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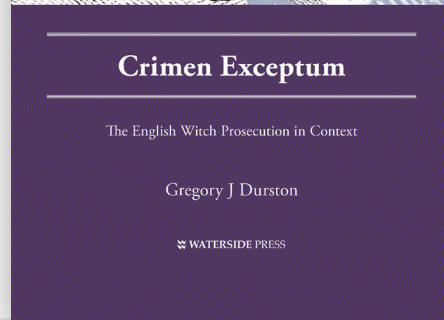
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Advance Information

Title Crimen Exceptum
Subtitle The English Witch Prosecution in Context
Author Gregory J Durston
Publisher Waterside Press Ltd
Format Paperback 234x156mm, 240 pages
ISBN 978-1-909976-65-8
Price £22.50 **Rights** Worldwide
Publication 5 June 2019 **Edition** 1st
Category legal history, persecution, witchcraft
Subjects LAZ=Legal history; HRQX5=Witchcraft
Who will buy it? Historians, lawyers, researchers and students as well as anyone interested in the origins and history of witchcraft and its legal, political and religious connections.



As the author notes, 'The early-modern European witch-hunts were neither orchestrated massacres nor spontaneous pogroms. Alleged witches were not rounded up at night and summarily killed extra-judicially or lynched as the victims of mob justice. They were executed after trial and conviction with full legal process'.

In this concise but highly-informed account of the persecution of witches Gregory Durston demonstrates what a largely ordered process was the singling-out or hunting-down of perceived offenders. How a mix of superstition, fear, belief and ready explanations for ailments, misfortune or disasters caused law, politics and religion to indulge in criminalisation and the appearance of justice. Bearing echoes of modern-day 'othering' and marginalisation of outsiders he shows how witchcraft became akin to treason (with its special rules), how evidentially speaking storms, sickness or coincidence might be attributed to conjuring, magic, curses and spells. All this reinforced by examples and detailed references to the law and practice through which a desired outcome was achieved.

In another resonance with modern-times the author shows how decisions were often diverted into the hands of witch-hunters, witch-finders (including self-appointed Witchfinder General, Matthew Hopkins), witch-prickers and other

experts as well as the quaintly titled 'cunning-folk' consulted by prosecutors and 'victims'. *Crimen Exceptum* (crimes apart).

Key Selling Points

- **A straightforward and authoritative guide.**
- **Shows the rise and fall of prosecutions.**
- **Backed by a wealth of learning and research.**

Extract

'A range of specialist tests developed to establish that a suspect truly was a witch. These included "swimming", "pricking" ... identifying a witch's teat, requiring her to recite the Lord's Prayer or other well-known passage of scripture ... and any positive results obtained from the various techniques, such as scratching a suspect or boiling a victim's urine ... to break a spell or to identify who had cast it'

Author

Gregory J Durston is a barrister-at-law who has taught in law schools in England and Japan. He was for many years Reader in Law at Kingston University, Surrey and is currently an adjunct professor at Southern Cross University School of Law and Justice, New South Wales, Australia. He is the author of *Fields, Fens and Felonies* and *Whores and Highwaymen* (both Waterside Press).



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Putting justice into words