



Crime and Punishment

All Cannings

Trial & Execution of John Goodman & Edward Amor – 1824

John Goodman and Edward Amor were the first prisoners to be publicly executed before the New Prison in Devizes, in front of a reported crowd of between 20,000 and 30,000 people, on 22 April 1824.

John Goodman, the son of William and Sarah Goodman, was baptised at All Saints Church in All Cannings on 30 November 1779. A carpenter by trade, John had enlisted in the army at Edinburgh on 1 November 1799, initially serving in the Fencibles Regiment before transferring to the 3rd Dragoon Guards less than four months later. John spent much of the Napoleonic Wars serving in the Peninsular Campaign, where he lost an eye, the Regiment seeing action at the Battles of Talavera, Albuhera and Vittoria. Although not present at Waterloo, the Regiment was part of the force that occupied Paris at the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Sergeant John Goodman was finally discharged in Dublin in November 1818. Following his discharge, John returned to All Cannings where he kept an evening school, in addition to working as a sawyer at Honey Street in Woodborough.

Edward Amor, the son of Edward and Elizabeth Amor (nee Truckel), was born in Pewsey and had been baptised at the Parish Church of St. John the Baptist on 28 November 1786. Edward was the nephew of William Amor, who had been convicted and executed (being hung from a gibbet on Pewsey Down) for the murder of John Dyke in 1773. Edward was also a sawyer at the timber yard of Samuel Robbins at Honey Street in Woodborough.

The crime for which they were both convicted was the assault and robbery of Thomas Alexander, a farmer from All Cannings, on 24 December 1823. John Goodman and Edward Amor also lived in All Cannings and on the day of the crime had been out drinking together in Devizes before returning home. Thomas Alexander had also been in Devizes on Christmas Eve, collecting the proceeds of wheat sold the previous day for £50, and was attacked on his way home. Although badly injured, Thomas Alexander survived the assault and identified Goodman and Amor as his assailants at the subsequent trial.

Despite coming under intense and repeated pressure to admit their guilt in the aftermath of the trial, both prisoners remained steadfast in pleading their innocence. John Goodman had the presence and composure to address the crowd from the scaffold to deny being involved in the crime.

The following transcripts, from the Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette, provide full details of the trial and execution of John Goodman and Edward Amor.

BARBAROUS ASSAULT

Edward Amor and John Goodman, were charged with assaulting and robbing Mr. Thomas Alexander, a respectable farmer of All Cannings, in his way from Devizes market to that place on the evening of the 24th of December last. It will be recollected that in consequence of Christmas day falling upon a Thursday, it was agreed amongst the dealers that the market should be held upon the preceding day. Devizes is a pitched market, and therefore a ready money one. It was known to the prisoners that the prosecutor had sent two loads of wheat on the Tuesday, for they had met the carter, and asked what he did with two carts; the man told them where he had been, and what with; and it appeared that this tempted them to lay wait for Mr. Alexander, in the hope of acquiring the value of the carts. Mr. Alexander had in his right hand pocket £30 and 1s. 6d. in silver; this he dexterously prevented them from taking, but they took from his other pocket, a knife, a key, and some bills, &c. As this case has excited considerable agitation in the country about Devizes, we shall give a full detail of the evidence:

Thomas Alexander, the prosecutor, in answer to questions put to him, deposed as follows: - I live at Allcannings, and went to Devizes market the day before Christmas day, the market being held by agreement on the Wednesday, that it might not interfere with the festival. On my return from the market, I called at the Elm Tree, where I saw the two prisoners. I never knew Amor before that day, but Goodman I have known these 4 years: this was about half past three o'clock; they were not intoxicated. I had other places to call at, which detained me in town an hour longer. My house is about 5 miles from Devizes; and when I was within a quarter of a mile of it I saw Amor standing in the middle of the road; I was near him and knew him well; he went before my horse at first, but afterwards I passed him; he then struck me 4 or 5 violent blows on the head; I saw no stick. Goodman came up, and they both pulled me off the horse; they kept me on the ground, and beat me violently with sticks about the head, but Amor beat me the most; they tore my clothes off and rifled my pockets; I had nearly 30l. in my right hand pocket; they tried to get at this pocket, but I shifted myself so as to prevent their effecting their purpose: they took from me a knife and some papers, and then stuffed my mouth with dirt and ran away. Amor had a dark brown coat on, Goodman a light grey coat. I struggled hard with Amor, and I gave him some blows about the face, he was near enough to me to have some of my blood on him. I bled very much, and kept my bed for ten days; I am not well now. [Mr. Alexander's hat and great coat were here produced, which were very bloody]. The 50l. I had in my pocket was the produce of the wheat I had sold. Stephen Tasker has been carter to me for 3 years, and is acquainted with Goodman. Tasker drove my cart on the previous day. Mr. Alexander underwent a severe cross-examination, but nothing was elicited to shake his testimony. On his re-examination, he said that he never gave any directions for the apprehension of Maslin or Swanborough; nor did he give any information at all with respect to them.

