



Devon Family History Society
Joint Project Publication with
Devon Record Office



STANBOROUGH AND COLERIDGE MAGISTRATES COURT REGISTER

1881

DRO Reference – 2448B/P/R1

DFHS Book Reference - D107

Magistrates' Courts were previously known as the Courts of Petty Sessions. They were the lowest tier in the English court system. They developed as extra meetings to lessen the burden on Justices of the Peace [magistrates] in Quarter Sessions, which were only held four times a year.

As was the normal practice Devon was subdivided into geographical divisions with each magistrate being assigned to a particular division. These magistrates' court divisions have altered over time.

Most minor crimes were dealt with by these courts, which sometimes met twice a month, between the Quarter Sessions. They required the presence of two Justices of the Peace [magistrates], but no jury.

They dealt mainly with minor cases such as petty theft, drunkenness, minor assaults, bastardy and failure to maintain families, larceny, trespassing, parking and traffic offences, fraud and juvenile cases, as well as ale licensing and adoption.

Records of the Courts of Petty Sessions/Magistrates' Courts therefore typically relate to criminal cases heard by the magistrates or Justices of the Peace for each division. They may also include registers of licences for public houses, clubs and other bodies.

The records of this Magistrates' Court form part of the Stanborough and Coleridge Petty Sessions collection [reference: 2448B] held at Devon Record Office. This Petty Sessional Division included parishes in the South Hams portion of South Devon.

The records include one Magistrates' Court register, which is also known as a "register of the Court of Summary Jurisdiction" dating from 1880 to 1892. There is also an earlier magistrates' minute book of court proceedings dating from 1876 to 1878 [ref: 2448 B/P/M1] which gives details on earlier court cases not covered by the surviving register, and a fines and fees account book beginning in 1880 [ref: 2448 B/P/A1].

This booklet covers Magistrates' Court register entries for the each of the two years only – i.e. for 1880 and 1881 - which are found in the register covering 1880 to 1892.