

Sheep Stealing at Winterbourne Dauntsey 1863



Some time in the course of Thursday night three sheep, two ewes and a teg, were stolen from a field in the occupation of Mr Barnes, at Winterbourne, near this city (*Salisbury*). On Friday morning information was forwarded to Mr Superintendent Matthews, of the county constabulary, who despatched men to different points. In the lane adjoining Mr Barnes's field there were marks of the wheels of a cart, and these, of course, immediately attracted attention, more particularly as it appeared that after being driven a short distance beyond the spot, the vehicle had been turned in the direction of Salisbury.

Suspicion being thus aroused, a certain house in Salisbury was searched, but without find of the missing sheep. Feeling assured, however, that they were on the right 'scent,' the officers prosecuted their inquiries, and in the course of the day it was ascertained that three live sheep had been sold to Mr Gatterell, of Chicklade Bottom, by a person who is well known in the neighbourhood of Salisbury.

Mr Gatterell had the animals killed, but in consequence of circumstances which afterwards came to his knowledge, he was induced to give information to Mr Dann, Superintendent of Police. Mr Matthews subsequently took possession of the skins and carcasses, and on Saturday a man named Alfred Churchill was apprehended at Fovant by Serjeant Wheeler, on the charge of having been concerned in the robbery.

On Monday he was taken before Mr E Hixman, at the Magistrate's clerk's office, Salisbury, and remanded, the person who actually sold the sheep being still at large. However, he is well known, and there is every reason to believe that he will soon be in custody. This is the third case of sheep stealing in this neighbourhood which Mr Matthews has detected within the last two years; and in answer to the sneer 'How they manage things at Salisbury,' it may be truly said that no officer in the service is in the habit of 'managing' such things with greater activity or more success.

Hampshire Advertiser Saturday 24 January 1863

On the Trail of the Sheep Stealers

It was announced in our last that three sheep had been stolen from Mr Barnes, of Winterbourne Dauntsey, and also that a hawker named Alfred Churchill had been apprehended at Fovant, on the charge of having been concerned in the robbery. It was further stated that the supposed principal in the felony had, for the moment, baffled pursuit although there was every probability of his speedy apprehension.

The capture of this individual has since been effected, but not without putting the vigilance and ingenuity of the police to the severest test. His name is George Ings, and he was formerly a greengrocer and general shopkeeper living in Gigant-street, in this city (*Salisbury*); but that business having failed him, he has latterly taken to dealing in pigs, poultry, and other things.

On the morning after the robbery he sold Mr Barnes's sheep to Mr Gattrell, a butcher, residing at Chicklade Bottom; and it would seem that being apprehensive of detection he afterwards actually abstracted the skins from the premises of a carrier to whom they had been entrusted for conveyance to Salisbury. From Chicklade Bottom he was traced to the Boot Inn, at Warminster Common, where he arrived on Saturday morning, and left his horse and trap, having evaded payment of the toll at Crockerton gate by declaring that he had taken a ticket at another gate on the same trust, but that the wind had blown it out of his hands - a similar excuse to one which he made at the Old Sarum-gate on the very night of the robbery.



On Monday, Mr Superintendent Matthews went to Warminster, and took possession of the horse and trap, and in the course of that day circumstances occurred to create a belief that Ings himself was at Bristol. Mr Matthews accordingly proceeded to that city by the first train on Tuesday, and shortly ascertained that the fugitive had been staying at a public house there since Saturday, but that he had left in the middle of the previous night. He was next heard of at the New Inn, kept by Mr Collard, at Patchway, five or six miles from Bristol, where he arrived between 8 and 9 o'clock on Tuesday morning, and remained until 4 or 5 in the afternoon. Thence he was followed to Almondbury, where all trace of him was lost for a time.

Thinking that he might have gone to Thornbury, Mr Matthews proceeded to that place, but finding himself at 'fault,' returned to the New Passage, with the view of learning if the fugitive had made his escape into Wales. Here he found that a man answering Ing's description had passed over the Severn on Wednesday in a steam tug, with a number of labourers engaged on some public works there. There being no boat running for hire at this point, Mr Matthews was under the necessity of doubling back to the Old Passage, near Thornbury, where he was again delayed, unable to cross the river that night.

