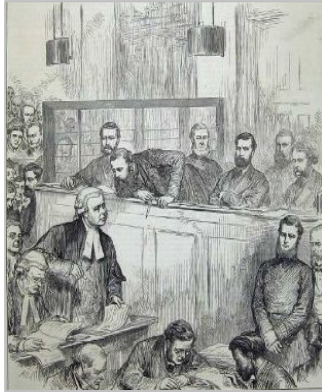


Transported for Arson 1838

Wilts Summer Assizes, Crown Court, Salisbury



William Clayton was indicted for having set fire to a dwelling house, the property of the Right Hon. Henry Pierrepont, at Conholt Park. Mr Slade conducted the case for the prosecution, the prisoner was undefended.

John Savage: I am servant to Mr Pierrepont, at Conholt, in the parish of Chute. Chester was head-groom, Allen was coachman. The servants supped at nine o'clock; Allen and the prisoner slept in the room over the workhouse, and Chester over the saddle-room.

On Friday the 23rd of March, I rang the supper-bell, and I then observed a light in Chester's bedroom; the fire soon got larger, and I alarmed Chester; we ran across the yard and found the door locked; Clayton was close to the door. Chester asked Allen for the key, who said he had not got it, but left Clayton in the room. Clayton said he came out and left the door unlocked. Chester asked him why he did not lock it, he said he had gone out for a walk and forgot it. Chester said either he or Allen must have it. Clayton felt for the key and said he had not got it.

The door was then burst open; I ran up stairs and found the room on fire; I threw water in, but it was ten minutes before I could get into the room. When I went in I found Chester's box on fire, and the bed and door burning - it was a fire in four different places. Almost everything in the box was consumed; there were embers of some little slips of wood in the box; there were marks of a poker on the box as if it had been broken open, and the poker in the saddle-room was very much bent.

I heard Mr Pierrepont ask Clayton to account for his time - he said he had been for a walk into the park for an occasion of nature, and afterwards he said he had been there to meet a woman - he had been to some clumps; he said he had met her in the daytime and at night. I was present when Knight brought a pocket book into the servants' hall.

John Broom: I am also a servant, as under-footman, to Mr Pierrepont. I saw Clayton coming up to the door on the alarm of fire being given. I asked him what light that was in Chester's room, and he turned his back towards the fire, and said - where? The light at the time was very visible.

Wm Chester: I am head-groom to Mr Pierrepont. I slept in a room over the saddle room - there is no fire except in the saddle room. When we have done up our horses for the night the key is carried into the saddle room and then the last comer is to lock the outer door of the saddle room and come in, and leave the key in the servants' hall. That had been invariably done till Friday night. I had £97 in my box that night. There were 52 sovereigns among the money. I had gone to my box that day, about five o'clock. The notes were in a pocket book in the till of the box. I had no pawnbrokers' duplicates in that pocket book, nor any directions about travelling. I used the poker that evening, before eight o'clock, it was then quite straight.

I left the saddle room about a quarter before eight; Clayton staid behind me. Allen was in the hall reading a book at a quarter before nine. I have nothing to add to what Savage has said. A paper hatbox had been broken up and put into my box. 17 sovereigns were left behind, all the rest of the money was gone. The poker in the saddle room fitted the marks in the box.

Allen: I am coachman to Mr Pierrepont. Clayton and I slept over the washhouse. I was in the bedroom with Clayton at 20 minutes before nine; he had a candle in the room. I left him there. After the fire was put out and we had had our supper, Clayton said that no stranger could have done it.

Harriet Broad: I am the wife of the bailiff to Mr Pierrepont. My room is next to Clayton's. I remember hearing two persons in Clayton's room that night; one left in about five minutes. I remember hearing a violent noise as of something being broken open in Chester's room, and shortly afterwards I heard the cry of fire.

Philadelphia Palmer: I am housemaid in Mr Pierrepont's family. I saw three hatboxes in Clayton's room on 23rd of March; one of them had some pieces of deal slips in it; it was on Clayton's side of the bed. This box was missing after the fire.

Thos Knight: I am a labourer in the service of Mr Pierrepont. I searched about after the fire, and on the 2nd of April, as I was birds' nesting near the icehouse, I found a pocket book in some thatch. I took it to the servants' hall, and Chester owned the pocket book. There were 35 sovereigns and some notes in it, and four or five duplicates.

Savage re-called: I gave the pocket book to Mr Pierrepont.

Mr Pierrepont produced the pocket book. There were some duplicates in it with the name of the prisoner on them, also some instructions for travelling, which had been given him by Mr Pierrepont.

The examination of the prisoner was read, in which he stated that he had been walking with a young woman in the park that night, and that on his return the alarm of fire was given.

Mr Baron Parke then summed up, and the Jury found the prisoner *guilty*. The learned Judge then sentenced him to be *transported for life* to the penal settlements.

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