

Riot in Wheatley 1849

This rather dramatic terminology is how an attack by four men on a group of passing Irish labourers on Sunday 7 October 1849 was described. It is covered in thirteen press articles or letters.

The Irish group consisted of two men, three women with children on their backs, and some other children. The attack took place during the time of divine service. Two of the Irish group took refuge in the house of a Mr Holder and the ‘rioters’ were tracked down to a pub by the curate, Rev. John Garrett (also an Irishman), who ‘apprehended’ them [it would be wonderful to think that they were put in the lock-up!] causing them to come before Justice Mr Henley. Garrett wrote to a constable, Mr Ring, whom he blamed for the fact that the public house(s) in Wheatley were open on the Sunday before the appointed time. John Juggins, churchwarden and later bête noire of Edward Elton, was one of the witnesses. When the case came to trial, the four were sentenced to 3 months imprisonment and hard labour.

Garrett appears to have grasped this as a *cause celebre* for trying to obtain a special constable in Wheatley. However, on 10 November, Mr Lovelock, on behalf of the vestry meeting, pointed out that (with just one dissention) the meeting did not agree that a special constable was required. Garrett also used the case to pursue another *cause celebre* claiming that Wheatley was akin to Botany Bay with local drunks, idlers etc. being foisted on it, and was an unsafe place to live.

Now it just so happens that the Bishop of Oxford, Samuel Wilberforce, preached at Wheatley Church on Wednesday 31 October 1849. The collection was to support the local school and this raised some £36, an insufficient sum as Garrett reckoned that £100 was needed. So, this became another *cause* along with trying to recover the costs of the prosecution which Garrett reported that some £5 was raised.

A ‘Friend of the Church’ pops up in an anonymous letter claiming that the Bishop of Oxford’s Cuddesdon Church, the mother church to Wheatley, was rich with some £4,200 while Wheatley was left to struggle for its ‘1,000 souls with a pittance of less than £100 per annum’.

Comment

The event appears to have been blown out of all proportion (even one letter says so) but, more importantly was used by Garrett and others for their battles for

Appointment of a special constable (which was later made at the cost to
the Poor Rates)

An attack on the Bishop for keeping Wheatley (church) impoverished
compared to Cuddesdon

The famous comment made by Wilberforce that Wheatley was the ‘most difficult village’ has never had a precise date attributed to it. However, Wilberforce was in Wheatley on 31 October during the thick of this ‘storm in a teacup’. Although Wilberforce had not taken up the Cuddesdon position until 1845, three years after the debacle with Rev. Langley in 1841-2 (which resulted in his suspension), he was probably aware of this, and also the unsatisfactory short tenure of a subsequent curate, Emilius Bayley.

Edward Elton (mis-spelt in the article) was appointed at the end of June 1849...

1849 30 June

**Oxford Chronicle and
Reading Gazette**

University Chronicle.

**BALLIOL COLLEGE.—The Rev. E. Etton, M.A., of
this college, curate of Bierton, Berks, to the perpetual
curacy of Wheatley, Oxon.**

... despite the fact that Garrett was clearly the curate during October and November of 1849. This raises an interesting point about his ‘absence’ from the riot affair newspaper articles. Perhaps there was a handover period and Elton was keeping a low profile? The appointment in June 1849 squares with the fact (from his diaries) that Elton was ready to start building his house on May 6 1850.

In view of his obvious replacement, it seems likely that there was ‘no love lost’ between Wilberforce and Garrett. Perhaps it was when Wilberforce came to preach in Wheatley on 31 October 1849 that he may have made the ‘most difficult village’ comment, perhaps even from the pulpit, and perhaps even with Elton’s knowledge and agreement.

There are four broader points. The first is that Wheatley, like any ‘open’ village tended to gather the riff-raff. The second is that it is known that Wheatley had considerable unemployment – or excess of labourers – with an article in 10 June 1843 stating that men with scythes were standing idle for want of a job paying only 3 shillings a week, which George Drury of Shotover House said that he would supplement by a further 5 shillings. The third is that passing people, who might be perceived as competition for any available work, would be seen as a threat to the unemployed people in Wheatley. The final point is that the (national) agricultural riots did not come to a quick end and that lack of employment continued into the late 1840s with agriculture only starting to improve in the 1850s.

1849 13 October

Oxford Journal

WHEATLEY.

DISGRACEFUL RIOT.—On Sunday last a most disgraceful riot occurred in this village. It appears that at about half-past 12 o'clock in the day a party of travelling labourers, partly Irish, were met near Wheatley bridge by some idle half drunk young men from the village; some conversation ensued, which ended in a violent attack upon the strangers. Two women were severely beaten, and one very much cut: they ran for safety into the village, but the violence of the four Wheatley men was so great that no one would venture to allow them to remain in their houses, and they were consequently obliged to leave the place, and were again brutally beaten near Mr. Juggins's house on the turnpike road. One man and his wife succeeded in finding refuge in the house of a man named Holder, who was very much threatened for doing so. Upon these occurrences reaching the ears of the Curate (the Rev. J. Garrett), he at once proceeded to enquire into them, and he found that the greater number had gone forward to Oxford, and that the rioters were in the public-houses preparing to attack the two who had gained refuge during the fight; he consequently had them taken into custody, and brought before Mr. Henley on Monday, when they were bound over to appear at the Sessions for trial. On the next day the Rev. Gentleman issued the following hand-bill, which it is hoped may have the desired effect:—

"IMPORTANT.—The respectable tradesman who, with a lady, walked by Holton Park, at Wheatley, on Sunday last, and witnessed the rioting which took place there will render a great public service by immediately communicating his name and address to the Rev. John Garrett, at Wheatley; or should any person know who the parties were, they are requested to give the most accurate information in their power without a moment's delay." *Oct. 9, 1849.*"

