



Debtors Act 1869

1869 CHAPTER 62 32 and 33 Vict

An Act for the Abolition of Imprisonment for Debt, for the punishment of fraudulent debtors, and for other purposes. [9th August 1869]

PRELIMINARY

1 Short title.

This Act may be cited for all purposes as “The Debtors Act 1869”.

2 Extent of Act.

This Act shall not extend to Scotland or Ireland.

3 Commencement and construction of Act.

.....^{F1} words and expressions defined or explained in the Bankruptcy Act 1869 shall have the same meaning in this Act.

Textual Amendments

F1 Words repealed by [Statute Law Revision \(No. 2\) Act 1893 \(c. 54\)](#)

PART I

ABOLITION OF IMPRISONMENT FOR DEBT

4 Abolition of imprisonment for debt, with exceptions.

With the exceptions herein-after mentioned, no person shall be arrested or imprisoned for making default in payment of a sum of money.

There shall be excepted from the operation of the above enactment:

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Debtors Act 1869. (See end of Document for details)

- (1) Default in payment of a penalty, or sum in the nature of a penalty, other than a penalty in respect of any contract:
- (2) Default in payment of any sum recoverable summarily before a justice or justices of the peace:
- (3) Default by a trustee or person acting in a fiduciary capacity and ordered to pay by a court of equity any sum in his possession or under his control:
- (4) Default by [^{F2}a solicitor] in payment of costs when ordered to pay costs for misconduct as such, or in payment of a sum of money when ordered to pay the same in his character of an officer of the court making the order:
- (5) Default in payment for the benefit of creditors of any portion of a salary or other income in respect of the payment of which any court having jurisdiction in bankruptcy is authorized to make an order:
- (6) Default in payment of sums in respect of the payment of which orders are in this Act authorized to be made:
Provided, first, that no person shall be imprisoned in any case excepted from the operation of this section for a longer period than one year; and, secondly, that nothing in this section shall alter the effect of any judgment or order of any court for payment of money except as regards the arrest and imprisonment of the person making default in paying such money.

Textual Amendments

F2 Words substituted by virtue of [Solicitors Act 1974 \(c. 47\), s. 89\(6\)](#)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C1 [S. 4](#) extended with modification by [Crown Proceedings Act 1947 \(c. 44\), s. 26\(2\)](#)

C2 [S. 4](#) amended as to exceptions (3) (4) by [Debtors Act 1878 \(c. 54\), s. 1](#)

5 Saving of power of committal for small debts.

Subject to the provisions herein-after mentioned, and to the prescribed rules, any court may commit to prison for a term not exceeding six weeks, or until payment of the sum due, any person who makes default in payment of any debt or instalment of any debt due from him in pursuance of any order or judgment of that or any other competent court.

Provided—

- (1) That the jurisdiction by this section given of committing a person to prison shall, in the case of [^{F3}the county court—]
 - (a) Be exercised only by a judge [^{F4}of the court], and by an order made in open court and showing on its face the ground on which it is issued:
 - (b)^{F5}
 - ^{F6}(c)
- (2) That such jurisdiction shall only be exercised where it is proved to the satisfaction of the court that the person making default either has or has had since the date of the order or judgment the means to pay the sum in respect of which he has made default, and has refused or neglected, or refuses or neglects, to pay the same.

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Debtors Act 1869. (See end of Document for details)

[^{F7}Proof of the means of the person making default may be given in such manner as the court thinks just.

For the purpose of considering whether to commit a debtor to prison under this section, the debtor may be summoned in accordance with the prescribed rules.]

Any jurisdiction by this section given to the [^{F8}High Court or family court may] be exercised by a judge sitting in chambers, or otherwise, in the prescribed manner.

^{F9}

Persons committed under this section [^{F10}by the High Court or family court] may be committed to the prison in which they would have been confined if arrested on a writ of *capias ad satisfaciendum*, and every order of committal [^{F10}by the High Court or family court] shall, subject to the prescribed rules, be issued, obeyed, and executed in the like manner as such writ.

This section, so far as it relates to [^{F11}the county court], shall be deemed to be substituted for sections ninety-eight and ninety-nine of the ^{M1}County Courts Act 1846, and that Act and the Acts amending the same shall be construed accordingly, and shall extend to orders made by the county court with respect to sums due in pursuance of any order or judgment of any court [^{F12}other than the] county court.

No imprisonment under this section shall operate as a satisfaction or extinguishment of any debt or demand or cause of action, or deprive any person of any right to take out execution against the lands, goods, or chattels of the person imprisoned, in the same manner as if such imprisonment had not taken place.

Any person imprisoned under this section shall be discharged out of custody upon a certificate signed in the prescribed manner to the effect that he has satisfied the debt or instalment of a debt in respect of which he was imprisoned, together with the prescribed costs (if any).

[^{F13}Section 31E(1)(b) of the Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984 (family court has county court's powers) does not apply in relation to the powers given by this section to the county court.]

