

= The Trial of Elizabeth Gadge =

" The Trial of Elizabeth Gadge " is the third episode of the second series of the British dark comedy anthology television programme Inside No. 9 . It was written by Reece Shearsmith and Steve Pemberton , and directed by Dan Zeff . It first aired on 9 April 2015 on BBC Two . The story follows a 17th @-@ century witch trial . Elizabeth Gadge , played by Ruth Sheen , stands accused of witchcraft by inhabitants of the village of Little Happens , including characters played by Sinead Matthews , Jim Howick , Paul Kaye and Trevor Cooper . Magistrate Sir Andrew Pike , played by David Warner , has summoned famed witch @-@ finders Mr Warren and Mr Clarke , played by Shearsmith and Pemberton , to try Elizabeth , but is more concerned with bringing people to the village than finding the truth .

The episode was not intended to be a parody of period dramas , but instead to reflect the absurdity of real witch trials . To that end , the characters take the events of the episode seriously , which leads to much of the humour . The writers ' influences included Witchfinder General , The Crucible , Monty Python and Hammer Horror films , while the names of the witch @-@ finders were a tribute to actor Warren Clarke . Many critics responded positively to the episode , praising the humour ? especially that deriving from the use of archaic language ? the writing and the performances . Some , however , considered " The Trial of Elizabeth Gadge " of lower quality than the previous two episodes .

= = Production = =

The second series of Inside No. 9 was written in 2014 , and then filmed from the end of 2014 into early 2015 . The writing process for " The Trial of Elizabeth Gadge " began with Shearsmith 's suggestion of a witch trial as a plot idea , and the writers then worked out the details of the setting . The episode was filmed , mostly in story order , on location in a barn at the Chiltern Open Air Museum . The same location had previously been used for Doctor Who and Horrible Histories . In addition , concurrent with the filming of " The Trial of Elizabeth Gadge " , a Drunk History sketch starring Luke Pasqualino ? a previous Inside No. 9 guest star ? was being filmed nearby . Shot in December , " The Trial of Elizabeth Gadge " was the first episode of the second series to be filmed . The barn was extremely cold during filming ; Pemberton joked that , unlike on Titanic , they would not be digitally adding breath in the production process .

" The Trial of Elizabeth Gadge " was written to mimic genuine witch trials , some transcripts of which Pemberton and Shearsmith had read as part of the writing process . The fixation of the characters on " teats " and " suckling " , for instance , was something Shearsmith had seen in authentic trials . One writing challenge concerned the need for new information to be revealed with each of the trial 's witnesses ; this is what shaped the structure of the script . For Shearsmith , given that the trials were already absurd , they cannot be parodied . The humour of the episode , for him , comes precisely from the fact that the characters take the events so seriously , and do not see this absurdity . Pemberton said that the pair aimed for authenticity , and did not seek to produce a spoof of a period piece . To that end , he was complimentary of Yves Barr , a costume designer with whom the writers had worked for a number of years , who did " a fantastic job creating this period on a shoestring " . Given that , in his view , " people don 't do this period " , Shearsmith was excited to film something set in the 17th century . The episode was the only period piece in the first two series , but the writers expressed willingness to do another ; they felt that the setting showed that they really could go anywhere with the programme .

As each episode of Inside No. 9 features new characters , the writers were able to attract actors who might have been unwilling to commit to an entire series . " The Trial of Elizabeth Gadge " starred Pemberton and Shearsmith as Mr Warren and Mr Clarke respectively , along with David Warner as Sir Andrew Pike and Ruth Sheen as Elizabeth Gadge . Warner had previously worked with Pemberton and Shearsmith on The League of Gentlemen 's Apocalypse , and the writers thought him very well @-@ suited to the role as Sir Andrew Pike . Shearsmith considered Sheen a very capable actress , and complimented the way she played Gadge as a serious character ;

Pemberton felt she added " gravitas " to the role . Sinead Matthews starred as Sarah Nutter , Jim Howick as Thomas Nutter , Paul Kaye as Richard Two @-@ Shoes , and Trevor Cooper as George Waterhouse . Shearsmith was particularly pleased to have Howick appearing in the episode . As he had appeared in Horrible Histories , he added , for Shearsmith , " a weight of royalty " . The " comic coupling " of Howick and Matthews had characters who were originally , mistakenly , named " Gadge " , but this did not fit with the characters ' relationship with the titular Elizabeth . The couple were renamed " Nutter " , a reference to Alice Nutter of the real @-@ world Pendle witch trials .

In addition to the credited actors , the crew had a crowd of extras for one day of filming . Around 12 extras were used ; budget constraints allowed this number for a day , or five extras for two days . This constraint led to a change in the script , seeing the crowd removed from the trial . Although uncredited , Goody Two @-@ Shoes was played by an actress who had appeared in Psychoville , one of Pemberton and Shearsmith 's previous productions , as Joanne Dunderdale , an understudy . The writers were complimentary of Cooper 's performance ; they said that he was almost " conducting " the crowd of extras , in that they were noisy when he was shouting , and quiet when he stopped .

