

Crime, punishment and policing in the 19th Century



The watch

The bigger towns set up a watch to patrol the streets at night. The people in the watch, sometimes called 'Charlies', were very poorly paid and were often too old and unfit to get any other type of job.



Magistrates

Each area had a magistrate (also called a Justice of the Peace). Their job was to question suspects and witnesses in a court. They were unpaid volunteers, and could punish criminals however they wanted for minor crimes (like drunken behaviour). For more serious crimes such as murder, the suspect would be sent to a special court with a professional judge and jury.



Constables

Some areas had one or two constables. They helped organise the watch and helped magistrates by trying to catch criminals. They were unpaid volunteers as well, and did the job for a year before someone else took over.



Summarise the roles of the above law enforcement.

What are the differences and similarities?

What is a Capital crime?

If, by some slim chance, a criminal was caught, the punishments were very tough. This was to act as a warning (**deterrent**) to others. And punishments were just as harsh no matter how young the criminal was.

In 1801, a boy was executed for breaking into a house and stealing a silver spoon – he was 13!

During the industrial period, there were over 200 crimes where the guilty person could be **executed**, these were known as **capital crimes**.

- Why were punishments so harsh?
- Are you surprised by any of these?

Some capital crimes

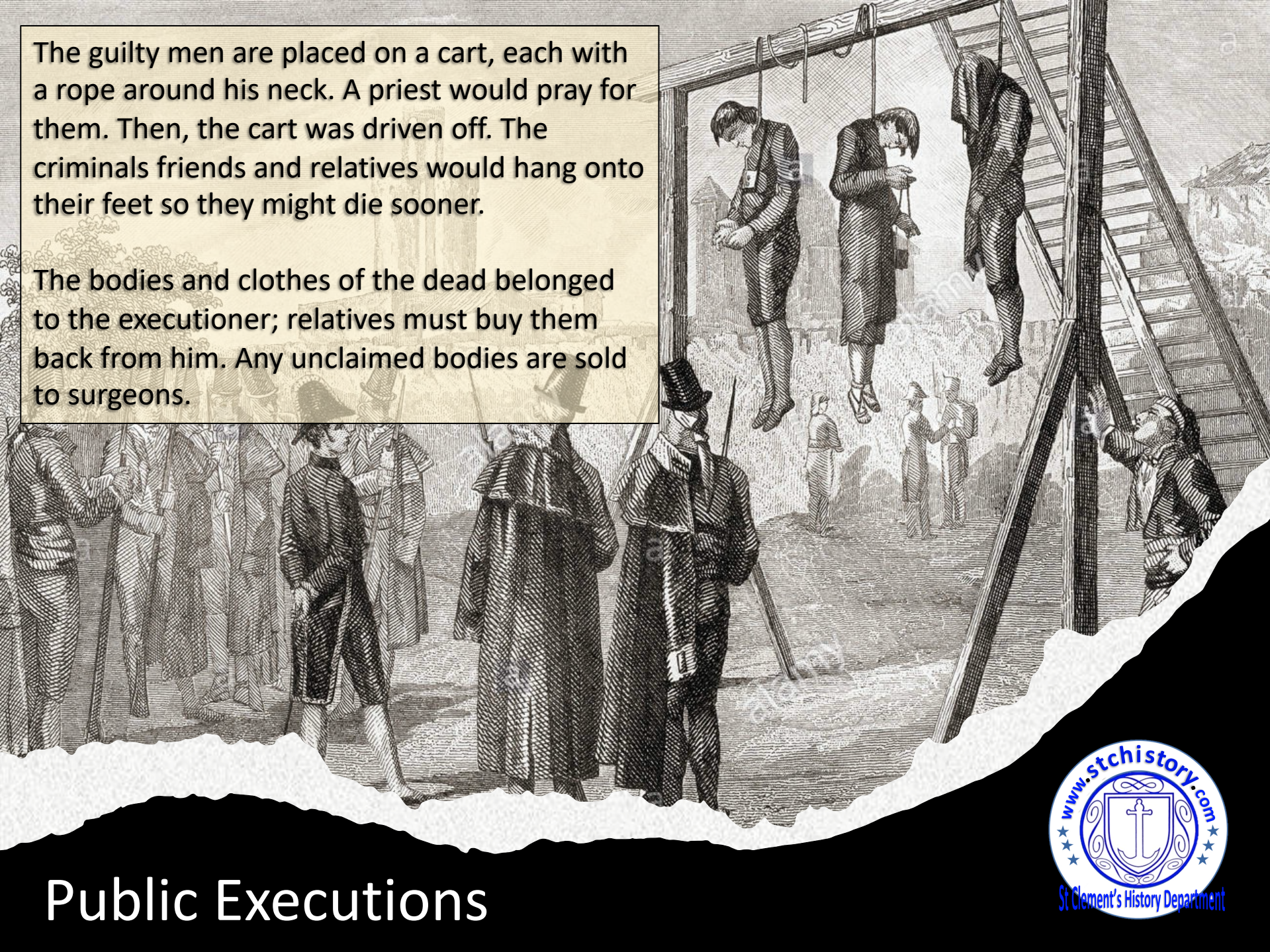
- Murder, treason & arson
- Theft of anything more than 25p (£15 today)
- Stealing from a shipwreck
- Cutting down growing trees
- Being a Pirate
- Shooting a rabbit
- Stealing letters
- Blackening up your face at night
- Damaging Westminster Bridge in London
- Begging without a licence

