



ET LAMMIIS, BURGENSES DE BASTLEDEN

THE WITCHES OF BASILDON BOROUGH

The Witchcraft Act of 1542 made Witchcraft an offence punishable by death. This act was repealed five years later.

A new act was created in 1563 and demanded the death penalty for anyone found guilty for using witchcraft to commit murder.

Matthew Hopkins, the Witchfinder General began his career in 1644, tracking witches before torturing them to obtain a confession. He had been influenced by a book called 'Daemonologie' written by the future King James I. The book described demonology and reasons for prosecuting anyone associated with it.

Another book, 'Malleus Maleficarum' (Hammer of the Witches) was written by clergyman Heinrich Kramer and was printed in 1486. This publication laid out reasons for why witches should be exterminated within theological and legal terms.



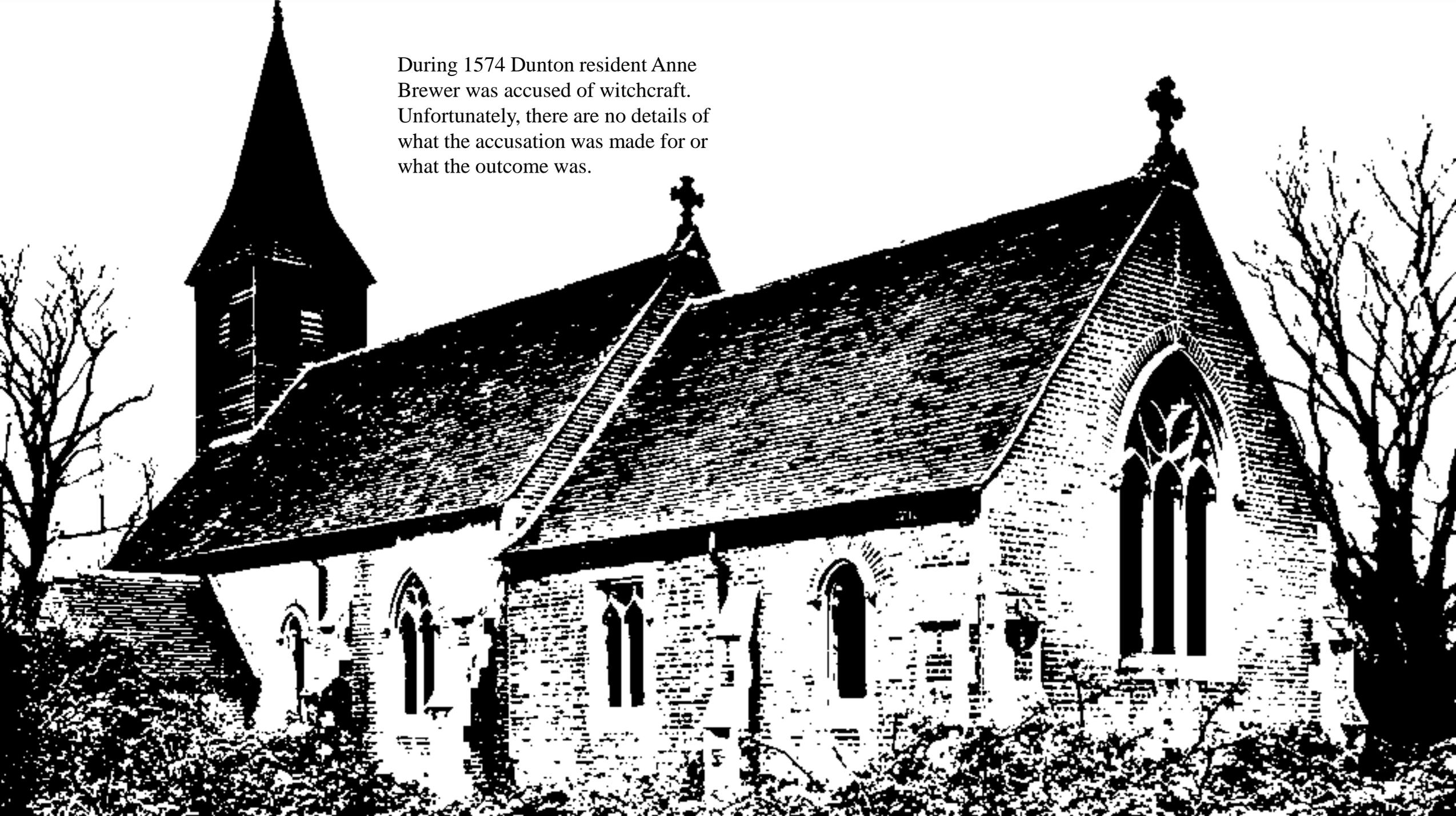
Hopkins was responsible for many deaths, including 19 in one day in Chelmsford, with another 4 dying in prison.

