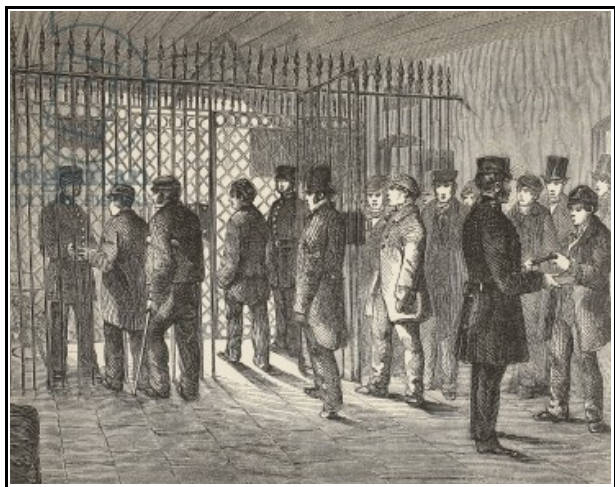


# Crime and Punishment

*Hankerton*



## **Trial of George Woodward**

George Woodward, a labourer, of Hankerton, was charged with stealing seven elm boards, value 1s, the property of Mr Daniel Yeo, of Lyneham, from his sawing works at Minety, on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> November.

PC Drake proved meeting the defendant with the boards under his arm. On asking him what he had, he replied, "It's no odds to you, it's my own." Witness took the seven boards (produced), and, in reply to a question, defendant said young Edgar (a young man on the works) gave them to him. Witness said he wasn't satisfied and should make enquiries.

Edgar Rudman was called, and said he was employed at cutting and making boxes at the place in question. He never gave defendant the boards, and had never given him any. The boards produced were, he believed, the property of Mr Yeo.

Woodward swore that the witness gave him the boards in exchange for a fowl, and had given him wood on previous occasions.

Complainant said he didn't wish to press the case, but wished it to be known that such things must not go on with impunity.

Defendant was committed for trial at the next assizes. Previous convictions for stealing were handed in.

*Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette Thursday 9 January 1890*

## **Assizes Trial**

George Woodward (27) labourer, was charged with stealing seven pieces of elm boarding from the timber stores of Mr Daniel Joseph Yeo, at Minety, on 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov. last. He pleaded not guilty, and was unrepresented by Counsel. Mr Lopes prosecuted, and said that before opening the case he would like to read a statement by the magistrates as to why the case had been sent forward for trial.

The Judge said it was unnecessary. It was very cautious of the magistrates to send in the reasons referred to which he had read. They were not, however, bound to do so. He thought the reasons given quite satisfactory.

Mr Lopes --- I was asked to draw your attention to them.

The Judge --- I ought perhaps to have mentioned it in my charge to the grand jury. The magistrates say very properly that they think the prisoner should not be kept waiting in custody until the Quarter Sessions.

Mr Lopes, proceeding, said the prosecutor was a timber merchant living at Lyneham, near Malmesbury, and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November last a police constable met the prisoner at one o'clock on the Sunday morning carrying the seven pieces of timber which would be produced. The constable asked him to account for having the timber in his possession. Not being satisfied with the account the prisoner gave, the constable took him into custody. Prisoner's statement was that a man named Edgar Rudman gave him the timber. Rudman would tell the jury that he never gave prisoner any timber or authorised him to take any. As to the law on the subject, it was as his lordship would tell them, that any person found in possession of stolen goods was expected to account for having them in his possession. He thought after hearing the evidence they would have little doubt that the prisoner had stolen the wood.

James Drake police constable, stationed at Minety, said he met the prisoner at one o'clock on Sunday morning, the 3<sup>rd</sup> November last, and found him carrying the seven boards (produced). The prisoner was coming from the direction of Mr Yeo's premises, and was going towards Holt along Hankerton Road. In reply to witness's questions, prisoner said Edgar Rudman gave the boards to him. Witness cautioned the prisoner, and he replied that he did not steal the boards, that they were given to him by Rudman, and he asked witness not to say anything about it as he would get Rudman out of his employment.

Edgar Rudman, of the Old Inn, Minety, was called and said he did not give the boards to the prisoner and did not authorise him to take them. The last he saw of him on the Saturday night preceding the alleged theft was when he was in the Old Inn at eight o'clock.

Prisoner here stated that witness gave him the boards for a fowl which he had given to witness. The price of the fowl was 2s and Rudman gave him the boards by way of payment. Witness denied that he gave him the boards for the fowl and said he paid him 2s.

Mr Yeo was called and said the boards produced were the same as those he made for boxes for tin plates. There were no other boards similar to them made in the neighbourhood.

The Judge, having summed up the evidence, the jury considered their verdict and the Foreman after a little time asked the Judge if the prisoner had been previously convicted.

His Lordship said he could not answer that question. He however called the police constable and asked him why the prisoner had not been tried at the Winter Assizes. The constable said the reason was that the prosecutor was unable to appear.

The jury returned a verdict of not guilty, the Foreman observing that they had a doubt as to the truth of the charge.

The Judge, addressing the prisoner, said he had had a fortunate escape. Prisoner said he was not guilty. His Lordship said he did not know whether prisoner had stolen the things or not but he had been convicted three times before. He might go but he must not do it again. (Laughter)

Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette Thursday 27 February 1890