23. CONVICTIONS FOR WITCHCRAFT AND POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY, 1682
24. JOSEPH GLAVNELL DEFENDS WITCH BELIEFS
25. WITCH-HUNTING ADVOCATED, 1722
26. REPUTING WITCH BELIEFS, 1736
27. SOME EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY COMMENTS

DOCUMENT 1  THE 1563 WITCHCRAFT STATUTE

Statute 5 Eliz. 1, cap. 16, ‘An Act against Conjuracions, Incantacions and Witchcrafts’ (English modernised). This is the text of this Act insofar as it concerns malefic witchcraft: there is a further section dealing with using magic to find treasure, etc.

Where at this present, there is no ordinary nor codign punishment provided against the practisers of the wicked offences of conjurations and invocations of evil spirits, and of sorceries, enchantments, charms and witchcrafts, the which offences by force of a statute made in the xxxiii year of the reign of the late King Henry the eighth were made to be felony, and so continued until the said statute was repealed by the Act and Statute of Repeal made in the first year of the reign of king Edward the viii; since the repeal whereof many fantastical and devilish persons have devised and practised invocations, and conjurations of evil and wicked spirits, and have used and practised witchcrafts, enchantments, charms and sorceries, to the destruction of the persons and goods of their neighbours and other subjects of this realm, and for other Lewd intents and purposes contrary to the laws of Almighty God, to the peril of their own souls, and the great infamy and disquietness of this realm: for reformation whereof it be enacted by the Queen’s Majesty with the assent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and the Commons in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, that if any person or persons after the first day of June next coming, use, practise or exercise any invocations or conjurations of evil and wicked spirits, to or for any intents or purposes; or else if any person or persons after the said first day of June shall use, practise or exercise any witchcraft, enchantment, charm or sorcery, whereby any person shall happen to be killed or destroyed, that then as well every such offender or offenders in invocations or conjurations as is aforesaid, their counsellors & aids, as also every such offender or offenders in witchcraft, enchantment, charm or sorcery whereby the death of any person does ensue, their aids and counsellors, being of either of the said offences lawfully convicted and attainted, shall suffer pains of death as a felon or felons, and shall lose the privilege of benefit of clergy: saving the wife of such

person her title or dower, and also the heir or successor of such person his or their titles of inheritance, succession and other rights, as though no such attainer of the ancestor or predecessor had been had or made.

And further be it enacted that by authority aforesaid, that if any person or persons, after the said first day of June next coming, shall use, practice or exercise any witchcraft, enchantment, charm or sorcery, whereby any person shall happen to be wasted, consumed or lamed in his or her body or member, or whereby any goods or chattels of such person shall be destroyed, wasted or impaired, then every such offender or offenders their counsellors and aiders, being thereof lawfully convicted, shall for his or their first offence or offences, suffer imprisonment by the space of one whole year, without bail or mainprize, and once in every quarter of the said year, shall in some market town, upon the market day or at such time as any fair shall be kept there, stand openly upon the pillory by the space of six hours, and there shall openly confess his or her error and offence; and for the second offence, being as is aforesaid lawfully convicted or attainted, shall suffer death as a felon, and shall lose the privilege of clergy and sanctuary; saving to the wife [as above].


**DOCUMENT 2**  
**WILLIAM PERKINS ON THE DEMONIC PACT**

William Perkins (1558–1602) was the most celebrated English theologian of his day. His emphasis on the central importance of the demonic pact was widely shared among Protestant demonological writers of the period.

The ground of all the practices of witchcraft, is a league or covenant made betwenee the witch and the devill; wherein they doe mutually bind themselves each to other. If any shall think it strange, that man or woman should enter league with satan, their utter enemie; they are to know it for a most evident and certen truth, that may not be called into question,... The ende why the devill seeketh to make a league with men, may be this; it is a point of his policie, not to be readie at every man’s command to doe for him what he would, except he be sure of his reward; and no other means will serve his turne for taking assurance hereof, but this covenant. And why so? That hereby he may testifie both his hatred of God, and his malice against man. For since the time that he was come down from heaven, he hath hated God & his kingdom, and greatly maligned the happy estate of our first parents in paradise. For he thought to have brought upon them by their fall, eternal and finall confusion; but perceiving the covenant of grace, then manifested, and seeing man by it to be in a better and surece state than before, he much more maligned his estate, and beares the ranker hatred unto God for that his mercie bestowed upon him.

