

Crimes, Punishments, Constabulary & Courts in the early Renaissance

Crime	Definition	Punishment	Remarks
Summary Offences	a crime in some common law jurisdictions that can be proceeded against summarily, without the right to a jury trial and/or indictment (required for an indictable offence).		
Public drunkenness	obvious display of intoxicated incompetence or behaviour disruptive/obnoxious to public order	Village lock-up > Drunkard's Cloak > Pilloried	
Creating a disturbance at church	Talking in church during mass	Fined	
Virginity fraud	women marrying despite being deflowered virgins	Pilloried	
Sumptuary law	Regulations were numerous and varied. Violations included breaches of a strict dress codes, gluttony & alcoholism	Pilloried	
Being a common scold	Type of public nuisance where a scold (bad-tempered woman) broke the public peace by habitually arguing and quarrelling with her neighbours	Pilloried	
Disturbing the peace	unsettling of proper order in a public space through one's actions, e.g. starting a fight that didn't spill blood (victims still has 4 or more Wounds), couples who argued violently in public, etc.	Stocks > Fined	
Outraging public decency (Lewdness)	Committing such immoral acts as mixed bathing, exhibitionism, a woman entertaining 3 men in her house after midnight, etc.	Fined > Pilloried	
Inciting riotous behaviour	to punish Agitators, Gossips and Shrews	Branked	To curb women's tongues that talk too idle
<u>Conspiracy to defraud</u>	Cheating in its many forms: - a baker purposely might not measure the bread ingredients properly or a butcher's scales might be tampered with - a horse trader might put garlic in the animal's nose to make the horse appear "lively" (in a frantic state) but the buyer would soon realize he'd been cheated when the horse fell ill or died shortly after the sale - simply a dice cogger (a cheat or deceiver especially at dice)	Stocks > Fined > Pilloried	
Misdemeanours	comprises every species of crime, which occasioned at common law the forfeiture of lands or goods.		
Loitering	the act of remaining in a particular public place for a protracted time without any apparent lawful purpose	Fined or Stocks > Pilloried > Incarceration	
Malicious mischief	the wanton or reckless damage, defacement or destruction of property (aka "breaking up his walls or doors"). Those who pillaged and plundered. More commonly known today as "Vandalism".	Stocks > Fined > Pilloried	Penalties depended on the severity of the damage inflicted.
Being a common nightwalker	Being out in the streets at night (9pm until sunrise) without legitimate business.	Stocks > Fined > Pilloried	Night watchmen patrolled the streets and were expected to examine all suspicious characters.
Slander	Oral form of defamation consisting of false statements about a person which would damage that person's reputation,	Fined > Branked > Pilloried	Calling someone "a fox" or stiff fine for calling someone "a harlot" resulted in a fair fine
Affray	Starting a fight that left the victim bloodied. Where slightly bloodied corresponds to heavily wounded (2-3W) and badly bloodied to severely wounded (1-2W).	Fined or Stocks > Pilloried > Branding with "F"	The mark of "F" signified Fraymaker.
Petty larceny	items less than 12 pence (a shilling), e.g. a loaf of bread, stealing a bird's egg	Pilloried > Branding with "T"	The mark of "T" signified Thief.
Blasphemy	Anyone who takes a god's name in vain.	Fined > Pilloried > Branding with a "B" >	The mark of "B" signified Blasphemer.

