

**Andrew Sneddon, Shannon Devlin (eds), ‘Documents from the Trial of the “Islandmagee Witches” at Carrickfergus Assizes, County Antrim, Ireland, 1711”.**

Introduction.

The trials of the nine Islandmagee ‘witches’ took place in March and September of 1711, in Carrickfergus, County Antrim.<sup>1</sup> They were Ireland’s last witch trials held under a dedicated witchcraft law, the Witchcraft Act of 1586.<sup>2</sup> This is the first time all the surviving documents – a contemporary pamphlet account, pre-trial depositions, letters and newspaper reports – relating to the trial have been brought together, transcribed, and annotated. Spelling, pagination and page layout have been reproduced from original sources, and annotation has been kept to a minimum and used primarily to clarify rather than to explain. Digital images of source documents have been placed beside corresponding pages. Font size on the second document, the depositions, has been reduced to enable this.

In February 1711, the elderly widow of Presbyterian minister, Ann Haltridge<sup>3</sup> died suddenly after suffering months of demonic attack in her home in Islandmagee, later referred to locally as Knowehead House. Islandmagee is an eight-mile-long peninsula on the east coast of County Antrim, which in the early eighteenth century contained around 300 Presbyterians of Scots descent. After Ann’s funeral, her niece, eighteen-year-old educated gentlewoman, Mary Dunbar, arrived at Knowehead House. Almost immediately, Mary began to display the

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<sup>1</sup> In surviving primary sources there is wide variation in spelling of the personal names of the ‘Islandmagee Witches’ but they have been fixed thus in recent historical work: Catherine McCalmond, Janet Liston, Elizabeth Sellar, William Sellar, Janet Carson, Janet Main, Janet Millar, Janet Latimer, and Margaret Mitchell. See: Andrew Sneddon, *Possessed By the Devil: The Real History Of The Islandmagee Witches And Ireland's Only Mass Witchcraft Trial* (Dublin, 2013); idem, *Representing Magic in Modern Ireland: Belief, History and Culture* (Cambridge, 2022); idem, “‘Creative’ Micro Histories, Difficult Heritage, and ‘Dark’ Public History: the Islandmagee Witches (1711) Project,” *Preternature*, 11:1 (2022), pp 109-130; idem, ‘Witchcraft Belief, Representation and Memory in Modern Ireland’, *Cultural and Social History*, 16:3 (2019), pp 251-270. The following discussion is based on this work unless otherwise stated.

<sup>2</sup> ‘An Act Against Witchcraft and Sorcerie,’ 28 Eliz. I, c. 2 [Ireland] (1586).

<sup>3</sup> Ann’s family name is given as Hattridge in the pamphlet account but as Haltridge in other primary sources including the pre-trial depositions. Again, in keeping with secondary work, Haltridge has been used in this introduction.

classic symptoms of demonic possession: from convulsions, to vomiting household objects, to levitation. During the month of March 1711, Dunbar accused eight Presbyterian women from Islandmagee and the surrounding areas of using witchcraft to attack her in spectral or spirit form and to summon demons to possess her body. The women were eventually tried on 31 March 1711 at the Spring Session of Carrickfergus County Assize Court before two judges travelling the North-East Assize Circuit from Dublin, Anthony Upton, Tory Justice of the Common Pleas, who directed the twelve-man, petty jury to acquit the women, and James MacCartney, Whig Justice of the Queen's Bench, who made a case for their conviction. Despite pleading not guilty, they were convicted under the 1586 Act and sentenced to one year's imprisonment and four stints in the pillory. Unlike most demoniacs (demonically possessed persons), the incarceration of the convicted witches did not improve Dunbar's health. Dunbar now claimed that William Sellar, husband and father to two of the convicted women, had begun bewitching her. William was convicted of witchcraft at Carrickfergus summer assizes on 11 September 1711. Mary Dunbar however had died a few weeks after the first trial, turning William's original offence into a capital crime for which he was probably executed: he was thus one of a possible two people put to death in Ireland under a witchcraft Act.<sup>4</sup>

In 1822, Samuel McSkimin (1775-1843)<sup>5</sup> edited a contemporary manuscript account of the trials, *THE ISLANDMAGEE WITCHES*, which was published by Joseph Smyth,<sup>6</sup> 'one of the

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<sup>4</sup> Historical opinion is divided over whether Florence Newton was executed after her conviction for the bewitchment of Mary Longdon and murder of David Jones at Cork summer assizes on 11 September 1661: Andrew Sneddon, 'Florence Newton's Trial for Witchcraft, Cork, 1661', *Irish Historical Studies*, 43:169 (2019), pp 303-304. See also: Mary McAuliffe, 'Gender, History and Witchcraft in early modern Ireland: a re-reading of the Florence Newton Trial' in Mary Ann Gialanella Valiulis (ed.), *Gender and Power in Irish History* (Dublin, 2009), pp 39-58.

<sup>5</sup> For more on Carrickfergus grocer, antiquarian and historian, Samuel McSkimin and his work on the Islandmagee witch trials: Sneddon, *Representing Magic*, pp 31, 35-38.

<sup>6</sup> Samuel McSkimin (ed.), *THE ISLANDMAGEE WITCHES, A NARRATIVE of the Sufferings of a Young Girl called MARY DUNBAR, Who was strangely molested by Spirits and Witches, at Mr. James Hatridge's house, ISLANDMAGEE, NEAR CARRICKFERGUS, In the County of Antrim and Province of Ulster in Ireland, and in*

giants of popular publishing in early nineteenth century Belfast.’<sup>7</sup> Internal evidence suggests that the manuscript was written just after the trial of William Sellor, in late 1711. It presents such a detailed description of the case that one suspects its author was well acquainted with Islandmagee and its inhabitants and perhaps personally involved in the trial itself. A rare copy of the 1822 edition of *THE ISLANDMAGEE WITCHES* forms part of the Francis Joseph Bigger (1863-1926) collection held in Belfast Central Library.<sup>8</sup> Before Bigger bought the pamphlet from an unknown party, it was in the possession of Rev. Classon Porter (1814-1885). Porter was the life-long, non-subscribing Presbyterian minister for Larne, County Antrim, and a local historian and biographer. In this latter capacity, he ‘wrote a series of articles on Ulster’s ghosts and witchcraft trials for the *Northern Whig* newspaper which were reprinted in book form as *Witches, Warlocks and Ghosts* (1885).’ This book included a lengthy account of the Islandmagee trial which was, unsurprisingly, based on a close reading of *THE ISLANDMAGEE WITCHES*.<sup>9</sup> An inscription on the title page of the Porter/Bigger copy suggests it was gifted to Porter by George Benn, historian of Belfast: Porter and Benn frequently corresponded on historical and antiquarian matters from the late 1860s until the early 1880s.<sup>10</sup> Sometime between ‘May 1875’ and his death in 1885, Porter wrote various notes on the Islandmagee trial on its flyleaf, including the following: ‘Mr Edward Blaine of Glenone [County Londonderry] has the original Manuscript from which this [pamphlet] is

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*some other places to which she was removed during the time of her disorder, as also of the aforesaid Mr. Hattridge’s house being Haunted with Spirits in the latter end of 1710 and the beginning of 1711* (Belfast, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 1822).

<sup>7</sup> J.R.R Adams, ‘The Belfast Almanacs and Directories of Joseph Smyth’, *The Linen Hall Review*, 8:1 (Spring, 1991), p. 14.

<sup>8</sup> Thanks to Dr Shannon Devlin for tracking down this copy of the first edition. Unfortunately, four pages have been lost (43, 44, 45, 46), which represent about half of the appended Tisdall letter. See below for more on this document.

<sup>9</sup> Sneddon, *Representing Magic*, p. 39

<sup>10</sup> For this correspondence see, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Benn Papers: D3113/6/92; D3113/7, 100, 151, 152, 155, 199. Benn must have given Porter the McSkimin pamphlet before 1868 because in March of that year Porter lent his copy to William Pinkerton: William Pinkerton to George Benn, 16 March 1868 (Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast [PRONI], Benn Papers, D3113/7/149).

printed. I have seen what is left of this.' He confirmed the manuscript's existence in *Witches, Warlocks and Ghosts*:

This narrative continued for many years in manuscript, in which form we have seen its existing remains, but in 1822 it was printed as a pamphlet at Belfast, under the editorship of the late Sam. McSkimmin [sic], the historian of Carrickfergus. Of this rare tract we happen to have a copy.<sup>11</sup>

Given the perilous condition of the manuscript version at the end of the nineteenth century, it is unsurprising that it did not survive into the twenty-first century.

As an appendix to *THE ISLANDMAGEE WITCHES*, McSkimin added a letter written in April 1711 by trial attendee, Rev. William Tisdall (1669-1735). Tisdall was Church of Ireland vicar of Belfast, owner of property in Carrickfergus, a Tory in politics, and rabidly anti-Presbyterian.<sup>12</sup> The letter provides crucial insights into the conduct of the first trial as well as background information on trial witnesses and the accused. McSkimin transcribed the letter verbatim from the January 1775 edition of the literary periodical, the *Hibernian Magazine*.<sup>13</sup> A privately printed second edition of the *THE ISLANDMAGEE WITCHES* appeared in the early twentieth century, which apart from font size and pagination was identical to the first edition.<sup>14</sup> The below transcription and digital images are taken from the second edition of McSkimin's pamphlet.

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<sup>11</sup> Classon Porter, *Witches, Warlocks and Ghosts* (Belfast, 1885), p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> For William Tisdall: Sneddon, *Possessed by the Devil*, pp 145-7.

<sup>13</sup> William Tisdall, 'Account of the Trial of Eight Reputed Witches, 4 April 1711' in *Hibernian Magazine* (1775), pp 47-51.

<sup>14</sup> The publication date is inferred from the type of paper and font used, and its private publication from the fact that no publisher name or place of publication was given. Thanks to staff at Belfast Central Library for their help in establishing a probable/possible publication date.

In 1896, Robert Magill Young (1851-1925), Belfast-based architect and antiquarian published the ‘Depositions in the case of the Island Magee Witches’.<sup>15</sup> These statements were taken before the trial, in early March 1711, from key witnesses by Edward Clements (d. 1733), Mayor and Justice of the Peace of Carrickfergus. Young based his publication on transcriptions made in the 1860s by Belfast-born antiquarian, William Pinkerton, from manuscripts held in Trinity College, Dublin (TCD),<sup>16</sup> where they are still stored.<sup>17</sup> Young’s version has been compared to the original TCD manuscript and it is an exact copy. The depositions are dated 1710 because they were recorded by Clements on or before the start of the new year, which according to the Julian calendar began on 25 March. After the official switch to the Gregorian calendar in 1752, the new calendar year begun on 1 January. If this date is taken as the start of the new year, then the depositions were collected in 1711 and not in 1710 as stated.

The deponents were men of higher social status, excluding of course Mary Dunbar, and all except Dunbar and James Blythe appeared as witnesses for the prosecution at the trial before Justices Upton and MacCartney: Dunbar was unable to testify as she claimed to have been robbed of speech just before proceedings began by the witchcraft of William Sellor and his accomplices. Before the trial took place, the depositions supplied by Mayor Clements were passed to the clerks of the court who used them to draft bills of indictment for the consideration of the Grand Jury. Irish Grand juries were composed of between 12 and 23 men from the higher reaches of county society and often represented specific factions or family groups. Unlike their English counterparts, Irish Grand Juries did not interview witnesses and based their judgement on whether there was enough evidence to warrant a trial on draft bills

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<sup>15</sup> R.M. Young (ed.), *Historical Notices of Old Belfast and its Vicinity ...* (Belfast, 1896), pp. 161–4.

<sup>16</sup> Pinkerton to Benn, 16 March 1868 (PRONI, D3113/7/149).

<sup>17</sup> ‘Examinations and Depositions taken in the County Antrim Respecting Witches’, March 1711 (TCD, Dublin Philosophical Society Papers, Ms 883/2, pp. 273–85).

of indictment. If this was judged to be the case, then a Billa Vera, or True Bill, was issued and the accused were arraigned. The new Bill of Indictment was then read out by the clerk of the court and the defendants entered a plea, which in this case, as in most trials involving serious charges, was not guilty. After a final check was made to see if the prosecutors were present, the petty jury was sworn in under oath and the defendants brought into court. The trial started at six o'clock in the morning, an hour or two earlier than most criminal trials in Ireland at that time.<sup>18</sup>

The depositions thus played an important administrative role in the prosecution of the Islandmagee witches. From the distance of some 300 years however we cannot say how accurately they reflect what deponents said as the recorder could have refashioned their testimony into a more coherent narrative, or silently added or deleted words, phrases or details.<sup>19</sup> However, if Clements or someone else did indeed rework them, this is not readily apparent from the text and they remain the sole surviving example of pre-trial depositions for an Irish witchcraft case.<sup>20</sup> The digital images and transcription given below have been taken from Young's edition.

This collection has been concluded with two short documents. Firstly, with a letter written in Armagh in May 1711 by scientist and politician, Samuel Molyneux, to his uncle in Dublin, Thomas Molyneux, the noted antiquarian and physician. It alludes to discussions Molyneux had with Mary Dunbar and the trial Judges and suggests that he might have been responsible

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<sup>18</sup> For more on the trial: Sneddon, *Possessed by the Devil*, pp 16-18, 85-96, 141-152. For the best study of the legal landscape of early eighteenth-century Ireland: Neal Garnham, *Courts, Crime and the Criminal Law in Ireland, 1692-1760* (Dublin, 1996).

<sup>19</sup> For more on this practice: Stephen Timmons, 'Witchcraft and Rebellion in Late Seventeenth-century Devon', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 10:4 (2006), p. 320.

<sup>20</sup> However, a manuscript of sworn evidence given by witnesses on the day of Florence Newton's trial in 1661 does survive and is held in the archives of the Royal Society in London. For a transcription of this document: Sneddon, 'Florence Newton's Trial for Witchcraft, 1661', pp 298-319.

for sending copies of the depositions to his uncle whereby ensuring their survival. Secondly, two newspaper reports have been transcribed from the *Dublin Intelligence*, an Irish newspaper operative from the late seventeenth century until the early eighteenth century. The reports are brief but provide vital information on what happened to Mary Dunbar.

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## THE ISLANDMAGEE WITCHES

A NARRATIVE of the Sufferings of a Young Girl called MARY DUNBAR, Who was strangely molested by Spirits and Witches, at Mr. James Hattridge's house, ISLANDMAGEE, NEAR CARRICKFERGUS, In the County of Antrim and Province of Ulster in Ireland, and in some other places to which she was removed during the time of her disorder, as also of the aforesaid Mr. Hattridge's house being Haunted with Spirits in the latter end of 1710 and the beginning of 1711.

