

WITCHES RIDE AGAIN

February 20th 1964

High Priestess and a jackdaw

DAILY TELEGRAPH REPORTER

A BATTLE of witches was joined at University College, London, last night when modern British witches turned up to a Folklore Society lecture. The lecturer, Dr. Rossell Hope Robbins, was out to prove that witches did not exist and never had.

Every time he said anything like that Mr. Hotfoot Jackson, a forest jackdaw, squawked loudly. He was sitting on the shoulder of Mrs. Sybil Leek, 41, High Priestess of British Witchcraft.

Mrs. Leek has been a witch since childhood. "I was always conscious of trance conditions," she said to me. "I found it useful in maths lessons."

No, she did not ride on a broomstick. "That's just a phallic symbol," she explained. She didn't believe in God, but felt responsible to the Supreme Being.

Coven meetings

Her coven met four times a year at midnight on the Red Sabbats. "These are religious meetings at which we renew our energies," she said. "The power of renewal comes from the Supreme Being."

Dr. Robbins, an American born in Cheshire, was introduced as an early example of the brain drain. He certainly drained mine and I began to wish I had not been in a trance condition at shorthand lessons.

He kept saying words like demonology, heresy, theological twist, but witch was witch I cannot tell. Now and again he hit out plainly and Mr. Hotfoot Jackson hooted.

Witches and warlocks were on the warpath after the lecture about Dr. Robbins's retort to a question from Mrs. Leek.

"Do you really not believe that there are all over the world to-day group of people sincerely practising the old religion?" she asked.

"I am not interested in sincerity," Dr. Robbins replied.

Two bessom broomsticks were found chained to a bench in the quadrangle outside the hall. Mrs. Leek dismissed them as a students' jape, unworthy of modern witchery and left for a night out touring the sights of London in a car.



Mrs. Sybil Leek, the High Priestess of British witchcraft, with Mr. Hotfoot Jackson, a forest jackdaw, sitting on her shoulder, at the Folklore Society lecture at University College last night. British witches turned up at the lecture at which Dr. Rossell Hope Robbins was out to prove that witches did not exist.