

## Events of the Witches Trials of 1612

### Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March

Alizon Device curses a pedlar John Law after he refuses to sell her some pins. Moments later the pedlar collapses with a seizure. Alizon is convinced that she is the cause and voluntarily confesses to bewitching him. John Law forgives her.

### Monday 30<sup>th</sup> March

John Law's son, Abraham Law, brings Alizon's confession to the attention of the authorities. Alizon, her mother Elizabeth and brother James are questioned by the Magistrate Roger Nowell. Alizon is detained.

### Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> April

Demdike, Chattox and Chattox's daughter Anne Redfearn are questioned by Roger Nowell. All three are detained,

### Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> April

Alizon Device, Demdike, Chattox and Anne Redfearn are imprisoned in Lancaster gaol.

### Good Friday 10<sup>th</sup> April

A great meeting of friends of the accused is held at Malkin Tower. It is believed by the courts to have been a witch's Sabbath.

### Monday 27<sup>th</sup> April

Magistrate Roger Nowell and Nicholas Bannister question Elizabeth Device, James Device and Jennet Device about the meeting at Malkin Tower.

### Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> May

Chattox and James Device are questioned further at Lancaster gaol.

### Monday 27<sup>th</sup> July

Jennet Preston, who attended the meeting at Malkin Tower, is found guilty of the murder of Thomas Lister.

### Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> July

Jennet Preston is hanged at York

### Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> August

The trial of the Pendle Witches begins at Lancaster. Elizabeth Device and Chattox are found guilty of witchcraft. Anne Redfearn is acquitted on the preliminary charges

### Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> August

Anne Redfearn tried on second charge of witchcraft and found guilty.

Alizon Device, Alice Nutter, Katherine Hewitt, John Bulcock, Jane Bulcock, Margaret Pearson and Isobel Robey are all tried and found guilty.

### Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> August

Alison Device, Elizabeth Device, James device, Chattox, Anne Redfearn, Alice Nutter, Katherine Hewitt, John Bulcock, Jane Bulcock and Isobel Robey are hanged at Lancaster gaol.



## St. Mary's, Newchurch in Pendle and the Pendle Witch Trials



Welcome to St. Mary's, a small but beautiful Church. Locally the church has been known as "The Cathedral in the Forest" because it is situated in the ancient Forest of Pendle.

## The Eye of God.

A small chapel existed on this site dating from the 1200s. The original stone built church dates from 1544. The tower is now the only part of the early church which survives. On the west face of the tower wall, about one third of

the way up, just above a small stone ledge is an inlet oval stone, with a smaller oval in the middle. This small oval shape used to be open so that the warden could look out of the



tower to see when funeral or wedding processions were approaching the church. At the time that this small opening was used the path from the road to the church came past the front of the Old School House and not at the angle it does now. The opening at the centre of the oval stone is now filled in. It has been known as “The Eye of God” for many years, probably because of its shape and also because of its original use. It would be easy to imagine some local wit telling children that God used it to see who was coming to church.

## The Witch Trials

St. Mary’s has strong connections with the Witch Trials of 1612, most of the accused lived

within the parish. At this time the whole of Pendle Forest was used by the King for his own private hunting parties. Many people were extremely poor with little or no means of earning a living and so resorted to begging or stole when they were desperate. Squatting where ever they could find or erect a shelter from the elements. Some of them used their own knowledge of plants to make herbal medicines which was a common practice at this time. They offered these cures for sale or said prayers they knew for specific ailments. Living off whatever they could find meant being looked on as a general nuisance. The authorities in the area wanted them out of the way. The modern idea of witches wearing pointed hats and riding on broomsticks bears no resemblance to the reality of the victims of the Witch Trials.

## The Witches Grave?

Amongst the group of the accused was a lady called Alice Nutter, she was a landowner in Roughlee. Her involvement with the rest of the group is something of a mystery. Some sources think that she was trying to offer help and support to the victims. The trials in Lancaster were conducted in Latin, so the accused would not understand the proceedings. The testimonies used to convict them were given based on fear and superstition, one from a 9 year old girl, which would not be acceptable in a modern court of law. Under trials at this time the accused were not allowed

any form of defence. After the convicted were hanged their bodies would have been disposed of near to the place of execution. No one who was executed as a witch was allowed to be buried in a church yard. This law was still in place in the 19th century.



The grave to the right of St. Mary’s church porch, as you come in, is known as the “Nutter Grave”. In this grave are buried members of the Nutter Family, who were interred during the 17th century. These people may have been related to Alice Nutter of Roughlee, but she is not buried in this grave. We would ask you to treat the “Nutter Family” grave with respect. Many family descendants still live in the local area.

We hope you have enjoyed your visit and that this leaflet has helped you understand more about the history surrounding St. Mary’s Church.

Please enjoy the peace of this place and God bless you as you travel home.