

5-5-87. Disorderly Conduct. Com 14 days.
18 June 1863. Larceny from the person Lancaster 2. S. 6 mos
27 Aug 1866 Drunk. Riotous 20s. Cost or 1 month
18 Dec. 1867. Disorderly Conduct in workhouse Com 1 month
4 June 1873 Drunkenness 10s. Cost or 2 days



HARD TIMES

Crime, Punishment and the Workhouse

Case File No: 15



CLASSIFIED
TOP SECRET





"If you can't do the time, don't do the crime"

This means, if you don't want to be punished, don't do the bad thing in the first place.

People throughout history have broken the law-

Sometimes it was just because they wanted to, sometimes it was because they needed to (to survive), and sometimes people have been punished for things that they didn't do.

We would be shocked by what was once thought of as a crime, and even more shocked by the harshness of the punishments!

Let's delve into:
Crime, Punishment & Workhouses

This Case File will take you on a journey through time as you discover how crimes and punishments have changed throughout the ages.

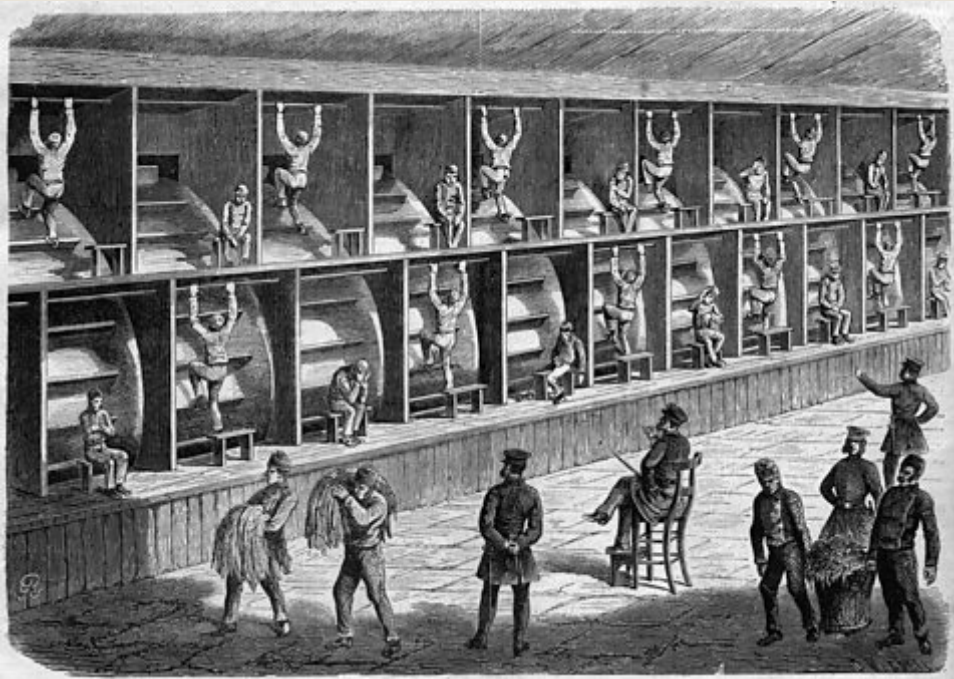
We will begin with the Romans and their extraordinary range of punishments involving donkeys, bees, and even...well, we will leave it for you to read.

The Medieval period was pretty harsh - particularly if you were thought to be a witch, and we will look at how the Lancashire Witches were punished (briefly though, because we have a Case File due in November all about Witches, Witchcraft and Folklore).

You will pause during the Victorian era when being sent to the Workhouse was considered a punishment for being poor, and you might be sent to Australia for fourteen years for pinching a loaf of bread.

You will discover how changes in society also create changes in the kind of things that are considered a crime, as well as the ways in which they are punished.

We will stop at the present day - though you might want to think about what might be considered a crime in the future and what kind of punishments would be used.



Prisoners on the treadmill at Colbath Fields Prison. Lancaster Castle housed two similar treadmills - one to drive 23 calico looms and one to draw water from the well.



