



MY DAYS

NIGHTS

By day she is Matron Bone, running an old folk's home in a London suburb. At night she becomes Witch Bone, high-priestess of a coven, dedicated to the magic arts. In this interview with GLENDA BANKS she tells of her strange double life and asks you to judge: "Am I fit to run an old folk's home?"

"Lit-Bits" (Week ending June 6th, 1964)

IT has all been a bit of a strain keeping my private life separate from my professional one. But at last my secret is out and I don't much care who knows.

I've been a witch for 30 years—a matron for ten.

And now everyone is talking about the witch who runs an old folk's home.

I feel I've some explaining to do . . .

My flat, a fourpenny bus ride from the old folk's home in Streatham, is in a house called The Towers.

The cauldron inside my front door is no door-stop. It's part of my other life.

I'm not only a witch, but one of Britain's three high-priestesses. By day I dress for my job as matron in a tweed suit, thick lisle stockings and brogues.

By night I dance naked with only a garter on my left thigh.

Worship

LET me tell you about my two lives . . . At my old folk's home I've nine patients under my wing.

At my flat, where incense burns and ritual knives are laid out on an altar, 12 coven members follow me in worship.

This all might sound strange, but in fact my two lives run in perfect harmony.

And there's no need for anyone to worry about the old folk in my care. At the home I go by the medical book.

The London County Council, who licensed my home, know about my other life—and it's more than I dare to treat any patients with witchcraft's own herbal remedies, spells and magic.

I'll tell you about one or two of my patients—old folk who have passed on.

One was an old dear from Monte Carlo. She was 84 and a chronic drug addict. She had been "hooked" on morphia for 40 years.

I nursed her for six years. When she died, her family were so pleased with the way I had cared for her, they left me an envelope full of money. Another old lady died and left me everything she had in the world.

One sweet old gentleman who died when he was 85 left me some antique silver which I use now when performing the "craft ceremonies."

But one of my greatest treasures is



Matron Bone with one of the residents of the old folk's home she runs by day. At night she becomes a witch and dances naked at magic rituals

an Egyptian ring about 2,000 years old. It was given to me by a dying patient.

But the living remember me with gratitude as well. More than one old dear has trusted me with absolute power of attorney in her business affairs.

One has property and I collect her rents . . . I don't think her knowing I am a witch will make much difference.

All my old people trust me.

But I don't bother them by holding my witchcraft meetings at the home. It would be much too noisy. I've often wondered what my neighbours

at The Towers think of the bumps in the night.

Well, I'll tell them. It's me moving the furniture about.

My coven meets in the living-room. I take everything out of the room, clear of the magic circle on the carpet.

And setting up the altar is no easy task. I use a huge, old chest on which I lay my ritual knives. Sacrifice? Never. People confuse witches like me with Black Magic. They say the red wine and small cakes I administer to my kneeling coven are a travesty of the Holy Communion. Piffle! They are symbolic of the harvest and we are simply giving thanks to the gods for the grapes and the grain.

It is true that we are always naked at our rituals.

But the reason is our search for purity.

We don't wear clothes because they bring foreign particles into our magic circle.

Our magic circle is purified with salt water. It is a big ring drawn at the beginning of each ceremony. It is drawn symbolically with the witches' sword—but I've painted mine on the carpet to save time.

Once the circle is made, the high-priestess—that's me—sprinkles salt

water all over it. You might call it our equivalent of Holy Water.

When the circle has been purified in this way no members of the coven can enter it unless they are naked. For a speck of dust from our everyday clothes might spoil our magic.

Please don't run away with the idea that we have a sexual orgy. My coven is made up of middle-aged men and women—the kind of people you see in any bus queue.

There's nothing sexy about us with our clothes off. We take it all very seriously and a prospective member to the "craft" is watched closely for three months before his or her nomination is put to the vote. That's how choosy we are.

As high-priestess of the coven I've had my share of cranky letters. But I've a stock answer for those kind of crackpots—I write and tell them it's a psychiatrist they need, not a witch.

Comfort

I'M 52, old enough to know my own mind and and the "craft" is my religion. But I don't inflict it on the old folk who pay for a bed in my rest-home.

There's no hocus-pocus when they need spiritual help—I call in the priest or minister of their own denomination. But if they prefer to die in my arms I will comfort them as best I know-how.

The gossips can say what they like. They've even named my favourite seat in the local pub "witches' corner."

But I defy anyone to find fault with the way I run my rest-home.

Am I fit to run an old folk's home? You be the judge. Matron Bone or Witch Bone—take your choice.

And if you have trouble sleeping tonight thinking about witchcraft, take a tip from Matron's cauldron: Two teaspoons of honey in hot milk is a wonderful sedative . . . you'll never hear the bumps in the night.

By Mrs.
Ray Bone

AS A MATRON AND AS A WITCH