Now that he might shew forth this hatred and malice, he takes upon him to imitate God, and to counterfeite his dealings with his Church. As God therefore hath made a covenant with his people, so satan ioynes in league with the world, labouring to bind some men unto him, that so if it were possible he might drawe them from the covenant of god and disgrace the same. Againe, as God hath his word and sacraments, the sealles of his covenant unto his believers; so the devill hath his words and certaine outward signes to ratifie the same to his instruments.

William Perkins, _A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft. So farre forth as it is revealed in the Scriptures, and manifest by true Experience_ (Cambridge, 1608), pp. 41, 45, 7.

**DOCUMENT 3**  
**WILLIAM PERKINS ON CUNNING FOLK**

This is an unusually cogent statement of the view widely held among Protestant theologians that 'good' witches drew their powers from the devil as certainly as did the wicked ones, and should suffer accordingly. Perkins's comments on the popularity of cunning folk were also widely echoed by the writers of the period.

The healing and harmlesse witch must die by this law, though he kill not, onely for covenant made with Satan. For this must alwaies be remembered, as a conclusion, that by witches we understand not those onely which kill and torment; but all diviners, charmers, inglers, all wizzards; commonly called wise men and wise women; yea, whosoever doe any thing (knowing what they doe) which cannot be effected by nature or
art; and in the same number we reckon all good witches, which doe no
hurt but good, which doe not spoil and destroy, but save and deliver.
All these come under this sentence of Moses, because they deny God, and
are confederates with Satan. By the lawes of England, the thiefe is executed
for stealing, and me thinke it just and profitable; but it were a thousand
times better for the land, if all witches, but specially the blessing witch
might suffer death. For the thiefe by his stealing, and the hurtful inchanter
by charming, bring hinderance and hurt to the bodies and goods of
men; but these are the right hand of the devil, by which he taketh and
destroyeth the soules of men. Men doe commonly hate and spit at the
damifying sorcerer, as unworthy to live among them; whereas the other
is so deare unto them, that they hold themselves and their countrey
blessed that have him among them, they fie unto him in necessitie,
they depend upon him as their god, and by this meanes, thousands are
carried away to their finall confusion. Death therefore is the just and
deserved portion of the good witch.


Document 4 REGINALD SCOT ON DIVINE POWER

Reginald Scot's tract of 1584 was unrelentingly sceptical about the powers of
witches, but a major theme informing the scepticism was a theological position
which argued that the misfortunes popularly attributed to witches are in fact
the result of God's power. Here he refutes those who overestimate the power of
the devil and of witches.

...these make the devill a whole god, to create things of nothing, to
knowe men's cogitations, and to doo that which God never did; as to
transubstantiate men into beasts, &c. Which thing if devils could doe,
yet followeth it not, that witches have such power. But if all the devils in
hell were dead, and all the witches in England burnt or hanged, I warrant
you we should not faile to have raine, haile and tempests, as now we
have; according to the appointment and will of God, and according to
the constitution of the elements, and the course of the planets, wherein
God hath set a perfect and perpetuall order.

I am also well assured, that if all the old women in the world were witches;
and all the priests [i.e., Roman Catholic priests], conjurers; we should not
have a drop of raine, nor a blast of wind the more or lesse for them. For
the Lord hath bound the waters in the clouds, and hath set bounds
about the waters, until the daie and night come to an end; yea it is God
that raiseth the winds and stilletteth them: and he saith to the raine and
snowe; Be upon the earth, and it falleth. The wind of the Lord, and not
the wind of witches, shall destroie the treasures of their pleasant vessels,
and drye up the fountains; saith Oseias. Let us also learne and confesse
with the Prophet David, that we ourselves are the causes of our afflictions;
and not exclaime upon witches, when we should call upon God for mercie.


Document 5 WITCHES AND ENTERTAINMENT

AT COURT, 1609

Ben Jonson (1573–1637) was one of the leading playwrights and poets of his
day, and also turned his hand to writing masques, entertainments for the court
of James VI and I and his queen, Anne of Denmark. The antimasque to his
'Masque of Queens' of 1609 consisted of a presentation of a group of witches
to represent 'the opposites to good fame', good fame being the theme of the
masque proper. Jonson left detailed instructions on the staging of this antimasque,
and referenced his sources, demonstrating his knowledge of both current
demonological works and classical allusions to witchcraft. The first extract
describes the initial scene witnessed by the audience, the second describes the
'dame', or chief of the witches.

