



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 This act was repealed five years later.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.



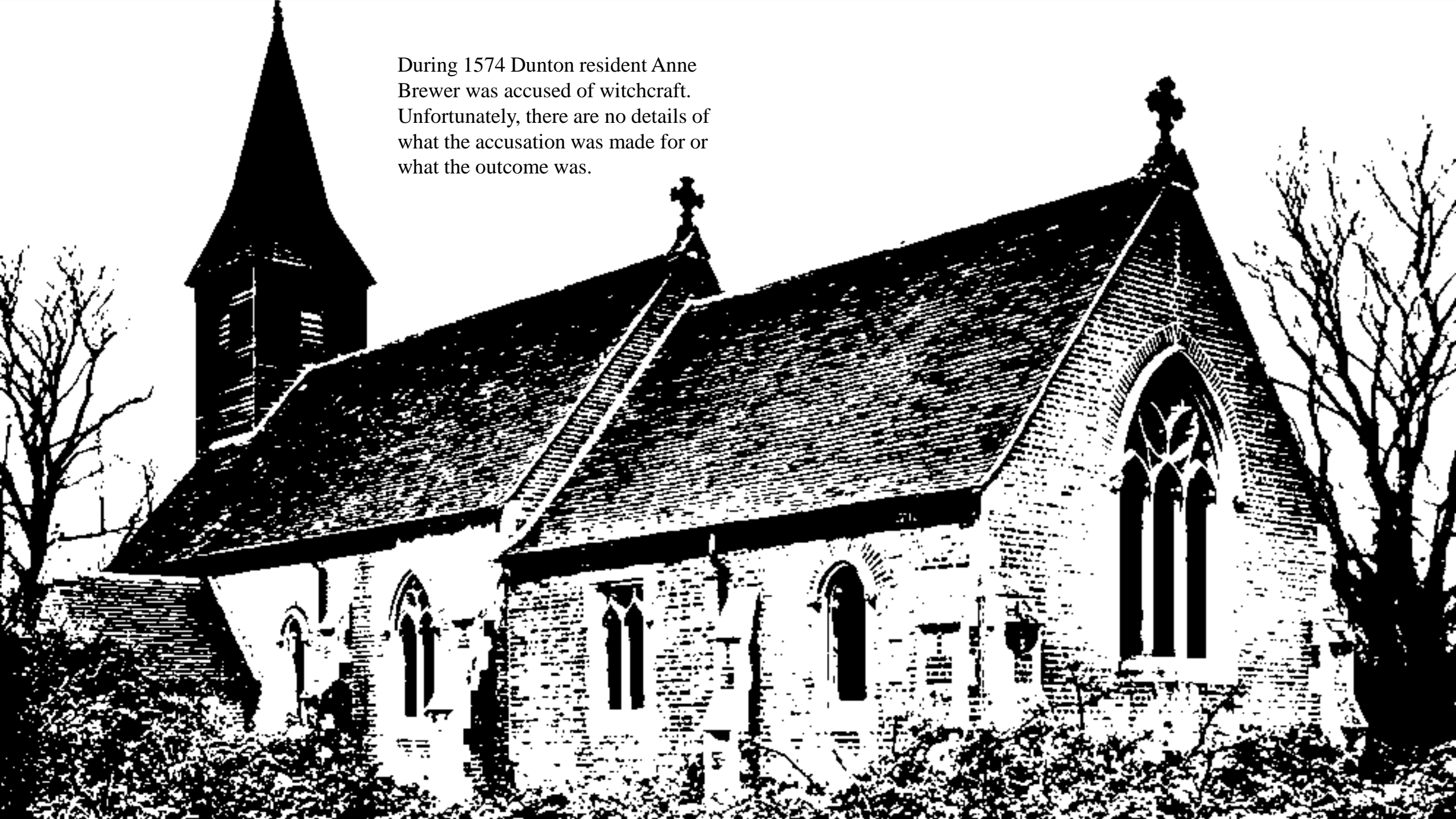
Hopkins was responsible for many deaths, including 19 in one day in Chelmsford, with another 4 dying in prison.