Mr. Garrett has also addressed the following letter to Mr. Ring, the constable:—

"Mr. Ring.—It is evident from the investigation which took place on Monday before the Magistrates that the disgraceful scenes of violence, by which this village was thrown into alarm and confusion on Sunday last, would not have occurred if the public-houses and beer-shops had been closed on Saturday night, and not re-opened before the hour sanctioned by law; it has been proved that the men who are bound to appear next week at the Sessions, and stand their trial for riot, were sufficiently intoxicated to excite them to the worst crimes; indeed, I cannot conceive any man being base enough to commit so great violence on helpless women, unless the temptations of Satan were strengthened by self-debasing intoxication. I now feel it my duty to warn you as a constable that in future I shall expect you to see that all the public-houses and beer-shops in this parish are completely closed during the hours required by law, and I think it right to tell you that I shall prosecute the offenders, at the expense of the parish, whether I shall find them to be constables remiss in the discharge of their duties, or publicans violating the requirements of law; in every case I shall act to the utmost limits of power which the laws of the country confer. You are at liberty to make any use you think best of this letter, and in making known its contents. I beg you will assure all parties concerned that my wishes are to preserve the Sabbath from desecration, to prevent those who are inclined to evil from effecting the ruin of themselves and their families, and to protect respectable people from insult and violence so far as I may be able; my only object, even to those I may be forced to have punished, is to do them good." *I am, your's truly,*

"Wheatley, Oct. 10. 1849." *J. GARRETT, Curate, &c.*"

1849 13 October

Oxford Chronicle and Reading Gazette

RIOTOUS CONDUCT AT WHEATLEY.—On Sunday morning last a serious disturbance took place at [Wheatley], in consequence of a gross assault made by some loose characters of that place on a company of Irish labourers who were passing along. The poor Irish were treated with great cruelty, and but for the interference of some of the better disposed of the neighbourhood, would probably have been murdered. The Rev. Mr. Garrett caused four very bad characters to be brought before J. W. Henley, Esq. on Monday last, who, after a very long hearing, were bound to appear for trial next week on the charge of a violent riot. We perceive by a handbill which has been circulated that a respectable tradesman of Oxford happened to be passing by at the time, and witnessed the commencement of the riot. It is much to be desired that he should come forward, as the success of the indictment against the ruffians charged will depend mainly on his testimony. This outrage took place during the time of divine service. The aggressors had been drinking at some public house, and met the Irish labourers, consisting of two men, three women with children on their backs, and some other children. One of the women was much injured, and now lies at [Wheatley] in a precarious state, there being apprehension of premature labour, if not something worse, from the ill-usage and fright to which she was subjected. The Rev. Mr. Garrett has written to a clergyman in Essex, to whom this poor woman referred him for her character, and the reply, which we have seen, is very creditable to her. It is, therefore, most important that the tradesman who witnessed the commencement of the affair, should come forward to further the ends of justice, in the prosecution of evil doers, and in the protection of peaceable subjects who are obliged to travel on the highroad.—The following is the copy of a letter addressed by the Rev. Curate of [Wheatley] to a constable :-

"MR. RING.—It is evident from the investigation which took place on Monday before the magistrate, that the disgraceful scenes of violence by which this village was thrown into alarm and confusion on Sunday last would not have occurred if the public-houses and beer-

shops had been closed on Saturday night, and not re-opened before the hour sanctioned by law; it has been proved that the men who are bound to appear next week at the sessions, and stand their trial for riot, were sufficiently intoxicated to excite them to the worst crimes; indeed, I cannot conceive any man being base enough to commit so gross violence on helpless women, unless the temptations of Satan were strengthened by self-debasing intoxication.

"I now feel it my duty to warn you, as a constable, that in future I shall expect you to see that all the public-houses and beer-shops in this parish are completely closed during the hours required by law; and I think it right to tell you that I shall prosecute the offenders at the expense of the parish, whether I shall find them to be remiss in the discharge of their duties, or publicans violating the requirements of law. In every case I shall act to the utmost limits of power which the laws of the country confer.

"You are at liberty to make any use you think best of this letter; and in making known its contents I beg you will assure all parties concerned that my wishes are to preserve the Sabbath from desecration, to prevent those who are inclined to evil from effecting the ruin of themselves and their families, and to protect respectable people from insult and violence, so far as I may be able; my only object even to those I may be forced to have punished, is to do them good.—I am, yours truly,

"Oct. 10, 1849. "J. GARRETT, Curate, &c."

1849 20 October Oxford Journal

THE RIOT AND ASSAULT AT WHEATLEY. *To the EDITOR of the OXFORD JOURNAL.*

SIR.—May I beg of you to assist me in taking the only course now open to me by laying the accompanying letter before the public. I am a stranger in this neighbourhood, and hope voluntary subscription may support me in such a case, since the Court have not considered it right to order the costs in question to be paid from the public funds of the county. By their decision I am a sufferer, not only by having been obliged to maintain three helpless people for more than a week, besides supplying them with funds to pursue their journey, and replace their property which was destroyed, but also by being liable for the solicitor's bill of costs; and this, I believe, without a single act of indiscretion on my part.

I find, moreover, that it will be absolutely necessary that I shall engage an efficient policeman to reside at Wheatley, for the purpose of crushing the bad spirit by which a crew of idle, dissolute people disturb the peace, and steal the property of the well-disposed inhabitants. I am fully convinced that benevolence and charity can not be more beneficially bestowed than by supplying a fund by which I may be able to check the course of vice, and save unfortunate victims from the paths of intoxication and violence.

I shall only add that the poor man named Barker, whose wife was so cruelly beaten, is not an Irish labourer, being a native of Yorkshire, who was never in Ireland, and bears a most excellent character; his wife has been nineteen years resident in England, and I enclose a copy of a letter from a Clergyman and Magistrate, who appears to have known her well.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

J. GARRETT.

Mitre Hotel, Oxford, Oct. 18, 1849. Curate of Wheatley, Oxon.

(Copy No. 1.)

Mitre Hotel, Oxford, Oct. 17, 1849.

REVEREND SIR.—I beg most respectfully to ask your kind consideration of the following facts:—

1st. After Mr. Henley had taken the depositions in the case of the affray at Wheatley, he told me he thought the evidence very weak as to the party who first was guilty of violence, and that he thought it would be better to arrange the matter amicably, in case the offenders would express contrition, and engage to keep the peace for the future; in this opinion I fully coincided, as nothing could be more painful to me than the part I have been forced to take in the matter.

2nd. From the moment the offenders were set at liberty on bail, namely, on Monday evening, they took no step whatever towards expressing sorrow, and allowing me an opportunity to quash the indictment, until late on Friday night, after I had summoned the witnesses to attend; on the contrary, the week was spent in drinking, in conclave with their bad and wicked companions, and the streets were filled every night with the most painful shouting; so much so, that I have been forced to remove Mrs. Garrett, and take up our abode at this Hotel.