**Look out for
this symbol**

Some of the descriptions of punishments in this Case File are too gory for us to describe, so we have left them out. We suggest that you ask your parent/guardian before you try to learn more.

DON'T UPSET THE ROMANS!!

The Roman system of law and punishment is the basis of many laws that we still use today....well, except chucking people off cliffs!

The Romans designed their punishments to make it too scary to even consider committing a crime. Whipping and fines were the most common punishments. An enslaved person would be forced to carry a piece of wood around their neck to announce the crime they had committed.

For very serious crimes you could be killed by crucifixion, thrown from a cliff, into a river, or even buried alive! Crucifixion was saved for serious crimes such as revolt against the Empire, treachery or conspiracy against the emperor. Romans loved power, and execution scenes were even used for household decoration on wall frescoes!

The establishment of a legal system was perhaps Rome's greatest legacy. Judges oversaw courts where charges were brought and argued by prosecutors and lawyers rose to argue the defense. There was even the option to appeal to a higher power.

Humiliate:

This word, which we use when we embarrass someone on purpose comes from the Latin word humiliat, which means to 'make humble' or 'bring low'. Can you see how this fits with the Roman social classes?

STATUS MATTERED

A Roman citizen had the right to appeal and would have a less severe penalty. A peregrine or non-Roman citizen would have no right to appeal and could expect to receive a more severe punishment. Punishment was even more severe for a slave.

By the 2nd century AD there were two groups – the honestiores (more honorable) and the humiliores (lower). The honestiores included senators, equestrians, soldiers and local officials and they could be punished by losing their heads or being sent away.

Meanwhile, the humiliores could be punished by burning, beasts or crucifixion. Or they could become a penal slave to be worked to death in the mines or quarries.



The Colosseum in Rome was where criminals were sent to fight with Gladiators...or wild animals

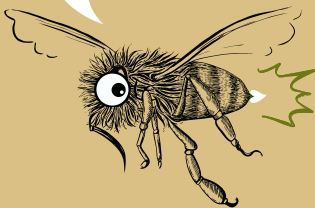
Fact or Fake?

Other Weird Punishments for Crimes in Ancient Rome



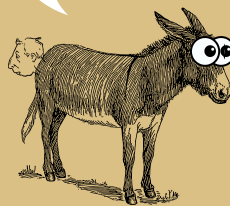
The punishment for a Roman soldier if he assaulted a woman was to lose his nose!

But how did he smell?



The punishment for several crimes was to be put in a basket next to a beehive and left to be stung until you died!

Awful!



Another ridiculous punishment was to be sewn into the belly of a donkey and left out in the sun!

poena cullei

The Roman punishment for bumping off your Dad was called *poena cullei*. The person would be whipped with blood-covered sticks, then sealed up in a sack with a rooster, a dog, a poisonous snake and a monkey. They would then be cast into the deep sea. If they were a long way from the sea they would be thrown before wild beasts. This law was passed by Emperor Hadrian "the righteous".

...OR THE ANGLO SAXONS!!

449 - 1066

We still hold a lot of the same laws that existed in Anglo-Saxon times, however, the punishments have thankfully moved on.

During this time there wasn't a police force like we have today, so keeping law and order was the job of everyone in the village. If someone was seen committing a crime then the witness would raise a 'hue and cry' (shout for help).

Everyone who heard it was expected to help chase and capture the suspects. If a crime was committed then there was a victim, and it was up to the victim—or the victim's family—to seek justice.



What do you think could happen if someone in the village didn't like you?

After the 10th century, there was a system in place called 'Tithing'. This meant that a group of ten men were tithed and made responsible for each other's behaviour. Should one of them break the law, the other members had to bring them to court. If they didn't, they would have to pay a fine. Every male over the age of twelve was expected to join a tithing!

All shires, or counties, were divided into hundreds. These hundreds were divided into tithings. Tithes had a tithingman, hundreds a hundredman, shires a shire-reeve. They met every four weeks. The king spoke to the shire-reeve, the shire-reeve spoke to the hundredmen, and the hundredmen spoke to the tithingmen. You can imagine how things might get misunderstood...

He stole my pig!

Did he say he ate a fig?

