

COMMON CRIMES IN THE SAXON AND MEDIEVAL ERA c.500 - 1500

The most common crimes in the Saxon and medieval periods would be very recognisable to people in the United Kingdom today.

Based on court records, 1300-1348, **the most common crimes were:**

- Theft: 73.5% of all offences
- Murder: 18.2%
- Receiving stolen goods: 6.2%
- Arson, counterfeiting coins, rape, treason and other crimes: 2.1%

Problems in the Saxon and medieval period: poverty, famine and warfare

These crimes largely show that the main causes of crime during this long period were connected with **poverty**. Medieval life was characterised by poverty for the vast majority of people who lived hard, short and brutal lives. The constant poverty for most people was made worse by:

- Regular outbreaks of **famine and disease** which placed great pressure on largely agricultural communities (*egs: the Great Famine of 1315-17 and the Black Death of the 1340s*)
- Government policies including **taxation** which led to frequent hardship and protests (*eg: the Poll Tax of the late 1370s*)
- The impact of **warfare** – both on destroying communities and in raising money to fight the wars (*egs: the Norman Conquest after 1066 and the Wars of the Roses from 1455-1485*)

These causes of poverty – and therefore of crime – were constant throughout the medieval period even up to the industrialisation of the early nineteenth century.

Common crimes in the Saxon and medieval period

Examples of crimes that were associated with poverty included the very common crime of **theft** of property but also other less common crimes such as **highway robbery** and outbreaks of **revolt and rebellion**.

As more trade and business began to develop later in the period, merchants and traders used the roads and tracks more often and this encouraged the growth of **highway robbery** and banditry. Parliament started to make laws to deal with highway robbery around the fourteenth century asking lords to cut down all the trees and bushes for around thirty feet on each side of major roads so that robbers would have nowhere to lie in wait for passing travellers.

Royal and church control over society during the medieval period meant that **rebellion or revolt** was infrequent but as the period progressed more outbreaks of protest began to threaten the authorities. Major outbreaks of revolt included:

- The Peasants' Revolt 1381
- Jack Cade's Revolt 1450
- The Cornish Rebellion 1497

There were local causes of these protests, but one common cause was dissatisfaction with high taxation.

Besides poverty, the Saxon and medieval period was also characterised by two other features which had a major impact on crime:

- The power of royal government
- The frequent violence in peoples' lives

In the Saxon period (sometimes known as the Dark Ages), the laws were not very clear but in the decades before the Norman Conquest in 1066, **most of England** had become a well-organised society under the feudal system. Under feudal law, everyone, from the greatest baron to the poorest peasant, owed allegiance to the king. A criminal was defined as someone who by doing something wrong "had disturbed the king's peace".

After the Norman Conquest, the system of laws was largely kept but the different monarchs that followed tried to introduce their own **codes of law** which highlighted offences against authority (crown and church) rather than crimes against individuals. These crimes which were regarded as serious included treason, revolt, sheltering criminals, blasphemy and heresy. The most notorious heretics were the **Lollards**, the followers of **John Wycliffe**, who challenged the teachings of the Catholic Church in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

One other thing that concerned medieval governments was **the amount of violent crime**. Court records also show that nearly 20% of all crimes in the period 1300 -1348 were for murder or manslaughter. This figure can be compared with later periods such as the nineteenth century where it was around 2% and today where it is a tiny proportion. Some historians believe that this is due to more men having access to dangerous weapons and farming tools.

There is evidence that murder of **women in medieval times** was very low. However, although assault and rape of women were serious offences punishable by death, both crimes had a very high acquittal rate, which may show the status of women in society at this time.

SUMMARY OF CRIME IN THE SAXON AND MEDIEVAL PERIOD

- Most crimes in the Saxon and medieval period were connected with the effects of poverty
- The most common crime was theft
- Saxon leaders and medieval monarchs were keen to ensure that people didn't challenge authority
- Violent crime was much more common than it is today
- These trends in the nature and causes of crime continued into the early modern ages after 1500

CRIME IN THE EARLY MODERN ERA c.1500 - 1700

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were ruled by the monarchs of the Tudor and Stuart families. There were **some changes** in the causes and nature of crime, but many aspects **stayed the same**.

