



Theft Act 1968

1968 CHAPTER 60

Definition of “theft”

1 Basic definition of theft.

- (1) A person is guilty of theft if he dishonestly appropriates property belonging to another with the intention of permanently depriving the other of it; and “thief” and “steal” shall be construed accordingly.
- (2) It is immaterial whether the appropriation is made with a view to gain, or is made for the thief’s own benefit.
- (3) The five following sections of this Act shall have effect as regards the interpretation and operation of this section (and, except as otherwise provided by this Act, shall apply only for purposes of this section).

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C1 S. 1(1) applied (25.8.2000) by 2000 c. 6, ss. 148(8), 168

2 “Dishonestly”

- (1) A person’s appropriation of property belonging to another is not to be regarded as dishonest—
 - (a) if he appropriates the property in the belief that he has in law the right to deprive the other of it, on behalf of himself or of a third person; or
 - (b) if he appropriates the property in the belief that he would have the other’s consent if the other knew of the appropriation and the circumstances of it; or
 - (c) (except where the property came to him as trustee or personal representative) if he appropriates the property in the belief that the person to whom the property belongs cannot be discovered by taking reasonable steps.
- (2) A person’s appropriation of property belonging to another may be dishonest notwithstanding that he is willing to pay for the property.

Status: Point in time view as at 27/02/2004.

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Theft Act 1968. (See end of Document for details)

3 “Appropriates”.

- (1) Any assumption by a person of the rights of an owner amounts to an appropriation, and this includes, where he has come by the property (innocently or not) without stealing it, any later assumption of a right to it by keeping or dealing with it as owner.
- (2) Where property or a right or interest in property is or purports to be transferred for value to a person acting in good faith, no later assumption by him of rights which he believed himself to be acquiring shall, by reason of any defect in the transferor’s title, amount to theft of the property.

4 “Property”.

- (1) “Property” includes money and all other property, real or personal, including things in action and other intangible property.
- (2) A person cannot steal land, or things forming part of land and severed from it by him or by his directions, except in the following cases, that is to say—
 - (a) when he is a trustee or personal representative, or is authorised by power of attorney, or as liquidator of a company, or otherwise, to sell or dispose of land belonging to another, and he appropriates the land or anything forming part of it by dealing with it in breach of the confidence reposed in him; or
 - (b) when he is not in possession of the land and appropriates anything forming part of the land by severing it or causing it to be severed, or after it has been severed; or
 - (c) when, being in possession of the land under a tenancy, he appropriates the whole or part of any fixture or structure let to be used with the land.
- (3) A person who picks mushrooms growing wild on any land, or who picks flowers, fruit or foliage from a plant growing wild on any land, does not (although not in possession of the land) steal what he picks, unless he does it for reward or for sale or other commercial purpose.

For purposes of this subsection “mushroom” includes any fungus, and “plant” includes any shrub or tree.

- (4) Wild creatures, tamed or untamed, shall be regarded as property; but a person cannot steal a wild creature not tamed nor ordinarily kept in captivity, or the carcase of any such creature, unless either it has been reduced into possession by or on behalf of another person and possession of it has not since been lost or abandoned, or another person is in course of reducing it into possession.

5 “Belonging to another”.

- (1) Property shall be regarded as belonging to any person having possession or control of it, or having in it any proprietary right or interest (not being an equitable interest arising only from an agreement to transfer or grant an interest).

Status: Point in time view as at 27/02/2004.

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Theft Act 1968. (See end of Document for details)

- (2) Where property is subject to a trust, the persons to whom it belongs shall be regarded as including any person having a right to enforce the trust, and an intention to defeat the trust shall be regarded accordingly as an intention to deprive of the property any person having that right.
- (3) Where a person receives property from or on account of another, and is under an obligation to the other to retain and deal with that property or its proceeds in a particular way, the property or proceeds shall be regarded (as against him) as belonging to the other.
- (4) Where a person gets property by another's mistake, and is under an obligation to make restoration (in whole or in part) of the property or its proceeds or of the value thereof, then to the extent of that obligation the property or proceeds shall be regarded (as against him) as belonging to the person entitled to restoration, and an intention not to make restoration shall be regarded accordingly as an intention to deprive that person of the property or proceeds.
- (5) Property of a corporation sole shall be regarded as belonging to the corporation notwithstanding a vacancy in the corporation.

6 “With the intention of permanently depriving the other of it”.

- (1) A person appropriating property belonging to another without meaning the other permanently to lose the thing itself is nevertheless to be regarded as having the intention of permanently depriving the other of it if his intention is to treat the thing as his own to dispose of regardless of the other's rights; and a borrowing or lending of it may amount to so treating it if, but only if, the borrowing or lending is for a period and in circumstances making it equivalent to an outright taking or disposal.
- (2) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1) above, where a person, having possession or control (lawfully or not) of property belonging to another, parts with the property under a condition as to its return which he may not be able to perform, this (if done for purposes of his own and without the other's authority) amounts to treating the property as his own to dispose of regardless of the other's rights.

Theft, robbery, burglary, etc.

7 Theft.

A person guilty of theft shall on conviction on indictment be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding [^{F1} seven years].

Textual Amendments

- F1 Words in s. 7 substituted (1.10.1992) by [Criminal Justice Act 1991 \(c. 53, SIF 39:1\)](#), s. 26(1); S.I. 1992/333, art. 2(2), [Sch.2](#)

8 Robbery.

- (1) A person is guilty of robbery if he steals, and immediately before or at the time of doing so, and in order to do so, he uses force on any person or puts or seeks to put any person in fear of being then and there subjected to force.

Status: Point in time view as at 27/02/2004.

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Theft Act 1968. (See end of Document for details)

- (2) A person guilty of robbery, or of an assault with intent to rob, shall on conviction on indictment be liable to imprisonment for life.

