



Crime News

Bishopstone

1884

Swindon Police Court, Thursday

Mischievous Boys at Bishopstone

Stephen Jones, 20, Oliver New, 19, William Lawrence, 16, Richard Wheatley, 19, Thomas Wheatley, 16, Charles Mortimer, 18, Joseph Dixon, 18, James Dixon, 17, William Marks, 20, and Frances Portridge, 18, all lads from the village of Bourton, were charged with committing wilful damage to a wooden fence and the roof of a cow shed, at Bishopstone, on the 9th inst., the property of Mr. James Johnson, of Ragnell Farm.

The prosecutor said he occupied land at Bishopstone, where there was a cow house with a slate roof. The defendants, on Sunday, were out for mischief, and with the large sticks produced (foal stakes), smashed the slates off the roof. He believed some of the boys were much worse than the others. He did not wish to press the charge, believing it was simply boys' mischief, but it must be taken some notice of.

P.C. Read said he was on duty in Station Road, when he saw the nine defendants present, and Jones, a soldier (who did not appear), go across Mr. Curtis's meadow, and cut an ash stick. They then beat a hedge row down, and went to the shed, where Jones picked up the foal stick produced, and commenced deliberately to smash the slates with it to atoms. New followed with a pole, and the others struck with sticks. They all appeared to be enjoying the fun. He ran towards them, when they all ran away, and he followed them for a mile, when he caught three, but one through a brook, and the others in different directions. He believed if he had not appeared on the scene just when he did the defendants would have beaten the shed down. He did not think Mortimer, the two Dixon's, Marks, and Portridge were quite as bad as the others.

The Rev. Mr. Kearney, of Bourton, stepped into the witness box and spoke to the good character of the defendants before this offence was committed, but Mr. Supt. North said he was surprised to hear this in the face of the fact that Mortimer, Lawrence, and New had been flogged at Faringdon, and Jones had served four months for housebreaking.

Mr. Kearney said if that was the case he would withdraw all he had said.

The Bench fined Jones and New £1 each and costs, and the others 2s. 6d. each and costs, or in default one month's imprisonment.

Swindon Advertiser and North Wilts Chronicle, 15 November 1884