## THE ISLANDMAGEE WITCHES

In the beginning of Sept., 1710, Mrs Ann Hattridge,<sup>21</sup> widow of the late Rev. John Hattridge, Presbyterian minister in Islandmagee, being sitting at her son's (Mr Jas. Hattridge's) kitchen fire, there were a great many small stones thrown at her, but did her no harm, though they hit her on the back and shoulders. In a short time after, she was frequently troubled in her bed by something which invisibly threw a great many stones, turf, &c. at the bed, which could make the curtains open a little with the force of the blow, and would sometimes draw the curtains from one end of the bed to the other, and at other times she would find, as she thought, some body going over her from one side of the bed to the other, the doors and windows at the same time being close shut, and after the strictest search nothing could be found which might in the least occasion any disturbance. A night or two after, the pillows were pulled from under her head, and the covering and blankets pulled off the bed where she lay; upon which she took a little girl, who was in the house, and made her lie beside her in the room, yet notwithstanding, the clothes were often pulled off her at night time. She then apprehended that it might be a cat which pulled off the clothes, and desired the girl to light a candle and search the room, which she did but nothing was found. However during the time the candle was lighted, there was no disturbance, but as soon as it was put out it was as great as before, upon which she left the room and went to another where her son and daughter lay; being afraid to

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stay in her own any longer. Some days after there was a cat found in the house, which they killed, as they supposed, and threw her out of the house; and going a little after to look for her, could never find her dead or alive. There was little remarkable for several days after, unless it were that her cane would be taken away, and be missing several days together; until about the 11<sup>th</sup> of Dec., 1710, when the aforesaid Mrs Hattridge was sitting at the kitchen fire, in the evening, before daylight going, a little boy (as she and the servants supposed), came in and sat down beside her, having an old black bonnet on his head, with short black hair, a half-worn blanket about him, trailing on the ground behind him, and a torn black vest under it. He seemed to be about ten or twelve years old, but he still covered his face, holding his arm with a piece of the blanket before it. She desired to see his face, but he took no notice of her. Then she asked him several questions, viz, if he was cold, or hungry? if he would have any meat? where he came from, and where he was going? to which he made no answer, but getting up danced very nimbly, leaping higher than usual, and then ran out of the house, as far as the end of the garden, and sometimes into the cow house, the servants running after him to see where he would go, but soon lost sight of him; but when they returned, he would be close after them

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<sup>21</sup> Ann Haltridge (d.1711), widow of Rev John Haltridge (d.1697), Scottish-born Presbyterian minister of Islandmagee from 1674. She resided at Knowehead House, Islandmagee, with her son, James Haltridge, and his family. James was absent for most of the supernatural disturbances. Biographical details throughout are derived from Sneddon, *Possessed by the Devil*.



in the house, which he did above a dozen of times; at last the little girl seeing her master's dog coming in, said "now my master is coming, he will take a course with this troublesome creature," upon which he immediately went away, and troubled them no more till the month of Feb., 1711. Upon Sunday, the 11<sup>th</sup>, old Mrs Hattridge (there being no sermon that day in the meeting house), was reading Mr Wedderburn's sermons on the covenant,<sup>22</sup> and having laid it by for a little while, there being nobody in the room with her at the time, it was suddenly taken away, upon which she searched the room, diligently, but to no purpose. On the 12<sup>th</sup> Feb., the apparition formerly mentioned, came to the house, and after having broke a quarry of glass in the kitchen window, on the side of the house next the garden, he thrust in his arm, with the book in his hand open, and entered into a conference with the girl of the house, called Margaret Spear,<sup>23</sup> the particulars of which are as follows.

Apparition—"Do you want a book?"

Girl—"No."

Apparition—"How came you to lie? for this

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is the book which the old gentlewoman wanted yesterday."

Girl—"How came you by it?"

Apparition—"I went down quietly to the parlour when you were all in the kitchen, and found it lying upon a shelf with a Bible and pair of spectacles."

Girl—"How came it that you did not take the Bible too?"

Apparition—"It was too heavy to carry."

Girl—"Will you give it back? for my mistress can't want it any longer."

Apparition—"No, she shall never get it again."

Girl—"Can you read it?"

Apparition—"Yes."

Girl—"Who taught you?"

Apparition—"The devil taught me."

Girl—"The Lord bless me from thee! thou hast got ill lear (i.e. learning)."

Apparition—"Aye, bless yourself twenty times, but that shall not save you."

Girl—"What will you do to us (Mr Hattridge's son, about eight years of age, was with her at the time), upon which it pulled out a sword, and thrust it in at the window, and said it would kill all in the house with that sword; at which the child said, "Meg, let us go into the room and bar the door, for fear it should kill us, which they did. Then it jeered at them, saying, "now you think you're safe enough, but I'll get in yet."

Girl—"What way? for we have the street door shut."

Apparition—"I can come in by the least hole in the house, like a cat or a mouse, for the devil can make me anything I please."

Girl—"God bless me from thee! for thou art no earthly creature if you can do that, upon which it took up a stone of considerable bigness and threw it in at the parlour window, which upon trial could not be put out at the same place, and then went away for a little time."

A little after, the girl and one of the children came out of the parlour to the kitchen, and looking out saw the apparition catching a turkeycock, which he threw over his shoulder, holding him by the tail, and the cock making a great splutter with his feet, the book before mentioned was, as they thought, spurred out on the loop of the blanket he had about him; but he taking no notice, ran along the side of the house, and leaped with the cock on his back

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<sup>22</sup> Alexander Wedderburn, *David's Testament Opened Up in Forty Sermons ...* (Edinburgh, 1705).

<sup>23</sup> Margaret Spear, a servant in the Haltridge household and witness to many of the reported supernatural incidents.

over a wall at the west end of the garden, leaping a great deal higher than the wall. The girl thinking this a

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good opportunity to get the book, told Mrs Hatridge, upon which she with the girl and a little boy went to the garden, and got the book, without any harm done to it; at the same time they looked about the garden, and fields adjoining, but could see nobody. There was no other person about the house at that time, only little children. A little after, the girl went to the window in the parlour, and looking out of the casement saw the apparition again with the turkey-cock lying on its back before him, he endeavouring to get his sword drawn to kill it, as she apprehended, but the cock got away. It then looked for the book in the loop of the blanket, and missing it, as she apprehended, threw away the blanket, and ran nimbly up and down upon the search for it. A little after, it came back with a club, and broke the glass in the side window of the parlour, and then went to the end window through which the girl was looking, and pulled off the casement glass, not leaving one whole quarry in it, and left it lying on the south side of the garden. A little after, the girl ventured to look out of the broken window and saw it as it was digging near the end of the house with the sword. She asked what it was doing? He answered, making a grave.

Girl—"For whom?"

Apparition—"For a corpse which will come out of this house very soon."

Girl—"Who will it be?"

Apparition—"I won't tell you that yet. Is your master at home?"

Girl—"Yes."

Apparition—"How can you lie? he is abroad, and is dead fourteen days ago."

Girl—"Of what sickness did he die?"

Apparition—"I won't tell you that."

After this it went over the hedge, as it had been a bird flying. Some persons of the neighbourhood came in immediately after, and being told, made a diligent search, but nothing could be seen. Thus it continued, from eight in the morning till three in the afternoon, throwing a great many stones, turf, &c. in at the windows, to the great terror of those who were in the house, who all this while durst not go out to acquaint their neighbours, there being none in the house but old Mrs Hatridge, the girl, and the children.

Tuesday and Wednesday following nothing remarkable happened. On Thursday morning the bedclothes were taken and laid in a heap at the

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back of Mrs Hatridge's bed, and on being put on the bed again by some of the family, they were immediately taken off and folded up, with a box belonging to Mrs Hatridge in the middle of them, and put under a large table which was in the room. They laid them in order upon the bed again, and they were taken off a third time, and made up in the shape of a corpse, as near as such a thing could be, laying the covering undermost,<sup>24</sup> with the blankets and bolster above them, with the sheets spread over all; and this it did as often as the bed was made up for eight days, which was as long as the old gentlewoman lived. Upon the noise this made many in the neighbourhood resorted to the house and took particular notice, lest there might be a trick in it. They were obliged to own that it was done by some invisible agent. Mr Sinclair,<sup>25</sup> the Presbyterian minister of the place, with John Main<sup>26</sup> and Reynold Leaths,<sup>27</sup> two

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<sup>24</sup> The lowest underneath.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Sinclair (d.1731), Presbyterian minister at Islandmagee from 1704 until his death.

<sup>26</sup> John Main or Man, a Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Church at Islandmagee.

<sup>27</sup> Reynold or Randal Leaths, a Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Church at Islandmagee.

of his elders, staid all day in the house, and seeing the great disorder of the family, resolved to stay the night, having with them some other pious Christians and neighbours who spent the night in prayer and other religious duties. Old Mrs Hattridge was desired to go to bed in the room which was haunted, which she did, but got little or no rest. About twelve o'clock she cried out suddenly, and made a very great moan Mr Sinclair asked her what made her so uneasy? She told him something was stuck into her back like a knife, the pain of which she was not able to bear. In the morning she left that room and went to another, being afraid to stay in it any longer. She lived till that day sen'night,<sup>28</sup> the violent pain never leaving that part of her back where it first seized her, and upon the 22<sup>nd</sup> inst.,<sup>29</sup> about twelve o'clock, she departed this life for a better, meekly, and in a most heavenly frame. During the time of her illness, the clothes were often every day taken off the bed where Mr Hattridge used to lie, and made up in the resemblance of a corpse. Although they sometimes put a table and chairs upon the bed to keep them on, yet they would all be taken off suddenly without any noise, and made up as before-mentioned, but were never moved whilst anybody was in the room. The evening before she died they were taken off the bed where she used to lie, and folded with a great deal of nicety, and laid in a chest above stairs, where they were found after a great deal of search.

Upon this part of the relation the following remarks may be made:-1<sup>st</sup>—That the apparition

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at first was thought to be a beggar boy, wanting something to eat, but his sudden disappearance surprised the spectators, and changed their minds.

2<sup>nd</sup>—That the girl who discoursed so long with it when it appeared the second time was during the whole time in a terror.

3<sup>rd</sup>—That old Mrs Hattridge heard the girl and it discourse, yet could not see it, though the girl pointed to the place where it was.

4<sup>th</sup>—That though the apparition told truth as to Mr Hattridge being abroad, yet it lied in saying he was dead, for his wife got a letter from him, and in less than a month after, he returned safe from Dublin.

5<sup>th</sup>—That the digging of the grave and making the bed clothes in the shape of a corpse was looking upon as a presage of death.

6<sup>th</sup>—That notwithstanding the disturbance in the old gentlewoman's room, yet she never neglected her hours of devotion in it, and being desired to retire to another, she would say it was not good to give place to the devil; and when she was afraid to lie in it, she went as long as she was able and prayed in it without any disturbance, continuing in it an hour or more at a time.

7<sup>th</sup>—That in the time of her sickness she would often enquire for her grandchildren and others in the family, and when she heard they were well, would say it was a great mercy those devils got no power over them. She would often raise herself in the bed and look earnestly to the foot and back of it and sigh, and then lie down again, which, with what followed after her death, gave some ground to suspect she had seen some apparitions or witches, though she did not discover it for fear of affrighting the family. I cannot here, in justice, omit to tell the serious Christian that pious and virtuous inclinations early discovered themselves in this gentlewoman; and during her marriage and widowhood she behaved herself Christianly, prudently, and exemplary, so that she, as much as any in her station, deserved the name of a mother of Israel, by engaging, both by advice and example, those she

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<sup>28</sup> A week later.

<sup>29</sup> 22 February 1711.

conversed with to fear and serve God. She was a constant attender upon public ordinances, a frequent and devout communicant, charitable, and tender in her walk and conversation.

After the death and burial of Mrs Hattridge, there was no disturbance for the space of some [d]ays, viz, till the 27<sup>th</sup> February, when a sister

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of young Mr Hattridge's and one, Miss Mary Dunbar,<sup>30</sup> her cousin-german,<sup>31</sup> came to bear her company in her affliction, after the death of her mother-in-law till her husband would come home, who was at that time in Dublin. That night before they went to bed a new mant<sup>32</sup> and some head clothes were taken out of a trunk and scattered through the house, their head dresses thrown out of doors, and the sleeves of the said mant, which they were making, were suddenly snatched from them, and found out of doors besmeared with dirt. At the time they were searching for the said mant, they found lying on the parlour floor an apron that was lying in a close locked room two days before. It was rolled close together and tied hard with the string of the same with five strange kind of knots upon them. They being surprised at it (knowing that a little before there was no such thing to be seen in the parlour nor could have been laid there by anything visible, the doors and windows being close shut); none would venture to loose the knots till the aforesaid Miss Mary Dunbar offered to do it, and, having loosed them, found a flannel cap which belonged to old Mrs Hattridge, wrapped up in the middle of it. The cap had been taken away before, and four days after brought again, and the last time had been ten days away. When she saw the cap she was frightened, and threw it, with the apron, to Mrs Hattridge. It was thought by some there was a charm in the knots designed for some in the family, by reason of what followed afterwards. The next day, being the 28<sup>th</sup> February, about eight in the morning, the clothes were taken off the bed as formerly, and about nine, after they were again put in order, Miss Mary Dunbar, as she was going upstairs with one along with her to see if anything in the room was put out of order, being within three steps of the top of the stairs, was suddenly seized with a pain in the thigh, which made her fall down and cry out very violently. Upon her being brought down stairs she soon after recovered for about seven or eight minutes, and was then seized with a like pain as before, but did not continued in the same place, being sometimes in her head, sometimes in her back and breast, &c. She continued taking these pains every seven or eight minutes and sometimes in a less time by half, till about three o'clock in the afternoon, about which time she fell into a fit quite different from the former. After she had struggled very much, shouting

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violently at the time, she calmed, and lay as if she had been in a swoon, in which she was heard to say these words—"So and so." After she recovered, being asked what she said and to whom she was speaking, she said there was a woman with a dirty biggy (which is the head clothes which the farmer's wives wear in Scotland) and a dirty face, came to the bedside, who said—"How do you do, Mary Dunbar?" She would be by no means persuaded but that those who were with her in the room saw the said woman as well as she had, after which she fell into several fits of a like kind, and told them she saw the aforesaid woman in three several fits. She was often heard entreating God to preserve her, and saying—"Fie, fie upon you for a wicked woman. I trust in God you shall never get advantage against me. Your master afflicted Job, but God preserved him. I believe that God who preserved him, and the

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<sup>30</sup> Mary Dunbar (d.1711), aged eighteen in 1711. A member of a gentry family of Castlereagh, County Down. A cousin of James Haltridge.

<sup>31</sup> A first cousin.

<sup>32</sup> Mantua, a type of dress popular in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. In Scotland, it consisted of a tight bodice and loose skirt with loose petticoats quilted underneath for warmth.

children of Israel in the Red Sea, is able to deliver me from thee. I trust in Christ you will get your reward,” &c. Those that were present when she recovered asked her again who she was speaking to; she answered “the woman with the dirty biggy and several others with her were in the bed and threatened to kill her.” Being asked if she knew any of them she said she had never seen any of them in all her life except what she saw in her fits, but said she heard them naming one another, one of them they called Janet Mean,<sup>33</sup> and another Janet Carson;<sup>34</sup> but after her recovering out of the next fit, she said she would tell no more what they said or did, for they had threatened to take away her life if she would make any more discoveries. Afterwards her fits were more violent and frequent than before, and she was often heard speaking to those who tormented her, though invisible to bystanders. She would often, at the same time, be putting up petitions to God for her safety.

