



Overseers of Semley Penalised 1818

Relieving the Poor of the Parish

- 1818 On Tuesday last, four penalties were paid to the Magistrates of the Sarum Division, which have been levied by their warrants of distress on a late Overseer of Semley, for refusing to obey four orders made for the relief of poor persons residing in that parish.
Salisbury & Winchester Journal November 30 1818

To the Printers of the Salisbury and Winchester Journal

Gentlemen, it appears by a paragraph in your last paper, that the Overseers of Semley had paid the sum of eight pounds on four several convictions, for refusing to obey the orders of two Magistrates for relieving the poor. Such a paragraph implies that the Parish Officers of Semley had not acted with that attention to the wants of the poor, or to the directions of the Magistrates, which humanity and the laws of the country point out.

It is therefore a justice due to these Parish Officers to say that they are not wanting in feeling towards the poor, or respect to those Magistrates who made the orders, but their refusal to obey the orders was merely to ascertain, in a legal manner, whether the poor people of Semley, if they really are in need of parochial assistance, or fancy themselves to be so, are to be encouraged to go twenty two miles to the Bench of Magistrates at Salisbury to make their complaints, and in consequence to compel the Overseers of that Parish to attend subsequently the Justices there, when there are not less than three Justices of the Peace in the adjoining Parishes, as able and willing as the Magistrates of Salisbury, to hear the complaints of the poor, and to give them redress.

This encouragement of the Bench at Salisbury being founded on no other pretence than that King Edwy, about 1000 years since, gave the Manors of Semley and Chalk to the Abbess of Wilton, and that the Abbess subsequently obtained the Hundred of Chalke, and required her tenants of Semley to do suit and service to her Hundred Court, held at Alvediston, about seven miles only distant from Semley. The point is now put in a fair way to be determined but no blame can possibly attach on the Parish Officers of Semley, who are herein acting under legal advice.
I am, Gentlemen, your most obedient servant, Chas. Bowles. Shaftesbury, Dec. 3, 1818

Salisbury & Winchester Journal December 07 1818

- 1819 The Appeal of the Overseers of Semley
To the convictions made on them of eight pounds for not relieving the poor of that parish according to the orders of the Salisbury Magistrates, in opposition to the rules laid down by the Bench of Justices at Hindon, was heard before the Justices assembled at the Quarter Sessions at Devizes.

After hearing Mr Merewether and Mr Storey in support of the convictions, and Mr Grant and Mr Peregrine Bingham, on the part of the Overseers, the Bench were of the opinion that Salisbury Magistrates had no jurisdiction in the business, and of course the convictions were quashed. As the question was deemed one of great consequence, at the earnest request of Mr Merewether, a special case was granted for the opinion of the Court of King's Bench.
Salisbury & Winchester Journal January 18 1819

- 1819 The Semley Case
It may be recollected that a paragraph appeared in our Journal several months ago, stating that an appeal was brought by Mr William Bracher, overseer of Semley, in the county of Wilts, and tried at the last Devizes sessions, against a warrant of distress for levying the penalty of 40s on the goods of Mr Bracher, for not obeying an order made by the Justices of the Sarum division, for the relief of Wm Maidment and his family, poor persons, residing in Semley, in the said division.

The sessions quashed the warrant, subject to a case to be stated for the opinion of the Court of the King's Bench. The magistrates of the division not being satisfied with the determination of the sessions, removed the proceedings by writ of certiorari, and on the 2d inst the case was argued before the four Judges of the Court of the King's Bench, in Sergeant's Inn Hall, when the judgement of the sessions was overturned by the unanimous opinion of the judges, and the distress made by the Justices was declared to be legal.
Salisbury and Winchester Journal 22 November 1819