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Episode #197 Highwaymen 28th Sep, 2021

[00:00:00] Hello, hello hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:00:12] The show where you can listen to fascinating stories, and learn weird and wonderful things about the world at the same time as improving your English.

[00:00:21] I'm Alastair Budge, and today we are going to be talking about Highwaymen.

[00:00:27] For a period of around 150 years, starting in the mid 17th century and continuing until the start of the 19th century, travelling around Britain was a dangerous business.

[00:00:42] The roads were bad, it took a long time, the nights were cold, and the days were wet.

[00:00:48] But there was a much greater danger: highwaymen.



[00:00:53] Men who would rush out in front of your coach¹, point a gun in your face, and say the infamous² words, "your money or your life", whereupon you would be forced to hand over whatever money you were carrying, and you would be able to continue on your way.

[00:01:11] These men, and occasionally women, will be the subject of this episode.

[00:01:15] On our travels we'll cover who exactly these people were, why they did what they did, the <u>circumstances</u>² that allowed them to do it, what they actually did, what happened to them if they were caught, why and when this stopped being a problem, the legacy they left behind, and of course along our journey we'll hear the stories of some of the most famous of the highwaymen.

[00:01:42] OK then, let's jump right into it.

[00:01:46] Let's start our story with a little history recap, because an understanding of what was happening, and what had happened, in Britain by the early 19th century is vital for an understanding of what caused the growth of highwaymen.

[00:02:03] The English Civil War had taken place between 1642 and 1651.

⁵ very important



¹ a large four-wheel carriage usually pulled by a horse

² famous for something bad

³ conditions or events that affect a situation

⁴ give the main points of a description or situation

[00:02:10] This involved nine long and bloody years of fighting, and a side called the Parliamentarians, otherwise known as the Roundheads, the anti-monarchists, were victorious.

[00:02:23] King Charles I was executed, and supporters of the king, known as Royalists, or Cavaliers, had to live under this new, republican government.

[00:02:34] Many of these Royalists would have had <u>extensive</u>⁶ military experience fighting in the civil war.

[00:02:42] They had access to weapons, they knew how to use them, and they were angry. They had lost the war, and their enemies were in power.

[00:02:52] Anyone who has lived in a country that has experienced civil war knows all too well that even when the war is over, there is a lot of <u>underlying⁷ tension⁸</u> between the winning and the losing side, and this certainly doesn't disappear <u>overnight⁹</u>.

[00:03:11] On a socio-economic level, people were starting to move to towns and cities, the country was starting the process of urbanisation.

⁷ existing without being obvious

⁹ happening as if in a single night, suddenly



⁶ a lot of

⁸ a situation of nervousness and hate

[00:03:21] Trade routes were opening up, which meant an increase in people travelling between towns and cities.

[00:03:30] The first railroad wouldn't be built until 1825, but there was a relatively extensive road network.

[00:03:38] If you wanted to go from one town to another, you had to travel by road.

[00:03:44] The roads, although relatively extensive, were not good quality.

[00:03:48] A carriage and its horses might travel at around 8 kilometres per hour, a fast walking pace¹⁰.

[00:03:56] The banking system was still pretty basic - the Bank of England was only established in 1694 - and if you wanted to move money from one place to another, you really needed to take it yourself, often in the form of gold coins, physical money.

[00:04:16] What's more, there had been technological advances with guns, and the invention of something called the flintlock pistol 12.

¹² a small gun that is fired from one hand



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¹⁰ the speed at which something moves

¹¹ an old type of gun using a very small piece of fire (a spark) to shoot

[00:04:25] This allowed the holder13 to pull a trigger14, a small piece of flint15 was brought into contact with steel, and the sparks16 caused the gunpowder17 to explode and push the bullet out.

[00:04:39] Before this, the way in which a shot was fired was much more complicated, and involved keeping a <u>lit¹⁸ fuse¹⁹</u> and using that to fire the bullet.

[00:04:49] Long story short, this new <u>flintlock pistol</u>, this new gun, meant that someone could prepare their gun to be ready to fire whenever they wanted.

