



Memorials

**Memorialising Injustice:
Remembering the Accused Witches of Scotland**

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Established memorials in Scotland.....	4
Contemporary memorials in Scotland.....	10
Diverse forms of memorialisation.....	20
International memorials.....	24
Concluding Reflections	29

Introduction

In Scotland, long overdue attention is now being given to remembering the people, mainly women, who were persecuted as witches during the historical witch-hunts. Between 1563 and 1736, the Witchcraft Act led to over 4000 people being accused of witchcraft or 'consulting with witches.' At least 2500 people were executed, around 85% of whom were women. This booklet highlights some of the ways that the stories of the accused witches of Scotland have been, and are being, memorialised.

Context

While the Scottish witch-hunts would have had a significant impact at the time, and in their aftermath across Scotland, there are relatively few monuments across the country to mark these events. In many places, this history has been erased from local memory or passed on with distortions that have been infused with the historic image of the 'witch' as a dark, malevolent force.

More recently, this history, in Scotland and internationally, has been the focus of campaigns to remember the accused and persecuted of the 16th and 17th century witch-hunts. This has involved highlighting the lives of the ordinary people who were accused and the significant injustices they experienced through the processes of accusation, torture and confession. At least 2500 people were brutally executed. The burning of the bodies of those convicted meant that for most, there was no burial place. Their lives were literally eradicated after death – so they experienced a physical and social death that must have had significant reverberations on their families and communities.

Action to remember the Scottish witch-hunts has been ongoing, with the emergence of local groups and activists working within communities to highlight these acts of injustice. This has raised questions about how to remember and acknowledge the people who were victims of the witch-hunts. Organisations, such as the National Trust, have also been exploring potential connections between their properties in Scotland and the period of the witch-hunts[1].

There is no doubt that memorialisation is difficult and requires sensitive reflections and considerations around traumatic and brutalising events such as the terror and persecutions that characterised the historical witch-hunts.

This booklet highlights a selection of historical and contemporary forms of memorialisation to remember the accused witches of Scotland. This work is continuing, and more monuments and forms of memorialisation are being created. So, while this overview is not comprehensive, it provides an indication of the different ways we might remember these historic injustices.

[1] C. Jones (2021) National Trust for Scotland: The Histories of the Witch Trials Report, National Trust for Scotland.

Some established memorials in Scotland



Commissioned in 1894 by philanthropist Sir Patrick Geddes, the cast iron fountain and accompanying plaque can be found in Edinburgh's castle esplanade. Designed by John Duncan, the fountain features a brass plate depicting Aesculapius and Hygeia, the Greek gods of medicine and health respectively. The theme of the depiction is said to represent the balance between good and evil, with the gods being accompanied by the image of a serpent and a foxglove (representing venom and poison). With our 21st century lens, the memorial is considered problematic by some, who suggest that the memorial further adds to the (incorrect) idea that those accused were witches. However, the foxglove, is more frequently used to heal rather than harm, not unlike the herbalists and healers among the accused. The commissioning of the memorial remains significant as Geddes chose to remind people that this fountain offering much needed drinking water, marked the spot where vast numbers of accused were executed.

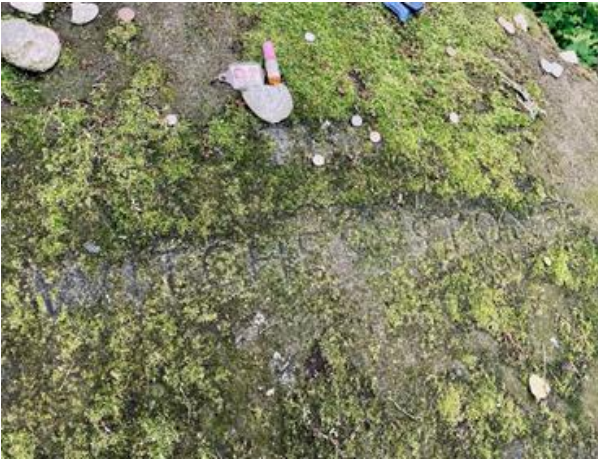
Today, visitors will notice it is regularly adorned with fresh flowers and tributes placed there in memory of the people executed here.

For more information see:

<https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/the-witches-well-edinburgh-scotland>

'Witches Stones'

Witches Stone, Boness



Photos courtesy of Craig MacInnes

Lying close to the graveyard of Carriden House is the Bo'ness 'Witches Stone'. While the stone itself is believed to be an ancient glacial boulder, its transformation into a memorial (through the addition of the words 'The Witches Stone') dates to the mid-twentieth century. The creator of the engraving is unknown however, local historians believe the stone's original purpose was that of a boundary marker for Carriden Muir, with the stone being also locally known as 'Muir's Stone'. This name might also denote the stone's proximity to the 'John Muir Way', an extensive nature trail dedicated to John Muir, the Scottish-born naturalist and founder of the American National Park system.

For more information see:

<https://falkirklocalhistory.club/around-the-area/houses-and-estates/carriden-house/>



The Witches Stone in the region of Spott Village, East Lothian, supposedly marks the location of the execution of Marion Lillie (the 'Ringwoodie Witch') in 1696/1698 (sources give both dates). The stone itself is unremarkable in appearance; however, it is located within a cast-iron enclosure with a sign (the 'Witches Stone') attached to the railings and a plaque which reads:

This stone has become a place to commemorate those local people who were once persecuted as witches. We cannot undo the hurt, but we can let their souls go free.

