

EXAMPLES of PRISON RECORDS in COUNTY CORK (1834 – 1839)

Compiled by Frank O'Donovan



Some years ago I was browsing through some Prison records for County Cork I stumbled across one which “caught my eye”, so to speak. It was a Donovan man in 1853 and the reason he was sent to prison was for ‘*Furious Driving*’. Now the motor car was not around in that era so I can only guess that he was driving a donkey and cart, a horse and cart or trap. Getting a little more curious I saw a wide variety of offences many of which would not stand up in a Court today. This compilation is published in the link at the end of this document.

Soon afterwards I thought it would be interesting to view offences in years before 1840 so I took 200 sample offences for each of the years 1834 to 1839, inclusive, and below is the summary of my finding from this selected sample. I believe that I got a representative sample to give us a flavour of the “crimes” of that 5-year period.

Shortly we will view the various types of offences committed but first let us look at a few typical crimes from the period:

- Runaway Apprentice
- Assaulting His Wife
- Provoking To Fight
- Embezzling Money
- Selling Liquor Without Licence
- Plundering A Wreck
- Unlawfully Assembly
- Unruly Servants
- Obtaining A Decree Fraudulently
- Unlawfully Pawning A Bed
- Breaking Open A Door Of A Pound
- Having A Stolen Cow In His Possession
- Having Barrack Blanket In Possession
- Riot Clonakilty
- Having Smuggled Tobacco
- Stealing Oats
- Assembling At Night And Cutting Timber
- Stealing Potatoes And Threatening
- Rescuing A Pig Taken Under A Decree
- Stealing Manure
- Stealing Money From A Chapel
- Trespass Cutting Grass And Rushes
- Suspicion Of Stealing Money
- Cutting A Tree At Night



The following table sets out the common crime types with the corresponding number of that crime committed for the 1,200 sample covering the 5-year period 1834 - 1839. Clearly stealing is top of the list with 406 instances or 33.8% of crimes. (note: I did not do any spelling corrections to some obviously mis-spelled words in the table)

Offence type	Number out of 1200	% of Total	
Stealing	406	33.8	%
Assault	189	15.8	%
Debtor	135	11.3	%
Riot	47	3.9	%
Murder	43	3.6	%
Trespass	37	3.1	%
Court Martial / Naval or Military Offender	28	2.3	%
Other	27	2.3	%
Larceny	23	1.9	%
Burglary & Robbery	23	1.9	%
Breaking Glass / Windows	18	1.5	%
Vagrant	18	1.5	%
Receiving / In Possession	15	1.3	%
Absconding	15	1.3	%
Rape	14	1.2	%
Green Wax	13	1.1	%
Threatening	11	0.9	%
Property damage	11	0.9	%
Family	10	0.8	%
Taking Forcible Possession	9	0.8	%
Excise Laws	9	0.8	%
Swindling / Fraud / Forgery	8	0.7	%
Disobeying	8	0.7	%
Manslaughter	8	0.7	%
Trees / Plants	8	0.7	%
Deserter	8	0.7	%
Drunk	7	0.6	%
Breach of the Peace	7	0.6	%
Perjury	7	0.6	%
Smuggling	6	0.5	%
Embezzling	5	0.4	%
Suspicion of	4	0.3	%
Disorderly	4	0.3	%
Drunk & Disorderly	3	0.3	%
Pawning	3	0.3	%
Attempt to	3	0.3	%
Unlicensed Fire Arms	3	0.3	%
Lunatic	2	0.2	%
Indecent Exposure	1	0.1	%
Obstructing	1	0.1	%
Convicts in transit	1	0.1	%
Contempt	1	0.1	%
Writing Threatening Letters	1	0.1	%
TOTAL	1,200	100.0	%

Stealing was the “most popular”, so what did people steal?

