar at a nudist club. In a mini-dress.

The first pint will be an historical moment for members. The nudist club is the first in Britain to have a licensed bar.

But it is likely to get a cool reception from the country's nudist movement. They have a strict "no alcohol" rule.

Maureen, 24, a nudist herself, said yesterday: "It's the biggest taboo in nudism. People think that if nudists start drinking one thing will lead to another and they'll all go berserk."

With her 47-year-old husband Harry, she runs the Five Acres nudist club --- membership: 700 --- at Bricket Wood, near Garston, Herts.

It is affiliated, with eighty other clubs, to the Central Council for British Naturism, which puts a firm ban on alcohol.

Of her decision to stay dressed while her customers are nude, Maureen said:

"It's something my husband and I decided, He dresses when he is cooking, too. It's no fun when there's hot fat flying about."

Photograph of the barmaid:



~ More about Harry and Maureen Fowler

From the Conversations with Chris Selwood:

Harry Fowler!

Harry was a mate of Jack. I don't know where from but they had some history. Harry was never 'manager of Fiveacres' although he did run the catering for special occasions. He was mainly instrumental in the nightclub scene in London - Happening 44 (Gerard St) UFO (Blarney Club Tottenham Court Road, the Cottage Club (Litchfield St) and Fiveacres Lights wherever we played.

Harry had a full time job at the (blank mind) hotel which was on Kings Cross Road/Calthorpe St NW1 - He was the head of maintenance and gave me a job there as part of the electrical team. I would walk all public areas every morning making sure all lights were working then retire to the underground workshops to plot sound and light at the various clubs in which Jack/Harry had an interest.

We did other stuff too which reminds me of the story of the pressure gun used for unblocking drains. I used it on the top floor one day and caused fountains of shit to erupt from the drains on two floors below. Management didn't seem to think it was as funny as I did :-)

(The hotel name will come to me I'm sure).

Jack had an apartment around the corner - certainly walking distance. I'll go looking on Street View.

Harry lived in public housing behind Kings Cross station.

Maureen took the name Fowler but I don't know if they were married. We got on as we were nearer in age than she was to Harry. Maureen had an intellectually disabled child when she was quite young, to whom she was devoted. The child would have been 7/8 years old when the newspaper article came out.

The article says she was 24 and Harry was 47 - that would have been about right. There must be a back story there but it never occurred to me at the time. They were never, to my knowledge, naturists themselves but it was clearly convenient and brought some glamour to the newspaper article about the bar opening. Maureen would work the bar on occasions, especially if Harry was running the kitchen for an event, but it was never a regular gig.

Harry had a son (Barry) who was my mate at the time. Barry worked as an apprentice diesel mechanic at the local brewery. He was known as "little Barry" because there was another Barry in our group who was very tall - yes, "big Barry."

The line that the CCBN were strictly no booze was bollocks - I have no idea where that came from, however it is true that Fiveacres was the first naturist club in the country to have a licenced bar. And, as a generalisation, the bar itself was open to members weekend evenings when most folk would have been dressed. (private parties excepted!).

Q: You mentioned about the hotel that you and Harry Fowler worked in but don't recall the name...

Could it been the Royston House, it was at the same cross street ?

CS: Nope, not Royston House - It keeps nagging me - bound to pop up.

From a recent email dated Thursday, April 25, 2024:

CS: I remembered the name of the hotel and when I revisited your email from a few weeks ago it had been there all the time, but I was misled by the text 'Royston House'. The hotel I worked was indeed as pictured in the link you provided. The Mount Pleasant Hotel. Originally built as cheap lodgings for workers it was known as Rowton House.

The 1970's and 1980's

~ **28 March 1971**

Swimmers, all members of the Five Acres Naturist Youth Club, plan to swim the Channel naked.

From the newspaper, The People, Sunday 28 March 1971:



They're going to swim the Channel - STARKERS!

By Denis Cassidy

CAPTAIN WEBB did it first in 1875. Since then, quite a few others have managed it --- to suitable acclaim.

But what's the betting on the biggest turn-out of all on the beaches when this happy bunch prepare to swim the Channel?

They're planning to do it STARKERS.

The swimmers, all members of the Five Acres Naturist Youth Club in Hertfordshire, are, from the left: Sharon Poole, a secretary; Charles Green, 15, who is still at school; receptionist Elizabeth Brown, 18, and her brothers, Mike, 14, and Robert, 20; and 15-year-old Sean Hayes.

In relays

They won't, of course, be entirely uncovered when they attempt to swim from England to France in a few weeks. They will each have to wear a coating of protective grease.

The six will swim in relays and they hope to be the first relay team, in fact, to swim the Channel nude.

They also hope to capture another record by swimming it earlier in the year than any team before them.