Around the stone are placed offerings of modern visitors, with the railings often adorned with flowers and trinkets to commemorate Marion Lillie and all who were taken before, and after, her. Archival documents exist and are available to view online for the stone. These documents detail a survey carried out in 1966 and an artist's rendition, dating from 1849, showing a far larger monument (possibly depicting one of the nearby ancient standing stones rather than the Witches Stone). These documents can be viewed at <https://www.trove.scot/place/57667>

For more information see:
<https://fabulousnorth.com/witches-stone-spott-village/>

Witches Stone, Monzie, Crieff

The Monzie Witches stone is an interesting memorial among witches' stone's as its origin is likely to hold equal fascination. Described as a 'bent' monolith due to the angular placement, the 1.7m/5ft tall stone is thought to have originally belonged (or at least been associated with) a nearby Stone Circle known as the 'Monzie Cairn'. As a memorial to the victims of the witch-hunts, this is interesting if we consider the Pagan practices that led to the creation of the ancient stone circles and the magical practices (turning into a bee in this case) that formed the witchcraft accusations. Equally, like our ancient ancestors, little is known of the memorial and its associated legend. The stone is thought to be a memorial to Kate McNieven, an accused witch who is said to have died on the spot where the stone now stands, after being rolled down the hill in a barrel and burned in 1615. Like others named in memorial markings, there is no (surviving) evidence to confirm Kate's existence, accusation or execution. Again, considering the association of the Stone Circle with this monument we gain a sense of how time alters perception. The ancient stone circle where magical practice was the norm, the monolith marking the site of the death of a 17th century 'servant of Satan' which is now viewed as a memorial to commemorate the false accusations and injustice against marginalised groups in society.

The Monzie Witches stone is another where historical surveys can be viewed online at <https://www.trove.scot/place/25448>

For more information see:
<https://www.jameselkingtonphotography.com/the-witches-stone-of-monzie>
<https://megalithix.wordpress.com/2013/10/06/witchesstone/>

Witches Stone, Forres



For more information see: <https://www.trove.scot/place/15807>

The Forres Witches Stone is another interestingly symbolic memorial. Awkwardly situated between a pavement, wall and road, the stone marks the site of execution for an unnamed accused woman. What adds to the power of this stone is this inconvenient placement. The trials themselves mark an uncomfortable chapter of history, something that cannot, and should not, be ignored and thus, the town architecture that is built around the memorial further honours this notion of the trials being built into the fabric of our being. Like the Monzie Witches Stone, the Forres Witches Stone is said to commemorate the site where victims were executed after being either thrown or rolled down Cluny hill in a barrel and set alight upon stopping. The stone's accompanying plaque reads:

From Cluny Hill witches were rolled in stout barrels through which spikes were driven. Where the barrels stopped, they were burned with their mangled contents. This stone marks the site of one such burning.

Unlike the Monzie Stone, here the plaque adds the disturbing detail that spikes were inserted inside the barrels, adding further horror to the memory of these executions

Witches Stone, Dornoch



The Dornoch Witches Stone is one of the few memorials that is situated in a private garden. The stone itself is small, with recent images giving it the appearance of a gravestone. Visible from the public road, the stone shows signs of significant decay although the inscription of '1722' remains largely visible. The inscription, and the memorial itself, commemorates the execution

of Janet Horne, who is cited as the last witch executed in Scotland. Both Janet (it is not certain if this was her real name) and her daughter were accused though fortunately her daughter avoided the horrific fate bestowed upon her mother. Janet, who some now believe may have been suffering from an illness such as dementia, was stripped, tarred and feathered before being dragged through the town in a barrel and finally burned alive. Unlike the other witches' stones, the Dornoch stone, while a memorial, includes a final injustice; Janet Horne was executed in 1727, not 1722. This highlights an interesting challenge with historical memorials, many seek to memorialise the event, but do not fully acknowledge that the event was an injustice against a marginalised group.

For more information see:

<https://burialsandbeyond.com/2022/10/23/the-last-witch-of-scotland/>
<https://www.scottish-places.info/features/featurefirst90267.html>

Witches Stone, near Fraserburgh



This stone is located south of Fraserburgh, in a wooded area referred to as Witches Hill and considered to be a place where people were burnt as witches. There are various sites in Aberdeenshire that are associated with the historic witch hunts including the Hanging Stone and the Lang Stone. The Witches' Stone is certainly part of local legend, although whether burnings took place at this site is unclear.

Witches Maze, Tullibole Castle, Crook of Devon

Poignantly this memorial can be found at the former home of Sir William Halliday and son Sir John Halliday, who were both actively involved in the persecution of the accused. In 2012 the current owner of Tullibole, Lord Moncrieff (the castle transferred from the Halliday's to the Moncrieff's through marriage in 1705) opened the memorial maze for the 11 victims of the 1662 Crook of Devon witch trials. The 33-metre-wide circular maze is formed from a beech trees maze with a central sandstone column upon which the names of the 11 victims are inscribed. The choice of a maze as memorial is interesting and significant as one could interpret this as representing the confusion and sense of loss experienced by the victims as they tried to navigate a circumstance and outcome that they couldn't escape.

For more information see:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-tayside-central-20085045>

Maggie Wall Monument, Dunning, Perthshire

The Maggie Wall monument is among the more 'traditional' style of memorial. The pile of square-cut stone is adorned with a monolith and cross however, the memorial breaks from the traditional when we see the roughly painted "Maggie Wall, burnt here as a witch in 1657". The exact date of the memorial's construction is unknown though the earliest known references to it are found in 1866. Adding to the memorial's mystery is the subject itself, Maggie Wall. No written evidence appears to exist that supports that Maggie Wall ever lived, or died, in Dunning (though this is not definitive proof that she did not exist as records of ordinary people are often erased or lost to time). In contrast, oral history in the area for Maggie, places her as both a member of a troublesome group campaigning against the election of a new minister and/or the secret lover of a member of the powerful Rollo family. Whatever her story may be, or if she ever existed at all, Maggie and her memorial exist today as a symbol of the victims of the witch trials.