Court records show that crimes such as theft **remained** the most common (about 75% of all crimes) and that many people were convicted for crimes of violence (around 15%).

However, the sixteenth century in particular saw an increase in the crimes associated with **poverty** and also with **religious change**. There were two important trends associated with this increase:

- **general changes in society** created pressures which made people more desperate
- people's lives were negatively affected by **government policies**

The increase of poverty

During the 16th century there was a definite rise in POVERTY. There were a number of reasons for this, including:

- **The population of England and Wales grew** from around 2.9 million in 1500 to 4.5 million by 1600. A rising population caused more demand for food, clothing, housing and work
- The economy was hit by **inflation** which meant that people's wages were worth less
- **Bad harvests** (especially in the 1550s and 1590s) caused a steep rise in the price of food
- Many farmers switched from growing crops to keeping sheep; this meant that **common land was enclosed** and there was less need for labourers, meaning more unemployment
- Henry VIII's government had **closed all the monasteries** in England and Wales; this took away the vital role played by monasteries in helping the desperate

The combination of these factors caused many people to become poorer. While many struggled on, others left and drifted away from their homes in the countryside to find work in nearby towns and cities. Drifting away from your home to find work was called **vagrancy**.

The crime of VAGRANCY

Often unable to find work, many vagrants were forced into **begging** for food and money and often resorted to petty stealing and fraud. These were called **vagabonds** or **rogues** and their increasing presence became a real worry for Tudor monarchs, especially during the reign of Elizabeth I.

The huge numbers of idle, wandering people are the chief cause of the problem because they do not work. They spend double as much as the labourer does as they lie idly in the alehouses day and night, drinking and eating excessively. The most dangerous are the wandering ex-soldiers and other sturdy rogues. Of these vagabonds there are up to three or four hundred in each shire, going round in little gangs of two or three. Once a week they all meet up at a fair or market and cause great threat.

Edward Hext, a magistrate, writing a letter to Lord Burghley, the Chief Minister of Elizabeth I (1596)

There were several examples of vagabonds and rogues who used **specialist tricks** to gain money from people. These included:

- the angler – used a hooked stick to reach through windows and steal goods
- the counterfeit crank – dressed in tatty clothes and pretended to suffer from falling sickness
- the clapper dudgeon – tied arsenic to their skin in order to make it bleed and attract sympathy while begging
- Abraham man or Tom o’Bedlam – pretended to be mad in order to attract donations through pity

Tudor governments dealt with the problem of vagrancy in various ways:

- in the earlier sixteenth century, attempts were made to scare people from becoming vagrants by **flogging or branding** them
- other governments tried to make it the job of different towns to tackle the problem. Towns like **Norwich** dealt well with its vagrants
- By the end of the century various laws had been passed to help desperate people. In 1598 and 1601, two **Poor Laws** were passed which made it the duty of each local parish to provide aid for its poor but also punished the lazy rogues and vagabonds.

The impact of religious change on crime

The increase in crimes associated with religion shows how changing government policy can influence the crime rates. **Heresy** is holding a belief or opinion that is different to accepted religion. It was always regarded as a serious crime in medieval times, but it was rare for people to be accused or convicted of it in Britain. However, there was an increase in the crime of heresy in the sixteenth century, caused mainly by **religious change**.

Religious change came to dominate the reigns of the Tudor monarchs. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, all countries in Europe were ruled by Roman Catholic monarchs. However, there was a serious challenge to the practices and beliefs of the Catholic Church led by a German monk, **Martin Luther**, which resulted in the emergence of the Protestant branch of Christianity and **the Protestant Reformation** which spread from Germany all over Western Europe, including England and Wales. The later Tudor monarchs each changed the official religion of the country, a series of policies which had an impact on the nature of crime.

