



Oxford Cambridge and RSA

A Level History A

Y312/01 Popular Culture and the Witchcraze of the 16th and 17th Centuries

Friday 9 June 2017 – Morning

Time allowed: 2 hours 30 minutes



You must have:

- the OCR 12-page Answer Booklet (OCR12 sent with general stationery)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Use black ink.
- Answer Question 1 in Section A and any **two** questions in Section B.
- Write your answer to each question on the Answer Booklet.
- Do **not** write in the barcodes.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is **80**.
- The marks for each question are shown in brackets [].
- Quality of extended responses will be assessed in questions marked with an asterisk (*).
- This document consists of **4** pages.

SECTION A

Read the two passages and then answer question 1.

- 1 Evaluate the interpretations in **both** of the two passages and explain which you think is more convincing as an explanation for the Essex witch hunts of the seventeenth century. [30]

Passage A

The East Anglian witch hunt between 1645 and 1647 is usually associated with Matthew Hopkins. In reality, however, Hopkins worked closely with John Stearne. The two men were to become England's most notorious witch-finders. By 1642, Charles I and Parliament were at odds. Civil War convulsed England for the next four years. Each side had a different religious perspective. The King's most aggressive opponents were the Puritans – strict Calvinists who had urged further reformation of religion before the war. By the 1640s, many Puritan clerics feared that the Devil was everywhere: some even believed that Charles I was Satan's agent. The Civil War saw the collapse of traditional authority and traditional institutions. Parliament legislated without royal assent, excluded bishops from the House of Lords, executed William Laud, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and dismantled the Church courts. In parliamentary-held areas religious images in churches were destroyed. Some Puritan activists came to regard witches as they did devotional art: as something that needed to be rooted out and destroyed. By early 1645, the eastern counties of England, the heartland of the parliamentarian and Puritan cause, were in a state of crisis. The outcome of the Civil War was far from certain. (It did not become so until parliamentary forces defeated the King's army at Naseby in June 1645.) It seemed possible that royalist forces might advance into East Anglia. People were fearful and overtaxed. Inflation had led to growing poverty. The principal concerns of the County Committees that ruled parliamentary-controlled areas were money, order, resources and obedience. Communities fighting for their lives also seemed threatened from within – by witches.

Adapted from: Alan Farmer, *The Witchcraze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century*, published in 2016.

Passage B

Why Essex? Is it possible that Essex as a local society was peculiarly conscious of the threat of witchcraft? But why should that be so? It's quite clear that people might feel threatened by *maleficium* in any part of England. Why should they act against it so much more in the county of Essex? And the only suggestion I can make on that issue is that the use of the criminal law against witches had had terrible publicity in Essex. Essex was unusual in the sense that it saw three *causes celebres*, three group trials. They took place in 1566, only three years after the passage of Elizabeth's statute; in 1582; and in 1589. In each of these cases an initial accusation was vigorously pursued by local justices of the peace who happened to have a particular personal concern about witchcraft. That meant that instead of just one person going on trial small groups of women went on trial and these trials were well publicised in pamphlets which were written about them.

All of this, then, may have given peculiar publicity to witchcraft as a threat and what could be done about it. One wonders, then, whether a number of particularly scandalous local cases occurring in this county had the effect of heightening anxiety about witchcraft within Essex, enhancing the sense of threat which people felt, making it more intense than elsewhere, and of course providing an object lesson in how to deal with it. So are we dealing then with a moral panic breaking out within a particular local society, which subsequently died down in the seventeenth century until it was artificially revived again by the activities of Matthew Hopkins, the Witchfinder General, in 1645?

**causes celebres* = cases which attracted widespread public interest and/or became notorious

Adapted from: Keith Wrightson, *Witchcraft and Magic*, published in 2012.

SECTION B

Answer **TWO** of the following three questions.

- 2*** 'Religious attitudes were the most important reason for the persecution of witches throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.' How far do you agree? **[25]**
- 3*** Assess the reasons why some areas saw more persecution of witches than others in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. **[25]**
- 4*** 'Large scale trials and persecutions characterised the response of the authorities to witchcraft in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.' How far do you agree? **[25]**

END OF QUESTION PAPER

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