

it and meikle off it by this meanes shee and the said rate ores milk and made butter and cheise thair of Shee confession or es milk and made butter and cheise thair of shee confession or es milk and made butter and cheise thair of shee confession or es milk and made butter and cheise thair of shee confession or es milk and made butter and cheise thair of shee confession or es milk and made butter and cheise thair of shee confession or es milk and made butter and cheise thair of shee confession or es milk and made butter and cheise thair of sheet and cheise thair of ne half since the devill came to the said kattrein Scots how her wer present with them Margrat Mckennie in gre herself and severall otheres the devill was in the likene an and sang to them and they dancit he gave them wyn to o eat and they warr all very mirrie she consesses at that made her sirst acquant ance with the devill and caused h hands with him Shee confessed that at that tym the devil s service and it sould be weell with her and bad her for so lid, delyvering her self wholley to him by puting her on hi and the other hand to the sole of her fort and giveing all Shee confessed that at that tym he gave her a name and her call him (serpent) when shee desired to speak with that sam tym the devill nipit her upon the right syd qlk but thairester he straicket it with his hand and healed it his mark Shee confessed that the devill lay thrise carne ness in the liknes of a Harie man ely in dun sed manare orsse & 3ly in Roughe manire in the likness of a brown do rnallie w[it]h hir] Shee confessed that she was at a meit fean king kettie Scot, Margrat Mckennie, and severa them in the likness of a brown dog the end of their

Devil's Mark

The Inverkip Witch Trials







The Distant Noises project was developed and managed by Magic Torch Comics CIC with the support of National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The script was written and compiled by Paul Bristow in collaboration with pupils of Inverclyde Academy, in workshops delivered in late 2024 / early 2025. Thanks to teachers who supported the project and to Inverclyde Libraries for support in the school library space.

Additional material (pages 11 & 13) developed by The Wishes Group, meeting at Youth Connections, Larkfield.

Thanks to Lorraine Murray (and colleagues) for review and feedback on script / artwork.

Artwork and cover by Julie Campbell. https://www.juliecampbelldraws.com

'Witches in words not deeds' image of Marie Lamont dress (p29) used with kind permission of Carolyn Sutton and The Watt Institution.

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https://www.magictorchcomics.co.uk

Introduction

I'm fairly sure it was my mum who first told me about 'the witches in Inverkip', back when I was little, and it was also one of the first stories we tackled in our early comics – one of the hosts of our 2013 horror comic Tales of the Oak was Granny Kempock. And in those versions of the stories, it's fair to say that the focus, what drew us in, was the supernatural elements, the moments that made it seem part of the otherworldly, magical Inverclyde that Magic Torch have always worked to create and maintain, the idea that a coven cast spells across the town.

This is not that story.

This is the story of a young girl, killed by people for being different, alongside some of her friends and neighbours. It's not magical, or glamorous. Just awful and true.

The script for the project was created in collaboration with pupils of Inverclyde Academy (some of whom live in Inverkip today) and with the exceptional help, support and guidance of Lorraine Murray of The Watt Institution, who is a specialist in this area of research.

Lots of creative women worked on this project, local artist Louise Carr helped the group develop some artwork, as did Carolyn Sutton whose 'Witches in Words Not Deeds' exhibition was on display in Inverclyde while we were working on the book. We had assistance from the 'Wishes Group' from Larkfield, who imagined the voices and discussion of the Inverkip villagers for us, and of course, the illustrations are by Julie Campbell - who has many other wonderful publications you should check out online.

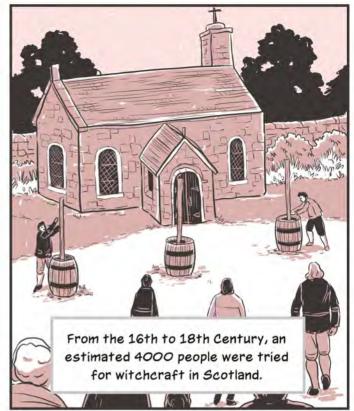
We create books like these to make stories more accessible, but I'm also aware that we often get people picking up our books who perhaps haven't read comics in a long time, but are interested in the topic. For those readers, here's some tips on reading a comic – pay attention to the colours, the shift in tones can often be mirroring what's happening in the text, or drawing your attention to something. Likewise, changes in text or fonts generally indicate a change in voice. And in this comic, this whole project in fact, whose voice we are hearing is important. The group wanted us to use simple language, with limited text, so that means the visuals have to do a little more work – so be sure to read the pictures too.

