

Moral crime

Late 1500s Puritan influence begins to grow. In the mid-1600s Puritan beliefs were mixed with the law. New crimes such as: Swearing, not going to church, being drunk, sex outside marriage. Puritan influence declined after 1600s.

Witchcraft

1500 and 1600s Govmt. introduced harsh new laws against witchcraft. 100s of women were executed for witchcraft.

Witchcraft trials peaked during times of poor harvest, plague and civil war and Puritan areas.

Many people believed in witchcraft and the devil. Thought the devil gave witches a familiar to do their bidding. Accusations often started with an argument between neighbours.

Witchcraft belief declined in the 1700s as people discovered science.

Smuggling

Govmt. relies on import tax (money paid on imported goods) for much of its money. This made goods from abroad more expensive. Smugglers made money by bringing these goods in to the country and avoiding paying import tax.

1600s - tobacco from Virginia, 1720s - brandy, silk and tea as Govmt. put import duty up to 30%

Coastal areas, 40-50 people - Venturer, ship's crew, landers, lookouts, carters.

People did not see smuggling as a crime and would help the smugglers or by their goods.

Highwaymen

16/1700s - Roads increase, travel is common, no banks so people carry their money. They would be ambushed by highwaymen on unlit roads in remote areas.

Highwaymen seen as 'gentleman of the road' i.e. Dick Turpin. Reality = Vicious robbers

Declined due to banks and patrols.

Punishments

Shaming and physical punishments - Public penance (asking forgiveness for your crimes in public.) Pillory, stocks, cucking and ducking stools, whipping and branding, scold's bridle.

Prison - Continued to be a less common punishment. Still used for debtors or people awaiting punishment. Some new prisons were built in the EMP.

Bridewells - Bridewell palace was an unused palace outside the city walls. It was turned in to a prison where vagrants were forced to work. If they refused to work they would face physical punishment. 1609 - the Vagabond Act forced JPs in every county to build bridewells.

Capital punishment - Most serious crimes still punished by death. Treason - Noblemen = chopped off with an axe. Common people = Hanging, drawing and quartering.

Capital offences other than treason were punished by hanging. The criminal would be dragged through town on a cart before being publicly hanged. It was death by strangulation as there was no sudden drop to break the neck.

The Bloody code

1688-1820 the number of offences for which people could be hanged rose dramatically. The landowning MPs used capital punishment to try and frighten people in to being law-abiding citizens as there was no police force. 50 capital crimes in 1688 → 200 in 1820. Most were crimes against property e.g. poaching.

The number of hangings was reduced though as judges were reluctant to pass the death sentence for minor crimes.

Law enforcement

Very similar to Medieval period - Hue and Cry, JPs, constables.

Changes - The sheriff became less important as the JPs gained more importance. As towns grew in size they began to employ watchmen to arrest drunks, vagabonds and other criminals

Courts

The assizes - Main courts for serious offences. E.g. Murder, rape, witchcraft. **The quarter sessions** - 4 times a year all JPs in a county met to try less serious offences - Elizabethan era JPs given more power such as licensing alehouses.

Petty sessions - 1600s - JPs couldn't carry out all work if they only met 4 times a year. Small groups of JPs met more regularly in their local area. Dealt with petty crime such as drunkenness - replaced manor courts. **Church courts** - Very active in 1500/1600s.

Early modern (1500-1750) crime and punishment knowledge organiser

Crime overview

The violence and disorder among nobles declined. Rather than waging war they gained more power through trade.

Types of crime committed by ordinary people were similar to the Medieval period. - Mainly petty crimes such as theft.

Rise in crime in the middle of the 1600s due to population increase and high prices. Crime declined by the middle of the 1700s.

In 1500s and 1600s authorities were more concerned about vagrancy, witchcraft and moral crime. 1700s - Smuggling and highwaymen.

Vagrancy

Population growth 2.4 million 1520 → 4.1 million 1600. = A rapid rise in prices. When harvests were bad or demand for English woollen cloth was low people lost their jobs and were forced to leave their villages to look for work.

Big problem in the Elizabethan era. - Pamphlets and books told stories of dangerous, wandering vagrant gangs.

1567 Thomas Harman wrote a book to warn people about 'rogues' and 'vagabonds' wandering the country. - 23 types of vagrants incl. 'counterfeit crank' ate soap to make you think he was ill and give him money.

Period overview

Many people continued to live and work in the countryside.

England became richer but there was a big social divide → Middle class families became wealthier, poorer families became poorer - Many had to leave their villages.

A fifth of people live in towns, they were small. London however was the largest city in Europe. There were the extremes of rich and poor. Many poor people turned to gin.

People travelled around more in this period. In the 1600s more roads were built and stagecoach travel became popular.

The government gained more power. They could make laws and had more control over people.

Religion changed many times due to the Reformation. - The Puritans emerged in the 16th century.

1640s - The Civil War. King Charles is executed. Oliver Cromwell takes power. Later King Charles II is given the throne. - Local landowners who were also MPs gained more power.

Printing became quick and cheap.