For more information see:

<https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/monument-for-a-witch-called-maggie-wall>

<https://dunning.uk.net/maggie.html>

Grave site of Liliias Adie, Shoreline Torryburn, Fife.

Among all the memorials concerning the victims of the witch trials, this unassuming, yet monolithic, slab of sandstone is unique. This is the only (known) grave from the period itself, the site where the body of an accused person, an elderly woman named Liliias Adie was interred. Liliias was accused of being a witch, to which she confessed (probably under torture) and died in custody before her trial could take place. However, Liliias had not been found guilty and thus, could not be burned as a witch, but neither could she be buried in consecrated ground. Even in death a witch was considered a threat as they were believed to be easily resurrected by the devil (with such a creature being known as a Revenant). And so, Liliias was entombed in a wooden box beneath the waves of the Firth of Forth (witches cannot cross water so the devil would not be able get to Liliias to resurrect her), adding extra security by sealing her beneath the sand on Torryburn bay with the half-ton sandstone slab visible today. Unfortunately, Liliias would not find peace even in death, as large parts of her skeleton were stolen from the site in the 19th century. Her skull has never been found however photographs do exist. Although the site was never intended as a memorial, in time it has become one, with many honouring Liliias's memory as they would a loved one by visiting the grave to pay their respects. This unique story of Liliias has also created one of the most poignant memorials, with the images of her skull being used to forensically reconstruct her face, giving a human face to the victims of the witch-hunts.

For more information see:

<https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/liliias-adie-grave-marker-scotland>

A Selection of Contemporary Memorials in Scotland

Aberdeen - Gallus Quines & Deeds Not Words street art



'Gallus Quines & Deeds Not Words' was created by artist Carrie Reichardt for Aberdeen Street Art. It can be found in the city centre near St. Nicholas Church where those accused of witchcraft during the 1597 witch-hunt were imprisoned. It references the history of witchcraft accusations in Scotland alongside broader themes of empowerment and resistance. Various panels celebrate women who contributed to Aberdeen's history (including the suffrage movement, the Scottish Pagan Federation and WASPI women (Women Against State Pension Inequality)).

The Doric phrase 'Gallus Quines' means 'bold women' and the art highlights women who resist patriarchal structures, historically and contemporarily, while also noting the ongoing pursuit of equality.

Abernethy

The Abernethy memorial – due for installation in 2025 - is carved in sandstone and is a beautiful piece of art. At its heart are the names of the three women caught up in this time of persecution whilst a Rowan tree, with interlacing Celtic knot 'roots', symbolizes lives cut short but remembered. Thanks to a grant from Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust and commissioned by Abernethy Museum (where more information about the local witch hunts can be found) the memorial is due to be installed in 2025 outside Abernethy Williamson Hall on Kirk Wynd. The stone has been created by heritage stone carver David McGovern (from Monikie Rock Art).

Check <https://www.museumofabernethy.co.uk/> for more information including museum opening hours.

Ayr



'Jonet', a sculpture by local artist Vanessa Lawrence, was installed in 2024 outside the Cutty Sark Centre on Ayr High Street in remembrance of South Ayrshire's accused witches. It marked ongoing collaborative work between South Ayrshire Council and Remembering the Accused Witches of Scotland (RAWS). At least 64 people were accused under the 1563 Witchcraft Act in South Ayrshire.

Calder – Calder Witch Hunt

The Calder witch hunt exhibition is hosted at Kirk of Calder, Mid Calder and it is possible to go along, without booking, between 2-4pm on Sundays between May and September. There is a commemorative plaque in Union Square West Calder – 'Good Calder Folk Not Witches'. It remembers at least five women, executed in the Calder Witch Hunt of 1643-5. Funded by West Calder and Harburn Community Development Trust designed by local artist Calum McCarra – the construction is formed of a three-sided panel with other sides commemorating the local anti-slavery moment and the co-operative society.

For more information see: <https://www.calderwitchhunt.co.uk>

Corstorphine

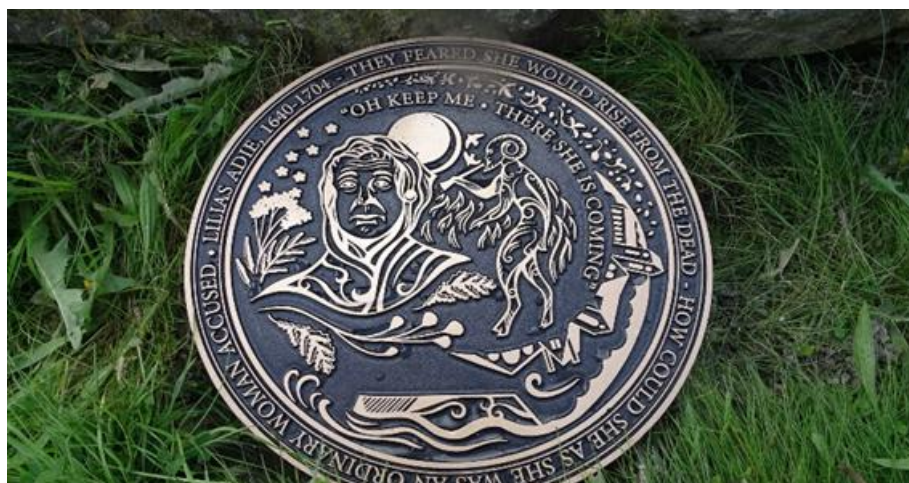
Perhaps intended both as an educational tool and memorial, the Corstorphine 1649 witch hunt plaque is an information board that provides the details of the seven locally accused people, three of whom were executed. The plaque was commissioned by The Corstorphine Trust and installed in St Margaret's Park. The site is located close to the old parish church where Beatrix Watson, one of the accused, was held.