Thos. Swanborough, a blacksmith of Allcannings, has known the prisoners for a number of years; saw them [...] afternoon of Christmas eve; they might have had some beer, but were not intoxicated; there was then no blood on Amor's coat; had there been any he must have seen it; saw Goodman next morning, and asked him how he got home last night; Goodman held up his hand, and gave a kind of a hush; witness was in prison once, when Amor said to him, "they could not find any thing on me, or else I should have been done." Witness had been in gaol for six weeks and 5 days, but Mr. Alexander never came to him during that time. This witness also underwent a severe cross-examination, but his testimony only received a further confirmation.

Wm. Dyke saw the prisoners cross Devizes Green about 4 o'clock on the Wednesday afternoon, on the road home; neither of them were drunk, nor was any marks of blood on Amor's coat.

Samuel Robins, a timber merchant, said: - The prisoners work together as sawyers in my employ. I saw Amor on Christmas day; he had on a brown coat, which was smeared all over with blood and covered with dirt. I went to his house, and asked his wife if she could account for the blood on her husband's coat, she said she could not, and said his smock frock was also bloody; I saw his smock frock, on the collar sleeves, and breast of which

there was blood. I went to Mr. Alexander on the Monday after Christmas-day, and on the Tuesday gave a good description of the men to Mr. Warrener, the magistrate; but did not then mention Goodman's name. I got a search warrant, and found in Amor's house the smock frock, which appeared to have been recently washed; the coat was hung up behind the door, the frock was in a chest; the coat produced is the one I saw him in, but I cannot identify the frock. In his cross-examination, he said, that he had some suspicion of the prisoners, because Amor had drank tea at Goodman's house; his suspicions never fell on any body else; he had no hope of reward in view – he was above it – he stood in no need of pecuniary aid – he did it as an act of justice which he owed his country.

B Hellyear, clerk to Clark and Robbins, has known Amor about a year and a half; saw him pass by the window on Christmas morning, about 8 o'clock: his clothes were dirty; he supposed that he had been out rambling; saw him he thinks the following day; his face was swollen: said to him Edward, have you been boxing! he replied no, master, I have got a cold, and it pitched in my face.

Samuel Robins re-called: he observed when Amor was sawing about a week afterwards, that his breeches were very bloody: cannot say that he observed the great coat particularly; saw him four or five times, and always on such occasions, made the same remark; heard of Mr. Alexander's accident on Christmas day.

Henry Gale attends Goodman's night-school; on Christmas eve he went soon after six, and about ten minute after, the prisoner Goodman came home very dirty: he had a little liquor, but was capable of attending to his school.

James Rivers corroborated Gale's evidence.

Barbara Beak, of Honey-street, went to the prisoner Amor's house on the Friday week after Christmas day; Amor's wife was going to wash; witness saw among other things lying on the floor, a smock-frock very bloody; it was smeared about the collar, and there was blood upon the breast, sleeves, shoulders, and back, in some places it appeared sprinkled; on the Monday following saw a great coat hanging upon Amor's garden hedge to dry; there was then some blood on the back of it; and the collar was smeared with blood.

Joshua Bullock, a prisoner in Devizes Bridewell stated, that the morning after Amor was committed, witness asked him how he came there? Amor replied for beating Alexander; after some conversation witness asked him if he knew any thing about it? He replied, yes, "I and Goodman were "the men that done it, and Swanborough knows right well "that we done it, but he's a great fool, and I am afraid he "will blow us, and if so, we shall be done, but if he holds "still his tongue there will be nothing the matter."

The prisoners brought forward, a fellow named Whitchell to prove an alibi, but his testimony was not for a moment to be credited.