The 1<sup>st</sup> day of March, about four in the morning, after her recovery out of three different fits, she named Janet Carson to be one of her tormentors. A daughter of hers being present, was very much concerned to hear her mother named, upon which she went to the Rev. Mr Robert Sinclair, and told him she knew not what to do for Mary Dunbar and named her mother for a witch. He advised her to go and tell her mother, and he himself would go and speak to her, which he did, and desired the said Janet Carson to step down to the house, it being but a

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little distance, and, as a neighbour, visit Mary Dunbar, and make trial whether she would know her or not. She excused herself by saying she was weak, and not able; but being earnestly desired, was prevailed upon, and went accordingly. Upon this he went down to the house where Miss Mary Dunbar was; and whilst he was talking to her, she told him there was a great terror came upon her, and a great heat. At this time Janet Carson was coming to the house, and before she saw her, or knew of her coming, she was in this terror, and began to stare and look about her after an unusual manner, and when ever she came to the room door where she lay she called out, “There’s Janet Carson!” and during her stay in the room was in the greatest agony imaginable, three strong men being scarcely able to hold her in the bed. She said that Janet Carson could hardly be prevailed upon to pray for her, saying she had done her no wrong, but was at last prevailed upon to pray to God for her recovery. It is to be remarked that Mary Dunbar never saw the said Carson before having been an absolute stranger in this part of the country, never having been within fifteen miles of the place before; yet before the said Carson was seen by her, except in her fits, she described her to be a low set woman, well favoured; which description exactly agrees to her person. That night there being a fire put on in the parlour, and all the company being accidentally out of the room, the clothes were taken off the bed, and thrust into the grate, and a great part of them burned before any notice was taken of their being in the fire. A little after, a servant going up stairs, a stone of a pound and a half weight was thrown at her with great force: the fall of it occasioned a great noise, which was heard by the company below. The girl thought it was thrown from a corner of the room, which was immediately searched very narrowly, as they did also below stairs, yet nothing could be seen that might have occasioned it. The same night a great many stones and turf were thrown into the kitchen, whilst a minister was praying I the room where the girl was. Upon the same day she gave the following description of the person, that first appeared to her and still continued to be one of her greatest tormentors, viz,

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<sup>33</sup> Janet Mean or Main, wife of Andrew Ferguson of Broadisland, County Antrim. Considered an irreligious woman with an unkempt appearance and scarred by smallpox. Dunbar accused her of being a ringleader in her bewitching.

<sup>34</sup> Janet Carson of Islandmagee, maintained her innocence throughout the trial.

she had a dirty biggy upon her head, her face swarthy, a large rolling eye, very thick lips, and lame of a foot, pretty thick, and of a low stature; and that there was a young

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woman with her, who was much handsomer, about the same stature, and also lame of a leg: that these were often in bed with her, and when she was in her greatest pain would lie laughing at her, and diverting themselves at her expense. Some in the neighbourhood being present, thought it proper to send for one Janet Liston,<sup>35</sup> who was married to William Sellar,<sup>36</sup> and her daughter Elizabeth Sellar,<sup>37</sup> who were of the same stature, and had all the marks given in the above description, which was accordingly done the same day. Janet Liston absolutely refused, saying if the devil had taken the health from that lass, the devil give her health again, and the devil be with them altogether! with several other horrible expressions of like nature. (The said Liston had been for a great many years under the repute of a witch, and her daughter for some time.) The next day being the second of March, Mr William Fenton, her landlord, was desired to use his interest with her to bring her to see the girl, with her daughter, which he and a few others did with some difficulty. The neighbourhood hearing of it, a great many persons of both sexes resorted to Mr Hattridge's, at which time the Rev. Mr David Robb,<sup>38</sup> the ordinary (or curate) of the place, and the Rev. Mr Robert Sinclair, aforesaid, were present, who ordered that the women should be brought in one by one into the room where Mary Dunbar was, which was done accordingly; and above thirty went in one after another, but the girl was not the least moved all the time, declaring she saw none there who were her tormentors. Last of all Janet Liston came, and as soon as she came to the door, she called out aloud, that was she! and during the time she continued in the room, remained in a fit as formerly, in very great pain, in which she could scarce be held by three men in the bed, to the great surprise of the company, some of whom trembled and others cried out with fear to see the miserable condition in which the girl was; at the same time Janet Liston prayed to God to send her her health. All being removed, the ministers took Janet Liston, and her daughter Elizabeth Sellar, to the parlour, and examined them upon the articles of the Christian religion, and desired them to repeat the creed and the Lord's prayer which they could not do distinctly; nor give any satisfactory answers to the questions put to them. After that E. Sellar was taken into the room, when the girl fell into a like fit, an accused her also, and after she was

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removed was easy. Then they persuaded the girl to turn her face to the wall, without letting her know any design they had, and placed three men before the bed, that she might not discover any body's coming into the room; notwithstanding which, Eliza Sellar being brought in again to the room, she fell into as violent a fit as before, and was immediately eased upon Sellar's being removed. A little after both mother and daughter were conveyed into the room a third time, and made to touch the girl, and upon their entrance was as before, but was immediately eased upon their removal. The ministers put several questions to them, but got no satisfactory answers. Amongst others they asked Sellar what she apprehended to be the reason of the girl's being seized after so extraordinary a manner upon their going into

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<sup>35</sup> Janet Liston of Islandmagee. By 1711, she had a reputation for witchcraft and was noted to have been a 'lame woman'.

<sup>36</sup> William Sellar of Islandmagee, husband of Janet Liston. Convicted and probably executed for bewitching Mary Dunbar in Spring 1711 after his wife and daughter had been found guilty of witchcraft.

<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Sellar of Islandmagee, seventeen-year-old daughter of William Sellar and Janet Liston. Described as being small and pretty but 'lame of leg'.

<sup>38</sup> David Robb, Church of Ireland minister of St John's parish, Islandmagee.

the room, more than when any other went in. Sellar made answer, "Perhaps God was at that time punishing the girl for the sins more than at another time;" and her mother answered to the same purpose. At night her fits changed to fainting fits, in which she lay a considerable time without any motion. She gave an account before she took those fits, that she found a heavy sulphurous smell, which was also discernible to those present, insomuch as a woman in the neighbourhood who came to see her swooned with the same. The girl gave an account that whilst she was in these fits she found her body as it were all pricked with pins, and a burning heat at her breast, as if she were a-roasting. She always called for water when she recovered, and drank eagerly all she got, but upon her essaying to eat or drink anything else, her throat would be contracted, and her teeth set, and appeared in danger of being choked, and through the violence of the pain she struggled with her hands and feet, as if she had been in the pangs of one strangling, and was not able to make the least noise. It is remarkable that upon her being taken out or into the room where she lay, that exactly upon the door threshold she fell down in the posture of one that had been dead for some time; all the parts of her body being frigid and stiff, and of three times greater weight than at other times when not in a fit.

Upon the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March, it was thought convenient to take her up stairs to another room where there was less disturbance, and when she was within three steps of the top, being the same place where she was first seized, she fell

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down as dead, and was carried by three strong men, who with difficulty were able to support her to the bed where they designed to lay her, because of the great weight she was when in those fits; at other times any of them could carry her as a child, she being but then a slender girl of fifteen or sixteen years of age. When she was above, she took the fits oftener than when below, so it was resolved to carry her down again; and when she was on the same step where first seized, she fell down as before. There was little remarkable that night, except her taking two draughts of beer, which was the first sustenance she took (except water) from the time she was first seized (which was on the 28<sup>th</sup> February), and slept about four or five hours after it.

March the 4<sup>th</sup>, being Sunday, she often having named one Catherine to be one of her tormentors, saying she was a large dark coloured woman: most part of the women of that name in Island Magee, came to the girl, but she was not in the least disturbed till one Catherine M'Calmond<sup>39</sup> came after all. She was an ignorant irreligious woman, of an ill fame, and had been desired to come several times by her neighbours, but was unwilling to come till that time. Upon her going into the room, she fell into as extraordinary a fit as any before, James Blythe,<sup>40</sup> James M'Alexander, Mrs Wilson, and Janet Martin being present;<sup>41</sup> and upon her recovery she charged her with being one of her tormentors. It was remarked that when M'Calmond was in the room, the girl grasped at her with great eagerness, but it was observed that she was pulled back as it were by some external power, though invisible; whereupon she desired they might put the wicked woman away; but M'Calmond actually refused to go, unless the rest of the women went also. It was observed, that a quarter of an hour before M'Calmond went to the house, Mr Robert Sinclair, going to the house, by the way heard a great sound as it were in the air, going towards the house, upon which he stopped, and heard the noise continued as it were like a horse, but more dull and melancholy.

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<sup>39</sup> Catherine McCalmond of Islandmagee, had a reputation of 'ill-fame' at the time of the trial.

<sup>40</sup> James Blythe of Bank-Head, Larne. Played a leading role in the investigation and acted as a witness for the prosecution in the trial.

<sup>41</sup> James McAlexander, Mrs Wilson, and Janet Martin, neighbours at Islandmagee who helped with the investigation.



Wm. Brown<sup>42</sup> at the same time going to the house, heard the same noise. The girl had many fainting fits coming on suddenly and going as suddenly off till seven at night and when she was in those fits she would be often reasoning with her tormentors, and desiring them to let her alone, and praying that God would deliver her from them. It will not be amiss to take notice

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here of these remarkable things.

1<sup>st</sup>. That whilst she was in her fits, she neither heard nor saw any person that was in the chamber with her, but directed her discourse as it were to some others who were only seen by herself.

2. That whilst Mr Sinclair was praying in the morning, Janet M'Alexander<sup>43</sup> saw a cloth, like the lower end of a petticoat, turning round in the middle of the floor, about a foot high from the ground, which frightened her very much, seeing nothing that could cause it. About three in the afternoon, Mr William Fenton,<sup>44</sup> Mr Hatley,<sup>45</sup> Robert Holmes,<sup>46</sup> and James Blythe, went to Catherine M'Calmond's to search for charms or pictures, and two of them went to the walls of an old house which was near it, to search there. Mr Sinclair was at the time standing at his own house, which was within view, and saw distinctly all that passed. While he was looking, one of them went back to M'Calmond's house and the other staid to make further search, and he apprehended he saw a woman go backwards to the house; but to be surer, took out a perspective glass, and was fully convinced by it that it was a woman, though upon enquiry, there was no woman there seen by them. About seven at night Mr Sinclair being in the house went to prayers, and upon rising and singing the 142<sup>nd</sup> psalm,<sup>47</sup> the girl was seized with a fit, but differing from those she had before, in this, that her teeth were so fast shut that it was with some difficulty they opened them with a key that was forced in betwixt them and her tongue was doubled in her throat. After singing and explaining the psalm Mr Sinclair asked her if she saw anything in her fits, she told him she saw Kitty,<sup>48</sup> and the lame woman, Janet Liston, and that they came into the bed upon her; as also two other women which they called Janet Main and Latimer.<sup>49</sup> She no sooner recovered out of one fit, but she fell immediately into another, with her teeth shut and her tongue doubled as before; insomuch that they were obliged above twenty times during prayer to force open her mouth and pull down her tongue. It was remarked, that when her tongue was brought back, she sighed, and gave a sudden start and immediately recovered. Upon her being asked what was the reason of it, she said she thought she found a pain in it like the pricking of a pin. After prayer was over she took light fainting fits frequently till twelve o'clock. She then fell asleep, and slept till break

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of day, and upon waking took a draught of beer, which she could not do all the day before.

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<sup>42</sup> William Brown, Ruling Elder at Islandmagee Presbyterian Church and wealthy neighbour.

<sup>43</sup> Probably James McAlexander's wife.

<sup>44</sup> William Fenton, Janet Liston and William Sellar's landlord and a Ruling Elder at Islandmagee Presbyterian Church.

<sup>45</sup> William Hatley, helped in the investigation and search of McCalmond's house. His wife's cloak was believed to have been bewitched.

<sup>46</sup> Robert Holmes (d.1724), wealthy Ruling Elder at Islandmagee Presbyterian Church.

<sup>47</sup> Psalms 142.

<sup>48</sup> Catherine McCalmond.

<sup>49</sup> Janet Latimer of Irish Quarter, Carrickfergus. Had an immoral reputation amongst her neighbours.



Monday, March 5<sup>th</sup>, there being a warrant given by the Mayor of Carrickfergus<sup>50</sup> to apprehend Janet Carson, Catherine M'Calmond, Janet Liston, and Eliza Sellor, they were accordingly apprehended about ten in the morning; and whilst the two first were coming to the house, Hugh Donaldson,<sup>51</sup> who was at that time lying on the bed taking care of the girl, called out "Lord bless me! I feel something stirring under my shoulder!" and pressing down his shoulder to feel it more distinctly, he found it as it were, pressing his shoulder. Mr Sinclair, who was sitting by at that time, put his hand in betwixt his shoulders and the bed, and found a moving, as did also the girl, and desired to be taken out of the bed, which they did that moment, and made search by taking out the clothes and feather bed, and there was something seen a little larger than a mouse, which flew along the floor from the bed to the clothes; and on putting the clothes upon the bed again, it was seen as before, flying into a corner of the room, and disappeared. A little after, Janet Carson and Catherine M'Calmond were brought to the house in custody, and when they came near the house, the girl said she was much afraid; and it was discernible to the bystanders, for she began to tremble and sweat; but as soon as they came in at the door she fell into a violent fit, and desired for Christ's sake to take them away, which they did immediately, and she was immediately easy. The women were sent to Carrickfergus, and by the Mayor committed to jail, and five persons bound over to prosecute. After they went she was pretty easy till about five at night, when she had some light fainting fits now and then; but the burning heat in her breast left her from the time they were committed. The sulphurous smell still continued. At the time of her taking the fits, there went three soldiers that day from Carrickfergus to see the girl; she desired they might dig about the door threshold, for she doubted there was a charm about it, that made her fall dead upon her going over, which they did, though it had been searched before, and upon their cutting the threshold and digging about it and under it, there was found a very great smell of sulphur. A little after she went in and out of the door without any trouble. About six at night Mr Sinclair went to pray; he no sooner began, but she fell into a violent fit as be-

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fore, with her teeth shut, and her tongue drawn back, which continued during prayer. When it was over, Mr Sinclair asked her if she saw anything? She told him she saw her they called Main, and the one they called Latimer, who came upon her in the bed and put their hands to her mouth, upon which her teeth were closed and her tongue pulled back; and gave the following description of them, viz., Janet Main was a woman of a middle stature, something ill coloured, with very little eyes of a brown colour, short nosed, out mouthed, marked with the small pox,<sup>52</sup> long vizaged, with a mark upon her breast; and Latimer was a tall black woman, very ill coloured. They told her at that time she would not go out of the door as she had done before, and that she should not hear Mr Sinclair's prayers, for they signified nothing: that they served a better master, and if she would do as they bid her she would soon be well. She got up and endeavoured to go over the door threshold she fell as dead upon it as

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<sup>50</sup> Edward Clements (d.1733) of Straid, Coounty Antrim. Whig Mayor of Carrickfergus, County Antrim in 1710-11. He was appointed Justice of the Peace by virtue of his mayoral office and decided to instigate a full investigation into Dunbar's accusations. His two brothers had also acted as Mayor of Carrickfergus.

<sup>51</sup> Hugh Donaldson of Islandmagee, came to the house to keep the family company and later acted as deponent and witness for the prosecution.

