

Ursula Kemp – witch

Most people believed in witches at this time, and Ursula was known for being able to break curses put on people by witches. After falling out with a neighbour in 1582, Ursula was accused of witchcraft by her neighbour Grace Thurlow.

Justice of the Peace, Bryan Darcy, talked to Ursula and her son Thomas, who was eight years old at the time. Thomas said that his mum kept four spirits. He described them as a grey cat called Tyffin, a white lamb called Tytтей, a black toad called Pygine and a black cat called Jacke. He said that he had seen his mother give her spirits beer and cake and let them suck blood from her body.



Ursula confessed to Bryan Darcy that she was a witch, and that she had these spirits, and that she had cursed her friends. It was common for women who were accused of being witches to confess to get a lighter sentence, and they often said other women were witches too. Ursula named 14 other women as witches.

All 14 women were put on trial in Chelmsford. Grace Thurlow said that she and Ursula had argued when Grace refused to employ Ursula as her baby daughter Joan's nurse. A few weeks later Joan fell from her cradle and died, and Grace believed that Ursula had cursed her baby. Grace then went back to Ursula for help for her leg, but refused to pay her for it, and so she thought Ursula had made her leg get worse.



Another neighbour, Alice Letherdale, had refused to let Ursula borrow some sand for scrubbing pots. Later her daughter Elizabeth had died, and Alice said she thought Ursula had cursed her too.

Ursula and one other woman called Elizabeth Bennet were hanged.