



## Duck Theft

### Wiltshire Sessions

Richard Stump has been committed to the Old Bridewell, Devizes, charged with stealing five ducks, the property of Thomas Hawkins of Rowde.

**Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette, 24 October 1833**

### Wiltshire Quarter Sessions

Richard Stump, was indicted for stealing five ducks. The property of Thomas Hawkins, in the Parish of Rowde. James Young, deposed as follows :- On the 21st of October I slept in prosecutor's hay-loft at Dunkirk; about six in the morning of the 22d, the prisoner came into the loft, awoke me, and desired me to get up, and sell some ducks to him. I told him I would have nothing to do with him, and sell some ducks for him. I told him I would have nothing to do with them, he again urged me to sell them, saying, it would do very well for a day's spree, and swearing, that if I did not immediately get up, he would murder me; he then began to beat a sack about my head, and when he did so, I heard a duck quack. I called for assistance two or three times, and he went away; immediately after which, I went and told Hawkins.

Thomas Hawkins, from information received, went to the house of Elizabeth Randall, and there found the ducks; he then went to the Old Crown Inn, where he apprehended the prisoner; who immediately exclaimed, "Young has sold me like a bullock, in Smithfield !".

Elizabeth Randall deposed that the prisoner brought the ducks to her house, desiring her to pick them as expeditiously as possible, and in such a manner that they might be fit to put upon the first gentleman's table.

In his defence, Stump said:- On the evening of the 21st of October, I first drank two pints of beer at Mr. Bristow's on the Bath road; after which I drank 4 pints more at the house of the Prosecutor, the Queen's Head, Dunkirk; and then I drunk with several persons whom I knew. By this time, I was very drunk, so drunk that I could not take care of myself, much more go to steal ducks. After falling down once or twice, I found my way to the hay loft; and in the morning Young stumbled over me. "Hollon (he says) is that you, Stump?" Yes (says I) it is. Get up, the, (said he) I have got something to raise the wind with tomorrow. Young (says I) let me alone, I'm very ill, indeed. In the morning, when I was going to work, "Stump ! (says he) don't work, when you can live without it". Young, (said I) we shall get ourselves into trouble. He, however, over persuaded me. He gave me the ducks to carry to Randell's, whilst he said he would

go in to have a pint of beer, to prevent suspicion. Fearful, however, that he would be discovered, he went in, and threw all the blame upon me.

The Rev. Mr. Mayo said, he had known the prisoner for several years, as an honest man, and he believed he was more sinner against than sinning.

He was found guilty, and sentenced to two months' hard labour, the last month in solitary confinement.

**Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette, 9 January 1834.**

**OPC Note:**

Thomas Hawkins was the Innkeeper of the "Queens Head" at Dunkirk Hill.