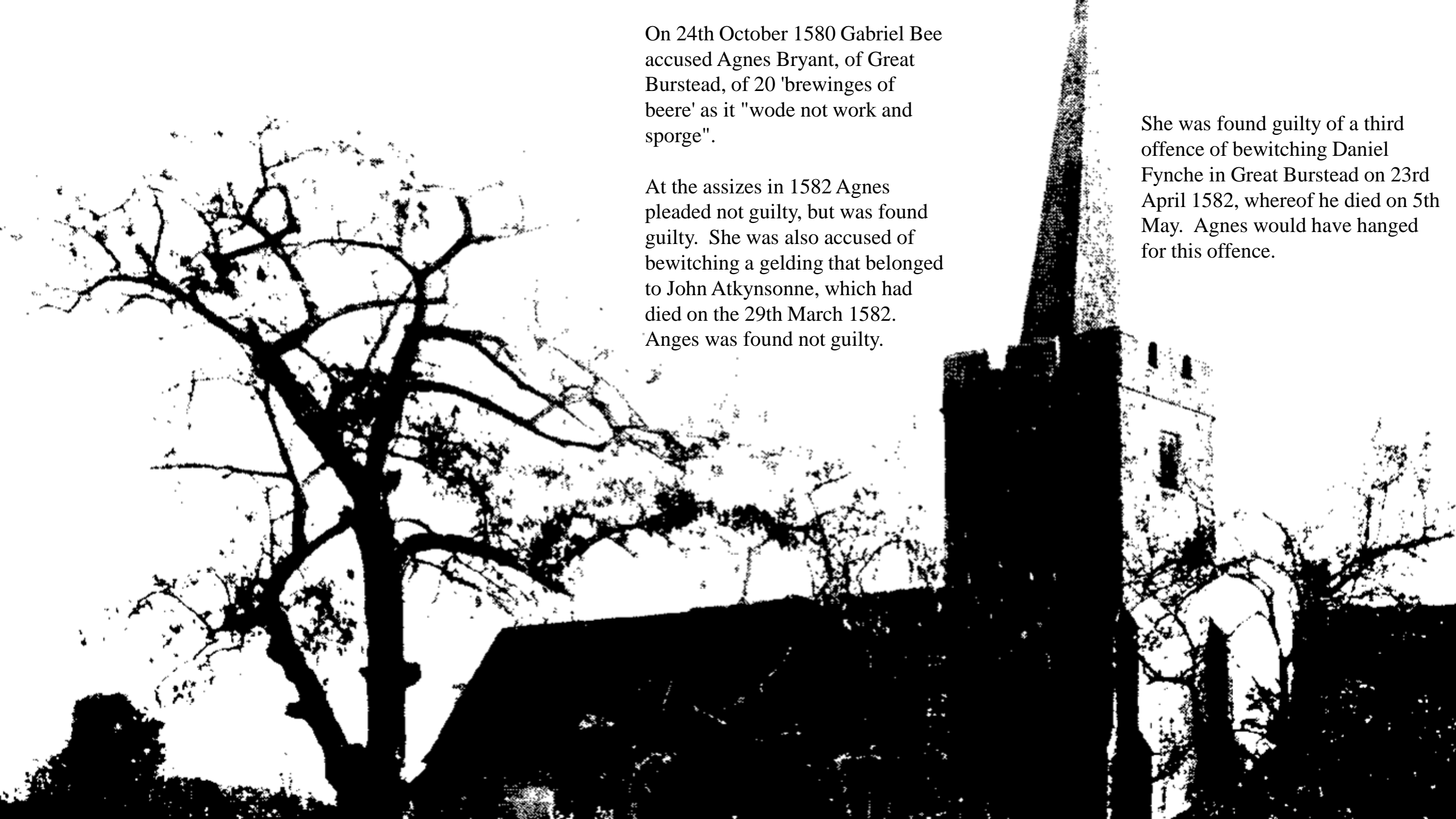
The area we now think of as Basildon Borough was not immune from the witch craze that swept across Europe.

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.