9 Burglary.

- (1) A person is guilty of burglary if—
- (a) he enters any building or part of a building as a trespasser and with intent to commit any such offence as is mentioned in subsection (2) below; or
 - (b) having entered any building or part of a building as a trespasser he steals or attempts to steal anything in the building or that part of it or inflicts or attempts to inflict on any person therein any grievous bodily harm.
- (2) The offences referred to in subsection (1)(a) above are offences of stealing anything in the building or part of a building in question, of inflicting on any person therein any grievous bodily harm or [^{F2}raping any person] therein, and of doing unlawful damage to the building or anything therein.
- [^{F3}(3) A person guilty of burglary shall on conviction on indictment be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding—
- (a) where the offence was committed in respect of a building or part of a building which is a dwelling, fourteen years;
 - (b) in any other case, ten years.
- (4) References in subsections (1) and (2) above to a building, and the reference in subsection (3) above to a building which is a dwelling, shall apply also to an inhabited vehicle or vessel, and shall apply to any such vehicle or vessel at times when the person having a habitation in it is not there as well as at times when he is.]

Textual Amendments

F2 Words in s. 9(2) substituted (3.11.1994) by 1994 c. 33, s. 168(2), **Sch. 10 para. 26**

F3 S. 9(3)(4) substituted (1.10.1992) by Criminal Justice Act 1991 (c. 53, SIF 39:1), s. 26(2); S.I. 1992/333, art. 2(2), **Sch. 2**

10 Aggravated burglary.

- (1) A person is guilty of aggravated burglary if he commits any burglary and at the time has with him any firearm or imitation firearm, any weapon of offence, or any explosive; and for this purpose—
- (a) “firearm” includes an airgun or air pistol, and “imitation firearm” means anything which has the appearance of being a firearm, whether capable of being discharged or not; and
 - (b) “weapon of offence” means any article made or adapted for use for causing injury to or incapacitating a person, or intended by the person having it with him for such use; and
 - (c) “explosive” means any article manufactured for the purpose of producing a practical effect by explosion, or intended by the person having it with him for that purpose.
- (2) A person guilty of aggravated burglary shall on conviction on indictment be liable to imprisonment for life.

Status: Point in time view as at 27/02/2004.
Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Theft Act 1968. (See end of Document for details)

11 Removal of articles from places open to the public.

- (1) Subject to subsections (2) and (3) below, where the public have access to a building in order to view the building or part of it, or a collection or part of a collection housed in it, any person who without lawful authority removes from the building or its grounds the whole or part of any article displayed or kept for display to the public in the building or that part of it or in its grounds shall be guilty of an offence.

For this purpose “collection” includes a collection got together for a temporary purpose, but references in this section to a collection do not apply to a collection made or exhibited for the purpose of effecting sales or other commercial dealings.

- (2) It is immaterial for purposes of subsection (1) above, that the public’s access to a building is limited to a particular period or particular occasion; but where anything removed from a building or its grounds is there otherwise than as forming part of, or being on loan for exhibition with, a collection intended for permanent exhibition to the public, the person removing it does not thereby commit an offence under this section unless he removes it on a day when the public have access to the building as mentioned in subsection (1) above.
- (3) A person does not commit an offence under this section if he believes that he has lawful authority for the removal of the thing in question or that he would have it if the person entitled to give it knew of the removal and the circumstances of it.
- (4) A person guilty of an offence under this section shall, on conviction on indictment, be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years.

12 Taking motor vehicle or other conveyance without authority.

- (1) Subject to subsections (5) and (6) below, a person shall be guilty of an offence if, without having the consent of the owner or other lawful authority, he takes any conveyance for his own or another’s use or, knowing that any conveyance has been taken without such authority, drives it or allows himself to be carried in or on it.
- (2) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (1) above shall [^{F4}be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, or to both.]

^{F5}(3)

- (4) If on the trial of an indictment for theft the jury are not satisfied that the accused committed theft, but it is proved that the accused committed an offence under subsection (1) above, the jury may find him guilty of the offence under subsection (1) [^{F6}and if he is found guilty of it, he shall be liable as he would have been liable under subsection (2) above on summary conviction.]

- [^{F7}(4A) Proceedings for an offence under subsection (1) above (but not proceedings of a kind falling within subsection (4) above) in relation to a mechanically propelled vehicle—
- (a) shall not be commenced after the end of the period of three years beginning with the day on which the offence was committed; but
 - (b) subject to that, may be commenced at any time within the period of six months beginning with the relevant day.

(4B) In subsection (4A)(b) above “the relevant day” means—

Status: Point in time view as at 27/02/2004.

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Theft Act 1968. (See end of Document for details)

- (a) in the case of a prosecution for an offence under subsection (1) above by a public prosecutor, the day on which sufficient evidence to justify the proceedings came to the knowledge of any person responsible for deciding whether to commence any such prosecution;
 - (b) in the case of a prosecution for an offence under subsection (1) above which is commenced by a person other than a public prosecutor after the discontinuance of a prosecution falling within paragraph (a) above which relates to the same facts, the day on which sufficient evidence to justify the proceedings came to the knowledge of the person who has decided to commence the prosecution or (if later) the discontinuance of the other prosecution;
 - (c) in the case of any other prosecution for an offence under subsection (1) above, the day on which sufficient evidence to justify the proceedings came to the knowledge of the person who has decided to commence the prosecution.
- (4C) For the purposes of subsection (4A)(b) above a certificate of a person responsible for deciding whether to commence a prosecution of a kind mentioned in subsection (4B)(a) above as to the date on which such evidence as is mentioned in the certificate came to the knowledge of any person responsible for deciding whether to commence any such prosecution shall be conclusive evidence of that fact.]
- (5) Subsection (1) above shall not apply in relation to pedal cycles; but, subject to subsection (6) below, a person who, without having the consent of the owner or other lawful authority, takes a pedal cycle for his own or another's use, or rides a pedal cycle knowing it to have been taken without such authority, shall on summary conviction be liable to a fine not exceeding [^{F8}level 3 on the standard scale.]
- (6) A person does not commit an offence under this section by anything done in the belief that he has lawful authority to do it or that he would have the owner's consent if the owner knew of his doing it and the circumstances of it.
- (7) For purposes of this section—
- (a) “conveyance” means any conveyance constructed or adapted for the carriage of a person or persons whether by land, water or air, except that it does not include a conveyance constructed or adapted for use only under the control of a person not carried in or on it, and “drive” shall be construed accordingly; and
 - (b) “owner”, in relation to a conveyance which is the subject of a hiring agreement or hire-purchase agreement, means the person in possession of the conveyance under that agreement.

