

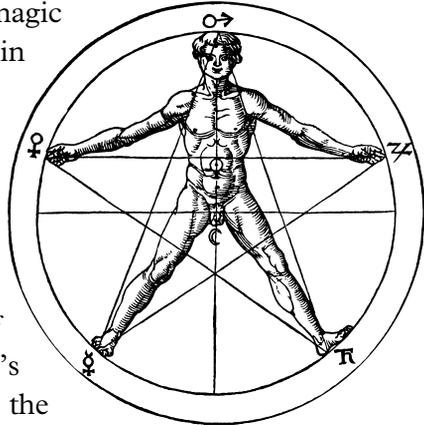
❧ Preface ❧

The Book of English Magic explores the curious and little-known fact that, of all the countries in the world, England has the richest history of magical lore and practice.

English authors such as J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Terry Pratchett, Susanna Clarke, Philip Pullman and J.K. Rowling dominate the world of magic in fiction, but while children accept the magical world without reservation, most adults are not only sceptical of its place in modern society but are ignorant of the part magic and magicians have played in English history.

From the earliest times, England has acted as home to generations of eccentrics and scholars who have researched and explored every conceivable kind of occult art. *The Book of English Magic* surveys England's magical past from the moment the first humans inhabited her shores to our present-day fascination with all things magical. Here, historical explorations and biographies of leading figures are combined with suggestions for sites to visit and experiments to perform that will allow you to begin experiencing for yourself the world of magic and enchantment that has intrigued generations of seekers. In the following pages you will also meet many of England's leading magicians and hear directly from them how and why they practise their art.

In *The Book of English Magic*, an extraordinary parallel world is revealed in which secret societies still practise ritual magic, our ancient landscape yields up its hidden powers, and the lost magical origins of centuries of tradition and folklore are revealed.