The Judge summed up, and the Jury without the slightest hesitation found both prisoners guilty:

Mr. Justice Burrough then passed on them the awful sentence of death, giving them no hopes of mercy.

Goodman addressed his Lordship as follows: - My Lord, I hope I may never enter the kingdom of heaven, if ever I had any intention of attacking Mr. Alexander; I never beat him with a stick; nor did I take any thing from his pocket."

Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette – Thursday, 18 March 1824

EXECUTION OF EDWARD AMOR AND JOHN GOODMAN

On Tuesday last, these two unfortunate men, convicted of robbing and brutally assaulting Mr. Thomas Alexander of Allcannings, were executed in front of the Penitentiary, near this town. The number of people assembled to witness the awful scene, we should think, amounted to from 20 to 30,000; - indeed, it appeared, as if the whole county had poured forth its contents. Long before the hour appointed, the large yard before the prison, and the adjoining road, for a long space, was entirely filled. Being the first execution that has taken place in this neighbourhood; its occurring on Easter-Tuesday, and Devizes Green fair being held on that day, all tended to increase the number of spectators.

Within a few minutes after twelve, the unhappy creatures were relieved of their irons; and shortly afterwards they were brought from their cells, preceded by Mr. Bush, (the under-sheriff,) Mr. Dowding, (the Governor of the County Gaol,) Mr. Cocks, (the Governor of the Penitentiary,) and the Rev. Mr. Mayo, (the chaplain); the latter gentleman very impressively reading parts of the funeral service as he proceeded to the place of execution. Amor, on entering the prison yard, gave a vacant stare around him, and then fixed his eyes intently on the ground. This poor fellow, we understand, was extremely illiterate; and his countenance would indicate that he was equally devoid of feeling as of understanding: but, although very strongly built, his legs as he walked, appeared to sink under him; and on the drop they could scarcely support him. Goodman's countenance, on the contrary, betrayed an intensity of feeling; yet he walked firm and erect. We occasionally saw a tear trickle down his cheek, but he struggled hard to suppress it. This man had been a sergeant in the 3rd (or Prince of Wales's) Dragoon Guards; and to the last showed the entire mien of a soldier. He was in various battles during the Peninsular War, and lost an eye in Egypt¹; in consequence of which he obtained his discharge in November 1818, after being in the army 10 years and 7 days – having entered at the early age of 20. He received a pension of 15d. a day; and as a proof of his good character while in the army, he was entitled to the benefit of a fund, called St. George's fund, to which all the non-commissioned officers, drummers, and privates, contribute, and which is divided amongst those discharged from the regiment without ever having been disgraced. Goodman also kept an evening school at Allcannings, and was by trade a sawyer. Up to the period of committing the crime for which he was to suffer, he bore the character of an honest man, but was sadly addicted to drinking. Amor first ascended the drop, & as soon as the ropes were adjusted, Goodman followed. A breathless anxiety now prevailed among the spectators, from the knowledge that both the prisoners had hitherto denied their guilt; and the doubt whether they would persist in that denial to the last. There was a death-like stillness – not a sound was to be heard! The number of unhappy wretches confined within the prison walls, and who were placed in situations to witness the sad spectacle – served to increase the awfulness of the scene!

The Rev. Chaplain now, with a solemnity that we are incapable of describing, thus addressed Goodman and Amor: - "John Goodman, and Edward Amor! I now require of you, and each of you, as you will in a few moments have to answer at the dreadful bar of the Almighty, are you guilty of the crime of which you have been charged, or are you not guilty?" Goodman immediately replied, in a voice that could be heard throughout the immense crowd, "NOT GUILTY!" Amor faintly said, "I say so too" – on which Goodman urged him to speak out. He then said in a louder tone, "I say so too – Not Guilty, Gentleman, Sir," (as if confused). Goodman afterwards addressed the spectators in the following words, 'Good people, before I leave this world, I wish to say a few words to you. I shall not tell a lie, nor do I wish to smother the truth, but for the last time I declare, that I never beat Mr Thos. Alexander nor did I rob him, on the 24th December; nor do I know who did.' He then with uplifted eyes, repeated in a firm voice, the Lord's prayer after the Rev. Chaplain; he also joined fervently in other prayers; and even when the cap was over his face, we could perceive the motion of his lips. Amor too prayed

¹ John Goodman's army discharge papers record that he lost his eye in the Peninsular Campaign and there is no reference to his having served in Egypt.

that God would be merciful to him. The Chaplain proceeded reading the burial service, and as he uttered the words, "In the midst of life we are in death," the fatal signal was given, and their earthly career was in an instant closed for ever!

