



## The Doreen Valiente Foundation

### A Short History: 1995 - 2010

In 1995 John and Julie Belham-Payne converted a barn at their Sussex home into what became The Centre for Pagan Studies, its policy from the first day was to offer facilities for anyone interested in expanding their knowledge of Paganism and they brought in the very best people to give lectures about the beliefs of many Pagan paths. As time went by the CFPS gained an enviable reputation for quality. This reputation got the attention of Doreen Valiente, Gerald Gardner's best known high priestess and often called the 'Mother of Modern Witchcraft' (a title which she disliked, John & Julie were later to discover!)

Not all of the events at the Centre were cerebral. They celebrated the turning of the year and gave many non-initiated Pagans the opportunity to be involved, to attend and to see for themselves. This led to talks in local community centres, women's institutions and places of learning in order for people to get to know what Pagan beliefs really entailed. The CFPS offered advice and information, and became a point of reference, which continues to this day. The grounds around the barn were used by groups of witches, heathens and druids to provide a sacred and safe place for a variety of rituals.

However things changed, when one evening celebration event, attracted Doreen. Not easy to lecture to a group of people about witchcraft, when the lady that knew more than any person alive, was seated in the room! She was very polite. At the end of the evening Doreen asked for John and Julie's telephone number, but they assumed she did this out of polite-

ness and expected never to hear from her again.

A few days later the phone rang and a voice said 'My name is Doreen Valiente, we met the other evening, I do hope you can remember me?' John, who answered the call, was hardly likely to forget. She then went on to say 'This Centre for Pagan Studies of yours - would you mind if I got more involved?' Taken a little aback at this John stupidly asked her what she thought she might like to actually do, 'Well I am not too good on my pins (legs) these days, but if you sit me at the sink, I can wash the cups for you' she replied!!! They did not let her do the washing up of course, but with her help and encouragement the CFPS went on to do greater and greater things. She became its patron and figurehead. The centre became a first for many things which include the first building in the UK to get planning permission with the word 'Pagan' in the application. It was also the first place to put on a Pagan Art Exhibition for the Visionary Artist Group.

Doreen had nursed her partner for a number of years until his passing and had retired from the Pagan community to take care of him. She saw the CFPS as her return. Her last ever public event was a talk for the CFPS called 'An Afternoon with Doreen Valiente'. Actually on that day it was the writer Marian Green who was caught doing the washing up! Which just shows that it is the work we do, rather than status we think we hold and who we think we are. It is a central principle of the CFPS. Now without a working partner and alone, Doreen asked John to become her high priest, which he did until she became seriously ill and passed over in September 1999.



[www.doreenvaliente.org](http://www.doreenvaliente.org)

Before she died she asked John to carry out her funeral rite and to his surprise, bequeathed to him all her artefacts and the copyrights to her written and artistic works. Her only request was that he used her altar privately, as they had done while she was alive. When he asked Doreen what she wanted him to do with the collection she said, rather enigmatically, 'John, I know whatever you choose to do, will be the right thing...'. We hope that by keeping the collection intact and accessible to the pagan and wider community, we can all make her proud and that this, truly, is 'the right thing to do'.

Amongst the collection is Gerald Gardner's Book of Shadows, his ritual sword, athame and many other items that he either collected, made or owned, along with the only known artifact from the famous New Forest coven that was passed on to him. In the collection are many other famous pieces and items from many other occultists like Aleister Crowley, Stewart Farrar, Patricia and Arnold Crowther. Since we started to talk about a museum, we also had items donated beyond Doreen's collection from many supporters. We have also been promised for the museum, the unique collection owned by Ralph Harvey of the Order of Artemis, a collection so important in John's own magical history. We know there are thousands of your own items that we would be only too happy to have donated or loaned to us for display in the museum.

In 2000 Julie and John sold their property in Sussex and moved to Southern Spain for health reasons. The CFPS went virtual, with a programme of mobile talks and exhibitions, which continues to this day. The entire collection, except for a few items cared for in Eastbourne by Ray and Lynda Lindfield (including the iconic art deco nude holding a moon shaped cradle) was all moved to Spain and is in safe and dry storage until the museum opens.

Over the years John and Julie have been restoring the collection privately when finances allowed. Unfortunately Doreen's Brighton apartment was damp and many of the books (which number in the thousands!) were in need of professional restoration. This work goes on, but at around £50 per book there is still a long way to go.

The years have gone by since Doreen's passing. The collection has been kept intact, safe and dry. Until 2010 John and Julie continued with a series of talks and exhibitions to keep Doreen's memory alive but having assembled a dedicated team, in March 2011

they put the collection into a charitable trust called The Doreen Valiente Foundation. The aim of the Foundation is to protect the artefacts, the library and the writings and to work towards making the collection safe and accessible to the global Pagan community for all time. The deed of trust states that no one can now sell, give away or privately own any of the collection.

Doreen was passionate about her beliefs and her knowledge through her research is legendary. It is our intention never to let that flame go out, but provide the space and infrastructure to forward her work through all those who shared her vision.

**The Future:** Because of the Doreen Valiente Foundation, the collection is now protected for all of us for all time. The collection is recognised as the most important collection to Paganism anywhere in the world. Each passing year Doreen's importance to the craft and our heritage is becoming more recognised. We have done our best so far, but we have always known we would need help, now is the time to ask **YOU** to help us . . .

We receive requests for access to her research or verification on something to do with the collection almost on a daily basis. In its present situation of safe storage, access and study is simply not possible and we just cannot do the research ourselves that people ask for. There is a whole and very important part of our pagan history locked away and it is our firm belief that it needs to be in a place that is both accessible for scholars and on display to the general public, plus an aid to those wishing to progress in their chosen path.

