



Crime and Punishment

Seend

WITCHCRAFT

The ridiculous notion of witches and witchcraft still prevails amongst the lower sort of people, as the following account will sufficiently evince: A few days ago, at the Village of Seend, in Wiltshire - a report prevailed, that a woman who was dangerously ill of a putrid fever was bewitched, and this report excited the curiosity of numbers of her neighbours to go and see her. The fever attending the dying person was so high, as to render her delirious, and in that state she often cried out, *she is pinching me to death*. This left it beyond a doubt to the credulous vulgar, that an old woman who had long unfortunately been considered by them to be a witch, was the cause of her torment; and near a hundred of these *wise* people went instantly to the supposed witch's house, procured a rope, tied it about her middle and carried her to a mill pond, where they cruelly gave the old accustomed discipline of ducking. On throwing her twice or three times headlong into the water, and being unable on account of her cloaths [sic] to keep her under, they were perfectly convinced of her power of witchcraft, and supposing the discipline might deter her from exercising any further cruelties to the poor woman, they suffered her to go home. The poor woman's fever, however, increasing they went again the next day to the supposed witch's house, determining to give her another ducking; but were happily prevented by a Magistrate, who was accidentally informed of their intentions; by whose means it is probable, the poor old woman escaped falling a sacrifice to their resentment. — This story, with all its circumstances, being related to a person late a school master, who now resides in the neighbourhood of Meer [sic], we hear, he has humanely drawn up a *curious* Receipt for the cure of Witchcraft, which he distributes gratis to all who apply for it. **Reading Mercury - Monday 15 March 1773**

Bath, March 10.

A few days ago, at the village of Seend, in Wiltshire, a report prevailed that a woman, who was dangerously ill of a putrid fever, was bewitched, and this report excited the curiosity of numbers of her neighbours to go and see her. The fever attending the dying person was so high as to render her delirious, and in that state she cried out "She is pinching me to death". This left it beyond doubt to the credulous vulgar, that an old woman, who had long unfortunately been considered by them to be a witch, was the cause of her torment, and near an hundred of them went instantly to the supposed witch's house, procured a rope, tied it about her middle and carried her to a mill-pond where they cruelly gave her the old accustomed discipline of ducking, or throwing her two of three times headlong into the water, and being unable on account of her clothes to keep her under, they were perfectly convinced of her power of witchcraft, but supposing this discipline might deter her from exercising any farther cruelties to the poor woman, they suffered her to go home; However, the woman's fever increasing, they went again the next day, determined to give her another ducking, but were happily prevented by a Magistrate, who was

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accidentally informed of their intentions, by whose means it is probable the poor old woman escaped falling a sacrifice to their resentment. **Leeds Intelligencer Tuesday 23 March 1773**

OPC Note

A similar report appears in the Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette - Thursday 11 March 1773 - but sections are illegible