3rd. On Saturday I received a letter from Mr. Henley, stating his opinion that the case against the men who were bound to stand their trial was so weak as to render it probable that a Jury would acquit them, and strongly pointing out the injury which a prosecution would do the place in case it should fail.

4th. Acting in accordance with Mr. Henley's opinion, thus expressed to me both verbally and on paper, I proposed to the parties, in the presence of several most respectable people, that if they would bind bail to keep the peace, &c., for six months, and each pay £1 to pay the expences which had been incurred, I would apply to have the prosecution stopped. These terms were at first complied with by profession, but, instead of carrying them into effect, additional violence and insult was my portion, so far as language was concerned, up to the moment of the trial.

5th. Impelled by Mr. Henley's opinion of the extreme weakness of the case, and of the injury which would result from an unsuccessful prosecution, I employed a solicitor, who soon obtained additional evidence, and brought the case so strongly forward, that the Jury did not hesitate a moment to find all the prisoners guilty of, in my opinion, as brutal and unprovoked violence as ever occurred in any civilized country.

6th. I have been pained most deeply to-day to hear you declare that, "After consulting with the Chairman, the Court have resolved that the case was so strong against the prisoners that there were not sufficient grounds to justify their granting 'Counsel's fees,'" thus throwing upon me the burthen which was called into existence by the repeated caution of the committing Magistrate that the case was so weak as I have stated above.

I humbly request you to protect me, residing as I am amongst a set of drunken, lawless people; and I hope, on learning the facts which I have thus plainly stated, you will see sufficient reason, and be graciously pleased, to alter the rule of the Court as it stands at present, and order the full payment of the costs I have incurred.

I am, Rev. Sir, your's very obediently,

J. GARRETT. Curata. &c.

1849 20 October Oxford Chronicle and Reading Gazette

RIOT AND ASSAULT AT WHEATLEY.

Joseph Gomm, Thomas Hickman, Thomas Clark, and Christopher Tombs, were charged with rioting at Wheatley, and assaulting several travelling labourers, on Sunday the 7th of October.

This case excited considerable interest, public attention having been called to it by the notices which the officiating Minister of Wheatley, the Rev. Mr. Garrett, had felt it to be his duty to make, in consequence of the gross outrages which had been committed upon some poor offending people, who were passing through the village on the day in question. It is greatly to the credit of the rev. gentleman that the four desperate characters who committed the gross outrage on a party of defenceless women and children have been brought to justice. The prosecution was instituted by the Rev. J. Garrett, who employed Mr. Pigott as his counsel, and Mr. T. Mallam as his solicitor.

Mr. Pigott briefly stated the case to the jury, and detailed the gross and outrageous conduct of the prisoners towards the poor defenceless people, whom they met on the road, and who, without any provocation whatever, were subjected to a degree of violence and ill-treatment which nothing could justify or palliate. Mr. Garrett had no ill-will towards the parties accused, but had offered to abandon the prosecution, if they would make some compensation to the poor unfortunate creatures whom they had so cruelly ill-treated.

The following witnesses were called in support of the charge:—

Ezra Tripp deposed that he was a bricklayer resident in Oxford, and that on Sunday, October 7, he went to meet his wife and child, who were coming from Thame; met them on the other side of Wheatley; met the prisoners and some Irish people on the road; the prisoners ran from the middle of the road violently against the poor people, who were walking on the footpath, and knocked them into the ditch; went and interfered, and asked them why they ill-treated and abused those poor people; the travellers ran away towards Wheatley, and the prisoners followed them; saw Clarke strike a woman with a child on her back under Holton Park wall; went back to Wheatley to get a constable to accompany him on the road, as his wife and child were much terrified, and he feared that they should be ill-treated.

William Mitchell, constable, of Wheatley, said:—On Sunday, the 7th instant, two travellers (Barker and his wife) came into my house; she appeared much distressed; the prisoners followed them up to my door. I went out, and asked what was the matter, when Hickman said, "Those Irish have fell upon us." Tombs at that time was about striking a woman with a child on her back; there was a great disturbance round my house; turned them out of his house because his wife was terrified; about seven in the evening aided in taking the prisoners into custody.

Ellen Barker, wife of Charles Barker, deposed—On the 7th of October I came with my husband, and a party of about dozen, to Wheatley; met the four prisoners; Clark struck my husband, and knocked him into the dyke, and as soon as he got out Gomm knocked him into it again; Gomm then struck me on the side of the head; a woman, named Joanna Collins, was with me, with a child on her back; Gomm knocked her into the ditch several times; Jeremiah Collins came to help her, when all the prisoners pinned him against the wall. Saw Hickman hit my husband, and saw Tombs strike a woman, who was one of her party; none of our party molested the prisoners; the disturbance lasted an hour. I am in the family way, and never was so much frightened or ill-used before. I have been ill ever since, and under the doctor, Mr. Cox, of Wheatley; I believe my child is dead from the violence I received.

[The witness appeared to suffer greatly while she was giving her evidence, and excited the sympathy of the whole Court.]

Thomas Hayes deposed—I was one of the Irish party; remember crossing Wheatley bridge; we were all walking on the foot-path. I saw the prisoners walking in the middle of the road; none of our party interfered with them; one of them came up and tried to strike Joanna Collins; saw Gomm strike Allen Barker on the head; one of the four prisoners knocked me into the ditch.

ran off, and afterwards took refuge in a yard on the hill, where the four prisoners followed me, and one struck me with a stick on the ribs. I fell on the ground, and cried out for mercy while they were all beating me.

John Juggins deposed—I am churchwarden of Wheatley. On the 7th October these people took refuge in my yard. Saw Gomm, Clark, and Tombs follow them; saw Gomm, Tombs, and Clark beat Hayes unmercifully; saw Clark strike Hayes with his fists, and with Hayes' own stick: there were forty or fifty people collected in the yard; saw Gomm and Tombs strike a woman with a child on her back. Did not see the Irish party do anything to give offence; must have seen them if they had done so.

Charles Barker—I was about two hundred yards behind; on coming up, with my wife, I saw two women in the ditch; saw Gomm hit Collins; Hickman knocked me into the ditch, and Tombs struck me on the arm; the Irish never interrupted the prisoners. After Gomm had struck the child on Collins's back, she threw a stone at him, and cut his forehead.

Mrs. Tripp corroborated the evidence of her husband. One of the prisoners (Gomm) called John Stanley as a witness, who, he said, saw Barker run after him to kick him.