The bodies, after hanging for an hour, were cut down, and in the evening delivered to their friends.

At the time that Mr. Dowding, the Governor of the County Gaol, communicated to Amor and Goodman the receipt of their respite, he very judiciously endeavoured to impress on their minds that it would be in vain for them to indulge any hope of a final reprieve; for he was persuaded, from the letter which accompanied the respite, that their fate was decided; and that their lives were protracted for a short space, not from any doubts that the learned Judge entertained of their guilt; but in order that he might peruse the documents which the prisoners' solicitor said he should have prepared for him. These documents were laid before Mr. Justice Burrough on Tuesday week, but they did not in the smallest degree shake his opinion. He then ordered that they should be executed at Devizes. During the time that they were confined at Fisherton, the Chaplain and Governor did every thing to urge them to confess their crime; but in the most solemn manner they protested their innocence, and hoped that God would never receive their souls if they spoke falsely. They were brought to the Devizes House of Correction a little before 10 on Saturday morning, in a mourning coach and four, accompanied by Mr. Dowding, and 3 assistants. Soon after, they were visited by the Rev. Mr. Mayo (the Chaplain,) who found them fully aware of their awful situation, and protesting their entire ignorance of the crime laid to their charge. It was not (the Rev. gent. Said) that kind of denial that would lead one to think them hardened in sin, or ignorant of the fatal consequences of sin in the next world; for it was an observation often made by Goodman, and agreed to by Amor, that they had many and grievous sins to answer for at the awful bar of God; and though they should suffer death for a crime of which they were innocent, yet God was just! The Rev. Chaplain left them for about an hour, and returned soon after 12 o'clock, when he found them both on their knees, praying most fervently. Amor being a man of weak understanding, Goodman was assisting him in his devotions, and directing his attention to those parts of the prayers that were most applicable to their situation. It was a truly affecting scene. Throughout their confinement, indeed, Goodman manifested the greatest anxiety for the welfare of Amor; and the same affectionate interest was perceivable in the latter toward Goodman. Having a full persuasion of their guilt when he first visited them, the Chaplain devoted greater part of the first day in urging them to a full and free confession of their crime, and in this he was kindly aided by the Rev. Mr. Lucas, but to no effect; and he left them at 7 in the evening as he found them in the morning, protesting their innocence. On the Sunday forenoon, the Rev. Chaplain preached a most impressive sermon on the occasion, at the Prison Chapel, from Heb. 7, 25 - "Wherefore he is able to save," &c: The discourse immediately referred to the solemnity of the day (Easter - day) and was made most applicable to the situation of the unhappy culprits. Their coffins too were placed directly before them; indeed every thing was said and done to inspire them with awe. After they came out of chapel, the chaplain again questioned them as to their guilt or innocence, when Goodman replied - "If any thing would make a man speak the truth, it would be seeing his coffin before him (which he had just done in chapel) and the certainty that within a few hours he would be laid in it;" and persisted in his innocence. They attributed their fatal end to drunkenness, not with reference to the crime charged, but its obliging them to prevaricate, as to where they were on the 24th Dec. and thereby exciting suspicion. The nearer the time for their execution drew on, the more urgent they were in their supplications for mercy. The Rev. Mr. Mayo visited them as early as six o'clock on Monday morning; when, after expressing their regret that they could not satisfy him as to their innocence, Goodman said, "it would not be long before he would learn the truth, and then he would think upon his words." At about twelve o'clock the friends of the poor fellows came to take a last farewell of them; and here followed a scene that no one could witness without being sensibly affected. The two children of Amor, one aged about 10, the other 12 years, clung to their father, and would not for a time be separated; they were sensible that they should never see him again, and also that a most dreadful death awaited him. They sobbed and cried, as if their little hearts would break; and were at last obliged to be taken away by force. The tears too flowed profusely over the father's face. Besides his children, there were present Amor's father, brother and sister. Goodman's