...the part of the scene which first presented it selfe, was a very ugly
Hell: which flaming beneath, smoked unto the top of the rooife. And in
respect all evills are, morally, said to come from Hell; as also from the
observation of Torrentius upon Horace his Canidia, 'quae tot Instructa
venenis, ex Orci faucibus profecta videri possit' [one can see as many
companies of witches as there are exits from hell]: These witches, with a
kind of hollow and internall musique, came forth from thence. First one,
then two, and three, and more, till their number increased to eleven; all
sullen, superstitious, and papist; or such as knowe no religion: in whose drousy minds the divell hath gotten a fine seat; so as, what mischeefe, mischance, calamity, or slaughter is brought to passe, they are easily persuaded the same is done by themselves; imprinting in their minds an earnest and constant imagination hereof. They are leane and deformed, shewing melancholie in their faces, to the horror of all that see them. They are doting, scolds, mad, divelish; and not much differing from them that are thought to be possessed with spirits; so firme and stedfast in their opinions, as whosover shall onelie have respect to the constancie of their words uttered, would easily believe they were true indeed.

These miserable wretches are odious unto all their neighbors, and so feared, as few dare offend them; or denie them anie thing they aske: whereby they take upon them; yea, and sometimes thinke, that they can doo such things as are beyond the abilitie of humane nature. These go from house to house, and from door to door for a pot full of milke, yea, drinke, pottage, or some such releife; without the which they could handle live: neither obtaining for their service and paines, nor by their art, nor yet at the divels hands (with whom they are said to make a perfect and visible bargaine) either beautie, monie, promotion, welth, worship, pleasure, honor, knowledge, learning, or anie other benefit whatsoever.

It falleth out many times, that neither their necessities, nor their expectation is answered or served, in those place where they beg or borrowe; but rather their lewdesnesse is by their neighbours reprooved. And further, in tract or time the witch waxeth odious and tedious to her neighbors; and they againe are despised and despight of her: so as sometimes she curseth one, and sometimes another; and that from the maister of the house, his wife, children, catell, &c. to the little pig that lieth in the sty. Thus in processe of time they have all displeased her, and she hath wished evil lucke unto them all; perhaps with cursses and imprecacons made in forme. Doubtlesse (at length) some of her neighbors die, or fall sick; or some of their children are visited with diseases that vex them strangely; as apoplexies, epilpleises, convulsions, hot fevers, worms, &c. Which by ignorant parents are supposed to be the vengeance of witches. Yea, and their opinions and conceits are confirmed and maintained by unskilfull physicians: according to the common saIeng, Inscitiae pallium

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maleficium & incantio, Witchcraft and enchantment is the cloke of ignorance: whereas indeed evil humors & not strange words, witches, or spirits are the causes of such diseases. Also some of their cattell perish, either by disease or mischance. Then they, upon whom such adversities fall, weighing the fame that goeth upon this woman (hir words, displeasure, and cursses meeting so justly with their misfortune) doo not onely perceive, but also are resolved, that all their mishaps are brought to passe by hir onely means.

Scott, Discoverie of Witchcraft, book I. ch. 3.

DOCUMENT 7 SOME EARLY DEPOSITIONS, ESSEX 1563

These were taken by the Archdeaconcy courts, although Elizabeth Lowys was tried shortly afterwards at the assizes. There she became the first person known to have been convicted under the 1563 statute. The evidence given here makes an interesting comparison to Scott's statements in the preceding extract.

Evidence of Philippa Geale (Gale), aged thirty-two, of Great Waltham: That Elizabeth Lewes, wife of John Lowys, and this depon[en]t fell at variat[ions] for takynge in of worke, in that the said Lewys wif went to John Barnard's wif and said that this depon[en]t wold spyn no more of her worke. Thereupon at the next meatynge they fell out. And this depon[en]t tolde her that she lied and had tolde a wrong tale. And, amonge other talke, this deponent saith that she said 'Yf it be as holke saye, thow art a wythc'. To whome the said Lewys wif aanswerde, 'Yf I be a wythe the dyvyll thee twythe'. And ymmedially upon that this depon[en]t fell on a grete quyvering and quakeringe. And this was don about Saturday aboutes five yeeres past. And soo after that [she] went home, continuynge soo till wednesdaie, at w[i]ch daie she fell downe ded, and was so sick fourteen daies yt no bodie thought shee would have lyved. And then her neighbors sent for the preist, to whom she utterde all. And then he sent for the said Lewys wif, threatenynge her if this depon[en]t died she shulde be brent [i.e., burnt], and after her conyynge this depon[en]t mended.

