

The Table of Doom: execution by burning, particularly for ‘petty treason’ (as of September 2021)

I have mentioned, in a number of posts on petty treason,¹ my ‘Table of Doom’: a list of women sentenced to burning after conviction for the homicide of a husband or (much more rarely) an employer. In due course, I mean to publish a proper list of these women, with full references and analysis. At the moment, this is my ‘in progress’ list (as of September 2021) of women (ordered to be) burned for husband-killing, before 1500.

It is a ‘conservative’ list, and does not include: accusations which ended in an acquittal (lots of these: more in due course) or pardon without clear conviction and sentence, those women ordered to be burned for offences other than husband-killing (I have examples of this sentence in relation to master/mistress killing,² counterfeiting and ‘ordinary’ homicide); convictions of husband-killing in which (frustratingly) the sentence is not specified (even if it probably was burning), or the few in which hanging, rather than burning, is prescribed.³ I also have further information on the way in which the sentence was noted (as ‘to do’, or ‘done’, and the terms used) as well as a variety of other details (geography, personnel, methods, concealment ...) emerging from the accusations and entries. And no doubt further cases, and new light on those I have already, will be found (or it will become clear that there is duplication – anything is possible ...). At the moment, there seems to be a striking ‘spike’ (in found records at least) in the 1390s. This, clearly, can be considered alongside contemporary political tensions, and legal developments relating to women. As I note in my book, however, the deep continuity in seeing fire as the appropriate response to husband-killing is also very important.

	Date/MS reference	Woman Convicted	Deferral ⁴ or pardon noted?
1	1211 ⁵	Avice, W of Simon de Atherfield.	-
2	1228 ⁶	Agnes de Lok, W of William Trenchemer.	Pardoned
3	1274 ⁷	Isabella W of Wm le Wychien.	-
4	1278 ⁸	Cecilia W of Henry le Melersteyn.	-
5	1281 ⁹	Alice W of Richard le Porter.	-
6	1285 ¹⁰	Margery W of Nicholas West of Felde	-
7	1286 ¹¹	Margery W of Martin Dod.	-
8	1293-4 ¹²	Joan W of John de Hoo.	-
9	1293-4 ¹³	Matilda W of John Bigger.	-
10	1294 ¹⁴	Margery daughter of Robert de Lytle	-
11	1301 ¹⁵	Alice dau of Agnes le Melner.	-
12	1321 ¹⁶	Juliana Murdak.	Pregnancy deferral
13	1322 ¹⁷	Isabella W of Bartholomew Leche.	-

14	[1322] ¹⁸	Unnamed woman allegedly burned for attempt to kill H.	-
15	1324 ¹⁹	Sarra, W of Richard Wychman.	-
16	1326 ²⁰	Lucy, W of Thomas de Tasburgh.	-
17	1327 ²¹	Agnes W of William de Hedon.	-
18	1331? ²²	Agnes W of John ?Ffyn of Oggeston.	Pregnancy deferral
19	1334 ²³	Alice W of Stephen de Lenham..	-
20	1344 ²⁴	Cristina W of Ralph atte Mulle.	-
21	1357 ²⁵	Alice W of William Barkere.	-
22	1357 ²⁶	Sibill de Warwick W of John le Hurdler.	-
23	1359 ²⁷	Alice, W of John Tailor of Tunstall.	-
24	1374 ²⁸	Cecilia W of Simon de Knolles of Maunsfeld.	-
25	1378 ²⁹	Margaret W of John Trilly jun of Walden.	-
26	1379 ³⁰	Matilda ?Colt W of Roger Camul?	-
27	1380 ³¹	Agnes W of Robert Farthing, cordwainer.	-
28	1380 ³²	Agnes W of John atte Halle.	-
29	1382 ³³	Agnes W of William Ardern of Luton.	-
30	1385 ³⁴	Matilda W of John Cook	-
31	1386 ³⁵	Beatrice W of Geoffrey Leffyn. .	Failed claim of pregnancy
32	1387-8 ³⁶	Elizabeth Walton.	Pregnancy deferral.
33	1390 ³⁷	Margaret W of Thos Gamul de Asshburn.	Failed claim of pregnancy. ³⁸
34	1390 ³⁹⁴⁰	Agnes W of William Milner.	-
35	c. 1390 ⁴¹	Anon wife.	-
36	1390 ⁴²	Denys, W of William Beaumont.	-
37	1390 ⁴³	Alice Pyrye.	-
38	1390 ⁴⁴	Isabella W of Richard Salman	-
39	1391 ⁴⁵	Juliana W of Thos Bouker jr of Westwhitring.	-
40	1391 ⁴⁶	Johanna Northfolk, W of John Chapman of Chilyngton.	-
41	1391 ⁴⁷	Juliana Scottes W of John S.	-
42	1393 ⁴⁸	Matilda W of Thomas Rawlins.	-
43	1393 ⁴⁹	Juliana W of Thomas Horn of Putteworth.	Pregnancy deferral.

