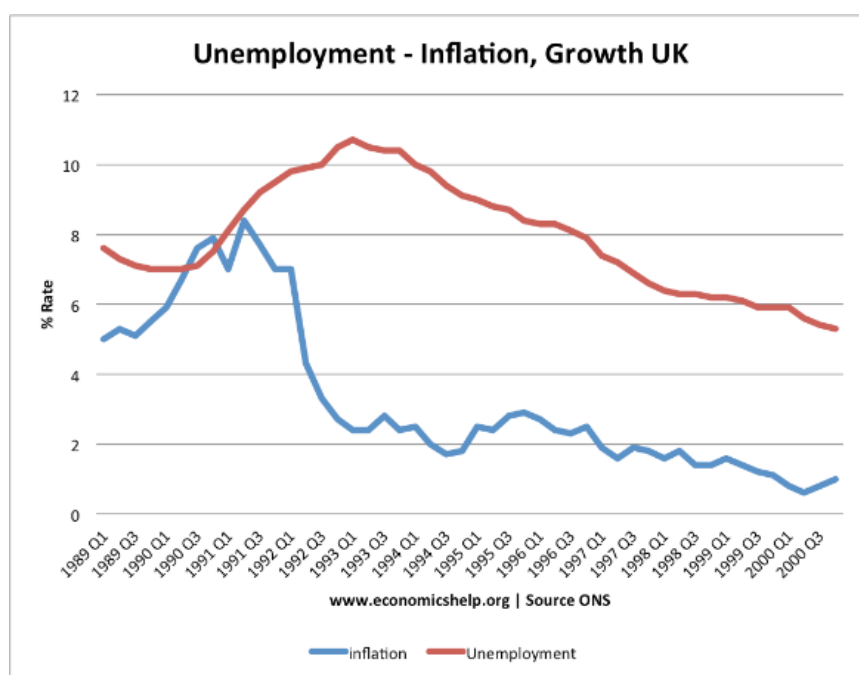


LIFE IN THE 90's

Whilst scientific and technological innovation was improving lives, the economic situation, once again, pulled the rug out from beneath the feet of a great many people. The boom and bust cycle had gone full-circle and Britain was again gripped by a serious economic recession. Life was once more degraded by another dose of rampant inflation and unemployment.

Basking in the success of revitalising the economy after the last recession in 1981-2 the Conservative Government under Margaret Thatcher continued to stimulate spending by keeping interest rates low and by cutting Income Tax, especially for high earners. There was encouragement to borrow to spend especially in the housing market where the vision of a property owning democracy was stepping up a gear. The spending spree resulted in higher overall demand and inevitably higher prices. From 1986 to 1990 the inflation rate more than doubled from 3% to 6.9%. Attempts to curb spending by raising Bank Rate during the same period saw the Rate rise from a low of 7.38% to 14.88% in October 1989. By this time the Trade Deficit had reached an all-time high of £20.3 billion. The situation was serious.

A growing faction of the Conservative Party saw further integration with the European Union as a means of bringing stability to the economic turmoil. Margaret Thatcher was firmly opposed but in 1990 was persuaded to join the European Exchange Rate Mechanism. (ERM) This

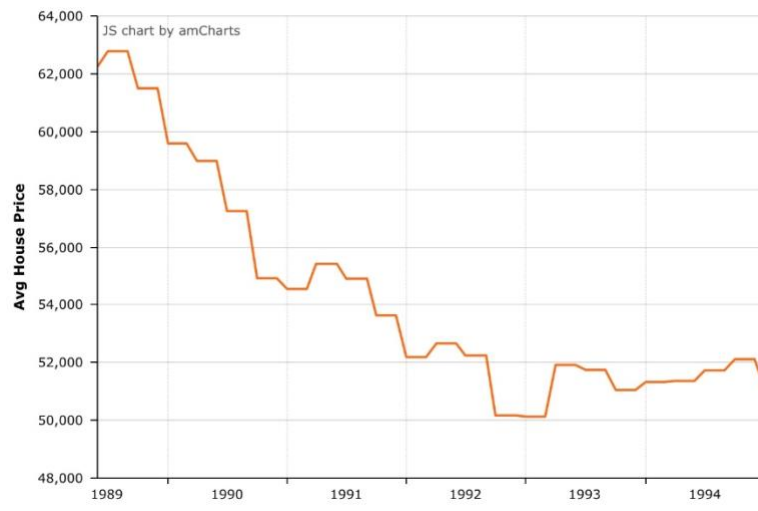


was a European Union initiative – a precursor to joining the single currency – the Euro. The idea was to lock exchange rates thereby keeping the £ Sterling at a certain level against the Deutschmark. The aim was to keep inflation low and to provide stability for exporters. Unfortunately, this backfired spectacularly. With high inflation and deteriorating economic activity the Pound became less attractive and its value kept falling. To prop it up the Government were forced to raise interest rates to 12%, and even temporarily to 15%, which exacerbated the situation and made things worse. At the same time Iraq invaded Kuwait and North Sea Oil workers decided to strike sending oil prices skywards – always a serious problem for western economies. The inevitable breakdown came on the 16th September 1992, 'Black Wednesday', when currency traders began a massive sell-off of Sterling which triggered a

rapid withdrawal from the ERM. Described as a disastrous day of infamy it taught the country to avoid external monetary constraints, a lesson which ultimately kept the country out of the single European currency.

