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MID SUFFOLK Curious History

The Witch of Eye

One of the earliest tales of witchcraft relates to Margery Jourdemaine, The witch of Eye, trialled in 1441 with Thomas Southwell and Roger Bolingbroke, accused of using sorcery to predict the date of the death of Henry VI.



The Green Children



In the 12th century, two green-skinned children appeared in Woolpit, speaking an unknown language and eating only raw broad beans. The boy died but the girl adapted, later claiming they came from an underground world called Saint Martin's Land, where it was always twilight and inhabited by green people.

The Green Children



Malekin

An invisible spirit befriended one of the maids at Dagworth Hall and introduced herself as Malekin – a human child, stolen by the fairies from the fields near Lavenham and forced to live with them for seven years. The Malekin story is one of the earliest appearances of the 'changeling' motif in English folklore.



Malekin



Fairies in Stowmarket

In the 1840s Rev Arthur Hollingsworth, vicar of Stowmarket, recorded narratives of local residents who reported seeing fairies – particularly around Tavern Street in the town.



The Plague Town

In 1663, the plague swept through Needham Market, isolating it for two years. Chains erected at both ends of the parish, served as psychological deterrents. Chainbridge, Chainhouse Road, and Chain House Farm mark the locations where townspeople exchanged money—soaked in vinegar for sterilization—for food left by those outside the exclusion zone. Additionally, 'The Causeway to Barking Church' is believed to be a corruption of 'The Corpseway,' where plague victims were taken for burial.



NEEDHAM MARKET

The Plague Town



EYE



WETHERINGSETT

The Bogus Cleric

George Ellis, 'Rector' of Wetheringsett was convicted in 1888 of being a fraud and served seven years in Dartmoor Prison. As a result the Marriages Validation Act was passed which recognised all of the marriages Ellis had performed 'as valid as if the same had been solemnised before a duly ordained clergyman of the Church of England'.



DEBENHAM

Debenham Church



Debenham Church

In the Domesday Book of 1086, Debenham has two churches listed against its name: St Mary's, which still exists, and St Andrew's which fell into a pit and was never seen again. Or that's the story, anyway, immortalised in a poem and in local legends. St Andrew's, it is claimed, disappeared from the face of the earth in the 13th century and nothing whatsoever remains, other than the Domesday mention and the legend.



BRAMFORD

Blood Hill



Blood Hill

Blood Hill overlooks the Gipping Valley and has long been linked to tales of a past battle. In 2006, archaeologists uncovered Roman-era graves, including a woman and child who had suffered brutal sword attacks, suggesting a violent event that may have contributed to the hill's ominous name.



River Gipping

