

# LAND OF WHITE GLOVES?

A history of crime and punishment in Wales

RICHARD W. IRELAND



HISTORY OF CRIME IN THE UK AND IRELAND

‘This fascinating history of criminal justice in Wales tells the story of the complex and constantly evolving relationship between authority and community over the past thousand years.

Concise and accessible, and with a specific focus on the Welsh experience, it also expertly captures the multifaceted nature of the subject and sheds light on social responses to crime which have universal significance. It is an excellent introduction to the subject which will inspire others to explore the rich seams of Welsh criminal justice history.’

R. Gwynedd Parry, Professor of Law and Legal History,  
Swansea University, UK

‘Richard Ireland is a brilliant advocate for the study of Welsh history, but he also opens up ideas that are not tied to one country or period. This book is a wonderful example of the richness that a fine historian can bring to the subject and, while it is to be hoped that he succeeds in his wish to inspire readers to “do” history, few possess his skill.’

Philip Rawlings, The Roy Goode Professor of Commercial Law,  
Queen Mary University of London, UK

‘A scholarly and readable account of the particular experiences and perspectives of the people of Wales in dealing with criminal behaviour over a thousand years of their history. A major contribution to Welsh legal and social history’.

Thomas Glyn Watkin, former Professor of Law,  
University of Wales, Bangor and Cardiff, UK

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# Land of White Gloves?

*Land of White Gloves?* is an important academic investigation into the history of crime and punishment in Wales. Beginning in the medieval period when the limitations of state authority fostered a law centred on kinship and compensation, the study explores the effects of the introduction of English legal models, culminating in the Acts of Union under Henry VIII. It reveals enduring traditions of extra-legal dispute settlement rooted in the conditions of Welsh Society. The study examines the impact of a growing bureaucratic state uniformity in the nineteenth century and concludes by examining the question of whether distinctive features are to be found in patterns of crime and the responses to it into the twentieth century.

Dealing with matters as diverse as drunkenness and prostitution, industrial unrest and linguistic protests, and with punishments ranging from social ostracism to execution, the book draws on a wide range of sources, primary and secondary, and insights from anthropology, social and legal history. It presents a narrative which explores the nature and development of the state, the theoretical and practical limitations of the criminal law and the relationship between law and the society in which it operates.

The book will appeal to those who wish to examine the relationships between state control and social practice and explores the material in an accessible way, which will be both useful and fascinating to those interested in the history of Wales and of the history of crime and punishment more generally.

**Richard W. Ireland** has been researching the history of crime and punishment for many years and has published widely in the area. Richard is a founding committee member of the Welsh Legal History Society and a member of the Board of the Centre for Welsh Legal Affairs. He has also contributed to a number of radio and television broadcasts.

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A history of crime and punishment in Wales

*Richard Ireland*

# **Land of White Gloves?**

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**Richard W. Ireland**

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**For my mother**

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# Preface

Let me start with a confession. I find it hard to finish pieces of work, to admit to myself that the time for making changes, checking facts and polishing arguments has run out. The book then goes out into the world to make its own way and to be judged for what it is, not what it might have been. Until this particular book I thought that I'd been getting a bit better at this "letting go" part of writing, but this time it hasn't been easy at all. Because it covers such a vast subject area, the book has taken me to some places and periods with which I was much less familiar than others. Academic research tends towards knowing more and more about less and less, so to find myself covering a period of over a thousand years was rather daunting. And, because it seeks to cover that ground concisely, the book also runs the risk of distortion or superficiality in its discussion, as well as simple omission. There were times when I thought that I was in danger of making a list of events ("There was another violent clash in ...") rather than giving them any meaningful context. There was the occasion when I woke up from a bad night's sleep suddenly aware of the fact that I had entirely forgotten to mention the Tonypandy riots!