Textual Amendments

- F4** Words substituted by [Criminal Justice Act 1988 \(c. 33, SIF 39:1\)](#), s. 37(1)(a), [Sch. 8 para. 16](#)
- F5** [S. 12\(3\)](#) repealed by [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 \(c. 60, SIF 95\)](#), s. 119, [Sch. 7 Pt. 1](#)
- F6** Words added by [Criminal Justice Act 1988 \(c. 33, SIF 39:1\)](#), s. 37(1)(6), [Sch. 8 para. 16](#)
- F7** [S. 12\(4A\)-\(4C\)](#) inserted (1.10.2001) by 2001 c. 3, s. 37(1); S.I. 2001/3215, [art. 2](#)
- F8** Words substituted by virtue of [Criminal Justice Act 1982 \(c. 48, SIF 39:1\)](#), [ss. 38, 46](#)

[^{F9}12A Aggravated vehicle-taking.

- (1) Subject to subsection (3) below, a person is guilty of aggravated taking of a vehicle if—

Status: Point in time view as at 27/02/2004.

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Theft Act 1968. (See end of Document for details)

- (a) he commits an offence under section 12(1) above (in this section referred to as a “basic offence”) in relation to a mechanically propelled vehicle; and
 - (b) it is proved that, at any time after the vehicle was unlawfully taken (whether by him or another) and before it was recovered, the vehicle was driven, or injury or damage was caused, in one or more of the circumstances set out in paragraphs (a) to (d) of subsection (2) below.
- (2) The circumstances referred to in subsection (1)(b) above are—
- (a) that the vehicle was driven dangerously on a road or other public place;
 - (b) that, owing to the driving of the vehicle, an accident occurred by which injury was caused to any person;
 - (c) that, owing to the driving of the vehicle, an accident occurred by which damage was caused to any property, other than the vehicle;
 - (d) that damage was caused to the vehicle.
- (3) A person is not guilty of an offence under this section if he proves that, as regards any such proven driving, injury or damage as is referred to in subsection (1)(b) above, either—
- (a) the driving, accident or damage referred to in subsection (2) above occurred before he committed the basic offence; or
 - (b) he was neither in nor on nor in the immediate vicinity of the vehicle when that driving, accident or damage occurred.
- (4) A person guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or, if it is proved that, in circumstances falling within subsection (2)(b) above, the accident caused the death of the person concerned, [^{F10}fourteen years]^{F10}.
- (5) If a person who is charged with an offence under this section is found not guilty of that offence but it is proved that he committed a basic offence, he may be convicted of the basic offence.
- (6) If by virtue of subsection (5) above a person is convicted of a basic offence before the Crown Court, that court shall have the same powers and duties as a magistrates’ court would have had on convicting him of such an offence.
- (7) For the purposes of this section a vehicle is driven dangerously if—
- (a) it is driven in a way which falls far below what would be expected of a competent and careful driver; and
 - (b) it would be obvious to a competent and careful driver that driving the vehicle in that way would be dangerous.
- (8) For the purposes of this section a vehicle is recovered when it is restored to its owner or to other lawful possession or custody; and in this subsection “owner” has the same meaning as in section 12 above.]

Textual Amendments

F9 S. 12A inserted (1.4.1992) by Aggravated Vehicle-Taking Act 1992 (c. 11), s. 1(1)(3); S.I. 1992/764, art.2

F10 Words in s. 12A(4) substituted (27.2.2004) by Criminal Justice Act 2003 (c. 44), ss. 285(1), 336; S.I. 2004/81, art. 5(2)(b)

Status: Point in time view as at 27/02/2004.
Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Theft Act 1968. (See end of Document for details)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C2 S. 12A restricted (1.4.1992) by Aggravated Vehicle-Taking Act 1992 (c. 11), s. 1(3); S.I. 1992/764, art.2
- C3 S. 12A(4) restricted (1.4.1992) by Aggravated Vehicle-Taking Act 1992 (c. 11), s. 1(2); S.I. 1992/764, art.2

13 Abstracting of electricity.

A person who dishonestly uses without due authority, or dishonestly causes to be wasted or diverted, any electricity shall on conviction on indictment be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years.

14 Extension to thefts from mails outside England and Wales, and robbery etc. on such a theft.

- (1) Where a person—
 - (a) steals or attempts to steal any mail bag or postal packet in the course of transmission as such between places in different jurisdictions in the British postal area, or any of the contents of such a mail bag or postal packet; or
 - (b) in stealing or with intent to steal any such mail bag or postal packet or any of its contents, commits any robbery, attempted robbery or assault with intent to rob;

then, notwithstanding that he does so outside England and Wales, he shall be guilty of committing or attempting to commit the offence against this Act as if he had done so in England or Wales, and he shall accordingly be liable to be prosecuted, tried and punished in England and Wales without proof that the offence was committed there.

- (2) In subsection (1) above the reference to different jurisdictions in the British postal area is to be construed as referring to the several jurisdictions of England and Wales, of Scotland, of Northern Ireland, of the Isle of Man and of the Channel Islands.