In addition to the use of visual effects , the closing sequence required ADR due to the sound of rain on the original filming . The visual effects were the director Dan Zeff 's idea , and the writers were pleased that they were within budget . They also serve to tie the final shot to the opening shot of the episode , as both feature a raven . Scenes that were cut down in the editing process included the initial meeting between the witchfinders ? Warren and Clarke ? and Sir Andrew Pike , and a private discussion between Warren and Clarke after the first day of the trial . The extended versions of the scenes featured an explanation about the Devil being found in everyday objects and a discussion about the stages of torture respectively . Shearsmith expressed frustration that these extra scenes could not be included on the DVD release .

= = Plot = =

In 17th century England , the magistrate Sir Andrew Pike (Warner) summons the witch @-@ finders Mr Warren (Shearsmith) and Mr Clarke (Pemberton) to the village of Little Happens . Elizabeth Gadge (Sheen) has been accused of witchcraft , and Pike is excited that the news has attracted the attention of outsiders . Pike and Warren already seem convinced of Gadge 's guilt , but Clarke remains sceptical .

Elizabeth 's case is brought to trial the following morning , with the assistance of the cobbler Richard Two @-@ Shoes (Kaye) . Elizabeth 's daughter Sarah (Matthews) and son @-@ in @-@ law Thomas Nutter (Howick) testify that they have witnessed Elizabeth sucking from the teat of a furry creature , and speaking to a mouse (believed to be a demon) . Elizabeth claims that Sarah and Thomas have falsely accused her , and want to be rid of her to make room in their house . George Waterhouse (Cooper) testifies against Elizabeth , and the accused is questioned . When others in the courtroom begin laughing at her responses , Warren declares that the next person to laugh will be executed as a witch . After an argument breaks out , the witch @-@ finders and Pike decide that the rest of the trial should be conducted in private . Elizabeth is pricked with a needle to test her for the devil 's mark . A remorseful Sarah tries to profess her mother 's innocence , but Warren does not believe her . Elizabeth confesses that she has been prostituting herself to Two @-@ Shoes , who wears a fur coat , but Two @-@ Shoes denies this , and the trial is adjourned . Throughout proceedings , Warren is accusatory while Clarke is more cautious ; Pike , meanwhile , is fascinated both by the lewd acts in which Elizabeth has supposedly engaged and by the witch @-@ finders ' torturous implements .

Clarke privately tells Warren that he thinks Elizabeth is innocent and that he is not sure that the pair are doing God 's work . Warren threatens that Clarke himself will be tried and convicted if he objects further . The trial resumes ? Elizabeth having been tortured overnight ? and Elizabeth 's mouse , Snowflake , is released , so that it might lead them to the witch . Warren has sprinkled crumbs in front of Elizabeth . When Snowflake approaches Elizabeth , Pike declares her a witch , and sentences her to be burned . Thomas and Sarah later say goodbye to a hooded and bound

Elizabeth , who awaits execution . Clarke dismisses them . He removes the hood from the figure to reveal that he has bound Warren in Elizabeth 's place ; Clarke believes Warren has been tainted with evil , and that the latter is no longer doing God 's work . Clarke puts back the hood , and Pike enters , happy that the trial has seen a revival of trade and visitors to the village . Warren is taken away to be burnt . Clarke releases the real Elizabeth , but she reveals that she truly is a witch ; she breaks Clarke 's neck , killing him . There are sounds of excitement from outside as flames light Elizabeth 's face . She tells Snowflake that she will go to her master , then transforms into a raven and leaves .

= = Analysis = =

" The Trial of Elizabeth Gadge " is a period piece tribute to Witchfinder General , The Blood on Satan 's Claw and The Crucible , while the names " Warren " and " Clarke " are a homage to British actor Warren Clarke , who , at time of production and airing , had recently died . The names were selected prior to Clarke 's death ? specifically because they were amusing but period appropriate , and not because the actor had any link to the episode 's themes ? but the writers chose to keep them as a tribute upon the death of Clarke , with whom Shearsmith had previously worked . The style and humour is reminiscent of Horrible Histories and Monty Python . For instance , one scene was directly inspired by the " laughing guard " scene in Monty Python 's Life of Brian . Pemberton and Shearsmith themselves , however , did not consider the episode to be particularly reminiscent of Monty Python . The humour is childish , but many of the jokes are " bawdy " and " adult " .

