HISTORY

‘Black cats and Broomsticks’: Understanding Witchcraft in C17 England
Rebecca Warren PhD PGCHE

Study Day 10am – 4pm
Saturday 11 May
Course code: 18TON377 Course fee: £42

This subject has previously been included in an autumn 2018 4 week course as a single seminar, and will therefore will explored in more depth as a study day.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed an explosion in witchcraft trials in England. Why was this, and what was behind this disturbing phenomenon? Using contemporary documents, this study-day will explore the origins and practices of witchcraft and delve into the real-life experiences of ‘witches’, ‘victims’ and their accusers.

This study day explores the fascinating but tragic phenomenon of English witchcraft in the early modern period (1500 - 1700). Popular images of witches feature cats, toads, broomsticks and cauldrons but what was the reality? Belief in magic and witches has ancient cultural roots and during this study day we will seek to debunk some of the subsequent mythology that has grown up around the subject. We will explore the reasons why so many people genuinely believed in witchcraft, what made the English experience different to that on the continent, and how cats, hats and broomsticks have come to be so closely associated with witches.

We will use a range of contemporary documents, images and records of trials to understand how innocent people could find themselves accused of malicious damage and even murder, and why such accusations were made. We will study a range of witch-related artefacts, which were frequently implicated in witchcraft accusations. We will also look at the gradual emergence of scepticism and how people tried to make sense of a frightening phenomenon which sat uneasily with their religious and intellectual beliefs.

Additional information

- No prior knowledge is necessary but a basic understanding of English history will be helpful.
- Suitable for all levels of interest.
- This course allows you to spend time exploring a subject for interest, among like-minded people, without formal assessment.
- There may be discussion activities during the course.
**Intended learning outcomes**

You will understand

- Why witchcraft appeared to flourish in the early modern period.
- The differences between English and continental witchcraft.
- The particular features of English witchcraft, and its association with cats, toads etc.
- Why witches were usually women and the role that men played in many trials.
- Why accusations of witchcraft gradually diminished.

You will also become familiar with

- Individual witchcraft trials and be able to identify the behaviour which led to accusations of witchcraft.
- Some of the artefacts that were associated with accusations of witchcraft.

**About the tutor**

Rebecca is an early modern historian, specialising in the religious history of the British Civil Wars and the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell. Her PhD focused on the English church in the 1650s. Her Masters’ thesis investigated the relationship between Church and State, focusing on the city of Canterbury in the fifteenth century. She has taught several undergraduate courses at the Canterbury campus on a range of late medieval and early modern topics, and a number of courses on seventeenth century history at the Tonbridge Centre. She has given numerous papers on different aspects of late medieval and early modern religious history to academic and general interest audiences. She also has degrees in Landscape Architecture and maintains a strong interest in landscape and architectural history.
Short Course Programme

General information, terms & conditions

How to book a place
These courses are usually very popular so you are advised to apply as soon as possible. Places cannot
be held without payment of the course fee.
- Online Booking is preferred. Please visit www.kent.ac.uk/tonbridge
- By post to us at the address below, using the application form in the programme booklet. Please
note that you will not receive an acknowledgment of your paper application; your payment will
usually be processed when the course becomes financially viable, otherwise we will notify you
of cancellation approximately seven days prior to the course. A paper application affirms
acceptance of our terms & conditions.

Course cancellation
As these short courses are self-financing, each course can only proceed if there are sufficient
enrolments. Therefore, if a course is cancelled due to insufficient enrolments we aim to notify applicants
approximately one week before the course start date; if there is no suitable alternative course, we will
refund the appropriate course fee in full. The University of Kent reserves the right to cancel a course
for this or any other reason in which case the relevant course fee will be refunded in full. We advise that
you do not purchase books or other course materials until that particular course is confirmed as taking
place: please contact us if you are unsure.

If you find it necessary to cancel your place on a course, please let us know as soon as possible. Refund
requests, including the reason, should be made by email or in writing to us at the address below. We
reserve the right to retain all or part of the course fee if you request a refund after 14 days of your online
booking being made or paper application being received. Discretionary, partial refunds may be made,
after the deduction of an administrative handling fee as follows:
- a course fee of up to and including £42 will incur an administrative handling fee of £10.00
- a course fee of £43 and over will incur an administrative handling fee of £12.50.

The University reserves the right to:
- exclude any student if the student’s presence is making it difficult for the class to function
  properly
- cancel or amend the length of any course if the circumstances so warrant.

Neither the University of Kent, nor its staff, can be held responsible for any damage, loss or injury,
however sustained, suffered by participants attending courses. Insurance is the student’s responsibility.

University Centre Tonbridge
For details of our other courses, news, events and location visit www.kent.ac.uk/tonbridge.
- Parking. There is plenty of public pay and display car parking locally, but please note that only
  selected car parks permit parking in excess of four hours; detailed information is available from
  www.tmbc.gov.uk. No parking is available here on site.
- Refreshments are not provided; food and drink can be purchased from any of the nearby café
  outlets - we are closely situated to the High Street and town centre. A hot drink vending machine
  is usually available on the ground floor of this building.

Mailing List and data protection
Those attending our courses are automatically added to our database and kept informed about new
courses. This information is not released to outside organisations. Please write to us if you do not wish
your details to be kept on our database.

Please contact us if you have any queries or would like to register your email address to receive
our course information updates. We look forward to welcoming you here soon.

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