The failure of the ERM experiment became very evident as the recession bit. During the period 1990- 91 Company earnings dropped by 25%, the Budget Deficit hit 8% of GDP, the Pound lost around 20% of its value and unemployment rose from 6.9% of the working population to 10.7% in a matter of months. This time, however, the blow hit the housing market very hard and reduced many young mortgagees to penury.

Having borrowed to the hilt to acquire a property of their own they now found that, with rising interest rates, they could no longer afford to service their loans. Flooded with repossessions the housing market collapsed and house prices dropped dramatically. This



in turn loaded people with negative equity since the sale price of their properties was well short of the amount borrowed. Shattered dreams were therefore accompanied by heavy financial penalties.

As the screw tightened dissatisfaction grew so, once again, the streets were menaced by riots. Mainly young, unemployed and deprived residents of the now aging council estates built in the 50's and 60's took to the streets to vent their frustrations in cities up and down the country. In 1991 riots in Oxford, Dudley, Leeds, Newcastle, Birmingham and Cardiff made the news with another spate in 1992 in Blackburn, Burnley, Coventry and several other towns in central and northern England. Tempers were also inflamed by the introduction of the Poll Tax in 1990 which attracted considerable organised opposition at both local and national levels. Well over 200,000 people demonstrated in Trafalgar Square in London on the eve of its introduction in March. 113 people were injured and 340 arrested with over 100 Police officers needing treatment for injuries. But opposition was nationwide and a great many people refused to pay. In South Yorkshire even the police were considering a refusal to arrest defaulters. Embattled on so many fronts and increasingly at odds with a growing pro-European Faction within the Conservative Party, Margaret Thatcher was forced from power in November 1990. Succeeded by John Major, the unpopular Poll tax was ditched in 1991 to be replaced with the 'Council Tax' implemented in 1993.

Despite the debacle of the ERM John Major's new Government vigorously pursued a pro-European agenda and signed up to the Maastricht Treaty in February 1992. The Treaty, which created the 'European Union' laid out the intention to:

1. Move towards Economic and Monetary union to provide
 - more choice and stable prices.
 - greater security and opportunity for business
 - improved stability and growth
 - more closely integrated financial markets and
 - the adoption of a single currency
2. Provide a Europe of Justice with co-operation to tackle international fraud, drug trafficking, organised crime, including the development of agencies like Europol.
- 3 Create a common Foreign Policy and Security Policy aimed at
 - Preserving peace
 - Strengthening international security
 - Promoting international co-operation
 - Developing and consolidating democracy
 - Upholding the rule of law and human rights.
4. Creating common European Citizenship and free movement across the boundaries of member states. This gave citizens the right to live, work and study in any member State.
5. The Treaty also extended the powers of the EU in other policy areas such as Education, Connectivity, Environment, Consumer Protection, Social and Health care and Security.

The Maastricht debate did not run smoothly in Britain and John Major faced fierce opposition particularly on the 'Social Chapter' – the trans-national standards of employment, and, of course monetary union. Whilst some countries secured ratification of the Treaty through referenda, in Britain it was secured by negotiating an opt-out from any move towards a single currency and the removal of the Social Chapter from the Treaty completely. Only then did it squeeze through Parliament in 1993. In 1997, an equally determined Labour Government under Tony Blair endorsed the Treaty of Amsterdam which moved the country one further step towards a federal Europe, which by then, was emerging as a significant aim of the Union. Under this arrangement member States agreed to transfer certain powers from National Governments to the European Parliament across diverse areas including immigration, commercial law and common foreign policy. At the same time the Union was expanding. Austria, Finland and Sweden were admitted in 1995 and preparations were being made to expand still further into Eastern Europe. At no stage in these procedures were the public consulted.

Membership of the European Union brought clear advantages to the country in the 90's. It provided a stimulus to growth which greatly assisted the recovery from recession from 1993 and contributed to steady economic improvement for the rest of the decade. It encouraged the creation of more jobs, higher wages and higher pensions, opened up the free movement of labour, goods, services and capital and gave British business access to 450 million consumers. In time its effects were felt in almost every area of life and not all of it was welcomed. Apart from the cost of membership - .6% of GDP, membership created a whole

new raft of bureaucracy - An unending stream of petty regulations across a broad front, enforced by the weight of new European Courts. The ever enlarging bureaucracy became slow and unwieldy, disputes took a lifetime to settle, and in some areas, especially agriculture, the enforced systems were unworkable if not damaging. The result was that the initial scepticism never completely melted away, it simmered and grew.