Yesterday, the team were in training at a private pool. Unheated, naturally, at 48 deg. F. For those who are getting the shivers even reading about it, this really is a story to warm the cookies of your heart.

For these splendid youngsters are doing it all for charity --- to raise money for a coronary care unit at the St. Albans City Hospital.

How do they feel about swimming the Channel in the altogether?

Charles Green: "It wouldn't be much warmer if we wore trunks would it?"

Elizabeth Brown: "I feel restricted in a bikini. I can't move my arms properly."

Still, it must be comforting to have a little something between you and those stinging jellyfish.

From the Conversations with Chris Selwood:

As for the swim, Sean was keen, as was Liz Brown and her three brothers as mentioned.

Liz, Sean and I swam regularly at the nudist swims at Tottenham and Watford baths.

The other girl (Sharon) could have been a link to channel swimming club. I don't know where the support boat/crew came from or who paid for it but I'll give it some more thought. I will however never forget the ritual of the swimmers getting greased up against the cold (mentioned in one of the articles) prompted the memory that the media call was a disaster because Sean got a hard-on in the process!

Q: Concerning the channel swim you didn't mention if they went part way across and what made them stop?

CS: yes they set out, but abandoned the attempt. Rough weather was the official cause

~ 13 August 1971

An event that Five Acres nudist club wanted to hold was thwarted. There was a plan to have nude sky divers make a drop near the Five Acres site for raising funds for a charity.

From the newspaper, Daily Mirror, Friday 13 August 1971:

Naked sky divers get the freeze

FOUR young men who want to do a nude sky-dive for charity are all undressed with nowhere to go.

For local farmers have refused permission to land in their fields.

The bare bale-out was suggested by the Five Acres nudist club at St. Albans, Herts, to the local parachute club, who jumped at the idea.

Parachutist Phil Corr said yesterday: "When we asked around at local farms for permission to land, no one wanted to know us."

Phil, 31, of Catsdell, Hemel Hempstead, added: "I don't know whether they are prudes, or worried about spectators, tramping around their fields."

~ 5 September 1971

Another article on the event that Five Acres nudist club wanted to hold was thwarted.

There was a plan to have nude sky divers make a drop near the Five Acres site for raising funds for a charity.

From the newspaper, Sunday Mirror, Sunday 5 September 1971:

Sky diving --- that's for the bareds



Nude jump for charity

A SKY DIVER needs only the bare necessities . . .

A parachute, of course; a helmet, in case he lands the wrong way up; and a pair of boots in case he has to run.

Anything else is an encumbrance, according to these four members of the Chiltern Sky Divers.

They are planning to make the first nude parachute jump in Britain.

The idea was suggested by Five Acres nudist camp, St. Albans, Herts, as a means of raising money for charity.

But now some thorny problems have arisen. Trees in the nudist camp prevent the parachutists from landing happily there.

And local farmers have refused to lend their fields for fear that their animals will be frightened.

Picture: RONALD HALLETT.

~ 24 October 1971

In late October of 1971, the temperatures in Britain was unseasonably hot. There was an article about the hot weather and Jack Bracelin, owner of the Five Acres Country Club was mentioned.

From the newspaper, The People, Sunday 24 October 1971:

70deg! The sun brings out the nudists

SEVENTY degrees --- in late October! Beaches boomed. Soccer fans basked on the terraces and the nudists were out sunbathing in record temperatures.

The third "Indian summer" of the year took Britain by surprise yesterday.

"There is sunshine all over the country," said an expert at the London Weather Centre.

"The only sign of rain is in Northern Ireland."

At 3 p.m., the hottest spot in the nation was Central London, where the temperature approached 22 degrees Centigrade --- more than 70 degrees Fahrenheit.

That's the highest for late October since records began 31 years ago.

(further down the article)

IT WAS HOT at the Five Acres Country Club, near St. Albans, Herts. There, the nudists couldn't bear to stay indoors out of the sun.

They stripped off and sunbathed beside the swimming pool.

Mr. Jack Bracelin, owner of the naturalists club, said: "A number of our members are out sunbathing. It's really remarkable for October."

~ 21 October 1974

Jack Bracelin had an unusual season ending party at Fiveacres Nudist Club.

From the newspaper, Evening Standard, Monday, October 21, 1974:

When the nudists got all dressed up !

Standard Reporter

REVEALED today --- the wilder moments of the dedicated nudist. In their end-of-season party at the weekend the Fiveacres Nudist Club of St. Albans hit on a stimulating new theme ... clothes.

There were to be trousers, jackets, shirts and --- for the very daring --- ties. Some members were reported to be all-a-tremble at the idea of women in ... well, how else can it be said? Dresses.

The scene was set up in the clubhouse the heating turned down, the lights up, the music pounding. But, disaster --- only half of those expected arrived.