The next morning he visited Chepstow and Portskewet, and was fortunate enough, at the railway station at the latter place, to gain some intelligence of the runaway. There being no train out of Portskewet for several hours after mid-day, Ings had waited at the station during the interval, and had also spoken to a man named Mizen who, it may be mentioned, was formerly connected with the Salisbury police. He asked Mizen several questions, and in the course of conversation stated that he had not been at Salisbury for some time. Ings took a ticket for Newport, and it appeared that only two others were issued for that town by the same train.

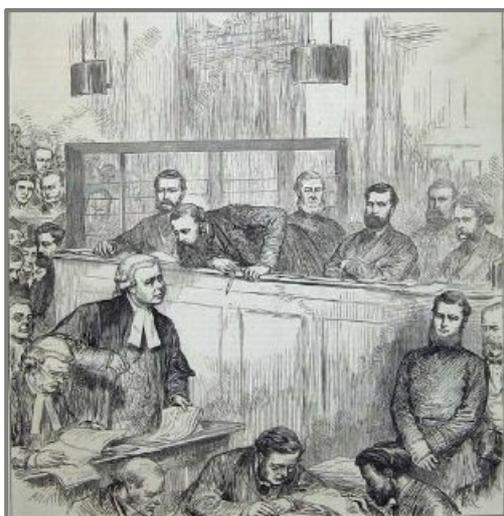
Having taken the numbers, Mr Matthews proceeded to Newport by the next train, and finding that all three tickets had been delivered there, was satisfied that the object of his search had not gone further, or left the train at an earlier station. Mr Huxtable, the chief of police at Newport, rendered every assistance; and after a short time there was an exceedingly 'formal' interview at a public house between Mr Matthews and the supposed sheepstealer, just as the latter was engaged in a very innocent conversation, enlivened no doubt by the reflection on his part that he had successfully baffled the efforts of the police.

He was at once handcuffed and brought to Bristol, and thence to Salisbury on the following day. It will thus be seen that even a deputy chairman of Quarter Sessions could not have 'managed' the affair more satisfactorily than the officer entrusted with the duty; although we think we should be doing an injustice if we did not say that Mr Superintendent Caldow and the city police rendered good service on discovering the route originally taken by the fugitive. On Saturday afternoon the prisoners were taken before Mr E Hixman, at the Magistrates' clerk's office. Some witnesses were examined and the prisoners were remanded.

Hampshire Advertiser Saturday 31 January 1863

The Trial

Before Mr Justice Byles, Crown Court, Wilts Lent Assizes, Devizes



George Ings, the younger, and Alfred Churchill (on bail) were indicted for stealing three sheep, the property of Mr Arthur Thomas Barnes, at Winterbourne Dauntsey, on the 16th of January.

A second count charged the prisoners with receiving the animals, well knowing them to have been stolen. They both pleaded not guilty.

Mr Cole prosecuted; Mr T W Saunders defended Ings. Mr Cole, having stated the case, proceeded to call the following witnesses.

Mr Arthur Thomas Barnes: I am a farmer, living at Winterbourne Dauntsey, about 4 miles from Salisbury. On the 14th of January I was going from my residence to the farmyard, when I met the prisoner Ings, whom I had known before. He is a small dealer, living at Salisbury. He was on foot.

He asked me if I had any sheep, fowls, or anything else to sell. I told him I had three ewes up in the field, for which I wanted 46s a head.

He asked if he might go and look at them, and I told him he might, but that I had not time to go with him. I told him that if he thought anything of them, he was to call on the following morning, when I should be at home. I never saw him again until he was in custody.

Stephen Saunders, shepherd to Mr Barnes, was at his master's sheep fold on the morning of the 14th of January. About 12 o'clock, the prisoner Ings came to the fold through a gap in the hedge, and asked him if they were Mr Barnes's sheep, and he told him they were. He asked if there were not some for sale. Witness said there were three fat ewes. He said Mr Barnes had sent him up to look at them, but he should not give the price which Mr Barnes asked. He then returned through the gap, got into his cart and drove off.

On the following Friday morning, about ½ past 7, he saw that some of the sheep were out of the fold and missed two fat ewes and a ewe teg. He examined the fold and saw marks of the sheep having been driven into one corner.