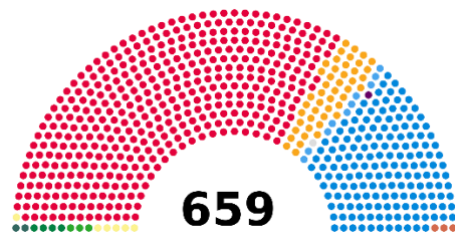
Whilst EU members enjoyed a relatively calm and undisturbed decade, the 90's was a time of political and ethnic volatility world-wide. The most prominent armed conflicts were the Gulf War (1991); the Chechen Wars with Russia (1994 – 96 and 1999); The Eritrean – Ethiopian War (1998 – 2000); the Yugoslavian Wars (1991 – 95) on the break-up of the country and, the South African Border Wars with Zambia, Angola and Namibia. There were also Civil Wars in Ethiopia, Algeria, Somalia, Rwanda, Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Very many atrocities were attributed to ethnic cleansing and the brutality stunned the world. Terrorism was also a feature of growing religious and ethnic tensions. Attacks against the Western World by Islamists stepped up. The World trade Centre in New York was hit in 1993 and Oklahoma City was mauled in 1995. The US embassy in Kenya also suffered attack in 1998. There were also significant political upheavals resulting from decolonisation and independence most notably in Russia with the dissolution of the Soviet Union (1991). This led to the independence of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. East and West Germany were also re-united in 1990. The result was the spread of democracy and capitalism. The world was about to become a very different place.

Few western countries were immune from terrorist attacks. In the UK a resolution to the longstanding problem with Irish nationalists was finally reached in 1998 with the Good Friday Agreement but only after a determined bombing campaign on the streets of English Cities. Between 1990 and 1997 there were 24 bombings incurring 10 deaths, over 590 injuries and many millions of pounds in structural damage. Whilst the majority of targets were in London, Leeds, Manchester and Warrington were also hit with devastating explosions. The most destructive occurred at the Baltic Exchange with estimate damage put at £800 million and Bishopsgate put at £340 million.



Ireland's fight for nationalism did not go unnoticed by Scotland and Wales and neither did the ultimate advantages of appeasement to the protagonists. There was a surge of nationalist sentiment in both countries which led to the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales in 1997 and the Scottish Parliament in 1999. They were accompanied by significant devolution of powers intended to bring democracy closer to the people. There were similar moves in England to create 'Unitary' Authorities in the 2-tier Shire Counties and in many of the larger urban districts. Democracy was changing! The arrival of the 'age of information' opened up debate and emboldened minority groups to push their cases to much wider audiences. The shenanigans of politicians, hitherto enacted in the privacy of the Chamber, was now open to scrutiny in the home and on the streets. Almost every phrase of an argument was now ripe for analysis and interpretation by pundits and public alike and every cough and sneeze of their private lives was open to inspection. Accountability took on a new meaning. For the first time direct and instant internet communication between constituent and MP or Councillor was possible with the expectation of some reply. Politics was becoming a maelstrom of conflicting interest in an environment of immediate response to everyday occurrences. Conflicting interest became the battle ground for the 1997 General Election.

The tired and divided Conservative Government marred by cover-ups and scandals did not survive. The election delivered a landslide victory for the Labour Party. Reinvigorated by Tony Blair, 'New Labour' presented a more centralist stance to socialism by ditching some of the more left-wing goals and projecting an image of modernism, vitality and sense of purpose. Its manifesto was enticing and settled some of the major issues of the time. It outlined 5 key pledges:



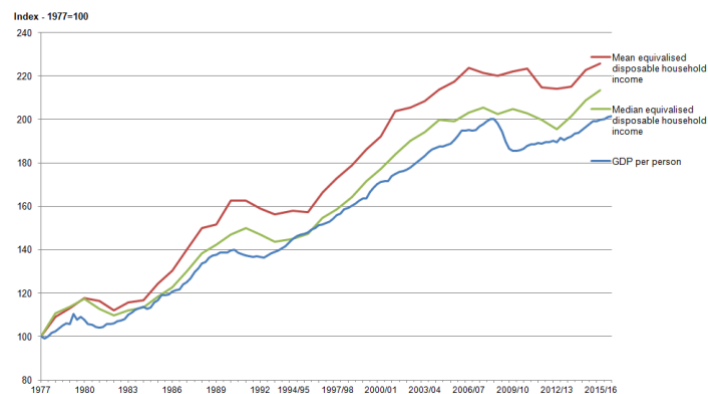
- Class sizes to be cut to under 30 for 5, 6, and 7 year-olds.
- Fast track punishment for persistent offenders by halving the time from arrest to sentencing.
- Cut NHS waiting lists.
- Get 250,000 under 25 year-olds off benefit and into work
- No rise in Income Tax; a cut of VAT on heating to 5%; and a pledge to keep interest rates and inflation low.



The intention to deepen the relationship with the European Union with a commitment to sign up to the Social Chapter was also listed though, any commitment to the adoption of the single currency was avoided amid massive opposition. There was also a commitment to the devolution of powers to both Scotland and Wales. As a modernist government there was also a tacit agreement to follow global trends.

During the 90's the awareness of multiculturalism and inclusivity grew worldwide. Frightening demonstrations of ethnic cleansing were evidence enough of the need to formulate some action to protect the minority communities. In Britain the population was becoming increasingly diverse and racial discrimination continued to plague many people of colour especially in the Cities. In London alone Black people numbered half a million in a City of 7 million. Government legislation since the 60's was failing to stem the tide of disadvantage and resentment and, as we have seen on several occasions, frustrations were rising to the point of riot. Such was the tension that, in some parts of the Cities, areas were becoming no-go-areas for people of minority colour. On both sides of the divide freedoms were being restricted.