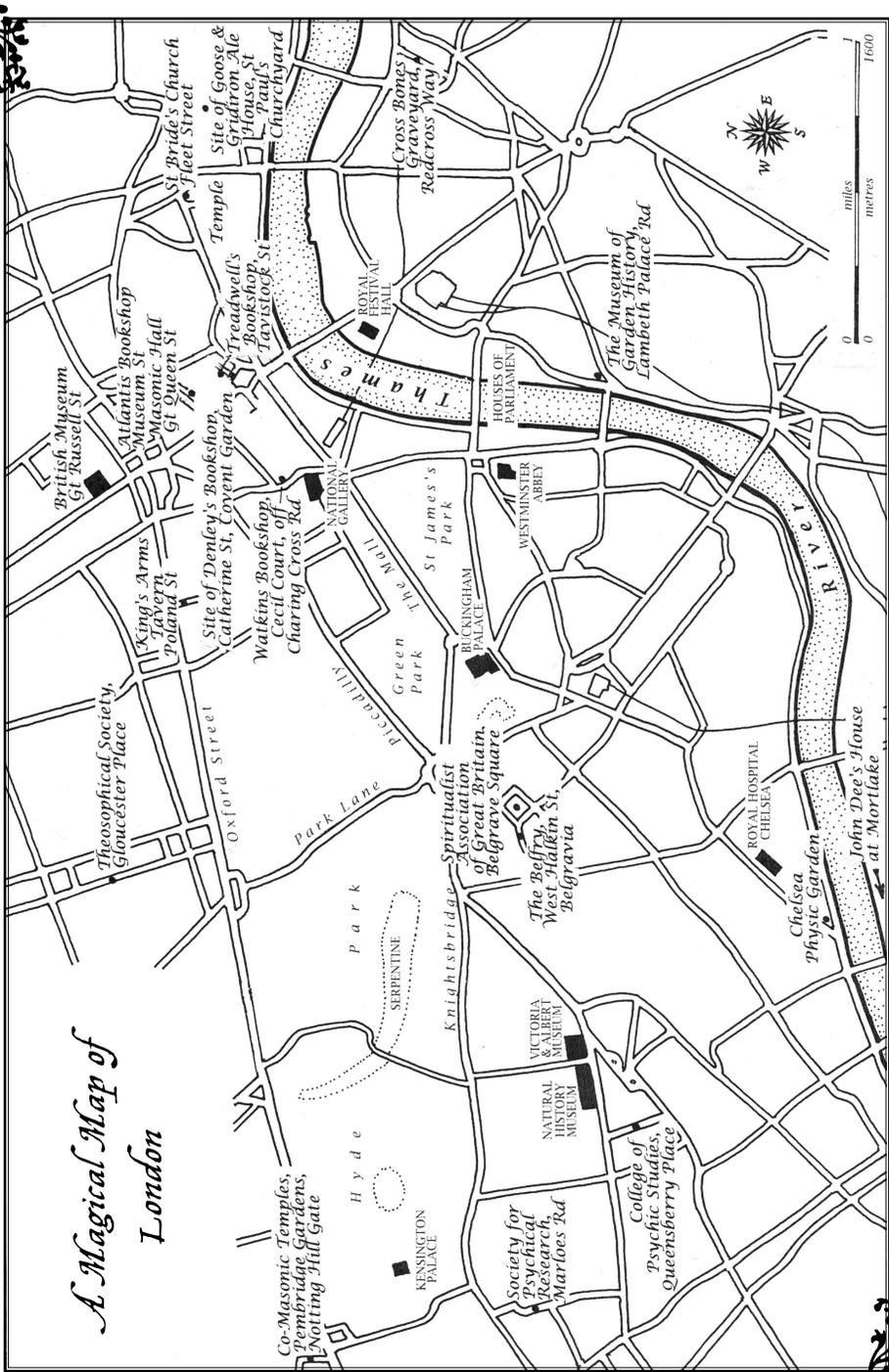


Key

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| 1. Mooted site of Camelot | 25. Rollright Stones |
| 2. Arthur's Chair | 26. Sulgrave Manor |
| 3. Pendragon Castle | 27. St John's College,
Cambridge –
university of Dee &
Nichols |
| 4. The Cumbrian Round
Table | |
| 5. Greymoor Hill | |
| 6. Bewcastle Cross | 28. Rufus Stone, New
Forest |
| 7. Bede's World | |
| 8. Mother Shipton's Cave | 29. Kingly Vale |
| 9. Pendle Hill | 30. Long Man of
Wilmington |
| 10. Cresswell Crag | |
| 11. Biddulph Moor | 31. Silbury Hill |
| 12. Church of St Chad | 32. West Kennet Long
Barrow |
| 13. Kinver Edge rock
houses | 33. Wilton House |
| 14. Royston Cave | 34. Cadbury Castle |
| 15. Witches cottage,
Brickett Wood | 35. Cerne Abbas
Giant |
| 16. Mother Ludlam's Cave | 36. Exeter Castle |
| 17. Co-Masonry temples | 37. Witchcraft Museum,
Boscastle |
| 18. Garway | |
| 19. Golden Valley | 38. Merry Maidens |
| 20. Meon Hill | 39. Steyning |
| 21. Shell Grotto | 40. Nine Maidens |
| 22. Barge Inn | 41. Grimes Graves |
| 23. White Horse of
Uffington & Dragon
Hill | 42. The Devil's Arrows |
| 24. Wayland's Smithy | 43. Rudston Monolith |
| | 44. Old Bewick |
| | 45. Chislehurst Caves |



