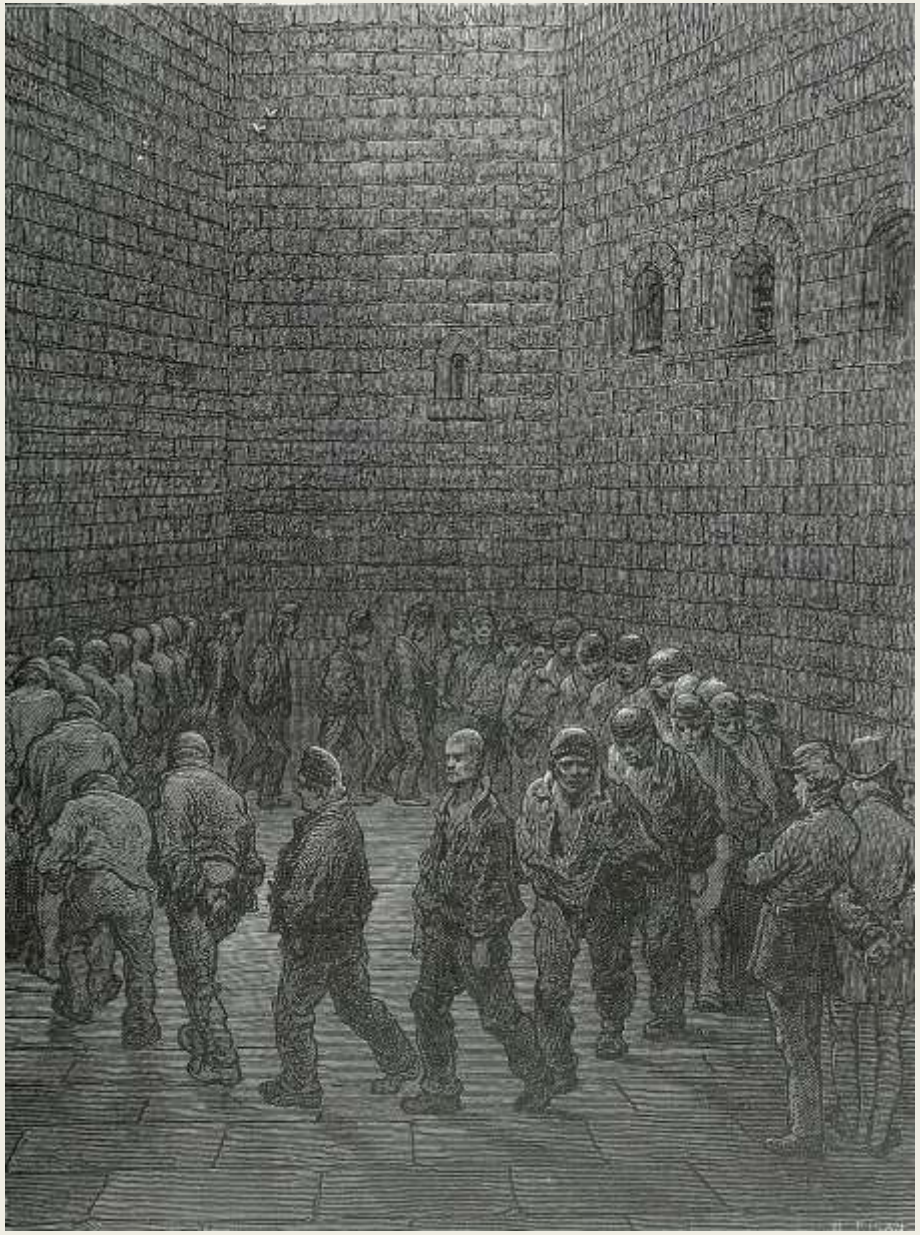
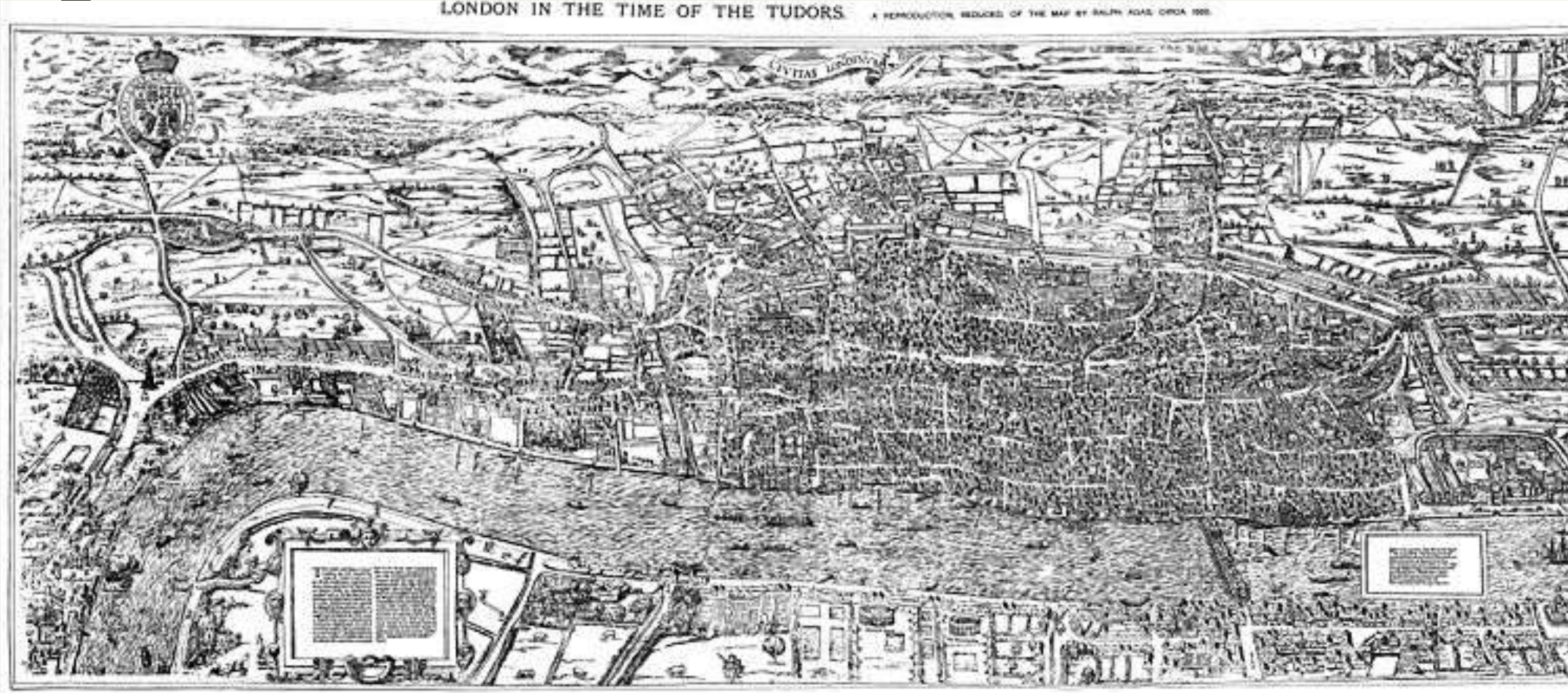
HT52217A / HT53217A

LANDMARKS IN LONDON HISTORY



Week 3. Criminality and Disorder

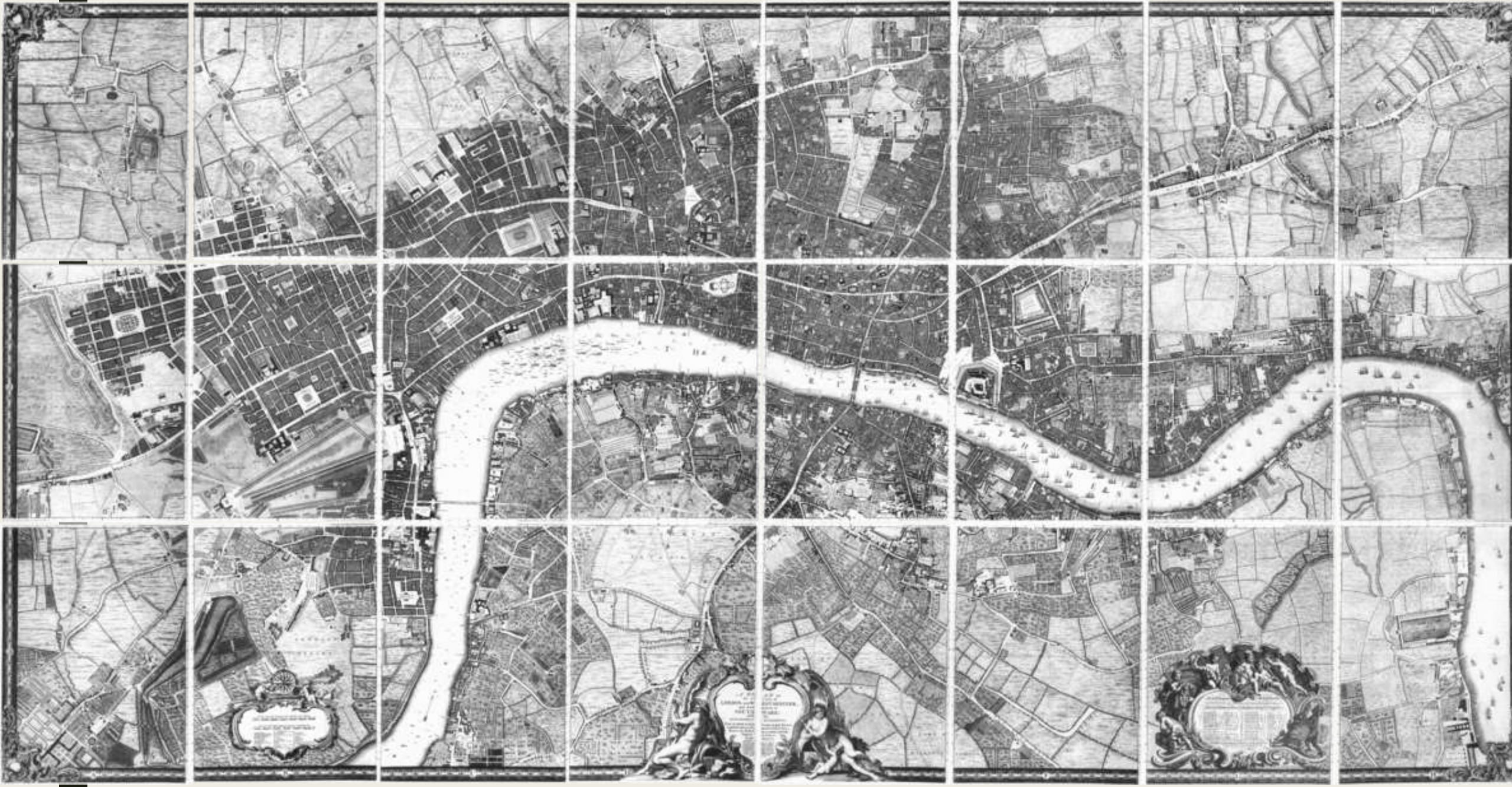
Claes Van Visscher, London Bridge 1616 [detail]