There were four hurdles plied back, so that sheep might have been pulled over them. Outside the fold he saw marks of sheep having been dragged towards a gap in the hedge, near the road. On the quicks there were several pieces of wool. He went through the gap and examined the road. He saw the tracks of a horse and cart, in the direction from the Amesbury turnpike. It appeared to have gone two yards below the gap, and then to have turned round and stopped. He traced it back again towards High Post Crossing, about 50 yards. That would be the way to Salisbury. He informed his master of the loss and afterwards shown some skins by Superintendent Matthews. The skins produced were the same. They were the skins of his master's sheep.

Richard Gattrell: I am a butcher living at Chicklade, 17 miles from Salisbury, and near Hindon. I know Ings, who is a first cousin of my wife's. On Friday the 16th of Jan. about 11 o'clock he brought 3 sheep - two fat ewes and a ewe teg - in his cart to my house. He said he had got three sheep he had bought at Redlynch the day before which he thought would suit me. He said he had 20 more bought, which he had not broken into.

I bought the two ewes at two guineas each and the teg at 14s. He stayed with me until about 4 o'clock, and he assisted me in slaughtering the sheep. He went away in his cart about four o'clock. The same day I gave the skins to Portnall, a carrier, to take to Salisbury.

The next morning I got up before 5, and saw a horse and cart at the back of my premises. I found it was Ings's cart. I went to the stable, and called 'George,' and Ings answered. I said 'For God's sake, what do you do here?' He said, 'Come in and I'll tell you; is there anybody outside?' and I said 'no.' He said 'As I was going back through Wilton last night I met our young Loo, who said that the police were looking after three sheep which had been stolen from Winterbourne, and that I had better not go into town.' I said 'You have got me into nice trouble'. He said 'Not at all; I have been to Portnall and got the skins; I shall take them, and make away with them; and if you cut up the sheep nobody will be the wiser.'

I charged him with stealing the sheep and he said he bought them of Mr Gwyer, of Redlynch. I asked him for the skins, and he said they were in the stable. I saddled my horse and went to see my father, telling him not to go until I returned. He said 'Don't holloa down there.' I sent my father to see that nothing was removed while I went and gave information to Superintendent Dann, at Hindon. When I returned Ings had left. I found the skins in the stable and delivered them and the carcasses to Mr Matthews, Superintendent of Police.



George Matthews: I am Superintendent of County Constabulary stationed at Salisbury. On the 17th of Jan. I went to Mr Gattrell's and received the skins produced. I saw Churchill at Dinton the same day, and told him the charge against him. I cautioned him and he said he knew nothing about any sheep being stolen. I told him he had been seen with Ings at Woodford and at Netton with him, and that he was seen going with him towards the fold. He said yes he did, but got down from the cart at Netton cross roads, as Ings said he was going down for some sheep which he had bought. He added that Ings overtook him before he got to Salisbury, with three sheep in the cart, and that he rode with him into Salisbury.

I then went to look for Ings, but could not find him. I went to Bristol, and on Thursday evening, the 22nd, apprehended him at a public house at Newport, Monmouthshire. I told him the charge. He said that he did not steal them; he bought them.

Other evidence was adduced.

Churchill's statement before the Magistrates was put in and read. He denied being with Ings when he took up the sheep. He got out of the cart at the cross roads, and Ings afterwards overtook him with 3 sheep in the cart. He road with Ings into Salisbury. Ings told him, if he saw any dealers not to say where he bought the sheep, as there were others to be bought cheap, and if the dealers knew it, it might be the means of taking a pound or two out of his pocket.

The Jury, after some deliberation, returned a verdict of guilty against both prisoners.

Ings was sentenced to four years' penal servitude, and Churchill to 12 calendar months' imprisonment with hard labour.

Churchill protested his innocence and said that Ings ought to be ashamed of himself for allowing him to be 'put aside' like this, without stating that he knew nothing about the matter.

Devizes & Wiltshire Gazette Thursday 02 April 1863

Testimonial

A subscription has been set on foot among the farmers of this neighbourhood, in order to present Mr Superintendent Matthews, of the Wilts Constabulary, with a testimonial of their appreciation of his conduct in the recent case of sheep stealing at Winterbourne Dauntsey, as well as in other cases of the kind during the last two or three years.

Hampshire Advertiser Saturday 14 February 1863