

WILTS LENT ASSIZES



The commission for holding these Assizes was read on Saturday last by Mr. Justice Bosanquet. The learned Judge was met on his road to Salisbury by Thomas Bolton, esq. (the High Sheriff) escorted by the two Javelin men, and by 50 gentlemen on horseback, who came forward to testify their esteem for Mr. Bolton. The Sheriff's equipage was the most splendid we have ever seen in Salisbury, and attracted the attention of the numerous spectators assembled on the occasion. On Sunday the learned Judges attended divine service at the Cathedral, where an excellent discourse was delivered by the Reverend Mr. Girdlestone, the Sheriff's chaplain, from St. Matthew, chapter 22; verses, 34, 35, and 36. On Monday the business of the Assize commenced; Mr. Baron Williams presiding at Nisi Prius, and Mr. Justice Bosenquet in the Crown Court – The following gentlemen composed the Grand Jury:

Sir F. H. Bathurst. Bart. Foreman:

Wad. Wyndham, Thomas Grove, jun. George Eyre, A. Powell, H. Biggs, T. F. Egerton, W. Hughes, W. H. Ludlow, T. E. A. Starker, J. A. Worksop, George Moncklaud, George Matcham, G. Lawrence, W. Fowle, jun. George Ravenhill, H. Hetley, Ambrose Hussey, J. H. Jacobs, J. H. Crook, A. P. E. Powell, Henry King, and Robert Pickney, esqs.

Mr. JUSTICE BOSANQUET charged them to the following effect: - "Gentlemen of the Grand Inquest! – The calender for the county is unusually long, and as you will have much to do, I shall not detain you at any great length with the observations I have to make: nor indeed is there much necessity, for, with the exception of four or five cases, there is nothing but what in the ordinary course of your Magisterial duties, you must be perfectly well acquainted with. There is one thing, however, which I respectfully mention to the consideration of the Magistracy, and that is, the great number of of minor cases which are inserted in the Assize calendar. I consider that some plan might be adopted for the disposal of these, which, without occasioning any delay in administration, would greatly facilitate the ends of public justice. - As the business of the county is now conducted it will be impossible for the Judges to finish the Western Circuit, before they will be called upon to commence their official duties in town. I do not make these observations with the view of attaching blame to any person; my objection is to the system, as now carried on. Gentlemen! – There is a case of arson, to which I must direct your attention. – Formerly, the commission of crimes of this nature could be traced to private revenge, or to some motives guided by a similar feeling. It is now, however, difficult to account for it. Should the evidence not appear sufficiently clear to warrant a conviction, you will probably think it best to return your bill ignored. The learned Judge then alluded to a case of rape, and a case against nature, and observed – I have often thought cases of this description do more harm than good to public morals, unless there is almost a certainty of bringing the guilty to punishment. The exposure of such cases in a Court of Justice has a tendency rather to increase than diminish evil.

After making a few observations on a case of malicious stabbing, the learned Judge, in concluding his charge, said – There is a remark I wish to make on the great increase of crime. Legal enactments have been tried in vain. The power of example is almost omnipotent. Far be it from me to insinuate the very shadow of thought, that you, Gentlemen, did not pay every attention to your moral and religious duties. Nothing of this kind can for a moment be attributed to the Magistracy and Gentlemen of Wiltshire. But if you, Gentlemen, can find in your domestic circles the use and advantage of what I recommend, endeavour to diffuse the same spirit amongst your poorer neighbours; and thus by habits of mutual intercourse the moral state of Society will be benefitted – the bonds of social affection will be more strongly link'd together; there will be a decrease of crime, and happiness will rise on the increase of virtue."

GEORGE PEARCE, charged with killing and slaying William Wiltshire at Melksham, on the 5th December.

John Pearce saw George Pearce in the streets of Melksham on the 5th December; heard a pistol fired, saw deceased lean forward, George Pearce fired it. George Pearce was in the street of Melksham on the evening of the 5th December; saw the pistol fired, deceased fell, and witness lifted him up, and took him in his arms to the doctor. George Kendrick, a surgeon at Melksham: saw deceased at 10 in the evening of the 5th, he had a wound in his chest, it did not appear to be a wound from the bullet; some cloth, and some pieces of paper were extracted. He died on the following day of hemorrhage occasioned by the wound. **Guilty – 6 months' hard labor.**

Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette, 13th March 1834