- (3) ^{F11}

Textual Amendments

- F11 S. 14(3) repealed (12.11.2003) by The Postal Services Act 2000 (Consequential Modifications) Order 2003 (S.I. 2003/2908, art. 3(2), Sch. 2

Fraud and blackmail

15 Obtaining property by deception.

- (1) A person who by any deception dishonestly obtains property belonging to another, with the intention of permanently depriving the other of it, shall on conviction on indictment be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding ten years.
- (2) For purposes of this section a person is to be treated as obtaining property if he obtains ownership, possession or control of it, and “obtain” includes obtaining for another or enabling another to obtain or to retain.

Status: Point in time view as at 27/02/2004.
Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Theft Act 1968. (See end of Document for details)

- (3) Section 6 above shall apply for purposes of this section, with the necessary adaptation of the reference to appropriating, as it applies for purposes of section 1.
- (4) For purposes of this section “deception” means any deception (whether deliberate or reckless) by words or conduct as to fact or as to law, including a deception as to the present intentions of the person using the deception or any other person.

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C4 S. 15 extended (prosp.) by Nuclear Material (Offences) Act 1983 (c. 18, SIF 8), ss. 1(1)(d), 8(2)

[^{F12}15A Obtaining a money transfer by deception.

- (1) A person is guilty of an offence if by any deception he dishonestly obtains a money transfer for himself or another.
- (2) A money transfer occurs when—
 - (a) a debit is made to one account,
 - (b) a credit is made to another, and
 - (c) the credit results from the debit or the debit results from the credit.
- (3) References to a credit and to a debit are to a credit of an amount of money and to a debit of an amount of money.
- (4) It is immaterial (in particular)—
 - (a) whether the amount credited is the same as the amount debited;
 - (b) whether the money transfer is effected on presentment of a cheque or by another method;
 - (c) whether any delay occurs in the process by which the money transfer is effected;
 - (d) whether any intermediate credits or debits are made in the course of the money transfer;
 - (e) whether either of the accounts is overdrawn before or after the money transfer is effected.
- (5) A person guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for a term not exceeding ten years.]

Textual Amendments

F12 S. 15A inserted (18.12.1996) by 1996 c. 62, s. 1

[^{F13}15B Section 15A: supplementary.

- (1) The following provisions have effect for the interpretation of section 15A of this Act.
- (2) “Deception” has the same meaning as in section 15 of this Act.
- (3) “Account” means an account kept with—
 - (a) a bank; or
 - (b) a person carrying on a business which falls within subsection (4) below.

Status: Point in time view as at 27/02/2004.

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Theft Act 1968. (See end of Document for details)

- (4) A business falls within this subsection if—
- (a) in the course of the business money received by way of deposit is lent to others; or
 - (b) any other activity of the business is financed, wholly or to any material extent, out of the capital of or the interest on money received by way of deposit;

F14 . . .

[^{F15}(4A) References in subsection (4) to a deposit must be read with—

- (a) section 22 of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000;
- (b) any relevant order under that section; and
- (c) Schedule 2 to that Act,

but any restriction on the meaning of deposit which arises from the identity of the person making it is to be disregarded.]

- (5) For the purposes of subsection (4) above—
- (a) all the activities which a person carries on by way of business shall be regarded as a single business carried on by him; and
 - (b) “money” includes money expressed in a currency other than sterling or in the European currency unit (as defined in Council Regulation No. 3320/94/EC or any Community instrument replacing it).

Textual Amendments

F13 S. 15B inserted (18.12.1996) by 1996 c. 62, s. 1

F14 Words in s. 15B(4) repealed (1.12.2001) by S.I. 2001/3649, arts. 1, 278(2)

F15 Words in s. 15B(4A) inserted (1.12.2001) by S.I. 2001/3649, arts. 1, 278(3)

16 Obtaining pecuniary advantage by deception.

- (1) A person who by any deception dishonestly obtains for himself or another any pecuniary advantage shall on conviction on indictment be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years.
- (2) The cases in which a pecuniary advantage within the meaning of this section is to be regarded as obtained for a person are cases where—
 - (a)^{F16}
 - (b) he is allowed to borrow by way of overdraft, or to take out any policy of insurance or annuity contract, or obtains an improvement of the terms on which he is allowed to do so; or
 - (c) he is given the opportunity to earn remuneration or greater remuneration in an office or employment, or to win money by betting.
- (3) For purposes of this section “deception” has the same meaning as in section 15 of this Act.

Textual Amendments

F16 S. 16(2)(a) repealed by Theft Act 1978 (c. 31, SIF 39:6), s. 5(5)

Status: Point in time view as at 27/02/2004.
Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Theft Act 1968. (See end of Document for details)

17 False accounting.

- (1) Where a person dishonestly, with a view to gain for himself or another or with intent to cause loss to another,—
 - (a) destroys, defaces, conceals or falsifies any account or any record or document made or required for any accounting purpose; or
 - (b) in furnishing information for any purpose produces or makes use of any account, or any such record or document as aforesaid, which to his knowledge is or may be misleading, false or deceptive in a material particular;he shall, on conviction on indictment, be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding seven years.
- (2) For purposes of this section a person who makes or concurs in making in an account or other document an entry which is or may be misleading, false or deceptive in a material particular, or who omits or concurs in omitting a material particular from an account or other document, is to be treated as falsifying the account or document.

18 Liability of company officers for certain offences by company.

- (1) Where an offence committed by a body corporate under section 15, 16 or 17 of this Act is proved to have been committed with the consent or connivance of any director, manager, secretary or other similar officer of the body corporate, or any person who was purporting to act in any such capacity, he as well as the body corporate shall be guilty of that offence, and shall be liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly.
- (2) Where the affairs of a body corporate are managed by its members, this section shall apply in relation to the acts and defaults of a member in connection with his functions of management as if he were a director of the body corporate.