brother alone came to see him; who earnestly beseeched him not to go out of the world with a lie in his mouth; that if he was guilty to say so." A similar request was made by Amor's brother to Amor. After parting with their friends, they were placed in the condemned cells, apart from each other, on either side the chapel; they were also handcuffed. Soon after this, the Rev. Mr. Methuen visited them, for half an hour; but although urged very strenuously by him to confess, they said 'they had repeated all they knew, and if they were to confess that they were guilty, they would be saying what was not true.' The Chaplain left them at 6, and returned to them again soon after 7, accompanied by the Rev. Mr. Wilton. Until 10 o'clock, these two gentlemen conversed with them apart from each other; but from first to last, separate or together – when conversing on the subject, or taken by surprise, they still preserved the greatest consistency in their declarations of innocence. As it was their earnest wish, that the above two gentlemen should remain with them all night, Mr. Cocks (the Governor) very kindly provided them with a double cell and a fire, and released them from their handcuffs. Goodman did not close his eyes during the whole night. Amor slept about an hour. It was truly painful to the Revd. Gentlemen to hear them count the hours they had to live, each time the clock struck. The night was principally passed in prayer and reading. A few communications were made during that time, which the Rev. gentlemen conceive would not be proper immediately to publish. At about four o'clock Amor's spirits began to droop; on perceiving which, Goodman took him by the hand, and led him to the bed-side, where both knelt down, and Goodman repeated 3 or 4 prayers, in which he was joined by Amor with so much devotion, that it would be impossible to believe either of them could be indifferent to their fate in the next world. When they had finished, they were told, that if they were bound by an oath not to reveal the secret, or wished for ever to conceal it from the world, that they should not again be asked the question by any one, but might confess themselves to Almighty God, provided they would cease to deny it altogether. But far from this, they expressed an anxiety that time might be allowed them distinctly to deny all knowledge of the transaction before they should be launched into eternity. The chaplain and the Rev. Mr. Wilton left them at 5, and returned again at 6; when they continued to appear fully resigned to their fate. There was one part of the evidence, that to the last, gave Goodman considerable uneasiness.

It may be recollected that it was deposed to by Swanboro' that on saying to Goodman on Christmas morning, "I was home before you last night," Goodman held up his finger as much as to say "hush." Now Goodman considered this circumstance weighed very much with the Judge and Jury; he said, he observed "the Judge shake his head, as much as to say guilty." The following is the reason he assigns for this motion to Swanborough: when he returned home on the Wednesday evening, he told his wife that he slept at the Charlton Cat on the preceding night, and described the way that he returned from Russell [Rushall?], not wishing she should know that he had been spending his time in drinking at Devizes instead of attending to his work. When he saw Swanborough in the morning, two of his immediate neighbours were with him, and he knew that if they heard Swanborough say they had been at Devizes, they would tell his wife." Amor acknowledged his having said to Bullock, "there was a fool in play," but said "he little thought it would have been adduced against him at the trial."

On the return of the Rev. gents. after breakfast, Amor was sitting by the fire, and Goodman was standing opposite to him, when Amor said, "I have made up my mind to speak the truth, and I will tell all I know about it." It had as instantaneous an effect on Goodman as it had on the Rev Clergymen; and the Rev. Mr. Mayo so firmly believed that he was going to confess, that he took out his pencil and pocket book, to note it down in his very words; but to his surprise, Amor said no more, and when told that they were ready to hear what he had to say, he began to name the witnesses whom he considered had perjured themselves on the trial!

Whether he was intimidated by a look from Goodman, or whether he had no particular meaning in what he said, - that it proceeded from him involuntarily – God only knows. He did not appear in the least confused; nor could any thing further be elicited, though tried very hard. At a quarter past 11, they went into the chapel, and after praying with them some time, the Rev Chaplain allowed them to offer up their own prayers, which they did most fervently, though not aloud. Their suffering at this time must have been acute: the minute bell was striking within a few yards of them, the sound of which convulsed their whole frames. The clock too every moment convinced

them of their near approach to eternity: at last it struck the fatal hour, and preparations were made for their departure. At this awful crisis, their firmness and resignation was surprising: they were fully sensible of their dreadful situation, and to all appearance deeply impressed with religious feelings: that they should at this time solemnly persist in their innocence, if they were guilty, staggered the belief of the Rev. Clergymen.

Under all circumstances, it was thought advisable not to administer the sacrament to either of them.

