



Accused of Sheep Stealing

Wilts Lent Assizes. Wednesday.

John Lay was indicted for stealing a ewe, the property of Joseph Pearce, at Fittleton.

Mr. Hodges was counsel for the prosecution, and Mr. Edwards for the prisoner.

It appeared that on the morning of the 29th Jan., Mr. Pearce's shepherd, upon going to the sheep fold saw that it had been disturbed; he therefore gathered the sheep together and counted them, and found one sheep missing. The police were informed of it, and certain tracks being seen, they were followed to a place where there was a quantity of straw at a considerable distance from the fold, and three parts of a sheep were discovered. In consequence of some suspicions attaching to the prisoner, the police went to his house and took him into custody. The prisoner was first asked if he had a knife? He said he had not. He was then searched and a knife was found in his pocket, which appeared to be bloody and greasy. He had on two smockfrocks; the upper one was a clean one, but the under one had stains of blood on it. His boots were then compared with some tracks which were found about the fold, and they corresponded.

In the deposition made before the magistrates it appeared that the policeman had not said anything about seeing the tracks and comparing the boots.

Mr. Edwards addressed the Jury at considerable length, pointing out a variety of discrepancies in the evidence.

The learned Judge having summed up, the Jury acquitted the prisoner.

Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette, Thursday, 11 March 1852