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# Editorial: SOLON Law, Crime and History Volume 8 No.1 2018

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SOLON Law, Crime and History  
University of Plymouth

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## EDITORIAL

This is a special issue, but it is also special in another way – one thing which marks out our special issue is that it is the editorial accomplishment of young scholars, just at the beginning of their academic journeys. Equally, the two founding editors of this journal feel it provides a suitable occasion to mark – not our retirement – but of our taking a step back and letting a new generation of editors take the front line role, with us still in the background. So – this special issue marks the formation, also, of the *Law, Crime and History* Editorial Collective. We founded *Law, Crime and History* (originally as *Crimes and Misdemeanours*) back in 2007, and we are very proud of what we achieved from the start. We were determined to provide an online journal which was free to access and free to download – and that is still what we are and it is something to which the Collective is unanimously committed. We are delighted to have secured entry and to have met the Romeo Sherpa criteria on both the [DOAJ](#) - Directory of Open Access Journals and [ERIH](#) European Reference Index for the Humanities and Social Sciences as well as our continuing free reproduction through the Cengage and EBSCO publisher databases.

But, now taking over those active responsibilities for the daily management of the journal hitherto taken by Kim Stevenson and Judith Rowbotham are Craig Newbery Jones (Law, Plymouth), Daniel Grey (History, Plymouth) and Iain Channing (Criminology, Plymouth). They will be working with two established figures for the journal, Samantha Pegg (Law, Nottingham Trent), our Submissions Editor, and John Wallis (Criminology, Liverpool Hope), our Book Review Editor – who provide practical continuity. And we (Kim and Judith) are part of the Editorial Collective in a Dowager capacity – there to advise, mentor and do any of the dogsbody jobs needed. We think this expansion marks a new and healthy development in the timeline of the journal and believe it will go on to even greater and better things with Craig, Daniel and Iain at the helm, and with the rest of the Collective working with them. So this issue is, for the two of us our ‘swan song’ as lead editors – and what a wonderful issue for us to sign off on! We were very proud of our first issue, including contributions from Barry Godfrey and David Cox (now the Wolverhampton SOLON Director) and Heather Shore, who was the keynote speaker at the conference generating this special issue.

Counting up, while editors we have edited, proofed and in many cases provided additional review comment on 101 articles to date mostly authored by SOLON network members as well as writing some of the book reviews which the journal has also had the privilege of publishing. We can also say how proud we are that figures of eminence in crime and legal history have

chosen to publish some of their work with us including Martin Wiener and Barry Godfrey – but we are especially proud of those individuals who we published as PhD scholars or in the very preliminary stages of their careers who we have seen subsequently blossom and flourish. But – thanks in particular to the genuine commitment and support of many eminent names in the fields we cover who have acted as referees for the journal's articles, and who have mentored and advised those young scholars – we believe that we have a record of publishing high quality scholarship whether the author is well-established or a newcomer to the areas of law, crime and history. All kinds of legal and criminological studies have appeared, some where the historical dimension is very substantial and others where it is more lightly touched on, especially those with a contemporary historical angle. We have also covered the globe, with papers on issues from all five continents, to say nothing of papers and book reviews reflecting on all the four nations originally making up the UK! Indeed, we have a Scottish-focused Discussion Piece following on from the articles and preceding the Book Review section in this issue. We have also published a number of special issues – including that of November 2009, edited by Kate Bradley, Anne Logan and Simon Shaw, which included an early work from Daniel Grey. Similarly, Henry Yeomans' special issue on teaching crime history in 2014 was a particularly proud moment for his former Director of Studies.

As the above underlines, we have been privileged, as editors, to oversee the publishing of a number of special issues of very high quality and this one is no exception. This collection of articles is the outcome of a fascinating and enjoyable one day conference, 'Lives, Trials and Executions', held on 24 May 2017 at Liverpool John Moore's University. Appropriately, we (Kim and Judith) attended with the incoming editors, Craig, Daniel and Iain (along with our technical collaborator, Rob Giles), using a Witness Seminar format to talk about our ongoing work on Everyday Offending in Plymouth, Past and Present – which relates to precisely this theme (less so, executions perhaps – but definitely Lives and Trials). We will not be publishing the Witness Seminar in the journal, but will be making it available online elsewhere on the SOLON webpages, as these are revamped in the coming months.