The remaining six accused were Margaret Bell, Katharin Gib, Margaret Baillie, Marion Inglis, Elizabeth Scott and her uncle William Scott. Margaret Bell, William Scott, and Elizabeth Scott would be executed while Katherine Gibb died due to sleep deprivation and Beatrix Watson died by suicide while incarcerated.

For more information see:

<https://the-past.com/news/plaque-installed-to-remember-the-witches-of-corstorphine/>
<https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/heritage-and-retro/heritage/edinburgh-plaque-remembers-those-accused-and-killed-as-witches-3366371>

Culross, Valleyfield and Torryburn, Fife Coastal Path



The Fife 'Witches Trail' can be found along the Fife Coastal Trail and is marked by three bronze plaques in Culross, Valleyfield and Torryburn, installed in 2020. The trail commemorates the 380 accused of witchcraft across the area however, the plaques themselves focus upon Lillias Adie (1640-1704) who died in prison before trial and was buried on the shoreline at Torryburn, and the 32 accused of Culross. The Valleyfield plaque reads:

Lillias Adie, 1640-1704, An ordinary woman accused of "Lying with the Devil." An innocent victim of unenlightened times.

The plaque's images show a young woman in the clutches of the devil, she appearing to playfully dance while trapped between his hands. Interestingly to the right of the woman herbs are depicted, marking the association of the herbalist/wise woman and the devil. The Torryburn plaque, overlooks the beach where the resting place of Lillias can be found. This plaque again commemorates the life of Lillias and further reads:

*They feared she would rise from the dead – How could she as she was
an ordinary woman accused.*

The plaques imagery shows Lillias, with the Devil to her right and her sandstone grave beneath her. Again, there are images of herbs along the outside of the image along with the crescent moon suggesting the connection to earlier Pagan practices and the Devil (with the Devil here bearing strong similarity to the Pagan God Pan).

The Culross plaque depicts the larger scale of the witch hunts, placing a woman (again surrounded by herbs) in the centre of the image. Before her stands the town hall and a band of text reading “32 innocent women accused of being witches”. Behind her there appears to be a burial ground bearing 32 crosses, each representing one of the 32 accused and perhaps giving them the grave marker they never received at the time of their deaths. The border of this plaque reads:

*So many ordinary women were accused of being witches in Culross.
Innocent victims of unenlightened times.*

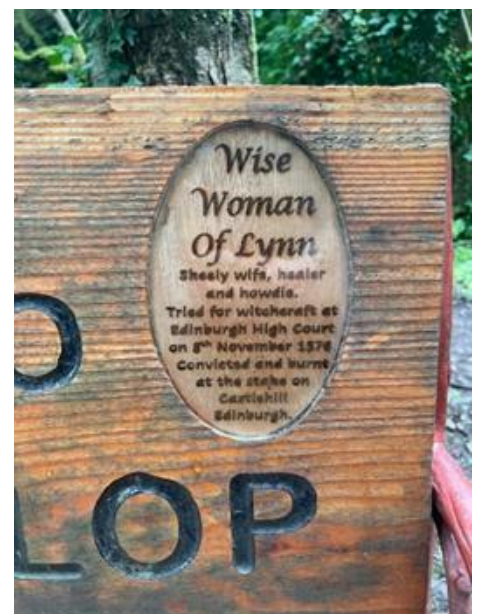
For more information see:

<https://www.differentia.co.uk/news/2020/10/2/fife-witches-trail>

<https://fifecoastandcountrysidetrust.co.uk/witches-trail/>

<https://www.raws.scot/post/launch-of-the-accused-witches-trail>

Dalry - Bessie Dunlop Bench



This seat is dedicated to Elizabeth (Bessie) Dunlop, a local healer and midwife, who was executed following a conviction for witchcraft in 1576. The bench features the name of Elizabeth, an artistic impression of her appearance and details of her occupation and fate:

Wise Woman of Lynn. Skeely wife, healer and howdie [midwife]. Tried for witchcraft at Edinburgh High Court on 8th November 1576. Convicted and burnt at the stake on Castlehill Edinburgh.

[North Ayrshire Heritage - Bessie Dunlop click to open](#)

Dundee - Grissel Jaffray Mosaic



Grissel Jaffray and her husband were accused of witchcraft with Grissel being strangled and burned at the stake in 1669 apparently at the point where the mosaic is now. Her husband was supposedly released. The mosaic is formed of two corresponding parts. One half of the image shows a cone filled with flames, and its counterpart, located at the opposite end of an arched walkway, features a matching cone filled with water. Further along at the intersection of Dundee's Peter Street and Seagate a further image of an "X" made from cobblestone can be found. This later mark is said to be the place of Grissel's execution. Further legend and rumour notes that the "Coveners Stone" in nearby Howff cemetery is the resting place of Grissel, however, this is unlikely given the burning of her remains and improbability that as a convicted 'witch' her remains would be placed in consecrated ground. The stone is more likely to be a marker of the meeting point of Dundee's trading merchant guilds.

