



Workhouse Warning Bell

Murder in Devizes Workhouse

Charles Gerrish, a pauper of Devizes Workhouse, aged 70, was indicted for the willful murder of Richard Coleman, another aged pauper. The men were sitting in the old men's room in the workhouse after breakfast, when a quarrel arose as to the position of a stool by the fire, one wanting nearer, and the other saying it should not be there. The deceased got up and went to the other side of the room, when Gerrish put the poker in the fire and stood by until it was red hot, when he took it, and going over to the deceased, thrust it into his neck. He died in three minutes.

The prisoner was found guilty, and Lord Chief Justice Coleridge sentenced him to death.

Bath Chronicle, 19 January 1882

Execution of an Aged Pauper

Charles Gerrish was executed at Devizes yesterday morning for the murder of Stephen Coleman at Devizes Union Workhouse. He had throughout shown no signs of compunction, nor expressed the least regret for his crime. He ate and slept well, and seemed wholly indifferent to his fate. The only persons present were the Under Sheriff, governor, chaplain, and warders, besides representatives of the press. The culprit walked firmly to the drop, and appeared quite unmoved. Marwood arranged the rope, the bolt was drawn, and the body fell a depth of ten feet, and death was instantaneous. The black flag was hoisted. There were very few persons outside. Gerrish was seventy years of age.

Dundee Courier, Tuesday, 31 January 1882