



Attempted Highway Robbery and Murder on Isaac Crofts of Crockerton

Between 6 and 7 o'clock on Saturday evening last, as Isaac Crofts of Crockerton was returning from Knoyle, where he had been with a load of coal, he was attacked by two men on the Down near Pertwood, about four miles and a half from Warminster, one of whom gave him a violent blow on the back part of his head, which knocked him from the cart into the road. They then commenced rifling his pockets but being disappointed at not finding any money, one of them, with a knife, cut the poor man's throat in a shocking manner, and also inflicted a severe cut from the corner of the right eye down the nose, and then left him.

As soon as Crofts recovered himself, he contrived to hold fast by the hind part of the cart, and soon overtook a little boy, who, after assisting the poor man into the cart, immediately gave an alarm; when Targett, the policeman stationed at Crockerton, and a labourer named Holton, went in pursuit of the villains.

Information was also conveyed to Mr Cole, the superintendent, who started others of the police to assist in the search, and also went himself. They searched all the public houses at Knoyle without success; but after returning again to the Black Horse Inn (the first they entered) and waiting for a few minutes, two suspicious characters entered, whom Holton, who was then alone, in a very courageous manner collared, and by two policemen entering soon afterwards the fellows were secured. They were, by the superintendent's direction, kept there until the following (Sunday) morning, when they were sent off to Warminster handcuffed.

Upon their persons were found a double-tongued rattle, a lock, a quantity of keys, matches, tinder and two knives. They gave their names as David Chipp and William Goulden.

They were brought before Lord Heytesbury and Mr Ravenhill on Monday, and remanded until Wednesday; Crofts, who is confined to his bed, being too ill to appear against them. The surgeon states that the wound

extends along the side of the neck three inches in length, passing over the carotid artery, which it exposed to view, and close to which the wound was three quarters of an inch deep.

Chipp was the principal in a robbery committed a short time since in Dorsetshire, in which his father, brother and mother were concerned. The three latter were apprehend by one of the Constabulary Force in the Hindon division, and tried at the last Dorsetshire sessions, when the father and brother were transported for 7 years and the mother was acquitted.

The prisoner contrived to escape but since his apprehension on the present charge, the Dorsetshire constables have written to state that they hold a warrant against him. The uncle of Chipp was also transported for 15 years, about twelve months ago.

The prisoners were yesterday again brought before the Magistrates, when additional evidence was adduced; but Crofts not being sufficiently recovered to appear against them, they were further remanded until to-morrow.

On returning to the prison yard Goulden made a desperate attack upon the policeman and effected his escape. He was, however, almost immediately re-apprehended by a man who, seeing him running down Weymouth-street, gave him such a violent blow on the head, that a surgeon has been obliged to dress it.

Devizes & Wiltshire Gazette, Thursday, 18 February 1841

Warminster. Between six and seven o'clock on Saturday evening last, as Isaac Crofts of Crockerton, was returning from Knoyle, where he had been with load of coal, he was attacked by two men on the down near Pertwood, about four miles and a half from Warminster, one of whom gave him a violent blow on the back part of his head, which knocked him from the cart into the road; they then commenced riding his pockets, but being disappointed at not finding any money, one of them, with a knife, cut the poor man's throat in a shocking manner, and also inflicted a severe cut from the corner of the right eye down the nose, and then left him. Soon Crofts recovered himself, he contrived to hold fast by the hind part of the cart, and soon overtook a little boy, who, after assisting the poor man into the cart, immediately gave an alarm. Two bad characters, David Chipp and William Goulden, of Shaftesbury, are in custody, on strong suspicion of being the perpetrators of the outrage.

Wiltshire Independent 25 February 1841

Salisbury Assizes William Goulden and David Chipp were indicted on a charge of having assaulted Isaac Crofts with intent to rob, and also with cutting the said Isaac Crofts, at Hill Deverill, on the February.