<u>Stealing sub-divisions</u>	Number	%	
Clothes	109	26.8	%
Money	50	12.3	%
Sheep / Lamb	48	11.8	%
Timber	29	7.1	%
Other	21	5.2	%
Potatoes	16	3.9	%
Food	15	3.7	%
Farm items / tools	13	3.2	%
Pig	13	3.2	%
Poultry	11	2.7	%
Cow	9	2.2	%
Turnips	8	2.0	%
Clock / Watch	7	1.7	%
Horse	7	1.7	%
Base Coin (making /using)	6	1.5	%
Wool	6	1.5	%
Animals	5	1.2	%
Furniture / Household Items	5	1.2	%
Copper / Lead	5	1.2	%
Boots / Shoes	4	1.0	%
Highway Robbery	3	0.7	%
Grass	3	0.7	%
Wheat / Oats / Barley / Corn	3	0.7	%
Hay / Straw	1	0.2	%
Turf	1	0.2	%
Furze	1	0.2	%
Unspecified	7	1.7	%
Total:	406	100	%

Here we see stealing clothes was over double the number imprisoned for stealing money

Then to look at the clothes section and the types of clothes stolen

<u>Clothes sub division</u>			
Fabrics (e.g. cotton, linen)	11	10.1	%
Coat	9	8.3	%
Shirt	8	7.3	%
Cloak	7	6.4	%
Gown	7	6.4	%
Shawl	4	3.7	%
Blanket	2	1.8	%
Sheets	3	2.8	%
Petticoat	2	1.8	%
Handkerchief	1	0.9	%
Unspecified / Other	55	50.5	%
TOTAL	109	100.0	%

Surnames of those imprisoned and frequency of that surname in the sample of 1,200 imprisonments.

Surname	Number	Surname	Number	Surname	Number
McCarthy	64	Scanlon	4	Pigott	1
Sullivan	59	Connell	4	McLoughlin	1
Mahony	58	Fitzgerald	3	Treacy	1
Murphy	54	Slattery	3	Slyater	1
Donovan	49	Leahy	3	Gower	1
Leary	40	Scott	3	O Hara	1
Regan	34	Adams	3	Ives	1
Shea	34	Rogers	3	Trendgill	1
Barry	34	Young	3	Aston	1
Daly	31	Brown	3	Skipton	1
Sheehan	31	Whitaker	3	Stowe	1
Healy	30	Moloney	3	McArthur	1
Crowley	29	Whelan	3	Wheeler	1
Hurley	27	Robinson	3	Sisson	1
Lynch	27	Whooley	3	Turlon	1
Neill	26	Ronayne	3	Barrett	1
Brien	26	Murnane	3	Bride	1
Burke	25	Harty	3	Connors	1
Cronin	23	Singleton	3	Everitt	1
Murray	21	Sillis	2	Osborne	1
Harrington	21	Maguire	2	Evanson	1
Ryan	21	Collins	2	Savage	1
Cotter	20	Nagle	2	Buchane	1
Hayes	16	Buckley	2	Goold	1
Sweeny	14	Colins	2	Welpley	1
Power	14	Flynn	2	Symons	1
White	13	Sisk	2	Milner	1
Keohane	13	Stephens	2	Counahan	1
Molony	13	Skinner	2	Sliney	1
Kennedy	12	Ronan	2	Scanlan	1
Delany	12	Ward	2	Harding	1
Manning	11	Irwin	2	Miller	1
Galvin	10	Deasy	2	Halpin	1
Sweeney	10	Tassop	1	Anson	1
Lucey	9	Lombard	1	Warren	1
Butler	9	Connelly	1	Duggan	1
Brennan	9	Coughlan	1	Buttimore	1
Kenny	8	Greanes	1	O'Hara	1
Williams	8	Sexton	1	Sloane	1
Looney	7	Hara	1	McAllen	1
Driscoll	7	Cremin	1	Twohig	1
Forde	7	Hanlon	1	Davis	1
Vaughan	6	Manley	1	Burchill	1
Supple	5	Hodnett	1	Halloran	1
Evans	5	Synnot	1	Skilty	1
Johnson	5	Rourke	1	Mirane	1
Allen	5	Scofield	1	Mirann	1
Russell	5	Feen	1	Armes	1
Norris	4	Gould	1	Sinclair	1
Foley	4	Herlihy	1	Milward	1

Surname	Number	Surname	Number	Surname	Number
Breen	1	McConn	1	Maskill	1
Hosford	1	Conway	1	Upton	1
Ivory	1	Shanahan	1	Bushe	1
Haneen	1	Silk	1	Waters	1
Bryan	1	Minehane	1	Connor	1
Whaly	1	Ashton	1	Total	1,200
Brewer	1	Forehane	1		
Rooney	1	Grady	1		

Number of Assaults on Police Constables

Number of assaults = 18 which is equal to 9.5% of all assaults

To view the report:

SAMPLE OF COUNTY CORK PRISON RECORDS (1840 – 1870)

please click the below link

<https://bmdnotices.com/Prisoners.pdf>