Ralph Agas, *Civitas Londinium* (c.1590)

John Norden's map of London (1593) [this copy comes from the 1653 edition of John Norden's *Speculum Britainiae*]


THE RIVER OF THAMES
St James's Square
St James's
Park
St. Georges Fields
Artillary Ground
Tower Hill
Mile end



John Rocque, Map of London (1746, 24 sheets)

Population of Early Modern European cities (in thousands)

	1500	1550	1600	1650	1700	1750
London	50	120	200	375	490	675
Constantinople					700	
Paris		250	250	450	530	570
Naples		80	289	265	232	315
Marseilles		30	45	65	75	88
Lisbon		100			188	
Amsterdam					172	
Rome			102	121	142	158
Rouen	40	75	60	82	64	67
Seville			150			
Venice		158	139	120	138	149
Moscow					130	
Bordeaux	20	33	35	40	45	60
Milan			130	109	120	124
Palermo		80	105	100	100	107
Antwerp					66	43

Sources: T. Chandler and G. Fox, *3000 Years of Urban Growth* (New York, 1974), pp. 11–20; P. Benedict, 'French cities from the sixteenth century to the Revolution: An overview', in P. Benedict, ed., *Cities and Social Change in Early Modern France* (London, 1989), p. 24; R. Finlay and B. Shearer, 'Population growth and suburban expansion', in A. Beier and R. Finlay, eds, *London 1500–1700: The Making of the Metropolis* (London, 1986), p. 39; G. Felloni, 'Italy', in C. Wilson and G. Parker, eds, *An Introduction to the Sources of European Economic History* (London, 1977), pp. 5–6.

Number of cities with at least 10,000 inhabitants, by territory

	1500	1550	1600	1650	1700	1750
Scandinavia	1	1	2	2	2	3
England and Wales	5	4	6	8	11	21
Scotland	1	1	1	1	2	5
Ireland	0	0	0	1	3	3
Netherlands	11	12	19	19	20	18
Belgium	12	12	12	14	15	15
Germany	23	27	30	23	30	35
France	32	34	43	44	55	55
Switzerland	1	1	2	2	3	4
Italy	44	46	59	50	51	65
Spain	20	27	37	24	22	24
Portugal	1	4	5	5	5	5
Austria/Bohemia/Moravia	3	3	3	3	4	6
Poland	0	1	1	1	1	2

Source: J. de Vries, *European Urbanization 1500–1800* (London, 1984), p. 29.

Total population of all cities with at least 10,000 inhabitants (in thousands)

	1500	1550	1600	1650	1700	1750
Scandinavia	13	13	26	63	115	167
England and Wales	80	112	255	495	718	1,021
Scotland	13	13	30	35	53	119
Ireland	0	0	0	17	96	161
Netherlands	150	191	364	603	639	580
Belgium	295	375	301	415	486	432
Germany	385	534	662	528	714	956
France	688	814	1,114	1,438	1,747	1,970
Switzerland	10	12	25	22	39	60
Italy	1,302	1,498	1,973	1,577	1,761	2,159
Spain	414	639	923	672	673	767
Portugal	30	138	155	199	230	209
Austria/Bohemia/Moravia	60	67	90	100	180	294
Poland	0	10	15	20	15	36

Source: J. de Vries, *European Urbanization 1500–1800* (London, 1984), p. 30.

Urban population as a percentage of total population

	1500	1550	1600	1650	1700	1750
Scandinavia	0.9	0.8	1.4	2.4	4.0	4.6
England and Wales	3.1	3.5	5.8	8.8	13.3	16.7
Scotland	1.6	1.4	3.0	3.5	5.3	9.2
Ireland	0	0	0	0.9	3.4	5.0
Netherlands	15.8	15.3	24.3	31.7	33.6	30.5
Belgium	21.1	22.7	18.8	20.8	23.9	19.6
Germany	3.2	3.8	4.1	4.4	4.8	5.6
France	4.2	4.3	5.9	7.2	9.2	9.1
Switzerland	1.5	1.5	2.5	2.2	3.3	4.6
Italy	12.4	12.8	14.7	14.0	13.4	14.2
Spain	6.1	8.6	11.4	9.5	9.0	8.6
Portugal	3.0	11.5	14.1	16.6	11.5	9.1
Austria/Bohemia/Moravia	1.7	1.9	2.1	2.4	3.9	5.2
Poland	0	0.3	0.4	0.7	0.5	1.0

Source: J. de Vries, *European Urbanization 1500–1800* (London, 1984), p. 39.

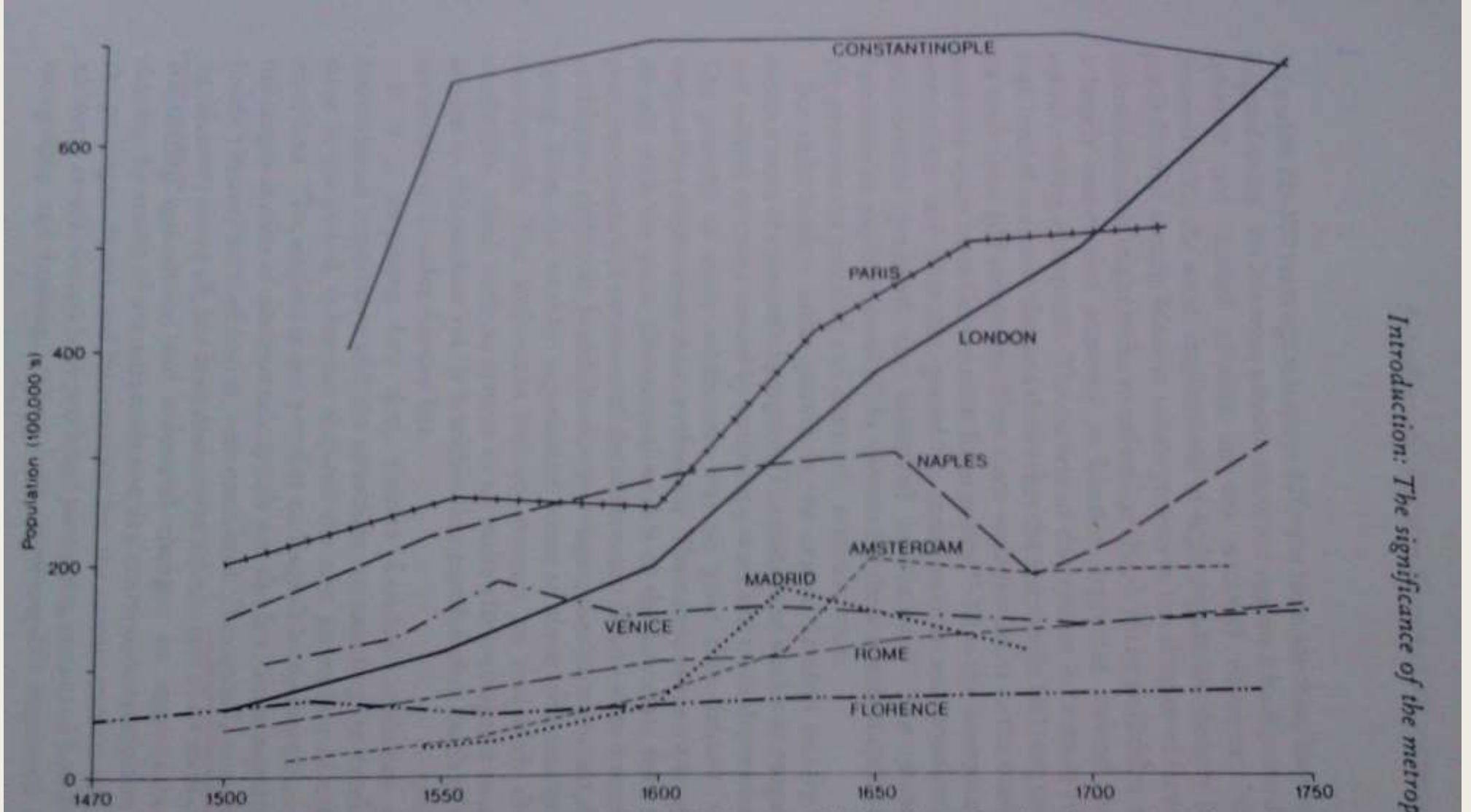


Fig. 1. European metropolitan population movements, 1470–1750. *Sources:* C. Tilly, Karen Fonde and Ann V. O'Shea, 'Statistics on the urbanization of Europe, 1500–1950' (unpublished typescript, 1972); E. Hélin, *La démographie de Liège aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* (Brussels 1963); T. Chandler and G. Fox, *3000 Years of Urban Growth* (London 1974). We are most grateful to Professor Tilly for permission to cite his unpublished figures. The London totals, 1550–1700, are from Table 5, p. 49, below.