Monarch	Religion	Features
Henry VIII	Henrician Catholicism	King replaced the Pope as Head of the Church Church services and prayers remain in Latin Priests not allowed to marry
Edward VI	Protestant	King is Head of the Church Church services and prayers in English Priests could marry
Mary I	Roman Catholic	Pope restored as Head of the Church Church services and prayers returned to Latin Priests had to separate from their wives
Elizabeth I	Protestant	Protestant Queen becomes ‘Supreme Governor’ of the Church Church services and prayers returned to English Priests allowed to marry

The crime of HERESY

Those individuals who refused to follow the official religion were accused of the medieval crime of **heresy**, a crime often punishable by death. The numbers involved were small by comparison with crimes like theft and assault, but these are worthy of note for several reasons:

- religion was a fundamental part of people's lives in this period
- government change in religion made criminals of people who were merely worshipping as they always had done
- the method of punishment for heresy was to be burnt at the stake – the public and gruesome nature of this meant that the crime was perhaps seen as more common than it actually was.

Number of people executed for heresy in England and Wales.		
Monarch	Date	Executed
Henry VII	1485-1509	24
Henry VIII	1509-1547	81
Edward VI	1547-1553	2
Mary	1553-1558	283
Elizabeth	1558-1603	4

The crime of treason

In many ways, heresy can be seen as a crime of **treason**, the crime of betraying one's country, monarch or government. This was seen as probably the most serious crime of all. Treason was again quite rare in medieval times as support for royal and church control over society was strong but **challenges to authority** grew in the sixteenth century and reached a peak with the Civil War of the mid 1600s.

Tudor and Stuart monarchs were well aware of the growing dissatisfaction of the people, whether this was caused by poverty, religious change or even a desire for more power. Governments employed **agents, spies and informers** to keep them informed of any dissatisfaction. This meant that most incidents of treason were anticipated and dealt with, usually quite brutally, as a deterrent to others.

Event	Main causes	When	Leader
Pilgrimage of Grace	Religion	1536	Robert Aske
Wyatt's Rebellion	Religion	1554	Thomas Wyatt
Apprentice Riots	Economic	1595	Spontaneous
Gunpowder Plot	Religion / power	1605	Robert Catesby
Popish Plot	Religion	1678	Titus Oates
Monmouth Rebellion	Religion / power	1685	Duke of Monmouth

SUMMARY OF CRIME IN THE TUDOR AND STUART PERIOD

- The most common crimes in this period were associated with theft and violence – as they were in medieval times
- Economic change led to an increase in vagrancy in the sixteenth century
- Religious change led to an increase in heresy in the sixteenth century
- There were increasing attempts to challenge the authority of governments through the period
- Tudor and Stuart monarchs were keen to ensure that people didn't challenge authority and stamped down hard on people who challenged them

CRIME IN THE INDUSTRIAL ERA c.1700 - 1900

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were an age of great industrial and agricultural change in Britain – this caused a lot of change in the type and causes of crimes seen in Britain. As was the case in earlier periods, both **theft and violent crime** continued to dominate as far as the volume of crime was concerned, but there were noticeable increases in certain types of crime. These crimes were not new but they did see an increase and often the specific causes were different.

Crimes associated with this period include:

- A rise in **smuggling**
- More instances of **highway robbery**
- **Riots and protests** caused by economic hardship
- Protests caused by a demand for more political rights

The growth of smuggling in the eighteenth century

Smuggling is the **secret trade in goods** in a deliberate attempt to avoid paying customs duties. Smuggling had never really been seen as a major worry as it was largely localised and didn't pose a threat to the authorities. It is another example of a minor offence that was turned into a major crime by government policy.

Smuggling was usually associated with communities based in isolated villages around **Britain's large coastline**. Smuggling had always made people considerable profit as they were able to sell goods much cheaper than in shops and markets.

The common people of England in general fancy there is nothing wrong in the crime of smuggling. The poor feel they have a right to avoid paying any duty on their goods.