And otherwise she knows nothing.

Agnes Devenyshe, aged forty-seven, of Great Waltham, where she had lived for eight years:

She hath herde a comon brute [i.e., rumour] that Lewys wif ys a withc. Item, that about March last, gooinge to Comes house, she wente to the said Lowes wiffes hous, and then they talked about a sore arme of hers. And then she [i.e., Lowys] counselled her to goo to a woman under Munckwoode. And goyne thith[e]r, the folkes tolld her husbande and her that she was a wythe.

Item. That the said Lewys wif did then and there aske her how Johnsson drink did worke. And she this deponent aunswered yt was as yt did. Then the said Lewys wifte said, 'Lett hym com and speke w[i]th me'.

Item. That this depon[en]t yngynge for her monnye, viz. vis viild whiche she colde not spare, and alt[e]r that she had two pigges and one of them sodenlie died, and the other ey[e]r pynd till she wasayne to sell yt. And she judgeth yt is the doinhe of the said Lowys wif. And then she this depon[en]t fell sicke, w[i]th her husband and child w[i]thall, in pain and gret.

Item. That on Maye Even, being at Canell[es] hous, John Canell his childe being sicke, laye w[i]th the necke ciene awrye, the face und[e]r[e] the liff [i.e., left] shoulder, and the right arme drawn w[i]th the hande ciene backwarde and upwarde, the shulder pynt [i.e., point] before the brest pight, the bodie lyinge from yt an oth[e]r waie, not rigth but wryttinge, and the right legge ciene backwarde behinde the bodie, contrarie to all nature; as they suppose the verye doinhe of the said Lowys wif.

And otherwise she knows nothing to depose.


DOCUMENT 8 ASSIZE INDICTMENTS FOR WITCHCRAFT, 1574

This is a fairly typical sample of indictments from the Elizabethan period (abstracted from the Latin originals) from the Summer Assizes in Essex held at Brentwood, 19 July 1574. Another woman, Cecily Glessever of Barking, was sentenced to death after being convicted for five counts of witchcraft at this assize. Sad to relate, further documentation reveals that Alice Hynsond died in prison of the plague in May 1575, about ten weeks before completing her sentence.
Elizabeth Taylor, wife of John Taylor of Thaxted, labourer, on 10 April 1573 at Thaxted bewitched Alice Holmes, daughter of William Holmes of London, basket-maker, who languished until 14 April following, when she died at Thaxted.

Plead not guilty; judged [i.e. found guilty and sentenced to death under the 1563 statute]

The same, on 10 October 1573 at Thaxted bewitched Agnes Townesend, daughter of William Townesend of Thaxted, carpenter, who languished until 20 May following, when she died at Thaxted.

Plead not guilty; judged

Alice Hynckson of Thaxted, widow, on 20 January 1572 at Thaxted bewitched three cows valued at £4, and seven ewes valued at 20 shillings, the goods and chattels of James Jarvy of Thaxted, husbandman, which died within four days.

Plead not guilty; guilty: sentenced to a year's imprisonment and four sessions on the pillory

Agnes Dix, wife of John Dix of Walter Belchamp, labourer, on 1 May 1574 at Walter Belchamp bewitched Richard Hayward, who languished for fourteen days subsequently.

Plead not guilty: not guilty

The same, on 20 January 1574 at Walter Belchamp bewitched Elizabeth Potter, wife of John Potter of Walter Belchamp, who languished until 30 January following, when she died at Walter Belchamp.

Plead not guilty: not guilty

First, they are by nature credulous, wanting experience, and therefore more easily deceived.

Secondly, they harbour in their breast a curious and inquisitive desire to know such things as be not fitting and convenient, and so are oftentimes intangled with the bare show and visard of goodness...