There were, however, compensating extensions of freedom in other areas. The freedom to spend improved steadily from 1993. Cumulative inflation across the decade amounted to 39% but again, wage inflation was much stronger at 56%. The graph shows the enormous growth rates in disposable incomes during the 80's and 90's.



In real terms this translated as:

PV = Present Value – Inflation adjusted to 2020 / 2021				
	1990	PV	2000	PV
Average House Price	£61,495	£154,352	£75,219	£134,717
Average Earnings	£13,760	£31,984	£17,500	£31,342
Petrol	£1.86 pg.	£2.51	£3.49 pg	£6
Standard Loaf	50p	£1.25	70p	£2

	1990	PV	2000	PV
Milk	28p	70p	34p	66p
Cigarettes	£1.64	£4.12	£3.95	£8
Mobile Phone	£1765	£4695	£72.50	£140

The figures conceal the erratic nature of the markets as they responded to the upheavals of recession and the vagaries of supply and demand. House prices, in particular, show some measured recovery after a severe slump. The most spectacular differences are to be found in the cost of new technologies as they were thirstily adopted. By 2000 mass production was well in gear for the most sought after gadgets, hence the huge drop in the price of mobile phones. With EU membership and a vastly enlarged market the cost of white goods in general did not keep pace with inflation and were cheaper.

Footfall on the High Streets remained strong. They remained the centre of commerce and the place to go to buy the latest fashions and luxury items. But their nature was changing. In many cities they were slowly being usurped by modern shopping Malls bringing retailing



Trafford Centre - Manchester

under cover in plush and inviting surroundings. The development of retail 'Parks' in the suburbs was also in vogue and in some areas the development of massive retail 'Hubs' in the countryside, designed to attract all the major retail outlets, began to threaten the very existence of the traditional High Street. Offering an attractive and comfortable environment for shoppers and ample parking space for cars, they provided levels of comfort and convenience unobtainable in the traditional High Street which, during the 90's began their journey into decline.



Bluewater - North Kent

New companies arrived on the scene which were to have a massive impact upon the life and habits of the populace. Three, in particular, stand apart for their impact. Microsoft who came to dominate the home-computing world; IKEA who became a dominant force in the world of furnishing and household goods, and Amazon who were to pioneer Internet Shopping. By the end of the decade this had begun to take off.

Perhaps the most significant change, however, was in the Sunday trading Laws. For more than a thousand years the Christian tradition of preserving Sunday as a day of rest was protected by law. Indeed, in times past church attendance was compulsory. By the 20th Century it was still regarded as a quiet family day of reflection and recreation free from employment, and by law most shops and offices were closed. This was to change in 1994. The Sunday Trading Act removed most restrictions to trade and Sunday became a normal shopping day. Age long traditions began to be set aside.

Popular culture was becoming increasingly ego-centric during the 90's with much greater concern for health and fitness and for body-shape and mood. Exercise and diet became more important. The fashion for slimness led to healthier diets with higher uptakes of whole grains and vegetables. Food scares around salmonella in eggs and Mad Cow Disease in beef sharpened awareness of what was eaten. Speculation about the adverse effects of some foods grew as did the advertisement of what the body needed to maintain proper organ function. The result was an upsurge in the use of dietary supplements to protect long-term health. Many people became regular pill poppers! For some body shape became an obsession. There was a rise in the incidence of eating disorders and, in a world with the possibility of 'designer babies', some pursued the route to 'designer bodies'. The market for cosmetic surgery blossomed with over a million procedures recorded for liposuction, eyelid surgery and breast augmentation during the decade. Many sought to change their facial features, often, in these early days, with disastrous effect. Michael Jackson's programme of self-improvement demonstrated the potential pitfalls.



Many more sought to augment their looks with tattoos and piercings, both of which became popular fashion icons of the age.

By the 1990's drugs had become an important part of life. Relief was available for almost every physical and mental ailment known to man, whether through prescription or off-the-shelf medication. Among other things it was increasingly possible to alleviate the effects of stress and depression, and, through recreational drugs to change and regulate mood. The use of such drugs grew sharply. Cannabis and amphetamines were widely used along with 'dance

drugs' like ecstasy and LSD. The use of 'hard' drugs, particularly heroin, was also on the rise especially amongst adolescents and young adults where 'chasing the dragon' – heating heroin on tin foil and inhaling the vapours became fashionable. The number of known addicts grew from about 5000 in 1980 to over 50,000 by the end of the 90's. Cocaine use also grew. Government reacted. In 1995 the 'Tackling Drugs Together' strategy committed the government to take action through law enforcement backed by accessibility to treatment and education, action that was reiterated in the 1998 '10-year Strategy for tackling Drug Misuse' issued by the Labour Government.

