



### **Serial Thief - George Watts**

George Watts, aged 21 years, was convicted of stealing a pick axe, the property of George Ruddle, at Little Bedwin. The Chairman in passing sentence observed that one of the advantages of trials like the present was to show to the public, that fellows like the prisoner was well known to the police, and their past offences were not forgotten when subsequently charged with crime. I find (said the Chairman) that in 1849 you were summarily convicted and imprisoned for three weeks for stealing peas; on the 13th December in the same year you were committed to the Devizes sessions for stealing coal, and were sentenced to two months hard labour; in 1851 you were charged with stealing rabbits, but the owner declined to prosecute; shortly afterwards you were committed for 21 days for stealing wood; on the 20th of November, 1851, you were charged with stealing wood and sentenced to three months hard labour and to be once whipped; and in addition to all this, the police in Dorsetshire still have a charge against you. When sat here I dare say you were told that if again convicted you would be transported; now punishment is not intended for revenge but as a public example, and in order to show that in cases like yours it is not usual to hold out mere idle threats, the sentence of the court is that you be transported for 7 years, and that in the mean time you be kept at hard labour.

**Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette, 13 January 1853**