[00:05:00] A combination of all of these factors created the ideal conditions for highwaymen:

[00:05:06] People who had experience fighting but now no employment, an increased number of people moving between cities having to carry larger amounts of money,

¹⁹ a cord or string which is burned easily, made to carry flame from one end to the other



¹³ the person who holds the gun

¹⁴ a part of a gun that activates the firing mechanism when pressed

¹⁵ a piece of black stone used to produce small pieces of fire

¹⁶ very small pieces of fire

¹⁷ a mixture of explosive materials in the form of a powder

¹⁸ burning

conditions that meant they were easy to catch up with, and a deadly weapon that meant it was easy to threaten²⁰ people.

[00:05:25] One such man, one such product of this environment and of these factors was a man called James Hind, a man who earned the nickname²¹ of The Royalist Highwayman.

[00:05:39] After fighting on the losing, Royalist, side in the English Civil War, he wanted to find a way to continue his **quest**²² against the Parliamentarians, people he held responsible for the murder of the true King of England, King Charles.

[00:05:57] He <u>took to²³</u> the roads, <u>ambushing²⁴</u>, laying in waiting for travellers, then jumping out at them and taking all their belongings.

[00:06:06] <u>Crucially</u>²⁵, he only attacked Parliamentarians, he only attacked the side that won in the civil war.

[00:06:14] As the attacks grew, so did the stories of his <u>exploits</u>²⁶.

²⁶ brave or daring acts



 $^{^{20}}$ tell someone that they would kill them unless they did what they wanted

²¹ an informal name

²² long search or hunt

²³ went to

²⁴ suddenly attacking after hiding and waiting

²⁵ in a way that is very important

[00:06:19] By this time there was growing circulation of newspapers in England.

[00:06:24] And much like in the 21st century, in the 16th century, 500 years before, people loved stories of criminals on the run²⁷, especially criminals with what was, to some, a noble purpose²⁸, of only stealing from "bad" people.

[00:06:43] It's hard to separate the real James Hind from the James Hind as he was **portrayed**²⁹ in the newspapers at the time, but he had a lot of the **attributes**³⁰ of the "good criminal", a sort of Robin Hood type figure.

[00:06:59] He would avoid violence, unless he had to.

[00:07:02] He was brave, and would go straight up to the carriage of the person he was robbing, look them in the eyes, <u>utter³¹</u> the words "Stand and Deliver", and allow them to escape alive if they gave him their money.

[00:07:17] This, by the way, is contrasted with the expectation of what a common thief³² might do, which would be to attack someone while they weren't looking, perhaps hit them over the head or even kill them, and then rob them of their belongings.

³² someone who steals



²⁷ trying to avoid being captured

²⁸ reason

²⁹ represented or described

³⁰ characteristics

³¹ say

[00:07:34] So, Hind was in many respects a "gentleman thief".

[00:07:40] His fame³³ continued to grow when he tried to rob the most famous Parliamentarian in the country, Oliver Cromwell, who was the Lord Protector of England, Scotland and Ireland at the time.

[00:07:53] Cromwell was essentially the most powerful person in the country, and the man who had ordered the execution of the previous king, Charles I.

[00:08:03] Hind's <u>attempt³⁴</u> to rob Cromwell didn't go to plan, Cromwell's carriage was much better protected than Hind had expected, and Hind only escaped by riding so fast and for so long that his horse actually died.

[00:08:19] Or so the newspapers reported it...

[00:08:22] And the eventual af fate of James Hind?

35 presented

³⁷ the outcome of a situation for someone



³³ the state of being widely known

³⁴ try

³⁶ happening at a future time

[00:08:25] Well, as will be a theme with all of the highwaymen subjects in this episode, Hind's life as a highwayman was adventurous, <u>bold</u>³⁸, made for a good story, but... short.

[00:08:40] He was captured in 1651, tried as a <u>traitor</u>³⁹, and <u>hung, drawn and</u> <u>quartered</u>⁴⁰.

[00:08:48] This was unusual because the normal punishment for being a highwayman was being hung⁴¹, not being hung, drawn and quartered, which was reserved⁴² for the even more serious crime of treason⁴³.

[00:09:02] There are some historians who believe that Cromwell was so angry after Hind's attempted robbery that he personally made sure that Hind received a traitor's death.