Also, while the comic presents historical events, like any adaptation, some dramatic license has been taken in service of the story and a few choices based on the classes' interpretation of Marie's story rather than on historical fact. None of that detracts from the horror of the truth.

"Thou shall not suffer a witch to live."

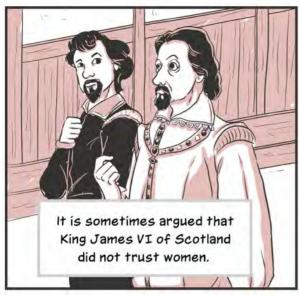
Exodus 22:18

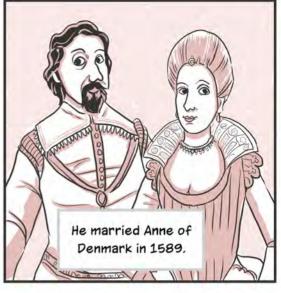






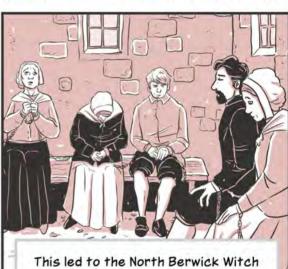








Returning from Scandinavia, his ship sailed into a storm and he began to suspect the dark arts were being used against him by his enemies.



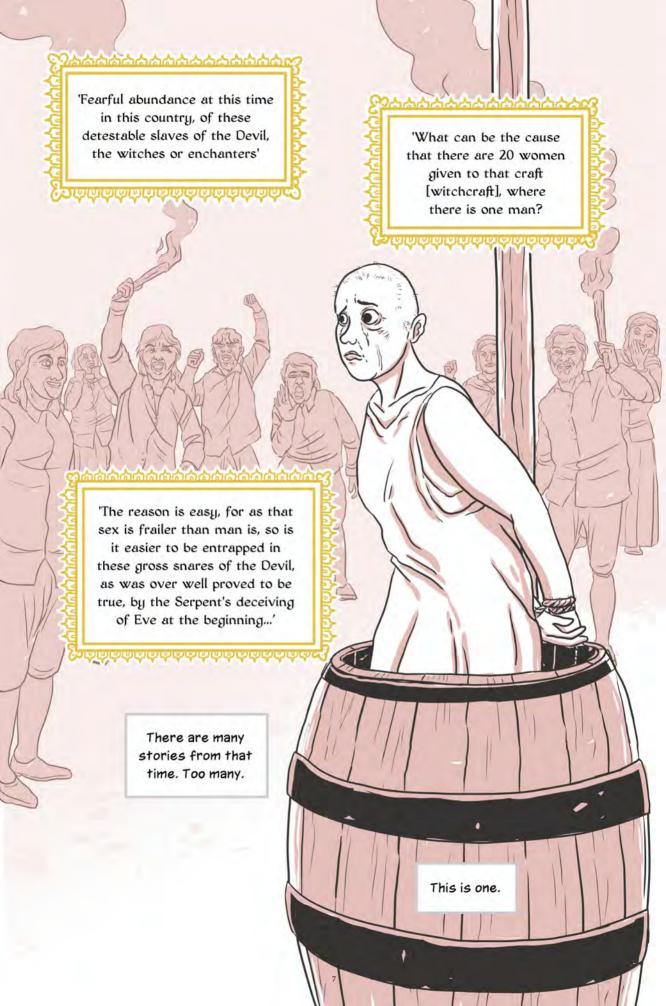
Trials, in which around 80-200 people

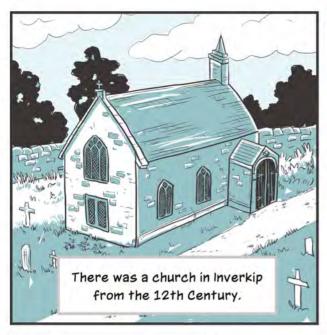
were arrested and tortured.





witches and published a book called Daemonologie, something which was later used as a text book for witch hunting.