London's continued population boom

- 1550-1700 = Huge expansion in population.
- 1550: 75,000 people; 1600: 200,000 people;
  1650: 400,000 people; 1700: 575,000 people
  1715: 630,000…
- 1550, London = 2.5% of the population of England. By 1700, London = 11% of the population of England
- During the same period, the population of the rest England barely doubled but in London it increased by more than 7 times
- 1650-1700 = population of the rest of England actually fell; but population of London increased as people moved from the country to the city
- What pressures would this put London and its surrounding areas under?

Causes of growth – rural to urban

- Pull factors

- Wealth = wages in London generally 50% higher than in the provinces
- Jobs = apprenticeships drew young working men into the city
- Prosperity = business and commerce drew young gentry and elite to the city

- Push factors

- Land shortages in rural areas
- Agricultural revolution = less labour needed
- Landowners shifting their businesses to the cities

Causes of growth – external migration

• 1500 = 3000 non British inhabitants in London; 1550 = 10,000 non British inhabitants in London

- Mostly from the Low Countries and France, for economic and religious reasons

• 1550-1600 = 40-50,000 foreign refugees came to London

• 1675-1700 = Influx of Huguenots from northern France fleeing religious persecution

- Huguenots altered the character of the city by settling in the ‘suburbs’ of Soho and Shoreditch rather than the City of London.
- Huguenot weaves settled in Spitalfields and Petticoat Lane, and others settled in Battersea, planting lavender, gardens and various industries, with a large burial ground nearby in Wandsworth

Growth of Early Modern London: Themes

- Continued expansion as a formidable trading power and capital city
- Overcrowding, sickness and outbreaks of plague
- While many authors embrace London life for its economic and social opportunities, another set of discourses emerges with doubts and fears
- The economic might and wealth of London's trade could also be regarded as a sign of its greed and corruption
- London's expansion into the countryside, concentration of poverty and disease, also alarmed some
- Peter Lake's chapter in Merritt's *Imagining Early Modern London* (2001) examines this theme in depth

Criminality and disorder in London: key questions

- How did Londoners respond to urban disorder and crime?
- How were different offences criminalised?
- How did attitudes to crime and punishment change over the early modern period?
- What can a study of criminality and punishment tell us about the wider social history of London over this period?

Establishing order – medieval London

- Sources like the *Liber Albus* (1419) indicate the lengths authorities went to regulate people's movements and the sale of goods
- 'pigs and dogs be not allowed to wander through the city', 'barbers shall not place blood in their windows', while no citizen was allowed to carry a bow for firing stones, and no 'courtesans' were permitted to dwell within the city walls.
- No 'stranger' was allowed to spend more than one day and a night in a citizen's house, and no one might be harboured within a ward 'unless he be of good repute'. No lepers were ever allowed within the city. No one was permitted to walk abroad 'after forbidden hours'—that is, after the bells or curfew had been sounded—unless he or she wished to be arrested as a 'night-walker'.
- No 'person shall keep a tavern for wine or for ale after the curfew aforesaid … nor shall they have any persons therein, sleeping or sitting up; nor shall anyone receive persons into his house from out of a common tavern, by night or by day'

Violent London – *London Eyre of 1244*

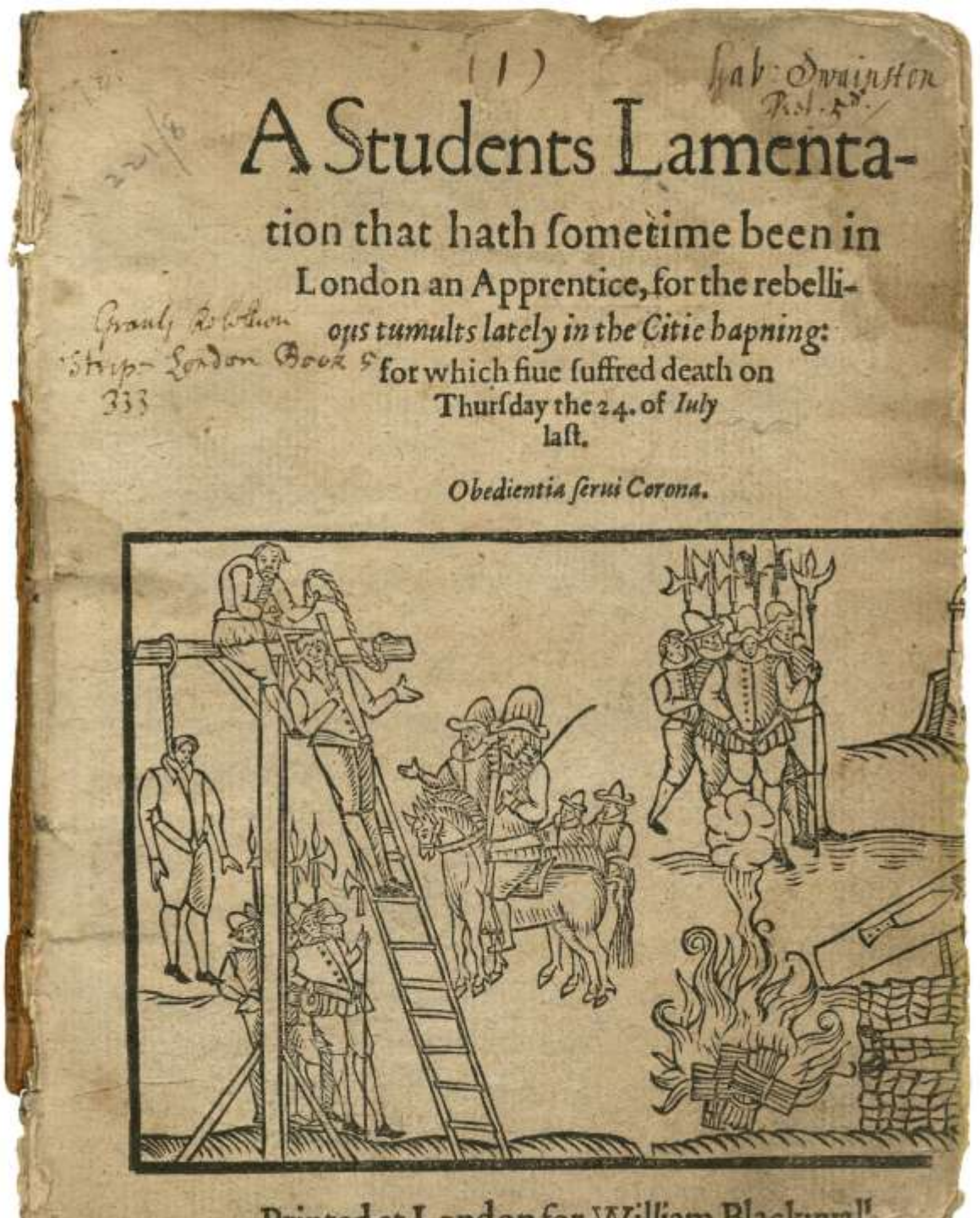
- ‘A certain man named Turrock’ was found dead but ‘it was found that three men were lying in the deceased’s bed when he died … and they are in mercy’, the last phrase denoting that they had been acquitted of any charge.
- ‘Roger struck Maud, Gilbert’s wife, with a hammer between the shoulders and Moses struck her in the face with the hilt of his sword, breaking many of her teeth. She lingered until the feast of St. Mary Magdalen, and then died’.
- ‘Henry de Buk killed a certain Irishman, a tiler, with a knife in Fleet Bridge Street, and fled to the church of St. Mary Southwark. He acknowledged the deed, and … abjured the realm. He had no chattels.’
- The quarrel of three men in a tavern by Milk Street led to one dying after being attacked with an ‘Irish knife’ and a ‘misericord’; the fatally wounded man reached the church of St. Peter in Cheapside, but none of the bystanders offered to assist him

London apprentices

- Some like Clive Bloom draw a historical line between urban violence and disorder and later political protest and riots
- Certainly the gatherings and fights by London apprentices caused serious disorder
- A group of goldsmiths, for example, fell upon a saddler and proceeded to lay open his head with a sword, chop off his leg with an axe and generally belabour him with a staff; he died five days later.
- When apprentices of the law rioted by Aldersgate, a citizen ‘amused himself’ by shooting into the crowd an arrow which killed an unfortunate bystander. A ‘love-day’ designed to reconcile the coppersmiths and ironsmiths, turned into a general and murderous riot.
- When a group of unruly men entered a tavern one of the customers enquired, “Who are these people?” and was promptly killed with a sword. There were continual fights in the street, ambushes and arguments over nothing—or over “goat’s wool” as it was known. Games of ‘dice or ‘tables’ frequently ended in drunken fights, while it is clear that some of the owners of dicing taverns were engaged in wholesale fraud.

London apprentices

- ‘Londoners have such fierce tempers and wicked dispositions that they not only despise the way we Italians live, but actually pursue them with uncontrollable hatred, and whereas at Bruges foreigners are hospitably received and complimented . . . by everybody, here the Englishmen use them with the utmost contempt and arrogance, and make them the object of insults . . . They eat very frequently, at times more than is suitable.’ – Andreas Franciscus, 1497
- A French physician, in London between 1552 and 1553, observed that ‘the common people are proud and seditious … these villains hate all sorts of strangers’ and even ‘spit in our faces.’
- London apprentices had a reputation for violence, and outbreaks usually occurred around taverns and football matches



(1)

A Students Lamenta-

tion that hath ſometime been in London an Apprentice, for the rebelli-ous tumults lately in the Citie hapning: for which fiue ſuffred death on Thurſday the 24. of *July* laſt.

Obedientia ſerui Corona.