There were brave showings by a lady in Victorian camiknickers and others threw caution to the winds and donned evening dress. "The weather had been so bad over the past few weekends there has hardly been any people here," organizer Mr Jack Bracelin said glumly.

"So there has been no building up of enthusiasm for the end of the season party."

All in all, the revolutionary party was a bit of a flop.

One middle-aged gentleman, though, defiantly conventional, stripped to a G string and tassels for a bit of ordinary nudist dancing.

There is one at every party.

~ 15 November 1975

Doreen Valiente recorded that Jack Bracelin sold land at Five Acres for development and moved the Witch cottage to an adjacent site.

From the Transcriptions of Doreen Valiente's Notebook, Part 2, 1966 to 1986:

Page 50

133)

November 15th 1975

Inf from Cynthia:

The woodland at Brickett Wood, together with the cottage, were left to Jack Bracelin in Gerald's Will. Bracelin has now sold the land for development, and the cottage has been taken down and re-erected on an adjacent site.

The St Albans' coven now meets at the house of Zachary and his wife (Jill?) (Z is H.P.) Bracelin has definitely left the Craft.

From the Conversations with Chris Selwood:

Q: Any comments on the event ?

CS: Searching memories....

Jack didn't "sell the land" but he did sell some of it for development (Google maps - Fiveacres Avenue, Bricket Wood). That was the development that required the cottage to be moved or demolished. Jack wanted to keep the cottage and the substantial part of the useable land. My recollection is that the development provided some financial security - and build the new clubhouse.

~ 8 June 1976

Hot temperatures increased the numbers of new members for the Five Acres Club.

From the newspaper, Evening Standard, Tuesday, June 8, 1976:

TO HOT TO WORK, SAY PLANE MEN

Standard Reporter

IT WAS the hottest June day for six years when the temperature soared to 84 degrees F (29 C), in London this afternoon.

(long article, only transcribing the relevant part)

As the sun baked down and the temperature soared up, nudists at the Five Acres Club at Garston, Hertfordshire, had to seek relief --- by unfurling umbrellas.

Club secretary Mrs. Trudy Doggart, 44, explained "We've had a rush of new members --- about 100 in the last three days. But the sun's just too hot for them. They are using umbrellas to shield vital parts of their anatomies from the sun. One chap got so burnt he couldn't sit down."

~ 1976

Jack Bracelin's mother died at the age of 79 in the 2nd quarter (Apr-May-Jun) of 1976 in the Hampstead registration district of Greater London and was buried 14 June 1976 in Camden, Greater London.

From the England & Wales, Death Index:

Name / Age / Birth Date / Death Date / Registration District / County / Vol. / Page

Gertrude Alice Bracelin / 79 / 24 Jun 1896 / Apr-May-Jun 1976 / Hampstead / Greater London / 12 / 1766

From the UK, Burial and Cremation Index:

Name / Register Type / Death Date / Burial Date / Burial Place

Gertrude Alice Bracelin / Burial / 1976 / 14 Jun 1976 / Camden, London, England

~ 1977

Rosemary Bracelin married Eric W. Brown in the 1st quarter (Jan-Feb-Mar) of 1977 in the Westminster registration district of Greater London.

From the England & Wales, Marriage Index:

Name / Name of spouse / Registration date of marriage / Registration district / County / Vol. / Page

Rosemary Bracelin / Eric W Brown / Jan-Feb-Mar 1977 / Westminster / Greater London / 15 / 1216

~ more about the Brown family

From the Conversations with Chris Selwood:

Liz lived out east - Hainault way - again I will try and remember more. I can't remember her mother's name but I can tell you that her father, Eric, was the Sergeant in charge of police in Wood Green (East London) and Eric, was also the love interest of Jack's wife Rosemary.

Q: There was this Ellen Brown that became a member of Five Acres Sun Club in 1959, Could she be Eric Brown's earlier wife?

Also, earlier I did come across in the newspapers an "Eric Brown" that was a police (commissioner?) in London but he was based in Kensington I think.

Perhaps was a different Eric Brown?

CS: No idea - I was 10! It would be another six or seven years before I took a fancy to Liz (Elizabeth). At that time Eric was a Sergeant at Hackney Road London N22. His earlier police career may well have seen him in Kensington, but it is unlikely he was Commissioner - a very high rank in the Met.

~ also in 1977

Jack Bracelin's company, Leon Bracelin (Enterprises) Limited, is being dissolved and removed from the Register.

From the London Gazette:

5 July 1977, Issue 47266

Page 8763 & 8764

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to section 353 (3) of the Companies Act, 1948, that at the expiration of three months from the date of the publication of this notice, the names of the Companies mentioned in the list hereunder will, unless cause is shown to the contrary be struck off the Register, and the Companies will be dissolved. This list may include companies which are being removed from the Register at their own request.

List 6993

(among others)

Leon Bracelin (Enterprises) Limited

~ 1978

Jack L. Bracelin married [Name private] in 1978.