+ 180 more


You have been warned

The guilty men are placed on a cart, each with a rope around his neck. A priest would pray for them. Then, the cart was driven off. The criminals friends and relatives would hang onto their feet so they might die sooner.

The bodies and clothes of the dead belonged to the executioner; relatives must buy them back from him. Any unclaimed bodies are sold to surgeons.



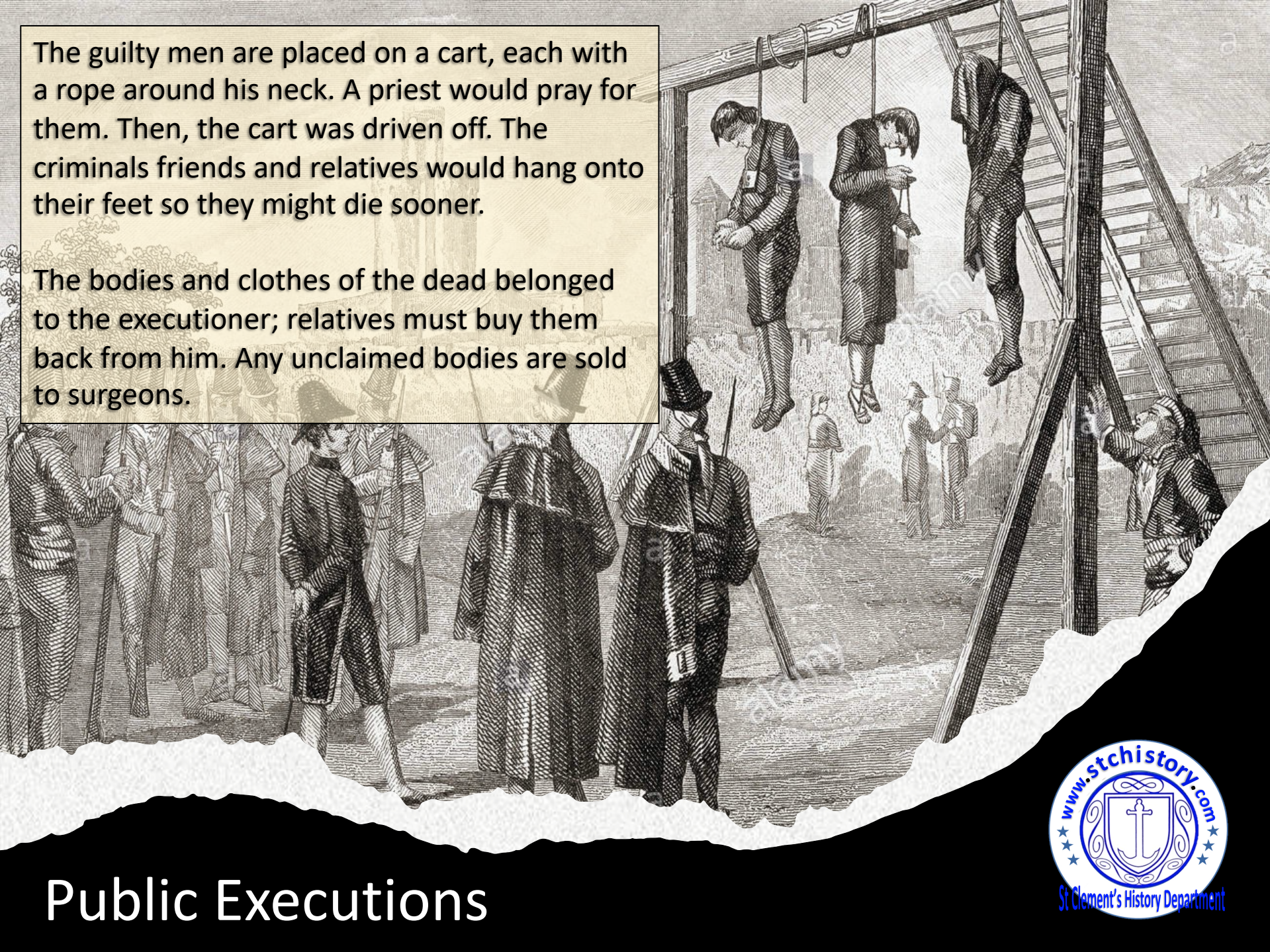
Public Executions




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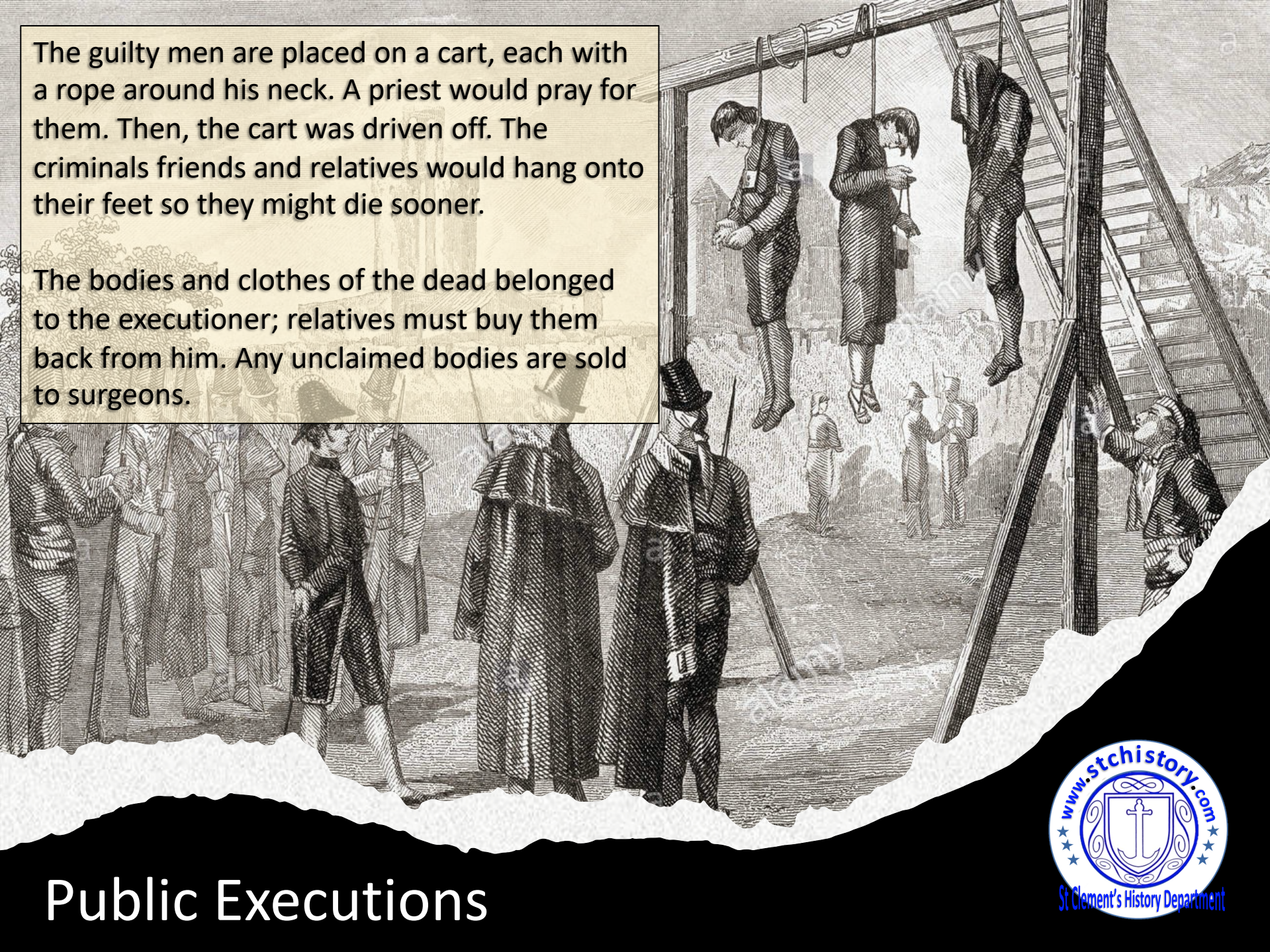