‘A students lamentation that hath sometime been in London an apprentice, for the rebellious tumults lately in the citie hapning’ (1595)

Hue and cry

- When wrongdoing was observed, be it in the streets at day or night, there was a shout out in which other members of the community had to come to their fellows' defence
- Any citizen who didn't come out was heavily fined. Crying shame could occur for major and minor things, including the ill-treatment of an apprentice or wife
- Justice was overseen by aldermen, aided by constables and night watchmen
- Clergy and church-wardens would investigate drunkenness, fornication, bastardy and other moral offences
- The aldermen and watch of each ward had other duties, e.g. arrest anyone wearing a 'visor or false face' in the streets, considered criminal.
- The Court Rolls suggest that they were also given power to remove the doors and windows from any house of dubious reputation; there is a record of their 'entering the house of William Cok, butcher, in Cockes Lane and tearing away eleven doors and five windows with hammers and chisels.'

Begging and overcrowding

‘Edward Ellis a vagrant who died in the street.
A young man not known who died in a hay-loft.
A cripple that died in the street before John Awsten’s door.
A maid, a vagrant, unknown, who died in the street near the Postern.
A young man in a white canvas doublet… being vagrant and died in the street near Sparrow’s corner being in the precinct near the Tower.
A young man vagrant having no abiding place … who died in the street before the door of Joseph Hayes, a brazier dwelling at the sign of Robin Hood in the High Street. … He was about 18 years old. I could not learn his name.’

From the records of burial between 1593-98 of St Botolph Aldgate

William Harrison estimated there might be ‘above ten thousand’ beggars in London in the 1570s

THE EVIL MAY-DAY.

ATTACK ON LOMBARDS BY THE LONDON APPRENTICES, MAY 1, 1517.

Evil May Day (1517)

- At the apparent instigation of John Lincoln, Dr Bell, a popular preacher, began to blame economic ills on Londoner's large population of foreigners – for 'Englishmen to cherish and defend themselves, and to hurt and grieve aliens for the common weal'
- By May Day, around a thousand men (mostly apprentices) gathered on Cheapside, and marched to St Martin-le-Grand, where they were attacked by residents with stones, bricks and boiling water
- In response, they rampaged through the City, destroying the homes and shops of those considered foreigners – mostly French, Flemish and Jewish migrants – and are eventually quelled by the Duke of Norfolk's army
- While hundreds were arrested and many injured, none were killed, though 13 were hung, drawn and quartered – and 300 pardoned

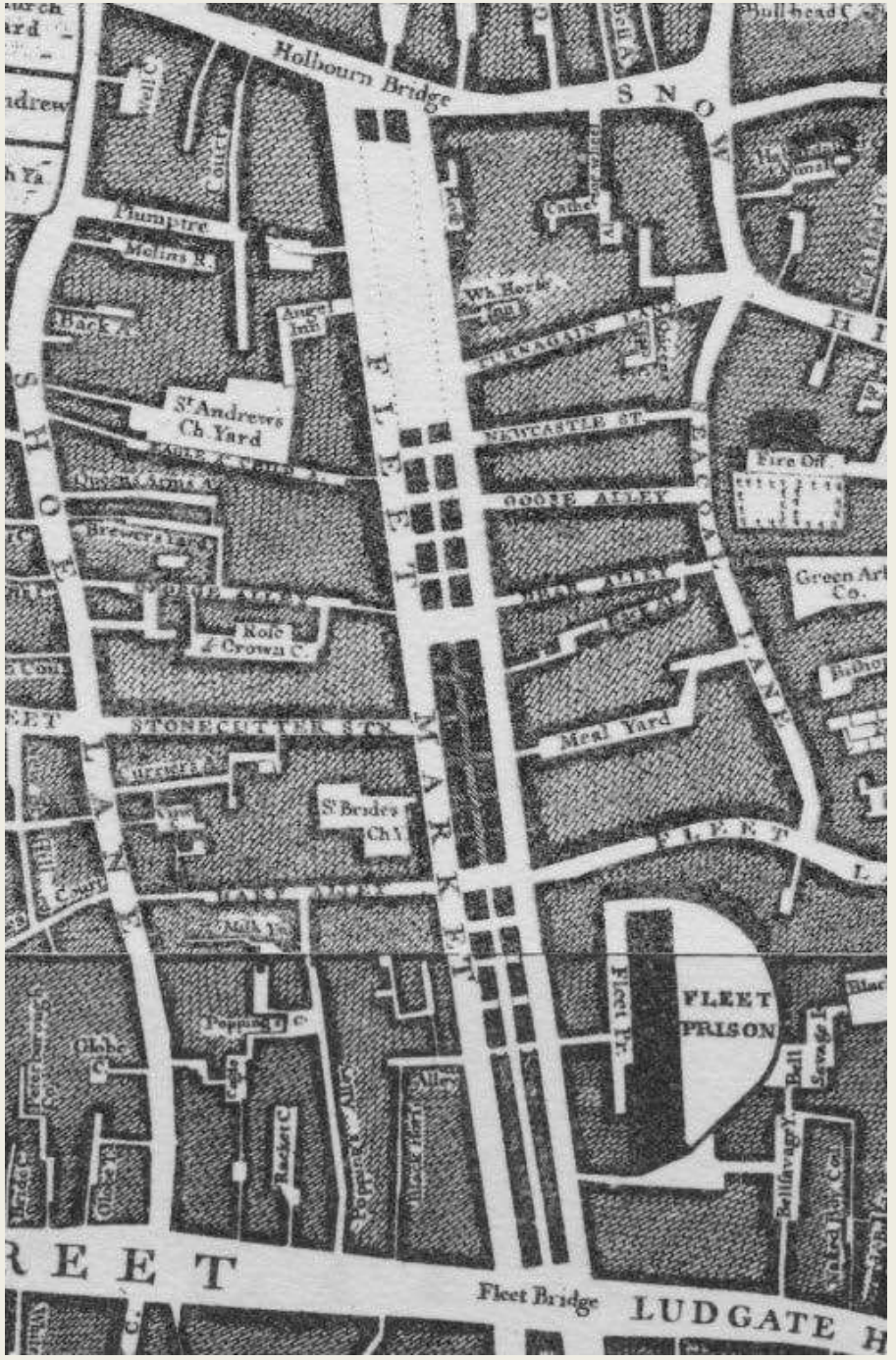
Rise of the prisons

- There have been forms of incarceration since London's earliest history, and there is disagreement about London's first prison – possibly the Clink, Newgate, or the Fleet, one of medieval London's first stone buildings
- Other key prisons include Newgate, London's largest and most ill-reputed
- Political prisoners were taken to the Tower of London
- Prisons begin developing from Henry II's Assize of Clarendon (1166), requiring the construction of prisons for the accused while waiting to go on trial
- During the early modern period, prisons were profit-making enterprises. Prisoners had to pay for food and lodging. There were fees for turning keys and for taking irons off, and Fleet Prison had the highest fees in England. Prisons were usually divided into a *Common* side and a *Master's* side, where rent was paid
- From the early 16th century, Southwark had five prisons – the Clink, the Compter, the King's Bench, the Marshalsea, and the White Lyon – why?

Rise of the prisons – the Fleet

- Built around 1197, and for a long time surrounded by a moat and tree-lined banks, close to modern Smithfield and the Thames
- The lowest sunken level was known ironically as ‘Bartholomew Fair’
- The prison became notorious for secret, unlawful marriages by ‘degraded clergymen’, by the early 18th century it was surrounded by 40 ‘marrying houses’ in nearby taverns
- Thomas More described the world as a kind of prison, ‘some bound to a poste … some in the dungeon, some in the upper ward … some wepying, some laughing, some labouring, some playing, some singing, some chiding, some fighting’
- The 1780 Gordon Riots would see numerous prisons destroyed, including the Fleet, Newgate and the Clink – the Fleet now largely a debtor’s prison
- The Fleet was rebuilt, and retained an old detail – an open grating with an iron box for alms and a begging prisoner who would call out ‘remember the poor prisoners’
- Samuel Pickwick, after speaking to those who lay there ‘forgotten’ and ‘unheeded’, muttered: ‘I have seen enough … My head aches with these scenes, and my heart too’.


Pray Remember ye poor Debtors
F.W. FAIRHOLT.


Holbourn Bridge
St Andrews Ch Yard
NEWCASTLE ST.
GOOSE ALLEY
Mead Yard
St Brides Ch.
FLEET PRISON
Fleet Bridge
LUDGATE

