



Crime and Punishment

Minety

Court Case

John Brown

At Malmesbury Special Sessions, on the 7th inst., Robert Bassett, a Railway policeman, informed the Bench, on oath, that, being on night duty, stationed at Minety, on Sunday, the 3rd inst., he passed the down mail Great Western Railway train from London, through the station, all right, at midnight.

At 2 o'clock on Monday morning, the up mail train came in sight, and he put the signals for her all right at the Station, but he found directly that she threw her steam off. He heard a loud crash up the line from where he stood, and ran down towards them, a distance of nearly a mile and a half from the Station. Before he arrived, the drivers had put back, to see what they had run over, and had commenced to put the steam on again, and passed him gently. They ordered him to go down the line to see what impediment remained, they having picked up, and got with them, a copper dome, or cap, belonging to an old engine, which stood on the siding.

Witness went on, and found three transoms, a lot of stone, and one length of metal, on the up line, which metal, by the concussion, had been cut in two. The stones had been partly knocked off by the engine guard, and the remainder were ground down under the engine. The wooden transoms were very much split and cut about. They were laid across the railway, one of them had been cut in the centre. The engine had kept driving it for a space of 50 yards from the place where it had been laid. The witness found it cut in two; the other part was forced above a foot into the bank, at some distance; witness understood it had belonged to the Vesta engine.

As soon as witness had cleared all the obstructions on that line he turned to the down line, to see if that was correct. There he found that three very large stones had been laid upon it, one was cut asunder, and the others ground into pieces, one of them weighing nearly a quarter of a hundred weight, and a couple of transoms were found cut in pieces similar to the others.

After calling the constable whose beat it occurred on, we looked about for footmarks, and found the prints of two persons round about the Vesta engine, and the materials which lay near it.

John Brown, of Minety, was charged with being concerned in the above offence. A considerable mass of evidence was adduced against him; but the Magistrates did not think it strong enough to warrant a

committal, and the prisoner, who denied the charge, but acknowledged that he was on the Railway on the Sunday evening, was dismissed.

Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette 21 October 1841