Isaac Crofts On the 14th of February I went with Henry Waters with two coal carts to Knoyle. We left there about seven o'clock in the evening. When we came to Hill Deverill, Watts was about 200 yards before me; I was sitting the rave of the cart. Chipp struck on the back of the head, and knocked me off. Prisoners were together, and before I could get up, Goulden pressed on me. He put his hand into my pocket. I told him I had no money. He said, then damn thee, I will cut thy throat; Chipp was standing by. He then stuck the knife into my neck, and drew it across my nose. When I was getting up, he was coming me again, and said damn thee, I'll finish thee but Chipp held him, and would not let him. They then went on to Deverell with the cart, and got assistance.

Cross examined by Mr Cockburn He struck me back-handed. I could see he was drunk. I was not sitting very firm on the cart. I fell forward, with my face downward. Thomas Waters stated that he was with his cart about 200 yards in advance of the last witness, when on Deverell Downs. Soon after he had met the two prisoners. Crofts overtook him; he was wounded, and bleeding, and implored the witness to go in search of assistance. He was in a very piteous condition, and in a state of great alarm.

Target, a policeman, stated, that had seen the two prisoners in Crockerton between three and four o'clock; that they were very drunk; so much so, that, apprehensive of riot and disturbance, he ordered them quit the place, which they did, going in the direction of Deverell Downs. Saw the prisoners in custody that night, between nine and ten, and searched their persons. On Chipp he found common knife only; on Goulden, he found no knife, but seven keys, a rattle, and box of matches.

James Horton, a stout, athletic countryman, stated, that having heard of the attack made upon the prosecutor, he went pursuit of the prisoners. He found them at the Black Horse at Knoyle (a beer-shop). He immediately seized them both – the one with the right, and the other with his left hand, saying, You are the men want; you are my prisoners; directing the same time the landlady shut the doors, and let no-one leave the house. Upon this, the prisoner Chipp said to his companion, We are done! – The conduct of this witness, who was evidently labouring under the influence of liquor, and whose manner in the witness-box exhibited great recklessness, led to a rigid cross-examination, and to severe animadversion from the Counsel and the Court.

Wm. Brown, a prisoner in the gaol, who had been convicted of apple-stealing, was brought up to depose to a conversation between him and Goulden in the gaol at Warminster. He stated that Goulden had confessed the circumstances of the transaction, and stated where he had concealed the knife with which he had inflicted the wounds, and that Goulden had told him, that he had contrived, while being searched, to shift the knife from one pocket to the other.

Further evidence was given of the knife having been found in the place described by the last witness. The knife was produced, and was one of those formidable instruments which on being opened, fastens with a spring, and becomes in effect, a dagger.

Mr Cockburn, on the part of the prisoner Chipp, addressed the jury, and submitted that the state of intoxication under which it was clear from the evidence that Chipp was labouring, and the rest of his share in the transaction – his taking no part in the violence inflicted by his comrade, and his praiseworthy conduct in forcibly restraining the latter from a renewal of the assault on the prosecutor, might fairly lead to the inference that the blow struck by Chipp had been inflicted in the wantonness of intoxication, and had not been committed with the intent alleged in the indictment.

Mr Saunders addressed the jury for the prisoner Goulden.

Mr Justice Erskine having summed up, the jury returned a Verdict of Guilty against both the prisoners. The learned Judge, in an emphatic address, passed sentence, observing that there was great distinction the cases of the prisoners, owing the interference of Chipp to protect Crofts from the further violence of Goulden. His Lordship sentenced Goulden to be transported for life, and Chipp to be imprisoned for eighteen months, with hard labour.

8 March 1841, Salisbury and Winchester Journal

The following convicts have been removed from Fisherton Gaol, and put on board the Stirling Castle hulk
Devonport: William Goulden,....

19 April 1841, Salisbury and Winchester Journal

OPC Note: William Goulden was transported to Van Diemen's Land along with 400 other convicts, on board the Tortoise, which departed 30h August 1841 and arrived in Australia 19th February 1842.

Digitalised record of his conduct , and personal description from Tasmania archives can be viewed by [following this link](#)

This gives information that he was a stone cutter, aged 19, amongst details of his conduct in Australia.

A description of the journey aboard the ship Tortoise, from the journal of another convict on the same passage [can be read here](#)