The Court asked, "Did you see Barker run after Gomm to kick him?" Stanley, in a strong tone of voice, said, "I did not."

The prisoners being called on for their defence, declined to say anything.

Mr. Pigott made a few observations to the Jury, the purport of which was, that had these poor people been the aggressors, it would have only affected the case as to the amount of punishment to be inflicted on those who had so outrageously assaulted them; but here it was proved that they had given no provocation whatever, and all they had done was to beg for that mercy which, for the sake of humanity, he regretted was denied to them.

The presiding magistrate enquired if the jury wished him to go through the evidence, because if they did, or had any doubts on the case, he would do so.

The jury intimated that it was unnecessary.

Mr. Matthews then observed that it was not for the jury to consider how far any of the party accused were more guilty than the other, but to decide whether they were all implicated in the charge brought against them.

The jury, without any hesitation, returned a verdict of guilty against all the prisoners.

Mr. Matthews, in passing sentence, said, "What could induce you four young men to attack defenceless women and helpless children on their travels in the way you did, Heaven only knows; but by such conduct you have got yourselves in a serious scrape, which I hope will be a warning to you for the future. That the peace of a village should be disturbed by four riotous fellows, and honest people knocked down and ill-treated, is a state of things that cannot be tolerated in this country, and must be put a stop to, and shall be put a stop to. The Act of Parliament gives power to inflict a fine or imprisonment, or, if necessary, both fine and imprisonment; but I will temper justice with mercy, in the hope that this will be a warning to you to the latest period of your lives. I shall inflict no fine, but sentence you to imprisonment; and I trust while you are in gaol you will consider the disgraceful state in which you have placed yourselves by your drunken and disorderly guilty conduct, and never forget yourselves again. Although you, Thomas Hickman, have had less to do with this transaction than the other prisoners, yet your previous character does not bear you out, and therefore I feel it to be my duty, and a duty which I owe to the public, to order each and every one of you to be imprisoned and kept to hard labour for three calendar months."

Sarah Cross, charged with stealing a pair of boots, was acquitted.

Thomas Jennings, 34, for stealing a bushel of potatoes and a bag, the property of William Chillingworth, at Cuddesden, was sentenced to 3 months' hard labour.

Henry Hazell, 15, for obtaining two loaves of bread at Kidlington by fraudulent pretences, was sentenced to one month's hard labour.

William Simmons, 16, for stealing 3lbs. of lead, at Headington, was sentenced to 21 days' hard labour.

E. Cox, for stealing money of the value of 2l. 18s. 8d. the property of Thomas Woodward, at Woodstock, was sentenced to 4 months' hard labour.

1849 20 October Oxford Journal

RIOT AND ASSAULT AT WHEATLEY.

Joseph Gomm, Thomas Hickman, Thomas Clark, and Christopher Tombs, were charged with rioting at Wheatley, and assaulting several travelling labourers, on Sunday the 7th of October.

This case excited considerable interest, public attention having been called to it by the notices which the officiating Minister of Wheatley, the Rev. J. Garrett, had felt it to be his duty to make, in consequence of the gross outrages which had been committed upon some poor unoffending people, who were passing through the village on the day in question. It is greatly to the credit of that Reverend Gentleman that the four desperate characters who committed this gross outrage on a party of defenceless women and children have been brought to justice. The prosecution was instituted by the Rev. J. Garrett, who employed Mr. Pigott as his Counsel, and Mr. T. Mallam as his Solicitor.

Mr. Pigott briefly stated the case to the Jury, and detailed the gross and outrageous conduct of the prisoners towards the poor defenceless people, whom they met upon the road, and who, without any provocation whatever, were subjected to a degree of violence and ill-treatment which nothing could justify or palliate. Mr. Garrett had no ill will towards the parties accused, but had offered to abandon the prosecution, if they would make some compensation to the poor unfortunate creatures whom they had so cruelly ill-treated.

The following witnesses were called in support of the charge:—

Ezra Tripp deposed that he was a bricklayer resident in Oxford, and that on Sunday, October 7, he went to meet his wife and child, *who were coming from Thame*; met them on the other side of Wheatley; met the prisoners and some Irish people on the road; the prisoners ran from the middle of the road violently against the poor people, who were walking on the foot path, and knocked them into the ditch; went and interfered, and asked them why they ill-treated and abused those poor people; the travellers ran away towards Wheatley, and the prisoners followed them; saw Clarke strike a woman *with a child* on her back under Holton Park wall; went back to Wheatley to get a constable to accompany him on the road, as his wife and child were much terrified, and he feared that they should be ill-treated.

William Mitchell, constable of Wheatley, said—On Sunday the 7th instant, a little before one o'clock, two travellers (Barker and his wife) came into my house; she appeared much distressed; the prisoners followed them up to my door. I went out, and asked what was the matter, when Hickman said, "Those Irish have fell upon us." Tombs at that time was about striking a woman with a child on her back; there was a great disturbance round my house; turned them out of his house because his wife was terrified; about seven in the evening aided in taking the prisoners into custody.

Ellen Barker, wife of Charles Barker, deposed—On the 7th of October I came with my husband, and a party of about a dozen, to Wheatley; met the four prisoners; Clark struck my husband, and knocked him into the dyke, and as soon as he got out Gomm knocked him into it again; Gomm then struck me on the side of the head; a woman, named Joanna Collins, was with me, with a child on her back; Gomm knocked her into the ditch several times; Jeremiah Collins came to help her, when all the prisoners pinned him against the wall. Saw Hickman hit my husband, and saw Tombs strike a woman, who was one of her party; none of our party molested the prisoners; the disturbance lasted an hour. I am in the family way, and never was so much frightened or ill-used before. *I have been ill ever since, and under the doctor, Mr. Cox, of Wheatley; I believe my child is dead from the violence I received.*

[The witness appeared to suffer greatly while she was giving her evidence, and excited the sympathy of the whole Court.]

Thomas Hayes deposed—I was one of the Irish party; remember crossing Wheatley bridge; we were all walking on the footpath. I saw the prisoners walking in the middle of the road; none of our party interfered with them; one of them came up, and tried to strike Joanna Collins; saw Gomm strike Ellen Barker on the head; one of the four prisoners knocked me into the ditch. I ran off, and afterwards took refuge in a yard on the hill, where the four prisoners followed me, and one struck me with a stick on the ribs. I fell on the ground, and cried out for mercy while they were all beating me.

