

John Williams, 5230, Edwin Fox

Researched by Marcia Watson

Also known as John Daley.

John Williams and John Daley are common names in London.

The first record found was for the Adjourned General Sessions, Clerkenwell, on 28 November 1853. John Daley, larceny after previous conviction, 12 months.¹

Central Criminal Court, 2nd February 1857.

John Williams and Henry Miller were indicted, together with another person, for a robbery with violence, on Joseph Harris, and stealing 1 watch, and 1 guard chain; his property.

Joseph Harris. I am collecting clerk to Messrs. H. and E. Rosier, of Limehouse, and have been so forty years. On Saturday, 10 January, I was in Rose-lane, Stepney, between 12 and 1 o'clock in the day—I was walking along, with a leather travelling bag in one hand, and an umbrella in the other—the Black wall railway runs across Rose-lane—there are three arches, one crosses each of the pathways, and one crosses the road—when I got within about sixty yards of the first archway, the prisoner Miller came off the footpath as deliberately as possible, and came towards me—when he came close to me, he stopped in front of me, and said, "Old gentleman, we have been waiting for you"—I was instantly seized from behind by two men—I turned my head sharply, and saw there were two—one took charge of my arms, and the other took charge of my head—my head was pressed down, and something as cold as possible put over my face, I could neither speak nor see, no further than I know that the man who met me in front, took my watch out of my waistcoat pocket—the weather was cold at this time; it might have been a hand that was put over my face—Miller tore the watch through my buttons—he tore the buttons off my waistcoat in doing so—finding that he could not get the guard off my neck, for I always button one side of it in my braces, and it was a strong solid gold guard, he seized it with all his might, and broke the guard—it was enough to cut my neck through, indeed, I wonder it did not do so—he broke the guard and took the watch away—I then felt his hand going to my right hand pocket—having a considerable sum of money in my left pocket, I struggled to get my mouth clear, and sang out, "Police!"—and at that instant I received a blow which knocked me down, and knocked my senses completely out of me—my recollection never came to me again until the next day—I fell on my arm, and have not been able to lift it to my head since—I recollect nothing after I was knocked down, until I found myself at home the next morning—I live at Barnet—the prisoners were taken into custody, I think, about seven or eight days afterwards; and when I went to the police station to see them, my recollection had not rightly recovered, and my eyes were so bad, I could not actually trust to them—I would not then swear to Miller, but I stated to the magistrate that, to the best of my belief, he was the man—I can now firmly swear he is the man—I never saw my watch again—I understand that my carpet bag was picked up, and brought to the station, but I know nothing at all about that.

Cross-examined by Mr. Hobry. (for Miller).

Question. Are you quite sure that you have got your recollection now?

Answer. Quite sure; I have always told the same story that I have now—I never said that Miller took me round the waist—I say now that Miller is the man who came in front of me—I have not said so before to-day—(The witness's deposition was here put in and read)—that is the statement I made, with the exception of being seized round the waist—I did not state that—it was read over to me, and I signed it—it was after I sang out, "Police!" that I was knocked down—they tell me that I gave a description of the persons who assaulted me, but I do not recollect it—I was taken into the station of the Blackwall Railway after it happened—I afterwards gave a description of the parties to the police—there were three persons engaged in it.

Michael Murray. I am a cooper's apprentice, and live at No. 5, Steven's-buildings, Queen-street, Ratcliff. On the day in question, I was coming from a pawnbroker's shop in the Commercial-road, with a basket in my hand—I saw Mr. Harris coming under the railway arch in Rose-lane—he was just

¹ The National Archives (TNA)UK, HO 27/105, p156

going into the arch, and I saw Williams come over, knock him down, and run away—that was the first that I saw—I did not see any watch taken—I did not see any other person—I know a man named Briney—I saw him at the corner; I suppose he was looking out.

Cross-examined.

Question. You saw all that took place, did you?

