Witchcraft in Early-Modern Scotland: A Central Government’s Role in Witch Panics

By: Chloe Chaplin and Faculty Advisor Dr. Kathy Callahan
Murray State University, History Department

North Berwick Witch Trials
- Newes from Scotland (1591) written in response to trials
- Central government took an active role in prosecution of the accused-granted commissions
- Between 70-80 involved in the panic
- Ties between some of the accused and the storms that affected James VI ship

James VI and Witches
- Firm believer in malevolent witches
  - James VI and Anne of Denmark caught in storms while travelling - blamed witchcraft
  - Demonology (1597) published shortly after Panic of 1597
  - Became intimately involved with 1590-91 and 1597 panics

Witch Panic of 1597
- Around 80 individuals involved in the panic
- Centrally delegated commissions much like North Berwick
  - Central authorities pushed further trials, local authorities resisted
- Return of link between charge of treason and witches