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The office of coroner was established in England in 1194; it has had an unbroken history, and has been exported to many countries, including the United States. At the zenith of his power, in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, the coroner was concerned with many aspects of law and local administration, and with some of the most tragic and dramatic episodes of medieval life.

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The coroner was a medieval official who was tasked to record all cases of sudden and unnatural deaths including suicides, accidents and homicides. After they had been notified of a violent death, the coroner and the sheriffs summoned an investigative jury from the ward where the victim had died and from neighbouring wards.

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Eventually, the coroner's role became specialised and from medieval tax collector it evolved into being almost exclusively concerned with unnatural death and death of unknown cause, although duties in respect of Treasure (previously known as Treasure Trove) remain. Although no longer required to be a knight, most county coroners were elected.

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The medieval coroner is not like a modern coroner, and there is a complete absence of forensic science in this age. The coroner's duty was of legal capacity to the people and the crown—both of which elected him. He made sure that any felon, had there been one involved with the death, was punished, and that the crown received the deodand, if any.

~~The Procedure of a Medieval Coroner's Inquest~~

The Medieval Coroners' Rolls By H. F. HUNNISETT \* THE OFFICE OF CORONER, which still flourishes in many English-speaking countries, can be traced back to the year 1194.<sup>1</sup> In the middle ages the coroner had much more importance and more varied duties than he has anywhere today. These duties can best be studied in the medieval coroners'

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The office and power of a coroner, like those of a sheriff, are both ministerial and judicial, as the sheriff's- substitute, but principally the latter, which almost wholly consists in taking inquisitions upon view of the body, when any one is slain, or dies suddenly, or in prison, or any kind of unnatural death whatsoever, and the body is found within his district; and this he does by a jury summoned from the neighbourhood.

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Coroner, a public official whose principal duty in modern times is to inquire, with the help of a jury, into any death that appears to be unnatural. The office originated in England and was first referred to as *custos placitorum* (Latin: "keeper of the pleas") in the Articles of Eyre of 1194, although there is some evidence that it may have existed earlier.

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History. It is in the general interests of the community that any sudden, unnatural or unexplained deaths should be investigated and, to reflect this, the role of the Coroner has adapted over the eight centuries since the office was formally established in 1194, from being a form of medieval tax gatherer to an independent judicial officer charged with the investigation of sudden, violent or unnatural death.

## ~~History~~ — Coroners' Society of England and Wales

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In medieval times, English coroners were Crown officials who held financial powers and conducted some judicial investigations in order to counterbalance the power of sheriffs. Depending on the jurisdiction, the coroner may adjudge the cause of death personally, or may act as the presiding officer of a special court (a "coroner's jury").

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The medieval coroner's overall responsibility was to record events that he observed, usually to assess the value of property and any fines involved. What were these records called? The Coroner's Book of Inquests The Coroner's Royal Record

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England has traditionally been understood as a latecomer to the use of forensic medicine in death investigation, lagging

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nearly two-hundred years behind other European authorities. Using the coroner's inquest as a lens, this book hopes to offer a fresh perspective on the process of death investigation in medieval England. The central premise of this book is that medical practitioners did participate in death investigation – although not in every inquest, or even most, and not necessarily in those investigations where we today would deem their advice most pertinent. The medieval relationship with death and disease, in particular, shaped coroners' and their jurors' understanding of the inquest's medical needs and led them to conclusions that can only be understood in context of the medieval world's holistic approach to health and medicine. Moreover, while the English resisted Southern Europe's penchant for autopsies, at times their findings reveal a solid understanding of internal medicine. By studying cause of death in the coroners' reports, this study sheds new light on subjects such as abortion by assault, bubonic plague, cruentation, epilepsy, insanity, senescence, and unnatural death.

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Their responsibilities included the arrest of suspects and the safeguarding of property subject to forfeiture; the coroners' rolls contained the written records of many official proceedings.

For the last 800 years coroners have been important in England's legal and political landscape, best known as investigators of sudden, suspicious, or unexplained death. Against the background of the coroner's role in historic England, this book explains how sudden death was investigated by magistrates in Scotland.

Excerpt from Records of Medieval Oxford: Coroners' Inquests, the Walls of Oxford, Etc A coroner is, as the name implies, an officer appointed to protect some, of the interests of the Crown. In the Middle Ages all offences were viewed as a source of profit to that court which had the trying of the case; and the coroner's duty was to see that the King was not defrauded of cases which should come before his court. Cases of murder and death by misfortune were, in particular, reserved to the King, and from the days of Edward I. The main work of a coroner was, as now, to hold an inquest whenever there was a sudden or violent death. It was his business to make inquiry what was the cause of death, and should there be any perquisites of the King, such as the goods and chattels of the felon, he must state what was their value. Subsequently, when the judges came on circuit to hold Assizes, the case would be tried by them, but the record drawn up by the coroner at the time of the inquest was placed before them, and not only insured that the case should not be overlooked, but also served as evidence. About the Publisher Forgotten Books publishes

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Introducing crusader turned county coroner Sir John: the first book in the page-turning Crowner John medieval mystery series, set in twelfth-century England. 1194. Appointed by Richard the Lionheart as the first coroner for the county of Devon, Sir John de Wolfe, recently returned from the Crusades, rides out to the lonely moorland village of Widecombe to hold an inquest on an unidentified body found in a stream. But on his return to Exeter, the new coroner is incensed to find that his own brother-in-law, Sheriff Richard de Revelle, is intent on thwarting the murder investigation – particularly when it emerges that the dead man is both a Crusader and a member of one of Devon ' s finest and most honourable families. Assisted by his loyal bodyguard Gwyn and his new clerk, defrocked priest Thomas, Sir John sets out to solve the mystery – whatever the cost.

Uses wills, coroners' rolls, and archaeological research to describe the homes, furnishings, clothing, food, kinship bonds, home economy, and stages of life of thirteenth-and fourteenth-century families

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The national bestselling hit hailed by the New York Times as a "vibrant medieval mystery...[it] outdoes the competition." In medieval Cambridge, England, Adelia, a female forensics expert, is summoned by King Henry II to investigate a series of gruesome murders that has wrongly implicated the Jewish population, yielding even more tragic results. As Adelia's investigation takes her behind the closed doors of the country's churches, the killer prepares to strike again.

The US Department of Justice's National Institute of Justice (NIJ) asked the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of The National Academies to conduct a workshop that would examine the interface of the medicolegal death investigation system and the criminal justice system. NIJ was particularly interested in a workshop in which speakers would highlight not only the status and needs of the medicolegal death investigation system as currently administered by medical examiners and coroners but also its potential to meet emerging issues facing contemporary society in America. Additionally, the workshop was to highlight priority areas for a potential IOM study on this topic. To achieve those goals, IOM constituted the Committee for the Workshop on the Medicolegal Death Investigation System, which developed a workshop that focused on the role of the medical examiner and coroner death investigation system and its promise for improving both the criminal justice system and the public health and health care systems, and their ability to respond to terrorist threats and events. Six panels were formed to highlight different aspects of the medicolegal death investigation system, including ways to improve it and expand it beyond its traditional response and meet growing demands and challenges. This report summarizes the Workshop presentations and discussions that followed them.

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