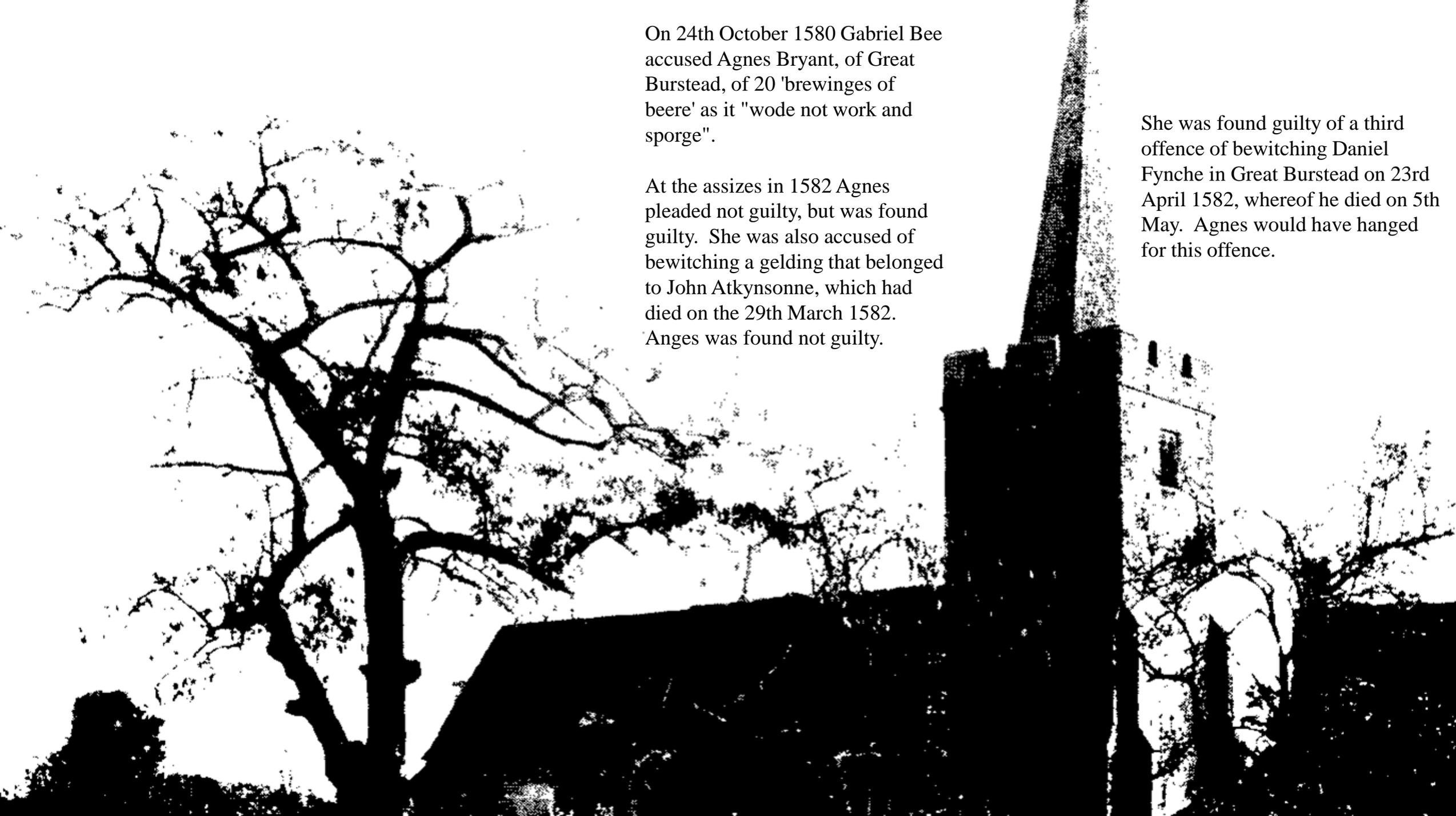
The area we now think of as Basildon Borough was not immune from the witch craze that swept across Europe.

The last execution for witchcraft in England was in 1684, when Alice Molland was hanged in Exeter. Scotland executed its last witch 20 years later. Law was passed in 1735 making it illegal for anyone in Great Britain to accuse another of witchcraft.

Matthew Hopkins died at his home in Manningtree in 1647. It is likely that he died of pleural tuberculosis.

During 1574 Dunton resident Anne Brewer was accused of witchcraft. Unfortunately, there are no details of what the accusation was made for or what the outcome was.