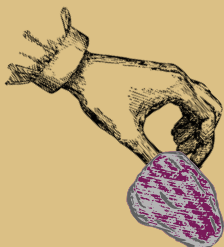
No! He poked his ear with a twig!

For the last time- I do not wear a wig!!



Nasty Punishments for Crimes in Anglo Saxon Times

Trial by ordeal



Putting your hand in boiling water to retrieve a stone.



Picking up a red hot iron.



Walking barefoot for at least nine feet (3m) on hot coals.

If your wounds healed cleanly after 3 days, then you were considered to be innocent in the eyes of God.

Fact - although it wasn't always saved just for naughty priests.

Fact or Fake?

Corsned

Also known as the 'Sacred Morsel', Corsned was saved for Priests. They would eat a piece of bread and cheese which was consecrated with a form of exorcism (which would evict demons). If guilty, it was supposed the priest would choke on the bread and cheese and die. If innocent, it was believed the person could swallow it freely, and the bread would turn to nourishment.

OUCH! MIDDLE AGES PUNISHMENT

793 - 1485

Punishment in the Middle Ages was much harsher than it is today. It was a lot harder to enforce the law as the population was often spread out across different farms and hamlets. Because there was no rapid response to crime, they had to make the punishments so severe it was not worth committing a crime in the first place!

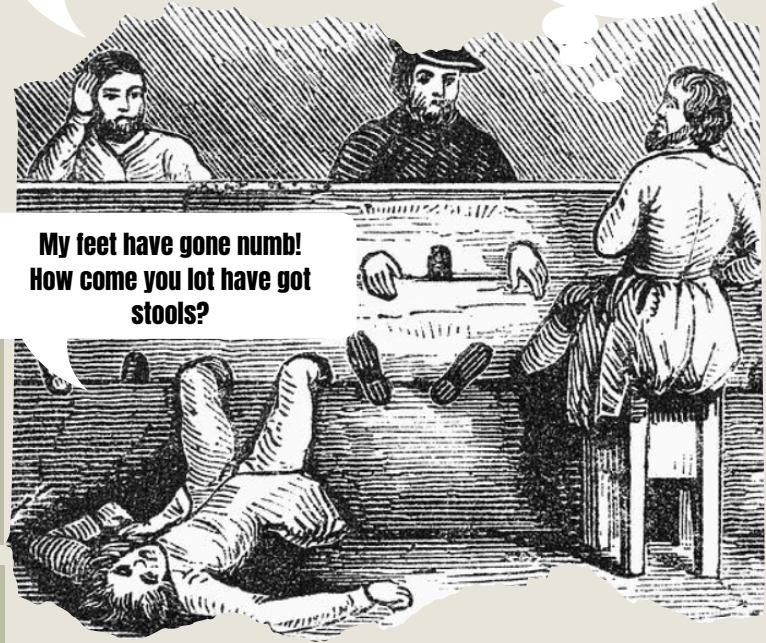
Top 5 crimes and their punishments in the Medieval age

Disturbing the peace

This could include fighting, revelry, violent arguing, and other minor offences. Anything that disrupted a town or village was viewed as disturbing the peace. Revelry and drunkenness could result in a trip to the pillory for an hour or a whole day to suffer insults and jeering. You might even be pelted with rotten vegetables as you stood with your head and hands locked in. For lesser crimes, you would be locked into stocks by your feet in front of the whole village.

Oh do shush Gerald, we are playing
I-spy and it's my turn!
I-spy with my little eye something
beginning with 'P'


'P' for Pillory.
It's always 'P' for
Pillory!!



Blasphemy

Speaking badly of the church, refusing to acknowledge God or the church as supreme over everything, or offering differing ideas from the church were all counted as blasphemy. The most common punishment for blasphemy was the removal of your tongue. Other punishments included stoning and hangings.

Treason

Being found guilty of treason meant certain death and was usually marked by the cruelest of punishments. Being hung, drawn, and quartered, burnt at the stake, and slowly flayed alive were all punishments meted out to those who had committed treason. 

Theft

This was a common crime as it was easier to accomplish due to the distances between settlements and the lack of police force. Petty theft was often punished with a fine, but this was usually much higher than the value of the actual theft itself. A thief could even be punished with the loss of an ear or a hand!