Thirdly, their composition [i.e. psychological condition] is softer, and from hence more easily receive the impressions offered by the divell; as when they be instructed and governed by good angels, they prove exceeding religious, and extraordinary devout: so consenting to the suggestions of evil spirits, becoming notoriously wicked, so that there is no mischief above that of a woman, Eccles. 25.13 &c.

Fourthly, in them is a greater facility to fall, and therefore the divell at the first tooke advantage, and set upon Eve in Adam's absence, Genesis 3.3.

Fifthly, this sex, when it conceiveth wrath or hatred against any, is unplaceable, possessed with unsatiable desire of revenge, and transported with appetite to right (as they thinke) the wrongs offered unto them; and when their power herein answereth not their will, and are meditating with themselves how to effect their mischievous projects and designs, the divell taketh the occasion, who knoweth in what manner to content exacerbated minds, windeth himselfe into their hearts, offereth to teach them the means by which they may bring to pass that rancor which was nourished in their breasts, and offereth his helpe and furtherance herein.

Sixthly, they are of a slippery tongue, and full of words: and therefore if they know any such wicked practices, are not able to hold them, but communicate the same with their husbands, children, consorts, and inward acquaintance; who not considerately weighing what the issue and end thereof may be, entertaine the same, and so the poason is dispersed.

Alexander Roberts, A Treatise of Witchcraft: wherein sundry Proposicions are laid downe, plainly discovering the Wickednesse of that damnable Art (1616), p. 42.

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Alexander Roberts, A Treatise of Witchcraft: wherein sundry Proposicions are laid downe, plainly discovering the Wickednesse of that damnable Art (1616), p. 42.

The Yorkshire gentleman Edward Fairfax began his account of his daughters' bewitchment with a description of the women he thought responsible. The list is typical, describing women of a generally bad character with an existing
reputation for witchcraft. Note how familiars were by this date a core aspect of witchcraft beliefs, and also how Elizabeth Fletcher’s reputation for witchcraft evidently worked to her advantage.

The women questioned for this offence are in number six, of whom five fall in my knowledge; therefore I can give you some character of them; and the spirits also I will describe, as the children demonstrated their shapes. The first is called Margaret Waite, a widow that some years ago came to dwell in these parts, with a husband; who brought with them an evil report for witchcraft and theft; the man died by the hand of the executioner for stealing, and his relict hath increased the report she brought with her for witcherie. Her familiar spirit is a deformed thing with many feet, black of colour, rough with hair, the bigness of a cat, the name of it unknown. The next is her daughter, a young woman, agreeing with her mother in name and conditions, and is thought, she added impudence and lewd behaviour; for she is young and not deformed; and their house is helden for a receptacle for some of the worst sort – her spirit, a white cat spotted with black, and named Inges.

The third is Jennet Dibble, a very old widow, reputed a witch for many years; and constant report confirmeth that her mother, two aunts, two sisters, her husband and some of her children, have long been esteemed witches, for that it seemeth hereditary to her family; – her spirit is in the shape of a great black cat called Gibbe, which hath attended her now above 40 years.

They are made up a mass by Margaret Thorpe, daughter of Jennet Dibble, lately a widow, for which she beareth some blame. This woman, if you read the sequel, will perhaps seem unto you, not without good reason, to be an obedient child and docile scholar of so skilful a parent. Her familiar is in the shape of a bird, yellow of colour, about the bigness of a crow – the name of it is Tewhit.

The fifth is Elizabeth Fletcher, wife of Thomas Fletcher, daughter to one Grace Foster, dead long since; a woman notoriously famed for a witch, who had so powerful hand over the wealthiest neighbours about her, that none of them refused to do anything she required; yea, unbeseought they provided her with fire, and meat from their own tables; and did what else they thought would please her.

The sixth is Elizabeth Dickenson, wife of William Dickenson, of whom I cannot say much of certain knowledge; neither is her spirit known to us.

Daemonologie: a Discourse on Witchcraft as it was acted in the Family of Mr. Edward Fairfax, of Fuerstan, in the County of York, in the Year 1621, ed. William Gratte (Harrogate, 1882), pp. 32-4.

