



Crime News

Bishopstone

1879

SWINDON POLICE COURT

Wednesday

Before D. Archer, Esq. (Chairman), Major Calley and Edgar Hanbury, Esq.

William Walston, a tramp, was brought, up on remand charged with setting fire to a barn and other buildings, the property of **Edwin Cue** and others, at Bishopstone, on the previous Wednesday. Mr Cue said the premises were unoccupied. He saw they were all safe on the previous night, but at four in the morning found them in flames. £100 worth of damage was done. **William H. Stevens**, living at Bishopstone Mill, 250 yards from the premises, said he saw the prisoner walking towards the barn at 20 minutes 0 10 at night. Prisoner stopped him and asked him if he could tell him where he could get a night's lodging. He told him he could not at that time of night, and he walked on towards Mr. Cue's premises.

The next morning about nine o'clock, he saw the prisoner again in the village, and asked him if he got a lodging, to which he replied that he slept in a cow shed all night. There was a cow shed not far from the barn – **James Johnson**, an engineer, said he met the prisoner on the morning, of the fire in the Vorty, when prisoner asked him the way into the village, and where the public house was. Prisoner told him he had slept in a barn all night, up towards the Ridgeway, but later on witness heard him tell a gentleman that he slept down near where the fire was. He noticed that prisoner had a stick in his hand, the end of which was burnt.

On getting into Stone's public house [*OPC note: Royal Oak Inn*] prisoner pushed this stick into the fire, but it was taken out again by a person present. **Henry Neall**, a labourer, sworn that he saw the stick with signs of fresh burns on it before prisoner went into the public house. Prisoner told him he had slept all night in a field with some cow's.

Mr. North this was evidence he had present, but there was a witness who could be got next week to speak to the prisoner having a pipe and a box of matches in his possession on the night before the fire broke out. When he was apprehended he had neither on him.

Sergt. Cleverley said when he approached prisoner at Stone's beerhouse, he said he slept in a stall two miles out of the village. On pointing out to him that his walking stick was burnt, prisoner said he did that in stirring the fire in the public house.

The Bench granted a further remand until Thursday week. In answer to the Bench, prisoner said he was a pensioner from the 23rd Regiment, having been a sergeant 11½ years.

Swindon Advertiser and North Wilts Chronicle, 27 December 1879