

1734

The 1734 Tradition is based on the philosophy of Robert Cochrane, a British Witch, and is composed of groups who have adopted that philosophy. The roots of the Tradition are British-Celtic, although many of its followers have become more Celtic-Eclectic through the years.

Robert Cochrane was born in London on January 26, 1931. At times, he claimed to be a hereditary Witch, speaking of his Great-Grandfather practicing in Warwickshire and of an aunt, "Mrs. Bromfield," who had an impressive collection of "Witch Things." At other times, he simply spoke of ancestors who had been executed for Witchcraft. The truth may be somewhere in between.

What we do know (from a British source) is that he was born to a Methodist family, he sought out and found a teacher (non-Gardnerian), formed a Coven he called *The Clan of Tubal Cain* (a reference to his work as a blacksmith), read books, did research and did the best he could to recreate what he believed to be The Old Religion. The first time we can document his Craft connection is his attendance at a Circle in 1953.

Cochrane was a poet and a philosopher who loved to write in a cryptic and mystical manner. He delivered poetry, riddles and folksongs more often than facts and he inspired research and evolution rather than a strict adherence to dogma. He said "A driving thirst for knowledge is the forerunner of wisdom" and that driving thirst seems to be a hallmark of the Covens that have come into existence as a result of his sharing of that knowledge.

During the mid-1960's, a correspondence developed between Cochrane and an American, Joseph Wilson. The information supplied in Cochrane's letters to Wilson (along with letters he wrote to several others during the same time period) form the basis for the Tradition we practice today. Cochrane also had articles published in several periodicals, which add to our knowledge of his philosophy (*Psychic News* - 1963, *Pentagram* - 1964-66, *New Dimensions* - 1965,). Another British periodical, *The Cauldron*, has published some of his unedited articles in the 1990's.

Cochrane and Wilson continued to correspond. As time went by, Wilson and several other Americans worked together to solve Cochrane's puzzles and fill in the gaps in the letters. Wilson eventually gave copies of those letters to quite a number of people who, in turn, did their own research and came up with their own answers. As a result, different Covens formed, no two exactly alike, and Lines developed. Each Line today is completely autonomous and there is no central authority.

The Covens do not share a common B.O.S. (Book of Shadows), but Cochrane's letters have served the same purpose and are passed from teacher to student in a similar fashion to the B.O.S. in other Traditions. In addition to the letters, most groups have created a personal B.O.S. These Covens, almost without exception, require at least a year and a day (and a good amount of study) prior to 1st Degree. They continue to read, research and evolve, as did Cochrane. Students are usually required to decipher the cryptograms 1734 and 1737, thus discovering the Names of the High Goddess and God and to solve several riddles given by Cochrane, as preparation for Initiation.

Although this Tradition was rather obscure until the 1980's, in the last decade it seems to be growing at a great rate. Covens are springing up everywhere and new Lines seem to be surfacing regularly.

Various groups have accumulated more information, through visits to England or correspondence with British Witches. Unfortunately, this has led to the occasional group thinking of themselves as "more 1734" than others. Although this is probably a very human reaction to receiving new information, it is a

less than valid viewpoint. If you call Her, She will make you Her Own. More information only leads to more puzzles and more questions to be answered.

We should explain that it is only in recent years that 1734 has been considered the name of a Tradition. It simply became easier, over time, to accept and utilize the name ourselves, rather than to constantly correct and explain to outsiders.

We also need to dispel some myths about the numerals "1734". First, Robert Cochrane did not "trace his Witch Blood back to 1734" (as stated in *Wicca*, p21, Vivianne Crowley). Neither was this "the address of the original HPS" (a suggestion found on a BBS, some years ago). 1734 is also not the date of any event or the founding date of any organization or order that we know of! 1734 is a cryptogram for the Name of our Goddess. Period.

Many of today's Covens seem to rely heavily on meditation and vision. Most work out of doors whenever possible, use dance and chant to raise energy and use Aspecting (a form of channeling) regularly. Cochrane referred to Covens as "clans" and "families" and, while hardly any groups today have retained this anachronism, the "family" feeling seems to be evident in all of them. On a side note: in spite of comments made by D. Valiente, we know of no 1734 Coven currently using any hallucinogen or narcotic as an aid to ritual or vision. We rely on the Gods Themselves to produce the special effects!

Robert Cochrane died at Summer Solstice, 1966. He left a wife and one son. Sadly, he never knew the impact his teaching would have on the Craft community in the years to come. It is unfortunate that we can no longer question him. He left many things unanswered.

"We teach by poetic inference, by thinking along lines that belong to the world of dreams and images. There is no hard and fast teaching technique, no laid down scripture or law, for wisdom comes only to those who deserve it, and your teacher is yourself seen through a mirror darkly. The answers to all things are in the Air---Inspiration, and the winds will bring you news and knowledge, if you ask them properly.... There is no secret in the world that cannot be discovered if the recipient is ready to listen to it, since the very Air itself carries memory and knowledge."

- Robert Cochrane, 1931-1966.

Flags, Flax and Fodder, Robert. We thank you.