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C5 S. 18 applied by [Theft Act 1978 \(c. 31, SIF 39:6\)](#), s. 5(1)

19 False statements by company directors, etc.

- (1) Where an officer of a body corporate or unincorporated association (or person purporting to act as such), with intent to deceive members or creditors of the body corporate or association about its affairs, publishes or concurs in publishing a written statement or account which to his knowledge is or may be misleading, false or deceptive in a material particular, he shall on conviction on indictment be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding seven years.
- (2) For purposes of this section a person who has entered into a security for the benefit of a body corporate or association is to be treated as a creditor of it.
- (3) Where the affairs of a body corporate or association are managed by its members, this section shall apply to any statement which a member publishes or concurs in publishing in connection with his functions of management as if he were an officer of the body corporate or association.

Status: Point in time view as at 27/02/2004.

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Theft Act 1968. (See end of Document for details)

20 **Suppression, etc. of documents.**

- (1) A person who dishonestly, with a view to gain for himself or another or with intent to cause loss to another, destroys, defaces or conceals any valuable security, any will or other testamentary document or any original document of or belonging to, or filed or deposited in, any court of justice or any government department shall on conviction on indictment be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding seven years.
- (2) A person who dishonestly, with a view to gain for himself or another or with intent to cause loss to another, by any deception procures the execution of a valuable security shall on conviction on indictment be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding seven years; and this subsection shall apply in relation to the making, acceptance, indorsement, alteration, cancellation or destruction in whole or in part of a valuable security, and in relation to the signing or sealing of any paper or other material in order that it may be made or converted into, or used or dealt with as, a valuable security, as if that were the execution of a valuable security.

(3) For the purposes of this section

“deception” has the same meaning as in section 15 of this Act, and

“valuable security” means any document creating, transferring, surrendering or releasing any right to, in or over property, or authorising the payment of money or delivery of any property, or evidencing the creation, transfer, surrender or release of any such right, or the payment of money or delivery of any property, or the satisfaction of any obligation.

21 **Blackmail.**

- (1) A person is guilty of blackmail if, with a view to gain for himself or another or with intent to cause loss to another, he makes any unwarranted demand with menaces; and for this purpose a demand with menaces is unwarranted unless the person making it does so in the belief—
 - (a) that he has reasonable grounds for making the demand; and
 - (b) that the use of the menaces is a proper means of reinforcing the demand.
- (2) The nature of the act or omission demanded is immaterial, and it is also immaterial whether the menaces relate to action to be taken by the person making the demand.
- (3) A person guilty of blackmail shall on conviction on indictment be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding fourteen years.

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C6 S. 21 extended (2.10.1991) by [Nuclear Material \(Offences\) Act 1983 \(c. 18, SIF 8\)](#), ss. **1(1)(d)**, 8(2);
[S.I. 1991/1716, art. 2](#)

Offences relating to goods stolen etc.

22 **Handling stolen goods.**

- (1) A person handles stolen goods if (otherwise than in the course of the stealing) knowing or believing them to be stolen goods he dishonestly receives the goods, or dishonestly

Status: Point in time view as at 27/02/2004.

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Theft Act 1968. (See end of Document for details)

undertakes or assists in their retention, removal, disposal or realisation by or for the benefit of another person, or if he arranges to do so.

- (2) A person guilty of handling stolen goods shall on conviction on indictment be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding fourteen years.

23 Advertising rewards for return of goods stolen or lost.

Where any public advertisement of a reward for the return of any goods which have been stolen or lost uses any words to the effect that no questions will be asked, or that the person producing the goods will be safe from apprehension or inquiry, or that any money paid for the purchase of the goods or advanced by way of loan on them will be repaid, the person advertising the reward and any person who prints or publishes the advertisement shall on summary conviction be liable to a fine not exceeding [^{F17}level 3 on the standard scale.]

Textual Amendments

F17 Words substituted by virtue of [Criminal Justice Act 1982 \(c. 48, SIF 39:1\)](#), **ss. 38, 46**

24 Scope of offences relating to stolen goods.

- (1) The provisions of this Act relating to goods which have been stolen shall apply whether the stealing occurred in England or Wales or elsewhere, and whether it occurred before or after the commencement of this Act, provided that the stealing (if not an offence under this Act) amounted to an offence where and at the time when the goods were stolen; and references to stolen goods shall be construed accordingly.
- (2) For purposes of those provisions references to stolen goods shall include, in addition to the goods originally stolen and parts of them (whether in their original state or not),—
- (a) any other goods which directly or indirectly represent or have at any time represented the stolen goods in the hands of the thief as being the proceeds of any disposal or realisation of the whole or part of the goods stolen or of goods so representing the stolen goods; and
 - (b) any other goods which directly or indirectly represent or have at any time represented the stolen goods in the hands of a handler of the stolen goods or any part of them as being the proceeds of any disposal or realisation of the whole or part of the stolen goods handled by him or of goods so representing them.
- (3) But no goods shall be regarded as having continued to be stolen goods after they have been restored to the person from whom they were stolen or to other lawful possession or custody, or after that person and any other person claiming through him have otherwise ceased as regards those goods to have any right to restitution in respect of the theft.
- (4) For purposes of the provisions of this Act relating to goods which have been stolen (including subsections (1) to (3) above) goods obtained in England or Wales or elsewhere either by blackmail or in the circumstances described in section 15(1) of this Act shall be regarded as stolen; and “steal”, “theft” and “thief” shall be construed accordingly.

