



An engraved coin featuring the murder of Wolf Myers

The Murder of Wolf Myers on December 28th 1767

The body of Wolf Myers a Jewish peddler, aged between 30 and 40, was found in a pit in late January, partially covered in snow. The head had a large fracture and the torso had a major stab wound. There was no doubt this was murder.

Later that day a sailor called John Curtis age 27 arrived in town claiming to have been attacked and robbed on the Blandford Road. He had been treated in the local infirmary and discharged on January 4th.

The coroner decided the coincidence of the 2 events were suspicious and issued a warrant for Curtis's arrest. He was found on the HMS Archilles in Gosport and was taken before the Justice of the Peace there and committed to jail.

A search of his sea chest revealed a box full of peddler's items plus other incriminating items. Among them was printed handbill advertising silverware for sale, a copy of which had been found in the murdered man's pocket.

He said his name was John Curtis and that he was born in Jersey. But it was believed his name was Courtine and he was Portuguese.

He was found guilty and sentenced to be executed and hung in chains near the spot where the murder took place. This was Lower Burn Beck in the parish of Britford. The date was March 14th 1768. He protested his innocence to the end.

Hung in chains meant after they have been hung, their bodies are covered with tallow and fat substances, over this is placed a tarred shirt fastened down with iron bands, and the body is hung with chains to the gibbet, which is erected on the spot as near as possible to the place where the crime was committed. The chains or iron straps were designed to ensure the body stayed upright and didn't fall apart while it decayed. The stinking body could be left there sometimes for many years, as a warning to others.