



Attack on Mr. Brown of Avebury

About 8 o'clock on Tuesday evening, Mr. George Brown was returning home from Calne in his gig, when, upon reaching the hill at Cherhill, he was accosted by a man at the side of the road, who asked him to allow him to ride. Mr. Brown refused to accede to the man's request, but at the same time asked him if he was one of the police? To this he made no reply, but persisted in getting into the gig, saying "I want a ride, and a ride I'll have!" Scarcely had he uttered the words when another man, whom Mr. Brown had not before seen, rushed forward and seized the horse's head. Mr. Brown at once perceived the object of the fellows, and jumping up in his gig, began to defend himself with his whip (the only weapon he had) - lashing first one, then the other, and then his horse. The tightness with which the man held the horse's head almost overturned the gig; but with another cut or two with the whip, the animal began to plunge so violently that the fellow was knocked down, and the horse ran off, breaking one of the traces. Fortunately Mr. Brown was able to keep his seat, and it was not long before he reached Beckhampton. He immediately went to Mr. Wentworth's but finding that gentleman from home, he called on Mr. Pinneger, who, with a friend (Mr. Crook), at once accompanied him in pursuit of the assailants; and the party were shortly afterwards joined by Mr. Wentworth, Mr. Treen, and Mr. Brown's two sons. Fancying that the fellows might have crossed to the Devizes Road, they beat across the Down to Shepherd's Shore, where they fell in with Mr. Perry, of Devizes, who told them he had met two men answering Mr. Brown's description on the road about midway between Shepherd's Shore and Beckhampton, going in the latter direction. On hearing this they at once went back to Beckhampton, but they saw nothing of the parties on the road. They had not, however been at Beckhampton more than 10 minutes, and were just holding a consultation as to the course they should next take, when they heard a whistle on the Down in the direction of Shepherd's Shore. Mr. Thomas Brown (one of Mr. George Brown's sons), with three of the party, at once set off towards the spot whence the sound came, and about a quarter of a mile on the road they met two men, whom they brought back to Mr. Brown, who immediately identified them as the parties who had stopped him. On searching them, the man who had attempted to get into Mr. Brown's gig was found to have concealed about him a pistol, loaded with powder and ball, and a cap on, besides a store of ammunition, consisting of balls, powder and shot, with a mould for casting bullets, and a dinner knife.

Both the fellows were taken to Marlborough, and fully committed for trial by the Rev. Sir E. Williams. One of them stated that he belonged to Bristol, the other said he came from Paddington. We are happy to say neither of them belong to this county.

Salisbury and Winchester Journal, 28 September 1850

Wilts Assizes

George Bell and Thomas Taylor were charged with having feloniously assaulted Mr. George Brown of Avebury, with intent to steal from his person.

Mr. Slade prosecuted and Mr. C. Smith defended.

Mr. George Brown said - "I was at Calne on the 24th September last. I left at 7 o'clock to return home alone in my gig. When I got to Cherhill, I was accosted by a man who asked me to give him a ride. It was Bell. I refused. He said he would ride and attempted to get into the gig. At the same time my horse's head was seized. Taylor held the horse, and I thrashed him and the horse too till the horse struggled violently, and we got away. I gave an alarm at Beckhampton, and went in search of the prisoners, with others to help me. Two men were brought to me by the police; they were the two men who stopped me; and on the prisoner Bell was found a pistol loaded with powder and a bullet, and some more bullets and a mould.

Cross-examined - "Cherhill is 3 miles from Calne. It was nearly dark; it was moonlight. Saw no one before Bell came up to me. It was before I saw any no one else that Bell asked me to ride. He tried to get into the gig. Was collected, but rather frightened, and rather pleased to get away. Struck the horse and man as hard as I could. The scuffle lasted about five minutes. Never saw either of the prisoners before. I had full opportunity of seeing the faces of the two prisoners.

Francis Francis, a policeman - "I apprehended the two prisoners on the night of the assault, in the Devizes Road. Met the men in the road, and took them to Beckhampton and showed them to Mr. Brown. Searched them and found on Bell a pistol loaded with cap and ball, a bullet mould, a knife, scissors, powder horn, and caps. Found on Taylor a cap, shoes, and some articles of clothing.

Cross-examined - Apprehended the prisoners about 10 o'clock, about two miles from the place of the assault. Apprehended no one else.

Stephen Beesley - Lives at Calne, and was a police officer. - Saw the prisoners, Bell and Taylor, at Calne about 4 o'clock in the afternoon on the day of the assault.

Edward Snelgrove is ostler at the inn at Cherhill, about a mile from the hill. Saw the two prisoners at the inn at Cherhill, on the 24th Sept3mber: they had some ale and bread and cheese. This was about 7 o'clock in the evening.

Cross-examined - the candles were lighted.

Mr. Smith addressed the Jury on behalf of the prisoners, but the Jury found them guilty, and they were sentenced to 7 years' transportation.

Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette, 13 March 1851