John Juggins deposed—I am churchwarden of Wheatley. On the 7th of October these people took refuge in my yard; saw Gomm, Clark, and Tombs, follow them; saw Gomm, Tombs, and Clark, beat Hayes unmercifully; saw Clark strike Hayes with his fists, and with Hayes's own stick; there were 40 or 50 people collected in the yard; saw Gomm and Tombs strike a woman with a child on her back; did not see the Irish party do any thing to give offence; must have seen them if they had done so.

Charles Barker—I was about two hundred yards behind; on coming up, with my wife, I saw two women in the ditch; saw Gomm hit Collins; Hickman knocked me into the ditch, and Tombs struck me on the arm; the Irish never interrupted the prisoners. After Gomm had struck the child on Collins's back she threw a stone at him, and cut his forehead.

Mrs. Tripp corroborated the evidence of her husband.

One of the prisoners (Gomm) called John Stanley as a witness, who, he said, saw Barker run after him to kick him.

The Court asked, "Did you see Barker run after Gomm to kick him?" Stanley, in a strong tone of voice, said, "I did not."

The prisoners being called on for their defence, declined to say any thing.

Mr. Pigott made a few observations to the Jury, the purport of which was that had these poor people been the aggressors, it would have only affected the case as to the amount of punishment to be inflicted on those who had so outrageously assaulted them; but here it was proved that they had given no provocation whatever, and all they had done was to beg for that mercy which, for the sake of humanity, he regretted was denied to them.

The presiding Magistrate enquired if the Jury wished him to go through the evidence, because if they did, or had any doubts on the case, he would do so.

The Jury intimated that it was unnecessary.

Mr. Matthews then observed that it was not for the Jury to consider how far any of the party accused were more guilty than the other, but to decide whether they were all implicated in the charge brought against them.

The Jury, without any hesitation, returned a verdict of guilty against all the prisoners.

Mr. Matthews, in passing sentence, said, "What could induce you four young men to attack defenceless women and helpless children on their travels in the way you did, Heaven only knows; but by such conduct you have got yourselves into a serious scrape, which I hope will be a warning to you for the future. That the peace of a village should be disturbed by four riotous fellows, and honest people knocked down and ill-treated, is a state of things that cannot be tolerated in this country, and must be put a stop to, and shall be put a stop to. The Act of Parliament gives power to inflict a fine or imprisonment, or, if necessary, both fine and imprisonment; but I will temper justice with mercy, in the hope that this will be a warning to you to the latest period of your lives. I shall inflict no fine, but sentence you to imprisonment, and I trust while you are in gaol you will consider the disgraceful state in which you have placed yourselves by your drunken and disorderly guilty conduct, and never forget yourselves again. Although you, Thomas Hickman, have had less to do with this transaction than the other prisoners, yet your previous character does not bear you out, and therefore I feel it to be my duty, and a duty which I owe to the public, to order each and every one of you to be imprisoned and kept to hard labour for three calendar months."

1849 27 October
Oxford Chronicle and
Reading Gazette

WHEATLEY NATIONAL SCHOOLS.

A SERMON will (D.V.) be preached in WHEATLEY CHURCH on WEDNESDAY NEXT, October 31st, 1849, by The Right Reverend THE LORD BISHOP OF OXFORD. Divine service will commence at Three o'clock, and a Collection made in behalf of the above Schools, for the purposes of paying the existing Debt, buying a supply of Apparatus, and Building a Class-room and Out-offices.

N.B. A fund of about £100 is required, so that all who feel an interest in the cause of education, and wish to aid in the religious and moral improvement of the people of this very poor village, are earnestly requested, in case they cannot attend the Church, to send contributions to the Venerable Archdeacon Clerke; or to the Reverend John Garrett, either at Wheatley or at the London and County Bank at Oxford. The population is more than 1000 souls, and there is no landed proprietor connected with the parish from whom the least assistance can be expected.

1849 27 October

Oxford Journal

THE RIOT AND ASSAULT CASE AT WHEATLEY.

The Rev. John Garrett, Curate of Wheatley, appeared before the Bench, and stated that he was sorry to feel obliged to apply for an order which might suspend the usual course of law. He resided in the middle of the village of Wheatley, where so much disorder, rioting, drunkenness, and shouting prevailed every night, that he and Mrs. Garrett could not live in the place. With a view to correct this state of things, he had made an arrangement with a man named Henry Jordan, who had been seven or eight years in the detective force, to assist him, and if the Magistrates would kindly lend their aid by swearing him in as a special constable, and thus enable him to carry out the law, he was willing to undertake the burden of paying and maintaining him at his own cost, provided that others did not take their share of the burden.

Dr. Wynter was of opinion that Mr. Garrett should adduce special reasons to justify the swearing in of a special constable.

Mr. Garrett stated that he was prepared to depose to facts and occurrences sufficient to shew the necessity of the course which he had taken, and his churchwarden, Mr. Juggins, was present to substantiate them.

Mr. Juggins came forward, and bore his testimony to the riotous proceedings in the parish, and the necessity which existed for the appointment of a special constable.

Mr. Haines, the assistant clerk to the Magistrates, remarked that at present there were three parochial constables at Wheatley, and the fact was they were not paid for extra duties, and therefore they did not feel themselves called upon to be up all night.

Mr. East, one of the constables of Wheatley, admitted that he was present when there was a fight in the church-yard while the funeral service was being read, but he did not take into custody any of the parties, because he was at a loss to know what to do with a hundred people. He knew the parties who had fought, as well as those who assisted in the riot, but had taken no steps to prosecute them.

Mr. Garrett observed that the Bench would judge from East's own admission how far he fulfilled his duty as a constable; while with respect to constable Mitchell, he admitted at the late trial that he drove out of his house the poor people who were pursued by four riotous and drunken men, and who went to him for protection and shelter. It was impossible to know to what extent the tumult on the occasion would have been carried, because the riotous men had been drinking all that day (Sunday), and promised to break into the man's house who gave these poor defenceless creatures shelter. Under these circumstances, he felt that he had no alternative but to ask the Magistrates to exercise the power vested in them by Act of Parliament to swear in, on the application of two credible witnesses, a special constable to assist in keeping the peace.

Dr. Marsham then read the clause from the Act of Parliament.

