



# WITCH HUNT: The Persecution of the Witches in England

*Andrew Pickering, David Pickering*

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- 'Excellent and useful book' Fortean Times
- 'An engaging book on a fascinating but gruesome episode of social history' Ripperologist
- Thorough treatment of an engaging and popular subject
- Includes contemporary engravings and extracts from primary sources, such as trial records, demonological texts and Royal Society papers

It was not so long ago that members of all levels of society shared the belief in witchcraft. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, diseases were feared by all, the infant mortality rate was high, and around one in six harvests was likely to fail. In the small rural communities in which most people lived, affection and enmity could build over long periods. When misfortune befell a family, they looked to their neighbors for support - and for the cause.

During the sixteenth century, Europe was subject to a fevered and pious wave of witch-hunts and trials. As the bodies of accused women burnt right across the Continent, the flames of a nationwide witch-hunt were kindled in England. In 1612, nine women were hanged in the Pendle witch trials, the prosecution of the Chelmsford witches in 1645 resulted in the biggest mass execution in England, and in the mid-1640s, the Witch finder General instigated a reign of terror in the Puritan counties of East Anglia. Hundreds of women were accused and hanged. It was not until the latter half of the seventeenth century that witch-hunting went into decline.

In this book, Andrew and David Pickering present a comprehensive catalogue of witch-hunts, arranged chronologically within geographical regions. The tales of persecution within these pages are testimony to the horror of witch-hunting that occurred throughout England in the hundred years after the passing of the Elizabethan Witchcraft Act of 1563.

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