



Devon Family History Society
Joint Project Publication with
Devon Record Office



WOODBURY MAGISTRATES COURT REGISTER

1891

DRO Reference – 1820P/R/1

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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 Woodbury Petty Sessions Division collection [reference: 1820P] held at Devon Record Office. Courts sat at Woodbury and Exmouth in the East Devon area.

The records include a number of Magistrates' Court registers, also sometimes known as "registers of the Court of Summary Jurisdiction" dating from 1891 to 1968. There is also an incomplete series of magistrates' minute books of court proceedings dating from 1849 to 1951 [ref:1820P/M/1-36]. The first three minute books, covering the years 1849-1859 and 1886-1889, give details of earlier court cases not covered by the register indexed here. The Juvenile Court registers in this collection begin in 1934 and end in 1968 [reference: 1820P/RJ/1-19]. The records also include an incomplete series of licensing registers for public houses, clubs, cinemas and other places of entertainment, beginning in 1923 [reference: 1820P/L/1-10].

Later Woodbury Magistrates Court registers are found in the East Devon Petty Sessions Division collection [reference 1821P].

This booklet covers Magistrates' Court register entries for 1891 only from the register covering 1891 to 1896.