A Magical Map of London

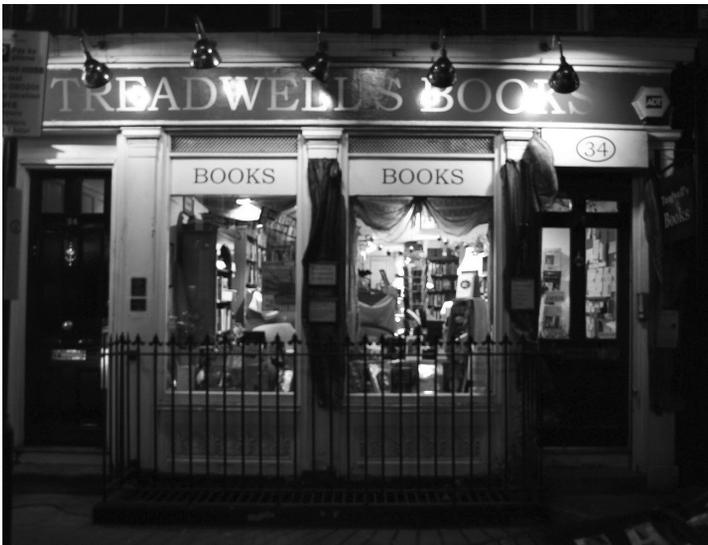




Every country has its magic: in its wild places, in its history, and in the traditions of its healers and mystics. The lands that border England have a special magic – Wales and Scotland are brimming with tales of wizards and seers – but this book focuses on the country that has grown, by design or quirk of fate, into the world’s richest storehouse of magical lore: England.

Our story begins in a bookshop. Treadwell’s in London’s Covent Garden is everything a bookshop should be – warm, inviting, comfortable – and yet most people hurry past it, because it specialises in a subject they don’t believe in: magic.

Magic is fun for children, and for the child in all of us, but it belongs to the world of fantasy books and films, and Treadwell’s doesn’t stock these – it’s not a place for children. And it’s not a place for people interested in conjuring and stage magic. Treadwell’s is a specialist bookshop for the practising occultist and wizard.



A century ago Edward Bulwer-Lytton began his Victorian occult novel *Zanoni* in just such a shop: ‘It is possible that among my readers there may be a few not unacquainted with an old-book shop, existing some years since in the neighbourhood of Covent Garden . . . there, perhaps, throughout all Europe, the curious might discover the most notable collection, ever amassed by an enthusiast, of the works of alchemist, cabalist, and astrologer.’

Bulwer-Lytton was a prolific novelist, a contemporary and close friend of Charles Dickens, and the owner of Knebworth House in Hertfordshire, which is now open to the public. Today you can walk through his sitting room and library, and imagine his gaunt figure studying astrology beside the fire, with a long pipe of opium in one hand. And just like the hero in *Zanoni*, who discovers a doorway to the world of magic in a bookshop in Covent Garden, you can walk into Treadwell’s to begin a journey of exploration into the hidden world of magic – its history and its power to stir the imagination.



Lord Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803–1873), novelist, playwright, poet, politician and member of the Rosicrucian Society in England (Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia). Bulwer-Lytton’s fictional bookshop was based on London’s most important occult bookshop, run by John Denley in Catherine Street, Covent Garden.

The best place to start finding out about magic is not Cairo or Calcutta, Paris or Prague, but London. Just as the English language has grown to become the dominant world language in science, diplomacy and commerce, so fate and history have

decreed that England, and in particular its capital, has over the centuries become the most important repository and breeding-ground of the magical arts in all the world.

Here in ancient times the Druids cast their spells before Caesar's armies ever crossed the Thames. Here Dr John Dee, astrologer to Queen Elizabeth I, amassed a vast library of occult books and consulted angels through his magic mirror of obsidian. Here robed magicians of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn invoked the gods, and naked witches danced – as they dance still – in suburban sitting rooms.

It was in London that the mediums of the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain in Belgrave Square began exploring the mysteries of life after death, and where, in nearby West Halkin Street, between the two world wars, the novelist and mystic Dion Fortune performed her Rites of Isis before invited guests.

The tradition continues. The owner of Treadwell's, Dr Christina Oakley-Harrington, is steeped in a knowledge of magic, and is well aware of London's significance in its history. An American, she was first drawn to London because she had a strong feeling for the Elizabethan period, 'when every street corner in London would have a practising astrologer, and one could almost breathe the magic in the air!'

She is also conscious of the role a bookshop can play in the life of an individual. When someone goes into a bookshop, they are standing at a series of gateways into other worlds – each book can pull them into a different universe. Open one and they are spirited to South America; open another and they enter the world of astrophysics. Sitting at the desk every day, and often in the evenings too, Christina acts as gatekeeper, steering her customers expertly in the direction she believes will be the most helpful. 'Going into an occult bookshop is a magical experience in its own right,' she explains. 'In most cities in the world there is probably an occult bookshop. Visitors start by wandering aimlessly around, perhaps afraid to speak to the person behind the till, not realising that this is all part of their initiatory experience. And then they pick up a book, or ask a question – and before they know it they are set on a magical path.'