Status: Point in time view as at 27/02/2004.
Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Theft Act 1968. (See end of Document for details)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C7 S. 24(1) and (4) applied (25.8.2000) by 2000 c. 6, ss. 148(9), 168

[^{F18} **24A Dishonestly retaining a wrongful credit.**

- (1) A person is guilty of an offence if—
 - (a) a wrongful credit has been made to an account kept by him or in respect of which he has any right or interest;
 - (b) he knows or believes that the credit is wrongful; and
 - (c) he dishonestly fails to take such steps as are reasonable in the circumstances to secure that the credit is cancelled.
- (2) References to a credit are to a credit of an amount of money.
- (3) A credit to an account is wrongful if it is the credit side of a money transfer obtained contrary to section 15A of this Act.
- (4) A credit to an account is also wrongful to the extent that it derives from—
 - (a) theft;
 - (b) an offence under section 15A of this Act;
 - (c) blackmail; or
 - (d) stolen goods.
- (5) In determining whether a credit to an account is wrongful, it is immaterial (in particular) whether the account is overdrawn before or after the credit is made.
- (6) A person guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for a term not exceeding ten years.
- (7) Subsection (8) below applies for purposes of provisions of this Act relating to stolen goods (including subsection (4) above).
- (8) References to stolen goods include money which is dishonestly withdrawn from an account to which a wrongful credit has been made, but only to the extent that the money derives from the credit.
- (9) In this section “account” and “money” shall be construed in accordance with section 15B of this Act.]

Textual Amendments

F18 S. 24A inserted (18.12.1996) by 1996 c. 62, s. 2

Possession of housebreaking implements, etc.

25 Going equipped for stealing, etc.

- (1) A person shall be guilty of an offence if, when not at his place of abode, he has with him any article for use in the course of or in connection with any burglary, theft or cheat.

Status: Point in time view as at 27/02/2004.
Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Theft Act 1968. (See end of Document for details)

- (2) A person guilty of an offence under this section shall on conviction on indictment be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years.
- (3) Where a person is charged with an offence under this section, proof that he had with him any article made or adapted for use in committing a burglary, theft or cheat shall be evidence that he had it with him for such use.
- (4) Any person may arrest without warrant anyone who is, or whom he, with reasonable cause, suspects to be, committing an offence under this section.
- (5) For purposes of this section an offence under section 12(1) of this Act of taking a conveyance shall be treated as theft, and “cheat” means an offence under section 15 of this Act.

Enforcement and procedure

26 Search for stolen goods.

- (1) If it is made to appear by information on oath before a justice of the peace that there is reasonable cause to believe that any person has in his custody or possession or on his premises any stolen goods, the justice may grant a warrant to search for and seize the same; but no warrant to search for stolen goods shall be addressed to a person other than a constable except under the authority of an enactment expressly so providing.

^{F19}(2)

- (3) Where under this section a person is authorised to search premises for stolen goods, he may enter and search the premises accordingly, and may seize any goods he believes to be stolen goods.

^{F20}(4)

- (5) This section is to be construed in accordance with section 24 of this Act; and in subsection (2) above the references to handling stolen goods shall include any corresponding offence committed before the commencement of this act.

Textual Amendments

F19 S. 26(2) repealed by [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 \(c. 60, SIF 95\)](#), s. 121, **Sch. 7 Pt. I**

F20 S. 26(4) repealed by [Criminal Justice Act 1972 \(c. 71\)](#), **Sch. 6 Pt. II**

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C8 S. 26(3): Powers of seizure extended (1.4.2003) by [2001 c. 16, ss. 50, 52-54, 68, 138\(2\)](#), Sch. 1 Pt. 1 para. 10; [S.I. 2003/708](#), **art. 2**

S. 26(3) modified (1.4.2003) by [2001 c. 16, ss. 55, 57\(3\), 68, 138\(2\)](#), Sch. 1 Pt. 3 para. 92; [S.I. 2003/708](#), **art. 2**

27 Evidence and procedure on charge of theft or handling stolen goods.

- (1) Any number of persons may be charged in one indictment, with reference to the same theft, with having at different times or at the same time handled all or any of the stolen goods, and the persons so charged may be tried together.

Status: Point in time view as at 27/02/2004.

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Theft Act 1968. (See end of Document for details)

- (2) On the trial of two or more persons indicted for jointly handling any stolen goods the jury may find any of the accused guilty if the jury are satisfied that he handled all or any of the stolen goods, whether or not he did so jointly with the other accused or any of them.
- (3) Where a person is being proceeded against for handling stolen goods (but not for any offence other than handling stolen goods), then at any stage of the proceedings, if evidence has been given of his having or arranging to have in his possession the goods the subject of the charge, or of his undertaking or assisting in, or arranging to undertake or assist in, their retention, removal, disposal or realisation, the following evidence shall be admissible for the purpose of proving that he knew or believed the goods to be stolen goods:—
- (a) evidence that he has had in his possession, or has undertaken or assisted in the retention, removal, disposal or realisation of, stolen goods from any theft taking place not earlier than twelve months before the offence charged; and
 - (b) (provided that seven days' notice in writing has been given to him of the intention to prove the conviction) evidence that he has within the five years preceding the date of the offence charged been convicted of theft or of handling stolen goods.
- (4) In any proceedings for the theft of anything in the course of transmission (whether by post or otherwise), or for handling stolen goods from such a theft, a statutory declaration made by any person that he despatched or received or failed to receive any goods or postal packet, or that any goods or postal packet when despatched or received by him were in a particular state or condition, shall be admissible as evidence of the facts stated in the declaration, subject to the following conditions:—
- (a) a statutory declaration shall only be admissible where and to the extent to which oral evidence to the like effect would have been admissible in the proceedings; and
 - (b) a statutory declaration shall only be admissible if at least seven days before the hearing or trial a copy of it has been given to the person charged, and he has not, at least three days before the hearing or trial or within such further time as the court may in special circumstances allow, given the prosecutor written notice requiring the attendance at the hearing or trial of the person making the declaration.
- [^{F21}(4A) Where the proceedings mentioned in subsection (4) above are proceedings before a magistrates' court inquiring into an offence as examining justices that subsection shall have effect with the omission of the words from "subject to the following conditions" to the end of the subsection.]
- (5) This section is to be construed in accordance with section 24 of this Act; and in subsection (3)(b) above the reference to handling stolen goods shall include any corresponding offence committed before the commencement of this Act.