In their cells, and on the drop, they again and again expressed their gratitude for the kind and humane attentions of Mr. Cocks (the governor); and the complete and decorous manner with which every thing was arranged, does great credit to the ability of this gentleman. To Mr. Dowding (the governor of Fisherton gaol) they also expressed themselves greatly indebted for the kindness he shewed them while under his care. The Rev. Chaplain was most assiduous in his duties, and with tears in their eyes, they frequently thanked him for the religious instruction they had received from him; and on the fatal drop, they prayed that God would bless him.

Mr. Bush (the under-sheriff) was in attendance throughout the morning, as was also Mr. Locke and Mr. Warrener, two of the county Magistrates.

We have now only to refer our readers to a report of the trial, inserted in our paper of the 18th of March. The assault was proved to be the most barbarous; and there is very little doubt, that the intention of those who committed it, was murder. The guilt of the prisoners was established by a chain of evidence that, they themselves have since admitted, was sufficient to prevent any Jury from returning a different verdict. Since the trial the witnesses have confirmed in every minute [...] the evidence they gave. Our readers will recollect the following deposition of Bullock's: - When he saw Amor in Devizes Bridewell, he said – I asked him what he was brought there for? He answered, about Alexander's job. I then told him I heard Alexander was dead. Dead! (replied Amor) no, he is not dead, nor is he beat half so much as the people talk of. Then you must know something about it, (I said); to which Amor answered – "I and Goodman were the men that done it, and Swanborough knows right well that we done it, but he is a great fool, and I am afraid he will split; and if so, we shall be done, but if he holds his tongue, there will be nothing the matter." Amor has since his confinement admitted the truth of this deposition, but that he meant nothing by what he said!

Mr. Alexander, we are sorry to state, is still extremely unwell; and it is thought, will never entirely recover from the effects of the wounds he received. Independent of his evidence at the trial, it is the opinion of many legal gentlemen, that there was sufficient to convict the prisoners.

The following letter the prisoners received on Saturday from a person under whom they had worked:

"Honey-street, near Pewsey, Wilts, April 16, 1824

EDWARD AMOR AND JOHN GOODMAN –

"It has been with considerable interest that I have waited the issue of the re-perusal of the minutes of your trial. At length it is come: and you, my unfortunate fellow creatures, it is evident must die! I was in hopes, and I am persuaded it was the general wish, that something favourable might have been brought to light, so that your sentence could have been commuted to transportation: but alas! for you, nothing of the kind has been elicited. I also could have wished, and I believe the wish to be universal, that you would confess yourselves guilty. But this, it appears, you are resolved not to do, although we have had all the evidence necessary for your conviction; and which, as you have seen, has satisfied the Judge – the Jury – the Court, and the country at large, that you are the men who assaulted Mr. Alexander. The consequence is, no one will credit your declarations of innocence, and ignorance of the affair: and I hope and trust you will persist in this mind no longer, but resolve on making a full disclosure of the whole; or at least to acknowledge the justice of the sentence, to which by the laws of your country you are doomed.

“I can assign but three reasons for conduct of this kind. It must proceed either from a desire of getting a reprieve; in consequence of a previous oath between you, not to tell on each other; or from determined and obstinate wickedness. As to the first, you need to be told, that there is now not the smallest chance that your fate will be any longer arrested, and charity would forbid me entertaining a thought that the third reason I have assigned, can be the true one. But I do think it probable, that your conduct may arise from the fact, that an oath has been taken by each of you not to confess. Now, if it be so, I am firmly of the opinion that you would be justified in cancelling it, because it is unlawful in itself; and you know it is never too late to repent of an evil deed. Allow me to remind you that the Judge – the Jury, the witnesses, the prosecutor and his family, and your own domestic connections, have a right to demand the confession you have hitherto refused to make. Permit me also to add, that this claim from so many quarters, is [seconded?] by the dictates of reason – the voice of conscience – and the laws of God? – yea, your own eternal destiny will be affected by it; for how tremendously awful would it be for you to go out of this world with a lie in your mouth! I do sincerely hope, that you will listen and yield to the teaching of Divine Grace, and thus be led to see the propriety, the justice, and absolute necessity of confession; - immediate, free, and full confession of your guilt.

