

Crime in Harefield

1878 ~ 1893

from the Middlesex Gazette

M. Evans.



Most of the local crime at this time was dealt with in the Petty Sessions at Uxbridge courthouse. It consisted chiefly of assault and abuse, failing to send a child to school, trespass in search of game, and being drunk and disorderly.

The latter was mainly on Saturday nights outside the pubs. It was said that there was a policeman for every pub. These "drunk and disorderly" cases often involved obscene language, "not

fit for a pig to hear" as P.C. Francis said later. The fine was 5s. to 20s. and the higher figure carried an alternative of 14 days in gaol. One wonders how often offenders had to accept the 14 days due to having no money.

The crime of assault carried varied penalties. Wounding his wife cost a man 15s. Knocking his wife down cost another 20s., more than a week's pay. But assault on a gamekeeper meant

2 months hard labour, and assaulting
a policeman 6 weeks of the same.

These cases may have meant
families going into the workhouse.

The schoolmaster, who was regarded
as "a terror", assaulted a boy who
played truant and was fined 10s.
A man who assaulted his daughter
got 3 months hard labour.

Game, belonging to the land-
owners, was clearly most valuable.
Fines of 25s., 30s., 40s. for using
a gun on someone's land were

common in the 1880s. In those 15 years there were 44 fines reported and one prison sentence of 6 weeks hard labour. There is no doubt these forays were a regular occurrence in some families - a risky way of providing food. Some used guns and others snares.

Failing to send a child to school was a regular offence. A boy could earn enough working in the fields at certain times to make the 2/6d fine worthwhile.

There were 24 cases of stealing. In 1878 a man stole some watercress and went to prison for a month. Six weeks hard labour seems a severe penalty for taking some of Mr. Webster's tomatoes at the Grove. Young George aged 13 got 8 strokes of the birch for stealing a bottle of lemonade. This is the only case recorded of the use of the birch.

Playing "pitch and toss" on a public way merited a fine of 5s. to 10s.

Riding and driving was another sphere in which one could come unstuck. A man riding asleep in 1878 was fined 10s. Driving without reins cost a farmer 10s. Furious driving, and being drunk in charge of a horse and cart could cost 20s.

There was one case of attempted rape, transferred to the Central Criminal Court where the accused was found not guilty.

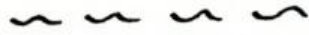
People with no land were often very poor, and these fines should

be seen in the light of the current
pay levels ~ a skilled horse or cow
man could earn 16s. a week, with
a cottage provided; his wife might
be expected to do some work as well.
Farm labourers earned much less, and
their work might be seasonal. There
must have been a great temptation
to "trespass in search of game" even
though the penalties were known.

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Summary of Cases from Harefield in
Uxbridge Petty Sessions Court
1878 to 1893.

from the Middlesex Gazette.



Stealing.	24	Prison 6. Fined 8 Remand 1 Discharged 8. Birch 1.
Assault & Abuse.	61.	{ Prison 11. Fined 26. Remand 1. Discharged 2. Adjourned 2 Bound over 3. Dismissed 12. Sent for trial 1. Not guilty 1.
Not sending child to school.	55	Fined 50. Adjourned 4. Order 2.
Neglect	7	Fined 2. Discharged 2. Dismissed 2. Order 1.
Driving Offences	7.	Fined 7.
Trespass in search of game	52.	{ Prison 1. Fined 44 Warrant 1. Dismissed 6.
Pitch & Toss	13.	Fined 13.
Fraud	1.	Sent for trial 1.
Drunk & Disorderly.	49.	Prison 1. Fined 41. Dismissed 7.
Unjust Weights.	9.	Fined 9
Wilful Damage	10	Fined 6. Sent for trial 4
Cruelty	3	Fined 2. Discharged 1.
Attempted suicide	1.	Discharged 1.
Causing Nuisance	1.	Order & costs 1.
Not providing water supply	2	Order & costs 2.