Such legislation did not deter the young from going out for a good time. The 'Rave' culture of the 'Acid House' explosion of 1988 / 89 where warehouse parties were held in rough and ready locations spilled over into the 90's. The hypnotic beats and writhing and rippling patterns of bass music, along with MDMA and LSD plus strobe and 'trippy' lights encouraged irrepressible levels of abandon and sweaty group hugs. Promoters were not slow to realise that the larger the crowd the more captivating it became. As a result, warehouse raves were supplemented by massive outdoor parties thrown without official permission in abandoned airfields or farmer's fields. Not surprisingly, after some cat and mouse tactics to out-fox the police, there was a massive crackdown to prevent the violation of the peace and the despoilment of the countryside. This temporarily thwarted the Rave movement forcing it back into the City Clubs. City by City, however, restrictions on all night dancing were removed causing a widespread expansion of nightclubs everywhere. Not surprisingly, the movement developed its own mutant forms of music and bands with Indie-dance groups like the 'Stone Roses' and 'Happy Mondays'. With ever more up-beat twists of popular hip-hop music with the inclusion of the rowdy vocals of the dancehalls, bands in London, like, 'Shut up and Dance', the 'Ragga twins', 'Urban Shakedown', and the 'Prodigy, propelled new sounds into the Hit Parade.

The music of the 90's echoed the more optimistic times as the economy, once more, rebounded out of recession. At first influenced by the 'Grunge' movement imported from America, the message was down-beat. Lyrics were typically angst-filled and introspective addressing such themes as social alienation, self-doubt, neglect and betrayal. In Britain this was soon superseded by 'Britpop'. This was a style of pop music that aimed to promote 'Britishness', the idea of 'Cool Britannia'. Launched by groups like 'Suede' and 'Blur', 'Oasis', 'Pulp', 'Supergrass' and 'Elastica', it brought a brighter, catchier alternative rock style into the mainstream. During the early 90's the Pop music scene was dominated by boy bands. 'Take That', 'East 17', 'Westlife', and 'Boyzone' all eagerly competed to excel in the Pop Charts. In the mid-90's, however, the girls broke through. The 'Spice Girls' hit the ground and ran into incredible popularity with 9 number 1 singles including 'Wannabe', '2 become 1', and 'Spice up your Life'. With catchy melodies and lyrics, they too promoted 'Britishness' as well as launching a 'Girl Power' movement to support feminism which went world-wide. They were

followed by 'All Saints' who, in turn had 5 No 1 hits. Together they set the scene for the emergence of a raft of girl bands in the early years of the new century.



Take That



The Spice Girls

Alongside main stream Pop, music continued to develop and diversify and new genres emerged. British 'Soul' and Indian based music enjoyed a resurgence and traditional Folk Music reached new levels of popularity. Perhaps the most notable developments, however, were in electronic sound as more and more equipment became available, Popular electronic genres included ' Breakbeat Hardcore', 'Big Beat', and 'UK Garage' purveyed by artists such as Prodigy, The Chemical brothers and Fat Boy Slim, to name but a few.

Music Festivals became the meeting place for the popular music of all genres and during the 90's they became more numerous. Glastonbury by then had become an institution and year-on-year it provided for growing numbers of revellers. In 1990 it welcomed 70,000 people, by 1999 the number had swelled to over 100,000. For the duration, a tented town appeared in the fields of Somerset. Even the ghastly weather of 1990, 1997 and 98 could not dampen the enthusiasm for a good time



Youthful enthusiasm and bravado also took sport into new and dangerous territory. The 1990's was the age of 'Extreme Sport' – activities perceived as having a high degree of risk. Traditionally associated with sports like Bull Fighting, Motor racing and Mountaineering a whole raft of new and daring stunts and sports gained in popularity. Whilst some regulated activities fell within the scope of Health and Safety legislation and the risks were deemed

acceptable, many were informal and outside any control, dependent entirely on the skill and judgement of the individual. Examples of these extreme activities are:

BMX, Bungee Jumping, Canyoning, Cave Diving, hang Gliding, Mountain Biking, Jet Skiing, Windsurfing, Paragliding, Kite-surfing, Rock Climbing, Skateboarding, Ski-Jumping, Sky-Diving, White Water Kayaking, and Windsurfing.

Also recognised as being on the extreme end of sport, Marathon running also gained in popularity. A growing number of Cities and Resorts organised full or half-marathons and several charities arranged shorter runs to raise funds by sponsorship. Some, like the Great North Run and the London Marathon became institutions. Seen as the ultimate challenge, they attracted competitors from across the world. In London the number of runners grew from 25,600 in 1990 to over 32,000 in 1999, the pain and gain being televised and broadcast nation-wide. To complete the 26.2 mile circuit was heralded as a valuable accolade admired and respected by all. To win brought international recognition – achieved only twice by British runners in the 90's – Eamon Martin and Liz McColgan.

Across the board Sport threw up its heroes:

Sally Gunnel (Hurdles), Linford Christie (100 metres), Tanni Grey-Thompson (Wheelchair Racing), Brian Lara (Cricket), Jonathon Edwards (Triple Jump), England's Rugby Grand Slam win in 1995, England's triumph in the Euro's 1996, Tiger Woods (golf), Denise Lewis (Athletics), Serena Williams (Tennis).

Regrettably, however, the sporting world was troubled by performance enhancing drugs – Anabolic Steroids for muscle growth, Stimulants (amphetamines, cocaine and even nicotine) to speed up physical processes and Erythropoietin to deliver more oxygen to the muscles. This undermined the very essence of fairness in competitive sport and made necessary rigorous testing regimes to safeguard standards.