<sup>52</sup> Smallpox is a contagious, potentially fatal disease caused by the variola virus and distinguished by fever, a rash, and pustules on the skin, which eventually scab over to leave pitted, deep scars. In the early eighteenth-century, smallpox was one of the most lethal epidemic diseases in Britain and Ireland, with the young especially vulnerable: Deborah Brunton, 'Smallpox Inoculation and Demographic Trends in Eighteenth-century Scotland' in, *Medical History*, 36:4 (1992), pp 403-10, 422-4; idem, 'The Problems of Implementation: the Failure and Success of Public Vaccination in Ireland, 1840-73' in, Greta Jones, Elizabeth Jones (eds), *Medicine, Disease and the State in Ireland, 1650-1940* (Cork, 1999), pp 139-40.

she used to do before it was dug. After that there was a strict enquiry made in several places of the country for the said women, and notice was given that there was one Janet Latimer in the Irish Quarter of Carrickfergus,<sup>53</sup> a woman that had been long under an ill fame, who had the marks given in the above description. There was likewise notice given that there was one Janet Main in the parish of Broad Island,<sup>54</sup> an ignorant woman of a malicious temper, who had all the marks given in the above description.

March 6<sup>th</sup>, there being a warrant signed by a Justice of Peace,<sup>55</sup> to apprehend all suspected persons, and bring them to be confronted with the girl. James Blythe and some others went to Broad Island to apprehend the said Janet Main, but before they returned, Janet Latimer came to Mrs Hattridge's, where the girl was, having been persuaded to come by her neighbours, rather than be taken by a constable with a guard. There were none in the house at the time that either knew her or anything of her coming. No sooner had she entered the door but Mary Dunbar called out "There's Latimer!" and fell into a violent fit. There were a great many present at the time among whom were Mr David Robb, Mr Charles Lennon,<sup>56</sup> Mr Hatley, and Mr Hugh Wilson.<sup>57</sup> A little while after, James Blythe brought Janet Main to the house, and her husband with her, without giving the girl any notice of her being brought, and made several other

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women go in before her whom the girl had never seen, but she was never moved at any of them till she appeared; but then fell into a very ill fit, in which she was speechless, all the aforesaid persons being present; and, upon her being removed, was easy as before. Mr Robb took the women aside, and examined them as to their knowledge of the Christian religion, but got no satisfactory account from them; he made them repeat the Lord's prayer,<sup>58</sup> and belief, which they did, but confusedly; and then made a handsome discourse upon the danger of witchcraft, and the necessity of repentance, in order to obtain eternal life. It was then resolved to take in Janet Main a second time, that her husband might be better satisfied. He went in a little before her, and found the girl very easy; but whenever she entered, she fell ill as before; and when she was removed, declared to her husband that Janet Main was one of her cruellest tormentors; and that Latimer had threatened to destroy her if she would discover them as she done the rest. About four in the afternoon, Main and Latimer were taken by a constable before the Mayor of Carrickfergus, and committed to jail, and Mr Lennon and Mr Hugh Wilson bound to prosecute. After that time the girl was easy, and slept till eight in the morning, and had no fit that night.

Next morning, March 7<sup>th</sup>, she arose, and about six in the morning ate a little bread and beer without any trouble, which was the first time she had power to eat from the 28<sup>th</sup> February, which was the day she fell ill, except the third part of an egg, which she took at twice, but never complained of hunger during that time. About two hours after, while John Campbell<sup>59</sup> was praying, Mrs Hatley saw something fly in betwixt the hanging and the back

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<sup>53</sup> At that time, this part of the town contained two streets of thatched houses: Sneddon, *Possessed by the Devil*, p. 91.

<sup>54</sup> Broadisland (also known as Templecorran), County Antrim.

<sup>55</sup> Irish JPs represented the bottom level of the judiciary and formed a central part of local law enforcement. They were Protestant, male and came predominantly from the ranks of the gentry. The warrant was probably signed by Edward Clements: Sneddon, *Possessed by the Devil*, p. 60.

<sup>56</sup> Charles Lennon or Lennan, member of the local gentry, deponent and prosecution witness.

<sup>57</sup> Hugh Wilson of Islandmagee, deponent and prosecution witness.

<sup>58</sup> The inability to say the Lord's Prayer was regarded as a legal proof of witchcraft because as agents of the Devil witches were widely believed to be unable to fully convey in speech the word of God as laid down in the Scriptures.

<sup>59</sup> John Campbell, a neighbour who was staying at the Haltridge house.

of the bed where the girl lay, upon which she got up and put by the curtain, and saw something about the bigness of her two fists. A little after the bed clothes were taken off above stairs, and made up in the shape of a corpse; and upon their being put right again, Mrs Hatley went and stood opposite the door, which was open, where she had the bed in view, and saw the clothes come off the bed as one had a hold of them by the corner, though nobody was in the room. About ten o'clock, Margaret Spear and one of the children were looking up stairs, and saw a boy of eight or nine years of age as to appearance standing upon the same step of the stairs where the girl first seized, with a piece

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of an old covering about him, which was thrown by as useless. They gave immediate notice, and search was made, but nobody could be found. A little after, Mrs Hatley's cloak was rolled round a bundle of wheat straw, and laid in the parlour floor. The girl continued well till four in the afternoon, when she fell into fits quite different from the former, in which she was as it were in a swoon, and would be often turned upon her bed with her face under, towards the holster;<sup>60</sup> all parts of her body as stiff as one some days dead, with a great weight upon her, insomuch that it took the whole strength of a man to raise her head from the bolster, to prevent her being smothered, which she would have been if not relieved.

March 8<sup>th</sup>, she fell into several of these fits, and in the intervals being asked what she saw, she gave an account that she saw one whom they called mistress, and another that was blind of an eye, who had a string of black beads about her neck, that came into the foot of the bed upon her. There was no disturbance in the house that day, and the girl slept most of the night.

March 9<sup>th</sup>, in the morning she had several fits of like nature, being turned as before in the bed, with a great weight upon her, so that one was obliged to lie in the bed with their arm under her to prevent her being smothered. It was remarked that, after Main and Latimer were put in jail, they never found the sulphurous smell; and that in her intervals, she would go in and out of the room without trouble, and eat frequently. The girl was pretty well that day, except that in time of prayer she had a long fit. Her hands were so fast shut that they could scarce be opened, with her tongue doubled in her throat, and her teeth fast closed. There were several stones thrown through the house, some as if they had been taken out of a lime wall, but could discover no place from whence they could have been taken. In the morning there were seven knots at equal distances upon one of the children's gown laces, as many upon Mrs Hattridge's apron strings, and three upon a young boy's cravat, all of which were thrown in to the fire, they supposing there was a charm in them. About three in the afternoon Mr Campbell's box in which he kept some papers, was taken, and the girl's cloak rolled about it, and laid in the parlour floor. At night, after Mr Campbell had prayed, he asked her if she had heard him: she answered, she was mighty sorry

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she did not, for she was in a fit all the time. That night a great noise was heard in the kitchen, and above stairs; a pot lid was thrown into the bed where Mrs Hattridge lay, and they through they heard glass, as it were, thrown through the kitchen. She rested well that night.

Next day, March 10<sup>th</sup>, she was very easy. Mr Sinclair, Mr Stannus,<sup>61</sup> Mr Robert Donaldson,<sup>62</sup> and Mr Hugh Donaldson, having gone to the house to bear her and the family company, asked her several questions, particularly what she heard them saying in her fits; of

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<sup>60</sup> Printing error, read: Bolster.

<sup>61</sup> James Stannus of Larne, visited Islandmagee with his wife and allowed Mary Dunbar to stay in their home before the trial. The Stannus family were possibly relatives of Dunbar: Sneddon, *Possessed by the Devil*, p. 119.

<sup>62</sup> Robert Donaldson, arrived at the Haltridge house with Hugh Donaldson.

which she gave the following account: viz., before any of them were apprehended, they said, they were making a great deal of *fraising* about her, but before it were long some of them that attended her would be as ill as she was. Then they dissuaded her from listening to any religious duty, as prayer, &c.; that they served a better master, and if she would do as they would desire her, she would soon be well. At another time, they were telling one another what they had left in bed with their husbands; one said she left a besom: another that she had left a little straw, which she had made a-purpose. Janet Main asked her they called mistress, if she drank much wine that night; she said she would have drank more if she had been to go home to Johnny, but she was come to this house first. They said they would never leave the house while there was anybody in it, and they would make everybody leave it. It was remarked that she never saw any of them since they were committed to jail. There were some turf thrown at the children, who were with the maid above stairs, but they could not discover from whence they came. There was little remarkable that day; there was a great noise heard above stairs at night. The girl rested very well all night.

March 11<sup>th</sup>, being Sunday, she had a desire to go to sermon, the meeting-house being within musket shot of the house. She joined in psalms and in prayer, but in the beginning of sermon fell into a fit, upon which she was taken out, but recovering she desired to go in again, which she did, but soon fell into another, upon which she was taken home, and had fits very often that day, such as she had when she was first seized, making a great struggle at first, and then falling quiet, as if she was in a swoon; yet those who were present heard her calling out in a low and scarcely audible voice; after she recovered, she affirmed she saw the woman blind of an eye, which was sunk in her head, who was an ill-

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coloured woman, and another she called Mrs Ann,<sup>63</sup> with a stamped apron upon her, and a good head-dress, a black and white manteau, a red face, and reddish coloured hair. After sermon there was a woman of the neighbouring parish brought to her, who was blind of an eye, which was sunk in her head, but she was not moved, but declared she had never given her any disturbance. There were several others who were blind of an eye in the island, which came to her, but she said it was none of them which had disturbed her. About nine at night, there was a turf thrown into the bed upon Sheela M'Gee,<sup>64</sup> with great force, which bruised her much. About the same time there was another thrown at Margaret Spear, which struck her on the mouth and nose till they bled. There were many more thrown, but did no harm. About twelve at night, John Smith<sup>65</sup> heard the door of the room, where he lay with Mr Campbell, fly open, though he shut it when he went to bed; and at the same time heard a noise, as of cats. He arose and shut the door, and as he apprehended, saw two persons standing betwixt him and the light of the window, as he went to bed, which put him in a great fright. Mrs Stannus, who was lying with a Mrs Jameson in the kitchen, much about the same time heard something strike above one hundred strokes, as she thought, upon the back of a chair, which frightened her; upon which she called James Blythe, who arose and lighted a candle, but could see nothing. At the same time Sheela M'Gee had thrown at her the bottom of an old lantern.<sup>66</sup>

March 12<sup>th</sup>, about eight in the morning there were several stones thrown at people both within and without doors, one of which weighed above a pound and a half. The girl put some long hairs out of her mouth the night before, and twice that morning. She had several fits that morning, and in the intervals gave the following description of those who tormented

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<sup>63</sup> Margaret Mitchell of Kilroot, County Antrim. Known as 'Mrs Ann' to the other suspected witches.

<sup>64</sup> Sheila McGee, a neighbour at Islandmagee who had been staying the night at the Haltridge house.

<sup>65</sup> John Smith, helped Blythe with the investigation at Islandmagee, acted as deponent and prosecution witness.

<sup>66</sup> A lantern.

her. She whom the other called Mrs Ann, was a woman of a middle stature, a reddish face, red haired, marked with the small pox, her teeth unevenly set, with rough arms and coarse hands; she wore sometimes a plain muslin apron, sometimes one furbelowed, sometimes a stamped one, and a mant of black and white mixture, at other times one of a brownish colour. The other woman, whom she had never heard named, was a little woman, her hair of a dark brown, one of her eyes sunk in her head, and the same side of

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her face drawn together by the small pox, her fingers crooked in at the ends, and a string of black beads about her neck, in a very ordinary habit, who told her in her last fit that the Mayor of Carrickfergus was coming to examine her, but she should have but little power to answer or to speak to him. About twelve at noon, the Mayor, and several other person with him, came to the house, at which time she was very well, but soon after fell into several fits. In the interval he asked her several questions, to all the which she answered distinctly; after which she was sworn. He then asked her if the six women in custody, viz., Janet Carson, Janet Liston, Elizabeth Sellor, Janet Main, Catherine M'Calmond, and Janet Latimer, were her tormentors? She said they were, but they never had appeared to her since they were taken into custody. The Mayor then asked if there were any others that tormented her? she said there were two, of whom she gave the description as before related. He then asked her why she called Janet Latimer, Elizabeth Latimer? she then told him she knew none of their names, nor ever had seen any of them but in her fits, till they were brought to her, and then she knew them too well, but was sure she heard one of them called Elspy, and told him she heard them often say they would destroy her if she would discover them; and they told her, they would never leave off, till they put the whole family out of the house. She had several fits during her examinations, but as soon as she recovered she began directly where she left off. The Mayor desired Mr Robb to pray, but she was in a fit during the whole time. After prayer she recovered, and she had not heard any of it except the first words, which she was much concerned at. She had several fits that night till 9, and from 12 at night till next morning, with her tongue doubled down, &c.

That morning, Tuesday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, it was thought fit by some of her relations to take her out of the Island to Mr Stannus's in the Parish of Larne;<sup>67</sup> they accordingly left Mr Hattridge's to go to the boat, having a long mile to go by land, and two by water, and every two or three perches she went she fell into a fit. It was concluded she should ride behind a man, and have one of each side to support her. She took several fits upon horseback, and came to the ground in spite of all they could do to hold her up. After she was put into the boat, she scarce ever recovered out of a fit till she landed at Mr

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Stannus's, which was from ten till twelve at noon. She had three or four fits after her landing before she could give an account of any thing. As soon as she recovered, she told that Janet Main and the woman that was blind of an eye were with her all the time she was upon the water, and that they appeared to her in her last fit, since she landed. She was desired to take care of what she said, for Janet Main was in jail, and so could give her no trouble, nevertheless she was positive that she was with her. About two in the afternoon, she desired Mr Ogilvy<sup>68</sup> to pray for her, and during prayer she was in a fit. She took fits very often that night, sometimes standing upon her head and feet at the same time, with her belly up like a bow, and at the end of the fit lay like one dead, without motion, at the same time was heard

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<sup>67</sup> Larne, County Antrim.