For more information see:

<https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/past-times/2359381/black-magic-the-history-and-brutal-demise-of-witches-in-tayside-and-perthshire/>

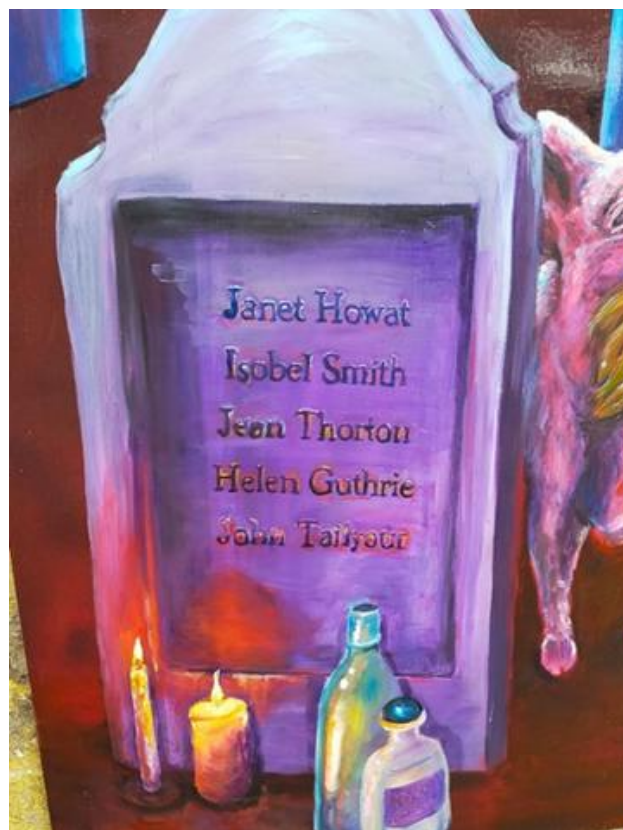
<https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/grissel-jaffray-memorial>

For the Convener's Stone: <https://secretscotland829724255.wordpress.com/2024/02/02/the-howff-conveners-stone/>

Forfar

The Forfar Witch Memorial is a small cenotaph designed by Marie and Mark Cashley and bears many of the characteristics we have come to recognise through this booklet. First is the noting of the phrase “Just People” at the base, again highlighting that we are not memorialising supernatural beings of great evil, we are remembering wrongly accused ordinary people. Above this the stone is engraved with 22 dots, each one symbolising one of those victims. The circular arrangement is poignant, reminiscent of the outline of a stone circle, perhaps symbolising the persecution of those who remained connected to Scotland’s ancient religions. The broken circle could also be symbolic of the cycle of these events, connecting to modern witch hunts as a call to end these practices of demonising marginalised individuals and communities.

Forfar Mural Trail



One of a series of murals depicting Forfar’s history, “The Accused” mural depicts a cemetery scene, notable as burial was not afforded to the accused, who were denied a final resting place. Within the image created by Skye Rose Collaborations, we find a group of women engaged in what could be a sabbat ritual. In the foreground there is a grave marker bearing the names of Janet Howat, Isobel Smith, Jean Thorton, Helen Guthrie and John Tailyour. Also of note is the sky which features 54 stars, symbolising the 54 accused during the period of the witch hunts.

For further information on the mural trail see:

<https://visitangus.com/get-inspired/heritage-trails/forfar-murals-trail/>

Orkney Islands – Gallow Ha

Located at Gallow Ha in Kirkwall, the engraved stone marks the site of the area's public executions and was erected in 2019 in memory of the 72 victims of the witch trials. The engraved stone features the image of a sundial to symbolise the healing of wrongs through passage of time. Surrounding the image is the phrase “they wur cheust folk”, the phrase is written in the Orcadian dialect and translates to “they were just folk”, recognising the injustice committed against the accused. The stone was procured and engraved by local stone mason Colin Watson and led by the Orkney Heritage Society (and supported by several local groups/authorities).

For more information see:

<https://orkneyheritagesociety.org.uk/projects/orkney-witchcraft-trial-memorial/orkney-witchcraft-memorial-project/>

<https://scottishpf.org/the-memorial-project-commemorating-the-victims-of-the-orkney-witchcraft-trials/>

See Orkney Heritage Society (2020) for an interesting article on the installation of the stone[1].

Paisley - Maxwellton Cross Memorial, and Memorial Stone at Gallows Green



The last mass execution for witchcraft in Western Europe took place in Paisley in 1697 when seven people (Margaret Lang, John Lindsay, James Lindsay, John Lindsay of Barloch, Katherine Campbell, Margaret Fulton, and Agnes Naismith) were executed on the Gallows Green on 10 June 1697.

[1] Orkney Heritage Society (2020) Commemorating the Victims of the Orkney Witchcraft Trials, Special Edition of the New Orkney Antiquarian Journal Vol. 9

One man, John Reid, died in prison. All had been accused of witchcraft after 11-year-old Christian Shaw, daughter of the Laird of Bargarran became ill, with claims that she was being tormented by a group of witches. The horseshoe is said to mark the spot at a crossroads in the town (between George St and Maxwellton St) where the ashes of the executed were buried. In 2008 a bronze tondo was installed to replace the original horseshoe (whose disappearance was associated with the 'witches curse' on Paisley). The tondo goes beyond marking the spot of death, to highlighting the injustice of these executions stating:

"Pain inflicted, Suffering Endured, Injustice Done"

A modern stone that takes the form of a carved granite slab is in place at the site of the Gallows Green and stands against a wall to the rear of the Green. It was installed as a more recent marker of these executions.

Find out more about this and the witch-hunts in Renfrewshire by getting in touch with Renfrewshire Witch Hunt 1697 on Facebook.

Penicuik





Unveiled in 2025 at Trinity Church, this memorial honours eleven women from Penicuik who were persecuted during the 1600s Scottish Witch Hunts. Believed to have been held—and some to have died—on these grounds, the site now offers space for reflection.