Mr. Haines said he feared that the clause just read disqualified the man selected to be special constable, inasmuch as he was not a householder, or qualified to serve the office of constable as required by the Act.

Mr. Garrett said that if such were the case, all his objects would be defeated, for there was not a single man in the parish that he would give a shilling to to keep the peace. The man he had selected had agreed with him to reside within the village of Wheatley as a householder. He knew, too, that when special constables were sworn in in London, when riots were anticipated, it was not necessary that they should be householders, inasmuch as clerks and others living in their employers' establishments had been sworn in.

Dr. Harington said that, however great the necessity for the appointment of a special constable, he feared that the Act did not meet the present case, and that the more proper course would be to summon the constables, and if it were proved that they did not do their duty, the Bench would fine them severely. There was no doubt, whatever, that the desperate and disreputable state of things at Wheatley was owing to the constables not doing their duty.

Mr. Garrett replied that he had no desire to institute prosecutions against those with whom he wished to be on terms of friendship, and over whom he was placed as Minister, nor did he feel himself called upon to involve himself in expensive costs, as he had already been, for protecting the helpless and upholding the peace and tranquillity of the village.

Mr. Marsham and Major Weyland suggested that Mr. Garrett should make a deposition, shewing the necessity for the appointment of a special constable, and that document the Magistrates would transmit to the Secretary of State, and if he sanctioned it, all the difficulties of the case would be surmounted.

Mr. Garrett said he would willingly adopt the suggestion, and at once drew up the following deposition:—

"That a violent affray and assault took place at Wheatley on Sunday the 7th inst., for which four men were found guilty, and sentenced to imprisonment at the last County Sessions.

"That previously, and subsequent to the commission of this offence, the peace of the village has been continually disturbed to such an extent that Mrs. Garrett has been in such terror as to be forced to leave the village.

"That the property of several inhabitants has been stolen, and these outrages have been committed by a clan of violent men, who seem banded together for the perpetration of every wickedness.

"That the greatest tumult again prevailed in Wheatley on the 10th inst., at the time when the Rev. A. Pott was in the act of performing the funeral service, on which occasion violence and disturbance filled the village with alarm.

"That the deponent is fully apprehensive of further serious misdemeanors and felonies being committed, if an active special constable be not immediately appointed for the purpose of crushing the bad spirit of insubordination which prevails amongst a large number of the inhabitants.

"That the existing parish constables are utterly useless, except they are driven and forced to act in particular cases, and the deponent supports this deposition with respect to the constables by the following facts:—

"1st. It was sworn by constable Mitchell, at the late trial at the County Sessions, that some people ran into his house for protection, and that he turned them out, although four violent men were pursuing them; and that, after being driven in his presence out of the village, one poor woman, whom he had seen bleeding with others, was followed and again unmercifully beaten by the very men whom the constable had seen pursuing them.

"2nd. That during the tumult and violence on the 16th inst., the constable, East, saw the parties in the act of fighting, and neither took them into custody at the time nor prosecuted them afterwards.

"3rd. That constable Ring is himself a maltster, and cannot be got to act in preventing the conduct of wicked men who drink to a late hour every night in the very houses the proprietors of which he supplies."

"The said John Garrett further deposes that if the special constable, Henry Jordan, be not appointed, it will be impossible for him to reside in the village, which must be abandoned to the felony, vice, rioting, and wickedness of a set of men who regard neither the laws of God or man."

Dr. Marsham observed that the present constables must not suppose that, by the appointment of a special constable, they would be released; on the contrary, it would be their duty to assist him whenever required to do so, and if they neglected to do so, they might rest assured they would be fined as heavily as the law allowed. The state of things at Wheatley was, and had been for years past, most disgraceful, but the Magistrates were determined that, as far as they had the power, it should no longer be tolerated. With respect to the burden and expense of maintaining a special constable, he considered that it would be most unfair, as well as improper for it to be borne by Mr. Garrett, but that it should be paid out of the county rate.

Dr. Harington concurred in what had fallen from Dr. Marsham, and said that the Magistrates, in transmitting the deposition to the Secretary of State, would feel it to be their duty to state that the appointment of a special constable was necessary.

Mr. Garrett thanked the Bench for the attention and consideration which they had given to his case, and said he believed that, taking the whole country, there was not such a strong case and necessity for the appointment of a special constable. If he called on the inhabitants to join with him in keeping the peace and punishing the disorderly, they would be in fear of their lives and property, in addition to which many of the people of substance in Wheatley either kept public houses, or were too much interested in the present state of things, to lend a helping hand in maintaining peace and tranquillity, or punishing those who disturbed it.

1849 27 October Oxford Journal

To the EDITOR of the OXFORD JOURNAL.

Sir.—I am encouraged by your kindness last week in hoping you will again grant me space for a few lines in connection with the state of this village. I wish thus publicly to mention with especial gratitude two donations towards the expenses I incurred at the late trial—one from a really kind friend, whose warm heart and generous hand are always ready to assist in every good work—the other from a Clergyman and Magistrate at a distance, upon whom the public importance of the case must be the only claim, as he does not, to my knowledge, possess any local interest in this neighbourhood; I refer to the contributions of G. V. Drury, Esq., £1, and the Rev. W. Cotten Risley, £1. I have also received some very kind letters and expressions of sympathy, which are most encouraging to me as a stranger in this county, amongst which are contributions from the Misses Biscoe, Holton Park, £1., and the Rev. T. Tyndale, £2.

Some benevolent persons appear to entertain a hope that the Magistrates may yet be induced to grant the costs from the county funds, but this I ascertained to be impossible before I asked for voluntary subscriptions; it would, I believe, be illegal to grant costs after the Court at which the trial took place had broken up. The Petty Session Court have appointed, and sworn in, as special constable, a man who was seven years one of the London police—this will ensure the firm maintenance of the law in future for the protection of the persons and property of the well-disposed.

But, Sir, thus to put in form the terrors of law, and appear to act with harshness amongst a people with whom I wish to enjoy the pleasures of that friendly intercourse which should bind together an affectionate Pastor and his flock, is an ungracious and painful course, unless, at the same time, every nerve be strained in anxious endeavour to teach them the blessed privileges which are gained by following the paths of holiness and virtue; it is, therefore, with much pleasure that I draw attention to the advertisement I send you, which gives notice of a sermon to be preached in this Church on Wednesday next, by the Lord Bishop, in behalf of the parochial schools; I hope additional contributions may be sent to me towards the expense of the trial, as the costs are very considerable, and any balance which may remain from the fund for preserving the peace I shall apply to the fund for promoting the efficiency of the schools.