For the less athletic and less adventurous, all kinds of physical activity were on the ascendant. Health consciousness and the need for fresh air, exercise and some challenge led to marked increases in the numbers Rambling, Cycling, Sailing and Canoeing. However, a large proportion of the population remained fully-fledged couch potatoes wedded to their television screens.

Television broadcasting developed further in the 90's. In November 1990 Sky Television merged with British Satellite Broadcasting. The new Company, BSkyB, grew into a major media company by the end of the decade notably owning the TV broadcasting rights for Premier League football and the domestic rights of Hollywood Films. Access to the channels were via a Satellite Dish and a Sky 'Box' activated by subscription. In 1993 Sky Multichannel was added broadening access to third-party channels for an additional subscription. Run on the analogue system it opened up a wide choice for viewers and attracted over 3.4 million subscribers by 1994. Terrestrial television also expanded with the addition of Channel 5 in 1997.

Popular Programmes of the time include:

- Sit Coms: Dinner ladies, Father Ted, Keeping up Appearances, Brush Strokes Men Behaving Badly, The Fast Show, Friends, Absolutely Fabulous, Mr Bean, Harry Enfield's Television. The Royle Family, The Thin Blue Line, Only Fools and Horses, You've been Framed, One Foot in the Grave.
- Drama: Lovejoy, Sharpe, Heartbeat, Baywatch, Wycliffe, Hetty Wainthropp, Kavanagh QC, ER, The Sopranos, Prime Suspect, Twin Peaks, Columbo, Cadfael, A Touch of frost, Peak practice, The Bill, Pie in the Sky, Cold Feet, Taggart, Smiley's People. Midsummer Murders, Inspector Morse Darling Buds of May.
- Game Shows: Blankety Blank, Countdown, University Challenge, Blind Date, Gladiators, The Krypton Factor, Mastermind, Catch Phrase, Mr and Mrs Sale of the Century.
- Children's Programmes: Bob the Builder, Chucklevision, Grange Hill, Byker Grove, Teletubbies, Fun House, Art Attack, Badger and Bodger, How, Rugrats. Live and Kicking, Sabrina the Teenage Witch.
- Soap Operas: Coronation Street, Eastenders, Emmerdale Farm, Neighbours, Brookside, Hollyoaks, Casualty, Holby City

The Top 10 most viewed programmes were:

1, Only Fools and Horses (24.65 million); **2**. Coronation Street (20.45 million); **3**. One Foot in the Grave (20 million); **4**. Eastenders (19.31 million); **5**. You've been framed (19.33 million); **6**. London's Burning (18.87 million); **7**. Inspector Morse (18.77 million); **8**. Darling Buds of May (18.73 million); **9**. Heartbeat (18.68 million); **10**. A Touch of Frost (18.22 million).

The Cinema Industry, so badly hit by the advent of television, was, by the 1990's once again finding a niche. The huge emporiums of earlier times had, by then, fallen by the wayside and were now being replaced by 'Multiplex' venues with several screens. Technology also continued to heighten the experience well beyond that available through the medium of television and, as a result, audiences were building. Reaching an all-time low in 1984 with a national box-office of 54 million, by 1990 it had risen to 97.4 million and by 2000 it had reached 142.5 million. The real break-through in the 90's was in photo-realistic 3D animation – of creating real-time animation in virtual worlds. Disney, in particular enjoyed a renaissance with animated films like 'Beauty and the Beast' (1991) and 'The Lion King' (1994) but the

technology was quickly adopted by other filmmakers like Pixar's 'Toy Story' (1995) and Universal's 'Jurassic Park' (1993).

The top 10 highest grossing films of the 90's were:

1. Titanic	Paramount	1997
2. Star Wars Episode 1	20 th Century Fox	1999
3. Jurassic Park	Universal	1993
4. Independence Day	20 th Century Fox	1996
5. The Lion King	Disney	1994
6. Forrest Gump	Paramount	1994
7. The Sixth Sense	Disney	1999
8. The Lost World	Universal	1997
9. Men in Black	Sony/Columbia	1997
10. Armageddon	Touchstone Pictures	1998

Other notable films included: Toy Story, Saving Private Ryan, The Matrix, Pretty Women, Mrs Doubtfire, Dances with Wolves. and Nottinghill.

Fashion is a slippery concept. Why do things catch on? What is the motive for change? Is it purely about novelty, of acquiring something new and different to break the monotony? Is it about expressing who you are, or who you would like others to think you are? Is it about the herd instinct of being accepted? Is it about status, of showing off? Or is it a ruse by manufacturers to sustain their businesses? In all likelihood it is about all of them and more. Whatever the motive, however, it is almost wholly dependent upon disposable income and the competition from other more essential needs. In the 90's with changes in life-style brought about by new technologies and increasing wealth, keeping up became more important than style. Gadgetry, holidays and cars rose up the want list.