The sculpture, featuring eleven forget-me-not flowers, symbolizes each woman. Their names are etched into a plaque, restoring dignity to lives once silenced. An accompanying information board shares their stories—including one remarkable account of three women who requested a trial, were found not guilty, and saw their accuser charged instead.

The memorial location can be found here - <https://www.visitscotland.com/info/see-do/penicuik-witch-trials-memorial-p3296231#:~:text=A%20information%20board%20and%20small,who%20suffered%20during%20th is%20time>

Prestonpans



Locally known as 'Athena' for the residential sub development where she is located, the Andy Scott galvanised steel statue was erected in 2011 as a tribute to the 81 accused, convicted and executed during the 16th and 17th century. The statue takes the form of a woman reading a book, with her period dress composed of leaf-like forms. Significantly when speaking of the statue, Scott highlights the desire to show the accused as a strong and proud woman, not a victim. While there is recognition of the victimisation of those accused, there is once more acknowledgement that they were, first and foremost, ordinary people who were dehumanised for possessing extraordinary wisdom, skills and bravery or (knowing or unknowingly) rejecting social norms of the period. This also memorialises another significant event in Scotland's witch hunts, with the accused of Prestonpans being publicly declared as innocent in 2004.

For more information see:

<https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/athena-memorial-statue-scotland>

Diverse forms of memorialisation

While ‘traditional’ memorials are in place across Scotland, recent campaigns to remember the people accused during the historic witch-hunts have shown considerable creativity in how they set out to remember, memorialise and educate. Below, we highlight a few of the many recent, current and emerging works that aim to highlight the injustice of the witch-hunts and to mark the lives and deaths of those who were persecuted.

Exhibitions

Ayr – and Ayrshire exhibition – Remembering the Accused Witches of Scotland



‘A Godlike Manner: The Accused Witches of South Ayrshire’ at the Carnegie Library, Ayr, was an exhibition created by Remembering the Accused Witches of Scotland based on the witch-hunts of Ayr and South Ayrshire. The exhibition took place between Friday 22 November 2024 and Wednesday 15 January 2025 and featured a memorial to the 64 accused witches of South Ayrshire. The exhibition highlighted the lives of some the accused and accusers in Ayrshire including Agnes Campbell, Patrick Lowrie and the Reverend William Adair. The exhibition welcomed many people to the library and a series of public talks and workshops on the lives of the accused of South Ayrshire has been ongoing across the region.

See: <https://www.raws.scot> for further details.

Artwork and Performance by The Creative Coven



The Creative Coven have organised a number of events aimed at remembering the accused witches of Scotland. The Coven hosted a major event in Edinburgh in 2024 to remember the accused, and in collaboration with RAWs, organised a National Day of Remembrance on 4 June 2024. Focused on artistic and creative forms of memorialisation, the Coven have organised plays, exhibitions and diverse artwork that highlight the lives and deaths of those accused under the Witchcraft Act.

For more information on the Creative Coven, see: <https://www.rowanmorrison.co.uk/> and Creative Coven 1563 Facebook page.

Witches in Word, Not Deed: Heritage interpretation design project by Carolyn Sutton

Carolyn Sutton's work has been exhibited in many parts of the country. The 'Witches in Word, Not Deed' exhibition commemorates thirteen Scottish women accused and persecuted for witchcraft during the 16th-18th centuries. Many of her works are now on display at local museums and have been exhibited at particular events across Scotland.
See Witches in Word, Not Deed on Facebook

Podcasts

Podcasts have also fulfilled a function more recently, by providing a forum for remembrance as well as education and discussion:

The Thing About Witch Hunts podcast (US) Sarah Jack and Joshua Hutchinson

Witches of Scotland podcast (Scotland) Claire Mitchell and Zoe Venditozzi

Witch Hunt – Susan Morrison and Louise Yeoman, BBC Radio Scotland

In 2025, Witches of Scotland, Claire Mitchell and Zoe Venditozzi, also published a book 'How to Kill a Witch' based on their podcast series and accompanied this with a Witches of Scotland tartan which is available via their website <https://www.witchesofscotland.com/>

Remembering Injustice: The Movement to Memorialize Scotland's Witch Trials with Margaret Malloch

Books

Here is a small selection of the many works of fiction and non-fiction that have been published in recent years.



Street names

In 2019, five streets in South Queensferry were named after Accused Witches - Helen Thompson, Marion Dauline, Marion Stern, Marion Little and Isabel Young, although the streets only bear their surnames.

In 2021, Kilwinning named a street after Bessie Graham, this was down to the hard work conducted by Heather Upfield, local historian and member of Remembering the Accused Witches of Scotland (RAWS). Heather's story is available on the website www.raws.scot and you can read about the Kilwinning Witch-hunts in her publication: Heather Upfield (2020) The Five Women of Kilwinning, Kilwinning Heritage Publication.



Photo courtesy of Heather Upfield and Lorraine Quinn



In Lochay, St Monans a street has been named after Maggie Morgan, Maggie Morgan Drive. Find out more about Maggie Morgan who was accused as a witch in East Neuk of Fife in 1651 at: <https://www.raws.scot/post/accused-witches-of-fife-maggie-morgan>

International Memorials

A growing number of memorials have been erected across the world to memorialise the persecutions of the historical witch-hunts. Again, we provide examples below of a few – including perhaps the most famous of all, the Salem Witch Hunt.

