



Killing Of Rabbits Charges

STEEPLE ASHTON PETTY SESSIONS

September 25th, 1846.

Before W. Long, esq., M.P., the Rev. Richard Crawley, and T. Heathcote, esq.

Two of Mr. Jonathan Grant's sons of Coulston, and one of his men, were summoned by H. Hayden, on the oath of Silas Miles, both being keepers of Sir John Cam Hobhouse, bart, of Erlestoke, for having on the 11th of Sept. carried certain guns in pursuit of game.

The only witness called on the part of Sir John was Silas Miles, who having been sworn, stated that on the evening of the day in question, he saw all three of the defendants beating about under the woods belonging to Sir John; and that he saw two of the defendants shoot off and pick up something, which they put into their pockets, but could not say whether it was a hare, rabbit, or pheasant; could not even swear that it was not a blackbird.

Mr. Hulbert of Devizes who appeared for the defendants, asked the witness in the course of his cross-examination, if the Bench of Magistrates of Devizes had not refused to receive his evidence? Mr. Hulbert also wished to know if there were many rabbits about there? To the latter question, on its being repeatedly pressed, Miles said there might be two or three! This was all the evidence on the part of the plaintiff.

Mr. Jonathan Grant, Snr, was here sworn and stated, that he had ordered his sons and the man in question to go out and shoot the rabbits in the evenings when they were out feeding; that he had two pieces of barley which had been half destroyed by the game and the rabbits; but chiefly by the rabbits;

and that he, some time ago, entered into a deed of covenant with Sir John Hobhouse, that as long as they were both occupiers under Mrs. Watson Taylor to abstain from killing any rabbits or game on the land in his (Mr. Grant's) possession, on the condition that Sir John would pay for all damage which he might sustain thereby; and that there was made as usual this last spring a valuation, which amounted to £94 10s which Sir John refused to pay, and that he (Mr. Grant) was in consequence compelled to destroy the rabbits or have nearly the whole of his produce of the land eaten up.

The Magistrates here decided that the case had not been proved, so that the game keepers have to pay all the expenses.

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