Answer. Yes; I saw Williams come up—I am sure it was Williams—I did not hear the prosecutor cry "Police!"—I told what I saw to a police sergeant—I did not see anything that occurred before Mr. Harris was knocked down.

Williams said - He has been heard to say that he would lag me the first chance he had.

Witness. That is not true.

Court.

Question. You were coming from the Commercial-road?

Answer. Yes; Mr. Harris was coming towards the railway—I went under the middle arch, where the carts go, in the road—Mr. Harris was just going into the arch—I did not see him before anybody touched him—as soon as I saw him, the blow was struck—there was nobody about him at the time—there were two more persons standing at the railway arch, and a man standing at the bottom, but they were a long distance from him—when he was struck, he lay down on the ground—he was very nearly knocked insensible—I was going to pick him up, but he got up himself, and was going away without his bag—I picked it up, and he came back for it—I knew Williams before, by sight, but not by name—I gave a description of him to the sergeant—I did not describe anybody else—he is the man that knocked Mr. Harris down.

Robert Tivey. I live at No. 3, Susanna-road, Dorset-street, and am a rigger. On Saturday morning, 10th Jan., between 12 and 1 o'clock, I was talking with another lad, and we happened to turn round, and saw the old gentleman lying on the ground at the end of the court, and the prisoner with his leg across him—I cannot exactly say which prisoner it was, because he was off in an instant—but when the old gentleman was walking into the station, the other prisoner laughed as he was going in—I only saw one person close to Mr. Harris; the other one was a little way off, down by the court—that was Briney—I know Miller—he is the one that laughed, as the old gentleman was going into the station—I know Williams by sight—I saw Briney, Miller, and Williams, all three together, before the robbery was committed—I cannot exactly say how long before—it was that same morning—I cannot say whether Williams is the man that I saw standing over the old gentleman—I cannot say who it was.

Cross-examined.

Question. Did you see him knocked down?

Answer. No; I saw him on the ground—I did not go up to him—one of the witnesses did, and led him into the station—I gave a description to sergeant Smith of the persons I saw about Mr. Harris, that same night—I saw the prisoners in custody a week afterwards, sergeant Smith fetched me to see them—he told me I was to pick out the one I saw laugh—the prisoners were in a room with a lot more—I picked Miller out—I did not pick out anybody else.

Court.

Question. The only man you saw meddle with the prosecutor was the man that had his legs between his?

Answer. Yes; I do not know that man—Miller was on the other side of the road—he is the only man I know—all I saw him do was to laugh as the old gentleman went into the station, and when he got to the corner, by Massey's public house, he ran across the road and went down some street.

George Budd. I live at No. 5, Phoenix-place, Ratcliff-cross, and get my living by selling newspapers. On Saturday, 10th Jan., I saw the old gentleman on the ground at the bottom of the arch, and I saw a person standing with his leg over him—I cannot swear which that was—I saw Miller when the old gentleman was coming into the station—he was on the other side of the road, and he laughed—I was talking to Tivey at the time—when Miller got to the corner, he took to his heels and ran—I saw Briney, as they call him, at the further end of the road, standing at the corner of London-street—I

had seen all the three together about nine o'clock that morning, standing in front of Massey's public house.

Cross-examined.

Question. Do you mean to say that you know all of them?

Answer. Yes; I could not see the face of the man who had his leg over Mr. Harris—I was selling my papers at the station at the time.

William Smith. (police sergeant, K 28). I received information, and took the prisoners into custody on Sunday morning, the 18th, at a coffee house in High-street, Stepney—they were both in the same bed there—I took them to the station—they were charged with stealing a gold chain and watch from the person of Mr. Harris, in Rose-lane on the 10th of the same month—Miller said, "I was at Chatham at that time, and I have witnesses to prove it"—Williams made no remark.

Miller said. It is false; I never said anything of the kind! Witness. I am quite certain he did; Potter, another constable, was present at the time, and the acting inspector also.