Textual Amendments

F21 S. 27(4A) inserted (4.7.1996 but with effect as mentioned in Sch. 1 Pt. III para. 39) by 1996 c. 25, s. 47, Sch. 1 Pt. II para. 19 (with s. 78(1)); S.I. 1997/683, art. 1(2)

Status: Point in time view as at 27/02/2004.
Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Theft Act 1968. (See end of Document for details)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C9 S. 27(4) applied (with modifications) (26.3.2001) by 2000 c. 26, s. 109(2); S.I. 2001/878, art. 2, Sch. (subject to transitional provisions and savings in art. 16)

^{F22}**28**

Textual Amendments

F22 S. 28 repealed (25.8.2000) by 2000 c. 6, ss. 165, 168, Sch. 12 Pt. I (with Sch. 11 paras. 1,2)

29 Jurisdiction of quarter sessions, and summary trial.

^{F23}(1)

^{X1}(2) In Schedule I to the ^{M1} Magistrates' Courts Act 1952 (which lists the indictable offences by adults which may be tried summarily with the consent of the accused) for paragraph 11 there shall be substituted:—

- “11 Any indictable offence under the Theft Act 1968 except—
- (a) robbery, aggravated burglary, blackmail and assault with intent to rob; and
 - (b) burglary comprising the commission of, or an intention to commit, an offence which is not included in this Schedule; and
 - (c) burglary in a dwelling if entry to the dwelling or the part of it in which the burglary was committed, or to any building or part of a building containing the dwelling, was obtained by force or deception or by the use of any tool, key or appliance, or if any person in the dwelling was subjected to violence or the threat of violence; and
 - (d) handling stolen goods from an offence not committed in the United Kingdom.”

Editorial Information

X1 The text of s. 29(2) is in the form in which it was originally enacted: it was not reproduced in Statutes in Force and does not reflect any amendments or repeals which may have been made prior to 1.2.1991.

Textual Amendments

F23 S. 29(1) repealed by Courts Act 1971 (c. 23), Sch. 11 Pt. IV

Marginal Citations

M1 1952 c. 55

Status: Point in time view as at 27/02/2004.
Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Theft Act 1968. (See end of Document for details)

General and consequential provisions

30 Husband and wife.

- (1) This Act shall apply in relation to the parties to a marriage, and to property belonging to the wife or husband whether or not by reason of an interest derived from the marriage, as it would apply if they were not married and any such interest subsisted independently of the marriage.
- (2) Subject to subsection (4) below, a person shall have the same right to bring proceedings against that person's wife or husband for any offence (whether under this Act or otherwise) as if they were not married, and a person bringing any such proceedings shall be competent to give evidence for the prosecution at every stage of the proceedings.
- ^{F24}(3)
- (4) Proceedings shall not be instituted against a person for any offence of stealing or doing unlawful damage to property which at the time of the offence belongs to that person's wife or husband, or for any attempt, incitement or conspiracy to commit such an offence, unless the proceedings are instituted by or with the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions:
Provided that—
- (a) this subsection shall not apply to proceedings against a person for an offence—
- (i) if that person is charged with committing the offence jointly with the wife or husband; or
- (ii) if by virtue of any judicial decree or order (wherever made) that person and the wife or husband are at the time of the offence under no obligation to cohabit; . . . ^{F25}
- ^{F26}(b)
- (5) ^{F27}Notwithstanding [^{F28}section 6 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1979] subsection (4) of this section shall apply—
- (a) to an arrest (if without warrant) made by the wife or husband, and
- (b) to a warrant of arrest issued on an information laid by the wife or husband.

Textual Amendments

- F24** S. 30(3) repealed by [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 \(c. 60, SIF 95\)](#), s. 121, [Sch. 7 Pt. V](#)
- F25** Word repealed by [Criminal Jurisdiction Act 1975 \(c. 59\)](#), [Sch. 6 Pt. I](#)
- F26** Proviso (4)(b) repealed by [Criminal Jurisdiction Act 1975 \(c. 59\)](#), [Sch. 6 Pt. I](#)
- F27** S. 30(5) added by [Criminal Jurisdiction Act 1975 \(c. 59\)](#), [Sch. 5 para. 2\(1\)](#)
- F28** Words substituted by [Prosecution of Offences Act 1979 \(c. 31, SIF 39:1\)](#), [Sch. 1](#)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C10** S. 30(1) applied by [Theft Act 1978 \(c. 31, SIF 39:6\)](#), [s. 5\(2\)](#)

31 Effect on civil proceedings and rights.

- (1) A person shall not be excused, by reason that to do so may incriminate that person or the wife or husband of that person of an offence under this Act—

Status: Point in time view as at 27/02/2004.

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Theft Act 1968. (See end of Document for details)

- (a) from answering any question put to that person in proceedings for the recovery or administration of any property, for the execution of any trust or for an account of any property or dealings with property; or
 - (b) from complying with any order made in any such proceedings;
- but no statement or admission made by a person in answering a question put or complying with an order made as aforesaid shall, in proceedings for an offence under this Act, be admissible in evidence against that person or (unless they married after the making of the statement or admission) against the wife or husband of that person.
- (2) Notwithstanding any enactment to the contrary, where property has been stolen or obtained by fraud or other wrongful means, the title to that or any other property shall not be affected by reason only of the conviction of the offender.