As life in Britain became increasingly classless so convention ebbed away and clothing became increasingly more casual and informal. Mainstream fashion saw something of a 60's revival for women with short mini-skirts, dresses, crop-tops and high knee socks often in muted colours. Fashionable streetwear included Bomber Jackets and boots. Denim was much in evidence in casual wear whilst more formally, in the office and elsewhere, Slip dresses, Blazers with matching pencil skirts and shoes were much in vogue. Power dressing with shoulder pads etc. remained as the feminist cause continued to gather momentum. For young women there was a phase when the sexy school-girl look became popular with tartan mini-skirts, undersized sweaters and pony-tail hair, and, towards the end of the decade Indian fashion, inspired by Bollywood, began to gain popularity. Throughout exercise wear became commonplace as a statement of life-choice with leotards, body-suits, sport bras, slouch socks and leggings. They became accepted as the 'casual chic' look.



The 90's was the age of the 'Super-model'. The most successful were Naomi Campbell, Cindy Crawford, Christy Turlington, Linda Evangelista, Tatjana Patitz and Kate Moss. They

became the icons of Haute Couture, with fame and influence that surpassed many movie stars. Famously, Evangelista was alleged to have commented that “we don’t wake up for less than \$10,000 a day”.

Men’s fashion similarly cycled through a 60’s revival phase with the ‘Mod’ look. Hip Hop fashion also became popular with over-sized baseball jackets, baggy jeans. Sportswear also became acceptable to wear in public. By the late 90’s there was a revival of interest in more stylish clothes when brand designers like Calvin Klein and Ralph Lauren made a comeback leading to a ‘dressy-casual’ look with somewhat brighter colours. In the office suits began to lose favour to be replaced by ‘smart-casual’.



In the land of sub-culture anti-conformist ‘Grunge’ wielded influence in the early 90’s. They popularised a down-beat and untidy look with flannel shirts, ripped jeans, hoodies, Doc Martin’s boots, over-sized knitted sweaters and, for women, long droopy skirts and ripped tights. Hard-core Punk fashion endured with bright coloured spiky hair, hoodies and baggy pants. There were recognised fashions associated with the ‘Rave’ culture with PVC mini-skirts and tops and DIY tie-dyed outfits, retro sportswear and outfits themed around sex showing much skin and nudity. Spiked hair, tattoos and body-piercing were also common. ‘Hip Hop’ drew forth a ‘saggy’ trend with wide-legged jeans, plaid Khakis, Locs Glasses, Bomber-jackets, Baseball caps and Snap-back Hats worn backwards. Goth culture too, with its all-embracing black theme, did not go away.



Grunge



Hip Hop



Rave



Goth

The fashion for cars grew strongly during the 90's, especially amongst the young who now found them within financial reach. The 'Boy Racer' with customised cars became a phenomenon. Embellished in almost every way imaginable with tweaked engines and ultra-sound systems they became the lure for girls and competition in equal measure.

During the 90's car ownership rose from 20.7 million to 25 million. Once again, whilst outward design changed little and there was a degree of uniformity across the brands, under the bonnet technology was working its magic. Some of the enhancements included High Tech Headlamps (1992); Stability Control (1995); On-Board Diagnostics (1996); Blue Tooth Integration (1998); Smart Keys (1998); Cruise Control (1999); and Sat. Nav. (2000). In retrospect, perhaps the most notable advance, however, was in the development of Electric Cars. Pioneered by General Motors the EVI went into production in 1996 though, its viability was questionable and it was far from practical. Nonetheless the advent of the Toyota Prius and Hybrid Technology in 1998 changed the mind-set and demonstrated real potential for the future.

The best selling cars of the decade in order of popularity were :



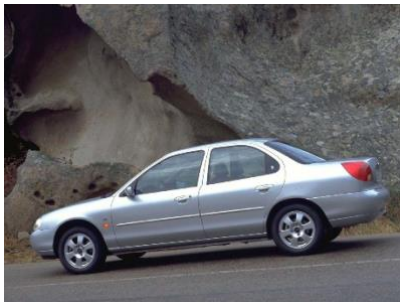
1. Ford Fiesta



2. Ford Escort



3. Vauxhall Astra



4. Ford Mondeo



5. Vauxhall Cavalier



6. Rover 200



7. Vauxhall Corsa



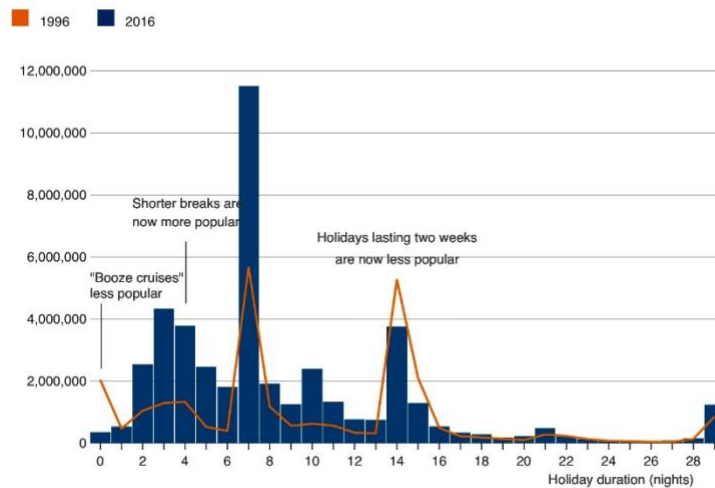
8. Vauxhall Vectra



9. Rover/MG Metro

Holidays too became both affordable and fashionable in the 90's. As the pace of life quickened so too did the need to find some respite from the pressures. Stays of one or two weeks were then the norm, short weekend breaks were unusual as the graph below illustrates.