Poaching

(Nothing to do with cooking eggs BTW!)

Feudal lords, kings and bishops owned hundreds of thousands of acres of land and everything on those lands was regarded as the property of the owners. This meant that common people could not hunt or gather food from lands owned by the king without permission. To do so was called poaching. All medieval officials took poaching *very* seriously and the punishment for poaching was often death!



Juries

People finally decided that priests were maybe not the best people to judge someone's guilt and that they wanted humans rather than the judgment of God to decide what happened to a criminal.

In 1219, King Henry III passed a law to establish the petty jury, a group of 12 people who were asked to determine guilt.

Eight hundred years later, courts still turn to juries of 12 people chosen randomly from the community.



THOSE TERRORS, THE TUDORS

1485 - 1603

The Tudor period was a very brutal time. Life was often nasty, brutish and painful for criminals in Tudor England, with a host of fiendish punishments dished out by the state to wrong-doers, including some new methods of execution dreamt up by King Henry VIII himself.



There was still no police force during Tudor times and like in the Middle Ages, in smaller towns and villages preventing crime was left up to the people. Some villages and towns started to employ 'Parish Constables' who would be responsible for keeping the peace and catching criminals. Tudor laws were very strict and most crimes were punished severely. People believed that if the punishment was painful enough, then it would stop others from doing it as well. Henry VIII was a very proud man and could be very cruel. At this time people were very religious and often scared of falling foul of witches and witchcraft.

Whipping

A common punishment for a wide variety of crimes. Vagrants (homeless people), thieves who stole goods worth less than a shilling and those who refused to attend church could all be whipped.

Branding

Being burned with a very a hot iron was another common punishment. This was done somewhere on your body so that other people could see that you were a criminal.

Executions

Saved for the most heinous of crimes, executions, such as beheading, being hung, drawn and quartered or being burnt at the stake were punishments for people guilty of treason (crimes against the king) or heresy (following the wrong religion).



Portrait of Anne Boleyn by artist Holbein

'Never had the queen looked so beautiful...'

Queen Anne Boleyn was punished by Henry VIII by being executed on 19 May 1536 at 8 o'clock in the morning. It was the first public execution of an English queen...but not the last.



Evidence from History

This painting from our collection shows Lancaster Castle. During the Tudor and Stuart period (1584-1646), fifteen Catholics were executed in Lancaster for their faith. The law at this time made it illegal to convert or be converted to Catholicism, to say or hear Mass or to help or conceal the presence of a priest. To be a priest ordained abroad was classed as treason. In this case, priests were hanged, drawn and quartered.

You can visit Lancaster Castle to find out all about the Catholics who were executed there.



Lancaster Castle - Charles Arthur Gevrais
The artist was a prisoner in Lancaster Castle between 1873-1874, for stealing a pistol. He produced six pieces of art work during his time in the prison.

NOT SO GRACIOUS GEORGIANS!

1714 - 1837

The Georgian era was a difficult time for lots of ordinary people. It was a time of mass unemployment and many people were forced into a life of crime just to survive.

"As many as eight or nine condemned prisoners and their coffins would be carried in the bottom of a cart. The procession from the Castle would pass along Moor Lane and Moor Gate, and tradition has it that they stopped at the Golden Lion public house at the corner of Brewery Lane so that the condemned could take their last drink, accompanied by their friends and relatives."

Lancaster Castle website

Throughout this period lots of people were poor and some thought of criminals who robbed from the rich as heroic and courageous. Highwaymen like Dick Turpin, and the activities of robbers and villains were celebrated as heroes. Their stories of daring criminality were written about in pamphlets, books and newspapers. As you can imagine, they generated lots of public interest across the country.

So, the Georgians used the death penalty for many crimes even minor ones like stealing food to keep the poor at bay. This was known as the Bloody Code. Condemned people were executed in public, for everyone to see. Children were treated exactly the same way and punished the same as adults.

At this time the courts were held in Lancaster for the whole of Lancashire. They were called the Assizes and were held in the castle. Lancaster was known as the Hanging Court, because more poor people were executed here than at any other court in the country! (not including London of course).

