



### **Exposing Diseased Meat for Sale**

Thomas Moody, one of the butchers who have for some months attended Devizes, Trowbridge, and other neighbouring markets with meat, which they sell at a much lower rate than some of the other butchers, was summoned, on Saturday last, at the Magistrates' Clerk's Office, before W. Fowler and W.R. Brown, Esqrs., for exposing for sale a quantity of meat, to wit, 58 lbs. of meat, unfit for the food of man.

Mr. Shrapnell appeared for the defendant.

Mr. Harris said he was the inspector of nuisances, appointed by the Trowbridge Local Board. That morning he was passing through the Market House about 9 o'clock, and on that gentleman's (defendant's) stall, he saw some meat hanging up which appeared to him not good. He examined it, and he believed it to be meat not fit for the food of man. He was not satisfied with his own opinion, and he called some person to watch it whilst he went for Dr. Taylor, the medical officer of the board, and he came, and on his examining it he condemned it, and said in the presence of the defendant that it was not fit for the food of man. Witness then seized it, and conveyed it to this (the magistrates') office. It was 58 lbs. weight. Most of it was beef.

Defendant: It was not all beef, some of it was veal. The beef was good enough, and he had sent a quantity of it that morning to Mr. Long's, at Rood Ashton.

Mr. Harris: I seized the meat, and now produce it, and it is for the Bench to decide if it is good or bad.

Mr. Shrapnell (to Mr. Harris): Were you instructed by anyone to go and examine the meat?

Mr. Harris: I was going through Market House, and I saw the meat hanging up there.

Mr. Shrapnell: That is not answering my question. Were you informed by someone?

Mr. Harris: I don't choose to answer your question.

Mr. Shrapnell: But you are bound to give, if you lay an information, the name of the informer.

Mr. Harris: I beg your pardon, Mr. Shrapnell, I am not, and I shall do no such thing. Why, if I had to do that in every case, I should be setting a whole town together by the ears.

Mr. Shrapnell went on to say that the case was got up entirely by the butchers out of malice, as these men sold their meat at a much lower figure, and again pressed for the names of those who had informed the inspector, but the Bench agreed with Mr. Harris that it was not for him to do so. Mr. Shrapnell said there was a cast in point in Stone's Justices' Manual, but unfortunately he had not got it with him, as he had only just been instructed.

Mr. Henry Clark: We have the book here, and can lend it to you.

The book was fetched, but Mr. Shrapnell failed to find out what he had stated, and he proceeded to cross-examine Mr. Harris, who said:-

I believe there was only beef and mutton on the stall. I told the defendant I should take it away, and he offered to let a man do it for me, but I told him I should do it myself. He said the meat was not so good as some on the stall. I only looked it over on one stall. The defendant has two or three stalls. I do not know anyone who bought any of it. I did not hear him offer it for sale.

Mr. Shrapnell said the meat had got delayed in sending – a day later – through the trains not running as usual. The meat was put on a different stall to the other, to be sold at a cheaper rate.

Dr. G.C. Tayler said he was medical officer to the Local Board. About 9 o'clock Mr. Harris requested him to accompany him to the Market House, to examine some meat which he considered not fit for human food, and he did so. The meat he examined was similar to that produced. It was lying on a stall in the Market House. He considered from its appearance and texture that it was not fit for human consumption. He communicated his opinion to Mr. Harris, and he took possession of it. There was not that consistency in it there ought to be; the muscular fibre was easily broken, and the layers of the muscles separated more easily than they otherwise would. There was no smell of decomposition that he could detect. His opinion, was that the animal was diseased before it was killed, judging from the texture of the meat, which was rather livid. He would not eat it himself. He considered it unwholesome and unsound. Decidedly unwholesome.

By Mr. Shrapnell: I examined a piece of beef, and other pieces of meat. I took some for mutton and some for veal. I believe there was a tongue amongst it. I know there was some veal. I did not detect any smell of decomposition. I cannot tell you what the disease was the animal was suffering from. I have not made a special examination of other butchers' meat. I have been in the habit of seeing meat diseased. I cannot tell what this cow or sheep died of. The present weather would make the meat softer than usual. I thought some of the pieces I examined were mutton, but it turned out to be veal. I saw some other meat there, and I examined it. There was some beef there, and I asked for a knife and cut it across, and that was good, but I can't say that this piece was from the same animal.

