# Judges' Reports on Criminals convicted at the Old Bailey, 1784-1827

## Description

The dataset has been created from The National Archives' item-level summary descriptions for more than 1000 pardoning reports and letters which were written by judges about individuals convicted at the Old Bailey between 1784 and 1827. The information given typically includes the name of the convict, the date of the trial and the sentence passed, the grounds cited in favour of clemency, and the recommendation (if any) made by the judge.

## 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.

Offenders who had been convicted and sentenced by the courts were permitted to petition the crown for the reduction or revocation of their sentence. The Home Office usually forwarded these petitions to the trial judge (or the Recorder of London), asking for a report and recommendation on the case. In most instances the Home Office followed the recommendation made by the judge. Therefore, these records often provide valuable information about prisoners and the actual outcomes of cases after sentencing.

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: JRC

## Original records

The dataset is derived from a series of letters and reports from judges on convicted criminals, with petitions for pardon, held at The National Archives (UK), using item-level descriptions created by TNA:

* HO 47 - Home Office: Judges' Reports on Criminals (1127 rows of data)

The records often included several documents: in addition to the judge's report, there might also be petition(s) from the prisoner and their family and associates, providing rich personal information from both the point of view of the prisoner and the criminal justice system.

The descriptions do not provide full transcripts of the original documents (although digitised images are available at FindMyPast).

## Data creation and limitations

HO 47 covers the whole of England and Wales; this dataset includes only individuals who were certainly or possibly tried at the Old Bailey.

The descriptions created by TNA are not, in the main, structured data, although they are quite formulaic and therefore facilitate semi-automated extraction of information. The DP project created a more structured dataset from the descriptions in order to facilitate record linkage. We have therefore decided to make this restructured version of the data available for re-use by researchers.

* certain and possible Old Bailey cases were identified (primarily by means of direct mentions of the Old Bailey or authorship by the Recorder of London).
* some reports referred to several prisoners, and these were separated out into individual entries in the dataset.
* where possible, key information (eg, prisoner age, trial date and place, offence, sentence, grounds for clemency, judge's recommendation) was extracted into structured fields.
* dates were normalised, and sentences and recommendations were categorised.

An individual may appear multiple times in the dataset; there has been no attempt to link these together.

## Data

### dp\_jrc\_20171218.csv

**dp\_id**

the prisoner's unique ID in the DP database.

**given**

prisoner's first name(s)

**surname**

prisoner's family name(s)

**aliases**

any aliases/alternative names given for the prisoner

**age**

age of prisoner (not consistently given)

**court**

'Old Bailey' (if identification is certain or probable) or 'possibly Old Bailey' (if less certain)

**trial\_date**

where present (yyyy-mm-dd)

**crime**

crime as described

**initial\_sentence**

sentence at end of trial, as described

**sentence\_type**

categorised sentence

**sentence\_commuted**

where there has already been some mitigation of the original sentence

**grounds\_clemency**

stated grounds for clemency

**recommendation**

the judge's recommendation, if any

**recommendation\_type**

categorised recommendation

**additional\_info**

any further information (may also contain some repetition of information in other columns)

**doc\_description**

cataloguers' description of the document

**doc\_date**

date of the document (yyyymmdd)

**doc\_type**

document category, derived from doc\_description (includes 'report', 'recommendation', 'certificate', 'petition')

**tna\_reference**

The National Archives' HO47 document reference

**tna\_discovery\_id**

The National Archives' online catalogue reference

## Further information

Digital Panopticon description of the dataset: https://www.digitalpanopticon.org/Judges\_Reports\_on\_Criminals\_1784-1827

The National Archives online catalogue: http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C8911

## Acknowledgments

The Arts and Humanities Research Council funded the DP project (2013-2017).

The National Archives hold the records and created the item-level descriptions, which are available for re-use under the Open Government Licence v3.0: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/

Sharon Howard, project manager for the Digital Panopticon project, converted the descriptions for project use, and produced this version of the data and associated documentation for public release. Eleanor Bland, a DP PhD student, added the recommendation\_types information.

## Licence

The dataset is released under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 (CC BY) licence, which is compatible with the terms of the Open Government Licence 3.0: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0

## Citation

Digital Panopticon, 'Judges' Reports on Criminals convicted at the Old Bailey, 1784-1827 (The National Archives, HO 47)' [dataset], version 1.0 (January 2018), www.digitalpanopticon.org.