DOCUMENT 11  A CHURCH COURT DEFAMATION CASE, 1617

One reaction to accusations of witchcraft was to sue the accusers for defamation. A number of such cases survive in church court records, one coming from the Leeds area. Note the public altercation between Thomas Brooke and John Beannond, the way in which witchcraft was gossiped about, Brooke’s longstanding suspicions that Beannond was harming his cattle, and Ann Snowden’s refusal to believe that Isabel Beannond was a witch. Other documentation for this case suggests that Beannond had been examined by local justices and committed to prison at York on suspicion of witchcraft a few days previously, although we have no evidence on the outcome of those proceedings or of this defamation suit. The statements reproduced here were taken on 28 November 1617.

Evidence of George Eastburne of Headingly in the parish of Leeds [Latin heading says Eastburne is aged about 50, has known Isabel Beannond well for about 30 years, and Thomas Brooke for about 34 years].

Upon Sunday next after May Day last past he the articular he [i.e., aresaid] Thomas Brooke being in the towne gate or street of Burley situate within the p[arish]e of Leeds articular he did goe unto the dore of the house of John Beannond, husband of the articular he Isabell Beannond, and willed him the said John to come forth of the house into the said streete & threateneth to fight w[ith] him, whereupon he the said John Beannond spooke unto the said Thomas Brooke through a windowe of his said house and tould him that he had three soumises the worst of w[ich] would answere him. And thereupon the said Thomas Brooke tould the said John Beannond that both he & his wife were witches (meaninghe the articular he Isabel Beannond), & further said that the
said Isabella Beamond had bewitched his goodes & had been a witch for
fortene yeres last of his knowledge: then & there being p[resent] and
hearinge the same wordes he this examina[te]e, Henrie Moore, William
Stevenson and divers others . . .

Evidence of Ann Snowden of Bramley in the parish of Leeds [Latin
heading says Snowden is aged 21, has known both Isabella Beamond and
Thomas Brooke for about seven years]:

That in May now last past as she certeynely remembret, she this
examina[te]e being then a servant to one Edward Haigh in Burley w[ill]thin
the par[ish]e of Leedes ar[ticula]te was goinge into the towne fieldes of
Burley to fetch her master's kine at w[ill]ch tyme & place the ar[articula]te
Thomas Brooke did ow[er]take this examina[te]e in the said fieldes &
after some other speecches he toldd this examina[te]e that his kyne would
give no milke, 'For I thynke', quoth he, 'that Isabella Beamond ar[articula]te
had bewitched them (meaning the ar[articula]te Isabella Beamond)', where-
upon the examina[te]e toldd him that she thought the said Isabella was an
honest woman, 'Nay', quoth he, 'she is a witch [meaning the ar[articula]te
Isabella Beamond] & hath done me harme in my goods these xilli yeres
last past: then & there being p[resent] this examina[te]e & none other.

Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, York, Cause Papers, C.P.H2177.

DOCUMENT 12 COMMUNITY REACTIONS TO WITCHES, c. 1720

These are two extracts from Quarter Sessions records showing how community
reactions to supposed witches could vary. The second extract (which is slightly
damaged in the original) suggests a considerable cleavage between the attitude
of the justices of the peace and that of the witch's community. The relatively
late date of both these extracts is of some interest.

West Riding Com Ebor. To the Hor[orable] the Justices of Peace at
Barnsley Assembled.

Wee the inhabitants of Knottingley within the said Riding do hereby
certify you[r] worship, that William Setton you[r] compl[ain]t is a man
of a quiet disposition frequenting the church & bringing his children up
in the feare of God giving them as good education as any person of
his ability within us doth. But being daily abused & threatened by one
William Howitt & Isabella his wife, by terming him a wizard, I was
forced to gett a warrant against them from Esq. Harman who committed
them & sent them to ye house of correction, to which place Sir Rowland
Winn had some yeres since sent them upon you[r] complainant's account
had he not out of compasion to them put up the same. But being not
able any longer to abide their reproaches was forced to doe what he hath
& humbly desires that the said Howitt may be dealt with as you[r]
worships may see fitt, for that you[r] complainant may live at quietness
he being no such person as the said Howitt terms him to be, to the best of
our knowledge, is the request of you[r] worship's humble serv[ant]s.
(Followed by 17 signatures)

West Yorkshire Record Office, Wakefield,
Quarter Sessions Rolls, Q51/62/10/ File 7: 1723.

