Crime and Punishment

Trials and Enforcement Timeline

Anglo Saxon England

Law Enforcement

Community was important for Law Enforcement:

* Hue and Cry – Everyone nearby would down tools to search for a criminal.
* Tithings – Small groups of men over 12 years old, who were all responsible for each other’s behaviour.
* Each tithing was led by a tithing man, who would be responsible for taking any criminals in their group to court.

Trials

Accused criminals were tried in local courts ("hundred courts") in front of a group of respected men and a local official.

The court would hear the case, with victim and criminal giving witnesses, and decide the verdict.

Reputation was very important, as people were judged on their character.

Trial by Ordeal is used if no verdict can be made - all of these (except by water) were done in a church:

* Boiling Water - accused (mainly men) would put arm in boiling water. If the wound was healing well after 3 days, they were innocent.
* Cold Water - accused (also mainly men) would be tied up and thrown in water blessed by a priest. If they sank, they were innocent.
* Hot Iron - mainly used for women, they would carry a red-hot iron a short distance. They were judged after 3 days, the same as the boiling water.

Norman England

Law Enforcement

Community was still an important factor for Law Enforcement:

* Local people were still responsible, under supervision of local nobles, sheriffs, and reeves.
* Normans built castles in strategic locations.
* Earls became less powerful, replaced by sheriffs.

Trials

Introduced trial by combat – Accused would fight accuser, until one died or gave up. The loser was considered guilty.

Later Middle Ages

Law Enforcement

A more centralised law enforcement system controlled by the King, and carried out by royal officials:

* 1166 - Court system reorganised; royal judges were appointed to travel the country to hear serious cases.
* 1194 - The role of the coroner is created. They investigate suspicious deaths, and ensure fine money reached the King.
* 1195 - King appointed officials called Keepers of the Peace is disorderly areas to uphold the law.

1327 - KPs appointed in all areas, and later were called Justices of the Peace (JPs).

* They can imprison criminals, judge cases, and hang the guilty.
* Parish constables were volunteers who upheld the law in their area for a year, unpaid.
* Watchmen were local citizens who watched for crimes at night.