William Charles Potter. (policeman, K 212). I was at the station when the prisoners were brought there, I heard the charge stated to them, Miller said, "I was at Chatham all that day, and I can bring proof of it."

GUILTY.

(Williams was further charged with having been before convicted.)

William Charles Potter. (policeman, K 212). I produce a certificate—(Read: Middlesex Sessions, Nov. 28, 1853; John Daley, Convicted of larceny; after a previous conviction; Confined twelve months)—Williams is the person referred to—I was present at the time.

MILLER—GUILTY. Aged 20.— Four Years Penal Servitude.

WILLIAMS—GUILTY. Aged 22.— Transported for Fifteen Years.²

John Williams (5320) arrived on the *Edwin Fox* in 1858.

He is said to have escaped in March 1862 from Vasse.

Gravesend Quarter Sessions. 17 July 1863.

John Williams, aged twenty-five, described in the calendar as a mariner, was charged with stealing two brass stanchions, value 40s, from the yacht *Oise*, belonging to Colonel Smith. Mr. Rosher had the case for the prosecution, and stated the facts of the case.

James Pull, police-constable, deposed that he was on duty in Darnley-terrace, at three o'clock in the morning of the 13th of June last, when he saw prisoner, who had bundle, which in reply to witness prisoner said contained tools. On witness proceeding to examine the bundle, prisoner threw it down and ran off. He pursued and took him. The bundle contained the articles now produced.

Thomas Harris deposed that he had charge of the yacht *Disc*, and that the stanchions belonged to the vessel. They were safe until Saturday, 12th of June. Prisoner made no defence. The jury returned verdict of guilty, and previous conviction for felony having been proved against him, the learned Recorder sentenced him to two years' imprisonment with hard labour.³

A Convict's Death and Confession.

About the 22 September 1865, a man giving his name as John Williams called at the Police Station, Gloucester, and asked for medical assistance. Upon being referred to the relieving-officer he declined to go, saying he was an escaped convict from the Western Australian colony. When charged before a Magistrate with the offence of being at large before the expiration of his sentence, he said, after being incarcerated for a short time in the colony, a free pardon was granted to him upon conditions that he would not leave the place. But the colonists behaving so badly to him, he got in league with the captain of a merchant ship, who brought him to England. Once more upon his native

² Old Bailey Proceedings Online (www.oldbaileyonline.org)

³ Gravesend Reporter, North Kent and South Essex Advertiser, 18 July 1863, p5; TNA, HO 27/134, p307

land he could not tell what to do, for fear of detection, as he had only served 8 years out of 15 years, a sentence passed upon him for garrotting a commercial traveller at Stepney, London. He worked his way into Kent, and there obtained employment but could not resist temptation, and committed another robbery, was arrested, and sentenced to two years in Maidstone gaol, which time he served without being discovered, and was then once more let loose upon society. The fear of capture was always before him, and he took a travel by night along the most remote roads and lanes he could find, until completely exhausted and half-starved he was compelled to apply to the police for medical assistance.

The magistrates directed enquiries to be made, which was done by Superintendent Griffin. In the meantime Williams was remanded. Upon being sent to prison he said his statement was false, he had not escaped from Australia, and that his leave of license was in Dublin. In the course of a few days Mr Griffin received a communication from the Secretary for the Home Department, detailing the man's conviction as he had stated, and a sentence of fifteen years being passed upon him, with directions for him to be brought before the magistrates for being illegally at large before the expiration of his sentence.

On Friday an officer was sent to fetch the man from the prison before the magistrates, when a certificate was given by the medical officer that he was ill of diseased brain, and quite unfit to be removed, and the magistrates granted a further remand until Monday, but the poor fellow died on Saturday.

An inquest was held the same day by Mr Lovegrove, and a verdict of "Died of natural causes" returned.⁴

Died on 8 October 1865 at Gloucester.

⁴ Wiltshire Times and Trowbridge Advertiser, 14 October 1865, p3