



Reports on County Gaol – Extract from Wilts Michaelmas Sessions

Wilts Michaelmas Sessions

These sessions commenced at Marlborough on Tuesday, under the presidency of Mr. H. A. Merewether, Q.C. The following other magistrates were also present:

Hon. P. P Bouverie,
Lord E. Bruce, M.P.,
Mr. George Alexander,
Mr. T. Fowle,
Mr. G. P. Fuller,
Rev. J. H. Gale,
Mr. H. N. Goddard,
Mr. A. L. Goddard,
Rev. F. Goddard,
Mr. E. Hinxman,
Mr. R. L. Lopes,

Mr. M. H. Marsh,
Mr. C. W. Martin,
Mr. R. E. Rogers,
Mr. Chaloner Smith,
Rev. C. Soames,
Ven. Arch. Stanham,
Mr. H. J. F. Tr.....
Mr. H. Tucker,
Rev. Dr. Wilkinson,
Rev. Preb. Wilkinson, &c.

County Prison - Visiting Justices' Report, 12th October 1870

Present: R.P. Nisbet, Esq., G.P. Fuller, Esq., and H. C. Wyndham, Esq.

We have this day visited the prison, saw all the prisoners, and found everything satisfactory. Robert John Ross made some sundry complaints, which appear unfounded. We think his mind disordered, and wish the medical officer to report his opinion. The average number of prisoners this quarter has been at the rate of 12 ½ per day being a decrease of 11 ½ per day as compared with the last quarter, and an increase of 10 per day as compared with the corresponding quarter in the preceding year. The number of commitments this quarter has been 233, in the corresponding quarter of last year it was 182. The number of prisoners in custody this day is as follows:

Male felons 31; misdemeanants, 29, assaults, 25; want of sureties, 8; Game laws, 5; debtors, 3,
Female felons, 4; misdemeanants, 3;
For trial at the assizes, 1;
For trial at the Sessions, 10;
Total 119.

The total number of prisoners committed in the year has been 883, the daily average number 183. In referring to the Chaplain's journal, we observe that the Chaplain has been absent from August 30th to September 30th, having appointed the Rev. H. A. L. Grindle to perform his duties during his absence, with the sanction of one Visiting Justice. We beg to refer the Chaplain to the standing orders in which it is necessary that he should apply to the committee of visiting Justices for leave, and for the appointment of his substitute.

The Court ordered the Standing Orders to be complied with.

Surgeon's Annual Report

Mr. Lords and gentlemen. In preparing my annual report I have much pleasure in stating that the health of the prisoners during the past year has been good. There has not been a single case of epidemic disease. No death has occurred among the prisoners. Three prisoners have been removed to Lunatic Asylums. The number of infirmary cases have been three. Fifty-seven prisoners were placed on extra diet during the year. The proportion of sick to the whole number of prisoners admitted was nearly one to seven, and the total number of cases treated during this year amounted to 103. The prison is clean and warm, and the earth closet system, which is almost exclusively used here, works remarkably well. The food supplied to the prisoners is good, and except in a few cases, sufficient in quantity. The clothing and bedding of the prisoners are in good order.

I have the honour to be, Your obedient servant,
EDWARD CLAPHAM, surgeon.

Wilts County Gaol, October 17th 1870.

The Court then proceeded to consider a recommendation of the Visiting Justices, of which notice had been given, that the salary of Mr. Alexander, the governor, should be increased from £250 to £300 per annum.

The adoption of the recommendation was moved by Mr. G. Fuller, who having alluded to Mr. Alexander's great length of service, proceeded to show that the salary proposed was not greater than that paid in other counties, where the average of prisoners was about the same as at Devizes. At Taunton the governor received £431, and the deputy governor £183. At Shepton Mallett, the governor received £300, and the deputy governor £85. At Dorchester the gaoler received £300, and his deputy £100 a year. Hampshire and Berkshire, being larger, had not been taken into account. If they gave Mr. Alexander, who had no deputy, £300 a year, he (Mr. Fuller) thought it would be by no means an extravagant amount. Mr. Lopes seconded the motion, and remarked that Mr. Alexander had purchased an increase of salary by the efficient way in which he had discharged his duties for many years. He was entitled to it in every way; he deserved, as he enjoyed, the confidence of the county.

Mr. Hinxman was glad of the opportunity to bearing testimony to Mr. Alexander's high character and efficiency, but seeing that the Salisbury prisoners were removed to Devizes only a few months ago, he thought it was rather early to talk of increased salaries, when they were told that about £900 a year was going to be saved.

Mr. Challoner Smith pointed out that when he first proposed the removal of the county prisoners from Salisbury to Devizes, he expressly allowed a sum of £200 a year for an increase of salaries at Devizes Gaol, in consequence of the extra duties that would be imposed upon the different officers. He believed that every statement that he made had been proved: They had removed the whole Salisbury establishment to Devizes, and yet the increased establishment charges at Devizes did not, at that

moment, exceed £80 a year. (Hear, Hear.) He thought that in awarding Mr. Alexander an extra £50 a year, they would only be doing a substantial act of justice to a faithful and meritorious public officer.

(Hear, hear.)

The motion, upon being put, was unanimously carried, and the CHAIRMAN expressed his concurrence in the remark that Mr. Alexander had earned the advance by the highly efficient manner in which he had discharged his public duties.

Wiltshire Independent, Thurs 20 Oct 1870