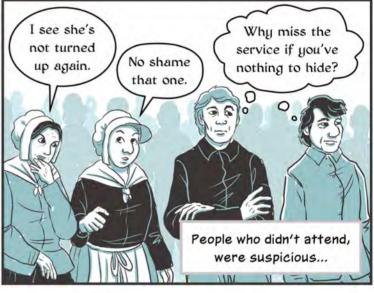




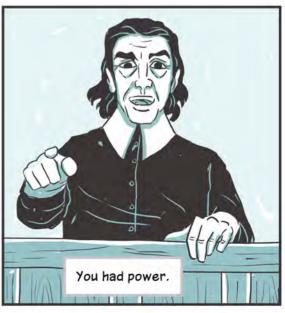
The Auld Kirk was also the parish for everyone from Greenock and Gourock, who would walk miles every week to come to the service.



And everyone did come, because the Kirk was in charge and it wouldn't do not to show your face each Sunday.







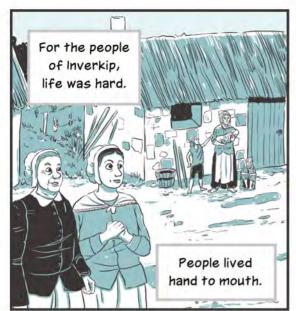


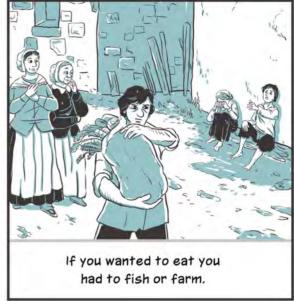


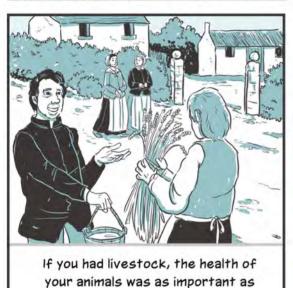


If you were in any kind of trouble, you would be brought up first to the Kirk and then to the Landowner Superior at Ardgowan – who likely owned the property you lived in.

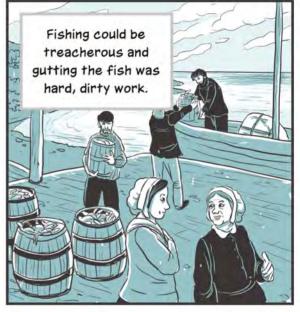






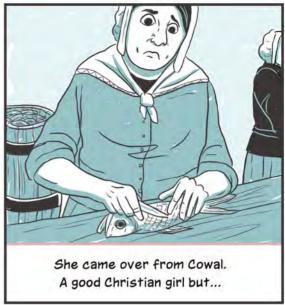


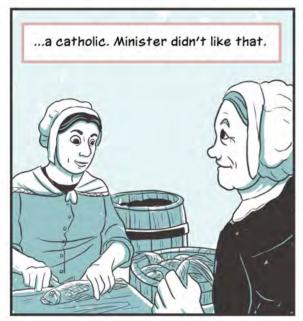
the health of your family.









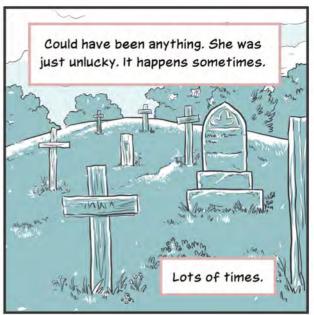


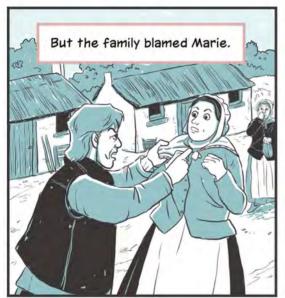




















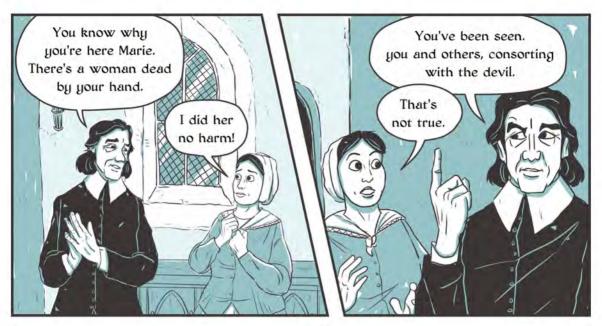


































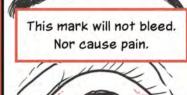






























SHE CONFESSED THAT TWO YEARS AND A HALF SINCE, THE DEVIL CAME TO KATHERIN SCOTT'S HOUSE IN THE MIDST OF THE NIGHT...



