



When the museum first opened, we recovered the Marlow Stocks from Bucks County Museum, where they had been in store for many years. Before that, they used to be on The Causeway in Marlow and were last used in 1858. They were originally kept at the top of the High Street outside the Market House, which became the Crown Hotel and is now reportedly about to become a cinema. The door in the right-hand photograph used to be on the gaol, which was once inside the ground floor of that building, but we have not yet been able to acquire it.

What were Stocks and what were they used for? They were a timber frame with holes for feet, usually for two persons side by side, and occasionally with holes for hands. Petty offenders were sentenced by the Magistrates to be confined in the stocks for a set period. They were placed on a bench or stools in a sitting position facing forward. It was a form of corporal punishment and public humiliation, allowing the public to throw fruit or vegetables, often rotten, even possibly liquid. Throwing other objects was not encouraged but probably did occur, especially if a local person had been terribly offended by the prisoner.



Our stocks have a device on the upright post to manacle a prisoner by the wrists for a beating/strapping/whipping, as decreed appropriate. You can easily see how the stocks come apart to insert or remove a prisoner's legs, with heavy padlocks in place to prevent escape.