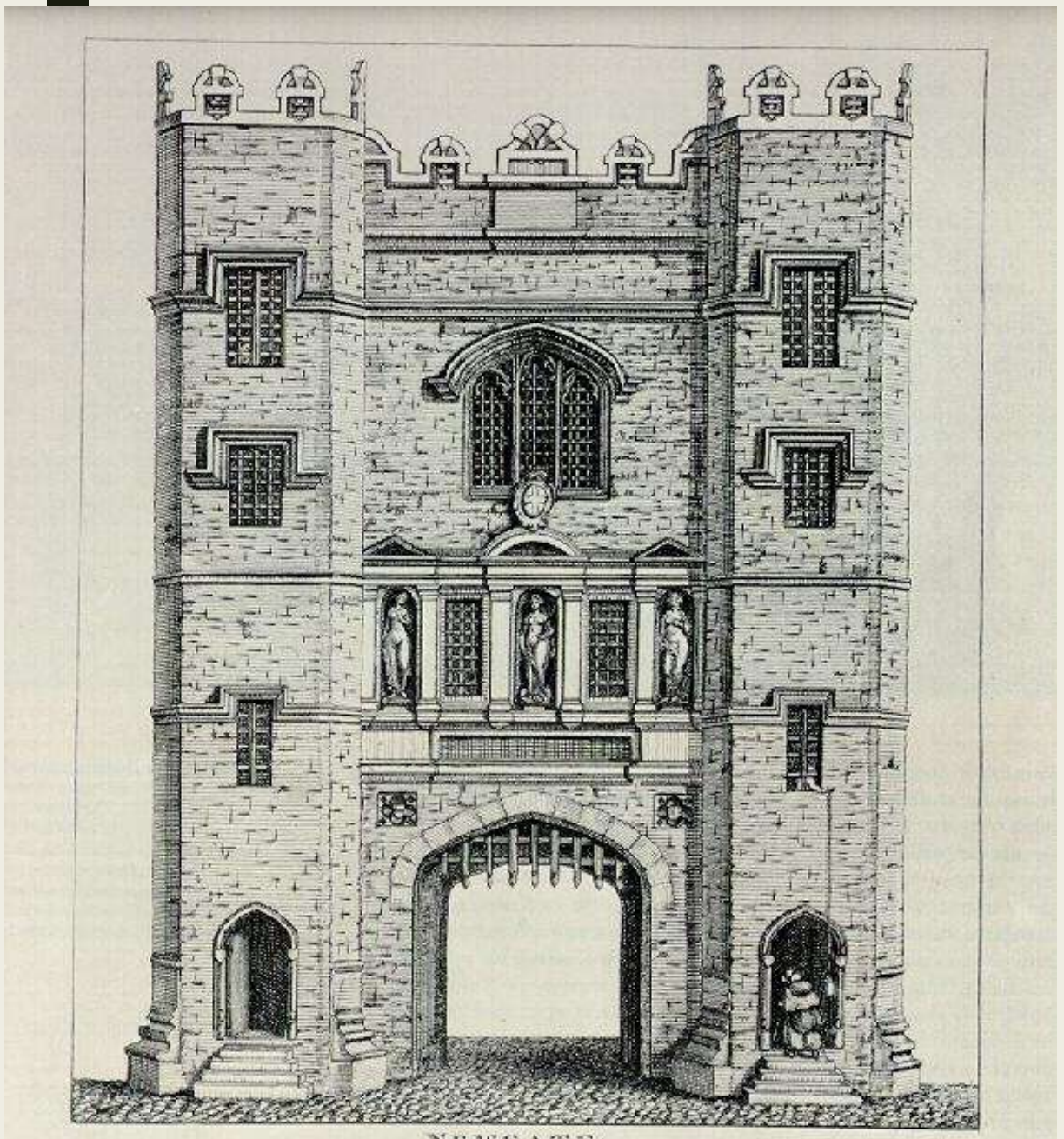
Rudolf Ackermann, The Raquet Ground of the Fleet Prison
circa 1808

Sanctuaries

- Monastic orders were granted ‘liberties’ outside city jurisdiction which remained after the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536-41
- By the early 17th century, Whitefriars and St Martin-le-Grand became refuges for ‘the lowest sort of people, rogues and ruffians, thieves, felons and murderers’. One of the apparent murderers of the ‘Princes in the Tower’, Miles Forest, took refuge in St Martins and lived there
- The area nearby, around Chandos Street, was known as the Caribbee Islands, from its countless straits and intricate thieves’ passages
- Whitefriars became known as ‘Alsatia’, a frontier, where no parish watch or city official would dare enter, and where criminals and wanted persons could lie low, south of Fleet Street, adjacent to the Temple
- Other sanctuaries included the Minories, and the area around the Royal Mints at Wapping and Southwark, where in the 1720s, legal officers struggled to clear and were beaten back, with one bailiff ‘duck’d in a Place in which the Soil of Houses of Office had been empty’d
- Sanctuaries eventually closed by acts of Parliament in 1697 and 1723

‘The Squire of Alsatia’; ‘London Courtezan’; and ‘Remember the Poor Prisoners’, from Marcellus Laroon's series *The Cryes of London*, 1688

William Hogarth, ‘A Room in the Fleet Prison’, from *A Rake’s Progress* (1735)



NEWGATE.

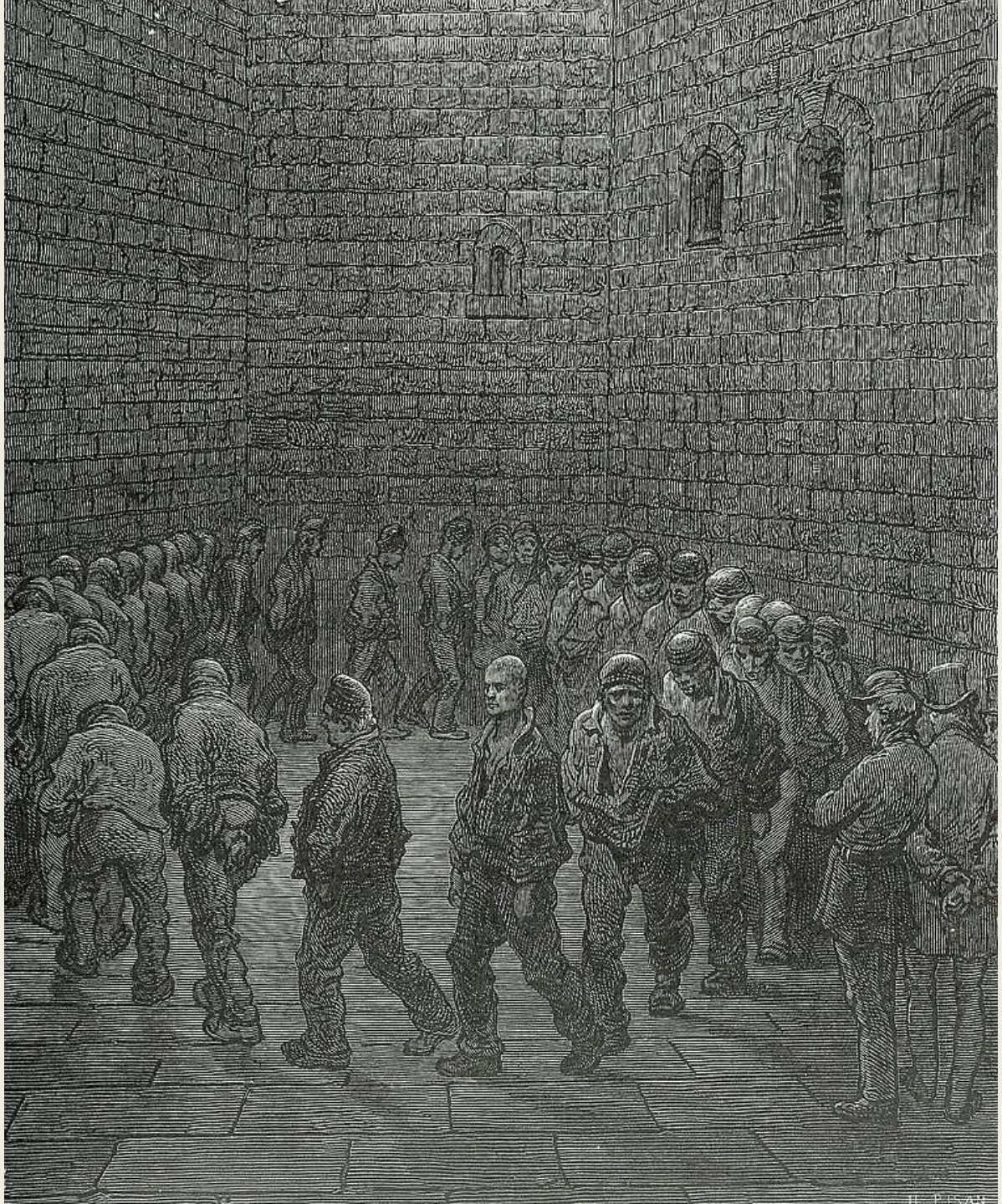
Chamberlains Gate a most miserable Dungeon, was rebuilt by Rich. Whittington in the style here represented and from its resemblance call'd Newgate from which the Prison Name was passed. Above the west front were four emblematical figures viz Liberty, Love, Strength & Plenty. One on the East front were three figures Justice, Britannia & Prudence, this Building was destroyed in the Conflagration 1666 which rebuilt it with great magnificence though nearly in the same plan as appears by the

Newgate

- The city gate had been used as a prison since 1188, and from 1236 the gatehouse turret and surrounding buildings served as a prison
- Conditions from the outset were notoriously squalid, and in 1419 ‘gaol fever’ kills 64 prisoners. In 1423 it is rebuilt with money from Richard Whittington, with genders separated, as well as commoners and masters, but it quickly becomes overcrowded, with around 300 crammed into half-an-acre (or a third of a football field)
- Jail-keepers were notorious for mistreatment: in 1447 James Manning left the body of one of his prisoners in the thoroughfare ‘causing a nuisance and great danger to the King who was passing there’; when he refused to remove it after several warnings, and after his wife had spoken ‘shameful words’, they were both taken to the compter.
- Two years later his successor was also imprisoned for a dreadful assault’ upon a female prisoner.
- Andrew Alexander, in the reign of Mary I, hurried his Protestant inmates to the fires of Smithfield with the words ‘Rid my prison! Rid my prison!’

Newgate

- By the mid-15th century, Newgate was London's main prison, for a variety of offenders
- Accounts agree in describing an overcrowded, squalid, and filthy place, where many prisoners were sick, and without any doctors
- Legend of the 'Black Dog', and the 'Black Dog Walk' by the early 18th century
- 'Limbo' was an underground dungeon in use from the 16th century, described as 'full of horrors, without light and swarming with vermin and creeping things'
- Lice and disease were very common – many compared Newgate to Hell, a place 'more terrible to me than death' – and many prisoners were perpetually drunk
- Others remark on fraternal solidarity, 'bothe shakeled in a fetter' (*Dick of Devonshire*), or as Bardolph says to Falstaff, 'Two and two, Newgate fashion', or in Dekker's *Satiro-mastix:* 'we'll walk arme in arme / As tho' we were leading one another to Newgate'.
- It is rebuilt by Wren after the Great Fire in 1670, and known as 'the Whit', with five sides for various offences, and a 'press room', used for torture



Gustav Doré, Newgate – Exercise Yard (1872)

Life in the prison - sources

- 1760s Boswell noticed the cells, “three rows of ’em, four in a row, all above each other. They have double iron windows, and within these, strong iron rails; and in these dark mansions are the unhappy criminals confined’. These ‘dismal places’ stayed with him all that day, ‘Newgate being upon my mind like a black cloud’.
- Casanova, briefly imprisoned there, described it as an ‘abode of misery and despair, a hell such as Dante might have conceived’.
- Wilhelm Meister, crossing the Press Yard on a tour of inspection, was ‘attacked as by a swarm of harpies and had no means of escaping but to throw a handful of half-pence amongst them for which they scrambled with all the fury of a parcel of wild beasts’ while others ‘who were shut up, stretched forth their hands through the iron bars, venting the most horrible cries’.

