

KQ4: How effective have methods of combating crime been over time?

THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD : c. 1500s – 1700s

The Tudor period

During this period the job of combating crime fell upon the shoulders of **JPs, constables** and **watchmen**. These were all untrained, unpaid amateurs.

- **JPs** were appointed by the crown to **supervise law and order in each locality**. Their workload increased to include things like organising road repairs and dealing with the poor.
- **Constables** assisted JPs. They had to **arrest troublemakers, bring them to court** and sometimes also **carry out punishments**, e.g., whipping vagrants. Other duties included reporting to the JP on the state of roads, checking ale houses etc. They were **chosen annually** from among the wealthier men of each parish. The job was **unpaid**, so not surprisingly many constables did not do it with much enthusiasm. Some paid others to do the job for them.
- All able-bodied men were also expected to take their turn to serve at night as **town watchmen**.
- In 1663 Charles II introduced paid night watchman known as **"Charlies."** However, they had little impact because pay was poor so only the old and infirm took the job.

The system was not very successful. JPs were overworked, parish constables hated taking time off from their own work and Charlies were ineffective. The fact that punishments were so harsh indicates that policing was not working very well.

The 18th century

In the 18th century, rapidly growing towns put added stresses on policing. **Thief-takers** appeared but they were often little better than criminals themselves. Far more important were **Henry Fielding** and his **Bow Street Runners** which had some success in reducing crime in that area of London. Fielding's brother John continued his work. He persuaded the government to set up the **horse patrol** which reduced highway robbery and showed the value of police in deterring crime, while the **"General Hue and Cry" newspaper** showed the value of information sharing.

WELSH EXAMPLE :

After the Acts of Union, policing in Wales was reorganised on the English model. JPs were appointed in each Welsh county e.g., Edward Stradling of St Donats Castle, who was JP in Glamorgan for much of the reign of Elizabeth I. They were supported by constables and watchmen. In 1651-2 the constable of the village of Prendergast was given the unusual task of stopping anyone from Haverfordwest from entering the village because of the presence of plague in the town.

INDUSTRIAL PERIOD : c.1750s - 1800s

The early 19th century

The 19th century saw the development of trained, professional police forces, first in London, then across the rest of England and Wales.

In **1829** Peel's **Metropolitan Police** was the **first full-time, trained and paid police force**. 3,300 men joined the force, all of whom had to be fit, over 5'7" tall, and able to read and write. They worked seven days a week, wore a **recognizable uniform** and spent their days **'walking the beat'** (a set patrol area on foot) to deter crime. They were successful in reducing crime in London, and many criminals left for other cities.

At first there was some opposition to the new force, especially in working class areas. Some wealthier citizens also objected to the increase in taxation required to fund the police. However, as crime rates fell they came to be accepted. The success of the Metropolitan Police led to the expansion of policing outside London.

- **1835 - the Municipal Corporations Act** gave other towns the power to set up their own police forces. The Borough **1839 County and Police Act** also gave counties the same right. However, few took advantage of these powers.
- **1856 - the County and Borough Police Act** made it **compulsory for every area in England and Wales to set up a police force**.

The 19th century also saw the **beginnings of specialisation** and the **use of technology**:

- The Metropolitan Police set up a plain clothes **detective branch in 1842**, which paved the way for the **Criminal Investigation Department (CID)** in 1878.
- In 1867 Scotland Yard began to use the **telegraph** to improve communication. From 1869 the **Criminal Records Office** compiled records of criminals, suspects and crimes. **Photography** was increasingly used in the late 19th century, first as mug shots of suspects and criminals and later at crime scenes.

By the late 19th century police across the country were having more success in combating crime.

WELSH EXAMPLE :

Events like the Merthyr Rising 1831 and the Newport Rising 1839 highlighted the need for trained police forces in Wales. Some towns like Cardiff, Swansea, Neath and Pwllheli established forces in the 1830s (though Neath and Pwllheli forces consisted of only 1 constable each). The first major force created in Wales was the Glamorgan County Constabulary in 1843.

MODERN PERIOD : c.1900s-present day

The 20th and 21st centuries

In the 20th and 21st centuries policing developed further and, arguably, had more success in fighting crime. As developments in transport and communication have changed society, and criminal behaviour, so the police have had to respond.

- **Developments in personnel** – women police constables WPCs first appeared in 1919. Special constables (1923), traffic wardens (1960) and PCSOs (2002) have been introduced to help police make better use of resources.
- **Specialization** e.g. dog handlers, Organised Crime Squad, the Anti-Terrorism Squad, SOCOs and use of forensic science has allowed expert officers to focus on particular areas of crime.
- **Developments in transport** have changed the nature of policing. The introduction of bicycles in 1909 and especially the **motor car** in 1919 allowed officers to respond to calls quickly and patrol a wider area. By the 1970s the patrol car had replaced the bobby on the beat. There are also more **specialized vehicles** e.g. motorway patrol cars, riot vans. Police have also made use of **helicopters, light aircraft** and **drones** for crowd control, to search for missing persons, etc.
- **Communications** have been revolutionized. The telegraph was already in use in 1900 and in 1902 the telephone was first used, followed by **two way radio in 1922**. These **improved response times** and **kept officers informed**. The introduction of the **"999" emergency number** in 1937 encouraged the public to report incidents. Today all police carry a two-way radio for instant communications with headquarters.
- **Computer technology** has improved record keeping and communication. Since 1974 the **Police National Computer** has held useful data e.g. criminal records, motor car details, missing persons etc. Since most police are now equipped with computer technology, they are able to make use of this data in real time. Photography and CCTV are also used.

In the late 20th century some people began to argue that the police had become too distant and had lost the day to day contact with the public. After the Brixton Riots in London in 1981, the police have worked to rebuild community links.

WELSH EXAMPLE :

In the 1960s police forces across England and Wales were amalgamated into larger units to improve efficiency. In Wales four new forces emerged – North Wales, Dyfed-Powys, South Wales and Gwent.