

Alleged Assault on a Farmer 1883

Everley Petty Sessions
(Mr W H Fowle retired from the Bench during the hearing of this case)



John Beckingham, gamekeeper for Mr W H Fowle, of Chute Lodge, was summoned for assaulting Mr John Reeves, farmer, at Collingbourn Ducis.

Complainant said that on the 2nd of January, about 10.15 pm, he was returning home from Collingbourn Kingston, when he saw two men moving slowly in front of him about half-way between the Railway Bridge and Collingbourn Shears. He passed them and said "Good night".

He had scarcely done so, when he found himself struck a violent blow on his right side. Complainant at once turned round to a man who was immediately behind him. This man said "Who are you?" The other man said "It's Mr Reeves" Complainant said, "Yes" and then drew back, when he understood one of the men to say "Oh, it's all right"

Complainant noticed that the man who spoke had a stick. Witness was about one yard in front of the man with the stick, and he was quite sure it was the defendant. Witness turned round and went on, leaving defendant standing still.

John Oram, another of Mr Fowle's gamekeepers, was standing about three yards to his (complainant's) right. At the time he did not know either the defendant or Oram.

After he got home he examined his side and shewed it to his sister. He felt a swelling. It was a violent blow. He could give no explanation of the cause of the assault. The day after the assault witness gave information to Police Sergeant Perrett.

John Oram, the other gamekeeper, referred to by Mr Reeves, corroborated that gentleman's evidence as to the conversation, but stated emphatically that although the defendant carried a stick, he saw no blow struck by defendant or anyone else.

Miss Reeves, sister of complainant, deposed to examining complainant's side, and saw some narrow red marks, but she neither saw nor felt any swelling.

Sergeant Perrett said on 3rd January Mr Reeves informed him that he had been assaulted. On the 8th January he saw defendant at Chute Lodge. Mr Reeves said to him, pointing to the defendant, "That's the man that struck me; I'll swear it". Defendant replied, "I'll swear I did not"

The defendant now said: I am not guilty. Mr Reeves passed us as we were coming home from Collingbourn, and touched me on the elbow. I said "Who's this?" He made no answer. I said, "Let's know who you are." Oram was about three yards in front, and turned round and said "It's Mr Reeves" Mr Reeves said "Yes, it's Mr Reeves" and I said "Good night" and passed on. I never struck Mr Reeves at all.

Mr Fowle went into the witness box and gave the defendant an excellent character.

The Bench dismissed the case.

Devizes & Wiltshire Gazette Thursday 01 February 1883