John Taylor, the governor of Newgate Prison, in a report to the prison owners in 1747

REASONS WHY SMUGGLING INCREASED:

The government clamped down hard on smuggling in the eighteenth century mainly because it needed the money that smugglers were trying to avoid paying. Throughout the eighteenth century **Britain was continuously at war**, mainly against France, and the government needed money to fight these wars. At this time, there was no income tax, so the government had to raise money in other ways, including enforcing and raising more **customs and excise duties** on popular imported goods such as chocolate, tea, wine, spirits, salt, leather and soap. Goods such as tea had a 70% tax on them, meaning that people were willing to buy the much cheaper smuggled goods which didn't have the tax on them.

Throughout the eighteenth century the government **customs and excise men** tried to control and catch the smugglers, but the activity was impossible to control especially as witnesses were often scared to come forward and many others in the communities were involved in smuggling themselves.

It is extremely dangerous for the Custom House officers to attempt to seize goods on the south coast because smugglers are very numerous there and can call on greater numbers if they need. Nine persons in ten in each area would give smugglers assistance and would lend them their horses to convey their goods.

Abraham Walter, a tea dealer who had been a smuggler, giving evidence to a government Commission of Enquiry in 1748

REASONS WHY SMUGGLING DECLINED:

The government decided to tackle the problem **by reducing the duties** in order to make smuggling unprofitable. For example, the duty on tea was reduced from 119% to 12% in 1784. This made tea much cheaper to buy in the shops, meaning there was no need to buy from smugglers. Further reductions followed over the next decades until smuggling was wiped out when the British government adopted a policy of **free trade** in the 1840s, with very few duties on any goods brought from abroad. There was no money left in smuggling so it lost its appeal.

The growth of highway robbery

Another crime from medieval times that saw an increase in the eighteenth century was **highway robbery**. Laws had been made to tackle highway robbery as far back as the fourteenth century and while the crime hadn't died out, it again wasn't seen as a major worry. But as with smuggling, this crime began to rise and it was also largely associated with changes in trade and business.

REASONS WHY HIGHWAY ROBBERY INCREASED:

- a general **increase in travel** as the industrial revolution began to improve trade
- improvements in **turnpike roads** encouraged more people to travel for business
- limited banking facilities meant more money being carried by road to pay for goods and services

The most frequent examples of highway robbery occurred on the heaths and commons around London, which was the most prosperous part of the country. Robbers who attacked pedestrians were called **footpads** but there were also **mounted highwaymen** who held up coaches and riders. These were often armed and worked in pairs. Some of the highway robbers were glamorised by the newspapers and broadsheets of the time including **Dick Turpin** and **John Rann**.

REASONS FOR THE DECLINE OF HIGHWAY ROBBERY:

Like smuggling, the amount of highway robbery declined as the eighteenth century ended. The last recorded crime of highway robbery was in 1831. There were several reasons for this:

- many roads became much busier and isolated travellers less common
- there was a greater use of banknotes that had to be cashed-in and could be traced
- in London, a horse patrol was set up in 1805 to guard the main roads

The pressures of industrial change and urbanisation

The increase in the crimes of both smuggling and highway robbery were associated with **the industrial changes which began in the eighteenth century**.

One of the changes was the process known as **urbanisation**. Many people were forced to move to towns and cities for work and where there were large amounts of people, there were more opportunities to commit crime and to take part in activities which became crimes. By the nineteenth century, the amount of crime that was recorded in the United Kingdom was getting much higher.

REASONS FOR AN INCREASE IN CRIME:

- The population of the United Kingdom rose from 16 million in 1800 to 42 million in 1900. Most of the rising population lived in the growing industrial towns and cities of the United Kingdom. For example, Manchester's population grew from 75,000 in 1801 to 300,000 in 1851.
- Living and working conditions in these growing towns and cities were squalid and insanitary. Heavy concentrations of people living in small urban areas meant that there were more opportunities for petty crime
- There were many periods in the nineteenth century when the economy was weak such as after the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 and following bad harvests. Poverty often led to people committing petty crime
- Poor living and working conditions led many people to consider protesting. Large towns and cities were ideal areas for protest groups to grow. Agricultural depression also meant protests were seen in rural areas

Crime connected with urbanisation

Common crimes such as stealing and assault continued to be regularly reported in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While crimes such as highway robbery had declined, new crimes, such as those connected with the new railway system after 1850 increased. Over 90% of reported crimes were connected with some sort of theft.