To the overseer of the poor for the town of Hainsworth [Hainworth].
Whereas Ann Jackson of you[r] town hath been falsly & malitiously
defame[d] for a witch & that scandal hath been so industriously promoted
by wicked people that all her neighbours refuse and avoid to have any
dealing or confin[e]ce with the said Ann and she being thereby de-
prived of necessary sustenance & her former allowance of twelve pence
being insufficient thereby for her maintenance, these are therefore to
require & order you the overseer to allow & pay the said Ann Jackson the
sum of two shillings & six pence weekly & every week until you shall
have cause to the contrary. Hereof faile not at you[r] peril. Given under
my hand . . . the 19th day of May in the year of our Lord 1719.

Joshua Bootham overseer of the poor of Hainsworth having this day
appeared before us to appeal agains[t] the above written order we think
fit to confirm it . . .

John Fountayne
Rob. Monkton

West Yorkshire Record Office, Wakefield,
Quarter Sessions Rolls, Q51/60/4/ File 8: 1719.
DOCUMENT 13  THE GODLY REJECT COUNTER MAGIC, 1683

Here a worried parent consults two nonconformist ministers about how to treat her supposedly bewitched son. Note the description of the symptoms of bewitchment, the evident acceptance by the doctor of the efficacy of counter magic, and the recipe for the 'witch's cake': as the document notes, the idea was that burning the cake, by sympathetic magic, would inflict unbearable pain in the urinary tract of the bewitcher, who would then reveal herself when she came to investigate the cause of her torments. Oliver Heywood (1630–1702) was a prominent West Yorkshire nonconformist minister, and his papers contain several references to witchcraft and related matters.

 Came to my house – Judith Rigson, and because I was not at home she writ down her business and left it for me, which was to desire my advice in a weighty case, she had also gone to Mr Dawson's, but found him not at home; the case was this. She hath a sone by her former husband Abraham Swift (called also Abraham) who hath lyen long under a strange and sad hand of God in his body; he lyes in bed, hath swelling in his throat, hand, cannot stirre, looks as one affrighted, about 12 years of age – they had used many means for his cure, but all inefficient; that day, May 7, came to their house (not sent for by them but brought by a friend) one Dr Thornton, who saith it is not a natural distemper, that he is troubled with, but hath some hurt by an evil tongue, he saith he will not prescribe any medicine for him, until his water [i.e., urine] have been tryed by fire – i.e., they must take his water and make a cake or loaf of it, with wheat meal, and put some of his hair into it and horse shoe stumps, and then put it in the fire, and till she or he or some doe this he will prescribe nothing for him – not that he bids her say any words yet she feared it may be some kind of charm, and as she piously expressed herself (for I hope she is a good woman), 'I being afraid to offend God by such a tryall as he prescribes, I come purposely to you and Mr Dawson to get your judgement' – Mr D. came to me the morning after to consult about it, we have concluded it not to be any way of God, having no foundation either in nature or divine revelation in scripture. I went to Halifax that day to a funeral, called of her, told her our thoughts, and then perceived their imagination, that upon their using these means, the

witch that had hurt them would come and discover all – I utterly disliked it, so did her husband and she – I told them the right way was to goe to God by fasting and prayer, they consent, we appointed yesterday, w[hy]ch was Wednesday May 16 1683.


DOCUMENT 14  A CUNNING MAN, 1652

There was probably no such thing as a typical cunning man, but one suspects that this example was less typical than most. Note the gendered nature of his business, and the way his reputation seems to have spread rapidly locally.

West Riding of the County of Yorke. The informacon of Lancelot Milner of Nesfield in the said county husbandman, taken upon oath the eleventh of March 1651[2], before Charles Fairfax of Menston, Esquire, one of the Justices of Peace within the sayd Rydeing.

Sayth that on Wenesday was sevennight at night a man whose name he knoweth not but p[re]tending [i.e., claiming] himselfe to be dumbe and deafe, did come to this informer's home and stayed there a weeke in which tyme divers from several pl[ar]tes of the country came to enquire, the wenches what husbands they should have; when they should come; whether they should bee widowes; and divers such like questions; some men to enquire of stolen horses, or mayres, all which questions he answered by signes in chalke, and poynitage with his hand which way they were gone; and divers such pl[ar]sons soe directed, have told this informer that the sayd dumbe man did directe them very truly. And of those pl[ar]sons soe resortinge to him, of some of them hee tooke a penny, of others twopence, of others a can of ale and of some nothinge; hee further sayth that a soldier (very familiar with him) came the last weeke to this informer's house and sayd the sayd dumbe man was borne about London.

