

Crime and Punishment Resource and Activity Pack

Norwich Castle is known today as a museum and art gallery, but for most of its history it was a place of imprisonment, trial and execution. Discover about its prisoners, reformers, architects, prison staff and those found guilty of murder! Please click on the underlined blue words to take you to relevant resources. Answers to questions can be found at the end of this document.

Fit for a king?

The Normans started building the castle as a defensive structure in 1067 and by the time it was completed in 1121, it had become a royal palace.

However, its function changed dramatically in 1345 when King Edward III sold it back to the city because it needed a lot of money to be spent on its upkeep – for example, the roof had started to fall in! It then became the county gaol.

Gaol or prison?

Now, before we go any further we need to check we know what a gaol was, back in the 14th Century. It was not a place of punishment, like today, but merely a holding place for those charged with crimes before their trials. As you will study from this [Medieval cell and graffiti](#), someone called Bartholomew scratched a declaration of innocence on the interior walls.

Activity: imagine you were imprisoned in Norwich Castle in the 14th Century, awaiting your trial. What would you write on your wall?

All mixed up

We know very little about conditions inside the gaol until we get to the 18th Century.

[A Bible](#) from that century recorded the baptisms of all the children born in the gaol.

Q1. What might this tell us about how men and women were held in the gaol?

We also know that there was no separation of people regarding the crime they had been charged with so people accused of stealing food may have found themselves next to some charged with murder!

Q2. Why might this be a bad idea?

Trials and fees

As judges used to travel around the country to hear trials, these were only held six times a year in Norwich. Therefore, you could be held in gaol for months before your trial came up. Gaols were not funded by the government so if you had been charged with a crime, you had to pay your gaoler fees to enter, to stay in the gaol and also if you wanted anything extra such as bedding. If you were found innocent, you had to pay your gaoler a fee, called a 'garnish', to let you out! That was provided you didn't owe him any money because if you did, you wouldn't have been allowed to leave and you would have become a 'debtor' in the gaol – someone who was unable to pay back money borrowed from someone else.

Punishments

If you were found guilty, punishments ranged from the ones below to hanging.

Q3: Match the punishment with the object:

Object		Punishment
<p>1.</p> 		<p>A. PILLORY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used 11th -19th centuries • Your heads and hands were fixed and you could have been pelted with objects for hours or days
<p>2.</p>  <p>From pilloryhistory.com</p>		<p>B. SCOLD'S BRIDLE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used 16th-19th centuries • This went over your head and a tongue holder would be forced into your mouth to stop you from speaking
<p>3.</p> 		<p>C. WHIPPING POST:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used 16th-19th centuries • Your wrists were fixed and you would have been whipped
<p>4.</p> 		<p>D. DUCKING/CUCKING STOOL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used 11th-19th centuries • You would have been carried on the chair through the city first before being ducked in a pond or river • In Norwich, ducking was done at Eye Bridge
<p>5.</p>  <p>From Leeds Museums and Galleries</p>		<p>E. STOCKS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used 11-19th centuries • Your legs and feet were fixed, and you would have had rotten food thrown at you for hours or days

The Bloody Code

From 1688 the number of offences for which people could be hanged rose dramatically, from 50 to 200 – known as the Bloody Code. This happened because MPs became more powerful following the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and they thought the threat of capital punishment would deter people from breaking the law.

Q4. Do you agree with the MPs? Why or why not?

Q5. Do you know or can you guess which crimes match which punishments?

Crime		Punishment
1. Stealing sheep		A. Hanged or transported to another country to serve sentence there
2. Swearing (if you were a woman)		B. Hanged
3. Cheating people out of money (if you were a tradesman)		C. Transported to another country to serve sentence there
4. Selling rotten food		D. Ducking stool
5. Stealing linen		E. Stocks
6. Burglary		F. Scold's bridle
7. Begging		G. Whipped
8. Arson		H. Hanged

Campaigning for change

As the number of people awaiting trial increased, gaols became overcrowded. When John Howard visited his local gaol in Bedfordshire, he was so horrified by what he saw there that he decided to visit other gaols in the country, including Norwich Castle, during the 1770s. Find out more about him at [John Howard and Prison Reform](#).