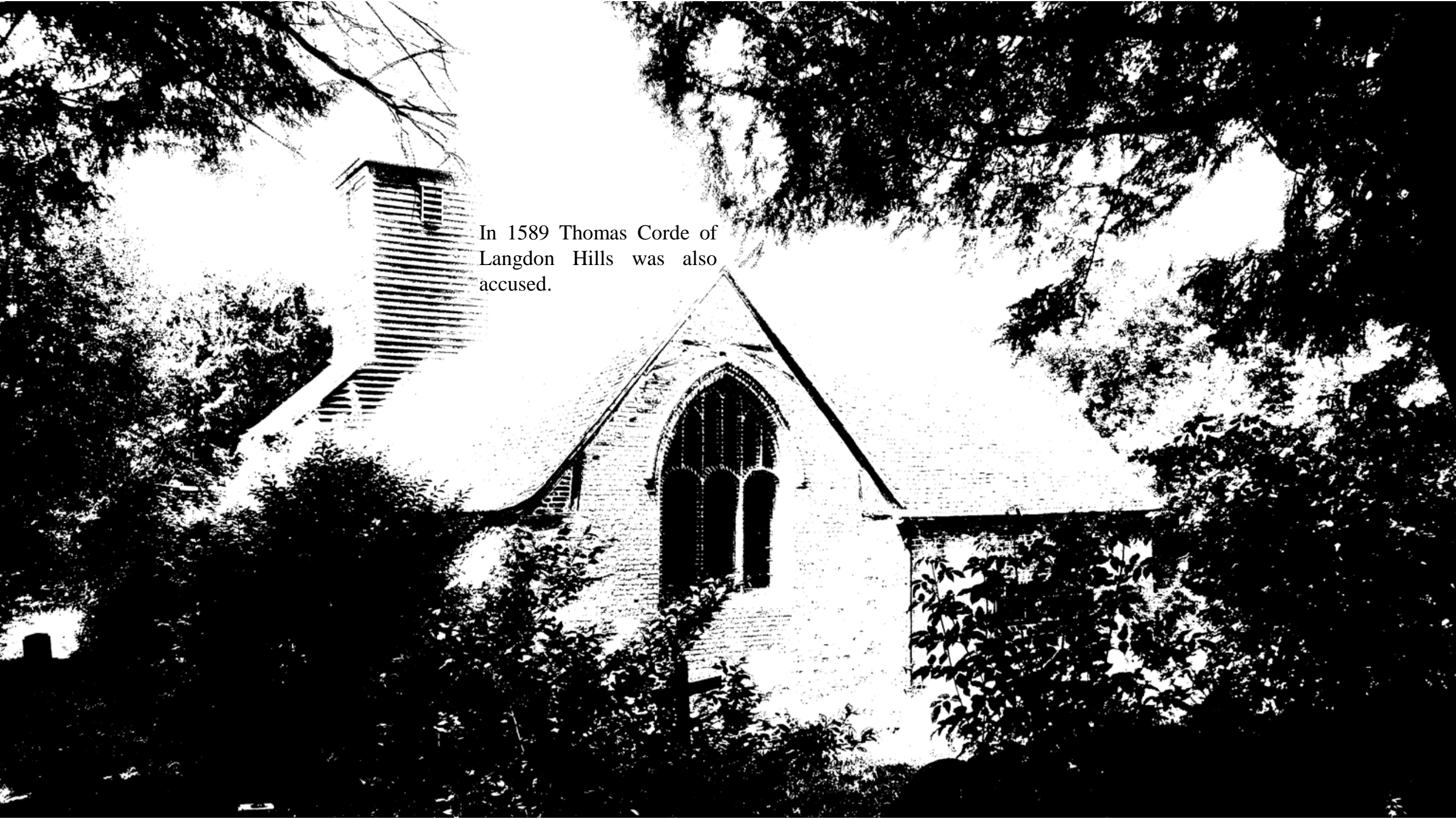


A black and white photograph of a church with a tall, pointed steeple and a large, leafless tree in the foreground. The church is a stone building with a prominent steeple. The tree is large and has many bare branches. The sky is bright and overexposed.

