

## Ufford Heritage Trail

### 2. Stocks and Whipping Post

From 1351, England's Statute of Labourers in the reign of King Edward III made it law that every town and village had a set of stocks for punishing "vagabonds, layabouts and drunkards". Ufford would therefore have had a set of stocks from that time, for the punishment of petty crime and misdemeanours. The use of stocks was outlawed in 1837 but whipping posts were not abolished until 1948. (For more historical background see later in this article)

The first record of the Ufford stocks and whipping post is in the 1680 churchwardens' accounts which shows the sum of two shillings being paid for repairs. The existing stocks and whipping post are Grade 2 listed by Historic England and are reported as being made in the mid C18<sup>th</sup> to early C19<sup>th</sup>, presumably to replace earlier models.



Photographs of the stocks and whipping post in their current location date from the late C19<sup>th</sup>: the one below (dating from 1901) shows the stocks in the extreme right foreground.

### Have the stocks always been outside St Mary's Church?

No - typically stocks were located on village greens which were used for pleasure, sport and for punishment. Our stocks and whipping post would probably have been on the Old Green, which now forms part of the grounds of The Dower House, adjacent to the church. It is almost certain that they were relocated when this house was built in the early C18<sup>th</sup> for Jacob Chilton, Rector of Ufford (1723 -1765).

A painting by Suffolk artist, Thomas Churchyard, shows the stocks in a lane with mature trees; the work was painted between 1820 and 1865. its actual location is not recorded. Standing today by the wall alongside the church gates the view is very similar although the artist seems to have ignored Church Cottage.

The painting, now held in the Ipswich Borough Council collection, is occasionally exhibited at the museum in Christchurch Park. You can see a copy by following the QR code link alongside this one.

This 1905 postcard was sent as a Christmas card to a nearby resident who had moved to London from Grundisburgh.



Ufford Stocks - Postcard from 1905



Christmas Greetings from the Stocks!

*Read on for Punishment through the Ages...*

## Punishment through the Ages

The history of the use of stocks and whipping posts goes back to the Middle Ages and from 1351 every township and village had to provide a set of stocks. This coincided with the time of Black Death which led to a national labour shortage.



People who were punished by the use of stocks included travelling musicians, fortune tellers, ballad singers, drunkards, gamblers, revilers, Sabbath breakers, vagrants, wife beaters, unruly servants and petty thieves. Some of the more regular occupants of stocks and pillories were shopkeepers and market stallholders who cheated their customers, for example, by giving short change or measure, or

selling poor quality merchandise. The use of stocks continued through to the Georgian period until the practice was outlawed in 1837, although there are reports of stocks being used for punishment into the late C19<sup>th</sup>.

Most villages also had a whipping post where petty criminals and other wrongdoers could be tied up and beaten with sticks, rods or whips. The practice was widely used around the world especially in colonial times. Public floggings and use of the whipping post was not banned in the UK until 1948, although their use in C20<sup>th</sup> was rare; the last state in the USA to ban the whipping post was Delaware in 1972.



From p. 127 in J.A. Cochrane, The Story of Newfoundland.

*Read on for Pillories...*



**Pillories** were also commonplace: the wrongdoer stood up in a wooden structure, similar to the stocks, and was beaten, pelted with all manner of things or made fun of.



The punishment was often made to fit the crime. A butcher who sold rotten meat would be pilloried with the offending product tied around his neck. An alewife who watered down her beer would have it poured over her head while she sat in the stocks. Often the punishment depended on the mood of the mob. The author Daniel Defoe, for example, was put in the pillory for satirising the government. The crowd brought him food and water and showered him with flower petals.

For more serious crimes, the gallows or gibbet were used to hang criminals condemned to death. These were often located away from the centre of the town or village but in a place where people could gather to watch. The nearest known sites for these are at Potsford, near Wickham Market, and at Gallows Hill, overlooking Wilford Bridge, on land now part of Woodbridge Golf Course. The remains of the Potsford gibbet are still in place, the last hanging there was in 1699.