Prostitution	Attitudes vary considerably from banned to tolerated and even licensed.		Pilgrimage Fined or Pilloried > Branding with a "P" > Impaling	Repeat offenders risked slow and painful death via the Judas Cradle (tall thin stool topped with a large pyramidal spike).
Fornication	Sex outside of marriage		Pilloried & Pilgrimage	Repeat offenders risked castration
Vagrancy	vagabonds, idle and suspect persons living suspiciously, i.e. "person who has no land, no master, and no legitimate trade or source of income so who wanders from place to place, often in poverty"		Stocks > Pilloried > Branding > Conscripted	beggars who are old and incapable of working receive a beggar's licence, i.e. anyone else caught begging was convicted of being a vagrant
Libel	Written form of defamation consisting of false statements about a person which would damage that person's reputation		Fined > Ears nailed to Pilloried > Cropping	
Conductus (receiving)	the suspect has bought, been given, or acquired stolen goods		Fined > Stocks > Pilloried	Historical equivalent of "receiving stolen goods"
Poaching	illegally hunted in royal parks		Fined > Cropping > Sewn into a deerskin and then hunted down by ferocious dogs > Blinding	
Debt evasion	Failure to repay a debt	Incarceration	Imprisonment in a debtor's jail which was often a single, large cell until their families paid their debt. Debt prisoners often died of diseases contracted from other debt prisoners. Conditions included starvation and abuse from other prisoners. If the father of a family was imprisoned for debt, the family business often suffered while the mother and children fell into poverty. Unable to pay the debt, the father often remained in debtors' prison for many years. Some debt prisoners were released to become serfs or indentured servants (debt bondage) until they paid off their debt in labour.	
Ravishment	Sexual violation of a victim, known today as "rape". It also includes attempted rape as little distinction was made during this period.		Incarceration + compensation to the victim > Castration > Burning	Surprisingly moderate offence compared to modern societies
Battery	Starting a fight that left the victim grievously wounded		Fined > Pilloried > Incarceration	Grievously wounded = 0 Wounds or less (critical)
Trespassing	entering a property without the owner's consent.		Fined + Incarceration	if the criminal was unable to pay the fine then he spent longer in jail
Felonies	characterised by offences against the person			
<u>Grand larceny</u>	theft of more than 1 shilling & often included cut-pursing		Branding with "T" > Mutilated: hand cut-off > Hanging	The mark of "T" signified Thief.
Livestock theft	theft of domesticated animals. Note that Horses were most valuable, followed by Cattle and then Sheep.		Pilloried > Branding with "T" > Galley slave	The mark of "T" signified Thief.
Burglary (aka as "Rustling" or "Duffing")	breaking and entering the house of another in the night time (1/2 hour after sunset & 1/2 hour before sunrise) with intent to commit a felony therein		Mutilation: hand cut-off > Hanging	
Smuggling	illegal transportation of objects, information or people. While often non-violent, this crime became a felony as state coffers became increasingly dependent on tariffs (high rates of duty varied from 20-60%).		Fined + Hard Labour > Fined + Incarceration	To calculate fines, consider "to pay an amount of money equal to four times the value of the goods themselves"
Perjury (aka "forswearing")	the intentional act of swearing a false oath or of falsifying an affirmation to tell the truth, whether spoken or in writing, concerning matters material to an official proceeding		Mutilated: hand cut-off + Penance > Hanging	Oaths would be sworn on relics (religious artefacts).
Aiding and abetting	those who are party to a crime, i.e. those helping criminals		Incarceration	

Harbouring an outlaw, fugitive serf or criminal	providing shelter for those "on the run"	Incarceration + further penalty	Imprisonment lasted "until those they receive is captured at which they are liable to same penalty as fugitive". Only exceptions were churches & monasteries that had the privilege of sheltering fugitives in sanctuary for 42 days.
Manslaughter	Death by misadventure	Fined & Branding with "M"	The mark of "M" signified Manslaughterer
Voyeurism (aka "Peeping tom")	practice of spying on people engaged in intimate behaviours, such as undressing, sexual activity, or other actions usually considered to be of a private nature	Mutilation: both eyes put-out	
Desertion	any soldier, man of arms or archer which, having mustered, departeth from his captain within his term without repaying the King's wages	Fined > Branding with "D" & Transportation	The mark of "D" signified Deserter.
Abduction	unlawful taking away or transportation of a man against that person's will, usually to hold the person unlawfully.	Incarceration + compensation > Banishment > Hanging	This crime was usually committed for ransom or in furtherance of another crime
Capital Offences	Execution could be avoided by petitioning for a royal pardon (about 100 were issued every year). Rarely a capital sentence could be commuted to a more clement punishment, e.g. Immurement.		
Dereliction of duties (aka "Fleeing justice")	failure to attend court (ignoring a summons), flight from arrest (when charged with a crime), custody or jumping bail	Outlawry > Bounty*	Suspects were convicted in absentia.
Resisting arrest	threatening, struggling against or striking a keeper of the peace while being arrested	Hanging	making it lawful to destroy felons who resist
Infanticide	Deliberately killing one's own child	Ducking upon cucking-stool into the water	
Suicide	the act of intentionally taking's one's own life	Staking	frequently carried in despair, often due to a mental disorder, alcoholism and/or stress factors such as debt, antagonistic relationships and bullying
Adultery	couple engaged in sexual intercourse outside of their respective marriages	Buried alive	
Robbery	the violent taking of any money or goods from the person of another, putting him in fear, be the value thereof above or under 1 shilling	Gibbeting	Highway robbery took place outside and in a public place such as a street or highway by a thief (sometimes on horseback)
Piracy	Robbery on the high seas	Gibbeting	
Incest	sexual activity between family members or close relatives	Impalement	
Sodomy	Buggery of humans or beasts	Dismemberment	
Abduction	unlawful taking away or transportation of a man against that person's will, usually to hold the person unlawfully	Dismemberment	Abductions were usually undertaken for ransom or in furtherance of another crime
Murder	no distinction made between premeditated murder and homicide	Weregild (fine) > Hanging	Women convicted of murder were strangled and then burnt
Counterfeiting	Minting fake coins or forging promissory notes (bills of credit)	Boiling	
Arson	Deliberate burning of a building	Burning	
Heresy	opinion of doctrine at variance with the orthodox or accepted doctrine of a church or religious system	Burning	
Sorcery	Gross Misconduct, Traitorous Acts, and most of all for Defaming the Good Orders of the Colleges of Magic	Pacification	Investigated, arrested, tortured (for confession) & executed by Witch-Hunters.
Witchcraft	those deceived by the Dark Gods (customary among pagans), who believes in these forbidden deities and supplicate to them	Brutal torturing & Burning	suspects allegedly often knew alchemy and/or demon summoning thanks to magical books
Sedition	an intention to bring into hatred or contempt, or to excite disaffection against the person of His Imperial Majesty, his heirs or successors	Breaking wheel	
High treason	plotting against the monarchy (state) Whereas petty treason which is treason against a lawful superior	Drawing & quartering	

