



PRESS RELEASE

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Many politicians misleadingly use ‘witch hunt’ as a dismissive label when being held accountable for their own lies, corruption and misdeeds.

Whereas, actual witch hunts in the UK are conducted by HM Office of the Witchfinder General, a secretive arm of law-enforcement concerned with enforcing ‘magus laws’, and ‘Protecting the public from the unnatural since 1645’.

DARTFORD, KENT – 30 June 2023 – Elsewhen Press is a publishing house specialising in high quality, entertaining and thoughtful speculative fiction from talented authors, including many debut authors. One of our more established authors is **Simon Kewin**. Perhaps best known for science fiction novels, Simon is, nonetheless, an accomplished author of fantasy stories that often include witches. His *Witchfinder* series of books is predicated on the premise that the role of Witchfinder General in Britain was instigated by parliament, and indeed has survived to the present day in the form of HM Office of the Witchfinder General. The OWG is now a shadowy arm of law-enforcement concerned with enforcing the ‘magus laws’, and trying to ensure that the general public are not aware of the evil forces that are at large. Their mission statement is ‘Protecting the public from the unnatural since 1645’. But the main protagonist, Danesh, an officer of the OWG, questions their approach and attitude towards all magic users not just those who are a danger to the public. Indeed, he objects to the Office’s motto ‘*Maleficos non patieris vivere*’, which while literally translating as ‘*You shall not suffer an evildoer to live*’ is widely interpreted to mean ‘*Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live*’, thanks to the misogynistic translation in the King James Bible. The ambiguity of Danesh’s evolving position is a compelling sub-plot in the *Witchfinder* series of books. The OWG’s treatment of magus law-breakers today is rather more nuanced than in the 15th century, and Simon Kewin’s witty writing style makes the books both thrilling and engaging.

The third novel in the series, *Head Full of Dark*, is a book close to the author’s heart, revealing, as it does, certain autobiographical details about him – including his own connection to the Office of the Witchfinder General. While names have been changed to protect the innocent, it remains to be seen how the Office will respond to one of their own breaking ranks in this way. He very much hopes that he will be able to produce further (redacted) reports on the battles waged against malign magic use and supernatural incursion – and that he does not, for example, get consigned to Oblivion never to be heard from again...

In reality, of course, the actual role of Witchfinder General was one that Matthew Hopkins invented and assumed for himself in 1645 during the English Civil War, pretending to have been commissioned by Parliament, and using many techniques from King James’ own book *Daemonologie* to discover witches. Like many entrepreneurs, cult leaders and fascists since, Hopkins made a fortune from the gruesomely lucrative business of ridding communities of an imagined enemy, often used as a cover by power-hungry locals to remove their rivals or exact revenge. Within a couple of years, however, his methods and motivation were called into question by a popular puritan cleric who described them as “abominable, inhumane and unmerciful” and Hopkins was forced to retire in 1647. He wrote a book justifying his own methods and the results of his hunts, *A Discovery of Witches*, which became a popular legal text especially in the Colonies, and is widely recognised as having had considerable influence on the Salem Witch Trials in Massachusetts some 45 years later. Ironically, the man responsible for the deaths of at least 300 women was reputed, in contemporary legend, to have died in one of his own ducking stool ‘trials’ after he had himself been accused of witchcraft; but more prosaically, in fact, he actually died not long after his retirement, either of tuberculosis... or a curse.

Today narcissistic politicians, especially in English-speaking nations, use ‘witch hunt’ as a conveniently dismissive label when being held accountable for their own lies, corruption and misdeeds. While hoping to leverage the perception that witch hunts were unfair and often conducted for ulterior motives, they fail to recognise that unlike modern judicial reviews and law enforcement activities, historical witch hunts were conducted without evidence and against (usually poor) victims who had neither the resources, nor often the wit, to defend themselves. The two situations could not be more different. Perhaps those politicians are trying to identify themselves with the poor defenceless ‘wise women’ typically portrayed in popular myth as the victims of witch hunts – which, given the largely misogynistic behaviour displayed by those same politicians, would be a cynical irony if it weren’t so contemptible.

Head Full of Dark, the third book in Simon Kewin’s *Witchfinder* series, is available as an eBook from today and in paperback from 31st July 2023.



Notes for Editors

About Simon Kewin



Simon Kewin is a pseudonym used by an infinite number of monkeys who operate from a secret location deep in the English countryside. Every now and then they produce a manuscript that reads as a complete novel with a beginning, a middle and an end. Sometimes even in that order.

The Simon Kewin persona devised by the monkeys was born on the misty Isle of Man in the middle of the Irish Sea, at around the time The Beatles were twisting and shouting. He moved to the UK as a teenager, where he still resides. He is the author of over a hundred published short stories and poems, as well as a growing number of novels. In addition to fiction, he also writes computer software. The key thing, he finds, is not to get the two mixed up.

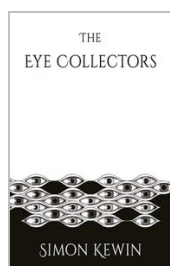
He has a first class honours degree in English Literature and an MA in Creative Writing (distinction). He's married and has two daughters.

About the Witchfinder series

Stories of HM Office of the Witchfinder General: Protecting the public from the unnatural since 1645

The *Witchfinder* series is a different type of police procedural. For a start, it's about a department of law enforcement that you've never heard of. They investigate crimes that you're never supposed to hear about, criminals that you really don't want to know about, using methods that it's best not to ask about.

Find out more at <https://bit.ly/WitchfinderSeries>



Book 1: The Eye Collectors

*When Danesh Shahzan gets called to a crime scene, it's usually because the police suspect not just foul play but **unnatural forces** at play.*

Danesh is an Acolyte in Her Majesty's Office of the Witchfinder General, a shadowy arm of the British government fighting supernatural threats to the realm. This time, he's been called in by Detective Inspector Nikola Zubrasky to investigate a murder in Cardiff. The victim had been placed inside a runic circle and their eyes carefully removed from their head. Danesh soon confirms that magical forces are at work.

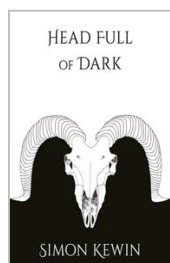
Book 2: The Seven Succubi

Of all the denizens of the circles of Hell, perhaps none is more feared among those of a high-minded sensibility than the succubi.

The Assizes of Suffolk in the eighteenth century granted the Office of the Witchfinder General the power to employ 'demonic powers' so long as their use is 'reasonable' and 'made only to defeat some yet greater supernatural threat'. No attempt was made in the wording of the assizes to measure or grade such threats, however – making the question of whether it is acceptable to fight fire with fire a troublingly subjective one. Now, in the twenty-first century, Danesh Shahzan, Acolyte in Her Majesty's Office of the Witchfinder General, had been struggling with that very question...



Book 3: Head Full of Dark



Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?

There is clearly someone in the Office of the Witchfinder General who is working for or with English Wizardry, and Danesh and the Crow are determined to track them down. It might even be one of the Lord High Witchfinders. Who can they trust? Can Danesh even trust the Crow? To ensure the traitor is not alerted, Danesh conducts an off-the-books investigation under cover of an inquiry into a cold case. But not all cold cases stay cold; not all dead witches stay dead; and not all traitors stay hidden... and what is the significance of the goat's skull?

About Elsewhen Press

Elsewhen Press is an independent publisher of Speculative Fiction. Based in the UK, in the South East of England, Elsewhen Press publishes titles in English, in digital and print editions, adopting a digital-first policy for most titles. Established in 2011, Elsewhen Press is an imprint of Alnpete Limited.

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