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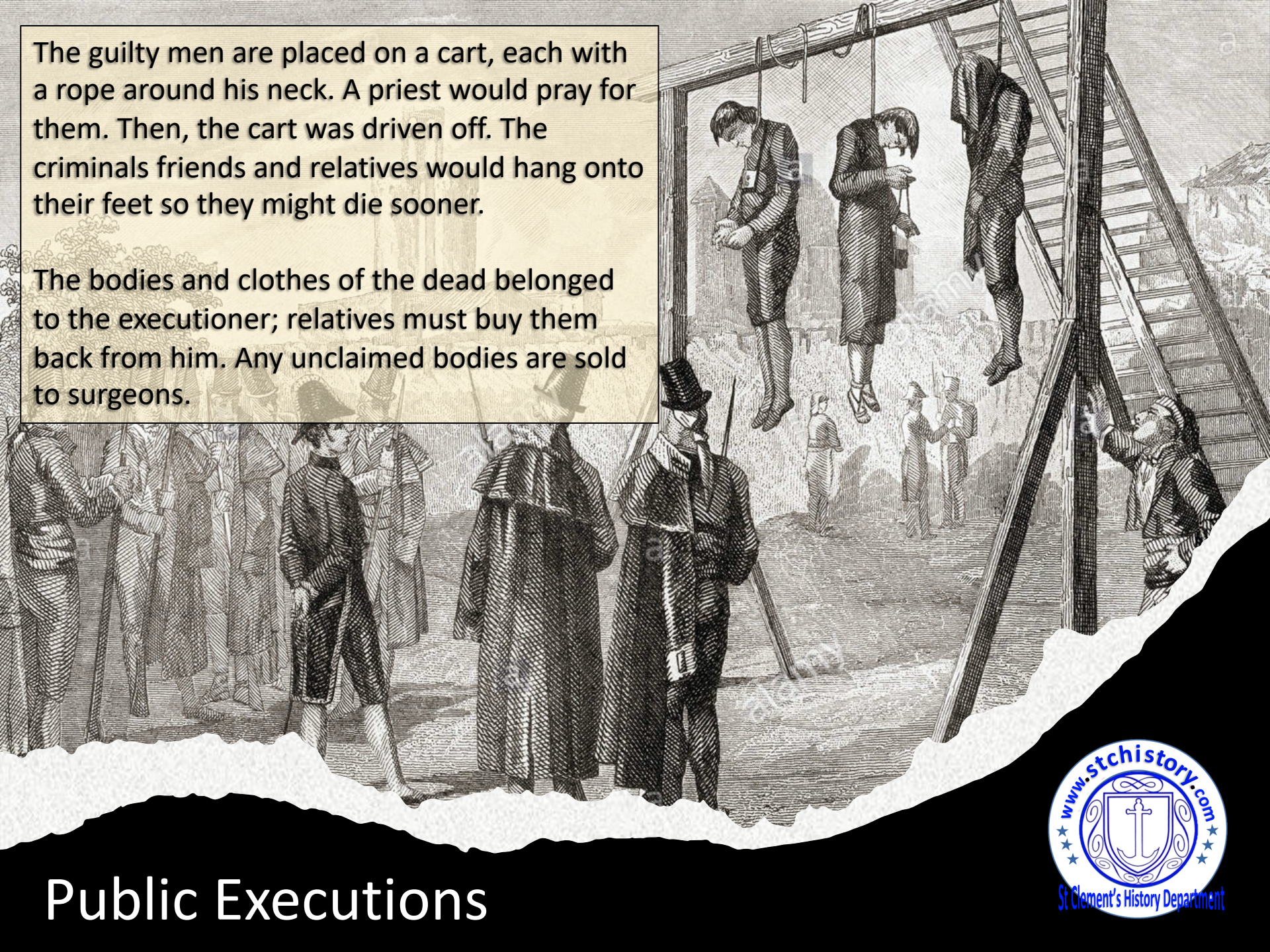
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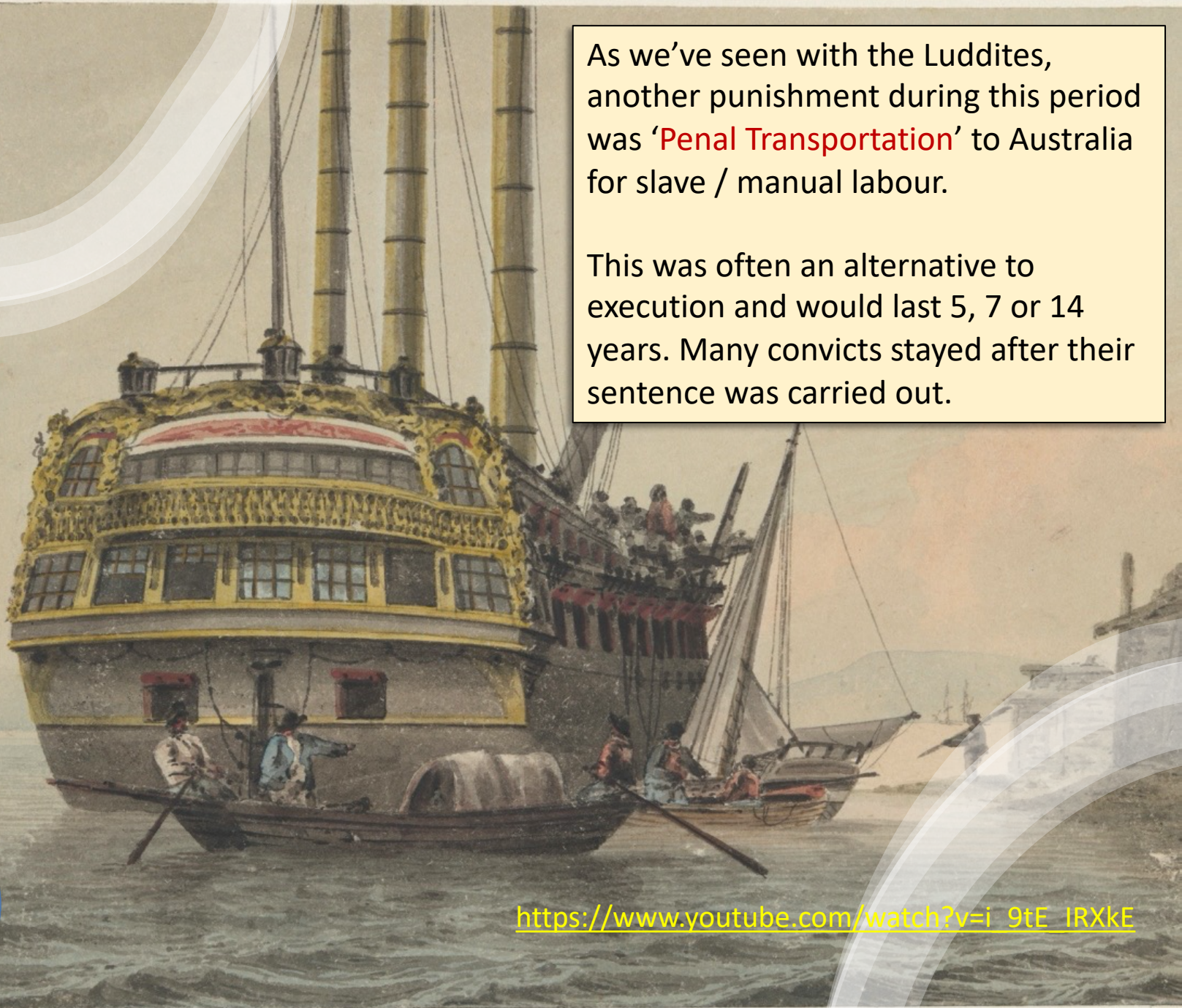


