

FIRST ENGLISH POLICE DOG.



Berkshire County Constabulary was the first in the country to have a dog to accompany the policemen on night duty, although this was quite usual in some places on the continent. Sir Theodore Brinkman, a large landowner, purchased one of Major Richardson's dogs and presented it to the Clewer Police-station. It was claimed that Nigger could overpower one or two men and pursue escaping criminals.

Pillory, tumbrel and gallows: Criminal justice in Medieval Windsor

It is often supposed that one feature of medieval Windsor which would never be in short supply was gaol space. The castle, surely, could provide as much accommodation of this type as was required, even if it just amounted to an unsavoury dungeon. In fact, throughout the middle ages the castle was only consistently used as a gaol for state prisoners, and even this use was intermittent. The castle's primary function, particularly from the second half of the thirteenth century, was as a royal palace, nothing more. It would be wrong, however, to say that the castle never operated as a town, forest or country prison, it did; but these episodes were brief and confined to its early history.

Unlike the modern arrangement, prisons in the middle ages were only used to hold prisoners before trial, rather than being a means of punishment post trial. For this reason medieval gaols were typically small, consisting of a lockable room or cell with sufficient space for perhaps five detainees. A further distinctive feature of these gaols was their singular attachment to a particular type of court. Courts were organised according to the law they administered and as there were several law codes (church, mercantile, civil, forest and criminal), divided for criminal law into major and minor charges, there were a number of different associated gaols. The county sheriff, for example, would control the sheriff's court, normally hosted in the county town, with its associated county gaol. This arrangement is demonstrated in many counties, but with the exception of Berkshire. It was far from clear which of Berkshire's major towns was its county town, and in consequence the county gaol was located in a succession of different towns. Before the mid-thirteenth century, for example, the county gaol could be found in Farringdon (1183), and in the castles of Wallingford (1216) and Windsor (1184/5, 1233/4). Some resolution of this issue was attempted in Windsor's borough charter of 1277, establishing the town as the county town. But this role was short lived, owing to local flooding, a shortage of food and the