44	1397 ⁵⁰	Matilda, W of Robert Collier of Donnington.	Pregnancy deferral (seems burnt).
45	1397 ⁵¹	Christina W of Edward Bred.	Sentenced to burn, but escaped.
46	1398 ⁵²	Alice W of John Bedyne of Great Tywe.	-
47	1398 ⁵³	Alice W of Richard Eremyte	-
48	1400 ⁵⁴	Agnes, W of John Cran.	-
49	1401 ⁵⁵	Joan W of John Bristowe.	Pregnancy deferral, execution ordered after she had given birth.
50	1402 ⁵⁶	Margery W of John Milner.	Failed pregnancy claim.
51	1404 ⁵⁷	Margaret W of John de Routhbery.	-
52	1405 ⁵⁸	Alice W of John Shepherd of Byngam	--
53	1407 ⁵⁹	Emma, W of John Handes.	Pregnancy deferral, pardon.
54	1415 ⁶⁰	Joan W of John de Alfreton.’	-
55	1418-19 ⁶¹	Margery W of John Chaloner	Failed claim of pregnancy.
56	1420 ⁶²	Katherine W of Thomas Beeston.	-
57	1420 ⁶³	Agnes W of Thos Swaton.	-
58	1424 ⁶⁴	Katherine W of Richard Farneborgh.	-
59	1426 ⁶⁵	Alice W of Philip Hencok.	-
60	1428 ⁶⁶	Alice W of Robert Johnson Bastard of Gedney.	Pregnancy deferral.
61	1433-4 ⁶⁷	Margery Andrewes	-
62	In or before 1483 ⁶⁸	‘a wife’	-

¹ See [these posts](#), and these videos from papers I gave in 2021 ([October](#) and [October](#) (again, longer), for some of my thoughts on petty treason. If your library has a copy, you could have a look at the section on petty treason in c.6. of my 2021 book, [Women in the Medieval Common Law](#). I am also preparing a paper on this topic for the British Legal History Conference in Belfast in 2022.

² JUST 3/195 m. 64d.

³ JUST 3/199 m. 5.

⁴ Deferral means deferral only – if there is a full pardon, it is noted. Cases marked [B] come from Butler, S. M. (2018). "Chapter 6 Pleading the Belly: A Sparing Plea? Pregnant Convicts and the Courts in Medieval England". In *Crossing Borders: Boundaries and Margins in Medieval and Early Modern Britain*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill.

⁵ CRR VI, 306; 62 SS, 322; Coss, Lady, 134; N Vincent, ‘Simon of Atherfield d. 1211, a martyr to his wife’ *Analecta Bollandiana* 113 (1995) p 349-61.

⁶ *Cl. Rolls, 1227-31*, 53.

⁷ JUST 1/538 m.13.

⁸ JUST 3/35B m. 53d.

⁹ JUST 1/486 m. 1.

¹⁰ JUST 1/705 m.6d.

¹¹ [B] JUST 1/573 m. 78.

-
- ¹² JUST 1/374 m. 63d.
¹³ JUST 1/374 m. 42.
¹⁴ JUST 3/92 m. 3.
¹⁵ JUST 1/1108 m. 17; JUST 3/74/2 m. 5.
¹⁶ 97 SS pp 216-7; KB 27/241 Rex m. 12d; KB 27/242 m. 4R, m. 31R and 31d; KB 27/243 m.7R and d.
¹⁷ JUST 1/3 m. 7d.
¹⁸ Bellamy, *Law of Trespass* 227 and references there; Staunford, *Pleas of the Crown*, 17.
¹⁹ JUST 3/18/5 m. 14.
²⁰ KB 27/263 m. 33d.
²¹ KB 27/268 m. 1d.
²² JUST 3/113 m. 6d.
²³ JUST 3/28 m. 5.
²⁴ KB 27/373 m. 47.
²⁵ JUST 3/139 m. 4d.
²⁶ JUST 3/139 m. 4d.
²⁷ JUST 3/143 m. 3.
²⁸ JUST 3/160 m. 16.
²⁹ JUST 3/168 m.4.
³⁰ JUST 3/166 m.7.
³¹ KB 27/476 m. 19 Rex; 88 SS p. 14. 1379; (134-5).
³² JUST 3/163 m. 10.
³³ JUST 3/164 m.5.
³⁴ JUST 3/164 m. 23.
³⁵ [B] JUST 3/173 m. 26.
³⁶ JUST 3/174 m.2; KB 27/508 m.4.
³⁷ [B] JUST 3/177 m. 49.
³⁸ JUST 3/177 m.49.
³⁹ JUST 3/177 m. 27.
⁴⁰ JUST 3/177 m. 27.
⁴¹ Greg Chron 93.
⁴² *CPR* 1388-92, p. 253.
⁴³ JUST 3/180 m. 30, 31.
⁴⁴ JUST 3/181 m. 16d.
⁴⁵ JUST 3/178 m. 9d.
⁴⁶ JUST 3/178 m. 9d.
⁴⁷ JUST 3/179 m. 17d.
⁴⁸ JUST 2/190, m.4; JUST 3/177 m. 18.
⁴⁹ JUST 3/178 m. 9d.
⁵⁰ JUST 3/177 m. 107.
⁵¹ JUST 3/179 m. 25.
⁵² JUST 3/180 m. 15.
⁵³ JUST 3/218/3 m. 35.
⁵⁴ 88 SS p. 118; KB 27/561 m. 2d.
⁵⁵ JUST 3/186 m. 4d.
⁵⁶ JUST 3/188 m. 7d.
⁵⁷ JUST 3/191 m. 19.
⁵⁸ JUST 3/188 m. 76.
⁵⁹ JUST 3/189 m. 5; CPR 1405-8 pp. 371, 470, CPR 1408-13 p. 3.
⁶⁰ JUST 3/195 m. 60d.
⁶¹ JUST 3/195 m. 72d; *Seipp* 1421.092rog.
⁶² KB 27/638 m. 20d; See also JUST 3/195 m. 91.
⁶³ JUST 3/195 mm. 15, 15d.
⁶⁴ JUST 3/202 m. 4.
⁶⁵ JUST 3/205 m. 21.
⁶⁶ JUST 3/203 m. 11d.
⁶⁷ KB 27/690 m. 3.
⁶⁸ *Seipp* 1483.037.