



# SOUTH WILTSHIRE CORONER'S INQUESTS



## Dinton

### Newspaper Reports

#### **Walter Blake                      30<sup>th</sup> September, 1848**

**Fatal Fight** - An inquest was held before Mr Wilson, on Saturday last, at Dinton, on the body of Walter Blake, who died on the preceding morning from the effects of a rupture of a vessel in the brain whilst fighting with Edwin Ford. It appeared from the evidence, that both parties were at the French Horn Inn, in the parish of Barford St. Martin, on the previous evening; that the deceased, without any provocation, struck James Ford, a brother of Edwin Ford, a violent blow on the face with his stick, which almost stunned him. Edwin Ford resented this and after a considerable interval was irritated by the deceased to fight him. They fought for about half an hour, when the blow was struck by Ford which caused the death of the deceased – two persons present, James Gaspar and Thomas Johnson, acting as seconds. The deceased upon receiving the blow fell down insensible and remained in that state until his death, which took place next morning about nine o'clock. He was allowed to remain in the kitchen of the French Horn Inn until nearly eleven o'clock at night and was then removed, by order of the landlord, into the stable, where he was found at seven o'clock next morning still insensible and was taken home between eight and nine o'clock.

The Jury, after a patient investigation, brought in a verdict of manslaughter against Edwin Ford and against Gaspar and Johnson for aiding and abetting; and accompanied their verdict with an expression of opinion, that the conduct of the landlord, in allowing the deceased to remain so long in an insensible state, was highly blamable and that a medical man ought to have been sent for.

The Coroner issued his warrant for the committal of the principal and the seconds to take their trial at the next assizes.

*(Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette, 5<sup>th</sup> October, 1848) &*

*(Salisbury and Winchester Journal, 7<sup>th</sup> October, 1848)*

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### **Result of Trial – Blake, Gasper & Johnson**

Edwin Ford was indicted for the manslaughter of Walter Blake; and James Gasper and Thomas Johnson were indicted for aiding and abetting Ford in the said felony at Dinton.

Mr Fitzgerald was counsel for the prosecution and Mr Slade was instructed for the prisoners.

As soon as the first witness was called, Lord Denman said he understood this was a fair fight brought on by the provocation of the brother of the deceased. He thought the other two prisoners were more culpable than the man himself. He was inclined to think it wiser on the part of the prisoners to plead guilty. The prisoners accordingly pleaded guilty.

Lord Denman then addressed the prisoners. – He hoped they would take care another time. All parties ought to understand that their duty was to prevent these quarrels; but if they must take place, which sometimes he feared was inevitable, then all would desire that there should be fair play; but all persons who took part in such transactions made themselves liable to punishment, which might run from the highest to the lowest degree. Under the circumstances of this case, he did not think that any Judge could pass a severe sentence; he therefore adjudged that they should be imprisoned for two days and pay a fine to the Queen of 1s.

*(Salisbury and Winchester Journal, 10<sup>th</sup> March, 1849)*

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