One changing feature was that certain areas of growing towns and cities became notorious for criminal activities. These were sometimes called **rookeries**. Examples were St Giles in central London and King Street in Southampton. Certain criminal activities acquired nicknames such as:

- **Thimble-screwers** who stole pocket-watches from their chains
- **Prop-nailers** who stole pins and brooches from women
- **Drag-sneaks** who stole goods or luggage from carts and coaches

Industrial and agrarian disorder during the Industrial Revolution

As well as the growth in criminal activities, the nineteenth century also saw a growth in **social and political protest**. Such protests were not uncommon but they had been less of an issue since the English Civil War of the mid seventeenth century. Between 1790 and 1850 many ordinary people turned to protest as a means of showing how bad their lives were becoming. Here are some examples:

Protest	When	Where	Features
Luddites	1812-1813	Industrial towns in northern England	Handloom weavers protesting over new machine-woven cloth carried out attacks on factory machines
Swing Riots	1830-1831	South-east England	Agricultural labourers were angry about the introduction of new machinery and the effect on their work; there were attacks on farm machines and property was set on fire
Rebecca Riots	1839-1843	South-west Wales	Farmers were angry about increased rent and tolls to use roads; protesters disguised themselves as women and there were attacks on tollgates and workhouses

SUMMARY OF CRIME IN THE PERIOD OF INDUSTRIAL CHANGE AND URBANISATION

- The most common crimes in this period were still associated with theft and violence – as they were in medieval and Tudor and Stuart times
- While the nature of crimes stayed largely the same, the types of crime varied with smuggling, highway robbery and petty thefts seeing a rise
- The majority of crimes were associated with the effects of industrialisation and urbanisation
- Areas such as the East End of London became notorious for the amount of crime that took place
- There was a revival of attempts to challenge political authority throughout the period. This took the form of both peaceful and more violent protest.

CRIME DURING THE MODERN ERA: c.1900 TO THE PRESENT DAY

Twentieth century pressures

Many of the crimes that were regularly seen in previous centuries such as theft, robbery and assault **continued to be very common** in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Crime figures rose sharply after 1900 but this doesn't necessarily mean that crime itself had risen: it was more likely that the increased reporting and recording of crime, alongside improved police methods meant more crime was dealt with. In addition, more laws being brought in by government would mean more activities became criminal, hence the crime rate rising (e.g. car related crime).

As in previous ages, changes in society continued to provide criminals with new opportunities for committing crime. For example, the development of the **motor car** gave rise to a new wave of transport crimes, while technological change has led to a growth in **cybercrime**. Other examples of crime that have become more high-profile in the modern centuries are more **violent crime**, including gun and knife use, and the increasing threat from **terrorism**.

Crimes associated with the motor car

The mass production of the motor car began in the 1920s. By 1939 the prices of cars had fallen enough to make them affordable to middle-class earners in the UK. As the number of cars on British roads grew, many new laws were brought in to control their use and for safety. As in previous centuries, new laws meant new crimes. Here are some examples of new laws in relation to car use.

When?	Legislation	Offence
1930	Compulsory motor insurance	Lacking correct documentation
1934	Speed limits introduced for the first time	Speeding offences
1956	First parking restrictions	Parking violations
1967	Breathalysers introduced to test for alcohol level	Drinking and driving
1983	Compulsory to wear a seat-belt when driving	Safety offences
1986	Public Order Act extended to drivers	Road rage offences
1988	Offence to drive a vehicle dangerously on a public road	Dangerous driving
2003	Use of hand-held mobile phone illegal	Safety offences

Motoring offences have grown into the biggest category of offending for people in the UK. One feature is that **this type of offence affects people of all social classes**. Up to the mid-twentieth century, about 80% of all crimes involved working class offenders. Since the growth of the motor car, many more middle class people have committed a criminal act associated with driving.