Life in the prison - sources

- Daniel Defoe was imprisoned here in 1703, and in *Moll Flanders* the protagonist ends up here.
- It is ‘impossible to describe the terror of my mind, when I was first brought in, and when I looked round upon all the horrors of that dismal place … the hellish noise, the roaring, swearing and clamour, the stench and nastiness, and all the dreadful afflicting things that I saw there, joined to make the place seem an emblem of hell itself, and a kind of an entrance into it’.
- Defoe also describes how prisoners became accustomed, even ‘impudently cheerful and merry in their misery’, and Moll Moll herself ‘turned first stupid and senseless, and then brutish and thoughtless’ until she becomes ‘a mere Newgate-bird, as wicked and as outrageous as any of them’.

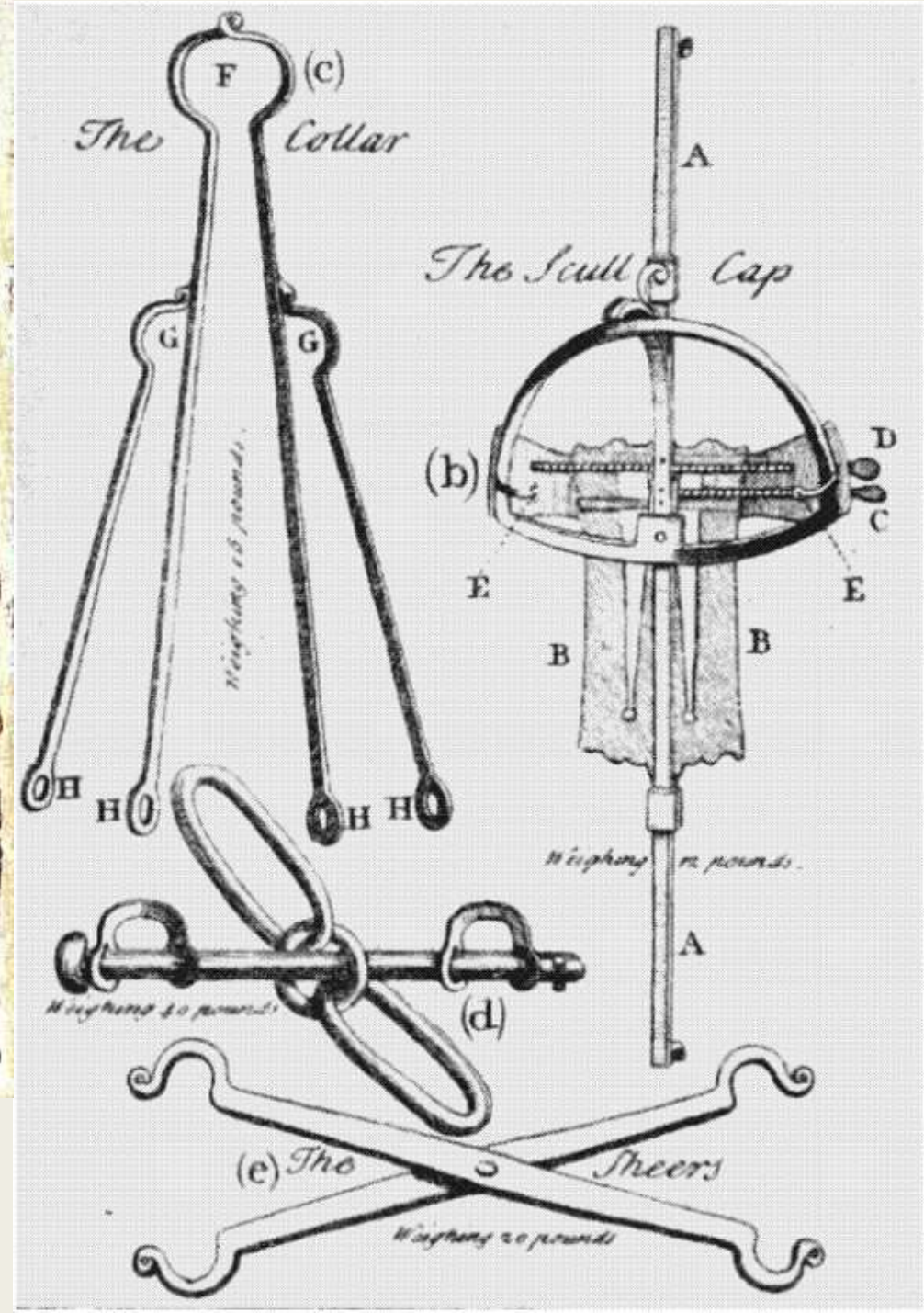
Newgate – fire and fall

- Another outbreak of ‘gaol fever’ in 1750, and the persistently foul smell across the neighbourhood results in the prison being rebuilt in 1770 by George Dance
- Its two hulking, great windowless blocks were destroyed by rioters in 1780 during the Gordon Riots, but rebuilt to the same plan
- Overcrowding continues, and the *Chronicles of Newgate* reports ‘lunatics raving mad ranged up and down the wards, a terror to all they encountered … mock marriages were of constant occurrence … a school and nursery of crime … the most depraved were free to contaminate and demoralise their more innocent fellows’.
- Elizabeth Fry described it as ‘Hell above ground’ in 1817, with damning official reports in 1836 and 1843
- Like the Second Bedlam Hospital, Newgate was popular with visitors, open on Wednesdays and Thursdays between 12-3. On display were the casts of heads of notorious criminals, chains and handcuffs, or the chance to sit at a whipping post or in a condemned cell
- The last execution is in 1902, and it is demolished the same year

Newgate – fire and fall

- Dickens in *Sketches by Boz* describes thousands of people each day “pass and repass this gloomy depository of the guilt and misery of London, in one perpetual stream of life and bustle, utterly unmindful of the throng of wretched creatures pent up within it’. A ‘light laugh or merry whistle’ can be heard ‘within one yard of a fellow-creature, bound and helpless, whose days are numbered’
- Dickens’ father was imprisoned in the Marshalsea Debtors’ prison and his family lodged there, and the theme of prison and forgotten prisoners haunts his works

The Gaols Committee of the House of Commons (c. 1729) by William Hogarth, questioning the Fleet's warden, Thomas Bambridge. To the left, torture instruments used.

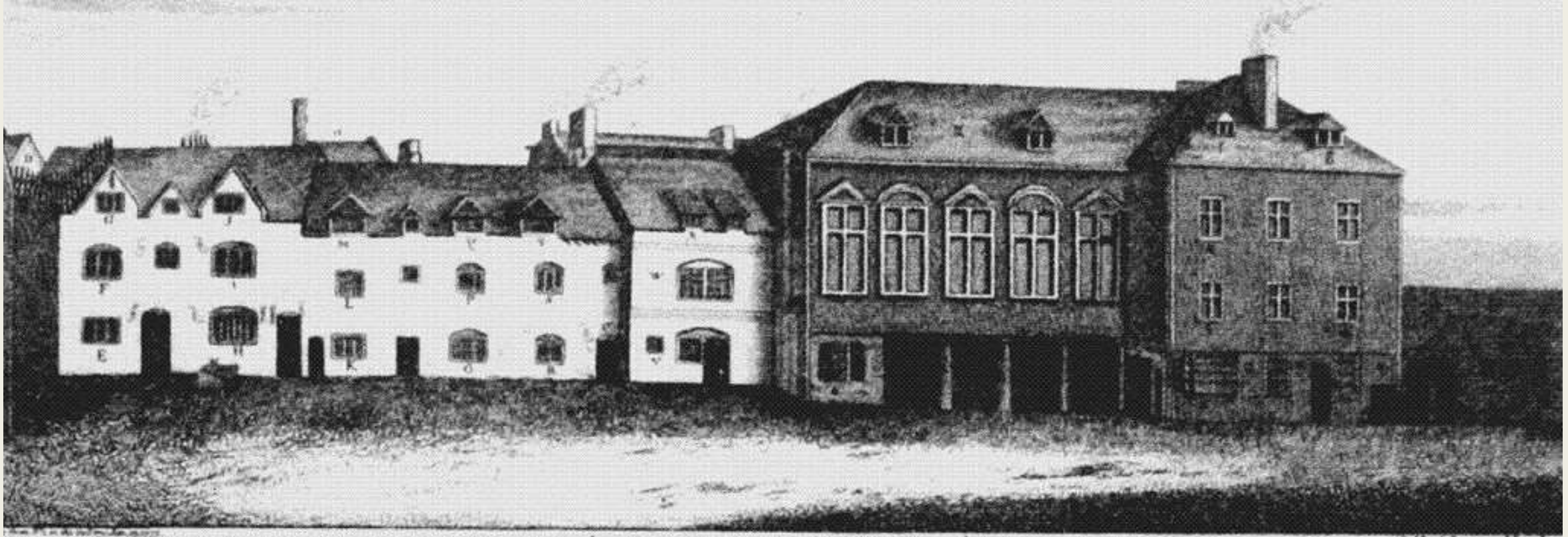


The Gaols Committee (1729)