⁴⁴ of a person who is not loyal to his own country



³⁸ not afraid of danger, brave

³⁹ someone not loyal to his own country

⁴⁰ hanged by the neck and had his body cut into pieces

⁴¹ killed by tying a rope around his head, attached from above and removing the support from beneath

⁴² kept, intended

⁴³ the crime of not being loyal to your own country

[00:09:15] Hind may have had political motivations when he decided to become a highwayman, but later highwaymen, especially after the Parliamentarians were kicked out and the monarchy <u>restored</u>⁴⁵ in 1660, were not in it for political reasons.

[00:09:32] Of course, we do not have detailed <u>insight</u>⁴⁶ into the exact motivations behind every highwayman, but their actions suggest that <u>they were in it</u>⁴⁷ for the money, the glory, or for the <u>thrill</u>⁴⁸.

[00:09:47] And for some, it was a combination of all three.

[00:09:51] The next highwayman we'll meet is actually French, although he is much more famous in England than the country of his birth.

[00:09:59] His name was Claude Du Vall, and he is perhaps the most famous example of the "Romantic Highwaymen".

[00:10:08] He moved to England as a young man, during the period of the Restoration, when King Charles II was put on the throne.

⁴⁸ excitement



⁴⁵ returned

⁴⁶ deep understanding and knowledge

⁴⁷ they participated in that activity

[00:10:16] He started off his career working as something called a **footman**⁴⁹, a man whose job was to follow and protect the carriage of a wealthy person.

[00:10:27] Footmen⁵⁰ were normally chosen because of their physical attributes.

[00:10:32] They needed to be strong, so they could help people in and out of the carriages, and push or pull the carriage if it got stuck in the mud⁵¹.

[00:10:42] They also needed to be handsome to be physically attractive, because they were an extension or perhaps even a reflection of their masters, of the people inside the carriage.

[00:10:54] In the age of the Highwayman, they also needed to be good with weapons, because part of their job was protecting the carriage against this external threat.

[00:11:06] Being a <u>footman</u> was, in many respects, the best possible training for a Highwayman.

⁵⁴ someone who expresses the characteristics of someone else



⁴⁹ a foot soldier or guard

⁵⁰ foot soldiers or guards

⁵¹ earth mixed with water

⁵² physically attractive

⁵³ someone who is representing someone

[00:11:13] It's not clear exactly when Du Vall switched from protecting carriages to attacking them, but as a highwayman he gained a reputation for being a <u>fashionable</u>⁵⁵ gentleman, someone who would never use violence, and always be polite and <u>courteous</u>⁵⁶ to the people he robbed, especially towards women.

[00:11:37] There is a famous story about one carriage he attacked, which has gone down in history as an example of the true character of highwaymen.

[00:11:47] Legend has it that he had stopped a carriage on the road. Inside were a man and his wife. The carriage held 400 pounds, the equivalent today of around €100,000.

[00:12:01] The woman, to try to show that she was not afraid, pulled out a small musical instrument called a flageolet, and started to play.

[00:12:11] Du Vall, being a cultured gentleman, also pulled out his flageolet, and they played together for a while.

[00:12:20] Then - and bear in mind⁵⁷ this is in the middle of a robbery, for which the punishment was death - Du Vall politely asked the man whether he could dance with his wife.

⁵⁷ have in mind



⁵⁵ dressing according to what was popular at the time

⁵⁶ polite and having good manners

[00:12:33] The man responded that he could, and then Du Vall and the lady danced together outside the carriage. Du Vall was, reportedly, an excellent dancer, and when the dance was finished he helped the lady back up onto the carriage.

[00:12:50] The man then proceeded to give Du Vall 100 pounds, a quarter of the amount that he had on him.

[00:12:57] Instead of <u>demanding</u>⁵⁸ the rest, Du Vall responded that "This hundred given so <u>generously</u>⁵⁹ is better than ten times the sum taken by force. Your noble behaviour has excused you the other three hundred which you have in the <u>coach</u> with you."

[00:13:13] Now, this may be legend, and it certainly makes for a good story, but it demonstrates how highwaymen were **portrayed** - normally not as violent criminals, but as gentlemen, brave and noble men whose job just so happened to involve stealing from others.