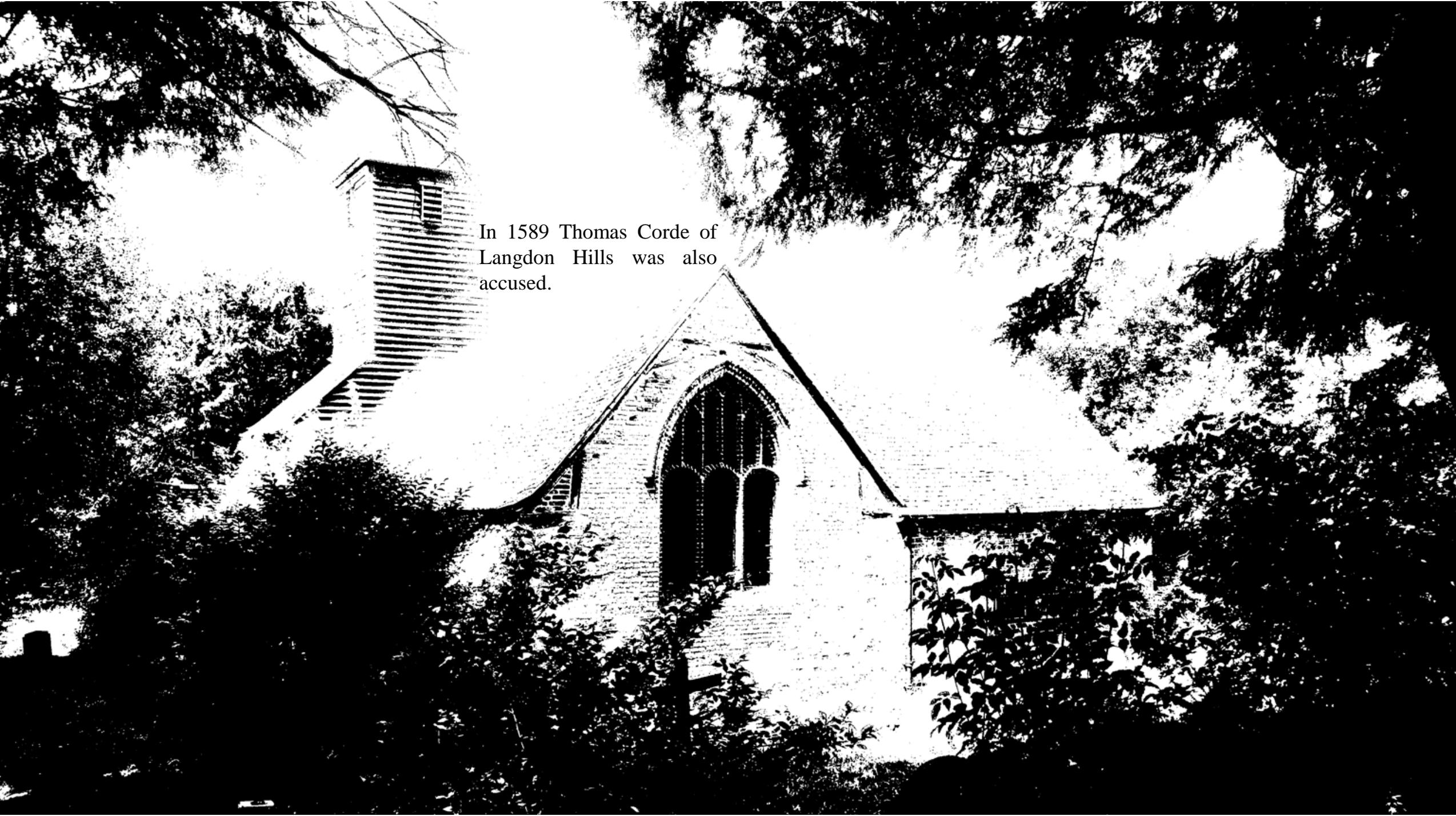




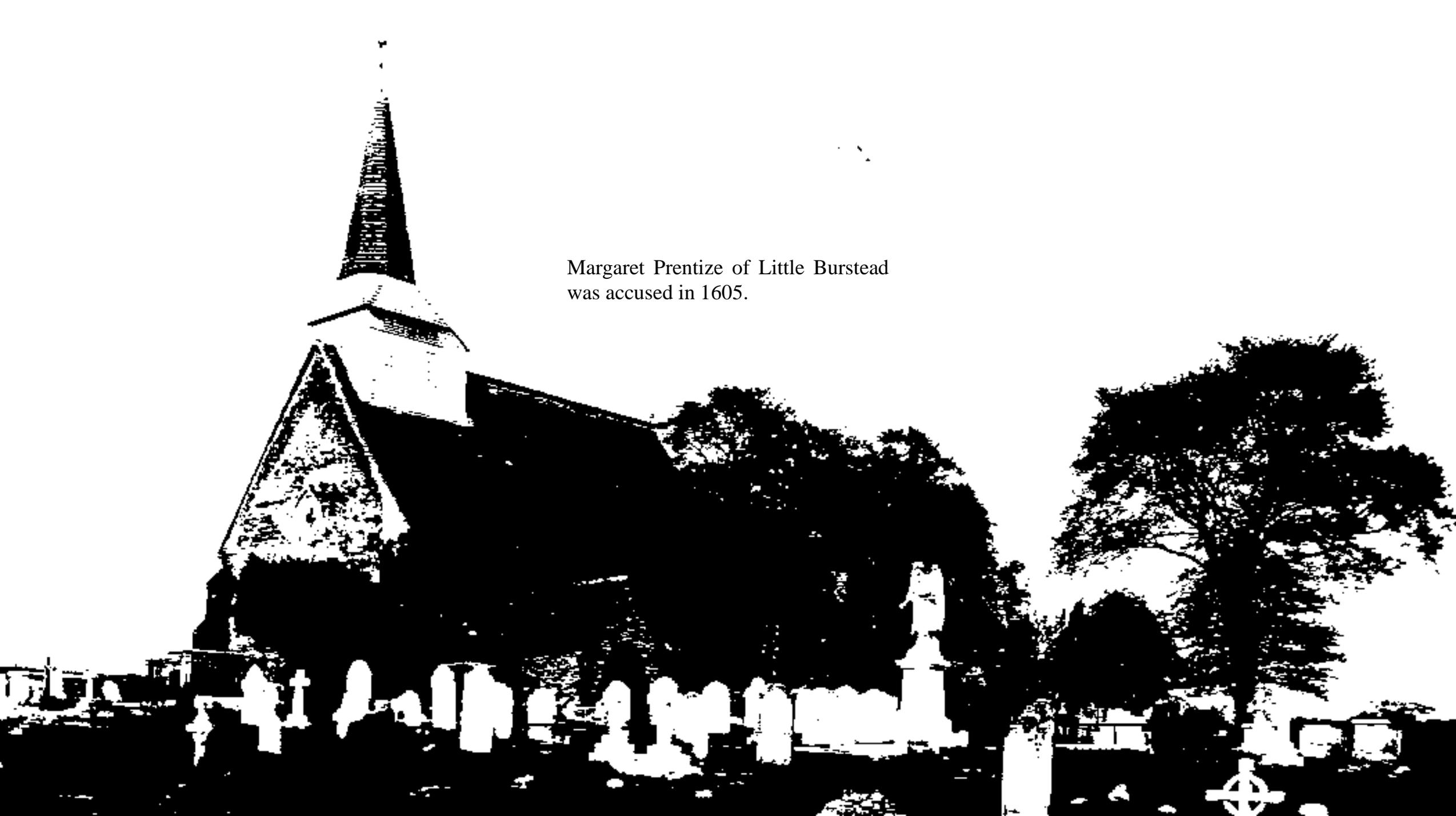
On 24th October 1580 Gabriel Bee accused Agnes Bryant, of Great Burstead, of 20 'brewinges of beere' as it "wode not work and sporge".

At the assizes in 1582 Agnes pleaded not guilty, but was found guilty. She was also accused of bewitching a gelding that belonged to John Atkynsonne, which had died on the 29th March 1582. Anges was found not guilty.

She was found guilty of a third offence of bewitching Daniel Fynche in Great Burstead on 23rd April 1582, whereof he died on 5th May. Agnes would have hanged for this offence.

A black and white photograph of a Gothic Revival style church. The church features a prominent steeple on the left side and a large, pointed Gothic window in the center. The building is surrounded by dense foliage, including trees and bushes, which partially obscures the structure. The image has a high-contrast, grainy appearance.

In 1589 Thomas Corde of  
Langdon Hills was also  
accused.



Margaret Prentize of Little Burstead  
was accused in 1605.



During April 1616 accusations of Witchcraft were made by Richard Tarling against John Scates, a weaver in Billericay.

His case was heard before the Assizes but it is not known what the outcome was. It is thought that Scates died in prison.

Mary Hurst, a spinster of Nevendon, was accused of bewitching William Hodge on 24 May 1653.

She was found guilty, 'convicted of felony by witchcraft' and remanded in gaol until 'she shall be delivered by due course of lawe'.