Information of Edward, son of Lancelot Milner, taken as above

Sayth that within the weeke before this his informacon, a man dwelling in or neare Rippon came to the dumbe man to enquire of a stolne mayre, and before any discourse with the man, he the sayd dumbe pl[ar]son tooke
a stole betwixt his legges and spurned it, and poynted towards him that
came to enquire of him; then tooke upp a chipp and flunge it from him,
makeinge signes that it was to noe purpose to looke after her; of some he
tooke a penny, of others nothing but ale; and of divers nothing at all.

[Information of Isabel Baring of Menston, 13 March 1652]
Sayth that shee goeinge on Satterday last with others to the house of Lancelot
Milner where the dume man was, diverse resorted thither and amongst
the rest two from Tadcaster about a horse stollen and some from Morton
towne shipp & others from other place or of the county to whom he made
signes by chalke upon a table and diverse gave him twopence apecie of
their owne voluntary will, but shee sayth that the saue dume man to
her knowledge demanded nothinge of any either by signes or otherwise.

Public Record Office, London, Clerks of Assize Records,
Northern Circuit Depositions, ASSI 45/4/2/70.

DOCUMENT 15 MEETING THE DEVIL AND GOING TO THE SABBAT,
LANCASHIRE 1634

Part of a deposition taken by local justices from one of the women sucked into
the Lancashire witch-scare of 1633–64. It contains what to become the
standard story of meeting the devil and making the pact with him, including
sexual intercourse, as well as, for England, an early and rare account of the
sabbat. But note how, at this point, the devil of the learned demonologist is
still being conflated with the familiar spirit of popular imagination.

The Examinacon and Voluntary Confession of Margaret Johnson, widdow,
taken at Padcam [Padiham] ye 9th day of March 1633 [i.e., 1634] before
Richard Shuttleworth and John Starkey, Esq. 2 of his Majesties justices of
the peace within the county of Lancaster

Who saith that betwene 7 or 8 yeares since shee beeing in her house at
Marsden in great passion & anger & distracted & withall oppressed w[il]th
some want there appeared unto her a spirit or devill in the similitude or
proportion of a man apparelled in a suite of blacke tie about w[il]th
silke pointes [i.e., laces], whose offered her yt shee would give him her soule,
hee would supply all her wants and bring her whatsoever she wanted or
needed and at her appoint[en]t would helpe her to kill & revenge her
either of man or beast or what she desired, and after a sollicitacon or
two shee contracted and cockioned w[il]th the said devill or spiritt for her
soule. And the said devill had her call him by the name of Mamillion, &
when shee called hee would bee ready to doe her will. And shee saith that
in all her talke and conference shee called the said Mamillion her God.
And shee further saith that the said spiritt or devill did by her consent
defile her body by com[m]itting wicked uncleaness together. And she
further saith that shee was not at the greate meetinge of the witches at
Harestones in the Forest of Pendle on All S[ain]ts Day last past, but saith
that shee was at a second meetinge the Sunday after All S[ain]ts day at the
place aforesaid where there was at that time betweene 30 and 40 witches
who did all ride to the said meetinge. And th'end of the said meetinge
was to consult for the killing and hurting of man & beasts, and that
there was one devill or spiritt that was more great & grand devill then
the rest. . . And further saith that the devill can raise foule wether and
stormes, and soe hee did at their meetinge. And shee further saith that
when the devill came to suck her pappe, hee came to her in the likenes of
a catt, sometimes of one coloure & sometimes of another. And since this
trouble befell her her spiritt hath left her and shee never sawe him since.

British Library, Additional MSS 36674. f. 196.

DOCUMENT 16 GOING TO THE SABBAT, 1673

This is an extract from the first of a series of remarkable depositions given by a
woman called Ann Armstrong to the Northumberland justices in the spring of
1673. Armstrong gave several descriptions of visits to the sabbat, and named
numerous people in the area as being witches who had attended these meetings.
As far as is known, no trials followed these allegations. In the earlier part of
this, her first, deposition, Armstrong had described meeting 'an old man with
rugged clothi[es]', clearly the devil, after which she fell into trances and fits.

Northumberland. The informacon of Ann Armstrong at Birks-nooke in
the county aforesaid taken upon oath the 5th day of February 1672 [4].