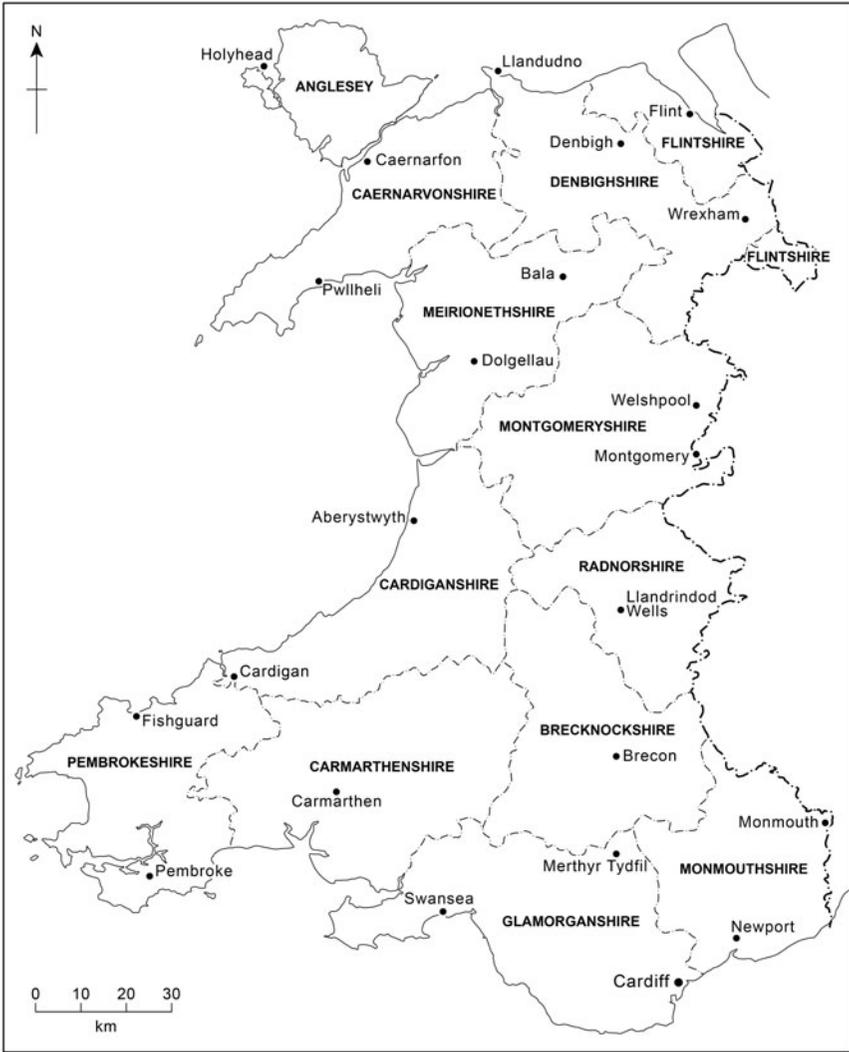
But this work was never for a moment intended to be a definitive history of crime and punishment in Wales, which is why I have been at such pains to press the reader to look at the footnotes and the bibliography for more specific references. I don't want to sound too apologetic here, though. The aim of the book is to fill a hole in the academic literature of crime and punishment which is as generally unnoticed as it is scandalous. The Welsh experience is interesting and important, and important no less to those outside Wales than to those within it. If it errs in the odd detail (and I sincerely hope that it doesn't) but ensures that no-one in future finds it so easy to assume that the experience of Wales was just the same as that in England, but expressed in a different accent, then it will have done its job.

I live and work in a small country, and that means that many of those who have given me assistance in researching and writing this book are personal friends as well as professional colleagues. I don't want to name them all because I'm bound to forget someone (if I can forget Tonypandy...). Many appear in footnotes, others will know who they are. So let me just say that

colleagues and students, particularly my postgraduates, within my Department and more widely in the University, those in the various county archives and museums visited and contacted in the course of this research, those at the National Library of Wales, including The People's Collection, and the National Screen and Sound Archive, have been enormously generous in their willingness to help. I owe a particular debt to those individuals, organizations and institutions who allowed me to reproduce the illustrations within the text. They are credited at the appropriate place in the book, but it is important to stress that my acknowledgments are not merely formal but represent genuine gratitude. Antony Smith of Aberystwyth University's Department of Geography and Earth Sciences very kindly provided the map. My editors, initially at Willan and then, with their merger, at Routledge were splendid: Julia Willan indulged my jokes, Heidi Lee encouraged me over the line when I was getting tired and grumpy. I have personal and profound thanks to Helen and to Tammas.

Finally I want to thank the series editor, Barry Godfrey, for asking me to contribute this book to the *History of Crime in the UK and Ireland* series and thereby showing that not all who work in this area are as dismissive of the Welsh dimension as I may have suggested above. To my intense embarrassment I have not felt brave enough to discuss the project, or indeed anything else, with him since that first discussion. This is not, I should stress, due to any fierceness on his part but to exaggerated diffidence on my own. I hope that he will be pleased with this book, and that I might now finally get round to buying him a drink.

Aberystwyth  
August, 2014



*Map of Wales*

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