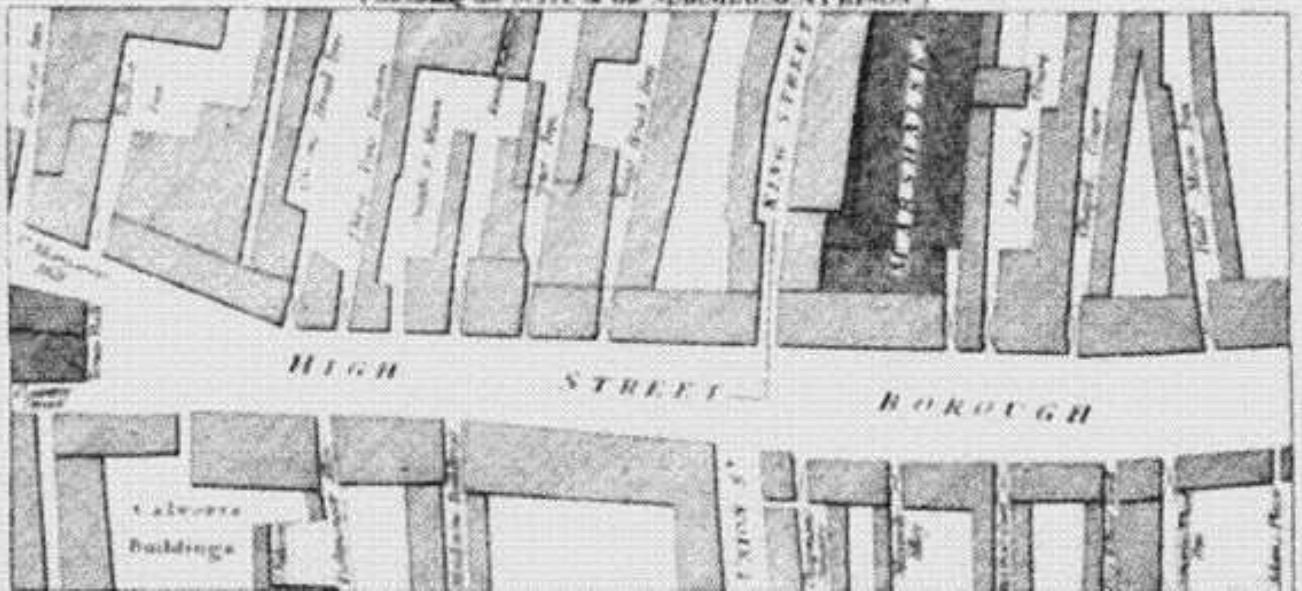
- In the Marshalsea they found that prisoners on the common side were being routinely starved to death, and others extorted:
- ‘All the Support such poor Wretches have to subsist on, is an accidental Allowance of Pease, given once a week by a Gentleman, who conceals his Name, and about Thirty Pounds of Beef, provided by the voluntary Contribution of the Judge and Officers of the Marshalsea, on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; which is divided into very small Portions, of about an Ounce and a half, distributed with One-Fourth-part of an Half-penny Loaf ...
- ‘When the miserable Wretch hath worn out the Charity of his Friends, and consumed the Money, which he hath raised upon his Cloaths, and Bedding, and hath eat his last Allowance of Provisions, he usually in a few Days grows weak, for want of Food, with the symptoms of a hectick Fever; and when he is no longer able to stand, if he can raise 3d to pay the Fee of the common Nurse of the Prison, he obtains the Liberty of being carried into the Sick Ward, and lingers on for about a Month or two, by the assistance of the above-mentioned Prison Portion of Provision, and then dies.’

The Gaols Committee (1729)

- The men's sick ward in the Marshalsea, Gaols Committee, 1729: ‘For along the Side of the Walls of that Ward, Boards were laid upon Trestles, like a Dresser in a Kitchen; and under them, between those Trestles, were laid on the Floor, one Tire [tier] of sick Men, and upon the Dresser another Tire, and over them hung a Third Tire in Hammocks.’
- One apparently diabetic army officer who died in the strong room—he had been ejected from the common side because inmates had complained about the smell of his urine—had his face eaten by rats within hours of his death, according to a witness
- Thomas Bliss was badly beaten by Acton after trying to escape, and placed in a ‘Strong Room’ adjacent to the sewer, which was never cleaned, had no drain, sunlight or fresh air, and full of rats and dung, with no bed. Sometimes corpses were left here for burial
- Bliss was imprisoned here for 3 weeks, wearing a skullcap that prevented him from eating, thumb screws, iron collar, leg irons and sheers around his ankles
- Bliss, like three others (and doubtless more), later died in hospital from the conditions
- Both wardens were tried, with Bambridge found guilty of extortion and imprisoned, while William Acton was cleared of murder



VIEW of the SOUTH FRONT of the NORTH SIDE of the | PART of the BOROUGH of SOUTHWARK, including the SITE of the MARSHALSEA PRISON | MARSHALSEA PRISON, near BLACKMAN STREET, SOUTHWARK



Previous: Southern front of the north side of the first Marshalsea, 1773.
‘Marshalsea in the Eighteenth Century’, Edward Walford, "Southwark: High Street," in *Old and New London*, Volume 6, 1878.

Jack Sheppard (1702-1724)

- While Newgate had a reputation for being unbreakable, in the early 18th century Jack Sheppard became a well-loved celebrity for escaping it
- Born in 1702 and placed in the Bishopsgate Workhouse, after serving most of a carpenter's apprenticeship, he became a (not very effective) thief and was caught
- He first escaped St Giles' Roundhouse in 1724 after cutting open the roof, and after being caught three months later after pickpocketing in Leicester Fields, he was taken to the New Prison at Clerkenwell, and broke his fetters and escapes with 'Edgeworth Bess'
- Jonathan Wild captured him and he is placed in Newgate and sentenced to death, but manages to escape… twice, the latter time from the impenetrable 'Stone Castle' on the fifth floor, using a nail and blankets
- 'Jack the Lad' captures the London imagination – many sightings, and he continues to rob, and hires a coach to visit Newgate with prostitutes and drink in the taverns
- At his final execution, a third of Londoners turn out, and he is commemorated in John Gay's *A Beggar's Opera* (1728)

Above: James Thornhill, drawing of JS, 1723
Right: Poster bill for *Little Jack Sheppard*, 1855

Crimes of property

- By the mid-18th century, overcrowding, poverty and social unrest was reflected in a high crime rate and growing anxieties about urban disorder, and the number of offences for which one could be hanged rose from 80 to 350
- 'I am perfectly ignorant of the state of the war abroad … but I know that we are in a state of war at home that is shocking. I mean, from the enormous profusion of housebreakers, highwaymen, and footpads; and, what is worse, from the savage barbarities of the two latter, who commit the most wanton cruelties … one dare not stir out after dinner but well-armed' – Horace Walpole, 1782.
- But of the 1200 Londoners hanged in the 18th century, most were servants, seamstresses or the labouring poor
- Much crime involved mishandling of property, e.g. making off with leftovers of cloth, nails, planks, tea or sugar, or smuggling and piracy – see Peter Linebaugh
- What once topped up wages was, after the Bugging Act of 1749, criminalised, with many executions for theft, and more whipping or transportation

William Hogarth, The Bench (1758)

Trial at the Old Bailey

- The Proceedings of the Old Bailey (1674-1913) give us a rich resource to explore London's social history, often giving circumstantial detail on the lives of London's poor, often caught up in crimes against property
- While the *Proceedings* tend to omit the details of defences and often tend to justify prosecutions, their testimony largely be authentic given its wide circulation
- The Session was like a drama, open to the public, with four overseeing judges, 24 jurors representing the City of London and County of Middlesex (landowners), and a yard filled with onlookers, who would often react and debate events
- Sessions of the Old Bailey were held every six weeks. Linebaugh focuses on January 1715, and the 57 put on trial, 32 found guilty, 6 hung and 17 branded
- Whether one was hung, branded or whipped was related to the value of the property

Punishment and property (Old Bailey Sessions, January 1715)

Whipped (7 offences)	Burnt in hand (13 offences)	Hanged (5 offences)
15 yds linsey-woolsey	25 yds drugget	silver tankard and silver spoon
100 lbs hemp	15 lbs whalebone	'a large quantity of Cambricks'
1 silk handkerchief	3 holland smocks	600 lbs sugar
groceries (1 quartern loaf, 2 lbs cheese, ½ lb bacon, ½ lb sugar)	2 cloth coats	4 pewter spoons and a copper furnace
2 holland shirts	4 gold rings	1 bed, 2 blankets and a rug
1 huckaback tablecloth	1 gold ring	
4 canes	3 diaper tablecloths	
	1 pair of shag breeches	
	1 feather bed and flaxen sheets	
	3 silver spoons and 1 silver mug	
	1 cloth coat	
	1 russet waistcoat	
	2 coach seats	

Occupations of the English born outside London and hanged at Tyburn, 1703–1773

Occupation	Number	Percentage
Apprentices	153	26.4
Qualified artisans	188	32.4
Sailors	37	6.4
Soldiers	33	5.7
Country labourers	77	13.3
Servants	51	8.8
Unknown	41	7.0

