

How were suspects tried? Trial by...



Water!

A suspected person was strapped to a chair and thrown into a lake. If they sank they were innocent; if they floated they were guilty, and then they were executed. The accused died in any case, by drowning or execution.



Fire!

This involved a person putting their arm into a cauldron of boiling water or holding a red hot iron bar and walking 3 paces. The wound was bandaged and if it started to heal after 3 days the person was innocent; if it did not they were guilty.



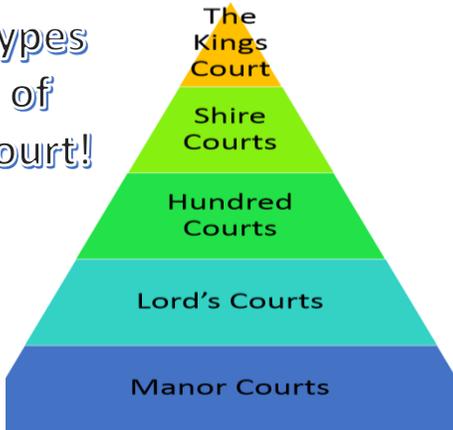
Combat!

This was introduced by the Normans! NEW! If a nobleman was accused of a crime he would fight his accuser and whoever won the fight was thought to be right. The loser was wrong and was also usually dead by the end of the fight.

The Murdrum Fine!

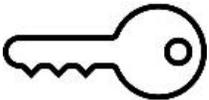
The Normans also introduced a special system to protect themselves from Anglo-Saxon hostility, the MURDRUM FINE! If a Norman was killed and their murderer had not been found within 5 days, the hundred (all the local community) would be fined. These fines helped to reduce violent acts against the Normans but when attacks did occur, the fines provided valuable income for the King.

Types of Court!



Key Words:

- Manorial Court
- Hue and Cry
- Constables
- Tithing
- Oaths
- Watchmen
- Trial by ordeal



Law and Order

Oaths!

- A high value continued to be placed on people's words or promises.
- People who knew the accused were called to give account- not necessarily giving evidence, more likely called to comment on the character of the accused.
- To ensure they told the truth they first had to swear an oath on a holy book or relic.
- Oaths were a continuation of the Anglo-Saxon system but their use declined in more serious cases.
- People were persuaded to make an oath of allegiance known as a common oath which meant they promised not to be involved in any major crime.
- If anyone was involved in a crime their whole family was punished. Punishments were decided in the courts.

What do I need to know:

- The Law courts
- Punishments
- Trial by ordeal
- Law enforcement.

How was the law enforced?

- This was the system for catching criminals after an offence occurred.
- This meant that everyone had a duty to raise the alarm if they saw a crime taking place and everyone who heard the alarm had to help to catch the suspect. If anyone ignored the hue and cry, they would be fined.

- This was a group of 10-12 freemen.
- They promised to prevent each other from committing a crime.
- If one of them did, they had to reveal the guilty one or risk the whole group being punished, usually by a fine.
- However, many guilty men escaped.
- Some sought sanctuary in the church.

- Most towns had a watchman who tried to make sure that people kept to the CURFEW. They were there to prevent crime and catch criminals.
- They were either volunteers or were given the job as a duty.
- Many did not take their job seriously and regarded their duty as a chance to drink with friends.

- Some places had constables to keep an eye on things, but these men only had the job for a year.
- They had the power to arrest people, break up fights and prevent fires.
- They held the key to the Stocks.
- They were not paid much and often had other work to supplement their income.

Tithing! Hue and Cry!

Watchmen

Constables

Kings Court	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The King was the most important person in the justice system this was the same as under the Anglo-Saxons. • His decisions were binding. • The King's court dealt with royal pleas. • Crimes: The most serious offences, robbery, rape, arson, treason, murder. • The King could also hear appeals from lower courts.
Shire Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anglo Saxon. • Not much change • They now met regularly and were supervised by a sheriff. • The judges were landowners or sheriffs. • Crimes: They heard disputes over land or theft or violence.
Hundred Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEW NORMAN IDEA. • Also known as the HONOURIAL COURTS. • They were for the Lord to deal with his tenants. • They supervised property transactions or announced new laws from the King. • The tenants gave the Lord advice.
Manor Courts:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manor Court was the area of land controlled by the Lord of the Manor. • Minor court • Dealt with day to life e.g. bad ploughing or labour not being supplied.