* Bounties were set according to the gravity crime (10-20 GC for misdemeanours, 30-50 GC for felonies & 60-100 GC for capital offences)

Punishment	Description
Village lock-up	Small but dedicated building that was used for the temporary (usually overnight) detention of unruly (usually drunk) people in rural parts. Often built of stone with a single door and a narrow slit window.
Fined	Criminal must pay a fine or face being Pillory and/or Imprisoned.
Small fine	3-8 shillings for minor trespass
Fair fine	12-30 shillings for repeat offenders or minor misdemeanours. Failing that, half a dozen lashes
Stiff fine	2-5 GC for gross misdemeanour, e.g. affray, petty larceny, grave slander or a dozen lashes
Heavy fine	8-20 GC for repeated misdemeanours or petty felonies, e.g. battery, night-stalker, ravishment, blasphemy or 2 dozen lashes
Massive fine	25-50 GC for gross felony, e.g. murder of a slave, murder of a churl, grand larceny? smuggling? evasion of duty? or 3 dozen lashes
Branked	The offender (usually a woman) had a cage-like contraption placed on her head. A metal strip on the "BRANK" fit into the mouth and was either sharpened to a point or covered with spikes so that any movement of the tongue was certain to cause severe injuries to the mouth
Stocks	A device which partially immobilises the criminal by clamping his feet with large, wooden boards. Not only is this physically painful but it also offers a form of social humiliation (often setup at marketplaces or crossroads) and even entertainment to the public who often took the opportunity to pelt the criminal with rotten food, mud, offal, excrement or dead animals. Detention lasted from a few hours to a few days.
Drunkard's Cloak	Criminal is required to wear a barrel (holes were cut on the sides for the person's hands and head, causing it to become like a heavy, awkward shirt) as he was led through the town so villagers might jeer at him
Pilloried (Flogging)	A device mounted on a post that partially immobilises the criminal by clamping his hands and head with large, hinged, wooden boards. The victim's back was then flogged with a whip before allowing the public a few hours to mock, taunt & abuse the criminal. A half dozen lashes (each lash inflicts 0.5W to the back) for trespasses, dozen for repeat offenders, 2 dozen (death possible) for misdemeanours and 3 dozen (death likely) for felonies.
Cropping	The removal of a criminal's ear with a blade (2D6W to the head). Cropping was also a secondary punishment to having criminals' ears nailed to the pillory (with the intention that their body movements would tear them off), In the case of Thomas Barrie (1538), he spent a whole day with his ears nailed to the pillory in Newbury, England, before having them cut off to release him.
Branding	The marking of a criminal by burning his skin with a red hot iron which combines physical punishment (6+D6W?) with public humiliation (usually the breast but sometimes under the left armpit or even the forehead).
Penance	A system of rituals to atone for temporal punishment due to sins, e.g. pilgrimage where the graver the crime, the greater the pilgrimage
Ducking	It was a chair attached to a large lever system which stabilised the seat so that it would remain upright with the offender strapped in. The chair was then lowered into the water any number of times. Sometimes the offender would drown from the time spent under water. • Criminal tied with ropes, pushed into a river (never a lake – the water has to be able to ‘wash away’ the sinner) • If the criminal got washed onto the shore alive, he would be exiled • Extra punishment: sewn into a sack with living animals (cats, dogs, snakes)
Hard Labour	Criminal is condemned to several years forced work quarrying (Middenheim Mining Colony and Penitentiary), building roads (chain gangs), city walls or labouring on the docks, often "grinders" (men walking inside a crane)
Staking	buried in the field with a stake driven through their bodies
Incarceration	Criminal is imprisoned for a term befitting the crime, either 1d10 years or life.
Weregild (blood money)	Large fine if victim was a slave & Massive fine if victim was a churl
Mutilation	An appendage is cut from the criminal, ranging from a finger to a hand or even an arm, depending on severity and nature of the crime. Note that amputation was such a common punishment that people who had accidentally lost body parts would carry certified notes to assure people that they were not criminals.
Castration	This often involved the total removal of all the male genitalia. This incurred great danger of death due to bleeding or infection and, in some states, was seen as the same as a death sentence. Removal of only the testicles had much less risk,