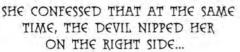
...WHERE WERE PRESENT WITH THEM MARGARET MCKENZIE OF GREENOCK, JANET SCOTT OF GOUROCK, HERSELF AND SEVERAL OTHERS.

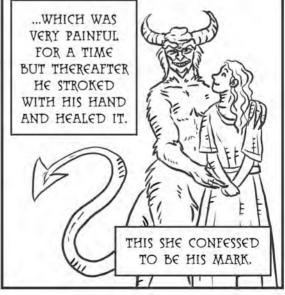


THE DEVIL SUNG TO THEM, AND THEY DANCED: HE GAVE THEM WINE TO DRINK AND WHEAT BREAD TO EAT AND THEY WERE ALL VERY MERRIE.











SHE CONFESSES THAT SHE AND OTHERS MET TOGETHER IN THE NIGHT AT THE BACK GATE OF ARDGOWAN WHERE THE DEVIL WAS WITH THEM IN THE LIKENESS OF A MAN WITH CLOVEN FEET.



THE DEVIL DIRECTED THEM TO FETCH WHITE SAND FROM THE SHORE...



...AND CAST IT ABOUT THE GATES OF ARDGOWAN...



...AND ABOUT THE MINISTERS HOUSE.



SHE SAYS THAT WHEN THEY WERE ABOUT THIS BUSINESS, THE DEVIL TURNED THEM INTO THE LIKENESS OF CATS BY SHAKING HIS HANDS ABOVE THEIR HEADS.





SHE WAS WITH KETTIE SCOTT,
MARGARET MCKENZIE AND OTHERS AT
A MEETING AT KEMPOCK WHERE THEY
INTENDED TO CAST THE LONG STONE
INTO THE SEA...



...THEREBY TO DESTROY BOATS AND SHIPS.

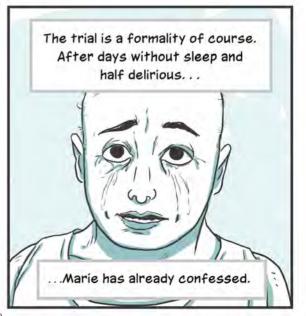


THEY ALSO DANCED HERE ...



...AND THE DEVIL KISSED THEM WHEN THEY WENT AWAY.





To be a witch was not exclusively female – it was about being aligned with the devil, using magic.



Women and men could be accused of being witches...



However by law, women were not allowed to speak in court, so could not defend themselves.



Being accused of the crime often meant your life was over anyway, whether you were found guilty or not.

Get executed, killed by mob or forced to leave the area.



The trial in Inverkip was what is known as a 'serial case' - a trial that involves more than one individual.



26 people were accused, 7 or 8 women were tried and found guilty of being witches.



In Inverciyde there were FIVE serial cases, which may be unique to Scotland.

From 1650 - 1700, more than 80 people were accused of witchcraft and it is estimated more than half of those were executed.



A huge amount for an area of this size.

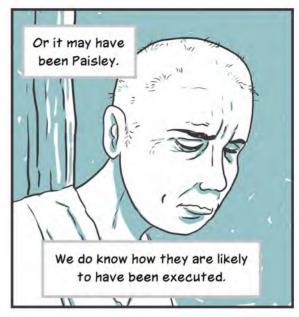
Successfully convicting people of witchcraft was certainly a good way to get noticed if you were a minister.

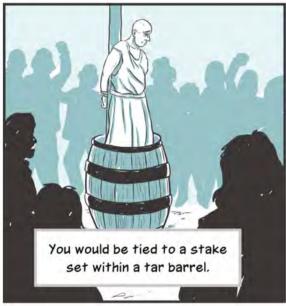


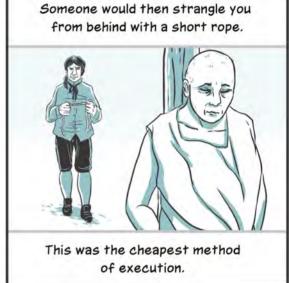
It could sometimes mean you were promoted to a bigger or better parish...