As you will discover, Norwich had links to many other gaol reformers, including Elizabeth Fry. To find out more about her, visit <http://historysheroes.e2bn.org/hero/108>

Read [John Howard's report](#) on the gaol although be careful as what looks like the letter 'f' may be an 's' instead!

Activity: The prisoners are given a weekly amount of cheese and coal but one 20oz loaf a day. Weigh out 20oz of bread or another type of food. Would this have kept you fed for a day?

Q6. Make your own report from Howard's by listing all the good things (9) about the gaol and then all the bad things (6). What recommendations would you make to make the gaol better?

New gaol building

Howard's report inspired new gaols to be built. The architect John Soane was employed to design a new gaol inside and around the Norwich Castle Keep. View [a model of Soane's gaol](#) along with an adjacent Shirehall, which housed trials.

Activity: what new features did Soane's gaol have? Do any match your recommendations from Q6?

Soane's gaol was built in 1790s but it had too many blindspots and it was also too small. So, a competition in 1819 was set to design a new gaol at Norwich Castle.

Activity: design your own gaol! Try to include all your recommendations from Q6.

And another new gaol building

Local architect William Wilkins won the competition (and £100) to redesign Soane's gaol. His winning design was inspired by reformers at the time who wanted to separate the different types of criminal as well as men and women. Study a [model of Wilkins' gaol](#) and his [floor plan](#). Watch the [Norwich Castle Prison Story](#).

Q7. Why did Wilkins build cell blocks radiating from the central gaoler's home?

From gaol to prison

The new gaol coincided with a massive change to the justice system in this country. Due to pressure from aforementioned reformers Howard and Fry, the Home Secretary during the 1820s, Robert Peel, decided to replace a lot of publicly humiliating punishments and hangings with imprisonment to attempt to reform the criminals' character. The gaol now became a prison.

Silent or separate?

As most prisoners were now in prison because they had been found guilty of their crimes, decisions were made on how they should be treated. One of two systems were chosen: the silent system and the separate system. Prisoners were not allowed to communicate with each other in anyway under the silent system and Norwich employed this system. However, this was very difficult for gaolers to manage so after 1850 Norwich took on the separate system. This mean that prisoners stayed alone in their cells for as long as possible – not just for sleeping and eating but also for working.

Q8. Look at the [images of prisons in the 19th Century](#). Decide which pictures are showing the silent system and which are showing the separate system.

Prison daily life

See a [reconstruction of a prison cell](#) from 1851. As you will see, it:

- Is only 10 feet by 6 feet
- Has a hammock so the prisoner can roll it away and use the cell to work
- Has a stool
- Has a slop bucket

Activity: draw plans of this cell and your bedroom and compare the two. Is your bedroom bigger than the cell and if so, by how much? What different items do you have?

Read [a day in the life of poacher Fred Rolff](#).

Activity: compare your day with Fred's day – before lockdown and during lockdown!

Transportation

Not all prisoners served their sentences in the prison. Many were transported to the Americas and Australia including two of the most famous prisoners in the prison's history: Henry Kable and Susannah Holmes. To read their amazing story, visit <https://henrykable-susannahholmes.com/>

Staff

View [Prison job descriptions in 1829](#).

Q9. What jobs can you read? What do you think each of these jobs entailed and which one would you have preferred to do?

To see those who staffed the prison in the late 19th Century, look at these [staff photos](#).

Courtroom

As Wilkins' new buildings took up nearly all of the Castle mound, new Shirehall courtrooms were built at the bottom North-East area of the mound. A staircase and tunnel was built to connect the prison with the new courtrooms built inside.

[Look at this photo of one of the courtrooms](#).

Q10. Can you figure out where the following people sat, A-E?

- Judge
- Jury
- Defendant(s)
- Witness
- Lawyers

Murder most famous

In April 1848, the most famous trial of this courtroom took place. It was of James Bloomfield Rush and he had been charged with double murder! To find out what happened, read [John Bloomfield Rush's story](#).