Textual Amendments

- F3** Words in s. 5 substituted (22.4.2014) by [Crime and Courts Act 2013 \(c. 22\)](#), s. 61(3), [Sch. 10 para. 2\(1\)\(a\)](#); [S.I. 2014/954](#), [art. 2\(d\)](#) (with [art. 3](#)) (with transitional provisions and savings in [S.I. 2014/956](#), arts. 3-11)
- F4** Words in s. 5 substituted (22.4.2014) by [Crime and Courts Act 2013 \(c. 22\)](#), s. 61(3), [Sch. 9 para. 78\(a\)](#); [S.I. 2014/954](#), [art. 2\(c\)](#) (with [art. 3](#)) (with transitional provisions and savings in [S.I. 2014/956](#), arts. 3-11)
- F5** S. 5 proviso (1)(b) repealed by [Bankruptcy Act 1883 \(c. 52\)](#), [Sch. 5](#)
- F6** Words in s. 5 omitted (22.4.2014) by virtue of [Crime and Courts Act 2013 \(c. 22\)](#), s. 61(3), [Sch. 10 para. 2\(1\)\(b\)](#); [S.I. 2014/954](#), [art. 2\(d\)](#) (with [art. 3](#)) (with transitional provisions and savings in [S.I. 2014/956](#), arts. 3-11)
- F7** S. 5: the sentence after the second proviso is substituted (25.3.2002) by [S.I. 2002/439](#), [art. 3](#)
- F8** Words in s. 5 substituted (22.4.2014) by [Crime and Courts Act 2013 \(c. 22\)](#), s. 61(3), [Sch. 10 para. 2\(2\)\(a\)](#); [S.I. 2014/954](#), [art. 2\(d\)](#) (with [art. 3](#)) (with transitional provisions and savings in [S.I. 2014/956](#), arts. 3-11)
- F9** Words in s. 5 repealed (22.7.2004) by [Statute Law \(Repeals\) Act 2004 \(c. 14\)](#), [Sch. 1 Pt. 17](#) Group 6

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Debtors Act 1869. (See end of Document for details)

- F10** Words in s. 5 substituted (22.4.2014) by [Crime and Courts Act 2013 \(c. 22\), s. 61\(3\), Sch. 10 para. 2\(2\)\(b\)](#); S.I. 2014/954, art. 2(d) (with art. 3) (with transitional provisions and savings in S.I. 2014/956, arts. 3-11)
- F11** Words in s. 5 substituted (22.4.2014) by [Crime and Courts Act 2013 \(c. 22\), s. 61\(3\), Sch. 9 para. 78\(b\)](#); S.I. 2014/954, art. 2(c) (with art. 3) (with transitional provisions and savings in S.I. 2014/956, arts. 3-11)
- F12** Words in s. 5 substituted (22.4.2014) by [Crime and Courts Act 2013 \(c. 22\), s. 61\(3\), Sch. 9 para. 78\(c\)](#); S.I. 2014/954, art. 2(c) (with art. 3) (with transitional provisions and savings in S.I. 2014/956, arts. 3-11)
- F13** Words in s. 5 inserted (22.4.2014) by [Crime and Courts Act 2013 \(c. 22\), s. 61\(3\), Sch. 10 para. 2\(2\)\(c\)](#); S.I. 2014/954, art. 2(d) (with art. 3) (with transitional provisions and savings in S.I. 2014/956, arts. 3-11)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C3** S. 5 extended by [Crown Proceedings Act 1947 \(c. 44\), s. 26\(2\)](#) and [Administration of Justice Act 1956 \(c. 46\), s. 40](#); restricted by S.I. 1952/2113 (1952 I, p. 213), rr. 377, 378, [National Insurance \(Industrial Injuries\) Act 1965 \(c. 52\), s. 28\(2\)](#), [Family Allowances Act 1965 \(c. 53\), s. 10\(2\)](#), [Administration of Justice Act 1970 \(c. 31\), s. 11](#) and [Social Security Act 1975 \(c. 14\), s. 87\(3\)](#); modified by [Attachment of Earnings Act 1971 \(c. 32\), s. 3\(4\)–\(7\)](#)
- C4** S. 5 modified (1.7.1992) by [Social Security Administration Act 1992 \(c. 5\), ss. 187\(3\), 192\(4\)](#)

Marginal Citations

- M1** 1846 c. 95.

6 Power under certain circumstances to arrest defendant about to quit England.

.....^{F14}

Where the plaintiff in any action in [^{F15}the High Court] in which, if brought before the commencement of this Act, the defendant would have been liable to arrest, proves at any time before final judgment by evidence on oath, to the satisfaction of a judge of [^{F15}the High Court], that the plaintiff has good cause of action against the defendant to the amount of fifty pounds or upwards, and that there is probable cause for believing that the defendant is about to quit England unless he be apprehended, and that the absence of the defendant from England will materially prejudice the plaintiff in the prosecution of his action such judge may in the prescribed manner order such defendant to be arrested and imprisoned for a period not exceeding six months, unless and until he has sooner given the prescribed security, not exceeding the amount claimed in the action, that he will not go out of England without the leave of the court.