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C11 S. 31(1) applied by [Theft Act 1978 \(c. 31, SIF 39:6\)](#), s. 5(2)

32 Effect on existing law and construction of references to offences.

- (1) The following offences are hereby abolished for all purposes not relating to offences committed before the commencement of this Act, that is to say—
- (a) any offence at common law of larceny, robbery, burglary, receiving stolen property, obtaining property by threats, extortion by colour or office or franchise, false accounting by public officers, concealment of treasure trove and, except as regards offences relating to the public revenue, cheating; and
 - (b) any offence under an enactment mentioned in Part I of Schedule 3 to this Act, to the extent to which the offence depends on any section or part of a section included in column 3 of that Schedule;
- but so that the provisions in Schedule 1 to this Act (which preserve with modifications certain offences under the ^{M2}Larceny Act 1861 of taking or killing deer and taking or destroying fish) shall have effect as there set out.
- (2) Except as regards offences committed before the commencement of this Act, and except in so far as the context otherwise requires,—
- (a) references in any enactment passed before this Act to an offence abolished by this Act shall, subject to any express amendment or repeal made by this Act, have effect as references to the corresponding offence under this Act, and in any such enactment the expression “receive” (when it relates to an offence of receiving) shall mean handle, and “receiver” shall be construed accordingly; and
 - (b) without prejudice to paragraph (a) above, references in any enactment, whenever passed, to theft or stealing (including references to stolen goods), and references to robbery, blackmail, burglary, aggravated burglary or handling stolen goods, shall be construed in accordance with the provisions of this Act, including those of section 24.

Marginal Citations

M2 1861 c. 96.

Status: Point in time view as at 27/02/2004.

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Theft Act 1968. (See end of Document for details)

33 Miscellaneous and consequential amendments, and repeal.

^{X2F29}(1)

^{X2}(2) The enactments mentioned in Parts II and III of Schedule 2 to this Act shall have effect subject to the amendments there provided for, and (subject to subsection (4) below) the amendments made by Part II to enactments extending beyond England and Wales shall have the like extent as the enactment amended.

^{X2}(3) The enactments mentioned in Schedule 3 to this Act (which include in Part II certain enactments related to the subject matter of this Act but already obsolete or redundant apart from this Act) are hereby repealed to the extent specified in column 3 of that Schedule; and, notwithstanding that the foregoing sections of this Act do not extend to Scotland, where any enactment expressed to be repealed by Schedule 3 does so extend, the Schedule shall have effect to repeal it in its application to Scotland except in so far as the repeal is expressed not to extend to Scotland.

(4) No amendment or repeal made by this Act in Schedule 1 to the ^{M3}Extradition Act 1870 or in the Schedule to the ^{M4}Extradition Act 1873 shall affect the operation of that Schedule by reference to the law of a British possession; but the repeal made in Schedule 1 to the ^{M5}Extradition Act 1870 shall extend throughout the United Kingdom.

Editorial Information

X2 The text of s. 33(1)–(3) is in the form in which it was originally enacted: it was not reproduced in Statutes in Force and does not reflect any amendments or repeals which may have been made prior to 1.2.1991.

Textual Amendments

F29 S. 33(1) repealed (26.3.2001) by S.I. 2001/1149, art. 3(2), **Sch. 2** (with art. 4(11))

Marginal Citations

M3 1870 c. 52.

M4 1873 c. 60.

M5 1870 c. 52.

Supplementary

34 Interpretation.

(1) Sections 4(1) and 5(1) of this Act shall apply generally for purposes of this Act as they apply for purposes of section 1.

(2) For purposes of this Act—

(a) “gain” and “loss” are to be construed as extending only to gain or loss in money or other property, but as extending to any such gain or loss whether temporary or permanent; and—

(i) “gain” includes a gain by keeping what one has, as well as a gain by getting what one has not; and

(ii) “loss” includes a loss by not getting what one might get, as well as a loss by parting with what one has;

Status: Point in time view as at 27/02/2004.
Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Theft Act 1968. (See end of Document for details)

- (b) “goods”, except in so far as the context otherwise requires, includes money and every other description of property except land, and includes things severed from the land by stealing ^{F30}; and.
- (c) “mail bag” and “postal packet” have the meanings given by section 125(1) of the Postal Services Act 2000.^{F30F30}]

Textual Amendments

F30 S. 34(2)(c) and preceding word inserted (12.11.2003) by [The Postal Services Act 2000 \(Consequential Modifications\) Order 2003 \(S.I. 2003/2908\)](#), art. 3(1), [Sch. 1 para. 1](#)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C12 S. 34 applied by [Theft Act 1978 \(c. 31, SIF 39:6\)](#), s. 5(2)

35 Commencement and transitional provisions.

- (1) This Act shall come into force on the 1st January 1969 and, save as otherwise provided by this Act, shall have effect only in relation to offences wholly or partly committed on or after that date.
- (2) [^{F31}Section 27 of this Act and section 148 of the Powers of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000]shall apply in relation to proceedings for an offence committed before the commencement of this Act as they would apply in relation to proceedings for a corresponding offence under this Act, and shall so apply in place of any corresponding enactment repealed by this Act.
- (3) Subject to subsection (2) above, no repeal or amendment by this Act of any enactment relating to procedure or evidence, or to the jurisdiction or powers of any court, or to the effect of a conviction, shall affect the operation of the enactment in relation to offences committed before the commencement of this Act or to proceedings for any such offence.

Textual Amendments

F31 Words in s. 35(2) substituted (25.8.2000) by [2000 c. 6, ss. 165\(1\), 168](#), [Sch. 9 para. 35](#)

36 Short title, and general provisions as to Scotland and Northern Ireland.

- (1) This Act may be cited as the Theft Act 1968.
- ^{F32}(2)
- (3) This Act does not extend to Scotland or, ^{F33} . . . to Northern Ireland, except as regards any amendment or repeal which in accordance with section 33 above is to extend to Scotland or Northern Ireland.

Textual Amendments

F32 S. 36(2) repealed by [Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973 \(c. 36\)](#), [Sch. 6 Pt. I](#)

F33 Words repealed by [Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973 \(c. 36\)](#), [Sch. 6 Pt. I](#)

Status:

Point in time view as at 27/02/2004.

Changes to legislation:

There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Theft Act 1968.