And surely a Curate residing in such a place has no ordinary claims on the sympathy and support of a Christian community. It is a well-known fact that this village serves as the BOVARY BAY of a large extent of surrounding country—all the idlers, thieves, and drunkards who cannot be retained on neighbouring

estates are, by the act of dismissal, effectually transported to Wheatley; settling here, the Clergyman has to contend not only with their own personal wickedness, but with their ruinous influence upon the native youth. It is true, carriages may roll in ease along the turnpike road, and those who sit in them may look down with calmness upon this receptacle of transported reprobates; to all appearance they may feel that every thing is peaceful and right, but if I could bring them for a few months to reside in the midst of it, they would soon acknowledge that the external appearance of peace and rectitude only bespeaks the sleep of death, and that the habitual drunkenness and fornication are no fitful dreams, but dread realities, by which Satan is committing ravages, unconceived before, amongst this wretched population. Oh! then, in the name of common honesty and bare humanity, I humbly ask those who send us such awful sinners to send us also a portion of that wealth which Almighty God has given them, to aid in their reformation, and in preserving the youth of the place from their baneful influence.

Again, if advocating the cause of our great Missionary Societies, and pleading in behalf of Africa, New Zealand, India, or America, one might well make the very blood of a faithful Christian to run cold with even calm descriptions of the spiritual destitution, which pierces the soul of a righteous emigrant with grief, which binds in darkness the enlightened Heathen, and which fills with cruelty the land of slaves—such an appeal would very properly be felt and answered by religious people, although the scenes of Missionary labour were so remote as to preclude the possibility of any local claim—and shall a Curate's voice be unheeded when he asks for money to assist in maintaining the law, and working efficient schools among a people full of every debasing sin, because they are not situated in any distant land, but in the heart of this rich and favoured country, and beneath the very walls of our ancient University? I have been told that public spirit does not much exist near Oxford, but I must believe that, in this case, the hand of charity will be liberally held out to aid me.

Pardon my freepassing at such a length, and kindly listen while I ask, "Is there not a cause?"

I am, Sir, your's obediently and obliged,
Wheatley, Oct. 25, 1849. JOHN GARRETT.

1849 3 November Oxford Chronicle and Reading Gazette

THE LATE RIOT AT WHEATLEY.

To the EDITOR of the OXFORD CHRONICLE.

SIR,—I shall feel much obliged if you will kindly make it known that since last week I have received towards the expences of the late prosecution, from the Rev. J. Baker, £1; Rev. C. T. Wyatt, 10s.; Mr. Jonathan Fiske, £1; Rev. W. Lowe, 10s.; Mr. Castle, 5s.; Rev. W. C. Risley, (second donation) 15s.; Mr. Henry Lupton, Thame, 5s., and a clergyman, a friend of his, 10s. To all these gentlemen I desire to express publicly my sincere thanks for their generous aid under the difficulties which the discharge of an imperative duty brought upon me.

I have also much pleasure in informing you that the collection after the sermon which the Lord Bishop preached yesterday, on behalf of the schools here, amounted to £36 5s. 6d.; this sum is encouraging, although it is far short of what is absolutely required in order to put the schools in an efficient state. This collection included donations from the Lord Bishop, £5, and G. V. Drury, Esq., £5, together with various sums sent to me by clergymen who could not attend. I sincerely trust other contributions may be given, as the great hope for the ultimate reformation of this parish lies in the active working of the schools.

I am very desirous now to explain two points connected with the report which has been published of my application for the appointment of a special constable:—

1st. In my depositions as to the inefficiency of the existing constables, I am sorry to find that what I stated with respect to Mr. Ring has caused him pain. I had no wish to do this, as he bears the highest character as a very respectable man. My object was to set forth the difficult position in which he stood with respect to the drunken and riotous people who lived around him. I have, however, since learned that he does not supply the public houses actually in this village, as they belong to gentlemen living in Oxford.

2nd. I was reported to have said, "there is not a man in the parish to whom I would give one shilling to keep the peace." My intention was by no means to state that there were no people sufficiently respectable and trustworthy for the office, but simply that I knew of no man whom I could present to the magistrates to be sworn as a special paid constable, whose residence in the village did not render him, in my opinion, unable to contend with the difficulties of the case; an experienced officer, entirely unconnected with the population, was the only man who could succeed.

With many thanks for your kind aid throughout this unpleasant business,

I remain, Sir, yours truly,

JOHN GARRETT, Curate.

Wheatley. 1st Nov., 1849.

1849 3 November Oxford Chronicle and Reading Gazette

THE BISHOP OF OXFORD AND WHEATLEY.

To the EDITOR of the OXFORD CHRONICLE.

SIR,—I perceive that Wheatley is a chapel of ease to Cuddesdon, of which the Bishop of Oxford is the resident rector, and which he holds in addition to his see, of the value of £4,200. If the state of the population were as fully known to his lordship as the state of other parishes in his diocese, can it be doubted that he would not leave the minister of Wheatley to struggle in vain with a demoralised population of 1,000 souls on a pittance of less than £100 per annum?

A FRIEND OF THE CHURCH.

1849 3 November

Oxford Journal

COUNTY HALL, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27.

(Present, J. W. Henley, Esq. M.P., Lord Norreys, M.P., J. H. Ashurst, Esq., H. Hambley, Esq., C. Peers, Esq., Dr. Marsham, and the Rev. Dr. Harrington.)

THE WHEATLEY SPECIAL CONSTABLE.—It will be recollect that, on Saturday the 20th instant, the Rev. J. Garrett, Curate of Wheatley, applied to the Bench to appoint and swear in a special constable, with a view to maintain the peace and tranquillity of that village, and the Magistrates then suggested that Mr. Garrett should make a deposition of facts, setting forth the necessity for such an appointment. Those depositions were drawn up, and a Memorial to the same effect was sent to the Secretary of State, through the Bishop of Oxford; but it appeared that the Magistrates discovered that they had the power vested in them to make the appointment, and the special constable was accordingly sworn in. In consequence of this, Mr. Garrett attended the Bench on Saturday last, with a view of getting the expences of maintaining this special constable paid out of the county rate, instead of out of his own pocket. Mr. Garrett was induced to take this course, in consequence of the remarks which fell from some of the Magistrates that the maintenance of a special constable, so essential for the public peace and security, should, in common fairness, be borne by the public, and not by a private individual. The application by Mr. Garrett was rendered the more necessary, because the special constable was appointed only for Wheatley, where there is not a landed proprietor or a single person disposed to bear any portion of the expense, whereas if his powers had been extended to the adjoining village, Cuddesden, there were many who were both able and willing to avail themselves of his services, and pay their quota for the protection and security which they would enjoy. It was, however, decided that the application should stand over to the Petty Sessions, which will be held in about a fortnight, when it will receive every consideration and attention from the Magistrates.