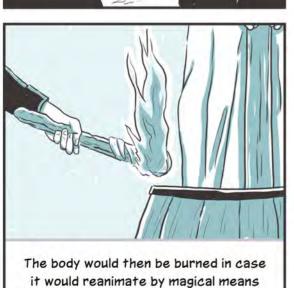


We don't know for sure whether Marie and the other women were executed in Inverkip. some of them may have been.

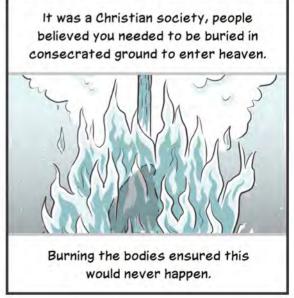








to seek revenge.





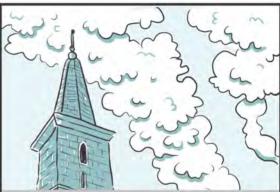
Those who led the witch trials did not believe that witches were real people, they believed their souls had already gone and that they were empty vessels for doing the devils work.



History sadly shows us that it is easier to commit the most appalling crimes if your victims are dehumanised first.



The final trial in Inverciyde was in 1699, 43 people were accused, but by 1700, the diet had been deserted meaning the case was not continued and there were no convictions.



In 1736, the law changed, we were now in more 'enlightened times'. Although many people still belived in witchcraft, those accused could only be convicted of the crime of 'pretending to be a witch'.



It's hard for us to be completely sure of the facts in these cases, because some years after the witch trials, the parish records burned.



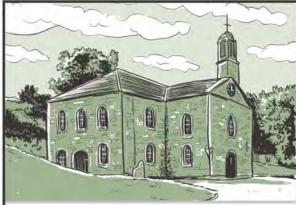
Did people realise years later they had accused people unfairly? Perhaps decide that these records were better off lost?



There are few places directly connected to the 1662 witch trials still standing.



The tower at Ardgowan House is still there, and the nearby shore.



The Parish Church in Inverkip today was built in 1801, across the street from where the Auld Kirk stood, but no one was tried or imprisoned in this building.

The Auld Kirk was originally on the site of the old graveyard.



Some of the original stones were used in the construction of the Shaw Stewart Mausoleum.

The Granny Kempock Stone still watches over Gourock and the river.



People do still visit for good luck.



Although Marie's trial in Inverkip is perhaps the most well known case, there are wider reaching potentially more shocking events, some involving so called 'mob justice'...

...including in Kilmalcom in 1698 which a group of young people subjected two boys to a swim test...



...resulting in one of them drowning.



There are a number of groups currently working across Scotland to recognise the injustice of the witch trials and to commemorate those accused.



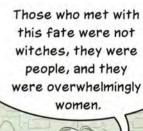
All of them are working to raise awareness and retell and reclaim the stories of the women involved.



Witches of Scotland is a successful podcast telling stories of the accused and its founders have been at the forefront of campaigning for a pardon and an apology.



As a result of the ongoing campaigning, on International Women's Day 2022, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon issued a formal posthumous apology to more than 2500 Scots executed under the Witchcraft Act.



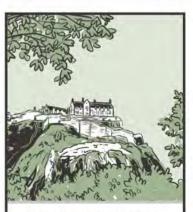




The First Minister drew a direct line between the deep misogyny which motivated the witch trials...



...and the everyday harassment, threats and violence which women still experience today.



Discussions continue for a National Monument for the accused, at a site yet to be decided.



Witches retain their place in popular culture...



...and it is possible to celebrate those characters and stories while still recognising the horror of what happened.



So no, witches don't turn into cats or have devil's marks...



They were witches in words, not deeds.





"SHE CONFESSES ALSO THAT IN THAT BUSINESS, SOME WERE CHIEFS AND RINGLEADERS, OTHERS WERE BUT FOLLOWERS."

Afterword

Many years ago, I heard about the superstitions connected to Maxwellton Cross in Paisley, and how it is supposedly where the remains of convicted 'witches' from Pollok and Bargarran are buried. The stories fascinated me, and after I came to work in Inverclyde, I started to research the topic in more detail.

As a professional Archivist, using primary sources as far as possible for my research was important. Although these events happened more than 300 years ago, there was already a great starting point in the form of the survey of Scottish witchcraft database, produced by the University of Edinburgh in 2003. From here, I found many sources that I have spent the last several years following up in my spare time. As such, it has been a long process, but one I intend to carry on with until I complete the task of researching those accused of witchcraft in the old County of Renfrew, and what is now greater Glasgow. I am hoping the outcome will be a publication as I believe it may be of interest to people in these areas.

