

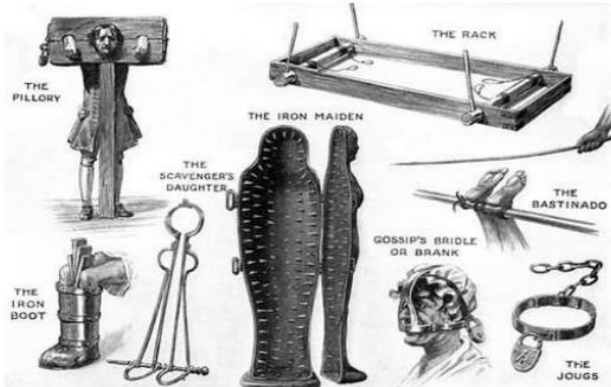
Changes in Crime and Punishment - fact sheet

Medieval Punishment

Throughout the medieval period it was believed that the only way to keep order was to make sure that the people were scared of the punishments given for crimes committed. For this reason all crimes from stealing to burglary of houses to murder had harsh punishment

Although there were gaols, they were generally used to hold a prisoner awaiting trial rather than as a means of punishment. Fines, shaming (being placed in stocks), mutilation (cutting off a part of the body) or death were the most common forms of medieval punishment. There was no police force in the medieval period so law-enforcement was in the hands of the community.

Some examples of medieval punishment:
How are these examples of **retributive** punishment?



Modern police officer with equipment.

Medieval Punishment

The King's Court (Trial by Ordeal)

Serious crimes were heard by the King's court. The accused had to face trial by ordeal to decide whether they were guilty or not guilty.

Ordeal by Fire

The accused had to pick up a red hot iron bar and hold it while they walked three or four paces. Their hand was then bandaged. After three days they had to return to the court where the bandages were removed. If the wound was beginning to heal they were innocent but if the wound showed no sign of healing then they were pronounced Guilty.

Ordeal by Water

The accused had their hands and feet tied together. They were then thrown into water. If they floated they were guilty but if they sank they were innocent.

Ordeal by Combat

Noblemen would fight (usually to the death) in combat with their accuser. The winner of the battle would be considered to be in the right.

Anglo Saxon Punishment

The Anglo-Saxons didn't have prisons. People found guilty of crimes were either **executed** or **punished with fines**.

If they ran away, they became '**outlaws**' (outside the law), and anyone could hunt them down - unless they hid in a church. The fine for breaking into someone's home was five shillings (25p), paid to the homeowner. For minor crimes like stealing, a nose or a hand might be cut off.

The Saxons had a system called '**weregild**', which meant that if you injured someone, you had to pay for the damage!

If a person killed someone, they paid money to the dead person's relatives. The idea was to stop long fights or '**blood feuds**' between families by making them pay money instead.



The weregild payable for the murder of an Anglo-Saxon thane was 6,000 pennies. The weregild for a king was 90,000!

Tudor Punishment

There were no police during the Tudor times. However, laws were harsh and wrongdoing was severely punished. In Tudor times the punishments were very, very cruel. People believed if a criminal's punishment was severe and painful enough, the act would not be repeated and others would deter from crime as well.



Whipping (flogging)

Many towns had a whipping post. The victim was chained to the post, stripped to the waist and whipped. You could be whipped for stealing a loaf of bread!



The **brank** was a punishment enacted on women who gossiped or spoke too freely.

Prisoner record from Bedford

Offence details
Name: Catherine Haddon
Age: 52
Date of Offence: 14th August 1866
Offence: Stealing a Pie and a Dish (Borough)
Sentence: 2 Calendar Months **Hard Labour**
Type of trial: summarily convicted

Personal details
Identifying marks:
Number of children: Unknown



The **pillory** was a T shaped block of wood with holes for the hands in the crossbar of the T. The person being punished would have to stand in the device in the middle of the market to be ridiculed by passers-by.

Modern police vehicles.



Modern day prison.



People face **trial** to decide whether they are guilty or innocent. A **sentence** is then given if a person is found guilty. This may be a fine, community service or imprisonment.

Catching the Criminal

The Victorian period saw great changes in how people were caught, arrested and charged to appear in court. The police force, as we know it today, did not exist until 1856. Before then, most places had only an unpaid parish constable to keep order. ...



Sentences and Punishments

The Victorians were very worried about crime. Levels rose sharply towards the end of the 18th century and continued to rise through much of the 19th century. **Offences** went up from about 5,000 per year in 1800 to about 20,000 per year in 1840.



Victorian Punishment

1873
John Walker - Convicted for Stealing Onions

A Typical Crime
This case concerns a market gardener of Beeston, Robert Cooper, an agricultural labourer John Walker and the theft of some onions.

John Walker was charged with **Larceny** for the theft of the onions valued at between 4 and 5 shillings. He appeared for trial on 8th April 1874 and was sentenced to seven years' penal servitude and seven years' police supervision.



Above: John Walker

Prisoner record from Bedford

Offence details
Name: Joseph Abel
Age:
Date of Offence: 4th March 1852
Offence: Horse Stealing
Sentence: Acquitted

Personal details
Identifying marks:
Number of children: Unknown

Prisoner record from Bedford

Offence details
Name: James Baker
Age: 20
Date of Offence: 24th October 1817
Offence: Stealing a Silk Handkerchief
Sentence: 6 Months Com. Gaol Publicly Whipped

Personal details
Height: 5 ft 8 inches
Hair colour: Brown
Complexion: pale
Identifying marks: Much pock marked - a native of Dartford near Daventry
Number of children: Unknown

The Courts and Judiciary

In the early nineteenth century, court conditions and the treatment of both the victim and the accused was very different from today. Trials in court were often very quick. Prosecutors, judges and jurors had more power and choice than they do...



Gaols

During the 19th century, gaols' buildings and daily life changed dramatically to reflect the beliefs of the time. Prison regimes came to be based on the concepts of separation, silence, hard labour and moral guidance.

Victorian Police Officer



Victorian Police Equipment



Victorian Police Officer

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