

Theft of Sheep & Lamb Skins 1857

Wilts Lent Assizes, Crown Court, Salisbury



Uriah Wylde (on bail), a respectable looking man, who is a carpenter, living at Lower Chute, in this county, was indicted for stealing a sheep skin and two lamb skins, the property of George Chandler, of Chute.

Mr Hodges prosecuted and Mr Arney defended the prisoner.

James Lucas, one of the county police stationed at Chute, deposed that on the 26th of February, about two o'clock in the afternoon, he went in company with Sergeant Mould, and the prosecutor, to the house of the prisoner, in order to search the premises.

They found a sheep skin and two lamb skins in a pig-stye at the end of the house, concealed under a board.

There were no pigs in the stye. Mr Chandler, of Chute Farm, was with them. Witness took the prisoner into custody. He said he knew nothing of the skins.

Two days before this witness saw a sheep skin and two lamb skins on Mr George Chandler's premises. The prisoner lives about a quarter of a mile from Mr Chandler's house. Witness traced footmarks from one house to the other. He saw some wool in the hedge round his garden, about 40 or 50 yards from the pig-stye.

Cross-examined by Mr Arney: I did not compare the footprints with the shoes of the prisoner.

James Mould, sergeant in the county police, stationed at Collingbourne, accompanied the last witness to the prisoner's house and deposed to finding some wool on the hedge near Wylde's house and also some wool on the hedge of his garden. The prisoner is a carpenter.

George Chandler deposed. I am a farmer living at Chute. In February last I had on my premises a sheep and two lamb skins. They were placed in a cart-house. I missed them on Thursday, 26th of February. I have examined the skins found in the prisoner's pig-stye and which are now produced. I can swear to the ewe skin. I have no doubt that the lamb skins are mine, but I cannot swear to them. The judge said that with the evidence before him, it was impossible to convict the prisoner. He observed that anybody might have placed the skins in the pig-stye.

Mr Arney said that he had witnesses to character, and he was anxious they should be heard.

Mr Stunt, clerk in a London firm of solicitors, had known the prisoner for many years, paying a rent of from 50/. to 60/. a year. He believed the prisoner to be a respectable man.

Mr Wheatly, a retired Excise man living at Chute, knew the prisoner as an honest, creditable, sober man.

The Judge: Here is a man of good character who has the misfortune to have skins put into his stye. There does not seem to me the slightest evidence against him and he will leave the Court without the slightest stain on his character.

The jury acquitted the prisoner.

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