As well as creating new crimes, the growth of the motor car has also **changed the nature of crimes** such as theft and robbery. Car and motorbike theft soared in the mid twentieth century, although greater security features have led to a recent decline. **Cars have also become a feature in many other crimes** being used as getaway vehicles or to transport illegal goods such as drugs or firearms.

Crimes associated with computers

Another technological development that has caused an increase in a certain type of crime has been the dramatic increase in the **use of computers** since the 1980s. Computer technology can be used to carry out many forms of criminal activity. These are often categorised as **cybercrimes**. **Some activities are new** such as hacking or phishing – criminals committing crimes remotely without having to enter a victim's home or office. Other offences are **newer versions of older crimes**. Using another person's identity is really an example of the old crime of fraud.

Examples of cybercrimes	
Hacking	Gaining unauthorised access to the private records of individuals or organisations
Phishing	Using bogus emails to trick people into revealing confidential information
Identity theft	Stealing a person's identity details and using this to withdraw money or order goods
Cyber bullying	Repeated threatening and hostile behaviour through computerised devices to intimidate and hurt others. This is currently an offence under harassment laws
Sexual crimes	Grooming of minors through use of chatrooms and social networks; making and sharing of illegal images of children; sharing adult sexual images without consent

The nature of the internet has changed crime in many ways. It not only allows criminals to be located in a different country to the victim but the criminal can target many thousands of victims at once. A phishing email can be sent easily to many people from one computer and a single person may infect millions of computers with malicious software.

From an official government document called Cyber Crime Strategy, 2010

Legislation has been brought in to regulate computer use, but the amount of people that have been convicted of crimes associated with computers is much less than those connected with motoring offences.

Violent crime and anti-social behaviour

Hooliganism

There is evidence that the later twentieth century has seen a rise in violent and anti-social behaviour which has often manifested itself through criminal behaviour. One example of a criminal activity that grew in the twentieth century was that of violence connected with sport, particularly football. This became known as **hooliganism**, a term first used in the nineteenth century to cover activities such as rioting and vandalism.

Hooliganism, as an opportunity to fight and riot, had been associated with football as that sport had grown in the early twentieth century. There was a riot at a Preston-Aston Villa match in 1885 and Millwall's ground was closed in 1920 and 1934 after disturbances. This kind of behaviour was not common, **but it became a serious issue to the authorities from around the 1960s.**

It is difficult to pinpoint the causes of the rise in football hooliganism but it is likely to be connected with a general lack of respect for authority that started in the 1950s and the emergence of a **generation gap.**

The wave of the criminal activity known as **football hooliganism** reached a peak in the 1970s and 1980s with gangs of rival supporters fighting each other or attacking property. Many of these gangs were well-organised and gave themselves names and common styles of dress. Of the many incidents associated with football hooliganism, one of the most notorious was the fighting between British and Italian fans at the Heysel Stadium in Belgium in 1985. 38 people were killed when a wall collapsed.

Football hooligans were often arrested and charged with public order offences, but the government decided to tackle this outburst of criminal activity in **different ways**, rather than making new laws. Such ways included:

- A Special Police Unit dedicated to dealing with football hooliganism
- Segregating fans before, during and after games
- Replacing terracing with seating at grounds
- Use of CCTV and banning orders

These kinds of methods have led to a great reduction in the extent of football hooliganism – an example of a crime that has been greatly reduced by policy change.

High-profile outbreaks of violence involving fans are much rarer today than they were 20 or 30 years ago. The scale of trouble now compared to then doesn't bear comparison – either in terms of the number of people involved or the level of organisation. Football has moved on thanks to banning orders and better, more sophisticated policing. There has also been a shift in the way people are expected to behave inside grounds. Offensive chants are still too commonplace but actual fighting doesn't happen very often.

David Bond, a journalist speaking on the BBC news in 2003

Gun and knife crime

Other examples of modern crimes that are associated with violence and anti-social behaviours are those connected with the use of **guns and knives** and **illegal drugs**. Sometimes these offences are connected.

