Crime and Punishment

Punishments Timeline

Anglo Saxon England

Punishments

The main focus behind punishments was deterrence and retribution:

* Deterrence – Punishments so harsh that people would be scared away from committing crimes.
* Retribution – People should "pay" for what they have done (not just money).

Types of Punishment

Corporal Punishment – Method of punishment to the body (e.g., stocks)

* The stocks and pillory – head or ankles clamped between 2 pieces of wood, often in public - humiliation and deterrence.
* Reoffenders were treated harshly, sometimes being mutilated (losing body parts). Severity designed to deter people.
* Wergild – A system of fines, where the amount depends on the severity of the crown.

Capital Punishment - The death penalty or execution. Treason was a crime punishable by death.

Prison was not used very often. You were only in prison if you were awaiting trial/execution.

* You could also be held in debtors’ prison if you owed someone money.

Norman England

Punishments

Changes to Wergild - Fines were now paid to the king, rather than the victim(s).

Law Enforcement

Reactions to changes - Following the Norman invasion, there was a lot of distrust towards them.

* Some fought back and killed Norman soldiers.
* William (King) introduced the Murdrum fines, which were for those who killed Normans.
* If a Norman was killed, the whole village would join together to pay a fine to the King.

Norman law gave a range of punishments for the same crime - the judges would choose a punishment.

Later Middle Ages

Punishments

New law passed - Statute of Labourers, made it illegal to:

* Demand higher wages from your Lord
* Move away from your Lord's land to seek higher wages elsewhere
* Work for more than a set minimum wage

1351 Treason Act - High treason was plotting to harm the King, or his family. The punishment was hung, drawing and quartering.

Laws were passed against heresy (speaking out against the church)