

## Changes in Crime and Punishment in Britain, c.500 to the present day – 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries

### How did these issues result in crime being committed?

Increase in crimes such as smuggling and highway robbery.

Rebels were labelled as revolutionaries and harshly punished.

### What problems were there?

High amount of poverty caused by unemployment.

Urbanisation forced people to move to towns for work.

Large number of people in one place makes it easier to commit crime.

1790 – 1850: Poor living and working conditions led to protests e.g. Peterloo Massacre 1819.

18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries

Population of Britain rose from 16 million in 1800 to 42 million in 1900.

Crime was committed out of desperation e.g. people stealing food

### Common crimes in this era:

Industrialisation and urbanisation meant people moved from close-knit communities to overcrowded towns with more opportunities for crime. Poor living standards and low wages meant that there was a very real threat of revolution, for example Luddism 1812-13, Swing Riots 1830-1831 and the Rebecca Riots 1839-43.

#### Smuggling



- In the 18<sup>th</sup> century smuggling made some criminals very rich. They sold goods cheaper than shops or markets.
- Increase in smuggling due to government policies on customs and excise duties.
- Ended because the government reduced duties to make smuggling unprofitable.

#### Highway robbery



- Became more common in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as people started to travel more.
- Robbers who attacked pedestrians were called footpads. Mounted highwaymen robbed coaches and riders.
- Some robbers were glamorised e.g. Dick Turpin.
- Highway robbery declined as roads became busier. Also, in 1805 a horse patrol was set up to patrol busy roads.

### Changes to prisons

- Imprisonment as a punishment did not exist in the medieval period.
- 1776, transportation was ended. Prison population started to grow. Conditions in prisons were appalling.
- Key individuals such as **John Howard** and **Elizabeth Fry** campaigned for prisons to be reformed.
- The Victorians developed the separate and silent system within prisons.

How was the law enforced during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries? – New industrial towns had to have a new system of law enforcement. The idea gradually developed the policing should become the responsibility of the government, although some people worried that a police force would restrict personal freedom.

#### Bow Street Runners



- Part-time paid constables who worked for Bow Street Magistrates Court
- The first force to show the government how to deal with crime.
- Developed by the Fielding brothers (Henry and John) from 1748.
- 1805 – Horse patrol set up to guard main roads in and out of London.

#### Metropolitan Police Act 1829



- Home Secretary Sir Robert Peel convinced MPs that an organised police force was needed in London.
- First police force to have full-time paid constables.
- Officers walked a set route called the beat to deter criminals.

#### Growth of the police across Britain



- Municipal Corporations Act 1835 – police established in larger towns.
- Rural Police Act 1839 – police established in more rural areas.
- County and Borough Act 1856 – compulsory for police to be established in every county.

#### Separate system:



- Individual cells to work/pray in.
- Only allowed out for church services.
- Wore masks to hide identity
- Worked making clothes/ sewing mail bags.

#### Silent system:



- Life made as unpleasant as possible for prisoners.
- They were allowed to eat and exercise together.
- Prisoners set boring and pointless work e.g. the treadmill.