As he was found guilty, he was sentenced to be hanged. You can read his [execution report](#). Before he was buried, a plaster cast of his head was made. See his [death head](#).

Q11. Do you know or can you guess why these were made?

As he had been found guilty of murder, Rush was not allowed to be buried in a churchyard in order to ensure his soul did not get to heaven. So, his body was brought back up to the prison and buried along the West wall, alongside other murderers executed at the prison. View [the wall and his grave marking](#).

Public executions were made illegal in 1868 due to rowdy and criminal behaviour on hanging days and humanitarian reasons, however executions still continued, but now in private. Capital punishment continued in this county until 1965.

Activity: make a list of pros and cons for capital punishment. Do you think it should be brought back? Why or why not?

The museum today

Despite having been re-designed and re-built in 1822, by the 1880s the prison was outdated. It was decided to move the prison to the former army barracks on Mousehold Heath in Norwich (which is still a prison today) and convert the old buildings into a museum. The museum opened in 1894 and you can still see the general layout of the prison today:

[The Keep](#) – once the Medieval gaol, then home to Soane's and Wilkins' cell blocks – see this 1880s [photograph of the cells inside the keep](#)

[Rotunda](#) – Wilkins' completely new building from 1822:

- Boudica and Romans, Temporary Exhibition and Natural History galleries are all old cell blocks

Colman: British Masters [Art gallery](#) – was an open-air exercise yard

[Shop](#) – was the schoolroom

[Outside](#) – this was where public hangings were held

[Decorative Arts/Teapot galleries](#) – private hangings took place in this area

Q11: Do you think it is right to have a museum where there was so much misery?

Answers to questions:

Q1. Men and women were not separated.

Q2. People who were innocent or charged with very minor crimes may well become influenced by those charged with serious crimes.

Q3.

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<p>1. </p>		<p>E. STOCKS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used 11th-19th centuries • Your legs and feet were fixed, and you would have had rotten food thrown at you for hours or days •
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Q4. Your opinion.

Q5.

Crime		Punishment
1. Stealing sheep		B or H: Hanged
2. Swearing (if you were a woman)		E. Scold's bridle
3. Cheating people out of money (if you were a tradesman)		C. Ducking stool
4. Selling rotten food		D. Stocks
5. Stealing linen		A. Transported
6. Burglary		A. Hanged or transported
7. Begging		F. Whipped
8. Arson		B or H: Hanged

Q6.

Good things	Bad things
Pump Bath Airy, separate rooms for the sick Humane and respected gaoler Prisoners can sell own wares to earn money Matron Surgeon Good bread Sermons	Flooded dungeon Women and men not separated when 'delicacy would most of all require it' Fees for inmates to stay in the gaol Fee ('garnish') to leave Fees to enter Fees for a bed or to share a bed with one or two others!

Recommendations: not have flooded areas, separate women and men all the time, scrap fees.

Q7. The gaoler could oversee all the prisoners.

Q8. Separate system is shown in pictures a, b, e (as the prisoners were kept as separate from each other as possible) and silent system (prisoners were allowed to see each other) is shown in c, d, f, g.

Q9.

Turnkeys: they would have quite literally have turned the keys of the cells, locking or unlocking the cells.

Taskmaster: they would have overseen the hard labour tasks prisoners were forced to partake in, such as the treadmill, oakum picking, etc.

Schoolmaster: this man would have taught inmates basic reading, writing and maths skills. The schoolroom was where the current museum shop is.

Porter: this man would have moved anything that needed moving around the prison.

Miller: this man was responsible for milling the corn from the treadmill (when it was used for such) for the prisoner's bread.

Q10.

A = Jury box

B = Judge

C = Witness box

D = Lawyers

E = Dock

Q11. To study the science of phrenology which believed you could tell a person's personality by looking at their head shape!

Q12. Your opinion.

Norfolk Museums Service is a partnership between Norfolk County Council and Norfolk's District Councils, funded through council tax, earned income and grants.