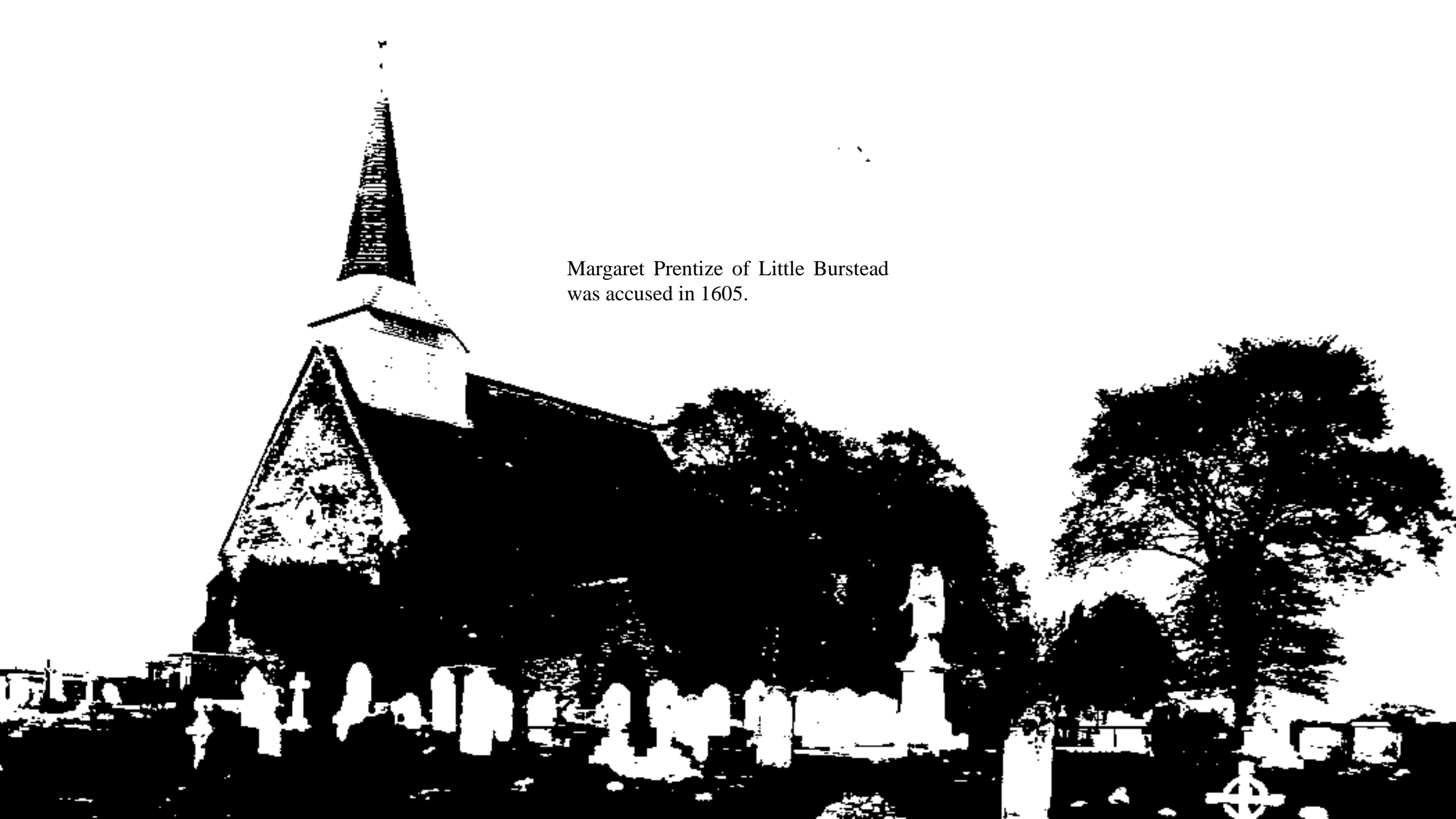
On 24th October 1580 Gabriel Bee
accused Agnes Bryant, of Great
Burstead, of 20 'brewinges of
beere' as it "wode not work and
sporge".

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.



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'.