Note: I have a copy of the marriage certificate, but I leave it private. As it appears that the second wife is still living perhaps in an old folks place.

~ 1980

Jack Bracelin had his will made on 5 February 1980 (see below in 1982).

~ 1981

Jack Leon Bracelin died on 28 July 1981 at the Five Acre Country Club, Bricket Wood, St. Albans, Hertfordshire.

From the England & Wales, Death Index:

Name / Age / Birth Date / Death Date / Registration District / County / Vol. / Page

Jack Leon Bracelin / 55 / 2 Jun 1926 / Jul-Aug-Sep 1981 / St Albans / Hertfordshire / 10 / 0582

From a copy of the 1981 death certificate:

DEATH

Registration district St Albans

Sub-district St Albans

Administrative area County of Hertfordshire

Date and place of death Twenty eighth July, 1981 Five Acre Country Club, Bricket Wood.

Name / Sex / Date and place of birth / Occupation and usual address / Name of informant / Qualification / Usual address / Date of registration Registrar

Jack Leon BRACELIN / Male / 2nd, June, 1926 London / Club proprietor (retired) Five Acre Country Club, Bricket Wood, St. Albans, Herts. / [Second wife - still living so name is private] / Widow of deceased / Five Acre Country Club, Bricket Wood, St. Albans, Herts. / Thirtieth July, 1981 / V. M. Martin Registrar

~ 1982

Jack Leon Bracelin had a will and it was probated on 14 January 1982.

From the England & Wales, National Probate Calendar Index:

1982

Page 1013

Bracelin, Jack Leon of Chalet Suntan Fiveacres Country Club Fiveacres Avenue Bricket Wood Herts died 28 July 1981 Probate Oxford 14 January

From the actual Will:

"In the High Court of Justice

The District Probate Registry at Oxford

Be it known that Jack Leon Bracelin of Chalet Suntan Fiveacres County Club Fiveacres Avenue Bricket Wood Hertfordshire died on the 28th day of July 1981."

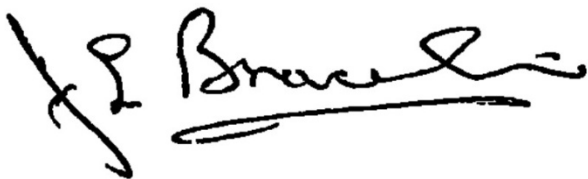
"Dated 14th day of January 1982"

"In Witness whereof I the said Jack Leon Bracelin have set my hand to this my Will this 5th day of February One thousand nine hundred and Eighty"

Image of part of the Will:

I JACK LEON BRACELIN of Chalet Suntan Fiveacres
Country Club Fiveacres Avenue Bricket Wood in the
County of Hertford HEREBY REVOKE all former
testamentary dispositions made by me AND DECLARE
this to be my last Will

Image of his signature on the Will:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J L Bracelin', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

The Will was rather short and gives instructions involving the trust and that it all goes to the wife [second wife - may still be living -so left private] and if in the case that the wife has died before the probate, then it all goes to his step-daughter.

~ **ca 1984**

Doreen Valiente recorded about Jack Bracelin and the Witch Cottage.

From the Transcriptions of Doreen Valiente's Notebook, Part 2, 1966 to 1986:

Page 90 & 91

232) [after the death of Jack Bracelin]

"The Witches Cottage is still standing in Brickett Wood, but boarded up and disused. Jack Bracelin and Zachary had a big row, and were estranged for some years, but were reconciled before Bracelin's death. Bracelin used the magical name of 'Seamus'."

"Fred Lamont [Lamond] married 'Gillian', and he and she are depicted in photograph in 'The Meaning of Witchcraft' together with Jack Bracelin. And Thelma Capel. Omar"

Many thanks to these people for their help

Chris Selwood --- for his sharing of his memories of his time there with us and for the images of the handbills of the 44 Happenings.

Melissa Seims --- for her help in getting some original documents to my attention. She owns a website called 'The Wica' at www.thewica.co.uk.

Philip Heselton --- for letting me use some excerpts of his book and for checking for more information through the Five Aces membership lists.

Scott Bisseker --- for locating a certain person.

John Buck --- of England for sending information on Jack Bracelin concerning the counter-culture years and of him being one of the first to develop and have light shows.

Clive Harper --- for a picture of Jack Bracelin.

Cody Sim --- for another picture of Jack Bracelin and for the picture of the door of the Witch Cottage of Bricket Wood.

Doreen Valiente Foundation --- Entries from the Doreen Valiente notebooks of which the originals is at the DVF.

If there is more information that can be added to the history, please let me know.

Also, so far I haven't found any advertisements for the Five Acres in the newspapers. So perhaps in some British Naturist magazines? Interested in stuff from the 1950's to 1981 period.

Sources

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