

## BOOK REVIEW

*John Walliss*<sup>1</sup>

**Book Series: Routledge History of Crime in the UK and Ireland:**

***Crime in England, 1688-1815*, David J Cox, London: Routledge, 2014, 204pp. £90 hardback. ISBN: 13 978-0-415- 50183-5**

***Crime in England, 1880-1945: The rough and the criminal, the police and the incarcerated*, Barry Godfrey, London: Routledge, 2014, 216pp. £85 hardback, £32.99 paperback. ISBN 978-1-84392-9482**

*History of Crime in the UK and Ireland* is a new series of books published by Routledge that, according to the publisher's blurb seeks to build 'up a rich but accessible history of crime and its control in the British Isles', providing 'an opportunity to contrast experiences in various geographical regions and determine how these situations changed – with slow evolution or dramatic speed – and with what results'. Two books have been published from the series and will be reviewed here, and three more are forthcoming in 2015, covering England 1815-1880, Ireland since 1800 and Wales from the medieval period.

The book by David Cox covers England during the 'long' eighteenth century from 1688 to 1815. Rather than being chronological in structure, the volume approaches the period thematically, with each chapter presenting an overview of the topic along with several illustrative case studies. The latter feature is one particular strength of the book; the case studies giving the reader a flavour of the topic that would be absent in just a straightforward review of the historiography. Following the Introduction, chapter 2 explores the socio-political and economic context, providing the reader with the broad context into which may be placed developments within criminal justice. In particular, the chapter explores the development of the State during this period, the role that it increasingly played in response to crime and the resulting shift from informal to formal mechanisms of social control. Chapter 3 then focuses on the impact of social change on criminality, exploring the way in which, on the one hand economic and technological developments led to the emergence of new forms of criminality

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(such as financial offences) and, on the other, the increasing criminalisation of the poor. The following two chapters turn their attention to the operation of the proto-Criminal Justice System, focusing on crime detection and the emergence of new policing practices such as the Bow Street Runners and changes in the types of punishment meted out to offenders, such as the rise of transportation and the movement away from extreme to standardised forms of capital punishment. The focus then shifts to gender and the criminal justice system, with chapter 6 exploring the part played by women as both offenders and victims and prosecutors of crime. It is in this chapter that use of case studies works particularly well, the vignettes of cases of individual female offenders putting human faces to the topic for student readers. The next chapter's focus on representations of crime and criminality in contemporary literature and culture is also a welcome addition to the volume. The final chapter offers both a summary of the preceding discussion and pointing to developments in the eighteenth century and beyond. In particular, the author highlights the ways in which the issues discussed in the volume are not simply historical questions but also find their parallels in contemporary issues and debates around criminal justice.

The book by Barry Godfrey covers the later period 1880 to 1945 and, while again focusing on broad themes rather than a chronological approach, eschews Cox's extensive use of illustrative case studies. Its aim, as set out in the introductory chapter, is to provide 'a comprehensive study of the main institutions of the criminal justice system', explaining 'how they worked, how they had an impact on people who broke the law, and how and why we remember and research crime in the way that we do' (p.12). The book succeeds in these aims, and is particularly welcome because of this latter focus. Several chapters in the volume are dedicated to topics such as the use of oral histories, digitised sources and the increasing popularisation of crime history among non-academic audiences. The inclusion of this material adds to the book's usefulness as a text for both specialist crime history courses and non-academic crime historians. Other topics covered in the book include the use of crime statistics as an index of criminal behaviour during the period, and some of the issues that need to be borne in mind when using this particular source. Chapter 4 highlights the ways in which crime statistics may be used with caution to explore the questions of why, on the one hand, prosecutions for violence and disorder fell during the period, and, on the other, there was a rise in prosecutions for 'regulatory' offences, such as motoring offences. Following on from the chapters dealing with 'doing' crime history, the remaining five chapters address the development and operation of the criminal justice system during the period, covering topics such as the emergence of new technologies of police power (such as forensic investigation, radios and motorisation), the growth of data gathering and theorising about crime and criminal behaviour (including the emergence of the academic discipline of

criminology), and new ideas and practices within the criminal justice system (most notably the increasing professionalization of the criminal justice process and the concomitant disappearance of the victim).

The series as a whole is a welcome addition to the growing historiography on crime in the UK and the books under consideration offer excellent introductions to the topic for those working in both criminology and crime history and are highly recommended. The only issue that could be raised is that their high cost puts them out of reach of undergraduate students and arguably many professional readers, making them library-only purchases though Godfrey's book is now available in paperback at a more reasonable price. This is a real pity as these books and the series as a whole deserve to be read widely, offering as they do an excellent and engaging introduction to the topic.