This being the whole of the evidence, Mr. Shrapnell said he did not consider that he had any case to answer. These proceedings had been instituted through some bad feeling on the part of the other butchers in the town, who were exceedingly jealous of the defendant's employer, because he brought meat into the town and offered it at a much lower sum. The butchers had been maintaining their high prices for a length of time, and now these men had come into the town and sold meat at a reasonable sum they were persecuted by the others. Why was it, he would ask, they were never found out? Mr. Harris did not find out this of himself, but only through the information of others. Mr. Harris in his evidence had told them he seized beef and mutton, and Dr. Tayler could not tell what some of the meat was, for he had said there was a tongue of some animal, whereas there was nothing of the sort; there was only some beef and one piece of veal in the seized portion.

Mr. Fowler called Mr. Shrapnell's attention to that appearance of the meat – there was no mistake about that.

Mr. Shrapnell said the appearance was certainly against it, for the fact was, through the alteration of gauge on the railway the meat had been kept on the road a day later than it should have been, but he contended the meat was good. Its appearance was not so good as if it had been hanging in the slaughter houses of Trowbridge instead of travelling.

Mr. Fowler said its appearance convinced him that it was not fit for human food.

Mr. Sharpnell said the pieces of beef examined by Dr. Tayler, and one of them pronounced by him to be good, came from the same animal, only it had been "messed" about in carriage. If his client had not sold good meat, it was not likely that out late respected member for North Wilts (Mr. Long, of Rood Ashton) would deal with him. Some portion of the same animal had been sent up to Rood Ashton House that morning. The case had been brought out of animosity, and if some information had not been given to Mr. Harris the magistrates would not have been brought there that morning.

Dr. Fowler (the presiding magistrate) quite agreed with Dr. Tayler's evidence, and said he was confident it was unhealthy meat, and what he could not eat himself he should not like others to.

Mr. Brown, who asked how was it the other meat, according to Mr. Shrapnell's remarking, from the same animal, was not so tainted, as that also was knocked about the same in carriage.

The defendant was then called, and said that he was in the employ of Mr. Weston. He received the meat on Thursday, but he ought to have had it before. He bought meat in different parts, and it was sent on to him. He received this meat in Devizes on Thursday, and brought it here.

On being closely questioned as to where this meat came from, defendant said that he bought this in Devizes – beef and veal, and gave 7½d. per lb. for it. It was brought to Trowbridge yesterday (Friday) by rail. Some was unpacked last night, and some this (Saturday) morning, and he did not observe anything the matter with it. The meat seized was what he brought from Devizes Market. There was a piece on the stall off the same beef. He bought half a calf at Devizes on Thursday, and gave 7½d. per lb. for it, and had sent 68lbs. of it to Mr. Long, of Rood Ashton, that morning, the same as that in the basket seized. This was the first time he had ever been summoned in his life for having bad meat. He attended markets nearly every day in the week – Salisbury on Tuesday, Frome on Wednesday, Devizes on Thursday, Chippenham on Friday, and Trowbridge and Bradford on Saturday.

Mr. Brown asked defendant how it was he bought all the meat, seeing that he was only Mr. Weston's servant?

Defendant said Mr. Weston was a gentleman, and left all of it to him.

Mr. Brown asked him who he bought the meat of in Devizes?

Defendant said he did not know his name, although he had bought several lots of him for some months past.

Mr. Brown: But don't you have any invoices when you buy meat in this way?

Mr. Shrapnell said it was generally a public-house transaction, and no invoices were made out.

Mr. Harris to defendant: Don't you know the man's name is Hunt, and that Hung only gave £1 for the whole carcass?

Defendant said he knew his name was John, and now he had mentioned it he believed his name was Hunt. He did not know what Hunt gave for the carcass. He had had dealings with him for the last four months, but never had a bill.

The Magistrates said that was very strange, and also said they should like to know what Hung gave for the animal. After some little consultation Mr. Shrapnell and his client wished it to be adjourned, and the magistrates agreed to it, for the production of Mr. Hunt, as on what the animal was sold for

they would ground their decision. The case was adjourned for a week, but the meat was ordered to be immediately destroyed.

The defendant was brought up again on Saturday last, and, after a patient hearing, the magistrates said the case was fully proved, and the defendant was fined 50s., and cost.

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