Treadwell's stocks plenty of second-hand books, which Virginia Woolf called 'Wild Books, Homeless Books', because, explains Christina, 'they have already had a journey, so they have extra energy in them from where they have been before, and they're looking for a home'. Christina likes being part of this tradition. 'When a new customer asks me to recommend a book I ask them a few general questions to find out where they are starting from. Then I suggest that they shouldn't feel rushed, but should just allow the books on the shelves to "speak" to them. There are usually lots of chairs and sofas in occult bookshops, so that the books can draw you in and fire your imagination.'



The story of magic in England begins as the very first humans start to populate the land, seeking solace and healing in the powers of nature. As layer after layer of magical knowledge and practice build upon each other across the centuries, the story becomes more complex and colourful, the cast of characters ever wider, as we reach the modern era, when more people practise magic in England than at any other time in her history.

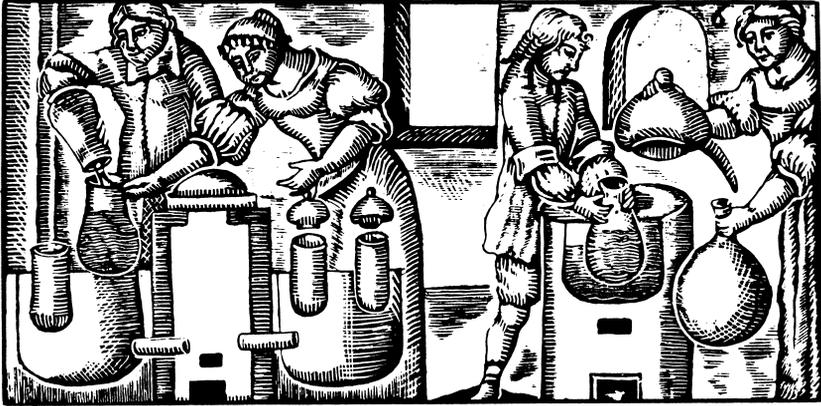
If you scratch the surface of our so-called 'normal' world you will soon discover witches and wizards, Druids and alchemists, astrologers and mystics in abundance, leading normal and yet also very unusual lives – here in England in the twenty-first century.

Their world, and the story of the different kinds of magic they practise, is all around us – written in the land, in ancient monuments, in old city streets, in museums and in the stories of those who have dared to practise the old arts, often risking their own lives. And yet few people are aware of the fact that England just happens to have acquired over the centuries the most varied, most extraordinary magical history of all the countries on earth.

The purpose of this book is to explore this history and the magic that is still practised here today. Moving through time, each chapter surveys the scene, and suggests places to visit and things to do that will help you discover and experience the essence of each of the

kinds of magic being explored. In creating this book we've interviewed over fifty contemporary magicians and many of these are presented here, along with explorations of magical fiction, biography and autobiography, and comprehensive resource guides, so that – if you choose – you can delve deeper into this strange and fascinating world.

Who should read this book, you may ask? The answer is simple: anyone with an open mind who seeks adventure . . .



❧ What is Magic? ❧

Magic, madam, is like wine and, if you are not used to it, it will make you drunk.

SUSANNA CLARKE, THE LADIES OF GRACE ADIEU

In the seventeenth century Sir Walter Raleigh wrote that ‘The art of magic is the art of worshipping God’. Three hundred years later the infamous magician Aleister Crowley reintroduced the archaic ‘k’ into his spelling of magic and defined it as ‘the Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will’. Later he said, ‘Magick is the Science of understanding oneself and one’s conditions. It is the Art of applying that understanding in action.’

Dion Fortune, who started her own magical lodge in 1922,

The Fraternity of the Inner Light, revised his definition to that of 'causing changes in consciousness at will'.

The Cheltenham magician W.G. Gray was more specific, and held quite a different opinion to Raleigh, when he wrote in 1969 that magic is: 'Man's most determined effort to establish an actual working relationship through himself between his Inner and Outer states of being. By magic, Man shows that he is not content to be simply a pawn in the Great Game, but wants to play on his own account. Man the meddler becomes Man the Magician, and so learns the rules the hard way, for magic is concerned with Doing, while mysticism is concerned with Being'.