<sup>68</sup> William Ogilvie (d.1712), Presbyterian minister of Larne. Acted as witness for the prosecution.

talking with a low voice and with her eyes open, stedfastly looking sometimes to one place and sometimes to another, yet saw none of the company that was about her during her fits. There was diligent enquiry made through the country for Mrs Ann and the woman blind of an eye, but hitherto to no purpose. There were great numbers of women from all parts of the country came to see her, and some blind of an eye, but she had no disturbance upon their coming to see her. The same day there was an account given to one that was in the Scotch Quarter of Carrickfergus,<sup>69</sup> who was blind of an eye, with some other marks given in the description; upon which James Blythe and some others went to her, and told her she must go to the girl. She told them she was very unable, having been long sick, and but lately recovered; however, by the strength of God, she would be with her in the morning; and wept bitterly. In the meantime, as he was looking out of the door, he saw a woman that had all the marks of the description exactly. She was going along the street smoking a pipe of tobacco, upon which he went straight to her and challenged her, at which she fell into a great rage, and cursed and swore horribly; upon which he told her if she would not go willingly he would take her by force, having a warrant to empower him to take up all suspected persons; but it being late at night he let her stay till morning. Mr Blythe had never seen her before, nor had any account of her, having only seen her thus accidentally. She had the exact marks given, viz., was a little woman, had dark brown hair, she had one eye sunk in her head, with the same side of her face drawn together,

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and her fingers drawn together and crooked at the ends, having been all occasioned by failing in the fire, where she was burned to that degree here described; her name was Janet Millar.<sup>70</sup>

March 14<sup>th</sup>, before eight in the morning she had a fit, and upon her recovery said that Janet Main appeared to her, and was in the bed with her in her fit. It being thought by some that the said Janet might have been enlarged,<sup>71</sup> they thought it proper to write a letter to the Mayor of Carrickfergus, giving him an account of her appearing, and desiring him, if she had been enlarged, she might again be confined; upon which the Mayor sent for the jailor to enquire into it, and, upon enquiry, found that the said Janet Main and Janet Liston were taken out of jail on the 13<sup>th</sup>, in the morning, to the jailor's house, and that Janet Main had her bolts struck off to spin to his use, whilst the other carded for her with her bolts on; and that they were remanded for jail about eight at night, and bolted, and brought out again next morning about seven to spin as before.<sup>72</sup> About nine in the morning a woman blind of an eye from Larne, and about ten the woman from Carrickfergus, which James Blythe had been informed of, and had been with, came to see the girl, but she was not in the least moved upon their approach, but told them she was under a great concern they had been put to the trouble of coming so far, and desired that her cousin would give the woman that came from Carrickfergus something to eat and drink. The woman was under the great concern for being suspected of witchcraft. About eleven Janet Millar came from Carrickfergus, her neighbours having promised to James Blythe that she should be with her that morning. When she came within a quarter of a mile of the house, she began to sweat and tremble, as she had been in a great terror, and upon her entrance fell into an extraordinary ill fit, insomuch that she could

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<sup>69</sup> Carrickfergus in 1711 was surrounded by walls punctured by four gates, the Key, West, North and East or Scotch gates. The latter opened onto a suburb called the Scotch Quarter which housed the town's fishermen, most of whom were of Scottish descent: Sneddon, *Possessed by the Devil*, p. 91.

<sup>70</sup> Janet Millar of Scotch Quarter, Carrickfergus. Badly scarred from smallpox and surviving a fire accident.

<sup>71</sup> Let out of jail.

<sup>72</sup> The implication being that when the iron "bolts" and chains used to restrain the women were removed this allowed them to resume their attack on Dunbar in spirit or spectral form. Iron was widely believed to deflect or counter the effects of harmful magic.

scarce be kept in the bed by three men. Upon her being removed to the barn, she was eased, and they asked her if she was positive she was the woman who tormented her? She said she knew her too well, and had seen her too often, to doubt she was the woman who had disturbed her and of whom she had given the marks. A little after Mr Ogilvy and several persons from Larne came to see her behaviour when Millar was present, and had her brought in a second time, and it had the same effect as before, upon which Millar was again carried into the barn, and Mr Ogilvy asked her

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several questions, as to her Christian faith, without receiving any satisfactory answer. He then asked her what she thought was the reason of the girl's being so ill when she approached her, and not so when others came near her, and what was the reason she had so exactly described her, having never seen her nor heard of her but in her fits? She answered after a surly manner, "I believe the devil's in the lass." There were some present who had a mind to make a third trial, and take in Janet Millar without her knowledge, or any who were present with her, which accordingly they did, which had a like effect, upon which she was sent to Carrickfergus, and there put in jail. The Constable and John Millar, who took her to Carrickfergus, searched her house, and found a ball of hair, made up as they apprehended with roots of herbs, and some combustible matter, with a needle five inches long through it, all which they threw into the fire and burned. It was observed the girl's tongue was never drawn back in her throat after Millar's imprisonment.

But to return to Mrs Hattridge's. March 14<sup>th</sup>, Mrs Hattridge being under a terror upon account of the disturbances in the house, prevailed with a schoolmaster who dwelt near them to bring his scholars and keep school in the parlour, which he did, and having shut the door, in two hours time there were seventeen stones thrown against the door, which were thrown with such force that they all made great impressions in it. After they had left the room at twelve o'clock, where they had a fire, a girl going into the room, found a riding hood of Mrs Hattridge's lying upon the fire, and a great part of it burnt.

March 15<sup>th</sup>, the girl had many fits, and in the intervals told that the woman who the other called Mrs Ann appeared to her, and told her she had discovered all, and got them secured, but she should never know her name, and said she would never leave her till she would be her death, and gave the same description of her as before. About three in the afternoon she had a severe fit, and upon recovery told that Mrs Ann had been with her, and that she was turned into a spider, and went away in that shape. John Getty,<sup>73</sup> merchant in Larne saw something like a spide at the same time; being at that time with the girl, he endeavoured to catch it, but could not. Soon after she, in another fit, saw Mrs Ann come as before and go off as a spider, at which time John Getty saw one on the bed, which he thought he

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caught, but upon going to the fire to throw it into it, found he had it not. About ten at night she had several fits, and upon recovery said Mrs Ann was with her, and lay upon her breast, and went off in the shape of a fly. The said Getty said he found something at that time strike him in the right thigh, though there was nothing visibly did it that time. Mary Dunbar said that Mrs Ann then told her she should not so easily get her discovered as she had done the rest, but desired her to tell her age and she should soon be better; she answered she did not know, and if she did she would not tell her. The same day there was a great many stones thrown at Mrs Hattridge's, and when the girls went out of the kitchen about two minutes to

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<sup>73</sup> John Getty of Larne, County Antrim, a merchant.



the door of the house, their bed clothes were taken and thrown into the fire, where they found them when they returned.

Friday, March 16<sup>th</sup>, she was easy, having but some light fits that day.

Saturday, the 17<sup>th</sup>, she had many fits, and gave an account that Mrs Ann was still with her, and threatened to destroy her, and told her she should never discover her by name. Soon after she fell into another fit, and upon recovery called out "her arm!" as if it were a cutting off; upon which they took hold of her arm, and looking upon where she complained of the pain, they found a black woollen string, with eight knots upon it, tied round her arm, which was immediately cut off, and the pain ceased. About twelve at noon she fell into another fit and upon recovering complained of her thigh, about which was found her fillet, which was a little before upon her head, with seven knots upon it, and as soon as removed she was eased. About two in the afternoon she was sitting betwixt Mr Ogilvy and Mr Stannus, and complained of her arm, about which was tied a blue string with five knots upon it, and was eased upon cutting it off. A little after she had another fit, and upon recovery complained her back and waist were sorely pained. Mr Skevington,<sup>74</sup> minister of Larne, and several others, were there with her, and found a white inkle string tied about her waist with nine knots upon it, and a little before was three times round her neck, and as soon as it was taken from about her she got ease. About nine at night she had another fit, and upon recovery complained of her right arm, about which was found a white woollen string with five knots; and in the intervals gave an account that Mrs Ann told her if she got her

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discovered she would send some of her friends, who would handle her worse than she had done.

Sunday, the 18<sup>th</sup>, in the morning, she had a fit; and after recovery told that Mrs Ann had put hair, feathers, and pins down her throat, which she said would cloak her, and told her if they did not, she would put pen knives down next, that would destroy her before ten o'clock next day. She had a great pain in her stomach afterwards, till two in the afternoon, and then fell a vomiting, and threw up some hair, a part of which appeared to be horse-hair, by the coarseness of it, and at several times that night, five large pins, with wool and feathers. She was very ill at night, falling into one fit after another with little intermission.

The 20<sup>th</sup> she had many ill fits, and about two and three in the afternoon described Mrs Ann as formerly, with addition, that she was a middle-aged woman. There was a great enquiry made in several places of the country for one bearing the marks given, and at last there was notice given of one Margaret Mitchell, in the parish of Kilroot,<sup>75</sup> who had all the marks given in the description. She was summoned the night before by James Blythe and John Smith, who went to see whether she had the marks described, before they would give her the trouble to go to the girl, but finding them to agree, were very pressing to have her to go as of herself, and not to be taken with a constable and a guard, which she complied with, but with great reluctancy. Before she came near the house, a fear came upon the girl, but not so great a trembling as before, when any of the rest came, having been persuaded to use something by way of a preventative, by a Scotch gentleman, who had been troubled himself by witches, which he said would prevent her falling into a fit upon her approach.<sup>76</sup> When

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<sup>74</sup> William Skeffington (1659-1741), Church of Ireland curate at Larne, County Antrim. Acted as witness for prosecution.

<sup>75</sup> Kilroot, County Antrim, was a small parish that lay to the north of Carrickfergus and was mostly inhabited by Presbyterians of Scottish descent.

<sup>76</sup> This charm was a form of protective or apotropaic magic provided by a magical specialist, possibly a charmer who specialised in healing natural affliction in animals and humans but sometimes treated ailments thought to have a supernatural cause. It is more likely however to have been supplied by a commercial magical practitioner



Margaret Mitchell came into the room where she was, she discovered with her without falling into a fit; and though in great terror, accused her of being one of her greatest tormentors. Mr Ogilvy desired her to be cautious of what she did, in accusing any person of so great a crime. The girl told him, that she should answer to God, at the great day of appearance, she was the person who went under the name of Mrs Ann amongst her tormentors. It was agreed by the girl's relations to let Margaret Mitchell go at liberty, to see if she would trouble her anymore; and when she was gone about an hour, she fell into a fit, and pointed with her finger to the foot

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of the bed, and was heard speaking, and praying that God would deliver her from her and all the same, desiring she would let her alone; yet at the same time saw none of those that were about her. After she recovered she said Margaret Mitchell was in the place where she pointed with her finger, and she told her she would torment her till next morning at ten, and no longer, if she would not prosecute her, and if she made any further discovery of her, she would torment her more and more. In a little she fell into another fit; when recovered, said that Margaret Mitchell still threatened her, and said she would make Blythe and Smith's pictures, and roast them like larks before a fire, and ere it were long some of them should be as ill, and worse than she was. She got up a great many feathers by vomiting, and after she recovered vomited up a button, which she said Mitchell put in her mouth, and after another fit another button of the same kind, which James Blythe comparing with his vest buttons, found to be the same sort, and found he wanted two of them, which he was sure he had before she fell into these fits. At the same time she vomited four large pins, two of which were rusted, and a great many feathers.

But to return to Mr Hattridge's, and give an account of the disorders there. From the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> there were a great many stones thrown, both by day and by night, at the people in the house, and many of them were sore hurt by them. At other times there were great noises in several parts of the house, and even in the room where the whole family lay, having got several of their beds in one room for their greater security, being afraid to lie at a distance from one another in the house. Many of the neighbourhood came every night to stay with them in their trouble, and some of them sat up all night, having a candle burning by them; yet, notwithstanding their care, the keys of the rooms would have been taken away for several days, and the key of the barn often. They also often heard a scratching upon the boards in the room, and on the bed posts where they lay, as it were one's nails, and at other times a striking upon the boards, and back of the chairs, after which they would have found the keys thrown in upon one of the beds or upon the floor; their wearing apparel would have been taken away, and not found in several days, and then sometimes found in the hag yard covered with straw, and at other times brought back and laid upon the floor. The chil-

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dren's gown-laces, cravats, and shirts, strangely knotted. One of them had his shirt knotted at the corners whilst upon his back as he lay in bed.

The 21<sup>st</sup>, Margaret Mitchell was brought to the girl a second time (the preservative which she had from the Scotch gentleman being laid by) and upon her appearing she fell into a fit, as formerly told when the others approached, but recovered as soon as Mitchell was removed, and persisted in affirming that she was the person who went under the name of Mrs

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(sometimes referred to as cunning-folk or wise men or women) who provided numerous magical services for a small fee but often specialised in the detection, countering and curing of witchcraft. For Cunning-folk: Owen Davies, *Popular Magic: Cunning-folk in English History* (London, 2003, repr. 2007); Sneddon, *Witchcraft and Magic in Ireland*, chapters 3 and 7.

Ann, upon which she was taken into custody by John Logan, constable of Broad Island, who put her in bolts at Ballycarry, about eleven at night. Mary Dunbar vomited up a linen thread, about seven o'clock, with seven knots upon it; those that waited upon her, seeing one end of it appear, pulled the other out of her throat. She had a severe fit a little before, with great pain in all parts of her body. It was remarked that after Margaret Mitchell was put in irons, which was at eleven at night, the girl was eased, having only a pain in her stomach, occasioned by some feathers that were in it, which she vomited that night, after which she was in perfect health till the 24<sup>th</sup> instant.

From the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> the disturbance increased much at Mr Hattridge's. The clothes were often pulled off the beds, and sometimes made up in the shape of a corpse, at other times thrown into the fire. Sometimes they were pulled out of the bed whilst the children were lying in it. Though several people were sitting by them, and had a candle burning in the room, yet they would see the clothes coming off, and endeavour to hold them on, but could not, nor see at the same time anything that could occasion their coming off. Sometimes the children, and others who would be lying with them, would be struck on the heads; they sometimes apprehended the strokes were given by a stick, at other times with an iron, which they judged to be the keys that were often wanting. Upon Sunday morning Mrs Hattridge had a black hood and a pair of gloves taken away, when she was dressing to go to sermon there being nobody at that time with her. When sermon was over they heard several great cries above stairs, but could see nothing. There was the same day a stone which weighed twelve pounds laid in the children's bed, and the mop which had been upon it taken off, and laid under it. In the same night there was a great knocking heard in the

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rooms, and all things that could be knotted, had a great number of knots put upon them. Mrs Hattridge's hood was found in a bed in the kitchen, a pair of blankets being nicely folded up in the shape of a child, and the black hood put as it were upon the head of it. The girl who saw it first was frightened, and called out there was somebody in the bed.

But to return to the girl. March 24<sup>th</sup>, as she was sitting upon the bedside, there being several present, she was of a sudden pulled through the bed backwards, and so to the floor, though there was nothing seen by the persons present that could have done it; in which she lay for a considerable time in a lamentable condition, having a great pain in all parts of her body. After she recovered, she said Janet Main pulled her through the bed, and threatened that she would take her out of the casement,<sup>77</sup> and drown her in the well. Soon after she had another fit, and declared when recovered, that Janet Main and Janet Liston appeared to her; that Janet Main threatened she would destroy her, and at the time put pins and feathers down her throat, though she did all she could to prevent her. She said further, that Janet Liston did not touch her, but flattered her to give her consent that they should take her out of the casement into the garden, which if she would they would quickly do, where she should see the finest play, and hear the sweetest music that ever she saw or heard in her life. It was remarked by the bystanders, that in the time of her fit, she was praying to God to be delivered from them, and she trusted he would do it. A little after she recovered, she vomited up a considerable quantity of feathers, and six corker pins, and after them some more feathers. There were two pair of the pins linked together with their points outwards. She had several other severe fits till four in the afternoon, in which she was lifted up to the bed-tester, though James Blyth did all he could to hold her down. Upon enquiry it was found that Janet Main and Janet Liston were enlarged about half an hour after twelve o'clock, and their bolts struck off, on purpose to find if they would at that time trouble the girl. The girl rested very well that

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<sup>77</sup> A window.

night, but wanted the power of her tongue in the morning.<sup>78</sup> She was otherwise very well, as she signified by signs.

At ten that morning (the 25<sup>th</sup>) she had a strong apprehension, as she said afterwards, that if she read the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Job,<sup>79</sup> she would

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have the power of her tongue, upon which she made signs for a Bible, and reading over the chapter to the 9<sup>th</sup> verse, she spoke, and praised God for the same. That day she was very well, and only had a pain in her stomach; and about two or three o'clock, vomited up at twice some wool, which she said Janet Main had put in her mouth the day before, and had been on her stomach since that time.

