

## THE RULE OF LAW IN MARKET RASEN

"WE CERTAINLY KNOW OF ONE EPISODE IN 1852 WHEN THREE PRISONERS ESCAPED BY UNSCREWING THE BOLTS OF THEIR CELL DOOR!"

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**The Magistrates' Court and Police Station in Market Rasen date from 1849 – before they were built all court sessions were held in The White Hart in King Street and petty criminals were 'housed' in policeman's homes, with the policeman's wife expected to feed them!**

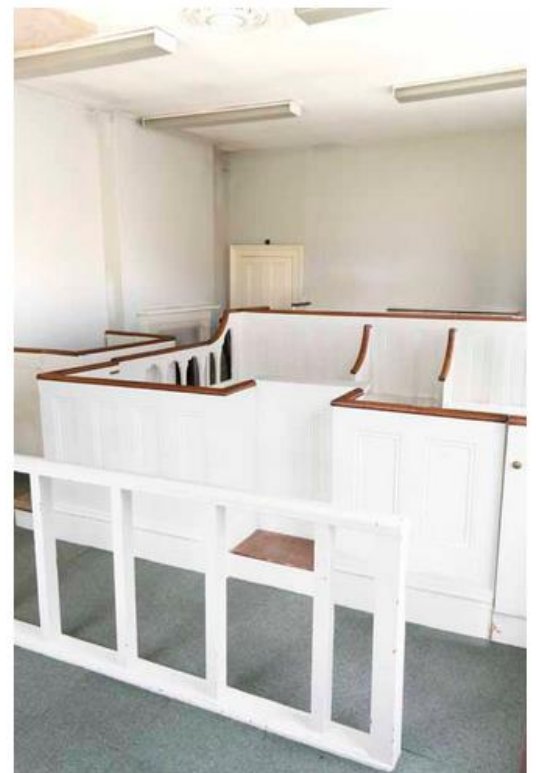
When the building opened the stocks were moved from the market place to here, and there were also cells for prisoners – though they weren't as secure as people expected! We certainly know of one episode in 1852 when three prisoners escaped by unscrewing the bolts of their cell door!

The court heard cases that affected people's everyday lives in Market Rasen – one of its first cases was a woman named Elizabeth Nursall, an unmarried mother who wanted child support money from her baby's father, Joseph Mann. The magistrates could hand down severe punishments, including hard labour. Magistrates also had the power to send the accused to Lincoln or Louth Assizes, where they could and were sentenced to be transported, often for life.

From 1787 to 1850, twenty one people from the Market Rasen area were sent to the other side of the world. Their crimes ranged from burglary through to sheep stealing, receiving sheep fleeces, assault, robbery and obtaining money under false pretences. Only one woman was sentenced to be sent to Australia – Elizabeth Drury had stolen linen and other material from a Market Rasen mercer. She was transported in 1787 but didn't survive the journey aboard the notorious ship The Neptune.



"Police Station" detail above the doors, with the date 1849



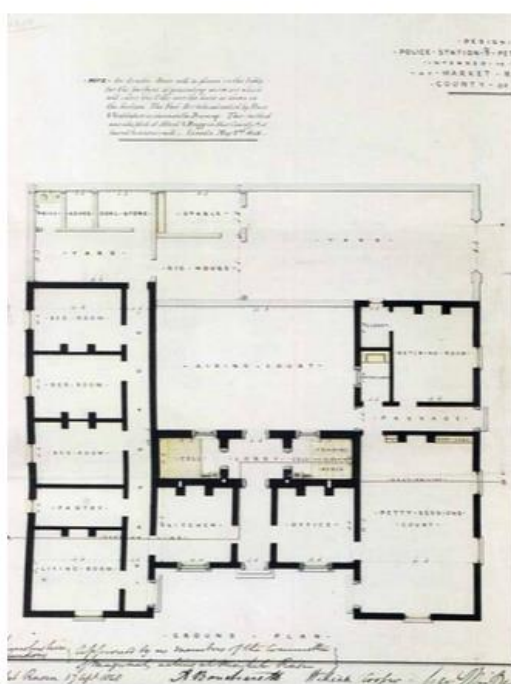
Inside the Magistrates' Court, Market Rasen, believed to be only one of three complete courtrooms of this period left in England

The Market Rasen Magistrates' Court eventually closed in 1998. The Old Police Station, as it's now known, is one of only three complete mid 19th century courtrooms left in England of this period making it a very important historic Grade II listed building.

## REFERENCES

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Original Architect's Drawing of the Magistrates' Court (floor plan) 1848



The Witness Box in Market Rasen's Grade II Listed Magistrates' Court



The Accused Box in Market Rasen's 1849 Magistrates' Court