

confessed (it was said ‘without compulsion’) and asked for two similar offences (stealing sheep from Hodge Bower) to be taken into consideration. He claimed that he had been incited to commit the crime by John Strutton and his mother Priscilla. An attempt had been made to arrest John Strutton but he had escaped and fled the parish but was under pain of arrest should he ever return.

Squatting

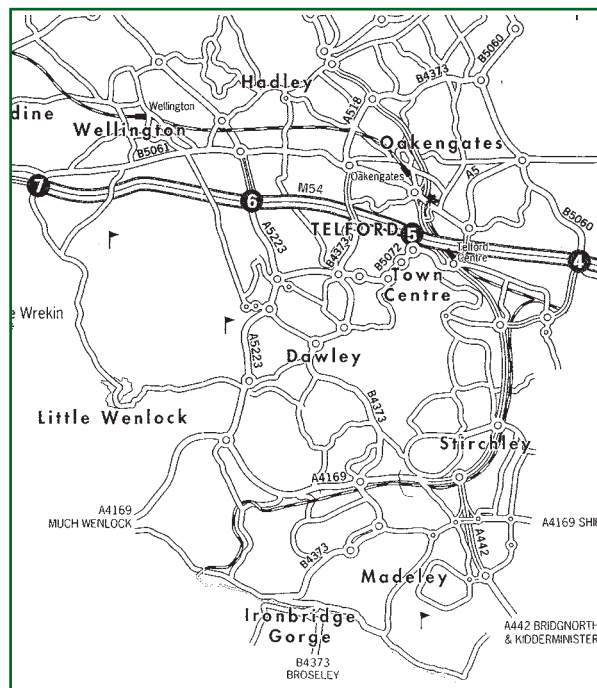
Henry Easthop was in more trouble with the court for building a cottage in Madeley Wood without permission and for not paying rent to the Lord of the Manor. This seems to have been a common offence – several others were fined for the same reason. From other Court Rolls it seems likely that, after paying his fine, he would be entered on the rent roll and pay rent like everyone else.



Unwelcome Guests

George Easthop junior and Priscilla Strutton were among the many inhabitants of the Manor to be fined for taking in lodgers without a licence. This was an early example of illegal immigrants flooding into the Parish and becoming a burden on local taxpayers. Poor Relief was organised by the Parish for any pauper who could prove they had been resident there for a year and a day and all parishioners paid a community charge which was dependent on the numbers requiring relief so unlicensed paupers posed a serious problem.

How to get to Madeley



Compiled by Sue Laffin assisted by the Madeley History Group.
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Typeset and printed by Madeley Print Shop Ltd

Parish People No.2



*The point of the Furze of
Lord of the Manors of Madeley*

Madeley Misdeeds

May 2010

Madeley Misdeeds (Extracts from the Manor Court of 2nd May 1677)

Manor Courts

The origins of the Manor Court are uncertain but almost certainly to be found in the Anglo-Saxon period. It was the lowest court in England and covered only those over whom the local manor held jurisdiction. It was the court of the lord of the manor and everything was done in his name although the proceedings themselves were usually presided over by his steward. The Manor Court dealt



solely with minor crimes and, although it was supposed to meet regularly, seems, in reality, to have been a much more haphazard affair. Cases were heard before a jury, usually of twelve people but sometimes comprising as many as thirty. Most people found guilty of offences were fined. However, an offence against the village as a whole (e.g. selling underweight bread) was often punished by time in the stocks. Stealing goods of quite low value counted as a felony and a person found guilty of a felony could be executed.

This leaflet is based on a summary of the proceedings of the Madeley Manor Court of 2nd May 1677 which is now stored in Shropshire Archives¹. The court was presided over by John Tranter, chief steward to Thomas Brooke, Lord of the Manor of Madeley. In addition to the cases dealt with it also records fines of 12 pence each charged to Francis Wolfe and James Colley who should have attended the court but failed to turn up and did not send apologies.

A noticeable feature of the document is that the same names seem to turn up several times accused of more than one offence. One suspects that the terms 'the usual suspects' and 'problem families' have a long history!

Animal antics

Abigail Hill, widow, seems to have been causing a nuisance to her neighbours in several ways! She was accused of *staff-driving* her two cows along the streets of Madeley (getting behind them with a large stick and beating them so hard that they panicked and ran into passers-by). She was also accused of setting up her 'swine-trough' in the street in Madeley in such a way that nobody could pass. When her cows were impounded (the 17th century equivalent of wheel-clamping) she sent her son, Samuel Hill, to break into the pound and retrieve them without paying the fine. James Cludd was also fined for staff-



driving his cows along Madeley streets while his wife, Anne Cludd, was fined for 'damaging the hedges'. Swine were supposed to have rings in their noses (to stop them burrowing) and to be yoked (to prevent them breaking through small gaps in hedges). Robert Holland was fined for allowing his swine to range over his neighbour's land *unyoked* and *unrung*.

"ASBOs"

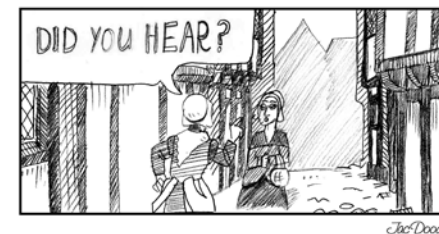
George Easthop junior's name crops up again as he was also fined for drinking in John Spencer's alehouse on Sundays when he should have been attending Divine Service while Spencer himself was fined for allowing people to drink in his alehouse during Divine Service. It is possible that this alehouse was close to the church so the nuisance was difficult to overlook. He was also fined for *suing and troubling* Henry Bowdler and his wife as well as the vicar, Benjamin Taylor. Bowdler was then fined for *suing and troubling* John Spencer in return. It would seem that catching 'two birds with one stone' was a popular ploy of the Court! In this instance the Constables and Churchwardens had arranged meetings between the aggrieved parties in an attempt to sort out the problem but the two men had continued their quarrels without

waiting for this arbitration.

Edward Davies and Morrice Hughes were fined for refusing work while having no visible means of support.

Drunk and Disorderly

William Morris (alias Davies) was fined for being a *common drunkard and blasphemer* and both he and Richard Garbett were fined for fighting and bloodshed. The fines levied for drunken and disorderly behaviour were higher if the protagonists came to blows and were doubled if blood was drawn! William's wife Elizabeth Morris (also alias Davies) was fined for causing discord among her neighbours. Marie Easthop (wife of George junior) was fined for similar reasons accused of inventing and spreading false gossip.



Environmental concerns

All the inhabitants of the Lower Town of Madeley were fined for failing to keep their stocks, pillory, ducking stool and shooting butts in a usable condition. William Ashwood of Madeley Wood was fined for allowing his house and tenement to fall into *ruin and decay*. George Easthop senior was fined for failing to maintain his hedges and ditches and for *oppressing (overgrazing) Madeley Wood with his cattle*.

Illegal Trading

Thomas Morris (alias Davies) was fined for Sunday trading.

Obstruction

Francis Walker was brought before the Court for another offence familiar to us today. He was accused of blocking up a right-of-way – the track leading from Madeley Wood to Madeley Parish Church *being an ancient usual way used and enjoyed time out of mind*.

Sheep Stealing

This was a felony and the responsibility of the Manor Court was restricted to detaining the offenders and sending them on to a more senior court (The Assizes) for trial. It seems that Henry Easthop (or Easthope) from Madeley Wood had stolen one of Robert Holland's sheep but had been caught in the act by Holland. Henry