Banishment (Exile)	PC is banished from the area with orders never to return, upon fear of death. This punishment is served only to local residents; re-roll for vagrants.
Conscription	in times of war, this constituted service in the Imperial army, in a penal battalion. These are mainly comprised of convicts but also soldiers with serious disciplinary problems. Although service is limited to 3 months, few survive that long due to meagre equipment, meagre rations, ruthless objectives and reckless leadership. During times of peace, conscripts were instead required to provide labour for other activities of the state (see Hard Labour).
Transportation	to a penal colony, e.g. Leopoldheim and Sudenberg in Southlands or Skeggi and Port Reaver in Lustria
Outlawry	the suspect is declared an outlaw. The "Writ of Outlawry" made the pronouncement <i>Caput gerat lupinum</i> ("Let his be a wolf's head", literally "May he bear a wolfish head"). Outlaws were banished and lost all their legal rights. Anyone could freely steal their property or could even kill them.
Execution	criminal is hanged, beheaded, burned or immured. Fate Points may be used to evade execution
Hanging	criminal was hanged by the neck till he be dead, and then cut down and buried (contrary to Gibbeting where his corpses would rot for weeks for all to see)
Gibbeting	• Slow death through strangulation (not breaking of the neck!) • Dead body was not buried but let hand to rot • Extra punishment by using a chain instead of a rope (chain does not tighten) • Extra punishment by burning a small pile of wood under the criminal • Corpse left dangling for weeks till it rotted and as a warning to others
Immurement	a form of imprisonment, usually for life, in which a person is, for example, locked within an enclosed space and all possible exits turned into impassable walls. This includes instances where people have been enclosed in extremely tight confinement, such as within a coffin. When used as a means of execution, the prisoner is simply left to die from starvation or dehydration. This is distinct from being buried alive, in which the victim typically dies of asphyxiation.
Impaling	This was performed with either a red-hot poker or a large stake being thrust through the rectum, sometimes coming out the criminal's mouth. It was customary to leave them on public display
Burning	condemned is bound to a large wooden stake atop a huge wood pile
Boiling	A criminal was placed in a large cauldron and literally boiled alive
Buried alive	• The two adulterers would be tied together • Hole in the earth is layered with thorny bushes • After the hole is closed, a stake would be driven in the earth and subsequently through the two adulterers
Dismemberment	The accused had his four limbs tied to four horses and then the horses were made to run in four different directions, resulting in the person being pulled apart
Pacification	type of Aethyric gelding - a cutting away of the part of the soul capable of seeing and casting magic
Breaking wheel	a torture device used for public execution by breaking the criminal's bones/bludgeoning him to death.
Drawing & quartering	hanged till half dead, dragged face downward through the streets by a horse's tail, drawn (disembowelled) & quartered (cut into 4 pieces) then buried in different parts of town. This meant that when Judgment Day came, they would not be able to rise whole, and therefore would be denied entrance to Paradise. 1) Burning with red hot pliers 2) Peeling off the skin in stripes 3) Hot tar on the soles of the feet 4) Quartering (or sometimes pulling out the guts) 5) Hanging of the four pieces at the gallows

Sources

Chapter 6 of the WFRP Companion

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