1849 10 November Oxford Chronicle and Reading Gazette

To the EDITOR of the OXFORD CHRONICLE.

Sir,—I have been grieved week after week to see a large-letter heading to paragraphs in your columns—"The late Riots at Wheatley," many parts of which are very unnecessary and incorrect, and written too by one man—that man a stranger, and professedly a minister of the Gospel of truth and peace—but who seems to delight in blazing abroad and exaggerating the depravities of his fellow men, and unhesitatingly classing the virtuous and respectable with the vicious and immoral.

The prosecution of the four youths for an assault on a set of insolent and itinerant Irish, and which he terms a riot, no doubt arose from a good motive, and might have been conducive to much good had he not suffered his own Irish blood to warm and carry him into a vindictive and harsh spirit, inducing him to swear his life in danger from the whole village, "there not being a man in it whom he could feel protection;" and after having day by day had communication with the constables, known their homes and callings, to malign each one after the other, treating them as the offscouring of all things rather than as respectable tradesmen, having characters to lose rather than to gain. He since, in apology, says, "he now finds that one is a respectable man;" why did he not know that earlier.

After branding the whole people as an infamous, lawless, drunken set, and injuring the characters of some by personality, can it be supposed that his ministrations will be acceptable or blessed—that the people he has so needlessly, wrongfully degraded will ever go to hear him? He has done anything but improve the order and morality of the village, by introducing a policeman, named Henry Jordan, of Enshame notoriety, and who was accompanied by a female of doubtful

character, falsely representing her as his sister, and who was consequently refused lodgings all over the village.

Again, the so-called Wheatley riots were begun and nearly finished in the parish of Holton, and the ring-leader was a Waterstock man—convicted thief. The three youths of Wheatley, being very young, were prodigal and profane, but hitherto their characters have not suffered from dishonesty, and no one wishes to exonerate them in this affair.

As regards the riot, he speaks of as taking place on the 16th of October, "filling the whole village with terror and alarm." A disagreement occurred between two men (it was the feast week), and, although I was in the village within a stone's throw of the scene, and which was not in the churchyard, as was stated—I should not have known it had I not happened to see a constable running, and then made enquiry as to the cause. I also know other parties who reside as near, and who never heard of it until it was blazoned forth in the newspapers.

Since Mr. Garrett has, therefore, slighted the assistance and support of many in this parish, who are ready and anxious to aid him in suppressing or getting rid of those characters, such as are found more or less in every village, and made himself so unpopular amongst them I do not wonder at his wishing for a man to guard him, and if he can obtain one from the county fund all well and good, as it will protect our back entrances, &c., from the many marauding Irish and other vagrants which we get. If he thinks of saddling the already overburdened parish with the expense he is mistaken—the parishioners will not stand it.

Under I give you a minute of a vestry meeting held after due notice; and, fearing I have trespassed much too far in your valuable room in speaking the sentiments of most of the inhabitants,

I am, Sir, yours truly obliged,

WILLIAM LOVELOCK.

"And this vestry, with only one dissentient, do agree that there is no necessity for a special constable or policeman in this parish, and that a memorial be drawn up and sent to Sir George Grey to that effect; and the majority of this vestry express their indignation at the manner in which the Rev. John Garrett has expressed himself in the public papers towards the inhabitants of Wheatley."

(Signed)

WILLIAM MOORE, Chairman and Guardian.

William Rogers.	R. Spicer.
William Lovelock.	Samuel Gibbins,
John Ring,	J. Frampton,
R. Walker (overseer),	T. Edmonds (overseer),
J. Stacey,	John Tombs,
Isaac Elderfield,	James Davis,
R. Slater,	William Smith,
R. Whiting,	T. Allsop.

1849 17 November Oxford Chronicle and Reading Gazette

To the EDITOR of the OXFORD CHRONICLE.

SIR,—In my letter to the deputy-chairman, respecting the costs of the late prosecution, I used these words, "I humbly request you to protect me, residing as I am amongst a set of drunken lawless people;" and in my depositions before the Magistrates this paragraph occurred, "The said John Garrett further deposed, that if the special constable, Henry Jordan, be not appointed, it will not be possible for him to reside in the village, which must be abandoned to the violence, vice, rioting, and wickedness of a set of men who regard neither the laws of God or man."

I am very sorry to find these expressions have given pain to some respectable people, as, in their opinion, reflecting upon the character of the inhabitants generally; I wish very much to correct such an impression, as I never intended the language in question to apply to any one whose case it did not correctly describe; and I am happy to say that I believe the comparatively small number of evil-disposed people are likely to be soon corrected under the strong feeling of disapprobation which their neighbours generally entertain of their bad conduct. Such a result will be a great blessing to the parish, and no doubt the comfort and property of the inhabitants will be greatly increased and benefited by it.

Your publishing this letter will much oblige,

Yours truly, JOHN GARRETT,
Wheatley, Nov. 9, 1849. Curate, &c.

1857 20 June Oxford Journal (extarct)

holiday. Before, however, we come to the ceremony of consecrating the new Church, it may be well to make one or remarks on the circumstances preceding and leading to its erection. Some ten years ago an arrangement was made by the Bishop of Oxford with the then Incumbent, in consequence of which the latter resigned the Benefice, to which several Clergymen were successively collated by the Bishop of Oxford, the patron. Owing to the meagre income of 120*l.* per annum, none of these gentlemen remained any length of time in the parish, but in the year 1849 the present Incumbent, the Rev. Edward Elton, M.A., was collated to the Living, and, by the disunion of the Parishes and Livings of Cuddesden and Wheatley in 1852, the income of the Incumbent of Wheatley was increased to 250*l.* per annum, by the addition of 130*l.* taken from the richer Living of Cuddesden for that purpose. This was the first step in the right direction ; the second was the erection of a new