Where the action is for a penalty or sum in the nature of a penalty other than a penalty in respect of any contract, it shall not be necessary to prove that the absence of the defendant from England will materially prejudice the plaintiff in the prosecution of his action, and the security given (instead of being that the defendant will not go out of England) shall be to the effect that any sum recovered against the defendant in the action shall be paid, or that the defendant shall be rendered to prison.

Textual Amendments

- F14** Words repealed by [Statute Law Revision \(No. 2\) Act 1893 \(c. 54\)](#)
- F15** Words substituted by virtue of [Supreme Court of Judicature \(Consolidation\) Act 1925 \(c. 49\), s. 224\(1\)](#)

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Debtors Act 1869. (See end of Document for details)

7 F16

Textual Amendments
F16 S. 7 repealed by Statute Law Revision Act 1883 (c. 39)

8 Saving for sequestration against property.

Sequestration against the property of a debtor may be issued by any court of equity in the same manner as if such debtor had been actually arrested.

9 F17

Textual Amendments
F17 S. 9 repealed by Statute Law Revision (No. 2) Act 1893 (c. 54)

X1

[^{F18}In this part of this Act—

“prescribed”, where it appears other than as part of the expression “the prescribed rules”, means prescribed by rules of court; and
“the prescribed rules” means rules of court.]

Textual Amendments
F18 Words substituted for s. 10 by virtue of S.I. 2002/439, art. 4

PART II

PUNISHMENT OF FRAUDULENT DEBTORS

11, 12. F19

Textual Amendments
F19 Ss. 11, 12, 14–16 repealed by Bankruptcy Act 1914 (c. 59), Sch. 6

13 Penalty on fraudulently obtaining credit, &c.

Any person shall in each of the cases following be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and on conviction thereof shall be liable to be imprisoned for any time not exceeding one year, ^{F20}; that is to say,

(1) F21

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Debtors Act 1869. (See end of Document for details)

- (2) If he has with intent to defraud his creditors, or any of them, made or caused to be made any gift, delivery, or transfer of or any charge on his property:
- (3) If he has, with intent to defraud his creditors, concealed or removed any part of his property since or within two months before the date of any unsatisfied judgment or order for payment of money obtained against him.

Textual Amendments
F20 Words omitted by virtue of [Criminal Justice Act 1948 \(c. 58\), s. 1\(2\)](#)
F21 [S. 13\(1\)](#) repealed by [Theft Act 1968 \(c. 60\), Sch. 3 Pt. 1](#)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)
C5 [S. 13](#) amended by [Criminal Law Act 1977 \(c. 45\), s. 16\(1\) Sch. 2 para. 6](#)
C6 [S. 13](#) amended as to mode of trial by [Magistrates' Courts Act 1980 \(c. 43, SIF 82\), s. 17, Sch. 1 para. 7](#)

14— F22
16.

Textual Amendments
F22 [Ss. 11, 12, 14–16](#) repealed by [Bankruptcy Act 1914 \(c. 59\), Sch. 6](#)

17 F23

Textual Amendments
F23 [S. 17](#) repealed by Costs in [Criminal Cases Act 1908 \(c. 15\), Sch.](#)

18 F24

Textual Amendments
F24 [Ss. 18, 23](#) repealed by [Statute Law \(Repeals\) Act 1989 \(c. 43\), s. 1\(1\), Sch. 1 Pt. 1 Gp. 5](#)

19 F25

Textual Amendments
F25 [S. 19](#) repealed by [Indictments Act 1915 \(c. 90\), Sch. 2](#)

20 F26

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Debtors Act 1869. (See end of Document for details)

Textual Amendments

F26 S. 20 repealed by [Criminal Law Act 1967 \(c. 58\)](#), [Sch. 3 Pt. II](#)

21, 22. **F27**

Textual Amendments

F27 Ss. 21, 22 repealed by [Bankruptcy Act 1883 \(c. 52\)](#), [Sch. 5](#)

23 **F28**

Textual Amendments

F28 Ss. 18, 23 repealed by [Statute Law \(Repeals\) Act 1989 \(c. 43\)](#), s. 1(1), [Sch. 1 Pt. I](#) Gp. 5

PART III

24— **F29**
28.

Textual Amendments

F29 Ss. 24–28 repealed by [Administration of Justice Act 1956 \(c. 46\)](#), s. 16, [Sch. 2](#)

29 **F30**

Textual Amendments

F30 S. 29 repealed by [Courts Act 1971 \(c. 23\)](#), [Sch. 11 Pt. IV](#)

Changes to legislation:

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