



Wilts Quarter Sessions

Great Bedwyn 1563 & 1574-1592

The courts of quarter sessions or quarter sessions were local courts traditionally held at four set times each year in the Kingdom of England (including Wales) from 1388 until 1707, then in 18th-century Great Britain, in the later United Kingdom, and in other dominions of the British Empire.

Quarter sessions generally sat in the seat of each county and county borough. The quarter sessions were named after the quarter days on which they met in England and Wales from 1388. These days were later settled as Epiphany, Easter, Midsummer, and Michaelmas sessions.

The quarter sessions generally heard crimes that could not be tried summarily by the justices of the peace without a jury in petty sessions, which were sent up by the process of indictment to be heard in quarter sessions. The quarter sessions did not have jurisdiction to hear the most serious crimes, most notably those subject to capital punishment or later life imprisonment. These crimes were sent for trial at the periodic assizes.

The quarter sessions in each county were made up of two or more justices of the peace, presided over by a chairman, who sat with a jury. County boroughs entitled to their own quarter sessions had a single recorder instead of a bench of justices. Every court of quarter sessions had a clerk called the clerk of the peace. For county quarter sessions, this person was appointed by the *custos rotulorum* of the county – the justice of the peace for the county charged with custody of its rolls and records. There was a large fee income for the clerk, and he was usually a friend or relative of the *custos*. The clerk rarely discharged the duties of the office himself, but appointed a solicitor to act as his deputy in return for a share of the fees. After 1852, payment by salary was gradually brought in instead of fees.

Year	Date	Surname	Given Names	Abode	Details
1575/ 6	22- Mar	Shadwell	Thomas	Great Bedwyn	Shoemaker -Bound in 100s and his sureties
1579	21- Apr	Baylie	Richard	Bedwyn	Clerk – bound in 10 pounds for his appearance at the next Sessions and in the meantime to pay 8 pence weekly for the maintenance of the child, John Bigges until the next Sessions or until another order be made or taken. ¹
1580	06- Oct	Baylye	Richard	Bedwyn	Clerk – Warrant of the good behaviour
1580/ 1	07- Jan	Baylie	Richard	Bedwyn	Clerk – bound in 20 pounds and his surety.
1580/ 1	07- Jan	Lyghtfoote alias Hawkins	John	Wylton	Lyghtfoote alias Hawkins of Wylton, husbandman, in 5l., for his payment of 6d. weekly for the relief and support of John Bigges, an infant, until he reaches the age of 12 years into the hands of the guardians, to wit the churchwardens for the time being of Bedwyn.’ And the lord of Hertford and Sir Thomas Wroughton like not of this order then to pay 9 pence.’
1580/ 1	07-	Bartlet	Thomas	Bedwyn	Warrant of the good behaviour granted

¹ Richard Bayley was the Vicar of Great Bedwyn (see incumbent list)

1	Jan				
1584	08-Jan	Batt	William	Bedwin	Husbandman to keep the peace
1584	08-Jan	Smith	Christopher	Tottenham	Yeoman - to keep the peace
1587/ 8	11-Jan	Bosgrave	William	Bedwyn	Tailor, bound in 20 pounds to keep the peace and his sureties
1587/ 8	11-Jan	Gryffen	Humfrey	Great Bedwyn	10 pounds for his appearance at the next Assizes
1592	04-Apr	Piersie	William	Great Bedwyn	Bound in 20 pounds and his sureties
1592	04-Apr	Griffen	Humfrey	Great Bedwyn	10 pounds for his appearance at the next Sessions and good behaviour in the meantime.
1592	04-Apr	Markes	Stephen	Great Bedwyn	10 pounds for his appearance at the next Sessions and good behaviour in the meantime.
1592	04-Apr	Gregory	Johannes	Bedwyn	Dimittuntur a custodiendo domum tiplacionis per curiam ²
1592	04-Apr	Piersie	Willelmus	Bedwyn	Dimittuntur a custodiendo domum tiplacionis per curiam ³
1592	04-Apr	Stranguishe	Edith		Fine for a Tippling House is taxed by the Court at 2 shillings and sixpence.
1592	05-Oct	Keele	John	Great Bedwyn	It is ordered that John Keele only shall keep an alehouse in Great Bedwyn and that William Piersie shall be permitted to keepe vitlinge until Easter next without settinge up any alestake, but if he keepe any disorder, then to be utterly dismissed ; all other to be removed.'

Details Extracted from Records Held by the Wiltshire Record Society

² Translation: Authorised by the Court to keep a Tippling House.

³ Translation: Authorised by the Court to keep a Tippling House.