The 26<sup>th</sup>, she was pretty well, excepting a pain in her stomach; and about ten in the morning vomited up a pin which had lain in her stomach since the 24<sup>th</sup>. It was observed she could give no account how these things were put down her throat, only she was sensible her tormentors put them in her mouth, and they were forced down her throat, but by what means she could not tell. The girl continued in very good health till the 29<sup>th</sup>, and walked to see the minister of the place, and several others in Larne.

But to return to Mr Hattridge's. The disturbance continued from the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 29<sup>th</sup>, there having been a great many stones and turf thrown both within and without doors, with which several were hurt; everything in or about the house strangely knotted, viz., the horses and cows binding; people's garters in a minute's time after having been taken from their legs; the servants' bedclothes taken off in the kitchen and thrown into the fire; and a riding hood of Mary Lock's,<sup>80</sup> which was made useless by the fire. When Margaret Spear was in bed with the children she felt a great weight, as of one going over her from one side of the bed to the other, which she had felt several times before; at the same time both her stockings were knotted, and a candle put in one of them; the pillows taken from under the children and thrown at her with great force; several turf and clods thrown at her, which hurt her, and one of them bled her mouth and nose; they then pulled the clothes off the bed, which she did all she could do to prevent, by pulling against them; at the same time finding as it were the feet of somebody thrusting against her feet till they had got them off.

But to return to Mary Dunbar. The 29<sup>th</sup> of March she continued well till about two in the afternoon (being upon her journey to Carrickfergus in order to prosecute at the Assizes the eight women in custody) she fell into a severe fit in which she fell to the ground from behind James Blythe, after she had rode about two miles, in which she lost the power of her tongue; so upon

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her recovery she could not tell anything. She fell after that so often into them that they could carry her no farther, so took her into John Burns's,<sup>81</sup> where she staid all night. At nine that night, she apprehended that if she would read the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of John to the 6<sup>th</sup> verse,<sup>82</sup> she would get her power of her tongue, which she did, and spoke accordingly. She then told the company, that in her fits upon the road, a man with light brown hair, a little curling at the ends, mixed with some grey hairs, appeared to her; he had an old brown bonnet upon his head, brown coloured clothes much worn, long visaged, and of an ordinary size; as also an

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<sup>78</sup> Lost the ability to speak.

<sup>79</sup> In Job 2, in the Old Testament, God allows Satan to physically afflict Job's body with boils in order to test his faith.

<sup>80</sup> Mary Lock, a neighbour.

<sup>81</sup> John Burns, owned a house that lay between Larne and Carrickfergus.

<sup>82</sup> John 14:1-6.

old woman, marked with the small pox, of a dark complexion, in ordinary clothes, of a middle size; and a young woman, of about twenty years of age, as she thought, of a middle stature, her clothes pretty good, and of a light colour. These appeared to her upon the road, and told her she was going to prosecute against the rest at the Assizes; but she should not have the power to speak in court against any of them; and told her they would torment her worse than she had been yet. She had the use of her tongue about an hour, then she fell into a fit, and lost it again.

The 30<sup>th</sup> instant, it was borne in upon her, if she should read the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of Genesis and 5<sup>th</sup> verse,<sup>83</sup> she should speak, which happened accordingly, about six in the morning. The same day, being upon the road within two miles of Carrickfergus, she fell into a severe fit, and when recovered wanted the power of her tongue, and continued so till one in the afternoon, when she had the power of her tongue again, and discoursed sensibly to several clergymen and other gentlemen that came to see her, and gave them great satisfaction in relation to her trouble. About three in the afternoon she had several fainting fits, and was dumb till four in the morning of the 31<sup>st</sup>, at which time she had several fits, and upon recovering made signs for a Bible, and looked upon Exodus the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> chapters, and spoke for near an hour, and told the company that the three persons before described were with her in her fits, and told her she should not be able to discover them, as she had done the rest, and should not be able to speak one word from five in the morning till four at night. About four o'clock she had a fainting fit, and lost the power of her tongue. At six o'clock the trial came on; the girl was in the court, and took several fainting fits, but was all

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the while dumb, though she had her hearing very well, except in her fits, when she neither heard nor saw anybody that was with her. The evidence sworn upon this trial were—John Smith, John Blair, James Blythe, the Rev. Mr Wm. Ogilvy, the Rev Mr Skeffington, Mr Wm. Fenton, Mr Wm. Hatley, Mr Chas. Lennon, John Wilson,<sup>84</sup> Hugh Wilson, Mr Hugh Donaldson, James Hill,<sup>85</sup> Mr James Hattridge, Mrs Hattridge, the Rev. Mr. Patrick Adair,<sup>86</sup> the Rev. Mr. James Cobham,<sup>87</sup> Patrick Ferguson,<sup>88</sup> James Edmonston,<sup>89</sup> Mr Jameson. After a long trial, from six in the morning till two in the afternoon, neither counsel nor attorney employed against the prisoners, the jury brought in their verdict, that Janet Liston, Elizabeth Sellar, Janet Carson, Catherine M'Calmond, Janet Main, Janet Latimer, Jean Millar, and Margaret Mitchell, were guilty of exercising witchcraft on the body of Mary Dunbar, and were sentenced to be imprisoned twelve months, and to be pilloried four times.<sup>90</sup> About half an hour after three, the girl signed for a Bible, and looking upon the 40<sup>th</sup> Psalm and 13<sup>th</sup> verse,<sup>91</sup> she spoke, and gave an account that the three persons before described lay heavy upon her, and threatened her that they would put pen knives down her throat. About five they

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<sup>83</sup> Genesis 6:5 KJV: 'And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.'

<sup>84</sup> John Wilson of Islandmagee, deponent and prosecution witness.

<sup>85</sup> James Hill, deponent and prosecution witness.

<sup>86</sup> Patrick Adair (d.1717), Presbyterian minister of Carrickfergus from 1702.

<sup>87</sup> James Cobham (1678-1759), Presbyterian minister of Broadisland from 1700.

<sup>88</sup> Patrick Ferguson, deponent and prosecution witness.

<sup>89</sup> James Edmonston, deponent and prosecution witness.

<sup>90</sup> A pillory is a wooden apparatus for punishment by public humiliation. Prisoners placed their head and/or hands through holes in the wood and were displayed to the public.

<sup>91</sup> Psalms 40:13 KJV : 'Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me.'

took horse for Castlereagh, in the county of Down, where her mother lived. They got home that night, having only three or four fits upon the road.

The first of April she was very ill, and had several violent fainting fits, and put out of her mouth several pins, and a considerable number of feathers, and in the intervals declared they were put into her mouth by her tormentors. From that time to the 7<sup>th</sup> she had many fainting fits, and put up during that time to the number of twenty pins and a considerable number of feathers.

From the 29<sup>th</sup> March to the 1<sup>st</sup> of April the disturbance continued at Mrs Hattridge's, the bed clothes being made up in the shape of a corpse, with great noises, such as scratching, knocking, laughing, &c.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> of April, Margaret Spear, being in the kitchen alone, saw a bolster with her master's night gown about it coming very softly out of the room into the kitchen. She at first thought it was a boy, but being afraid ran into a room where there were tailors working, and told them, who came immediately out and saw it standing against the wall. The noise continued from the

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3<sup>rd</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup>, with the throwing of stones, &c. It was observed, if they flourished a sword where the noise was, it left off for some time.

From the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup>, it changed from knocking to whistling louder than usually a man can do; it whistled several tunes very distinctly, as the Jolly Batchelors, and Old Wife beyond the Fire, &c., and those present thought it was near them; and it often struck the children upon the heads when in bed. When they offered to hunt the dogs to it, it hissed as they did; and when they smacked to chase it, it smacked as they did. The 10<sup>th</sup>, Mary Twinan<sup>92</sup> found like one going over her in the bed several times; it pulled John Spire very strongly by the hat, when it was on his head, several times, yet he and the company could see nothing, though there was a candle burning by them. As the said John Spire was sitting on the children's bed side, of a sudden the clothes were taken off the bed, and rolled about his head, and several things thrown at him. Sometime sit would make a noise like ducks, sometimes clap, sometimes draw the curtains of Mr Hattridge's bed backwards and forwards, and then make the bed shake terribly.

The 8<sup>th</sup> of April the man appeared to Mary Dunbar again, and threatened to kill her, if she discovered him. The 10<sup>th</sup>, Wm. Sellor, husband to Janet Liston, who had all the marks given, hearing he was going to be apprehended, fled, but was given up four miles off his own house, and carried to the girl, who did not accuse him for fear of his threatenings; so he was let go.

The 12<sup>th</sup> she had fits, and declared Sellor appeared to her with a butcher's knife, the blade of which was broken, and welded together, with which he threatened to destroy her, and wounded her under the right shoulder; the place being looked there was a visible mark. Notice hereof coming to her friends in the Island, the high constable apprehended Sellor, who was tried at the Assizes after and found guilty. It was observed, when they went to take Sellor, there was a drinking horn thrown at John Brown, which hit him in the neck. At Mr Hattridge's, which house has never been since disturbed, Robert M'Killock saw two men run down towards Sellor's house, when the high constable was there, and mount two black horses, and ride from the house, though none with the high constable observed it.

END OF THE MANUSCRIPT.

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<sup>92</sup> Mary Twinan, a neighbour of Liston.

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DR. WM. TISDALL'S ACCOUNT OF THE TRIAL OF  
EIGHT REPUTED WITCHES

At Carrickfergus, March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1711.

(Copied from the *Hibernian Magazine*, for Jan., 1775. Page 52.)<sup>93</sup>

I received yours last week, for which I own myself much obliged to you, and do here send you something in return, which perhaps you may think as well worth reading, as I did writing from the notes which I myself took from the mouths of the sworn witnesses.<sup>94</sup>

What I here send you, is an account of the trial of eight supposed witches, accused of tormenting a young gentlewoman, one Miss Dunbar. I must here promise to you, that there was no lawyer to manage the trial, so that the evidence not being produced in any order, the circumstance of time and place were so perplexed and confused, that were there not so many glaring matters of fact which pierced through so many clouds that could be raised, men might have gone away without having discovered truth, or satisfied their curiosities.<sup>95</sup> So that to give you the most perfect image I can of this whole matter, I choose the following method:--

1<sup>st</sup>. To give a brief character of all the witnesses produced, the party afflicted, and the persons accused as her tormentors, or the supposed witches.

2<sup>nd</sup>. I will let you know in what manner the supposed witches were discovered by the afflicted person.

3<sup>rd</sup>. What facts appeared most extraordinary and preternatural through the course of the evidence.

4<sup>th</sup>. If I have time, I will give you two or three of my own remarks upon the whole.

1<sup>st</sup>. The chief evidences produced on this trial were six persons of good repute for understanding and integrity, and seemingly of good fashion and substance,<sup>96</sup> and the most considerable persons in the neighbourhood where the facts happened.

The party afflicted was a young girl, aged about eighteen years, with an open and innocent countenance: she was a very intelligent young gentlewoman. I discoursed with her after the trial, and received very satisfactory and reasonable answers from her: she was an utter stranger in that country where she was afflicted, and only came there on a visit to a relation. She neither knew, or was known by any of the persons accused; as was confessed by the accused, and mother of the afflicted.

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The supposed witches were eight in number, six of them with such variety of ill looks, that had the afflicted known them before, it might have given grounds to suspect she had singled them out for her tormentors, even from their diabolical appearances; the seventh was not so disagreeable, but had a sedate and composed countenance. The eighth was a young girl of about seventeen, who seemed by her countenance to have more of the Lancashire than Scotch

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<sup>93</sup> The correct pagination for this letter as published in the *Hibernian Magazine* in 1775 is, pp 47-51 (see introduction). Although this letter is written from a sceptical perspective and influenced by Tisdall's High-Church Tory politics, it provides the most complete version of events on the day of the trial. For further discussion of Tisdall's letter: Sneddon: *Representing Magic*, pp 31, 36-37.

<sup>94</sup> In other words, William Tisdall attended the trial at Carrickfergus assizes on 31 March 1711.

<sup>95</sup> This was a very lengthy criminal Assize trial by the standards of the day (it lasted eight hours) and involved large number of witnesses and defendants which may account for the alleged shortcomings of the two Assize Judges trying the case. For more on criminal trial procedure in early eighteenth-century Ireland: Garnham, *Courts, Crime and the Criminal Law in Ireland*. See also, Sneddon, *Possessed by the Devil*, pp 139-152.

<sup>96</sup> Well dressed, wealthy and of high social status.

witch;<sup>97</sup> she had a fair complexion and a very good face; and so was represented by the afflicted before she was discovered.

2<sup>nd</sup>. The supposed witches were discovered by the afflicted after this manner. Upon the death of one Mrs Hatridge, who (as is generally believed by the neighbourhood) was bewitched to death, there was an apron which had been missing some time before, brought back, tied with nine knots; the afflicted was the first who found it, and untied all the knots without the least fear or suspicion of witchcraft; after which, in the evening, she was seized with violent fits; and on recovering, cried out that a knife was run through her thigh, that she was most grievously afflicted by three women, whom she described with the greatest particularity imaginable; but could then give no account of their names. She was then seized with a second fit about midnight; and in her vision, there appeared to her (as she declared when she came out of her fit) seven or eight women, who conversed together, and called each other, some by their Christian names and some by their surnames. The description the afflicted gave of them, together with some of their names, were so very particular, that several of them were guessed at, and sent from different parts to the afflicted, whom she discovered from many other women who were brought with them. She was constantly more afflicted as they approached the house; particularly there was one Latimer, who had been sent from Carrickfergus privately by Mr Adair, the dissenting teacher; when she came into the house where the afflicted was, viz., in Islandmagee, none of them suspected her, but the afflicted fell into a fit as she came near the house, and recovering when the woman was in the chamber, the first words she said were, “O Latimer, Latimer!!!” (which was her name) and her description agreed most exactly to the person. After this manner were all the rest discovered and at one time she singled out one of her tormentors from amongst thirty, whom they brought to see if they could deceive her either in the name or description of the accused person.

All this was sworn to by persons who were present, as having heard it from the afflicted, as she recovered from her several fits. The supposed

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witches were called to the bar to compare them with the description given by the afflicted at several times; and it is really inconceivable to imagine how exactly they all agreed to the descriptions given: though it was confessed they never had seen the afflicted, nor the afflicted them. One particular, which seemed most extraordinary, was this: in her fits she had often her tongue thrust into her windpipe, in such a manner that she was like to choke, and the root seemed to be pulled up into her mouth. Upon her recovery from these fits, she complained extremely of one, Main (I think her name was) who had twisted her tongue; and she told them she had tore her throat and tortured her violently by reason of her crooked fingers and swelled knuckles. The woman was called to the bar upon this evidence, and ordered to show her hand; it was really amazing to see the exact agreement betwixt the description of the afflicted and the hand of the supposed tormentor: all the joints were distorted, and the tendons shrivelled up, as the afflicted had described.

3<sup>rd</sup>. What facts appeared most extraordinary upon the trial.

