

Northamptonshire Assizes
Thursday 28th Day February 1856
Before
The Right Honourable John Lord Campbell
Lord Chief Baron

Robbery at Finedon

Robert Hawkes shoemaker (25) Shoemaker and John Hancock (27) labourer were charged with feloniously breaking and entering the warehouse of George Shelton at Finedon and stealing there from

Hancock pleaded not guilty, Mr Flood prosecuting and Mr Palmer conducted the defence.

Thomas Claypole sworn in is Assistant to the prosecutor a boot and shoe manufacturer

At Higham Ferrers and also at Finedon a large stock is kept there.

On the 31st Dec the warehouse was broken open, the premises were safe that night on his going to bed missed 17 pairs of water tight boots and one pair of Bluchers and some laces all worth £14

Daniel Bradshaw sworn in and examined is a surveyor who lives at Ecton and was out early on Jan 1st Saw three men coming from the direction of Wellingborough.

Hawkes was one they had three bags with them cross examined Ecton is ten miles from Finedon and had never to his knowledge seen Hawkes before the 1st Jan.

Joseph Alliston a Policeman stated on the night of Jan 4th he had Hawkes in custody and took the pair of shoes from Hawkes feet and handed them over to Inspector Harris who deposed to going to the place where the robbery took place on Jan 7th and compared the shoes with certain impressions made and in each instance they corresponded.

They were right hand and left hand shoe marks did not place the shoes in either of the previous impressions but made one with the shoes by the side of each.

Produced a pair of Bluchers which had been received from Superintendent Chambers,

Clarke also a policeman had given them to Superintendent Chambers having received them from Stephen Warner on the 5th Jan, Stephen Warner called as witness stated he gave the Blucher Boot which he had received from Charles Cooper a shoemaker to the policeman Clarke.

Charles Cooper stated that one day in January he was with the two prisoners on his way to Finedon from Northampton quitted there company about half a mile from Ecton it was on the 4th Jan Hawkes Told the Charles Cooper they had been to Finedon and got into Claypole's warehouse prisoner said "have you heard of the robbery in Finedon" Charles Cooper replied "yes of course" Hawkes and Hancock said it was they who had done it.

Charles Cooper was at Hawke's house on the 5th Jan and went with his wife to a Mrs Harding's who gave him a pair of Bluchers they were the same boots given to Stephen Warner.

Cross examined Hawkes was apprehended on a Thursday and Cooper was at Hawkes house the night after the conversation in the road and knows Thomas Botteril who was not present at the time of the conversation and has been three times before the magistrate and twice convicted and told Claypole on the day of the conversation what Hawkes had said Hawkes had two ferrets with them.

Ann Harding spoke to giving the boots to Cooper they had been left at her house on Wednesday Or Thursday and had seen Mrs Hawkes there she being a distant relation and often comes to Coopers house.

Joseph Alliston recalled by the judge deposed to the fact that Hawkes had been apprehended on the evening of the 4th Jan when he took the boots from him, Claypole having been recalled stated that

he cut the boots open for purposes of identifying there shop work and reference to a particular pair of boots which witness had hung up behind a door the night before and they were gone the following morning Claypole first saw the footmarks on the morning of the fifth.

John Hancock pleaded guilty to this charge stating that Botteril and Hawkes came to his house the evening before the robbery and asked if he would go out with them, he did they went to Finedon and stopped in a farm yard, he stated they went through some fields and then broke into a warehouse and came out with three bags Hancock carried on of them and then they lost themselves in the fields and hid the other two bags in Ecton Spinney.

The substance of Hancock's evidence was that he in concert Hawkes and Botteril committed the robbery in question and received 7s and sixpence on one occasion and 25s on another as his share.

In cross examination he said he was not at Joseph Ralls house after coming from the robbery But Hawkes did call at his house and going to the window called him up and asked the way to Northampton.

Mr Palmer in a very powerful and ingenious speech contended that the evidence against Hawkes being mainly of a self-convicted felon the jury would scarce think themselves warranted in convicting him. The Learned judge however though that the additional corroborative facts given in evidence could leave little doubt in the minds of the jury as reasonable men that Hawkes was one of the three men engaged in the robbery in question.

The Jury returned a verdict of guilty, the Chief Baron sentenced Hawkes to a years imprisonment and hard labour and John Hancock to six months imprisonment with hard labour.