



Crime and Punishment

Trowbridge

Serious Charge of Stealing and Receiving Wool

At the police station, on Monday last, Richard Sheppard, 69 years of age, for nearly 40 years a confidential servant in the employ of Messrs. Webber and Kemp, wool dyers, appeared to his recognizance from Wednesday last, charged with stealing 50lbs of wool from the dyehouse, on Saturday the 7th inst. Mr. Superintendent White Conducted the prosecution, the prisoner being defended by R. K. Lopes esq., of the western circuit, instructed by Mr. C. J. Jones, solicitor. - John Kemp was the first witness, who deposed that on the 24th ult., George Seer, of Frome, brought 168lbs. of raw wool to the dyehouse to be dyed brown, which was done, and the whole of the wool was still at the dyehouse in a wet state. Also that some wool like that produced had lately been dyed by them for Palmer and Mackay's firm, - John Reynolds, one of the employed, proved seeing about Christmas some small heaps of wool in both rooms of the drying stove, apparently put aside for some purpose, and that both heaps increased until the 6th inst., when he missed part of them. - Charles Freeth another employee, deposed to the same effect, and also that on Saturday the 7th, about 12 noon, he saw a horse and trap belonging to Seer standing at the dyehouse gates, when young Seer, who was in charge of it, went into the yard and directly afterwards returned to the gateway with the prisoner Sheppard when both looked up and down the road and then returned into the yard.

Immediately afterward he saw them both re-appear, bringing between them a bag of wool, which they put into the trap and young Seer drove off with it. - Supt. White deposed that having received some information he went the same evening to Seer's house at the woodlands, Frome where he found the wool produced (40lbs. of blue and 12lbs. of black), which had been identified by the witnesses. He also produced samples from the dyehouse. Witness further deposed that seeing Sheppard the next day and asking for his explanation of it, he said they had instruction from Seer to dye his wool black, blue and brown. He then took him into custody, and prisoner afterwards admitted to him that he was very sorry, but that it was only odd wool. - prisoner now pleaded guilty. - Mr Lopes addressed the bench in mitigation of punishment, urging the age of the prisoner and his previous good character for so many years. - The bench addressing the prisoner, said it was a very serious charge and if taken to the Assizes he would be liable to a much heavier punishment than they could inflict. As he had elected to be tried by them and pleaded guilty, they felt they would not be doing their duty if they did not give him the full term of imprisonment, viz., six months. - *George Seer and George Seer, junr.*, woollen manufacturers, of the Woodlands, Frome, were then charged with feloniously receiving the wool, - Mr. Jones defended alone in this case. - Mr. Kemp was again examined, and Charles Freeth, who deposed to seeing the younger prisoner receive the wool from Sheppard under the circumstances deposed to in the previous case.

Superintendent White prove finding the wool in the prisoner's mill at the woodlands, when the elder prisoner said it was part of what he had taken to the dyehouse to be dyed, from which place he had that day brought it.

(This statement was afterwards found to be incorrect, as the prisoner had given instructions for his wool to be dyed brown).- Mr. Superintendent Williams of Frome, who was in company of the last witness corroborated. - Mr Jones addressed the bench and asked if there was any case against either, and, on being answered in the affirmative, asked the bench not to send them for trial unless they reasonably believed a jury would convict. - both were then committed for trial as the Assizes, but admitted to bail-themselves in £50 each, and two sureties in the sum of £25 each. **19th January 1888 Devizes Gazette**