[00:13:34] Stories such as this one of Du Vall must have made being stopped by a highwayman an experience - yes, you might be being robbed, but you had heard so much about these noble, charismatic 100:13:34] Stories such as this one of Du Vall must have made being stopped by a highwayman an experience - yes, you might be being robbed, but you had heard so much about these noble, charismatic 100:13:34] robbers, that you might well have been very curious to see one for yourself.

⁶¹ attractive and inspiring



⁵⁸ asking for something without allowing refusal

⁵⁹ in a way that shows willingness to give money

⁶⁰ very exciting

[00:13:55] Despite Du Vall's reputation as a **charismatic** gentleman, he was, of course a thief, and when he was eventually captured, aged only 27, he was given the punishment for his crimes, **hanging**⁶².

[00:14:10] The message on his **tombstone**⁶³ is **revealing**⁶⁴ of the two things he is remembered for: theft and his popularity with women.

[00:14:19] It reads:

[00:14:20] "Here lies Du Vall, reader, if male thou art,

[00:14:24] Look to thy <u>purse</u>⁶⁵; if female, to thy heart.

[00:14:29] So, that's an old style of writing, but it means if you are a man, keep an eye out for your <u>purse</u>, your <u>wallet</u>⁶⁶. And if you are a woman, look out for your heart, because that is what Du Vall was going to steal.

[00:14:45] In the interests of balance, it's important to stress that not all Highwaymen were like James Hind and Claude Du Vall.

⁶⁶ a small container or case for carrying money



⁶² tying a rope around his head, attached from above and removing the support from beneath

⁶³ a stone used to mark a grave or the place where someone is buried

⁶⁴ making interesting information known

⁶⁵ a small container or case for carrying money

[00:14:53] Many would use great violence against their victims, and by the time the law caught up with them they weren't tried for simple robbery, but murder, rape⁶⁷, and worse.

[00:15:07] Perhaps the most famous Highwayman in British history was a man called Dick Turpin, who <u>terrorised</u>⁶⁸ the English roads in the early 18th century.

[00:15:18] He wasn't particularly famous when he was alive though - his <u>fame</u> only came after his story was taken up by a Victorian novelist 100 years after his death, and he was the main character in a hugely popular novel called Rockwood, which <u>romanticised</u> his <u>exploits</u>.

[00:15:38] In this book, Turpin is a romantic Highwayman, and in order to give himself an <u>alibi</u>⁷⁰ for a crime he rides his horse so fast and so far, all the way from London to York, that the horse dies.

[00:15:53] In the popular imagination Dick Turpin is this **dashing**¹¹, romantic hero, but the history books suggest that this is far from the truth.

⁷¹ attractive, confident and stylish



⁶⁷ the act of forcing someone to have sex with them, using violence

⁶⁸ made people feel extreme fear

⁶⁹ made them look better than they really were

⁷⁰ proof that he was not present at the place where the crime happened

[00:16:05] He was involved with a violent gang who robbed houses, <u>raped</u>⁷² women, and murdered anyone who stood in their way.

[00:16:14] He probably also shot and killed one of his partners, and was eventually captured for stealing horses.

[00:16:22] It's not exactly the **glamorous**⁷³ life of a gentleman thief that many might remember it as.

[00:16:29] And while we are on the subject of exceptions to the popular idea of the highwayman, not all highwaymen were, well, men.

[00:16:40] One such example was a lady called Lady Katherine Ferrers.

[00:16:45] Now, you may know that in English if you are called Lady something, it is a formal, noble title.

[00:16:53] Lady Katherine Ferrers was an aristocrat, she was a rich lady who lived in a large house.

[00:17:00] What possible reason did she have to become a Highwaywoman?

[00:17:05] Well, she came from a Royalist family, and during the time of the Parliamentarians, many Royalists fell into serious financial difficulties. She may have

⁷³ attractive, beautiful in an exciting way



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⁷² forced people to have sex with them, using violence

seen that her fortune was starting to shrink, and felt that she needed to do something about it.

[00:17:23] Being a highwayman could be a <u>lucrative</u>⁷⁵ profession, it could be a quick way of making some money.

[00:17:29] Or, she might have just enjoyed the thrill.

