

## BOOK REVIEW

*Alison Pedley*<sup>1</sup>

**Jo Turner, Paul Taylor, Sharon Morley, Karen Corteen (eds.) *A Companion to the History of Crime & Criminal Justice*, Bristol, Policy Press, 2017. 308pp. paperback. ISBN 9781447325871**

The *Companion* tackles the history of crime, criminal justice and punishment through a series of short essays written by some of the most knowledgeable academics in the field. As a comprehensive reference book, it provides brief, wide-ranging but clear definitions of major terms and concepts. The alphabetically-arranged individual accounts not only clarify important fundamental terminology but also give clear references to related items within the book and suggestions for additional reading. Each definition explains the use of relevant terms both in historic and contemporary usage. Additionally, the inclusion of some critical analysis of technicalities and technical language make the individual entries are more than just simple descriptions.

The brief co-written preface from the editors sets out the purpose and intentions of the volume. Included within the aims is an explanation of the rationale behind the choice of subject matter and indeed the scholars who have contributed. The geographic and historic scope of the book was inevitably limited by sheer size of the subject-field and the wish for the contributions to relate to one another. With some exceptions such as the inclusion of sections like 'Australia, Crime and Punishment' or 'Slavery in the Americas', the *Companion* is focussed upon the British Isles. In the main the historical period covered is the modern era, although use of that time-frame does not mean that there is lack of reference to earlier times. The editors make the point that the contributions were necessarily restricted in size and for this reason, each section has a short of suggested further reading and is cross-referenced to other relevant entries

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in the book. The strength of the volume lies in the fact that each of the contributions, whilst being a succinct, informative summary of its topic, weaves into making this a complete textbook.

The *Companion* covers a broad spectrum of themes ranging from advocacy to suicide, broadsides to white-collar crime and criminal lunatics to women and violence, the selection of which seems quite eclectic. Topics, where necessary, have been broken down into their constituent geographic or historic parts where law and practice differ. For example, 'Capital Punishment' is split into geographic sections, although, confusingly in this instance, the entry for Scotland is included elsewhere under a more general heading of 'Prisons and Punishment'. On the historic side, 'Prostitution' has two entries, one for the nineteenth century and the other for the twentieth. There are a number of different sections on various aspects of the history of policing, breaking the subject down into individual nation's experiences in different centuries. Legislatively important events such as 'The Gladstone Report' and 'The Macmillan and Wolfenden Committees' merit their own sections and there are also case histories of famous and infamous incidents and people, influential individuals both fictional - Sherlock Holmes and historical - Patrick Colquhoun. Sitting alongside the historical aspects there is discussion of modern relevant material such as Digital History, Dark Tourism, Life-Course Analysis and even a discussion on the history of Crime Fiction.

In the Preface, the editors do state that their intention was not to produce just a dictionary of the history of crime and criminal justice, but to incorporate a certain amount of analysis and discussion to complement the factual information. To a large extent this has been achieved. The indexing is broken into two separate parts, one for legislation and cases and the other a subject index, which together with the clear signposting from the individual essays adds to the worth of the volume as a referencing tool. The accessibility of the text is certainly convenient for any reader seeking background on an unfamiliar or new issue. A criticism may be that the short, individual entries do not go into each definition in any great depth, which could be frustrating to someone with knowledge in that area. However, in the main, the book is one to which anyone with an interest in the history of crime and criminal justice, could refer whether as a starting point for gathering research material or to refresh or indeed reinforce knowledge on a subject.

The academic contributors come from a variety of relevant academic areas but all are respected researchers in their field. Each has researched widely in the disciplines of criminology, criminal justice, sociology and criminal and legal history. The range of connected disciplines reflects both established and new scholarship in the field. Many of the writers are connected with projects such as SOLON or Our Criminal Past as well as other well-known names. The list of the 60 names, in fact, reads like a Who's Who of the best academics in criminal history and criminology and the quality of the scholarship contained herein adds strength to the value of the book. The book provides a valuable basic introductory source to the history of crime and punishment and has the potential to become an essential text for those working in the field at all levels, be that researchers, teachers and students.