More recently, I was able to incorporate my private research into my work at The Watt Institution, where we had a month of commemoration throughout March to coincide with International Women's Day. As 85% of those accused in Scotland were women, it seems appropriate to approach this as a women's history topic. We were fortunate to host Carolyn Sutton's "Witches in word, not deed" exhibition for just over 2 months between February until April, and alongside this, ran a new "Witchcraft in Inverclyde" display and a few outreach events on the subject.

This new publication about Mary Lamont - the most well-known 'witch' of the old Innerkyp Parish – will likely bring these harrowing events to a wider due to this accessible format. Hopefully it will inspire a new audience to find out more about this difficult history.

Lorraine Murray Archivist The Watt Institution

Witches In Word, Not Deed

Witches in Word, Not Deed remembers 13 women unjustly accused and persecuted for witchcraft in Scotland under the Witchcraft Act of 1563.

Through personalized and historically accurate dresses imprinted with the words that condemned them, the exhibition brings attention to the power of words and the loss of identity and life in which the witchcraft trials resulted.

The exhibition is a heartfelt moveable memorial to the roughly 4000 people accused of witchcraft in Scotland, nearly 85% of them women. It is an imperative asking us to remember the lives of the victims with dignity and compassion. It cautions us against the further exploitation of this history.

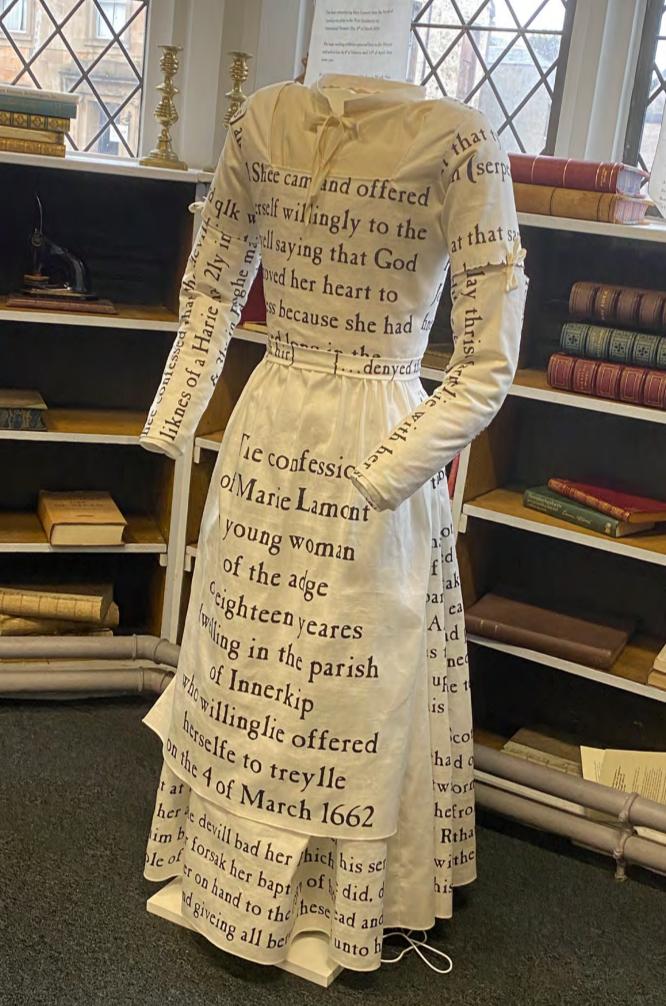
The exhibition has been touring around Scotland for some time and new works are being created to join permanent local collections. The first of these was in remembrance of Mary Lamont, which is held at the Watt Institution in Greenock.

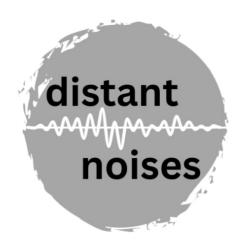
Mary's dress was made in partnership with archivist and historian Lorraine Murray and is shown alongside Lorraine's extensive research into the local witchcraft trials and those in the wider western Scotland area.

Carolyn Sutton's higher degrees in information science and archival administration, heritage and exhibition design, and studio art/photography inform her work as an artist and interpretation designer.