[00:17:33] For a woman in 17th century England, society's <u>norms</u>⁷⁶ were pretty strict, there were strict codes of behaviour that you were expected to <u>adhere to</u>⁷⁷.

[00:17:45] And stopping strangers on the roads, pointing a gun in their faces and robbing them, well that was certainly something very different to what most 17th century women were up to.

[00:17:57] So, legend has it, after dinner was over, Lady Katherine Ferrers would <u>slip</u>⁷⁸ into a secret side room, get changed into men's clothes, put on her hat and <u>mask</u>⁷⁹, get on her horse and ride out into the night.

⁷⁹ a covering worn on the face to hide one's identity



⁷⁴ become smaller

⁷⁵ producing a lot of money

⁷⁶ accepted standards of behaviour

⁷⁷ obey or follow

⁷⁸ move quietly and quickly

[00:18:15] Unlike James Hind or Claude Du Vall, she did not display gentlemanly behaviour. She was a <u>cold-blooded</u>⁸⁰ killer, and would murder <u>coach</u> drivers and their passengers even if they gave her their money.

[00:18:30] So, what happened to this aristocrat-turned-robber-murderer?

[00:18:35] Well, you guessed it. Her criminal career wasn't to last for long.

[00:18:40] Sometime in 1660, when she was only 26 years old, she was shot during an attack.

[00:18:48] She managed to ride all the way back home, but died of her <u>wounds</u>⁸¹. Her crimes were covered up by her servants, and indeed there is still doubt about exactly what she did, but her legend certainly lives on.

[00:19:05] Now, thankfully in Britain at least, we do not have to worry about Highwaymen or Highwayladies.

[00:19:11] The entire career choice of Highwayman became significantly less popular and less attractive in the early 19th century for a number of reasons.

⁸¹ injuries made by a weapon



⁸⁰ without emotion or pity

[00:19:23] Firstly, a mounted⁸² police force was created in 1805, so police officers would patrol⁸³ the roads on horseback⁸⁴ during the night.

[00:19:34] Secondly, advances in the banking system meant that people simply didn't need to carry much money with them. A situation where someone would carry the equivalent of €100,000, as in the story of Claude Du Vall, was just far less likely.

[00:19:52] Thirdly, the Industrial Revolution had caused cities to expand even further out, so there were fewer completely <u>isolated</u>⁸⁵ stretches of road close to the cities.

There were also far more people travelling, so it was just busier on the roads.

[00:20:11] Long story short, being a highwayman was both a lot less profitable, and you were much more likely to be caught.

[00:20:19] The punishment was still death by hanging, and this was enough of a <a href="https://death.org/

⁸⁶ something that made them afraid to do something



⁸² riding a horse

⁸³ go around an area in order to secure it

⁸⁴ on a horse

⁸⁵ far away from other places or people

[00:20:30] But while the last time someone was executed for highway robbery in Britain was in 1802, the legend of the highwayman has certainly endured⁸⁷, but it is one of contradiction.

[00:20:44] On the one hand, they were criminals. They stole from people, they killed people, they made the simple act of travelling from one place to another an act that could cost you your life and all the money you had in the world.

[00:20:59] But, on the other hand, they are often remembered as noble gentlemen, people who may have sort of been criminals, but they were gentlemen first and criminals second.

[00:21:11] In some cases, and for some people, they even had good intentions, such as only taking from bad, Parliamentarians, and living by a certain code of moral honour.

[00:21:23] They still attract fascination, and there have been countless books and films made about the lives of Highwaymen, which almost always present them as misunderstood⁸⁸ gentlemen rather than violent thieves.

[00:21:38] It's hardly surprising, really, and there is still this fascination with the "gentleman thief".

⁸⁸ incorrectly understood



⁸⁷ lasted

[00:21:45] French listeners will be familiar with Arsène Lupin, there's The Thomas Crown Affair, or the Ocean's Eleven films.

[00:21:53] And of course there are countless more of these kinds of stories, and of these kinds of thieves.

[00:22:00] Thieves who commit crimes but somehow, the more we know about the thief, and especially if the thief doesn't use violence and doesn't really need to commit the crime in the first place, the more we are able to justify their actions, and almost admire them.

