

No Crime Too Small: Petty Crime in 19th Century East Farndon

Two incidents reported in the *Harborough Advertiser* in the Victorian period can make us feel nostalgic for an age when the police had time to solve minor crimes in a very patient way. East Farndon, like most parishes, could rely on the local police to take every incident seriously, however trivial it might seem to us today. In fact, these successful arrests may strike us as almost comical, because this use of police time is so far from our experience.

In a report of August 1870, the culprit is a man named Edmund Tredgold, who turns up fairly regularly before the local magistrates. Mr W.E. Whiteman suspected that someone was stealing milk from his cows on the sly. The police response was to send a constable to lie in wait – for how long is not specified – to try to apprehend the phantom milker. Tredgold was intercepted and charged with stealing a pint and a half of milk. At the Petty Sessions he denied the charge. But the evidence of the warm milk in the bottle made this denial hard to sustain. He was committed for trial.



In June 1883 in another case at Little Bowden Petty Sessions, farmer Mr J. Rowlatt accused Henry Moore, one of his workers, of stealing 3 eggs, valued at twopence halfpenny. In a smart piece of detection, P.C. Thacker marked some eggs and then lay in wait in the hope that the culprit would appear and steal them. His ingenuity and patience paid off and he was able to spring out and apprehend Moore. The marked eggs of course gave him away. Mr Rowlatt appealed for leniency as Moore pleaded guilty. However Moore was fined ten shillings, plus £1-3-7 costs. All for 3 eggs, worth twopence halfpenny.



These are incidents from a more leisurely, less complex time. Today the farmers would surely be told they needed to upgrade their security systems. But it's hard to dismiss from your mind the image of the local constable lurking patiently behind a hay stall, waiting for the surreptitious milker of the cows or the worker sneaking off with his three ill-gotten eggs.

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