In the Norwegian Arctic, in Vardø in the north of Norway, the Steilneset memorial consists of a long wooden corridor with 91 windows, one for each victim. It was erected at the site of the executions that took place in this country in the 1600s. During the witch hunt of the seventeenth century, Vardø was the town in Norway with the highest number of convictions and executions for witchcraft. A total of 91 people were convicted and burnt at the stake in Finnmark between 1600 and 1692. Next to the corridor is an installation by the artist Louise Bourgeois, who specialised in the visual representation of emotional pain and trauma: a chair in flames. This collaborative effort between Louise Bourgeois and architect Peter Zumthor is part of the National Tourist Routes project.

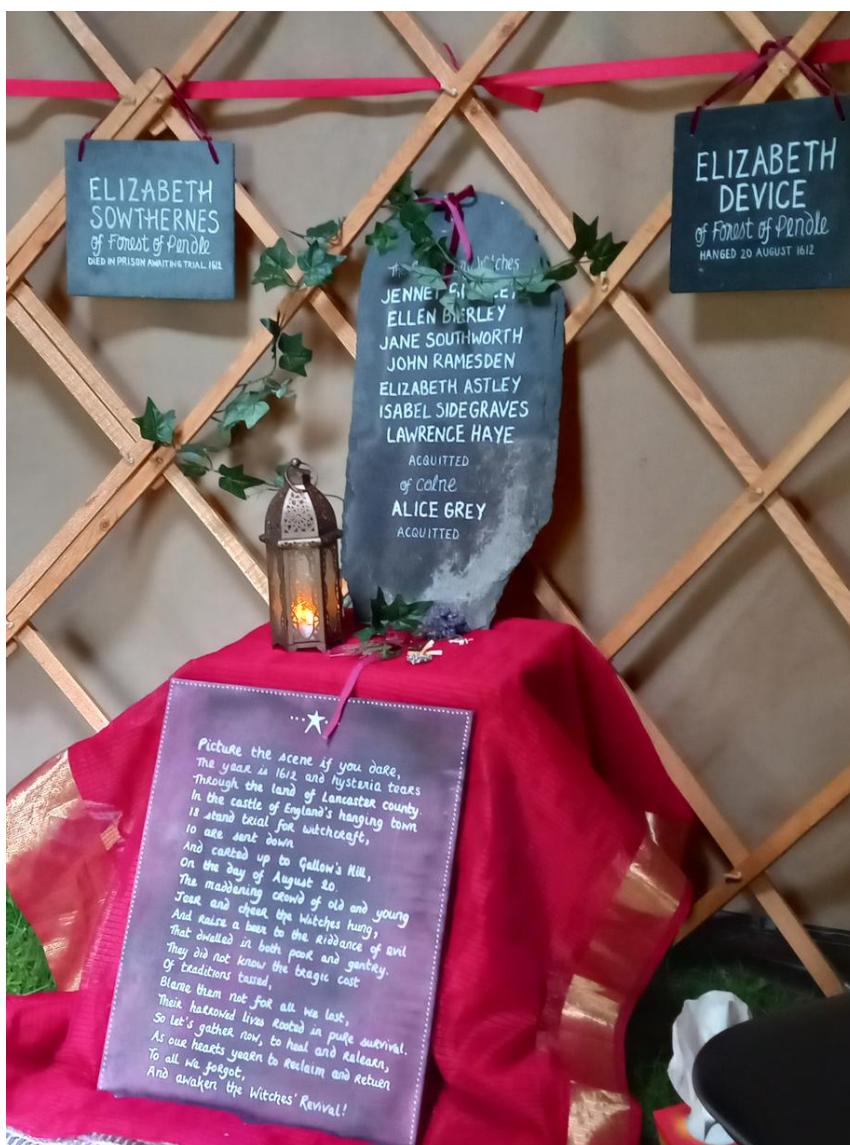
Elsewhere, museums have been established as part of the process of commemoration such as the Anna Goldi Museum in Switzerland. Anna Göldi was the ‘last witch’ to be executed in in 1782 in Europe and was exonerated in 2008, by the government of the canton of Glarus. This posthumous exoneration acknowledged the illegality of her trial and a formal recognition of her innocence and the injustice of her conviction. A play was made about her life, and a museum was established to publicise her story. An eternal flame burns in her memory at the court where she was condemned to death.

In March 2023 a plaque was unveiled in Islandmagee, County Antrim, to commemorate the last witch trial of nine alleged witches on the island of Ireland. Martina Devlin had campaigned for the plaque since 2014 to remember the 'lingering injustice'. Sadly, councillor Keith Turner rejected a proposed line on the plaque declaring the nine people, who were accused of making themselves tiny and entering through keyholes in order to torment their accuser, were innocent. He argued that the council had no authority to clear their convictions. The Islandmagee witch trials have been very considerably remembered in a project Witches of Islandmagee based at <https://w1711.org/>

Pendle and Lancaster, England

A number of projects have commemorated the accusation and executions of the Pendle Witches, who were executed at Lancaster Castle in 1612.

Pendle Witch Trials



The Salem Witch Trial Memorial

For the memorialisation of the injustice of the witch trials there is perhaps no better example than the (arguably) most famous of them all; the Salem Witch Trials of 1692. The event in the small New England village resulted in the execution of 20 people (19 by hanging and one pressed to death under heavy stones for refusing to enter a plea). Several others died in prison while awaiting trial. Some of those convicted were pardoned and compensation issued to their families in 1711 by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The remaining 11 people who had been convicted were fully exonerated in 2001 and in 2022, Massachusetts officially exonerated Elizabeth Johnson Jr., the last of the convicted individuals.