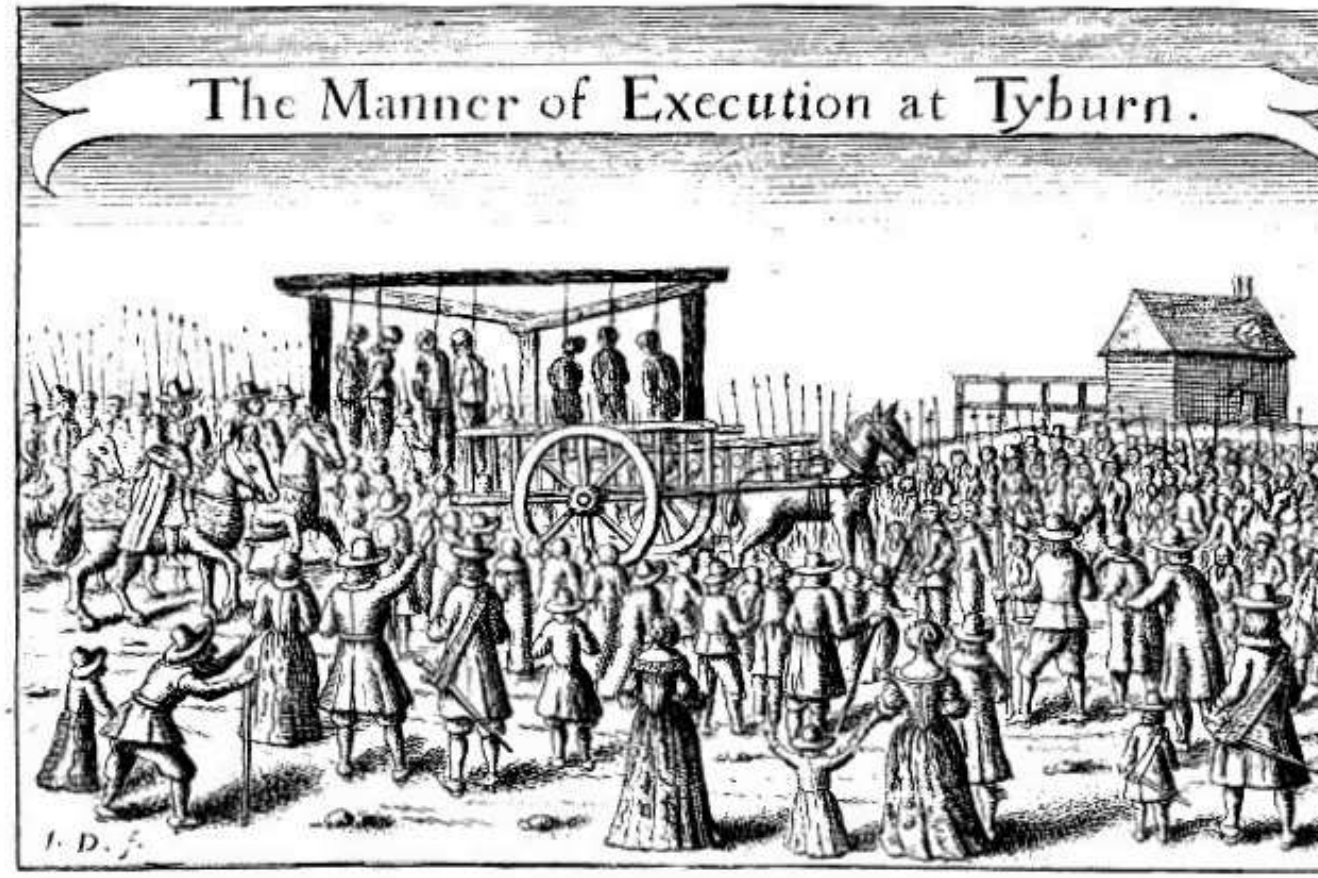
From Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged*

Tyburn Tree

- The first permanent gallows was set up at Tyburn in 1571, while Smithfield had been another key site of public executions prior
- Those sentenced to execution would go on a two-hour procession from Newgate to Tyburn (just north of Marble Arch) by cart along Tyburn Lane (now Oxford Street), often stopping at taverns and at St Giles in the Field
- Executions were on Mondays, often a public holiday, and along the streets many apprentices and onlookers cheered or, in the case of Jonathan Wild, pelted the victim
- Public executions were popular, with many gathering to watch victims at 'Mother Proctor's Pews' who were hung on 'Tyburn Tree', a three-level gallows
- There was a theatricality in punishment and execution, with impaled heads spiked over London Bridge, and later Temple Bar in the 18th century, and the pillory was frequently used from medieval times, and not abolished until 1837


The IDLE PRENTICE Executed at Tyburn.
Proverbs Chap: 1. Vers. 27, 28.
Plate II

EXECUTION OF LORD FERRERS AT TYBURN. (*From an Old Print of the Period.*)



Tyburn Tree

- ‘The executioner stops the Cart under one of the Cross Beams of the Gibbet, and fastens to that ill-favour’d Beam one End of the Rope, while the other is round the Wretches Neck; This done, he gives the Horse a Lash with his Whip, away goes the Cart, and there swing my Gentlemen kicking in the Air: The Hangman does not give himself the Trouble to put them out of their Pain; but some of their Friends or Relations do it for them: They pull the dying Person by the Legs, and beat his breast, to dispatch him as soon as possible.’ – Maximilien Misson, 1698
- Wooden stands were erected, and seats (and ladders) hired by spectators
- Once hanged, onlookers would rush to grab the corpse, with the bodies or mementoes of the dead thought to have healing properties. Sometimes friends also rushed to grab the body, in the hope of revival – as with John Smith (1709), or Sheppard.
- Surgeons also battled with loved ones for the bodies, to use for dissection (see Linebaugh, ‘The Tyburn Riot Against the Surgeons’ in *Albion’s Fatal Tree*
- After fears about disorders and common theft, executions were moved to the Mother Red Capp Inn, Camden, in 1776, and Tyburn gallows were demolished in 1783, with executions moved to Newgate itself

Tyburn Tree

‘What are these golden Builders doing
Near Mournful ever-weeping Paddington
Standing above that mighty Ruin
Where Satan the first victory won.

Where Albion slept beneath the Fatal Tree
And the Druids golden Knife
Rioted in human gore,
In Offerings of Human Life

They groan’d aloud on London Stone
They groan’d aloud on Tyburns Brook
Albion gave his deadly groan,
And all the Atlantic Mountains Shook.’
- William Blake

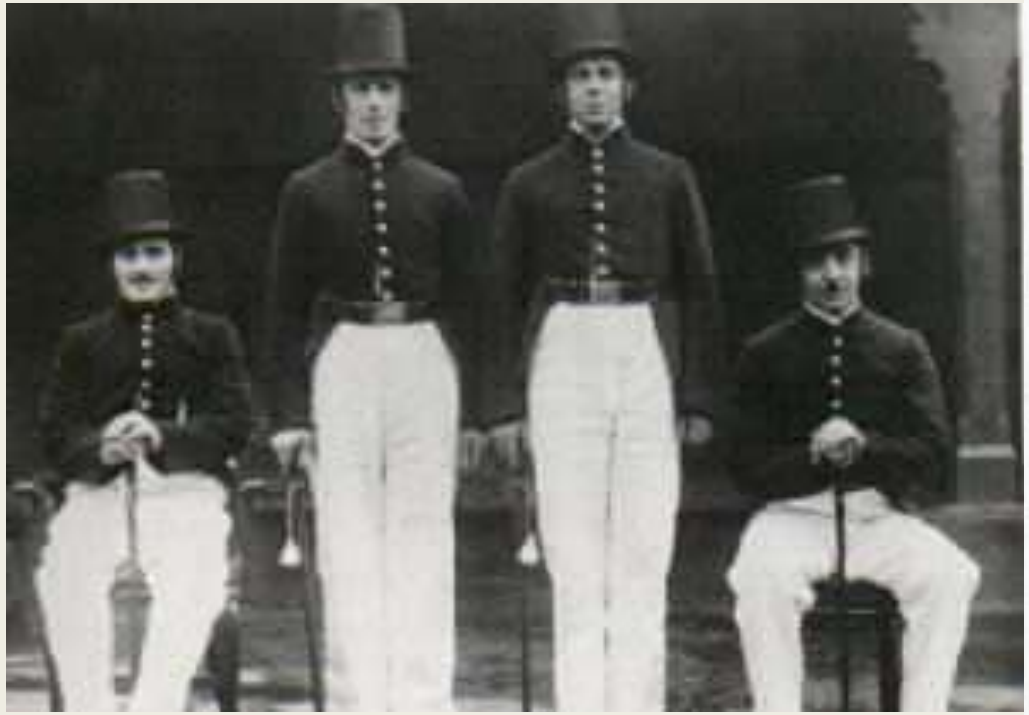
Gordon Riots of 1780

- An initially peaceful protest against Catholic emancipation, led by Lord George Gordon of the Protestant Association, led to serious riots
- After delivering a petition to petition, a large crowd attacked foreign embassies and the homes of rich and poor Catholics – among them, William Blake
- Others targets of ‘King Mob’ were Catholic churches, the Bank of England, the house of the Lord Chief Justice William Murray, and the prisons of the Clink, Fleet and Newgate, releasing large numbers
- The army were later summoned to disperse the rioters, shooting dead around 285 and wounding a further 200, with a further 450 arrested

The Devastations occasioned by the RIOTERS of LONDON Firing the New Goal of NEWGATE and burning Mr. Akerman's Furniture &c. June 6. 1780

Growth of the Police

- London had resisted a metropolitan police force as a symbol of (foreign) tyranny or political subjugation, though the Bow Street Runners were formed in 1749 by Henry Fielding
- Prior to that, justices had to rely on paid thief-takers like Jonathan Wild
- The Metropolitan Police Act of 1829 established a new force under Robert Peel, employing 1000 ‘bobbies’ or ‘peelers’, and by 1857 police forces were established across the UK
- David Campion explores how this New Police were investigated in 1833 for excessive spying and violence against political assemblies, and were viewed by contemporaries as unprofessional and ineffective
- Peelian principles hinged on policing by consent and public approval, reinforced in the 1839 Police Reform Act



Evaluating this period

- ‘Most of those hanged had offended against the laws of property, and at the heart of the ‘social contract’ was respect for private property. It could therefore be argued that, just as each hanging renewed the power of sovereignty, so each hanging repeated the lesson: ‘Respect Private Property.’ So, if the hangings are to be considered as dramas, the conflict they represented was the conflict of the Powerful and the Propertied against the Weak and the Poor’
  – Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged*
- ‘But a punishment like forced labour or even imprisonment – mere loss of liberty – has never functioned without a certain additional element of punishment that certainly concerns the body itself: rationing of food, sexual deprivation, corporal punishment, solitary confinement … There remains, therefore, a trace of ‘torture’ in the modern mechanisms of criminal justice – a trace that has not been entirely overcome, but which is enveloped, increasingly, by the non-corporal nature of the penal system’
  - Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*