Though one critic said that the episode was " the first straight @-@ up comedic episode of the second series " , another said that the episode 's humour was balanced with tragedy and poignancy , arguing that the whole episode has an element of horror . This was especially true given that the story reflects actual happenings ; the depiction of torture was described as " genuinely upsetting " . Despite the sole setting of the barn , the episode evokes a degree of folk horror . " The Trial of Elizabeth Gadge " was described by Jonathan Wright (The Guardian) and Phoebe Jane @-@ Boyd (Den of Geek) as like a Hammer Horror film with added humour , and writers for the Irish Examiner said that the episode should appeal to both horror and comedy fans .

Given that Gadge is revealed to actually be a witch , Howick asked Shearsmith whether the former 's character , Thomas , truly had witnessed Gadge engaging in some kind of supernatural activity . Shearsmith suggested that Thomas was motivated by greed . However , he begins to regret his choice when he witnesses Gadge being tortured . Pemberton , though , noted that the real @-@ life accusations of witchcraft must have been based on some level of belief .

= = Reception = =

Critics generally responded warmly to the episode , but some felt it compared poorly to others in the series . David Chater , writing for The Times , felt that " The Trial of Elizabeth Gadge " was dissimilar from any previous episode of Inside No. 9 , but that it was " equally accomplished " , while in sister publication The Sunday Times , critics suggested that the change in style showed the writers ' versatility . Neela Debnath , writing for The Independent , called " The Trial of Elizabeth Gadge " a " hilariously dark little half @-@ hour of quintessentially British comedy " . Rupert Hawksley , writing for The Daily Telegraph , was more critical . He awarded " The Trial of Elizabeth Gadge " three out of five stars , saying that " despite a starry cast and a delightful twist and counter @-@ twist , [the episode] was nothing like as effective " as " La Couchette " and " The 12 Days of Christine " , the previous two episodes of the series . The episode , he claimed , was indicative of a " mid @-@ series lull " . The freelance journalist Dan Owen felt the episode was " entertaining fare , but too predictable and clichéd to prove genuinely memorable " , awarding it two out of four stars . He , too , said the episode felt like " a mid @-@ series misstep " . Shearsmith was unhappy with those who thought the episode a " dud " or a " misfire " , confessing that it was his favourite episode of the second series . Pemberton felt it was going to be difficult to follow " The 12 Days of Christine " , but Shearsmith was of the view that the episodes should not be in competition with each other .

The episode 's humour was praised by the majority of commentators . Julia Raeside , writing for The Guardian , said the writers " managed to pull together a loving tribute to [their] cult horror source material with an all @-@ out gag rate that most sitcoms would fail to keep up with " , claiming that " they get the look and tone just right and then inject it with the kind of comedy that is perfectly tailored to puncture the fictional world without deflating it " . Similarly , Debnath felt that the jokes , including " anachronistic references " and " dark punnery " , were " bang on " . By contrast , Hawksley claimed that the episode had several " inspired moments " , including a " perfectly pitched " joke about selfies , but that the writers had failed to properly exploit the 17th @-@ century setting . Overall , though finding it " occasionally funny " , Hawksley thought the episode " fell some way short of what we have come to expect from Pemberton and Shearsmith " . For the comedy critic Bruce Dessau , the episode was " all the more hauntingly funny because it is played pretty straight " , but he noted that the character of Sir Andrew Pike allowed " some offbeat humour " . Chater called the episode " very , very funny " , and Philip Cunningham , of the Lancashire Evening Post , called it " one of the funniest half @-@ hours of TV so far this year " after the conclusion of the series .

Television critics praised the writing and acting of " The Trial of Elizabeth Gadge " . Though Owen felt that the ending " held little surprise " , Paddy Shennan , of the Liverpool Echo , said he " loved the fact that , for the third week running , [he] couldn 't work out the twist " . For Debnath , " the best was saved till last " , but the whole episode was " tightly written " . Patrick Mulkern (Radio Times) , too , said that " this dark tale soon works a devilish spell " . Christine Brandel , writing for entertainment website PopMatters , particularly praised the episode 's " beautifully done " dialogue , saying that " it feels authentic in its phrasing , even during the more bizarre (and hilarious) court scenes " . Owen , similarly , said " the dialogue was also frequently hilarious , with Shearsmith and Pemberton having a fine ear for the rhythms of Olde English and how best to have characters deadpan their way through some ridiculous sentences . " Hawksley praised Warner 's " effortlessly batty " performance as Sir Andrew Pike , and claimed that Sheen " brought an unsettling complexity " to the title character . Gerard Gilbert , of The Independent , claimed Warner was clearly " having a ball " as Pike , and Wright (The Guardian) said " Warner quite brilliantly makes the most of every line he 's given " . Brandel considered Warner one of the best guest stars of the series .

= = = Cited sources = = =

Pemberton , Steve ; Shearsmith , Reece (2015) . The Trial of Elizabeth Gadge (episode commentary) . Steve & Reece IN9 (via SoundCloud) . Retrieved 4 August 2015 .