[00:22:20] And when it comes to highwaymen, the myth of the gentleman thief is so powerful that for many people they are a subject of admiration, and really aren't remembered as criminals at all.

[00:22:36] OK then, that is it for today's episode on Highwaymen.

[00:22:41] As always, I would love to know what you thought of this episode.

[00:22:45] We have only really spoken about Highwaymen in Britain, but of course Britain was far from the only country with Highwaymen.

[00:22:53] So, what stories about Highwaymen are there from your country?

[00:22:57] How are they remembered? Gentlemen or thieves? Or a combination of the two?



[00:23:02] I would love to know, so let's get this discussion started - the place to go for that is community.leonardoenglish.com.

[00:23:11] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:23:16] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]



Key vocabulary

Word	Definition
Coach	a large four-wheel carriage usually pulled by a horse
Infamous	famous for something bad
Circumstances	conditions or events that affect a situation
Recap	give the main points of a description or situation
Vital	very important
Extensive	a lot of
Underlying	existing without being obvious
Tension	a situation of nervousness and hate
Overnight	happening as if in a single night, suddenly
Pace	the speed at which something moves
Flintlock	an old type of gun using a very small piece of fire (a spark) to shoot
Pistol	a small gun that is fired from one hand



Holder the person who holds the gun

Trigger a part of a gun that activates the firing mechanism when pressed

Flint a piece of black stone used to produce small pieces of fire

Sparks very small pieces of fire

Gunpowder a mixture of explosive materials in the form of a powder

Lit burning

Fuse a cord or string which is burned easily, made to carry flame from one

end to the other

Threaten tell someone that they would kill them unless they did what they

wanted

Nickname an informal name

Quest long search or hunt

Took to went to

Ambushing suddenly attacking after hiding and waiting

Crucially in a way that is very important

Exploits brave or daring acts



On the run trying to avoid being captured

Purpose reason

Portrayed represented or described

Attributes characteristics

Utter say

Thief someone who steals

Fame the state of being widely known

Attempt try

Reported presented

Eventual happening at a future time

Fate the outcome of a situation for someone

Bold not afraid of danger, brave

Traitor someone not loyal to his own country

Hung, drawn and hanged by the neck and had his body cut into pieces

quartered

Hung killed by tying a rope around his head, attached from above and



removing the support from beneath

Reserved kept, intended

Treason the crime of not being loyal to your own country

Traitor's of a person who is not loyal to his own country

Restored returned

Insight deep understanding and knowledge

They were in it they participated in that activity

Thrill excitement

Footman a foot soldier or guard

Footmen foot soldiers or guards

Mud earth mixed with water

Handsome physically attractive

Extension someone who is representing someone

Reflection someone who expresses the characteristics of someone else

Fashionable dressing according to what was popular at the time



Courteous polite and having good manners

Bear in mind have in mind

Demanding asking for something without allowing refusal

Generously in a way that shows willingness to give money

Exhilarating very exciting

Charismatic attractive and inspiring

Hanging tying a rope around his head, attached from above and removing the

support from beneath

Tombstone a stone used to mark a grave or the place where someone is buried

Revealing making interesting information known

Purse a small container or case for carrying money

Wallet a small container or case for carrying money

Rape the act of forcing someone to have sex with them, using violence

Terrorised made people feel extreme fear

Romanticised made them look better than they really were

Alibi proof that he was not present at the place where the crime happened



Dashing attractive, confident and stylish

Raped forced people to have sex with them, using violence

Glamorous attractive, beautiful in an exciting way

Shrink become smaller

Lucrative producing a lot of money

Norms accepted standards of behaviour

Adhere to obey or follow

Slip move quietly and quickly

Mask a covering worn on the face to hide one's identity

Cold-blooded without emotion or pity

Wounds injuries made by a weapon

Mounted riding a horse

Patrol go around an area in order to secure it

Horseback on a horse

Isolated far away from other places or people



Deterrence something that made them afraid to do something

Endured lasted

Misunderstood incorrectly understood

We'd love to get your feedback on this episode.

What did you like? What could we do better?

What did you struggle to understand?

Let us know in the forum <u>community.leonardoenglish.com</u>