These are, in many ways, 'troubled times', and as ever at such times, concerns over crime and its impacts, and the ability of the legal process to manage that crime to minimise negative consequences, is regularly at the forefront of the media, in all its various formats. The special issue, as our guest editors Samuel Saunders and Stephen Basdeo point out in their introduction, reflects in particular on the ways in which the media played a key role in familiarising societies with crime events and their socio-cultural effects. The articles also, to varying degrees, make use of media formats as significant sources for their work – for instance, in Basdeo's own article, its focus is on the fiction written by newspaper proprietor

and editor, G.W.M. Reynolds – fiction which both uses and depicts print reportage of crime. Some have taken as their main focus the ways in which the media regularly and consciously adopted a perspective on crimes that was dictated not by the crime but by the personalities and appearances of the individuals involved in that crime. Reading articles such as that by Nell Darby provides a timely reminder that appearance and reputation are still obstacles in the criminal landscape that today's media needs to negotiate in ways that take regard of the sensibilities of consumers as well as the realities of the criminal justice process. Darby's focus on the murder committed by Mary Eleanor Piercey in 1892 shows how stereotypical expectations of an automatic condemnation of a murderer can be confounded by physical assets such as comely appearance and cultural ones like a respectable background and education. It will be interesting, for instance, to see how the reportage of Rachael Flemington, the woman accused of the murder of her grandfather, James 'Eddie' Fish in Grimsby, develops in terms of the descriptions of her and how, implicitly, that feeds into an understanding of her culpability.

This issue of culpability, equally, affects the understanding of Clare Sandford-Couch and Helen Rutherford's fascinating paper reconstructing the murder of Margaret Dockerty in Newcastle. Though a respectable woman, she was drunk – an unwomanly state – at the time of her murder. She was also out alone after the hours that a respectable woman should find herself in such circumstances and as such, the contemporary perspective included a consciousness of blame attaching to her. She was a woman who should NOT have been in the wrong place at the wrong time! As well as illustrating how to marry sources, including media depictions, and thereby build a richly textured account of the event, this article and the succeeding one on Newcastle executions provides a welcome focus for us on the North East and the provincial perspective on crime and its punishment. Patrick Low's focus on Newcastle executions not only offers another perspective on the previous article with its comments on the perpetrator, George Vass, but also picks up on another theme that SOLON has long championed – that it cannot simply be assumed that provincial responses to crime mirrored those of the metropole, London. This is something which scholars like Richard Ireland have championed for Wales, and which the Plymouth Timelock team are exploring for the South West.

Taking a broader view, however, Daniela Fasching and Claudia Resch provide a welcome extension of the scholarship on broadsides and ballads which is so popular amongst British-focused crime research and writing. In their article on Execution Broadsheets in eighteenth century Vienna, what they do is raise challenges about the uniqueness of the British printing phenomenon of the time. Presented in an accessible way for the first time, it alerts scholars to

the existence of a rich resource permitting a proper comparative exploration of the execution broadsheet as a way of understanding both an individual execution event and the wider presentation of the workings of the justice system in two widely differing locales. The article by Samuel Saunders complements this because European scholarship on police memoirs and writings is well established, and this piece both nods to that and develops a usefully British perspective on the phenomenon. Finally, Daniel Johnson's piece looks at history of crime from a heritage perspective, examining the depictions in the museums at York Castle and Lincoln Gaol of 'typical' inmates challenging us to reflect on that typicality. It provides a very useful reminder of the dangers of relying on stereotypes as a way of creating insights into crime history via heritage as well as via the kinds of reconstructions also discussed in these articles. This all amounts to a very fine, and extremely useful, assemblage of articles in this special issue, and the authors and editors are to be complimented for their work.

Completing the issue, we have a discussion piece from Robert Shiels on the process underpinning the emergent authority of Crown Office in Scotland (there is no definite article beforehand – read his piece!). This is a further contribution to a series which have appeared in *Law, Crime and History* that have considerably advanced a better understanding of Scottish law, past and present – a very worthy and necessary development which we are happy to see furthered through our publication. We can only hope for more work on Scotland – and that this piece will encourage such contributions since we consider this to be one of the most thought-provoking and engaging pieces by him that we have published. We present this discussion paper at a time when, amidst much controversy both about his actions and those of Scottish SNP politicians, the Chief Constable of Scotland, Phil Gormley, has resigned. Can we hope in future to see a discussion piece, or an article, offered to us on this development and its implications for policing in Scotland? We would certainly welcome such a contribution.

We also have a number of book reviews reflecting on recent publications – including one authored by incoming editor Iain Channing (*The Police and the Expansion of Public Order Law in Britain, 1829-2014*). We are, as ever, deeply grateful not just to our Book Review editor John Wallis (whose forthcoming publication with Palgrave on the Bloody Code will certainly be reviewed in these pages) but also to those who volunteer to undertake and to deliver such reviews. Rhiannon Pickin deserves double thanks for her two reviews...the one on Channing's book and also that by David Beckingham on *The Licensed City: Regulating Drink in Liverpool, 1830-1920*. We also include Alison Pedley's review of Jo Turner *et al's* *Companion to the History of Crime and Criminal Justice*, as well as Colin Moore's comments on the recent production by David Cox and Barry Godfrey, working with Paul Adey as lead author: *Crime, Regulation and Control During the Blitz: Protecting the Population of Bombed*

*Cities*. Such reviews enable readers to pick and choose in an informed manner amongst the breadth of offering across the burgeoning field of crime and legal history.

We shall continue to blaze a trail for interdisciplinary research, engagement in and promotion of aspects of law, crime and history especially with our ongoing roles as joint editors of the RoutledgeSOLON Book Series on Histories of Crime and Criminal Justice together with David Nash and David J. Cox.

Kim and Judith, February 2018