We have been in discussion with several places in the USA, Europe and the UK to build a museum and a new "Centre For Pagan Studies", and Doreen's beloved Brighton in Sussex is still the favoured destination. The city authorities have given us their blessing and have indicated that they may be able to offer us a quite prestigious building sometime in the near future, but we need to be ready to take up that offer. The problem now is hard cold cash to make the plan a reality. We have the backing of several very eminent museum and academic professionals, who have offered to donate their time to see the project take shape but what we need to do is raise funds and, equally importantly, interest so that we can show those who would back us financially that it is a project that would benefit a large and growing global Pagan community.

## *Membership of The Doreen Valiente Foundation*

In the Doreen Valiente Collection are many artefacts from many varied sources. Doreen was interested in all faiths and traditions. We are in talks with other faith leaders, Druids and Heathens for example, we are discussing their help with the museum and want their input. Let us be absolutely open and honest:

For the museum to open and for you to have pleasure in seeing the collection, our unique look into Pagan history and the use of the study centre we need your money, your help and your enthusiasm.

Now that the artefacts, library and Doreen's manuscripts have entered the public domain via the charitable trust which now owns them, we want you to feel as if you "own" your heritage properly (sadly, no, you cannot take it home with you today!!). For the first time since Doreen passed on we feel as if we are in a position to accept the donations that in the past have been offered and we have turned down on the basis of not being able to make proper use of such generosity. Now the offers will be gladly accepted as we see the goal of establishing the centre as being within reach. But its NOT just your money, we also want you to be involved even further with the projects we are running and planning and so we have decided to open up the Foundation to allow anyone who shares our beliefs and visions to become a member of the Doreen Valiente Foundation. Not only will memberships raise funds for the cause but with the support of the individuals within the Pagan (and wider) community we hope to tap into the great willingness to volunteer and share skills and resources, to find the people who can carry the Foundation and Doreen's legacy forward with us.

Whilst we have put together a membership package that contains some exclusive material from the collection, discounts from our range of books and merchandise plus exclusive news and information throughout the year and some unique opportunities to meet and discuss with us the way forward we think the real benefit of membership is the opportunity to be involved personally with Doreen and her legacy as we move forwards together - we need members to be helping to arrange exhibitions and talks that will raise funds and awareness and of

course we will always be available to help with and attend such events. Currently there are 3 foundation members individually or collectively, available to do talks, with a small selection of the artefacts from the collection to bring along as a travelling exhibit. We are happy to travel anywhere in the world to do this. All three of us are very experienced in doing a variety of lectures, TV, radio and press interviews and so far we've found these events be a great success for the organisers and a lot of fun for everyone. We have all the publicity material, or will help you put it together. What is important is 'doing the right thing,' raising the funds and making the collection available and on display for everyone to enjoy as soon as possible. This is just one of the things we think members of the Foundation will be able to help us do more and more.

In the near future, we will also be looking for volunteers who have both the time and skills available to help establish the museum and the research centre: We are going to need people who have library experience, secretarial skills, carpenters, electricians, builders, lighting engineers, photography and film makers, artists, entertainers, actors, musicians, writers and many other hands to bring it all together. We will need drivers for our planned Pagan day trip/excursion tours and those willing to take on teaching roles in the study centre. The museum shop will need only the very best merchandise and we would love to see more and more pagan artists, sculptors and model makers selling through the museum shop. Eventually we will be looking to help establish local centres where local collections can go on display and this network of establishments can share with each other our valuable resources and experience. The ideas are endless, only restricted by our imaginations and the people to carry it all out. Whatever your interests, dreams or path, if you have an idea, come and talk to us and let us see how we can work together for a better Pagan community

So please do fill in the form overleaf, join the Doreen Valiente Foundation and become part of the future of Paganism with us . . .

# The Doreen Valiente Foundation

## Application For Membership

Annual membership subscription is £20 (or €30 or \$40)  
members must be aged 18 years or over

Please make cheque payments payable to "Doreen Valiente Foundation" and send to:  
DVF, 4 Mapperley Heights, Plains Road, Nottingham, NG3 5GR

Name .....

Address .....

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Email .....

*Optional Information:*

Telephone .....

Do you consider yourself Pagan ? Yes / No

If so, what is your chosen path? .....

Is there something specific you'd like to see in the museum or do you have an idea

for a present or future project for the Foundation? .....

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Do you have skills that you could offer as a volunteer? .....

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Signature ..... Date .....

If you are a UK Tax payer you can choose to donate your membership to us under the **Gift Aid** scheme for charities, this will allow us to claim back the tax you have paid before your donation. This does not affect your own tax position

Please treat my membership donation as Gift Aid in respect of: (choose one option below)

- This donation only
- This donation and any other donations I make until further notice
- All donations I have made in the past six years including this one and any other donations I make until further notice

**Notes about Gift Aid:** 1. You can cancel your Gift Aid Declaration at any time by notifying the charity. 2. If in the future your circumstances change and you no longer pay tax on your income and capital gains equal to the tax that the charity reclaims, you can cancel your declaration. 3. If you pay tax at the higher rate you can claim further tax relief in your Self Assessment tax return. 4. If you are unsure whether your donations qualify for Gift Aid tax relief, ask the charity. Or, refer to help sheet IR65 on the HMRC web site. ([www.hmrc.gov.uk](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk)) 5. Please notify the charity if you change your name or address. 6. You must pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax at least equal to the tax that the charity reclaims on your donations in the appropriate tax year.