

Jaundiced Journalism



Robinson Crusoe author Daniel Defoe, was sentenced at the Old Bailey, City of London, in 1703 to 3 days in a Pillory for political dissent.

On 9th January 2025 the Manx Independent newspaper featured an alarming article titled, "Fifteen of the Island's worst criminals put behind bars in 2024".

This divisive news feature included the facial photographs and sentencing summary of 15 offenders currently imprisoned at Jurby Prison, Isle of Man.

In response to such scornful article we wrote the following open letter to the newspaper editor:

Dear Mr Jones

Re: *Opinion to Editor – Prejudicial Journalism*

I write to express my dismay at the double page article in the Manx Independent dated 9th January 2025 titled, "Fifteen of the Island's worst criminals put behind bars in 2024".

Firstly, given that at least four of the defendants featured in this disturbing story are currently in the process of challenging their convictions and/or sentence in the Appeal Court, such article is plainly premature.

Much more importantly, what was the point of this heartless news piece?

It is stated that, "We take a look at some of the worst criminals who have been locked up in the past year".

Whilst the victim is always properly at the very centre of any sentencing exercise, this has to be balanced against a number of other human rights and legal considerations.

The majority of the 15 prisoners featured were drug offenders and the article failed to give proper credit to all those who pleaded guilty and showed appropriate remorse.

*In my view, to label a human being as a **worst criminal** is appallingly judgemental, cruel and sanctimonious. It demonstrates an attitude devoid of compassion, understanding or forgiveness. And it harks back to the medieval gallows mentality of rejoicing in public hangings, ridiculing those locked in a Pillory and throwing rotten eggs at offenders trapped in Stocks.*

The 15 men and women featured in this one-sided news article have previously had their cases openly reported and facial photographs published during 2024. Their human failings, errors of judgment and mistakes have therefore already been publicly aired.

To broadcast their mug shots and sentencing yet again now is nothing less than gratuitous gloating in the suffering and misfortune of fellow citizens. It is a form of recurrent punishment. It is shamelessly indulging in their repeated public humiliation and it shows a callous disregard for the personal circumstances and feelings of the parents, partners and children of offenders. It demonstrates an ignorance of the importance of individual rehabilitation, and is insensitive to the significant psychological harm public shaming and subjecting a person to a parade of civic disgrace can cause.

If the point of such a merciless news article was to demonise, exclude and marginalise an entire group of human beings, then it can be considered a success.

However, in my opinion this sort of reporting, pandering to the basest instincts of revenge and retribution, represents the worst form of populist and prejudicial journalism.

Have you never heard of the maxim, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone"?

One final thought. A Freedom of Information reply from the DHA to me dated 20th July 2023 revealed that each prisoner costs £80,094.00 per year to keep at Jurby Prison. The total sentences for the 15 individuals featured in the article amounts to 183 years. This would cost the Manx taxpayer a staggering £14.5 million just for those 15 inmates, in other words an average of approximately £1 million per sentence.



The ultimate public humiliation. Ruben's 1620 oil painting, "Christ on the Cross" (between two criminals).

Maybe one unfortunate day the Manx Independent editor will be distracted whilst driving and knock a cyclist over or perhaps momentarily lose his temper and slap a friend. How will that editor feel when he sees his criminal court case reported and his own face repeatedly pictured in the media?

<https://www.ik.im/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/16.01.25-Letter-to-Mr-D.-Jones-Editor-@-IOM-Newspapers.pdf>

*They called Jesus **A FRIEND OF SINNERS.***