The growth of such crimes is hard to explain. Several causes are centuries-old, others may be newer influences. These may include:

- Poverty
- Lack of opportunity
- A 'must-have-now' culture
- The growing divide between rich and poor, especially in large cities
- Breakdown of family values and discipline

Gun and knife crime is often associated with **juvenile gang culture**, particularly in inner cities, with members of gangs carrying weapons for protection and intimidation. The first decade of the twentieth century saw a large growth in recorded instances of gun crime, particularly connected with gang culture. Firearm offences increased by nearly 90% between 1999 and 2009, from 5,200 to nearly 10,000. In 2009 there were over 270 deaths from stabbing in England and Wales.

The growth of crimes associated with drugs

Drug abuse is not new, and crimes associated with drug and alcohol abuse had been a serious issue in the nineteenth century, but it is another offence that became more prominent during the later twentieth century. The Dangerous Drugs Act of 1920 made possession of certain drugs illegal and various other laws during the century criminalised possession of various drugs including the Act of 1971 which categorised drugs into Categories A, B and C.

Banning possession of certain drugs for recreational purposes has resulted in an increase in the old crime of smuggling, often now described under the term '**trafficking**.' Planes, boats, trucks and people are used by gangs to smuggle illegal drugs into the UK. Drug gangs operate on their own 'turf' and use violence to protect their area from rival gangs. Often this involves use of guns and knives.

Additionally, **drug addiction is a contributory factor** in the increase of crimes such as burglary, mugging and robbery.

The culture of drug-related violence now taking hold in British cities mirrors that which has already wreaked havoc on the streets of other cities like New York, Miami, and Kingston. The motivation and methods are the same. The principal activity is pushing crack cocaine and the operations are characterised by the use of extreme violence in pursuit of huge profits.

From a report in the Sunday Times newspaper, October 1993

The increasing threat from terrorist crimes

The modern era has also seen a rise in the fear associated with the criminal act of **terrorism**. This offence had been seen in Britain on rare occasions in the past, a key example being the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. Previous terrorist groups were politically motivated and tried to use violence to secure their goals but each threat faded away in time. Another change is that each of the people associated with these incidents were found guilty of **treason**.

As with other violence related offences, the growth of **modern terrorism** began in the 1960s. Since this decade, Britain has lived with the constant fear of terrorist activity and various groups have carried out operations in the UK. This has led to the UK government passing various **specific laws connected with terrorism**. The first of these was passed in 1974, largely to deal with the IRA bombing campaign of the 1970s and a new wave of laws was passed from 2000 to try to deal with the global threat from terrorism.

In the mid twentieth century, the most serious terrorist threat to Britain came from **the IRA**, a largely Catholic group dedicated to ending British rule in Northern Ireland. This group was challenged by Protestant groups such as **the UDA** and over 3,500 people were killed in Northern Ireland between 1969 and 2001. The IRA also carried out numerous attacks on the British mainland including:

- Public house bombings in Birmingham in 1974 which killed 19 people
- The assassination of Airey Neave M.P. in the House of Commons car park in 1979
- The bombing of the Arndale shopping centre in Manchester in 1996 which injured over 200 people

As with other crimes, the rise in the offences was tackled by a political solution, the Good Friday Agreement, which allowed power-sharing between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland.

The terrorist threat to Britain has continued into the twenty-first century but it is now associated more with global terrorists and their aims. An aeroplane explosion at Lockerbie in Scotland in 1988 killed over 250 people and was the activity of Libyan terrorists. More recently, the terrorist threat has come from groups linked with Islamist extremism; the most notorious were the 7/7 attacks in 2005 which were a co-ordinated series of suicide bombings on London's transport system. This was linked to the group **al-Qaeda**.

SUMMARY OF CRIME IN THE MODERN ERA

- Many of the crimes that were regularly seen in previous centuries such as theft, robbery and assault continued to be very common in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries
- Crime figures have risen sharply since 1900 but this is not to say that crime has risen: it is more likely to be associated with the increased reporting and recording of crime, with improved police methods and also with more laws being brought in by government
- This latest period has seen governments faced with new types of crime associated with technology, including motor crime and cybercrime
- Many crimes have also been associated with violence
- While many crimes remain a problem, others have been tackled by new laws and government action