Witches in Word, Not Deed stems from her interest in matters of social justice, difficult heritage, and folklore. She has been researching the witchcraft trials for many years, but it wasn't until the culmination of all these things that the exhibition could come together in a way that felt right to her.

Discover more on instagram https://www.instagram.com/witchesinwordnotdeed/





Distant Noises is exploring, recording, illustrating and sharing stories from a range of community archives throughout 2024 and 2025. The stories will be shared as a collection of graphic novels and audio dramas / podcasts / soundscapes.

The project is delivered by Magic Torch Comics CIC with the support of National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The stories will include tales of the Inverkip Witch Trials, the journey of a Jewish refugee in World War 2, the people of the Glasgow Panopticon 'freakshow' and folk tales from the School of Scottish Studies.

All of the material will be available to read and download for free on our website.

If you would like to find out more about the project, please email info@magictorchcomics.co.uk





The confession of Marie Lamont a young woman of the adge of eighteen yeares dwelling in the parish of Innerkip who willinglie offered herselfe to trylle on the 4 of March 1662

1 Shee cam and offered herself willingly to the tryell saying that God moved her heart to confess because she had lived long in the devills service

2 Shee confessed most Ingenuously that fyve yeares since Kattrein Scot in mudistean within the parochin of Innerkipp learned her to tak kyes milk biding her goe owt in mistie mornings and tak with her a harrie tedder and draw it over the moath of a mug saying in gods name god send us milk god send it and meikle off it by this meanes shee and the said Kattrein gat much of their neighbores milk and made butter and cheise thairof

3 Shee confessed that four yeares and ane half since the devill came to the said kattrein Scots hous in the midst of the night wher wer present with them Margrat Mckennie in greinok Jonet Scot in gorrok, herself and severall otheres the devill was in the likeness of ane meikle blak man and sang to them and they dancit he gave them wyn to drinck and wheat bread to eat and they warr all very mirrie she consesses at that meiting the said Kettie Scot made her first acquantance with the devill and caused her to drink to him and shak hands with him

4 Shee confessed that at that tym the devill bad her betak her self to his service and it sould be weell with her and bad her forsak her baptizme, which shee did, delyvering her self wholley to him by puting her on hand to the crown of her head and the other hand to the sole of her fott and giveing all betwixt these two unto him

5 Shee confessed that at that tym he gave her a name and called her (Clowts) and bad her call him (serpent) when shee desired to speak with him

6 Shee confessed that at that sam tym the devill nipit her upon the right syd qlk was very painfull for a tym but thairefter he straicket it with his hand and healed it, this shee confesses to be his mark

7 Shee confessed that the devill lay thrise carnellie with her first at Achiness in the liknes of a Harie man 2ly in dun sed manare in the likness of ane gray horsse & 3ly in Roughe manire in the likness of a brown dog {marginalia-[?] denyed the devill lay carnallie w[it]h hir}

8 Shee confessed that she was at a meiting in the bridylinne with Jean king kettie Scot , Margrat Mckennie, and severall otheres wher the devill was x them in the likness of a brown dog the end of their meiting was to raise stormie wether thereby to hinder boats from the killing fishing

9 Shee confessed that shee, kettie Scot, and Margrat Holm, cam to Allan Oorr's hous in the likness of kats and followed his wif in to the chamber where they took a herring owt of a barrell and having takein a byt off it they left it behind then the qlk herring the said Allan his wyf, did eat and thairefter taking heavy desease died the quarrell was becaus the said Allan had put margrat holm owt of the houss where shee was dwelling wher upon shee threatened in wrath that he and his wif sould not be long together this aggrees with the tent artickle of Kettie Scot confessioun

10 Shee confessed that shee, kettie Scot, Margrat mckennie, and severall otheres went owt to the sea betwixt and the Land of Arran to doe skaith to boats and ships that sould com alongs they caused the storme to Increase greatly and meting with Colein Cambpells ship did Rive the sailles from her shee confesses that in that voyadge shee was soe over sett with ill weather that she took thef ever soone thairefter and did bleed much this aggrees with the 12 artickle of Kettie Scots confessioun

11 Shee confessed that when shee had bein at a meting sinc Zowle Last with other witches in the night the devill convoyed her hom in the dawing and when shee was com near to the hous wherin shee was a sevant her m[aste]r saw a waffe of him as he went away from her

