

# Now the witches



Brighton witch Miss Doreen Valiente with some of the tools of her "trade."

## have their own 'trade union'

**I**TS name is almost staid—the Witchcraft Research Association. Even Magic Circle sounds exotic beside it. But its aim is to delve into the history and practices of a subject which some say is vile. Others mildly amusing...

The association was formed earlier this year and has still to hold its first meeting. But, predictably enough, it has links with Brighton—in a basement flat in Lewes Crescent on the seafront. There lives Doreen Valiente, one of Britain's few witches—self-styled, of course, since there is no university degree in the subject—a mild, early-middle-aged woman with a West Country burr and one passionate hobby: the old religion. She is a member of the W.R.A.; she refers to it by its initials. It is, she says, "a perfectly serious association. Our aim is impartial research into the old traditions of witchcraft. We are just a body of people who have set out honestly and sincerely to study a very fascinating subject."

### A COVEN

The association, she agrees, has yet to meet. But it has been active. In its six or so months of existence, Miss Valiente says it has:

- Discovered a coven of witches not known before to other active witches. She would not say where it is.
- Collected a number of spells and invocations not before known. As they were given in confidence she could not say anything about them.
- Acquired a small quantity of an English incense made by a witch to a witch's brew. It was given to Miss Valiente in a small red cardboard carton marked "Viscount de-mothing crystals."

### MAGAZINE

"It is genuine English witch's incense," the Lewes Crescent witch said as she burned a little in a brass incense burner. "I'll have to try to get the recipe."

The witch who made the incense also showed Miss Valiente an unguent which she claimed

### THEY FORM A RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

helped in clairvoyance. Miss Valiente is after a sample of that too.

The association has produced one issue of a four-page magazine about witchcraft. It sold for 2s. Another is due.

Miss Valiente, who is proud of her claim to be a witch, is pleased with the progress of the association so far. "People are very cautious about giving information about witchcraft to anyone because there has been so much of the wrong sort of publicity," she said.

She estimates that she is one of only a hundred or so witches in this country, but she says that many people have information about the old religion which the W.R.A. would like to collect.

So, although the association has not yet attained substance, she says it has a great future. She

would like to see it open an office in London, a library, hold meetings, trace relics for meetings. It is interested in anything pagan, superstitious, occult, folk, traditional.

And it wants to combat inaccurate statements about witchcraft. For instance, said Miss Valiente, that witches dance in the nude. "Some did," she said, "but others think that nudity actually detracts from a witch's power."

"And, anyway," she added, "can you imagine what it must be like meeting and dancing in the nude in this country in a normal summer!"