



A Typical Magistrates Hearing of the Victorian Period

### **Concealment of Birth**

At the last Petty sessions, Ellen Maxfield, of Longbridge Deverill, aged 24, was charged with concealing the birth of a male child. On the 3rd of May, the prisoner's brother met her coming into the house from the garden, with blood on her apron, and, on passing the closet in the garden, he saw more blood. He then looked down the vault, and saw the body of a child, which he picked out with a stick and a pair of tongs. The prisoner, on being questioned, said the child was born dead in the closet, and she threw it down the vault. Mr Vicary, the surgeon who conducted the post mortem examination, said he believed that the child was born alive. On opening the neck he found marks in the child's throat, as if large stick had been thrust down its mouth. There was also a bruise on its head sufficient to cause death, which, he thought, might have been caused by the fall against the brick floor of the closet. The prisoner was committed for trial on the charge of concealing the birth.

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