



Upper House (date unknown)
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Perhaps the best-known event in Madeley's proud history is the occasion on which the future Charles II spent a night in 'King Charles' Barn', at Upper House, during his escape after the battle of Worcester in 1651. Charles later dictated the story of his escape to the diarist Samuel Pepys.

Following his defeat at Worcester, on Wednesday 3rd September 1651, Charles fled north to White Ladies, a large, timber-framed house built on the site of a medieval nunnery. He reached the house early on Thursday 4th September. White Ladies was in the charge of George Penderel one of five brothers who would play a large part in the events which followed. The Penderels disguised the future king as a woodcutter, called Will Jones, and hid him in Spring Coppice a nearby wood. Just an hour later a group of Parliamentary soldiers arrived and searched the area but failed to find him. That evening he moved to Hobbal Grange, home of Richard, another Penderel brother, and his mother Jane. As night fell, fortified by a meal and still disguised as a countryman, he and Richard set off westwards. Charles hoped to travel to London but eventually decided that a safer course would be to cross the Severn into Wales then set out for Swansea or another port where he might be able to take ship for France.

The pair headed for Madeley planning to cross the Severn at a ferry point probably near Coalport. However, they were challenged at Evelith Mill (near Kemberton) by the miller and forced to run down a "very deep and very dirty" lane and hide behind a

hedge in fear of pursuit (unknown to them the miller was actually a royalist sympathiser who was sheltering some escapees from Worcester in his mill).

They arrived in Madeley early on Friday 5th September and made for Upper House, home of Francis Wolfe, a staunch Roman Catholic and known Royalist sympathiser. According to the king's

own account (dictated some 30 years after the event) Richard Penderel asked Francis Wolfe to shelter "one that had escaped from the battle of Worcester" and Wolfe responded by saying that it was so dangerous a thing to harbour anybody that was known that "I would not venture my neck for any man unless it were the King himself" whereupon Penderel revealed the true identity of his companion and Francis Wolfe offered to "venture all he had in the world to secure him". They were warned that the area was crawling with Parliamentary troops who had discovered all the hiding places (probably priests' holes) in Wolfe's house so Charles and Richard hid in the Upper House barn where they stayed the whole day. Wolfe advised against trying to cross into Wales because of the military presence and Charles decided to strike back east, to Boscobel House, another property in the care of the Penderel family. He arrived there on Saturday 6th September and was obliged to spend most of the day hiding in the now-famous oak tree while soldiers scoured the woods for fugitive Royalists. He was able to return to the house for the night and left on Sunday evening for Moseley Old Hall near Wolverhampton.

Two days later he set off for Bristol, on horseback, disguised as a groom and accompanied by Mistress Jane Lane of Bentley Hall, Staffordshire. Without an official pass Catholics could not travel more than five miles from their homes but she had obtained a pass, for herself and a manservant, to visit a pregnant friend in Bristol. After many more adventures Charles arrived in Brighton on 15th October 1651 and sailed from a creek near Shoreham in the coal brig *Surprise* to seek shelter in France where he remained in exile until 1660.

After the Restoration, a grateful king offered a pension to his protector, Francis Wolfe, but this was declined and the family was rewarded with a set of silver plate and an inscribed silver tankard. The king also increased the armorial bearings of the Wolfe family by adding a crown resting on a wolf's paw to the hereditary crest. The fate of the set of plate remains unknown but the tankard was sold to the Reynolds family during the later 18th century and later passed, by marriage, to the Rathbones a family of Liverpool merchants.



Upper House c. 1873
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Upper House Barn c. 1873
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Examination of the records in Shropshire Archives revealed that a facsimile of the tankard had been presented to the Society of Antiquaries of London during the 19th century. The original was exhibited at the Lancashire and Cheshire Historic Society in 1851 by a W. Rathbone. It then vanished from view but it is believed to survive in a private collection.

During the 18th century 'King Charles' barn', as it had become known, together with its adjoining buildings were used, briefly, as a market house for Madeley and the butchers shambles were still visible in 1880. The main house passed through a succession of owners eventually being sold to a trust in 1941 when it was leased, with its outbuildings, to the Coventry Gauge and Tool Co. who set up a branch factory in the barns and installed their manager in the main house. The whole property was purchased by Telford Development Corporation in April 1966 and the house was converted for the TDC Social Development staff. During the period of TDC ownership the barns were rented out, for a time, to a small light engineering company which built bicycle frames (Southern Cross Bicycles). Upper House was leased to Shropshire County Council in 1976 and was used, for ten years, as a Magistrates' Court.

In 1987 the property was purchased by Cyril Orchard & Partners (Surveyors). By the mid-1990s it had reverted to Telford & Wrekin Council, successors of TDC, and the main house became the offices of the Social Services Mental Health Unit as it remains today. The barns and their surroundings became increasingly derelict before being purchased for residential conversion in the early 21st century since when they have enjoyed a new lease of life.

This story represents one of the rare occasions when events in Madeley impacted upon our national history and it seems only right that it should take its place alongside the better-known aspects of the escape of the future king. After all, the story of Charles's sojourn in the oak tree at Boscobel is known all over England but how many people outside Madeley know about his night in our barn?

The following sources have been consulted during the preparation of this leaflet:

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The Escape of Charles II after the Battle of Worcester (London, 1966)

Orchard, C
Upper House Madeley (privately published, nd)

Rayska, Sula
Upper House & Barn (Historic Buildings in Telford leaflet No. 9, Telford Development Corporation, nd)

The National Trust
Moseley Old Hall (The National Trust, 1997)

Weaver, O J
Boscobel House and White Ladies Priory (English Heritage, 1996)

Charles II's account, which he dictated to Samuel Pepys in 1680, was first published by Sir David Dalrymple in 1766. It has been republished several times, most recently in 1954 under the title *His Majesty Preserved*. The original manuscript is housed in the Pepysian Library, Magdalene College Cambridge (MSS 2141) together with other eye-witness accounts collected by Pepys.



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Richard Penderel by Richard Houston after Gerald Soest mezzotint, published 1798.
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