12 Shee confessed that shee knew som witches caried meikle ill will at Blackhall vounger and Msinistelr John hamiltoun and would fain give them ane ill cast if they could Therefor abowt five weeks sinc Jean King, Kettie scot, Jonet holm, herself and severall otheres met together in the night at the Backgate off Ardgowand where the devill was with them in the likness of a blak man with cloven feett and derected som of them to fetch whyt sand from the shore and cast it about the gates of Ardgowand and abowt the minasteres hous bot shee sayes god wold not give them labertie to get any evill done, shee saves when they wer about that bussines the devill turned them in likness of kates by shaking his hands abov their heads, shee confesses also that in that bussines som wer cheifs and reignleaderes otheres was bot ffollowelres this aggries with the ii artickle of Kettie Scots confessioun

13 Shee confessed also that shee was with Kettie Scot, Marg[are]t mckennie, and severall otheres at a meting at kempock where they intendit to cast the Longston into the sea thereby to destroy boats and shipes wher they danceit, and the devill kissed them when they went away

These artickles wer confessed by the said Marie Lamount at Innerkyp the ___ day of march jajvij sixtie two yeares Befor us undersubscrivers.

Archibald Stewart feare of Blackhall

N. Hammiltonne minister at Innerkipp.

John Scot not[ary] at Innerkypp

Johne Houwie servitor to Blackhall

Hew Montgomerie

This transcription of Marie's confession was undertaken by Lorraine Murray and Carolyn Sutton for use in creating the dress for The Watt Institution.

The language and spelling are presented as found in the historical document. We have also used it on the interior covers.

References / Credits for artwork

Page 5, panel 1

Ardgowan Castle - Creative Commons

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ardgowan_Castle_19_May_2010. jpg

Page 16, Panel 1

Granny Kempock Stone - Creative Commons

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Granny Kempock Stone 3.JPG

Page 20, Panel 1

Ardgowan Castle

Same reference used as on note for Page 5, panel 1 as noted above.

Page 20, Panel 2

Inverkip Parish Church - Creative Commons

Panel was based on this reference -

 $https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Inverkip_Church_-_geograph. org.uk_-_337068.jpg$

Page 20, Panel 3

Shaw Stewart Mausoleum - Creative Commons

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mausoleum_of_the_Shaw-

Stewart_Family_-_geograph.org.uk_-_158233.jpg

Page 20, Panel 4

Granny Kempock Stone

Same reference used as on note for Page 16, panel 1 above.

Page 21, Panel 1

Lilias Addie grave marker on Torrieburn beach

References used - https://fifecoastandcountrysidetrust.co.uk/witches-trail/ And https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Torryburn_plaque_on_ Fife_Witches_Trail.jpg (Creative Commons)

Panel 3

This image is created mostly with reference from this newspaper photograph.

https://www.glasgowtimes.co.uk/news/trendingacrossscotland/20009882. witches-scotland-campaigners-shortlisted-scotswoman-year-award/

Panel 4

Scottish Parliament - Public Domain

Principle reference - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/

File:ScottishParliamentFront.JPG

Page 22, Panel 5

'Words not Deeds' Dress - reference as per artist photograph

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hat sould com alongs they caused the storme to inches with Colein Cambpells ship did Rive the sailles from hat voyadge shee was soe over sett with ill weather oone thairester and did bleed much this aggrees with Scots confessioun Shee confessed that when shee had b Last with other witches in the night the devill conv g and when shee was com near to the hous wherin sh et saw a waffe of him as he went away from her She w som witches caried meikle ill will at Blackhall you hamiltown and would fain give them ane ill cast if the weeks sinc Jean King, Kettie scot, Jonet holm, herse together in the night at the Backgate off Ardgowa them in the likness of a blak man with cloven feett fetch whyt sand from the shore and cast it about the sout the minasteres hows bot shee sayes god wold not ny evill done, shee sayes when they wer about that them in likness of kates by shaking his hands abov t alsoe that in that bussines som wer cheifs and reign sfollo [we]res this aggries with the ii artickle of K confessed alsoe that shee was with Kettie Scot, es severall otheres at a meting at kempock where Longston into the sea thereby to destroy boats and the devill kissed them when they went away The "She confessed that at that time he gave her a name and called her Clowts and bade her call him serpent when she desired to speak with him."