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<sup>97</sup> It is unclear what Scottish trial (or type of Scottish witch) Tisdall is referring to as around 2, 500 women and men were put to death for the crime in Scotland between 1563 and 1736. For an overview of Scottish witch-hunting: Brian Levack, *Witch-hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics and Religion* (Abingdon, 2008). Tisdall however is almost certainly referring to the women involved in the Lancashire witch trials of 1612. Among the nineteen people accused of witchcraft were the elderly Elizabeth Southernnes (“Old Demdike”) who died in jail while awaiting trial. Her daughter Elizabeth Device, along with her children Alizon and James Device and seven others, were found guilty at Lancaster assizes and hanged on 20 August 1612. For the Lancaster trial: Phillip C. Almond, *The Lancaster Witches: A Chronicle of Sorcery and Death on Pendle Hill* (London, 2012).



It was sworn by some of the evidences, that in some of her fits three strong men were scarce able to hold her down; that she would mutter to herself, and speak some words distinctly, and tell everything she had said in her conversation with the witches, and how she came to say such and such things, which she spoke when in her fits.

2<sup>nd</sup>. One of the men who held her when in a fit, swore she had nothing visible on her arms, when he took hold of them, and that all in the room saw some worsted yarn tied round her wrist, which was put on invisibly; there was upon this string seven double knots and one single one.

3<sup>rd</sup>. She cried out in one of her fits that she was grievously tormented with a pain about her knee; upon which the women in the room looked at her knee, and found a fillet tied fast about it; her mother swore to the fillet, that it was the same she was given her that morning and had seen it tied about her head; this fillet had also seven double knots and one single one.<sup>98</sup>

Her mother was advised by a Popish priest to use a counter charm by writing some words out of the first chapter of St John, and tying it with an inkle three times round her neck, knotted each time.<sup>99</sup>

This charm the girl herself declined, but her mother, in one of the times of her being afflicted, used it. She was in a violent fit upon the bed, held down by a man, and recovering a little, complained grievously of a pain in her back, and about her middle; immediately the company observed the individual inkle, which had been tied

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about her neck, tied round her middle with seven double knots and a single one: this was sworn to by several. The man who held the afflicted was asked by the judge if it were possible she could reach the inkle<sup>100</sup> about her neck whilst he held her? He said it was not, by virtue of his oath, he having all that time her hands fast down.

5<sup>th</sup>. There was a great quantity of things produced in court, and sworn to be what she had vomited out of her throat. I had them all in my hand, and found there was a great quantity of feathers, cotton yarn, pins, and two large waistcoat buttons: at least as much as would fill my hand; they gave evidence to the court they had seen these very things come out of her mouth, and received them into their hands as she threw them up.

6<sup>th</sup>. The afflicted during one of her fits, was observed by several persons to slide off the bed in an unaccountable manner, and to be laid gently on the ground, as if supported and drawn invisibly. Upon her recovery, she told them the several persons who had drawn her in that manner, with an intention, as they told her, of bearing her out of the window, when open; but that, reflecting at the time, and calling upon God in her mind, they let her drop on the floor.

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<sup>98</sup> A 'fillet' is a band of fabric or ribbon used for decorative purposes or to keep hair up or a headdress in place.

<sup>99</sup> The 'Popish priest' was possibly Roman Catholic clergyman, Edmond Moore, whose early eighteenth-century clerical charges covered the wider Larne area: J. O'Lavery, *An Historical Account of Diocese of Down and Connor, Ancient and Modern* (5 vols, Dublin, 1878-95), iii, 109-10. A similar type of counter or protective charm was used in another possession case in early eighteenth-century England: Anon., *The Tryal of Richard Hathaway Upon an Information for Being a Cheat and Imposter ...* (London, 1702), pp 15-16. For written, protective charms and charming in Ireland: Barbara Hillers, Ciarán Ó Gealbháin, Ilona Tuomi and John Carey (eds.), *Charms, Charmers and Charming in Ireland: From the Medieval to the Modern* (Melksham, 2019); Andrew Sneddon, 'Gender, Folklore and Magical Healing in Ireland, 1852-1922' in Jyoti Atwal, Ciara Breathnach and Sarah Ann Buckley (eds.), *Gender and History: Ireland 1852-1922* (Routledge India, forthcoming); idem, *Witchcraft and Magic in Ireland* (Basingstoke, 2015), pp 48-50.

<sup>100</sup> Linen tape used in trimmings, or the yard and thread from which they had been woven.



7<sup>th</sup>. The afflicted, recovering from a fit, told the persons present, that her tormentors declared she should not have power to go over the threshold of the chamber door. The evidence declared they had several times attempted to lead her out of the door, and that she was as often thrown into fits as they had brought her to the said threshold; that to pursue the experiment further, they had raised the said threshold, upon which they were immediately struck with so strong a smell of brimstone, that the stench spread through the whole house, and afflicted several to that degree, that they grew sick in the stomach, and were much disordered.

These were the principal facts sworn to in the court; to which most of the evidence gave their joint testimony.

It seems the supposed tormentors had told the afflicted, the day before the trial, that she should have no power to give evidence in court. She was accordingly, that morning before the trial, struck dumb, and so continued in the court, during the whole trial, but had no violent fit.

I saw her in the court cast her eyes about in a wild distracted manner, and it was then thought she was recovering from a fit, and it was hoped would give in her own evidence. I observed as they raised her up, she sunk into the arms of a person who held her, closed her eyes, and seemed perfectly senseless and motionless. I went to see her after the trial, she told me she knew not

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where she was when she was in court, that she had been afflicted all that time by three persons, of whom she gave a particular description of their proportions, habits, hair, features, and complexion. She said she had never seen these person till the day before the trial.

When all the witnesses were examined upon oath to the precedent facts, the Judge<sup>101</sup> ordered the prisoners at the bar to offer what they could to the court in their own defence. They all, in general, positively denied the facts charged against them. One of them, with the worst look, and generally the most suspected, called the great God of heaven and earth to witness she was injured. The character of each person was inquired into: some of them were of a general ill fame, upon which enquiry seemed rather due to their ill looks. It appeared upon oath most of them received the communion, some of them very lately; that some of them had been laborious, industrious people, had frequently been known to pray in their families, both publicly and privately; most of them could say the Lord's prayer (which it is generally said they learned in prison), they being every one Presbyterians.

When they had ended their defence, Judge Upton summed up the evidence with great exactness and perspicuity, notwithstanding the confused manner in which it was offered. He seemed entirely of opinion that the jury could not bring them in guilty upon the sole testimony of the afflicted person's *visionary images*. He said he could not doubt but the whole matter was preternatural and diabolical, but conceived, that had the person accused been really witches and in compact with the devil, it could hardly have been presumed they should be such constant attendants upon divine service both in public and private.

Mr Justice M'Cartney<sup>102</sup> spoke to the jury after Judge Upton had ended. He seemed to add nothing to what Judge Upton had said, but differed from him in opinion, and thought the jury might, from the evidence, bring them in guilty, which they accordingly did.

4<sup>th</sup>. The remarks which I think fit to make up on the whole affair are as follows:--

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<sup>101</sup> Anthony Upton (d.1718), Tory Judge of the Common Pleas, directed the jury to acquit the accused: Sneddon, *Possessed by the Devil*, pp 148-9.

<sup>102</sup> James McCartney (d.1727) Whig Justice of the Queen's Bench, directed the jury to convict the accused. McCartney was the eldest son of prominent merchant and surveyor of Belfast, George McCartney: Sneddon, *Possessed by the Devil*, p.149.

1<sup>st</sup>. I am of opinion that these extraordinary facts, proved upon oath, in the course of the evidence, were all preternatural; not to be performed by the common course of second causes, nor soluble by any human reason.

2<sup>nd</sup>. Our Christian faith being founded chiefly upon miraculous and preternatural effects, wrought by the immediate power of God, and constantly appealed to by Christ himself as miraculous, and wrought for that great end, I take this for a proposition generally true, that all preternatural operations wrought since the ceasing of miracles

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For the consummation of Christ's divine mission, and establishment of our faith, may reasonably be presumed to be diabolical; and also when these preternatural effects are wrought for bad ends, or even such as are unaccountable, as tormenting this innocent person &c., they must be diabolical.

3<sup>rd</sup>. The tormented person being several miles distant from the supposed tormentors during her fits, it is evident the afflicted was not personally, but visionarily, affected, if by them. That had the images represented to the imagination of the afflicted been of persons deceased, it is probably this would not have passed for witchcraft, but for apparitions of spirits; nor is it to be doubted but the devil may as well represent the one as the other. This being premised, the main question upon which the whole must tend to prove the supposed witches guilty of these facts, must be this: Can the devil represent the images of innocent persons to demoniacs, or persons under diabolical possessions, or in such fits as this afflicted is supposed to have had?

The nature of the thing doth not seem capable of a demonstration, whether the devil can or cannot represent the images of innocent persons; but I presume to say, there are much more convincing reasons to believe that he can, than that he cannot, and consequently that the prisoners ought rather to be acquitted than condemned.

1<sup>st</sup>. The devil has represented an angel of light, and why he may not as well represent the images of innocent persons, as an angel of light, I cannot apprehend.

2<sup>nd</sup>. He has represented the image of a saint in Heaven, viz., that of Samuel to Saul, by the mediation of the witch of Endor; and why the devil, who can represent the image of a saint in Heaven, cannot that of an innocent person on earth, I cannot conceive.<sup>103</sup>

3<sup>rd</sup>. The devil has tormented innocent persons whilst living, as in the case of Job, and even of this afflicted woman; and it seems an argument *a fortiori*, that he who could torment an innocent person may also represent the image of an innocent person to be tormented. If it be said, it is not to be presumed that God would permit the devil to raise the images of innocent persons to the imagination of the afflicted, as in this case; the sure consequence of such representations being to have innocents arraigned, accused, lose their reputations, and perhaps their lives; it may be with equal force retorted, that God would not permit the devil to torture or afflict an innocent person, as this afflicted girl is supposed to be, and as Job most undoubtedly was afflicted by the devil, both with the loss of his health, fortune, and reputation; so that upon the whole, I cannot see how the jury could, upon the nature of the

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evidence, bring in the persons accused guilty: in which verdict they seemed to me to have acted inconsistently: because the person afflicted was presumed by them innocent, and at the same time allowed to be tormented by the devil. If it be objected, as was hinted in court, that the devil could represent the images of departed persons as in the case of Samuel, but not of

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<sup>103</sup> In 1 Samuel 28 in the Old Testament, the "Witch of Endor" is said to have raised the spirit of the prophet Samuel.

the living, I desire any reason may be assigned for his agency in the one and his impotency in the other. It seems past dispute with me, that he may in the one as well as in the other; and the facts in this trial amount to a demonstration on that point.

Judge Upton, who, with great judgement remarked that the purport of the whole evidence was not sufficient to find them guilty, advanced this popular argument to the jury, which seemed rather calculated to influence them (who seemed predetermined against the witches) than from any force which was in the argument itself; he told them he could not well imagine that persons utterly abandoned to the devil, and who had renounced God (as he presumed to be the case of all real witches) could retain so much the form of religion, as to frequent the religious worship of God, both privately and publicly, as the accused were proved upon oath to have done. But this argument seemed to me by no means conclusive. Neither do I see why a real witch may not have permission to personate a real saint, as well as the devil has been permitted to personate an angel of light; or why a person in contract with the devil may not be guilty of this worse hypocrisy, which gives her apostacy a deeper dye; if, as a witch, she was deprived of her power of praying, and receiving the sacrament visibly, she must be deprived of this power either by the devil or by God himself. It cannot be supposed that the devil would hinder her from the basest and vilest acts of hypocrisy, or that God would interpose miraculously to deprive this wretch of her natural faculties, any more than he doth other profligate sinners who receive unworthily, and eat and drink their own damnation. But upon presumption that witches were deprived of this power of hypocritical praying and receiving, yet it could not acquit these persons, because the devil might have made this contract with them since the receiving the sacrament, and entering into them, as he did unto Judas, immediately after.

I am quite tired writing, and therefore, as this is the only copy I have made of the trial, I shall be pleased to think it is grateful to you. I desire you may give my service to the Provost,<sup>104</sup> and Dr Ellwood,<sup>105</sup> and let them read it. – I am, dear Sir,  
Your most obedient servant,

William Tisdall  
Belfast, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1711.

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<sup>104</sup> Benjamin Pratt (1669-1721), Provost of Trinity College, Dublin (1710-1717) and Church of Ireland Dean of Down in the Diocese of Down and Connor from 1717 until his death in 1721. He was a Tory in politics and friend of Jonathan Swift: George P. Mayhew, 'Jonathan Swift's 'Preferments of Ireland,' 1713-1714,' *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 30:4 (1967), p. 300.

<sup>105</sup> Dr John Elwood, Tory Vice Provost of Trinity College, Dublin: Mayhew, 'Preferments of Ireland', p. 300.

[p. 161] **Island Magee Witches, 1710. Depositions in the case of the Island Magee Witches 1710.**

COUNTY ANTRIM. THE EXAMINATION OF JOHN SMITH, OF LAIRNE, IN YE S<sup>D</sup> COUNTY, TAKEN AT CARRICKFERGUS, 21 MARCH, 1710.

Who, being duly Sworn and Examined, Saith that Mrs. Mary Dunbar, who has for this Long time been in a most unusual manner tormented and afflicted (as shee Saith, and as by all that see her do verily believe) by witches and Witchcraft, having since the Confinement of Jannet Liston, Janett Meane, and Jane Miller, whom she affirms to be her Tormentors, declared that she was troubled only with one young woman, whom the aforesaid women, when about her And tormenting her, did call Mrs. Ann, but that the young woman told her that she should never be discovered by her name as the rest were, shee, the Said Mary Dunbar, having given Exact marks and Description of one Margret Mitchell, whom she, this Ex<sup>t</sup><sup>106</sup> doth verily believe, the Said Mary never had seen before the Said Marg<sup>t</sup><sup>107</sup> Mitchell was brought to her, and that the Said Mary afflict her, And that she never saw her before but when she was tormenting her; and that after the Said Marget<sup>108</sup> was set at Liberty, the Said Mary fell into a most violent fit, in which the Said Ex<sup>t</sup> heard her say—"For Christ Sake, Let me alone, and I won't discover you." And after being Recoverd out of the Said Fitt, was asked to whom she spoke, The Said Mary told them that the Said Marg<sup>t</sup> Mitchell was then afflicting her, and told her she would have this Exam<sup>t</sup> James Blithe's Picture made & roast it like a Lark, and that they should not Catch her, for she wou'd turn herself into a Hare,<sup>109</sup> and further Saith that the Said Mary did remit Several Pins, buttons, and horse Hair, and further Said not.

THE EXAMINATION OF MARY DUNBAR, TAKEN 12<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 1710.

