# England and Wales Criminal Registers (Middlesex), 1791-1802

## Description

The dataset has been created from a series of late 18th-century registers of prisoners in Newgate Prison charged with indictable offences, most for trial at the Old Bailey. The information given includes the name of the prisoner, offences charged and case outcomes, with physical descriptions and biographical details in many cases.

## Background

This dataset was created as part of the Digital Panopticon project (www.digitalpanopticon.org). This project uses record linkage technologies to bring together existing and new genealogical, biometric and criminal justice datasets held by a range of organisations, in order to explore the impact of different types of punishments on the lives of c.100,000 people sentenced at the Old Bailey between 1780 and 1875.

In the 19th century, British prisons recorded ever-increasing amounts of physical, biometric and biographical information about prisoners. However, it is very unusual for 18th-century records to contain this type of detail, and these registers are consequently a rare and rich source. (Indeed, they surpass many 19th-century prison records because they are not restricted to prisoners who had already been convicted.) Their usefulness is further enhanced by information about the outcomes of cases. Most of the prisoners who went on to trial at the Old Bailey can be linked to defendants in the Old Bailey Proceedings, but the registers also include many whose cases did not go to trial because they were thrown out by the grand jury and some who were acquitted during a period (c.1792) when acquittals were excluded from the Proceedings.

This dataset is one of a number to be released as open data by the project). It can be used for standalone research but additionally, the project will release record linkage data (known as 'life archives' data) which will enable researchers to reconstruct information about individuals from multiple datasets in ways that go beyond what is possible using the search facilities at www.digitalpanopticon.org.

DP dataset code: HCR

## Original records

The data is derived from the Home Office Criminal Registers, Middlesex (HO 26, held by The National Archives, London). This dataset was created from the digitised version from the London Lives 1690-1800 (LL) project.

* HO 26/1-7 - Home Office: Criminal Registers, Middlesex, 1791-1801 (8833 rows of data)

The Registers consist of annual volumes. In September 1791, the sheriffs of London and Middlesex began to keep a regular register of persons committed to Newgate prison for indictable offences. In September 1793, the Home Office took over the keeping of the Register, compiled from weekly lists provided by the sheriffs.

The calendars are arranged on the page in a tabular format, but not always a perfectly regular one. Some volumes ordered prisoners by date of committal and some alphabetically (by session). In chronological volumes, prisoners tried together were often grouped using brackets. The clerks compiling the volumes tended to avoid vertical repetition of information; this was sometimes made explicit by the use of 'ditto' (abbreviated as 'do'), but with dates in particular the omitted information often has to be inferred.

The amount of information they contained and the precise layout varied to some extent over the course of the decade covered. However, all volumes regularly included personal information about the accused - age, place of birth, occupation and physical characteristics, including height, hair colour, eye colour and complexion - and information on post-sentencing outcomes such as pardon or execution, removal to prison hulks or details of transportation, as well as occasional comments about character or previous offences.

The same individual might appear on multiple occasions within the dataset. Most prisoners were tried at the session immediately following their committal and did not spend long in Newgate, but this was not always the case and some prisoners could be listed several times while awaiting trial or sentencing decisions. Some prisoners offended on multiple occasions, and previous offences might be recorded in the 'remarks' column (but it is uncertain how consistently this happened).

The Registers ordered by committal date have alphabetical indexes; some Registers also have information about prisoners that is not contained in the regular tabular format. These have *not* been included in the dataset.

## Data creation and limitations

Users of the data should refer to the London Lives Technical Methods for full details and limitations of the processes used to digitise and transcribe the Registers: https://www.londonlives.org/static/Project.jsp

The London Lives version of the records is not fully structured and further work was carried out by members of the DP project team to produce a dataset suitable for record linkage and statistical analysis. This included reintroducing lost table structure and integrating the slightly varying volumes into a single master table; checking and cleaning names and gender data, normalising committal/trial dates and prisoner ages and heights, and adding sentence and outcome categories.

However, the team did not attempt to manually check every register entry against the original images and it is likely that some errors still remain. Nor has there been any attempt to do internal record linkage.

## Data

### dp\_hcr\_20171205.tsv

**dp\_id**

the prisoner's unique ID in the DP database. (NB that this is the London Lives unique name ID with the prefix 'hcr'.)

**ll\_image\_ref**

the London Lives unique image reference. This can be pasted into the LL reference search: https://www.londonlives.org/formRef.jsp

**date\_committed**

normalised version of the date on which the prisoner was committed to Newgate

**calendar\_number**

the number given to the prisoner in the calendar

**given\_name**

first name(s) of the prisoner, as recorded

**surname**

family name(s) of the prisoner, as recorded

**additional\_info**

sometimes information such as 'remains' or 'bailed' was added after the prisoner's name

**alias**

any aliases or alternate names given for the prisoner.

**description**

the full text of the description in the original, where present

**age**

age extracted from the description

**gender**

this was derived automatically by the LL project from the prisoner's given name; DP checked names which the LL processing had been unable to identify (due to ambiguity, spellings or transcription errors) and corrected them where possible

**height\_inches**

height derived from the description and normalised

**prison**

where the prisoner had been held before transfer to Newgate, as originally recorded

**justice**

the magistrate who had committed the prisoner, as originally recorded

**crime**

the offence with which the prisoner was charged, as originally recorded

**proclaim**

denotes a case which was rejected by the grand jury before reaching trial; usually DP ('discharged by proclamation') or DOC ('discharged by order of the court')

**date\_tried**

normalised date of trial

**judge**

judge before whom the trial was held

**court**

court in which the trial was held (or county if transferred outside London)

**acquit**

if the defendant was acquitted (usually 'NG')

**sentence**

the sentence, as originally recorded

**disposed**

how the prisoner was disposed of following trial (eg, delivered to ship, executed, etc), as recorded. (In some volumes the information about discharge by proclamation or acquittal was recorded here; where this was the case, it has been moved to the proclaim/acquit column.)

**discharged**

if present, usually a brief note of discharge, as recorded

**executed**

details of execution, as recorded; column present only in HO26/1 (LL NAHOCR70005)

**transported**

details of transportation, as recorded; column present only in HO26/1 (LL NAHOCR70005)

**delivered**

to whom delivered, as recorded; column only in HO26/1 (LL NAHOCR70005)

**remarks**

a variety of comments could be recorded in this column, including occasional notes about character/previous offending

**not\_convicted**

consolidates the proclaim/acquit columns into one field (dp or ng)

**sentence\_category**

standardises the information in the sentence column

**outcome**

the final known outcome (as recorded in any of disposed/executed/transported etc), if it differs from the initial sentence or provides confirmation of execution

## Further information

Digital Panopticon description: https://www.digitalpanopticon.org/England\_and\_Wales\_Criminal\_Registers\_1791-1892

London Lives document type information: https://www.londonlives.org/static/CR.jsp

The National Archives online catalogue: http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C8890

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Sharon Howard, project manager for the Digital Panopticon project, produced this version of the data and associated documentation for public release.

## Licence

The dataset is released under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0 (CC BY-NC) licence: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0

Please contact the DP project if you wish to use the data for purposes that fall outside the terms of the licence, or if you're interested in future research collaborations: https://www.digitalpanopticon.org/Contact\_Us

## Citation

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