“Having this only opportunity, I would exhort you to attend to the directions and prayers of your spiritual advisers, The Minister who attends you, and the means you are favored with, are singular blessings which the Almighty God has been pleased to privilege you with; and I most earnestly and solemnly persuade you to repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, on whose mercy you may repose, however great your sins. Even supposing you are innocent of the crime, for which you are sentenced to death, you need not be informed that in other respects you have forfeited God’s favor, and need his pardon. You are void of His image, and want a meetness for everlasting happiness, which, that God in his infinite mercy may grant you both, is the prayer of your well wisher,

Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette – Thursday, 22 April 1824

OPC Postscript:

The execution of John Goodman and Edward Amor provoked comment and letters in the local papers for several weeks after their execution, particularly as to the guilt or innocence of John Goodman. The following two letters, which appeared in the same edition of the Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette, are of particular interest as they record detail as to the family history of Edward Amor.

To the Editor of the Devizes Gazette.

SIR – It is an error that all kinds of ministers visited Goodman and Amor; the clergymen alone of the parishes where they had lived or where they were confined, called on them with the Chaplain appointed by the Magistrates. Neither were they buoyed up by spiritual excitements to conceal, nor induced by any deceptions to confess their guilt. The truth indeed by all fair means was endeavoured to be elicited; and, at one time, it was asked Amor (on purpose to see if the similarity of the circumstances, with the awful horror attending thereon, would bring his own mind into a confidential confession of his offence), if it was true that his uncle had untimely suffered for a robbery and murder? – “Yes Sir, (said he, with perfect calmness, and as answering a solemn question) so I have been told.” – “You do not remember any thing of the affair?” “Oh! No, Sir, it was long before I was born. It was fifty-two years ago. My father was only a boy at plough.” “Then you know nothing of that sad business?” “I have often heard of it from others.” – [He seemed by no means disposed to conceal what he had heard, or to avoid talking upon the subject.] “How did it happen?” “They had been drinking at a public-house,

Sir." - "Who?" "My uncle and a tailor that lived at Shercott, named Dike." "Where were they drinking?" "At the Swan, as it was called then, at Pewsey."

"And what tempted your uncle to commit the deed?" "The lust of money, Sir. The tailor, so they told me, had been boasting and showing his money at the Swan, and late at night sallied forth to go to Shercott; my uncle, who was very poor, soon afterwards went away, and followed him. He said his heart failed him once, and he turned back again; but there, he overtook him at last, and robbed and killed him."

"Whereabout was it?" - "Do you know the road, Sir, from Pewsey to Shercott?" - "Very well, indeed, I have travelled it often."

"It is about half-way; there are very plain marls now." "How marks?" - "There are two great holes, just as you get over a stile." "What, the foot-way? I don't know the footway."

"It is a very remarkable spot, Sir."

"How was it discovered?" - "His conscience, I have heard, was never at rest; and some suspected and watched him, and saw him throw the watch into a pond; and then he was taken up."

A gentleman, who had not yet spoken, here slowly said to him, "Did your uncle confess, Amor?" "Oh! Yes, Sir; I have always heard there was no doubt of that, and he told himself, they say, all the particulars."

This is related as near as possible, verbatim, and the manner in which Amor answered the questions, and narrated so trying a story, proved that he did not want understanding, or a conscientious sense of right and wrong; and he spoke with that firmness, which is equally removed from whining and canting, as from daringness and indifference.

This conversation took place on the night before he suffered.

Sir, - Your correspondent, who said in your last week's Gazette that "Amor's relations were dissenters, and disliked his going to church," is misinformed.

Unfortunately for Amor, he was born of very ignorant parents, who paid no attention to the duties of religion, either as it regards their moral obligation to God, or their relative duties in bringing up their children in the fear of God.

The elder branches of the Amor family were, and are remarkable for their ignorance of religion, and seldom or ever attend *any* place of religious worship, either church or chapel. They were never known regularly to attend a dissenting place of worship. I saw Amor, (accompanied by his wife,) at the chapel at Pewsey in September last; which, I believe, was the only time he was there. His father and mother I have seen there a few times during the past winter, which never occurred before.

The grandfather of Amor was possessed of a small leasehold estate, and his grandmother was the mother of twenty children, nearly all of whom I knew, but none of them were or are dissenters. Your's,

JAMES NOYES.

Pewsey, May 4th, 1824.

Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette – 6 May 1824