Adjacent to Salem's Charter Street Cemetery rests a small area enclosed on three sides by a low granite wall, this is the Salem Witch Trial Memorial. While one of many memorials throughout Salem, this memorial is notable as an example of injustice remembered. To enter the memorial's space, you must first pass over a stone threshold engraved with the words of the victims, such as those by Mary Bradbury's "I do plead not guilty, I am wholly innocent of such wickedness". These proclamations spoken by the victims alone could stand as the memorial, with each enforcing a stark recognition that this site commemorates innocent victims yet, being asked to walk over them is symbolic, making you wonder if you are playing the role of the bystander during the trials themselves, bearing silent witness to the injustice as it played out in court. However, what makes the Salem Witch Trial Memorial a powerful example of memorialising injustice is further emphasised by what lies within the space. Extending out from the walls are 20 slabs (or shelves) of stone, one for each of the victims. Each stone records the name, date, and manner of death for each of the victims.

In this memorial we are not being asked to remember lives once lived or even lives lost. Instead, we are forced to acknowledge that these were 20 lives violently and needlessly cut short. Seldom do we visit memorials that so plainly and starkly remind us of how the individuals died, and even less often of the nature of these horrific and violent deaths. While we are given the victims' names, this is all we are given, we leave knowing no more of these people other than their violent ends, 19 times we are confronted with the word “Hanged”, and once “Pressed to Death”. It is thus a memorial commendable for its ability to highlight and impart the injustice and trauma of the victims of the witch trials upon its visitors.

See <https://www.charterstreetcemetery.com/witchtrialsmemorial> for more details about the memorial.

Salem as living memorial of injustice against the accused and the witch

While the Salem Witch Trial Memorial is itself a powerful and poignant example of how we can memorialise injustice, it is not the only example of such memorialisation in Salem. On approaching Salem's main street, we find a memorial of quite a different kind, a statue of Elizabeth Montgomery in the guise of Samantha, the main character of 1960's tv show 'Bewitched'. As a memorial, the statue has proven controversial, with many viewing it as insensitive or making a mockery of the real-life cost that came with being branded a witch in Salem. However, there is a contrary view that places this a memorial to the injustice of the demonisation of the identity of the witch and alternative social cultures.

Unlike 17th century Salem, 21st century Salem proudly proclaims itself as 'Witch City'. The area is abundant in alternative and witch-themed retail stores and attractions, some educational, some not so much. Again, there are grounds to view this as profiting from the suffering and executions of the victims of the witch trials, adding further injustice to their memory by commodifying their suffering. Yet, this has also allowed Salem to become something of a pilgrimage for many subcultures, most notably those who identify as witches as this is one of few locations in the world where the practicing witch is fully welcomed and catered for. Where once 20 people were executed on baseless claims of being a witch, Salem is now a haven for those who are different, it is a place where their cultures, beliefs and needs are taken seriously, welcomed and even celebrated. Salem has become a town that has defied its history by allowing the identity and image of the “witch” to be reclaimed and reshaped into a positive light.



The Bewitched statue can then thus become a memorial of the injustice done to the identity of the witch (note; not those accused of being witches but actual practitioners of witchcraft). With the statue representing the witch not as the demonised “hag”, but as a human who is kind, compassionate, and powerful. It becomes a beacon that proclaims Salem as a stand against injustice of the marginalised. Significantly, the “Bewitched” statute stands on the site of the former land of John Hathorne, one of the judges in the 1692 trials, arguably permitting the statue a further act of defiance and recognition of the injustice Hathorne enacted upon the accused and the proliferation of the demonisation of the witch identity.

With these two memorials then, the question of how we memorialise injustice depends entirely upon what we are memorialising. In Salem, the witch trials and Elizabeth Montgomery are (arguably) recognising two different events, the injustice of marginalisation and the reclamation/recovery of identity. The former asks us to recognise the violence committed against 20 individuals who were not witches and the latter asks us to recognise that a “witch” is not a demon nor a servant of the devil, they are humans like the rest of us.

Other campaigns to remember the accused in the US include the Connecticut Witch Trial Exoneration Project. See also The Thing About Witch Hunts Podcast and <https://connecticutwitchtrials.org>

Concluding Reflections

It is notable that where memorials exist, they provide multiple functions, serving as a reminder of a specific event or person, and engaging the community with the memory in its midst. Memorials often provide a space for reflection and memory-work – and many of the existing memorials are strewn with flowers and personal effects from people who have come to visit and to remember.

The history of the witch hunts in Scotland, as elsewhere, has been remarkably overlooked and recent campaigns have called for both local and national memorialisation as a priority. The campaigns have drawn together campaigners from different parts of the country, different political persuasions and with different aims and objectives. There have been distinctions between the development of local memorials and collective (albeit not entirely united) activity towards a national memorial. The latter has been subject to considerable controversy – who should build it? Where? What form should it take?

Finding an appropriate way to memorialise injustice can be challenging; many of the forms we have highlighted here are testament to that – as well as to the creativity that has accompanied efforts to find appropriate forms of memorialisation. A memorial is more than a grave marker; it can serve as a reminder of events that arouse both anger and compassion, particularly in a modern world where these injustices persist. We see equal challenge in memorialising enslavement and our national historic legacies as groups call for recognition of the problematic pasts of our nation and its leaders. Whether it is the event, the victims or both, there is a difficulty in representing and memorialising trauma and violence in a manner that all will accept. However, this does not negate the need for such memorialisation.

For the 4000+ people accused of witchcraft in Scotland, our efforts to memorialise serve as reminders of what happened to ordinary people trapped and frightened by a series of events out of their control. By remembering this historic legacy of injustice, perhaps we will be increasingly reminded of the ongoing injustice in our world today and what we can do to address this.

Check out further resources at www.raws.scot

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Remembering the Accused Witches is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation campaigning to raise awareness of the ordinary people who were accused of witchcraft across Scotland during the early modern period.