Can you believe that there were over 200 crimes that were punishable by death? This even included poaching, burglary and criminal damage. That's why it was called the 'Bloody Code'.

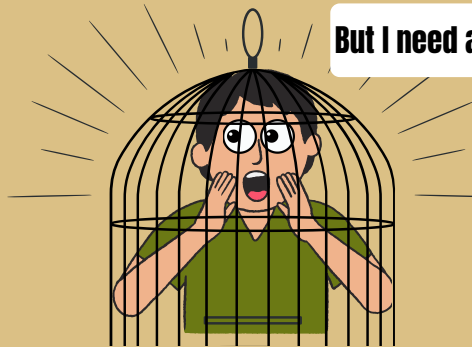
Prior to 1800 hangings had taken place on the moors above the town, but after 1800, when the new courts were opened, executions moved to Hanging Corner, within the castle precincts. Executions were in public until 1865.

School Punishments in Georgian Times

Corporal punishment was practised in Georgian schools: if students misbehaved they were treated like criminals.



A child would be forced to wear a wooden log hanging by a chain around his neck



Really naughty children would be put in a cage and suspended from the ceiling!!

Fact or Fake?

Scold's Bridle

This iron contraption was put on women for punishment and humiliation (remember that word). There was a metal piece that slid into the mouth and pressed down on top of the tongue, often with a spike on the tongue, as a compress. It was designed to silence the wearer from speaking entirely.

Fact or Fake?

Absolutely True!! This horrid, heavy means of punishment was also called Branks, or Gossip's Bridle. You can see one at Lancaster Castle.

THE VICIOUS VICTORIANS

1837 - 1901

Victorian Britain would have been a place where the rich were getting richer and the poor were punished for having nothing. It was an era of the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. The Industrial revolution saw lots of people move into cities and petty crime was everywhere.



COPPERS, BOBBIES & PEELERS

A police force was formed in the Georgian era in London in 1829 by Sir Robert Peel.

Policemen were called Bobbies or Peelers after him. Sometimes they were called coppers from the old English word cop, meaning to grab or seize hold of. In 1856 it was the law for counties to form their own police force.

The first British policemen were not armed with guns. Instead, they carried truncheons and rattles and from the 1880s they also carried whistles. They wore top hats, which were later replaced by helmets designed to protect the head.

Capital Punishment

Death was *still* a punishment used by Victorians but it was used only for murderers and traitors by this point. A huge effort was being made in the 19th century to use imprisonment as a punishment instead.

Transportation of Criminals

Many offenders were by now regularly sent to live and work in British Colonies such as Australia. This was a way of getting rid of bad people and making use of them as free labour. Prisoners were sent on enormous ships and the journey took weeks and weeks. They had to stay there for 7 or 14 years. This came to an end in the 1850s. Lots of Lancaster people were transported!

Imprisonment

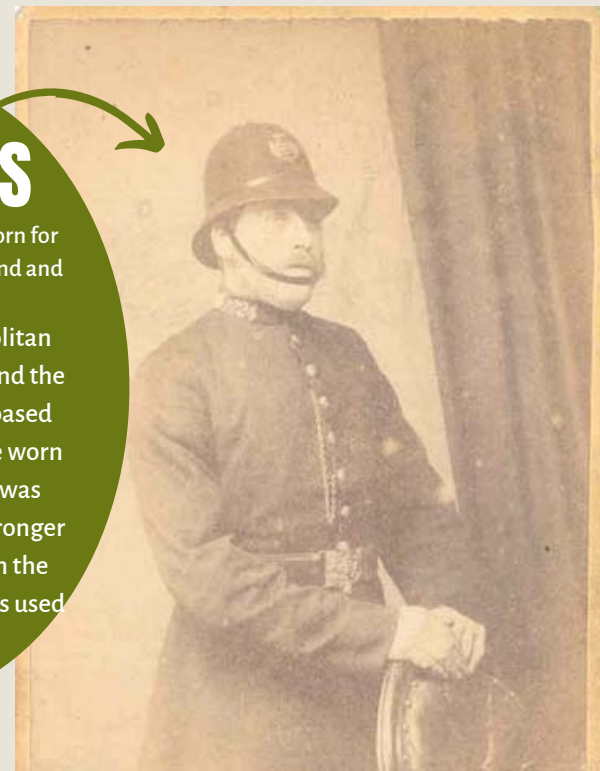
By now the punishment of choice for both adults and children. It was thought that prisons would reform the criminals no matter what age and that once their sentence was carried out they would leave as better citizens. Crime was seen as a 'moral' problem and that bible reading and hard work would help.



