

WHAT, NO BROOMSTICK?

WITCHCRAFT is a mystical religion," said Lois Pearson, a modern witch, in a B.B.C. programme recently. "It is pre-Christian and it dates back to the Stone Age. Reincarnation is one of our firm beliefs, and we also believe that people who are witches in previous lives will be drawn back to us in this life.

"Being a witch means that I generate a power, a life force, and I can channel it into a specific purpose. I have the power to heal the sick, and I can influence people. To some extent I can make wishes come true, and I also have the power to bring about anything in my own life that I really desperately want.

"Do witches worship the devil?" asked an interviewer.

"No, witches do not worship the devil," replied Lois Pearson. "I should like to make that quite clear. The devil is a Christian symbol for evil. Nor do we practice black magic. In the old days, the witches themselves were the priesthood. Our Hallowe'en ceremony is devoted to the god, and the god's place is taken by the high priest and he wears for this ceremony a horned helmet.

Gates of death

At the festival of Hallowe'en we ask the god to open the gates of death and let those of our numbers who have gone before us return for a little while to join in the feasting and the merry-making."

"Are you aware of those who have passed through the Gate of Death returning to join you on Hallowe'en?" asked the interviewer.

"Well, we are aware of their

spiritual presence but we are not aware of them as people."

"As witches, do you meet often?"

"Yes, we meet once a month."

"That would be the full moon, would it?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact it is."

"Witches' Sabbath?"

"Well, it isn't a sabbath. A sabbath is one of the great festivals. There are four great festivals during the year — May Eve, August Eve, Hallowe'en and Candlemas."

"How many of you form a coven?"

"The ideal number for a coven is 13 people, six couples and a high priestess. A man and a woman work magic together, you see. Two men are not allowed to work together, and two women are not allowed to work together."

"Why is that?"

"Sometimes the working of magic produces a feeling of love between people, and it would be

wrong if it was produced between men or between women, unless it was a platonic sort of love. But we don't take any chances."

"Would you regard the powers that witches exercise as supernatural?" asked the interviewer.

"No," replied Lois Pearson, "I would not regard them as supernatural. We all have certain powers which are inherent in us, and it's just that the purification we undergo in witchcraft, and

the rites we carry out, help us to develop any spiritual gifts which we might possess. But witchcraft won't give you anything which you don't already have. It just helps to develop the powers you already possess."

"Is there any kind of organisation which links one coven with another?"

Spells are out

"No, we have no central organisation. You see, in the old days in the burning times, the rule was that one coven shouldn't know of the existence of another one so that if they were caught and tortured, they couldn't confess what they didn't know. And to a certain extent that rule still prevails today."

"Tell me, do you in fact cast spells, or is that an old-fashioned idea?"

"That's an old-fashioned idea. We don't cast spells in the old-fashioned sense. We don't say 'eeny meeny miny mo' for instance. We work. We have a sort of agenda."

"Is it easy nowadays to be a witch, or do witches find themselves, as it were, hunted, as witches used to be?"

"Well, there is a certain amount of persecution, but witches don't really pay much regard to it, you know. It's usually one of the things that they can take in their stride. They develop a thick skin."



● Lois Pearson is a modern witch, so she uses modern means of transport. Here she is seen stepping from a plane.