Who, being duly Sworn and Examined, Saith that during these Severall weeks she has been in a most grievous and violent manner tormented and afflicted with Witches; that Several whom she never had known, or to her knowledge seen before, did frequently appear to her (tho' invisible to her keepers and attenders), who make her fall very often into fainting and tormenting fitts, take the Power of Tongue from her, and afflicts her to that Degree that she often thinks she is pierced to the heart, and that her breasts are cut off; that she heard the Said women (when about her) name one another, and that called one Jannet Liston, another Eliz.<sup>110</sup> Cellor, another Kate McCamont, another Jannet Carson, another Jannet Mean, another Latimore, and another Mrs. Anne, and the Said Jannet Liston, Eliz. Cellar, Kate McCamont, and Jannet Carson being brought to her, att their first appearance she knew them to be four of her Tormentors, and that after they were taken into Custody the aforesaid Latimore and Mean did very much Torment her, especially when Mr. Sinclair, the Dissenting Minister, was praying with and for her, and told her they would hinder her of hearing his prayers; but if she would do as they would have her, she soon would be well, and that Jannet Latimore and Jannet Mean being brought to her, she likewise knew them to be other two of her Tormentors, and that since the confinement of the said Jannet Liston, Eliz. Cellor, Kate McCamont, Jannet Carson, Jannet Mean, and Jannet Latimor, none of the them has troubled her, neither has been so much tormented as when they were at Liberty, and that there do now only two appear to her (viz<sup>t</sup>), the aforesaid Mrs. Ann, as they called her, and another woman, blind of an eye, who told

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<sup>106</sup> Examinant. The person who is being examined.

<sup>107</sup> Margaret.

<sup>108</sup> Margaret.

<sup>109</sup> This could be a reference to the belief that witches could transmogrify into hares to steal milk from cows.

This witchcraft trope was more prominent in early modern, Gaelic-Irish culture than in its Presbyterian, Ulster-Scots counterpart. See Sneddon, *Witchcraft and Magic in Ireland*.

<sup>110</sup> Elizabeth.

her when Mr. Robb, the curate, was going to pray with and for her, that she should be little the better for his prayers, for they would hinder her from hearing them, which they accordingly did.

#### THE EXAMINATION OF JOHN SMITH, TAKEN 14<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 1710.

Who, being duly Sworn and Examined, saith that, upon the within-mentioned Mary Dunbar giving an acco<sup>111</sup> that there was a woman blind of an eye that did torment her, three several women blind of an eye were brought to her, but she, the Said Mary, declared they never troubled her, and that she had nothing to say against them or Lay to their Charge; and one Jane Miller, of Carrickfergus, who is blind of an eye, being likewise sent for to come to the Said Mary, that as soon as she drew nigh the house where the Said Mary was (the Said Mary did not know of her coming), she became very much afraid, faintish, and Sweat, and as soon as shee came into the Roome where the Said Mary lay, she, the Said Mary, fell into Such a violent fitt of pains that three men were Scarce able to hold her—cried out, “For Christ’s Sake, take the Devil out of the Room;” and being asked, Said the blind woman, meaning the Jane Miller, for she was the woman that did Torment her, and shee had seen her too often in her fitts, and the Said Miller being taken from the House, the Said Mary came to her Right Senses, and Declared that she Said Jane Miller was the woman blind of an eye that did afflict her, tho’ she did not know her name, nor never had seen her before, but when in her fitts aforesaid, and the Said Jane Miller being brought into her again, shee assured them that shee was the woman that did afflict her, and being brought in the third time into the room unknown and unseen to the Said Mary, as she does verily believe, the Said Mary fell into her violent fitts, and begged of the People to take her, the said Jane Miller, out of the Room.

[p.162] Bryce Blan, Constable, Deposeth that after the said Jane Miller was delivered to him and brought from the said House, he privately, and unknown to the Said Mary, brought her into the Room where she was again, and before the Said Mary saw her, shee fell very ill in violent fitts, and prayed them to take the Devil out of the Roome.

#### THE EXAMINATION OF H. WILSON (ISLAND MAGEE), TAKEN 10<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 1710.

Who, being duly Sworn and Examined, saith that on the 6<sup>th</sup> Instant he was in the house of Ja.<sup>112</sup> Haltridge, in the Said Island, Gent, and Saw Mary Dunbar in a very ill condition, being, as is supposed, tormented with witches, and one Jannet Latimore, who being often Said by the person grieved to be one of her Tormentors, tho’ she never had seen her in her life, but when shee appeared, as she Said, to her in her affliction, came near the House, became very uneasie and faintish, and much disordered, and became worse and worse, notwithstanding the Said Mary Dunbar, nor none of her keepers or attendants knew of the Said Latimor’s coming or being there, and being desired by some there in the House to go in and see the Said Mary, which she did, amongst several others, and when she appeared to her, the Said Mary fell into Desperate violent fitts, and when she got the Liberty of her Tongue (which was often taken from her), Said that woman Latimore was one of her Tormentors, and that she knew her face full well, tho’ shee had never Seen her before, but in her tormented fitts appeared to her. And further saith that one Jannet Mean, wife to one Andrew ffergusson, near Billycarry,<sup>113</sup> in the Said County, was brought by a Warrant, but privately and unknown to y<sup>c</sup> Said Mary Dunbar, and among very many more came to see her, and at her first appearance Shee, the said Mary, became as before, in her most desperate fitts, and both the Said Mean and Latimore being taken apart from the said Haltridge’s house to another house, to be Exam<sup>d</sup>: that after Examination the Said Mean’s Husband would not be Satisfied that the sick person would

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<sup>111</sup> Account.

<sup>112</sup> James.

<sup>113</sup> Ballycarry, a village in the parish of Broadisland, County Antrim.

anyway alter at the appearance of his wife. It was agreed that shee Should appear to the Sick person again, and that as Soon as she entered the Roome Doore where the Said Mary lay, she became distracted, tho' Sober ere her entrance: and further saith that y<sup>e</sup> said Mary is most tormented when prayed with or for, Save when they personally appear to her, and she Saith that since the Confinement of Jannet Liston and her Daughter Cat: McCamont and Jannet Carson, none appeared to her but the Said Jannet Mean and Jannet Latimore, and appears most to her when prayed for as aforesaid, the Said Mary being, when out of her fitts, very sensible.

THE EXAMINATION OF CHARLES LENNAN, GENT., TAKE Y<sup>E</sup> 10<sup>TH</sup> OF MARCH, 1710.

Who, being Duly Sworn and Examined, Saith that the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Instant he was in the House of James Haltridge, of Island Magee, Gent., where lies in the most Desperate Condition Mary Dunbar, of or about the age of 17 or 18 years, being, as Concluded by all that See her, tormented with Witches and Witchcraft, and his Examination agreeth word for word with the 10<sup>th</sup> in Examination, and further Saith that when Mr. Sinclare, the Minister, was praying with the said Mary Dunbar, that the Said Mary Said Jennet Latimore and Jannet Mean told her that they would hinder her of hearing his prayers; but both Said to her if she would do as they would have her to do, she would soon be well. The Ext. further Saith that when the Said Mary was taken or helped out of the Roome she lay in that she fell as dead on the Threshold, and at her Desire the Threshold and floor about was dug up, And in so doing there was a strong Smell as (as was Concluded) of Brimstone, and when done the Said Mary went out of y<sup>e</sup> Said Roome without any trouble, and in Some hours after, when Mr. Sinclare prayed with her, shee fell into violent fitts, and said she Saw the Said Mean and Latimore, who Said to her that shee should not get so well out of the Door again, whereupon it was agreed that she should try; accordingly she did, and fell into more violent fitts than before, both at her going out and Returning to the Said Roome.

THE EXAMINATION OF WM. FENTON, OF ISLAND MAGEE, 3<sup>D</sup> OF MARCH, 1710.

Who, being duly Sworn and Examined, Saith that for sometime past the House of James Haltridge, of Island Magee aforesaid, hath been haunted with Evil Spirits (as he is credibly Informed), and that Mary Dunbar, being now in the Said house, is in great Disorder, and very much tormented both day and night by Witches; And by the description the said Mary Dunbar gave this Ex<sup>t</sup> and others of the Witches, they did verily believe that Jannet Liston and Eliz. Cellar were persons Guilty of the Same, upon which, on Friday Last, they Sent for the Said persons, and when the said Jannet Liston and Eliz. Cellar came into the Roome where y<sup>e</sup> Said Mary Dunbar was, Shee the Said Mary fell into a violent fit of Pains, and Said that as Soon as she Saw them she was Stung to y<sup>e</sup> heart, and declared that the Said Jannet and Elizabeth were Devils, and continually with Several other women about her bed troubling her, and further Saith that there were a great many more of other women present when the Said Mary Challenged the Said Jannet and Elizabeth, whom she never Saw in her Lifetime before her trouble aforesaid.

JOHN WILLSON, OF ISLAND MAGEE AFORESAID,  
agreeth with the above, word for word.

JAMES BLYTH, OF BANK, IN THE COUNTY OF ANTRIM,

Who, being duely Sworn and Exam<sup>d</sup>, agreeth Verbatim with the aforesaid Exam<sup>ns</sup>, and further Saith that the Said Mary Dunbar Said she heard her Tormentors name one Katty

among them, upon which one Katherine McCamont was sent for; and as Soon as She came into the Said

[p.163] Mary's Roome, the Said Mary Dunbar fell into such violent fit of pains that three persons were not able to hold her, and that the Said Mary Dunbar Declared that the Said Katherine was one of her tormentors, and further Saith that as soon as the Said Katherine entered the House, tho' unseen to the Said Mary, her pains Seized on her with a great Sweat.

James Hill Desposeth that the first Instant, he being in the House of Wm. Cellar of Island Magee, one Mary Twmain (*sic*) came into the Said House and called out Jannet Liston to speak to her, and that after the Said Jannet came in again shee fell a trembling, and told this Depon<sup>t</sup> that the Said Mary had been desiring her to go to Mr. Haltridge to see Mary Dunbar, but declared she would not goe for all Island Magee, except Mr. Sinclare wou'd come for her (and Said)—If the plague of God was on her, the Said Mary Dunbar, y<sup>e</sup> Plague of God be on them altogether; the Devil be with them, if he was among them. If God had taken her health from her, God give her health. If the Devil had taken it from her, the Devil give her it. And then said—O, misbelieving ones, eating and drinking Damnation to themselves, Crucifying Christ afresh, and taking all out of the hands of the Devil. *Capt et Jurat v<sup>o</sup> Die Martij, 1710.*

William Hatley deposeth that after the aforesaid Mary Dunbar was recovered out of one of her fitts, and in her Right Senses, she declared that Jane Carson was one of the tormentors.

COUNTY ANTRIM.

THE EXAMINATION OF HUGH DONALDSON OF ISLAND MAGEE, IN THE SAID COUNTY, TAKEN THE 5<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 1710.

Who, being duly Sworn and Examined, Saith that the 28<sup>th</sup> of February, he being in the house of James Haltridge of Island Magee afores<sup>d</sup>, he Saw Mrs. Mary Dunbar afflicted in an unusual manner, falling into fitts as if she had been dead, and did not know what any about her said, in one of which fitts he heard her say So and So after she was recovered, and very Sensible was asked what it was She Said in the Said fitt, shee answered, there was a woman came to the bed side, and asked her, Molly Dunbar, how do you do, and the Said Mary, giving the marks of one Jannet Liston, whom shee never had seen in her life, as shee said when out of her fitts, upon which the Said Liston was sent for, and at her approach the Said Mary affirmed that was the woman, and fell into extream torment during the Said Liston's aboad in the Roome, so that Scarce two or three men were able to hold her. She likewise, in her other fits, said shee heard her Tormentors name one another, and that they called one of them Jannet Carson, another Katty, another Jannet Mean, and another McAlexander, all who threatned to kill her if she told their names, upon

[p. 164] which the Said Janet Carson was Sent for about the first Instant, and as soon as shee appeared, the Said Mary fell into a great agony during her stay, as also during the abode of one Eliz: Cellar, whom she had given a Description of, and declared to be one of her Tormentors, and that the aforesaid Mary Dunbar declared she never Saw any of the aforesaid women before her affliction aforesaid, and further Saith that about thirty other women were Severally brought into the Roome where she was, and that she never was disturbed in the Least during their Continuance, and Said they were none of her afflictors, still averring that the aforesaid women were her tormentors.

COUNTY ANTRIM.

THE EXAMINATION OF JAMES HALTRIDGE, OF ISLAND MAGEE, GENT., 24<sup>TH</sup> MAR., 1710.

Who, being duly Sworn and Examined, Saith that his house, situate in Island Magee aforesaid, which for this considerable time past has been haunted with Evil Spirits and Witches, and in which house one Mrs. Mary Dunbar (who is now removed from them to bank in the said County) was afflicted and tormented by witches, as she Saith, whom she discovered by giving Exact marks and account of the most of their names, tho she never had Seen of them in her life before (as she declares) but when by them tormented; since y<sup>e</sup> Confinement of Margt. Mitchell, whom the Said Mary affirm to be the only one that did afflict her since the Confinement of Jannet Liston, Eliz. Cellar, Kate McCamont, Jannet Carson, Jannet Mean, Jannet Latimore, and Jane Miller, who were all sent to and still do Remain in Gaoll, upon her discovering them as aforesaid to be her tormentors, hath never been troubled or molested in the Least, and that the Said Mary Dunbar told this Exam<sup>t</sup> that Since the Confinement of the Said Margaret Mitchell, whome she assured him that she was very Certain was her only tormentor after the Confinement of y<sup>e</sup> aforesaid persons, she the said Mary has not been tormented or afflicted, and that none of them has appeared to her, but she has been very easie ever Since, Save Some things she thought was in her Stomack, which she would be glad to Vomit, and further Saith not.

*Capt et Jurat cor me  
dic Annoque Supradict.*

Edward Clements, *Copia Vera*.

(Pinkerton MSS.) (MS. 1. 1-3, T.C.D)



**Samuel Molyneux, Armagh, to [his uncle], Thomas Molyneux, Dublin, 14 May 1711, Trinity College Dublin, MS 889, ff 31r-31v.**

“D<sup>r</sup> uncle, you judge very rightly of my design in sending you the examinations you lately recieved which I do assure you was for to satisfy you as much as I could rather than to convince you of y<sup>e</sup> truth of those accusations, I must however assure you the Judges related to me severall much more convincing circumstances which appeared on y<sup>e</sup> triall and which I shall endeavour to keep in my mind till I see you, thus for is certain that many supernaturall appearances did happen to that Mrs Dunbarr and therefore I think y<sup>e</sup> question should not be of y<sup>e</sup> reality of y<sup>e</sup> witchcraft (if we are pleas’d to call it so) but where to place it. Whether in y<sup>e</sup> accuser or y<sup>e</sup> accused and this question by many circumstances of y<sup>e</sup> good character & education & sense [31v] of ye young woman and her family, by severall previous disturbances that severall others alleged to have suffer and by these accused persons frequent vaunts and threats of their own revenge & power I am really inclinable to determine in her favour...”

I am y<sup>r</sup> affte nephew, S. Molyneux.

*The Dublin Intelligence Containing A Fully And Impartial Account Of The Foreign And Domestick News*, Saturday, 14 April 1711.<sup>114</sup>

“Dublin. We hear, That 8 witches were Try’d at the Assizes of Carrickfergus, for bewitching a young Gentlewoman, were found Guilty, and are to be Imprisoned for a Year and a Day, and 4 times Pillored.”

*The Dublin Intelligence Containing A Fully And Impartial Account Of The Foreign And Domestick News*, Tuesday 24 April 1711.

“Dublin. We have an Account, That the young Gentlewoman, that was tormented by the *witches*, lately Tried at Carrickfergus, is dead.”

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<sup>114</sup> In 1711, the newspaper was printed by Francis Dickson at the Union Coffee-house ‘on Cork-Hill’, Dublin and contained a mixture of local and international news: *Dublin Intelligence*, 24 April 1711.