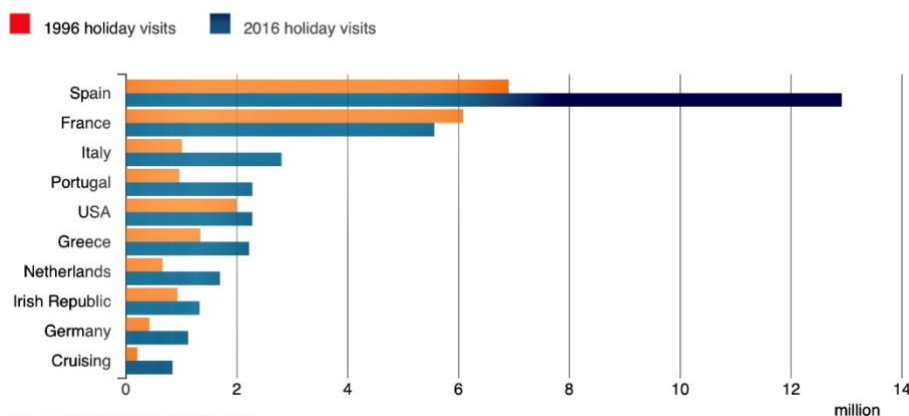
Duration of holidays overseas by UK residents, 1996 and 2016



Source: Travel trends: 2016, ONS

The arrival of budget Airlines together with the relaxation of travel restrictions arising from membership of the EU had enormous impact upon the number holidaying abroad from approximately 20 million in 1990 to around 370 million by 2000. The most popular destinations were :

Top 10 destinations for UK resident holidaymakers, 2016 (with 1996 figures)



Source: Travel trends: 2016, ONS

Whilst for most people the 90's was a period of more gain than pain, some, regrettably fell victim to the vagaries of man and nature. There was a serious Flu epidemic across the winter of 1989 / 1990. At its peak infection rates reached 600 per 100,000 with somewhere between 19,000 and 29,000 deaths attributed to the outbreak. There were also a number of serious weather events which disrupted life in particular parts of the country. The Burns' Day Storm of January 1990 hit Scotland with hurricane force winds, felled around 3 million trees,

disrupted power to more than half a million homes and caused severe flooding in England. 47 deaths were recorded – more than the Great Storm of 1987. It was followed by a heatwave in August with moorland fires laying waste to some 100 square miles of moorland in the Peak District and Yorkshire Moors and then a particularly cold winter with two significant falls of snow. There were similar extremes in 1995 when periods of extremely heavy snowfall in Northern England in January were followed by heat wave conditions in August creating one of the driest summers on record. The weather was also responsible for a spate of serious accidents on the roads. Reckless driving through fog caused a 51-car pile-up on the M4 in January 1991 where 10 were killed, and, in 1997, 160 vehicles collided on the M42 killing 3. The risks of travelling were also apparent in 4 serious rail accidents at:

- Canon Street (1991) 2 killed, 542 injured.
- Watford (1996) 1 killed, 69 injured.
- Southall (1997) 7 killed, 139 injured
- Ladbroke road (1999) 31 killed, 417 injured.

Helicopters also proved themselves vulnerable with 3 crashes in the 90's and a death toll of 32.

Further disruption was caused by flooding, the most serious being across the Midlands at Easter in 1998 where 5 people lost their lives and thousands were evacuated.



Southall (1997)

Fate and ill-fortune also beset families across the country in an age when divorce and relationship break-downs were on the rise. In 1992 the Queen's 'Annus Horribilus' speech reflecting on the divorce or marital break-up of three of her four children and a devastating fire at Windsor Castle, showed that no one is immune. It in some way validated the separation of couples as an OK route to a happier life. Nothing, however, could counter the shock of premature death. Princess Diana's death in the early hours of August 31st, 1997 stunned the world. The public out-pouring of grief was a total phenomenon never before witnessed. Few people were unaffected and the country fell into mourning.



In many respects the 90's marked the end of an era and the start of another. The fact that it was also the end of a millennium did not go unnoticed. Since the end of the 2nd World War so much had changed and with it the values and attitudes of the populace. Liberated from class convention, awarded undreamt of sexual freedoms, given the freedom and opportunity through education to achieve anything, given freedom of expression, a voice and status, and removed from penury with the ability to satisfy the needs of the modern age, the freedom to travel and go anywhere..... Add to this the improvements to health and life expectancy – the list goes on. Adapting to and assimilating the changes has changed people. We are not the people we were before. We have become more ego-centric, more competitive, more suspicious of others, less sociable, less concerned for others, and less tolerant. We have become more obsessed with the acquisition of things and more self-indulgent. Family has become less important, and we strive for independence. The Englishman's home is now his fortress. But the quality of life has improved immensely. The basic standard of living has been raised. Everyone is fed, clothed, and sheltered and everyone has space for recreation and entertainment. Most can afford the basic treats of life and everyone is secure in the knowledge that there is health care and a safety net against hard times. This was not the case in 1945.