HELMETS

Police helmets have been worn for more than 150 years in England and Wales. They were

first used by the Metropolitan Police in London in 1863, and the "custodian" helmet was based on the spiked Pickelhaube worn by the Prussian army. It was made of cork and much stronger and more protective than the top hats that police officers used to wear.



Drunkenness

One of the most common ways for Victorians to deal with the hardships of life was to drink lots of cheap alcohol. This in turn caused lots of disorder in the streets and homes of Victorian Britain, causing fights and accidents. The Habitual Drunkards Act 1879 enabled courts to suggest residential treatment in a licensed 'inebriate retreat' as an alternative to prison for habitual drunkards. This was meant to help them to recover from alcohol and see the error of their ways

There were later Acts passed specifically for women should they consider ever neglecting their husbands or children; including the Provision of Meals act of 1903 and the Prevention of Cruelty act of 1904 if their neglect of their husbands and children was due to drinking.



Evidence from our collection

This black and white photograph shows Sergeant W. Horn.

Horn is wearing the Victorian style uniform of a long coat and silver buckled belt. The registration number on Horn's collar reads: '1224'.

[LANLM.1981.71.2]

GOING TO EAST ROAD THE LANCASTER WORKHOUSE

Poor people in Victorian Britain might end up in the Workhouse - a place that provided work and shelter.

Originally designed to help paupers, they housed some of the most vulnerable people in society.

"Oh I don't care about going for two months, it'll be a change".

John Gardiner, aged 60. Charged with stealing his workhouse uniform whilst absconding from arranged leave and sentenced to two months in Lancaster Castle.

Ellen Cave, 1867. A regular visitor between the workhouse and courts. Convictions shows 'disorderly conduct' and a month's prison sentence.

Mabel Stretch, aged 20. A single Farm Servant, who abandoned her baby girl and was 'bound over' for 12 months.



Lancaster's Workhouse, now the Lancaster Royal Grammar School

Admittance to a workhouse was voluntary- you could not be forced to go in there and unlike prisons, an adult could not be held there against their will: you could in theory leave at any time. Without a job or somewhere else to live though, it was very difficult to leave again.

Workhouse life was highly disciplined with a punishment system in place for rule-breakers. The aim was to subdue individuals, making them humble and obedient. Workhouse masters and matrons would punish unruly inmates by giving them bread and water for a day, confining them to the lockup cell or whipping them for serious misdemeanours. For criminal offences, inmates were arrested and ended up convicted.

With thanks to Naomi Parsons, who researched the history of the Workhouse and the stories of its unfortunate residents, some of which are reproduced here thanks to Lancashire Archives.

Your Mission

Visit the exhibition

Going to East Road: A History of Lancaster Workhouse

Lancaster City
Museum

2 July to 11 September

This brilliant exhibition will help you to understand why some people ended up living in the Workhouse in Lancaster. Investigate the exhibition and try to discover what happened to these three people. Do you think that their punishment was fair?



Left to Right: Mary Cawson, William Wharton & Peter Rennison

GOING TO EAST ROAD

A HISTORY OF LANCASTER WORKHOUSE

EXHIBITION

2 JULY UNTIL 11 SEPTEMBER 2022
LANCASTER CITY MUSEUM
Market Square, LA1 1HT FREE ENTRY
open Tuesday to Sunday 10am-5pm

follow us:



visit our website for further information:
visitlancaster.org.uk/museums



EVIDENCE



Did you know that the new Lancashire
Police Museum is now open at Lancaster
Castle?
The museum is open Thursday and Friday
from 10.30am to 4pm (closed between
12.30pm - 1.30pm)
Admission to the museum is free.



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