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As we've seen with the Luddites, another punishment during this period was '**Penal Transportation**' to Australia for slave / manual labour.

This was often an alternative to execution and would last 5, 7 or 14 years. Many convicts stayed after their sentence was carried out.





How long do you think we've had a police force in Britain?

Who were the Bow Street Runners?



Several other groups grew up around London, but it wasn't enough. Britain needed a proper police force!

At the start of the Industrial period, c.1750, Britain had no official police force. As the towns and cities grew, so did crime. In 1749, a magistrate named Henry Fielding decided to do something about these con artists, thieves, and prostitutes operating near his offices in Bow Street, London.

Fielding gathered 6 men, gave them handcuffs, a pistol and a stick and promised to pay them a guinea (£1.05) a week to capture as many criminals as possible.

At first they wore their own clothes, then they were given a uniform. This early police force became known as the **Bow Street Runners**.



The first official police force in Britain:

Robert Peel, a government minister set up the Metropolitan Police in 1829:

- 3000 men, mainly ex soldiers
- They got new dark blue uniforms, boots, wooden truncheons, a rattle, a brown coat and a top hat lined with cane and wire.
- They were paid 5p a day
- They were expected to walk their 32k 'beat' around London, seven days a week.
- They had to be under 35, healthy and literate
- Discipline was severe, many early recruits were sacked for drunkenness

Create a job advert for a new Police man, it should be enticing / persuasive and include the details above



Robert Peel



Despite a difficult start with many police officers being attacked and called spies for the government, crime in London began falling which brought a new respect from the public. Soon other towns copied London and by 1856, every large town had its own policemen.

- Why could setting up an official Police force be seen as a key moment in British History?
- Who is employing the police?
- Who are the police controlling?

Why do you think that Robert Peel when he set up the police didn't want them to carry guns?

What are the similarities and differences between the Bow Street Runner and the Met policeman?



A Bow Street Runner, 1749.

A policeman, 1829. These men soon became known as 'Peelers' or 'Bobbies' after the surname or first name of their founder.

Why would a policeman need a rattle?

What were the most common crimes the police had to deal with in the 19th Century?...

What related to Prostitutes is one of Britain's most famous and chilling crimes?...

